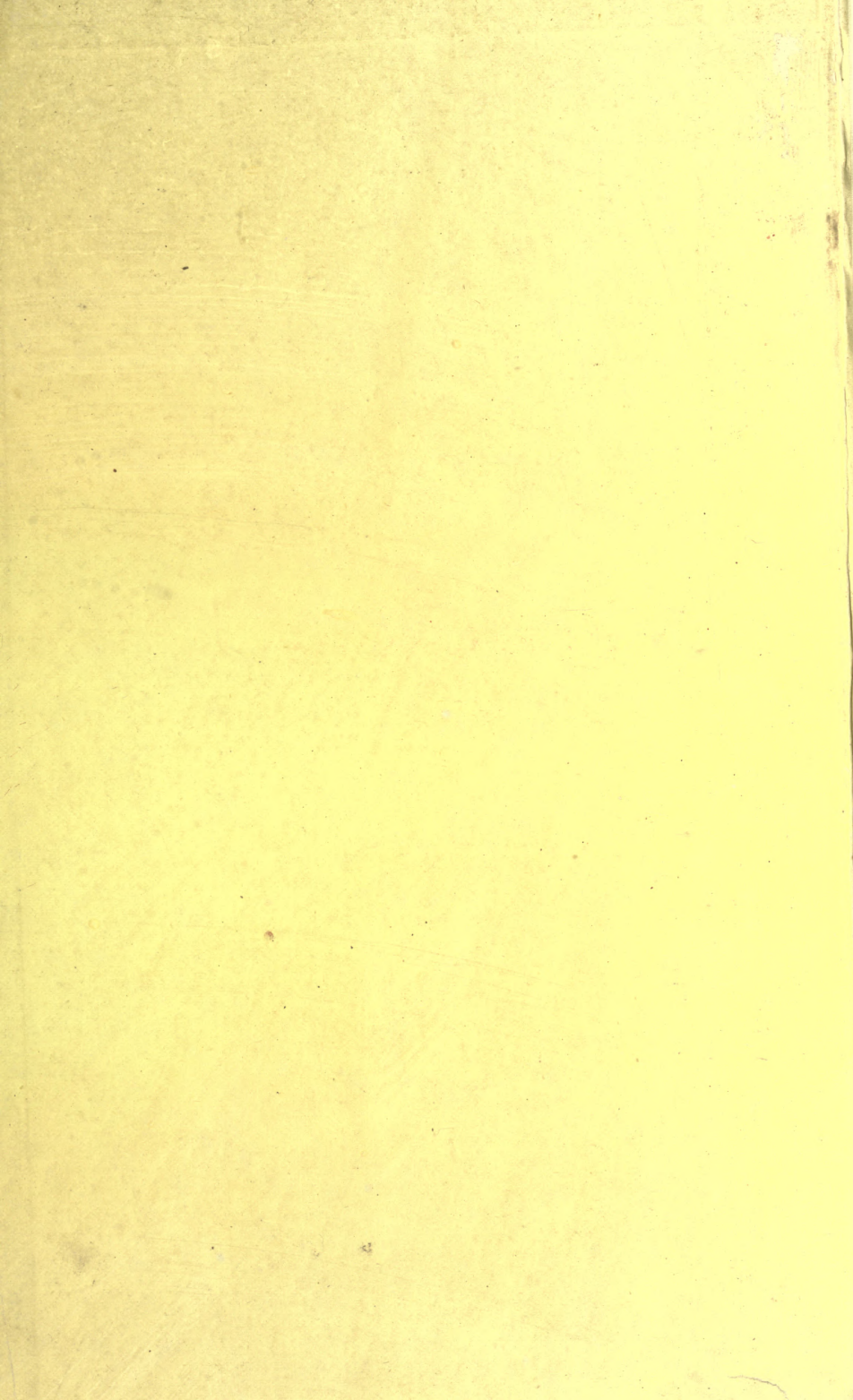




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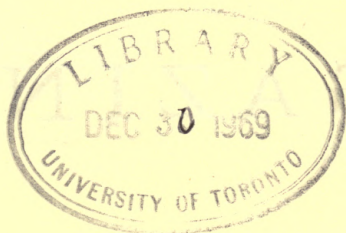
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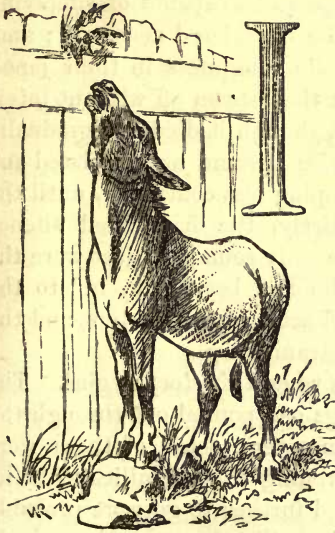
THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÂ.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTERCESSOR.



IN the heart of the City, but fended off from the roar and rattle of traffic by a ring of shops, and under the shadow of a smoke-begrimed classical church, stands—or rather stood, for they have removed it recently—the large public school of St. Peter's.

Entering the heavy old gate, against which the shops on both sides huddled close, you passed into the atmosphere of scholastic calm which, during working hours, pervades most places of education, and you saw a long plain block of buildings, within which it was hard to believe, so deep was the silence,

that some hundreds of boys were collected.

Even if you went down the broad stairs to the school entrance
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and along the basement, where the bulk of the class-rooms was situated, there was only a faint hum to be heard from behind the numerous doors—until the red-waistcoated porter came out of his lodge and rang the big bell which told that the day's work was over.

Then nervous people who found themselves by any chance in the long dark corridors experienced an unpleasant sensation, as of a demon host in high spirits being suddenly let loose to do their will. The outburst was generally preceded by a dull murmur and rustle, which lasted for a few minutes after the clang of the bell had died away—then door after door opened and hordes of boys plunged out with wild shrieks of liberty, to scamper madly down the echoing flagstones.

For half an hour after that the place was a Babel of unearthly yells, whistles, and scraps of popular songs, with occasional charges and scuffles and a constant tramp of feet.

The higher forms on both the classical and modern sides took no part of course in these exuberances, and went soberly home in twos or threes, as became 'fellows in the Sixth.' But they were in the minority, and the Lower School boys and the 'Remove'—that bodyguard of strong limbs and thick heads which it seemed hopeless to remove any higher—were quite capable of supplying unaided all the noise that might be considered necessary; and, as there was no ill-humour and little roughness in their japes, they were very wisely allowed to let their steam off without interference. It did not last very long, though it died out gradually enough: first the songs and whistles became more isolated and distinct, and the hallooing and tramping less continued, until the *charivari* toned down almost entirely, the frightened silence came stealing back again, and the only sounds at last were the hurried run of the delinquents who had been 'run in' to the detention room, the slow footsteps of some of the masters, and the brooms of the old ladies who were cleaning up.

Such was the case at St. Peter's when this story begins. The stream of boys with shiny black bags had poured out through the gate and swelled the great human river; some of them were perhaps already at home and enlivening their families with the day's experiences, and those who had further to go were probably beguiling the tedium of travel by piling one another up in struggling heaps on the floors of various railway carriages, for the entertainment of those privileged to be their fellow-passengers.

Halfway down the main corridor I have mentioned was the 'Middle-Third' class-room, a big square room with dingy cream-coloured walls, high windows darkened with soot, and a small stained writing-table at one end, surrounded on three sides by ranks of rugged seasoned forms and sloping desks; round the walls were varnished lockers with a number painted on the lid of each, and a big square stove stood in one corner.

The only person in the room just then was the form-master, Mark Ashburn; and he was proposing to leave it almost immediately, for the close air and the strain of keeping order all day had given him a headache, and he was thinking that before walking homeward he would amuse himself with a magazine, or a gossip in the masters' room.

Mark Ashburn was a young man, almost the youngest on the school staff, and very decidedly the best-looking. He was tall and well made, with black hair and eloquent dark eyes, which had the gift of expressing rather more than a rigid examination would have found inside him—just now, for example, a sentimental observer would have read in their glance round the bare deserted room the passionate protest of a soul conscious of genius against the hard fate which had placed him there, whereas he was in reality merely wondering whose hat that was on the row of pegs opposite.

But if Mark was not a genius, there was a brilliancy in his manner that had something very captivating about it; an easy confidence in himself, that had the more merit because it had hitherto met with extremely small encouragement.

He dressed carefully, which was not without effect upon his class, for boys, without being overscrupulous in the matter of their own costume, are apt to be critical of the garments of those in authority over them. To them he was 'an awful swell'; though he was not actually overdressed—it was only that he liked to walk home along Piccadilly with the air of a man who had just left his club and had nothing particular to do.

He was not unpopular with his boys: he did not care twopence about any of them, but he felt it pleasant to be popular, and his careless good-nature secured that result without much effort on his part. They had a great respect for his acquirements too, speaking of him among themselves as 'jolly clever when he liked to show it'; for Mark was not above giving occasional indications of deep learning which were highly impressive. He went out of his way to do it,

and was probably aware that the learning thus suggested would not stand any very severe test; but then there was no one there to apply it.

Any curiosity as to the last hat and coat on the wall was satisfied while he still sat at his desk, for the door, with its upper panels of corrugated glass protected by stout wire network—no needless precaution there—opened just then, and a small boy appeared, looking rather pale and uncomfortable, and holding a long sheet of blue foolscap in one hand.

'Hullo, Langton,' said Mark, as he saw him; 'so it's you who haven't gone yet, eh? How's that?'

'Please, sir,' began the boy, dolorously, 'I've got into an awful row—I'm run in, sir.'

'Ah!' said Mark; 'sorry for you—what is it?'

'Well, I didn't do anything,' said he. 'It was like this. I was going along the passage, and just passing Old Jemmy's—I mean Mr. Shelford's—door, and it was open. And there was a fellow standing outside, a bigger fellow than me, and he caught hold of me by the collar and ran me right in and shut the door and bolted. And Mr. Shelford came at me and boxed my ears, and said it wasn't the first time, and I should have a detention card for it. And so he gave me this, and I'm to go up to the Doctor with it and get it signed when it's done!'

And the boy held out the paper, at the top of which Mark read in old Shelford's tremulous hand—'Langton. 100 lines for outrageous impertinence. J. Shelford.'

'If I go up, you know, sir,' said the boy, with a trembling lip, 'I'm safe for a swishing.'

'Well, I'm afraid you are,' agreed Mark, 'but you'd better make haste, hadn't you? or they'll close the Detention Room, and you'll only be worse off for waiting, you see.'

Mark was really rather sorry for him, though he had, as has been said, no great liking for boys; but this particular one, a round-faced, freckled boy, with honest eyes and a certain refinement in his voice and bearing that somehow suggested that he had a mother or sister who was a gentlewoman, was less objectionable to Mark than his fellows. Still he could not enter into his feelings sufficiently to guess why he was being appealed to in this way.

Young Langton half turned to go, dejectedly enough; then he came back and said 'Please, sir, can't you help me? I shouldn't

mind the—the swishing so much if I'd done anything. But I haven't.'

'What can I do?' asked Mark.

'If you wouldn't mind speaking to Mr. Shelford for me—he'd listen to you, and he won't to me.'

'He will have gone by this time,' objected Mark.

'Not if you make haste,' said the boy, eagerly.

Mark was rather flattered by this confidence in his persuasive powers: he liked the idea, too, of posing as the protector of his class, and the good-natured element in him made him the readier to yield.

'Well, we'll have a shot at it, Langton,' he said. 'I doubt if it's much good, you know, but here goes—when you get in, hold your tongue and keep in the background—leave it to me.'

So they went out into the long passage with its whitewashed walls and rows of doors on each side, and black barrel-vaulting above; at the end the glimmer of light came through the iron bars of the doorway, which had a prison-like suggestion about them, and the reflectors of the unlighted gas lamps that projected here and there along the corridor gave back the glimmer as a tiny spark in the centre of each metal disc.

Mark stopped at the door of the Upper Fourth Class-room, which was Mr. Shelford's, and went in. It was a plain room, not unlike his own, but rather smaller; it had a dais with a somewhat larger desk for the master, and a different arrangement of the benches and lockers, but it was quite as gloomy, with an outlook into a grim area giving a glimpse of the pavement and railings above.

Mr. Shelford was evidently just going, for as they came in he had put a very large hat on the back of his head, and was winding a long grey comforter round his throat; but he took off the hat courteously as he saw Mark. He was a little old man, with a high brick-red colour on his smooth, scarcely wrinkled cheeks, a big aquiline nose, a wide thin-lipped mouth, and sharp little grey eyes, which he cocked sideways at one like an angry parrot.

Langton retired to a form out of hearing, and sat down on one end of it, nursing his detention paper anxiously.

'Well, Ashburn,' began the Reverend James Shelford, 'is there anything I can do for *you*?'

'Why,' said Mark, 'the fact is, I——'

'Eh, what?' said the elder. 'Wait a minute—there's that impudent fellow back again! I thought I'd seen the last of him. Here, you sir, didn't I send you up for a flogging?'

'I—I believe you did, sir,' said Langton, with extreme deference.

'Well, why ain't you *getting* that flogging—eh, sir? No impudence, now—just tell me, why ain't you being flogged? You ought to be in the middle of it now!'

'Well, you see,' said Mark, 'he's one of *my* boys——'



'I don't care whose boy he is,' said the other, testily; 'he's an impudent fellow, sir.'

'I don't think he is, really,' said Mark.

'D'ye know what he did, then? Came whooping and shouting and hullabalooing into my room, for all the world as if it was his own nursery, sir. He's *always* doing it!'

'I never did it before,' protested Langton, 'and it wasn't my fault this time.'

'Wasn't your fault! You haven't got St. Vitus' dance, have you? I never heard there were any Tarantula spiders here. You don't go dancing into the Doctor's room, do you? *He'll* give

you a dancing lesson!' said the old gentleman, sitting down again to chuckle, and looking very like Mr. Punch.

'No, but allow me,' put in Mark; 'I assure you this boy is——'

'I know what you're going to tell me—he's a model boy, of course. It's singular what shoals of model boys *do* come dancing in here under some irresistible impulse after school. I'll put a stop to it now I've caught one. You don't know 'em as well as I do, sir, you don't know 'em—they're all impudent and all liars—some are cleverer at it than others, and that's all.'

'I'm afraid that's true enough,' said Mark, who did not like being considered inexperienced.

'Yes, it's cruel work having to do with boys, sir—cruel and thankless. If ever I try to help a boy in my class I think is trying to get on and please me, what does he do? Turn round and play me some scurvy trick, just to prove to the others he's not currying favour. And then they insult me—why, that very boy has been and shouted "Shellfish" through my keyhole many a time, I'll warrant!'

'I think you're mistaken,' said Mark, soothingly.

'You do? I'll ask him. Here, d'ye mean to tell me you never called out "Shellfish" or—or other opprobrious epithets into my door, sir?' And he inclined his ear for the answer with his eyes fixed on the boy's face.

'Not "Shellfish,"' said the boy; 'I did "Prawn" once. But that was long ago.'

Mark gave him up then, with a little contempt for such injudicious candour.

'Oh!' said Mr. Shelford, catching him, but not ungently, by the ear. "'Prawn," eh? "Prawn"; hear that, Ashburn? Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me *why* "Prawn"?'

To any one who looked at his bright-red face and prominent eyes, the reason was sufficiently obvious; but Langton probably felt that candour had its limits, and that this was a question that required judgment in dealing with it.

'Because—because I've heard other fellows call you that,' he replied.

'Ah, and why do *they* call me Prawn, eh?'

'I never heard them give any reason,' said the boy, diplomatically.

Mr. Shelford let the boy go with another chuckle, and Langton retired to his form again out of earshot.

'Yes, Ashburn,' said old Jemmy, 'that's the name they have for me—one of 'em. "Prawn" and "Shellfish"—they yell it out after me as I'm going home, and then run away. And I've had to bear it thirty years.'

'Young ruffians!' said Mark, as if the sobriquets were wholly unknown to the Masters' room.

'Ah, they do though; and the other day, when my monitor opened the desk in the morning, there was a great impudent kitten staring me in the face. He'd put it in there himself, I dare say, to annoy me.'

He did not add that he had sent out for some milk for the intruder, and had nursed it on his old knees during morning school, after which he showed it out with every consideration for its feelings; but it was the case nevertheless, for his years amongst boys had still left a soft place in his heart, though he got little credit for it.

'Yes, it's a wearing life, sir, a wearing life,' he went on with less heat, 'hearing generations of stoopid boys all blundering at the same stiff places, and worrying over the same old passages. I'm getting very tired of it; I'm an old man now. "Occidit miseris crambe"—eh, you know how it goes on?'

'Yes, yes,' said Mark, 'quite so,'—though he had but a dim recollection of the line in question.

'Talking of verses,' said the other, 'I hear we're to have the pleasure of seeing one of your productions on Speech-night this year. Is that so?'

'I was not aware anything was settled,' said Mark, flushing with pleasure. 'I did lay a little thing of my own, a sort of allegorical Christmas piece—a *masque*, don't you know—before the Doctor and the Speeches Committee, but I haven't heard anything definite yet.'

'Oh, perhaps I'm premature,' said Mr. Shelford; 'perhaps I'm premature.'

'Do you mind telling me if you've heard anything said about it?' asked Mark, thoroughly interested.

'I did hear some talk about it in the luncheon hour. You weren't in the room, I believe, but I think they were to come to a decision this afternoon.'

'Then it will be all over by now,' said Mark; 'there may be a note on my desk about it. I—I think I'll go and see, if you'll excuse me.'

And he left the room hastily, quite forgetting his original purpose in entering: something much more important to him than whether a boy should be flogged or not, when he had no doubt richly deserved it, was pending just then, and he could not rest until he knew the result.

For Mark had always longed for renown of some sort, and for the last few years literary distinction had seemed the most open to him. He had sought it by more ambitious attempts, but even the laurels which the performance of a piece of his by boy-actors on a Speech-day might bring him had become desirable; and though he had written and submitted his work confidently and carelessly enough, he found himself not a little anxious and excited as the time for a decision drew near.

It was a small thing; but if it did nothing else it would procure him a modified fame in the school and the Masters' room, and Mark Ashburn had never felt resigned to be a nonentity anywhere.

Little wonder, then, that Langton's extremity faded out of his mind as he hurried back to his class-room, leaving that unlucky boy still in his captor's clutches.

The old clergyman put on the big hat again when Mark had gone, and stood up peering over the desk at his prisoner.

'Well, if you don't want to be locked up here all night, you'd better be off,' he remarked.

'To the Detention Room, sir?' faltered the boy.

'You know the way, I believe? If not, I can show you,' said the old gentleman, politely.

'But really and truly,' pleaded Langton, 'I didn't do anything this time. I was shoved in.'

'Who shoved you in? Come, you know well enough; you're going to lie, I can see. Who was he?'

It is not improbable that Langton *was* going to lie that time—his code allowed it—but he felt checked somehow. 'Well, I only know the fellow by name,' he said at last.

'Well, and *what's* his name? Out with it; I'll give him a detention card instead.'

'I can't tell you that,' said the boy in a lower voice.

'And why not, ye impident fellow? You've just said you knew it. Why not?'

'Because it would be sneakish,' said Langton, boldly.

'Oh, "sneakish," would it?' said old Jemmy. '"Sneakish," eh? Well, well, I'm getting old, I forget these things. Per-

haps it would. I don't know what it is to insult an old man—that's fair enough, I dare say. And so you want me to let you off being whipped, eh?'—

'Yes, when I've done nothing.'

'And if I let you off you'll come galloping in here as lively as ever to-morrow, calling out "Shellfish"—no, I forgot—"Prawn's" your favourite epithet, ain't it?—calling out "Prawn" under my very nose?'

'No, I shan't,' said the boy.

'Well, I'll take your word for it, whatever that's worth,' and he tore up the compromising paper. 'Run off home to your tea, and don't bother me any more.'

Langton escaped, full of an awed joy at his wonderful escape, and old Mr. Shelford locked his desk, got out the big hook-nosed umbrella, which had contracted a strong resemblance to himself, and went too.

'That's a nice boy,' he muttered—'wouldn't tell tales, wouldn't he? But I dare say he was taking me in all the time. He'll be able to tell the other young scamps how neatly he got over "old Jemmy." I don't think he will, though. I can still tell when a boy's lying—I've had plenty of opportunities.'

Meanwhile Mark had gone back to his class-room. One of the porters ran after him with a note, and he opened it eagerly, only to be disappointed, for it was not from the committee. It was dated from Lincoln's Inn, and came from his friend Holroyd.

'Dear Ashburn,' the note ran, 'don't forget your promise to look in here on your way home. You know it's the last time we shall walk back together, and there's a favour I want to ask of you before saying good-bye. I shall be at chambers till five, as I am putting my things together.'

'I will go round presently,' he thought. 'I must say good-bye some time to-day, and it will be a bore to turn out after dinner.'

As he stood reading the note, young Langton passed him, bag in hand, with a bright and grateful face.

'Please, sir,' he said, saluting him, 'thanks awfully for getting Mr. Shelford to let me off: he wouldn't have done it but for you.'

'Oh, ah,' said Mark, suddenly remembering his errand of mercy, 'to be sure, yes. So he has let you off, has he? Well, I'm very glad I was of use to you, Langton. It was a hard fight, wasn't it? That's enough, get along home, and let me find you better up in your Nepos than you were yesterday.'

Beyond giving the boy his company in facing his judge for the second time, Mark, as will have been observed, had not been a very energetic advocate; but as Langton was evidently unaware of the fact, Mark himself was the last person to allude to it. Gratitude, whether earned or not, was gratitude, and always worth accepting.

'By Jove,' he thought to himself with half-ashamed amusement, 'I forgot all about the little beggar; left him to the tender mercies of old Prawn. All's well that ends well, anyhow!'

As he stood by the *grille* at the porter's lodge, the old Prawn himself passed slowly out, with his shoulders bent, and his old eyes staring straight before him with an absent, lack-lustre expression in them. Perhaps he was thinking that life might have been more cheerful for him if his wife Mary had lived, and he had had her and boys like that young Langton to meet him when his wearisome day was over, instead of being childless and a widower, and returning to the lonely, dingy house which he occupied as the incumbent of a musty church hard by.

Whatever he thought of, he was too engaged to notice Mark, who followed him with his eyes as he slowly worked his way up the flight of stone steps which led to the street level. 'Shall I ever come to that?' he thought. 'If I stay here all my life, I may. Ah, there's Gilbertson—he can tell me about this Speech-day business.'

Gilbertson was a fellow-master, and one of the committee for arranging the Speech-day entertainment. For the rest he was a nervously fussy little man, and met Mark with evident embarrassment.

'Well, Gilbertson,' said Mark, as unconcerned as he could, 'settled your programme yet?'

'Er—oh yes, quite settled—quite, that is, not definitely as yet.'

'And—my little production?'

'Oh, ah, to be sure, yes, your little production. We all liked it very much—oh, exceedingly so—the Doctor especially—charmed with it, my dear Ashburn, charmed!'

'Very glad to hear it,' said Mark, with a sudden thrill; 'and—and have you decided to take it, then?'

'Well,' said Mr. Gilbertson, looking at the pavement all round him, 'you see, the fact is, the Doctor thought, and some of us thought so too, that a piece to be acted by boys should have a leetle more—eh? and not quite so much—so much of what yours

has, and a few of those little natural touches, you know—but you see what I mean, don't you?'

'It would be a capital piece with all that in it,' said Mark, trying to preserve his temper, 'but I could easily alter it, you know, Gilbertson.'

'No, no,' said Gilbertson, eagerly, 'you mustn't think of it; you'd spoil it; we couldn't hear of it, and—and it won't be necessary to trouble you. Because, you see, the Doctor thought it was a little long, and not quite light enough; and not exactly the sort of thing we want, but we all admired it.'

'But it won't do? Is that what you mean?'

'Why—er—nothing definite at present. We are going to write you a letter—a letter about it. Goodbye, goodbye! Got a train to catch at Ludgate Hill.'

And he bustled away, glad to escape, for he had not counted upon having to announce a rejection in person.

Mark stood looking after him, with a slightly dazed feeling. *That* was over, then. He had written works which he felt persuaded had only to become known to bring him fame; but for all that it seemed that he was not considered worthy to entertain a Speech-night audience at a London public school.

Mark had spent some years now in hunting the will-o'-the-wisp of literary fame, which so many pursue all their lives in vain, till it comes, at last, to flicker awhile above their graves. Even at Cambridge, where he had gone up from this very school of St. Peter's with a scholarship and anticipations of a brilliant career, he had put aside his tripos to join adventurous spirits in establishing more than one of those ephemeral undergraduate periodicals the satire of which has a boomerang-like power of recoil.

For a time, some easy triumphs in this direction, and his social qualities, made him a second Pendennis amongst the men of his college; then his star, like that of Pendennis, had waned, and failure followed failure. His papers in his second-year examinations were so bad that his scholarship was not continued, and the next year he took a low third-class in his tripos, when a good first had been predicted for him. He had gone in for the Indian Civil Service, and in his last trial came out just three places below the lowest successful candidate. Now he had found himself forced to accept a third-form mastership in his old school, where it seemed that, if he was no longer a disciple, he was scarcely a prophet.

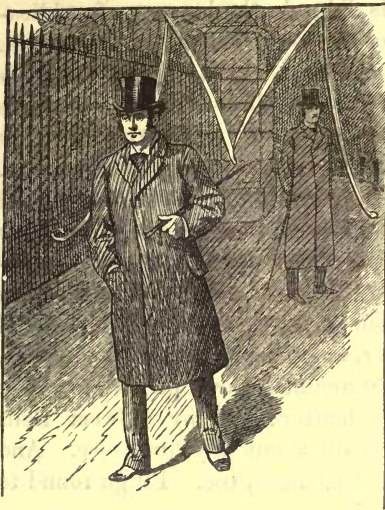
But these failures had only fanned his ambition. He would show the world there was something in him still; and he began to send up articles to various London magazines, and to keep them going like a juggler's oranges, until his productions obtained a fair circulation, in manuscript.

Now and then a paper of his did gain the honours of publication, so that his disease did not die out, as happens with some. He went on, writing whatever came into his head, and putting his ideas out in every variety of literary mould—from a blank-verse tragedy to a sonnet, and a three-volume novel to a society paragraph—with equal ardour and facility, and very little success.

For he believed in himself implicitly. At present he was still before the outwork of prejudice which must be stormed by every conscript in the army of literature: that he would carry it eventually he did not doubt. But this disappointment about the committee hit him hard for a moment; it seemed like a forecast of a greater disaster. Mark, however, was of a sanguine temperament, and it did not take him long to remount his own pedestal. 'After all,' he thought, 'what does it matter? If my "Sweet Bells Jangled" is only taken, I shan't care about anything else. And there is some of my best work in that book, too. I'll go round to Holroyd, and forget this business.'

CHAPTER II.

A LAST WALK.



ARK turned in from Chancery Lane under the old gateway, and went to one of the staircase doorways with the old curly eighteenth-century numerals cut on the centre stone of the arch and painted black. The days of these picturesque old dark-red buildings, with their small-paned dusty windows, their turrets and angles, and other little architectural surprises and inconveniences, are already numbered. Soon the sharp outline of their old gables and chimneys will cut the sky no longer; but some

unpractical persons will be found who, although (or it may be *because*) they did not occupy them, will see them fall with a pang, and remember them with a kindly regret.

A gas jet was glimmering here and there behind the slits of dusty glass in the turret staircase as Mark came in, although it was scarcely dusk in the outer world; for Old Square is generally a little in advance in this respect. He passed the doors laden with names and shining black plates announcing removals, till he came to an entrance on the second floor, where one of the names on a dingy ledge above the door was 'Mr. Vincent Holroyd.'

If Mark had been hitherto a failure, Vincent Holroyd could not be pronounced a success. He had been, certainly, more distinguished at college; but after taking his degree, reading for the Bar, and being called, three years had passed in forced inactivity—not, perhaps, an altogether unprecedented circumstance in a young barrister's career, but with the unpleasant probability, in his case, of a continued brieflessness. A dry and reserved manner, due to a secret shyness, had kept away many whose friendship might have been useful to him; and, though he was aware of

this, he could not overcome the feeling: he was a lonely man, and had become enamoured of his loneliness. Of the interest popularly believed to be indispensable to a barrister he could command none, and, with more than the average amount of ability, the opportunity for displaying it was denied him; so that when he was suddenly called upon to leave England for an indefinite time, he was able to abandon prospects that were not brilliant without any particular reluctance.

Mark found him tying up his few books and effects in the one chamber which he had sub-rented, a little panelled room looking out on Chancery Lane, and painted the pea-green colour which, with a sickly buff, seems set apart for professional decoration.

His face, which was dark and somewhat plain, with large, strong features, had a pleasant look on it as he turned to meet Mark. 'I'm glad you could come,' he said. 'I thought we'd walk back together for the last time. I shall be ready in one minute. I'm only getting my law books together.'

'You're not going to take them out to Ceylon with you, then?'

'Not now. Brandon—my landlord, you know—will let me keep them here till I send for them. I've just seen him. Shall we go now?'

They passed out through the dingy, gas-lit clerk's room, and Holroyd stopped for a minute to speak to the clerk, a mild, pale man, who was neatly copying out an opinion at the foot of a case. 'Goodbye, Tucker,' he said. 'I don't suppose I shall see you again for some time.'

'Goodbye, Mr. 'Olroyd, sir. Very sorry to lose you. I hope you'll have a pleasant voy'ge, and get on over there, sir, better than you've done 'ere, sir.'

The clerk spoke with a queer mixture of patronage and deference: the deference was his ordinary manner with his employer in chief, a successful Chancery junior, and the patronage was caused by a pitying contempt he felt for a young man who had not got on.

'That 'Olroyd 'll never do anything at the Bar,' he used to say when comparing notes with his friend the clerk to the opposite set of chambers. 'He's got no push, and he's got no manner, and there ain't nobody at his back. What he ever come to the Bar for at all, I don't know!'

There were some directions to be given as to letters and papers, which the mild clerk received with as much gravity as though

he were not inwardly thinking, 'I'd eat all the papers as ever come in for *you*, and want dinner after 'em.' And then Holroyd left his chambers for the last time, and he and Mark went down the rickety winding stairs, and out under the colonnade of the Vice-Chancellors' courts, at the closed doors of which a few clerks and reporters were copying down the cause list for the next day.

They struck across Lincoln's Inn Fields and Long Acre, towards Piccadilly and Hyde Park. It was by no means a typical November afternoon: the sky was a delicate blue and the air mild, with just enough of autumn keenness in it to remind one, not unpleasantly, of the real time of year.

'Well,' said Holroyd, rather sadly, 'you and I won't walk together like this again for a long time.'

'I suppose not,' said Mark, with a regret that sounded a little formal, for their approaching separation did not, as a matter of fact, make him particularly unhappy.

Holroyd had always cared for him much more than he had cared for Holroyd, for whom Mark's friendship had been a matter of circumstance rather than deliberate preference. They had been quartered in the same lodgings at Cambridge, and had afterwards 'kept' on the same staircase in college, which had led to a more or less daily companionship, a sort of intimacy that is not always strong enough to bear transplantation to town.

Holroyd had taken care that it should survive their college days; for he had an odd liking for Mark, in spite of a tolerably clear insight into his character. Mark had a way of inspiring friendships without much effort on his part, and this undemonstrative, self-contained man felt an affection for him which was stronger than he ever allowed himself to show.

Mark, for his part, had begun to feel an increasing constraint in the company of a friend who had an unpleasantly keen eye for his weak points, and with whom he was always conscious of a certain inferiority which, as he could discover no reason for it, galled his vanity the more.

Mark's careless tone wounded Holroyd, who had hoped for some warmer response; and they walked on in silence until they turned into Hyde Park and crossed to Rotten Row, when Mark said, 'By the way, Vincent, wasn't there something you wanted to speak to me about?'

'I wanted to ask a favour of you; it won't give you much trouble,' said Holroyd.

'Oh, in that case, if it's anything I *can* do, you know—but what is it?'

'Well,' said Holroyd, 'the fact is—I never told a soul till now—but I've written a book.'

'Never mind, old boy,' said Mark, with a light laugh; for the confession, or perhaps a certain embarrassment with which it was made, seemed to put Holroyd more on a level with himself. 'So have lots of fellows, and no one thinks any the worse of them—unless they print it. Is it a law book?'

'Not exactly,' said Holroyd; 'it's a romance.'

'A romance!' cried Mark. 'You!'

'Yes,' said Holroyd, 'I. I've always been something of a dreamer, and I amused myself by putting one of my dreams down on paper. I wasn't disturbed.'

'You've been called though, haven't you?'

'I never got up,' said Holroyd, with a rather melancholy grimace. 'I began well enough. I used to come up to chambers by ten and leave at half past six, after noting up reports and text-books all day; but no solicitor seemed struck by my industry. Then I sat in court and took down judgments most elaborately, but no leader ever asked *me* to take notes for him, and I never got a chance of suggesting anything to the court as *amicus curiæ*, for both the Vice-Chancellors seemed able to get along pretty well without me. Then I got tired of that, and somehow this book got into my head, and I couldn't rest till I'd got it out again. It's finished now, and I'm lonely again.'

'And you want me to run my eye over it and lick it into shape a little?' asked Mark.

'Not quite that,' said Holroyd; 'it must stand as it is. What I'm going to ask you is this: I don't know any fellow I would care to ask but yourself. I want it published. I shall be out of England, probably with plenty of other matters to occupy me for some time. I want you to look after the manuscript for me while I'm away. Do you mind taking the trouble?'

'Not a bit, old fellow,' said Mark, 'no trouble in the world; only tying up the parcel each time, and sending it off again. Well, I didn't mean that; but it's no trouble, really.'

'I dare say you won't be called upon to see it through the press,' said Holroyd; 'but if such a thing as an acceptance should happen, I should like you to make all the arrangements. You've

had some experience in these things, and I haven't, and I shall be away too.'

'I'll do the best I can,' said Mark. 'What sort of a book is it?'

'It's a romance, as I said,' said Holroyd. 'I don't know that I can describe it more exactly: it——'

'Oh, it doesn't matter,' interrupted Mark. 'I can read it some time. What have you called it?'

'“Glamour,”' said Holroyd, still with a sensitive shrinking at having to reveal what had long been a cherished secret.

'It isn't a society novel, I suppose?'

'No,' said Holroyd. 'I'm not much of a society man; I go out very little.'

'But you ought to, you know: you'll find people very glad to see you if you only cultivate them.'

There was something, however, in Mark's manner of saying this that suggested a consciousness that this might be a purely personal experience.

'Shall I?' said Holroyd. 'I don't know. People are kind enough, but they can only be really glad to see any one who is able to amuse them or interest them, and that's natural enough. I can't flatter myself that I'm particularly interesting or amusing; in any way it's too late to think about that now.'

'You won't be able to do the hermit much over in Ceylon, will you?'

'I don't know. My father's plantation is in rather a remote part of the island. I don't think he has ever been very intimate with the other planters near him, and as I left the place when I was a child I have fewer friends there than here even. But there will be plenty to do if I am to learn the business as he seems to wish.'

'Did he never think of having you over before?'

'He wanted me to come over and practise at the Colombo Bar, but that was soon after I was called, and I preferred to try my fortune in England first. I was the second son, you see, and while my brother John was alive I was left pretty well to my own devices. I went, as you know, to Colombo in my second Long, but only for a few weeks, of course, and my father and I didn't get on together somehow. But he's ill now, and poor John died of dysentery, and he's alone, so even if I had had any practice to leave I could hardly refuse to go out to him. As it is, as far as that is concerned, I have nothing to keep me.'

They were walking down Rotten Row as Holroyd said this, with the dull leaden surface of the Serpentine on their right, and away to the left, across the tan and the grey sward, the Cavalry Barracks, with their long narrow rows of gleaming windows. Up the long convex surface of the Row a faint white mist was crawling, and a solitary, spectral-looking horseman was cantering noiselessly out of it towards them. The evening had almost begun; the sky had changed to a delicate green tint, merged towards the west in a dusky crocus, against which the Memorial spire stood out sharp and black; from South Kensington came the sound of a church bell calling for some evening service.

'Doesn't that bell remind you somehow of Cambridge days?' said Mark. 'I could almost fancy we were walking up again from the boats, and that was the chapel bell ringing.'

'I wish we were,' said Holroyd with a sigh: 'they were good old times, and they will never come back.'

'You're very low, old fellow,' said Mark, 'for a man going back to his native country.'

'Ah, but I don't feel as if it was my native country, you see. I've lived here so long. And no one knows me out there except my poor old father, and we're almost strangers. I'm leaving the few people I care for behind me.'

'Oh, it will be all right,' said Mark, with the comfortable view one takes of another's future: 'you'll get on well enough. We shall have you a rich coffee planter, or a Deputy Judge Advocate, in no time. *Any* fellow has a chance out there. And you'll soon make friends in a place like that.'

'I like my friends ready-made, I think,' said Holroyd; 'but one must make the best of it, I suppose.'

They had come to the end of the Row; the gates of Kensington Gardens were locked, and behind the bars a policeman was watching them suspiciously, as if he suspected they might attempt a forcible entry.

'Well,' said Mark, stopping, 'I suppose you turn off here?' Holroyd would have been willing to go on with him as far as Kensington had Mark proposed it, but he gave no sign of desiring this, so his friend's pride kept him silent too.

'One word more about the—the book,' he said. 'I may put your name and address on the title-page, then? It goes off to Chilton and Fladgate to-night.'

'Oh yes, of course,' said Mark, 'put whatever you like.'

'I've not given them my real name, and, if anything comes of it, I should like that kept a secret.'

'Just as you please; but why?'

'If I keep on at the Bar, a novel, whether it's a success or not, is not the best bait for briefs,' said Holroyd; 'and besides, if I am to get a slating, I'd rather have it under an *alias*, don't you see? So the only name on the title-page is "Vincent Beauchamp."'

'Very well,' said Mark, 'none shall know till you choose to tell them, and, if anything has to be done about the book, I'll see to it with pleasure, and write to you when it's settled. So you can make your mind easy about *that*.'

'Thanks,' said Holroyd; 'and now, goodbye, Mark.'

There was real feeling in his voice, and Mark himself caught something of it as he took the hand Vincent held out.

'Goodbye, old boy,' he said. 'Take care of yourself—pleasant voyage and good luck. You're no letter-writer, I know, but you'll drop me a line now and then, I hope. What's the name of the ship you go out in?'

'The "Mangalore." She leaves the Docks to-morrow. Goodbye for the present, Mark. We shall see one another again, I hope. Don't forget all about me before that.'

'No, no,' said Mark; 'we've been friends too long for that.'

One more goodbye, a momentary English awkwardness in getting away from one another, and they parted, Holroyd walking towards Bayswater across the bridge, and Mark making for Queen's Gate and Kensington.

Mark looked after his friend's tall strong figure for a moment before it disappeared in the dark. 'Well, I've seen the last of him,' he thought. 'Poor old Holroyd! to think of his having written a book—he's one of those unlucky beggars who never make a hit at anything. I expect I shall have some trouble about it by-and-by.'

Holroyd walked on with a heavier heart. 'He won't miss me,' he told himself. 'Will Mabel say goodbye like that?'

CHAPTER III.

GOODBYE.



IN the same afternoon in which we have seen Mark and Vincent walk home together for the last time, Mrs. Langton and her eldest daughter Mabel were sitting in the pretty drawing-room of their house in Kensington Park Gardens.

Mrs. Langton was the wife of a successful Q.C. at the Chancery Bar, and one of those elegantly languid women with a manner charming enough to conceal a slight shallowness of mind and character; she was pretty still, and an invalid at all times

when indisposition was not positively inconvenient.

It was one of her 'at home' days, but fewer people than usual had made their appearance, and these had filtered away early, leaving traces of their presence behind them in the confidential grouping of seats and the tea-cups left high and dry in various parts of the room.

Mrs. Langton was leaning luxuriously back in a low soft chair, lazily watching the firebeams glisten through the stained-glass screen, and Mabel was on a couch near the window trying to read a magazine by the fading light.

'Hadn't you better ring for the lamps, Mabel?' suggested her mother. 'You can't possibly see to read by this light, and it's so trying for the eyes. I suppose no one else will call now, but it's very strange that Vincent should not have come to say good-bye.'

'Vincent doesn't care about "at homes,"' said Mabel.

'Still, not to say good-bye—after knowing us so long, too! and I'm sure we've tried to show him every kindness. Your father was

always having solicitors to meet him at dinner, and it was never any use; and he sails to-morrow. I think he *might* have found time to come!

'So do I,' agreed Mabel. 'It's not like Vincent, though he was always shy and odd in some things. He hasn't been to see us nearly so much lately, but I can't believe he will really go away without a word.'

Mrs. Langton yawned delicately. 'It would not surprise me, I must say,' she said. 'When a young man sets himself——' but whatever she was going to say was broken off by the entrance of her youngest daughter Dolly, with the German governess, followed by the man bearing rose-shaded lamps.

Dolly was a vivacious child of about nine, with golden locks which had a pretty ripple in them, and deep long-lashed eyes that promised to be dangerous one day. 'We took Frisk out without the leash, mummy,' she cried, 'and when we got into Westbourne Grove he ran away. Wasn't it too bad of him?'

'Never mind, darling, he'll come back quite safe—he always does.'

'Ah, but it's his running away that I mind,' said Dolly; 'and you know what a dreadful state he always *will* come back in. He must be cured of doing it somehow.'

'Talk to him very seriously about it, Dolly,' said Mabel.

'I've tried that—and he only cringes and goes and does it again directly he's washed. I know what I'll do, Mabel. When he comes back this time, he shall have a jolly good whacking!'

'My *dear* child,' cried Mrs. Langton, 'what a dreadful expression!'

'Colin says it,' said Dolly, though she was quite aware that Colin was hardly a purist in his expressions.

'Colin says a good many things that are not pretty in a little girl's mouth.'

'So he does,' said Dolly, cheerfully. 'I wonder if he knows? I'll go and tell him of it—he's come home.' And she ran off just as the door-bell rang.

'Mabel, I really think that must be some one else coming to call after all. Do you know, I feel so tired and it's so late that I think I will leave you and Fräulein to talk to them. Papa and I are going out to dinner to-night, and I must rest a little before I begin to dress. I'll run away while I can.'

Mrs. Langton fluttered gracefully out of the room as the butler crossed the hall to open the door, evidently to a visitor, and presently Mabel heard 'Mr. Holroyd' announced.

'So you really have come after all,' said Mabel, holding out her hand with a pretty smile of welcome. 'Mamma and I thought you meant to go away without a word.'

'You might have known me better than that,' said Holroyd.

'But when your last afternoon in England was nearly over and no sign of you, there *was* some excuse for thinking so; but you have come at last, so we won't scold you. Will you have some tea? It isn't very warm, I'm afraid, but you're so very late, you know. Ring, and you shall have some fit to drink.'

Vincent accepted tea, chiefly because he wanted to be waited upon once more by her with the playful, gracious manner, just tinged with affectionate mockery, which he knew so well; and then he talked to her and Fräulein Mozer, with a heavy sense of the unsatisfactory nature of this triangular conversation for a parting interview.

The governess felt this too. She had had a shrewd suspicion for some time of the state of Holroyd's feelings towards Mabel, and felt a sentimental pity for him, condemned as he was to disguise them under ordinary afternoon conversation.

'He is going away,' she thought; 'but he shall have his chance, the poor young man. You will not think it very rude, Mr. Holroyd,' she said, rising: 'it will not disturb you if I practise? There is a piece which I am to play at a school concert to-morrow, and I do not yet know it.'

'Vincent won't mind, Ottilia dear,' said Mabel. 'Will you, Vincent?' So the governess went to the further room where the piano stood, and was soon performing a conveniently noisy German march. Vincent sat still for some moments watching Mabel. He wished to keep in his memory the impression of her face as he saw it then, lighted up by the soft glow of the heavily shaded lamp at her elbow, a spirited and yet tender face, with dark-grey eyes, a sensitive, beautiful mouth, and brown hair with threads of gold in it which gleamed in the lamplight as she turned her graceful head.

He knew it would fade only too soon, as often happens with the face we best love and have reason chiefly to remember. Others will rise unbidden with the vividness of a photograph, but the

one face eludes us more and more, till no effort of the mind will call it up with any distinctness.

Mabel was the first to speak. 'Are you *very* fond of music, Vincent?' she said, a little maliciously. 'Would you rather be allowed to listen in peace, or talk? You *may* talk, you know.'

'I came late on purpose to see as much of you as possible,' said poor Vincent. 'This is the last time I shall be able to talk to you for so long.'

'I know,' said Mabel, simply; 'I'm very sorry, Vincent.' But there was only a frank friendliness in her eyes as she spoke, nothing more, and Vincent knew it.

'So am I,' he said. 'Do you know, Mabel, I have no photograph of you. Will you give me one to take away with me?'

'Of course, if I have one,' she said, as she went to a table for an album. 'Oh, Vincent, I'm so sorry. I'm afraid there's not one left. But I can give you one of mamma and papa and Dolly, and I think Colin too.'

'I should like all those very much,' said Vincent, who could not accept this offer as a perfect substitute, 'but can't you find one of yourself, not even an old one?'

'I think I can give you one, after all,' said Mabel; 'wait a minute.' And as she came back after a minute's absence she said, 'Here's one I had promised to Gilda Featherstone, but Gilda can wait and you can't. I'll give you an envelope to put them all in, and then we will talk. Tell me first how long you are going to be away.'

'No longer than I can help,' said Vincent, 'but it depends on so many things.'

'But you will write to us, won't you?'

'Will you answer if I do?'

'Of course,' said Mabel. 'Don't you remember when I was a little girl, and used to write to you at school, and at Trinity too? I was always a better correspondent than you were, Vincent.'

Just then Dolly came, holding a cage of lovebirds. 'Champion said you were here,' she began. 'Vincent, wait till I put Jachin and Boaz down. Now you can kiss me. I knew you wouldn't go away without saying goodbye to me. You haven't seen my birds, have you? Papa gave them to me. They're such chilly birds, I've brought them in here to get warm.'

'They're very much alike,' said Vincent, looking into the cage, upon which each bird instantly tried to hide its head in the sand underneath the other.

'They're exactly the same,' said Dolly, 'so I never know which is Jachin and which is Boaz; but they don't know their own names, and if they did they wouldn't answer to them, so it doesn't matter so very much after all, *does it?*'

As it never occurred to Dolly that anybody could have the bad taste to prefer any one else's conversation to her own, she took entire possession of Vincent, throwing herself into the couch nearest to him, and pouring out her views on lovebirds generally to his absent ear.

'They don't know me yet,' she concluded, 'but then I've only had them six months. Do you know, Harold Caffyn says they're little humbugs, and kiss one another only when people look at them. I *have* caught them fighting dreadfully myself. I don't think lovebirds ought to fight. Do you? Oh, and Harold says that when one dies I ought to time the other and see how long it takes him to pine away; but Harold is always saying horrid things like that.'

'Dolly dear,' cried the governess from the inner room, 'will you run and ask Colin if he has taken away the metronome to the schoolroom?'

Dolly danced out to hunt for that prosaic instrument in a desultory way, and then forget it in some dispute with Colin, who generally welcomed any distraction whilst preparing his school-work—a result which Fräulein Mozer probably took into account, particularly as she had the metronome by her side at the time. 'Poor Mr. Vincent!' she thought; 'he has not come to talk with Dolly of lovebirds.'

'You will be sure to write and tell us all about yourself,' said Mabel. 'What do you mean to do out there, Vincent?'

'Turn coffee-planter, perhaps,' he said gloomily.

'Oh, Vincent!' she said reproachfully, 'you used to be so ambitious. Don't you remember how we settled once that you were going to be famous? You can't be very famous by coffee-planting, can you?'

'If I do that, it is only because I see nothing else to do. But I am ambitious still, Mabel. I shall not be content with that, if a certain venture of mine is successful enough to give me hopes of anything better. But it's a very big "if" at present.'

'What is the venture?' said Mabel. 'Tell me, Vincent; you used to tell me everything once.'

Vincent had very few traces of his tropical extraction in his nature, and his caution and reserve would have made him disposed to wait at least until his book were safe in the haven of printer's ink before confessing that he was an author.

But Mabel's appeal scattered all his prudence. He had written with Mabel as his public; with the chief hope in his mind that some day she would see his work and say that it was well done. He felt a strong impulse to confide in her now, and have the comfort of her sympathy and encouragement to carry away with him.

If he had been able to tell her then of his book, and his plans respecting it, Mabel might have looked upon him with a new interest, and much that followed in her life might have been prevented. But he hesitated for a moment, and while he hesitated a second interruption took place. The opportunity was gone, and, like most opportunities in conversation, once missed was gone for ever. The irrepressible Dolly was the innocent instrument: she came in with a big portfolio of black and white papers, which she put down on a chair. 'I can't find the metronome anywhere, Fräulein,' she said. 'I've been talking to Colin; he wants you to come and say goodbye before you go, Vincent. Colin says he nearly got "swished" to-day, only his master begged him off because he'd done nothing at all really. Wasn't it nice of him? Ask him to tell you about it. Oh, and, Vincent, I want your head for my album. May I cut it out?'

'I want it myself, Dolly, please,' said Vincent; 'I don't think I can do without it just yet.'

'I don't mean your real head,' said Dolly, 'I believe you know that—it's only the outline I want!'

'It isn't a very dreadful operation, Vincent,' said Mabel. 'Dolly has been victimising all her friends lately, but she doesn't hurt them.'

'Very well, Dolly, I consent,' said Vincent; 'only be gentle with me.'

'Sit down here on this chair against the wall,' said Dolly, imperiously. 'Mabel, please take the shade off the lamp and put it over here.' She armed herself with a pencil and a large sheet of white paper as she spoke. 'Now, Vincent, put yourself so that your shadow comes just here, and keep perfectly

still. Don't move or talk or anything, or your profile will be spoilt!

'I feel very nervous, Dolly,' said Vincent, sitting down obediently.

'What a coward you must be! Why, one of the boys at Colin's school said he rather liked it. Will you hold his head



steady, Mabel, please?—no, you hold the paper up while I trace.'

Vincent sat still while Mabel leaned over the back of his chair, with one hand lightly touching his shoulder, while her soft hair swept across his cheek now and then. Long after—as long as he lived, in fact—he remembered those moments with a thrill.

'Now I have done, Vincent,' cried Dolly, triumphantly, after

some laborious tracing on the paper. 'You haven't got *much* of a profile, but it will be exactly like you when I've cut it out. There!' she said, as she held up a life-size head cut out in curling black paper; 'don't you think it's like you, yourself?'

'I don't know,' said Vincent, inspecting it rather dubiously, 'but I must say I hope it isn't.'

'I'll give you a copy to take away with you,' said Dolly, generously, as she cut out another black head with her deft little hands. 'There, that's for you, Vincent—you won't give it away, *will* you?'

'Shall I promise to wear it always next to my heart, Dolly?'

Dolly considered this question. 'I think you'd better not,' she said at last: 'it would keep you warm certainly, but I'm afraid the black comes off—you must have it mounted on cardboard and framed, you know.'

At this point Mrs. Langton came rustling down, and Vincent rose to meet her, with a desperate hope that he would be asked to spend the whole of his last evening with them—a hope that was doomed to disappointment.

'My dear Vincent,' she said, holding out both her hands, 'so you've come after all. Really, I was quite afraid you'd forgotten us. Why didn't somebody tell me Vincent was here, Mabel? I would have hurried over my dressing to come down. It's so very provoking, Vincent, but I have to say goodbye in a hurry. My husband and I are going out to dinner, and he wouldn't come home to change, so he will dress at his chambers, and I have to go up and fetch him. And it's so late, and they dine so ridiculously early where we're going, and he's sure to keep me waiting such a time, I mustn't lose another minute. Will you see me to the carriage, Vincent? Thanks. Has Marshall put the footwarmer in, and is the drugget down? Then we'll go, please; and I wish you every success in—over there, you know, and you must be careful of yourself, and bring home a nice wife.—Lincoln's Inn, tell him, please.—Goodbye, Vincent, goodbye!'

And she smiled affectionately and waved her long-gloved hand behind the window as the carriage rolled off, and all the time he knew that it would not distress her if she never saw him again.

He went slowly back to the warm drawing-room, with its delicate perfume of violets. He had no excuse for lingering there any

longer—he must say his last words to Mabel and go. But before he could make up his mind to this another visitor was announced, who must have come up almost as Mrs. Langton had driven off.

‘Mr. Caffyn,’ said Champion, imposingly, who had a graceful way of handing dishes and a dignified deference in his bow which in his own opinion excused certain attacks of solemn speechlessness and eccentricity of gait that occasionally overcame him.

A tall, graceful young man came in, with an air of calm and ease that was in the slightest degree exaggerated. He had short light hair, well-shaped eyes, which were keen and rather cold, and a firm, thin-lipped mouth; his voice, which he had under perfect control, was clear and pleasant.

‘Do you mean this for an afternoon call, Harold?’ asked Mabel, who did not seem altogether pleased at his arrival.

‘Yes, we’re not at home now, are we, Mabel?’ put in audacious Dolly.

‘I was kept rather late at rehearsals, and I had to dine afterwards,’ explained Caffyn; ‘but I shouldn’t have come in if I had not had a commission to perform. When I have done it you can send me away.’

Harold Caffyn was a relation of Mrs. Langton’s. His father was high up in the consular service abroad, and he himself had lately gone on the stage, finding it more attractive than the Foreign Office, for which he had been originally intended. He had had no reason as yet to regret his apostasy, for he had obtained almost at once an engagement in a leading West-end theatre, while his social prospects had not been materially affected by the changes; partly because the world has become more liberal of late in these matters, and partly because he had contrived to gain a tolerably secure position in it already, by the help of a pleasant manner and the musical and dramatic accomplishments which had led him to adopt the stage as his profession.

Like Holroyd, he had known Mabel from a child, and as she grew up had felt her attraction too much for his peace of mind. His one misgiving in going on the stage had been lest it should lessen his chance of finding favour with her.

This fear proved groundless: Mabel had not altered to him in the least. But his successes as an amateur had not followed him to the public stage; he had not as yet been entrusted with

any but very minor rôles, and was already disenchanted enough with his profession to be willing to give it up on very moderate provocation.

'Why, Holroyd, I didn't see you over there. How are you?' he said cordially, though his secret feelings were anything but cordial, for he had long seen reason to consider Vincent as a possible rival.

'Vincent has come to say goodbye,' explained Dolly. 'He's going to India to-morrow.'

'Goodbye!' cried Caffyn, his face clearing: 'that's rather sudden, isn't it, Holroyd? Well, I'm very glad I am able to say goodbye too' (as there is no doubt Caffyn was). 'You never told me you were off so soon.'

Holroyd had known Caffyn for several years: they had frequently met in that house, and, though there was little in common between them, their relations had always been friendly.

'It was rather sudden,' Holroyd said, 'and we haven't met lately.'

'And you're off to-morrow, eh? I'm sorry. We might have managed a parting dinner before you went—it must be kept till you come back.'

'What was the commission, Harold?' asked Mabel.

'Oh, ah! I met my uncle to-day, and he told me to find out if you would be able to run down to Chigbourne one Saturday till Monday soon. I suppose you won't. He's a dear old boy, but he's rather a dull old pump to stay two whole days with.'

'You forget he's Dolly's godfather,' said Mabel.

'And he's my uncle,' said Caffyn; 'but he's not a bit the livelier for that, you know. You're asked too, Juggins.' (Juggins was a name he had for Dolly, whom he found pleasure in teasing, and who was not deeply attached to him.)

'Would you like to go, Dolly, if mamma says yes?' asked Mabel.

'Is Harold going?' said Dolly.

'Harold does not happen to be asked, my Juggins,' said that gentleman, blandly.

'Then we'll go, Mabel, and I shall take Frisk, because Uncle Antony hasn't seen him for a long time.'

Holroyd saw no use in staying longer. He went into the school-room to see Colin, who was as sorry to say goodbye as the pile of

school-books in front of him allowed, and then he returned to take leave of the others. The governess read in his face that her well-meant services had been of no avail, and sighed compassionately as she shook hands. Dolly nestled against him and cried a little, and the cool Harold felt so strongly that he could afford to be generous now, that he was genial and almost affectionate in his good wishes.

His face clouded, however, when Mabel said, 'Don't ring, Ottilia. I will go to the door with Vincent—it's the last time.' 'I wonder if she cares about the fellow!' he thought uneasily.

'You won't forget to write to us as soon as you can, Vincent?' said Mabel, as they stood in the hall together. 'We shall be thinking of you so often, and wondering what you are doing, and how you are.'

The hall of a London house is perhaps hardly the place for love-passages—there is something fatally ludicrous about a declaration amongst the hats and umbrellas. In spite of a consciousness of this, however, Vincent felt a passionate impulse even then, at that eleventh hour, to tell Mabel something of what was in his heart.

But he kept silence: a surer instinct warned him that he had delayed too long to have any chance of success then. It was the fact that Mabel had no suspicion of the real nature of his feelings, and he was right in concluding as he did that to avow it then would come upon her as a shock for which she was unprepared.

Fräulein Mozer's inclination to a sentimental view of life, and Caffyn's tendency to see a rival in every one, had quickened their insight respectively; but Mabel herself, though girls are seldom the last to discover such symptoms, had never thought of Vincent as a possible lover, for which his own undemonstrative manner and procrastination were chiefly to blame.

He had shrunk from betraying his feelings before. 'She can never care for me,' he had thought; 'I have done nothing to deserve her—I am nobody,' and this had urged him on to do something which might qualify him in his own eyes, until which he had steadily kept his own counsel and seen her as seldom as possible.

Then he had written his book; and though he was not such a fool as to imagine that any woman's heart could be approached

through print alone, he could not help feeling on revising his work that he had done that which, if successful, would remove something of his own unworthiness, and might give him a new recommendation to a girl of Mabel's literary tastes.

But then his father's summons to Ceylon had come—he was compelled to obey, and now he had to tear himself away with his secret still untold and trust to time and absence (who are remarkably overrated as advocates by the way) to plead for him.

He felt the full bitterness of this as he held both her hands and looked down on her fair face with the sweet eyes that shone with a sister's—but only a sister's—affection. 'She would have loved me in time,' he thought; 'but the time may never come now.'

He did not trust himself to say much: he might have asked and obtained a kiss, as an almost brother who was going far away, but to him that would have been the hollowest mockery.

Suppressed emotion made him abrupt and almost cold, he let her hands drop suddenly, and with nothing more than a broken 'God bless you, Mabel, goodbye, dear, goodbye!' he left the house hurriedly, and the moment after he was alone on the hill with his heartache.

'So he's gone!' remarked Caffyn, as she re-entered the drawing-room, after lingering a few moments in the empty hall. 'What a dear, dull old plodder it is, isn't it? He'll do much better at planting coffee than he ever did at law—at least, it's to be hoped so!'

'You are very fond of calling other people dull, Harold,' said Mabel, with a displeased contraction of her eyebrows. 'Vincent is not in the least dull: you only speak of him like that because you don't understand him.'

'I didn't say it disparagingly,' said Caffyn. 'I rather admire dulness; it's so restful. But as you say, Mabel, I dare say I don't understand him: he really doesn't give a fellow a fair chance. As far as I know him, I *do* like him uncommonly; but, at the same time, I must confess he has always given me the impression of being, don't you know, just a trifle heavy. But very likely I'm wrong.'

'Very likely indeed,' said Mabel, closing the subject. But Caffyn had not spoken undesignedly, and had risked offending her for the moment for the sake of producing the effect he

wanted; and he was not altogether unsuccessful. 'Was Harold right?' she thought later. 'Vincent is very quiet, but I always thought there was power of some sort behind; and yet—would it not have shown itself before now? But if poor Vincent is only dull, it will make no difference to me; I shall like him just as much.'

But, for all that, the suggestion very effectually prevented all danger of Vincent's becoming idealised by distance into something



more interesting than a brother—which was, indeed, the reason why Caffyn made it.

Vincent himself, meanwhile, unaware—as all of us would pray to be kept unaware—of the portrait of himself, by a friend, which was being exhibited to the girl he loved, was walking down Ladbrooke Hill to spend the remainder of his last evening in England in loneliness at his rooms; for he had no heart for anything else.

It was dark by that time. Above him was a clear, steel-blue sky; in front, across the hollow, rose Campden Hill, a dim, dark mass, twinkling with lights. By the square at his side a German band was playing the garden music from 'Faust,' with no more regard for expression and tunefulness than a German band is ever

capable of; but distance softened the harshness and imperfection of their rendering, and Siebel's air seemed to Vincent the expression of his own passionate, unrequited devotion.

'I would do anything for her,' he said, half aloud, 'and yet I dared not tell her then. . . . But if I ever come back to her again—before it is too late—she shall know all she is and always will be to me. I will wait and hope for that.'

(To be continued.)

THE LAY FIGURE.



PON one of my trips to Paris — and I am rather partial to running over there occasionally, as refreshing to both my eye and hand (for I am an artist, a painter of 'genre' pictures, my subjects generally in fashionable life) — upon one of these excursions I chanced to be in the neighbourhood of Mont St. Geneviève, in a long narrow lane going down-hill and occupied on both sides of the way by *bric-à-brac*

shops and second-hand furniture dealers.

There were many articles I should have been glad to possess, such as carved cabinets and other furniture of the fifteenth century which had found their way to these curiosity-mongers from many old houses and châteaux ransacked by the Prussians; but, even could I have given the prices demanded for them, I should have found their weight incommodious and expensive for transit to England. All at once my glance chanced to fall on a lay figure exposed for sale—a very beautiful lay figure too, a female. It arrested me on the spot. The master and mistress of the shop immediately advanced, inviting me to enter and inspect it, assuring me it was in perfect condition, and if I would take it

I should have it a bargain. 'Cent vingt francs!' Five pounds! It was wonderful, a bargain indeed, if unbroken. Why, I had paid five-and-twenty pounds for mine at home, in every respect inferior to this. So I entered the shop and made a minute examination. The lay figure was tied up to the side wall with a strong cord, and it took some little time to unfasten it. The formation was perfect, quite a work of art, for it was a model of a beautiful woman of exquisite proportions cased in a fine elastic silk skin. All the joints worked well in their sockets, as easily as if recently oiled. The head turned gracefully on its slight neck, and its long soft black hair was worked into the scalp as only French hands could work it. The face was oval, of a fine enamelled surface, painted a pale creamy tint; the eyes were brown and different from any I had ever seen in lay figures, of glass like a doll's.

Here was a chance, a bargain indeed! I pulled out my purse to examine its contents. Alas! I found it seven francs deficient. I counted it again, and felt in my pockets, the dealer watching me. 'N'importe,' said the man, smiling with great *bonhomie*. 'Monsieur is artiste-peintre; cela suffit; I have a great respect for his profession: he shall have it for his money.' Wonderful! A Frenchman to be so liberal! Generally I found them rather difficult to treat with, but here was an exception. Now another obstacle presented itself. If I gave him the whole contents of my purse, how could I pay the *fiacre* in which I proposed to carry home my purchase? I demurred again. My generous dealer held up both his hands. 'Pardon, was it not the duty of the seller to convey his goods to the purchaser? If monsieur would wait two seconds, the boy Henri should wheel it on a truck to monsieur's hôtel.' Here, then, we came to a settlement at last, and I emptied the contents of my purse into his hand, at which proceeding he smiled and made me a polite bow. The lay figure wore a loose grey linen wrapper; it was now carefully packed up in green baize and placed upon the truck wheeled by Henri, a lad of about fifteen. The dealer took off his cap and bowed to me as we parted; madame made me a French bend, with a sweet 'Adieu, monsieur.' Alas for the deceitfulness of Parisians! Happening to glance in a looking-glass at the door, I saw reflected therein the dealer winking his eye and madame laughing derisively. Could it possibly be at *me*? Was I cheated? No. I had minutely examined my purchase; I supposed they were only indulging in a little spleen at 'perfidie Albion.'

I lodged in the Rue de la Paix, so that it was rather a long distance for Henri to wheel the truck, I walking on the footpath, he beside me on the *pavé*; and all went well until we reached the Rue de Rivoli, when, without any previous notice, off rolled the lay figure at the feet of two Sisters of St. Joseph who were just crossing the road. Of course this caused an obstruction: carriages had to draw up, *sergents de ville* pounced down upon us, and, amid rather strong language and some laughter, the figure was readjusted and securely tied this time. 'Monsieur is taking home his bride!' cried a soldier.

On arriving at the door of my hôtel the old concierge appeared horror-stricken: she fancied there had been an accident. She was not much reassured on seeing my purchase unrolled—it was so exactly like a woman. It was unpacked in the yard, as the boy had to take back the baize with him. I ran up to my room to find him a few sous, and for these he was so grateful that he came up to me whispering confidentially, 'Monsieur, excusez—but—keep your studio door locked at night!' and ran away. No fear of having it stolen in London, thought I, but in Paris no doubt it might happen.

I then proceeded to carry my purchase up three flights of stairs to my rooms, taking it in my arms as I should have done a living person. It was heavy, of course, but so beautiful in its mechanism that it bent easily into a sitting position. I had placed its arms over my shoulders: they felt almost as soft as a woman's; in my imagination they really appeared to press me, as if about to meet around my neck—an absurd fancy, of course. I put it down on the landing-place while I took the key from the lock on opening the door. Now, my impression was that I had placed the figure on its side, and I must confess I felt a little surprised to find it turned over, lying on its back. 'If it should be badly balanced and apt to roll over,' I thought, 'it will not prove such a bargain as I expected.' In a day or two I was going home, and, as November days were short, there was little time to lose; therefore I went out again immediately to buy a large packing-case for my purchase. An oblong-shaped box would never do, being too suggestive of a coffin, and likely to cause a fuss at the railway station. I was fortunate enough to find a square one ready labelled 'Objets d'Art.' As the figure was so flexible, it could be easily doubled in half, and so travel without exciting remark.

It was evening when I returned to my rooms. I had dined, and

found the wine unusually good ; but I deny having taken too much. As I ascended the stairs I was startled by hearing a smothered laugh—a peculiar laugh, a very unnatural and unpleasant one. I paused to listen. The rooms immediately under mine were occupied by a comtesse, a *dévoté* ; she had priests and nuns everlastingly coming to see her—a great amount of praying and



not much laughter, I should imagine. All remaining quiet, I ascended the next flight, entered the room, and lighted the bougies. The lay figure sat exactly the same as I had left it ; but let me advise people never to buy one with glass eyes ; it really was a most unpleasant sensation to see them shining and glittering in that large half-illuminated room : they appeared to be following all

my movements, and I was silly enough to dislike them so much as to throw the table-cover over the head and so shut them out. The following morning the packing-case arrived, the carpenter staying to assist me in placing the figure within it and to nail down the lid. The silly fellow appeared quite frightened, declaring it seemed half alive; but ignorant people are so superstitious. Another four-and-twenty hours saw me on the Chemin de Fer du Nord, homeward bound, my packing-case in the luggage van. The longest halt was at Amiens, where I alighted for a cup of coffee. Judge of my astonishment, on returning to the train, to find guards, porters, and soldiers hauling the contents of the luggage van out upon the platform—boxes, trunks, portmanteaux, pell-mell, one thing upon another—all the assistants talking at once, all in a state of excitement! What was the matter? Was there an accident? I got no answer. After completely emptying the van they examined its interior very carefully; then, amidst much swearing, they pitched everything back again in still greater haste, for fear of being behind time. I remember they were particularly abusive to the man who rode in the luggage department, who looked as white as a sheet.

‘What’s wrong with that man?’ I asked; ‘is he ill?’

‘No, monsieur,’ answered the guard; ‘he is only a fool. He declares that all the way from Paris there has been a groaning and knocking as if somebody were hidden behind or *in* one of the boxes. Fool!’ Here he slammed to the carriage door, and off we went at great speed to make up for the minute or two that had been lost.

Arriving at Boulogne, I and my luggage went on board the steamer at once; and a very bad, rough passage it was. Of course one does not expect the sea to be like a mill-pond in the month of November. On this occasion it was of leaden-coloured hue, with larger waves than I had ever seen in the Channel, and we made very little progress, one or the other of the paddles being always out of the water. ‘Never see’d anything like it,’ said the steward, ‘except when we’ve got a dead body on board!’ At last we reached Dover, and I do not think I ever felt so ill in my life—so giddy and faint that I determined to stay the night instead of proceeding to London.

The night was so cold, wet, and stormy, that I entered the first haven of rest, the ‘Lord Warden,’ or I should have proceeded to an hotel more in accordance with my means. My luggage was

placed in a lobby at a side door which opened to a yard beside the railway platform, in readiness for my departure the next morning, and I went to bed and soon fell asleep. I think I must have slept for about four hours, when I was aroused by the sound of many feet running under my window. At first I thought little of it, but presently the occupier of a room adjoining mine threw up his window, and called out to those below, asking what was the matter.

‘We think there’s a haccident on the line, sir,’ was the answer. Imitating my neighbour’s example, I also raised my sash and took a survey of the scene underneath, where much confusion prevailed. It was the yard close to the station, for through an archway I saw the line, where porters and others appeared very busy among the empty carriages with lanterns; men were hurrying to and fro, talking excitedly.

‘What is it?’ I called out in my turn.

‘When the last train come in, sir, we’re feared it run over somebody; the crying and groaning is hawful now and then—There: don’t you hear un?’ replied a servant of the hotel. I listened, the wind every minute blowing in great gusts from the sea. But there were also short spasmodic cries, at no very great distance, as if from some one in pain.

‘Here comes the station master!’ said the man, as that official, who had been knocked up from his sleep, made his appearance.

‘Who is hurt? Where—what is it?’ cried he, all on the alert.

‘We can’t make out, sir,’ was the reply. ‘After the last train come in we heard smothered cries like, and we’ve all been looking on the line with lights, but can’t see nothing.’

‘Just listen, sir,’ exclaimed another.

‘Poor creature—somebody’s got jammed,’ said the station master as a long wail was presently heard. ‘Here—bear a hand—run the carriages down the metals—get the ambulance ready close by—give me a lantern—come with me!’ and the good man sprang off the platform on to the line with alacrity. What followed I could not make out, for everybody disappeared; my neighbour grumbled about false alarms and being disturbed, closed his window with a bang, and went to bed again, I presume, as I soon after heard him snoring.

In about half an hour the domestics from the hotel re-entered the yard, and I called out, asking if they had found the poor creature.

'We've not found nobody nor nothing,' answered a man. 'Blest if any one knows who's hurt!'

'The crying an' groaning's stopped now, sir,' said another. 'You see the night-time is agin' us: we shall find out something dreadful at daybreak, depend on that.'

But nothing was found up to the time I left Dover, or afterwards either, so far as I heard, and I looked in the papers diligently to see if any mention of it were made.

The following morning there was much talk in the coffee room about the disturbance of the previous night; all those sleeping on my side of the house had heard it.

'I think some one was playing a trick,' said a waiter.

'If a hoax, who was the hoaxter?' I asked.

'Well, sir, just as I come in from the side door to the lobby where that there luggage of this here gent's is stowed—it was past two o'clock in the morning then—I heard a smothered laugh like, as if some one was a-hiding behind the boxes and enjoying of the fun all to theirselves. I didn't see nobody; I was too tired to look, I can tell you; but take my word for it it was a hoax.'

I reside with my mother in a villa at Kensington, and have a studio built out into the garden, very convenient for the entrance of frame-makers and models and for the egress of my pictures, as it has a door opening on to the road, quite private. At this door I was set down, my lay figure having come in its box on the top of the cab. How I longed to show it off to my brother artists!

'Whatever have you got in that great packing-case, George?' asked my mother. But I would not satisfy her, as I wished to give her a surprise.

What with relating Parisian news to her, and in return hearing the events that had happened in my absence, it was dark when we left the dining-room.

'And now, George, I want to see your purchase,' said my mother.

I told Jane to bring a hammer and chisel; then entering my studio, I turned up the gas. After some little labour I got the lid off the case and lifted out the lay figure.

'Whatever is it?' exclaimed my mother, aghast.

'Ah—ah—a—!' screamed Jane.

'Don't be a fool!' I cried. 'What are you screaming at?'

'Ah! ah—wha—!' screamed Jane again, backing up to the wall and standing with horrified, distended eyeballs fixed on the figure. 'It's a woman, and she's alive! Look at her eyes!'

‘You great silly!’ I said angrily. ‘Don’t you see it’s a lay figure, like my old one in the corner there? You were never frightened at that.’

‘Oh, the old one is an innocent thing to what this is, sir. I’m sure she’s alive.’

‘It’s got glass eyes, like a doll, mother,’ I said, seeing that even she was looking at it askance. ‘Very unnecessary to put them, but it is a French freak, I suppose. Isn’t it a beauty?’ and to show off my purchase I screwed the head round on the neck.

‘Ah—ah—a—!’ screamed Jane again. ‘She’s a-frowning—frowning awful at you, sir!’

‘Jane,’ said I sternly, ‘leave the room this instant.’

‘What a foolish young woman she is, to be sure!’ I observed as she scudded away.

‘Well, to say the truth, George,’ replied my mother, putting on her glasses and peering into my lay figure’s cream-coloured face, ‘I do not like the look of it myself. It’s too beautifully made, too natural and like a real woman; unnecessarily so, I should say. Let us go away and leave it. See how the eyes seem staring at your old figure there in the corner.’

‘I hope they won’t fight,’ I said in joke as we left the room, and I locked the studio door.

In the middle of the night we were aroused by the noise of something falling down in the painting-room. My mother got up and came to my chamber all of a tremble. ‘My dear,’ she said, ‘I am afraid your new figure has fallen down. I do not think it can be housebreakers.’

‘All is quiet now, mother,’ I replied, listening. ‘I’m afraid that lay figure is not well balanced; it turned over once before. However, I shan’t get up in the cold unless I hear more noises. We shall see what it is in the morning.’

On entering the studio next day, there sat the figure as I had left it—but such a strange thing! my old battered English figure, which I had used for these twelve years past, lay overturned on the floor, stand and all! It really seemed as if the words I had spoken in jest were verified, and that the two figures *had* quarrelled.

My artist friends were all delighted with my purchase, and without exception wanted to borrow it. The joints were twisted and turned about in every conceivable manner. The mechanism and flexibility were pronounced unsurpassable in their workmanship. I promised to lend it to each by turn, and commenced with

it myself, attiring it in a black velvet dress and train trimmed with ermine, for a picture I was painting of Mary, Queen of Scots.

I do not think I ever executed drapery so well in my life as I did when painting from that figure; the folds fell and clung so beautifully around its graceful form. But neither my mother nor Jane could get over their great dislike to it; indeed, Jane declined to enter the studio at all, and, if obliged to bring me a letter, poked the tray in at the door, with her eyes fixed on the lay figure as if expecting it to pounce upon her. As she was a most excellent servant in other respects, and had been with us some time, we were obliged to humour her whims; so of course my studio was not too tidy.

My mother about this time declared she heard footsteps walking about the studio in the small hours of the morning. As for me, I generally slept too soundly to hear anything, unless it were unusually startling.

Now it is a remarkable fact that, though I painted hour after hour, and day after day, from that lay figure, I never could see anything repulsive about it, as others did. My frame-maker, for instance—a worthy, respectable tradesman—was one of those who could not look at it. A young curate occasionally called upon me for local subscriptions; *he* named it ‘the witch of Endor.’ Dr. Hollis, who attended my mother for her neuralgia, examining it, said its anatomy was perfect; and his son, Jack Hollis, declared he should like to dissect it.

In the meantime I had sold my old lay figure to an artist residing at Liverpool, and did not allow myself to become prejudiced, by people who knew nothing about art, against my new one. Having finished the black velvet dress, I removed the figure to a corner of my studio.

Miss Lucy Hollis, daughter of the above-mentioned medical gentleman, had kindly given me sittings for the beautiful and unfortunate queen. She was a lovely, brilliant brunette, and a charming girl as well. When I invited her to sit for my picture, I was only very slightly acquainted with her, but after about seven sittings, of two hours each in duration, we began to feel as if we had known each other intimately all our lives. In fact, it led to her ultimately accepting an artist husband. But that was later on, and has nothing to do with the history of my Parisian lay figure. On one occasion when Lucy was giving me a sitting, I was engaged in taking the measurement of her pretty hand; I was scarcely aware

of it, but perhaps I might have held it a trifle longer than was needful, when we were all startled by a deep, long-drawn sigh. 'Good gracious!' cried Lucy, starting up, 'whatever was that?'

'Was it not you, dear?' said my mother, who was seated near the fire knitting, looking up in surprise.

No, it was neither of us. I looked under the couches and other furniture, thinking that perhaps an animal might be asleep beneath one of them. No, there was nothing.

'How I do hate that horrid lay figure!' said my mother, shaking her knitting-needles at it.

Now comes a very strange part of my story. Early the next morning, as I was dressing preparatory to going down to breakfast, Jane came to my door, asking me to step into my mother's room, who appeared very ill.

'My dear mother,' I cried, 'what is the matter?' as I hurried in to her, to find her still in bed, looking very pale, faint, and ill.

'Shut the door, dear, and come here.' I obeyed her. 'My dearest George,' she said, taking my hand, 'I am sure that you love me, and that there are few things you would refuse me, for I have tried to be a tender parent to you, my dear boy.'

'That is true,' said I, stooping to kiss her cold brow and remembering her self-denial in my early life, when I would be an artist, and how she, a widow, had so economised that my masters should be of the best. 'That is true, dearest mother; there are few things in which I could say you nay.'

'I am about to make a serious request; it will entail a sacrifice on your part. I want you to get rid of that dreadful lay figure.'

'Get rid of the lay figure? To be sure, easily enough. But why on earth should I get rid of it?' I exclaimed.

'Last night,' continued my mother solemnly, 'I awoke about three o'clock, I should imagine. My night light was burning as usual on the toilet table, when I saw my door, which you know I always leave ajar, slowly open and your lay figure enter. It advanced and stood at the side of the bed, looking at me in silence; but oh, George, the dreadful glitter of its eyes! They seemed to have a red flame behind them, and their expression was fiendish—fiendish! I was so overcome that I fainted. Destroy it, George, destroy it. Mark my words: it is a demon!' My mother lay down again, quite overcome and trembling violently. She alarmed me, for ordinarily she was a person of good sense and not given to nervousness. That she had been much

frightened was plain ; but might she not have dreamt it ? I wiped her damp forehead with my handkerchief.

‘Dear boy,’ she continued, holding my hand, ‘do you remember me shaking my knitting-needles at it yesterday and calling it “a horrid thing” ? Oh ! I cannot rest with it in the house ! George, did you lock your studio door last night ?’

I tried to remember, but could not recall whether I had done so or not—my head, you see, was occupied at that time by thinking of Lucy Hollis—so I ran downstairs to see. No. Strange to say, I had NOT locked my studio door ; in fact, it was partly open ! I hurried into the room, but there was my lay figure in the corner, just as it was yesterday. I examined the black velvet drapery, which I had carefully pinned and arranged to paint from ; it appeared to be undisturbed. My mother must have been dreaming. Still I could not retain the figure if it worried her, that was clear. It was vexatious, however, to part with such an acquisition, and be left without any figure at all for my use ; it had been foolish of me to sell my old one ; it was inconvenient and unpleasant. Yes, the figure must be sent out of the house, as it preyed on my mother’s nerves. But I need not sell it at present ; I would lend it about to my artist friends, who had been so anxious to borrow it. So I wrote a line telling O’Kelly that I would lend it to him first, if he would come and fetch it. O’Kelly was of course an Irishman : he had studied beside me at the Academy, and became a friend, always good-natured and pleasant, but rather too lively, being partial to playing silly practical jokes. He had private property, and took his profession easily, residing in handsome apartments in Harley Street, Cavendish Square. I had no doubt that if I ultimately made up my mind to sell my lay figure I should find a purchaser in him. He came over to Kensington directly he received my note, only too glad to get the loan of it. ‘You may as well leave on the black velvet dress, old fellow. I’m painting the last days of Sir Thomas More, and it will do for Margaret Roper.’

‘Very well,’ I said ; ‘only please to remember I’ve hired that dress of Levi Zerubbabel, and left a ten-pounds deposit on it.’

‘All right,’ said O’Kelly. We then rolled the figure up in a damask curtain, and he drove away with it in a four-wheeler with great glee.

My poor mother watched the departure from her bedroom window ; she thanked me most affectionately for acceding to her

request. She had certainly had a great shake in some way or other, though I could not reconcile her story with common sense. At any rate from that moment she began to get better, and Jane was as brisk as a bee, even asking my permission to give the studio a good cleaning, which in her reluctance to enter it had not received for some time. Everybody was satisfied except myself, who was left without anything to pose my drapery upon. I even wished for my old lay figure back again, clumsy though it was. Thereby hangs a moral: 'Do not part with a tried friend who has grown old and shabby for an unknown showy one.'

In the course of a few days I received a note from O'Kelly. He was painting in a very satisfactory manner, he said, from 'Madame,' as he called her; but his postscript rather puzzled me; it ran thus: 'Do you think that lay figure is all right?'

What on earth did he mean? It was neither broken nor out of condition. Could it be that there really was something queer about it? My curiosity did not allow me to rest, so I drove over to Harley Street to see about it that same evening. My friend was at home, and smoking his everlasting meerschaum beside a splendid fire in the spacious drawing-room, which he made his painting-room. The lay figure, posed in a graceful attitude, stood in the centre of the apartment. O'Kelly was delighted to see me, bringing out his decanters with Irish hospitality.

'Your postscript about that figure brings me here, O'Kelly,' said I.

'Did it surprise you, old boy? I'm glad you've come any way; and Madame's pleased herself, bedad! I believe she's smiling at ye!' pointing to the figure with his pipe.

'Nonsense, O'Kelly!' I said, frowning. 'I will not listen to any chaff; I am in earnest. What did you mean in your postscript? Is the figure broken?'

For reply O'Kelly got up, crossed the spacious room stealthily, opened the door noiselessly, and peeped out. Seeing the coast was clear, he returned in the same mysterious manner to his seat.

'Well, George, this is just the gist of the matter. My landlady, Mrs. Munro, is a Scotchwoman; to look at, she seems a plain, matter-of-fact body enough, but in reality she is as superstitious as the old jintleman himself. She is, sure! Unfortunately she saw me bring Madame home. She declared it was a lady, and alive; of course I convinced her to the contrary, but she's never let me have a moment's peace since. What do you think? She will have

it'—whispering—'that Madame walks about the house of a night!'

I cannot express how astonished I felt at having my mother's statement thus corroborated.

'Yes,' continued O'Kelly, 'she says she hears Madame walking about this room, and come upstairs in the small hours of the mornings, and then descend again.' Once she fancied in her sleep



she saw her come into her room and stand at the foot of the bed. Twice she has opened her door, thinking to catch the figure as it passed. She did not see anything, but heard the footsteps going downstairs, and a horrid, wicked, smothered laugh, as if some one were enjoying her discomfiture. She then hears this drawing-room door close. Strange, isn't it?'

'Why do you not lock the drawing-room door of a night?' I asked, remembering a similar laugh I had myself heard at the hôtel in the Rue de la Paix.

'There's niver a key,' replied O'Kelly. 'Bless ye! we're like a family party in this house; there's no occasion to lock up. What I fear is that Mrs. Munro will give me notice to quit unless I give up Madame there. I'm so comfortable here that I don't want to leave, and that's a fact.' And he took a long, melancholy pull at his pipe.

I was in a brown study: what could I say?

'If I were in your place, O'Kelly, I would finish off Margaret Roper's gown directly, and then let Daubrey have the figure. I promised him the loan of it after you.'

'Well, if it must be it must; but it's real sorry I am!' sighed O'Kelly.

Now Daubrey was a fashionable portrait painter, always talking of the lovely countesses and marchionesses he was 'doing.' He was a great fop, but a nice fellow on the whole, and was only too delighted to receive 'Madame,' black velvet dress and all, for he was going to 'do' a dowager. Daubrey lived in Albion Street, Hyde Park, and thither the figure was speedily transferred. Just at that time he was absent on a visit to a country house. He was an agreeable, gay little fellow, singing drawing-room comic songs very well, full of anecdote and conversation, which portrait painters often excel in. These items ensured him plenty of invitations in the winter time.

My mother and I, though living very quietly, occasionally entertained our friends at a small dinner or evening party, and always had a little dance on my birthday, the 6th of February. This year it was intended to be a very pleasant *réunion*, for sweet Lucy Hollis, with her father and brother, were to be of the guests. We had a cheerful fire in the studio; it was wretchedly cold weather, and the snow lay deep. The studio was to be the ball-room, and I decorated it tastefully with evergreens, artificial flowers, and a flag or two. I hired an Erard, and engaged a pianoforte player and a violinist to play for the dancing. It proved a very bad night: the atmosphere was raw and foggy; then it rained, converting the snow into a deep, muddy slush. This did not much signify, most of the company, with the exception of O'Kelly, residing within easy access of us. We had a delightful evening indoors; everybody came. My mother seemed

to have recovered her spirits, and was quite herself again. Refreshments had been handed round, and we were in the middle of the Lancers, the time being about half-past ten o'clock, when we heard several knocks at the side door of the studio, which, as I previously described, gave egress to the road. Thinking it was some mischievous boys, attracted by the brilliant light from the large windows, no attention was paid to it; the dancing continued. Presently the rapping recommenced, louder and more peremptorily. As I did not care to have the door unfastened and opened unnecessarily to let in the cold night air, I told Jane to go to the hall door and call out, 'Who's there?' and ask what they wanted. Jane went; but, as there was no reply, we again set the interruption down to some mischievous persons, and finished the set of Lancers.

Whether it was the comparative quiet that made the knocking seem louder, or whether it really was louder, I know not, but several violent raps were now heard on the panels, accompanied by sobs and sharp spasmodic cries. Of course we were all silenced. 'Who's there? What do you want?' I called out from my side of the door. There was no answer, only sobbing.

'Some one had better go round outside and see who is there,' said my mother. 'Doubtless it is some poor houseless creature attracted by the lights and sounds of gaiety.' But now authoritative hammering, accompanied by the loud voice of a man, was heard.

'Open the door directly: I'm a policeman.'

Of course I unbolted the door directly, and was almost knocked down by a tall female form which fell upon me, and from me to the floor with a crash. I stooped to raise what appeared to be a mass of wet black velvet. To my dismay and utter astonishment I lifted my French lay figure!

'That poor thing's been a-crying and knocking at your door ever so long. I think she's fainted at last,' said the policeman.

'It's no poor thing at all!' I replied indignantly, turning the figure over on the floor with my foot, its glass eyes wide open and glistening in the light most unpleasantly as it lay on its back. 'Somebody has been playing a senseless trick. This is a lay figure—a life-sized doll, that is, such as artists dress in drapery to paint from.'

'Don't tell me,' said the intelligent officer; 'that there's a lady.'

'Come in, then, and judge for yourself; only *do* shut the door and keep the night air out,' said I. The man then entered, and

holding his bull's-eye close to the cream-coloured face examined it, and seemed puzzled and scared.

'This is one of your jokes,' I said to O'Kelly indignantly, 'a very silly one; and let me tell you I consider it extremely bad taste as well.'

O'Kelly strenuously denied all knowledge of the affair. I did not believe him.

'This pore thing's walked,' said the policeman, who was going on with his examination. 'Look at her stockings; look at the mud over her feet, no boots on; and what draggled skirts!'

We had all assembled round the recumbent figure, some holding candles, a merry party no longer, for this unexpected adventure had caused an uncomfortable break in our amusements and raised much curiosity.

'Look here,' said the policeman, holding up the velvet train, lined with what was once white fur; 'I declare it's all bedraggled with mud and soaked with snow-water a yard deep. The pore thing's walked.'

'What an obstinate man you are, to be sure!' cried I. 'How can a wooden dummy walk?' and I began twisting the hands and feet about to prove my words.

'Well, I never could have believed anythink could have been a-manufactured so natural-like—never!' said the policeman, who looked quite bewildered. 'Any way she was a-standin' agin' the door, and I could have swore she was a-knocking and a-crying to be let in; only, you see, ladies and gents, if she's only a image she couldn't have done it; and you were making such a noise with music and dancing. I suppose I was mistaken.'

'This is a shameful practical joke, Mr. O'Kelly,' said I once more to the puzzled Irishman, who stood staring at the lay figure, from which the mud and rain still oozed off on to the floor. 'You say you did not plan it, but no doubt you can give a good guess at who did. A shameful trick, especially as you were aware that I left ten pounds with Zerrubbabel for a deposit on the velvet dress, which is quite spoilt.'

'I'll pay the ten pounds, or twenty if you like,' cried O'Kelly earnestly; 'but, on the honour of a jintleman, I've had no more to do with it than you have had yourself.'

'Now, my good man,' said I to the policeman, 'if you have quite made up your mind that this is not a human being, perhaps you will be so good as to carry it round by the garden to the

tool house by the side of the conservatory ; then go to the kitchen and have some hot toddy and something to eat.'

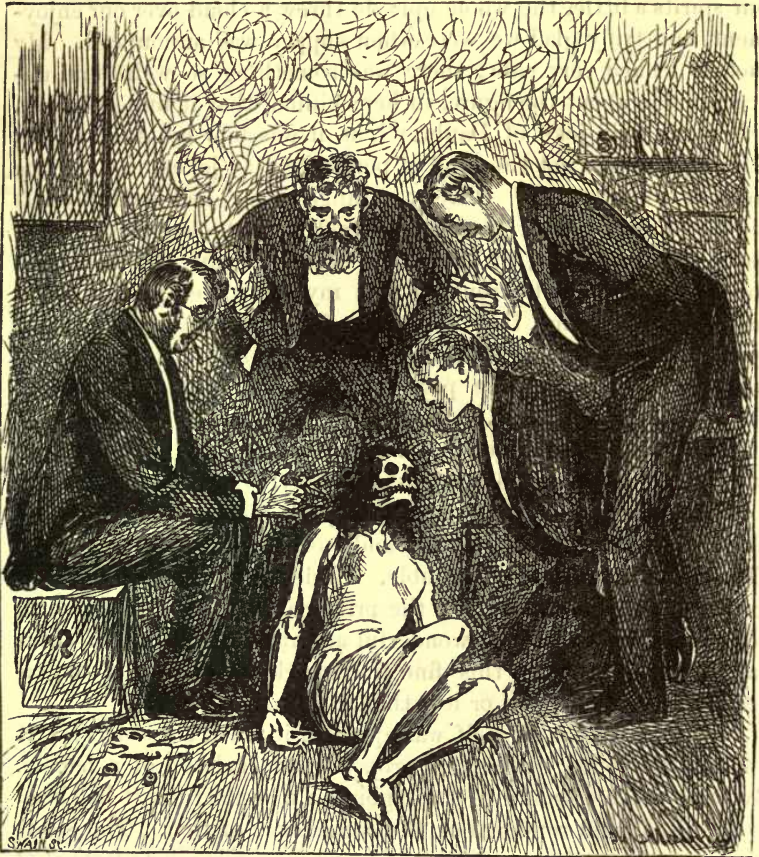
'Thank you kindly, sir,' said the officer, taking the wet lay figure in his arms. 'The cleverness and hingenueity of the present day is allowed to be supprisin', but this here figur caps Dolly!'

Though this speech of the policeman had the effect of raising our spirits a little, the whole episode threw a cloud over our enjoyment, and truly glad we were when supper was announced. My mother looked very pale ; there was something so weird and unaccountable about the figure, in her opinion, that it unnerved her. Of course this joke of Daubrey's, as it was now set down to be, although he was not the kind of person to play jokes, was the one topic of conversation. O'Kelly, strange to say, had suddenly lost all his animation and become plunged in a brown study. Our party soon broke up ; all took their departure save Dr. Hollis, his son, and O'Kelly, who remained at my whispered request, for it had occurred to me that as the lay figure must be thoroughly spoilt by the soaking it had received it was worthless, and we would *dissect* it, as once proposed by Jack Hollis, and find out of what it was composed.

Informing my mother that we were going to have a cigar, we withdrew, and when the house was perfectly quiet repaired to the tool house and commenced undressing the figure. The dress was like a wet sponge, the outer silk and stocking-like skin the same. This we cut off with much trouble. Underneath was firm padding, formed exactly to the shape ; the principal muscles of the human body being imitated with wonderful accuracy. We tore off these paddings. What was this fine framework supporting it underneath ? Nothing more or less than *a human skeleton!*

Even Dr. Hollis himself was appalled by such a discovery. It was a small-boned, exquisitely proportioned skeleton of a female. By some process known to the ingenious manufacturer it had been 'vulcanised,' and rendered of the consistence of iron. The joints were most beautifully substituted by wheels and sockets formed of fine steel and brass, resembling the work of a watchmaker, turning with ease in exact reproduction of a living person. The time, the toil, the ingenuity and patience this model—for such it was—must have taken to become what it was, was incredible. And for what purpose ? The face, so finely enamelled, was the original cranium, upon which the scalp with the long black hair remained—the hair

I had admired for being, as I thought, so artistically worked in! It was horrible. Had this work been done during the long months of the siege of Paris as an amusement or revenge? Had these bones belonged to a victim or a criminal? I shuddered. What demonology would explain such a mystery? Whence had my Parisian dealer obtained it? That he knew well enough there was

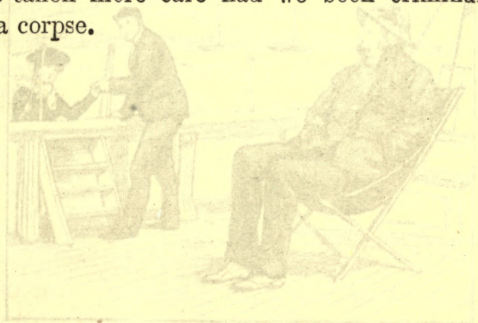


something sinister pertaining to the lay figure, as he called it, I was now certain, recalling the manner in which it had been corded to the wall, his jeering expression of face, and again the recommendation of the boy Henri to keep the studio door locked. Had a demon possessed it?

Dr. Hollis placed the head and bones, all now separated, in a

box, and he and his son carried it away with them to his surgery. He afterwards arranged with the sexton of a neighbouring cemetery to bury it in a corner of consecrated ground. The exquisite steel and brass joints were all thrown into the Thames from Hammer-smith Suspension Bridge. The padding was burnt by myself and O'Kelly in the tool house before we separated the next morning.

We could not have taken more care had we been criminals bent on getting rid of a corpse.

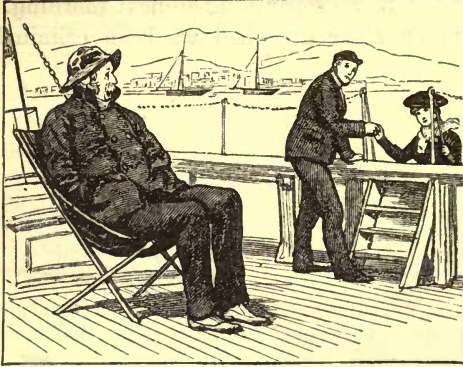


doubt as to whether
he has not ordered
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after an altogether
erroneous fashion; and
if he be, as I am, an
old bachelor, I hardly
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giving. A slight sound—a scent suddenly takes us back to
those half-forgotten days when we were young; we call to mind
what was; we realize what might be now, had not this that
and the other thing occurred, and we find ourselves musing
about our present. Ah! dear me! what a mistake it has all been,
to be sure!

I believe, indeed, that it was only the lively strains of the
Hungarian band which prevented these very words from being
brought to full form in my life as I stood in the doorway of a London
hallway, and watched Alice Wynne dancing with young Charles
Stapleton, to whom her engagement had been announced a few
days before. It so happens that I myself had often danced in
the same room. I would say how many years ago, when its
faded carpet was in the nursery when beads which are bald
and now are worn by Charles Stapleton's, and when a
pair of blue people were sitting and merry; and standing there
unnoticed, we have who have had their day must expect to be
lost sight of a number of two of the modern young men and
women who were dancing before me, and beheld the long room
thronged with these young whom one especial ghost may
perhaps have been more prominent than the rest. I say one
can't avoid these memories and regrets. They come upon one
when one least expects it and make one feel most confoundedly
foolish and uneasy. As a general thing I am pretty well con-

THE OLD WOMAN OF THE SEA.



NEARLY every man, I should think, must sometimes feel in doubt as to whether he has not ordered the course of his life after an altogether erroneous fashion; and if he be, as I am, an old bachelor, I hardly see how he is to escape such occasional mis-

givings. A sight—a sound—a scent suddenly takes us back to those half-forgotten days when we were young; we call to mind what once was; we realise what might be now, had not this, that, and the other thing occurred, and we find ourselves muttering under our breath, ‘Ah, dear me! what a mistake it has all been, to be sure!’

I believe, indeed, that it was only the lively strains of the Hungarian band which prevented these very words from being heard to fall from my lips as I stood in the doorway of a London ball-room, and watched Alice Wynne dancing with young Charles Stapleton, to whom her engagement had been announced a few days before. It so happened that I myself had often danced in that very same house, I won't say how many years ago, when its present owners were in the nursery, when heads which are bald and grey now were as curly as Charles Stapleton's, and when a host of dead people were alive and merry; and standing there unnoticed, as dogs who have had their day must expect to be, I lost sight for a minute or two of the modern young men and women who were gyrating before me, and beheld the long room thronged with ghosts, among whom one especial ghost may perhaps have been more prominent than the rest. I say one can't avoid these memories and regrets. They come upon one when one least expects it, and make one feel most confoundedly foolish and uneasy. As a general thing I am pretty well con-

tented with my manner of existence, such as it is ; but when one is an old man and a rich man, and when one sees Tom, Dick, and Harry with their sons and daughters about them, and their houses full of friends, and with a hundred interests in life not directly connected with their own persons, celibacy does somehow present itself to one in the light of a defiance of obvious duty and destiny. Why I have never married is a question which concerns no one except myself ; but I own that I have sometimes doubted whether my reason was a sufficient one, and whether I should not have done better to take a wife—any wife. Dr. Johnson thought that if all marriages were arranged by the Lord Chancellor the result would be quite as satisfactory as that obtained from the ordinary English method, and I am not prepared to say that that unromantic philosopher was wholly in the wrong. There is no denying that matches of affection frequently turn out badly, while matches of convenience frequently turn out well. One can't have everything in this give-and-take world, and the sight of two young people unmistakably in love with each other, yet brought together by their elders from motives of the purest worldliness, is as rare a one as it is delightful to witness.

So I leant against the doorway, absorbed in musings with which Stapleton and Miss Wynne were only in part connected, until a brisk voice at my elbow cried, 'A penny for your thoughts, General Rivers! Do you know that you are looking quite sentimental?'

'I was looking at your daughter and Lord Charles, Mrs. Wynne,' I said ; for it was the mother of the bride-elect who had addressed me.

'Ah, dear child!' she sighed, 'it is such a happiness to me to see her happy ; and I know you rejoice with us. But this makes *us* seem terribly old, doesn't it?'

'Well, you know, we *are* rather old,' I replied bluntly ; and I don't think she quite liked it. The truth is that Mrs. Wynne is a contemporary of my own, or thereabouts ; but I am bound to confess that she looks a good twenty years younger. I glanced at her after I had made this uncivil remark, and I could not help admiring the marvellous perfection of her make-up. Her face was painted, and so were her delicately-traced eyebrows ; but the work betrayed the touch of a finished artist. The brown hair which clustered in little curls all over her head and came down low upon her forehead was a wig most likely, though it looked

uncommonly natural ; but how on earth had she achieved those youthful shoulders and arms ? She wore a low dress—in fact, a very low dress—and I declare that the charms which she displayed might have been those of a woman of five-and-twenty. I was privileged to behold a set of beautifully regular and pearly teeth (false ones, I suppose) when she smiled upon me and murmured :

‘ But not too old to be a little sentimental sometimes, eh, General ? ’



‘ Oh, I shall have occasional fits of sentimentality up to my dying day, I expect. It’s the weather—or the gout coming on ; it doesn’t mean anything,’ I returned hastily ; for something in the woman’s look and manner affected me with a vague feeling of alarm.

But she said : ‘ Ah ! don’t let us be ashamed of having hearts and memories. The world makes us all hard, whether we will or no ; but we need not boast of it. Come and sit down in the next room, General Rivers, and we will be sentimental together for a quarter of an hour.’

I saw no reason why we shouldn't. We retired into a small, dimly-lighted boudoir adjoining the ball-room, and talked very pleasantly about bygone days for more than the allotted quarter of an hour. She made a good deal of pretence of being younger than I was; she affected ignorance of events which she could not really have forgotten and of persons with whom I myself had seen her flirting in the consulship of Plancus; but she seemed to be interested in what I said, and showed more power of participating in my melancholy mood than I should have given her credit for. I have always admitted that Mrs. Wynne can be a very agreeable woman when she likes. The worst of me is that I am so easily imposed upon. Of course I knew that this shocking old sham was likely to be as false in her sentiment as she was in her person; yet when she spoke affectionately of the daughter whom she was about to lose, turning on a sort of *tremolo* stop in her voice as she did so—when she appealed to me to say what she was to do with her life after its chief interest had been removed—and when she alluded with a sigh to the trials and sorrows which she had passed through and lived down—I was touched. I said to myself that one does not necessarily become a hardened reprobate because one is a little worldly. As far as that went, wasn't I also a little worldly? I thought I could enter into poor Mrs. Wynne's natural feeling of loneliness, and I was ashamed of the half suspicion which had entered my mind for a moment that she might be setting her cap—or rather her curly wig—at me.

Not, to be sure, that there would have been anything very extraordinary in it if she had, seeing that, many years before, she had married a man considerably older than I am now. That was her second matrimonial venture—her first husband, a dashing young hussar, having broken his neck steeplechasing, I forget where. Old Wynne died very soon after his little girl's birth, which was an unlucky thing for some people. His estates passed to his nephew, to spite whom he had married, and his widow was left but scantily provided for. I fancy that she must have found it a hard matter to keep her head above water, living in the way that she did; but she managed it somehow, and never allowed herself to drop out of society. When Alice was old enough to come out, the two ladies went to the first drawing-room of the season together; and I think it was then that Mrs. Wynne assumed that surprisingly youthful aspect which caused her,

when seen from a sufficient distance, to look like her daughter's younger sister. No doubt she had to swallow down some snubs and slights; for she was an impoverished woman who was bound to live like a moderately rich one, under penalty of being forgotten, and we all know how little mercy is shown by the world to those who deliberately place themselves in false positions. Nevertheless, she did not suffer herself to be discouraged, and now she had reaped the reward of her labours. She had secured a husband for her daughter who was not only the younger son of a duke, but was far better off than younger sons generally are, some member of his mother's family having left him a handsome property.

I felt a genuine satisfaction at her success; for one likes to see pluck recompensed, and besides, I had known Mrs. Wynne all my life, though I can't say that we had ever been exactly friends. After that evening at the ball, however, she was pleased to treat me quite like a friend—an intimate friend, indeed. We never met anywhere that she did not drag me off into a corner to whisper some confidential piece of information about Alice's approaching nuptials, or to consult me as to some point connected with settlements, although one would have supposed that she might have obtained from her solicitor all the advice that she needed upon such subjects. And then she was always sending me little unnecessary notes, till at last I grew positively to loathe the sight of the buff-coloured envelopes which she used, and Wilson, my man, smiled demurely when he handed them to me. Now, if there is one thing that I dislike more than another, it is being laughed at by Wilson; and what was perhaps even more disagreeable was that the men at the club began to chaff me, my old friend Conington in particular being exquisitely facetious, inquiring whether the double event was to come off on the same day, and so forth. I was obliged to tell him at length that that kind of thing, besides being utterly witless, was offensive to me; to which he replied that he only did it out of kindness.

'My good fellow, you can't take care of yourself,' he said, 'and if somebody didn't catch hold of your coat-tails you'd be swallowed up before you knew where you were. Our friend Mrs. Wynne is a good deal cleverer than you are, I can tell you.'

'Very likely,' I returned; 'I never said she wasn't.'

'Yes; and she's a fascinating woman too, in her way.'

'I don't find her so,' I said; 'but I suppose you do, for you

are always talking to her. Perhaps you would like to marry her yourself. If so, pray don't let me stand in your way.'

Conington shook his head with a wise smile. 'I'm too old a bird,' he answered; 'and she knows that well enough. She won't waste time in trying to drop salt on my tail. She knows I recollect her ages and ages ago as an old thing with grey hair and false teeth that waggled at you when she talked. She goes in for being a sort of Ninon de l'Enclos now; but that won't do with *me*, you know.'

As far as that went, it wouldn't do with me either; and, though I did not remember to have seen Mrs. Wynne in the stage described, I was sure that, whether she had designs upon me or not, I should never fall a victim to her borrowed charms. Still I did feel that it would be a comfort when the wedding was over and the excuse for all these interviews and notes removed. To add to my discomfort, the ladies of my acquaintance began with one consent to give me friendly warnings; and then, only a week before the day appointed for the ceremony, a very annoying thing took place.

'My dear General,' Mrs. Wynne said one morning, squeezing my hand affectionately (she had taken to squeezing my hand by this time), 'I want you to do me a *great* kindness. I want you to give dear Alice away.'

'I?—give your daughter away?' I ejaculated, aghast. 'Well, upon my word, I don't think I am quite the right person——'

'Ah, don't refuse!' she broke in. 'I am sure you won't refuse! You know she has literally *no* near relations, poor child, and James Wynne, who was to have represented the family, is laid up with chicken-pox and can't come. Unless you will help me out of the difficulty, I don't see who there is to apply to, except the verger.'

'Couldn't you put it off until James Wynne is better?' I suggested.

'Oh dear, no! Quite impossible! It might be weeks and weeks. Some people take an eternity to get over the measles, and——'

'You said it was chicken-pox just now,' I interrupted suspiciously.

'Oh, well, it doesn't matter what it is,' she returned. 'You couldn't expect him to come into church all over spots and scatter infection among a hundred and fifty people, could you?'

‘I suppose not,’ I agreed. It really was a very cool request to make, and no doubt Conington and other resolute persons would have refused point-blank; but I never can bring myself to be rude to people, unless I am goaded into absolute fury, so I ended by yielding a reluctant consent.

I performed the duty required of me when the festive day came, feeling perfectly wretched the whole time, and not daring to look at anybody; and it was only when the rite was over and we were assembled round the breakfast table that I recognised James Wynne among the company, looking as well and hearty as I had ever seen him in my life. This was too much. I made my escape as soon as possible, only darting one glance of bitter reproach at that Sapphira of a woman, and early the next day I left town and fled into Dorsetshire to stay with some cousins of mine who had asked me, very opportunely, to pay them a visit.

I did think I should have been safe there, with the London season only just over and everybody hastening to Goodwood, where I rather wanted to have gone myself; but no such thing! I hadn't been two days in the house when Mrs. Wynne arrived, looking more juvenile and blooming than ever; and I found out afterwards that she had actually asked herself down—my poor cousins, who knew nothing of what had taken place in London, welcoming her with the utmost cordiality. Ah, how differently would they have behaved had they guessed the predatory intentions of their visitor with regard to one whose worldly goods may not improbably be divided among them some day!

Mrs. Wynne could not, of course, blush, her natural skin being for ever hidden from mortal eye; and, morally speaking, I should say that she had the hide of a rhinoceros. She did not appear to be in the least ashamed of having compromised me in the eyes of all my friends by that unspeakably shabby trick of hers, and I felt that no words of mine would be likely to produce any impression upon such brazen effrontery. I therefore maintained an attitude of cold reserve, only taking good care not to be left alone with her for a single moment. But I need hardly say that she broke down my defence with the greatest ease as soon as she thought fit to do so. She waylaid me on the staircase, as I was making for the smoking-room, on the second evening after her arrival, and, touching me gently on the arm, ‘You are angry with me,’ said she, in a tone of soft remonstrance. ‘What have I done to offend you?’

‘I am not offended, Mrs. Wynne,’ I replied; ‘but, since you ask me, I will confess that I am annoyed at your having thought it necessary to tell me a—what shall I say?—about James Wynne.’

‘But I didn’t tell you a what-shall-you-say,’ she rejoined, laughing. ‘He really had something the matter with him. It turned out to be only a cold in the head; still it might quite well have prevented him from coming. And I was not at all sorry for the mistake. I don’t like James—we have never got on together—and it was much pleasanter to me to see an old friend like yourself standing where you did. I think you ought to be flattered,’ she added, with a killing smile.

‘I am *not* flattered,’ I replied gloomily; for I thought it best to be explicit. ‘I don’t like to be made conspicuous in that un-called-for way.’

‘Oh, how rude you are!’ she exclaimed, laughing, and rapping me on the knuckles with her fan. ‘I shall not speak to you again until you have found your manners.’

And she turned and ran up the stairs with the buoyant step of careless girlhood.

This was all very well; and if, by dint of bad manners, I could have persuaded her to carry out her threat of not speaking to me any more, mannerless I should have remained. But she didn’t carry out her threat. Far from it! On the contrary, she spoke to me a great deal; and the things that she said were so startling that I hardly knew which way to look when she uttered them, while my cousins, who had begun by being amused at her, ended by becoming indignant. Any one, to hear her talk, would have supposed that I had almost lived in her house in London—that little Mayfair house which she had rented for some years past, and which she now announced that she intended, by my advice, to quit. ‘Certainly I should find it dreary work to go on living all by myself where I have been so happy with my poor little girl,’ she said; ‘I dare say it is better that I should make a change. Where I shall go or what I shall do I can’t think; but my dear, kind old friend’ (it was thus that she was pleased to designate the reader’s humble servant) ‘has promised to find me a home somewhere before long.’

Now it was true that, while in London, she had told me that she contemplated a change of quarters, and had begged me to let her know if I heard of anything that sounded suitable; but the

impression conveyed by her words was something very different from this, and my cousins not unnaturally concluded that I either meant to marry Mrs. Wynne or that I had been trifling with her affections. Of these two alternatives the latter would no doubt have been the more agreeable to them; but in either case they would have felt justified in regarding me with that pity which is not akin to love, and they showed in the plainest manner that they did so regard me.

All these things being so, there was nothing for it but a second and a longer flight. My yacht was waiting for me at Portsmouth. I determined to go on board at once and sail for Norway as soon as I could possibly get off. I did not want to do this. I am not much of a fisherman; and besides, there is very little salmon-fishing to be obtained by the casual traveller in Norway nowadays. Moreover, I have reached that time of life when a man likes to do the same things year after year. It throws me out, and gives me an uneasy, fidgety feeling of having forgotten something, if I am not at Cowes for the Squadron regatta, at Weymouth, Dartmouth, and Torquay shortly afterwards, and in Scotland by the beginning of September. But it was not a case for consulting one's inclinations. I telegraphed to two or three men to join me, and left precipitately, allowing it to be inferred that I was bound for no more distant waters than those of the Solent.

The truth of the matter was that that shameless and unscrupulous woman had taken an accurate measure of my character and had found out my weak points. She knew—at least, I suppose she did—that blandishments would have no sort of effect upon me; but doubtless she also knew that there was scarcely any foolish thing that I would not do, rather than have a disturbance. Her tactics were obvious. She intended to make me compromise myself and her before witnesses and then throw herself upon my generosity, or my feebleness, whichever it ought to be called; and if I had not happened to be fully alive to this danger, it is quite upon the cards that she might have succeeded. As it was, I got three friends to accompany me and sailed for Stavanger before the end of the week.

When I had placed the tumbling waves of the North Sea between me and my dreadful old woman, I breathed more freely, and my temper, which I was told had been rather short during the passage, recovered its wonted sweetness. I felt that I had been delivered from a great and imminent peril. People who sneer at

panics of this kind, and say that a woman can't marry a man against his will, and so forth, simply don't know what they are talking about. I maintain that there are occasions upon which it behoves the bravest of men to run away.

We spent a very pleasant three weeks in dawdling along the west coast of Norway. It was a little late in the year, but the weather, for once in a way, was propitious, and the magnificent fjords, which are so often shrouded in rain and mist, showed themselves to us, day after day, in unclouded grandeur. My friends were kind enough not to be too exacting. I could not put them in the way of getting any sport; but they said the scenery and the sunshine would do instead, and professed themselves satisfied with an occasional drive up unfrequented valleys or a climb to the glaciers which overhang the Hardanger Fjord and its branches.

One evening we had all gone ashore at Eide, and were strolling along and gazing at the sunset, when a string of carioles was seen approaching us, in the foremost of which was seated a lady whom my companions at once pronounced to be an Englishwoman. They further remarked that she was an uncommonly well turned-out one too. As for me, I said never a word; but my heart became as water within me. Ah me! that trim figure, that bottle-green Newmarket, that billycock hat, those neat little boots which rested in the stirrups of the cariole—had I not recognised them from afar? Oh, my prophetic soul!—my old woman!

She was grasping my hand before I knew where I was. Who would have thought of meeting *me* in Norway? This was really delightful! She had been so much pressed to come over by her friends the Somebodies (I don't remember their name—they must have been strange people) that at last she had consented; and now she was so glad she had come! She added, with one of those finger-squeezes which always made me feel hot and cold all over, 'How horrid of you to run away like that! And never even to tell me where you were going!'

'It seems that you found out, though,' said I, too much perturbed to observe the decent reticences of polite society.

She looked at me with an innocent wonder in those artistically enlarged eyes of hers. 'Well, yes; I have found you,' she answered; 'but that is no thanks to you. I hope you are glad to be found. Now we must make some pleasant excursions together. I hear that there is a great deal to be seen in this neighbourhood.'

'Oh, yes; we'll make some pleasant excursions together and

we'll see the neighbourhood,' I echoed grimly. 'Does that schooner yacht lying alongside of us belong to your friends?'

She said it did, and I remembered having examined the vessel and having noticed that she had no auxiliary steam. A strong wind was blowing straight up the fjord too, and likely to hold—come! there was balm in Gilead after all.

Yet I was obliged to ask Mrs. Wynne to dine on board that evening. I didn't see my way to getting out of it. One of the men who were with me was already acquainted with her; she made her-



self exceedingly agreeable to the others; and in short, if I had not asked her, she would have asked herself; so that it didn't make much difference. I felt sure that I should pass a detestable evening, and my expectations were not disappointed. That woman's behaviour was downright outrageous. Not only did she display an affectionate interest in my every proceeding; not only did she warn me, in a tone of quasi-wifely remonstrance, what I ought not to eat and drink, on account of my gout; but she would persist in talking as if our meeting had been the result of a pre-

concerted arrangement. It was quite evident that all those who saw and heard her set her down as the future Mrs. Rivers; and, in point of fact, she went as near to saying so as was possible. After dinner I made a feeble effort to convey to her my fixed determination to live and die a bachelor; but she only laughed and affected to misunderstand me. Had I not, most mercifully, had steam-power at my command, I believe I should have been driven to throw myself upon her compassion and implore her to leave me alone. She did not go away until quite late; and the moment that she had vanished into the darkness, I gave orders to my captain to get under way with the first streak of dawn. 'There is no one to tell her where I have gone, and she can't scour the high seas in pursuit of me,' I thought.

I am afraid my companions were not best pleased when, on waking up in the morning and finding themselves already out at sea, they were informed that our destination was Kirkwall; but I couldn't help that. A man must be allowed to command on board his own yacht, and though we had a rough passage across and some of us were sea-sick, there was no use in grumbling about it. When we were safe on the other side, I explained that one couldn't count upon the weather at that season of the year, and that it would have been very disagreeable to be bottled up at Bergen or Trondhjem for three weeks together. We finished our cruise among the Hebrides and the other islands of the west coast of Scotland, and I reflected gleefully within myself that Mrs. Wynne could not possibly know what had become of me this time.

Towards the end of September my friends left me. It was growing cold, and I had had quite enough of yachting; yet I felt that there could be no real safety for me except in a seafaring life. I had made several engagements to stay with different people then and during the following month; but I was not going to run the risk of meeting Mrs. Wynne in a country house, so I wrote off excuses to everybody, and made up my mind to go round to Portsmouth in the yacht.

After we had been detained for some days at Oban by bad weather, the wind shifted to the north-east, and we got a cold, bright morning, which looked suitable for making a start. Seated on deck, I was watching the men getting up the anchor, and was ruminating a little sadly upon the infirmities which make themselves felt with advancing years and the many worries which appear to be inseparable from existence. Nothing is so disastrous

to my liver as a touch of east wind. I knew that I ought to be sitting before a good fire instead of upon that draughty deck, and it seemed a little hard that I must be exposed to all the inclemencies of the season because a brazen old woman had taken it into her head that she would like to have the spending of my money. While I was musing thus, I thought I heard somebody hail us; but I did not move, knowing that I had no acquaintances in the place who were likely to be coming on board. Presently I saw Jackson, my skipper, walk aft; then he took off his cap to somebody; and then—oh, horror!—the head and shoulders of Mrs. Wynne appeared over the side. The rest of her person followed quickly, and behind her loomed up—could I believe my eyes?—a huge portmanteau. Then came another portmanteau, and then a travelling-bag, a bundle of shawls, and a dressing-case. What in heaven's name could it all mean?

I was not left long in doubt. Mrs. Wynne came tripping across the deck towards me on the tips of her toes, her hands outstretched, and her painted countenance all smiles. 'My dear General,' she began—'my dear friend, what *will* you think of me?'

'I don't know,' I groaned; 'I don't know what to think. Perhaps you will explain.'

'I was afraid you would be rather astonished at first,' she said, 'but then I thought I might surely venture upon taking a little liberty with *you*, and I was certain that you would be too kind to refuse me such a trifling favour as taking me round to the Clyde with you. I know you are going south, and it's all on your way.'

'Gracious mercy!' I ejaculated, but she held up her hand entreatingly.

'Now do allow me to finish. I was just going to tell you how it has happened that I am stranded here all by myself. Those people with whom I was yachting in Norway were to have picked me up here and taken me to Glasgow, where I positively must be by to-morrow night in time to catch the mail, and only this morning I had a telegram from them to say that they were weather-bound somewhere up north, and could not possibly be here for several days. Wasn't it too tiresome? I am always so nervous about travelling alone, and I haven't even got my maid with me. I was quite in despair till I caught sight of your yacht, and heard that you were on the point of starting for the south. It was as if you had been sent specially by Providence to save me.'

I could not think that Providence would have served me such a dirty turn as that; but it was idle to dispute the assertion. What was evident was that nothing but the greatest firmness and presence of mind could save *me*.

‘Mrs. Wynne,’ I said gravely, ‘what you ask me to do is out of the question—utterly out of the question, believe me. You have not, I suppose, realised that I am alone on board?’

‘Oh, are you?’ she returned, not a whit abashed; ‘I am very glad of it. We shall have the more time for a quiet chat; and I want to consult you about a heap of things.’

‘But, my dear good lady,’ I exclaimed impatiently, ‘we can’t put to sea for a day and a night all by ourselves. It wouldn’t do. It wouldn’t be proper, you know.’

‘As if it signified!’ she cried. ‘Such old friends as you and I!’

‘Oh, we are old enough for anything,’ I agreed; ‘I quite admit that. We are old enough to know better. You must be aware that age is no protection from slander, and that people are sure to say——’

‘I don’t care a straw what people say,’ she interrupted audaciously.

‘Possibly not; but the difference between us is that I do,’ I remarked. After which there was a pause.

During this colloquy Jackson had been hovering near us with a face expressive of the most profound astonishment, and I thought it would be better to go below before embarking upon the altercation which was now inevitable. ‘Would you mind coming into the main cabin with me?’ I asked Mrs. Wynne. Then I told Jackson that I should not want to get under way just yet, and followed my persecutor’s blue serge skirt down the companion.

She began flitting about at once and examining everything. ‘What a pretty cabin! You are quite a sybarite. Who arranges your flowers for you? And which is to be my berth?’

Now or never, I felt, was the time for me to show of what stuff I was made.

‘Mrs. Wynne,’ I answered, gently but decisively, ‘you will not occupy any berth on board this vessel, I am sorry to say. It is painful to me to be obliged to be so inhospitable; but I am persuaded that, when you think things over quietly, you will see that I have no choice in the matter. I have a duty to perform, and I shall not shrink from performing it.’

‘What are you going to do?’ she asked; and I was glad to notice a shade of apprehension in her voice.

‘I am going,’ I replied, ‘to put you on shore immediately. I am going to escort you to the steamboat-office or the railway station, whichever you prefer, and I am going to take your ticket for Glasgow and see you safely off.’

‘How unkind you are!’ she cried; ‘and how ridiculously prudish! What if we *are* doing something that Mrs. Grundy wouldn’t approve of? People will never hear of it. Who is to tell them?’

I knew very well who would tell them; but I did not say this. I only replied mildly that I was very sorry, but that there was no help for it. Go she must.

‘I won’t go!’ she exclaimed abruptly; ‘I won’t be turned into a laughing-stock because of your absurd scruples. If I had had any idea that you would be so very disagreeable, I should never have come on board; but now that I am here I shall stay. And I do think you might have some little consideration for me. I am not accustomed to travelling about alone, and there are all sorts of horrid tourists and people in these trains and steamers. One might have one’s pocket picked, or be insulted, or—or fifty things.’

‘I am protecting you against yourself,’ answered I sententiously; ‘I value your reputation more even than your comfort.’

‘Bother my reputation!’ called out Mrs. Wynne with alarming recklessness. ‘Why, if the worst came to the worst, what could people say?’

‘Well,’ replied I, ‘I am afraid they could, and would, say that—we were going to be married.’

‘And would that be such a terrible calamity?’

My blood curdled in my veins when Mrs. Wynne put this question in her most insinuating manner, accompanying it with an upward glance which spoke volumes. I knew that she was not the woman to stick at a trifle; but I really had not expected that she would propose to me in so many words. I confess that I lost my head for the moment, and hardly knew what I was saying.

‘It would indeed!’ I cried eagerly. ‘Any woman who married me would be going in for a truly calamitous thing. In fact her whole life afterwards would be one long calamity, so to speak. My temper is awful—you might not suppose it, but it is. I have several organic complaints which are bound to make an end of

me in a year or two, and when I die all my landed property will go to my cousin. As for my personalty, I have invested largely of late in Turkish and South American securities, and the result is what no one can foretell. And besides all this, I am absolutely and irrevocably determined not to marry anybody. I never have married, and—and at my time of life it is not likely that I should begin.'

Mrs. Wynne stared at me as if she thought I had taken leave of my senses; and indeed she might have been excused for believing what was so nearly the truth. Then she laughed a little. 'Really, my dear General,' she said, 'one would suppose that I had asked you to marry me, instead of only begging you to take me as far as the mouth of the Clyde.'

'It's the same thing,' answered I despondently, feeling a little ashamed of my vehemence. But no sooner had the words passed my lips than I saw, by the gleam in her eyes, what a dangerous admission I had made, and I hastened to correct it.

'At least,' I added hurriedly, 'it would be the same thing in the eyes of the world. I should not, of course, marry you; but everybody would say that you had tried to make me do so.'

She started to her feet and paced up and down the cabin once or twice with an agitated step. Then all of a sudden she exclaimed, 'How can you say such cruel things?' and, dropping into an arm-chair, burst into tears.

In a general way I am as wax in the hands of those who weep at me; but I suppose there must be an undercurrent of brutality in my nature which rises to the surface when I am driven to desperation. I astonished myself by the callous insensibility with which I said—'I wouldn't cry if I were you. You may leave unbecoming traces upon your cheeks, you know, and we are far from all the resources of civilisation in these parts.'

I thought that would rouse her. It did.

'You *wretch!*' she shrieked; 'I don't paint my cheeks. Spiteful women say I do—they say that of everybody who has a decent complexion, but it's a falsehood. I can convince you of it if you choose. Would you like to see me wash my face?'

'No,' I answered unfeelingly, 'I should not. The question doesn't interest or concern me in any way. I don't care if you never wash your face again.'

'You insult me!' she exclaimed.

'I am aware of it,' returned I. 'I have insulted you grossly,

and if you have a spark of self-respect you can't possibly remain on board. I shall go up on deck for five minutes to give you time to compose yourself a little, and then we will go ashore.'

I will confess that, when I had left Mrs. Wynne, my conduct struck me as having been atrocious, but then the provocation had been great, and my remorse was assuaged in some measure by the pride of conquest. The only question was, had I conquered after all? Supposing that she obstinately declined to retreat, what was I to do? I couldn't put her on shore by main force. Possibly it might have been wiser to have recourse to some stratagem than to defy one who had neither pity nor principle. While I thus communed with myself I was absently gazing at a large yawl which had come in while I had been below, and was bringing up within a short distance of us. I seemed to know the look of her, but it was only when Jackson joined me, and said, "'Skyrocket," just in from Portree, sir,' that I recognised Conington's yacht, the 'Scirocco,' and there, sure enough, was Conington himself on deck, waving friendly signals to me.

It is a kindly provision on the part of Nature that our most brilliant inspirations generally come to us in moments of the greatest emergency. I don't know what it was that suddenly made me think of the man who, while elbowing his way through a crowd, had a baby placed in his arms, and who, with the utmost presence of mind, popped it into a passing carriage and ran away. Why, I asked myself—my heart beginning to beat wildly—why should not this precedent be applied to me and my old woman of the sea? It was a stirring thought. With a rapidity of which I should not have believed myself capable, I conceived and grasped every detail of a bold design, and, without hesitating for a moment, I ran down the companion to put it into execution.

Mrs. Wynne was sitting where I had left her; but she had dried her eyes. She wore—if I may be allowed to use so ungalant a comparison—very much the air of a donkey who has planted his forefeet firmly on the ground, laid back his ears, and tucked his tail between his legs. 'No surrender' was written on every line of her countenance. It must have been a surprise to her to see me walk in delicately like King Agag, and to hear me address her in gentle, conciliatory accents.

'Mrs. Wynne,' said I, 'I have come to make my apologies. I feel that I spoke hastily and rudely just now. Shall we agree to forget that painful scene, and sail for the Clyde as if nothing had

happened? When all is said and done, why should an old man care for the world and its harsh judgments?’

She jumped up with a little cry of pleasure, and for an instant I thought she was going to embrace me. However, I executed a backward bound and pushed a chair between us, so as to preclude any surprises of that nature, after which I went on with my scheme of heartless deception. I remember to have felt a sort of dull wonder at my own duplicity, but for the time being I was really dead to all sense of shame. I said, ‘Let us go up into the fresh air;’ and she cheerfully acceded to this proposal.

As soon as we were on deck, I affected much surprise at becoming aware of the ‘Scirocco.’ ‘Dear me!’ I cried, ‘there is Conington’s yacht; and surely that is Conington himself beckoning to us. Suppose we go on board for five minutes and see him.’

My manner was composed, but I was trembling all over with suppressed anxiety. Would she yield? would she fall into the trap? To my boundless relief, she did. From the alacrity with which she consented, and from the expression of triumph which she vainly strove to conceal, I saw that she not only suspected nothing, but was overjoyed at this opportunity of parading her supposed captive in the presence of witnesses. That crushed any lingering feeling of compunction that I may have had. I had been resolute before; I was adamant now. I ordered the gig alongside, and in a few minutes we were standing on the deck of the ‘Scirocco,’ Conington greeting us with sardonic smiles by which my withers were unwrung. I met the derisive and compassionate gestures with which he favoured me behind Mrs. Wynne’s back in a spirit of bland self-security. ‘Wait a bit, my boy!’ thought I to myself. ‘*Rira bien qui rira le dernier!*’

‘Pray, have you two been cruising about together for long?’ Conington inquired, taking no pains to hide his insulting chuckles.

Mrs. Wynne did her best to look bashful. ‘Really, Lord Conington!’ she exclaimed with a conscious laugh. And then—‘I’m sure you won’t be so ill-natured as to tell anybody about your having seen us. It was the merest chance—I missed the friends who were to have met me here, and General Rivers took pity upon me and offered to see me to my destination. Perhaps I ought not to have consented; but I have such a dread of crowded steamers and excursion trains!’

‘Oh, that’s it, is it?’ said Conington, chuckling more than

ever. 'Well, you may rely upon my discretion; I never tell tales out of school. Perhaps, now that you are on board, you would like to have a look at my accommodation below. I have made one or two improvements this year which I flatter myself are a success.'

This was just what I wanted. Conington has a mania for taking blurred photographs of which he is inordinately proud, and I knew that if I could get him to exhibit the thousand and one (more or less) specimens of his skill which he always has on board with him, no victim, however impatient, would escape from his clutches under three-quarters of an hour at least. So, after we had duly admired his new bath-room and smoking-cabin, I said: 'I suppose you've had the camera out this summer?'

'Oh, yes,' he answered, 'and I've done some rather good things, I think, only of course they are not printed yet. I wonder whether Mrs. Wynne would care to see a few records of former cruises and journeys.'

Victory! The well-known albums were dragged down from their shelves. Mrs. Wynne was wedged in between the sofa and the table, with the open books before her; Conington, forgetful of everything except the matter immediately in hand, was bending over her and doing the explanatory showman. 'That is Venice, from the sea. The gondolas in the foreground have wobbled about a little; but it's a pretty picture. Those are the Falls of Niagara—no; the Mer de Glace, taken from the Montanvert. That appearance in the sky is owing to a slight fault in the plate. Looks like the moon, doesn't it? I thought I would leave it so,' &c., &c.

I sauntered as far as the foot of the companion, with my hands in my pockets, whistling. Then I mounted a few steps to look at the barometer and rap it with my knuckles. A few more steps, taken very slowly and deliberately, brought me up on deck, where my demeanour underwent a sudden change. I was over the side and seated in my gig in the twinkling of an eye. 'Shove off!' I said in an agitated whisper, and in a very short space of time I was once more on board my own vessel.

A certain huntsman (it was one of the well-known Hills family, I think), being told that fox-hunting was a cruel sport, replied that he could not see in what the cruelty consisted. The hounds liked it, the horses liked it, and he firmly believed that the fox liked it too. It may very well be so. For choice, I should always

prefer pursuing to being pursued ; yet, from personal experience, I can strongly recommend running away to all who desire to make trial of a novel and intense emotion. I shall ever remember the brief period which intervened between the moment of my quitting the 'Scirocco' and that when we rounded the island of Kerrera as having been, upon the whole, the most exciting of my life. How I blessed the rugged hills which shut out Oban from us and us from Oban ! I was perfectly safe now. Out of sight and out of hail, I might have been in the other hemisphere for any chance that Mrs. Wynne had of getting me into her power again. I dare say neither she nor Conington noticed my absence before we were well on our way down the Sound of Mull, bowling along merrily with a fair wind.

When I pictured to myself what their faces would be like on finding that I and my yacht had vanished as if by enchantment, I gave way to paroxysms of ecstatic mirth. Jackson, who must of course have understood the nature of the case, was grinning from ear to ear ; the men, too, collected together in the fore-castle, were bursting into intermitten guffaws. Poor fellows, why shouldn't they laugh ? It isn't every day that I can provide my crew with a really first-class practical joke to laugh at. I didn't grudge them their hilarity ; I wouldn't have grudged anybody anything at that moment. I was in such good humour with all the world that I could not harbour unkind thoughts even of Mrs. Wynne. I bore her no malice ; I had paid her out so handsomely that I could afford to forgive her, and, after such a lesson as she had received, it was scarcely likely that she would molest me any more.

The day passed pleasantly and peacefully away ; and not until we had left Jura and Islay far astern and were out upon the long Atlantic swell did I remember that I had all the poor woman's luggage on board. That recollection damped my spirits considerably. I had never intended to put her to such dreadful inconvenience as I must have done, and the more I thought of the situation the less I liked it. Obviously it was my duty to restore Mrs. Wynne's property to her with all possible despatch ; but whither was I to send it ? I knew of no address at Oban, even supposing, what was most unlikely, that she would remain another day or two in that place ; and she had not told me anything more about her destination than that she wanted to catch the train at Glasgow. All things considered, the chances, I thought, were in favour of her

having been on her way to visit her daughter, and I determined to put into Stranraer and forward her belongings thence to Cumberland, where Lady Charles's new home was situated. I did so the next day, at the same time addressing the following telegram to Stapleton: 'Have sent you four packages by express; property of Mrs. Wynne left on board my yacht by unfortunate mistake. Don't know where she is, so am obliged to direct them to you. Hope it's all right. Am sailing to-day for Portsmouth.'

This done, I resumed my voyage in a somewhat less jubilant mood. The episode of the purloined baggage might, I felt, cause awkward complications, and it would always be difficult for me to give any satisfactory explanation of its having been on board my yacht at all. What with one thing and another, it took me very nearly a fortnight to get round to Portsmouth, where, on my arrival, I found the following letter from Charles Stapleton awaiting me:—

'Dear General Rivers,

'The boxes which you were kind enough to send from Stranraer reached this safely a day or two before Mrs. Wynne joined us. Of course she was very glad to have them again, but she had been obliged to get herself a complete new rig-out at Glasgow, which was rather a bore for her. There certainly does seem, as you say, to have been some unfortunate mistake. I don't wish to be officious, and would much rather not interfere between you and my mother-in-law in any way; but I may as well tell you that she is very much hurt by what she calls your inexplicable behaviour. She says you left her at Oban without any reason or any warning, although it had been arranged that you were to take her to the Clyde, and that if it had not been for the kindness of Lord Conington, who insisted upon placing his yacht at her disposal, she does not know what would have become of her. Her conviction is that you went off in a fit of pique, because you didn't like her spending a long time with old Conington looking over a photograph book or something. I must say that I have some difficulty in believing this extraordinary statement, but I thought I had better let you know what she says.

'Alice is sure that it would all be set right and explained if you and her mother could meet, and she begs me to say, with her love, that she hopes you will come and stay a few days with us, if you can manage it. I need not add how glad I shall be to see you. Mrs. Wynne will be here for another month, I expect, but the

sooner you come the better, because she *will* go on talking about it to everybody, and one doesn't want outsiders to be entertained with family differences.

‘Sincerely yours,

‘CHARLES STAPLETON.’

This letter caused me extreme discomfort. I was unwilling to lose the friendship and esteem of the Stapletons, but I saw at once that I must chance that. As for meeting Mrs. Wynne, I would as soon have met the whole of Wombwell's menagerie loose on Salisbury Plain. I would not even answer Charles's letter, but only sent him another telegram: ‘Sorry I can't come. Just off to the Mediterranean for the winter. No explanation at all necessary or desirable.’

If he had a grain of common sense he would understand that, I thought; but if he didn't understand, I couldn't help it. I kept my word and sailed for the Mediterranean as soon as ever I could make the necessary arrangements, and there I have been ever since. It was only the other day that, taking up one of those weekly papers whose mission it is to chronicle social events, I came across the subjoined astounding paragraph:—

‘It is announced that a marriage will take place very shortly between Viscount Conington and Mrs. Wynne, whose daughter, Lady Charles Stapleton, was one of the beauties of last season, and who is herself considered by many people to be *filiâ pulchrior.*’

Well, I am sorry for poor Conington; but it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and I suppose I may go home now.

THE FIRST WARNING.

IN the poem of 'The Three Warnings,' ascribed to Mrs. Thrale, but concerning which it is ungallantly suggested, since it is 'so inferior to her other compositions,' that Johnson must have helped her in it, there seems to me an error or two, even if he did. The hero, Dodson—was ever such a name given to hero before?—is first presented to us as a 'jocund bridegroom,' who, when Death looks in upon him, very naturally observes—

'Young as I am, 'tis monstrous hard.
My thoughts on other matters go;
This is my wedding day, you know.'

Moved by this argument, Death promises not to call again for some time to come, and in the meantime to send 'Three Warnings beforehand.' He calls in Dodson's eightieth year—a proof of moderation on the part of his grisly majesty which is not appreciated.

'So soon returned!' old Dodson cries.
'So soon d'ye call it?' Death replies;
'Surely, my friend, you're but in jest;
Since I was here before
'Tis six-and-thirty years at least,
And you are now fourscore.'

So that the poetess makes the 'jocund bridegroom' no less than forty-four on his marriage-day—presumably his first one. This is surely not poetical justice—to the bride. Moreover, Mrs. Thrale makes another and a graver error in the character of her first warning; which she makes to be lameness. This is not in accordance with the experience of human life at all. It should have been failure of memory; and if Dodson had been half as sharp as Dodson and Fogg were, he might have pleaded it with success. When Death reminded him of his previous visit, he should have boldly said that he had no recollection of the circumstance, and insisted on a written notice and starting *de novo*. I have no doubt whatever that, except in cases of chronic rheumatism or of intoxication, one's memory goes before one's legs. And even while we possess it, how partial it is! The scientific writers upon this subject take little note of this, and seem to attribute its absence

in certain particulars to disease ; but, if so, there must be a good many diseased memories. For my own part, I have never been able to remember a single date, save that of the Battle of Hastings, for which a verse in Valpy's 'Chronology,'

In years one thousand and sixty-six
Since Christ in Bethlehem's manger lay,

gave me a particular clue ; and the year 1830, which has a special significance for me, as being the epoch in which (as I have been informed) I myself began to 'flourish.'

Cross-examination in a court of justice has always its terrors ; for what chance has even the most blameless life against the insinuations of a brutal and chartered slanderer ? but for me it would be destruction, since, though I remember the occurrence of things, I have not the slightest idea as to when they occurred ; not only within a week, or a month, or a year, but within a decade. Such a question as 'Now, on your oath, sir, was it not in May 1870 that you made the first attempt to poison your grandmother ?' would paralyse me at once. I should not only not know whether it was in May or March, but should be unable to indicate the date within ten years. The circumstance itself would no doubt recur to me on having my mental elbow thus brutally jogged, but as to when it took place, I should be powerless to help even my own counsel. If the judge insisted, he would have to take his choice between 1066 and 1830, and fix the month as he liked. There must be an immense number of people in the same unhappy position as myself in this respect, and I can't imagine what they do under such circumstances.

In a recent trial, some poor wretch subjected to this torture, which is really very similar to the old 'pressing to death,' produced in despair a diary. It was of course at once suggested that it was forged. Perhaps it was ; but who can blame him ? I can *imagine* dates myself, though I can never remember them. On the other hand, there are heaps of people who seem to remember nothing *but* dates. They forget the point of their stories altogether, but have all the chronological details at their fingers' ends, or thereabouts. 'It was in the autumn of 1846,' they begin, 'and rather late in the autumn : yes, it was in October, and severe weather for the time of year. 1847, as you no doubt remember (they turn to me for corroboration ; I gasp and nod), was particularly mild in its autumn,' &c. &c.

Good heavens! In what pigeon-holes in their minds do they keep such a fact as that, and why do they keep it? It is this sort of memory which, like a bad shilling, never leaves its possessor. Age cannot impair it, nor custom stale its infinite inutility. On the other hand, their memory upon other matters leaves them, as it leaves me, long before their legs. I have a relative who has so many nephews and nieces that she can't count them, and makes no effort to do so, but with whom the recollection of 1846 as distinguished from 1847 with its mild autumn is quite distinct. If an expectant juvenile comes to see her, he is welcomed cordially: 'My darling child, how well you are looking, and how good it is of you to come and see your old auntie!' Then after the cake and wine have been partaken of, and the two half-crowns in a piece of silver paper duly pocketed, she inquires with tender curiosity, 'And now, my dear, *who* are you?' I have not got to that stage yet myself, but that is what I am coming to.

People don't lose their memory all of a sudden, of course. The commencement of its failure is with the small cards of the plain suits: nobody (but your partner) thinks much of that; but when it comes to the large cards and the trumps, you had better sit out and content yourself with watching the play. Your own part in the game of whist (and of life) is over. Royal families (because perhaps in their case not to know folks is a slight, and therefore the art is worth cultivating) are said to have 'an extraordinary memory for faces.' I yield to no crowned head in Europe in this particular; I recognise with ease, but I cannot identify. A man's face, once seen, becomes familiar to me, but not necessarily welcome; I don't know whose it is. It may be my Lord Thingamy whom I was so gratified by meeting at What-d'ye-call-um's the other night, and who conversed so affably upon the weather; or it may be the young man who irons my hats at Lincoln and Bennett's; or it may be one of the club waiters out for a holiday. Or, again, I may connect a man's face with his individuality; know him for my friend or neighbour perfectly well; but his name escapes me. When one's friend asks to be introduced to another hitherto a stranger to him, and you can't do it for the life of you, on account of this temporary oblivion, it is very inconvenient. There have been occasions when I have forgotten them both; it is then necessary to put on an appearance of excessive *bon-homie*, clap them each on the back, and exclaim, 'You two know one another by name, of course;' and if they don't, it's unfortunate,

but not *my* fault. I can remember good stories; but, unless the persons of whom they are narrated are necessary to the jest, they are very apt to escape me.

There was one, with more humour than grace in it, told of a certain money-lender of the last generation. Finding myself after dinner next to a man very obnoxious to me, but whom, for my host's sake, I wished to treat civilly, I favoured him with this very anecdote; it was better, under these circumstances, than conversation, and, dull as he was, I felt it could not fail to tickle him. The effect was unmistakable, but it did not take the shape I expected. He grew graver and graver; his face became a bluish purple, and his eyes slowly pushed themselves out of his head. Then suddenly it flashed across me that the hero of this very funny, but not complimentary narrative, was his own father. 'Well,' he said in an awful voice, as I stopped short; 'what then?'

My brow was bedewed with horror, and I seemed to see sparks. 'My very dear sir,' I said, 'I am ashamed to say that I have drunk a little too much wine. I have clean forgotten how the story ended!' But I have not forgotten how near I was to telling it, nor shall I ever forget it.

That was an example of memory coming to the rescue indeed; but sometimes it arrives inopportunately. An old acquaintance of mine who lived in the days when George the Third was king, and had not a little to do with him, told me the following story. In those good old days a title of nobility was really worth something, and fetched a good round sum. My friend was the youthful assistant of a well-known gentleman, Major D., who dealt in such things; and an excellent living he made by them. He was 'attached to the person of His Majesty' (not without reason), and took advantage of his position to recommend his friends (and clients) to 'the fountain of honour,' who was far from being in good condition. He had still his wits about him, but not, like his lords, 'in waiting.' Sometimes he would sign anything in the most obliging manner, and sometimes refuse to stir a finger, and make the most embarrassing inquiries. The Major's business, therefore, though very lucrative when all things went right, was a speculative one, and exposed to considerable risks. One day there was a baronetcy 'on,' for which a celebrated maker of musical instruments had undertaken to pay handsomely, and the necessary parchment, duly drawn out, was laid before the king.

His royal eye, wandering aimlessly down the page, suddenly lit upon the name of the candidate for greatness—some Erard or Broadwood of that time—and it evoked a flash of memory. ‘You’re sure there’s no piano in it?’ he exclaimed suddenly. His Majesty, who was a great stickler for birth, and had a corresponding contempt for those who made their money by trade, was not to be trifled with in such a matter; and as there were a great many pianos in it, the two confederates had to hurriedly murmur, ‘We will make inquiries, sire,’ and roll up the patent. That little gleam of royal recollection cost the Major 5,000*l.*, his assistant, my informant, his fee, and the musical gentleman his baronetcy.

Judging from my own case, since some unlooked-for return of this departing attribute always delights my soul, the king himself must have been pleased. I can imagine him saying, ‘By jingo! I remembered *that*, though;’ and reflecting that he was not so very old after all. Unhappily there is little comfort to be drawn from such occasional resuscitations. It is only that ‘the shadow feared of man’ has had his attention withdrawn from us for the moment (probably to some more advanced case), and forgets to beckon with that inexorable finger. It is no use to fight against the ebbing wave; yet how some people do fight!

I was once dining with a friend who had one other guest, whom I will call B. This gentleman, after dinner, became extraordinarily eloquent upon the agreeable qualities of a certain Mr. C., who, according to his account, had been imported from Cornwall to London solely for his conversational qualities. ‘His stories,’ he said, ‘are simply inimitable.’

‘I suppose they are Cornish stories,’ observed our host, who, as a denizen of Pall Mall, did not much believe, perhaps, in provincial celebrities.

‘Not at all,’ replied B. indignantly; ‘they are English stories.’ This statement, which suggested that we had thought the stories were in old Cornish—an extinct dialect—tickled me immensely; but, being a very well behaved individual, I devoted myself to the biscuits and kept my eyes on the table.

‘And have you heard any of these admirable narratives?’ inquired our host.

‘Yes; lots.’ It struck me that the word ‘lots’ sounded suspiciously like ‘lotsh;’ but yet it was impossible to imagine B. intoxicated: he not only looked as sober as a judge, but he *was*

a judge (though, it is true, only a colonial one), and, though of heavy build and dignified movement, he seemed the last sort of person to be overtaken by liquor.

I think our host noticed that something was amiss, for he said, 'Won't you take any more wine?' and half rose from his chair as if to adjourn to the smoking-room. 'Let me drink this first,' said B. with judicial gravity, 'before we think of any more. That was a speech,' he added with a confidential smile, 'that was made by the old dean of something or another to his host when he wanted to get him away to the ladies.' Our host hastened to explain that he had no such end in view; nor indeed was it possible, since we were dining at a club, which does not admit the other sex; and, since he found himself in for it, returned, rather wickedly, as I thought, to the Cornishman and his stories.

'Perhaps, my dear B., you will be so good as to tell us one.'

'By all means; I will. It is not the best of them perhaps; but it will give you an idea of his style.' Then he began. I say he began; but in point of fact he never left off beginning. There was an innkeeper, and a smuggler, and a miner, and the first hint of a wreck, but they were mere skeletons. The Cornish gentleman's style, if it *was* his style, was certainly tedious. It was like drawing an immense map of an unknown country for our instruction, without so much as a post town in it. I did not dare look up from my plate. I felt myself on the verge of an apoplectic fit through suppressed laughter, and I knew that my host was suffering the same inconvenience; he was much fatter, and of necessity touched the table, which gently shook in sympathy with his inward agonies. Suddenly the judge ceased in the middle of a sentence, and then, as ill luck would have it, my host's foot (he was stretching his legs for a momentary relief to the mental tension) touched my own. Then we both burst out into inextinguishable mirth. For my part I could not have avoided it had B. been the Pope. What added to my hilarity was the desperate efforts of our host to apologise, which, themselves interrupted by spasms of laughter on his own part, were received by B. with imperturbable gravity. He did not give one the impression of being annoyed at all, but merely as biding his time for some full and complete explanation. At last his opportunity arrived. 'I am aware,' he said, 'my good friends, that I have somehow forgotten the point of what I give you my honour is a most interesting story, but *give me one more chance.*'

Anything more pathetic I never heard. It reduced our mirth to sober limits at once, and then he began again. As I live by bread (and little else) the innkeeper, the smuggler, the miner, and the first hint of the wreck that never was to come off, were all planned out again, and he came to a full stop precisely and exactly at the same moment as before. I don't know what powers of narration the Cornish gentleman really did possess, but I am quite certain that no 'twice-told tale' of his or any other person ever evoked such rapturous delight in his hearers as that story twice begun and never finished. The judge is knighted and sitting thousands of miles away presiding over his dusky court; but I seem to see him now, imperturbable, bland, and modestly pleading, 'Give me one more chance.' He had confidence in his memory, though it was misplaced.

I remember an equally droll example of a gentleman who knew himself better. His name was O'Halleron, the greatest talker I ever knew, and with an earnestness and vigour in his tones which, unless you knew him, you would have thought must needs be accompanied by truth. Our host had started some subject on which the other at once became amazingly eloquent. It reminded him, he said, of an anecdote that had occurred to him in Paris (with ever so many *r*'s) and which was calculated to make us die of laughing; yet after a burst of about twenty minutes he seemed just as far off the anecdote as when he began. Of course I was all attention and politeness—a circumstance which, though I hope not uncommon, appeared to tickle my host extremely.

'You amuse me immensely,' he said, cutting off the other's flow of talk at the very main, as it were, by addressing me with grave directness. 'You don't know my friend here, or you would not be in such a creditable state of expectation. O'Halleron begins all right, you know—his intentions are honourable enough—but after the first few minutes he altogether forgets what it was he purposed to talk about. At this very moment he has not the very faintest idea where he started from, or where he is going to.'

As there was an awkward pause, during which the conversationist turned exceedingly red, I hastened to interpose.

'I am quite sure,' I said, with a courteous air, 'that Mr. O'Halleron knows perfectly well what anecdote he was about to tell us.'

'Begad, I don't, though,' said O'Halleron; 'I've forgotten all about it.'

He was, it seemed, perfectly aware of the loss of his memory, and had learnt, not indeed to do without it, but to use some substitute of imagination or fancy, just as, when one has but one leg, one gets a thing of cork and wires, instead of flesh and blood, to supply its place.

In the scientific treatises on the failure of memory, some very curious specific examples are given. Thus one gentleman could never retain any conception of words beginning with the letter D (such as his debts for instance); while with another the figure 5 had utterly lost its significance.¹ This latter catastrophe would be serious to a whist player, since he would never know when he had won a game; but otherwise the blank seems endurable. What would be much more curious would be the losing sight of number one, which, however, up to our last moments (and indeed in those especially) is never forgotten.

Of course there are exceptions as regards this first hint of mental decay. It is even stoutly asserted by some persons that the loss of memory arises merely from disuse. It is only, they argue, in youth, in most cases, that we attempt to learn things 'by heart' at all, while, when we grow old, we delegate the duty of remembrance to others. If we kept it up, the faculty would not desert us. A corroboration of this pleasant theory is found in Mr. Samuel Brandram, who, though not apparently in his *première jeunesse*, exhibits a stupendousness of recollection infinitely more marvellous, because accompanied by the acutest perception, than that of the most Calculating Boy. One of my favourite nightmares—I have a whole stud of them—is to dream that I am standing before a distinguished audience, including Her Majesty and the Royal Family, who are awaiting a reading from Shakespeare without book; the indispensable glass of water is on the table with which I just moisten my lips, and then when I attempt to open them I find it has been a draught of Lethe. Every word of what I came to say has fled from my mind. I gasp and tremble; everybody becomes excited and impatient: in vain I attempt to conciliate them by offering to state accurately and offhand the date of the Battle of Hastings. There is a sort of O. P. riot, the distinguished audience rise *en masse*, tear up the benches, and make for me in the order of precedence; I wake in a paroxysm of terror, and—instantly forget all about it.

¹ Hence, perhaps, the origin of the term 'spoilt five,' the meaning of which I could never understand.

MY TIGER WATCH.



I AM not a 'practised' writer, but I can promise one thing, that the account I am going to give of the night I spent in the jungle at Gunnapoorum in the early part of last May shall not be strictly false, as Indian stories are usually supposed to be, but shall be as true as my best efforts and memory can make it.

I had been in India six months and had shot four tigers at the time I found myself encamped near the village of Gunnapoorum, about

four miles from the particular part of the jungle in which the resident shikarri reported tigers, and my head man Barlão (Hindustani for Bear), after an exploring round with him, came to the conclusion that there were no fewer than three full-grown beasts, namely tiger, tigress, and cub, infesting the forest. Tracks there certainly were of one tigress—a deep oval footmark, betokening a heavy female, and of one male, a square—but whether the old gentleman were or were not still in residence was doubtful. Barlão thought yes; I thought no, and I was supported in my opinion by my younger shikarri, Seib, and by the villagers. I must state that what gave rise to the question was the difficulty of judging from prints or 'pughs' in the extremely soft deep sand, as in this even the velvet-footed tiger sinks deeply at every step, without leaving a clear-cut impression, the marks varying so much in size with the nature of the sand as to require a most practised tracker to decide whether they had been made by a young or old animal, or by both. There could be no doubt about the mother and son, but the wise men of the East could not agree about the presence of the Paterfamilias.

Well, it was no use beating that jungle, for the forest was so dense down to the very brink of the broad river-bed which wound through it that no beaters would have been of the slightest use; so it was a case of a night-watch and making my bag by moonlight.

Luckily there was moonlight, a bright full moon, or I should have been reduced to a hole in the ground, so as to have been on a level with my prey, and see his outline against the sky-line; and a platform is pleasanter every way than a hole in the ground. Accordingly the platform was got ready during the day, and was a rudely constructed enough affair apparently, though in reality so artfully and scientifically designed that not even Pussy could have distinguished it from the surrounding mass of foliage, unless her attention had been attracted by an unwary movement; and so it admirably served its purpose of concealing me from the sharp eyes of the most suspicious brute in the world. Catch old Stripes come near my bullock if he thought 'a shooting-iron' was anywhere about! So I was up about ten feet from the ground, till he should have got to work on the remains of the buffalo, and then it would be my turn to get to work on him.

It was late in the afternoon before all our arrangements were perfect, and tying up a succulent young heifer by the foreleg a few yards out in the river-bed, we kicked the sand over our foot-marks and vanished from the spot for the night, and returned to camp, fervently hoping that some one or other of the tiger family would appreciate the supper we had prepared with so much pains.

At nine o'clock the next morning we anxiously returned and examined the spot. The river-bed was dry at this time of the year, except here and there where a pool or two of water still lay, and these were well trodden down by game of many kinds. These, of course, had not drunk together, nor even at the same pool. Of heavy game we saw fresh tracks of bear, panther, and, what delighted us more than all, the 'pughs' of the tigress and cub. Of smaller game we found traces of pig, cheetah, the latter a graceful deer, and the tiny jungle-sheep—these had all taken their evening draught at one pool, and to it a very small panther had also made his way, after they had retreated, fortunately for them. Two bears had enjoyed some cool water from a pool under a large rock, while the tigers had both favoured the upper and larger pool, and had evidently luxuriated there, rolling and stretching themselves in the cool sand for some moments before they noticed our dainty provision for their supper.

Evidence was clear, as if written in a book or beheld with the eye, of what a tragedy had taken place the night before in that lonely forest.

The tigers had been drinking and amusing themselves, when all at once they had caught sight of the unfortunate buffalo, and at that moment that buffalo's days, not to say minutes, had been numbered.

They had gone for him. They had raced over the intervening ninety yards at full speed, for the light sand had spurned from their feet as they had galloped, and then there had been one simultaneous bound, for the sand was not disturbed, and the footprints ceased about eighteen or nineteen feet from the buffalo, with deeply indented marks where they had driven their feet in for the last tremendous spring, no more being visible until they reappeared round the carcase.

A hunter is never satisfied. I would have willingly resigned my two next tigers to have seen with my own eyes those two terrible leaps in the moonlight, and to have heard the woods echo with those two deep short roars that must have rung through them the night before.

As is very often the case, but little of the 'kill' had been eaten, so there was every prospect of my having a successful vigil during the night, with the undevoured portion as a bait. I ought to obtain a good chance from my platform, as, from whatever direction the brutes came, they would be clear of overhanging branches when they approached the remains of buffalo, which, having been fastened by the leg to a stump, had not been dragged away.

I was not to be alone on the watch, as Seib, an awfully smart young fellow, was anxious to see the sport; and shikarries don't care a straw for the devils of the jungle, which are such a terror to the ordinary villager that, as a rule, except in large parties, no native will face after dark the supernatural mysterious haunts of the tiger, infested as they are with gruesome, unexplained, and unearthly noises. These are attributed to devils, and every now and then in the depths of the forest you come across a devil-tree, hung with yellow flowers, daubed with red paint and whitewash, while in front is generally a small stone altar with a few trident or spear heads planted in the ground round it. No native would go alone near one of these devil-trees at night to save his life.

Seib, however, was above all such frivolities, and, full of anticipations of a bag, we set off shortly before sunset, each of us

carrying a woollen blanket, which, being spread over the branches of our 'machan' or platform, minimised the chance of our causing any accidental noise in the slight movements I might be obliged to make while aiming.

For tigers I always used a five hundred Express, built by Joseph Lang, and good old Joseph has never failed me yet.

I had often suffered from thirst during a long night-watch, as the suppressed excitement at moments when your very breathing seems audible parches the mouth dreadfully, so I always provided myself with a gourd of good water, wrapped round with wet straw, which keeps it cool. On our arrival at the 'machan,' everything was as we had left it in the morning, and but a few moments sufficed for us to establish ourselves comfortably in our ambush. Then came the sound of the 'tom-tom' from the distant village announcing sunset, and that was our last tie to humanity for the night.

The darkness came on sharp—it never takes long over that in India—and the remains of the buffalo showed conspicuously in the bright yellow sand in front of us.

It was a lovely spot. I see it now. There was the long course of the river stretching away to the left and right, like a golden road cut through the glorious depths of the dense, grand, lonely forest, lit up by the bright clear light of the moon, which rose about an hour after sunset, one side in blackest shadow of the gigantic trees which hung over its very edge, and here and there a grim cape vividly standing out where a monster had overbalanced, torn up his roots in the soft sand, and fallen; while far in the distance peeped forth the ruddy glow of a smouldering trunk, denoting where the charcoal-burners had been during the day.

But I said I could not write, and neither can I; so if you will just try and think of the place, I will get on to the tiger.

For some time we had nothing to do but keep quiet, watch this beautiful scene, and listen to the jungle-cocks chuckling and calling to each other, the rustle of the lizards creeping in and out of the dry twigs and grass, and the hum, and whistle, and whirr of the swarming insect-life. These are the sounds one always hears in an Indian forest at night, but there are many others which seem to steal unconsciously on the senses, without being noticed, the charm of which must be personally experienced, since no words can express it.

A slight breeze stirred through the trees at intervals, and the

falling of a dead branch, or the creaking of a sapling, was the only louder sound which broke the stillness; for all beasts, except bears, have such excellent reasons for moving silently, that a footfall is very seldom heard, and they take precious good care not to make any noise by snapping of twigs or disturbing of the foliage, which might either betray their presence to enemies or scare their quarry.

In the hush of expectancy we had sat there some two hours, straining our eyes to pierce the gloom of the jungle opposite, and our ears to catch the least warning sound of the approach of our expectant visitor or visitors, and wondering whether, or how soon, and from what quarter, *he* or *she* or *they* would appear, when there came three or four times the short, sharp clear coughing bark of a spotted buck about half a mile down the river to our right. How anxiously we waited to see if those signals were answered! Had they been so, the buck might merely have been calling to another of its own species; but no, they were not answered, and not repeated more than two or three times, each time being fainter and fainter. It was not a call, it was a warning cry; something had disturbed that cheetah; it might be anything; but as Seib and I exchanged glances, we knew that it might also be that the breeze in that part of the forest bore the taint of a—tiger.

How long or how short a time after this it might have been before anything happened, I cannot say; it seemed an age, it may have been but a few minutes. It seemed all silent enough as Seib and I sat there, but by-and-by we found it getting—silenter. The chipper of the jungle-cocks died away, one little sound after another ceased, there was not a breath stirring; even the hum of the insects seemed—but of course it was not so—to get fainter; even they seemed—but of course they didn't—to know something was going to happen.

About forty yards down the river a small bird fluttered away, with an angry chirp. A pause; and then I caught the slightest sound in the world—it was barely audible, the whistle of a dead leaf fluttering to the ground would have made more noise, but it was unmistakably *it*—the firm stealthy tread of a tiger. Only one footfall, but we both had been expecting it too intently for either to miss it. Seib and I looked at each other. The sound was close by; the beast was within a few yards of us; and we knew the brute was listening as hard as we for the least sound—

the crack of a twig, a gust of wind from us to our right, and all would have been lost; but, no; we were in luck. A few minutes, and my companion touched my knee, his other hand was pressed to his open mouth, his whole face gleamed with excitement, as out from the gloom, about twenty yards off, down the river to our right, glided forth the vilest-looking tigress I have ever seen; she halted about five yards from the banks, and looked back over her shoulder, then gazed intently at the buffalo, and, apparently satisfied, walked swiftly up to it. There was an indescribably hideous beauty about her, which can be but faintly expressed by the word tigress. Involuntarily I began to think of the witch of Endor—in moments of extraordinary excitement one does have extraordinary thoughts—and, as she passed in front of us, her long, lank, soft, flexible outline showing every motion in the still moonlight, she looked the very incarnation of malice.

Usually a tiger is very qualmish, and usually, ere he will fairly begin to gorge or kill, looks perpetually over his shoulder as he creeps along, stops, listens, glaring about in every direction with his great fierce eyes, and will, even after beginning, often take a survey round or make a considerable circuit ere he returns to the spot and falls to in earnest. More than once I had had to wait for this second and real first course to begin before I was satisfied with my chance; for it is only a chance in night shooting at the best, and I never but once found myself at fault in so doing, of which more anon, but I am satisfied I did right to wait even that time, nevertheless. The old girl in front of me, however, was an 'unsophisticated creature,' and as no one had shot in this jungle before—as far as I could learn, at least—there was some excuse for her being less wary than others of her species who live in the more easily reached jungles in India. There she was, lying on her chest, within a few inches of the 'kill,' while my rifle was lying ready across my knees, but the moment had not yet arrived for me to use it. Anxiously I watched her through my field-glasses; if I could only bag her, how jolly it would be! She was awfully old and skinny, lean, anxious and haggard looking, with wrinkled lines all down her cheeks; but she was cheerful enough under present influences, and a soft purring noise soon gave intimation that everything was entirely to madam's satisfaction, and that she intended to make a good 'square meal,' without troubling her head about anybody, and would be obliged by having no interruptions.

This watching a wild beast following its own inclinations, totally unconscious of the presence of a human enemy, constitutes one of the greatest attractions of the jungle, and for this reason I generally watched alone; willingly would I now have put off firing longer than was necessary, but I was mortally afraid of some accident sending off the tigress, as the chances of this were of course doubled by having my young shikarri with me; so the moment I



heard the bones crunch, I shouldered my rifle silently, and aimed point-blank for the shoulder.

It is impossible to see the fore sight of your rifle at night, whatever expedients you may adopt, such as luminous paint, a ball of cotton wool, &c., so you have to aim point-blank as best you can. A second sufficed to get a true line, and the next instant the merry music of the Express rang out clear and sharp.

The smoke hung in front of me, preventing my seeing the result, and I had then to wait in the keenest anxiety for the rush through the bushes, which it was fifty to one would be the next sound heard, if the tigress had been missed, or only wounded, no matter how severely. However, the next moment freed me from anxiety, as Seib saw, before the smoke floated in front of him, that my shot had taken effect, and that the tigress had sunk on her side. Almost at once the smoke cleared, and I need scarcely say that I looked anxiously at the spot, but I was horrified to see nothing; for it was several moments before I could distinguish her yellow skin from the sand, now that her form cast no shadow. However, Seib, whose sharp eyesight soon spotted her white belly, pointed her out, and I instantly covered her with my second barrel, in case she should revive and rush off, as tigers often do after they have recovered from the first shock of a mortal wound. But this was unnecessary; she never stirred again, for, as we afterwards found, the bullet had broken her neck.

Need I say how pleased I was at the result of that lucky shot, or describe the delight which took the place of excitement in Seib's face—such a contrast to the disgust it would have expressed if I had missed? Had the brute even been severely wounded, the tracking next day would have been more than usually hazardous, owing to the height and density of the underwood in the jungle. However, all had been right this time and no mistake. There she lay on her side, and mightily did Seib rejoice.

So we had 'pocketed' the tigress, and as we smoked together, my companion and I eagerly discussed our prospects of getting the cub and even the old tiger which Barläo had maintained existed in the vicinity. The thing was, would the cub come this evening? As I said before, we did not agree with Barläo, so the old tiger did not enter into our calculations; but the question was, how about the cub? Was there a chance of him? We did not think we had a chance, and imagined that nothing would induce that wily rogue to draw near to the grisly spot where his mother so involuntarily reclined; and as, however joyous a spectacle she might be to us, stretched out there full length in the gleaming moonshine, he could not be expected to see it in the same light, we made up our minds that our night's task was done, and that, having finished our smoke, we could draw our blankets round us and snooze till break of day.

But no, better luck was in store; the smoke was done; Seib

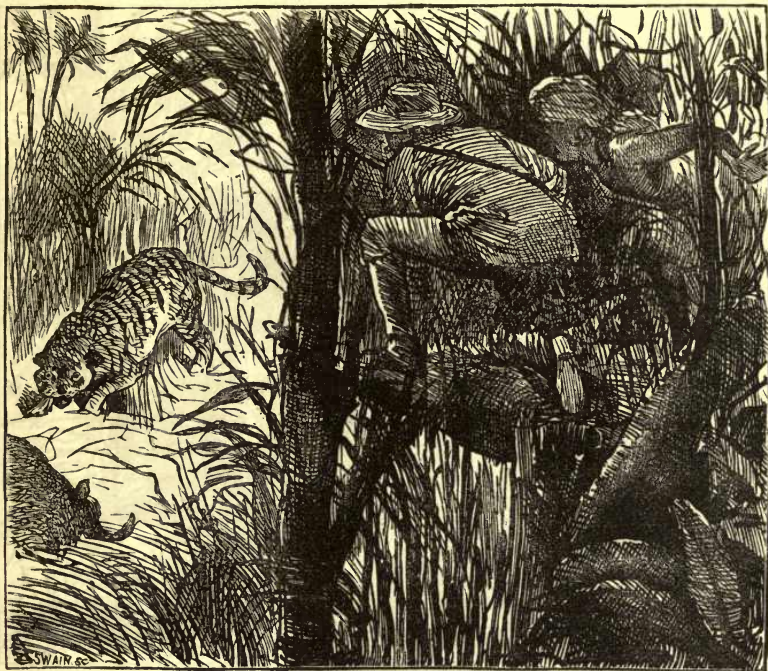
had curled himself up, and I was about to follow his example, when we heard a sound never to be forgotten when once heard—the ‘wooaugh-augh’ of a tiger’s call, but pitched in a whining, plaintive, interrogative tone. It came from the brushwood not fifty yards off, and, alert in a moment, we waited, hoping against hope. Seib remained motionless as a stone, wrapped up in his rug, for, like all natives on going to sleep, he had drawn the blanket up over his head; he knew better than to stir at so critical a moment, and had to remain lying down; but I fortunately was still sitting up; my rifle, too, was in position, as I had left it on my knees when I had put in a fresh cartridge, so I was all right for the next move on the board. There could be no doubt about it; there the cub was, within a stone’s throw. It was most unlikely, at least we should have said previously that it was most unlikely, that a tiger would approach the dead body of one of its own species under the circumstances; and the chances, every shikarri would have agreed, were at least twenty to one that as soon as he saw—and doesn’t he *see*? he is not like a bear or an elephant; he sees *everything*—that, as soon as he saw the corpse, he would vanish without further ado, and start a household on his own hook.

So we should all have said, but those two calls were affectionate ones, not suspicious nor angry. Then, the jungle had never been shot before, as I said earlier; and the tigress had fallen in a natural position on her side, as we often see large dogs or cats lie in the sun with their legs straight out; and above all she had died without a sound; we had also been very cautious in talking and in keeping our hands round the glowing part of our tobacco, to prevent its being seen, as, though we expected nothing, a hunter depends upon chances for sport—so we yet hoped.

There was a dead silence for about five minutes, and the next sound was an impatient ‘Woogh!’ as if all the wind in the brute’s body had been driven forcibly through its open jaws, and then—I began to despair. But our star was still in the ascendant, and a few seconds after, this is what that cub did. Appearing about ten yards lower down the river than his mother had done when she first broke cover, he proceeded to walk with a careless unconcerned step towards the spot where she lay. What he could have made of the shot which killed her I cannot imagine, unless he took it for thunder, there having been one or two storms in this jungle shortly before.

He merely glanced at the tigress—perhaps her easy position misled him into the belief that she slumbered—and having passed her by, as unworthy of notice, he now gave his full attention to the buffalo, smelling him cautiously.

It was no time for hesitation, nor watching him with glasses. Any moment might bring the conviction of its being no sleep which had overpowered her, so I aimed as quickly as possible, and blazed.



Seib was up in an instant, but again we had to await the dispersion of the smoke.

It was not long clearing away, and there lay the new-comer, a pace or two behind the other! Only once I saw him raise his head, when I very nearly fired, but expecting him momentarily to be up and bounding away, I paused, in the hope of obtaining a more certain shot. There was no need for it. The head sank down again; it had been the poor cub's final effort.

Seib's cry of joy assured me that there could be no doubt of my good luck.

‘Dead! Dead! Two tigers with two bullets, master sahib; very great sahib; very good shikarri,’ said he, as he made a low salaam.

I longed to be down examining the spoil, but my companion held me impressively back, urging a safety shot to make doubly sure.

Accordingly I fired once more, though I was sorry for it afterwards, as I found my first bullet had torn the beast’s heart in



such a way that it could never have stood again, and my second shot, being a bad one in the stomach, had merely made an unnecessary hole in the skin.

Still, the more prudent shikarri objected to my going within reach of either of the tigers, and I knew him to be right; but I longed to be down examining the spoil, as I said before, touching them, handling them, finding out how they had been hit, &c.; so I waited till my companion should nap off, for there would be no more sleep for *me* that night, and then I meant to be down beside the slain animals.

Meantime I watched the two beauties lying there side by side. What a size they looked, with their limbs stretched out, and the cub's tail curling gracefully over his back, their huge carcasses relaxed, and their great heads pillowed on the sand!

My good fortune seemed scarcely credible, and as soon as the shikarri fairly slumbered, down I slipped from the platform.

It was all right; there was no fear of a slap in the face; those mighty paws would never stir a joint again.

All round us was still as death. It was past midnight, and the weird solemnity of the scene made it desperately exciting and 'kind of awful.'

I did not mind it, but I wished I could be doing something more. There was nothing now to be done, but to pat, and stroke, and look at the two great furred bodies; and so there I stood, patting, and stroking, and looking.

I was recalled to myself by a very slight movement in the edge of the opposite forest, and remembering what old Barläo had said about a third tiger, and knowing that if there really were one, he would probably be not far off, I thought it advisable to return to the 'machan' while all was well; but feeling restless and pretty confident that even if there were another Stripes he would not show himself that night, I woke up Seib, and we returned to the village about two o'clock in the morning, and sent a couple of bullock carts for the trophies. They arrived soon after dawn, and proved to be a fine pair; the cub, being a male, measured two inches more than the tigress, although she was a remarkably long one.

Old Barläo was as pleased as I was at our success, and accompanied me back to the 'machan' the next morning. After a careful examination of the opposite bank, he found the fresh marks of a third tiger, and triumphantly pointed them out. They were close to the spot where I had heard a movement on the previous night, while examining the tigress and cub; so I may have unconsciously had an escape.

I watched the following night with Seib, in the hope of his putting in an appearance, but we saw nothing of him, though we found by his tracks that the wily old scamp had had his evening drink at a pool a long way down the river.

Barläo had made me promise I would give him three chances, so for the third time I ascended the 'machan,' and at about eleven o'clock sure enough he came, walking under the shadow of the

opposite bank, whence he emerged when exactly opposite the bait, which on this occasion was a live buffalo, and a queer time that buffalo had of it. I don't think he will want to go through his experiences again. The tiger approached, looked at him, stared at him, grinned at him. The buffalo, tied up as he was by the leg, turned himself round and round, faced his ghastly visitor, and returned the stare idiotically; and thus the two continued for some moments. It was the most weird and at the same time the most ludicrous sight it has ever been my lot to witness. The horror of it was greatly increased by the deathly silence, neither beast making the slightest sound, though, on first catching sight of the tiger, the buffalo had emitted a few melancholy croaks.

I waited in vain for my shot; he would not expose his shoulder, and he would not demolish his friend. After a pensive survey, lasting perhaps a minute and a half, he quietly turned away and pursued his blameless path at a walk, looking from time to time with a rueful grin over his shoulder at an acquaintance with whom he so reluctantly parted. Then, as soon as he got near the edge of the forest opposite, he broke into a trot, and disappeared from our view, though not to that of the buffalo, who followed the retreating form with his eyes long after it had become lost to us in the shadow.

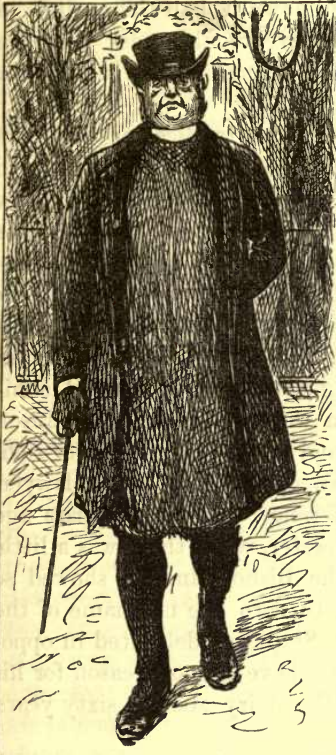
That was the last I ever saw of that tiger, though I sat up two other nights on the chance of his return; and, as usual when one loses a tiger, he appeared the biggest I had ever come across.

For some time after his retreat we confidently expected a return, but probably he did not even remain in the neighbourhood, as the philosophical buffalo presently lay down to rest.

Finding no fresh tiger 'pughs,' I changed my quarters after a day or two for other hunting grounds, and with good luck, though I did not again have the fortune to kill two tigers in one night.

Their skins and heads, together with those of eight others, I brought to England a few weeks ago.

KING PEPIN AND SWEET CLIVE.



PON arriving at the middle of the Close the Dean stopped. He had been walking briskly, his chin from very custom a little tilted, but his eyes beaming with condescension and general goodwill, while an indulgent smile playing about the lower part of his face relieved for the time its massive character. His walking-stick was swinging to and fro in a loose grasp, his feet trod the pavement of the precincts with the step of an owner, he felt the warmth of the sun, the balminess of the spring air dimly, and somewhere at the back of his mind he was conscious of a vacant bishopric, and of his being the husband of one wife. In fine, he presented the appearance of a contented, placid, unruffled dignitary, until he reached the middle of the Close.

But there, alas! the ferule of his stick came to the ground with a mighty thud; the sweetness and light faded from his eyes as they rested upon Mr. Swainson's plot; the condescension and good-will became conspicuous only by their absence. The Dean was undisguisedly angry; he disliked opposition as much as lesser men, and met with it more rarely. For Bicester is old-fashioned, and loves the Church and State, but especially the former, and looks up to principalities and powers, and even now execrates the memory of a recreant Bicesterian, otherwise reputable, on account of a terrible mistake he made. It was at a public dinner. 'I remember,' said this misguided man, 'going in my young days to the old and beautiful

cathedral of this city. (Great applause.) I was only a child then, and my head hardly reached above the top of the seat, but I remember I thought the Dean the greatest of living men. (Whirlwinds of applause.) Well (smiling) perhaps I don't think quite that now.' (Dead silence.) And so dull at bottom may even a man be whose name is not unknown in half the capitals of Europe, that this degenerate fellow never could guess why the friends of his youth from that moment turned their backs upon him.

Such is the faith of Bicester, but even in Bicester there are heretics. To say that the Dean rarely met with opposition, is to say that he rarely met with Mr. Swainson, and that he seldom saw Mr. Swainson's plot. As a rule, when he crossed the Close he averted his eyes by a happy impulse of custom, for he did not like Mr. Swainson, and as for the latter's plot, it was *anathema maranatha* to him. The Dean was tall, Mr. Swainson was taller; the Dean was stubborn, Mr. Swainson was obstinate; so there arose between them the antagonism that is born of similarity. On the other hand the Dean was stout and Mr. Swainson a scarecrow; the Dean was comely and clerical, but not over-rich, Mr. Swainson was pallid, lantern-jawed, wealthy, and a lawyer, and hence the dislike born of difference. Moreover, years ago Mr. Swainson had been Mayor of Bicester, when there was a little dispute between the Chapter and the Bishop, and he showed so much energy upon the one side as to earn the nickname of the 'Mayor of the Palace.' Finally Mr. Swainson delighted in opposition as a cat in milk, and cared to have a good reason for his antagonism no more than puss in the dairy about a sixty years' title to the cream-pan.

But a sixty years' title to his plot was the very thing which Mr. Swainson did claim to have. Exactly opposite his house—his father's and grandfather's house, too—in which, said his enemies, they had lived and grown fat upon cathedral patronage, lay this debateable land. His front windows commanded it, and on such a morning as this he loved to stand upon his doorstep and gaze at it with the air of a dog watching the spot where his bone is buried. But if Mr. Swainson was right, that was just what was not buried there; there were no bones there. True, the smoothly shorn surface of the little patch was divided from the green turf around the cathedral only by a slight iron railing, but, said Mr. Swainson, ponderously seizing upon his opponent's

weapon and using it with telling effect, it was of another sort altogether: of a very different nature indeed. It had never been consecrated, and close as it was to the sacred pile, being in fact separated from it on two sides but by a yard of sunk fence, it did not belong to it, it was not of it, quoth he; it was private property, the property of Erasmus John Swainson, and the appanage of his substantial red-brick house just across the Close.

And no one could refute him, though several tried their best, to his huge delight. It cannot now be exactly computed by how many years the discovery of his rights prolonged his life—not certainly by some. His liver demanded activity, namely a quarrel, and what a coil this was! If he had been given the choice of opponents, he would probably have preferred the Dean and Chapter, they were so substantial, wealthy, and all but formidable. And such a thorn in the side of those comfortable personages as these rights of his were like to be he could hardly have imagined in his most sanguine dreams, or hoped for in his happiest moments.

It was great fun stating his claim, flouting it in their faces, displaying it through the city, brandishing it in season and out of season; but when it came to making a hole in the smooth turf hitherto so sacred, and setting up an unsightly post, and affixing to it a board with 'Trespassers will be prosecuted. E. J. Swainson,' the fun became furious. So did the Dean, so did the Chapter, so did every sidesman and verger. Bicester was torn in pieces by the contending parties, but Mr. Swainson was firm. The only concession that could be wrung from him was the removal of the obnoxious board. Instead of it he placed a neat iron railing round his property, enclosing just thirty feet by fifteen. Such was the *status in quo* on this morning, and with it the Dean had for some time been obliged to rest content.

And yet, sooth to say, the greatest pleasure of the very reverend gentleman's life was gone with this accession to the roundness and fulness of Mr. Swainson's. No more with the thorough satisfaction of hitherto could he conduct the American traveller through the ancient crypt, or dilate upon the beauty of the quaint gargoyles to the Marquis of Bicester's visitors. No; indeed that railed-in spot was a plague-spot to him, ever itching, an eyesore even when invisible, a thing to be evaded and dodged and given the slip, as a Dean who is a Dean should scorn to evade anything mortal. He winced at the mere thought that the inquisitive sight-

seer might touch upon it, might probe the matter with questions. He hurried him past it with averted finger and voluble tongue, nor recovered his air of kindly condescension, or polished ease (as the case might be), until he was safe within his own hall. Only in moments of forgetfulness could the Dean now walk in his own Close of Bicester with the easy grace of old times.

But on this particular morning the sunshine was so pleasant, the wind so balmy, that he walked halfway across the Close as if the river of Lethe flowed fathoms deep over Mr. Swainson's plot; then it chanced that his eyes in a heedless moment rested upon it; and he saw that a man was at work in the tiny enclosure, and he paused. The Dean knew Mr. Swainson by this time, and did not trust him. What was this? By the man's side lay a small heap of greyish-white things, and he was holding a short-handled mallet, and was using it deftly to drive one of the greyish-white things into the ground. From him the Dean's eyes travelled to a couple of parti-coloured sticks, one at each end of the plot. What was this? A horror so terrible that the Dean stood still, and that remarkable change came over him which we have described.

Great men rise to the occasion. It was only a moment he thus stood and looked. Then he turned and walked rapidly back to a house he had just passed. A tall thin man was standing upon the steps, with the ghost of a smile upon his face. For a moment the Dean could only stammer. It was such a dreadful outrage.

'Is that,' he said at last, 'is that there, sir, being done by your authority?' With a shaking finger he pointed to Mr. Swainson's plot. The tall man in a leisurely manner settled a pair of eye-glasses upon his nose and looked in the direction indicated. 'Ah, I see what you mean,' he said at last with delicious coolness. 'Certainly, Mr. Dean, certainly!'

'Are you aware, sir, what it is?' gasped the clergyman; 'it is sacrilege!'

'Pooh, nothing of the kind, I assure you, my dear sir. It's croquet!'

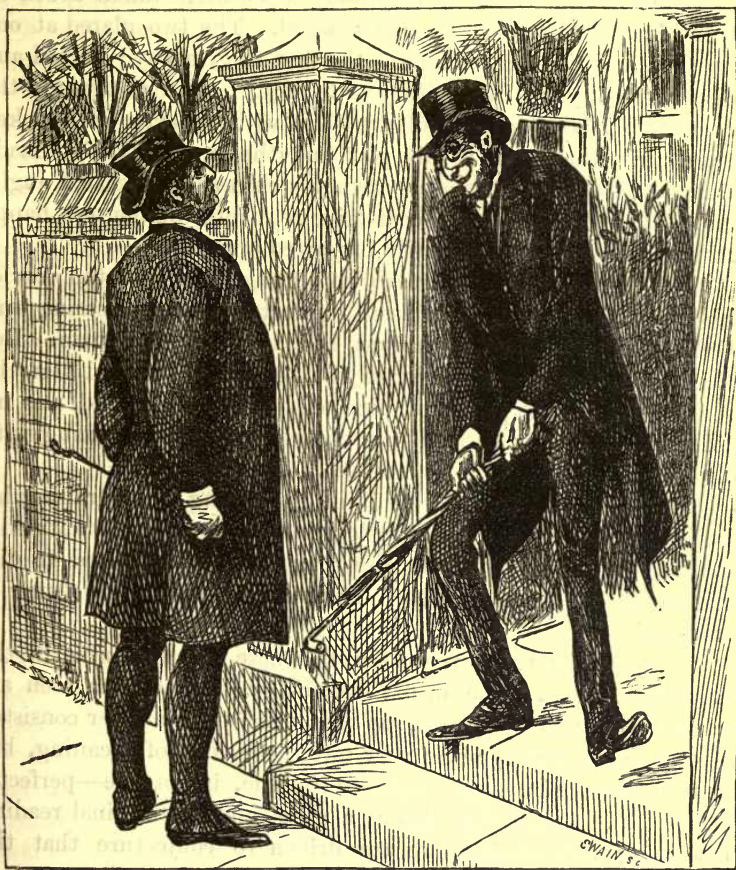
The tone was one of explanation, and there was such an air of frankness, of putting an end to an unfounded error, that the veins upon the Dean's temples swelled and his face grew, if possible, redder than before.

'I won't stay to bandy words with you——'

'Bandy!' cried the tall man, intensely amused. 'Ha, ha, ha!'

you thought it was hocky! Bandy! Oh, no, you play it with hoops and a mallet. Drive the balls through—so!

And to the intense delight of the Close people, nine-tenths of whom were at their windows, Mr. Swainson executed an ungainly kind of gambade upon the steps. 'Disgusting,' the Dean called



it afterwards, when talking to sympathetic ears. Now he merely put it away from him with a wave of the hand.

'I will not discuss it now, Mr. Swainson. If your own feelings of decency and of what is right and proper do not forbid this—this ribald profanity—I can call it nothing else, sir—I have but one word to add. The Chapter shall prevent it.'

'The Chapter!' replied the other in a tone of singular contempt, which changed to savageness as he continued, 'you are well read in history, Mr. Dean, they tell me. Doubtless you remember what happened when the puissant king Canute bade the tide come no further. I am the tide, and you and the Chapter sit in the chair of Canute.'

The Dean, it must be confessed, was a little taken aback by this terrible defiance. He was amazed. The two glared at one another, and the clergyman was the first to give way; baffled and disconcerted, yet still swelling with rage, he strode towards the deanery. His antagonist followed him with his eyes, then looked more airily than ever at his plot and the progress being made there, considered the weather with his chin at the decanal angle, and with a flirt of his long coat-tails went into the house, a happy man and the owner of a vastly improved appetite.

But the Dean had more to go through yet. At the door of his garden he ran in his haste against some one coming out. Ordinarily, great man as he was, he was also a gentleman. But this was too much. That, when the father had insulted him, the son should almost prostrate him on his own threshold, was intolerable—at any rate at a moment when he was smarting with the sense of unacknowledged defeat.

'Good morning, Mr. Dean,' said the young fellow, raising his hat with an evident desire to please that was the very antipodes of his sire's manner—only the Dean was in no mood to discriminate—'I have just been having a very pleasant game of croquet.'

It is greatly to be regretted, but here a short hiatus in the narrative occurs. The minor canons, than whom no men are more wanting in reverence, say that the Dean's answer consisted of two words, one of them very pithy, very full of meaning, but in the mouth of a Dean, however choleric, impossible—perfectly impossible. Accounting this as a gloss, and the original reading not being forthcoming, we are driven to conjecture that the Dean's answer expressed mild disapprobation of the game of croquet. Certain it is that young Swainson, surprised doubtless at so novel and original a sentiment, only said,

'I beg your pardon.'

'Hem! I mean to say that I do not approve of this. I will come to the point. I must ask you to discontinue your visits at my house.' The young man stared as if he thought the ex-

cited divine had gone mad ; the Deanery was almost a home to him. 'Your father,' the Dean went on more coherently, 'has taken a step so unseemly, so—so indecent, has used language so insulting to me, sir, that I cannot, at any rate at present, receive you here.'

Young Swainson was a gentleman, and moreover, for a very good reason hereinafter appearing, the Dean failed to anger him. He raised his hat as respectfully as before, bowed slightly in token of acquiescence, and went on his way sorrowfully.

He had a singularly pleasant smile, this young gentleman, though this was not the time for displaying it. Mrs. Dean had once pronounced him a pippin grafted on a crab-stock, and thereafter in certain circles he was known as King Pepin. He was tall and straight and open-eyed, with faults enough, but of a generous youthful kind, easily overlooked and more easily forgiven. Doubtless Mr. Swainson would have had his son more practical, cool-headed, and precise ; but the shoot did not grow in the same way as the parent tree. Old Swainson would not have been happy without an enemy, nor young Swainson as happy with one ; and if, as the former often said, the latter's worst enemy was himself, he was likely to have a tolerably prosperous life.

In a space of time inconceivably small the doings of the grim old lawyer and the Dean's remonstrance were all over Bicester. Nay, fast as the stone had rolled, it had gathered moss. It was gravely asserted by people who rapidly grew to be eye-witnesses, that Mr. Swainson had danced a hornpipe in the middle of his plot, snapping his fingers at the Dean the while the latter prodded him as well as he could over the railings with his umbrella ; and that only the arrival of Mr. Swainson's son put an end to this disgraceful exhibition.

Neither side wasted time. The Dean, the Canon in residence, and the Præcentor, an active young fellow, consulted their legal adviser, and talked largely of ejection, title, and seisin. Mr. Swainson, having nine points of the law in his favour, and as well acquainted with the tenth as his opponents' legal adviser, devoted himself to the lighter pursuit of the mallet and hoop. In a state of felicity undreamt of before, he played, or affected to play, croquet, his right hand against his left, the former giving the latter two hoops and a cage. He played with a cage and a bell ; it was more cheerful, not to say noisy.

Of course all Bicester found occasion to pass through the Close

and see this great sight, while every window in the precincts was raised, that the denizens thereof might hear the tap, tap of the sacrilegious mallet. The Cathedral lawyer, urged to take some step, and well knowing the strength of the enemy's position, was fairly nonplussed. But while he pondered, with a certain grim



amusement, over Mr. Swainson's crotchet, which did not present itself to his legal mind in so dreadful a light as it did to the mind clerical, some unknown person took action, and made it war to the knife.

'Who did it?' Bicester asked loudly when it awoke one morning, to find Mr. Swainson in a state of mind which seemed

imperatively to call for a padded room and a strait waistcoat. During the night some one had thrown down the iron railing, taken up and broken his hoops, crushed his bell, and snapped his pegs; all this in the neatest possible manner, and with no damage to the turf. War to the knife indeed! Mr. Swainson, like the famous Widdrington, would have fought upon his stumps on such a provocation.

He expressed his opinion very hotly that this was the work of 'that arrogant priest,' and he should smart for it. A clergyman in this kind of context becomes a priest. This is common knowledge.

The Dean said, if hints were to go for anything, that it was a more or less direct interposition of Providence.

Young Swainson said nothing.

The vergers followed his example, but smiled a good deal.

The Dean's lawyer said it was a very foolish act, whoever did it.

Mrs. Dean said she should like to give the man who did it five shillings. Perhaps her inclination mastered her.

The Dean's daughter sighed.

And Bicester said everything except what young Swainson said.

I have not mentioned the Dean's daughter before. It is the popular belief that she was christened Sweet Clive Buxton, and if people are mistaken in this, and the name 'Sweet' does not appear upon the highly favoured register, what of that? It is but one proof the more of the utter and tremendous want of foresight of godfathers and godmothers. They send the future loungee in St. James's into the world handicapped with the name of Joseph or Zachary, and dub the country curate Tom or Jerry. No matter; Clive Buxton, whatever her name, could be nothing but sweet. She was not tall nor yet short; she was just as tall and just as short as she should have been, with a well-rounded figure and a grave carriage of the head. Her hair was wavy and brown, and sometimes it strayed over a white brow, on which a frown was so great a stranger that its right of entry was barred by the Statute of Limitations. There were a few freckles, etherealised dimples about her well-shaped nose. But these charms grew upon one gradually; at first her suitors were only conscious of her great grey wide-open eyes, so kind and frank and trustful, and so wise withal, that they filled every young man upon whom she turned them with a certainty of her purity and goodness and loveableness, and sent him away with a frantic desire to make her his wife without loss of time. With all this, she overflowed with fun and happiness—

except when she sighed—and she was just nineteen. Such was Sweet Clive Buxton then. If her picture were painted to-day, there would be this difference: she is older and more beautiful.

To return to our plot. Bicester watched with bated breath to see what Mr. Swainson would do. No culprit was forthcoming, and it seemed as if the day was going against him. He made no sign; only the broken hoops, the cage and battered bell, so lately the instruments and insignia of triumph, were cleared away and, at the ex-mayor's strenuous request, taken in charge by the police. Even the iron railing was removed. The excitement in the Close rose high. Once more the Cathedral vicinage was undefiled by lay appropriation, but the Dean knew Mr. Swainson too well to rejoice. The ground was cleared, it is true, but only, as he well foresaw, that it might be used for some mysterious operations, of which the end and aim only—his own annoyance—were clear to him, and not the means. What would Mr. Swainson do?

The strange unnatural calm lasted several days. The Cathedral dignitaries moved about in fear and trembling. At length one night the dwellers in the Close were aroused by a peculiar hammering. It was frequent, deep, and ominous, and came from the direction of Mr. Swainson's plot. To the nervous it seemed as the knocking of nails into an untimely coffin; to the guilty—and this was very near the Cathedral—like the noise of a rising scaffold; to the brave and those with clear consciences, such as Clive Buxton, it more nearly resembled the knocking a hoarding together. And indeed that was the very thing it was, and around Mr. Swainson's plot.

But what a hoarding! When the light of day discovered it to people's eyes, the Dean's fearful anticipations seemed slight to him, as the boy's vision who has dreamed he is about to be flogged in gaol, and awakes to find his father standing over him with a strap. It was so unsightly, so gaunt, so unpainted, so terrible; the very stones of the Cathedral seemed to blush a deeper red at discovering it, and the oldest houses to turn a darker purple. Had the Dean possessed the hundred tongues of Fame (which in Bicester possessed many more) and the five hundred fingers of Briareus, he could not hope to prevent the Marquis's visitors asking questions about *that*, or to divert the attention of the least curious American. He recognised the truth at a glance, and formed his plan. Many generals have formed it before; it was—retreat. He sent out his butler to borrow a continental Bradshaw from the

club, and shut himself up in his study. The truly great mind is never overwhelmed.

The vergers alone inspected the monster unmoved. They eyed it with glances not only of curiosity, but of appreciative intelligence. Not so, however, later in the day. Then Mr. Swainson appeared, leading by a strong chain a brindled bull-dog, of the most ferocious description and about sixty pounds weight. The animal contemplated the nearest verger with much satisfaction, and licked his chops; it might be at some grateful memory. The verger, who was in a small way a student of natural history, pronounced it however a lick of anticipation, and appeared not a little disconcerted. Mr. Swainson entered with the dog by a small door at the corner, and came out again without him. The other vergers then left.

Their coming and going was nothing to Mr. Swainson. It was enough for him that he stood there the cynosure of every eye in the Close; even Mrs. Dean was watching him from a distant garret window. In slow and measured fashion he walked to the steps of his own house, and, taking from them a board he had previously placed there, returned to the entrance of his plot, now enclosed to the height of about ten feet by this terrible hoarding. Above the door he carefully hung the board and drew back a few feet to take in the effect. Mrs. Dean sent down hastily for her opera-glasses, but really there was no need of them. The legend in huge black letters on a white ground ran thus: 'No Admittance! Beware of the Dog!!!' A smile of content crept slowly over Mr. Swainson's face, and he said aloud,

'Trump that card, Mr. Dean, if you can.'

As he turned—Mrs. Dean saw it distinctly and declared herself ready to swear to it in any court of justice—he snapped his fingers at the Deanery. And the dog howled!

It was the first of many howls, for he was a dog of great width of chest; and not even the surgeon of an insurance company, if he had lived twenty-four hours in Bicester Close, would have found fault with his lungs. Why he howled during the night, for it was not the time of full moon, became the burning question of each morning. That he joined in the Cathedral services with a zest and discrimination which rendered the organ almost superfluous, and drove the organist to the verge of resignation, was only to be expected. There was nothing strange in that, nor in his rivalry of the Præcentor's best notes, whose voice was considered very

fine in the Litany. The voluntary, Tiger made his own ; and of the sermon he expressed disapproval in so marked a manner that it was hard to say which swelled more with rage, the Dean within or the dog without. Their rage was equally impotent.

Things went so far that the Dean publicly wrung his hands at the breakfast-table. 'You could not hear the benediction this morning? And I was in good voice too, my dear!' he wailed, with tears in his eyes.

'You should appeal to the Marquis,' suggested his wife. It must be explained that the Marquis in Bicester ranks next to and little beneath Providence. But the Dean shook his head. He put no faith in the power even of the Marquis to handle Mr. Swainson. 'I will lay it before the Bishop, my dear,' he said humbly. And then, indeed, Mrs. Dean knew that the iron had entered into his soul, and that the hand of the Mayor of the Palace was very heavy upon him ; and her good, wifely heart grew so hot that she felt she could have no more patience with her daughter.

For Clive's sympathies were no longer to be trusted. She was not the Sweet Clive of a month ago, but a sadder and more sedate young person, who had a troublesome and annoying way of defending the absent foe, and of sighing in dark corners, that was more than provoking. Duty demanded that she should be an ocean, into which her father and mother might pour the streams of their indignation and meet with a sympathising flood-tide, and lo ! this unfeeling girl declined to make herself useful in that way, and instead sent forth a 'bore' of light jesting that made little of the enemy's enormities and a trifle of his outrages. More, she showed herself for the first time disobedient ; she altogether refused to promise not to speak to King Pepin if opportunity should serve, and, clever girl as she was, laughed her father out of insisting upon it, and kissed her mother into being a not unwilling ally. A wise woman was her mother and clear-sighted ; she saw that Clive had a spirit, but no longer a heart of her own. Yet at such a time as this, when her husband was wringing his hands, Clive's insensibility to the family grievances tried Mrs. Dean sorely. It was hard that the Canon's sleepless night, the Præcentor's peevishness, the singing man's influenza, and all the countless counts of the indictment against Mr. Swainson, should fail to awaken in the young lady's mind a tithe of the indignation shared by every other person at the Deanery, from the Dean himself to the scullery-

maid. But then love is blind ; for which most of us may thank Heaven.

Day after day went by and the hoarding still reared its gaunt height, and the unclean beast of the Hebrews still made night hideous, and the day a time for the expression of strong feelings. At length the Dean met his legal adviser in the Close—ay, and within a few feet of the obnoxious erection ; he kept his back to it with ridiculous care, while they talked.

‘ We have come to something like a settlement at last,’ said the lawyer briskly ;—‘ con-fusion take the dog ! I can hardly hear myself speak.—We are to meet at the Chapter House at five, Mr. Dean, if that will suit you : Mr. Swainson, the Bishop, Canon Rowcliffe, and myself. I think he is inclined to be reasonable at last.’

The Dean shook his head gloomily.

‘ Ah, you will see it turn out better than you expect. Let me whisper something to you. There is an action commenced against him for shutting up a road across one of his farms at Middleton, and it will be fought stoutly. One suit at a time will be sufficient to satisfy even Mr. Swainson.’

‘ You don’t say so ? This is good news !’ cried the Dean, with unmistakable pleasure. ‘ Certainly, I will be there.’

‘ And—I am sure I need not hint at it—you will be ready to meet Mr. Swainson half-way ?’

The Dean looked gloomy again. But at this moment a long loud howl, more frenzied, more fiendish than any which had preceded it, seemed to proclaim that the dog knew his reign was menaced, and, like Sardanapalus, was determined to go out right royally. It was more than the Dean could stand. With an involuntary motion of his hands to his ears, he nodded and fled with unseemly haste to a place less exposed, where he could in a seemly and decanal manner relieve his feelings.

The best-laid plans even of lawyers will go astray, and when they do so, the havoc is generally of a singularly wide-spread description. The meeting in the chapter-house proved stormy from the first. Whether it was that the writ in the right-of-way case had not yet reached Mr. Swainson, and so he clung to his only split-straw, or that the Dean was soured by want of sleep, or that the Bishop was not thorough enough—whatever was the cause, the spirit of compromise was absent, and the discussion across the chapter-house table threatened to make matters worse

and not better. Whether the Dean first called Mr. Swainson's enclosure the 'toadstool of a night,' or Mr. Swainson took the initiative by styling the Dean the 'mushroom of a day' (the Dean was not of old family), was a question afterwards much and hotly debated in Bicester circles. Be that as it may, the high powers at length rose from the table in dudgeon and much confusion.

There was behind the Dean at the end of the chapter-house a large window. It looked directly down upon what he, in the course of the discussion, had more than once termed 'The Profanation,' and since the eventful day of Mr. Swainson's match at croquet it had been, by the Dean's order, kept shuttered, to the intent that, when occupied in the chapter-house, the Profanation might not be directly before his eyes. On this occasion the shutter was still closed; it may be that this phenomenon had weakened Mr. Swainson's not over-robust resolves on the side of amity.

The Dean was a choleric man. As the party rose, he stepped to this shutter and flung it back. He turned to the others and said excitedly—

'Look, sir; look, my Lord! Is that a sight becoming the threshold of a cathedral? Is that a thing to be endured on consecrated ground?'

They stepped towards the window, a wide low-browed Tudor one, and looked out. The Dean himself stood aside, grasping the shutter with a hand that shook with passion. He could see the others' faces. He expected little show of shame or contrition on that of Mr. Swainson, but he did wish to bring this hideous thing home to the Bishop, who had not been as thorough in the matter as he should have been. Still, as a bishop, he could not see that thing there in its horrid reality and be unmoved!

No, he certainly could not. Slowly, and as if reluctantly, his lordship's face changed; it broke into a smile that broadened and rippled wider and wider, second by second, as he looked. His colour deepened until he became almost purple! And Mr. Swainson? His face was the picture of horror: there could not be a doubt of that. Confusion and astonishment were stereotyped on every feature. The Dean could not believe his own eyes. He turned in perplexity to the lawyer, who was peeping between the others' heads. His shoulders were shaking and his face was puckered with laughter.

The Bishop stepped back. 'Really, gentlemen, I think it is hardly fair of us to play the spy. This is no place for us.' He was a kindly man; there never was a more popular bishop in Bicester, and never will be.

At this the Canon and the lawyer lost all control over them-



selves, and their laughter, if not loud, was deep. The Dean was immensely puzzled, confused, perplexed, wholly angry. He did at last what he should have done at first, instead of striking an attitude with that shutter in his hand. He looked through the window himself. It was dusty, and he was somewhat near-sighted, but at length he saw; and this was what he saw.

In the further corner of the ugly enclosure, a couple of lovers billing and cooing; about and around them Mr. Swainson's big dog performing uncouth gambols. Bad enough this; but it was not all. The unsuspecting couple were Frank Swainson and—the Dean's daughter. Frank's arm was round her, and as the Dean looked, he stooped and kissed her, and Clive gazed with her brave eyes full of love into his and scarcely blushed.

When the Dean turned round he was alone.

Was it very wrong of them? There was nowhere else, since this miserable fracas began, where, away from others' eyes, they could steal a kiss. But into Mr. Swainson's plot no window, save a shuttered one, could look; the door, too, was close to one of the side doors of the cathedral, and you could pop in and out again unseen, and as for the big dog, Frank and Tiger were great friends. So if it was very wrong, it was very easy and very nice, and—*facilis descensus Averni*.

For one hour the Dean remained shut up in his study. At the end of that time he put on his hat and walked across the Close. He knocked at Mr. Swainson's door, and, upon its being opened, went in, and did not come out again for an hour and five minutes by Mrs. Canon Rowcliffe's watch. I have not the slightest idea of what passed there. More than two thousand different and distinct accounts of the interview were current next day in Bicester, but no one, and I have examined them all with care, seems to me to account for the undoubted results:—Imprimis, the disappearance next day from Mr. Swainson's plot of the famous hoarding, which was not even replaced by the old iron railing. Secondly, the marriage six weeks later of King Pepin and Sweet Clive.

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST, 1883.

SOME SICK POOR.



‘DOES she cough any?’

‘Well, yes, sir, she do. At times. Occasionally.’

‘Does she take her food?’

‘Well, no, sir, she don’t. Not proper.’

‘Does she take about half what she ought?’

‘Well, no, sir, she don’t, as I may say. Not that, scarcely.’

The case had aspects which were serious, evidently. That could be told by the Professor

being silent a moment, attentive; by his students—grouped round him and his patient—respectfully marking his questions and his attention, and maintaining that attitude whilst he took out his watch and felt his patient’s pulse.

‘Prepare such and such drugs,’ he says at last to one of the students, who disappears through the Dispensary door to do it; the others seemingly glad that they can stay and listen to the rest. ‘It’s a case of exhaustion,’ the Professor makes known then. ‘She’s weak. She must have stimulants. Coax her with her diet, and let her be. In a week, come again.—Next case.’

The students and attendants break their little knot open to let this first case go, and to let the second case come; and then they close in again as before.

‘What’s the matter here?’

‘Lame, sir.’ To further which statement, a leg, that is the affected leg, is taken off the ground, and is held, the sole of the foot uppermost, that the Professor may see.

His expert and kind hand is put round the—ankle, say (which is far from being the technical word, but it will do); his expert touch is applied to the joint gently, pressing in, and again pressing by a move up and along; and he signs that the leg may be put down.

‘Let me see it walk,’ is his order. When at once the students and attendants are dissipated again, that room may be made for the walking to be done; it is done a few yards on the open stones, out where there is space to judge; and the Professor cries, ‘That will do,’ intimating that the patient may be led back to where he stands.

‘Mr. Learner,’ he says, calling one of the students by name; ‘can you assign a cause for the lameness?’

Mr. Learner takes the patient’s foot up and examines it; places the patient’s foot down; passes his hand round, and above, and below, repeating the movements of his watchful instructor; and when such terms catch the ear, out of the short haze of private talking, as ‘small bony nodule,’ ‘periosteal deposit,’ ‘periostitis,’ and so on, it may be presumed that Mr. Learner hazards, or is skilfully helped up to, the elucidation required from him, and is showing that his College sessions have been made profitable by him, duly.

‘Then what treatment should you advise?’

The work of introspection has to be done again; it is done; there is again a short silence during it, with a short talk following; and the conclusion that Mr. Learner hazards, or is again skilfully directed to, is the right conclusion clearly, for the Professor endorses it.

‘Yes,’ he says; and turning to the poor man who has brought the poor patient, he gives him full directions. ‘Put on hot-water bandages, and give it rest—entire rest, mind you. Keep the bandages on two hours at a time. Do that for three or four days, and then let the bandages be cold. And come to me again.—Next case.’

It is a case (when the little knot of young men, for the passage out, have unknotted themselves, and, after the new passage in, have knotted themselves up again) which proves to have more gravity about it than any case presented for examination during

all of the gratis, or pauper, afternoon. A wrap is round the poor sufferer for warmth; and the thorough indisposition 'present' is shown by a drooping head, a dull eye, tremor, and a faint sobbing cough.

'Take the temperature,' says the Professor to a student.

He is himself marking the patient's pulse, doing it by means that are unexpected, possibly; for whilst his watch is in his left hand, and he is counting by it, the fingers of his right hand are



upon the sufferer's chin or under-jaw; but he wants more knowledge than this will afford him; and when his pupil has consulted the thermometer as he directs, reporting that it registers as high an amount of heat as 101° , he wants more knowledge still.

'Mr. Firstyear,' he says, with that good organisation of his that leads him to employ each student according to aptitude and in turn, 'my stethoscope is not here. May I trouble you to run for it to my room?—Where's the owner?' he asks, during the

moment of the run. 'I should always see the owner. Where is he?'

'Here, sir.'

And no desire, it must be chronicled, has been evinced by the poor fellow to escape identification; only he is very dirty, and very ragged, and very 'rough;' the company he finds himself amongst are not what he is accustomed to, and so his feet shuffle about a bit, and he holds himself awkwardly, shy.

'What have you noticed about it?' the Professor asks him.

'It's bin dull, sir. Very dull. And it won't take no food.'

'For long?'

'Two or three days about, sir. Not more.'

'Thank you,' says the Professor, but this is to Mr. Firstyear, who has quickly returned, handing the instrument asked for; and the Professor at once proceeds to use it.

It is again by means that may appear unusual; for there has to be a doffing of the hat—the whole scene being out of doors, and out of doors on a cold day, when hats and coats are highly needful—and there has to be a stoop so low to get the stethoscope well at the patient's chest, and the ear well fixed at the other end of it, that the Professor intertwines his neck with his patient's neck till it seems that he will surely get right under it in a moment, and come out at the other side.

Besides, the patient starts at this; not unnaturally. Nervousness comes; the drooping head is shaken; the feet move up and down.

'Make it steady,' cries the Professor. 'Hold its nose.'

Whereupon, steadiness is there, satisfactorily; and what can be noted amidst the steadiness is so marked and symptomatic, that the students are requested to make themselves aware of it in person, and each one comes, adopting the intertwining motion of the Professor, and taking his hat off to do it, as if the ceremony had something courtly in it, or the poor patient were a shrine.

'Can you hear it?'

'Not very clearly'—say one or two of them; so the Professor directs them to try again, and how to try, and exactly what to try for, and what to hope to get.

'Eh?' he says at this point, with a turn round. For the man who has been told to put hot-water bandages on his patient's lame leg for two hours, comes back, touching his hat respectfully, to ask a question.

‘Will the bandage keep hot for the two hours, sir, please, sir?’

‘No, no,’ answers the Professor with a smile. ‘You must keep putting hot water to it. Do it with a sponge, you know. Or with another cloth, which you can wrap round and keep changing.’

‘Well,’ he says, returning to his pupils—the man leaving the group with another expression of gratitude for the advice given and the trouble taken with him—‘you find it duller than you thought, no doubt; but that is it. Now’—and he was lifting up the lid of his patient’s eye with his thumb, and looking at the poor sad dimness of it, and lifting up and turning back the patient’s nostril, to inquire into the condition of that—‘we must give saline powders and some alcohol. It is fever and sore throat, as marked as any I ever saw. The diet must be managed. There must be coaxing, again. If it will not eat one thing, it must be tried with another. What is it that you do give?’

‘Oats, sir. Bran mash.’

‘Well, that’s right. You must keep on. Its cough is bad, I can hear. Be very careful.—Next case.’

It is time, though, that no other fresh case should be set down, lest there should be more minuteness than is judicious; only it is a pretty creature this next, as Larry (the College-ostler, his post may be called, or Outdoor-patients’-groom, or Surgery-porter) brings it into view, by a short rope tied to its mouth, the fashion by which he has brought in, and led away, all the rest; and just a word or two must be given of it. It is so pretty, in its fair fawn colour, and its long mane fairer still, that had it been well washed and well combed, it might have been pronounced a circus pony, dedicated to a circus princess, merely turned evil and headstrong because its princess had vanished, and it was grieving, with nothing really the matter with it at all; but it is rugged enough now—like a wild cottage child, showing its beauty in spite of its knitted locks and unsavoury skin—and it stands quite quenched, admitting its reprobate condition, so to speak, conscientiously. It seems a mere toy, too, it is so small and so harmless-looking, in comparison with its fellow-patients, who have all ‘stood’ the requisite number of ‘hands’ high; and had the Professor just given this new patient a handful of apples and lumps of sugar, letting it crunch them, and put in and out its tongue to lick in their sweet acidity, it would have appeared an amiable course to pursue, to which full approbation could have

been given. The Professor, however, in the face of these pupils of his, and being there, within those Camden Town College walls, to give them veterinary instruction, and to give poor costermongers, on certain particular afternoons, the gratis veterinary advice for which they can not afford to pay—the Professor has his own straight question to put over all cases brought to him, this new one amongst them, and in his own straight way he puts it.

‘What’s wrong here?’

‘Lame, sir, please, sir.’

It is a lad speaks, the lad who is with the pony, a plump-faced chap, all lips and dirty rosiness, who himself would certainly have no objection to apples or sugar either, from the age and style of him; and with this brought to the mind not unpleasantly, he is heard saying a little more.

‘Lame for a time, sir, please, sir; and then better for a time, sir; and then lame again, somehow.’

‘Pick the foot up.’

Long scrutiny is given to the foot when the picking up has been done; more long scrutiny is given to it by the pupils when the Professor, seeming to have mastered the case, calls them to note the points of it. And then Larry is ordered to lead the little creature for that experimental walk that shall let the exact manner and manifestation of the lameness be ascertained.

‘Do you observe?’ says the Professor, putting his own shoulders momentarily stiff and awry, the better to illustrate how the poor pony’s limbs, in the distance, can be seen to be stiff and awry. And then he says louder, ‘That’ll do,’ Larry’s signal to lead the little creature back again.

‘It is here,’ says the Professor, giving his verdict at last, not without having tried the knowledge of a student, or shown him how knowledge could be obtained. ‘Here, and there. Both hocks are diseased. So, do you, please, Mr. Progressor, fire the fetlock. Let it be done at once. Take all the dirt out thoroughly. And then give a blister. You’—turning to the boy—‘oh, yes, here you are; the pony must rest, mind. You must let it lie by, thoroughly lie by. You understand?—Next case.’

One was an old number; that meaning one already on the gratis list, which the Professor (or one of his colleagues) had seen on another afternoon. One was an open sore, which was to have a poultice. One was exhaustion again; the owner begging pardon, and with his hand up to his hat, asking if medicine could

be given that could be mixed amongst the creature's corn, since it was so very hard, it was, to give it physic that was drink; the owner, moreover, being accommodated instantly, since the Professor, prompt to recognise these stable difficulties, and the individualities of his patients, ordered powders to be made up for it, in the place of a draught. Three were colds; all three from the same stables: some wretched squalid place, one may be sure, under the wretched squalid rooms that were the costermongers homes, and that would let in weather, and keep in damp, and



be the habitation of rats, of mice, of smaller vermin, and of rheumatism and fevers unavoidable—stables in which, as the Professor knew, no patients could recover properly, when once strength and stamina had been beaten down and disease had gained the victory, yet stables to which he would be forced to resign his patients, seeing that College funds are not available for atoning for landlords' parsimony, any more than human hospital funds are available for sweetening the homes of human pauper-patients.

The cases, in short, in all, amount perhaps to a dozen; the last being a dog, a beautiful, soft-haired, silky, black retriever, suffering from canker of the ear. The cases do not, as it chances, include a cat this particular afternoon, though cats are sometimes brought, it seems; women and girls being the 'owners,' who melt off into tears and other hysterical sorrows. The cases do not happen, either, to include donkeys, or sheep, or cattle, though the poor may bring these also if occasion should arise, still having the privilege of gratis advice for them, and of getting the medicine prescribed at the uniform low rate of a shilling. The two hours devoted to this humane work have run out, and there are no more animals waiting to be seen; the Professor, having his students before him, counsels them to take especial notice of some post-mortem subject they will find just ready for their examination, and they and he disperse, and go their several ways.

One way leads to where it is good to be permitted to follow. It is to the cleanly stalls (wards would be, perhaps, the more rightful name) wherein are the College patients proper; wherein are the animals that are not paupers, but residents, paid for by their masters—by yearly subscription as regards advice, by a fixed charge per night as regards board and lodging—and where they are nursed in all the perfection of curative and sanitary arrangements to which, up to this time, veterinary knowledge has arrived. Thus, these stalls are kept at the temperature each case requires. Also, they are spacious; they are kept free from draughts, and beautifully clean, with scarcely a straw awry; and at the door of each, unless a horse has succeeded in biting or worrying it away, there is a card, in ordinary hospital fashion, describing the patient, its disease, its treatment, its diet, and the day on which it was sent in. Here, in this stall for example, the nearest to the yard (on the Old St. Pancras side of the building), where the gratis patients have been seen, is a poor horse with lock-jaw. Quiet is essential to it—dead quiet; so the windows of its stall are made blank by matting, and the door is padlocked to keep out unnecessary visitors, and suffer it only to be disturbed when the Professors in charge permit. The afflicted patient is standing; he has his whole body stone-like, without a bend or rest; its face is piteously vacant; its eyes so quenched and uninterested it might be blind. When a kind hand just strokes its nose gently, it gives no response; indeed, it might be an inanimate creature. Yet there is fair hope that it may recover, poor thing.

For, leaving it quietly and turning the key of a second door, here is another horse, with lock-jaw also, which a few days ago was in as sorry a plight as the first, but which is now by very slow degrees recovering; and if skilful treatment has worked its way on this, why may it not work its way upon the other? Very touching is this second poor invalid, too, in its sadness, and in its manifestation of slight bettering. It, too, has the stiff attitude, but it seems to relish the momentary light and companionship the opening of its door affords; it unfastens its mouth a faint inch or two at the soothing touch it feels; it can even go so far as to droop its tongue out a little way moistly; grateful, so it would appear, to have that much of its lost power returning to it, and glad to show that it has gone that far on the road to mend.

Securing its door again and going away, we find a horse which was operated upon only three or four hours ago. The operation was merely the probing of a cyst or abscess, so it has left but little distress; and but that the practised eye of the operator detects somewhat more suppuration now than was expected, the creature looks as sleek and as contented as if it had been in clover under the hands of its own pet groom. His neighbour has a bandaged leg. It has been hurt in a carriage accident, and will stay here till its wound is healed. This other bandaged leg, in a stall opposite, received the laceration for which the bandage is there, in the hunting-field. This pretty, pert, black animal, smooth, fine, with its bright eyes on the alert at a visit being paid to it, and its tall, thin ears quick to rise and fall as if in rapid questioning, is so much the better, clearly, of any malady which might have brought him here, that he will be ready to be restored to his owner, and may be slipping glibly over miles and miles of breezy turf and soft green upland before many days are over.

Here is a poor horse slung; by a cloth under its body, hung to straps and chains. The injuries from which it is suffering prevent it supporting itself, so this cloth gently holds it, yet holds it in a position that will let all its four feet or any of them touch the ground whenever it wishes—the thorough suspension of a horse being prohibited, it seems, by its nervous temperament; under penalty, that is, at least, of producing excitement, as certain to be as ruinous to usefulness and health as any injury for which slinging would be prescribed. A horse is seen next with paralysis of the lip; another with rheumatism; another with sore throat; plenty have cold and fever, and all varieties of diseases of the

respiratory organs ; these, together with lameness among the pauper patients, and setting aside the contagious pests and plagues every now and then epidemic, being the disorders for which veterinary skill, in the ordinary work of towns, is most frequently required. Altogether, here is accommodation for a hundred sick horses, or for bullocks, oxen, camels, elephants—special accommodation too for a score or more of dogs. They are on a floor above, and have nice clean compartments, boarded and railed off, and a bath, and a railed place, extra high and secure, for any suffering from rabies ; and a cooking-place, in which at this moment the *chef* is attending to hot boiled bullock's heart, chopping it up for those patients for whom no more especial sick diet has been ordered. Then, in addition to these stalls and wards, there are other places within these College walls which testify to the wide area that veterinary practice now embraces, and to the humane principles it inculcates and requires. There is the horses' vapour-bath. There are the other baths—the douche, the hot, the cold. There is the operating-bed—a clean floor of straw, softly bottomed, with a gallery round it, from which students can see all that is going on. There is the operating-pen—a simple barriered place to surround horses which need not lie down, but can be belted and buckled in, to receive their benefit quietly as they stand. There are the storing-places for the beef tea, the port wine, the gruel, the gin, the milk, that form the sick fare for the horses at special times. There is the post-mortem house. There is the dissecting-room. There is the museum, with such skeletons as the ostrich, the elephant, the ox, dog, pig, sheep, tiger, calf, as well as the man, for comparison, and, of course, the horse. There is the dispensary, a compact little chemist's shop of drugs. There is the instrument-room, suggesting, in its prim and trim glass cases, that it is merely a collection of unusual cutlery. There is the students' library. There is the lecture-hall, or theatre, where at one side are great doors wide enough to admit a sick horse bodily, for students to have a practical lesson on it upon the spot, as well as lessons by diagram or speech. There is, with marked benefit coming from it, the forge ; in it shoeing is taught, shoeing is done ; every young veterinary student being required to know how to shoe horses with his own hand, and every horse-patient being unshod periodically, lest its feet should be getting sore or tender, or some discomfort or deformity should be entailed. There is (over and above all the other offices that are imperative) the governors' board-

room, with a small engraving hanging in it of Vial de Saint Bel, that famous French veterinary surgeon who left his own country, during the Revolution, to teach his art in England; where, till he came, veterinary surgery was unknown. And there is—across there, open on this side of it, yet roofed in—the fine long exercise piece, with strawed floor, with padded ends (that no harm may come from too sudden turning), which is not only used to give convalescent horses gentle walking, or the quicker pace to which they may be coaxed when their progress warrants it, but to test the wind of strange horses sent here by subscribers to see if they are fit to buy. All such horses, it may be mentioned, make an application (through their best friend) for a diploma; and it is given to them after they have passed physical tests as severe in their way as the mental ordeals which test young men who are students at the College. And with both sorts of examinations, if the answers come satisfactorily, the same end is gained. It is a Pass.

An infinity of interesting—nay, fascinating—detail reveals itself in veterinary surgery, of course, the more veterinary surgery is seen. It is a theme of itself, however, and cannot be touched now. Some Sick Poor are being led away from the Royal Veterinary College; let us pass out of the gates with them, and say no more.

THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER PRESS.

IN TWO PARTS

I.

THE modern French newspaper press has been modelled after three types,—the old-fashioned press of the Restoration, that golden age of the French press when the journal was a standard and the journalist the soldier of an idea; the mercantile press, conceived by Emile de Girardin; and the gossipy journal, the *petite presse* of the Second Empire, of which the inventor was Hippolyte de Villemessant. Every feature of the French newspapers of the present day will be found more or less developed in these three types, which represent the history of the newspaper press in France since the fall of the First Napoleon.

The old-fashioned French press, of which honourable representatives still exist in the 'Journal des Débats,' the 'Constitutionnel,' and the 'Siècle,' partook rather of the nature of a review than of a newspaper. It discussed matters learnedly, scientifically, and at any rate with an irreproachable gravity which had the pretension of teaching rather than of amusing. Its academic form rendered it not easily accessible, and the small number of its readers proved the narrow limits of its influence. Nevertheless the old-fashioned press had its wits and writers *à la mode*, but they appealed only to a certain section of society—the lettered middle classes, the *bourgeoisie lettrée*.

In introducing cheap periodical literature into France, Emile de Girardin caused a revolution in journalism. Previously to 1836, the year when he founded 'La Presse,' French newspapers had depended for their income almost entirely on the subscriptions, which varied from 80 fr. to 120 fr. a year. They were little sheets, containing a comparatively small amount of text, having only a small circulation, and consequently but few advertisements. The two great journals of the day, for instance, the 'Journal des Débats' and the 'Gazette de France,' had from eight to ten thousand subscribers, and about 200,000 fr. to 250,000 fr. worth of advertisements a year. Emile de Girardin, who was essentially a

keen business man, struck by the success that had been obtained in England by cheap publications like the 'Penny Magazine,' determined to introduce the system into France. He tried the experiment first of all with the 'Journal des Connaissances Utiles,' the subscription to which was 4 fr. a year, and which at the end of the first twelvemonth had a circulation of 230,000—a success then unparalleled in France. 'La Presse' was a large four-page daily paper, issued at 40 fr. a year. The principle on which 'La Presse' was founded was that the value of the advertising columns of any publication depends on the number of its readers. The chief object of the publisher was therefore to secure the greatest possible number of readers. The methods adopted by De Girardin for attaining this end were the cheapness of the price of the journal, extensive advertising, which soon won him the nickname of the *Homme-Annoncé* and the *Homme-Affiche*, and, above all, the invention of the *roman-feuilleton*, the novel cut up into daily slices, 'to be continued in our next.' The *feuilleton* brought thousands of readers, for whom mere political, economical, or literary questions had no interest. Besides, at that time newspaper reading was not popular; news travelled slowly, and people were not in a hurry to receive it. The *roman-feuilleton* was a bait, and especially a bait for the women; and it is a rule in journalism of all countries that success is impossible unless the suffrages of the women be secured.

The women took this new bait greedily, and in the latter part of the reign of Louis Philippe the serial novel had an immense vogue. The *roman-feuilleton* was, indeed, the *raison d'être* of the journal itself. Hence sprang the reputation of the elder Dumas, of Eugène Sue, of Paul Féval, of Elie Berthet, and others. Even the grave old-fashioned journals, after having first disdained this means of acquiring fortune, were obliged at last to have recourse to it. The 'Journal des Débats' and the 'Constitutionnel' recovered their declining influence thanks to the socialistic novels of Eugène Sue, for whose 'Wandering Jew' the latter journal paid 100,000 fr. *A propos* of Sue's 'Mysteries of Paris,' published as a *feuilleton* in 1844, Théophile Gautier said: 'For more than a year all France has busied itself with the adventures of Prince Rudolf before attending to its own affairs. The sick have retarded their decease in order to wait for the end of the "Mysteries of Paris;" the magic "to be continued to-morrow" carried them along from day to day, and death comprehended that they would

never be at peace in the other world until they knew the *dénouement* of that strange *épopée*.'

This was the time when Alexandre Dumas hired himself to MM. de Girardin and Véron for the sum of 64,000 fr. a year, and undertook at the same time to supply the 'Siècle' with a hundred thousand lines of copy a year at the rate of 1fr. 50c. a line.

By means of the sovereign attraction of the *roman-feuilleton*, 'La Presse' obtained a circulation of 10,000 copies at the end of two months, and of 20,000 at the end of two years. The rival journal, 'Le Siècle,' subsequently reached 38,000, a figure then unprecedented. The publicity thus acquired was made a source of revenue, not only by means of advertisements, but also by *réclames*, or 'puffs,' inserted in the reading matter. The *réclame* had been invented by De Villemessant, who was then struggling to the front with a little fashion journal, 'La Sylphide,' and it was at his suggestion that 'La Presse' carried out the idea on a grand scale.

The mercantile press thus established—the joint-stock journal with dividends—was a purely commercial speculation. In it the idea was subordinated to the advertising columns. It was a degradation of the press in this respect, that the mercantile journal ceased to direct or instruct the reader. It became the tributary of the crowd which demanded each day to be amused. All that had formerly constituted a journal, the discussion of public affairs, the development of party principle, the discussion of men and things, was considered to be of secondary importance from the point of view of success. Even literary criticism was turned out of doors; the farmer of the advertising columns protested against the admission of independent judgments, and required the insertion of *réclames* that were paid for at so much a line. The new press was justly reproached with having transformed into a vulgar traffic what was formerly a mission, a *sacerdoce*.

The further development of the mercantile press was brusquely arrested by the political changes that took place after 1848, and while in the dozen daily political papers that were tolerated by the Empire at first, the tradition of the main features introduced into journalism of the cheap press was perpetuated, there came into existence a new type of journal, which deserves somewhat careful consideration, the more so as almost every prominent journalist of the present day has served his apprenticeship in this school. This new type of journalism used to be known as the *petite presse*. The model organs were the weekly 'Figaro,' founded by De Ville-

messant in 1854, and a daily literary newspaper, 'L'Événement,' founded also by De Villemessant in 1865. This latter journal was suppressed at the end of 1866, and immediately replaced by the daily 'Figaro,' which shortly afterwards obtained the authorisation to treat of political matters, and which still continues to be one of the most typical and most flourishing of Parisian newspapers. But the 'Figaro,' it must be remembered, began as a *petit journal*, and up to the present day it has, with its imitators and rivals, maintained the leading characteristics and much of the spirit of the so-called *petite presse* of the Second Empire.

In 1852 the state of the public mind in France had undergone a profound change. The *coup d'état* had put an end to the wars of thought, of eloquence, and of ambition, to the debates of political, artistic, and literary parties, to the rivalry of *cénacles* and assemblies. The mind of the nation was kept in a state of enforced inactivity. But although the victory of the new power prohibited public opinion from scaling the heights of storm and discussion, it could not prevent the public mind from taking refuge in curiosity. Public life was walled in; private life was thrown open. And so the whole attention and existence of the public, and particularly of the public of the capital, became absorbed in tittle-tattle, gossip, scandal, calumny, anecdotes, personalities, the servile war of petty envy. The green-room, the boudoir, and the alcove were the fields in which the journalists sought their harvest, and as long as they remained within these limits they ran no risk of giving umbrage to the powers that were. The *petite presse* was to journalism what the Offenbachian operetta was to music—the negation of all that is noble, lovely, or great, the triumph of scepticism, the ironical vengeance of disabused worldlings. The minor press avenged the public on its fallen gods, and systematically desecrated the objects of its admiration. The method of the journalists of the *petite presse* consisted in magnifying everything that is trivial and diminishing everything great. The scoffing and smart jeering of the weekly 'Figaro' and of its contemporaries; that Rabelaisian laughter which hailed the smallest triumph; that weekly scarification of talent or of legitimate pride; those bitter attacks upon too-persistent popularity, regaled Imperial Paris with the joys of Rome, with the satisfaction of ostracism, and with the delights of the antique circus. The *petite presse* appealed to the most wretched passions of the lower middle classes; it gave a voice and an arm to the

impatience with which those classes witnessed the inequality of individuals before intelligence and renown.

We may be permitted to dwell upon the characteristics of the Imperial press at some length, because nearly every criticism that may be made upon it is applicable to some of the most prominent French journals of the present day. As has been already stated, most of the leading journalists of to-day are men who began their career under the Empire and in the *petite presse*. And in tracing the history of the origins of the modern French press we must not neglect a point which has been admirably developed by MM. de Goncourt in their novel 'Charles Demailly,' a book which gives a vivid picture of the ways and manners of newspaper men under the Empire. This point is the entrance of a new element into literature, the Bohemian element, which helped not a little the fortune of the *petit journal*. The Bohemians, whose poet was Henri Murger, were a new race of intellects, without ancestors, and free from all taint of education or tradition. The Bohemians did not enter the career of art or letters on the same conditions as the former generation, the men of 1830, almost all of whom belonged to the well-to-do middle classes. The Bohemians sprang from nobody knows where, and brought with them terrible needs in the pursuit of their ambition. In them the *petite presse* found men ready-drilled, a trained army—one of those terrible, naked, bare-footed, badly fed armies that fight over their rations. Starvation, bitterness, the haughty indifference of success, the fireless hearth, the manuscript that the publisher disdains, the frequent visits to the pawnshop, the crying debts, all this to be avenged, and everything to be gained, made the Bohemians enter the career of minor journalism as if they were mounting to the assault of an abhorred and oppressive society and, as it were, with an echo of the cry of 1848: '*A bas les gants! Down with the kid-gloves!*'

From an Anglo-Saxon point of view, the *petite presse* of the Empire might be characterised as a scandalous and unprincipled institution. Nevertheless, circumstances enabled it to become all that it wished to be—a success, a fashion, a tyranny, an excellent business enterprise. The minor journal was read everywhere, in Paris and in the provinces, and before it all trembled—the author for his book, the musician for his opera, the painter for his picture, the sculptor for his statue, the vaudevillist for his wit, the theatrical manager for his receipts, the actress for her youth, the rich man for his sleep.

But even more disastrous than this tyranny was the degradation of the intellectual level of the public which the minor press produced. It put an end to that development of taste which the preceding generation had begun. The literary movement of 1830 had made of France a great public. The country of Boileau and Voltaire had broadened its taste and genius. Escaping from the idolatries of tradition, it had translated Shakespeare, and learned to live in a heavenly Jerusalem of poetry, lyricism, and imagination. The flippant press of the Empire lowered this intellectual level, degraded the public, and degraded literature itself by its ignoble chattering, its Mephistophelean wit, its irony that respected nothing.

But enough of general considerations: let us return to practical details and continue our examination of the type of journal conceived by Villemessant. The old weekly 'Figaro,' in which the principal writers were Auguste Villemot, Edmond About, Théodore de Banville, Sarcey, Jules Noriac, Scholl, Henri de Pène, Charles Monselet, was a violent literary pamphlet whose editors were required to handle the rapier as deftly as the pen. On the other hand, while aiming principally at a scandalous notoriety, De Villemessant was the first man in France to comprehend a newspaper as a newspaper; he appreciated the value of news rapidly if not surely obtained; but at the same time, knowing the nature of his public, so indifferent to everything outside of their own country, De Villemessant used to lay down the principle that a dog run over on the Boulevard des Italiens interested the French reader far more than a regicide committed at St. Petersburg or Berlin. It is, indeed, on this principle that most Parisian newspapers are still conducted. With these ideas, when the 'Figaro' became a daily political paper, De Villemessant still contrived to make it above all a newspaper within the limits of his Parisian acceptation of that term. The principal writers in the 'Figaro' before 1870 were Albert Wolff, Henri Rochefort, Adrien Marx, F. Magnard, and Saint-Genest. With the exception of Rochefort, all these gentlemen are still the ornaments of the 'Figaro.' As for the writers of the old weekly 'Figaro,' their names are to be found here and there in the leading journals of the present day, and, in fact, there is hardly a prominent journalist, with the exception of purely political writers, who has not at one time or another written for the 'Figaro' and been an apprentice under De Villemessant. Moreover, so completely does the 'Figaro,' as developed by De

Villemessant, fulfil the requirements of the French reader, that all the great political journals have been obliged to conform more or less to the model of their vivacious contemporary.

The 'Figaro' consists of four pages, each of six columns, printed in long-primer and bourgeois type, with plenty of 'whites' and 'leads.' Sixteen to eighteen of the columns are devoted to reading matter, and the rest to advertisements. The first page starts off with a political bulletin, or a *chronique* of two or three columns; then follow 'Echoes of Paris,' or some equivalent title, containing personal notes, news items, and society or other notes, and 'puffs.' After this come the 'nouvelles à la main,' three or four jokes, piquant anecdotes, or *bons-mots*. This department is to be found in the earliest French journals, even in the 'Mercure de France,' during the most stirring days of the Revolution of 1789; and it was brought to a high state of perfection by the mischievous *petite presse* of the Empire. After the funny department follows a society article, in which is discussed the social topic of the day, the marriages, the funerals, the fêtes of high life and would-be high life. After these special and invariable features follow short articles on current events, parliamentary reports, cuttings from the French papers and two or three insignificant items from the half-dozen English and German newspapers that compose 'the foreign press' in the eyes of the average French journalist; various local news; law reports; telegrams and correspondence, a meagre column filled up by the telegraphic agencies; the Bourse, a financial report furnished by some banking establishment; theatrical reports and news; sporting, and then on the last column of the third page, and generally on the whole of the fourth page, advertisements. Finally, one-third of the second page is taken up by the *roman-feuilleton*. Such, with slight modifications, is the plan of the contents of the majority of the daily political newspapers that have yet appeared in France. In some papers political discussion takes up the lion's share of the space on the first page; in others, greater attention is given to less serious topics, but in all the main features, the *chronique*, the 'nouvelles à la main,' the 'faits divers,' the law reports, and the theatrical record, the same model is universally followed.

'Le Temps' and the 'République Française' may be taken as types of serious political and general newspapers, as distinguished from the lighter boulevard journals and the skirmishing party organs like Rochefort's 'Intransigeant' or Dr. Clémenceau's 'Jus-

tice.' 'Le Temps,' like all the French journals, has only four pages, but the sheet is much larger than the sheet of the 'Figaro,' the columns wider and longer, and the typographical appearance altogether more solid and business-like. It is a Protestant and Moderate Republican organ, very serious in tone, and incapable of such freaks as jokes, *bons-mots*, or 'nouvelles à la main.' The general plan of this journal is as follows: First page, bulletin or abstract of the home and foreign news of the day; telegrams, short but excellent; three or four well-written leading articles on French and foreign affairs; correspondence; *feuilleton*; on Sunday the *feuilleton* is occupied by M. Francisque Sarcey's review of the dramatic week, on Monday by M. Weber's musical article, on Tuesday by a scientific record, and on the other days of the week by a story. 'Le Temps' affects translations of English novels, as being of a higher moral tone and more in harmony with its Protestant principles than most of the works of contemporary French writers. Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Hawthorne, Mrs. Gaskell, Miss Braddon, Wilkie Collins, Rhoda Broughton, Henry James, &c., have seen many of their works translated in this journal. Second page—detailed analysis of foreign news; a *chronique*, in which M. Jules Clarétie discusses the artistic, literary, or social topics of the day; 'news of the day,' 'miscellaneous items,' 'parliamentary report,' &c. The third page is generally taken up by 'variétés'—a literary, social, or philosophical study, or literary miscellany, signed by Schérer, Jules Soury, Renan, Taine, and other eminent writers. The odd corner is filled up with law and commercial reports, theatrical items, &c. The fourth page is devoted to advertisements and to the latest news items and telegrams, thrown in at the foot of the page as a *feuilleton* on going to press, 'Le Temps,' being an afternoon paper, appearing about half-past four. 'Le Temps' is on the whole the best informed, the best conducted, and the best written of all the French journals, though not perhaps the most amusing or the most characteristically French. It is the organ of the higher middle classes. With the exception of the *chronique*, the *feuilleton*, and the 'variétés,' the articles in 'Le Temps' are anonymous. The same is the case with the 'République Française,' and with a few other journals, so far as concerns the leading articles.

The third type of journal that we have to consider is the small folio sheet sold at five centimes, the popular journal, of which the model is 'Le Petit Journal,' which has a daily circulation of

650,000 copies. Everything in the popular journal is brief, and yet, strange to say, nearly one third of the whole space is devoted to serial fiction. The 'Petit Journal' publishes daily instalments of two sensational novels at the foot of the first, second, and third pages, a leading article on some political or social topic, concise parliamentary and legal reports, telegraphic news, provincial news, a list of public amusements, theatrical news, &c. The fourth page is always occupied by advertisements. The 'Petit Journal,' and most of the journals of the same type, are excellently edited. It was under the management of the late Emile de Girardin that the 'Petit Journal' attained its enormous circulation; and since 1873, when he reorganised it, this little sheet has caused the elementary notions of political life to penetrate into the remotest parts of France. There is no exaggeration in saying that the 'Petit Journal' has contributed more than all the other French journals put together to secure the establishment of the present French Republic.

In order the better to appreciate the excellences and the shortcomings of the French newspaper press, we will briefly examine the characteristics of the several departments, beginning with one of the most interesting, the *chronique*, or 'Courier de Paris.'

The *chronique* has no equivalent in English journalism; like *mémoires* and *causerie*, it is something peculiarly French. The Anglo-Saxon genius lends itself with difficulty to the light and genial and witty train of thought which the *chronique* requires. Our blows have a tendency to be too heavy, and our laughter too coarse. The bludgeon is an excellent weapon, but it lacks the grace and elegance of the rapier. Moreover, it must be admitted that since the eighteenth century the conditions necessary for the existence of the *chronique* have been wanting in England, while in America they have never been known. These conditions are the life of a capital, the existence of a community within a community, what used to be called in England in the last century 'the town,' and which is still called in Paris, 'le tout Paris.' In London, owing to the immense increase in the size of the place, and owing to the practical suppression of social castes in an equality of dress, of wealth, of manners, 'the town' has ceased to have a distinct existence; it has become lost in the colossal uniformity of the great city, and with its disappearance has vanished also the comedy of 'the town,' the comedy of Wycherley, Congreve,

Sheridan, and Colman. In Paris, on the contrary, 'the town' still exists, although even there the tide of cosmopolitanism and democracy is rapidly rising and threatening it with destruction. Hitherto, however, the boulevard, the life of the boulevards, the manners and usages and eccentricities of the social agglomeration known as 'tout Paris,' have furnished a rich field for the observation of the chronicler and of his colleagues in anecdotic history, the vaudevillist and the playwright. Paris still has a comedy of 'the town,' and it is in this comedy and in the *chronique* that we find French *esprit* still hale and hearty.

The introduction of the *chronique* into the modern French journal dates from the time of the old 'Presse,' for which, between the years 1836 to 1848, under the pseudonym of the 'Vicomte de Launay,' Madame de Girardin (Delphine Gay) wrote that famous 'Courrier de Paris,' which has served as a model to so many imitators, from Auguste Villemot to Jules Clarétie. For more than ten years Madame de Girardin continued to observe and describe her epoch week by week, with its manners, its fashions, its peculiarities of language, its enthusiasms, its follies, its fêtes, its balls, its gossip, its scandal. How many of these details, in appearance so frivolous, have already become historical! What an inexhaustible mine of facts for the novelists and historians of the future who wish to reconstruct a picture of French society of that epoch! And since then how many brilliant pages have been written in the service of the *chronique*! With what delight the next generation will turn back to the two volumes of *chroniques* that Auguste Villemot wrote for the old 'Figaro,' and to the smart and ingenious anecdotes and observations of Edmond About, Henri de Pène, Rochefort, Jules Lecomte, Janin, Charles Monselet, Scholl, Jules Clarétie, Albert Wolff, and of the young men who are now winning their spurs in the press? Even Taine did not disdain to contribute a *chronique* to 'La Vie Parisienne,' and his articles have been collected into a curious volume called 'La Vie et les Opinions de Thomas Graindorge.'

The weekly literary and dramatic *feuilleton*, in which Sainte-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, Jules Janin, and Paul de Saint-Victor used to make and destroy reputations, at the same time that they established their own, is now a diminished but not a fallen power. At present the public are too eager for news to wait until the end of the week for an account of the new play or the new book. With a few exceptions, then, the French journals have abolished

this *feuilleton*, and the critics pass judgment on the piece the morning after the first performance. The importance attached to theatrical affairs of late years is remarkable, and each journal of the type of the 'Figaro' has three editors, who are charged with informing the public as to the great and small events that take place before and behind the curtain in the score theatres with which the Parisians are provided. There is first of all the regular dramatic or musical critic who furnishes an account and criticism of the new piece; then there is the editor who day by day relates the anecdotic history of the Parisian evening, a kind of theatrical *chronique*, created in the 'Figaro' some six or seven years ago by M. Arnold Mortier, and sustained day by day with a display of *verve*, wit, and ingenuity that is truly remarkable; and, finally, an editor charged with the theatrical *courrier* consisting of minor theatrical notes and news. The relations between the newspapers and the theatrical managers are not those of independence. In France anonymous journalism is the exception, and, as a rule, all articles are signed either with a real name or a pseudonym, of which the secret belongs to M. Tout le Monde. Moreover, besides being worldlings who seek rather than avoid public and social notoriety, the French journalists are as often as not playwrights and novelists as well as journalists and critics. They have their entries to the theatres, and their demands for boxes and free seats are, as a rule, far from modest. In return for these favours the theatrical managers expect the insertion of 'puffs' and other interested notes gratis, and it has become the custom of the Parisian press to accept this obligation, which reduces the advertising expenses of Parisian theatres to zero, at least so far as the newspapers are concerned. This is one of the bad consequences of the admission of 'puffs' amongst reading matter, a thing no good English or American editor would think of doing. Then, again, perfect independence of judgment is interfered with by considerations of good-fellowship, by the desire not to offend colleagues, or managers, whose influence or whose good graces may be needed some day or other. The question of *camaraderie* has a very serious influence on this as on nearly every other department of the French newspaper. The tendency is towards excessive benevolence or excessive severity, sugared friendliness or ferocious enmity. In some of the more serious journals like 'Le Temps,' or the 'Journal des Débats,' the dramatic critic writes only once a week; the *chronique* of the Parisian evening is suppressed, but the theatrical

gossip and puffs, together with the summary programmes of the theatres, are published daily gratis. In short, where the insincerity or corruption, direct or indirect, begins and ends it would be hard to say. The 'puffing' of a new piece has even been reduced to a regular system of anticipatory and contemporaneous *réclame*, of which the following are the usual progressive stages. First of all, before the work is begun, the author is announced to be putting the finishing touches to a comedy or drama for such and such a theatre; then the piece is falsely announced to have been accepted at half-a-dozen other theatres successively (this stage is of no use to the author except that it causes his name and the title of his piece to be printed in all the newspapers of France and of Navarre); then follow the announcement of the true acceptation of the piece, the date at which it is likely to be produced, the names of the actors engaged to play in it, the reading of the piece to the actors with immense success, the final cast, gossip from behind the scenes, troubles of the author on account of the interference of the censorship, list of the provincial theatres which have bought the right to play the piece, no places to be had for the 'first night,' the dress rehearsal and its emotions, description of the dressing-room of the 'star' actress, account of her life and adventures, her charity, her poodle-dog, her hôtel in the Rue de Monceau, the perfume she uses for her bath, &c., and then a multitude of *potins*, letters from indignant rivals, newspaper polemics, the house 'full to suffocation,' *bons-mots* of the 'lucky author of —, the comedy which is now having such an unprecedented success at the Folies-Amoureuses,' and so on, until the announcement of the supper given in commemoration of the hundredth performance, the description of that supper, and the final announcements of the 'last nights.' This rage of *réclame* is a veritable curse to the French newspaper and periodical press. The French journalists would perhaps do wisely in carrying into execution the dictum of old Boileau, who said of dramatic criticism :—

C'est un droit qu'à la porte on achète en entrant.

THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÀ.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER IV.

MALAKOFF TERRACE.



AFTER parting from Vincent at the end of Rotten Row, Mark Ashburn continued his walk alone through Kensington High Street and onwards, until he came to one of those quiet streets which serve as a sort of backwater to the main stream of traffic, and, turning down this, it was not long before he reached a row of small three-story houses, with their lower parts cased in stucco, but the rest allowed to remain in the original yellow-brown brick, which time had mellowed to a pleasant warm tone. 'Malakoff Terrace,' as the place had been

christened (and the title was a tolerable index of its date), was rather less depressing in appearance than many of its more modern neighbours, with their dismal monotony and pretentiousness. It faced a well-kept enclosure, with trim lawns and beds, and across the compact laurel hedges in the little front gardens a curious passer-by might catch glimpses of various interiors which in nearly every case left him with an impression of cosy comfort. The outline of the terrace was broken here and there by little verandahs protecting the shallow balconies and painted a deep Indian-red or sap-green, which in summer-time were gay with

flowers and creepers, and one seldom passed there then on warm and drowsy afternoons without undergoing a well sustained fire from quite a masked battery of pianos, served from behind the fluttering white curtains at most of the long open windows on the first floor.

Even in winter and at night the terrace was cheerful, with its variety of striped and coloured blinds and curtains at the illuminated windows; and where blinds and curtains were undrawn and the little front rooms left unlighted, the firelight flickering within on shining bookcases and picture-frames was no less pleasantly suggestive. Still, in every neighbourhood there will always be some houses whose exteriors are severely unattractive; without being poverty-stricken, they seem to belong to people indifferent to all but the absolutely essential, and incapable of surrounding themselves with any of the characteristic contrivances that most homes which are more than mere lodgings amass almost unconsciously. It was before a house of this latter kind that Mark stopped—a house with nothing in the shape of a verandah to relieve its formality. Behind its front railings there were no trim laurel bushes—only an uncomfortable bed of equal parts of mould and broken red tiles, in which a withered juniper was dying hard; at the windows were no bright curtain-folds or hanging baskets of trailing fern to give a touch of colour, but dusty wire blinds and hangings of a faded drab.

It was not a boarding-house, but the home in which Mark Ashburn lived with his family, who, if they were not precisely gay, were as respectable as any in the terrace, which is better in some respects than mere gaiety.

He found them all sitting down to dinner in the back parlour, a square little room with a grey paper of a large and hideous design. His mother, a stout lady with a frosty complexion, a cold grey eye, and an injured expression about the mouth and brow, was serving out soup with a touch of the relieving officer in her manner; opposite to her was her husband, a mild little man in habitually low spirits; and the rest of the family, Mark's two sisters, Martha and Trixie, and his younger brother, Cuthbert, were in their respective places.

Mrs. Ashburn looked up severely as he came in. 'You are late again, Mark,' she said; 'while you are under this roof' (Mrs. Ashburn was fond of referring to the roof) 'your father and I expect you to conform to the rules of the house.'

'Well, you see, mother,' explained Mark, sitting down and unfolding his napkin, 'it was a fine afternoon, so I thought I would walk home with a friend.'

'There is a time for walking home with a friend, and a time for dinner,' observed his mother, with the air of quoting something Scriptural.

'And I've mixed them, mother? So I have; I'm sorry, and I won't do it again. There, will that do?'

'Make haste and eat your soup, Mark, and don't keep us all waiting for you.'

Mrs. Ashburn had never quite realised that her family had grown up. She still talked to Mark as she had done when he was a careless schoolboy at St. Peter's; she still tried to enforce little moral lessons and even petty restrictions upon her family generally; and though she had been long reduced to blank cartridges, it worried them.

The ideal family circle, on reassembling at the close of the day, celebrate their reunion with an increasing flow of lively conversation: those who have been out into the great world describe their personal experiences, and the scenes, tragic or humorous, which they have severally witnessed during the day; and when these are exhausted, the female members take up the tale and relate the humbler incidents of domestic life, and so the hours pass till bedtime.

Such circles are in all sincerity to be congratulated; but it is to be feared that in the majority of cases the conversation of a family whose members meet every day is apt, among themselves, to become frightfully monosyllabic. It was certainly so with the Ashburns. Mark and Trixie sometimes felt the silences too oppressive to be borne, and made desperate attempts at establishing a general discussion on something or anything; but it was difficult to select a topic that could not be brought down by an axiom from Mrs. Ashburn which disposed of the whole subject in very early infancy. Cuthbert generally came back from the office tired and somewhat sulky; Martha's temper was not to be depended upon of an evening; and Mr. Ashburn himself rarely contributed more than a heavy sigh to the common stock of conversation.

Under these circumstances it will be readily believed that Mark's 'Evenings at Home' were by no means brilliant. He sometimes wondered himself why he had borne them so long; and if he had been able to procure comfortable lodgings at as

cheap a rate as it cost him to live at home, he would probably have taken an early opportunity of bursting the bonds of the family dulness. But his salary was not large, his habits were expensive, and he stayed on.

The beginning of this particular evening did not promise any marked increase in the general liveliness. Mrs. Ashburn announced lugubriously to all whom it might concern that she had eaten no lunch; Martha mentioned that a Miss Hornblower had called that afternoon—which produced no sensation, though Cuthbert seemed for a moment inclined to ask who Miss Hornblower might happen to be, till he remembered in time that he really did not care, and saved himself the trouble. Then Trixie made a well-meant, but rather too obvious, effort to allure him to talk by an inquiry (which had become something of a formula) whether he had 'seen any one' that day, to which Cuthbert replied that he had noticed one or two people hanging about the City; and Martha observed that she was glad to see he still kept up his jokes, moving him to confess sardonically that he knew he was a funny dog, but when he saw them all—and particularly Martha—rollicking round him, he could not help bubbling over with merriment himself.

Mrs. Ashburn caught the reply, and said severely: 'I do *not* think, Cuthbert, that either I or your father have ever set you the example of "rollicking," as you call it, at this table. Decent mirth and a cheerful tone of conversation we have always encouraged. I don't know why you should receive a mother's remarks with laughter. It is not respectful of you, Cuthbert, I must say!'

Mrs. Ashburn would probably have proceeded to further defend herself and family from the charge of rollicking, and to draw uncomplimentary parallels from the Proverbs between the laughter of certain persons and the crackling of thorns under a pot, when a timely diversion was effected by a sounding knock at the little front door. The maid put down the dish she was handing and vanished; after which there were sounds of a large body entering the passage, and a loud voice exclaiming, 'All in, hey? and at dinner, are they? Very well, my dear; tell 'em I'm here. I know my way in.'

'It's Uncle Solomon!' went round the table. They refrained from any outward expression of joy, because they were naturally a quiet family.

'Well,' said Mrs. Ashburn, who seemed to put her own construction on this reserve, 'and I'm sure if there is any table at which my only brother Solomon should be a welcome guest, it's *this* table.'

'Quite so, my dear; quite so,' said Mr. Ashburn, hastily. 'He was here last week; but we're all glad to see him at any time, I'm sure.'

'I hope so, indeed! Go in, Trixie, and help your uncle off with his coat,' for there were snorting and puffing signs from the next room, as if their relative were in difficulties; but before Trixie could rise the voice was heard again, 'That's it, Ann, thanky—you're called Ann, aren't you? I thought so. And how's the baker, Ann—wasn't it the baker I caught down the airy now? *wasn't* it, hey?'

And then a large red-faced person came in, with a puffy important mouth, a fringe of whiskers meeting under his chin, and what Trixie, in speaking privately of her relative's personal appearance, described as 'little piggy eyes,' which had, however, a twinkle of a rather primitive kind of humour in them.

Solomon Lightowler was a brother of Mrs. Ashburn's, a retired business man, who had amassed a considerable fortune in the hardware trade.

He was a widower and without children, and it was he who, fired with the ambition of having a nephew at one of the universities who should carry off the highest prizes and do credit to his uncle's perception, had sent Mark up to Trinity at his own expense, for Mr. Ashburn's position in the Inland Revenue Office would not have warranted such an outlay.

Mark's career at Cambridge, as has been said, had not been of a kind to reflect much distinction on his uncle, who, with the idea of having one more attempt to 'see his money back,' as he called it, and his powers of judgment in some degree verified, had then made Mark enter for the Indian Civil Service; after this also had ended in disaster, Uncle Solomon seemed at one time to have given him up in disgust, only reserving himself, as the sole value for his money, the liberty of reproach, and Mark was of opinion that he had already gone far towards recouping himself in this respect alone.

'Hah! phew—you're very hot in here!' he remarked, as an agreeable opening—he felt himself rich enough to be able to remark on other people's atmospheres; but Cuthbert expressed a

sotto voce wish that his uncle were exposed to an even higher temperature.

'We can't all live in country-houses, Solomon,' said his sister, 'and a small room soon gets warm to any one coming in from the cold air.'

'Warm!' said Mr. Lightowler, with a snort; 'I should think you must all of you be fired like a set of pots! I don't care where I sit, so long as I'm well away from the fire. I'll come by you, Trixie, eh—you'll take care of your uncle, won't you?'

Trixie was a handsome girl of about eighteen, with abundant auburn hair, which was never quite in good order, and pretty hands of which most girls would have been more careful; she had developed a limp taste for art of late, finding drawing outlines at an art school less irksome than assisting in the housekeeping at home. Uncle Solomon always alarmed her, because she never knew what he would say next; but as it was a family rule to be civil to him, she made room for him with great apparent alacrity.

'And how are you all, boys and girls, eh?' asked Uncle Solomon, when he was comfortably seated: 'Mark, you've got fuller in the waist of late; you don't take 'alf enough exercise. Cuthbert, lad, you're looking very sallow under the eyes—smoking and late hours, *that* is the way with all the young men nowadays! Why don't you talk to him, eh, Matthew? I should if he was a boy o' mine. Well, Martha, has any nice young man asked you to name a day yet?—he's a long time coming forward, Martha, that nice young man; why, let me see, Jane, she must be getting on now for—she was born in the year, fifty-four, was it?—four it was; it was in the war time, I remember, and you wanted her christened Alma, but I said an uncommon name is all very well if she grows up good-looking, but if she's plain it only sounds ridiklous; so, very fortunately as things turn out, you had her christened Martha.' There's nothing to bite your lips over, my dear; no one blames you for it, we can't be all born 'andsome. It's Trixie here who gets all the love-letters, isn't it, Trixie?—ah, I *thought* I should see a blush if I looked! Who is it now, Trixie, and where do we meet him, and when is the wedding? Come, tell your old uncle.'

'Don't put such nonsense into the child's head, Solomon,' said his sister, in a slightly scandalised tone.

'That would be ccals to Newcastle with a vengeance,' he

chuckled; 'but you mustn't mind my going on—that's my way; if people don't like it I can't help it, but I always speak right out.'

'Which is the reason we love him,' came in a stage aside from Cuthbert, who took advantage of a slight deafness in one of his uncle's ears.

'Well, Mr. Schoolmaster,' said the latter, working round to Mark again, 'and how are *you* gettin' on? If you'd worked harder at College and done me credit, you'd 'a' been a feller of your college, or a judge in an Indian court, by this time, instead of birching naughty little boys.'

'It's a detail,' said Mark; 'but I don't interfere in that department.'

'Well, you *are* young to be trusted with a birch. I'm glad they look at things that way. If *you're* satisfied with yourself, I suppose I ought to be, though I did look forward once to seeing a nephew of mine famous. You've 'ad all your fame at Cambridge, with your papers, and your poems, and your College skits—a nice snug little fame all to yourself.'

Martha tittered acidly at this light badinage, but it brought a pained look into Trixie's large brown eyes, who thought it was a shame that poor Mark should never be allowed to hear the last of his Cambridge *fasco*.

Even Mrs. Ashburn seemed anxious to shield Mark. 'Ah, Solomon,' she said, 'Mark sees his folly now; he knows how wrong he was to spend his time in idle scribbling to amuse thoughtless young men, when he ought to have studied hard and shown his gratitude to you for all you have done for him.'

'Well, I've been a good friend to him, Jane, and I could have been a better if he'd proved deserving. I'm not one to grudge any expense. And if I thought, even now, that he'd really given up his scribbling——'

Mark thought it prudent to equivocate: 'Even if I wished to write, uncle,' he said, 'what with my school-work, and what with reading for the Bar, I should not have much time for it; but mother is right, I *do* see my folly now.'

This pleased Uncle Solomon, who still clung to the fragments of his belief in Mark's ability, and had been gratified upon his joining one of the Inns of Court by the prospect of having a nephew who at least would have the title of barrister; he relaxed at once: 'Well, well, let bygones be bygones, you may be a credit to me yet. And now I think of it, come down and stay Sunday

at "The Woodbines" soon, will you; it'll be a rest for you, and I want you to see some of that 'Umpage's goings on at the church' (Uncle Solomon not unfrequently dropped an 'h,' but with a deliberation that seemed to say that he was quite aware it was there, but did not consider it advisable to recognise it just then). 'He's quite got round the Vicar; made him have flowers and a great brass cross and candles on the Communion table, and 'Umpage all the time a feller with no more religion inside him than'—here he looked round the table for a comparison—'ah, than that jug has! He's talked the Vicar into getting them little bags for collections now, all because he was jealous at the clerk's putting the plate inside my pew reg'lar for *me* to hold. It isn't that I care about 'olding a plate, but to see 'Umpage smirking round with one of them red velvet bags makes me downright sick—they'll drive me to go over and be a Baptist one of these fine days.'

'You don't like Mr. Humpage, do you, uncle?' said Trixie.

'Umpage and me are not friendly—though contiguous,' said he; 'but as for liking, I neither like nor dislike the man; we 'old no intercourse, beyond looking the other way in church and 'aving words across the fence when his fowls break through into my garden—he won't have the hole seen to, so I shall get it done myself and send the bill in to him—that's what *I* shall do.—A letter for you, Matthew? read away, don't mind me,' for the maid had come in meanwhile with a letter, which Matthew Ashburn opened and began to read at this permission.

Presently he rubbed his forehead perplexedly: 'I can't make head or tail of it,' he said feebly; 'I don't know who they are, or what they write all this to *me* for!'

'And it over to me, Matthew, let's see if *I* can make it any plainer for you,' said his brother-in-law, persuaded that to his powerful mind few things could long remain a mystery.

He took the letter, solemnly settled his double eye-glasses well down on his broad nose, coughed importantly, and began to read: 'Dear Sir,' he began in a tone of expounding wisdom—'well, that's straightforward enough—Dear Sir, We have given our best consideration to the—hey!' (here his face began to grow less confident) 'the sweet—what?—ah, sweet bells, sweet bells jangled. What have you been jangling *your* bells about, eh, Matthew?'

'I think they're mad!' said poor Mr. Ashburn; 'the bells in this house are all right, I think, my dear?'

'I'm not aware that any of them are out of order; they rehung the bell in the area the other day—it's some mistake,' said Mrs. Ashburn.

'Which,' continued Uncle Solomon, 'you 'ave been good enough to submit to us (pretty good that for a bell-'anger, hey?) We regret, however, to say that we do not find ourselves in a position to make any overtures to you in the matter. Well,' he said, though not very confidently, 'you've been writing to your landlord about the fixtures, and these are his lawyers writing back—isn't *that* it now?'

'What should I write to *him* for?' said Mr. Ashburn; 'that's not it, Solomon—go on, it gets worse by-and-by!'

'Your one fair daughter also (hullo, Trixie!) we find ourselves compelled to decline, although with more reluctance; but, in spite of some considerable merits, there is a slight roughness (why, her complexion's clear enough!), together with a certain immaturity and total lack of form and motive (you *are* giddy, you know, Trixie, I always told you so), which are in our opinion sufficient to prevent us from making any proposals to you in the matter.'

Uncle Solomon laid down the letter at this point, and looked around open-mouthed: 'I thought I could make out most things,' he said; 'but this is rather beyond me, I must say.'

'Ere are these people—what's their names? Leadbitter and Gandy (who I take it are in the gas-fitting and decorating line)—writing to say in the same breath that they can't come and see to your bells, and they don't want to marry your daughter. Who asked them?—you ain't come down so low in the world to go and offer Trixie to a gas-fitter, I should 'ope, Matthew!—and yet what else *does* it mean?—tell me that, and I'll thank you.'

'Don't ask *me*,' said the unhappy father; 'they're perfect strangers.'

'Trixie, you know nothing about it, I hope?' said Mrs. Ashburn, rather suspiciously.

'No, ma dear,' said Trixie; 'but I don't want to marry either Mr. Leadbitter or Mr. Gandy.'

The situation had become too much for Mark; at first he had hoped that by holding his tongue he might escape being detected, while the rejection of both the novels from which he had hoped so much was a heavy blow which he felt he could scarcely bear in public; but they seemed so determined to sift the

matter to the end that he decided to enlighten them at once, since it must be only a question of time.

But his voice was choked and his face crimson as he said, 'I think perhaps I can explain it.'

'You!' they all cried, while Uncle Solomon added something about 'young men having grown cleverer since his young days.'

'Yes, that letter is addressed to me—M. Ashburn, you see, stands for Mark, not Matthew. It's from—from a firm of publishers,' said the unlucky Mark, speaking very hoarsely; 'I sent them two novels of mine—one was called "One Fair Daughter," and the



other "Sweet Bells Jangled"—and they, they won't take them—that's all.'

There was a 'sensation,' as reporters say, at this announcement: Martha gave a sour little laugh of disgust; Cuthbert looked as if he thought a good deal which brotherly feeling forbade him to put in words; but Trixie tried to take Mark's hand under the table—he shrank from all sympathy, however, at such a moment, and shook her off impatiently, and all she could do was to keep her eyes in pity from his face.

Mrs. Ashburn gave a tragic groan and shook her head: to her a young man who was capable of writing novels was lost; she had

a wholesome horror of all fiction, having come from a race of Dissenters of the strict old-fashioned class, whose prejudices her hard dull nature had retained in all their strength. Her husband, without any very clear views of his own, thought as she did as soon as he knew her opinions, and they all left it to Mr. Lightowler to interpret the 'evident sense of the house.'

He expanded himself imposingly, calling up his bitterest powers of satire to do justice to the occasion: 'So *that's* all, is it?' he said; 'ah, and quite enough, too, *I* should think; so it was the bells on *your* cap that were jingling all the time?'

'Since you put it in that pleasant way,' said Mark, 'I suppose it was.'

'And that's how you've been studying for the Bar of evenings, this is the way you've overcome your fondness for scribbling nonsense? I've spent all the money I've laid out on you' (it was a way of his to talk as if Mark had been a building estate), 'I've given you a good education, all to 'ave you writing novels and get 'em "returned with thanks!"—you might have done that much without going to College!'

'Every writer of any note has had novels declined at some time,' said Mark.

'Well,' said Uncle Solomon, ponderously, 'if that's all, you've made a capital start. You can set up as a big littery pot at once, *you* can, with a brace of 'em. I 'ope you're satisfied with all this, Jane, I'm sure?'

'It's no use saying anything,' she said; 'but it's a bad return after all your kindness to him.'

'A return with thanks,' put in Cuthbert, who was not without some enjoyment of Mark's discomfiture; he had long had a certain contempt for his elder brother as a much overrated man, and he felt, with perfect justice, that had Fortune made him his uncle's favourite, he had brains which would have enabled him to succeed where Mark had failed; but he had been obliged to leave school early for a City office, which had gone some way towards souring him.

'There's an old Latin proverb,' said Mr. Ashburn, with a feeling that it was his turn—'an old Latin proverb, "*Nec suetonijs ultra crepitam.*"'

'No, excuse me, you 'aven't *quite* got it, Matthew,' said his brother-in-law, patronisingly; 'you're very near it, though. It runs, if I don't make a mistake, "*Ne plus ultra sutorius* (not

suetonius—*he* was a Roman emperor)—crepitan,” a favourite remark of the poet Cicero—“Cobbler stick to your last,” as *we* have it. But your father’s right on the main point, Mark. I don’t say you need stick to the schoolmastering, unless you choose. I’ll see you started at the Bar; I came this very evening to ’ave a talk with you on that. But what do you want to go and lower yourself by literature for? There’s a littery man down at our place, a poor feller that writes for the “Chigbourne and Lamford Gazette,” and gets my gardener to let him take the measure of my gooseberries; he’s got a hat on him my scarecrow wouldn’t be seen in. That’s what you’ll come to!’

‘There’s some difference,’ said Mark, getting roused, ‘between the reporter of a country paper and a novelist.’

‘There’s a difference between you and him,’ retorted his uncle; ‘he gets what he writes put in and paid so much a line for—you don’t. That’s all the difference *I* can see!’

‘But when the books are accepted, they will be paid for,’ said Mark, ‘and well paid for too.’

‘I always thought that dog and the shadow must ha’ been a puppy, and now I know it,’ said his uncle, irritably. ‘Now look here, Mark, let’s have no more nonsense about it. I said I came here to have a little talk with you, and though things are not what I expected, ’ave it I will. When I saw you last, I thought you were trying to raise yourself by your own efforts and studying law, and I said to myself, “I’ll give him another chance.” It seems now that was all talk; but I’ll give you the chance for all that. If you like to take it, well and good; if not, I’ve done with you this time once for all. You go on and work ’ard at this Law till you’ve served your time out, or kept your terms, or whatever they call it, and when you get called, you can give ’em notice to quit at your school. *I’ll* pay your fees and see you started in chambers till you’re able to run alone. Only, and mind this, no more of your scribbling—drop that littery rubbish once for all, and I stand by; go on at it, and I leave you to go to the dogs your own way. That’s my offer, and I mean it.’

There are few things so unpleasantly corrective to one’s self-esteem as a letter of rejection such as had come to Mark—the refusal of the school committee was insignificant in comparison; only those who have yielded to the subtle temptation to submit manuscript to an editor or a publisher’s reader, and have seen it return in dishonour, can quite realise the dull anguish of it, the

wild, impotent rebellion that follows, and the stunned sense that all one's ideas will have somehow to be readjusted; perhaps an artist whose pictures are not hung feels something of it, but there one's wounded vanity can more easily find salves.

Mark felt the blow very keenly; for weeks he had been building hopes on these unfortunate manuscripts of his; he had sent both to a firm under whose auspices he was particularly anxious to come before the world, in the hope that one at least would find favour with them, and now the two had been unequivocally declined; for a moment his confidence in himself was shaken, and he almost accepted the verdict.

And yet he hesitated still: the publisher might be wrong; he had heard of books riding out several such storms and sailing in triumphantly at last. There was Carlyle, there was Charlotte Brontë, and other instances occurred to him. And he longed for speedy fame, and the law was a long avenue to it.

'You hear what your uncle says?' said his mother. 'Surely you won't refuse a change like this.'

'Yes, he will,' said Martha. 'Mark would rather write novels than work, wouldn't you, Mark? It must be so amusing to write things which will never be read, I'm sure.'

'Leave Mark alone, Martha,' said Trixie. 'It's a shame—it is.'

'I don't know why you should all be down on me like this,' said Mark; 'there's nothing positively immoral in writing books—at least when it never goes any further. But I daresay you're right, and I believe *you* mean to be kind at any rate, uncle. I'll take your offer. I'll read steadily, and get called, and see if I'm good for anything at the Bar, since it seems I'm good for nothing else.'

'And you'll give up the writing, hey?' said his uncle.

'Oh, yes,' said Mark, irritably, 'anything you please. I'm a reformed character; I'll take the pledge to abstain from ink in all forms if you like.' It was not a very gracious way of accepting what was by no means an unhandsome offer; but he was jarred and worried, and scarcely knew what he said.

Mr. Lightowler was not sensitive, and was too satisfied at having gained his object to cavil at Mark's manner of yielding. 'Very well; that's settled,' he said. 'I'm glad you've come to your senses, I'm sure. We'll have you on the Woolsack yet, and we'll say no more about the other business.'

'And now,' said Mark, with a forced smile, 'I think I'll say

good-night. I'll go and attack the law-books while I'm in the humour for them.

Upstairs in his room he got out his few elementary text-books, and began to read with a sort of sullen determination; but he had not gone very far in the 'descent of an estate-tail,' before he shut the book up in a passion: 'I can't read to-night,' he said savagely; 'it isn't easy to hug my chains all at once; it will be a long time before I come out strong on estates-tail. If Holroyd (who says he *likes* the jargon) can't get a living by it, there's not much hope for me. I loathe it! I'm sure I had a chance with those books of mine, too; but that's all over. I must burn them, I suppose—— Who's there?' for there was a tap at the door.

'It's me, Mark—Trixie—let me in.' Mark rose and opened the door to Trixie, in a loose morning wrapper. 'Mark, I'm so sorry, dear,' she said softly.

'Sorry! you ought to rejoice, Trixie,' said Mark, with a bitter laugh. 'I'm a brand from the burning—a repentant novelist. I've seen my errors and am going to turn Lord Chancellor.'

'You mustn't be angry with them,' said Trixie. 'Dear ma is very strict; but then she is so anxious to see you making a living, Mark, and you know they don't give you very much at St. Peter's. And Martha and Cuthbert can't help saying disagreeable things. Don't you think, perhaps,' she added timidly, 'that it's better for you to give up thinking about writing any more?'

'Well, I've done it, Trixie, at any rate. I'm not so bad as that fellow Delobelle, in "Fromont Jeune," with his "Je n'ai pas le droit de renoncer au théâtre!" am I? I've renounced *my* stage. I'm a good little boy, and won't make a mess with nasty ink and pens any more. When I get those confounded books back they shall go into the fire—by Jove they shall!'

'No, Mark, don't, it would be such a pity,' cried Trixie. 'I'm sure they were beautifully written; quite as well as some that get printed. I wish you could write novels and be Lord Chancellor too, Mark.'

'Bring out Acts in three volumes, and edit Judicature Rules in fancy covers for railway reading? It would be very nice, Trixie, wouldn't it? But I'm afraid it wouldn't do, even if I wrote them in secret, under the Woolsack. If I write anything now, it must be a smart spicy quarto on Bankruptcy, or a rattling digest on the Law of Settlement and Highways. My fictions will be all legal ones.'

‘I know you will do your best,’ said Trixie, simply.

Mark dreamed that night—much as other disappointed literary aspirants have dreamed before him—that a second letter had come from the publishers, stating that they had reconsidered their decision, and offering repentantly to publish both novels on fabulous terms. He was just rushing to call Trixie, and tell her the good news, when the dream faded, and he awoke to the consciousness of his very different circumstances.

Literature had jilted him. The Law was to be his mistress henceforth: a bony and parchment-faced *innamorata*, with a horsehair wig; and he thought of the task of wooing her with a shudder.

CHAPTER V.

NEIGHBOURS.



MORE than a week had passed since the scene in Malakoff Terrace described in my last chapter—a week spent by Mark in the drudgery of school work, which had grown more distasteful than ever now he could indulge in no golden dreams of a glorious deliverance; for he could not accept his new prospects as an adequate substitute, and was beginning to regret his abandonment of his true ambitions with a longing that was almost fierce.

He had gone down to ‘The Woodbines,’ his uncle’s villa at Chigbourne, in pursuance of the invitation given him; and Mr. Lightowler’s undisguised recovery of the feeling of proprietorship in him, and his repeated incitements to pursue his studies with unwearied ardour, only increased Mark’s disgust with himself and his future, as he

walked along the lanes with his relative towards the little church beyond the village on the last Sunday in November.

It was a bright clear frosty day, with a scarlet sun glowing through dun-coloured clouds, and a pale blue sky beyond the haze above their heads; the country landscape had suggestions of Christmas cheeriness, impossible enough to Londoners who cannot hope to share in country-house revels *à la* Mr. Caldecott, but vaguely exhilarating notwithstanding.

Mark knew that his Christmas would be passed in town with his family, who would keep it as they observed Sunday, and refrain from any attempt at seasonable jollity; yet he began to feel elated by its approach, or the weather, or some instinct of youth and health which set his blood tingling and drove away his dissatisfaction with every step he took.

Uncle Solomon had come out in broadcloth, and a large hat with such an ecclesiastical brim that it influenced his conversation, causing it to be more appropriate than Sunday talk will sometimes be, even amongst the best people. He discoursed of Ritualism, and deplored the hold it had acquired on the vicar, and the secret manœuvres of the detested Humpage in the vestry.

'I was brought up a Baptist,' he said, 'and I'd go back to 'em now, if I didn't know how they'd all crow about it; and they're a poor lot at Little Bethel, too, not a penny-piece among 'em.'

'When we get into the church,' he continued, 'you give a look left of the chancel, close by the door where the shelf is with the poor-loaves. You'll see a painted winder there which that 'Umpage got put up to his aunt—that's his ostentation, that is. I don't believe he ever *had* an aunt; but I don't wish to judge him. Only you look at that window, and tell me how it strikes you afterwards. He's got the artist to do him as the Good Samaritan there! I call it scandalous!—there's no mistake about it; the 'air's not the same colour, and the Eastern robes hide it a bit; but he's there for all that. I don't relish seeing 'Umpage figurin' away in painted glass and a great gaudy turban every time I look up, he's quite aggravating enough in his pew. If I chose to go to the expense, I could put up a winder too, and 'ave myself done.'

'As a saint?' suggested Mark.

'Never you mind. If I liked to be a saint on glass I could, I suppose. I'm a churchwarden, and there's no reason why 'Umpage should 'ave all the painted winders to himself; but I shouldn't

care to make myself so conspicuous. 'Umpage, now, he likes that sort of thing.'

This brought them to the church, a Perpendicular building with a decidedly 'Early English' smell in it, and Uncle Solomon led the way to his pew, stopping to nudge Mark as they passed the memorial to his enemy's meretricious aunt; he nudged him again presently, after he had retired behind the ecclesiastical hat and emerged again to deal out some very large prayer and hymn books as if they were cards.

'That's him—that's 'Umpage,' he said in a loud whisper.

Mark looked up in time to see an old gentleman advance to the door of the pew in front of them—a formidable-looking old gentleman, with a sallow face, long iron-grey locks, full grey eyes, a hook-nose, and prominent teeth under a yellowish-grey moustache and beard.

He felt a sudden shame, for behind Mr. Humpage came a pretty child with long floating light hair, with a staid fresh-faced woman in grey, and last a girl of about nineteen or twenty, who seemed to have caught the very audible whisper, for she glanced in its direction as she passed in with the slightest possible gleam of amused surprise in her eyes and a lifting of her delicate eyebrows.

A loud intoned 'Amen' came from the vestry just then, the organ played a voluntary, and the vicar and curate marched in at the end of a procession of little surpliced country boys, whose boots made a very undevotional clatter over the brasses and flagstones.

As a low churchman Mr. Lightowler protested against this processional pomp by a loud snort, which expression of opinion he repeated at any tendency to genuflexion on the part of the clergymen during the service, until the little girl turned round and gazed at him with large concerned eyes, as if she thought he must be either very devout or extremely unwell.

Mark heard little of the service; he was dimly aware of his uncle singing all the psalms and responses with a lusty tunelessness, and coming to fearful grief in gallant attempts to follow the shrill little choristers over a difficult country of turns and flourishes. He explained afterwards that he liked to set an example of 'joining in.'

But Mark saw little else but the soft shining knot of hair against the dark sables of the hat and tippet of his beautiful

neighbour, and a glimpse of her delicate profile now and then, as she turned to find the places for her little sister, who invariably disdained assistance as long as possible. He began to speculate idly on her probable character. Was she proud?—there was a shade of disdain about her smile when he first saw her. Self-willed?—the turn of her graceful head was slightly imperious. She could be tender with it all—he inferred that from the confidence with which the child nestled against her as the sermon began, and the gentle protecting hand that drew her closer still.

Mark had been in and out of love several times in his life; his last affair had been with a pretty, shallow flirt with a clever manner picked up at secondhand, and though she had come to the end of her *répertoire* and ceased to amuse or interest him long before they parted by mutual consent, he chose to believe his heart for ever blighted and proof against all other women, so that he was naturally in the most favourable condition for falling an easy victim.

He thought he had never seen any one quite like this girl, so perfectly natural and unaffected, and yet with such an indefinable air of distinction in her least movement. What poems, what books might not be written, with such an influence to inspire them, and then Mark recollected with a pang that he had done with all that for ever now. That most delicate form of homage would be beyond his power, even if he ever had the opportunity of paying it, and the thought did not tend to reconcile him to his lot.

Would chance ever bring him within the sphere of his new-found divinity? Most probably not. Life has so many of these tantalising half-glimpses, which are never anything more. 'If she is Humpage's daughter,' he thought, 'I'm afraid it's hopeless; but she shall not pass out of my life if I can help it!' and so he dreamed through the sermon, with the vicar's high cracked voice forming a gentle clacking accompaniment, which he quite missed when the benediction came upon him unexpectedly.

They came out of church into bright November sunshine; the sun had disengaged itself now from the dun clouds, melted the haze, and tempered the air almost to the warmth of early spring. Mark looked round for Mr. Humpage and his party, but without success; they had lingered behind, perhaps, as he could not help fearing, designedly. He determined, however, to find out what he could about them, and approached the subject diplomatically.

'I saw the window,' he began; 'that was the Good Samaritan in front, of course. I recognised him by the likeness at once.'

'He took care it should be like,' said Uncle Solomon, with a contemptuous sniff.

'That was his family with him, I suppose?' Mark asked carelessly.

'Umpage is a bachelor, or gives himself out for such,' said his uncle, charitably.

'Then those young ladies—are they residents here?'

'Which young ladies?'

'In his pew,' said Mark, a little impatiently, 'the little girl with the long hair, and—and the other one?'

'You don't go to church to stare about you, do you? I didn't take any notice of them; they're strangers here—friends of 'Umpage, I daresay. That was his sister in grey; she keeps house for him, and they say he leads her a pretty life with his tempers. Did you see that old woman behind in a black coalscuttle? That was old widow Barnjum; keeps a sweetstuff shop down in the village. I've seen her that far in liquor sometimes she can't find her way about and 'as to be taken 'ome in a barrow. You wouldn't think it to look at her, would you? I shall give the vicar the 'int to tell old John Barker he ought to stay away till he's got over that cough of his; it's enough to make anybody ill to listen to him. I've a good mind to tell him of it myself; and I will, too, if I come across him. The Colonel wasn't in church again. They tell me he's turned Atheist, and loaf about all Sunday with a gun. I've seen him myself driving a dog-cart Sunday afternoons in a pot 'at, and I knew then what would come of that. Here we are again!' he said, as they reached the palings of 'The Woodbines.' 'We'll just stroll round to get an appetite for dinner before we go in.'

Uncle Solomon led the way into the stables, where he lingered to slap his mare on the back and brag about her, and then Mark had to be introduced to the pig. 'What I call a 'andsome pig, yer know,' he remarked; 'a perfect picture, he is' (a picture that needed cleaning, Mark thought)—'you come down to me in another three weeks or so, and we'll try a bit off of that chap'—an observation which seemed to strike the pig as in very indifferent taste, for he shook his ears, grunted, and retired to his sty in a pointed manner.

After that there was plenty to do and see before Mark was allowed to dine: Lassie, the colley, had to be unfastened for a run about the 'grounds,' of which a mechanical mouse might have made the tour in five minutes; there was a stone obelisk to

be inspected that Uncle Solomon had bought a bargain at a sale and set up at a corner of the lawn inscribed with the names of his favourite characters living and dead—a remarkably scratch team, by the way; then he read out sonorous versions of the Latin names of most of his shrubs, which occupied a considerable time, until, at last, by way of the kitchen-garden and strawberry beds, they came to a little pond and rustic summer-house, near which the boundary fence was unconcealed by any trees or shrubs.

‘See that gap?’ said Mr. Lightowler, pointing to a paling of which the lower half was torn away; ‘that’s where ’Umpage’s blithering old gander gets through. I ’ate the sight of the beast, and I’d sooner ’ave a traction-engine running about my beds than him! I’ve spoke about it to ’Umpage till I’m tired, and I shall ’ave to take the law into my own hands soon, I know I shall. There was Wilcox, my gardener, said something about some way he had to serve him out—but it’s come to nothing. And now we’ll go in for a wash before dinner.’

Uncle Solomon was a widower; a niece of his late wife generally lived with him and superintended his domestic affairs—an elderly person, colourless and cold, who, however, had a proper sense of her position as a decayed relative on the wife’s side, and made him negatively comfortable; she was away just then, which was partly the reason why Mark had been invited to bear his uncle company.

They dined in a warm little room, furnished plainly but well; and after dinner Uncle Solomon gave Mark a cigar, and took down a volume of American Commentaries on the Epistles, which he used to give a Sunday tone to his nap; but before it could take effect, there were sounds faintly audible through the closed windows, as of people talking at the end of the grounds.

Mr. Lightowler opened his drooping eyelids: ‘There’s some one in my garden,’ he said. ‘I must go out and put a stop to that—some of those urchins out of the village—they’re always at it!’

He put on an old garden-hat and sallied out, followed by Mark: ‘The voices seem to come down from ’Umpage’s way, but there’s no one to be seen,’ he said, as they went along. ‘Yes, there is, though; there’s ’Umpage himself and his friends looking across the fence at something! What does he want to go staring on to *my* land for—like his confounded impudence!’

When they drew a little nearer, he stopped short and, turning to Mark with a face purple with anger, said, ‘Well, of all the

impudence—if he isn't egging on that infernal gander now—put him through the 'ole himself, I daresay !'

On arriving at the scene, Mark saw the formidable old gentleman of that morning glaring angrily over the fence ; by his side was the fair and slender girl he had seen in church, while at intervals her little sister's wondering face appeared above the top of the palings, a small dog uttering short sharp barks and yelps behind her.

They were all looking at a large grey gander, which was unquestionably trespassing at that moment ; but it was unjust to say, as Mr. Lightowler had said, that they were giving it any encouragement ; the prevailing anxiety seemed to be to recover it, but as the fence was not low, and Mr. Humpage not young enough to care to scale it, they were obliged to wait the good pleasure of the bird.

And Mark soon observed that the misguided bird was not in a condition to be easily prevailed upon, being in a very advanced stage of solemn intoxication ; it was tacking about the path with an erratic stateliness, its neck stretched defiantly, and its choked sleepy cackle said, ' You lemme 'lone now, I'm all ri', walk shtraight enough 'fiwan'to !' as plainly as bird-language can be rendered.

As Uncle Solomon bore down on it, it put on an air of elaborate indifference, meant to conceal a retreat to the gap by which it had entered, and began to waddle with excessive dignity in that direction, but from the way in which it repeatedly aimed itself at the intact portions of the paling, it was not difficult to infer that it was under a not infrequent optical illusion.

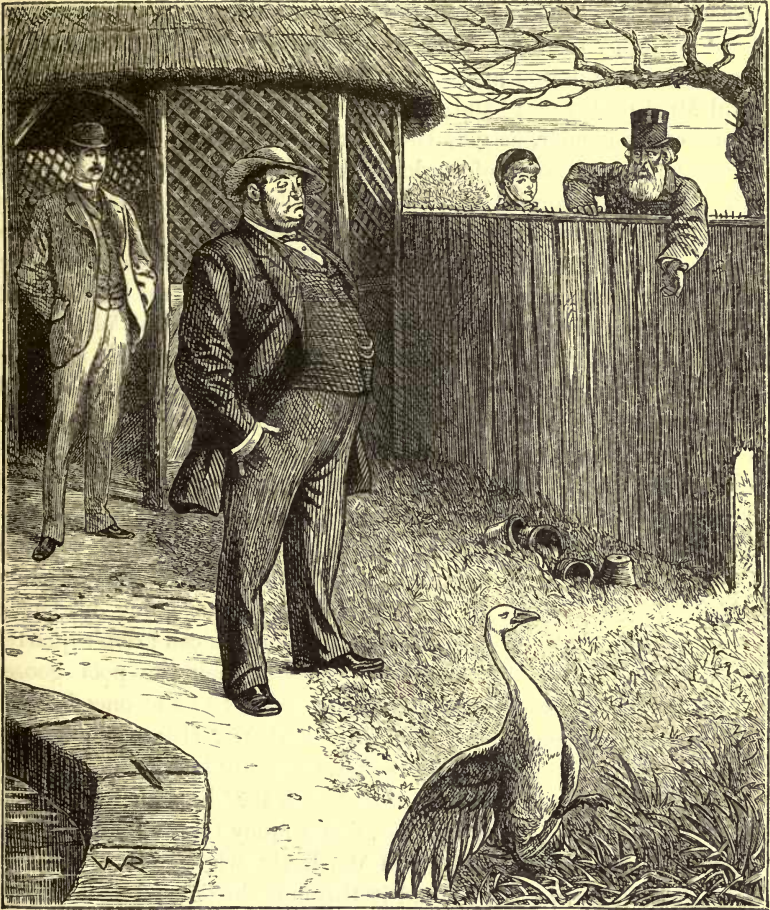
Mr. Lightowler gave a short and rather savage laugh. ' Wilcox *has* done it, then !' he said. Mark threw away his cigar, and slightly lifted his hat as he came up ; he felt somewhat ashamed and strongly tempted to laugh at the same time ; he dared not look at the face of Mr. Humpage's companion, and kept in the background as a dispassionate spectator.

Mr. Lightowler evidently had made up his mind to be as offensive as possible. ' Afternoon, Mr. 'Umpage,' he began ; ' I think I've 'ad the pleasure of seeing this bird of yours before ; he's good enough to come in odd times and assist my gardener ; you'll excuse me for making the remark, however, but when he's like this I think he ought to be kep' indoors.'

' This is disgraceful, sir,' the other gentleman retorted, galled by this irony ; ' disgraceful !'

'It's not pretty in a gander, I must say,' agreed Uncle Solomon, wilfully misunderstanding. 'Does it often forget itself in this way, now?'

'Poor dear goose,' chanted the little girl, reappearing at this juncture, 'it's so giddy; is it ill, godpapa?'



'Run away, Dolly,' said Mr. Humpage; 'it's no sight for you; run away.'

'Then Frisk mustn't look either; come away, Frisk,' and Dolly vanished again.

When she had gone, the old gentleman said, with a dangerous

smile that showed all his teeth, 'Now, Mr. Lightowler, I think I'm indebted to you for the abominable treatment of this bird?'

'Somebody's been treating it, it's very plain,' said the other, looking at the bird, which was making a feeble attempt to spread out its wings and screech contemptuously at the universe.

'You're equivocating, sir; do you think I can't see that poison has been laid in your grounds for this unhappy bird?'

'It's 'appy enough; don't you be uneasy, Mr. 'Umpage, there's been no worse poison given to it than some of my old Glenlivat,' said Mr. Lightowler; 'and, let me tell you, it's not every man, let alone every gander, as gets the luck to taste that. My gardener must have laid some of it down for—for agricultural purposes, an' your bird, comin' in through the 'ole (as you may p'raps remember I've spoke to you about before) 'as bin makin' a little too free with it, that's all. It's welcome as the flowers in May to it, only don't blame me if your bird is laid up with a bad 'eadache by-and-by, not that there's an 'eadache in the 'ole cask.'

At this point Mark could not resist a glance at the fair face across the fence. In spite of her feminine compassion for the bird and respect for its proprietor, Mabel had not been able to overcome a sense of the absurdity of the scene, with the two angry old gentlemen wrangling across a fence over an intoxicated gander; the face Mark saw was rippling with subdued amusement, and her dark grey eyes met his for an instant with an electric flash of understanding; then she turned away with a slight increase of colour in her cheeks. 'I'm going in, Uncle Antony,' she said; 'do come, too, as soon as you can; don't quarrel about it any more—ask them to give you back the poor goose, and I'll take it into the yard again; it ought to go at once.'

'Let me manage it my own way,' said Mr. Humpage, testily. 'May I trouble you, Mr. Lightowler, to kindly hand me over that bird—when you have quite finished with it?' he added.

'That bird has been taking such a fancy to my manure-heap that I'll ask to be excused,' said Mr. Lightowler. 'If you was to whistle to it now, I might 'ead it through the 'ole; but it always finds it a good deal easier to come through than it does to come back, even when it's sober. I'm afraid you'll have to wait till it comes round a bit.'

At this the gander lurched against a half-buried flower-pot, and rolled helplessly over with its eyes closed. 'Oh, the poor thing, cried Mabel, 'it's dying!'

'Do you see that?' demanded its owner, furiously; 'it's dying, and you've had it poisoned, sir; that soaked bread was put there by you or your orders—and, by the Lord, you shall pay for it!'

'I never ordered or put it there either,' said his enemy, doggedly.

'We shall see about that—we shall see,' said Mr. Humpage; 'you can say that by-and-by.'

'It's no good losing your temper, now—keep cool, can't you?' roared Uncle Solomon.

'It's likely to make a man cool, isn't it? to come out for a quiet stroll on Sunday afternoon, and find that his gander has been decoyed into a neighbour's garden and induced to poison itself with whisky?'

'Decoyed? I like that! pretty innercent, that bird of yours! too timid to come in without a reg'lar invitation, wasn't he?' jeered Mr. Lightowler; 'quite 'ad to press him to step in and do the garden up a bit. You and your gander!'

Mabel had already escaped; Mark remained trying to persuade his uncle to come away before the matter ceased to be farcical.

'I shall take this matter up, sir! I shall take it up!' said Mr. Humpage, in a white rage; 'and I don't think it will do you credit as a churchwarden, let me tell you!'

'Don't you go bringing that in here, now!' retorted Uncle Solomon. 'I'll not be spoken to as a churchwarden by you, Mr. 'Umpage, sir, of all parties!'

'You'll not be spoken to by anybody very soon—at any rate, as a churchwarden. I mean to bring this affair before the magistrates. I shall take out a summons against you for unlawfully ill-treating and abusing my gander, sir!'

'I tell you I never ill-treated him; as for abuse, I don't say. But that's neither here nor there. He ain't so thin-skinned as all that, your gander ain't. And if I choose to put whisky, or brandy, or champagne-cup about my grounds, I'm not obliged to consult your ridik'lous gander, I *do* hope. I didn't ask him in to sample 'em. I don't care a brass button for your summonses. You can summons me till you're black in the face!'

But in spite of these brave words Mr. Lightowler was really not a little alarmed by the threat.

'We shall see about that!' said the other again, viciously. 'And now, once more, will you give me back my poor bird?'

Mark thought it had gone far enough. He took up the

heavy bird, which made some maudlin objections, and carried it gingerly to the fence. 'Here's the victim, Mr. Humpage,' he said lightly. 'I think it will be itself again in a couple of hours or so. And now, perhaps, we can let the matter drop for the present.'

The old gentleman glared at Mark as he received his bird: 'I don't know who you may be, young sir, or what share you've had in this disgraceful business. If I trace it to you, you shall repent of it, I promise you! I don't wish to have any further communications with you or your friend, who's old enough to know his duty better as a neighbour and a Christian. You will let him know, with my compliments, that he'll hear more of this.'

He retired with the outraged bird under his arm, leaving Uncle Solomon, who had, of course, heard his parting words, looking rather ruefully at his nephew.

'It's all very well for you to laugh,' he said to Mark, as they turned to go into the house again; 'but let me tell you, if that hot-tempered old idiot goes and brings all this up at Petty Sessions, it may be an awkward affair for me. He's been a lawyer, has 'Umpage, and he'll do his worst. A pretty thing to 'ave my name in all the papers about 'ere as torturing a goose! I dessay they'll try and make out that I poured the whisky down the brute's throat. It's Wilcox's doings, and none of mine; but they'll put it all on me. I'll drive over to Green & Ferret's to-morrow, and see how I stand. You've studied the law. What do *you* think about it, come? Can he touch me, eh? But he hasn't got a leg to stand on, like his gander—it's all nonsense, *ain't* it?'

If there had ever been a chance, Mark thought bitterly, after comforting his uncle as well as his very moderate acquaintance with the law permitted, of anything like intimacy between himself and the girl whose face had fascinated him so strangely, it was gone now: that bird of evil omen had balked his hopes as effectually as its ancestors had frustrated the aspiring Gaul.

The dusk was drawing on as they walked across the lawn, from which the russet glow of the sunset had almost faded; the commonplace villa before them was tinted with violet, and in the west the hedges and trees formed an intricate silhouette against a background of ruddy gold and pale lemon; one or two flamingo-coloured clouds still floated languidly higher up in a greenish blue sky; over everything the peace and calm had settled that mark the close of a perfect autumn day, with the additional stillness which always makes itself perceptible on a Sunday.

Mark felt the influence of it all, and was vaguely comforted—he remembered the passing interchange of glances across the fence, and it consoled him.

At supper that evening his uncle, too, recovered his spirits: ‘If he brings a summons, they’ll dismiss it,’ he said confidently; ‘but he knows better than that as a lawyer—if he does, he’ll find the laugh turned against him, hey? I’m not answerable for what Wilcox chooses to do without my orders. I never told him he wasn’t to—but that ain’t like telling him to go and do it, is it now? And where’s the cruelty, either?—a blend like that, too. Just try a glass, now, and say what you think—he’ll be dropping in for more of it, if he’s the bird *I* take him for!’

But as they were going upstairs to bed, he stopped at the head of the staircase and said to Mark, ‘Before I forget it, you remind me to get Wilcox to find out, quietly, the first thing to-morrow, how that gander is.’

CHAPTER VI.

SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR.



HEN Mark awoke next morning the weather had undergone one of those sudden and complete changes which form one of the chief attractions of our climate; there had been a frost, and with it a thin white mist, which threw its clinging veil over the landscape; the few trees which were near enough to be seen were covered with a kind of thick grey vegetation, that gave them a spectral resemblance to their summer selves. Breakfast was early, as Mark had to be at St. Peter's as soon after morning chapel as possible,

and he came down shivering to find his uncle already seated. ‘The dog-cart will be round in five minutes,’ said the latter

gentleman, with his mouth full ; ' so make the most of your time. You'll have a cold drive. I'll take you over to the station myself, and go on and see Ferret after.'

The too-zealous Wilcox brought the trap round. 'Ave you been round to see about that bird next door?' Mr. Lightowler asked rather anxiously, as the man stood by the mare's head. 'Yessir,' said Wilcox, with a grin; 'I went and saw Mr. 'Umpage's man, and he say the old gander was werry bad when they got 'im 'ome, but he ain't any the worse for what he 'ad this mornin', sir; though the man, he dew say as the gander seem a bit sorry for 'isself tew. They tough old birds 'a' got strong 'eads, sir; I knowed it 'ud do him no 'arm, bless ye!'

'Well, don't you go trying it again, Wilcox, that's all. Mind what I say,' said Uncle Solomon, with visible relief, 'else you and me 'll 'ave words and part. Let her go,' and they drove off.

He gave Mark much good advice on the way, such as wealthy uncles seem to secrete and exude almost unconsciously, as toads yield moisture; but Mark paid only a moderate degree of attention to it as they spun past the low dim hedges; he hardly noticed what could be seen along the road even, which was not much—a gable-end or a haystack starting out for an instant from the fog, or a shadowy labourer letting himself through a gate—he was thinking of the girl whose eyes had met his the afternoon before.

He had dreamed of her all that night—a confused ridiculous dream, but with a charm about it which was lingering still; he thought they had met and understood one another at once, and he had taken her to the village church where he had first seen her, and they had a private box, and Uncle Solomon took the chair, while old Mr. Shelford, Trixie, and young Langton were all in the choir, which was more like an orchestra. It was not particularly connected or reverent, but she had not been included in the general travesty—his sleeping brain had respected her image even in its waywardness, and presented it as vivid and charming as in life, so that the dream with all its absurdity seemed to have brought her nearer to him, and he could not resist the fancy that *she* might have some recollection of it too.

A low hum in the still air, and distant reports and choked railway whistles told them they were near the station, but the fog had grown so much denser that there was no other indication of

it, until Mr. Lightowler brought up sharply opposite the end of an inclined covered staircase, which seemed to spring out of nothing and lead nowhere, where they left the dog-cart in charge of a flyman and went up to the platform.

There a few old gentlemen with rosy faces were stamping up and down and slapping their chests, exchanging their 'Raw morning this, sir's,' 'Ah, it is indeed's,' with an air of good men bearing up under an undeserved persecution.

'Sharp morning this to stand about in,' said Uncle Solomon; 'let's go into the waiting-room, there's a fire there.' The waiting-room was the usual drab little room, with a bottle of water and tumblers on a bare stained table, and local advertisements on the dingy walls; the gas was lighted, and flickered in a sickly white fishtail flame, but the fire was blazing cheerfully, giving a sheen to the silver-grey fur of a child in a crimson plush hat who stood before it embracing a small round basket out of which a Skye terrier's head was peering inquisitively.

The firelight shone, too, on the graceful form of a girl, who was bending towards it holding out her slender hands to the blaze. Mark scarcely needed to glance at the face she turned towards the newcomers to recognise that fortune had allowed him one more chance: Mr. Humpage's visitors were evidently returning to town by the same train as himself, and the old gentleman in person was standing with his back to them examining a timetable on the wall.

Uncle Solomon, in his relief at Wilcox's information that morning, did not seem to perceive any awkwardness in the encounter, but moved about and coughed noisily, as if anxious to attract his enemy's attention. Mark felt considerably embarrassed, dreading a scene; but he glanced as often as he dared at the lady of his thoughts, who was drawing on her gloves again with a dainty deliberation.

'Godpapa,' said the little girl, suddenly, 'you never told me if Frisk had been good. Has he?'

'So good that he kept me awake thinking of him all night,' said the old gentleman, drily, without turning.

'Did he howl, godpapa? He does sometimes when he's left out in the garden, you know.'

'He did,' said Mr. Humpage. 'Oh, yes—he howled; he's a clever dog at that.'

'And you really *like* him to?'

'Some people don't.'

'Narrow-minded of 'em, very,' growled the old gentleman.

'Isn't it?' said Dolly, innocently. 'Well, I'm glad *you* like it, godpapa, because now I shall bring him to see you again. When there's a moon he can howl much louder. I'll bring him when the next moon comes, shall I?'

'We'll see, Chuckie, we'll see. I shouldn't like to keep him sitting up all night to howl on my account; it wouldn't be good for his health. But the very next blue moon we have down in these parts, I'll send up for him—I promise you that.'

Dolly was evidently about to inquire searchingly into the nature of this local phenomenon, but before she could begin the old gentleman turned and saw that they were not alone.

'Mornin', Mr. 'Umpage,' said Uncle Solomon, clearing his throat; and Mark felt a pang of regret for the lost aspirate.

'Good morning to you, sir,' said the other, distantly.

The elder girl returned the bow which Mark risked, though without giving any sign of remembrance; but Dolly remarked audibly, 'Why, that's the old man next door that gave your goose something to make it giddy, isn't it, godpapa?'

'I hope,' said Uncle Solomon, 'that now you've had time to think over what 'appened yesterday afternoon, you'll see that you went too far in using the terms that fell from you—more particularly as the bird's as well as ever, from what I hear this morning?'

'I don't wish to reopen that affair at present,' said the other, stiffly.

'Well, I've heard about enough of it, too; so if you'll own you used language that was unwarrantable, I'm willing to say no more about it for my part.'

'I've no doubt you are, Mr. Lightowler, but you must excuse me from entering into any conversation on the subject. I can't dismiss it as lightly as you seem to do—and, in short, I don't mean to discuss it here, sir.'

'Very well, just as you please. I only meant to be neighbourly—but it don't signify. I can keep myself *to* myself as well as other parties, I daresay.'

'Then have the goodness to do it, Mr. Lightowler. Mabel, the train is due now. Get your wraps and things and come along.'

He walked fiercely past the indignant Uncle Solomon, followed by Mabel and Dolly, the former of whom seemed a little ashamed

of Mr. Humpage's behaviour, for she kept her eyes lowered as she passed Mark, while Dolly looked up at him with childish curiosity.

'Confound these old fools!' thought Mark, angrily; 'what do they want to squabble for in this ridiculous way? Why, if they had only been on decent terms, I might have been introduced to her—to Mabel—by this time; we might even have travelled up to town together.'

'Regular old Tartar, that!' said his uncle, under his breath. 'I believe he'll try and have the law of me now. Let him—I don't



care! Here's your train at last. You won't be in by the timetable this morning with all this fog about.'

Mark got into a compartment next to that in which Mr. Humpage had put Mabel and her sister; it was as near as he dared to venture. He could hear Mabel's clear soft voice saying the usual last words at the carriage window, while Uncle Solomon was repeating his exhortations to study and abstinence from any 'littery nonsense.'

Then the train, after one or two false starts on the greasy rails, moved out, and Mark had a parting glimpse of the neighbours

turning sharply round on the platform with an elaborate affectation of being utter strangers.

He had no paper to amuse him, for the station was not important enough for a bookstall, and there was nothing to be seen out of the windows, which were silvered with frozen moisture. He had the compartment to himself, and lay back looking up rather sentimentally at the bull's-eye, through which he heard occasional snatches of Dolly's imperious treble.

'I know her name now,' he thought, with a quite unreasonable joy—'Mabel. I shall remember that. I wonder if they are going all the way to town, and if I could offer to be of any use to them at King's Cross? At all events, I shall see her once more then.'

It was not a very long journey from Chigbourne to the terminus, but, as will be seen hereafter, it was destined to be a landmark in the lives of both Mark and Mabel, though the meeting he looked forward to at the end of it never took place.

(To be continued.)

A ROMANCE OF THE MIRAGE.

THE romances encountered in real life are dreadfully sketchy and incomplete. It is the best and most interesting function of the imaginative writer to give true stories shape rather than to build up fictions; or so at least I think, having no faculty of invention. The outline of a tale which I am going to fill in was given me by an official of the Telegraph Service as we steamed one morning across the blue bay of Suez. A slight mirage lay beneath the glowing hills on the desert edge. I observed that the phenomenon is nowhere so vivid as in the South African *veldt*, according to my experience. My companion's travels had not been so wide, though much more profitable. But duty had kept him stationed in many parts of the Egyptian desert, and he had witnessed such surprising illusions as eclipse all I ever saw or heard of. I suggested that a plain report of them, coming from an authoritative person like himself, would be valuable to science and most curious to the public.

He modestly could not be brought to credit that any experience of his might be worthy of record, but told me what follows.

At one time he had charge of a station down the Red Sea. It was lonely in the extremest sense of the word. Himself, two native clerks, and two servants were the only human beings within a radius of unknown length. The Bedouins do not come that way, for there is not a well nor a green herb for many miles round. Once a month a native vessel called to replenish the kegs and to bring forage for his horse and a pony belonging to one of the clerks, Zohrab. If this supply did not arrive within ten days of its appointed time, the standing orders of the little colony enjoined them to embark and leave the place. They had a boat for the purpose.

Their station, Um el Jemal, was the home of mirage. It displayed itself in every possible form, and in many which would be thought impossible. Often, when they turned out, the desert was a lively scene. Fishing craft sailed in pellucid rivers; sometimes a great merchant ship or a man-o'-war appeared; villages stood out distinctly, camels and caravans stalked along, men prayed and marched. These visions changed from day to day. Sometimes

the fantastic became grotesque ; animals and men walked stolidly upside down, ships sailed in comfort on their trucks. But one picture appeared always the same, and very frequently. It flashed into sight directly behind the station. It was an ancient building of great size, castellated, with a broad terrace before its massive gateway. It did not glimmer into view, nor flicker in vanishing, but burst on the eye complete, substantial, remained about fifty minutes, and disappeared as suddenly. So distinct was this phantom castle that the clerks knew each of its windows as familiarly as their own. The terrace was often occupied by horses and men, who presently walked out of the scene, melting into air. The moment of disclosure, and the duration of the spectacle, varied with the season and with other circumstances doubtless ; but this was the most constant of all the mirage pictures. Scientific people will regret that my informant did not make precise observations and note them down. Civilised men have seldom opportunity to watch a phenomenon of the kind which often recurs. That there must be such is evident ; several others less conspicuous and less interesting haunted Um el Jemal.

The gentleman of whom I speak is not a fanciful person, and he had grave business to occupy his mind. The clerks enjoyed more leisure. They were young ; and though an Oriental scarcely understands what it is to be bored, that attribute is not caused by lack of imagination. They took greater interest in watching this apparition than their superior could have found, since they understood much in it that would have been a mystery to him. The spectral mansion was rather lively, as I have said. People came and went, and the very unusual proportion who were robed all in white, the frequent praying and preaching, told a political secret. Wherever this fantastic house might be situate, it was a haunt of the Wahabis, therefore a home of treason and rebellion, and therefore Zohrab loved to observe it. When there were no visitors on the terrace, donkeys often paraded there, equipped with such housings as wealthy Arab ladies use. And presently ladies mounted, their sex distinguishable, though they sat astride, by trousers and veil and the ugly, shapeless *ferijeh*. These demoiselles or dames rode out, but they never returned ; probably because the vision had disappeared before they got back. It was evident that the master of the house had a large harem.

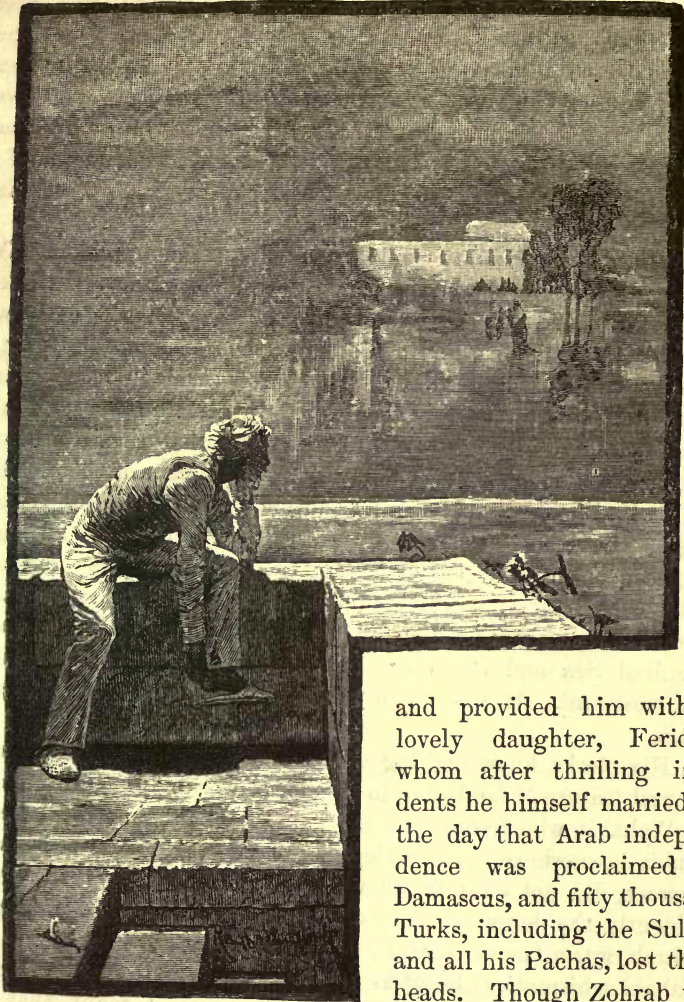
About that personage the clerks could not make up their minds. Upon the one hand they thought they recognised him in a tall

man who was present when the females of the household came on the terrace, as occasionally happened. It was deserted then, of course, by all males excepting this individual, who sat beneath the wall and smoked with some of the women, probably the elders. Amongst the bevy playing round, several were children and others quite young, as their lively motions suggested. They approached the man familiarly. One so privileged could only be the husband and father, or the eunuch; and the clerks' experience negated this latter supposition. But, on the other hand, he wore a black burnoos, coloured clothes beneath it, and a head-handkerchief of the brightest tints. How should a leader of Wahabis dress himself like that?

Where this dwelling could be situate made a problem. My informant himself found time to indulge a mild curiosity. He looked up his maps and books, but they gave no suggestion. There was actually no hint to guide conjecture. Um el Jemal lies on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea, but the reflections in mirage came from every quarter. They were ruled by certain laws, no doubt, immutable like all of nature's framing, but what they can be one is more puzzled to guess the longer one's experience of them. The real boats of which they saw a phantom, as it were, must be sailing on the west, or north-west, or south-west, if not on all these points at once. But they stood in the picture among trees and villages and caravans which must be, the substance of them, in directions exactly opposite; unless indeed they were thrown across the Red Sea and the Egyptian desert hundreds of miles from the westward. It was mighty bewildering, and my friend gave it up.

His clerks knew nothing of science. Mirage was for them a natural feature of landscape in this lower world. But the number of Wahabis who frequented the house told them it must lie in Arabia somewhere. The elder of the two, a Mohammedan and discreet, did not want to know too much about a spot which was evidently the haunt of rebels and heretics. But the younger, Zohrab, was a fanatic patriot, though a Christian. He hated the Wahabi schismatics almost as bitterly as they hate his own creed, but he was reluctantly inclined to think, as do so many, that the supreme foe, the Turk, will only be expelled by the aid of these bloodthirsty desperadoes. He watched the house where, as he fancied, a grand conspiracy was brewing, until it haunted him. Mixing up together war, patriotism, politics, romance, and love,

Zohrab constructed new tales of adventure on every recurrence of the mirage. He had made a very distinct individuality for the Sheikh, the man in the black burnoos. He had given him a name



and provided him with a lovely daughter, Ferideh, whom after thrilling incidents he himself married on the day that Arab independence was proclaimed in Damascus, and fifty thousand Turks, including the Sultan and all his Pachas, lost their heads. Though Zohrab was educated in Frank learning,

he did not understand mercy to the Ottoman. His most cherished wedding present would have been the false Khalif's head.

He was a Syrian of Beyrout, and a Christian as has been said. I picture a tall, lithe youth, small of bone but muscular, with large

eyes and a delicate moustache ; in short, a hero after the school-girl fancy when amiable and composed. An æsthetic barber would have longed for a model of Zohrab to exhibit in his shop window had he seen him in such a mood. But if, in conversation, somebody spoke well of the Turk, or alluded to the great days past and the present degradation of the Arab, this youth quivered and flamed like a war-horse tethered. An Arab of pure blood is curiously like his steed in peculiarities of nervous expression. A constant quiver of the nostrils, an unconscious thrill of straining muscles, an instant promptitude to take fire, are characteristic of each. My portrait of Zohrab is but half fanciful, of course ; in drawing it I have before my eye a score of models ; amongst them, be it admitted with qualifications, that grandest of all savages I ever met, the Sheikh 'Mteyer, who betrayed his trust and did to death poor Palmer and Gill and Charrington. But if Zohrab was like what that old traitor had been in youth, it was in outward semblance only.

The stories he incessantly devised about the phantom castle and its indwellers made pleasant fooling for Suleyman and the servants. They had no other diversion, and they loved a tale. But all the while Zohrab was trying seriously to discover where dwelt the chief who was plotting for the great cause—who was also the father of Ferideh ; for his imagination had so mixed the two threads of romance that they became one. From the very first he had employed himself in urging the crew of the supply-ship to make inquiries in all quarters ; had shown them the mirage, made a drawing of the castle with exhaustive notes, and offered a moderate reward. The vessel hailed from Sûf, a very small Arabian port, which desert Bedouins seldom visited ; but it was the only channel of communication with the world. The Arabs were interested, of course, in a matter which had the savour of magic ; but for many succeeding months they brought no suggestion that would bear examination. At length the Reis reported with delight substantial news. A Bedouin, calling at Sûf, recognised the sketch at a glance. It represented El Husn, the fortress-palace of Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr (Father of Victory), which lies four days' journey across the desert from Sûf.

With this fact in hand, the Reis asked no more. Who had not heard of El Husn and the Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr ? Every Arab is familiar with these names. Zohrab had heard them often, and he asked particulars which any of the crew could furnish, subject

to correction. The Sheikh had been a Wahabi in youth, and taken part in the grand struggles which would have broken up the Turkish empire had the fanatics been less tigerish, and Ibrahim Pasha, the Arnaout, been less shrewd. After the collapse of that great movement, the Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr retired to his fortress with his share of the spoils of Mecca, Medina, and a hundred shrines plundered by the Wahabis. When Ibrahim was preparing to follow thither, Mehemet Ali recalled him for graver work. Abou 'l Nasr rested quiet awhile, maturing his plans, and giving himself to the study of magic, in which he was proficient beyond all men. When the Wahabis recovered heart, he was ready, with patriotic devotion unaffected, with treasure beyond counting, and supreme wisdom. All Arab people consulted him as an oracle of God. The Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr said, 'Fight here! Remove that man! Keep quiet there!' and always, when his command was followed, advantage ensued. He had ceased to be a Wahabi, smoking and drinking coffee, and doing what he pleased. The Arabs generally thought none the worse of him for that; and the Wahabis, though in their hearts resenting his apostacy, dared not quarrel with their great ally.

This detailed information stirred Zohrab to intense excitement. His daily thought and nightly dream were of visiting the Sheikh and offering his sword for freedom—and Ferideh. If the patriot chief were as tolerant as rumour reluctantly declared, his creed would be no bar to service. Whilst Zohrab was working himself up to action, his resolve was precipitated by events. His superiors invited him to join the Telegraph Service of Egypt, and they made so sure of acceptance that they despatched his successor the same day, giving Zohrab a month to arrange his affairs. That decided him. When the new clerk arrived by steamer, the supply-ship chanced to be in port. Its return voyage carried this romantic youth, his pony, and his carpet-bag to Sûf.

Disguised as a well-to-do Arab of the lower class he drew little notice. Sûf is a miserable place, inhabited by people calling themselves Bedouin, who live by fishing and petty piracy. They also grow the most attenuated crops recognised by science. But it is a central station for feeding telegraph posts and light-houses. A company of Turkish soldiers garrison it, and a good number of people, such as Zohrab seemed to be, are drawn thither on business. He found his way to the Medhafe, put up his pony, and visited the coffee-house after a frugal meal. It was a horrid

little den, windowless, black all over with dirt and smoke. Coffee was dispensed by a one-eyed negro, in cups that had not been washed for months. Zohrab had fallen into English ways so far, at least, that this return to native habits sickened him.

An old officer came bustling in, and demanded papers. He should have boarded the vessel, but he was asleep. Zohrab assumed an air of dignity, and accompanied him to the Medhafa. When the Captain read that this stranger was an Effendi in Government employ, he became anxiously deferential—awkward investigations impending! But Zohrab let it be understood that for grave and secret purposes he was instructed to visit El Husn, and asked for a guide. The officer looked startled.

‘Every man in this accursed place knows the way except my soldiers. The people are rebels and heretics every one! No guide would serve you without the Sheikh’s approval; and that, perhaps, you do not care to ask publicly? I thought not! Then, if I ordered one of these brutes to accompany you I might as well send a burying party as a rear-guard.’

‘I could go alone, if the road is easy.’

‘Easy enough, if you met no evil-minded persons. You are acquainted with the Wahabi signs? No? Then it is madness to proceed, Effendi!’

‘We were told that the Sheikh had abandoned his heresy.’

‘He?—he’s an infidel; may his father’s name be cursed! But those who go back and forward from El Husn are nearly all Wahabis, and it’s fifty to one you come across them.’

‘Can you not teach me the pass-words?’

‘Oh!’ said the Captain, suddenly blustering, ‘I’ve not neglected that duty. Wahabis have taken me for one of themselves—Allah forgive my sin! If you can recollect all I teach you, Effendi, there is no danger.’

So Zohrab learned his part, carefully overhauled his baggage, removing all that could raise suspicion, handed it to the officer for keeping, and stretched himself upon the earth, among the fleas. Then he stole away by moonlight. The soldiers, warned, let him pass the gate.

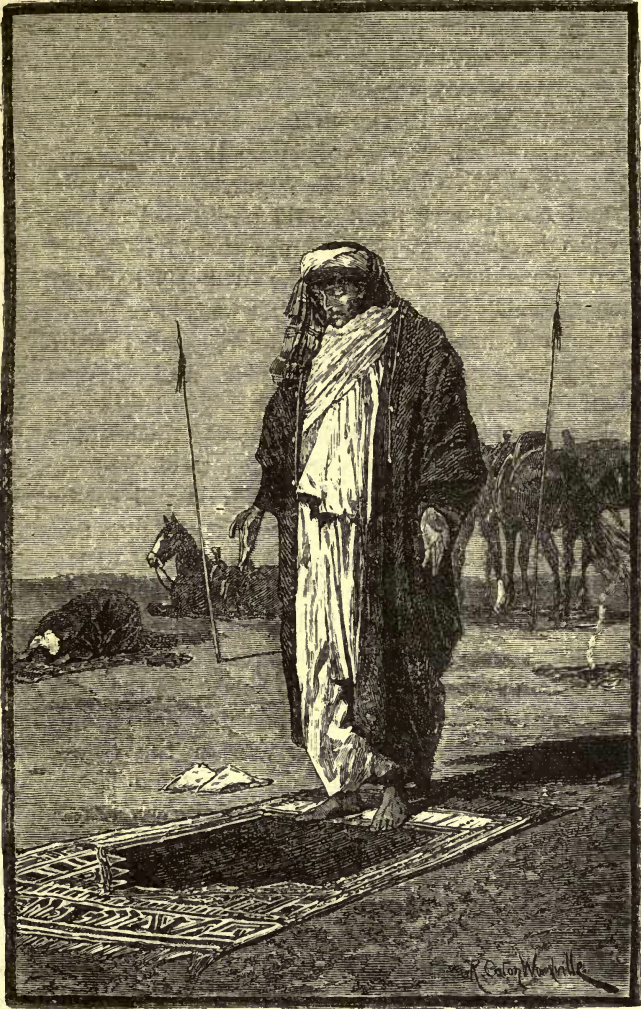
The first stage was long, but easy and not dangerous. Nevertheless, to be alone in the desert is terrible. Not a shadow in the landscape, save the traveller’s own, which his horse tramples wearily, with shuffling, noiseless feet. When the moon sank, Zohrab dismounted, waiting the dawn with his bridle in his hand.

That is a solemn pause, even if no danger threatens. The still night is busy with sounds, soft and mysterious, high up in air. They gather sometimes for a rush as of a mighty wind, but no breath stirs. Then, from the darkness, comes a sudden clang, ringing and sonorous, that makes the lonely watcher start to his arms. Zohrab had never known, or had forgotten, the rustling murmur of sand-grouse taking their early flight in thousands; the signals of wild geese, and the sharp, metallic cry of zikzak plovers. Um el Jemal was too barren even for those strong fliers. The dawn broke at last and he resumed his way, followed it whilst the sun climbed higher and higher, and pressed down on him like liquid heat. The sand-hills rolled away on either side, so smoothly monotonous that their crests blended into one another, and the world seemed flat. No landmarks but the crags on the horizon, at whose feet the mirage glistened. The vegetation was all burnt and sapless, showing the sand through its spiky, brittle twigs. No colour there but greys and browns and dusty yellows; but now and again a bone gleamed white, and Zohrab's high-strung nerves regarded it with a prescient thrill.

It was noon when he reached the termination of this stage. The pious soul who dug or restored a muddy, blessed puddle here had been commemorated by a Wely; but the Wahabis had passed that way, and after drinking had overthrown their benefactor's modest shrine for a superstitious monument. Zohrab plunged into the evil-smelling pond, beside his horse. Then, after the meal, he lay upon the glowing sand to sleep. The evening chill roused him suddenly, and they set off again. The second stage was traversed safely, but with worse alarms, for Zohrab thought he had lost his way. He reached the well early, drank, ate, and lay down. Wakened in the moonlight by the shrill neigh of his horse, he saw a little cavalcade approaching.

In the desert one cannot hide, and Zohrab lay still. The strangers drew up, looked at him, and dispersed to their camp duties. They were not Bedouins, for no camel followed them. After attending to their horses they sat down to eat, but two armed men quietly stationed themselves beside Zohrab. The moon vanished, but in the circle round a smouldering fire, torches were lit. He thought out the situation, rose like a man from sleep, and advanced with salaams. All eyed him gravely, but did not reply. He tried a Wahabi signal, which gained instant recognition. 'Sal Khayr!' said the chief courteously, piously avoiding

the name of Allah. Zohrab sat beside this chief, and the questioning began, but much less eager than is usual. His story was pat, for he had little to conceal besides his creed, and whilst their meal proceeded, a frugal repast of bread and rice, the Wahabis



listened with grave politeness. At the end all rose, with a low ejaculation of thankfulness to Allah. Zohrab rose also. 'Bind that spy!' the chief commanded. In an instant, Zohrab was stripped and tied, thrown upon the earth and left there.

The camp did not stir early. At the hour of morning prayer men released the prisoner, brought the carpet which he had thoughtfully provided, and went to their own devotions. Zohrab ought, I know, to have refused, and the story should end at this point with a harrowing narrative of his martyrdom. But my hero was not formed of martyr's stuff. He knelt and stood, folded his hands and spread them, touched the ground with his forehead, and so on. As nobody watched him closely, the performance did not cause suspicion. In the heat of the morning they started, Zohrab in the midst. To his questions the Wahabis replied very briefly or not at all. Indeed they scarcely spoke among themselves, and no stronger proof could be alleged of the influence religion has on character. That Arabs should be silent and self-contained seems incredible, but the Wahabis habitually display this phenomenon. Now and then, after long brooding over earthly wickedness and heavenly joys, a warrior cried sharply 'Lah-Ullah!' seldom completing the formula. And others would take it up, half unconsciously.

At the halt, Zohrab approached the chief, who heard his reproaches unmoved. 'If you were going to visit Sheikh Abou 'l Nasr, you have no cause of complaint. I will conduct you to him!' No more words would he give, but the tone meant death.

The next march brought them within view of El Husn, so the Wahabis declared. Zohrab looked with all his power. Suppose that this place, to visit which he had probably sacrificed his life, were not the substance of his mirage dreams after all! So it appeared in truth, and his heart sickened. In the quarter where El Husn lay, as the guides alleged, nothing was visible but piles of crag; and there were no mountains in the vision. Zohrab keenly scrutinised the plain, but it lay yellow and bare to the very foot of those yellow barren hills. He had thrown away his life!

When still far from the crags, the party diverged towards a solitary mound. Two Arabs who had been lying on its crest rose to their feet and vanished. Presently they reappeared on horseback, galloping from the further side. At a furious pace some young Wahabis rode to meet them, whirling guns but not firing. All went on together to the well, talking eagerly. The remarks Zohrab overheard suggested that action was at hand. After spending the night at this halt, the Wahabis rode in a straight course for the hills. The sun was high when they reached a narrow gorge, so deep and so abrupt that it lay in shadow almost cool

whilst the crags glowed and burnt above. Massive sungas, works of rough stone piled up, flanked the entrance, and at every point of vantage above the winding road such defences were repeated. The Wahabis looked at them with interest, and the elders told legends of fight this gorge had witnessed.

A mile or two beyond its mouth the fortifications became continuous. Suddenly a valley opened, with palms and green specks of fields, and huts and black tents. At the further end, several miles away, shone the white dome of a mosque. And in front appeared the house of the mirage, on a terrace of the mountain. Zohrab gasped! It was no trick of the eye! In real stone and mortar, there stood the gateway and the battlements and the windows he had daily beheld four hundred miles away! There was the Sheikh in his black burnoos and bright handkerchief. There were the children playing on the terrace. Zohrab forgot the peril in which he lay. What could harm the man to whom such a miracle was vouchsafed!

Men clothed all in white came galloping from the tents and loudly welcomed their friends. Sheikh and girls vanished. Across the flat, up the hill side, the Wahabis advanced. As Zohrab came out upon the terrace he wondered whether Suleyman was watching now and smoking by the station door. About this hour the mirage appeared at Um el Jemal.

Servants took the horses of the chiefs, who went in, whilst their followers lay in the house shadow, eating, dreaming, and sleeping; so, many a time, had Zohrab seen the terrace occupied. Hour passed after hour, but he could neither eat nor sleep. Then two burly blacks called him. A few steps inside the arch, the roadway wheeled at right angles where a portcullis hung on rusty chains. Several meurtrières in either wall allowed the garrison to make a last resistance, behind the portcullis, though the gate were forced. Under the further arch Zohrab saw a courtyard with stalky flowers and channels for irrigation; beyond it, painted arcades, where sat the Wahabi chiefs in their snowy robes. But his conductors opened a narrow door in the thickness of the wall, and threw him in. The dreary place he entered was a guardroom, used as a prison. Light entered dimly from the meurtrières for a few hours on each side of noon. Eight or ten scarecrows in Turkish uniform lay round. Their eyes, feverishly bright, shone in the gloom. Zohrab addressed them eagerly, but they did not reply.

In a few moments the Wahabis passed, and smiled grimly as

they looked in. People came and went through the archway. Then dusk crept over the fetid den, though free men outside called it early afternoon. After some hours of impotent storming, Zohrab grew hungry, and asked his fellow-prisoners when food was served. A big-boned Turk who had been fat and jovial perhaps in other days, answered bitterly from the darkness, 'Those who enter here learn to live without eating!' It was excitement rather than hunger which Zohrab had suffered. But at the threat of starvation he suddenly fished. The Turks would not answer again.

The prison had long been black as a mine when servants arrived with torches. The negroes entered first, bound Zohrab and threw him into a corner. Then the others brought in food, a tiny mess of rice and a slab of unleavened bread for each prisoner—saving the last. They laughed to hear his cries for food and curses. When all the Turks had done, the slaves unbound Zohrab, and took the light away.

It is not strange nor painful for an Arab to fast a day and night. Under ordinary circumstances he will sleep through longer abstinence. But Zohrab's fervid imagination was moved here. That the realisation of his wildest hopes should mean a fate like this was hideous, monstrous. He could not sleep. Standing by a loophole he implored each passer-by to tell the Sheikh this and that. An endless time it seemed before the show of torches and the clash of the big doors told that real night had begun, and an endless time of horror succeeded before they clashed again, opening in the dawn which would not reach that prison-house for hours. Perhaps he had slept, but it was the sleep that fevers. All through the pitchy blackness, waking or dreaming, he had seen the white eyes of his companions who had learned to live without food. Sharp pains transfixed his body; blood rushed to his head with splitting vehemence and left it frozen. Zohrab was still far from delirium, but he heard familiar voices and raved in answer. The Turks watched him anxiously as the dim light spread. Horrid experience warned them that this newcomer might do mischief before he grew used to starve. No one else heeded him, save by a mocking word thrown in.

Evening was heralded by its chills. Zohrab had fallen beneath the loophole when the blacks entered suddenly, and threw themselves upon him. In spite of his desperate struggling they fixed the ropes, and food was served to the others. Then they held the

prisoner firmly whilst a slave untied him, and when the last knot was loosed they pitched him headlong with all their strength. When Zohrab recovered his feet they were laughing outside.

Such, then, was to be his fate—death by hunger, with torment added! After a mood of helpless agony furious raving got hold upon him. The Turks gathered in a feeble heap to defend themselves. At midnight, or near it, men came with lights. ‘The Sheikh summons you!’ they said, and led him out. That calmed him. Quietly he followed across the moonlit courtyard, through dusky alcoves, to an inner room, where sat an old but vigorous chief, warrior and statesman every inch. He smiled, took the narguilleh from his lips, and told the slaves to go.

‘Health to you, my son! Sit down!’

Zohrab was trying to collect his thoughts for this supreme crisis. But on the first effort of will he felt them escape, fly round, transform themselves and reappear, the same but in new shapes. They would not be held. Frightened, awestruck, by this revolt, Zohrab fell on the divan, without even kicking off his shoes. The Sheikh started in surprise. That act told more than he had looked to hear. The stranger was a Christian and a ‘personage.’ He smiled in scornful pity, but without change of tone asked whence Zohrab came.

The youth began his story, very slightly and innocently falsified. He described how the fame of the great Arab had reached him at Beyrout. But in this early stage his attention wandered. He found himself talking of home, of his mother and sisters—pulled up confused—began to tell of the mirage, and described Um el Jemal, with a minute but flighty sketch of his English superior.

The Sheikh smoked and listened pleasantly. He observed, ‘You do not mention your father—may his soul have found peace!’

‘He was killed by the Turks!’ Zohrab passionately shouted. ‘When people told me of Sheikh Abou ’l Nasr, I said, He is my father and my lord! I will go and fight the Turk with him! Oh, Sheikh, they starve me, and I could not get word with you! My blood is flame and my head a millstone with lightning in it! I am dying!’

‘Who told you the way hither?’

‘The Reis of our store-boat. I showed him your house and your image, and the Wahabis who came, and Ferideh—’

‘You showed him?’ began the Sheikh, astonished. ‘Who is Ferideh?’

‘Your daughter! Oh, pardon me! I don’t know what I say!’ He threw himself along the divan, hysterically sobbing.

The Sheikh watched him thoughtfully, then clapped his hands and ordered bread and wine. Zohrab kissed his garments in the Oriental manner, not practised by this semi-Frank since childhood. He devoured the small cake, and looked for more. ‘Drink!’ the chief commanded, and he swallowed the measure in one gulp.

‘Now finish your tale, my son!’

‘My head is whirling! I do not remember!’

‘You have told me you are a Christian of Beyrout, employed in the service of the Porte. You invoked certain powers to reach me. What are they?’

‘Powers? You misunderstood, Sheikh, or I talked foolishness.’

‘Nay, my son!’ Then, looking fixedly at Zohrab, and making strange signs, he spoke in an unknown tongue. The youth felt a deeper thrill of alarm as the thought struck him that his mind was giving way. He sat with eyes dilated, panting.

After several essays, the Sheikh paused in bewilderment. ‘What your power is I know not, my son, but it is inferior to mine. Instruct me, therefore!’

‘I swear I do not know what you refer to, Sheikh.’

A sharp clang of brass resounded, and the negroes appeared. ‘Throw this Turk over the cliff!’ the Sheikh commanded; and in an instant Zohrab was overpowered and dragged out, yelling defiance and entreaties, through the archway to the moonlit platform. Lights gleamed at the windows, and heads appeared far above. Upon the very brink, Zohrab heard the Sheikh: ‘Tell the truth!’

‘By the God we both worship, I have told truth!’

‘One—lift him on the parapet! Two—his feet! Throw his feet over. Well?’

But Zohrab did not reply. He was looking to Heaven with prayers.

‘Father—father! not before our eyes!’ cried a girl’s voice from above. And Zohrab saw a lovely face outlined in the moonbeams at a window.

‘Lift him back! Put him in a room to sleep.’ And presently Zohrab, dazed and trembling in great shivers, lay on a carpet, with meat and wine beside him. It was long before he slept, and his dreams at first were of a thousand dreadful deaths. Towards morning he fell into heavy slumber.



The Sheikh sat beside him when he woke. After a moment's perplexity Zohrab sprang to his feet ready for a struggle.

‘I have taken counsel. Now tell what marvels you please, and I believe!’

‘You know I spoke the truth?’

‘I know that and more. But explain how you saw me and my house if it was not magic?’

In the sudden brightness of his spirits, a question rose to Zohrab’s lips why the occult powers had not cleared up this mystery also. But he refrained, and told about the mirage. The chief was interested, but uneasy. If his dwelling could be spied on hundreds of miles away, why not his defences? Zohrab reassured him partly, and he said in conclusion: ‘Now, Sheikh, will you enlist an infidel?’

‘If I enlist the Wahabi tiger for a good end, how can I refuse a Christian dog?’ he answered, smiling. ‘But those who would be served by men must lower themselves to serve prejudice and passion. Call yourself Aghile Agha, of Beyrout! I put this garrison in your charge, for other business absorbs my time. Lie quiet to-day. I will send you books.’

The Sheikh’s library was small, but characteristic: some poets, some works of unintelligible necromancy, the Campaigns of Zenghis Khan, and the autobiographies of his great descendants, Babar and Ackbar. The philosophy of these Moghul emperors, though timidly rendered by an orthodox translator, had evidently impressed the Sheikh. In a dozen loose notes Zohrab found its expression, which may be summarised briefly: ‘There is no God but one; the prophets of all creeds are his servants. There are devils beyond counting, but the man wise and just can sway them.’

Next day Zohrab took command of the garrison. It was no honorary charge. Every dweller in the valley capable of bearing arms was a retainer of the Sheikh. Fifty of them in rotation served at the castle, and all mustered for review at intervals. Drill is abhorrent to the Arab, as to the Turk; but these men, mostly veterans of fight, performed to admiration the simple tactics necessary for their warfare. They knew their place in the ranks, and would keep it; they would advance or retire as they got the word, obedient though not compact. Mechanical movements are not required in the desert.

For a while messengers and mysterious visitors arrived more thickly. Every day armed men encamped upon the terrace—Wahabi or other—whilst their chiefs took counsel within. Owing

to this invasion, doubtless, the women of the household never came out on this side. They had another space for airing; and Zohrab knew they used it. In his room sometimes he heard merry voices, and scoldings, and the wail of little girls whose ears are boxed. His apartment had windows, high above the floor, that looked on the harem playground. Zohrab was sorely tempted to climb up, and it was not the certainty of death, if caught, that checked him. He listened for an individual voice that should speak to his heart, and sometimes he thought to recognise it. Remembering that if he could not see Ferideh, she could see him at any time, he kept himself neat and soldierlike.

After awhile the visits became less frequent. For a day, then two days, no cavalcade was signalled from the desert mound which Zohrab remembered so painfully. He heard the men discussing this change, from which they drew conclusions. One morning he sought the Sheikh, who was pondering and reckoning as usual.

‘My father, you won the name of the Victorious in youth. Full of honours and renown you may rest at ease, directing those who fight. But we are young! Give me the untried warriors in your tents, and let us go.’

‘Take two hundred, and march on Sûf. You may have an opportunity to prove yourselves men, for the Turks are reinforced to-day. Hold that place to the death, my son!’

‘Do the Turks project a landing in force?’

‘You have a shrewd intelligence, Aghile Agha. Yes! When they have put out the fire I have raised they will march on El Husn. The result is in God’s hand. He has given me many years of peace!’

‘You speak as if the cause would certainly be defeated, Sheikh! Why do you despair?’

‘I do not despair, but I know. The time is not revealed. We should hold out more than a year in the South.’

‘Then we should hold out for ever if you took the field, Sheikh,’ said Zohrab timidly.

‘No; I can command the Wahabis from a distance, but I cannot serve with them, nor they with me.’

‘I understand. But if you know that with such instruments victory is impossible, why employ them, Sheikh? I ask the foolish question of your wisdom.’

‘My son, the mason takes a rough tool to split the stone which he will cut and fashion with tempered steel.—There are old guns

buried in Sûf; the people will show them you. Fortify; mount them; have all prepared. When the time comes I will march thither with two thousand men.'

'It is impossible the Turks should come by land?'

'What Ibrahim Pasha dared not try, Turks will not venture! And now,' the Sheikh added, with pleasant significance, 'does Zohrab Effendi still dream of Ferideh?'

Zohrab coloured furiously, but he tried to answer in the same tone: 'Aghile Agha dreams no more!'

The Sheikh smiled now. 'Then let us look for Ferideh together with our eyes open!'

Zohrab was transfixed. Such invitations are not unknown in legend, or even in history; but those who give them are reckless debauchees, or despots above the canons of propriety. But the Sheikh waited with a dignified kindness, as unlike the air of a drunkard as of a madman. Zohrab still hesitated.

'Why, my son, if I visited you in Beyrout, would you not present your sisters to me? And, if I visited the Queen of Frangistan, would she not show me all the ladies of her realm? Are we Moslem beasts, or our women unclean?'

'Oh, Sheikh!' cried Zohrab, stepping forward, 'there are no Moslem like you!'

'Nay, you do not know! Very many good Moslem have broken a law, suited perhaps to the time, but foolish now, to secure the happiness of those they love!'

In speaking he led the way through bare stone passages, with massive doors at every turning, useful if the walls were carried by a rush of Bedouins, but valueless against a disciplined foe. They came out in a grated chamber, where girlish voices sounded close. Zohrab's heart beat wildly as he took place behind the Sheikh and looked. Five girls of different ages were seated on the ground, vociferously playing at some game. Younger children toddled about, and three women sat languid in the shade. 'Not one son!' the Sheikh bitterly muttered, but he recovered his good humour on the instant. 'Now, Zohrab Effendi, is Ferideh there?'

'Oh, yes, father. That is she—the loveliest of all!'

The Sheikh laughed softly. 'You must be more explicit to a parent. Which is the loveliest of all?'

'Oh, you are mocking. She in the gold scarf and blue trousers, with the snood of coins in her loose hair! See! she has fallen over, laughing! Her slipper has dropped off. What a lovely foot!'

‘That, Ferideh? Regard the others! They are older and more beautiful!’

‘Not for me. Oh, Sheikh, our souls are one!’

‘But it was not your Ferideh who called that night when you fancied yourself already dead!’

‘She was not there or she was asleep! Oh, father, you will not break your word!’

‘No! Perhaps it is best. My little Zireh will not be impatient whilst her betrothed is absent in the wars. Then let us go.’

‘You are displeased. Believe me I would choose another if I could.’

The Sheikh laughed so loud that his old walls re-echoed. ‘I see how impossible it is now you are awake, Aghile Agha. Take comfort; the child is yours when these troubles are past, and you return.’

‘Oh, my father! Will you tell her she is destined for me?’

‘No; for Zireh is young, too young for trouble; and no man can tell his own fate or another’s when balls are flying. But you shall see her again the day you leave.’

‘Allah will be kind to you, Sheikh, who are so kind to men. When shall I go?’

‘Choose your companions and bring the list to me.’

All was ready in three days. As Zohrab stood upon the terrace after a last parade, the Sheikh took him by the arm and led the way to a chamber which he entered first. A little figure sprang from the divan, in a whirl of hair, to throw itself into his arms.

‘Is this proper conduct in the presence of a stranger, you wild gazelle?’ said the chief laughing. ‘Put on your veil.’

Pouting and blushing, but not much abashed, Zireh covered her face; the proprieties becoming a young girl were not yet familiar. Zohrab saw again the features, lean and clear but not sharp, the eyes so dark and shadowed that light sparkled in them as on the facet of a black diamond, the pink-purple mouth; the slender figure too, outlined in a robe of thinnest silk, crossed on the bosom, tightly swathed by a scarf upon the hips. Zireh looked at him when the veil was adjusted with the boldness of petulant childhood, discontentedly, askance; but the young man’s expression had such eager fire that she dropped her gaze, and raised it angrily, and looked to her father, bewildered.

‘This youth, Zireh, is Aghile Agha, upon whose courage and discretion the safety of us all may depend. Now leave us, child.’

Zireh looked puzzled as she withdrew, with a touch of her forehead and a bow to the stranger. At the door she glanced up under her thick lashes, caught his eye again, and hastily went out.

‘I know—I know,’ the Sheikh ejaculated, ‘I hold a hostage dearer to you than life! Now to business. Three days ago I dismissed my Turkish prisoners secretly. You will hear from them on your road, I doubt not. When the swine have delivered Sûf into your hands, give them five hundred liras and help them to get away.’

Had I dared to violate truth I should have liked to record that Zohrab’s first act after gaining favour had been to procure the release of these fellow-prisoners. So an Englishman or a Christian would have behaved towards his bitterest personal foe perhaps. But my characters are Arab, with Arab ways of virtue as of error. Zohrab had given the Turks no thought of kindness. He said, ‘Have they strength to reach Sûf?’

‘Oh, I have fed them till they are lusty as young camels, and Turks can always find strength for the devil’s work.’

Zohrab started next day. At the second halt he received a communication. Yielding to alarm and greed the commandant betrayed his post. Before dawn next day the Arabs crept to a gate which they found unlocked, and carried the town. The Turkish soldiers fought and died; the superior officers surrendered, took the wages of their treachery, and embarked in the afternoon.

Then Zohrab began his work with zeal, repairing the old fortifications, building new, and mounting guns. Fortunately, the Turks were occupied down south, and their vessels only threw a dozen shells into the place in passing. Zohrab had a thousand cares and projects, but very few hands to execute his schemes. Time went by quickly, month after month. News arrived constantly from El Husn, and rumours came by sea. The rebellion followed its usual course. The Arabs, mustering silently, overpowered small Turkish garrisons, swept the edge of the cultivated land, and mastered the oases. The enemy concentrated, yielding whole provinces to the rush. Then the reaction set in. The wilder people of the desert tired, and made off with their plunder. The Wahabis, unrestrained, sacked mosques, overthrew shrines, murdered priests, and persecuted the orthodox. When the Turks began to move, no force remained to oppose them face to face.

Desperate forays were made in their rear, and small parties were cut off, but district by district they regained the country. After twelve months, though the struggle was not finished, nor will be so long as the Turkish dominion lasts, it had ceased to be war. Then, if the Sheikh were well-advised by his agents or his familiar spirits, the peril of El Husn was nigh.

In his letters Zohrab had not breathed a hint of the matter nearest his heart. And the Sheikh, though liberal in his ideas, would have thought it shocking to mention a girl. One day pressing news arrived. The Turks were collecting an army to reduce the Wahabi stronghold of Wady Afre, as they gave out. But Abou 'l Nasr was assured that they purposed attacking him. On an advance by land nobody had counted. He had strong hopes of resisting successfully behind his desert barrier, but as a measure of precaution he sent his harem and valuables to Sûf. Solemnly the old chief commended them to Allah and his friend. Two days afterwards the caravan arrived, a score of women and children, with many camel loads of property. The men who guarded it returned, leaving a few veterans to guard their master's family. Zohrab gave up his quarters to the ladies; amongst their dark eyes, still swollen with tears and alarm, he recognised Zireh's. But they did not look at him.

Of all the weary months of Zohrab's exile it was the longest that followed this event. He did not once see the girl now sleeping under his roof, and the merest propriety forbade him to seek communication with her, had any means come to hand. The Sheikh reported almost daily, and his news, though calmly told, was alarming. The party he had sent to destroy the wells upon the route the Turks must follow had been driven back by Bedouins. The schemes for a diversion had failed. None but his immediate retainers stood by the Sheikh, and the enemy were getting into motion. Forgetting all else in a generous enthusiasm, Zohrab begged to be relieved, that he might conquer or die with his benefactor, but the refusal was peremptory. At the same time the Sheikh wrote to his head wife, Zireh's mother. She came to the lieutenant, veiled and weeping, and put into his hand the letter she could not read. He pressed it to his lips and brow and heart. The Sheikh enjoined upon his wife to obey Zohrab as she did himself and to love him as her son; for he, as Zireh's husband, should be recognised as the head of the family.

'You to be our son! You!—a stranger who keeps here in

safety whilst my lord is struggling for life!' So the fiery old dame went on. Zohrab read all the letters to her, and at length she owned with sobs that the Sheikh was wise for the children's sake. She would obey.

For a whole week there was silence. Scouts despatched did not return; the garrison became demoralised, and every night there were desertions. Zohrab made his arrangements for the worst. The Sheikh had supplied him with ample funds. He chartered the store-ship, which no longer supplied Um el Jemal, and equipped it for female passengers. Then he loaded the treasure and baggage, in charge of the trusty veterans, and waited. At length two horsemen rode in with a brief letter. After two days' fight, the Sheikh reported, the passes had been forced. Whilst he wrote, the Turkish column was pouring into the valley. Zohrab was solemnly commanded to take ship at once and sail for Aden, where, if by miracle the Sheikh escaped, he would rejoin his family. But he bade them all good-bye, and commended them to the merciful God.

The evil news had spread before Zohrab gained the street. His soldiers were looting on every side. He ran to his former quarters, and shouted for the head-wife. Frightened slaves shut the door in his face. Time pressed cruelly. As the soldiers gathered their load of worthless plunder—each religiously avoiding houses where he individually had eaten bread—they made off for the desert; and as their numbers lessened the townspeople became more threatening. Zohrab hammered at the gate, and some scores of Arabs swiftly collected, full of mischief and revenge. Then he shouted for Zireh; and suddenly the door opened—she stood shrinking before him. 'Where is your mother? Quick!' But the throng behind crushed in, and the girl sunk fainting in his arms. Zohrab shot down the foremost, and, as the others pressed back, he caught up his bride, ran to the zenana—and found it empty! Dropping Zireh on the floor, he hurried out. But the courtyard and the passages were now full of Arabs, shrieking, yelling, rushing hither and thither. If there were women's cries in that tumult they could not be heard. Zohrab did not hesitate! Nothing remained but to die, since he had failed to save. But as he gathered his weight for the rush, girlish arms caught him fast.

'Oh, save me, Aghile Agha! Save me! Save me!'

Zohrab looked. When love pleads with youth, honour which



commands to refuse and die must be stronger than is found in the Arab's fiery blood. Zohrab carried her back, lifted her

through a window, and they ran to the shore. There a boat was waiting, with half a dozen of the guard. Zohrab took four, and returned to meet the whole body of townsmen, armed now and triumphant. The struggle was brief and desperate. With one surviving comrade, Zohrab fought his way back. He gained the ship, which set sail for Aden.

There Zireh was placed in charge of mission ladies before her bodyguard knew what was doing. A handsome draft on the Sheikh's treasure comforted their bodies, not their souls. They would have liked to raise a riot, but the police damped their ardour. When Zireh's eyes had been opened to some elementary ideas of life in this world and that to come, Zohrab confessed himself a Christian. The surprise was not painful; for experience of English ways had shown the girl that Christians are not unclean and miserable outcasts of humanity. So soon as he assured her that the Sheikh knew his religion, Zireh was quite content; and in no long time she professed herself a Christian—a bad one, I fear, regarded dogmatically, but gentle, compassionate, and pure.

They remained twelve months at Aden; but no news came of the Sheikh or his family. When that date was passed, Zohrab spoke of marriage, and he met no plea for delay—that would not occur to an Arab maiden if, by such unheard-of chance as this, she were left to speak for herself. The ceremony was performed in the garrison church, amid such universal interest, such attentions to the pretty bride from the highest quarters, and such military display as would alone have made it the happiest event of their lives. A week afterwards they sailed for India, and Zohrab is now high in the Telegraph Service of the Nizam, where he finds a few Arabs to talk with and many to avoid.

THE BACKSLIDER.



THERE was much stir and commotion on the night of Thursday, January the 14th, 1874, in the Gideonite Apostolic Church, number 47, Walworth Lane, Peckham, S.E. Anybody could see at a glance that some important business was under consideration ; for the Apostle was there himself, in his chair of presidency, and the twelve Bishops were there, and the forty-eight Presbyters, and a large and earnest gathering of the Gideonite laity. It was only a small bare school-room,

fitted with wooden benches, was that headquarters station of the young Church ; but you could not look around it once without seeing that its occupants were of the sort by whom great religious revolutions may be made or marred. For the Gideonites were one of those strange enthusiastic hole-and-corner sects that spring up naturally in the outlying suburbs of great thinking centres. They gather around the marked personality of some one ardent, vigorous, half-educated visionary ; and they consist for the most part of intelligent, half-reasoning people, who are bold enough to cast overboard the dogmatic beliefs of their fathers, but not so bold as to exercise their logical faculty upon the fundamental basis on which the dogmas originally rested. The Gideonites had thus collected around the fixed centre of their Apostle, a retired attorney, Murgess by name, whose teaching commended itself to their groping reason as the pure outcome of faithful biblical research ; and they had chosen their name because, though they were but three hundred in number, they had full confidence that when the time came they would blow their trumpets, and all the host of Midian would be scattered before them. In fact, they divided the world

generally into Gideonite and Midianite, for they knew that he that was not with them was against them. And no wonder, for the people of Peckham did not love the struggling Church. Its chief doctrine was one of absolute celibacy, like the Shakers of America; and to this doctrine the Church had testified in the Old Kent Road and elsewhere after a vigorous practical fashion that roused the spirit of South-eastern London into the fiercest opposition. The young men and maidens, said the Apostle, must no longer marry or be given in marriage; the wives and husbands must dwell asunder; and the earth must be made as an image of heaven. These were heterodox opinions, indeed, which South-eastern London could only receive with a strenuous counterblast of orthodox brickbats and sound Anglican road metal.

The fleece of wool was duly laid upon the floor; the trumpet and the lamp were placed upon the bare wooden reading desk; and the Apostle, rising slowly from his seat, began to address the assembled Gideonites.

‘Friends,’ he said, in a low clear, impressive voice, with a musical ring tempering its slow distinctness, ‘we have met together to-night to take counsel with one another upon a high matter. It is plain to all of us that the work of the Church in the world does not prosper as it might prosper were the charge of it in worthier hands. We have to contend against great difficulties. We are not among the rich or the mighty of the earth; and the poor whom we have always with us do not listen to us. It is expedient, therefore, that we should set some one among us aside to be instructed thoroughly in those things that are most commonly taught among the Midianites at Oxford or Cambridge. To some of you it may seem, as it seemed at first to me, that such a course would involve going back upon the very principles of our constitution. We are not to overcome Midian by our own hand, nor by the strength of two and thirty thousand, but by the trumpet, and the pitcher, and the cake of barley bread. Yet, when I searched and inquired after this matter, it seemed to me that we might also err by overmuch confidence on the other side. For Moses, who led the people out of Egypt, was made ready for the task by being learned in all the learning of the Egyptians. Daniel, who testified in the captivity, was cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and instructed in the wisdom and tongue of the Chaldeans. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, had not only sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but was also able

from their own poets and philosophers to confute the sophisms and subtleties of the Grecians themselves. These things show us that we should not too lightly despise even worldly learning and worldly science. Perhaps we have gone wrong in thinking too little of such dross, and being puffed up with spiritual pride. The world might listen to us more readily if we had one who could speak the word for us in the tongues understood of the world.'

As he paused, a hum of acquiescence went round the room.

'It has seemed to me, then,' the Apostle went on, 'that we ought to choose some one among our younger brethren, upon whose shoulders the cares and duties of the Apostolate might hereafter fall. We are a poor people, but by subscription among ourselves we might raise a sufficient sum to send the chosen person first to a good school here in London, and afterwards to the University of Oxford. It may seem a doubtful and a hazardous thing thus to stake our future upon any one young man; but then we must remember that the choice will not be wholly or even mainly ours; we will be guided and directed as we ever are in the laying on of hands. To me, considering this matter thus, it has seemed that there is one youth in our body who is specially pointed out for this work. Only one child has ever been born into the Church: he, as you know, is the son of brother John Owen and sister Margaret Owen, who were received into the fold just six days before his birth. Paul Owen's very name seems to many of us, who take nothing for chance but all things for divinely ordered, to mark him out at once as a foreordained Apostle. Is it your wish, then, Presbyter John Owen, to dedicate your only son to this ministry?'

Presbyter John Owen rose from the row of seats assigned to the forty-eight, and moved hesitatingly towards the platform. He was an intelligent-looking, honest-faced, sunburnt working-man, a mason by trade, who had come into the Church from the Baptist society; and he was awkwardly dressed in his Sunday clothes, with the scrupulous clumsy neatness of a respectable artisan who expects to take part in an important ceremony. He spoke nervously and with hesitation, but with all the transparent earnestness of a simple, enthusiastic nature.

'Apostle and friends,' he said, 'it ain't very easy for me to disentangle my feelins on this subjec' from one another. I hope I ain't moved by any worldly feelin', an' yet I hardly know how to

keep such considerations out, for there's no denyin' that it would be a great pleasure to me and to his mother to see our Paul becomin' a teacher in Israel, and receivin' an education such as you, Apostle, has pinte'd out. But we hope, too, we ain't insensible to the good of the Church and the advantage that it might derive from our Paul's support and preachin'. We can't help seein' ourselves that the lad has got abilities; and we've tried to train him up from his youth upward, like Timothy, for the furtherance of the right doctrine. If the Church thinks he's fit for the work laid upon him, his mother and me'll be glad to dedicate him to the service.'

He sat down awkwardly, and the Church again hummed its approbation in a suppressed murmur. The Apostle rose once more, and briefly called on Paul Owen to stand forward.

In answer to the call, a tall, handsome, earnest-eyed boy advanced timidly to the platform. It was no wonder that those enthusiastic Gideonite visionaries should have seen in his face the visible stamp of the Apostleship. Paul Owen had a rich crop of dark-brown glossy and curly hair, cut something after the Florentine Cinque-cento fashion—not because his parents wished him to look artistic, but because that was the way in which they had seen the hair dressed in all the sacred pictures that they knew; and Margaret Owen, the daughter of some Wesleyan Spitalfields weaver folk, with the imaginative Huguenot blood still strong in her veins, had made up her mind ever since she became Convinced of the Truth (as their phrase ran) that her Paul was called from his cradle to a great work. His features were delicately chiselled, and showed rather natural culture, like his mother's, than rough honesty, like John Owen's, or of strong individuality, like the masterful Apostle's. His eyes were peculiarly deep and luminous, with a far-away look which might have reminded an artist of the central boyish figure in Holman Hunt's picture of the Doctors in the Temple. And yet Paul Owen had a healthy colour in his cheek and a general sturdiness of limb and muscle which showed that he was none of your nervous, bloodless, sickly idealists, but a wholesome English peasant boy of native refinement and delicate sensibilities. He moved forward with some natural hesitation before the eyes of so many people—ay, and what was more terrible, of the entire Church upon earth; but he was not awkward and constrained in his action like his father. One could see that he was sustained in the prominent part he took that morning by the

consciousness of a duty he had to perform and a mission laid upon him which he must not reject.

‘Are you willing, my son Paul,’ asked the Apostle, gravely, ‘to take upon yourself the task that the Church proposes?’

‘I am willing,’ answered the boy in a low voice, ‘grace preventing me.’

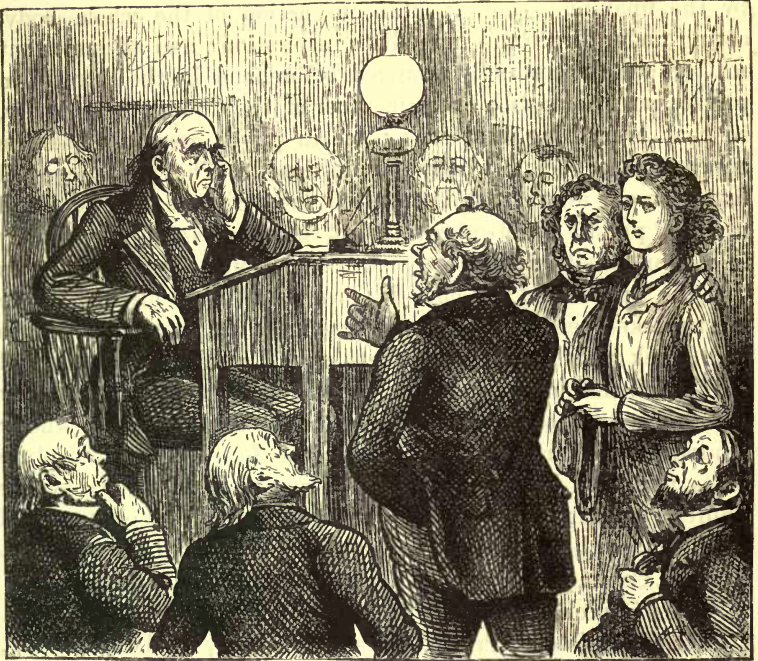
‘Does all the Church unanimously approve the election of our brother Paul to this office?’ the Apostle asked formally; for it was a rule with the Gideonites that nothing should be done except by the unanimous and spontaneous action of the whole body, acting under direct and immediate inspiration; and all important matters were accordingly arranged beforehand by the Apostle in private interviews with every member of the Church individually, so that everything that took place in public assembly had the appearance of being wholly unquestioned. They took counsel first with one another, and consulted the Scripture together; and when all private doubts were satisfied, they met as a Church to ratify in solemn conclave their separate conclusions. It was not often that the Apostle did not have his own way. Not only had he the most marked personality and the strongest will, but he alone also had Greek and Hebrew enough to appeal always to the original word; and that mysterious amount of learning, slight as it really was, sufficed almost invariably to settle the scruples of his wholly ignorant and pliant disciples. Reverence for the literal Scripture in its primitive language was the corner-stone of the Gideonite Church; and for all practical purposes, its one depositary and exponent for them was the Apostle himself. Even the Rev. Albert Barnes’s Commentary was held to possess an inferior authority.

‘The Church approves,’ was the unanimous answer.

‘Then, Episcops, Presbyters, and brethren,’ said the Apostle, taking up a roll of names, ‘I have to ask that you will each mark down on this paper opposite your own names how much a year you can spare of your substance for six years to come as a guarantee fund for this great work. You must remember that the ministry of this church has cost you nothing; freely I have received and freely given; do you now bear your part in equipping a new aspirant for the succession to the Apostolate.’

The two senior Episcops took two rolls from his hand, and went round the benches with a stylographic pen (so strangely do the ages mingle—Apostles and stylographs) silently asking each to put down his voluntary subscription. Meanwhile the Apostle

read slowly and reverently a few appropriate sentences of Scripture. Some of the richer members—well-to-do small tradesmen of Peckham—put down a pound or even two pounds apiece; the poorer brethren wrote themselves down for ten shillings or even five. In the end the guarantee list amounted to 195*l.* a year. The Apostle reckoned it up rapidly to himself, and then announced the result to the assembly, with a gentle smile relaxing his austere countenance. He was well pleased, for the sum was



quite sufficient to keep Paul Owen two years at school in London and then send him comfortably if not splendidly to Oxford. The boy had already had a fair education in Latin and some Greek, at the Birkbeck Schools; and with two years' further study he might even gain a scholarship (for he was a bright lad), which would materially lessen the expense to the young Church. Unlike many prophets and enthusiasts, the Apostle was a good man of business; and he had taken pains to learn all about these favourable chances before embarking his people on so very doubtful a speculation.

The Assembly was just about to close, when one of the Presbyters rose unexpectedly to put a question which, contrary to the usual practice, had not already been submitted for approbation to the Apostle. He was a hard-headed, thickset, vulgar-looking man, a greengrocer at Denmark Hill, and the Apostle always looked upon him as a thorn in his side, promoted by inscrutable wisdom to the Presbytery for the special purpose of keeping down the Apostle's spiritual pride.

'One more pint, Apostle,' he said abruptly, 'afore we close. It seems to me that even in the Church's work we'd ought to be business-like. Now, it ain't business-like to let this young man, Brother Paul, get his eddication out of us, if I may so speak afore the Church, on spec. It's all very well our sayin' he's to be eddicated and take on the Apostleship, but how do we know but what when he's had his eddication he may fall away and become a backslider, like Demas and like others among ourselves that we could mention? He may go to Oxford among a lot of Midianites, and them of the great an' mighty of the earth too, and how do we know but what he may round upon the Church, and go back upon us after we've paid for his eddication? So what I want to ask is just this, can't we bind him down in a bond that if he don't take the Apostleship with the consent of the Church when it falls vacant he'll pay us back our money, so as we can eddicate up another as 'll be more worthy?'

The Apostle moved uneasily in his chair; but before he could speak, Paul Owen's indignation found voice, and he said out his say boldly before the whole assembly, blushing crimson with mingled shame and excitement as he did so. 'If Brother Grimshaw and all the brethren think so ill of me that they cannot trust my honesty and honour,' he said, 'they need not be at the pains of educating me. I will sign no bond and enter into no compact. But if you suppose that I will be a backslider, you do not know me, and I will confer no more with you upon the subject.'

'My son Paul is right,' the Apostle said, flushing up in turn at the boy's audacity; 'we will not make the affairs of the Spirit a matter for bonds and earthly arrangements. If the Church thinks as I do, you will all rise up.'

All rose except Presbyter Grimshaw. For a moment there was some hesitation, for the rule of the Church in favour of unanimity was absolute; but the Apostle fixed his piercing eyes on Job Grimshaw, and after a minute or so Job Grimshaw too

rose slowly, like one compelled by an unseen power, and cast in his vote grudgingly with the rest. There was nothing more said about signing an agreement.

II.

Meenie Bolton had counted a great deal upon her visit to Oxford, and she found it quite as delightful as she had anticipated. Her brother knew such a nice set of men, especially Mr. Owen, of Christchurch. Meenie had never been so near falling in love



with anybody in her life as she was with Paul Owen. He was so handsome and so clever, and then there was something so romantic about this strange Church they said he belonged to. Meenie's father was a country parson, and the way in which Paul shrank from talking about the Rector, as if his office were something wicked or uncanny, piqued and amused her. There was an heretical tinge about him which made him doubly interesting to the Rector's daughter. The afternoon water party that eventful Thursday, down to Nuneham, she looked forward to with the deepest interest. For her aunt, the Professor's wife, who was to

take charge of them, was certainly the most delightful and most sensible of chaperons.

‘Is it really true, Mr. Owen,’ she said, as they sat together for ten minutes alone after their picnic luncheon, by the side of the weir under the shadow of the Nuneham beeches—‘is it really true that this Church of yours doesn’t allow people to marry?’

Paul coloured up to his eyes as he answered, ‘Well, Miss Bolton, I don’t know that you should identify me too absolutely with my Church. I was very young when they selected me to go to Oxford, and my opinions have decidedly wavered a good deal lately. But the Church certainly does forbid marriage. I have always been brought up to look upon it as sinful.’

Meenie laughed aloud; and Paul, to whom the question was no laughing matter but a serious point of conscientious scruple, could hardly help laughing with her, so infectious was that pleasant ripple. He checked himself with an effort, and tried to look serious. ‘Do you know,’ he said, ‘when I first came to Christchurch, I doubted even whether I ought to make your brother’s acquaintance, because he was a clergyman’s son. I was taught to describe clergymen always as priests of Midian.’ He never talked about his Church to anybody at Oxford, and it was a sort of relief to him to speak on the subject to Meenie, in spite of her laughing eyes and undisguised amusement. The other men would have laughed at him too, but their laughter would have been less sympathetic.

‘And do you think them priests of Midian still?’ asked Meenie.

‘Miss Bolton,’ said Paul, suddenly, as one who relieves his overburdened mind by a great effort, ‘I am almost moved to make a confidante of you.’

‘There is nothing I love better than confidences,’ Meenie answered; and she might truthfully have added, ‘particularly from you.’

‘Well, I have been passing lately through a great many doubts and difficulties. I was brought up by my Church to become its next Apostle, and I have been educated at their expense both in London and here. You know,’ Paul added with his innate love of telling out the whole truth, ‘I am not a gentleman; I am the son of poor working people in London.’

‘Tom told me who your parents were,’ Meenie answered simply; ‘but he told me, too, you were none the less a true gentleman born for that; and I see myself he told me right.’

Paul flushed again—he had a most unmanly trick of flushing up—and bowed a little timid bow. ‘Thank you,’ he said quietly. ‘Well, while I was in London I lived entirely among my own people, and never heard anything talked about except our own doctrines. I thought our Apostle the most learned, the wisest, and the greatest of men. I had not a doubt about the absolute infallibility of our own opinions. But ever since I came to Oxford I have slowly begun to hesitate and to falter. When I came up first, the men laughed at me a good deal in a good-humoured way, because I wouldn’t do as they did. Then I thought myself persecuted for the truth’s sake, and was glad. But the men were really very kind and forbearing to me; they never argued with me or bullied me; they respected my scruples, and said nothing more about it as soon as they found out what they really were. That was my first stumbling-block. If they had fought me and debated with me, I might have stuck to my own opinions by force of opposition. But they turned me in upon myself completely by their silence, and mastered me by their kindly forbearance. Point by point I began to give in, till now I hardly know where I am standing.’

‘You wouldn’t join the cricket club at first, Tom says.’

‘No, I wouldn’t. I thought it wrong to walk in the ways of Midian. But gradually I began to argue myself out of my scruples, and now I positively pull six in the boat, and wear a Christchurch ribbon on my hat. I have given up protesting against having my letters addressed to me as Esquire (though I have really no right to the title), and I nearly went the other day to have some cards engraved with my name as “Mr. Paul Owen.” I’m afraid I’m backsliding terribly.’

Meenie laughed again. ‘If that is all you have to burden your conscience with,’ she said, ‘I don’t think you need spend many sleepless nights.’

‘Quite so,’ Paul answered, smiling; ‘I think so myself. But that is not all. I have begun to have serious doubts about the Apostle himself and the whole Church altogether. I have been three years at Oxford now; and while I was reading for Mods, I don’t think I was so unsettled in my mind. But since I have begun reading philosophy for my Greats, I have had to go into all sorts of deep books—Mill, and Spencer, and Bain, and all kinds of fellows who really think about things, you know, down to the very bottom—and an awful truth begins to dawn upon me, that our

Apostle is after all only a very third-rate type of a thinker. Now that, you know, is really terrible.'

'I don't see why,' Meenie answered demurely. She was beginning to get genuinely interested.

'That is because you have never had to call in question a cherished and almost ingrown faith. You have never realised any similar circumstances. Here am I, brought up by these good, honest, earnest people, with their own hard-earned money, as a pillar of their belief. I have been taught to look upon myself as the chosen advocate of their creed, and on the Apostle as an almost divinely inspired man. My whole life has been bound up in it; I have worked and read night and day in order to pass high and do honour to the Church; and now what do I begin to find the Church really is? A petty group of poor, devoted, enthusiastic, ignorant people, led blindly by a decently instructed but narrow-minded teacher, who has mixed up his own headstrong self-conceit and self-importance with his peculiar ideas about abstract religion.' Paul paused, half-surprised at himself, for, though he had doubted before, he had never ventured till that day to formulate his doubts, even to himself, in such plain and straightforward language.

'I see,' said Meenie, gravely; 'you have come into a wider world; you have mixed with wider ideas; and the wider world has converted you, instead of your converting the world. Well, that is only natural. Others beside you have had to change their opinions.'

'Yes, yes; but for me it is harder—oh! so much harder.'

'Because you have looked forward to being an Apostle?'

'Miss Bolton, you do me injustice—not in what you say, but in the tone you say it in. No, it is not the giving up of the Apostleship that troubles me, though I did hope that I might help in my way to make the world a new earth; but it is the shock and downfall of their hopes to all those good, earnest people, and especially—oh! especially, Miss Bolton, to my own dear father and mother.' His eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

'I can understand,' said Meenie, sympathetically, her eyes dimming a little in response. 'They have set their hearts all their lives long on your accomplishing this work, and it will be to them the disappointment of a cherished romance.'

They looked at one another a few minutes in silence.

'How long have you begun to have your doubts?' Meenie asked after the pause.

‘A long time, but most of all since I saw you. It has made me—it has made me hesitate more about the fundamental article of our faith. Even now, I am not sure whether it is not wrong of me to be talking so with you about such matters.’

‘I see,’ said Meenie, a little more archly; ‘it comes perilously near——’ and she broke off, for she felt she had gone a step too far.

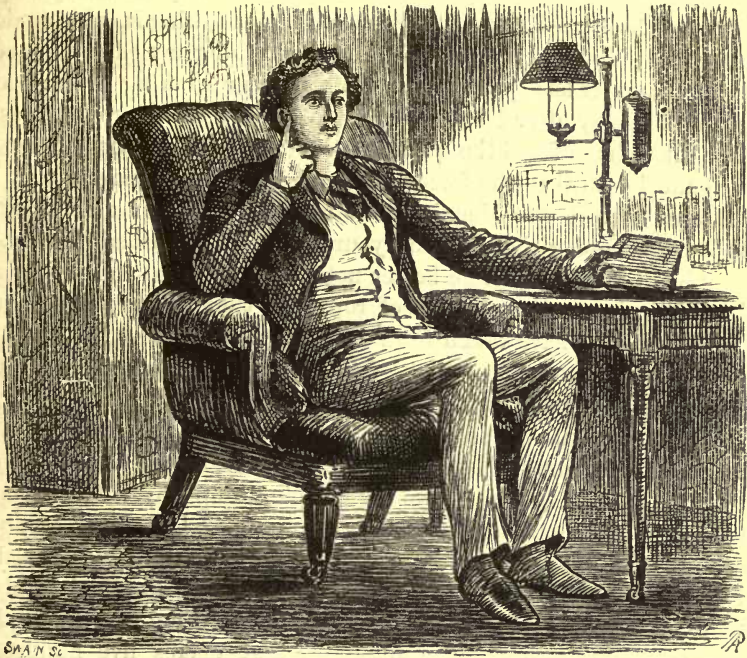
‘Perilously near falling in love,’ Paul continued boldly, turning his big eyes full upon her. ‘Yes, perilously near.’

Their eyes met; Meenie’s fell; and they said no more. But they both felt they understood one another. Just at that moment the Professor’s wife came up to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*; ‘for that young Owen,’ she said to herself, ‘is really getting quite too confidential with dear Meenie.’

That same evening Paul paced up and down his rooms in Peckwater with all his soul strangely upheaved within him and tossed and racked by a dozen conflicting doubts and passions. Had he gone too far? Had he yielded like Adam to the woman who beguiled him? Had he given way like Samson to the snares of Delilah? For the old Scripture phraseology and imagery, so long burned into his very nature, clung to him still in spite of all his faltering changes of opinion. Had he said more than he thought and felt about the Apostle? Even if he was going to revise his views, was it right, was it candid, was it loyal to the truth, that he should revise them under the biassing influence of Meenie’s eyes? If only he could have separated the two questions—the Apostle’s mission, and the something which he felt growing up within him! But he could not—and, as he suspected, for a most excellent reason, because the two were intimately bound up in the very warp and woof of his existence. Nature was asserting herself against the religious asceticism of the Apostle; it could not be so wrong for him to feel those feelings that had thrilled every heart in all his ancestors for innumerable generations.

He was in love with Meenie: he knew that clearly now. And this love was after all not such a wicked and terrible feeling; on the contrary, he felt all the better and the purer for it already. But then that might merely be the horrible seductiveness of the thing. Was it not always typified by the cup of Circe, by the song of the Sirens, by all that was alluring and beautiful and hollow? He paced up and down for half an hour, and then (he had sported his oak long ago) he lit his little reading lamp and sat down in the big chair by the bay window. Running his eyes over

his bookshelf, he took out, half by chance, Spencer's 'Sociology.' Then, from sheer weariness, he read on for a while, hardly heeding what he read. At last he got interested, and finished a chapter. When he had finished it, he put the book down, and felt that the struggle was over. Strange that side by side in the same world, in the same London, there should exist two such utterly different types of man as Herbert Spencer and the Gideonite Apostle. The last seemed to belong to the sixteenth century, the first to some new and hitherto uncreated social world. In an age which pro-



duced thinkers like that, how could he ever have mistaken the poor, bigoted, narrow, half-instructed Apostle for a divinely inspired teacher! So far as Paul Owen was concerned, the Gideonite Church and all that belonged to it had melted utterly into thin air.

Three days later, after the Eights in the early evening, Paul found an opportunity of speaking again alone with Meenie. He had taken their party on to the Christchurch barge to see the race, and he was strolling with them afterwards round the meadow walk by the bank of the Cherwell. Paul managed to get a little

in front with Meenie, and entered at once upon the subject of his late embarrassments.

‘I have thought it all over since, Miss Bolton,’ he said—he half hesitated whether he should say ‘Meenie’ or not, and she was half disappointed that he didn’t, for they were both very young, and very young people fall in love so unaffectedly—‘I have thought it all over, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no help for it: I must break openly with the Church.’

‘Of course,’ said Meenie, simply. ‘That I understood.’

He smiled at her ingenuousness. Such a very forward young person! And yet he liked it. ‘Well, the next thing is, what to do about it. You see, I have really been obtaining my education, so to speak, under false pretences. I can’t continue taking these good people’s money after I have ceased to believe in their doctrines. I ought to have faced the question sooner. It was wrong of me to wait until—until it was forced upon me by other considerations.’

This time it was Meenie who blushed. ‘But you don’t mean to leave Oxford without taking your degree?’ she asked quickly.

‘No, I think it will be better not. To stop here and try for a fellowship is my best chance of repaying these poor people the money which I have taken from them for no purpose.’

‘I never thought of that,’ said Meenie. ‘You are bound in honour to pay them back, of course.’

Paul liked the instantaneous honesty of that ‘of course.’ It marked the naturally honourable character; for ‘of course,’ too, they must wait to marry (young people jump so) till all that money was paid off. ‘Fortunately,’ he said, ‘I have lived economically, and have not spent nearly as much as they guaranteed. I got scholarships up to a hundred a year of my own, and I only took a hundred a year of theirs. They offered me two hundred. But there’s five years at a hundred, that makes five hundred pounds—a big debt to begin life with.’

‘Never mind,’ said Meenie. ‘You will get a fellowship, and in a few years you can pay it off.’

‘Yes,’ said Paul, ‘I can pay it off. But I can never pay off the hopes and aspirations I have blighted. I must become a schoolmaster, or a barrister, or something of that sort, and never repay them for their self-sacrifice and devotion in making me whatever I shall become. They may get back their money, but they will have lost their cherished Apostle for ever.’

‘Mr. Owen,’ Meenie answered solemnly, ‘the seal of the

Apostolate lies far deeper than that. It was born in you, and no act of yours can shake it off.'

'Meenie,' he said, looking at her gently, with a changed expression—'Meenie, we shall have to wait many years.'

'Never mind, Paul,' she replied, as naturally as if he had been Paul to her all her life long, 'I can wait if you can. But what will you do for the immediate present?'

I have my scholarship,' he said; 'I can get on partly upon that; and then I can take pupils; and I have only one year more of it.'

So before they parted that night it was all well understood between them that Paul was to declare his defection from the Church at the earliest opportunity; that he was to live as best he might till he could take his degree; that he was then to pay off all the back debt; and that after all these things he and Meenie might get comfortably married whenever they were able. As to the Rector and his wife, or any other parental authorities, they both left them out in the cold as wholly as young people always do leave their elders out on all similar occasions.

'Maria's a born fool!' said the Rector to his wife a week after Meenie's return; 'I always knew she was a fool, but I never knew she was quite such a fool as to permit a thing like this. So far as I can get it out of Edie, and so far as Edie can get it out of Meenie, I understand that she has allowed Meenie to go and get herself engaged to some Dissenter fellow, a Shaker, or a Mormon, or a Communist, or something of the sort, who is the son of a common labourer, and has been sent up to Oxford, Tom tells me, by his own sect, to be made into a gentleman, so as to give some sort or colour of respectability to their absurd doctrines. I shall send the girl to town at once to Emily's, and she shall stop there all next season, to see if she can't manage to get engaged to some young man in decent society at any rate.'

III.

When Paul Owen returned to Peckham for the long vacation, it was with a heavy heart that he ventured back slowly to his father's cottage. Margaret Owen had put everything straight and neat in the little living room, as she always did, to welcome home her son who had grown into a gentleman; and honest John stood at the threshold beaming with pleasure to wring Paul's hand in

his firm grip, just back unwashed from his day's labour. After the first kissings and greetings were over, John Owen said rather solemnly, 'I have bad news for you, Paul. The Apostle is sick, even unto death.'

When Paul heard that, he was sorely tempted to put off the disclosure for the present; but he felt he must not. So that same night, as they sat together in the dusk near the window where the geraniums stood, he began to unburden his whole mind, gently and tentatively, so as to spare their feelings as much as possible, to his father and mother. He told them how, since he went to Oxford, he had learned to think somewhat differently about many things; how his ideas had gradually deepened and broadened; how he had begun to inquire into fundamentals for himself; how he had feared that the Gideonites took too much for granted, and reposed too implicitly on the supposed critical learning of their Apostle. As he spoke his mother listened in tearful silence; but his father murmured from time to time, 'I was afeard of this already, Paul; I seen it coming, now and again, long ago.' There was pity and regret in his tone, but not a shade of reproachfulness.

At last, however, Paul came to speak, timidly and reservedly, of Meenie. Then his father's eye began to flash a little, and his breath came deeper and harder. When Paul told him briefly that he was engaged to her, the strong man could stand it no longer. He rose up in righteous wrath, and thrust his son at arm's length from him. 'What!' he cried fiercely, 'you don't mean to tell me you have fallen into sin and looked upon the daughters of Midian! It was no Scriptural doubts that druv you on, then, but the desire of the flesh and the lust of the eyes that has lost you! You dare to stand up there, Paul Owen, and tell me that you throw over the Church and the Apostle for the sake of a girl, like a poor miserable Samson! You are no son of mine, and I have nothin' more to say to you.'

But Margaret Owen put her hand on his shoulder and said softly, 'John, let us hear him out.' And John, recalled by that gentle touch, listened once more. Then Paul pleaded his case powerfully again. He quoted Scripture to them; he argued with them, after their own fashion, and down to their own comprehension, text by text; he pitted his critical and exegetical faculty against the Apostle's. Last of all, he turned to his mother, who, tearful still and heartbroken with disappointment, yet looked admiringly upon her learned, eloquent boy, and said to her ten-

derly, 'Remember, mother, you yourself were once in love. You yourself once stood, night after night, leaning on the gate, waiting with your heart beating for a footstep that you knew so well. You yourself once counted the days and the hours and the minutes till the next meeting came.' And Margaret Owen, touched to the heart by that simple appeal, kissed him fervently a dozen times over, the hot tears dropping on his cheek meanwhile; and then, contrary to all the rules of their austere Church, she flung her arms round her husband too, and kissed him passionately the



first time for twenty years, with all the fervour of a floodgate loosed. Paul Owen's apostolate had surely borne its first fruit.

The father stood for a moment in doubt and terror, like one stunned or dazed, and then, in a moment of sudden remembrance, stepped forward and returned the kiss. The spell was broken, and the Apostle's power was no more. What else passed in the cottage that night, when John Owen fell upon his knees and wrestled in spirit, was too wholly internal to the man's own soul for telling here. Next day John and Margaret Owen felt the dream of their lives was gone; but the mother in her heart

rejoiced to think her boy might know the depths of love, and might bring home a real lady for his wife.

On Sunday it was rumoured that the Apostle's ailment was very serious; but young Brother Paul Owen would address the Church. He did so, though not exactly in the way the Church expected. He told them simply and plainly how he had changed his views about certain matters; how he thanked them from his heart for the loan of their money (he was careful to emphasise the word *loan*), which had helped him to carry on his education at Oxford; and how he would repay them the principal and interest, though he could never repay them the kindness, at the earliest possible opportunity. He was so grave, so earnest, so transparently true, that, in spite of the downfall of their dearest hopes, he carried the whole meeting with him, all save one man. That man was Job Grimshaw. Job rose from his place with a look of undisguised triumph as soon as Paul had finished, and, mounting the platform quietly, said his say.

'I knew, Episcops, Presbyters, and Brethren,' he began, 'how this 'ere young man would finish. I saw it the day he was appointed. He's flushing up now the same as he flushed up then when I spoke to him; and it ain't sperritual, it's worldly pride and headstrongness, that's what it is. He's had our money, and he's had his eddication, and now he's going to round on us, just as I said he would. It's all very well talking about paying us back: how's a young man like him to get five hunderd pounds, I should like to know. And if he did even, what sort o' repayment would that be to many of the brethren, who've saved and scraped for five year to let him live like a gentleman among the great and the mighty o' Midian? He's got his eddication out of us, and he can keep that whatever happens, and make a living out of it, too; and now he's going back on us, same as I said he would, and, having got all he can out of the Church, he's going to chuck it away like a sucked orange. I detest such backsliding and such ungratefulness.'

Paul's cup of humiliation was full, but he bit his lip till the blood almost came, and made no answer.

'He boasted in his own strength,' Job went on mercilessly, 'that he wasn't going to be a backslider, and he wasn't going to sign no bond, and he wasn't going to confer with us, but we must trust his honour and honesty, and such like. I've got his very words written down in my notebook 'ere; for I made a note of

'em, foreseeing this. If we'd 'a' bound him down, as I proposed, he wouldn't 'a' dared to go backsliding and rounding on us, and making up to the daughters of Midian, as I don't doubt but what he's been doing.' Paul's tell-tale face showed him at once that he had struck by accident on the right chord. 'But if he ever goes bringing a daughter of Midian here to Peckham,' Job continued, 'we'll show her these very notes, and ask her what she thinks of such dishonourable conduct. The Apostle's dying, that's clear; and before he dies I warrant he shall know this treachery.'

Paul could not stand that last threat. Though he had lost faith in the Apostle as an Apostle, he could never forget the allegiance he had once borne him as a father, or the spell which his powerful individuality had once thrown around him as a teacher. To have embittered that man's dying bed with the shadow of a terrible disappointment would be to Paul a lifelong subject of deep remorse. 'I did not intend to open my mouth in answer to you, Mr. Grimshaw,' he said (for the first time breaking through the customary address of Brother), 'but I pray you, I entreat you, I beseech you, not to harass the Apostle in his last moments with such a subject.'

'Oh yes, I suppose so,' Job Grimshaw answered maliciously, all the ingrained coarseness of the man breaking out in the wrinkles of his face. 'No wonder you don't want him enlightened about your goings on with the daughters of Midian, when you must know as well as I do that his life ain't worth a day's purchase, and that he's a man of independent means, and has left you every penny he's got in his will, because he believes you're a fit successor to the Apostolate. I know it, for I signed as a witness, and I read it through, being a short one, while the other witness was signing. And you must know it as well as I do. I suppose you don't think he'll make another will now; but there's time enough to burn that one anyhow.'

Paul Owen stood aghast at the vulgar baseness of which this lewd fellow supposed him capable. He had never thought of it before; and yet it flashed across his mind in a moment how obvious it was now. Of course the Apostle would leave him his money. He was being educated for the Apostolate, and the Apostolate could not be carried on without the sinews of war. But that Job Grimshaw should think him guilty of angling for the Apostle's money, and then throwing the Church overboard—the bare notion of it was so horrible to him that he could not even

hold up his head to answer the taunt. He sat down and buried his crimson face in his hands; and Job Grimshaw, taking up his hat sturdily, with the air of a man who has to perform an unpleasant duty, left the meeting-room abruptly without another word.

There was a gloomy Sunday dinner that morning in the mason's cottage, and nobody seemed much inclined to speak in any way. But as they were in the midst of their solemn meal, a neighbour who was also a Gideonite came in hurriedly. 'It's all over,' he said, breathless—'all over with us and with the Church. The Apostle is dead. He died this morning.'

Margaret Owen found voice to ask, 'Before Job Grimshaw saw him?'

The neighbour nodded, 'Yes.'

'Thank heaven for that!' cried Paul. 'Then he did not die misunderstanding me!'

'And you'll get his money,' added the neighbour, 'for I was the other witness.'

Paul drew a long breath. 'I wish Meenie was here,' he said. 'I must see her about this.'

IV.

A few days later the Apostle was buried, and his will was read over before the assembled Church. By earnest persuasion of his father, Paul consented to be present, though he feared another humiliation from Job Grimshaw. But two days before he had taken the law into his own hands, by writing to Meenie, at her aunt's in Eaton Place; and that very indiscreet young lady, in response, had actually consented to meet him in Kensington Gardens alone the next afternoon. There he sat with her on one of the benches by the Serpentine, and talked the whole matter over with her to his heart's content.

'If the money is really left to me,' he said, 'I must in honour refuse it. It was left to me to carry on the Apostolate, and I can't take it on any other ground. But what ought I to do with it? I can't give it over to the Church, for in three days there will be no Church left to give it to. What shall I do with it?'

'Why,' said Meenie, thoughtfully, 'if I were you I should do this. First, pay back everybody who contributed towards your support in full, principal and interest; then borrow from the remainder as much as you require to complete your Oxford course; and finally, pay back all that and the other money to the fund when you are

able, and hand it over for the purpose of doing some good work in Peckham itself, where your Church was originally founded. If the ideal can't be fulfilled, let the money do something good for the actual.'

'You are quite right, Meenie,' said Paul, 'except in one particular. I will not borrow from the fund for my own support. I will not touch a penny of it, temporarily or permanently, for myself in any way. If it comes to me, I shall make it over to trustees at once for some good object, as you suggest, and shall borrow from them five hundred pounds to repay my own poor people, giving the trustees my bond to repay the fund hereafter. I shall fight my own battle henceforth unaided.'

'You will do as you ought to do, Paul, and I am proud of it.'

So next morning, when the meeting took place, Paul felt somewhat happier in his own mind as to the course he should pursue with reference to Job Grimshaw.

The Senior Episcop opened and read the last will and testament of Arthur Murgess, attorney-at-law. It provided in a few words that all his estate, real and personal, should pass unreservedly to his friend, Paul Owen, of Christchurch, Oxford. It was whispered about that, besides the house and grounds, the personalty might be sworn at 8000*l.*, a vast sum to those simple people.

When the reading was finished, Paul rose and addressed the assembly. He told them briefly the plan he had formed, and insisted on his determination that not a penny of the money should be put to his own uses. He would face the world for himself, and thanks to their kindness he could face it easily enough. He would still earn and pay back all that he owed them. He would use the fund, first for the good of those who had been members of the Church, and afterwards for the good of the people of Peckham generally. And he thanked them from the bottom of his heart for the kindness they had shown him.

Even Job Grimshaw could only mutter to himself that this was not sperritual grace, but mere worldly pride and stubbornness, lest the lad should betray his evil designs, which had thus availed him nothing. 'He has lost his own soul and wrecked the Church for the sake of the money,' Job said, 'and now he dassn't touch a farden of it.'

Next John Owen rose and said slowly, 'Friends, it seems to me we may as well all confess that this Church has gone to pieces. I can't stop in it myself any longer, for I see it's clear agin

nature, and what's agin nature can't be true.' And though the assembly said nothing, it was plain that there were many waverers in the little body whom the affairs of the last week had shaken sadly in their simple faith. Indeed, as a matter of fact, before the end of the month the Gideonite Church had melted away, member by member, till nobody at all was left of the whole assembly but Job Grimshaw.

'My dear,' said the Rector to his wife a few weeks later, laying down his 'Illustrated,' 'this is really a very curious thing. That young fellow Owen, of Christchurch, that Meenie fancied herself engaged to, has just come into a little landed property and eight or nine thousand pounds on his own account. He must be better connected than Tom imagines. Perhaps we might make inquiries about him after all.'

The Rector did make inquiries in the course of the week, and with such results that he returned to the rectory in blank amazement. 'That fellow's mad, Amelia,' he said, 'stark mad, if ever anybody was. The leader of his Little Bethel, or Ebenezer, or whatever it may be, has left him all his property absolutely, without conditions; and the idiot of a boy declares he won't touch a penny of it, because he's ceased to believe in their particular shibboleth, and he thinks the leader wanted him to succeed him. Very right and proper of him, of course, to leave the sect if he can't reconcile it with his conscience, but perfectly Quixotic of him to give up the money and beggar himself outright. Even if his connection was otherwise desirable (which it is far from being), it would be absurd to think of letting Meenie marry such a ridiculous hair-brained fellow.'

Paul and Meenie, however, went their own way, as young people often will, in spite of the Rector. Paul returned next term to Oxford, penniless, but full of resolution, and by dint of taking pupils managed to eke out his scholarship for the next year. At the end of that time he took his first in Greats, and shortly after gained a fellowship. From the very first day he began saving money to pay off that dead weight of five hundred pounds. The kindly ex-Gideonites had mostly protested against his repaying them at all, but in vain: Paul would not make his entry into life, he said, under false pretences. It was a hard pull, but he did it. He took pupils, he lectured, he wrote well and vigorously for the press, he worked late and early with volcanic energy; and by the end of three years he had not only saved the whole of the

sum advanced by the Gideonites, but had also begun to put away a little nest-egg against his marriage with Meenie. And when the editor of a great morning paper in London offered him a permanent place upon the staff, at a large salary, he actually went down to Worcestershire, saw the formidable Rector himself in his own parish, and demanded Meenie outright in marriage. And the Rector observed to his wife that this young Owen seemed a well-behaved and amiable young man; that after all one needn't know anything about his relations if one didn't like; and that as Meenie had quite made up her mind, and was as headstrong as a mule, there was no use trying to oppose her any longer.

Down in Peckham, where Paul Owen lives, and is loved by half the poor of the district, no one has forgotten who was the real founder of the Murgess Institute, which does so much good in encouraging thrift, and is so admirably managed by the founder and his wife. He would take a house nowhere but at Peckham, he said. To the Peckham people he owed his education, and for the Peckham people he would watch the working of his little Institute. There is no better work being done anywhere in that great squalid desert, the east and south-east of London; there is no influence more magnetic than the founder's. John and Margaret Owen have recovered their hopes for their boy, only they run now in another and more feasible direction; and those who witness the good that is being done by the Institute among the poor of Peckham, or who have read that remarkable and brilliant economical work lately published on 'The Future of Co-operation in the East End, by P. O.,' venture to believe that Meenie was right after all, and that even the great social world itself has not yet heard the last of young Paul Owen's lay apostolate.

THE MANNERS OF POSTHUMOUS MAN.

IN the matter of ghosts I am one of those who believe not, but tremble. Philosophers commonly explain apparitions by observing that the eye-witness expects to see them, and consequently *does* see them. What an explanation! How constantly one wishes to see a cab, or even the homelier omnibus, or, in occasion of need, a policeman! Does a spectral policeman, omnibus, or cab immediately impress itself subjectively on the retina? Does one see what he expects and wishes to see? Of course not. The theory of 'attentive expectation' is not justified in cases like these. You might as well say that a man will find a sovereign in his pocket, when there is no sovereign there, because he expects to do so, as that he will behold a ghost because he is expecting a ghost. I have been expecting with trembling to see a ghost all my life, especially in houses which are reputed to be haunted. Yet I was expecting nothing less than a ghost the only time I ever saw one. The theory of 'expectation' clearly will not hold water. Is there any other more scientific theory? An answer to this question, and an uncommonly disagreeable answer, will be found in a new French book, 'Essai sur l'Humanité Posthume,' by M. Adolphe d'Assier. In some respects this is the most comic, and in others the most gruesome, work that has ever been written on what M. d'Assier calls 'the manners of posthumous man.' To M. d'Assier posthumous man (his term for a ghost) is just as ordinary a person as primitive man is to Mr. Herbert Spencer. He thinks he knows all about posthumous man, who has this unpleasant feature in common with primitive man, that he is a cannibal. Nay, posthumous man is even more 'regardless,' as the Scotch say, than Mr. Herbert Spencer's client. For primitive man draws the line, in New Caledonia at least, at eating members of his own tribe, whereas posthumous man, better known as a vampire, turns by preference to his friends and relations.

That a scientific writer, and follower of M. Comte (as far as Comte's 'Philosophie Positive' goes), should firmly believe in vampires and *incubi*, seems a little incongruous. The philosophy of M. Comte takes no notice of a future life. We are to have merely a 'subjective immortality;' we are to be merged in

Humanity (with a capital H), and are to live only in the consequences of our actions. This must be the opinion of M. d'Assier, whose previous works comprise treatises on grammar, geography, and astronomy. Even now he does not appear to believe in the immortality of the soul, but only in the temporary continuance of a shadowy and ill-conditioned ghost, with a malevolent disposition and a physical basis. This is precisely the opinion of the Australian blacks, and of other races in the same stage of absence of civilisation. It is interesting to know, first, how a French Positivist came to agree with the lowest savages, and next to examine his opinions and anecdotes about *l'homme posthume*. When M. d'Assier was a little boy he lived in the remote and rural southern parish of Sentenac, in Ariège. The parish priest died, and the parsonage was immediately haunted by strange sounds and stranger sights. M. d'Assier, though a small boy, thought those stories were absurd inventions, and in this mind he continued till 'the terrible year'—the year of the war. From that ordeal he emerged with threatenings of general paralysis, and since he was threatened with paralysis he has become a believer in 'posthumous man.' This is an extremely frank confession, and everyone who is not a member of the S.P.R.¹ will surmise that M. d'Assier would never have discovered posthumous man if he had not become more or less paralytic. In 1871 he went to 'take the waters' at Aulus, a mountain hydropathic establishment, and there he found posthumous man extremely active in his peculiar 'walk,' as we may call it. The owner of the baths had recently died, but he had by no means abandoned his interest in the establishment. It is a peculiarity of posthumous man that he entirely alters his nature and some of his habits. Alive, the proprietor had been all courtesy and attention to visitors; dead, he diverted himself by knocking blows against the walls, throwing heavy objects on the floor, and generally making night hideous. M. d'Assier at first disbelieved, then (alas!) he investigated, and he was finally convinced by the reports of several trustworthy persons, one of whom had fired at the ghost and hit a tree. This was a lucky miss, according to M. d'Assier, for he is now convinced that a ghost or wraith suffers extreme personal inconvenience if stabbed or shot. Once sure that the Aulus ghost was genuine, M. d'Assier continued his researches. His object in publishing the results of his investigations

¹ Society for Psychical Research.

is to 'strip posthumous man of the veil of the marvellous, and to connect all his proceedings, like other natural phenomena, with the laws of time and space.' One result of these efforts is the discovery that a man, 'like a bird,' *may* be in two places at once. This has previously been thought inconsistent with the laws of time and space, but M. d'Assier makes the phenomenon seem ordinary enough. He is eager 'to free the men of our time from the debilitating hallucinations of spiritualism.' By way of putting the people of our time quite at their ease, he assures them that posthumous man frequently emerges from his retreat, and 'feeds fearsomely,' as Mr. John Payne says, on the living bodies of his nearest relations. He also reassures the timid by discovering that witches can haunt and molest us in visible form, while all the time their other visible form sits quietly at home. To have scientific evidence for these great truths is indeed salutary, and calculated to check the spread of superstitious fears. M. d'Assier asserts that posthumous man is now 'freed from the slightest trace of the supernatural,' but that does not, we fear, prevent posthumous man from being a very awkward customer.

In the true spirit of Baconian induction, M. d'Assier began by collecting 'instances' of the existence and deportment of man on the other side of the grave. We must confess that he has not been very particular about his evidence. It is not good enough to go to a jury, nowadays, though some of it did go to a jury in times past, and so worked on their minds that they burned Jane Brooks, at Chard, for a witch. The first 'instance' is that of the posthumous Abbé Peyton, about whose doings M. d'Assier was sceptical when he was a little boy. He had his evidence collected from the mouths of aged men who remember the affair. The first story shows how two sceptical parishioners lay in wait for the ghost of the Abbé at night, and heard him walking about, moving the chairs, and taking snuff, to which, both before and after his lamented decease, the Abbé was extremely partial. There is no instance of posthumous man smoking a cigarette, but it is established that he snuffs. In another case, the posthumous Abbé was seen reading his breviary. Posthumous man thus retains some of his old habits, while, in other cases, he simply takes to bear-fighting, and making hay of the furniture. In another canton of Ariège, Monsieur X., who died about twenty years ago, used to walk about in his habit as he lived, producing a shrill sound like the snip of a pair of shears. More frequently posthumous man

confines himself to making a nocturnal disturbance. This occurred in the house of the father of M. Charles Sainte-Foix, 'about' 1812. Everything in the house was tossed about; the neighbours even were wakened from ambrosial sleep, and the big dog was seriously alarmed. The disturbance was attributed to a near relation that had just died at a distance, nor did the tumult entirely cease till M. Sainte-Foix carried out certain wishes of the deceased which he had been disposed to ignore. There was some method in the madness of this posthumous man. The noisy proprietor of the establishment at Aulus did not cease to annoy his successors till the house was pulled down in 1872. In 1830, an old lady died at Bastide de Serou (Ariège). Her next step was to break all the glass and crockery in the house, and to drag the bedclothes from people who slept in her room. This M. d'Assier recognises as a very frequent diversion of posthumous man. Masses were said in vain for the repose of this rampagious old lady. Then a rather odd thing happened. A round-robin, signed by the people of the house, was left in a room at night, with pen and ink, and in the round-robin the visitor was requested to state her wishes in writing. Next morning the paper, pen, and ink were found lying on the floor. On the table was laid an open dictionary, and on the open page were three small red stains. The disturbances soon ceased. Apparently the posthumous lady was not strong in spelling, and, after consulting the dictionary, had resigned the attempt to write to her relations. Another posthumous man was the ghost of a lunatic, but he merely behaved like sane posthumous men, and made a fearful racket in the room he haunted. Another posthumous man, who had died in America, appeared to M. Bonnetty, clad in a very remarkable waistcoat. M. Bonnetty sent to America for information, and learned that this waistcoat had been a favourite with the deceased. M. d'Assier tells a good many anecdotes like these, the evidence being usually not at first hand.

Our author thinks he has now established his fact. *Sunt aliquid manes*, there is such a thing as *l'homme d'outretombe*. The next step is to strip him of his supernatural character. This M. d'Assier does by maintaining that we all carry about in us a second man, 'something of a shadowy being,' as Dr. Johnson said, but none the less real and physical. He proves his fact, to his own satisfaction, by a number of instances of 'wraiths,' as the Scotch call them—apparitions beheld at a distance, while the

owner of the double is still alive. As a rule, these doubles (which are of a fluid nature) seem to be emanated from the frame in moments of strong excitement, of syncope, or in the hour of death. Thus a woman, who was dying on board ship on her way to Rio Janeiro, fell into a syncope, and announced, on recovering consciousness, that she had visited a friend in Brazil. The friend in Brazil recognised her, and this is an instance of the *dédoublement de la personnalité humaine*. 'I compared the phantom of the living man with the phantom from beyond the tomb,' says M. d'Assier, 'and I readily perceived that they were one and the same personage.' The phantom of the living man can speak when he is not too far removed from his base of supply, so to say—from his reserves of force in the actual body. This is M. d'Assier's theory, which does not fall in well with his theory of posthumous man. For the actual body of posthumous man has necessarily ceased to be a base of supply, and cannot provide the fluid spectral form with any strength. Yet posthumous man is amazingly vigorous, according to the evidence, strikes tremendous knocks on walls and tables, and has been known to move an enormous piano to some distance in a moment of time. How is all this to be explained on the principle of the base of supply, when the body has long been dust? As far as M. d'Assier answers this question, it is by the hypothesis that posthumous man derives his force from the physical and moral constitutions of persons who resemble him in character. M. d'Assier is amazed that phantoms can drink a glass of water *sans se rompre*, but if they can make a large meal (as he believes they can) this ceases to surprise. In fact, he believes in the water, because he believes in something still more prodigiously absurd. He believes that little Dick Jones, in 1658, saw the double of Jane Brooks, a witch; that one Gilson, who did not see the figure, hit at it with a knife; that Jones and Gilson rushed to Jane's house, and found that she had been wounded in the hand, and that (which unluckily is true) poor Jane Brooks was tried at Chard, on March 26, 1658, and condemned to death. From this evidence about the wounding of Jane Brooks he gathers that the phantom has a system of arteries and veins, and he accepts all the stories of witchcraft that used to satisfy English juries. If science is converted to M. d'Assier's opinions, we shall return to the conditions of an African people. One tribe, according to Mr. McDonald, a missionary, is losing about half its numbers by prosecutions for

witchcraft. The other half is perishing by the machinations of the witches.

As a good deal will have to be said to the prejudice of posthumous man, and as even our doubles, according to M. d'Assier, take a hand in malevolent sorcery, this seems the place for an anecdote that redounds to the credit of the common wraith or doppel-gänger. The narrative is given, as the newspapers say, 'on the most reliable authority.' One winter evening, a gentleman, whom we shall call Mr. Jenkins, had been dining quietly at his club, than which no more respectable and classic edifice adorns Pall Mall. In due time Jenkins started for his chambers in the Temple. He is a barrister, and, as the poet sings,

Persuasion tips his tongue whene'er he talks,
And he has chambers in the King's Bench Walks.

The night was very windy and drizzly, and Jenkins paused on the steps of his club, struggling with his umbrella. On the other side of the street he observed a man dressed exactly like himself, also engaged in a struggle with *his* umbrella. Jenkins walked briskly down the south side of Pall Mall, but he could not help observing that the figure on the other side of the way kept pace with him exactly. He soon became curious about the man and crossed over to observe him more closely. On reaching the north side of Pall Mall, at the entrance of Waterloo Place, he found that he had lost sight of the figure. Rather relieved at this, Jenkins walked on, but, turning casually at the Old Water Colour Society's Gallery, he beheld his companion marching on the opposite, the southern, side of Pall Mall. He crossed again, missed him again, but saw that the figure accompanied him all down the Strand. Jenkins reached the gate of the Temple, knocked, and was admitted by the porter. 'Are you sure you know me?' he asked the porter. 'Know you, sir, of course I do; I've known you for years.' 'You could not mistake anyone else for me?' 'Impossible, sir.' 'Well,' said Jenkins, pointing across Fleet Street, 'do you see that fellow standing there?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, he's an impostor. He'll try to get in, and to persuade you that he is me; take care you don't let him in.' The porter promised, and Jenkins, who thought he had at last baffled his follower, went cheerfully to his chambers. He groped about for a match, lighted a candle, and there, to his horror, saw himself sitting in the armchair before the fire. To drop his candle in his fright, to rush downstairs (like the

sailor who took five hours to climb Majuba Hill and came down in three minutes), was to the awestruck Jenkins the work of a moment. He hurried to the porter's lodge. 'Why did you let that fellow in?' he cried. 'Door has not been opened since you came in, sir,' replied the proud porter. On hearing this Jenkins decided not to return to his chambers; he passed the night at a neighbouring hotel. Next day, in the cheerful sunshine, he ventured back to his rooms. The candlestick was lying on the floor, but everything else was orderly. In the bedroom another scene met his eye. The storm of the night before had blown the chimney through the roof, and the heavy coping-stone reposed where Jenkins's head should have been—on the pillow of Jenkins. His double, by frightening him out of his chambers, had saved his life. Let us remember this affecting anecdote when doubles are spoken of with harshness by philosophers.

A good many difficulties in the matter of ghosts are solved by the ingenuity of M. d'Assier. How do ghosts get into rooms when the doors are locked? Athene, in the 'Odyssey,' entered rooms 'like a breath of wind.' That is how ghosts manage it. They have 'fluidic bodies,' and can flow through chinks. It is in vain to put list at the bottom of doors, for 'the wind bloweth where it listeth,' and ghosts, too, can filter through a stone wall. Of course, as M. d'Assier observes, 'the fissures in wood, and doors that do not shut well, give ready access to the fine and elastic tissue of a spectre.' Our author holds that ghosts, like the feet of the lady in Sir John's Suckling's ballad, 'peep in and out, as if they feared the light.' 'Light seems to annihilate their forces,' therefore ghosts are commonly seen in the dark. But here M. d'Assier is not in accord with the best ancient and modern authorities. Both in Homer and Theocritus the darkness shines like fire when anything supernatural is going forward. The Eskimo believe that Tornuks, or spirits, always manifest themselves in a blaze of light. The same light, according to tradition, blazes as an omen on the tombs of the St. Clairs in Roslin.

Seem'd all on fire that chapel proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffin'd lie,
Each baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheath'd in his iron panoply.

'The tomb-fires of the North,' says Sir Walter, 'are mentioned in most of the Sagas,' in which you read how the whole of the barrow seems to stand open, and full of light. One of the best

ghost-stories, that of the lady whose mother appeared to her and prophesied her death, says the ghost manifested herself in brilliant light. The tale is in the 'Remains' of Dr. J. A. Symonds, and is quoted from Dr. Henry More. The evidence is certainly better than most of what satisfies M. d'Assier. As this author's whole theory precisely corresponds to that of savage men, he cannot well afford to run counter to the very strongly held creed of the Eskimo. But, on the other hand, spiritualists certainly prefer 'dark *séances*,' both in Greenland, Europe, and among the Maories of New Zealand.

Another problem that has puzzled philosophers is the clothes worn by spirits. Generally they appear 'in their habit as they lived.' Now the sceptic is apt to say, 'I can stand the ghost, but where does the ghost get his clothes?' M. d'Assier replies, in point of fact, 'from Poole, and other artists.' Clothes have their ghosts, just as much as men have, and a ghost appears in the ghost of his clothes. M. d'Assier gets his evidence from the famous Seeress of Prévorst, a lady who had seen as many ghosts as Coleridge, but, unlike Coleridge, had not seen 'too many to believe in them.' The seeress 'distinguished the fluidic images of all things.' This is precisely the view of 'primitive man,' only primitive man calls the 'fluidic images' souls, or ghosts. 'Fetichism,' says Mr. McLennan, 'assigns souls to all things.' 'The Khonds have a limited quantity of soul as tribal property, and they explain their custom of female infanticide by saying that the fewer their women are the more soul there will be for the men.' How often do we hear a lady's friends say that she is 'all soul.' To return to the souls of objects: savages show their belief in them, by breaking the pots and other articles which they bury with the dead. The soul, or 'fluidic image,' of the pots is thus set free for the use of the 'fluidic image,' or soul, of the deceased. Adopting this theory, M. d'Assier is enabled to solve another riddle in the manners of posthumous man. We have all heard of the *poltergeist*—the noisy bear-fighting ghost who fills the rooms with strange sounds of breaking glass and falling furniture. The glass, where those sounds are heard, is usually found not to be broken, and when the flying tables and chairs strike people they do not hurt them. 'The person who is struck compares the sensation to that produced by a blow from a soft substance, like a ball of linen or cotton.' The truth is that posthumous man is extremely addicted to the use of missile weapons. 'Le projectile paraît être son arme favorite.' But he does not toss about real

glasses, tables, stones, and chairs. He only throws their 'fluidic images.' The ghost of man knocks about the ghosts of objects. 'The man from beyond the grave acts with stones as he does with clothes. He contents himself with detaching their fluidic images, which become, in his hands, invisible projectiles.' Nothing can be more satisfactory.

Two more questions of great interest remain. First, Does posthumous man last long in a state of activity? Second, Are we all capable of becoming posthumous men? The first question M. d'Assier answers in the negative. This is the most gruesome side of his doctrine. The soul is not immortal. There only remains after death a wandering, comfortless, insatiate shadow, or *larva*—a being with will, thought, desires, for ever unsatisfied; a homeless, hapless creature gradually dwindling in force and in capacity for making communications to the living. 'The slow agony of its posthumous being is verified, so to speak, experimentally, by the very process of his manifestations. Turbulent at first, they slacken as time passes in force and frequency, and end by quite dying away.' The manifestations are 'the effort of the dead to recall himself to the memory of his kinsfolk, and to implore their assistance.' This is probably the most hideous speculation as to the future life that it has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. A future life, a terminable future life without hope, home, or activity, but with consciousness of lack of all things good, with hunger and desire—this is reserved for us, according to M. d'Assier. His ideas may be commended to the modern necromants who attempt to build on the evidence of spiritualism and apparitions a demonstration of the future life. If it be true that the investigators of ghost-stories find no examples of ghosts surviving the decease of the body more than one hundred years, the evidence (as they consider it) makes rather for M. d'Assier's theory than for their hope. This horrible Hades is the end of their seeking for a sign. On the other hand, some Banshees appear to be very old indeed. But who would like to survive as a Banshee? M. d'Assier's horrors are not exhausted. Savages believe that the dead manifest themselves in the shape of animals—serpents among the Zulus; tigers, lizards, coyotes, beavers, in other countries of America and Africa. Mr. d'Assier, too, believes that the human ghost may take the animal form. He gives an example of a miller, at Serssols, who appeared in the shape of a kind of dog.

Here is another story of his; the event narrated happened some fifteen years ago, at Saint Lizier, in the house of two brothers. M. d'Assier got the tale from one of them.

'At that time I lived in one of the little houses at the head of the town. I was about twelve years old, and my brother was seventeen or eighteen. We slept in the same room, which was reached by a small staircase with but a few steps. One evening we had just gone to bed, and were not yet asleep, when we heard something coming up the stairs that led to our room. Presently we saw a beast of about the size of a calf. As the window had no shutters, and it was a clear night, we could easily make the brute out. My brother jumped from his bed, seized a pitchfork, faced the beast, and said, in a firm resolute voice, "If you come from God, speak; if you come from the Devil, you will have to settle with me." The animal bolted, and, as he turned, his tail hit my bed. I heard him going downstairs, but he disappeared before my brother, who was at his heels, could see where he went. The door of the house, of course, was locked. We both believed we had to do with a *loup-garou* and we accused one of the neighbours, to whom various adventures of this kind were attributed.'

On this evidence, and evidence such as this, M. d'Assier confirms himself in the savage belief that the doubles of living men sometimes take animal shape. As far as he ventures to theorise on the subject, he is half inclined (oh, shade of Darwin!) to explain it by *atavism*—that is, by a reversion to the animal forms out of which man was evolved. As M. d'Assier firmly believes that dead beasts have ghosts, just as much as men have, it would seem easier to suppose that this calf was simply a posthumous calf like any other. A posthumous mule plays a considerable part in another of M. d'Assier's ghost-stories. The most painful part of his work is consecrated to vampires, and other even more terrible posthumous persons about whom it is not necessary to say much. He is a firm believer in Calmet's tales of Servian villages depopulated by vampires, who (this is the scientific explanation) merely continue in the future life 'the struggle for existence' at the expense of their neighbours. The question remains, Are we all capable of becoming posthumous men? The answer is mixed up with the whole metaphysics of the subject. We have all a 'double,' but we are not all in the habit of disengaging this double so that it appears to other people. That feat depends on

'mesmeric ether,' and 'mesmeric ether' is, fortunately, not often found in large quantities. If anyone is largely endowed with mesmeric ether, and gets into the society of persons equally gifted, then his double is apt to appear, and (in a favourable environment) may prolong its existence after the death of the body. But the favourable conditions are very infrequent, which is, so far, a comfort. A person with plenty of 'nervous ether'—say a medium—is apt to go on existing, especially if he has friends who are also mediums. This is precisely the Eskimo theory that an Angakok, or wizard, makes the most dreadful sort of ghost, and is chiefly seen by other Angakoks. M. d'Assier has not taken into account the singular confirmation which his ideas receive from the beliefs of the lower races. If he had studied his subject in the spirit of the anthropologist, he would find that this latest birth of science is a precise restoration of the notions of Eskimo, Brazilians, Andaman Islanders, and Bushmen. We may take that for confirmation if we please. But it is on the whole more obvious that, if science accepts ghost-stories, the science of savage and civilised man become identical. Positivism is merged in Shamanism, and the Royal Society becomes a gathering of Australian 'Birraarks' and 'Pow-wows.' We need not be much afraid that science in general, or the followers of M. Comte in particular, will be converted by M. d'Assier. But students of 'psychical research,' at least, may be interested in seeing the goal to which their investigations have led M. d'Assier. Granting the facts (which is granting a good deal), there is not much that is glaringly unscientific in the conclusion. A very pretty conclusion it is, and calculated vastly to add to the sum of human happiness and the sanction of human morality.

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THE REVEREND JOHN CREEDY.

I.



‘ON Sunday next, the 14th inst., the Reverend John Creedy, B.A., of Magdalen College, Oxford, will preach in Walton Magna Church, on behalf of the Gold Coast Mission.’ Not a very startling announcement that, and yet, simple as it looks, it stirred Ethel Berry’s soul to its inmost depths. For Ethel had been brought up by her Aunt Emily to look upon foreign missions as the one thing on earth worth living for and thinking about, and the Reverend John Creedy, B.A. had a missionary history of his own, strange enough even in these strange days of queer juxtapositions between utter savagery and advanced civilisation.

‘Only think,’ she said to her aunt, as they read the placard on the schoolhouse-board, ‘he’s a real African negro, the vicar says, taken from a slaver on the Gold Coast when he was a child, and brought to England to be educated. He’s been to Oxford and got a degree ; and now he’s going out again to Africa to convert his own

people. And he's coming down to the vicar's to stay on Wednesday.'

'It's my belief,' said old Uncle James, Aunt Emily's brother, the superannuated skipper, 'that he'd much better stop in England for ever. I've been a good bit on the Coast myself in my time, after palm oil and such, and my opinion is that a nigger's a nigger anywhere, but he's a sight less of a nigger in England than out yonder in Africa. Take him to England, and you make a gentleman of him: send him home again, and the nigger comes out at once in spite of you.'

'Oh, James,' Aunt Emily put in, 'how can you talk such unchristianlike talk, setting yourself up against missions, when we know that all the nations of the earth are made of one blood.'

'I've always lived a Christian life myself, Emily,' answered Uncle James, 'though I have cruised a good bit on the Coast, too, which is against it, certainly; but I take it a nigger's a nigger whatever you do with him. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, the Scripture says, nor the leopard his spots, and a nigger he'll be to the end of his days; you mark my words, Emily.'

On Wednesday, in due course, the Reverend John Creedy arrived at the vicarage, and much curiosity there was throughout the village of Walton Magna that week to see this curious new thing, a coal-black parson. Next day, Thursday, an almost equally unusual event occurred to Ethel Berry, for to her great surprise she got a little note in the morning inviting her up to a tennis party at the vicarage the same afternoon. Now, though the vicar called on Aunt Emily often enough, and accepted her help readily for school feasts and other village festivities of the milder sort, the Berrys were hardly up to that level of society which is commonly invited to the parson's lawn tennis parties. And the reason why Ethel was asked on this particular Thursday must be traced to a certain pious conspiracy between the vicar and the secretary of the Gold Coast Evangelistic Society. When those two eminent missionary advocates had met a fortnight before at Exeter Hall, the secretary had represented to the vicar the desirability of young John Creedy's taking to himself an English wife before his departure. 'It will steady him, and keep him right on the Coast,' he said, 'and it will give him importance in the eyes of the natives as well.' Whereto the vicar responded that he knew exactly the

right girl to suit the place in his own parish, and that by a providential conjunction she already took a deep interest in foreign missions. So these two good men conspired in all innocence of heart to sell poor Ethel into African slavery; and the vicar had asked John Creedy down to Walton Magna on purpose to meet her.

That afternoon Ethel put on her pretty sateen and her witching little white hat, with two natural dog-roses pinned on one side, and went pleased and proud up to the vicarage. The Reverend John Creedy was there, not in full clerical costume, but arrayed in tennis flannels, with only a loose white tie beneath his flap collar to mark his newly-acquired spiritual dignity. He was a comely looking negro enough, full-blooded, but not too broad-faced nor painfully African in type; and when he was playing tennis his athletic quick limbs and his really handsome build took away greatly from the general impression of an inferior race. His voice was of the ordinary Oxford type, open, pleasant, and refined, with a certain easy-going air of natural gentility, hardly marred by just the faintest tinge of the thick negro blur in the broad vowels. When he talked to Ethel—and the vicar's wife took good care that they should talk together a great deal—his conversation was of a sort that she seldom heard at Walton Magna. It was full of London and Oxford, of boat-races at Iffley and cricket matches at Lord's; of people and books whose very names Ethel had never heard—one of them was a Mr. Mill, she thought, and another a Mr. Aristotle—but which she felt vaguely to be one step higher in the intellectual scale than her own level. Then his friends, to whom he alluded casually, not like one who airs his grand acquaintances, were such very distinguished people. There was a real live lord, apparently, at the same college with him, and he spoke of a young baronet whose estate lay close by, as plain 'Harrington of Christchurch,' without any 'Sir Arthur'—a thing which even the vicar himself would hardly have ventured to do. She knew that he was learned, too; as a matter of fact he had taken a fair second class in Greats at Oxford; and he could talk delightfully of poetry and novels. To say the truth, John Creedy, in spite of his black face, dazzled poor Ethel, for he was more of a scholar and a gentleman than anybody with whom she had ever before had the chance of conversing on equal terms.

When Ethel turned the course of talk to Africa, the young

parson was equally eloquent and fascinating. He didn't care about leaving England for many reasons, but he would be glad to do something for his poor brethren. He was enthusiastic about missions; that was a common interest; and he was so anxious to raise and improve the condition of his fellow-negroes that Ethel couldn't help feeling what a noble thing it was of him thus to sacrifice himself, cultivated gentleman as he was, in an African jungle, for his heathen countrymen. Altogether, she went home from the tennis-court that afternoon thoroughly overcome by John Creedy's personality. She didn't for a moment think of falling in love with him—a certain indescribable race-instinct set up an impassable barrier against that—but she admired him and was interested in him in a way that she had never yet felt with any other man.

As for John Creedy, he was naturally charmed with Ethel. In the first place, he would have been charmed with any English girl who took so much interest in himself and his plans, for, like all negroes, he was frankly egotistical, and delighted to find a white lady who seemed to treat him as a superior being. But in the second place, Ethel was really a charming, simple English village lassie, with sweet little manners and a delicious blush, who might have impressed a far less susceptible man than the young negro parson. So whatever Ethel felt, John Creedy felt himself truly in love. And after all, John Creedy was in all essentials an educated English gentleman, with the same chivalrous feelings towards a pretty and attractive girl that every English gentleman ought to have.

On Sunday morning Aunt Emily and Ethel went to the parish church, and the Reverend John Creedy preached the expected sermon. It was almost his first—sounded like a trial trip, Uncle James muttered—but it was undoubtedly what connoisseurs describe as an admirable discourse. John Creedy was free from any tinge of nervousness—negroes never know what that word means—and he spoke fervently, eloquently, and with much power of manner about the necessity for a Gold Coast Mission. Perhaps there was really nothing very original or striking in what he said, but his way of saying it was impressive and vigorous. The negro, like many other lower races, has the faculty of speech largely developed, and John Creedy had been noted as one of the readiest and most fluent talkers at the Oxford Union debates. When he enlarged upon the need for workers, the need for help, the need

for succour and sympathy in the great task of evangelisation, Aunt Emily and Ethel forgot his black hands, stretched out open-palmed towards the people, and felt only their hearts stirred within them by the eloquence and enthusiasm of that appealing gesture.

The end of it all was, that instead of a week John Creedy stopped for two months at Walton Magna, and during all that time he saw a great deal of Ethel. Before the end of the first fortnight he walked out one afternoon along the river bank with her, and talked earnestly of his expected mission.



‘Miss Berry,’ he said, as they sat to rest awhile on the parapet of the little bridge by the weeping willows, ‘I don’t mind going to Africa, but I can’t bear going all alone. I am to have a station entirely by myself up the Ancobra river, where I shall see no other Christian face from year’s end to year’s end. I wish I could have had some one to accompany me.’

‘You will be very lonely,’ Ethel answered. ‘I wish indeed you could have some companionship.’

‘Do you really?’ John Creedy went on. ‘It is not good for

man to live alone, he wants a helpmate. Oh, Miss Ethel, may I venture to hope that perhaps, if I can try to deserve you, you will be mine ?'

Ethel started in dismay. Mr. Creedy had been very attentive, very kind, and she had liked to hear him talk and had encouraged his coming, but she was hardly prepared for this. The nameless something in our blood recoiled at it. The proposal stunned her, and she said nothing but 'Oh, Mr. Creedy, how *can* you say such a thing ?'

John Creedy saw the shadow on her face, the unintentional dilatation of her delicate nostrils, the faint puckering at the corner of her lips, and knew with a negro's quick instinct of face-reading what it all meant. 'Oh, Miss Ethel,' he said, with a touch of genuine bitterness in his tone, 'don't you, too, despise us. I won't ask you for any answer now; I don't want an answer. But I want you to think it over. Do think it over, and consider whether you can ever love me. I won't press the matter on you, I won't insult you by importunity, but I will tell you just this once, and once for all, what I feel. I love you, and I shall always love you, whatever you answer me now. I know it would cost you a wrench to take me, a greater wrench than to take the least and the unworthiest of your own people. But if you can only get over that first wrench, I can promise earnestly and faithfully to love you as well as ever woman yet was loved. Don't say anything now,' he went on, as he saw she was going to open her mouth again: 'wait and think it over; pray it over; and if you can't see your way straight before you when I ask you this day fortnight "yes or no," answer me "no," and I give my word of honour as a gentleman I will never speak to you of the matter again. But I shall carry your picture written on my heart to my grave.'

And Ethel knew that he was speaking from his very soul.

When she went home, she took Aunt Emily up into her little bedroom, over the porch where the dog-roses grew, and told her all about it. Aunt Emily cried and sobbed as if her heart would break, but she saw only one answer from the first. 'It is a gate opened to you, my darling,' she said: 'I shall break my heart over it, Ethel, but it is a gate opened.' And though she felt that all the light would be gone out of her life if Ethel went, she worked with her might from that moment forth to induce Ethel to marry John Creedy and go to Africa. Poor soul, she acted faithfully up to her lights.

As for Uncle James, he looked at the matter very differently. 'Her instinct is against it,' he said stoutly, 'and our instincts wasn't put in our hearts for nothing. They're meant to be a guide and a light to us in these dark questions. No white girl ought to marry a black man, even if he *is* a parson. It ain't natural: our instinct is again it. A white man may marry a black woman if he likes: I don't say anything again him, though I don't say I'd do it myself, not for any money. But a white woman to marry a black man, why, it makes our blood rise, you know, 'specially if you've happened to have cruised worth speaking of along the Coast.'

But the vicar and the vicar's wife were charmed with the prospect of success, and spoke seriously to Ethel about it. It was a call, they thought, and Ethel oughtn't to disregard it. They had argued themselves out of those wholesome race instincts that Uncle James so rightly valued, and they were eager to argue Ethel out of them too. What could the poor girl do? Her aunt and the vicar on the one hand, and John Creedy on the other, were too much between them for her native feelings. At the end of the fortnight John Creedy asked her his simple question, 'yes or no,' and half against her will she answered 'yes.' John Creedy took her hand delicately in his and fervidly kissed the very tips of her fingers; something within him told him he must not kiss her lips. She started at the kiss, but she said nothing. John Creedy noticed the start, and said within himself, 'I shall so love and cherish her that I will make her love me in spite of my black skin.' For with all the faults of his negro nature, John Creedy was at heart an earnest and affectionate man, after his kind.

And Ethel really did, to some extent, love him already. It was such a strange mixture of feeling. From one point of view he was a gentleman by position, a clergyman, a man of learning and of piety; and from this point of view Ethel was not only satisfied, but even proud of him. For the rest, she took him as some good Catholics take the veil, from a sense of the call. And so, before the two months were out, Ethel Berry had married John Creedy, and both started together at once for Southampton, on their way to Axim. Aunt Emily cried, and hoped they might be blessed in their new work, but Uncle James never lost his misgivings about the effect of Africa upon a born African. 'Instincts is a great thing,' he said, with a shake of his head, as he

saw the West Coast mail steam slowly down Southampton Water 'and when he gets among his own people his instincts will surely get the better of him, as safe as my name is James Berry.'

II.

The little mission bungalow at Butabué, a wooden shed neatly thatched with fan palms, had been built and garnished by the native catechist from Axim and his wife before the arrival of the missionaries, so that Ethel found a habitable dwelling ready for her at the end of her long boat journey up the rapid stream of the Ancobra. There the strangely matched pair settled down quietly enough to their work of teaching and catechising, for the mission had already been started by the native evangelist, and many of the people were fairly ready to hear and accept the new religion. For the first ten or twelve months Ethel's letters home were full of praise and love for dear John. Now that she had come to know him well, she wondered she had ever feared to marry him. No husband was ever so tender, so gentle, so considerate. He nursed her in all her little ailments like a woman; she leaned on him as a wife leans on the strong arm of her husband. And then he was so clever, so wise, so learned. Her only grief was that she feared she was not and would never be good enough for him. Yet it was well for her that they were living so entirely away from all white society at Butabué, for there she had nobody with whom to contrast John but the half-clad savages around them. Judged by the light of that startling contrast, good John Creedy, with his cultivated ways and gentle manners, seemed like an Englishman indeed.

John Creedy, for his part, thought no less well of his Ethel. He was tenderly respectful to her; more distant, perhaps, than is usual between husband and wife, even in the first months of marriage, but that was due to his innate delicacy of feeling, which made him half unconsciously recognise the depth of the gulf that still divided them. He cherished her like some saintly thing, too sacred for the common world. Yet Ethel was his helper in all his work, so cheerful under the necessary privations of their life, so ready to put up with bananas and cassava balls, so apt at kneading plantain paste, so willing to learn from the negro women all the mysteries of mixing agadey, cankey, and

koko pudding. No tropical heat seemed to put her out of temper; even the horrible country fever itself she bore with such gentle resignation John Creedy felt in his heart of hearts that he would willingly give up his life for her, and that it would be but a small sacrifice for so sweet a creature.

One day, shortly after their arrival at Butabué, John Creedy began talking in English to the catechist about the best way of setting to work to learn the native language. He had left the country when he was nine years old he said, and had forgotten all about it. The catechist answered him quickly in a Fantee phrase. John Creedy looked amazed and started.

‘What does he say?’ asked Ethel.

‘He says that I will soon learn if only I listen, but the curious thing is, Ethie, that I understand him.’

‘It has come back to you, John, that’s all. You are so quick at languages, and now you hear it again you remember it.’

‘Perhaps so,’ said the missionary, slowly, ‘but I have never recalled a word of it for all these years. I wonder if it will all come back to me.’

‘Of course it will, dear,’ said Ethel; ‘you know things come to you so easily in that way. You almost learned Portuguese while we were coming out from hearing those Benguela people.’

And so it did come back, sure enough. Before John Creedy had been six weeks at Butabué, he could talk Fantee as fluently as any of the natives around him. After all, he was nine years old when he was taken to England, and it was no great wonder that he should recollect the language he had heard in his childhood till that age. Still, he himself noticed rather uneasily that every phrase and word, down to the very heathen charms and prayers of his infancy, came back to him now with startling vividness and without an effort.

Four months after their arrival John saw one day a tall and ugly negro woman, in the scanty native dress, standing near the rude market place where the Butabué butchers killed and sold their reeking goat-meat. Ethel saw him start again, and with a terrible foreboding in her heart, she could not help asking him why he started. ‘I can’t tell you, Ethie,’ he said, piteously, ‘for heaven’s sake don’t press me. I want to spare you.’ But Ethel would hear. ‘Is it your mother, John?’ she asked, hoarsely.

‘No, thank heaven, not my mother, Ethie,’ he answered her, with something like pallor on his dark cheek, ‘not my mother; but I remember the woman.’

‘A relative?’

‘Oh, Ethie, don’t press me. Yes, my mother’s sister. I remember her years ago. Let us say no more about it.’ And Ethel, looking at that gaunt and squalid savage woman, shuddered in her heart and said no more.

Slowly, as time went on, however, Ethel began to notice a strange shade of change coming over John’s ideas and remarks about the negroes. At first he had been shocked and distressed at their heathendom and savagery, but the more he saw of it the more he seemed to find it natural enough in their position, and even in a sort of way to sympathise with it or apologise for it. One morning, a month or two later, he spoke to her voluntarily of his father. He had never done so in England. ‘I can remember,’ he said, ‘he was a chief, a great chief. He had many wives, and my mother was one. He was beaten in war by Kola, and I was taken prisoner. But he had a fine palace at Kwantah, and many fan-bearers.’ Ethel observed with a faint terror that he seemed to speak with pride and complacency of his father’s chieftaincy. She shuddered again and wondered. Was the West African instinct getting the upper hand in him over the Christian gentleman?

When the dries were over, and the koko-harvest gathered, the negroes held a grand feast. John had preached in the open air to some of the market people in the morning, and in the evening he was sitting in the hut with Ethel, waiting till the catechist and his wife should come in to prayers, for they carried out their accustomed ceremony decorously, even there, every night and morning. Suddenly they heard the din of savage music out of doors, and the noise of a great crowd laughing and shouting down the street. John listened, and listened with deepening attention. ‘Don’t you hear it, Ethie?’ he cried. ‘It’s the tom-toms. I know what it means. It’s the harvest battle-feast!’

‘How hideous,’ said Ethel, shrinking back.

‘Don’t be afraid, dearest,’ John said, smiling at her. ‘It means no harm. It’s only the people amusing themselves.’ And he began to keep time to the tom-toms rapidly with the palms of his hands.

The din drew nearer, and John grew more evidently excited

at every step. 'Don't you hear, Ethie?' he said again. 'It's the Salonga. What inspiriting music! It's like a drum and fife band; it's like the bagpipes; it's like a military march. By Jove, it compels one to dance.' And he got up as he spoke, in English clerical dress (for he wore clerical dress even at Butabué), and began capering in a sort of hornpipe round the tiny room.

'Oh, John, don't,' cried Ethel. 'Suppose the catechist were to come in!'

But John's blood was up. 'Look here,' he said excitedly, 'it goes like this. Here you hold your matchlock out; here you fire; here you charge with cutlasses; here you hack them down before you; here you hold up your enemy's head in your hands, and here you kick it off among the women. Oh, it's grand!' There was a terrible light in his black eyes as he spoke, and a terrible trembling in his clenched black hands.

'John,' cried Ethel, in an agony of horror, 'it isn't Christian, it isn't human, it isn't worthy of you. I can never, never love you if you do such a thing again.'

In a moment John's face changed and his hand fell as if she had stabbed him. 'Ethie,' he said in a low voice, creeping back to her like a whipped spaniel, 'Ethie, my darling, my own soul, my beloved; what *have* I done! Oh, heavens, I will never listen to the accursed thing again. Oh, Ethie, for heaven's sake, for mercy's sake, forgive me!'

Ethel laid her hand, trembling, on his head. John sank upon his knees before her, and bowed himself down with his head between his arms, like one staggered and penitent. Ethel lifted him gently, and at that moment the catechist and his wife came in. John stood up firmly, took down his Bible and Prayer-book, and read through evening prayer at once in his usual impressive tone. In one moment he had changed back again from the Fantee savage to the decorous Oxford clergyman.

It was only a week later that Ethel, hunting about in the little store-room, happened to notice a stout wooden box carefully covered up. She opened the lid with some difficulty, for it was fastened down with a native lock, and to her horror she found inside it a surreptitious keg of raw negro rum. She took the keg out, put it conspicuously in the midst of the store-room, and said nothing. That night she heard John in the jungle behind the yard, and looking out, she saw dimly that he was hacking the

keg to pieces vehemently with an axe. After that he was even kinder and tenderer to her than usual for the next week, but Ethel vaguely remembered that once or twice before, he had seemed a little odd in his manner, and that it was on those days that she had seen gleams of the savage nature peeping through. Perhaps, she thought, with a shiver, his civilisation was only a veneer, and a glass of raw rum or so was enough to wash it off.

Twelve months after their first arrival, Ethel came home very feverish one evening from her girls' school, and found John gone from the hut. Searching about in the room for the quinine



bottle, she came once more upon a rum-keg, and this time it was empty. A nameless terror drove her into the little bedroom. There, on the bed, torn into a hundred shreds, lay John Creedy's black coat and European clothing. The room whirled around her, and though she had never heard of such a thing before, the terrible truth flashed across her bewildered mind like a hideous dream. She went out, alone, at night, as she had never done before since she came to Africa, into the broad lane between the huts which constituted the chief street of Butabué. So far away from home, so utterly solitary among all those black faces, so sick at heart with that burning and devouring horror! She

reeled and staggered down the street, not knowing how or where she went, till at the end, beneath the two tall date-palms, she saw lights flashing and heard the noise of shouts and laughter. A group of natives, men and women together, were dancing and howling round a dancing and howling negro. The central figure was dressed in the native fashion, with arms and legs bare, and he was shouting a loud song at the top of his voice in the Fantee language, while he shook a tom-tom. There was a huskiness as of drink in his throat, and his steps were unsteady and doubtful. Great heavens! could that reeling, shrieking black savage be John Creedy?

Yes, instinct had gained the day over civilisation; the savage in John Creedy had broken out; he had torn up his English clothes and, in West African parlance, 'had gone Fantee.' Ethel gazed at him white with horror—stood still and gazed, and never cried nor fainted, nor said a word. The crowd of negroes divided to right and left, and John Creedy saw his wife standing there like a marble figure. With one awful cry he came to himself again, and rushed to her side. She did not repel him, as he expected; she did not speak; she was mute and cold like a corpse, not like a living woman. He took her up in his strong arms, laid her head on his shoulder, and carried her home through the long line of thatched huts, erect and steady as when he first walked up the aisle of Walton Magna church. Then he laid her down gently on the bed, and called the wife of the catechist. 'She has the fever,' he said in Fantee. 'Sit by her.'

The catechist's wife looked at her, and said, 'Yes; the yellow fever.'

And so she had. Even before she saw John the fever had been upon her, and that awful revelation had brought it out suddenly in full force. She lay unconscious upon the bed, her eyes open, staring ghastlily, but not a trace of colour in her cheek nor a sign of life upon her face.

John Creedy wrote a few words on a piece of paper, which he folded in his hand, gave a few directions in Fantee to the woman at the bedside, and then hurried out like one on fire into the darkness outside.

III.

It was thirty miles through the jungle, by a native trackway, to the nearest mission station at Effuenta. There were two Methodist missionaries stationed there, John Creedy knew, for he had gone round by boat more than once to see them. When he first came to Africa he could no more have found his way across the neck of the river fork by that tangled jungle track than he could have flown bodily over the top of the cocoa palms; but now, half naked, barefooted, and inspired with an overpowering emotion, he threaded his path through the darkness among the creepers and lianas of the forest in true African fashion. Stooping here, crawling on all fours there, running in the open at full speed anon, he never once stopped to draw breath till he had covered the whole thirty miles, and knocked in the early dawn at the door of the mission hut at Effuenta.

One of the missionaries opened the barred door cautiously. 'What do you want?' he asked in Fantee of the bare-legged savage who stood crouching by the threshold.

'I bring a message from Missionary John Creedy,' the bare-legged savage answered, also in Fantee. 'He wants European clothes.'

'Has he sent a letter?' asked the missionary.

John Creedy took the folded piece of paper from his palm. The missionary read it. It told him in a few words how the Butabué people had pillaged John's hut at night and stolen his clothing, and how he could not go outside his door till he got some European dress again.

'This is strange,' said the missionary. 'Brother Felton died three days ago of the fever. You can take his clothes to Brother Creedy, if you will.'

The bare-limbed savage nodded acquiescence. The missionary looked hard at him, and fancied he had seen his face before, but he never even for a moment suspected that he was speaking to John Creedy himself.

A bundle was soon made of dead Brother Felton's clothes, and the bare-limbed man took it in his arms and prepared to run back again the whole way to Butabué.

'You have had nothing to eat,' said the lonely missionary. 'Won't you take something to help you on your way?'

‘Give me some plantain paste,’ answered John Creedy. ‘I can eat it as I go.’ And when they gave it him he forgot himself for the moment, and answered ‘Thank you’ in English. The missionary stared, but thought it was only a single phrase that he had picked up at Butabué, and that he was anxious, negro-fashion, to air his knowledge.

Back through the jungle, with the bundle in his arms, John Creedy wormed his way once more, like a snake or a tiger, never pausing or halting on the road till he found himself again in the open space outside the village of Butabué. There he stayed awhile, and behind a clump of wild ginger, he opened the bundle and arrayed himself once more from head to foot in English clerical dress. That done, too proud to slink, he walked bold and erect down the main alley, and quietly entered his own hut. It was high noon, the baking high noon of Africa, as he did so.

Ethel lay unconscious still upon the bed. The negro woman crouched, half asleep after her night’s watching, at the foot. John Creedy looked at his watch, which stood hard by on the little wooden table. ‘Sixty miles in fourteen hours,’ he said aloud. ‘Better time by a great deal than when we walked from Oxford to the White Horse, eighteen months since.’ And then he sat down silently by Ethel’s bedside.

‘Has she moved her eyes?’ he asked the negress.

‘Never, John Creedy,’ answered the woman. ‘Till last night she had always called him ‘Master.’

He watched the lifeless face for an hour or two. There was no change in it till about four o’clock; then Ethel’s eyes began to alter their expression. He saw the dilated pupils contract a little, and knew that consciousness was gradually returning.

In a moment more she looked round at him and gave a little cry. ‘John,’ she exclaimed, with a sort of awakening hopefulness in her voice, ‘where on earth did you get those clothes?’

‘These clothes?’ he answered softly. ‘Why, you must be wandering in your mind, Ethie dearest, to ask such a question now. At Standen’s, in the High at Oxford, my darling.’ And he passed his black hand gently across her loose hair.

Ethel gave a great cry of joy. ‘Then it was a dream, a horrid dream, John, or a terrible mistake? Oh, John, say it was a dream!’

John drew his hand across his forehead slowly. ‘Ethie darling,’

he said, 'you are wandering, I'm afraid. You have a bad fever. I don't know what you mean.'

'Then you didn't tear them up, and wear a Fantee dress, and dance with a tom-tom down the street? Oh, John!'

'Oh, Ethel! No. What a terrible delirium you must have had!'

'It is all well,' she said. 'I don't mind if I die now.' And she sank back exhausted into a sort of feverish sleep.

'John Creedy,' said the black catechist's wife solemnly, in Fantee, 'you will have to answer for that lie to a dying woman with your soul!'

'*My* soul!' cried John Creedy passionately, smiting both his breasts with his clenched fists. '*My* soul! Do you think, you negro wench, I wouldn't give *my* poor, miserable, black soul to eternal torments a thousand times over, if only I could give her little white heart one moment's forgetfulness before she dies?'

For five days longer Ethel lingered in the burning fever, sometimes conscious for a minute or two, but for the most part delirious or drowsy all the time. She never said another word to John about her terrible dream, and John never said another word to her. But he sat by her side and tended her like a woman, doing everything that was possible for her in the bare little hut, and devouring his full heart with a horrible gnawing remorse too deep for pen or tongue to probe and fathom. For civilisation with John Creedy was really at bottom far more than a mere veneer; though the savage instincts might break out with him now and again, such outbursts no more affected his adult and acquired nature than a single bump supper or wine party at college affects the nature of many a gentle-minded English lad. The truest John Creedy of all was the gentle, tender, English clergyman.

As he sat by her bedside sleepless and agonised, night and day for five days together, one prayer only rose to his lips time after time: 'Heaven grant she may die!' He had depth enough in the civilised side of his soul to feel that that was the only way to save her from a life-long shame. 'If she gets well,' he said to himself, trembling, 'I will leave this accursed Africa at once. I will work my way back to England as a common sailor, and send her home by the mail with my remaining money. I will never inflict my presence upon her again, for she cannot be persuaded, if once

she recovers, that she did not see me, as she did see me, a bare-limbed heathen Fantee brandishing a devilish tom-tom. But I shall get work in England—not a parson's; that I can never be again—but clerk's work, labourer's work, navy's work, anything! Look at my arms: I rowed five in the Magdalen eight: I could hold a spade as well as any man. I will toil, and slave, and save, and keep her still like a lady, if I starve for it myself, but she shall never see my face again, if once she recovers. Even then, it will be a living death for her, poor angel! There is only one hope—Heaven grant she may die!

On the fifth day she opened her eyes once. John saw that his



prayer was about to be fulfilled. 'John,' she said feebly—'John, tell me, on your honour, it was only my delirium.'

And John, raising his hand to heaven, *splendide mendax*, answered in a firm voice, 'I swear it.'

Ethel smiled and shut her eyes. It was for the last time.

Next morning, John Creedy—tearless, but parched and dry in the mouth, like one stunned and unmanned—took a pickaxe and hewed out a rude grave in the loose soil near the river. Then he fashioned a rough coffin from twisted canes with his own hands, and in it he reverently placed the sacred body. He allowed no one to help him or come near him—not even his fellow-Christians, the catechist and his wife: Ethel was too holy a thing for their African hands to touch. Next he put on his white surplice, and

for the first and only time in his life he read, without a quaver in his voice, the Church of England burial service over the open grave. And when he had finished he went back to his desolate hut, and cried with a loud voice of utter despair, 'The one thing that bound me to civilisation is gone. Henceforth I shall never speak another word of English. I go to my own people.' So saying, he solemnly tore up his European clothes once more, bound a cotton loin-cloth round his waist, covered his head with dirt, and sat fasting and wailing piteously, like a broken-hearted child, in his cabin.

Nowadays, the old half-caste Portuguese rum-dealer at Butabué can point out to any English pioneer who comes up the river which one, among a crowd of dilapidated negroes who lie basking in the soft dust outside his hut, was once the Reverend John Creedy, B.A., of Magdalen College, Oxford.



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IN TWO PARTS.

II.

LITERARY criticism in France is afflicted with a peculiar malady. There are no critical reviews, as in England and America, organs free from all political passion and influence, and delivering a literary verdict with the absolute impartiality of purely literary criticism. French literary criticism, so far as it can be said to exist, is enrolled in a journal, and it belongs more or less to the colour and tendencies of that journal, and if not to its prejudices, at least to its principles. And so it happens that the spirit of the book, or the spirit of the author, is generally considered before the value of the book itself. The critic can with difficulty admire in another camp or criticise in his own. If a novel has a Catholic hero, the critic of the anti-clerical journal will declare it to be detestable. If the hero of the novel be a Voltairian, the Catholic journal will anathematise both the book and the author. Whatever Victor Hugo writes will be proclaimed sublime by the 'Rappel' and ignoble by the 'Union,' and from one end of France to the other you will hardly find a single writer who ventures to express a candid and independent opinion. We make an exception in favour of one critic, M. Schérer, of 'Le Temps,' who has taken up the succession of Sainte-Beuve without Sainte-Beuve's knowledge or brilliancy. M. Schérer is an honest critic, but his influence over the public is small. It may be said without exaggeration that literary criticism in France at the present day is dead. The literary standard of the press itself as a whole is no longer what it was in the time of the Restoration, or even of the Second Empire. Indeed, liberty of the press in France would appear to be unfavourable to literary excellence, and doubtless if, under the two *régimes* just mentioned, the press had been left free to discuss and to criticise the affairs of the nation and of the Government, the *littérateurs* and stylists would not have occupied the place they did. The high-class newspapers of the Empire were, if one may say it, elegant salons, where a brilliant talker was listened to with delight by a chosen circle; in the universal silence the literary

articles of Taine or of Sainte-Beuve and the fine witticisms of Prévost-Paradol had at least a nine days' celebrity. Since 1789, which brought to light in a few months no fewer than 140 political journals, every successive revolution has had the effect of throwing literature into the shade. The revolution of 1871 did not differ in this respect from its predecessors, and as that revolution was prolonged in an acute state until the year 1877, it is not remarkable that the French press of to-day should be still absorbed by political discussion which literary men are inclined to consider idle. Literary criticism has then, to a great extent, been crowded out by politics, but, as the public still takes a great interest in literary questions, the subject has been taken up by the chroniclers and the reporters, who talk more about the author than about the book. Literary criticism has become, so to speak, anecdotic and biographical. The appearance of a new novel by Alphonse Daudet, for instance, is preceded by a series of articles describing the author's childhood, his home, his way of working, his future projects, &c., but when once the book is published the press ceases to concern itself about it. In short, like dramatic criticism, literary reporting—for it cannot be called criticism—turns to anecdotes, trivialities, *racontars*, what the French call *informations*. In both cases the reasons of the transformations are much the same. The writer who treats of books or plays must take into careful consideration his own interests as well as the proverbial irritability or authors and the vanity of actors. The signature at the foot of his article does not allow him to take refuge behind the editorial 'we,' and the absence of that 'we' renders it impossible to obtain unity in a French journal, where each individual writer is all the time stepping out of the ranks. On the other hand, *réclame* and *camaraderie* have been carried to such a pitch that the public, or at any rate the Parisian public, are no longer deceived: they know very well that such and such a manager whose 'incomparable ability' is celebrated in the newspapers every morning is on the verge of bankruptcy, and that X., whose new novel is loudly proclaimed to be 'a masterpiece of Parisian wit and clever observation,' will not succeed in selling a hundred copies.

The *faits divers*, or 'local news,' is one of the most wretchedly conducted departments of a French newspaper. The so-called 'reporter' is a fantastic and utterly unconscientious creature, who is a disgrace to the name that he has borrowed. The reporter gravitates between the Morgue, the Central Market, the home for

lost dogs, and the Prefecture of Police; he writes paragraphs on runaway horses, street accidents, suicides, infanticides. When none of these events happen in the course of the day, he invents them without scruple. He is a great stylist, and his prose is full of ingenious tropes. To lose a son is 'to be smitten in one's dearest affections.' The mother 'wild with grief' is reserved for the cases of little children crushed to death or burnt in their beds, 'another accident caused by lucifer matches!' The 'horrible event' or 'dreadful catastrophe' which the reporter narrates invariably 'plunges several families in grief,' or 'spreads desolation over a whole district.' If a colossal pumpkin makes its appearance in the market, he will tell you that 'an English lord has offered a thousand francs for it.' How many times in the course of the year does the reader come across that old old friend, the account of a dog 'presenting all the symptoms of hydrophobia,' who was rushing through such and such a street, 'spreading terror in his path,' until he was killed by the cutlass of a courageous policeman! This is the style of the old-fashioned reporter at three sous a line, who supplies 'flimsy' simultaneously to half a dozen journals. Most of these *faits divers* are purely imaginary, and when they do happen to be true, they are inexact and at least a week old. All the Paris journals publish more or less of these *faits divers*, but some half-dozen of them keep one or two 'reporters à l'Américaine,' with a staff of subalterns under them. The 'reporter à l'Américaine' has a speciality of interviewing the celebrity of the hour, of wresting secrets from diplomatists and statesmen, and of bribing the valets of kings *en voyage* to tell him what the monarchs eat for breakfast. The 'reporter à l'Américaine' doubtless arrives at a certain number of interesting facts, but his prose is utterly untrustworthy and too full of his own personality to be practical. The whole system of reporting and news-gathering is trivial. There is not a single Parisian journal that gives an adequate and thoroughly unbiassed report of a political meeting. As for rapidity in publishing news, it is out of the question. A catastrophe happens at Lyons, say on Monday morning, the Havas Telegraphic Agency receives a despatch of ten lines, 'Figaro' sends down its 'reporter à l'Américaine,' and in the 'Figaro' of Tuesday we read 'Terrible Catastrophe at Lyons. By telegraph. I arrived here to find the whole city in desolation. The latest reports mention twenty killed and 300 wounded. Full details to-morrow. Pierre Giffard.' In the 'full

details' that finally come to hand in Wednesday's paper, the 'reporter à l'Américaine' will infallibly tell the reader that he dined with the prefect, 'whose charming wife is an admirable musician,' and that the beds in the Lyons hotels are infested by insects! After all there is a simple explanation of the continuance of journalism of this kind: the French reader seeks two things in a newspaper—amusement and news—and he perhaps prefers the former to the latter. In his eyes the journalist is a sort of mountebank of the pen, and the stranger his antics the more droll he deems him.

The judicial and parliamentary reporting is superior to the kind of work just described. But it is characteristic of the people to find that both the law courts and the legislative chambers are regarded as sources of amusement almost like the theatre or the circus. The judicial reporter dresses up his chronicle in the gayest and most flippant manner, and notices by preference cases that present a scandalous, comic, or curious side. The parliamentary reporting is generally very well done, from the point of view adopted. Those who need a complete shorthand report of the proceedings must have recourse to the 'Journal Officiel'; the ordinary political journal gives only brief editorial comment and condensed reports of the proceedings of the Senate and Chamber, with or without extracts from the speeches, and an anecdotic chronicle of the political day, together with odd scraps of political news. The parliamentary reports of the 'Figaro' are done by Albert Millaud, one of the cleverest wits of the day, and two or three assistants. They form an almost exact counterpart of the theatrical reports already described—a happy mixture of fact, criticism, anecdote, and malice.

The financial column is the principal source of weakness in the French newspapers, almost without exception; it opens the door to that corruption which spreads, with greater or less intensity, from the first page to the last, in the shape of direct or indirect 'puffs,' and more particularly of financial 'puffs.' A newspaper cannot be founded without money, and, as many journalists know to their cost, the capitalist very often not only furnishes the funds, but also interferes in the editing of his paper. Without entering into the reasons—often mysterious, not to say inexplicable—which induce people to start new journals, it may be stated generally that in France, at the present day, large private interests have two powerful levers, the one backing up the other, and that the combination of politics and finance enables the Robert

Macaires of the day to fleece the public with greater facility. Nearly all the daily political papers are either virtually the property of financiers or banking establishments, or else they farm out their financial column to such individuals or companies; and the subvention thus obtained is one of their most important sources of revenue. One journal is said to have received from a bank 150,000 francs a year as the rent of a daily Bourse article of 100 lines, a whole page in the weekly supplement of the journal, 8,000 lines of 'puffs' a year, and the insertion of circulars in the wrapper of the journal four times a year. Furthermore, the Bank had the right to have articles on financial subjects inserted on the first page of the paper at the rate of 30 francs a line, on the second page at the rate of 20 francs a line, and had also absolute and exclusive control over everything concerning finance that was printed in the paper. Every journal in France, both Parisian and provincial, is hampered by some contract similar to the specimen just mentioned, and the taint of this corruption seems to affect the whole journal.

Even art and dramatic critics whose names are an authority with the general public are notoriously open to bribes and *pots-de-vin*. The Parisians, or, at least, the Parisians who are in the movement, are perfectly aware of this state of affairs; the artists know well enough that X. has been *étreinté* by the famous critic W., because he took no notice of an intimation of the latter that a finished sketch would be found acceptable; but, with that cowardice that the Parisians show as regards any prominent person whose name is cited amongst the celebrities of the 'tout Paris,' they set an example of tolerance in these matters that does little credit to their energy. The instances of corruption in financial matters are innumerable. It is needless to add that the 'puffs,' *réclames*, and articles inserted in the French newspapers on such conditions are full of lies and of misrepresentations. The editors of the journals know this to be the case; they know that they are wittingly deceiving the public; but they are powerless to protest, or even to put in the warning letters *Advt.* at the end of the article. The 'puffs' appear in the text of the journal as if emanating from and expressing the opinion of the journal itself. To such an extent has this corruption been carried, that where, twenty years ago, a hundred thousand francs would have sufficed to advertise a new company, a million would now be insufficient. Several times these facts have been brought under the attention of the Chamber

of Deputies ; but the interests of the newspapers, of the financiers, and of the Deputies themselves are so intimately connected, and all are so mutually dependent upon each other, that no result can be arrived at. On the occasion of the discussion of the new press law, in February 1881, M. Sourigues made a very important speech on these scandalous abuses ; but only a few journals ventured even to mention the fact, and most of them, by a discreet silence, did their best to nullify the honourable Deputy's efforts for the public good ! As it is, the utmost that the most influential Parisian journals can do is to keep the 'puffs' within reasonable limits. As for the provincial journals they are entirely at the mercy of the great Parisian financial and speculative companies. From the journalistic point of view independence is thus rendered impossible ; but there is a still higher point of view, the neglect of which reflects discredit on the whole French newspaper press. This view is set forth in the following words of Henri Rochefort : ' When I founded " La Lanterne," ' he says, ' in 1868, I peremptorily refused all propositions for advertisements. Later, when the " Marseillaise " was started, the circulation of which in a few days exceeded 150,000, it was agreed that no financial " puffs " should ever enter its pages. . . . We preferred, my staff and myself, to deprive the journal of considerable perquisites *rather than to participate, even unconsciously, in the possible ruin of some of our fellow-citizens.*'

As regards the *roman-feuilleton* which still continues to occupy the foot of the page, or what is called the *rez-de-chaussée* of French newspapers, it must be stated that the conditions have completely changed. Forty years ago, as we have seen above, the invention had a great success ; but nowadays times have changed. Journalism has assumed formidable dimensions in certain directions, and an insatiable curiosity has been awakened amongst the public. The *feuilleton* is no longer the *raison d'être* of the newspaper ; the main interest of the publication is no longer merely at the foot of the page, but in the columns of the journal itself, in the home and foreign news, and above all in the discussion and commenting of the events and questions of the day. On the other hand, the great masters, the initiators of the *roman-feuilleton*, have disappeared or grown old, and the new writers, the men of the school of Flaubert and De Goncourt, the *romanciers-naturalistes*, as Zola styles them, produce works that do not easily take the form of chapters continued from day to day.

They do not cultivate that happy suspension of the interest at some dramatic point which constituted half the science of the *feuilletonistes*. Furthermore, the book-trade has acquired a magnitude hitherto unprecedented, and the public prefers to read the modern novel in a volume rather than in daily chapters. In that case, it may be asked, why should not the *feuilleton* be suppressed? It appears that the women still demand a daily slice of fiction, and it is the women who decide beyond appeal whether the subscription to a journal is to be renewed or not. The subscribers being, for the majority of French journals, quite as important as the outside purchasers, if not more so, the support of the women is indispensable. In France it is the rule to subscribe to a journal rather than to buy it at a news-stall—a fact due to the legislation on *colportage*, which until quite recently had the effect of seriously limiting the public sale of newspapers and periodicals. The newspapers, therefore, still continue to publish *feuilletons*, and even the novels of Zola, Alphonse Daudet, and Edmond de Goncourt are forced into the ungrateful mould of ‘la suite à demain.’ When the ‘Voltaire’ published Edmond de Goncourt’s ‘La Faustin’ it spent some 60,000 francs in advertising, although the publication probably did not increase the circulation of the journal at all. If you ask the editors why they cut up the works of Alphonse Daudet into *feuilletons*, without any prospect of gaining thereby, they will reply that the publication is honourable to the journal and gives it a high literary renown. To this argument there is no reply to be made. It is a proof, if proof were needed, that the French public is by no means indifferent to the literary battles that have been waged of late years. But apart from the *romanciers-naturalistes*, who only accept the hospitality of the *feuilleton* because they need money like the rest of mankind, there are still novelists who write exclusively for the *rez-de-chaussée* of newspapers. These writers are to be counted by the score, but their work is worse than mediocre; it has nothing to do with literature. A certain portion of the public require, morning and evening, a certain sum of romantic adventures, crimes, bloodshed, and love-making; and there are manufacturers of ‘copy’ who furnish this merchandise as others furnish cheese or butcher’s meat. Most of the *romanciers-feuilletonistes* have no reputation; but some arrive at a veritable popularity, and exercise an incontestable influence on the public. None of the living writers can be compared to Dumas, to Eugène Sue, or

to Ponson du Terrail; still the names of Xavier de Montépin, Fortuné de Boisgobey, Emile Richebourg, and Alexis Bouvier have the faculty of attracting fresh readers to the journals that publish their works. Emile Richebourg, especially, has captivated a certain public by sentimental romances, full of tears, affection, and devotion. The appearance of a new novel by this author in the 'Petit Journal' caused an increase in the circulation of no less than 50,000 copies. It may be remarked, in passing, that the novels which have a success in *feuilletons* have but a small sale when published in volumes, whereas the reverse is the case with the literary novels, which generally go through a large number of editions. Some of Zola's works, for instance, that have had but little success when published in *feuilletons*, have attained a hundredth edition, each edition numbering a thousand copies.

Owing to the absence of regular business buildings in Paris the newspapers are wretchedly lodged. The editorial rooms are rarely large enough to 'swing a cat' in, and the composing room is generally a cellar. Most of the Parisian journals are printed in one of three great central printing works. In short, the average French journal is a comparatively cheap affair in all senses of the word. The fitting up is cheap; the amount of composition—never more than four pages, including the advertisements—is small; and the paper and ink employed are of very inferior quality. The material cost of getting out 20,000 copies of the large-size Parisian four-page journal, including paper, composition, printing, gas, rent, and wear and tear, is as near as possible 1,250 francs.

The editorial expenses are not so easy to estimate. The pay varies very much with the journals, and, owing to the custom of signing, individual writers, who have acquired great celebrity, are paid at exceptional rates, like famous tenors and golden-mouthed *cantatrices*. The regular staff of the 'Figaro,' the most numerous, is composed of twenty-five persons. The pay of the celebrities of the *chronique*, like Albert Wolff, Scholl, and Monselet, is 1,500 francs a month for one or two articles a week. The leading reporter of the 'Figaro' receives the same sum, together with handsome travelling expenses. In short, the small fry of journalists earn from 200 to 500 francs a month, while the leading writers—say, at the outside, twenty men—will make an average of 25,000 francs a year out of their pen. M. Francisque Sarcey, the leading

dramatic *feuilletoniste*, receives 250 francs for each of his weekly reviews in 'Le Temps.' The general tariff for a special article is 150 francs, and the highest price paid to the dozen leaders of the Parisian press is 250 francs. The weekly Parisian letter in the 'Indépendance Belge,' which can almost be reckoned amongst the Parisian journals, is paid 150 francs. The price paid for the *roman-feuilleton* varies very considerably, from two sous a line to thirty sous. Thirty sous a line was the price paid to Alphonse Daudet for his last novel, 'L'Évangéliste,' but it is an altogether exceptional figure; few writers are paid more than eight sous.

Telegraphing expenses and foreign correspondence do not form a large item in the budget of a Parisian journal. Very little telegraphing is done, and what foreign correspondence they publish is, with few exceptions, intermittent, and often voluntary. The business and publishing departments of the French journals are not very extensive, and all the advertising in the principal political journals is in the hands of three great companies which are associated for the joint administration of financial and industrial advertisements in the Parisian and provincial journals.

The history of the laws that have been passed in France with regard to the press during the present century would fill several volumes. The subject is one of the most complicated that could be imagined, and at last the decrees, ordinances, laws, and edicts became so numerous, so contradictory, and so obscure, that no lawyer even pretended to be able to expound them. It suffices to say that until 1881 liberty of the press was unknown in France, and every journal treating of politics or political economy was bound to fulfil many tiresome formalities, to obtain certain authorisations, and to deposit a large sum as caution money. In July 1881 a new press law was promulgated, by virtue of which the publication and sale of newspapers is practically free, most of the formalities have been abolished, and the deposit of caution money is no longer required. The new law, however, contains no fewer than seventy articles, surely a strangely diffuse way of proclaiming liberty of the press!

In France, and particularly in Paris, scarcely a week passes that does not witness the birth, and often the death, of one or more newspapers. The statistics as to the number and circulation of the French journals are therefore constantly varying. Nevertheless it is possible to give approximately correct figures that will serve to show the development of the newspaper press in this

great country with its thirty-nine millions of inhabitants. In the autumn of 1882 the number of periodical publications of all descriptions in France amounted in round numbers to 3,000, out of which number Paris claimed 1,290, and the provinces 1,710. In Paris there are published about 120 periodical publications, daily or weekly newspapers or reviews treating of politics and social economy; in the provinces the number of similar publications amounts to about 800, that is to say, in all, 920. The political journal that has the largest circulation is a one-sou journal, 'Le Petit Journal,' which prints between 620,000 and 650,000 copies. The political journal that has the smallest circulation is 'Le Vigilant,' a Republican journal published at Sedan, which publishes less than a hundred copies a day. At the present moment nearly seventy daily political journals appear at Paris, some sixteen of which are small five-centime journals of the type of the 'Petit Journal;' the rest are four-page papers like the 'Figaro,' varying in price from five to fifteen centimes, the usual price being fifteen centimes. No eight-page journal has ever succeeded in France. The last attempt to found one was made in 1879, in 'Le Globe,' which endeavoured to be a regular newspaper full of news and reading matter of a serious description. 'Le Globe' proved an utter failure, and at the end of a year it was transformed into a four-page journal of the approved type. The average daily circulation of all the daily papers published in Paris is a little under two millions of copies. Next to 'Le Petit Journal,' the journal that has the largest circulation is 'La Petite République Française,' with 160,000 to 170,000 copies.¹ The 'Figaro' has a circulation of about 80,000 copies; 'Le Temps' 25,000 to 30,000; the venerable 'Journal des Débats' about 8,000; 'L'Intransigeant' an average of 35,000; the old 'Constitutionnel,' which before and after 1830 had the then enormous circulation of 20,000 copies, has sunk now to about 2,000, and is still conducted on the old principle for the benefit of a few aged and faithful *abonnés*. Of the provincial journals the 'Petit Lyonnais' has the largest circulation, with a daily average of 73,000 copies; then follow the 'Petit Marseillais' with 57,000, and the 'Lyon Républicain' with 52,000. The number and the circulation of the Republican journals of all

¹ The death of M. Gambetta has caused a considerable decline in the circulation both of the 'République Française' and of the 'Petite République.' The above figures were approximately exact in the autumn of last year, at which time these two journals were the accredited organs of that great political leader.

shades is more than three times as great as the number and circulation of all the Legitimist, Catholic, Orleanist, and Bonapartist sheets put together. Furthermore, the sixteen or seventeen five-centime journals published in Paris have together a larger circulation than all the other large-sized papers. They print daily considerably over a million of copies.

From a commercial point of view, although not to be compared with the press of England, of the United States, or even of Germany, newspaper property in France is nevertheless a very good investment. In the present article nothing can be said about the weekly illustrated press—very inferior, it is true, but very profitable. As regards the daily newspapers, two or three instances may be cited. ‘Figaro’ 500 franc shares have been doubled four times, and are now quoted at 920 francs, which represents for original holders 3,860 francs. ‘L’Univers,’ the leading Catholic journal, pays a dividend of more than 20 per cent.; the ‘République Française’ pays about 10 per cent.; the ‘Petite République’ 26 per cent. Since 1877 the ‘XIX. Siècle’ has paid a dividend of from 58 to 70 per cent.

As compared with the Anglo-Saxon nations the French are not a reading people. Reviews or magazines, such as exist by the dozen in England or America, find great difficulty in obtaining support in France. When you have mentioned the old ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’ the ‘Correspondant,’ and the ‘Nouvelle Revue,’ all dead-alive publications, the list of general and literary magazines is about exhausted. On the other hand, while refusing to read long and solid articles, the French public is ready to absorb any quantity of light newspaper reading, provided it be served up in such a manner as to suit the national taste, and in such quantities as tradition and long usage have shown to be within the capacity of the Gallic newspaper appetite. From the Anglo-Saxon point of view the average French newspaper is deficient in news. Alluding partly to the fact that French papers, in order to satisfy their provincial subscribers, generally bear a date twenty-four hours in advance of their actual appearance, a wit once observed, that in France the newspapers are published to-morrow and contain the news of the day before yesterday. Certainly the French do not live at high pressure; they transact their business slowly and tranquilly; they move slowly, and they are much given to ‘loafing’ and lounging. The verb *flâner* has no equivalent in any other language. If the French are contented with

their press it is probably because it is such as they desire it to be. In all those points which we Anglo-Saxons are wont to consider essential to the excellence of a newspaper the French press is very deficient; on the other hand, in brightness, literary excellence, and wit, it is perhaps superior to the press of any other country. Of late years there has been a swarming growth of political journals; but, on the other hand, literary men are welcomed in the new journals. Three or four papers bid against each other for the honour of publishing the novels of Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Emile Zola, while Renan, About, Jules Soury, Mézières, Daudet, J. J. Weiss, Legouvé, Théodore de Banville, and a dozen other veterans are still active contributors to the best French newspapers, and it is in the newspapers, and, above all, in the various developments of the *chronique*, that the men of the younger generation are making their names familiar to the public. Journalism, with all its shortcomings, and in spite of its changed conditions, is still the great school of French literature now, as it has been for the last sixty years.

THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSA.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE FOG.



ARK was roused from his reverie in the railway carriage by the fact that the train, after slackening speed rather suddenly, had come to a dead standstill. 'Surely we can't be in already,' he said to himself, wondering at the way in which his thoughts had outstripped the time. But on looking out he found that he was mistaken—they were certainly not near the metropolis as yet, nor did they appear to have stopped at any station, though from the

blank white fog which reigned all around, and drifted in curling wreaths through the window he had let down, it was difficult to make very sure of this.

Along the whole length of the train conversation, no longer drowned by the motion, rose and fell in a kind of drone, out of which occasional scraps of talk from the nearer carriages were more distinctly audible, until there came a general lull as each party gave way to the temptation of listening to the other—for the dullest talk has an extraordinary piquancy under these circumstances, either because the speakers, being unseen, appeal to

our imagination, or because they do not suppose that they are being so generally overheard.

But by-and-by it seemed to be universally felt that the stoppage was an unusual one, and windows went down with a clatter along the carriages while heads were put out inquiringly. Every kind of voice demanded to be told where they were, and why they were stopping, and what the deuce the Company meant by it—inquiries met by a guard, who walked slowly along the line, with the diplomatic evasiveness which marks the official dislike to admit any possible hitch in the arrangements.

'Yes,' he said, stolidly; 'there might be a bit of a stoppage like; they'd be going on presently; he couldn't say how long that would be; something had gone wrong with the engine; it was nothing serious; he didn't exactly know what.'

But he was met just under Mark's window by the guard from the break at the end of the train, when a hurried conference took place, in which there was no stolidity on either side. 'Run back as quick as you can and set the detonators—there ain't a minute to lose, she may be down on us any time, and she'll never see the other signals this weather. I'd get 'em all out of the train if I was you, mate—they ain't safe where they are as it is, that they ain't!'

The one guard ran back to his break, and then on to set the fog-signals, while the other went to warn the passengers. 'All get out 'ere, please; all get out!' he shouted.

There was the usual obstructive person in the train who required to be logically convinced first of the necessity for disturbing himself; he put his head angrily out of a window near Mark's: 'Here, guard!' he shouted importantly; 'what's all this? *Why* am I to get out?' 'Because you'd better,' said the guard, shortly. 'But why—where's the platform? I insist on being taken to a platform—I'm not going to break my leg getting out here.' Several people, who had half opened their doors, paused on the steps at this, as if recalled to a sense of their personal dignity. 'Do as you please, sir,' said the official; 'the engine's broke down, and we may be run into any minute in this fog; but if you'd be more comfortable up there——' There was no want of alacrity after that, the obstructive man being the first down; all the rosy-faced gentlemen hopped out, some of the younger ones still grasping half-played hands of 'Nap' or 'Loo,' and made the best of their way down the embankment, and

several old ladies were got out in various stages of flutter, narrowly escaping sprained ankles in the descent.

Mark, who had seen his opportunity from the first, had rushed to the door of the next compartment, caught Dolly in his arms as



she jumped down, and, hardly believing in his own good fortune, held Mabel's hand in his for one happy moment as she stepped from the high and awkward footboard.

'Down the slope, quick,' he cried to them; 'get as far from the line as you can in case of a smash.'

Mabel turned a little pale, for she had not understood till then that there was any real danger. 'Keep close to me, Dolly,' she said, as they went down the slope; 'we're safe here.'

The fog had gathered thick down in the meadows, and nothing could be seen of the abandoned train when they had gone a few paces from the foot of the embankment; the passengers were moving about in excited groups, not knowing what horrors they might not be obliged to witness in the next few minutes. The excitement increased as one of them declared he could hear the noise of an approaching train. 'Only just in time—God help them if they don't pull up!' cried some, and a woman hoped that 'the poor driver and stoker were not on the engine.'

Dolly heard this and broke from Mabel with a loud cry—'Mabel, we've left Frisk!' she sobbed; 'he'll be killed—oh, my dog will be killed—he mustn't be left behind!'

And, to Mark's horror, she turned back, evidently with the idea of making for the point of danger; he ran after her and caught the little silver-grey form fast in his arms. 'Let me go!' cried Dolly, struggling; 'I must get him back—oh, I must!'

'He'll have jumped out by this time—he's quite safe,' said Mark in her ear.

'He was sound asleep in his basket, he'll never wake if I don't call to him—why do you hold me? I tell you I *will* go!' persisted Dolly.

'No, Dolly, no,' said Mabel, bending over her; 'it's too late—it's hard to leave him, but we must hope for the best.' She was crying, too, for the poor doomed dog as she spoke.

Mark was hardly a man from whom anything heroic could be very confidently expected; he was no more unselfish than the generality of young men; as a rule he disliked personally inconveniencing himself for other people, and in cooler moments, or without the stimulus of Mabel's presence, he would certainly have seen no necessity to run the risk of a painful death for the sake of a dog.

But Mabel was there, and the desire of distinguishing himself in her eyes made a temporary hero out of materials which at first sight were not promising. He was physically fearless enough, and given to acting on impulses without counting the consequences; the impulse seized him now to attempt to rescue this dog, and he obeyed it blindly.

'Wait here,' he said to Mabel; 'I'll go back for him.'

'Oh, no—no,' she cried; 'it may cost you your life!'

'Don't stop him, Mabel,' entreated Dolly; 'he is going to save my dog.'

Mark had gone already, and was half-way up the slope, slippery as it was, with the grass clumped and matted together by the frost, and scored in long brown tracks by the feet that had just descended it.

Mabel was left to console and encourage the weeping Dolly as best she might, with a terrible suspense weighing on her own heart the while, not altogether on Frisk's account. At the point where the train had broken down, the line took a bold curve, and now they could hear, apparently close upon them, the roar of a fast train sweeping round through the fog; there were some faint explosions, hoarse shouting, a long screeching whistle,—and after that the dull shock of a collision; but nothing could be seen from where they stood, and for some moments Mabel remained motionless, almost paralysed by the fear of what might be hidden behind the fog curtain.

Mark clambered painfully up the glistening embankment, hoping to reach the motionless carriages and escape with his object effected before the train he could hear in the distance ground into them with a hideous crash.

He knew his danger but, to do him justice, he scarcely gave it a thought—any possible suffering seemed as remote and inconsiderable just then as the chance of a broken leg or collar-bone had been to him when running for a touchdown in his football days; the one idea that filled his brain was to return to Mabel triumphant with the rescued dog in his arms, and he had room for no others.

He went as directly as he could to the part of the train in which was the carriage he had occupied, and found it without much difficulty when he was near enough to make out forms through the fog; the door of Mabel's compartment was open, and, as he sprang up on the footboard, he heard the train behind rattling down on him with its whistle screeching infernally, and for the first time felt an uneasy recollection of the horribly fantastic injuries described in accounts of so many railway collisions.

But there was no time to think of this; at the other end of the carriage was the little round wicker-basket he had seen in Dolly's hands at the Chigbourne waiting-room, and in it was the terrier, sleeping soundly as she had anticipated. He caught up the little drowsy beast, which growled ungratefully, and turned

to leap down with it to the ballast, when there was a sharp concussion, which sent a jangling forward shock, increasing in violence as it went along the standing train, and threw him violently against the partition of the compartment.

Meanwhile the passengers of the first train, now that the worst was apparently over, and the faint shouts and screams from the embankment had calmed down, began to make their way in the direction of the sounds, and Mabel, holding Dolly fast by the hand, forced herself to follow them, though she was sick and faint with the dread of what she might see.

The first thing they saw was a crowd of eager, excited faces, all questioning and accusing the badgered officials of both trains at the same time. 'Why was an empty train left on the rails unprotected in this way? they might have been all killed.—It was culpable negligence all round, and there should be an inquiry—they would insist on an inquiry—they would report this to the traffic manager,' and so on.

The faces looked pale and ghastly enough in the fog, but all the speakers were evidently sound in wind and limb, and, as far as could be seen, neither train had left the rails—but where was the young man who had volunteered to recover the dog? 'Oh, Mabel,' cried Dolly, again and again. 'Frisk is killed, I'm sure of it, or he'd come to me—something has happened—ask, do ask!'

But Mabel dared not, for fear of hearing that a life had been nobly and uselessly sacrificed; she could only press through the crowd with the object of making her way to the carriage where her suspense would be ended.

'There's some one in one of the carriages!' she heard a voice saying as she got nearer, and her heart beat faster; and then the crowd parted somehow, and she saw Mark Ashburn come out of it towards her, with a dazed, scared smile on his pale face, and the little trembling dog safe under one arm.

Fortunately for Mark, the fog-signals had been set in time to do their work, and the second train was fitted with powerful brakes which, but for the state of the rails, would have brought it to without any collision at all; as it was, the shock had not been severe enough to damage the rolling-stock to any greater extent than twisting or straining a buffer or coupling-chain here and there, though it had thrown him against the corner of the net-rail with sufficient violence to slightly graze his forehead, and leave him stunned and a little faint for a few moments.

After sitting down for a short time to recover himself, he picked up the terrier from the cushions on which it was crouching and shivering, having dropped from his hand at the concussion, and feeling himself still a little giddy and sick, got down amongst the astonished crowd, and came towards Mabel and Dolly as we have seen.

It was the best moment, as he thought afterwards, in his life. Every one, probably, with any imagination at all likes to conceive himself at times as the performer of some heroic action extorting the admiration he longs for from some particular pair of eyes, but opportunities for thus distinguishing oneself are sadly rare nowadays, and often when they come are missed, or, if grasped with success, the fair eyes are looking another way and never see it.

But Mark had a satisfied sense of appearing to the utmost advantage as he met the little girl and placed the dog in her arms. 'There's your dog; he's quite safe, only a little frightened,' he said, with a pleasant sympathy in his voice.

Dolly was too overcome for words; she caught Frisk up with her eyes swimming, and ran away with him to pour her self-reproach and relief into his pricked ears, without making any attempt to express her thanks to his rescuer. Her sister, however, made him ample amends.

'How can we thank you?' she said, with a quiver in her voice and an involuntary admiration in her eyes; 'it was so very, very brave of you—you might have been killed!'

'I thought at first it was going to be rather a bad smash,' said Mark—he could not resist the impulse now to make all the capital he could out of what he had done—'I was knocked down—and—and unconscious for a little while after it; but I'm not much hurt, as you see. I don't *think* I'm any the worse for it, and at all events your little sister's dog isn't—and that's the main point, isn't it?' he added, with a feeling that his words were equal to the occasion.

'Indeed it isn't,' said Mabel warmly; 'if you had been seriously hurt I should never have forgiven myself for letting you go—but are you sure you feel no pain anywhere?'

'Well,' he admitted, 'I fancy I was cut a little about the head' (he was afraid she might not have noticed this), 'but that's a trifle.'

'There is a cut on your forehead,' said Mabel; 'it has been bleeding, but I think it has stopped now. Let me bind it up for you in case it should break out again.'

It was in truth a very small cut, and had hardly bled at all, but Mark made light of it elaborately, as the surest means of keeping her interest alive. 'I am afraid it must be giving you pain,' she said, with a pretty, anxious concern in her eyes as she spoke; and Mark protested that the pain was nothing—which was the exact truth, although he had no intention of being taken literally.

They had gone down the embankment again and were slowly crossing the dim field in which they had first taken refuge. No one was in sight, the other passengers being still engaged in comparing notes or browbeating the unhappy guards above; and as Mark glanced at his companion he saw that her thoughts had ceased to busy themselves about him, while her eyes were trying to pierce the gloom which surrounded her.

'I was looking for my little sister,' she exclaimed, answering the question in his eyes. 'She ran off with the dog you brought back to her, and it is so easy to lose oneself here. I must find out where she is—oh, you are ill!' she broke off suddenly, as Mark staggered and half fell.

'Only a slight giddiness,' he said; 'if—if I could sit down somewhere for a moment—is that a stile over there?'

'It looks like one. Can you get so far without help?' she said compassionately. 'Will you lean on me?'

He seemed to her like some young knight who had been wounded, as it were, in her cause, and deserved all the care she could give him.

'If you will be so very good,' said Mark. He felt himself a humbug, for he could have leaped the stile with ease at that very moment. He had very little excuse for practising in this way on her womanly sympathy, except that he dreaded to lose her just yet, and found such a subtle intoxication in being tended like this by a girl from whom an hour ago he had scarcely hoped to win another careless glance; if he exaggerated his symptoms, as it is to be feared he did, there may be some who will forgive him under the circumstances.

So he allowed Mabel to guide him to the stile, and sat down on one of its rotten cross-planks while she poured *eau-de-Cologne* or some essence of the kind on a handkerchief, and ordered him to bathe his forehead with it. They seemed isolated there together on the patch of hoary grass by a narrow black ditch half hidden in rank weeds, which alone could be distinguished in

the prevailing yellowish whiteness, and Mark desired nothing better at that moment.

'I wonder,' said Mabel, 'if there's a doctor amongst the passengers. There must be, I should think. I am sure you ought to see one. Let me see if I can find one and bring him to you.'

But Mark declared he was quite himself again, and would have begged her not to leave him if he had dared; and as there really did not seem to be anything serious the matter, Mabel's uneasiness about Dolly returned. 'I can't rest till I find her,' she said, 'and if you really are strong again, will you help me? She cannot have gone very far.'

Mark, only too glad of any pretence to remain with her, volunteered willingly.

'Then will you go round the field that way,' she said, 'and I will go this, and we will meet here again?'

'Don't you think,' said Mark, who had not been prepared for this, 'that if—she might not know *me*, you see—I mean if I was not with you?'

'Yes, she will,' said Mabel impatiently; 'Dolly won't forget you after what you have done, and we are losing time. Go round by there, and call her now and then; if she is here she will come, and if not then we will try the next field.'

She went off herself as she spoke, and Mark had nothing for it but to obey, as she so evidently expected to be obeyed. He went round the field, calling out the child's name now and then, feeling rather forlorn and ridiculous as his voice went out unanswered on the raw air. Presently a burly figure, grotesquely magnified by the mist, came towards him, and resolved itself into an ordinary guard.

'You one of the gentlemen in my train, sir?' he said, 'the train as broke down, that is?'

'Yes,' said Mark; 'why?'

'Cause we've got the engine put to rights, sir; nothing much the matter with her, there wasn't, and we're goin' on directly, sir; I'm gettin' all my passengers together.'

Mark was in no hurry to leave that field, but his time was not his own; he ought to have been at St. Peter's long ago, and was bound to take the first opportunity of getting back. It would not be pleasant, as it was, to have to go and fetch down his class from the sixth form room, where the head master—had probably given them a temporary asylum.

He had never forgotten a morning on which he had overslept himself, and the mortification he had felt at the Doctor's blandly polite but cutting reception of his apologies. He had a better excuse this time, but even that would not bear overtaxing.

He hesitated a moment, however. 'I'll go in a minute,' he said, 'but there's a lady and a little girl with a dog somewhere about. They mustn't be left behind. Wait while I go and tell them, will you?'

'Never you fear, sir,' said the guard, 'we won't go without them, but I'll call 'em; they'll mind me more than they will you, beggin' your pardon, sir, and you'd better run on, as time's short, and keep places for 'em. You leave it all to me; I'll take care on 'em.'

Mark heard faint barks across the hedge in the direction Mabel had taken. The child was evidently found. The best thing, he thought, to do now was to secure an empty compartment, and with that idea, and perhaps a little from that instinctive obedience to anything in a uniform which is a characteristic of the average respectable Englishman, he let himself be persuaded by the guard, and went back to the train.

To his great joy he found that the compartment Mabel had occupied had no one in it; he stood waiting by the door for Mabel and her sister to come up, with eager anticipations of a delightful conclusion to his journey. 'Perhaps she will tell me who she is,' he thought; 'at all events she will ask me who *I* am. How little I hoped for this yesterday!'

He was interrupted by a guard—another guard, a sour-looking man with a grizzled beard, who was in charge of the front van. 'Get in, sir, if you mean to travel by this 'ere train,' he said.

'I'm waiting for a young lady,' said Mark, rather ingenuously, but it slipped out almost without his knowledge. 'The other guard promised me——'

'I don't know nothing about no young ladies,' said the guard obdurately; 'but if you mean my mate, he's just give me the signal from his end, and if you don't want to be left be'ind you'd better take your seat while you can, sir, and pretty sharp, too.'

There was nothing else to do; he could not search for Mabel along the train; he must wait till they got to King's Cross; but he took his seat reluctantly and with a heavy disappointment, thinking what a fool he had been to let himself be persuaded by

the burly guard. 'But for that, *she* might have been sitting opposite to me now!' he thought bitterly. 'What a fool I was to leave her. How pretty she looked when she wanted me to see a doctor; how charming she is altogether! Am I in love with her already? Of course I am; who wouldn't be? I shall see her again. She will speak to me once more, and, after all, things might be worse. I couldn't have counted on *that* when we started.'

And he tried to console himself with this, feeling an impatient anger at the slow pace of the train as it crept cautiously on towards the goal of his hopes. But the breakdown had not happened very far from town, and, tedious as the time seemed to Mark, it was not actually long before the colour of the atmosphere (there was no other indication) proved that they were nearing the terminus.

It changed by slow gradations from its original yellow-whiteness to mustard colour, from that to a smoky lurid red, and from red to stinging, choking iron-grey, and the iron-grey pall was in full possession of King's Cross, where the sickly moonlight of the electric lamps could only clear small halos immediately around their globes.

Mark sprang out before the train had stopped; he strained his eyes in watching for the form he hoped to see there, but in vain; there were no signs in all that bustle of Mabel or Dolly, or the little dog to whom he owed so much.

He sought out the guard who had deluded him and found him superintending the clearing of the luggage-van. He hardly knew whether it was merely a fancy that the official, after making a half-step forward to meet him, and fumbling in all his pockets, turned away again as if anxious to avoid meeting his eye.

Mark forced him to meet it, however, willing or not. 'Where is the lady?' he said sharply. 'You left her behind after all, it seems?'

'It wasn't my fault, sir,' said the guard wheezily, 'nor it wasn't the lady's fault, leastways on'y the little lady's, sir. Both on us tried all we could, but the little missy, her with the tarrier dawg, was narvous-like with it all, and wouldn't hear of getting in the train again; so the young lady, she said, seeing as they was so near London, they could get a fly or a cab or summat, and go on in that.'

'And—and did she give you no message for me?' said Mark. There was such evident expectation in his face that the guard

seemed afraid to disappoint it. 'I was to give you her dooty,' he said slowly—'her dear love I ought to say,' he substituted quickly, after a glance at Mark's face, 'and you was not to be in a way about her, and she'd see you soon at the old place, and——'

'That's all a lie, you know,' said Mark, calmly.

'Well, then, she didn't say nothing, if that warn't it,' said the guard, doggedly.

'Did she—did she leave any directions about luggage or anything?' said Mark.

'Brown portmanty to go in the left-luggage room till called for,' said the guard. 'Anything else I can do for you, sir; no? Good mornin', then, and thanky, sir!'

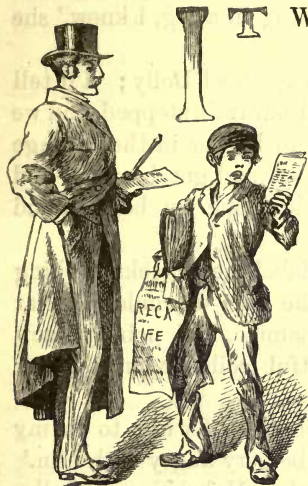
'Never did such a thing as that in my life afore,' he muttered, as he went back to his van; 'to go and lose a bit o' paper with writing on it, d'reckly I got it, too; I'm afraid my 'ead's a-leavin' me; they ain't keepin' company, that's plain. I made a mess o' that, or he wouldn't have wanted her direction. I saw what he was up to—well, they'd make a good-looking pair. I'm sorry I lost that there paper; but it warn't no use a-tellin' of him.'

As for Mark, this lame and impotent conclusion brought back all his depression again. 'She never even asked my name!' he thought, bitterly. 'I risked my life for her—it *was* for her, and she knew it; but she has forgotten that already. I've lost her for ever this time; she may not even live in London, and if she did I've no clue to tell me where, and if I had I don't exactly see what use it would be; I won't think about her—yes, I will, she can't prevent me from doing that, at any rate!'

By this time he had left the City station of the Metropolitan Railway, and was going back to his underground labours at St. Peter's, where he was soon engaged in trying to establish something like discipline in his class, which the dark brown fog seemed to have inspired with unaccountable liveliness. His short holiday had not served to rest and invigorate him as much as might have been expected; it had left him consumed with a hopeless longing for something unattainable. His thirst for distinction had returned in an aggravated form, and he had cut himself off now from the only means of slaking it. As that day wore on, and with each day that succeeded it, he felt a wearier disgust with himself and his surroundings.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAD NEWS.



IT WAS Christmas week, and Mrs. Langton and her daughters were sitting, late one afternoon, in the drawing-room where we saw them first. Dolly was on a low stool at her mother's feet, submitting, not too willingly, to have the bow in her hair smoothed and arranged for her. 'It *must* be all right now, mother!' she said, breaking away rebelliously at last. 'It's worse than ever, Dolly,' said Mrs. Langton plaintively; 'it's slipped over to the left now!' 'But it doesn't matter, it never will keep straight long.' 'Well, if you *like* to run about like a little wild child,' was the resigned answer. 'Little wild children don't wear bows in their hair; they wear—well, they don't wear anything they've got to be careful and tidy about. I think that must be rather nice,' said Dolly, turning round from where she knelt on the hearthrug. 'Wake up, Frisk, and be good-tempered directly. Mother, on Christmas Day I'm going to tie a Christmas card round Frisk's neck, and send him into papa's dressing-room to wish him a Merry Christmas, the first thing in the morning—you won't tell him before the time, will you?' 'Not if you don't wish it, darling,' said Mrs. Langton, placidly.

'I mightn't have had him to tie a card to,' said Dolly, taking the dog up and hugging him fondly, 'if that gentleman had not fetched him out of the train for me; and I never said "thank you" to him either. I forgot somehow, and when I remembered he was gone. Should you think he will come to see me, Mabel; you told him that mother would be glad to thank him some time, didn't you, on the paper you gave the guard for him?'

'Yes, Dolly,' said Mabel, turning her head a little away; 'but you see he hasn't come yet.'

'My dear,' said her mother, 'really I think he shows better

taste in keeping away; there was no necessity to send him a message at all, and I hope he won't take any advantage of it. Thanking people is so tiresome and, after all, they never think you have said enough about it. It was very kind of the young man, of course, very—though I can't say I ever quite understood what it was he did—it was something in a fog, I know,' she concluded vaguely.

'We told you all about it, mother,' explained Dolly; 'I'll tell you all over again. There was a fog and our train stopped, and we got out, and I left Frisk behind, and there he was in the carriage all alone, and then the gentleman ran back and got him out and brought him to me. And another train came up behind and stopped too.'

'Dolly tells it rather tamely,' said Mabel, her cheeks flushing again. 'At the time he ran back for the dog, we could all hear the other train rushing up in the fog, mamma, and nobody knew whether there might not be a frightful collision in another minute.'

'Then I think it was an extremely rash thing for him to do, my dear; and if I were his mother I should be very angry with him.'

'He was very good-looking, wasn't he, Mabel?' said Dolly, irrelevantly.

'Was he, Dolly? Well, yes, I suppose he was, rather,' said Mabel, with much outward indifference, and an inward and very vivid picture of Mark's face as he leaned by the stile, his fine eyes imploring her not to leave him.

'Well, perhaps he doesn't care about being thanked, or doesn't want to see us again,' said Dolly; 'if he did, he'd call, you know; you wrote the address on the paper.'

Mabel had already arrived at the same conclusion, and was secretly a little piqued and hurt by it; she had gone slightly out of her way to give him an opportunity of seeing her again if he wished, and he had not chosen to take advantage of it; it had not seriously disturbed her peace of mind, but her pride was wounded notwithstanding. At times she was ready to believe that there had been some mistake or miscarriage with her message, otherwise it was strange that the admiration which it had not been difficult to read in his eyes should have evaporated in this way.

'Why, here's papa—home already!' cried Dolly, as the door opened and a tall man entered. 'How do you do, papa? you've

rumpled my bow—you didn't think I *meant* it, did you? you can do it again if you like—I don't mind a bit; mother does.'

He had duly returned the affectionate hug with which Dolly had greeted him, but now he put her aside with a rather pre-occupied air, and went to his wife's chair, kissing the smooth forehead she presented, still absently.

'You are early, Gerald,' she said; 'did the courts rise sooner to-day?'

'No,' he said conscientiously, 'it's the Vacation now—I left chambers as soon as I could get away,' and he was folding and unfolding the evening paper he had brought in with him, as he stood silent before the fire.

Mr. Langton was not much over fifty, and a handsome man still, with full clear eyes, a well-cut chin and mouth, iron-grey whiskers, and a florid complexion which years spent in stifling law-courts and dust and black laden chambers had not done much to tone down. Young barristers' and solicitors' clerks were apt to consider him rather a formidable personage in Lincoln's Inn; and he was certainly imposing as he rustled along New Square or Chancery Lane, his brows knitted, a look of solemn importance about his tightly-closed lips, and his silk gown curving out behind him like a great black sail. He had little imperious ways in court, too, of beckoning a client to come to him from the well, or of waving back a timid junior who had plucked his gown to draw his attention to some suggestion with a brusque 'Not now—I can't hear that now!' which suggested immeasurable gulfs between himself and them. But at home he unbent, a little consciously, perhaps, but he did unbend—being proud and fond of his children, who at least stood in no fear of him. Long years of successful practice had had a certain narrowing effect upon him; the things of his profession were always foremost in his mind now, and when he travelled away from them he was duller than he once promised to be—his humour had slowly dwindled down until he had just sufficient for ordinary professional purposes, and none at all for private consumption.

In his favour it may be added that he was genial to all whom he did not consider his inferiors, a good though not a demonstrative husband; that, as a lawyer, he was learned without the least pedantry; and that he was a Bencher of his Inn, where he frequently dined, and a Member of Parliament, where he never spoke, even on legal matters.

Mabel's quick eyes were the first to notice a shade on his face and a constraint in his manner; she went to his side and said in an undertone, 'You are not feeling ill, papa, are you, or has anything worried you to-day?'

'I am quite well. I have news to tell you presently,' he said in the same tone.

'Come and see my Christmas cards before I do them up,' said Dolly from a side-table; 'I'm going to send one to each of my friends, except Clara Haycraft, or if I *do* send her one,' she added thoughtfully, 'it will be only a penny one, and I shall write her name on the back so that she can't use it again. Clara has not behaved at all well to me lately. If I sent one to Vincent now, papa, would he get it in time?'

'No—no,' said her father, a little sharply; 'and look here, Pussy, run away now and see how Colin is getting on.'

'And come back and tell you?' inquired Dolly; 'very well, papa.'

'Don't come back till I send for you,' he said. 'Mind that now, Dolly, stay in the schoolroom.'

He shut the door carefully after her, and then, turning to his wife and daughter, he said, 'You haven't either of you seen the papers to-day, I suppose?'

'No,' said Mrs. Langton; 'you know I never read daily papers. Gerald,' she cried suddenly, with a light coming into her eyes, 'is another judge dead?' Visions of her husband on the Bench, a town-house in a more central part of London, an increase of social consideration for herself and daughters, began to float into her brain.

'It's not that—if there was, I'm not likely to be offered a judgeship just yet; it's not good news, Belle, I'm afraid it's very bad,' he said warningly, 'very bad indeed.'

'Oh, papa,' cried Mabel, 'please don't break it to us—tell it at once, whatever it is!'

'You must let me choose my own course, my dear; I am coming to the point at once. The "Globe" has a telegram from Lloyd's agent reporting the total loss of the "Mangalore."'

'Vincent's ship!' said Mabel. 'Is—is he saved?'

'We cannot be certain of anything just yet—and—and these disasters are generally exaggerated in the first accounts, but I'm afraid there is very grave reason to fear that the poor boy went down with her—not many passengers were on board at the time,

and only four or five of them were saved, and they are women. We can hope for the best still, but I cannot after reading the particulars feel any confidence myself. I made inquiries at the owner's offices this afternoon, but they could tell me very little just yet, though they will have fuller information by to-morrow—but from what they did say I cannot feel very hopeful.'

Mabel hid her face, trying to realise that the man who had sat opposite to her there scarcely a month ago, with the strange, almost prophetic, sadness in his eyes, was lying somewhere still and white, fathoms deep under the sea—she was too stunned for tears just yet.

'Gerald,' said Mrs. Langton, 'Vincent is drowned—I'm sure of it. I feel this will be a terrible shock to me by-and-by; I don't know when I shall get over it—poor, poor dear fellow! To think that the last time I saw him was that evening we dined at the Gordons—you remember, Gerald, a dull dinner—and he saw me into the carriage, and stood there on the pavement saying good-bye!' Mrs. Langton seemed to consider that these circumstances had a deep pathos of their own; she pressed her eyes daintily with her handkerchief before she could go on. 'Why didn't he sail by one of the safe lines?' she murmured; 'the P. and O. never lost a single life; he might have gone in one of them and been alive now!'

'My dear Belle,' said her husband, 'we can't foresee these things, it—it *was* to be, I suppose.'

'Is nothing more known?' said Mabel, with a strong effort to control her voice.

'Here is the account—stay, I can give you the effect of it. It was in the Indian Ocean, not long after leaving Bombay, somewhere off the Malabar coast; and the ship seems to have grazed a sunken reef, which ripped a fearful hole in her side, without stopping her course. They were not near enough to the land to hope to reverse the engines and back her on shore at full speed. She began to settle down fast by the head, and their only chance was in the boats, which unfortunately had nearly all become jammed in the davits. Every one appears to have behaved admirably. They managed at last to launch one of the boats, and to put the women into it; and they were trying to get out the others, when the vessel went down suddenly, not a quarter of an hour after striking the reef.'

'Vincent could swim, papa,' said Mabel, with gleaming eyes.

'He was not a first-rate swimmer,' said Mr. Langton, 'I remember that, and even a first-rate swimmer would have found it hard work to reach the shore, if he had not been drawn down with the ship, as seems to have been the fate of most of the poor fellows. Still of course there is always hope.'

'And he is dead! Vincent dead! It seems so hard, so very, very sad,' said Mabel, and began to cry softly.

'Cry, darling,' said Mrs. Langton, 'it will do you good. I'm



sure I wish *I* could cry like that, it would be such a relief. But you know papa says we may hope yet; we won't give up all hope till we're obliged to; we must be brave. You really don't care about coming in to dinner? You won't have a little something sent up to your room? Well, I feel as if food would choke me myself, but I must go in to keep papa company. Will you tell this sad news to Dolly and Colin, and ask Fraulein to keep them with her till bedtime? I can't bear to see them just yet.'

Mr. Langton's decorous concern did not interfere with his

appetite, and Mrs. Langton seemed rather relieved at being able to postpone her grief for the present, and so Mabel was left to break the disaster, and the fate there was too much reason for fear for Vincent, to her younger brother and sister—a painful task, for Holroyd had been very dear to all three of them. Fraulein Mozer, too, wept with a more than sentimental sorrow for the young man she had tried to help, who would need her assistance never again.

The tidings had reached Mark early that same afternoon. He was walking home through the City from some 'holiday-classes' he had been superintending at St. Peter's, when the heading 'Loss of a passenger steamer with —— lives' on the contents-sheets of the evening papers caught his eye, and led him, when established with a 'Globe' in one of the Underground Railway carriages, to turn with a languid interest to the details. He started when he saw the name of the vessel, and all his indifference left him as he hurriedly read the various accounts of the disaster, and looked in vain for Vincent's name amongst the survivors.

The next day he, too, went up to the owners' offices to make inquiries, and by that time full information had come in, which left it impossible that any but those who had come ashore in the long-boat could have escaped from the ship. They had remained near the scene of the wreck for some time, but without picking up more than one or two of the crew; the rest must all have been sucked down with the ship, which sank with terrible suddenness at the last.

Vincent was certainly not amongst those in the boat, while, as appeared from the agent's list, he was evidently on board when the ship left Bombay. It was possible to hope no longer after that, and Mark left the offices with the knowledge that Holroyd and he had indeed taken their last walk together; that he would see his face and take his hand no more.

It came to him with a shock, the unavoidable shock which a man feels when he has suddenly to associate the idea of death with one with whom he has had any intimacy. He told himself he was sorry, and for a moment Vincent's fate seemed somehow to throw a sort of halo round his memory, but very soon the sorrow faded, until at last it became little more than an uneasy consciousness that he ought to be miserable and was not.

Genuine grief will no more come at command than genuine joy, and so Mark found, not without some self-reproach; he even

began to read 'In Memoriam' again with the idea of making that the keynote for his emotions, but the passionate yearning of that lament was pitched too high for him, and he never finished it. He recognised that he could not think of his lost friend in the way their long intimacy seemed to demand, and solved the difficulty by not thinking of him at all, compounding for his debt of inward mourning by wearing a black tie, which, as he was fond of a touch of colour in his costume, and as the emblem in question was not strictly required of him, he looked upon as, so to speak, a fairly respectable dividend.

Caffyn heard the news with a certain satisfaction. A formidable rival had been swept out of his path, and he could speak of him now without any temptation to depreciate his merits, so much so that when he took an opportunity one day of referring to his loss, he did it so delicately that Mabel was touched, and liked him better for this indication of feeling than she had ever been able to do before.

Her own sorrow was genuine enough, requiring no artificial stimulus and no outward tokens to keep it alive, and if Vincent could have been assured of this it would have reconciled him to all else. No callousness nor forgetfulness on the part of others could have had power to wound him so long as he should live on in the memory of the girl he had loved.

But it is better far for those who are gone that they should be impervious alike to our indifference and our grief, for the truest grief will be insensibly deadened by time, and could not long console the least exacting for the ever-widening oblivion.

CHAPTER IX.

A TURNING-POINT.



ARK came down to the little back parlour at Malakoff Terrace one dull January morning to find the family already assembled there, with the exception of Mrs. Ashburn, who was breakfasting in bed—an unusual indulgence for her.

‘Mark,’ said Trixie, as she leaned back in her chair, and put up her face for his morn-

ing greeting, ‘there’s a letter for you on your plate.’

It was not difficult to observe a suppressed excitement amongst all the younger members of his family concerning this letter; they had finished their breakfast and fallen into some curious speculations as to Mark’s correspondent before he came in. Now three pairs of eyes were watching him as he strolled up to his seat; Mr. Ashburn alone seemed unconscious or indifferent.

Of late Mark had not had very many letters, and this particular one bore the name of ‘Chilton & Fladgate’ on the flap of the envelope. The Ashburns were not a literary family, but they knew this as the name of a well-known firm of publishers, and it had roused their curiosity.

Mark read the name too. For a moment it gave him a throb of excitement, the idea coming to him that, somehow, the letter concerned his own unfortunate manuscripts. It was true that he had never had any communication with this particular firm, but these wild vague impressions are often independent of actual fact; he took it up and half began to open it.

Then he remembered what it probably was, and, partly with the object of preserving Vincent's secret still as far as possible, but chiefly, it must be owned, from a malicious pleasure he took in disappointing the expectation he saw around him, put the letter still unopened in his pocket.

'Why don't you open it?' asked Trixie impatiently, who was cherishing the hope that some magnificent literary success had come at last to her favourite brother.

'Manners,' explained Mark, laconically.

'Nonsense,' said Trixie, 'you don't treat us with such ceremony as all that.'

'Not lately,' said Mark; 'that's how it is—it's bad for a family to get lax in these little matters of mutual courtesy. I'm going to see if I can't raise your tone—this is the beginning.'

'I'm sure we're very much obliged to you,' from Martha; 'I'm quite satisfied with my own tone, it's quite high enough for me, thank you.'

'Yes, I forgot,' said Mark, 'I've heard it very high indeed sometimes. I wronged you, Martha. Still, you know, we might (all except *you*, Martha) be more polite to one another without causing ourselves any internal injury, mightn't we?'

'Well, Mark,' said Trixie, 'all you have to do is to ask our leave to open the letter, if you're really so particular.'

'Is that in the Etiquette Book?' inquired Mark.

'Don't be ridiculous—why *don't* you ask our leave?'

'I suppose because I want to eat my breakfast—nothing is so prejudicial, my love, to the furtherance of the digestive process as the habit of reading at meals, any medical man will tell you that.'

'Perhaps,' suggested Martha, 'Mark has excellent reasons for preferring to read his letter alone?'

'Do you know, Martha,' said Mark, 'I really think there's something in that.'

'So do I,' said Martha, 'more than you would care for us to know, evidently; but don't be afraid, Mark, whether it's a bill, or a love-letter, or another publisher's rejection; we don't want to know your secrets—do we, Cuthbert?'

'Very amiable of you to say so,' said Mark. 'Then I shan't annoy you if I keep my letter to myself, shall I? Because I rather thought of doing it.'

'Eh? doing what? What is Mark saying about a letter?' broke in Mr. Ashburn. He had a way of striking suddenly like this into conversations.

'Somebody has written me a letter, father,' said Mark; 'I was telling Martha I thought I should read it—presently.'

But even when he was alone he felt in no hurry to possess himself of the contents. 'I expect it's the usual thing,' he thought. 'Poor Vincent is out of all that now. Let's see how they let him down!' and he read:—

'DEAR SIR,—We have read the romance entitled "Glamour" which you have done us the honour to forward some time since. It is a work which appears to us to possess decided originality and merit, and which may be received with marked favour by the public, while it can hardly fail in any case to obtain a reception which will probably encourage its author to further efforts. Of course, there is a certain risk attending its reception which renders it impossible for us to offer such terms for a first book as may be legitimately demanded hereafter for a second production by the same pen. We will give you . . .' (and here followed the terms, which struck Mark as fairly liberal for a first book by an unknown author). 'Should you accept our offer, will you do us the favour to call upon us here at your earliest convenience, when all preliminary matters can be discussed.

'We are, &c.,

'CHILTON & FLADGATE.'

Mark ran hurriedly through this letter with a feeling, first of incredulous wonder, then of angry protest against the bull-headed manner in which Fortune had dealt out this favour.

Vincent had been saved the dreary delays, the disappointments and discouragements, which are the lot of most first books; he had won a hearing at once—and where was the use of it? no praise or fame among men could reach him now.

If he had been alive, Mark thought bitterly; if a letter like this would have rescued him from all he detested, and thrown open to him the one career for which he had any ambition, he might have waited for it long and vainly enough. But he began by being indifferent, and, if Fortune had required any other inducement to shower her gifts on him, his death had supplied it.

He chafed over this as he went up to the City, for there was another holiday-class that day at St. Peter's; he thought of it at intervals during the morning, and always resentfully. What increased his irritation above everything was the fact that the publishers evidently regarded *him* as the author of the book, and he would have the distasteful task put upon him of enlightening them.

When the day's duties were over he found himself putting on his hat and coat in company with the Rev. Mr. Shelford, who was also in charge of one of the classes formed for the relief of parents and the performance of holiday work, and the two walked out together; Mark intending to call at once and explain his position to Messrs. Chilton & Fladgate.

'What are you going to do with yourself, Ashburn, now?' said Mr. Shelford in his abrupt way as they went along. 'Going to be a schoolmaster and live on the *crambe repetita* all your life, hey?'

'I don't know,' said Mark sullenly; 'very likely.'

'Take my advice (I'm old enough to offer it unasked); give yourself a chance while you can of a future which won't cramp and sour and wear you as this will. If you feel any interest in the boys——'

'Which I don't,' put in Mark.

'Exactly, which you don't—but if you did—I remember *I* did once, in some of 'em, and helped 'em on, and spoke to the headmaster about 'em, and so on. Well, they'll pass out of your class and look another way when they meet you afterwards. As for the dullards, they'll be always with you, like the poor, down at the bottom like a sediment, sir, and much too heavy to stir up! I can't manage 'em now, and my temper gets the better of me, God forgive me for it, and I say things I'm sorry for and that don't do me or them any good, and they laugh at me. But I've got my parish to look after; it's not a large one, but it acts as an antidote. You're not even in orders, so there's no help for you *that* way; and the day will come when the strain gets too much for you, and you'll throw the whole thing up in disgust, and find yourself forced to go through the same thing somewhere else or begin the world in some other capacity. Choose some line in which hard work and endurance for years will bring you in a more substantial reward than that.'

'Well,' said Mark, for whom this gloomy view of his prospects

reflected his own forebodings, 'I am reading for the Bar. I went up for my call-examination the other day.'

'Ah, is that so? I'm glad to hear of it; a fine profession, sir; constant variety and excitement—for the pleader, that is to say' (Mr. Shelford shared the lay impression that pleading was a form of passionate appeal to judge and jurymen), 'and of course you would plead in court. The law has some handsome



prizes in its disposal, too. But you should have an attorney or two to push you on, they say. Perhaps you can count on that?'

'I wish I could,' said Mark, 'but the fact is my ambition doesn't lie in a legal direction at all. I don't care very much about the Bar.'

'Do you care very much about anything? Does your ambition lie anywhere?'

‘Not now; it did once—literature, you know; but that’s all over.’

‘I remember, to be sure. They rejected that Christmas piece of yours, didn’t they? Well, if you’ve no genuine talent for it, the sooner you find it out the better for you. If you feel you’ve something inside of you that must out in chapters and volumes, it generally comes, and all the discouragement in the world won’t keep it down. It’s like those stories of demoniacal possession in the “Anatomy”—you know your Burton, I daresay? Some of the possessed brought “globes of hair” and “such-like baggage” out of themselves, but others “stones with inscriptions.” If the demon gets too strong for you, try and produce a stone with a good readable inscription on it—not three globes of hair for the circulating libraries.’

‘We shall see,’ said Mark laughing. ‘I must leave you here. I have an appointment with Chilton & Fladgate just by.’

‘Ay, ay,’ said the old gentleman, wagging his head; ‘publishers, aren’t they? Don’t tell me your ambition’s dead if it’s taken you as far as that. But I won’t ask any more questions. I shall hope to be able to congratulate you shortly. I won’t keep you away from your publishers any longer.’

‘They are not my publishers yet,’ said Mark; ‘they have made me some proposals, but I have not accepted them at present.’

He knew what a false impression this would leave with his companion, bare statement of fact as it was, but he made it deliberately, feeling almost as much flattered by the unconscious increase of consideration in the other’s voice and manner as if there had been the slightest foundation for it.

They said good-bye, and the old clergyman went on and was swallowed up in the crowd, thinking as he went, ‘Publishing, eh? a good firm, too. I don’t think he could afford to do it at his own expense. Perhaps there’s more ballast in him after all than I gave him credit for. I can’t help liking the young fellow somehow, too. I should like to see him make a good start.’

Mark, having sent his name up by one of the clerks behind the imposing mahogany counters, was shown through various swinging glass doors into a waiting-room, where the magazines and books symmetrically arranged on the table gave a certain flavour of dentistry to the place.

Mark turned them over with a quite unreasonable nervous-

ness, but the fact was he shrank from what he considered the humiliation of explaining that he was a mere agent; it occurred to him for the first time, too, that Holroyd's death might possibly complicate matters, and he felt a vague anger against his dead friend for leaving him in such a position.

The clerk returned with the message that Mr. Fladgate would be happy to see Mark at once, and so he followed upstairs and along passages with glimpses through open doors of rooms full of clerks and desks, until they came to a certain room into which Mark was shown—a small room with a considerable litter of large wicker trays filled with proofs, packets and rolls of manuscripts of all sizes, and piles of books and periodicals, in the midst of which Mr. Fladgate was sitting with his back to the light, which was admitted through windows of ground-glass.

He rose and came forward to meet Mark, and Mark saw a little reddish-haired and whiskered man, with quick eyes, and a curious perpendicular fold in the forehead above a short, blunt nose, a mobile mouth, and a pleasantly impulsive manner.

'How do you do, Mr. Beauchamp?' he said heartily, using the *nom de plume* with an air of implied compliment; 'and so you've made up your mind to entrust yourself to us, have you? That's right. I don't think you'll find any reason to regret it, I don't indeed.'

Mark said he was sure of that.

'Well, now, as to the book,' continued Mr. Fladgate; 'I've had the pleasure of looking through it myself, as well as Mr. Blackshaw, our reader, and I must tell you that I agree with him in considering that you have written a very remarkable book. As we told you, you know, it may or may not prove a pecuniary success, but, however that may be, my opinion of it will remain the same; it ought, in my judgment, to ensure you a certain standing at once—at once.'

Mark heard this with a pang of jealousy. Long before, he had dreamed of just such an interview, in which he should be addressed in some such manner—his dream was being fulfilled now with relentless mockery!

'But there is a risk,' said Mr. Fladgate, 'a decided risk, which brings me to the subject of terms. Are you satisfied with the offer we made to you? You see that a first book——'

'Excuse me for one moment,' said Mark desperately, 'I'm afraid you imagine that—that I wrote the book?'

'That certainly was my impression,' said Mr. Fladgate, with a humorous light in his eye; 'the only address on the manuscript was yours, and I came to the not unnatural conclusion that Mr. Ashburn and Mr. Beauchamp were one and the same. Am I to understand that is *not* the case?'

'The book,' said Mark—what it cost him to say this!—'the book was written by a friend of mine, who went abroad some time ago.'

'Indeed? Well, we should prefer to treat with him in person, of course, if possible.'

'It isn't possible,' said Mark, 'my friend was lost at sea, but he asked me to represent him in this matter, and I believe I know his wishes.'

'I've no doubt of it; but you see, Mr.—Mr. Ashburn, this must be considered a little. I suppose you have some authority from him in writing, to satisfy us (merely as a matter of business) that we are dealing with the right person?'

'I have not indeed,' said Mark, 'my friend was very anxious to retain his incognito.'

'He must have been—very much so,' said Mr. Fladgate, coughing; 'well, perhaps you can bring me some writing of his to that effect? You may have it among your papers, eh?'

'No,' said Mark, 'my friend did not think it necessary to give me one—he was anxious to——'

'Oh, quite so—then you can procure me a line or two perhaps?'

'I told you that my friend was dead,' said Mark a little impatiently.

'Ah, so you did, to be sure, I forgot. I thought—but no matter. Well, Mr. Ashburn, if you can't say anything more than this—anything, you understand, which puts you in a position to treat with us, I'm afraid—I'm *afraid* I must ask time to think over this. If your friend is really dead, I suppose your authority is determined. Perhaps, however, his—ahem—anxiety to preserve his incognito has led him to allow this rumour of his death to be circulated?'

'I don't think that is likely,' said Mark, wondering at an undercurrent of meaning in the publisher's tone, a meaning which had nothing sinister in it, and yet seemed urging him to contradict himself for some reason.

'That is your last word, then?'

'said Mr. Fladgate, and there

was a sharp inflection as of disappointment and irritation in his voice, and the fold in his forehead deepened.

‘It must be,’ said Mark, rising; ‘I have kept you too long already.’

‘If you really *must* go,’ said Mr. Fladgate, not using the words in their conventional sense of polite dismissal. ‘But, Mr. Ashburn, are you quite sure that this interview might not be saved from coming to nothing as it seems about to do? Might not a word or two from you set things right again? I don’t wish to force you to tell me anything you would rather keep concealed—but really, this story you tell about a Mr. Vincent Beauchamp who is dead only ties our hands, you understand—ties our hands!’

‘If so,’ said Mark, uncomfortably, ‘I can only say I am very sorry for it—I don’t see how I can help it.’

He was beginning to feel that this business of Holroyd’s had given him quite trouble enough.

‘Now, Mr. Ashburn, as I said before, I should be the last man to press you—but really, you know, *really*—this is a trifle absurd! I think you might be a little more frank with me, I do indeed. There is no reason why you should not trust me!’

Was this man tempting him? thought Mark. Could he be so anxious to bring out this book that he was actually trying to induce him to fabricate some story which would get over the difficulties that had arisen?

As a mere matter of fact, it may be almost unnecessary to mention that no such idea had occurred to worthy Mr. Fladgate, who, though he certainly was anxious to secure the book, if he could, by any legitimate means, was anything but a publishing Mephistopheles. He had an object, however, in making this last appeal for confidence, as will appear immediately; but, innocent as it was, Mark’s imagination conjured up a bland demon tempting him to some act of unspeakable perfidy; he trembled—but not with horror. ‘What do you mean?’ he stammered.

Mr. Fladgate gave a glance of keen amusement at the pale troubled face of the young man before him. ‘What do I mean?’ he repeated. ‘Come, I’ve known sensitive women try to conceal their identity, and even their sex, from their own publishers; I’ve known men even persuade themselves they didn’t care for notoriety—but such a determined instance of what I must take leave to call the literary ostrich I don’t think I ever *did* meet before!’

I never met a writer so desperately anxious to remain unknown that he would rather take his manuscript back than risk his secret with his own publisher. But don't you see that you have raised (I don't use the term in the least offensively) the mask, so to speak—you should have sent somebody else here to-day if you wished to keep me in the dark. I've not been in business all these years, Mr. Ashburn, without gaining a little experience. I think, I *do* think, I am able to know an author when I see him—we are all liable to error, but I am very much mistaken if this Mr. Vincent Beauchamp (who was so unfortunately lost at sea) is not to be recovered alive by a little judicious dredging. Do think if you can't produce him; come, he's not in very deep water—bring him up, Mr. Ashburn, bring him up!

'You make this very difficult for me,' said Mark, in a low voice; he knew now how greatly he had misjudged the man, who had spoken with such an innocent, amiable pride in his own surprising discernment; he also felt how easy and how safe it would be to take advantage of this misunderstanding, and what a new future it might open to him—but he was struggling still against the temptation so unconsciously held out to him.

'I might retort that, I think. Now be reasonable, Mr. Ashburn. I assure you the writer, whoever he may be, has no cause to be ashamed of the book—the time will come when he will probably be willing enough to own it. Still, if he wishes to keep his real name secret, I tell him, through you, that he may surely be content to trust that to us. We have kept such secrets before—not very long, to be sure, as a general rule; but then that was because the authors usually relieved us from the trouble—the veil was never lifted by us.'

'I think you said,' began Mark, as if thinking aloud, 'that other works by—by the same author would be sure of acceptance?'

'I should be very glad to have an opportunity, in time, of producing another book by Mr. Vincent Beauchamp—but Mr. Beauchamp, as you explained, is unhappily no more. Perhaps these are earlier manuscripts of his?'

Mark had been seized with the desire of making one more attempt, in spite of his promise to his uncle, to launch those unhappy paper ships of his—'Sweet Bells Jangled' and 'One Fair Daughter.' For an instant it occurred to him that he might answer this last question in the affirmative; he had little doubt

that if he did his books would meet with a very different reception from that of Messrs. Leadbitter and Gandy; still, that would only benefit Holroyd—not himself, and then he recollected, only just in time, that the difference in handwriting (which was very considerable) would betray him. He looked confused and said nothing.

Mr. Fladgate's patience began to tire. 'We don't seem to be making any way, do we?' he said, with rather affected pleasantry. 'I'm afraid I must ask you to come to a decision on this without any more delay. Here is the manuscript you sent us. If the real author is dead, we are compelled to return it with much regret. If you can tell me anything which does away with the difficulty, this is the time to tell it. Of course you will do exactly as you please, but after what you have chosen to tell us we can hardly see our way, as I said, to treat with you without some further explanation. Come, Mr. Ashburn, am I to have it or not?'

'Give me a little time,' said Mark faintly, and the publisher, as he had expected, read the signs of wavering in his face, though it was not of the nature he believed it to be.

Mark sat down again and rested his chin on his hand, with his face turned away from the other's eyes. A conflict was going on within him such as he had never been called upon to fight before, and he had only a very few minutes allowed him to fight it

Perhaps in these crises a man does not always arrange pros and cons to contend for him in the severely logical manner with which I have occasionally found him doing it in print. The forces on the enemy's side can generally be induced to desert. All the advantages which would follow if he once allowed himself to humour the publisher's mistake were very prominently before Mark's mind—the dangers and difficulties kept in the background. He was incapable of considering the matter coolly; he felt an overmastering impulse upon him, and he had never trained himself to resist his impulses for very long. There was very little of logical balancing going on in his brain; it began to seem terribly, fatally easy to carry out this imposition. The fraud itself grew less ugly and more harmless every instant.

He saw his own books, so long kept out in the cold by ignorant prejudice, accepted on the strength of Holroyd's 'Glamour,' and,

once fairly before the public, taking the foremost rank in triumph and rapidly eclipsing their forerunner. He would be appreciated at last, delivered from the life he hated, able to lead the existence he longed for. All he wanted was a hearing; there seemed no other way to obtain it; he had no time to lose. How could it injure Holroyd? He had not cared for fame in life; would he miss it after his death? The publishers might be mistaken; the book might be unnoticed altogether; *he* might prove to be the injured person.

But, as Mr. Fladgate seemed convinced of its merit, as he would evidently take anything alleged to come from the same source without a very severe scrutiny, there was nothing for it but to risk this contingency.

Mark was convinced that publishers were influenced entirely by unreasoning prejudices; he thoroughly believed that his works would carry all before them if any firm could once overcome their repugnance to his powerful originality, and here was one firm at least prepared to lay that aside at a word from him. Why should he let it go unsaid?

The money transactions caused him the most hesitation. If he took money for another man's work, there was a name, and a very ugly name, for that. But he would *not* keep it. As soon as he learnt the names of Holroyd's legal representatives, whoever they might be, he would pay the money over to them without mentioning the exact manner in which it had become due. In time, when he had achieved a reputation for himself, he could give back the name he had borrowed for a time—at least he told himself he could do so.

He stood in no danger of detection, or, if he did, it was very slight. Vincent was not the man to confide in more than one person; he had owned as much. He had been reticent enough to conceal his real surname from his publishers, and now he could never reveal the truth.

All this rushed through his mind in a hurried confused form; all his little vanities and harmless affectations and encouragements of false impressions had made him the less capable of resisting now.

'Well?' said Mr. Fladgate at last.

Mark's heart beat fast. He turned round and faced the publisher. 'I suppose I had better trust you,' he said awkwardly

and with a sort of shamefaced constraint that was admirably in keeping with his confession, though not artificial.

‘And you wrote this book, “Glamour,” then?’

‘If you must have it—yes,’ said Mark desperately.

The words were spoken now, and for good or ill he must abide by them henceforth to the end.

(To be continued.)

THE TRYST.

FAREWELL, beloved! we will not weep; 'tis but a little while :
 When the snow is gone I shall return with spring's returning smile.
 Where sunlight falls with shade and rain from hurrying clouds that sweep
 With nought betwixt me and the sky, there lay me down to sleep.
 The place is known to you and me, nor needs it more should know,
 So raise no stone at head or feet, but let the wild flowers blow.

And then some little part of me will creep up through the mould,
 The brightness of my hair will gleam from kingcups' hearts of gold,
 The blue that's faded from my eyes will meet your eyes again
 When little speedwells on my grave smile softly after rain.
 When the warm blood is frozen at my heart and on my lips,
 Kneel down above the dust and kiss the daisy's coral tips.

And when from out the sunset a little breeze comes by,
 And a flush of deeper colour steals across the upper sky ;
 When the beech-leaves touch and tremble, whisper soft, and then are still,
 And a bird hid in the thicket sings out sudden, sweet, and shrill ;
 When faint voices of the evening murmur peace across the land,
 And silver mists creep up and fold the woods on either hand,

Or in the early morning when the world is yet asleep,
 And the dew lies white in all the shade where the grass is green and deep,
 You'll find me there, love, waiting you ; and you may smile and say,
 ' I met my darling all alone at our old tryst to-day ;
 I look'd into her eyes so blue, I stroked her hair of gold,
 We kiss'd each other on the lips as in the days of old.'

It was her voice so low, so clear, that in mine ears did sound,
 ' Beloved, there's no such thing as death ; 'tis life that I have found ;
 The life that thrills in leaf and flower and fills the woods with song,
 That throbs in all the gleaming stars when winter nights are long—
 The life that passes with the winds from utmost shore to shore,
 Embracing all the mighty world, is mine for evermore.'

IN SUSPENSE.

Gente di molto valore
Conobbi, che in quel limbo eran sospesi.

I DIED in the latter part of the past year, 1882.

What I am about to relate has so little to do with myself that I don't think it needful to enter into details concerning that event. It is astonishing how much less largely it bulks in importance when one regards it in the past instead of the future tense. This, I have remarked, is a usual result of human experience. We continue to be greatly interested in those who have gone through the same vicissitudes, but familiarity lessens our respect for every event that has happened to ourselves. To a man who has committed a murder, for instance, the fact that he has done it takes away a great deal of its strangeness, so that he is disposed to wonder why other people should make such a fuss about a thing which, after all, is not so unusual. Death comes under the same law; there is nothing in it to be so excited about, we think, when it is over; after all it is only one in a multiplicity of events.

I came to the place I am about to describe, after having gone through various preliminaries unnecessary to dwell upon. It was, I believe, the fact that I belonged to the literary profession that determined my going in that special direction. I had never even imagined myself to be a great writer, but I was what people called painstaking and industrious, producing a good deal of conscientious work. As my works were chiefly in the daily press it does not surprise me that people here know little about them; indeed, even in the other world my reputation was chiefly at home, I might even say a local reputation, and when I travelled out of my natural surroundings I had always found that very little was known about me. The announcement of my name and the various other particulars on which I was questioned produced no sensation at all upon the personage who received me in the district of the eternal world to which I found myself allotted. I do not know why at the moment of appearing before him a recollection should have passed through my mind, by one of those freaks of fancy which defy investigation, of Dante's description of Minos in the 'Inferno,' and the somewhat ridiculous (it must be allowed)

manner in which that potentate indicated their future place to the souls whom he judged.¹ For the personage before whom I stood in no way resembled Minos. He smiled (though I said nothing) at the suggestion; for it must be allowed as detracting in some degree from the comfort of these regions that the greater number of the people you meet understand you without the necessity of any vocal medium of communication. Till one has got over one's earthly habits this is sometimes awkward enough. The official before whom I stood smiled. 'No,' he said, 'you perceive I have no tail to use in such a way; and as this is not penal, only reformatory ——' He smiled, and so did I. 'You will find abundant means of choosing the occupation that suits you,' he said. 'But I think you will find it pleasant to step into the Hall first and look about. You will see a good many persons of note, and they will all be glad to see you; for a person lately arrived, and bringing news, is always welcome.'

'Do you mean then that news is esteemed here?'

'Oh, as much as in any club smoking-room in the other world. The newspapers give only the exoteric view; for the other part we are obliged, I need scarcely say, to trust to the new-comers; they will all be eager to question you. You were connected with the press? Then you must know many things,' he added with a smile, 'that have never met the public eye.'

I was a little disturbed by this. 'I know very little,' I said, 'except in the nature of hearsay, attributing motives, and that sort of thing; the news themselves are all in print. The esoteric mostly consists in giving a bad interpretation to what is done, or suggesting an evil intention.'

'We all know that: and, knowing it, our curiosity is strong to ascertain the private tide of opinion. You will find much commotion among certain distinguished members of our community in respect to recent works of which they have been the subjects.'

'Ah, that, indeed!' I cried. How thoroughly I could understand this may be divined from the fact, that I had myself left materials for a biography which would throw much light upon the profession of literature and especially journalism, and about which I felt rather anxious that my representatives should make a proper use of them. I went in accordingly to the great Hall, very willing to communicate such information as I possessed.

¹ Cignesi colla coda tante volte
Quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa.

There were few people in it. It was a very handsome spacious hall, with great tables covered with every kind of periodical and book. The walls were ornamented with frescoes, some of them very fine and spirited, though not of historical subjects, or any, indeed, that seemed to me very suitable for a great reading-room, such as this seemed to be. They were chiefly rural scenes, as hay-making, harvest-making, and such like, with some others from active life of a less rustic character; and I observed that the people about bore mostly the appearance of persons engaged in practical occupations, and whose time of repose was limited in duration. We addressed each other with the usual friendly salutations, and some inquiries were made as to the time of my arrival, the circumstances of my journey, and other such particulars, all of which I had pleasure in answering, as they seemed to have pleasure in hearing, there being, so far as my experience goes, an unusual amount of good feeling and kindness, and a ready interest in the experiences of the persons addressed which is often wanting in the earlier world. Many questions were put to me also, as I had been warned would be the case, about the state of affairs in that world, and demands made as to what were the real opinions of—my interlocutors paid me the compliment of saying—myself first: and then of persons likely to know, and who were able to judge on various matters of public importance. When I referred to the printed disquisitions on those subjects with which I perceived they were largely supplied, these were politely waved aside.

‘Politics,’ said one of my new friends, ‘have very little interest for us. What we wish to know is the opinion of people who are able to form one.’

‘Majorities do not affect us,’ another said, ‘or who is in office or who out;’ at which there was a little laughter—as I judged, because he was a man to whom this had mattered much—‘for all good men are more or less of the same opinion,’ he added. This surprised me a little, as I was accustomed to believe that men equally good might hold very different opinions on the most important questions. But my surprise, as it arose in my mind, was divined, and I had soon a reply. The speaker had by times that look of perfect self-absorption and incapacity to receive external impressions which is the mask of statesmen. ‘Perhaps,’ he said, ‘one must be here out of their range in order to be fully aware what is the vital point of all questions, and what is merely

secondary and accidental. There are men who even in the first world make the discovery, and that in different ways; some by reason of a natural fineness of faculty: but this it is difficult to keep in absolute proportion, and clear from prejudice and reasoning; and age has the effect, in some minds, of detaching them from the vulgar instincts which warp the sight; but in most cases they are compelled to disguise this enlightenment. It is one of the first advantages here that we are no longer obliged to disguise it, and, free from the warp of prejudice, dare fix our attention upon what is the heart of the matter. Consequently opinions biassed by political leanings or by interest, or by any sophistication of thought, are without value in our eyes. At the same time,' he added, 'many, in whom this warp of politics or interest exists, have yet in their hearts a just and entirely satisfactory estimate of the position, if their prepossessions would permit them to bring it out.'

This led to a great deal of conversation, which was evidently very agreeable to my new friends, and in which they conveyed to my mind a great deal of instruction and more new views than it was in my power to assimilate on the moment. This was put a stop to, however, by some one having the air of an official of the place, who came in with a look of great amusement on his face, and made some slight remark or other, which scarcely caught my attention, but which caused some of my friends to jump up very hurriedly, with looks of embarrassment and even alarm, and to take up tools and implements of various kinds which had been put down on the floor or the seats, and hasten away. The tools perplexed me greatly, for the persons to whom I had been speaking were all evidently people of the highest education and most philosophical views. The individual whom I have described as looking like an official laughed as he saw my wondering looks.

'They are always at it,' he said, 'instructing the world as in the preliminary stage. Habit, you know, it is said, is second nature; but they have the grace to be ashamed of themselves when they find it out. It was not necessary for me, you observed, to say a word.'

'It is a pity,' I said, 'that people of cultivated understanding should be set to the tasks of common workmen. Don't you think it is a great waste of material? They must be fit for something better than that.'

Upon this the official personage laughed more than before. He found my remark so comical, indeed, that he became like

Milton's image 'holding both his sides.' 'You are the best of all,' he said, 'ho, ho! You know all about waste of material. It is a pity that the Master of all did not first take your advice.'

Upon this I felt, though I could scarcely tell why, such a stinging sense of shame as I am not aware of ever having felt before. My folly and audacity came before me, not so much as guilty, but as ridiculous, which was worse; and the laugh of the spectator, who seemed to see through and through me, penetrated me with a sort of arrow of remorseless amusement. There was not, however, anything ill-natured in his laugh, though perhaps such enjoyment of another's weakness was not altogether amiable. At least, this was the aspect in which, being the sufferer, it appeared to me.

This was put an end to by the entrance of several other people, all fresh from work of various kinds, and all full of interest in the new arrival, and eager to learn what I had to say. It is true that many of them, like those I had first met, were so anxious to impress upon me their own view of human affairs and tendencies, that little time was left to me to say anything; but others were more open to information, which on my side I found myself very willing to give, rather liking, if I must tell the truth, the importance of my position as the sole exponent of what men were about. It is needless to put down here all the questions upon which my opinions were requested; indeed these questions were so changed by the way in which they were stated, the light in that region falling upon them in a different way from that to which I had been accustomed, that it took some time before, in most cases, I fully understood what it was about which my new friends were asking. They were all fully acquainted with what was said on these subjects publicly upon earth, but, feeling the limitation involved in intercourse with other minds carried on by reading alone, were all the more anxious to make out by personal intercourse the discrepancies thus presented to them. They took a wider and more philosophical view than that to which I had been accustomed; and though there were variations of sentiment, and all were not equally enlightened, there was a far more clearly defined sequence of events in life as they looked at it, than I had ever before been able to see.

There were also many who spoke to me of matters personal to themselves; of books and works of their own for example, which they had left uncompleted, and of which they had no clear

information. Among these latter, ideas existed so very different from anything we meet with in the old planet, that they were very bewildering, and almost incredible to me, some being as desirous of the non-success of their own previous efforts, as others were for their acceptance and triumph. One, I remember, laughed, and hoped, he said, that a certain work might have got check in its popularity. 'When I wrote that I knew nothing about the subject,' he said.

'That is a very common case,' said another. 'In that preliminary world so little is known. The people there thought you an authority. I remember doing so myself in that curious chapter of existence. It was you who pointed out to me afterwards the flaws in your own reasoning.'

'Not difficult that,' said the first. 'It was all one flaw. Education is so poor, and the systems of thought; though I hear,' he said with a laugh, 'that the same idea prevails in a higher stage, of our methods here.'

The other laughed too with a sort of incredulous air, and I asked, for my information, whether the systems of philosophy taught here were different from those known on earth, or if it was an adaptation of ancient methods, probably influenced by a larger knowledge, which they employed. My companions were still more amused by this question, and assured me that they taught nothing here, 'except ourselves, perhaps,' they said, and pointed out to me the hod which one of them shouldered, while the other had a mason's mallet in his hand. They were at work building a house, and very healthy and ruddy they looked, with a fine air of activity and energetic life. I confess that I could not but feel the regret which I had before expressed to see men of cultivated minds engaged in occupations so strangely unlike the high training and culture they had received: but was checked in this thought by a recollection of their own amused estimate of that culture, and evident superiority to it in their own conception, strangely inferior as their present occupations seemed to me to be. They laughed still more as they perceived this thought in my mind (another evidence of the inconvenience to a person, unaccustomed to it, of this kind of transparency), and told me I should never be able to conceive, till I tried, the pleasure of getting a wall straight and making a perfect angle. When I replied that I could not help thinking powers much less cultivated than theirs would have suited such a purpose, they answered in the most cheerful and

light-hearted manner that education was a long process, and that they were far from being done with it yet. 'Housebuilding is an excellent corrective to philosophy,' one of them said; and 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are thought of'—said the other. I did my best, seeing that my ideas were so uncomfortably open to them, to make no comment in my mind upon this at all.

Here, however, we were interrupted by the entrance of a shaggy figure, with which I had been very familiar in the preliminary life. He was a large frame of a man, but had never been filled out or extended by such bodily exercise as his race required; and though his cheek had never lost the rustic red nor his mind the uncompromising expressions of a peasant, he had stooped and shambled somewhat, so far as concerned the outer man, in his mortal days. He seemed to me to have added a cubit (if I knew how much that was) to his stature, and the development of his physical organs had cleared up the cloudy face full of laughter yet of storms, with its frequent flush of wrath and those bursts of vituperation which always ended in the deep rumble of a volcanic laugh. It had not become a peaceful face even now, but was subject to such atmospheric variations as come and go on the hills, swept by sudden lights and shadows. He carried a spade over his shoulders and brought in with him a whiff of that upturned earth which the great Bacon held to be so wholesome, and a waft of fresh air as from the broad and breezy fields. He cast a glance at me, but said nothing for the moment, his eyes giving out a gleam of amused criticism upon my companions, who, I easily understood, were of an order very unlike himself—and retired to a chair, into which he flung himself with a long breath of satisfaction, like a man who had earned a moment of repose and was pleased to have it. I saw that he gave us a glance from time to time as he turned over the piles of books and periodicals on the table, but he did not make any approach till my philosophers had gone to the building of their house; then he came towards me, holding out a large and cordial hand.

'So ye have found your way here?' he said. 'Ye are very welcome! there's many that will be pleased to see you, for the way is a trifle confused, and every one does not just hit it. Well! and would you say they were wearied of me and my concerns yet in your bit little earth, where we seem to have made grand sport for the Philistines,' he added with one of those outbursts of laughter

which were so characteristic of him. His eye had all its old keenness, and I was a little alarmed to have to say my say upon this subject to the hero himself upon whom so many strictures had been made. 'Ah!' he said with another laugh, 'I see your difficulty. Ye have had a good deal to do with the sport in your own person. Well, well, we can understand that; it was all in the way of your trade.'

'We had all something to do with it,' said I; 'and you must know that it was, in a great measure, your own fault.'

'That I know very well,' he said; 'and I am not taking it, as ye perceive, in any tragical kind of a way. That bit of a world sets all things wrong in a man's head. There is so little of it, and ye think everything of it—till the moment comes when ye are set free, and the temptation is to think nothing. Ay, ay, it was my own fault. There is a great bitterness,' he said, stretching himself out, and with a stress upon the vowels such as I well remembered in him, 'and confusion and bewildering darkness in the thought, that just when a man is fully equipped and has his ideas matured, it is all to be turned into nothing, and the good of him and the harm of him lost for ever.'

'I should have thought,' said I, 'that to lose the harm of him would be always an advantage.'

'Ay, ye would think that, would ye? But I have a great opinion of the mental faculties. There is none of them that can be spared.' Here he began to laugh again. 'Not even,' he said, 'what you may call the literary-traitor faculty, which is just one of your grand æsthetic arts, if ye look at it impartially, and chiefly the outcome of the nineteenth century, with all its improvements; for to make out a true man to be a picturesque fiction and all his beliefs a kind of fungus-growth upon the skin of him, instead of a principle of life within, what is that but a high development of the grand Fiction and Lie of Life which is the present ideal? Ye will say I have had my share in establishing the hunt after it and making men's minds familiar with the thought that what is turned to the world is oftenest but Clothes. Ay, I agree to that. Ye see,' he added with a gleam of humour, 'I had not thought of it as applied to my own case.'

'I am afraid,' I said, 'it has been very disagreeable to you; it has given you annoyance?—'

Upon this he laughed again. 'That is a kind of thing,' he said, 'which has but a brief existence in this place; not that we

are any way elevated above the opinion of our fellows, but, as you will have found out, the existence of the sham, even in its unconscious—which is always its most dangerous—state, is little possible when ye have the clearness of vision that distinguishes our neighbours here; by which means delusion cannot long entertain, and even the flunkey has little means of turning his master into another nightmare and illusion for the further disenchantment of the world.'

'You are thinking of——' I said.

Upon this he fell a-laughing again, and answered, 'I have no animosity to man: nor does it appear to me in any other light than that of a keen piece of historical satire, what ye call the irony of fate, or, sometimes, poetic justice. But I would not answer for it if the Wife were to lay her hands upon him, who was never what ye call a very tolerant woman. Ye have all a hand in it,' he added after a moment: 'I am thinking I have had a certain affinity to Samson's riddle with which he dispersed into outer darkness all yon cohort of the light-minded—"Out of the eater came forth meat." I have devoured in my day; it is meet I should furnish occasion for some fine feeding in my turn.'

'You see,' said I with diffidence, 'there were many people who loved you well, but could not understand why you should have treated them and those belonging to them with such contempt. I am not criticising; I am but——'

He shot a glance at me from under his shaggy eyebrows which made me feel my smallness better than a thousand words, and at the same time made me fear that I, too, was to be dispersed like Samson's tormentors: for I had not yet acquired the faculty of seeing the thoughts as they arose. I was somewhat astonished therefore when he said nothing except, with a shake of his head, "'The sorrows of death encompassed me; the pains of hell gat hold upon me.'" And it was not till a full minute had passed that he added, 'When a man is at what he thinks the end of life, awaiting the moment when he shall be bidden to begone into the eternal darkness—and learns that he that thought himself a true man has been in his way as base, and blind, and ignorant as any: and of the nature of the tyrants and eaters of men's souls: and can make no amends, nor ever have his day's work over again!—— Yon Apostle with the bitter tongue, that has left but one utterance, and no more, I wonder what they thought of him in the church meetings and among the pious women—whom he was, no

doubt, civil to before the torrent broke. "Clouds without water," he says, "carried about of the winds; trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." Yet he had a tender heart, and would have no man bring a railing accusation'

While I was trying with some perplexity to piece my thoughts together and make out what this meant, some one came bustling in who had a long shepherd's staff in his hand, and that sort of primitive wrap over his shoulder which in Scotland is called a plaid, and in which the guardian of the flock can carry a lamb when need is. He came in with a smiling air of one who is used to setting everything right, and laid his hand upon my companion's arm. 'What is going wrong?' he said. 'When you quote Scripture at this rate, and fume and march about (for the first speaker had been pacing the hall back and forward), there is evidently need of Me. Dearest fellow, what is going wrong?'

At this my friend gave him a keen, humorous look from under his eyebrows, and, with a laugh which broke out of the solemnity of his aspect very strangely, retired to his seat again, and left the new comer in possession of the field. He was a smooth, ready, vivacious personage, very well known, indeed, in the places whence I had come; the change of costume was more striking in him than it had been in the others. He gave me a smile and a white hand. 'The prophet is always vehement,' he said, with a little glance aside as if he and I had a mutual understanding on this subject and comprehended our friend better than he did himself. 'You are speaking, of course, of the biography? Very curious, very curious, my dear sir, the manner in which we are dealt with after we go. It is a kind of refined infidelity, nothing better; quite natural, you know, in our friend's legatee, but not at all natural in that dearest boy of mine, whose training was so different. It betrays a certain conviction that they are never to see us again, which is a mistake in every way. This will make it awkward for them when they come after us, more awkward than it had any need to be: awkward in their own feelings,' said the shepherd, rubbing his hands; 'though in our bosoms no offence dwells.'

'Yes, your lordship,' said the other, from his chair. 'Ye are just as badly treated as the rest of us, and have made sport for the Philistines, too.'

The shepherd hung his head a little, and then looked up with a benignant smile. 'Dearest R——,' he said, 'must have found they were making me dull. It was so; the beginning was respectable, most respectable: but the reader missed the bishop of his heart. I was getting a little tedious, a thing men did not expect from me. I do not blame my dear one; he knew if there was one thing more foreign to me than another that was the thing. He made a dash to my rescue. Unfortunately the dear fellow's zeal was superior to his judgment. It often is so in these warm-hearted natures; my jottings explain themselves, I hope—notes, mere notes; and when there are many people talking and one's self perhaps talking, it is possible the most of all——'

'One fails to catch,' I said diffidently, 'which voice it is that has spoken?'

He smiled approvingly, yet at the same time with an apologetic look. 'Yes,' said the shepherd, 'it is possible you are right. A great deal is always being said in society: you get the substance sometimes but not the manner of putting it—or, perhaps, the other way, the manner of putting it without the substance—which is, perhaps, the most seductive; and names are a snare. The eighteenth century was wiser with its asterisks. Nothing, I need not say, could be further from my intention than to wound people's feelings, or betray their indiscretions. Dearest R— has been incautious, very incautious. Impossible to lament it more than I do,' he said, folding his hands meekly and with a sigh: but there was in the corner of the shepherd's eye a twinkle—and the other burst into a laugh.

'He is, perhaps, not altogether so sorry as might appear upon the face of him. He finds in it an eternal warning to the blabbers, the men that are loose of lip and long of tongue. And if there had but been the voice of a prophet to do it, to clear the earth of the infernal vermin!——'

'Hush, hush, hush, hush!' cried the shepherd, with his hand upon the arm of him that bore the spade. 'These words, you know, in the presence of ——! You must remember the charge, "Swear not at all." But you were always given to strong language.' Then he went on, with a little laugh running through his words: 'Perhaps it may be a good moral lesson, as our friend says: but unintentional, entirely unintentional. I could find it in my heart to be angry with my dear one; but he meant it for the best. And such an accident is full of morals. Not to make jottings at all:

or to burn them; or, perhaps, to make them more full, so that no respectable clergyman may have it in his power to make you dull, and so tempt your affectionate relatives to interfere. Finally, to use asterisks as they did in the eighteenth century, in which golden age, dearest man, there were no misfortunes like ours. Yet dear Horace Walpole spoke plainly enough; perhaps the ultimate cause is hurry—Hurry! our friends will not wait!’

‘They think,’ said the other, ‘that this generation—perhaps the meanest of all generations that have ever trod the earth—will have no recollection of the very names of us after a year or two, but will just drive on to destruction over every great roaring torrent of a Niagara that lies in their way with none now to give a warning, nor point out the whirl of destruction into which ——’

‘O-o-h!’ said the shepherd, drawing in his breath. ‘Dearest fellow! come; here we don’t take such a dismal view of affairs. I see great confusion myself, and a sad want of men to fill my place. Still, it is not so bad as that; twenty years hence, fifty even, we shall still be remembered. You were always too despondent; but it is a lesson of humility, not unneeded even here, to see one’s self set up before the world as a writer of slip-slop.’ The shepherd shivered a little and spread out his white hands. ‘Slip-slop!’ he said; ‘there is no other word. Dearest R—! how incautious, how indifferent to his father’s fame! To be revealed even in one’s bedchamber as capable of *that*.’

‘You may be sure,’ I said, ‘that it was an error of love—and that admiration and enthusiasm with which you filled all about you. They thought everything that your hand had touched must be excellent, the best of its kind.’

The shepherd turned upon me a beaming look of gratitude and approval. ‘Dear fellow!’ he said; but there was always a twinkle in his eye; ‘my friends were indeed too partial ——’

The other interrupted this with his usual laugh. ‘There is a depth of the flunkey mind,’ he said, ‘perhaps the most terrible abyss of all, in which the straw and rubbish become emblems of perfection, and the sweepings of a bedchamber turn to pearls and diamonds as in a fairy tale. Light-flying frivolities, exhalations of no-thought and an idle brain, or even a ball of common dirt flecked from the finger after some inimical passer-by, or vagrant vermin of a mongrel dog, will thus be laid up in jewelled cabinets and preserved for the edification of posterity, much

perplexed by its treasures in that kind! Whether that is the worst: or if a blacker still is the Jesuit-Iconoclast, the son of darkness, and father of slaves; the Ham-Benjamin that uncovers the old man's nakedness, notwithstanding that he had the double portion laid into the sack of him, and was the last—— One might say they were the two sides of that lying worship of heroes that puts to shame the true. Cynic-investigator valet, with his master "no hero" on one hand: and what may be called the Dustman-enthusiast, gatherer up of beard clippings, old rags, and relics—phantasmal heaps—'

Our benign companion had been listening sweetly with a slight shake of his head and a faint *tchick-tchick* now and then of indulgent toleration, but here he burst in with—'No, no; come now, come; not so bad as that. Dearest R—! He may have wanted judgment. To the best of sons, who never gave an hour's anxiety to his father, this quality may yet be incommunicable. He has saved me, as I have already pointed out, from the swathings of respectability in which my earlier biographers had clothed me. Can I say he has done ill, dearest boy? I suffer in the letter, but perhaps in the spirit——'

Then it surprised me very much to see approaching a maid, one of the servants of the place, who had been sweeping with a large broom at some distance from us, and who had made haste to remove, on their entrance, the traces of the soil which the boots of my friend and his pastoral companion had left upon the pure marble of the floor. Having ended that portion of her work she had taken a very long *plumet*, or feather brush, with which she had been clearing every trace of cobweb or other soil or accumulation from the corners and intricacies of the beautifully designed cornice. She came up to us now with this over her shoulder. She was of a stout figure, not handsome nor young, but with an energetic, lively look in her plain countenance which was not unattractive. She said good-humouredly, yet with a touch of disdain, 'You men have never the courage of your opinions. Before I came away, I took care to leave the results of my observation of my friends very clearly upon the record. I was content with no jottings down of chance stories like yours, my lord. I put it all on paper what I thought of them. In common society it is awkward, and might produce complications; but I think it has a fine moral effect, when you feel sure you will be out of reach, to let them know what you always thought of them. Eh? Oh, yes,

I hear you well enough; it is only the old habit of the trumpet that sticks to me.'

'Dear lady,' said the shepherd (notwithstanding the broom), 'women are always more ingenious than our duller sex; but is there not something cynical in your statement of the case?'

'Probably there is a great deal that is cynical. I never was a person moved by gusts of passion like our friend here, or fond of that little pinch in passing which was a pleasure to you. I was always a downright person. I was never done full justice to. Government used to take my help and pick my brains, but never offered me a C.B. As for their pensions, I scorned money—in that way. Even my parents never did me justice: and for my friends, when I was a notability they fawned upon me. I was determined there should be no mistake about it. I can't pretend, like you, that I never intended it. There was, however, one mistake I made,' she said, reaching up at the height of her *plumet* to destroy a cobweb—('how quick these spiders spin!—faster than any of us; and need no publisher). There was one mistake, and I am delighted to have done it in such good company.'

'What was that, Harriet? I always thought you a very honest woman; saying your say perhaps not always with the highest wisdom, but in a serious, straightforward way, grappling with the naked truth of things.'

'That has rather an immodest sound, and I should object to it if I had been an American. The mistake I made was the same as that which one of you has already pointed out: that I never thought I was likely to meet these people again; and here am I caretaker of this hall, and right in the way of every one of them! It gives me a little shock when they come in as they all do, though it is rather humbling to perceive that most of them have forgotten all about it, while I remember every word. That is confusing. Of course it is done on purpose. I am here on purpose; and in the curious change of circumstances it does me a great deal of good. You, now,' said this plain-spoken lady, touching me on the arm, 'you don't recollect who I am. Oh, yes; I can see into your mind, remember. You are asking yourself, Who is she? And I was a great light in my day; but I have been longer here than these two, and even the fuss that was made by all my friends about whom I spoke my mind, has died away. So will the fuss about you too die away.'

'And then we shall be judged on our merits,' said the gentle

shepherd. 'In a good hour! but probably we shall all have passed on before this to a higher sphere, and will not even hear of it. What matter? We cannot, my dearest friends, go on thinking for centuries of what happened in the course of sixty or even eighty years. You were both octogenarians, I think? What vitality! Now I must go back to my few sheep—they may stray if I linger longer in this delightful intercourse. You don't know yet, dear fellow, what you are going to do?'

'Not yet,' I said; 'but surely, I must say it, this is a dreadful waste of material—to put men like you into occupations that ——'

My friend took up his crook and with a benignant smile waved his hand to me. 'One dear flock is like another,' he said; 'and then the blessed peacefulness of it—no rivals, no promotion. An obstinacy of going astray, perhaps, to which my experience, however, finds many parallels; but no complications. Dear innocents! I draw in health and vigour every day.'

'But you,' I said, looking at the prophet; 'you who ——'

He drew himself up with one of his cavernous laughs, bursting, with a rumble of echoes, from his deep chest; strong, vigorous, unimpeded, a model of his kind. 'I have gotten back,' he said, 'to the original of my race. I till the soil that is truth incarnate in its solid, silent way, and deceives no man. The shadows and the phantasms are departed, gone back into chaos whence they came. There is now no contradiction between thoughts and things. The red earth is kindly, there is health in the smell of it. And I am thinking there's still better to come.'

So saying he waved his hand to me and went out with a step that rang like a trumpet. I was left alone with her of the broom; her whole mind seemed to be set upon the dislodgment of a nest of spiders which seemed to have twisted their filaments round and round the open work of the cornice. She was on tiptoe reaching up to them, and I thought civility required that I should offer to do it for her. Whereupon she turned upon me with a half-indignant air.

'Have you not heard yet what your own work is to be? You will find that enough for you without helping me; not but what it was kind enough,' she added. 'Oh! I know what was your profession. But I am one that would give the Devil his due.'

'You are talking of —— a fabulous personage,' I said.

She stopped and looked down upon me, though I was tall and she was dumpy; such was the constitution of the woman that she looked down. 'Oh! you think so,' she said; and then, with the utmost contempt of which the gesture was capable, stood up on her toes again, and stretched upwards at the full length of her arm towards the cobwebs on the roof.

It was at this moment that the official, of whom I have previously spoken, approached me with what seemed a sort of warrant in his hand. I may mention that I was by profession a critic; I had brought many men to the ground that were better than I; I had helped some reputations, but marred many. I was rather renowned for slashing articles. The man in office approached me with a malicious smile in his eyes.

'You will take this to the kitchen department,' he said.

I was allotted to ——. But why need I disclose it? Would it make my brethren spare a dart, or mitigate a spiteful sentence? No! so I refrain from any attempt at a moral. Also I must allow, as happens invariably in that place which is the first step in moral reformation, that, when I had become accustomed to it, I did not dislike my new occupation at all.

THE ROMANCE OF PAULILATINO.

I.



OUNT VINCENZO DI SAN BENEDETTO DI GIAVE was a young man well known to Florentine society and much liked in certain sections of it, where—time, in these days, being of importance even in Italy—he was commonly spoken of and addressed as Vincenzo Giave, without further syllabic embellishment. The son of a Sardinian landed proprietor of ancient lineage, he was currently reported to be possessed of large means; and although, as regarded the immediate present, this general impres-

sion was an erroneous one, there could be no doubt that the Sardinian acres must come to him eventually;—a circumstance which did not tend to lessen his popularity.

A singular circumstance in connection with this young man was that, in spite of his being an only child, he had not set eyes on his father for twenty years out of the five-and-twenty which had elapsed since his birth; and what was perhaps even more singular was that this estrangement had arisen out of no quarrel between the father and son, but simply from the fact that neither of them had ever expressed, or felt the smallest desire, to become acquainted with the other. As far as Vincenzo was concerned, such a lack of natural affection was hardly blameworthy and certainly not surprising; for his home from his earliest boyhood had been with an uncle and aunt, who had nursed him through his childish ailments, educated him, supplied him with such pocket-money as he required, and treated him in all respects like one of their own numerous family. Naturally, therefore, he considered himself as belonging rather to them than to the shadowy old person in Sar-

dinia, who wrote to him on an average once in a twelvemonth, and whose letters on those rare occasions were of the most formal and meagre description.

As for the old Count, the indifference which he manifested towards his son might easily have been accounted for by those who knew him, upon the ground of his absolute indifference to everything that this world contains, save money alone. With that single exception, the Count di San Benedetto di Giave liked nothing and nobody; but, on the other hand, there were many persons and things for whom and for which he felt a hearty dislike, and prominent among these were children. It is difficult to conjecture what, after his wife's death, would have been the fate of his own five-year old offspring if the Countess's sister and her husband, the Cavaliere Legnani, had not written from Florence to beg that little Vincenzo might be entrusted to their care. No doubt they were acquainted with their brother-in-law's peculiarities and were aware that their offer would be accepted, if not with gratitude, at all events with alacrity. 'Take him, my good friends,' wrote the old Count, without waste of time; 'take him with my blessing. He is a fine and amiable child; he will be a credit to you and a loss to me. But take him. I can give you no more convincing proof of my profound respect and esteem.'

It is far from improbable that the worthy Legnani couple received no aid from the old Count in the task they had undertaken beyond that which the above-mentioned benediction might be supposed to supply; for he was not the man to offer money, nor were they people who would be at all likely to ask for it. Without being rich, they had yet enough to enable them to live at their ease, to educate their children thoroughly, and to mix in the artistic and literary society towards which their tastes inclined them. It was in these literary and artistic circles that Count Vincenzo, when he became a man, was chiefly appreciated. He grew up a handsome young fellow with a pale oval face, small features, a pair of magnificent velvety-brown eyes, and a somewhat melancholy expression of countenance; which last did not, however, indicate any inward dissatisfaction with his lot. By education, and probably also by temperament, he was a worshipper of all beautiful things, not to speak of beautiful people; he was a first-rate judge of a picture; he knew a great deal about old china, old enamels, old lace, and similar matter; and besides all this he was very fond of dancing,

in which art he excelled. With these qualifications it was natural that he should shine most in the company of ladies; but his amiability and courteous manners had won him many friends of his own sex as well. It had never entered into the heads of those who were responsible for this refined and pleasing, but entirely useless creature, to put him into any profession. 'What is the good of being a rich man's son,' the good-natured Cavaliere Legnani was wont to ask, 'if you are to turn the talents which you have received from Heaven into a mere means of supporting existence? Most artists are obliged to do so, and that cannot be helped; though it is a pity that they should be so cramped. Vincenzo is free to devote his life to art in the highest sense of the word; he will never need to earn his bread, or to trouble himself about pleasing the public. My brother-in-law is an old man, and my nephew will assuredly be a very wealthy one before many years are past.'

Vincenzo, however, was not an artist; and the Cavaliere, in reasoning thus, had omitted to take into account the chapter of accidents. An accident happened to him one day to which all of us are liable, yet few expect, namely, he fell sick of a dangerous disease and succumbed to it.

The death of the head of a family, which in England often means the break-up of a home, almost invariably means that upon the Continent. When Signor Legnani's fortune had been divided between his widow and his children, of whom three were already married men, one of the pleasantest houses in Florence was closed for ever, and a collection of bric-à-brac was thrown upon the market of which Vincenzo Giave would have been the first to profit if he had not been too sad at heart to think at that time of gratifying his usual innocent greed for pretty things. There was another circumstance—a very queer little circumstance, as it seemed to the young man—which would in any case have precluded him from being a buyer: he had no money. Hitherto money had come, when wanted, from his uncle; but now his uncle was dead, and he was wondering in total bewilderment what he ought to do next, and whither he was to go, when both questions were answered for him after a fashion which gave his nerves a great shock: that is to say, by a letter from his father requesting and requiring his immediate return home. 'I cannot,' wrote the old gentleman, 'undertake to defray the ruinous expense of your residence alone in Florence; there is therefore nothing for it

but to prepare rooms for you in this house, and I have accordingly prepared them. On Friday next, I believe, a steamer leaves Leghorn for Cagliari; you had better cross by it. Your aunt Legnani will doubtless supply you with the requisite passage-money, which I will repay her as soon as an opportunity presents itself.'

This affectionate missive went near to breaking the heart of its recipient. Poor Vincenzo was essentially a man of cities. He had no great love for the country at any time, and upon Sardinia he looked with much the same feelings as a born and bred Londoner might perhaps entertain towards the Shetland Islands or the wilds of Galway. However, to use his father's encouraging phrase, 'there was nothing for it' but to go. He did not request a loan from Signora Legnani, for he was beginning to understand much that had hitherto been kindly concealed from him; but he sold a few of his treasures to a dealer, and, having said farewell to his friends and his happy days, set out with a heavy heart to confront destiny.

Destiny, as discernible from the deck of a steamer in the bay of Cagliari on a wild February morning, and after a stormy passage from the mainland, wore a sufficiently forbidding visage. Across the vast plain inland, low grey clouds were flying from the west; the mountains to the eastward were veiled in mist; splashes of rain fell every now and then; the dreary, poverty-stricken town of Cagliari—which yet is lively and wealthy for Sardinia—seemed to Vincenzo to greet him with a blank stare, as though to ask what in the world a man of his tastes could want in such a place. He hurried on shore, closing his eyes and ears against impressions which could only be dispiriting ones, and scarcely bestowing a glance of languid curiosity upon the picturesque bearded figures who carried his luggage up to the railway-station, and who, with their jackets adorned with a mass of silver buttons, their Phrygian caps, their short-kilted petticoats, loose linen trousers, and black gaiters, looked like a cross between Genoese fishermen and Greek brigands. Soon he was ensconced in the corner of a railway-carriage, and was progressing at a snail's pace along the newly-constructed line which is to regenerate Sardinia—some day.

As often as Vincenzo looked out of the window he shuddered; and indeed there was some excuse for him. The great, melancholy plain of Cagliari, sun-baked in summer, storm-swept in winter, fever-stricken always, stretched away on his right hand and his left to meet the low horizon; vegetation was scanty; the sparse

dwellings in sight were mere hovels; the little knots of peasants congregated round the wayside stations were certainly not prepossessing of aspect. The men were, for the most part, clad in goatskins, the women in rags; men and women alike had their heads and necks muffled up in handkerchiefs or hoods as a protection against the poisonous exhalations which for ever hang over that part of the island. 'Heavens! what a country!—what a people!' sighed the disconsolate representative of advanced civilisation in his railway-carriage.

The train jogged on, mounting imperceptibly as it pursued its slow course towards the high table-land of the interior, while the grey daylight faded away. It was quite dark when the small station of Paulilatino, where our traveller was to alight, was reached. As he stepped out, he became aware of a stalwart individual with a grizzled beard, whose garb appeared to be that of a farmer of the better class, and who took off his hat, saying:

'You do not remember me, Signor Vincenzo; how should you? I am Sandro, the *fattore*, at your service.'

'I remember you perfectly, Sandro,' answered the young man, holding out his hand; 'you used to carry me about on your shoulder when I was a child, and my mother was always in a terrible fright lest you should let me fall. So you are still in the old place? And you are quite well, I hope, Sandro?' It raised his spirits a little to feel the rough hand of this old friend close round his own slim fingers. 'And—and my father,' he added, with a momentary hesitation; 'is he quite well, too?'

Sandro shrugged his broad shoulders ever so slightly. 'Il Signor Conte,' he replied, 'is—as he always is. I have brought two young men down to carry your trunks to the village.'

'Ah!—the village. Is that far?'

'Eh! it is where it was; it has not moved. A little two miles from the station. But, to be sure, there was no station when you went away, Signorino.'

'The house is near the village, is it not?'

'Near?—it is in the middle of the village. Have you forgotten?' asked Sandro, staring.

The fact was that this circumstance had escaped Vincenzo's memory. Some dim childish recollections he had of large, empty rooms and long corridors; when he had thought of his father's abode at all, he had pictured it to himself as a lonely castle. He was rather relieved to find that this was not so, and that there

would be human beings around him, even though they would be only Sardinian villagers. 'Ah, well,' he said, 'it is many years since I was here, and I was not of an age to notice localities when I left. I suppose,' he continued, looking out into the darkness, 'there is a carriage of some kind waiting for us.'

'A carriage!' echoed Sandro, in astonishment; 'what should we do with a carriage in Paulilatino? And how should we get it up there?'

'You don't mean to say that there is no road to the place!' ejaculated Vincenzo.

'*Che vuole?* They promise us a road some day; but for my part I would rather be upon the back of a good horse than upon wheels on a dark night like this.'

The young Count sighed, but made no rejoinder. In a few minutes he was mounted upon one of the rough little Sardinian horses, whose powers of endurance and surefootedness are so famous, and was following, rather by hearing than by sight, in the wake of the *fattore*, who had ridden on ahead. By what kind of a track they were mounting it was impossible to see; but Vincenzo, finding himself at one moment on slippery rocks and the next in an abyss of mud, concluded that it was a tolerably rough one, and wisely left all responsibility to the instinct or knowledge of his beast. The two miles—if indeed they were but two—took a long time to accomplish, and were made up of a series of alternate scramblings and flounderings; but neither Vincenzo nor his horse came down; and at length, all of a sudden, they were in a narrow street, or rather in a channel of mud with low houses on either side of it, which Sandro said was Paulilatino.

In none of these houses was there a candle burning or any symptom of human life; but the clatter of the horses' hoofs roused three or four yelping dogs, and presently somebody appeared out of the darkness, bearing a lantern, by the light of which Vincenzo could make out the semicircle of a stunted archway. Through this Sandro rode, and dismounted; and he, doing likewise, found himself in a yard such as most Italian country inns are provided with, composed on three sides of stables and out-buildings, and on the fourth of a tumbledown edifice which was obviously 'home.'

'It is worse even than I expected!' muttered poor Vincenzo, following Sandro up a dirty stone staircase.

On the first landing were double doors, one wing of which the *fattore* flung open, announcing in stentorian tones, 'Il Signorino Vincenzo!' as the young man made his way into a large, scantily-furnished room.

The two men, who were playing cards before the wood fire, turned their heads as if they did not much relish the interruption; and one of them got up slowly and moved away. He was a fat, unshaven personage whom Vincenzo afterwards learnt to be the *Sindaco* of the village. The old man with the pinched features,



who was clad in a dressing-gown and a velvet skull-cap, and who had not risen, was, of course, his father. Vincenzo had a moment of embarrassment and hesitation which the author of his being did nothing to relieve: then, feeling that somebody must do something, and that the proper thing had better be done, he stooped down, laid his hands lightly upon the old man's shoulders, and kissed him on both cheeks.

He was rather glad when this embrace was over; for, to tell the truth, the old man was a very dirty old man, and had been

having garlic with his dinner. He had evidently not shaved for several days, for he had a chin like a nutmeg-grater; and, judging by the way in which he scrubbed his cheeks with a red pocket-handkerchief, he did not like being kissed. 'I needn't do it again, then,' thought Vincenzo, with a faint inward acknowledgment that things are seldom so terribly bad but that they might conceivably be worse.

'So you have arrived,' the old Count said, after a long pause; and presently he went on to inquire after the health of Signora Legnani. 'I cannot understand your uncle's death,' he added querulously. 'A young man—quite a young man—twenty years younger than I, at least; and then to die like that, without any warning! It is most extraordinary.'

'I suppose he couldn't help it,' observed Vincenzo; but his father shook his head. Clearly he thought that the Signor Legnani ought to have helped it.

After this, silence once more fell upon the company; until the Sindaco, who had been looking the new-comer over from head to foot, as if he had never seen anything at all like him before (and probably he never had), gave utterance to a modest conviction that he was *de trop*, and offered to retire.

'No, no!' cried the old Count, with more animation than he had yet displayed; 'why should you go? Let us finish our game.' He looked appealingly at Vincenzo, and then, struck by a bright idea—'You will want something to eat,' he said. 'Sandro will see to you. Go, my son, and get something to eat.'

And with that he drew his chair closer to the table, and picked up the greasy cards which he had relinquished on his son's entrance.

The Conte di Giave was not a miser to the extent of starving either himself or his dependants. With actual coin it was grievous to him to part; but the food consumed in his establishment was seldom paid for in this way. His estates on hill and plain supplied him with all the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life; many of his tenants, too, were allowed to discharge their debts in kind; and so no belated traveller, seeking shelter for the night at Paulilatino, was in danger of being sent empty away. In a country where inns are all but unknown such hospitality is, indeed, almost obligatory; and the Sardis, unlike their neighbours on the mainland, are accustomed to eat as much meat as Englishmen. The cooking, it is true, was hardly of a kind to please

fastidious palates such as Vincenzo's ; but hunger and fatigue blunt the edge of delicate perceptions, and the young Count complained neither of his fare, nor of the hard bed upon which he was soon afterwards stretched in a profound slumber.

II.



WHEN Vincenzo had been a few weeks under the paternal roof he felt as though he had dwelt there for years. The old Vincenzo Giave, who had been used to attend art-sales and lounge in ladies' boudoirs and dance all the happy night through at Florence, was dead—so he said to himself—and in his place was a forlorn

youth without enjoyment in the present or hope for the future ; a youth who sometimes thought of turning the muzzle of the revolver, which had been his last purchase before leaving civilisation, towards his head, and of putting an end to all care and weariness in that way. He hated Paulilatino, its life and its surroundings, with a perfect hatred ; but he never thought of escape. It was not in his nature to look far ahead, or to regard his father's advanced age as pointing towards emancipation at no very distant date.

Of his father he saw next to nothing. The old gentleman spent the whole day in his own rooms, either dozing or poring over accounts, and only emerged, like an owl, after nightfall, when the Sindaco or the parish priest would come in and play a game of cards with him. Neighbours of his own rank he had none ; such

landed proprietors as there were within a day's ride of Paulilatio dwelling, after the fashion of the island, in seclusion, and keeping their wives and daughters in a stricter seclusion still. This Vincenzo had discovered by inquiry, for it had occurred to him that if he could get up a flirtation with somebody's wife or daughter life might be a shade less dreary. But no such person was available, and, in default of any other confidant, he poured his griefs into the ear of Sandro, who sympathised with, although he did not at all understand, them.

'But, Signorino,' he remonstrated one morning when the two were riding together across the slopes which trend upwards beyond Abbasanta (for Vincenzo, in sheer lack of any other occupation, usually accompanied the steward on his daily rounds); 'but, Signorino, there is no sense in quarrelling with a place for not being some other place. You cannot make wine out of olives, but they will yield you excellent oil; and though, I grant you, we have no great cities in Sardinia, we have that of our own which you would be puzzled to match in Tuscany. Look at our *nuraghi*, for instance! Every one agrees that they are thousands of years old; older by a great deal than the Roman ruins which you make such a fuss about over the water; and professors, with spectacles on their noses, come from the very ends of the earth (as I have been told) only to see them, and many books have been written about them; and in spite of all that,' concluded Sandro, triumphantly, '*nobody has ever found out what they are!* Now there, if you like, is something interesting!'

'Not to me,' answered Vincenzo, with a melancholy shake of the head. He had inspected one or two of the curious prehistoric towers, known as *nurhags*, which abound in Sardinia, and had soon arrived at the conclusion that he did not in the least care whether their original constructors had used them as dwellings, according to the hypothesis of some archæologists, or as tombs, or as watch-towers, which were the views adopted by others. 'When you have seen one, you have seen them all,' he said.

'Well, but then there is the sport,' continued Sandro. 'Where in the kingdom is such sport to be found as in Sardinia? You would not perhaps care to spend a night or two in the open; otherwise, over yonder in Genargentù, you might get a shot at a red deer, or perhaps at a *mouflon*; but for winged game in plenty one need not go so far. You should take your gun with you, as I do,' said the *fattore*, who indeed never failed to carry a fowling-piece across

his saddle-bow, after the custom of the country. 'And, besides,' he added, 'it is always well to be armed. One does not know what may happen.'

'I suppose this delightful country adds banditti to its other charms,' sighed Vincenzo. 'They told me in Florence that I should very likely get my throat cut here.'

'They know very little about us in Florence,' returned Sandro, somewhat nettled. 'No, no; we have no banditti here; but just now the people are not very well contented. The taxes are terrible, and prices have risen, and the crops are not what they used to be. You cannot expect a hungry man to be over-scrupulous. And then, in the mountains, there are a few unfortunates who are obliged to keep out of the way, you understand.'

'I suppose you mean murderers.'

'I would not call them that; but perhaps they may have been so unlucky as to kill somebody. Well, if you were to meet one of them, I do not say but that he might ask for your purse or your watch.'

'I am not altogether unprotected,' remarked Vincenzo, unbuttoning his coat and showing the revolver which he carried in his waistband.

Sandro made a grimace. 'A shot-gun is better,' he said. 'I not do like these toys. They are no use at a distance, and at close quarters—well, you would most likely kill the poor fellow, and that is not what one wants.'

'I should do nothing of the sort,' Vincenzo answered; 'I have a prejudice against shedding blood. If I encountered one of those gentry, I should only let him see that I was armed, and perhaps fire over his head; I should not kill him.'

'Then I am afraid he would kill *you*, Signorino mio,' returned Sandro, with a grim smile. 'Believe me, a shot-gun is best.'

Vincenzo only shrugged his shoulders. His feeling at that moment was that the man who should kill him would rather render him a service than otherwise; and sometimes he fancied that his life was not quite so safe as Sandro would have had him suppose. The Sard, as a rule, does not love strangers. For 'Continental,' as he calls his fellow-subjects on the mainland, he has a double hatred, as for a race which he considers inferior, but which, despite its inferiority, is gradually gaining possession of his lands, is making money out of them in ways which his own ignorance or sloth have prevented him from discovering, and is ruthlessly and senselessly cutting down his magnificent forests for charcoal. Now

Vincenzo, although a Sard by birth, was altogether Italian in nature and appearance; he had made few attempts to ingratiate himself with the natives, whose language he did not speak, and by whom his first advances had been coldly received; and so, as he rode past the miserable cabins—for the most part windowless and chimneyless—in which they dwelt, it not unfrequently happened that sullen glances were shot out at him from beneath black brows, which caused him to move about uneasily in his saddle; for, notwithstanding his declared indifference to death, he was of a somewhat nervous temperament, and abhorred the idea of pain. However, nobody tried to assassinate him, and, as the monotonous days and weeks crept on, he began to think that even an ill-directed bullet might be better than no excitement at all.

Some modicum of excitement came at length into his life in a less objectionable form. The one thing that interested Vincenzo in the island which he so cordially detested was the dress of its inhabitants. This—or rather these; for each district has its own costume—gratified his artistic eye, and he seldom let slip an occasion of studying them. Hearing, therefore, one fine hot day in May, that a great *festa* was taking place at Macomer, a village on the high land some twenty miles to the northward, he rode over thither in search of novelty—and found it. For, while he was listlessly looking on at the impetuous gyrations of some half-dozen couples of peasants who were dancing a *stornello* on the dusty little piazza before the church, there suddenly came upon him a sensation to which he had long been a stranger; namely that agreeable quickening of the pulses which it was natural to him to experience on catching sight of a really beautiful young woman.

She was a girl of seventeen or eighteen, slight, exquisitely proportioned, and dressed in the kilted skirt, open bodice, cambric habit-shirt, and tightly-fitting jacket, ornamented with a profusion of silver buttons, which make up the holiday garb of the district to which she belonged. Her head and neck were swathed in folds of white linen, surmounted by a long hood of dark cloth reaching down to the waist—a head-dress which can hardly be considered pretty in itself, but which was by no means unbecoming to the small oval face, with its clear brown complexion, bright eyes, and rather coquettish smile, to which it formed a frame. Moreover, it had been so arranged, or disarranged, that a few irrepressible curls had escaped from beneath the linen folds, and fell over the low forehead of their fortunate possessor. She was being led into

the open space that had been cleared for the dancers by a tall, powerful-looking young man, and it seemed rather a pity that she should be going to make herself hot and dusty like the other rustics, to whom she was evidently so superior.

It presently appeared, however, that she had no intention of over-heating herself. She danced, not as the others did, with a wild barbaric fury which was almost painful to witness, but with the lithe grace of one to whom rhythmic movement is a form of art, like music or poetry. There was art, too, and a good deal of it, in her rendering of the measure, which, like all such dances, is in reality more or less of a pantomime. The demure smile or roguish glance with which she glided from every advance made by her partner, who, for his part was leaping and skipping like a young bull, was quite an epitome of rustic flirtation. Vincenzo watched her with the deepest interest; nor was this interest at all lessened when he discovered, as he did by-and-by, that the above-mentioned roguish glances were not intended exclusively for the bounding Hercules towards whom they should by rights have been directed. The young lady was evidently quite conscious of the fact that somebody else was looking at her; and that somebody else, not being of a timid temperament where her sex was concerned, resolved that he would take an early opportunity of making her acquaintance.

This opportunity was afforded to him very shortly—not altogether by accident perhaps. Standing upon the steps of the church, and looking down upon the dancers and the bystanders, he saw the girl abruptly withdraw from the circle, and, with a nod or a laughing word for various friends who hailed her, slip through the throng and disappear round the nearest corner. It is needless to add that the young Count was after her like an arrow out of a bow. He elbowed his way through the crowd with scant ceremony, and, passing out of the piazza, found himself immediately outside the village, upon the great high road which leads from Cagliari to Sassari and which approaches the heights of Macomer by a series of zigzags. There, leaning over the parapet, and to all appearance absorbed in contemplation of the wide prospect of mountain and plain which lay before her, was the fair unknown; and in less than five minutes Vincenzo had found out who she was, together with all such particulars of her history as he cared to hear. Her name, it appeared, was Teresina Bruschetti; she was an orphan, and dwelt with her sister-in-law, not at

Macomer, but at Bosa, a small town on the western seaboard about twelve miles away. Vincenzo's name and rank were no secret to her, nor was she in the least overawed by the latter; only, as she frankly confessed, very curious to know what had brought him to Sardinia, and why he remained in a country which everybody declared that he disliked.

Vincenzo laughed at her rapid questions, put with a mixture of innocence and coquetry which he found very captivating. He admitted that he was not much in love with his native island; 'but perhaps,' he added meaningly, 'I shall look at it with other eyes now.'

'Oh, as far as that goes,' she rejoined, ignoring this innuendo, 'you have really not seen it yet. The country round Paulilatino is bare and sad, and even here at Macomer it is not much better; but Bosa is very different. At Bosa we have woods down to the water's edge, and groves of orange and lemon trees; and there is the river, too, and the old ruined castle above the town, where I often sit and spin in the afternoon, and watch the ships sailing away across the sea, and wish I were on board one of them.'

'Why do you wish that?' interrupted Vincenzo.

'Because I am like you,' she answered, laughing; 'I am a little tired of Sardinia. And yet I am not like you, really; for I have never left the island, and never shall.'

'Who knows?' returned Vincenzo, encouragingly. 'I shall certainly ride over to Bosa to-morrow, and, perhaps, I may be so fortunate as to find you among the ruins.'

This drew from her the first symptom of self-consciousness that she had yet displayed, in the shape of a slight blush. She turned away, saying, 'Oh, no; that is not likely; I only go there sometimes. Perhaps, after all,' she added, 'you would not care to see Bosa or the castle—or me either. And now, Signor Conte, I must wish you good-day, or they will wonder what has become of me.'

'Who will wonder?' Vincenzo asked. 'That long-legged fellow who was dancing with you?'

Teresina tossed her pretty head. 'He may wonder as much as he likes,' she declared; 'I should not hurry myself for *him*! But I must not stay here any longer. *A rivederla!*' And, with a wave of her hand, she darted across the road and was gone.

Bosa is, in truth, one of the few places in Sardinia which can boast of the especial beauty of scenery that one is accustomed to

associate with southern latitudes. It is a quaint, sleepy little town, hemmed in by high mountains, of which the lower slopes are clothed with cork and olive woods, and looking out from beneath the ruins of a mediæval fortress upon its silted-up harbour, and upon the broad blue sea beyond, which shuts it out from, instead of connecting it with, the world. Down the fertile valley, which stretches inland behind the town, flows a placid stream, on either side of which are the orange and lemon groves of which Teresina had boasted, fields of corn and maize, and mulberry trees, with here and there a tall palm. Unhappily, this smiling oasis bears a reputation for insalubrity notorious even in that island of fevers, where every variety of the malady is rife, from the deadly *perniciosa*, which will strike a man down and make an end of him in twenty-four hours, to the slow, enervating *intemperia*, which few can hope to escape. At Bosa, the women grow old long before their time; the men are for the most part a sickly, stunted race; the children look up at you with large black eyes, and pale, pathetic little faces. All this Vincenzo noticed as he rode through the narrow streets on the day after his interview with the fair Teresina, and he muttered to himself with a sigh, '*Mors etiam in Arcadia!*'

However, he was not in the mood for indulging in melancholy reflections. Having had some experience of feminine peculiarities, and reasoning, not without plausibility, that women are much the same all the world over, he felt tolerably certain that he should find Teresina somewhere within the precincts of the ancient keep; and, sure enough, after he had stabled his horse and scrambled up the heights on which the ruin stands, he obtained the desired proof that his knowledge of human nature had not played him false. She was seated in a shady corner, plying her distaff, and greeted him with a perfectly unembarrassed smile.

'You have really come, then!' she said.

'Of course I have come,' answered Vincenzo, throwing himself down on the short grass at her feet; and for some minutes they talked of the ruins and the scenery, and the weather, although, probably, neither of them felt any great interest in those topics at the moment. All at once the girl dropped her distaff across her knees, and bending forward till her lovely face was close to that of her companion—

'What made you take this long ride to-day?' she asked.

'Can you doubt?' returned Vincenzo reproachfully, making

that use of his fine eyes for which he conceived that they had been given to him.

‘Because,’ she continued, straightening herself up again, ‘I had better tell you at once that we have always been honest people, and you must not suppose from my meeting you here that I am one of those girls who would allow a stranger to be the ruin of her.’

This piece of curiously plain speaking shocked Vincenzo a little, and disconcerted him a good deal. It might be natural for a peasant girl to call things by their names in that direct fashion,



and, perhaps, her doing so was only a proof of innocence ; but his previous philanderings had not brought him into contact with peasants, and he did not in the least know what reply to make.

‘Indeed, you are wronging me,’ he said at last, with more or less of truth ; ‘I had no thought of—of what you allude to. Only I am desperately lonely in this wretched country ; I have not a soul with whom I care to exchange a word ; and I thought you would not grudge me the happiness of talking to you sometimes.’

‘Oh, if it is only talking,’ she said, ‘you may do that as much as you please, and it will be a real pleasure to me to listen to you ; though I don’t know why you should care to talk to an

ignorant girl. Tell me about all the great cities where you have been, and the palaces, and the carriages, and the ladies in their diamonds; that is what I like best to hear. Sometimes I read about it all in the newspaper; but there is never half enough, and I can't understand unless I have some one to explain it to me.'

Vincenzo asked for nothing better than to comply with this request. He was simply starving for the want of a little sympathy, and almost any woman who was not physically repulsive, or mentally deficient, would have satisfied the craving that he felt. His present hearer was neither the one nor the other. With her elbows resting on her knees and her eyes fixed dreamily on the far horizon, she drank in the glowing descriptions that he gave of his beloved Florence; nor was she less attentive when he went on to pour forth lamentations over the miseries of his exile. As soon as he paused she offered him a very practical piece of consolation. 'But this will not last for ever,' said she. 'The old Count will die soon, and then you will be free.'

For the second time Vincenzo was slightly scandalised. 'My father has never been like a father to me,' he remarked; 'yet I can't go quite so far as to wish for his death.'

The girl looked at him wonderingly for a moment. 'Oh, not to *wish* for it,' she said; 'still it is a thing which must happen; and when it does happen, of course you will go away. I am not so fortunate; I shall remain at Bosa always,' she added, sighing.

It was now Vincenzo's turn to act the part of consoler. 'No one can tell what the future may bring,' he observed oracularly. 'Perhaps you may yet see "the city of flowers and the flower of cities," and it may be my good fortune to show you Giotto's Campanile and the Boboli Gardens and the Cascine, where the ladies who interest you so much drive to and fro in the cool of the day. I feel certain that you were never born to waste your life on this desert island.'

He did not very well know what he meant by these vague phrases, which were half promises. His object was simply to say something which should be agreeable to his companion; and in this he was certainly successful, for a faint flush crept into the olive-brown of the girl's cheek, and her eyes brightened. 'Tell me about them,' she exclaimed eagerly—'about the ladies, I mean, and the carriages, and the jewels!'

Vincenzo, nothing loth, resumed his narrative of bygone joys, smiling as he compared himself inwardly to Othello waking

the fancy of Desdemona. Or was he, perhaps, more like Faust stealing away the innocent heart of Marguerite? The latter parallel did not please him, and he hastened to dismiss it from his mind.

The sun was sinking when the two young people parted. Neither of them was tied down to hours, or likely to be missed by anxious relatives. 'Will you come again some day?' asked the girl wistfully, while Vincenzo held her little brown hand and wished her good night; and he answered, 'I will come as often as you will let me.'

Nevertheless, as he rode away over the bare hills and moors, he began to doubt whether he would keep this promise. He was not over-squeamish; his principles were those of his age and his nation; he had always been accustomed to seize any kind of good luck that came in his way; but, for all that, he had a conscience. A young girl, as guileless presumably as a savage, and an orphan too!—No! it really would not do; 'I am not a scoundrel!' cried Vincenzo aloud; and, finding that the utterance of this modest boast did him good, he repeated it, 'I am not a scoundrel; and—by all the saints of Heaven, I won't go back to Bosa!'

It cost Vincenzo something to arrive at this heroic determination, which he did not record until the church of Paulilatino, with its collection of miserable dwellings huddled about it, was in sight. For by that time he had satisfied himself that the feeling which he entertained for the beautiful Teresina was no mere fancy, but downright, desperate love. In one sense this discovery made his resolution the more necessary; but on the other hand it unquestionably rendered the carrying out of it more difficult. This was far from being his first acquaintance with the tender passion, and, reasoning by analogy, he was justified in the hope that time would remove it; yet somehow he did not think that he had ever been *really* in love until now. To be sure, he had had the same conviction upon every previous occasion. Anyhow, his mind was made up; he would see Teresina no more.

Now, since Vincenzo Giave was not a man of iron will, it is by no means certain that weariness and loneliness might not have caused him ere long to break the engagement which he had made with his better self, had not circumstances taken all choice in the matter out of his hands. Most likely he had lingered too long in the treacherous evening air of Bosa; for the very next day he sickened of the fever, and for many long weeks afterwards he lay

on his bed, alternately burning and shivering, often delirious, and in his intervals of consciousness too prostrate and miserable to rise, as Sandro repeatedly besought him to do, and make an effort to shake off his malady. The Sindaco, who was also by way of being the village doctor, prescribed for him; his father, who had never suffered from the climate himself and could not understand why any one else should do so, came in sometimes to see him and scolded him half kindly, half fretfully; Sandro was unremitting in his attentions. But one and all said the same thing: he would not be himself again until after the autumn rains. 'I should be all right if I could only get away,' poor Vincenzo would moan; but when he said this the old Count usually jumped up and hobbled out of the room with great celerity. Hardly even to save his son's life could he have prevailed upon himself to pay the expenses of a journey to Florence.

But it was not, after all, a life or death matter. It was, as Sandro said, a case for patience—for patience and for a little courage,' the worthy *fattore* would sometimes venture to add.

But Vincenzo was not to be roused by these mild rebukes. 'What is the use of going out?' he would ask listlessly; 'what is there to do when one is out? Let me try to sleep, since I can't die.' Once or twice, half maddened by solitude and by the ceaseless tick-tick of the old eight-day clock on the landing, he did creep out into the dry, neglected garden behind the house; but the sunshine blinded him, the fine dust that hovered in the atmosphere choked him, and the din of the *cicale* (one must spend a summer in the south to realise how the grasshopper may become a burden) irritated his shattered nerves beyond bearing. He was glad to get back to semi-darkness, to semi-stupor, to confused dreams, in which the figure of Teresina was ever a prominent one.

For sickness had not cured Vincenzo of his love. When at length the time of sultry heat, of drought and universal inaction, had spent itself, when the first rains had fallen, when the parched earth had awakened from her annual trance, and when a delicious crispness freshened the morning air, the invalid began to feel his strength returning, and with it an irresistible craving to see Teresina once more. There was nothing to divert his thoughts from her; he had absolutely no pursuits to fall back upon; he was forgotten, or at any rate fancied himself forgotten, by all his friends. Was he to refuse himself the one poor pleasure that life could offer him because of scruples which, when all was said and

done, were perhaps exaggerated? There is only one sure way, as some cynical person has said, of getting rid of a harassing temptation, and that is to yield to it. As soon as Vincenzo was able to mount a horse again he was over the hills and away to Bosa; and in the joy of anticipation it seemed to him that even hated Sardinia, with its barren uplands and rocks and poverty-stricken villages, had become gay and beautiful. Bosa itself and the little valley, all green and fresh after the rains, looked like another Garden of Eden. He left his horse at the inn, and climbed, not without some difficulty, the steep path leading to the ruins.

She was not there. Of course it would have been rather a strange coincidence if she had happened to be on the exact spot where he had parted from her months before; yet, being still so weak, the young fellow was almost ready to cry like a fretful child over his disappointment. There were actually tears in his eyes, as, after waiting a long time in vain, he retraced his steps.

As he rode through the ill-paved streets, he peered eagerly at every hooded figure that fitted past him; but never a one among them was there resembling that of which he was in search, and it was not until he had crossed the bridge which leads out of the town, and was dejectedly breasting the hill towards home, that his heart suddenly stood still, and then began to beat like a steam-engine. Tripping down to meet him was a girlish form that he would have known among a thousand; and in his delight and surprise he hardly took note of the circumstance that she was accompanied by a young man, and that that young man was no other than the sturdy peasant whom he had seen dancing with her at the *festa* at Macomer.

Teresina started violently when she recognised the horseman, and a rush of colour came into her cheeks; but she recovered herself immediately, and greeted him with a cheery, unconcerned '*Buona sera, Signor Conte!*'

At the same time, however, she gave him a signal—a slight contraction of the brow and movement of the head—which Vincenzo was clever enough to interpret. He exchanged a few friendly words with her and rode slowly on up the winding road, feeling a pleasant assurance that she would join him before he should have proceeded very far upon his way. And so indeed it proved. He had not loitered up three of the long zigzags when there came a rustling sound in the bushes that bordered the highway, and Teresina, breathless but radiant, darted to his side.

‘You came here to see me?—you have not forgotten me?’ she panted.

‘Forgotten you?’ cried Vincenzo. ‘Ah! if you only knew!’ He checked himself, and added in a quieter tone, ‘I have been ill; that is why——’

‘Yes, yes; I know,’ interrupted Teresina; ‘I heard of that, and I understood how it was that you could not come. Only I was afraid—I was afraid——’

Vincenzo had dismounted, he was standing close to the girl; he saw that her lips were quivering, her eyes swimming. . . .

Alas for heroic resolutions! we are but mortal. One instant later Count Vincenzo di San Benedetto di Giave was clasping Teresina Bruschetti in his arms and covering her face with kisses. She did not resist him. On the contrary, she let her lovely head drop upon his shoulder, murmuring, ‘Oh, it is too beautiful! it is like a dream!’

All of a sudden she drew herself away and held her lover at arm’s length. ‘Is it *true*, then?’ she exclaimed. ‘Shall we really be married some day, and will you take me to Florence, as you said?’

Vincenzo’s heart turned cold within him. *He* to marry a peasant girl! Did she not see that it must be impossible? ‘We love one another; is not that enough?’ he stammered guiltily.

‘Oh, I know it cannot be yet,’ answered the girl, misunderstanding him; ‘I know we must wait until you are your own master. But perhaps that will not be long; and what signifies a year or two of waiting if we can look forward to being happy at last? You are not deceiving me?—oh! I know you could not do that. But tell me yourself—tell me—is it really true that I shall be your wife some day?’

Poor Vincenzo was not very strong-minded; but he was an honourable man according to his lights. Realising to its full extent the sacrifice that was demanded of him, he yet saw but one course to pursue; and he made his choice then and there. ‘It is true,’ he answered gravely. ‘I swear to you that you shall be my wife as soon as I have a home to offer you.’

A good half-hour had elapsed before Teresina’s accepted lover bethought himself of the young man in whose company he had encountered her, and began to make inquiries about him. ‘Oh, he!’ she said slightlyly, ‘he is nobody; only an old friend.

Yes, I believe he wants to marry me; but that is of no consequence. You are not jealous?’

‘No,’ answered Vincenzo; ‘why should I be jealous? I am sorry for the poor fellow.’

‘He will get over it and marry somebody else,’ Teresina declared, laughing. ‘And we shall really go to Florence, shall we not, and see the great ladies and their diamonds? And perhaps, oh! *perhaps*, I may have diamonds of my own when that time comes!’

The persistency with which she recurred to this topic ended by vexing Vincenzo. ‘Is it only for the diamonds that you care?’ he asked reproachfully.

‘Oh, no!’ she answered, throwing her arms round his neck, and holding up her face to be kissed, ‘for you too!—you too!’

III.



INCENZO rode homewards in a state of mingled elation and disquietude. He had sallied forth with no definite intention, and now, lo and behold! a crisis had come upon him which must needs change the whole current of his future life. He accepted that change, not without trepidation, indeed, yet in a loyal spirit, reflecting that he was not the first man who had followed King Cophetua's doubtful precedent; that there was such a thing as natural refinement; that

exceptional beauty always counted for something; and a good deal more to the like effect.

While one of the betrothed pair was thus consoling himself, the other was passing a somewhat uncomfortable five minutes

under an archway in a dim street of Bosa. Confronting her was the big-limbed young man of whom mention has already been made; and the voice and gestures of this young man were full of wrath.

‘You confess that you ran after that puppy,’ he was saying; ‘you confess that you have been talking to him all this time; and then you tell me not to be jealous! Do you take me for a fool?’

‘Indeed I do, dear Paolo,’ answered the girl sweetly. ‘What else can I think when you speak so roughly and accuse me of such dreadful things? If you cannot trust me now, what would it be when we were married?’

‘Marry me and you shall see,’ returned the other eagerly. ‘It would be quite different then; I should have no fears for you. Marry me, and I swear that you shall never hear a rough word from my lips.’

‘Now, Paolo,’ remonstrated Teresina, ‘how ridiculous that is! You know very well that we must wait until you have laid by enough money to keep us from starving. And in the meantime you are not to be so suspicious, or you will frighten me away altogether. This poor Count Giave means no harm. He is lonely, and so am I when you are away at work. It amuses us to chatter together sometimes—*ecco!* If you are not satisfied——’

She finished her sentence with an expressive shrug.

Paolo scratched his head. ‘So be it,’ he said at last. ‘But mind this. If ever your Count takes it into his head to say a word which a man might not say to his sister, I will kill him as I would a rabbit. You may tell him that from me.’

Teresina, however, did not see fit to deliver this message when next she met Vincenzo. Being, as will have been seen from the above fragment of dialogue, one of those prudent persons who are alive to the advantage of having a second string to their bow, she was above all things anxious to avert the chance of a collision between her two admirers; and surely there was no reason why the one should ever find out whether words addressed to her by the other were of a fraternal character or not.

Nevertheless, it is not easy for a young man and maiden to meet continually without officious persons becoming aware of the fact and drawing their own conclusions from it; and although Vincenzo and Teresina took what they conceived to be all proper precautions, they were not destined to escape the common lot.

On the one side, the gossips of Bosa began to wag their heads and their tongues; on the other, Sandro thought it right to speak a word of warning to his young master.

‘You have found an amusement, it seems, Signorino,’ said he one day. ‘I ask no questions; only remember that you are in Sardinia, and that our women are jealously watched, while our men are apt to be over-ready with their knives.’

By way of reply Vincenzo pointed to the butt of his revolver, which, as usual, was sticking out of his waistband; but the *fattore* sighed. ‘If you would only be advised by me and carry a shot-gun,’ he said. ‘It is so much safer. But the best way is to get into no quarrel at all.’

Vincenzo had neither intention nor expectation of using the weapon which Sandro so much disliked. He had ceased to look upon the Sards as a people of assassins, and was not conscious of having earned the enmity of any one among them. However, as he was riding home late one evening, after a long, blissful interview with the girl of his heart, he had a fine fright; for in the loneliest part of the road a tall figure sprang from behind a rock and barred his path, calling out melodramatically: ‘Signor Conte, beware! You are playing a dangerous game. Suspicions I have; I wait only for proofs. Believe me you are in no small peril of dying a violent death!’

And with that Paolo—for he it was—plunged into the darkness and vanished.

Vincenzo tried to laugh; but the truth was he was by no means disposed for laughter. His nerves, not of the strongest at any time, were shaken by his long illness; and although he would not tell Teresina of what had occurred, lest he should alarm her, he impressed upon her the necessity of prudence, varied their trysting-places as much as possible, and even suggested that it might be better to let the truth be known, if not as yet to his father, at least to her relations. But against this course she protested strenuously, declaring that her sister-in-law, whose intelligence was of a limited order, would never believe in the genuineness of her betrothal to one so far above her in rank, and would take instant measures for separating them irrevocably. Vincenzo did not press the point. He had fallen completely under the sway of the bright-eyed little woman, who did what she pleased with him. He had come to think her as clever as she was beautiful, and he reposed in her an unlimited confidence

which she would have been very glad if Paolo had seen his way to imitate.

Thus things went on smoothly and pleasantly until the catastrophe came which was quite certain to come sooner or later. It was on a wooded height to the south of Bosa that the lovers were locked in a tender parting embrace, when Teresina suddenly wrenched herself away with a loud cry of terror; and Vincenzo, wheeling round, saw his rival running towards him. The peasant's



long knife gleamed in his hand; he was rushing on with the fury of a wild beast; there was no time for deliberation. Hardly knowing what he did, Vincenzo drew his revolver and fired. Instantly Paolo leapt high into the air, came down heavily upon his heels, and toppled over backwards, stone-dead.

'Ah! we are lost!—we are lost!' shrieked Teresina; and, without another word, she turned and fled like the wind.

Vincenzo was fain to do likewise. Frightened and horror-struck, he dropped his revolver, sprang upon his horse, and galloped away

towards Paulilatino. He did not even stoop over his victim to see whether life was extinct; he *knew* that the man would never move again.

As luck would have it—for the dazed youth knew not whither he was hastening—he encountered Sandro before reaching the outskirts of the village; and to him he poured forth a hurried and incoherent account of what had happened.

‘Away with you to the mountains, Signorino!’ cried the *fattore*; ‘this is a bad business. Here is a hunch of bread and cheese and a little wine; it is all I have with me. Take them, and hide yourself in the mountains till I come to you. Stay; you know the *nuraghe* on the hills to the right as you go towards Nuora: it is a lonely place, and it will do for you to conceal yourself in till we see how things are likely to go. You say there were no witnesses?’

‘Only Teresina—only the girl,’ answered Vincenzo.

Sandro pursed up his lips and looked grave.

‘She would die sooner than breathe a word!’ Vincenzo cried.

‘Eh! who knows? But we must not waste time in talking. Ride as hard as you can, and turn the horse loose when you have done with him; he will find his own way home. Keep up your courage, Signorino, and to-morrow, if I can do it safely, I will bring you food and news.’

Vincenzo obeyed his servant’s orders without hesitation or objection. The shock that he had received had thrown him into that condition of mental paralysis which, it is said, enables even cowards to mount the scaffold calmly, and the only clear impression on his brain was that he must hurry away somewhere and hide himself. But when he had reached the lonely nurhag to which Sandro had directed him, and, after casting his horse adrift, had crept into the circular chamber which forms the interior of all these constructions, and was alone, the horror and hopelessness of his position became all at once apparent to him. The night was dark and chilly; he had no matches, and would not have dared to use them, had he had any; he could not bring himself to touch the bread that he had brought with him. Throwing himself down with his face to the ground, he gave way to a paroxysm of despair.

Hunted men almost invariably become demoralised. The great majority of mankind will behave fairly well in a stand-up fight; but to maintain your self-command after you have been

obliged to run away requires another and a rarer kind of courage. Vincenzo did not possess it. All through that terrible night he grovelled on the earth in senseless, abject terror. More than once he was tempted to crawl out from his lair, go down to the nearest village, surrender himself, and so have done with it; and, indeed, this would probably have been his wisest course; for, after all, he had fired in self-defence, and a case might easily have been made out for him. But he could not rouse himself to action; and when at length the day dawned he was conscious only of an intense animal longing for life. To be executed as a murderer, or, worse still, to be sent into penal servitude among the lowest of created beings!—it seemed impossible that such a horrible fate could befall him, Vincenzo Giave. And yet it was quite sure to befall him; unless, indeed, Sandro could devise some means for his escape. From time to time he peeped cautiously out through the narrow aperture which served as an entrance to his place of concealment, watching with feverish impatience for the approach of the faithful *fattore*; but many hours of intolerable suspense passed by, and it was not till late in the afternoon that he at last discerned a solitary horseman galloping towards him across the plain, and recognised the man who, he fondly hoped, might yet prove his deliverer.

Sandro tied up his horse to a tree and crept on hands and knees into the nurrag. ‘*Dio mio!*’ he exclaimed, feeling about in the darkness for his young master’s hand, ‘you are as cold as death. Here! drink this wine and eat something. Afterwards we will talk.’

‘I cannot!’ gasped Vincenzo.

‘You must. I will not speak a word until you have done it.’

To humour him, Vincenzo hastily tossed off the contents of Sandro’s flask and swallowed a mouthful or two of food. ‘Now go on—quickly,’ he whispered. ‘What news do you bring?’

‘The news is bad, Signorino; the girl has confessed everything. I do not blame her, she was scared, and besides, if she had held her peace, it would have made no difference. Your pistol was found lying beside the body, and it seems that all Bosa knew there would be a quarrel. Ah, those revolvers!—did I not tell you that no good would come of meddling with them?’

‘I never meant to kill the man,’ cried Vincenzo despairingly.

‘I know—I know. And to think that a charge of shot would

have answered all the purpose and done no sort of harm! However, it is too late to talk about that now. The carabinieri are out scouring the country in search of you, and just before I left Paulilatino I heard that a large reward is offered for your capture. Now, listen to me, Signor Vincenzo, and for Heaven's sake don't shiver as though you were a poltroon. When night comes you must find your way over into Genargentù and hide yourself as best you may among the forests. Others have done it before now, and why should not you? I have brought you some food, and you can get more, when that is gone, from the charcoal burners. For they may offer what reward they please, there is not a man in Sardinia so base as to hand a poor fellow over to those cursed carabinieri. Your father has given me all the gold he had in the house—a hundred Napoleons; you may imagine what a treat it was to him to part with them! I have sewn them into this belt, which you are to put on. And here is a good knife, in case—in case it should be wanted. For the moment we dare not try to get you down to the coast; but in a month or two it will be easier. Then we shall send you in a sailing-boat to Naples, where you will take your passage for America. The Signor Conte feels very confident about obtaining your pardon; only not yet. He thinks at least a year must pass before he could venture to ask for it, and even then it will cost a great deal of money. In a word, there is great danger; but the case is not desperate, if you will only be brave and prudent. Have you understood me?' concluded Sandro, as Vincenzo remained speechless.

'I understand you,' answered the other, in a dull, hopeless voice; 'but I can't do what you say; it would be only dying a hundred deaths instead of one. I think I will give myself up to the carabinieri.'

The *fattore* struck his hands together in despair. 'Signor Vincenzo,' he cried, 'don't break my heart! Have you no courage?'

'I don't know, Sandro,' answered the young man, breaking into an odd, short laugh. 'I think I have; only I can't lay my hand upon it, somehow.'

'What is the use of courage that can't be found when it is wanted?' groaned the *fattore*, with almost comical pathos.

There was a pause of some minutes. Then Vincenzo said, 'Have you a pencil and a scrap of paper about you? Yes? Then strike a light, and let me write something.'

He scribbled a few hurried lines to Teresina, telling her where he was and of the plan which had been suggested to him for regaining his liberty. 'I cannot do otherwise than release you from your engagement to me,' he wrote; 'and yet you are all that I care to live for. Send me one word by the bearer (who can be implicitly trusted) to say that at least you will not forget me.' He had settled in his heart that upon that word it should depend whether he would allow himself to be captured, or take the forlorn hope of escape held out to him.

When he had done writing he folded the paper and handed it to Sandro. 'Can I stay here two days more?' he asked.

Sandro shook his head. 'Better not.'

'But is it possible?'

'Of course it is *possible*.'

'Then, my dear, good Sandro, do me one last kindness. Take this paper to Teresina Bruschetti at Bosa, and bring me her reply the day after to-morrow.'

Sandro protested loudly and long. It was madness, he said, to run such needless risks; but Vincenzo was resolute; and, after a long debate, the *fattore* yielded against his better judgment.

'If I do this for you,' he said at last, 'will you in return do what I ask you and make for the mountains?'

'I think I will,' answered the young man. 'I won't promise, but I think I will. I have to find my courage first, you know,' he added, with a faint smile.

IV.



HERE was another long period of suspense before Vincenzo; but his nerves were steadier now. He felt that the worst was over, and that never again could he go through such an agony as that which was past. He managed to eat and drink without much difficulty, and slept from sheer exhaustion.

The night passed, the day came again, and hour after hour stole by in an unbroken stillness. Every now

and again he looked at the long double-edged knife which Sandro had given him, and felt its sharp point. 'If the worst comes to the worst,' he thought, 'this would be better than the guillotine or the galleys.'

But somehow he could not help hoping. There seemed to be hope in the air, in the bright sunshine, in the coursing of his own young blood. Only once or twice it came across him with a swift, shuddering chill that he was a murderer, and that, happen what might, that hideous fact could never be obliterated.

Once more the night fell, bringing snatches of sleep with it, and once more the grey dawn broke. And then, far earlier than he had dared to hope for it, the longed-for sound of a horse's hoofs galloping struck upon his ear. He thrust his head through the narrow opening and looked out eagerly.

Alas! it was not Sandro who was spurring across the dewy pasture-lands, but a mounted carabinieri; and Vincenzo, seeing him, knew that his hour had come. He did not attempt to withdraw into his hiding-place, but lay there, as if fascinated, watching

the approach of fate. Presently he made out another carabinieri riding through the morning mists on the far right, then another on the left, and yet another, who seemed to be making straight for the hills behind the nurhag. He saw it all now: he was surrounded, taken in a trap, and escape was as impossible as resistance.

‘Vincenzo Giave, come out and surrender yourself!’ shouted the first horseman, as soon as he was within hailing distance, and the fugitive obeyed immediately.



‘You need not take precautions,’ he said, for the man had covered him with his carbine. ‘I am not going to struggle or run.’

He held out his wrists for the handcuffs with a smile. The misery of fear was over and done with now, and he had never felt more calm in his life.

‘By-the-by,’ he asked, pausing for a moment, ‘how did you find out that I was here?’

‘We had information,’ answered the man curtly and rather sullenly. ‘A reward was offered, and it has been claimed.’

‘I am sorry that you should have been deprived of the reward,’ said Vincenzo. ‘And who is the fortunate fellow who is to get it?’

The man hesitated, lowering his eyes. His companions had ridden up by this time, and had surrounded their prisoner. 'What signifies that?' growled out one of them. 'It is no business of ours. Nor of yours either,' he added to Vincenzo.

'Pardon me, my friend,' returned the young man mildly, 'but I think it concerns me a little, and it can do you no harm to gratify my curiosity. You would not wish to refuse such a small favour as that to one who will never be able to ask another favour of a fellow-creature.'

'Well, well,' said the man who had spoken first, 'it was the girl Teresina Bruschetti. I should not have betrayed you in her place; but what would you have? She is poor; and besides, as she said, you had killed her lover.'

'She said that?' exclaimed Vincenzo, who had turned as white as marble—'she said that?'

'*Eh, perdio!* was it not true? But you had better not answer,' added the man hastily. 'If you will take my advice, you will engage a good advocate and hold your tongue.'

But Vincenzo was not listening to this well-meant counsel. His hands were still free. He remained motionless for a second, staring straight before him; then, with a sudden, swift movement, he drew Sandro's knife, held it at arm's length, and, putting forth all his strength, buried it deep in his breast—having found his courage at last, as some may think.

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PELINO VIERA'S CONFESSION.



WILL be necessary to inform the reader—in all probability unacquainted with the political events of the year 1829 in Buenos Ayres—that the close of that year was more memorable for tumults of a revolutionary character than usual. During these disturbances the prisoners confined in the city gaol, taking advantage

of the outside agitation and of the weakness of their guard, made an attempt to recover their liberty. They were not acting without precedent, and had things taken their usual course they would, no doubt, have succeeded in placing themselves beyond the oppressive tyranny of the criminal laws. Unfortunately for them they were discovered in time and fired on by the guard ;

several were killed or wounded, and in the end they were overpowered; not, however, before some half-dozen of them had made good their escape. Amongst the few thus favoured of fortune was Pelino Viera, a prisoner who had already been found guilty—without extenuating circumstances—of murdering his wife. Notwithstanding the unsettled condition of the country the tragedy had created a great sensation at the time, owing to the unusual circumstances attending it. Viera was a young man holding a good position, and generally beloved for the sweetness of his disposition; he had married a very beautiful woman, and was believed by all who knew him to entertain the deepest affection for her. What then was the motive of the crime? The mystery remained unsolved at the trial, and the learned and eloquent Doctor of Laws who defended Viera was evidently put to great straits, since the theory he set up was characterised by the Judge of First Instance, presiding at the trial, as incredible and even absurd. It was to the effect that Viera's wife was a somnambulist; that roaming about her bedchamber she had knocked down a rapier hanging against the wall, which falling pierced her bosom; and that Viera, distracted at so sudden and awful a calamity, had been unable to give an account of what had happened, but had only raved incoherently when discovered mourning over the corpse of his bride. The accused himself would not open his lips either to confess or to deny his guilt, but appeared, while the trial lasted, like one overwhelmed by a great despair. He was accordingly condemned to be shot; those who saw him carried back to his cell knew there was not the smallest chance of a reprieve, even in a country where reprieves may often be had for the asking: for the unhappy man's relations were thousands of miles away and ignorant of his desperate situation, while his wife's relations were only too anxious to see the last penalty of the law inflicted on him. Unexpectedly, when the young wife-killer imagined that only two days of life remained to him, his fellow-prisoners dragged him forth from his cell, and from that moment he vanished utterly from sight. Concealed in the pallet he had occupied the following confession was found, written in pencil on a few sheets of the large Barcelona paper which it is customary to give out to the prisoners to make their cigarettes with. The manuscript was preserved, along with other prison curiosities, by the Alcalde, and after his death, many years ago, it came by chance into my possession.

I am not going to shock the enlightened and scientific reader by expressing belief in this confession, but give, without comment, a simple translation of it. Witchcraft in England is dead and buried ; and if sometimes it rises out of its grass-grown grave it returns to us under a new and pretty name, and can no longer be recognised as that maleficent something which was wont to trouble the peace of our forefathers. But in Pelino Viera's country it is still a reality and a power. There at the hour of midnight it is a common thing to be startled by peals of shrill hysterical laughter, heard far up in the sky ; this is called the *witch-laughter*, and something about what is supposed to be the cause of it may be gathered from what follows.

My father came early in life to this city as agent for a commercial firm in Lisbon. In time he prospered greatly, and for over twenty years figured as one of the principal merchants of Buenos Ayres. At length he resolved to give up business and spend the remainder of his days in his own country. The very thought of going to Portugal was to me intolerable. By birth and education I was an Argentine, and looked upon the Portuguese as a distant people about whom we knew nothing, except that they were of the same race as the Brazilians, our natural enemies. My father consented to let me remain ; he had nine children and could afford to spare me ; nor did my mother regard the separation as a calamity, for I was not her favourite son. Before embarking my father made generous provision for my support. Knowing that my preference was for a country life, he gave me a letter to Don Pascual Roldan, a wealthy landholder of Los Montes Grandes—a pastoral district in the southern portion of the province ; and told me to go and reside with Roldan, who would be a second father to me. He also gave me to understand that a sum of money, sufficient for the purchase of an estate, would be lodged for me with his old friend.

After parting from my relations on board their ship I despatched a letter to Don Pascual, informing him of my intended visit, and then spent a few days making preparations for my country life. I sent my luggage on by the diligence, then, having provided myself with a good horse, I left Buenos Ayres, intending to journey leisurely to the Espinillo, Roldan's estate. I rode slowly across country, inquiring my way and resting every night at some village or estancia house. On the afternoon of the third

day I came in sight of the Espinillo—a herdsman pointed it out to me—a blue line of trees on the distant horizon. My horse being tired when I approached my destination, I walked him slowly through the wood of tala trees. Here the boles and lower branches had been rubbed smooth by the cattle, and there was no under-wood. Finding the shade grateful and wishing to feel my feet on the ground, I dismounted and led my horse by the bridle. A great silence rested on the earth; only the distant lowing of cattle could be heard, and sometimes a wild bird broke into song near me. This quiet of nature made my heart glad within me; I could not have wished for a sweeter welcome. Suddenly as I walked I heard before me the shrill voices of women quarrelling: they seemed to be very angry, and some of the expressions they used were terrible to hear. Very soon I caught sight of them. One was a withered, white-haired old woman, dressed in rags, and holding in her arms a bundle of dried sticks. The other was young, and wore a dark-green dress; her face was white with passion, and I saw her strike the old woman a blow that made her stagger and drop her bundle of sticks on the ground. At this moment they perceived me. The young woman had a grey shawl with a green fringe on her arm, and on seeing me she wrapped up her face in it, and hurried away through the trees. The other, snatching up her bundle, hobbled off in an opposite direction. When I called to her she only increased her pace, and I was left alone. I continued my walk, and presently emerging from the road I found myself before the house I sought.

Don Pascual had not visited Buenos Ayres for many years, and I did not remember him. He was a stout, elderly man, with white hair, which he wore long, and a pleasing, open, florid countenance. He embraced me joyfully, asked me a hundred questions, and talked and laughed incessantly, so pleased was he at my visit. Later he presented me to his daughters, and I was surprised and flattered at the warmth of their welcome.

Don Pascual had a gay, lively disposition, and, remarking my white hands, asked me if I thought they could check a hot-mouthed horse, or cast a lasso on to the horns of a bull. After dinner, when we all sat under the corridor to enjoy the cool evening, I began to observe his daughters more closely. The youngest, whose name was Dolores, was a gentle-faced girl, with grey eyes and chestnut hair. Apart from her sister she would have been thought pretty. Her sister, Rosaura, was beautiful

and majestic, and with her sweet grace and vivacity quickly captivated the heart. Her eyes were dark and passionate, her features perfect; never had I seen anything to compare with the richness of her complexion, shaded by luxuriant masses of blue-black hair. I tried to restrain the spontaneous admiration I felt. I desired to look on her with calm indifference, or only with an interest like that felt for rare and lovely flowers by one learned in plants. If a thought of love was born in me, I regarded it as a sinful thought, and strove to divest myself of it. Was any defence against such sweetness possible? She fascinated me. Every glance, every word, every smile drew me irresistibly to her. Yet the struggle in me would not cease. What is the reason of this unwillingness to submit? I asked myself. The answer took the form of a painful suspicion. I remembered that scene in the tala wood, and imagined that in Rosaura I beheld that angry young woman in the green dress. In another moment I rebuked a thought so unjust. I was about to relate to her what I had witnessed. Again and again I attempted to speak of it, but though rebuked, the suspicion still lived and made me silent.

For many days these thoughts continued to disquiet me, and made me anxiously watch for the appearance of the green dress and of the shawl with green fringe. I never saw them. Days, weeks, months flew pleasantly by; I had lived an entire year at the Espinillo. Roldan treated me like a beloved son. I acted as major-domo on the estate, and the free life of the pampas grew unspeakably dear to me. I could understand why those who have once tasted it are never satisfied with any other. The artificial luxuries of cities, the excitement of politics, the delights of travel, what are these in comparison with it? The sisters were my constant companions. With them I rode, walked, sang, or conversed at all hours of the day. Dolores was my sweet sister, and I was her brother; but Rosaura—if I but touched her hand my heart was on fire; I trembled and could not speak for joy. And she was not indifferent to me. How could I fail to remark the rich colour that mantled her olive cheek, the fire that flashed from her dark eyes at my approach?

One evening Roldan hurried in full of happy excitement. 'Pelino!' he cried, 'I bring you great news! The estate adjoining mine on the west side is for sale—two leagues of incomparable pasture land. The thing could not be better. The Verro—a perennial stream, remember—runs the entire length of the land.

Will you now begin life for yourself? I advise you to buy, build a proper house, plant trees, and make a paradise. If your money is not sufficient, let me help you. I am rich and have few mouths to feed.'

I did as he advised. I bought the estate, built houses, and increased the stock. The care of my new establishment, which I had rechristened Santa Rosaura, occupied all my time, so that my visits to my friends became infrequent. At first I could scarcely exist apart from Rosaura; her image was before me day and night, while the craving to be with her was so intense that I lost flesh and looked pale and worn. I was therefore surprised to find this great longing quickly pass away. My mind was again serene as in the days before that great passion had disturbed me. At the same time, however, I felt that only while apart from Rosaura would this feeling of freedom which I had now recovered endure, so that I grew more and more reluctant to visit her.

I had been about four months at Santa Rosaura when Roldan came one day to visit me. After admiring all I had done he asked me how I bore my solitary life.

'Ah, there it is!' I replied. 'I miss your pleasant society every hour of the day.'

The old man's face darkened, for by nature he was proud and passionate. 'And is the society of my daughters nothing to you, Pelino?' he sternly said.

'What must I say to him now?' I asked myself, and was silent.

'Pelino,' he demanded, 'have you nothing to answer? I have been a father to you. I am an old and wealthy man; remember that I am also a proud one. Have I not seen everything since the day that brought you to my door? You have won the heart of the daughter I idolise. I never spoke a word to you, remembering whose son you were, and that a Viera should be incapable of a disgraceful action.'

The old man's just anger and my facile nature conspired to destroy me. 'Oh, señor,' I exclaimed, 'I should indeed be the basest of men had any motive but the purest love and esteem influenced me. To possess your daughter's affections would indeed be the greatest happiness. I have loved and I love her. But has she given me her heart? On that point I have only cruel doubts.'

'And are you so weak as to resign your hopes because of doubts?' asked Roldan with a touch of scorn. 'Speak to her, boy, and you will know all. And should she refuse you, swear

by all you hold sacred to marry her in spite of refusals. That was what I did, Pelino, and the woman I won—Heaven rest her soul!—was like her daughter Rosaura.'

I clasped his hand and thanked him for the encouragement he gave me. The cloud passed from his brow, and we parted friends.

Notwithstanding all I had said I was filled with despondency when he left me. True, I loved Rosaura, but the thought of an alliance with her was almost intolerable. Yet what could I do? From the alternative course I shrank in dismay, for how could I ever endure to be despised by Roldan, whom I loved, as the vilest of men? I saw no possible escape from the false position I was in. My mind was in a dreadful tumult, and in this condition I passed several days and nights. I tried to force myself to believe that I loved Rosaura passionately, as I had indeed loved her once, and that were I to marry her, a great and enduring happiness would crown my life. I figured her in my mind a bride, dwelling in imagination on her perennial smile, her passionate beauty, her thousand nameless fascinations. All in vain! Only the image of the white-faced fury of the tala wood remained persistently on my mind, and my heart sank within me. At length, driven to extremity, I resolved to prove the truth of my suspicions. Never would such a fiend win me to marry her, though her beauty exceeded that of an angel. Suddenly a means of escape opened before me. I will visit Rosaura, I said, and tell her of that strange scene in the tala wood. Her confusion will betray her. I will be grieved, alarmed, amazed. I will discover by accident, as it were, in her that hateful being. Then I will not spare her, but wound her with cruel taunts; her agitation will turn to implacable rage, and our miserable affair will end in mutual insults. Roldan, ignorant of the cause of our quarrel, will be unable to blame me. Having thus carefully considered my plans and prepared myself for the exercise of dissimulation, I went to the Espinillo.

Roldan was absent. Dolores received me; her sister, she told me, was far from well, and for some days past had kept her room. I expressed sympathy and sent a kind message. I was left alone for half an hour, and experienced the greatest agitation of mind. I was now, perhaps, about to be subjected to a terrible trial, but the happiness of my whole life depended on my resolution, and I was determined to allow no soft feelings to influence me.

At length Dolores returned supporting her sister, who ad-

vanced with feeble steps to meet me. What a change in her face—how thin and pale it was! Yet never had I seen her fairer: the pensive languor of illness, her pallor, the eyes cast down, and the shy fondness with which she regarded me, increased her beauty a thousand times. I hastened to her side and clasped her hand in mine, and could not withdraw my sight from her countenance. For a few moments she permitted me to retain her hand, then gently withdrew it. Her eyes drooped and her face became suffused with a soft indescribable loveliness. When Dolores left us I could no longer disguise my feelings, and tenderly upbraided her for having kept me in ignorance of her illness. She turned her face aside and burst into a flood of tears. I implored her to tell me the secret of her grief.

‘If this is grief, Pelino,’ she replied, ‘then it is indeed sweet to grieve. Oh, you do not know how dear you are to us all in this house. What would our lonely lives be without your friendship? And you grew so cold towards us I thought it was about to end for ever. I knew, Pelino, I had never uttered a word, never harboured a thought you could take offence at, and feared that some cruel falsehood had come between us. Will you now always—always be our friend, Pelino?’

I replied by clasping her to my bosom, pressing a hundred burning kisses on her sweet lips, and pouring a thousand tender vows of eternal love in her ear. What supreme happiness I felt! I now looked back on my former state as madness. For what insane delusions, what lies whispered by some malignant fiend, had made me harbour cruel thoughts of this precious woman I loved, this sweetest creature Heaven had made? Never, so long as life lasted, should anything come between us again!

Not very long after that meeting we were married. For three happy months we resided in Buenos Ayres, visiting my wife's relations. Then we returned to Santa Rosaura, and I was once more occupied with my flocks and herds and the pastimes of the pampas.

Life was now doubly sweet for the presence of the woman I idolised. Never had man a more beautiful or a more devoted wife, and the readiness, nay joy, with which she resigned the luxuries and gay pastimes of the capital to accompany me to our home in the lonely pampa filled me with a pleasant surprise. Still even then my mind had not regained its calm; the delirious happiness I experienced was not a dress for everyday wear, but a gay, embroidered garment that would soon lose its beauty.

Eight months had elapsed since my return, when, turning my eyes inward and considering my state, as those who have been disturbed in their minds are accustomed to do, I made the discovery that I was no longer happy. 'Ingrate, fool, dreamer of vain dreams, what would you have?' I said to myself, striving to overcome the secret melancholy corroding my heart. Had I ceased to love my wife? She was still all my imagination had pictured: her sweet temper never knew a cloud; her rare grace and exquisite beauty had not forsaken her; the suspicion I had once harboured now seemed forgotten, or came back to me only like the remembrance of an evil dream, and yet, and yet I could not say that I loved my wife. Sometimes I thought my depression was caused by a secret malady undermining my existence, for I was now often afflicted by headache and lassitude.

Not very long after I had begun to note these symptoms, which I was careful to conceal from my wife, I woke one morning with a dull, throbbing sensation in my brain. I noticed a peculiar odour in the room which appeared to make the air so heavy that it was a labour to breathe: it was a familiar odour, but not musk, lavender, attar of roses, or any of the perfumes Rosaura was so fond of, and I could not remember what it was. For an hour I lay on my bed disinclined to rise, vainly trying to recall the name of the scent, and with a vague fear that my memory was beginning to fail, that I was perhaps even sinking into hopeless imbecility. A few weeks later it all happened again—the late waking, the oppressive sensation, the faint familiar odour in the room. Again and again the same thing occurred. I was anxious and my health suffered, but my suspicions were now thoroughly aroused. In Rosaura's absence I searched the apartment. I found many scent-bottles, but the odour I was in quest of was not there. A small ebony silver-bound box I could not open, having no key to fit it, and I dared not break the lock, for I had now grown afraid of my wife. My evanescent passion had utterly passed away by this time; hatred had taken its place—hatred and fear, for these two ever go together. I dissembled well. I feigned illness; when she kissed me I smiled while loathing her in my heart; the folds of a serpent would have been more endurable than her arms about me, yet I affected to sleep peacefully in her bosom.

One day while out riding I dropped my whip; dismounting to pick it up I put my foot on a small dark green plant with long

lance-shaped leaves and clusters of greenish-white flowers. It is a plant well known for its powerful narcotic smell and for the acrid milky juice the stem gives out when bruised.

'This is it!' I cried in exultation. 'This is the mysterious perfume I have been seeking. From this little thing I will advance to great things.'

I resolved to follow the clue; but I would be secret in all I did, like a man advancing to strike a venomous snake and fearing to rouse it before he is ready to deliver the blow.

Taking a sprig of the plant I went to an old herdsman living on my estate and asked him its name.

He shook his head. 'Old Salomé, the *curandera*, knows everything,' he answered. 'She can tell you the virtue of every plant, cure diseases, and prophesy many things.'

I replied that I was sorry she knew so much, and rode home determined to visit her.

Close to the Espinillo house there existed a group of little ranchos, tenanted by some very poor people who were charitably allowed by Roldan to live and keep a few cattle rent free on his land. In one of these huts lived Salomé, the *curandera*. I had often heard about her, for all her neighbours, not even excepting my father-in-law, professed to believe in her skill; but I had never seen her, having always felt a great contempt for these ignorant but cunning people, who give themselves mysterious airs and pretend to know so much more than their neighbours. In my trouble, however, I forgot my prejudice and hastened to consult her. On first entering her hovel, I was astonished to discover in Salomé the old woman I had seen in the tala wood on my arrival at the Espinillo. I sat down on the bleached skull of a horse—the only seat she had to offer me—and began by saying that I had long known her by fame, but now desired a more intimate acquaintance. She thanked me dryly. I spoke of medicinal herbs, and, drawing from my pocket a leaf of the strange-smelling plant I had provided for the occasion, asked her what she called it.

'Tis the Flor de Pesadilla,' she replied, and, seeing me start, she cackled maliciously.

I tried to laugh off my nervousness. 'What a pity to give a pretty flower a name so terrible!' I said. 'The night-mare flower—only a madman could have called it that! Perhaps you can tell me why it was called by such a name?'

She answered 'that she did not know,' then angrily added 'that I came to her like one wishing to steal knowledge.'

'No,' I returned, 'tell me, mother, all I wish to know, and I will give you this;' and with that I drew from my pocket a gold doubloon.

Her eyes sparkled like fireflies at the sight. 'What do you wish to know, my son?' she asked in eager tones.

I replied, 'Out of this flower there comes by night an evil spirit and cruelly persecutes me. I do not wish to fly from it. Give me strength to resist it, for it drowns my senses in slumber.'

The old hag became strangely excited at my words; she jumped up clapping her hands, then burst into a peal of laughter so shrill and unearthly that my blood was chilled in my veins, and the hair stood up on my head. Finally she sank down in a crouching attitude upon the floor, mumbling, and with a horrid expression of gratified malice in her eyes.

'Ah, sister mine!' I heard her mutter. 'Ah, bright eyes, sweet lips, because of you I was driven out, and those who knew and obeyed me before you were born now neglect and despise me. Insolent wretch! Fools, fools that they were! See now what you have done; something must surely come of this, something good for me. She was always bold, the pretty one, now she grows careless.'

She kept on in this way for some time, occasionally uttering a little cackling laugh. I was greatly disturbed at her words; and she, too, when the excitement had worn itself out, seemed troubled in mind, and from time to time stole an anxious glance at the great yellow coin in my hand.

At length she roused herself, and taking a small wooden crucifix from the wall approached me.

'My son,' she said, 'I know all your afflictions, and that you are now only about to increase them. Nevertheless, I cannot reject the succour Heaven in its infinite compassion sends to one so old and feeble. Kneel, my son, and swear on this cross that whatever happens to you you will never disclose this visit, or name my name to that infamous despiser of her betters, that accursed viper with a pretty face—alas, what am I saying? I am old—old, my son, and sometimes my mind wanders. I mean your sweet wife, your pretty angel, Rosaura; swear that she shall never know of this visit; for to you she is sweet and good and beautiful, to every one she is good, only to me—a poor old

woman—she is more bitter than the wild pumpkin, more cruel than the hungry hawk!

I went down on my knees and took the required oath. 'Go now,' she said, 'and return to me before sunset.'

On my return to the hovel the old woman gave me a bundle of leaves, apparently just gathered and hastily dried by the fire. 'Take these,' she said, 'and keep them where no eye can see



them. Every night, before retiring, chew well and swallow two or three of them.'

'Will they prevent sleep?' I asked.

'No, no,' said the hag, with a little cackle as she clutched the doubloon; 'they will not keep you long awake when there is nothing stirring. When you smell Pesadilla be careful to keep your eyes closed, and you will dream strange dreams.'

I shuddered at her words and went home. I followed her directions, and every night after chewing the leaves felt strangely wakeful; not feverish, but with senses clear and keen. This would last for about two hours, then I would sleep quietly till morning.

Close to the head of the bed, on a small table, there was an ebony cross on which a golden Christ was suspended, and it was Rosaura's habit every night after undressing to kneel before it and perform her devotions. One night, about a fortnight after I had seen Salomé, while I lay with partially closed eyes, I noticed that Rosaura glanced frequently towards me. She rose, and moving stealthily about undressed herself, then came, as was her custom, and knelt down beside the bed. Presently she placed a hand gently on mine and whispered, 'Asleep, Pelino?' Receiving no reply she raised her other hand, there was a small phial in it, and removing the stopper the room was quickly filled with the powerful Pesadilla odour. She bent over me, placing the phial close to my nose, then poured a few clammy drops into my lips, and withdrew from the bedside uttering a great sigh of relief. The drug produced no effect on me: on the contrary, I felt intensely wakeful, and watched her slightest movement, while outwardly I was calm and apparently in a sound sleep.

Rosaura retired to a seat beside the dressing-table at some distance from the bed. She smiled to herself and appeared to be in a soft, placid frame of mind. By-and-by she opened the small ebony box I have already spoken about, and took from it a little clay pot and placed it on the table before her. Suddenly I heard a rushing noise like the sound of great wings above me; then it seemed to me as if beings of some kind had alighted on the roof; the walls shook, and I heard voices calling, 'Sister! sister!' Rosaura rose and threw off her night-dress, then, taking ointment from the pot and rubbing it on the palms of her hands, she passed it rapidly over her whole body, arms, and legs, only leaving her face untouched. Instantly she became covered with a plumage of a slaty-blue colour, only on her face there were no feathers. At the same time from her shoulders sprang wings which were incessantly agitated. She hurried forth, closing the door after her; once more the walls trembled or seemed to tremble; a sound of rushing wings was heard, and, mingling with it, shrill peals of laughter; then all was still. At the last, in my amazement and horror, I had forgotten myself and stared with wide-open eyes at her doings; but in her haste she went out without one glance at me.

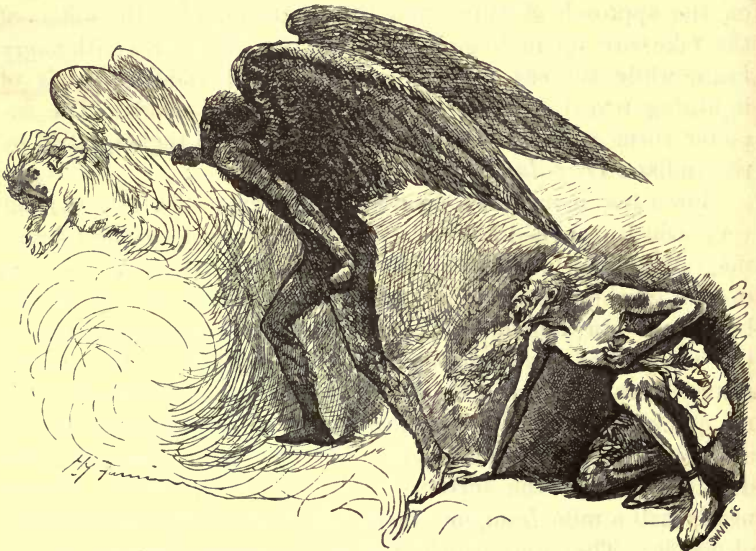
Since my interview with the *curandera* the suspicion, already then in my mind, that my wife was one of those abhorred beings possessing superhuman knowledge, which they kept secret and

doubtless used for evil purposes, had grown into a settled conviction. And now that I had satisfied the dangerous curiosity that had animated me, had actually seen my wife making use of her horrid occult arts, what was I to do? Not even yet was my curiosity wholly satisfied, however, and to inspire me to further action the hatred I had long nursed in secret became all at once a bitter, burning desire for vengeance on the woman who had linked with mine her accursed destiny. I was desperate now and fearless, and anxious to be up and doing. Suddenly a strange thought came to me, and springing to my feet I tore off my shirt and began to rub myself with the ointment. The mysterious effect was produced on me—I was instantly covered with dark blue feathers, and on my shoulders I felt wings. Perhaps, I thought, I am now like those abhorred beings in soul also. But the thought scarcely troubled me, for I was insane with rage. Catching up a slender rapier that hung on the wall, I sallied forth. The moon had risen, and the night was almost as bright as day. I felt strangely buoyant as I walked, and could scarcely keep my feet on the ground. I raised my pinions, and rose without apparent effort perpendicularly to a vast height in the air. I heard a shrill peal of laughter near me, then a winged being like myself shot by me with a celerity compared with which the falcon's flight is slow. I followed, and the still night air was like a mighty rushing wind in my face. I glanced back for a moment to see the Verro, like a silver thread, far, far beneath me. Behind me in the northern sky shone the cluster of the seven stars, for we flew towards the Magellanic clouds. We passed over vast desert pampas, over broad rivers and mountain ranges of which I had never heard. My guide vanished before me, still I kept on—the same stars shining in my face. Shrill peals of laughter were occasionally heard, and dark forms were seen shooting past me. And now I noticed them sweeping downwards towards the distant earth. Beneath me lay a vast lake, and in its centre an island, its shores covered with a dense forest of tall trees; but the interior was a lofty plain, barren and desolate. To this plain the flying forms descended, I with them, still grasping the naked weapon in my hand. I alighted in the middle of a city surrounded by a wall. It was all dark and silent, and the houses were of stone and vast in size, each house standing by itself surrounded by broad stony walks. The sight of these great gloomy buildings, the work of former times, inspired my soul with awe, almost with fear, and for a short time banished the thought

of Rosaura. But I did not feel astonished. From childhood I had been taught to believe in the existence of this often and vainly sought city in the wilderness, founded centuries ago by the Bishop of Placentia and his missionary colonists, but probably no longer the habitation of Christian men. The account history gives of it, the hundred traditions I had heard, the fate of the expeditions sent out for its discovery, and the horror the Indian tribes manifest concerning it, all seemed to indicate that some powerful influence of an unearthly and malignant nature rests upon it. The very elements appear leagued together to protect it from prying curiosity, if there is any foundation for the common belief that on the approach of white men the earth trembles, the waters of the lake rise up in huge billows covering the shores with angry foam, while the sky darkens overhead, and sudden flashes of lightning reveal gigantic human forms in the clouds. The explorer turns in terror and dismay from this evil region, called by the Indians *Trapalanda*.

For a few moments I stood still in a wide silent street; but very soon I discerned a crowd of winged people hurrying towards me, talking and laughing aloud, and, to escape them, I concealed myself in the shadow of a vast arched entrance to one of the buildings. In a moment they entered after me, and passed into the interior of the building without seeing me. My courage returned, and I followed them at some distance. The passage led me quickly into a vast room, so long that it looked like a wide avenue of stone and arched over. Around me all was dark and deserted, but at the further end of the room, which seemed nearly half a mile from me, there was a great light and a crowd of people. They were whirling about, apparently dancing, all the time shouting and laughing like maniacs. The group I had followed had probably already joined this crowd, for I could not see them. Walls, floor, and the high arched roof were all of black stone. There were no fires or lamps, but on the walls were painted figures of jaguars, horses speeding through clouds of dust, Indians engaged in fight with white men, serpents, whirlwinds, grassy plains on fire, with ostriches flying before the flames, and a hundred other things; the men and animals were drawn life size, and the bright colours they were painted in gave out a phosphorescent light, making them visible and shedding a dim twilight into the room. I advanced cautiously, rapier in hand, and keeping always in the centre of the floor where it was very

dark, being at least ten yards from the pictured walls on either hand. At length I came on a black figure crouching on the floor before me; at the sound of my step it started up—a great gaunt man, with cavernous eyes that gleamed like will-o'-wisps, and a white beard reaching to his waist. His sole garment was a piece of guanaco hide tied round the body, and his yellow skin was drawn so closely over his bones that he looked more like a skeleton than a living being. As I approached him I noticed an iron chain on his ankle, and feeling now very bold and careless, and commiserating this sad object, I said, 'Old man, what brought



you here? We are comrades in misfortune; shall I give you liberty?' For a few moments he stared at me with a wild, astonished look, then bending forward till his lips almost touched my face, he murmured, 'This is hell—do you not know? How can you get out of it? Look!' and his finger pointed over my shoulder. 'Poor old man, your mind is gone!' I said. He answered nothing, but dropped down on his face upon the floor again. The next moment I saw at my elbow a woman, all feathered like myself, who stood staring at me with an expression of amazement and fear in her face. As I turned she uttered a piercing yell; I raised my weapon, but she fled screaming beyond

its reach. The old man lifted his head again and stared at me, then pointed towards the door by which I had entered. In another moment such a shrill and outrageous hubbub resounded from the further end of the room that, struck with sudden terror, I turned and fled. Before I reached the door a crowd of feathered women appeared before me, all staring at me with pale, furious faces; but the cries behind me were coming nearer; there was no other way of escape, and I rushed at them striking them furiously with my rapier. I saw distinctly one woman fall before its thrust, while three or four more were borne down by the shock of my body. I passed out over them, sprang into the air, and fled. The shrill angry cries beneath me quickly died away; I was at a vast height speeding towards the cluster of the seven stars. In this homeward flight I was alone in the vast solitary sky, for not one dark winged form did I meet, nor did any sound break the deep silence. In about two hours I was again in my own district, and saw far beneath me the Verro glimmering in the moonlight.

I reached my home and re-entered my silent room, where the candle still burnt on the dressing-table just where Rosaura had left it. I now began to experience a terrible excitement, for every moment I expected the return of my wife. Cautiously I disposed everything just as she had left it. I had forgotten for a time the wings and feathers that clothed my body. Merciful heaven! what should I do to rid myself of them? I tore at the feathers with my hands, but they were deeply embedded in the flesh. Perhaps, I thought, when daylight comes they will go off of themselves. Night was wearing away; in an agony of fear I concealed myself under the bed-clothes. All my desperate courage had now left me; I was completely at Rosaura's mercy, and no doubt she would wreak some dreadful vengeance on me. In this miserable condition I lay for another hour. Still she came not, and every moment my terror and anguish increased until it was almost more than I could bear. Suddenly a sound was heard—a sound of rushing wings; a few moments later I heard the cautious footsteps of several people in the room adjoining mine. Then I heard voices whispering. 'Leave me now, sisters,' one said. 'Yes, sister,' another replied; 'but remember it is late, be quick, and if it cannot be concealed say it was an accident—a dream—that he did it, anything to save yourself.' Then all was silent. Slowly the door opened. A sweat of terror broke over my fore-

head. I closed my eyes. I was about to rise in my distraction, and throw myself at once on the devilish mercy of my wife. I looked again and saw her standing in the room with a face like ashes, her legs trembling under her, and the blood oozing from her bosom. She staggered to a seat, gasping for breath; with trembling hands she again opened the small ebony box and took from it a second clay pot. Taking ointment from it she rubbed herself with it. Slowly she passed her hands downward from her shoulders, and lo, the feathers withered up and disappeared, but the blood continued to flow from her wounded breast. She took



up a garment lying near, and tried to staunch it. I forgot everything in the horror and fascination that possessed my soul. I had risen to a sitting position, and was staring at her with wide-open eyes when she glanced towards me. She sprang from her seat uttering a terrified shriek, then fell back with a groan upon the floor. For some time I dared not approach her, but she never stirred. I heard footsteps in the next room; then there was a knock at the door, and my servants calling. I perceived the danger of my position. I flew to the door and locked it. 'Go back to bed,' I cried; 'your mistress has had a bad dream, that's all!' The servants retired. I quickly applied ointment from the

second pot to my body, and was restored to my former state. I examined Rosaura and found that she was dead. It was a horrible death she had met; still I felt no compassion, no remorse, though convinced that my own hand had inflicted her death-wound. I dressed myself and sat down to meditate on my situation. Day had long dawned, and the sun shining in that ghastly chamber reminded me of the necessity of action. There at my feet lay my wife, an expression of horror and anguish still disfiguring her beautiful countenance, the blood still slowly oozing from her wounded breast. But in my heart there was now a great despair that rendered me incapable of making any resolution. What would the world say when it came to look into that blood-stained chamber? Should I fly to escape the fate of a murderer? It was late for that; moreover, my flight would proclaim me guilty at once, and I was not guilty. I should be captured and put to a death most horrible. Or would it do to tell the simple truth; to say, when interrogated, 'I am guilty, yet not guilty,' and then proceed to relate the marvellous circumstances? Would such a story be believed? Perhaps yes, but that would avail me nothing: the prosecuting counsel—for a trial for murder would certainly come—would say that I had a good invention, and was learned in legends and superstitions, and no judge would have the courage to acquit me.

I was still sitting, unable to decide on anything, when I heard voices eagerly talking, footsteps rapidly approaching, then a loud rap at my door. It was my father-in-law come to surprise us by an early visit. I recognised his voice, though it was full of alarm, for the servants had already told him what they had heard. I was about to rise and admit him, since further concealment was impossible, when the frail lock gave way, and the door flew wide open. Roldan stared in, horror-struck, for some moments, while loud exclamations escaped from the servants standing behind him. 'Rosaura—O my beloved daughter!' cried the old man at last, 'dead—slain! In the name of God, Pelino, explain this!'

I will tell him that in a sudden fit of rage she stabbed herself, I thought; then immediately I perceived that this story would not do, for no person had ever seen Rosaura in a passion. Roldan marked my hesitation. 'Assassin!' he shrieked, springing forward and seizing my arm with a firm grip. In an instant an uncontrollable rage possessed me, and all prudence was forgotten. I rose, shaking him violently from me. 'Back!' I cried. 'Know,

miserable dotard, that this is your work! When I had escaped from your detestable daughter's wiles, who but you dragged me back to her? Accursed be the day in which I first saw you and this fiend with a beautiful mask! This is the result of your interference!' By giving vent to these frantic words I had destroyed myself, for they almost amounted to a confession of guilt. Overwhelmed with despair, I threw myself once more on my seat. Roldan fell back to the door, hurriedly dispatched one of my servants to summon the Alcalde, and took measures to prevent me from escaping.

The Alcalde soon arrived; I was formally charged and sent to Buenos Ayres; the trial and sentence followed. Nothing that could be urged in my defence was omitted, but all in vain. Had I, at the proper moment, feigned a grief I did not feel, and told the story my defender afterwards invented to account for Rosaura's death, I should have been saved. But after my behaviour towards my father-in-law, when he entered that chamber of death, nothing could avail me. That anything will now interpose between me and the fatal *banquillo* I have no hope.

Before long my family will hear of my fate, and this is a great bitterness for me: it is for them I write this narrative; when they read it they will know that I was no murderer. Accidentally I set my heel on the head of a venomous serpent, and crushed it—that was my only crime.

It is hard to die so young, but life could no longer be sweet and pleasant to me as in former days. Sometimes, lying awake at night, thinking of the great breezy plains, till I almost fancy I hear the cattle lowing far off, and the evening call of the partridge, the tears gush from my eyes. It would be sad to live far away from that sweet life I knew, to wander amongst strangers in distant lands, always haunted by the memory of that tragedy.

I have told my story to my Father Confessor, and I know from the strange look in his face that he does not altogether believe it, and thinks, perhaps, that at the last I will declare it all an invention. When I am on the bench, and the bandage is on my eyes; when the muskets are levelled at my breast, and he is forced at the last to quit my side, then he will know that I have told him the truth; for who could willingly die with the burden of a great crime on his soul?

Let him, in justice to me, write here at the end of this confession, before sending it to my unhappy father in Portugal, whether he believes that I have spoken the truth.

MRS. OPIE.

I.

It is not very long since some articles appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine' which were begun under the influence of certain ancient bookshelves with so pleasant a flavour of the old world that it seemed at the time as if yesterday not to-day was the all-important hour, and one gladly submitted to the subtle charm of the past—its silent veils, its quiet incantations of dust and healing cobweb. The phase is but a passing one with most of us, and we must soon feel that to dwell at length upon each one of the pretty old fancies and folios of the writers and explorers who were born towards the end of the last century would be an impossible affectation; and yet a postscript seems wanting to the sketches which have already appeared of Mrs. Barbauld and Miss Edgeworth; the names of their contemporaries should not be quite passed over.

In a hundred charming types and prints and portraits we recognise the well-known names as they used to appear in the garb of life. Grand ladies in broad loops and feathers, or graceful and charming as nymphs in muslin folds, with hanging clouds of hair; or again, in modest coiffes such as dear Jane Austen loved and wore even in her youth. Hannah More only took to coiffes and wimples in later life; in early days she was fond of splendour, and, as we read, had herself painted in emerald earrings. How many others besides her are there to admire? Who does not know the prim, sweet, amply frilled portraits of Mrs. Trimmer and Joanna Baillie? Only yesterday a friend showed me a sprightly, dark-eyed miniature of Felicia Hemans. Perhaps most beautiful among all her sister muses smiles the lovely head of Amelia Opie, as she was represented by her husband with luxuriant chestnut hair piled up Romney fashion in careless loops, with the radiant yet dreaming eyes which are an inheritance for some members of her family.

The authoresses of that day had the pre-eminence in looks, in gracious dress and bearing; but they were rather literary women than anything else, and had but little in common with the noble and brilliant writers who were to follow them in our own more

natural and outspoken times; whose wise, sweet, passionate voices are already passing away into the distance; of whom so few remain to us.¹ The secret of being real is no very profound one, and yet how rare it is, how long it was before the readers and writers of this century found it out! It is like the secret of singing in perfect tune, or of playing the violin as Joachim can play it. In literature, as in music, there is at times a certain indescribable tone of absolute reality which carries the reader away and for the moment absorbs him into the mind of the writer. Some metempsychosis takes place. It is no longer a man or a woman turning the pages of a book, it is a human being suddenly absorbed by the book itself, living the very life which it records, breathing the spirit and soul of the writer. Such books are events, not books to us, new conditions of existence, new selves suddenly revealed through the experience of other more vivid personalities than our own. The actual experience of other lives is not for us, but this link of simple reality of feeling is one all independent of events; it is like the miracle of the loaves and fishes repeated and multiplied—one man comes with his fishes, and lo! the multitude is filled.

But this simple discovery, that of reality, that of speaking from the heart, was one of the last to be made by women. In France Madame de Sévigné and Madame de la Fayette were not afraid to be themselves, but in England the majority of authoresses kept their readers carefully at pen's length, and seemed for the most part to be so conscious of their surprising achievements in the way of literature as never to forget for a single instant that they were in print. With the exception of Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth, the women writers of the early part of this century were, as I have just said, rather literary women than actual creators of literature. It is still a mystery how they attained to their great successes. Frances Burney charms great Burke and mighty Johnson, and wise Macaulay in later times. Mrs. Opie draws compliments from Mackintosh, and compliments from the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, and Sydney Smith, and above all tears from Walter Scott.

Perhaps many of the flattering things addressed to Mrs. Opie may have said not less for her own charm and sweetness of nature

¹ And yet as I write I remember one indeed who is among us, whose portrait a Reynolds or an Opie might have been glad to paint for the generations who will love her works.

than for the merit of her unassuming productions ; she must have been a bright, merry, and fascinating person, and compliments were certainly more in her line than the tributes of tears which she records.

The authoresses of heroines are often more interesting than the heroines themselves, and Amelia Opie was certainly no exception to this somewhat general statement. A pleasant, sprightly authoress, beaming bright glances on her friends, confident, intelligent, full of interest in life, carried along in turn by one and by another influence, she comes before us a young and charming figure, with all the spires of Norwich for a background, and the sound of its bells, and the stir of its assizes, as she issues from her peaceful home in her father's tranquil old house, where the good physician lives widowed, tending his poor and his sick, and devotedly spoiling his only child.

II.

Amelia Opie was born in 1769 in the old city of Norwich, within reach of the invigorating breezes of the great North Sea. Her youth must have been somewhat solitary ; she was the only child of a kind and cultivated physician, Doctor James Alderson, whose younger brother, a barrister, also living in Norwich, became the father of Baron Alderson. Her mother died in her early youth. From her father, however, little Amelia seems to have had the love and indulgence of over half a century, a tender and admiring love which she returned with all her heart's devotion. She was the pride and darling of his home, and throughout her long life her father's approbation was the one chief motive of her existence. Spoiling is a vexed question, but as a rule people get so much stern justice from all the rest of the world that it seems well that their parents should love and comfort them in youth for the many disgraces and difficulties yet to come.

Her mother is described as a delicate, high-minded woman, 'somewhat of a disciplinarian,' says Mrs. Opie's excellent biographer, Miss Brightwell, but she died too soon to carry her theories into practice. Miss Brightwell suggests that 'Mrs. Opie might have been more demure and decorous had her mother lived, but perhaps less charming.' There are some verses addressed to her mother in Mrs. Opie's papers in which it must be

confessed that the remembrance of her admonition plays a most important part—

Hark! clearer still thy voice I hear.
 Again reproof in accents mild
 Seems whispering in my conscious ear,

and so on.

Some of Mrs. Alderson's attempts at discipline seemed unusual and experimental. The little girl was timid, afraid of black people, of black beetles, and of human skeletons. She was given the skeleton to play with, and the beetles to hold in her hand. One feels more sympathy with the way in which she was gently reconciled to the poor negro with the frightening black face—by being told the story of his wrongs. But with the poor mother's untimely death all this maternal supervision came to an end. 'Amelia, your mother is gone; may you never have reason to blush when you remember her!' her father said as he clasped his little orphan to his heart; and all her life long Amelia remembered those words.

There is a pretty reminiscence of her childhood from a beginning of the memoir which was never written:—'One of my earliest recollections is of gazing on the bright blue sky as I lay in my little bed before my hour of rising came, listening with delighted attention to the ringing of a peal of bells. I had heard that heaven was beyond those blue skies, and I had been taught that *there* was the home of the good, and I fancied that those sweet bells were ringing in heaven.' The bells were ringing for the Norwich Assizes, which played an important part in our little heroine's life, and which must have been associated with many of her early memories.

The little girl seems to have been allowed more liberty than is usually given to children. 'As soon as I was old enough to enjoy a procession,' she says, 'I was taken to see the Judges come in. Youthful pages in pretty dresses ran by the side of the High Sheriff's carriage, in which the Judges sat, while the coaches drove slowly and with a solemnity becoming the high and awful office of those whom they contained. . . . With reverence ever did I behold the Judges' wigs, the scarlet robes they wore, and even the white wand of the Sheriff.'

There is a description which in after years might have made a pretty picture for her husband's pencil of the little maiden wandering into the court one day, and called by a kind old Judge to sit beside him upon the bench. She goes on to recount how next day

she was there again ; and when some attendant of the court wanted her to leave the place, saying not unnaturally, 'Go, Miss, this is no place for you ; be advised,' the Judge again interfered, and ordered the enterprising little girl to be brought to her old place upon the cushion by his side. The story gives one a curious impression of a child's life and education. She seems to have come and gone alone, capable, intelligent, unabashed, interested in all the events and humours of the place.

Children have among other things a very vivid sense of citizenship and public spirit, somewhat put out in later life by the rush of personal feeling, but in childhood the personal events are so few and so irresponsible that public affairs become an actual part of life and of experience. While their elders are still discussing the news and weighing its importance, it is already a part of the children's life. Little Amelia Alderson must have been a happy child, free, affectionate, independent ; grateful, as a child should be, towards those who befriended her. One of her teachers was a French dancing-master called Christian, for whom she had a warm regard. She relates that long afterwards she came with her husband and a friend to visit the Dutch church at Norwich. 'The two gentlemen were engaged in looking round and making their observations, and I, finding myself somewhat cold, began to hop and dance upon the spot where I stood, when my eyes chanced to fall upon the pavement below, and I started at beholding the well-known name of Christian graved upon the slab ; I stopped in dismay, shocked to find that I had actually been dancing upon the grave of my old master—he who first taught me to dance.'

III.

After her mother's death, Amelia Alderson, who was barely fifteen at the time, began to take her place in society. She kept her father's house, received his friends, made his home bright with her presence. The lawyers came round in due season : Sir James Mackintosh came, the town was full of life, of talk, of music, and poetry, and prejudice.

Harriet Martineau, in her memoir of Mrs. Opie, gives a delightful and humorous account of the Norwich of that day—rivaling Lichfield and its literary coterie, only with less sentimentality and some additional peculiarities of its own. One can almost see the Tory gentlemen, as Miss Martineau describes them, setting a

watch upon the Cathedral, lest the Dissenters should burn it as a beacon for Boney; whereas good Bishop Bathurst, with more faith in human nature, goes on resolutely touching his hat to the leading Nonconformists. 'The French taught in schools,' says Miss Martineau, 'was found to be unintelligible when the peace at length arrived, taught as it was by an aged powdered Monsieur and an elderly flowered Madame, who had caught their pupils' Norfolk pronunciation. But it was beginning to be known,' she continues, 'that there was such a language as German, and in due time there was a young man who had actually been in Germany, and was translating "Nathan the Wise." When William Taylor became eminent as almost the only German scholar in England, old Norwich was very proud and grew, to say the truth, excessively conceited. She was (and she might be) proud of her Sayers, she boasted of her intellectual supper-parties, and finally called herself "The Athens of England."'

In this wholesome, cheerful Athens, blown by the invigorating Northern breezes, little Amelia bloomed and developed into a lovely and happy girl. She was fortunate indeed in her friends. One near at hand must have been an invaluable adviser for a motherless, impressionable girl. Mrs. John Taylor was so loved that she is still remembered. Mrs. Barbauld prized and valued her affection beyond all others. 'I know the value of your letters,' says Sir James Mackintosh, writing from Bombay; 'they rouse my mind on subjects which interest us in common—children, literature, and life. I ought to be made permanently better by contemplating a mind like yours.' And he still has Mrs. Taylor in his mind when he concludes with a little disquisition on the contrast between the barren sensibility, the indolent folly of some, the useful kindness of others, 'the industrious benevolence which requires a vigorous understanding and a decisive character.'

Some of Mrs. Opie's family have shown me a photograph of her in her Quaker dress, in old age, dim, and changed, and sunken, from which it is very difficult to realise all the brightness, and life, and animation which must have belonged to the earlier part of her life. The delightful portrait of her engraved in the 'Mirror' shows the animated beaming countenance, the soft expressive eyes, the abundant auburn waves of hair, of which we read. The picture is more like some charming allegorical being than a real live young lady—some Belinda of the 'Rape of the Lock' (and one would as soon have expected Belinda to turn Quakeress).

Music, poetry, dancing, elves, graces, flirtations, cupids, seem to attend her steps. She delights in admiration, friendship, companionship, and gaiety, and yet with it all we realise a warm-hearted sincerity, and appreciation of good and high-minded things, a truth of feeling passing out of the realms of fancy altogether into one of the best realities of life. She had a thousand links with life: she was musical, artistic; she was literary; she had a certain amount of social influence; she had a voice, a harp, a charming person, mind, and manner. Admiring monarchs in later days applauded her performance; devoted subjects were her friends and correspondents, and her sphere in due time extended beyond the approving Norwich-Athenian coterie of old friends who had known her from her childhood, to London itself, where she seems to have been made welcome by many, and to have captivated more than her share of victims.

In some letters of hers written to Mrs. Taylor and quoted by her biographer we get glimpses of some of these early experiences. The bright and happy excitable girl comes up from Norwich to London to be made more happy still, and more satisfied with the delight of life as it unfolds. Besides her fancy for lawyers, literary people had a great attraction for Amelia, and Godwin seems to have played an important part in her earlier experience. A saying of Mrs. Inchbald's is quoted by her on her return home as to the report of the world being that Mr. Holcroft was in love with Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Inchbald with Mr. Godwin, Mr. Godwin with Miss Alderson, and Miss Alderson with Mr. Holcroft!

The following account of Somers Town, and a philosopher's costume in those days, is written to her father in 1794:—

'After a most delightful ride through some of the richest country I ever beheld, we arrived about one o'clock at the philosopher's house; we found him with his hair *bien poudré*, and in a pair of new sharp-toed red morocco slippers, not to mention his green coat and crimson under-waistcoat.'

From Godwin's by the City they come to Marlborough Street, and find Mrs. Siddons nursing her little baby, and as handsome and charming as ever. They see Charles Kemble there, and they wind up their day by calling on Mrs. Inchbald in her pleasant lodgings, with two hundred pounds just come in from Sheridan for a farce of sixty pages. Godwin's attentions seem to have amused and pleased the fair, merry Amelia, who is not a little proud of her arch influence over various rugged and apparently inaccessible persons. Mrs. Inchbald seems to have been as jealous of Miss

Alderson at the time as she afterwards was of Mary Wollstonecraft. 'Will you give me nothing to keep for your sake?' says Godwin, parting from Amelia. 'Not even your slipper? I had it once in my possession.' 'This was true,' adds Miss Amelia; 'my shoe had come off, and he picked it up and put it in his pocket.' Elsewhere she tells her friend Mrs. Taylor that Mr. Holcroft would like to come forward, but that he had no chance.

That some one person had a chance, and a very good one, is plain enough from the context of a letter, but there is nothing in Mrs. Opie's life to show why fate was contrary in this, while yielding so bountiful a share of all other good things to the happy country girl.

Among other people, she seems to have charmed various French refugees, one of whom was the Duc d'Aiguillon, come over to England with some seven thousand others, waiting here for happier times, and hiding their sorrows among our friendly mists. Godwin was married when Miss Alderson revisited her London friends and admirers in 1797—an eventful visit, when she met Opie for the first time.

The account of their first meeting is amusingly given in Miss Brightwell's memoirs. It was at an evening party. Some of those present were eagerly expecting the arrival of Miss Alderson, but the evening was wearing away and still she did not appear; at length the door was flung open, and she entered bright and smiling, dressed in a robe of blue, her neck and arms bare, and on her head a small bonnet placed in somewhat coquettish style sideways and surmounted by a plume of three white feathers. Her beautiful hair hung in waving tresses over her shoulders; her face was kindling with pleasure at the sight of her old friends, and her whole appearance was animated and glowing. At the time she came in Mr. Opie was sitting on a sofa beside Mr. F., who had been saying from time to time, 'Amelia is coming; Amelia will surely come. Why is she not here?' and whose eyes were turned in her direction. He was interrupted by her companion eagerly exclaiming, 'Who is that—who is that?' and hastily rising Opie pressed forward to be introduced to the fair object whose sudden appearance had so impressed him. With all her love of excitement, of change, of variety, one cannot but feel, as I have said, that there was also in Amelia Alderson's cheerful life a vein of deep and very serious feeling, and the bracing influence of the upright and high-minded people among

whom she had been brought up did not count for nothing in her nature. She could show her genuine respect for what was generous and good and true, even though she did not always find strength to carry out the dream of an excitable and warm-hearted nature.

IV.

There is something very interesting in the impression one receives of the 'Inspired Peasant,' as Alan Cunningham calls John Opie—the man who did not paint to live so much as live to paint. He was a simple, high-minded Cornishman, whose natural directness and honesty were unspoiled by favour, unembittered by failure. Opie's gift, like some deep-rooted seed living buried in arid soil, ever aspired upwards towards the light. His ideal was high; his performance fell far short of his life-long dream, and he knew it. But his heart never turned from its life's aim, and he loved beauty and art with that true and unflinching devotion which makes a man great, even though his achievements do not show all he should have been.

The old village carpenter, his father, who meant him to succeed to the business, was often angry, and loudly railed at the boy when good white-washed walls and clean boards were spoiled by scrawls of lamp-black and charcoal. John worked in the shop and obeyed his father, but when his day's task was over he turned again to his darling pursuit. At twelve years old he had mastered Euclid, and could also rival 'Mark Oaks,' the village phenomenon, in painting a butterfly; by the time John was sixteen he could earn as much as 7s. 6d. for a portrait. It was in this year that there came to Truro an accomplished and various man, Dr. Wolcott—sometimes a parson, sometimes a doctor of medicine, sometimes as Peter Pindar, a critic and literary man. This gentleman was interested by young Opie and his performances, and he asked him on one occasion how he liked painting. 'Better than bread-and-butter,' says the boy. Wolcott finally brought his *protégé* to London, where the Doctor's influence and Opie's own undoubted merit brought him success; and to Opie's own amazement he suddenly found himself the fashion. His street was crowded with carriages; long processions of ladies and gentlemen came to sit to him; he was able to furnish a house 'in Orange Court, by Leicester Fields;' he was beginning to put by money when, as suddenly as he had been taken up, he was

forgotten again. The carriages drove off in some other direction, and Opie found himself abandoned by the odd, fanciful world of fashions, which would not be fashions if they did not change day by day. It might have proved a heart-breaking phase of life for a man whose aim had been less single. But Opie was of too generous a nature to value popularity beyond achievement. He seems to have borne this freak of fortune with great equanimity, and, when he was sometimes overwhelmed, it was not by the praise or dispraise of others, but by his own consciousness of failure, of inadequate performance. Troubles even more serious than loss of patronage and employment befell him later. He had married, unhappily for himself, a beautiful, unworthy woman, whose picture he has painted many times. She was a faithless as well as a weak and erring wife, and finally abandoned him. When Opie was free to marry again he was thirty-six, a serious, down-right man of undoubted power and influence, of sincerity and tenderness of feeling, of rugged and unusual manners. He had not many friends, nor did he wish for many, but those who knew him valued him at his worth. His second wife showed what was in her by her appreciation of his noble qualities, though one can hardly realise a greater contrast than that of these two, so unlike in character, in training, and disposition. They were married in London, at Marylebone Church, in that dismal year of '98, which is still remembered. Opie loved his wife deeply and passionately; he did not charm her, though she charmed him, but for his qualities she had true respect and admiration.

V.

Opie must be forgiven if he was one-idea'd, if he erred from too much zeal. All his wife's bright gaiety of nature, her love for her fellow-creatures, her interest in the world, her many-sidedness, this uncompromising husband would gladly have kept for himself. For him his wife and his home were the whole world; his art was his whole life.

The young couple settled down in London after their marriage, where, notwithstanding fogs and smoke and dull monotony of brick and smut, so many beautiful things are created; where Turner's rainbow lights were first reflected, where Tennyson's 'Princess' sprang from the fog. It was a modest and quiet installation, but among the pretty things which Amelia brought to

brighten her new home we read of blue feathers and gold gauze bonnets, tiaras, and spencers, scarlet ribbons, buff net, and cambric flounces, all of which give one a pleasant impression of her intention to amuse herself, and to enjoy the society of her fellows, and to bring her own pleasant contributions to their enjoyment.

Opie sat working at his easel, painting portraits to earn money for his wife's use and comfort, and encouraging her to write, for he had faith in work. He himself would never intermit his work for a single day. He would have gladly kept her always in his sight. 'If I would stay at home for ever, I believe my husband would be merry from morning to night—a lover more than a husband,' Amelia writes to Mrs. Taylor. He seemed to have some feeling that time was not to be long—that life was passing quickly by for him, almost too quickly to give him time to realise his new home happiness, to give him strength to grasp his work. He was no rapid painter, instinctively feeling his light and colour and action, and seizing the moment's suggestion, but anxious, laborious, and involved in that sad struggle in which some people pass their lives, for ever disappointed. Opie's portraits seem to have been superior to his compositions, which were well painted, 'but unimaginative and commonplace,' says a painter of our own time, whose own work quickens with that mysterious soul which some pictures (as indeed some human beings) seem to be entirely without.

'During the nine years that I was his wife,' says Mrs. Opie, 'I never saw him satisfied with any one of his productions. Often, very often, he has entered my sitting-room, and, throwing himself down in an agony of despondence upon the sofa, exclaimed, "I shall never be a painter!"'

He was a wise and feeling critic, however great his shortcomings as a painter may have been. His lectures are admirable, full of real thought and good judgment. Sir James Mackintosh places them beyond Reynolds' in some ways.

'If there were no difficulties everyone would be a painter,' says Opie, and he goes on to point out what a painter's object should be—'the discovery or conception of perfect ideas of things; nature in its purest and most essential form rising from the species to the genus, the highest and ultimate exertion of human genius.' For him it was no grievance that a painter's life should be one long and serious effort. 'If you are wanting to yourselves, rule may be multiplied upon rule and precept upon precept in

vain.' Some of his remarks might be thought still to apply in some cases, no less than they did a hundred years ago, when he complained of those green-sick lovers of chalk, brick-dust, charcoal, and old tapestry, who are so ready to decry the merits of colouring and to set it down as a kind of superfluity. It is curious to contrast Opie's style in literature with that of his wife, who belongs to the entirely past generation which she reflected, whereas he wrote from his own original impressions, only saying those things which struck him forcibly as they strike us now. 'Father and Daughter' was Mrs. Opie's first acknowledged book. It was published in 1801, and the author writes modestly of all her apprehensions. 'Mr. Opie has no patience with me; he consoles me by averring that fear makes me overrate others and under-rate myself.' The book was reviewed in the 'Edinburgh.' We hear of one gentleman who lies awake all night after reading it; and Mrs. Inchbald promises a candid opinion, which, however, we do not get. Besides stories and novels, Mrs. Opie was the author of several poems and verses which were much admired. There was an impromptu to Sir James Mackintosh, which brought a long letter in return, and one of her songs was quoted by Sydney Smith in a lecture at the Royal Institution. Mrs. Opie was present, and she used to tell in after times 'how unexpectedly the compliment came upon her, and how she shrank down upon her seat in order to screen herself from observation.'

The lines are indeed charming:—

Go, youth beloved, in distant glades
 New friends, new hopes, new joys to find,
 Yet sometimes deign 'midst fairer maids
 To think on her thou leav'st behind,
 Thy love, thy fate, dear youth, to share
 Must never be my happy lot;
 But thou may'st grant this humble prayer,
 Forget me not, forget me not.

Yet should the thought of my distress
 Too painful to thy feelings be,
 Heed not the wish I now express,
 Nor ever deign to think of me;
 But oh! if grief thy steps attend,
 If want, if sickness be thy lot,
 And thou require a soothing friend,
 Forget me not, forget me not.

VI.

The little household was a modest one, but we read of a certain amount of friendly hospitality. Country neighbours from Norfolk appear upon the scene; we find Northcote dining and praising the toasted cheese. Mrs. Opie's heart never for an instant ceased to warm to her old friends and companions. She writes an amusing account to Mrs. Taylor of her London home, her interests and visitors, 'her happy and delightful life.' She worked, she amused herself, she received her friends at home and went to look for them abroad. Among other visits, Mrs. Opie speaks of one to an old friend who has 'grown plump,' and of a second to 'Betsy Fry,' who, notwithstanding her comfortable home and prosperous circumstances, has grown lean. It would be difficult to recognise under this familiar cognomen and description the noble and dignified woman whose name and work are still remembered with affectionate respect and wonder by a not less hard-working, but less convinced and convincing generation. This friendship was of great moment to Amelia Opie in after days, at a time when her heart was low and her life very sad and solitary; but meanwhile, as I have said, there were happy times for her; youth and youthful spirits and faithful companionship were all hers, and troubles had not yet come.

One day Mrs. Opie gives a characteristic account of a visit from Mrs. Taylor's two sons. "John," said I, "will you take a letter from me to your mother?" "Certainly," replied John, "for then I shall be sure of being welcome." "Fy!" returned I. "Mr. Courtier, you know you want nothing to add to the heartiness of the welcome you will receive at home." "No indeed," said Richard, "and if Mrs. Opie sends her letter by you it will be one way of making it less valued and attended to than it would otherwise be." To the truth of this speech I subscribed and wrote not. I have heard in later days a pretty description of the simple home in which all these handsome, cultivated, and remarkable young people grew up round their noble-minded mother.' One of Mrs. John Taylor's daughters became Mrs. Reeve, the mother of Mr. Henry Reeve, another was Mrs. Austin, the mother of Lady Duff Gordon.

Those lean kine we read of in the Bible are not peculiar to Egypt and to the days of Joseph and his brethren. The unwelcome creatures are apt to make their appearance in many a country and many a household, and in default of their natural food

to devour all sorts of long-cherished fancies, hopes, and schemes. Some time after his marriage, Opie suddenly, and for no reason, found himself without employment, and the severest trial they experienced during their married life, says his wife, was during this period of anxiety. She, however, cheered him womanfully, would not acknowledge her own dismay, and Opie, gloomy and desponding though he was, continued to paint as regularly as before. Presently orders began to flow in again, and did not cease until his death.

VII.

Their affairs being once more prosperous, a long-hoped-for dream became a reality, and they started on an expedition to Paris, a solemn event in those days and not lightly to be passed over by a biographer. One long war was ended, another had not yet begun. The Continent was a promised land, fondly dreamt of though unknown. 'At last in Paris; at last in the city which she had so longed to see!' Mrs. Opie's description of her arrival reads a comment upon history. As they drive into the town, everywhere chalked up upon the walls and the houses are inscriptions concerning 'L'Indivisibilité de la République.' How many subsequent writings upon the wall did Mrs. Opie live to see! The English party find rooms at an hôtel facing the Place de la Concorde, where the guillotine, that token of order and tranquillity, was then perpetually standing. The young wife's feelings may be imagined when, within an hour of their arrival, Opie, who had rushed off straight to the Louvre, returned with a face of consternation to say that they must leave Paris at once. The Louvre was shut; and, moreover, the whiteness of everything, the houses, the ground they stood on, all dazzled and blinded him. He was a lost man if he remained! By some happy interposition they succeed in getting admission to the Louvre, and, as the painter wonders and admires, his nervous terrors leave him. The picture left by Miss Edgeworth of Paris society in the early years of the century is more brilliant, but not more interesting, than Mrs. Opie's reminiscences of the fleeting scene, gaining so much in brilliancy from the shadows all round about. There is the shadow of the ghastly guillotine upon the Place de la Concorde, the shadows of wars but lately over and yet to come, the echo in the air of arms and discord; meanwhile a brilliant, agreeable, flashing Paris streams with sunlight, is piled with treasures and

trophies of victory, and crowded with well-known characters. We read of Kosciusko's nut-brown wig concealing his honourable scars; Masséna's earrings flash in the sun; one can picture it all, and the animated inrush of tourists, and the eager life stirring round about the walls of the old Louvre.

It was at this time that they saw Talma perform, and years after, in her little rooms in Lady's Field at Norwich, Mrs. Opie, in her Quaker dress, used to give an imitation of the great actor and utter a deep 'Cain, Cain, where art thou?' To which Cain replies in sepulchral tones.

We get among other things an interesting glimpse of Fox standing in the Louvre Gallery opposite the picture of St. Jerome by Domenichino, a picture which, as it is said, he enthusiastically admired. Opie, who happened to be introduced to him, then and there dissented from this opinion. 'You must be a better judge on such points than I am,' says Fox; and Mrs. Opie proudly writes of the two passing on together discussing and comparing the pictures. She describes them next standing before the 'Transfiguration' of Raphael. The Louvre in those days must have been for a painter a wonder palace indeed. The 'Venus de' Medici' was on her way; it was a time of miracles, as Fox said. Meanwhile Mrs. Opie hears some one saying that the First Consul is coming from the Senate, and she hurries to a window to look out. 'Bonaparte seems very fond of state and show for a Republican,' says Mrs. Fox. Fox himself half turns to the window, then looks back to the pictures again. As for Opie, one may be sure his attention never wandered for one instant.

They saw the First Consul more than once. The Pacificator, as he was then called, was at the height of his popularity. On one occasion they meet Fox with his wife on his arm crossing the Carrousel to the Tuileries, where they are also admitted to a ground-floor room, from whence they look upon a marble staircase and see several officers ascending, 'one of whom, with a helmet which seemed entirely of gold, was Eugène de Beauharnais. A few minutes afterwards,' she says, 'there was a rush of officers down the stairs, and among them I saw a short pale man with his hat in his hand, who, as I thought, resembled Lord Erskine in profile.' This, of course, is Bonaparte, unadorned amidst all this studied splendour, and wearing only a little tricoloured cockade. Maria Cosway, the painter, who was also in Paris at the time, took them to call at the house of Madame Bonaparte *mère*,

where they were received by 'a blooming, courteous ecclesiastic, powdered and with purple stockings and gold buckles, and a costly crucifix. This is Cardinal Fesch, the uncle of Bonaparte. It is said that when Fox was introduced to the First Consul he was warmly welcomed by him, and was made to listen to a grand harangue upon the advantages of peace, to which he answered scarcely a word; though he was charmed to talk with Madame Bonaparte, and to discuss with her the flowers of which she was so fond.' The Opies met Fox again in England some years after, when he sat to Opie for one of his finest portraits. It is now at Holker, and there is a characteristic description of poor Opie, made nervous by the criticism of the many friends, and Fox, impatient but encouraging, and again whispering, 'Don't attend to them; you must know best.'

VIII.

'Adeline Mowbray; or, Mother and Daughter,' was published by Mrs. Opie after this visit to the Continent. It is a melancholy and curious story, which seems to have been partly suggested by that of poor Mary Wollstonecraft, whose prejudices the heroine shares and expiates by a fate hardly less pathetic than that of Mary herself. The book reminds one of a very touching letter from Godwin's wife to Amelia Alderson, written a few weeks before her death, in which she speaks of her 'contempt for the forms of a world she should have bade a long good-night to had she not been a mother.' Justice has at length been done to this mistaken but noble and devoted woman, and her story has lately been written from a wider point of view than Mrs. Opie's, though she indeed was no ungenerous advocate. Her novel seems to have given satisfaction; 'a beautiful story, the most natural in its pathos of any fictitious narrative in the language,' says the 'Edinburgh,' writing with more leniency than authors now expect. Another reviewer, speaking with more discriminating criticism, says of Mrs. Opie: 'She does not reason well, but she has, like most accomplished women, the talent of perceiving truth without the process of reasoning. Her language is often inaccurate, but it is always graceful and harmonious. She can do nothing well that requires to be done with formality; to make amends, however, she represents admirably everything that is amiable, generous, and gentle.'

Adeline Mowbray dies of a broken heart, with the following

somewhat discursive farewell to her child: 'There are two ways in which a mother can be of use to her daughter: the one is by instilling into her mind virtuous principles, and by setting her a virtuous example; the other is by being to her, in her own person, an awful warning!'

One or two of Opie's letters to his wife are given in the memoir. They ring with truth and tender feeling. The two went to Norwich together on one occasion, when Opie painted Dr. Sayers, the scholar, who, in return for his portrait, applied an elegant Greek distich to the painter. Mrs. Opie remained with her father, and her husband soon returned to his studio in London. When she delayed, he wrote to complain. 'My dearest Life, I cannot be sorry that you do not stay longer, though, as I said, on your father's account, I would consent to it. Pray, Love, forgive me, and make yourself easy. I did not suspect, till my last letter was posted, that it might be too strong. I had been counting almost the hours till your arrival for some time. As to coming down again, I cannot think of it; for though I could perhaps better spare the time at present from painting than I could at any part of the last month, I find I must now go hard to work to finish my lectures, as the law says they must be delivered the second year after the election.'

The Academy had appointed Opie Professor of Painting in the place of Fuseli, and he was now trying his hand at a new form of composition, and not without well-deserved success. But the strain was too great for this eager mind. Opie painted all day; of an evening he worked at his lectures on painting. From September to February he allowed himself no rest. He was not a man who worked with ease; all he did cost him much effort and struggle. After delivering his first lecture, he complained that he could not sleep. It had been a great success; his colleagues had complimented him, and accompanied him to his house. He was able to complete the course, but immediately afterwards he sickened. No one could discover what was amiss; the languor and fever increased day by day.

His wife nursed him devotedly, and a favourite sister of his came to help her. Afterwards it was of consolation to the widow to remember that no hired nurse had been by his bedside, and that they had been able to do everything for him themselves. One thing troubled him as he lay dying: it was the thought of a

picture which he had not been able to complete in time for the exhibition. A friend and former pupil finished it, and brought it to his bedside. He said with a smile, 'Take it away; it will do now.'

To the last he imagined that he was painting upon this picture, and he moved his arms as though he were at work. His illness was inflammation of the brain. He was only forty-five when he died, and he was buried in St. Paul's, and laid by Sir Joshua, his great master.

The portrait of Opie, as it is engraved in Alan Cunningham's *Life*, is that of a simple, noble-looking man, with a good thoughtful face and a fine head. Northcote, Nollekens, Horne Tooke, all his friends spoke warmly of him. 'A man of powerful understanding and ready apprehension,' says one; 'Mr. Opie crowds more wisdom into a few words than almost anybody I ever saw,' says another. 'I do not say that he was always right,' says Northcote; 'but he always put your thoughts into a new track that was worth following.' Some two years after his death the lectures which had cost so much were published, with a memoir by Mrs. Opie. Sir James Mackintosh has written one of his delightful criticisms upon the book:—

The cultivation of every science and the practice of every art are in fact a species of action, and require ardent zeal and unshaken courage. . . . Originality can hardly exist without vigour of character. . . . The discoverer or inventor may indeed be most eminently wanting in decision in the general concerns of life, but he must possess it in those pursuits in which he is successful. Opie is a remarkable instance of the natural union of these superior qualities, both of which he possesses in a high degree. . . . He is inferior in elegance to Sir Joshua, but he is superior in strength; he strikes more, though he charms less. . . . Opie is by turns an advocate, a controvertist, a panegyrist, a critic; Sir Joshua more uniformly fixes his mind on general and permanent principles, and certainly approaches more nearly to the elevation and tranquility which seem to characterise the philosophic teacher of an elegant art.

IX.

Mrs. Opie went back, soon after her husband's death, to Norwich, to her early home, her father's house; nor was she a widow indeed while she still had this tender love and protection.

That which strikes one most as one reads the accounts of Mrs. Opie, is the artlessness and perfect simplicity of her nature. The deepest feeling of her life was her tender love for her father, and if she remained younger than most women do, it may have been

partly from the great blessing which was hers so long, that of a father's home. Time passed, and by degrees she resumed her old life, and came out and about among her friends. Sorrow does not change a nature; it expresses certain qualities which have been there all along.

So Mrs. Opie came up to London once more, and welcomed and was made welcome by many interesting people. Lord Erskine is her friend always; she visits Madame de Staël; she is constantly in company with Sydney Smith, the ever-welcome as she calls him. Lord Byron, Sheridan, Lord Dudley, all appear upon her scene. There is a pretty story of her singing her best to Lady Sarah Napier, old, blind, and saddened, but still happy in that she had her sons to guide and to protect her steps. Among her many entertainments, Mrs. Opie amusingly describes a dinner at Sir James Mackintosh's, in which most of the guests had been asked at different hours, varying from six to half-past seven, when Baron William von Humboldt arrives. He writes to her next day, calling her Mademoiselle Opie, 'no doubt from my juvenile appearance,' she adds, writing to her father. It is indeed remarkable to read of her spirits long after middle life, her interest and capacity for amusement. She pays 4*l.* for a ticket to a ball given to the Duke of Wellington; she describes this and many other masquerades and gaieties, and the blue ball, and the pink ball, and the twenty-seven carriages at her door, and her sight of the Emperor of Russia in her hotel. When the rest of the ladies crowd round, eager to touch his clothes, Mrs. Opie, carried away by the general craze, encircles his wrist with her finger and thumb. Apart from these passing fancies, she is in delightful society.

Baron Alderson, her cousin and friend, was always kind and affectionate to her. The pretty little story is well known of his taking her home in her Quaker dress in the Judges' state-coach at Norwich, saying, 'Come, Brother Opie,' as he offered her his arm to lead her to the carriage. She used to stay at his house in London, and almost the last visit she ever paid was to him.

One of the most interesting of her descriptions is that of her meeting with Sir Walter Scott and with Wordsworth at a breakfast in Mount Street, and of Sir Walter's delightful talk and animated stories. One can imagine him laughing and describing a Cockney's terrors in the Highlands, when the whole hunt goes galloping down the crags, as is their North-country fashion. 'The

gifted man,' says Mrs. Opie, with her old-fashioned adjectives, 'condescended to speak to me of my Father and Daughter. He then went on faithfully to praise his old friend Joanna Baillie and her tragedies, and to describe a tragedy he once thought of writing himself. He should have had no love in it. His hero should have been the uncle of his heroine, a sort of misanthrope, with only one affection in his heart, love for his niece, like a solitary gleam of sunshine lighting the dark tower of some ruined and lonely dwelling.'

'It might perhaps be a weakness,' says the Friend, long after recalling this event, 'but I must confess how greatly I was pleased at the time.' No wonder she was pleased that the great wizard should have liked her novel.

It would be impossible to attempt a serious critique of Mrs. Opie's stories. They are artless, graceful, written with an innocent good faith which disarms criticism. That Southey, Sydney Smith, and Mackintosh should also have read them and praised them may, as I have said, prove as much for the personal charm of the writer, and her warm sunshine of pleasant companionship, as for the books themselves. They seem to have run through many editions, and to have received no little encouragement. Morality and sensation alternate in her pages. Monsters abound there. They hire young men to act base parts, to hold villainous conversations which the husbands are intended to overhear. They plot and scheme to ruin the fair fame and domestic happiness of the charming heroines, but they are justly punished, and their plots are defeated. One villain, on his way to an appointment with a married woman, receives so severe a blow upon the head from her brother, that he dies in agonies of fruitless remorse. Another, who incautiously boasts aloud his deep-laid scheme against Constantia's reputation in the dark recesses of a stage-coach, is unexpectedly seized by the arm. A stranger in the corner, whom he had not noticed, was no other than the baronet whom Constantia has loved all along. The dawn breaks in brightly, shining on the stranger's face: baffled, disgraced, the wicked schemer leaves the coach at the very next stage, and Constantia's happiness is insured by a brilliant marriage with the man she loves. 'Lucy is the dark sky,' cries another lovely heroine, 'but you, my lord, and my smiling children, these are the rainbow that illumines it, and who would look at the gloom that see the many-tinted iris? not I, indeed.' 'Valentine's Eve,' from which this is

quoted, was published after John Opie's death. So was a novel called 'Temper,' and the 'Tales of Real Life.' Mrs. Opie, however, gave up writing novels when she joined the Society of Friends.

For some years past, Mrs. Opie had been thrown more and more in the company of a very noble and remarkable race of men and women living quietly in their beautiful homes in the neighbourhood of Norwich, but of an influence daily growing—handsome people, prosperous, generous, with a sort of natural Priesthood belonging to them. Scorning to live for themselves alone, the Gurneys were the dispensers and originators of a hundred useful and benevolent enterprises in Norwich and elsewhere. They were Quakers, and merchants, and bankers. How much of their strength lay in their wealth and prosperity, how much in their enthusiasm, their high spirits, voluntarily curbed, their natural instinct both to lead and to protect, it would be idle to discuss. It is always difficult for people who believe in the all-importance of the present to judge of others, whose firm creed is that the present is nothing as compared with the future. Chief among these remarkable people was Elizabeth Gurney, the wife of Josiah Fry, the mother of many children, and the good angel, indeed, of the unhappy prisoners, to whose utter gloom and misery she brought some rays of hope. There are few figures more striking than that of the noble Quaker lady starting on her generous mission, comforting the children, easing the chains of the captives. No domineering Jellyby, but a motherly, deep-hearted woman; shy, and yet from her very timidity gaining influence, which less sensitive natures often fail to win. One likes to imagine the dignified sweet face coming in—the comforting Friend in the quiet garb of the Quaker woman standing at the gates of those terrible places, bidding the despairing captives be of good hope.

Elizabeth Fry's whole life was a mission of love and help to others; her brothers and her many relations heartily joined and assisted her in her many plans and efforts.

For Joseph John Gurney, the head of the Norwich family, Mrs. Opie is said to have had a feeling amounting to more than friendship. Be this as it may, it is no wonder that so warm-hearted and impressionable a woman should have been influenced by the calm goodness of the friends with whom she was now thrown. It is evident enough, nor does she attempt to conceal the fact, that the admiration and interest she feels for John Joseph Gurney are very deep motive powers. There comes a time in

most lives, especially in the lives of women, when all the habits and certainties of youth have passed away, when life has to be built up again upon the foundations indeed of the past, the friendships, the memories, the habits of the early life, but with new places and things to absorb and to interest, new hearts to love. And one day people wake up to find that the friends of their choice have become their home. People are stranded perhaps seeking their share in life's allowance, and suddenly they come upon something, with all the charm which belongs to deliberate choice, as well as that of natural affinity. How well one can realise the extraordinary comfort that Amelia Opie must have found in the kind friends and neighbours with whom she was now thrown! Her father was a very old man, dying slowly by inches. Her own life of struggle, animation, intelligence, was over, as she imagined, for ever. No wonder if for a time she was carried away and forgot her own nature, her own imperative necessities, in sympathy with this new revelation. Here was a new existence, here was a Living Church ready to draw her within its saving walls. John Joseph Gurney must have been a man of extraordinary personal influence. For a long time past he had been writing to her seriously. At last, suddenly, though not without secret deliberation, with her father's full approval, she joined the Society of Friends, put on their dress, and adopted their peculiar phraseology. People were surprised at the time, but I think it would have been still more surprising if she had not joined them. J. J. Gurney, in one of his letters, somewhat magnificently describes Mrs. Opie as offering up her many talents and accomplishments a brilliant sacrifice to her new-found persuasions. 'Illustrations of Lying,' moral anecdotes on the borderland of imagination are all that she is henceforth allowed. 'I am bound in a degree not to invent a story, because when I became a Friend it was required of me not to do so,' she writes to Miss Mitford, who had asked her to contribute to an annual. Miss Mitford's description of Mrs. Opie, 'Quakerised all over, and calling Mr. Haydon "Friend Benjamin,"' is amusing enough; and so also is the account of the visiting card she had printed after she became a Quaker, with 'Amelia Opie,' without any prefix, as is the Quaker way; also, as is not their way, with a wreath of embossed pink roses surrounding the name. There is an account of Mrs. Opie published in the 'Edinburgh Review,' in a delightful article entitled 'The Worthies of Norwich,' which brings one almost into her very presence.

Amelia Opie at the end of the last century and Amelia Opie in the garb and with the speech of a member of the Society of Friends sounds like two separate personages, but no one who recollects the gay little songs which at seventy she used to sing with lively gesture, the fragments of drama to which, with the zest of an innate actress, she occasionally treated her young friends, or the elaborate faultlessness of her appearance—the shining folds and long train of her pale satin draperies, the high, transparent cap, the crisp fichu crossed over the breast, which set off to advantage the charming little plump figure with its rounded lines—could fail to recognise the same characteristics which sparkled about the wearer of the pink calico domino in which she frolicked incognito 'till she was tired' at a ball given to the Duke of Wellington in 1814, or of the eight blue feathers which crowned the waving tresses of her flaxen hair as a bride.

Doctor Alderson died in October 1825, and Mrs. Opie was left alone. She was very forlorn when her father died. She had no close ties to carry her on peacefully from middle age to the end of life. The great break had come; she was miserable, and, as mourners do, she falls upon herself and beats her breast. All through these sad years her friends at Northrepps and at Earlham were her chief help and consolation. As time passed her deep sorrow was calmed, when peaceful memories had succeeded to the keen anguish of her good old father's loss. She must have suffered deeply; she tried hard to be brave, but her courage failed her at times; she tried hard to do her duty; and her kindness and charity were unailing, for she was herself still, although so unhappy. Her journals are pathetic in their humility and self-reproaches for imaginary omissions. She is lonely; out of heart, out of hope. 'I am so dissatisfied with myself that I hardly dare ask or expect a blessing upon my labours,' she says; and a long list of kind and fatiguing offices, of visits to sick people and poor people, to workhouses and prisons, is interspersed with expressions of self-blame.

The writer can remember as a child watching the straight-cut figure of a Quaker lady standing in the deep window of an old mansion that overlooked the Luxembourg Gardens at Paris, with all their perfume and blooming scent of lilac and sweet echoes of children, while the quiet figure stood looking down upon it all from—to a child—such an immeasurable distance. As one grows older one becomes more used to garbs of different fashions and cut, and one can believe in present sunlight and the scent of flowering trees and the happy sound of children's voices going straight to living hearts beneath their several disguises, and Mrs. Opie, notwithstanding her Quaker dress, loved bright colours and

gay sunlight. She was one who gladly made life happy for others, who naturally turned to bright and happy things herself. When at last she began to recover from the blow which had fallen so heavily upon her, she went from Norwich to the Lakes and Fells for refreshment, and then to Cornwall, and among its green seas and softly clothed cliffs she found good friends (as most people do who go to that kind and hospitable county), and her husband's relations, who welcomed her kindly. As she recovered by degrees she began to see something of her old companions. She went to London to attend the May meetings of the Society, and I heard an anecdote not long ago which must have occurred on some one of these later visits there.

One day when some people were sitting at breakfast at Samuel Rogers's, and talking as people do who belong to the agreeable classes, the conversation happened to turn upon the affection of a father for his only child, when an elderly lady who had been sitting at the table, and who was remarkable for her Quaker dress, her frills and spotless folds, her calm and striking appearance, started up suddenly, burst into a passion of tears, and had to be led sobbing out of the room. She did not return, and the lady who remembers the incident, herself then a young bride, told me it made all the more impression upon her at the time because she was told that the Quaker lady was Mrs. Opie. My friend was just beginning her life. Mrs. Opie must have been ending hers. It is not often that women, when youth is past, shed sudden and passionate tears of mere emotion, nor perhaps would a Quaker, trained from early childhood to calm moods and calm expressions, have been so suddenly overpoweringly affected, but Mrs. Opie was no born daughter of the community, she was excitable and impulsive to the last. I have heard a lady who knew her well describe her, late in life, laughing heartily, and impetuously thrusting a somewhat starched-up Friend into a deep armchair exclaiming, 'I will hurl thee into the bottomless pit.'

X.

'At sight of thee, O Tricolor,
I seem to feel youth's hours return,
The loved, the lost;'

So writes Mrs. Opie at the age of sixty, reviving, delighting, as she catches sight of her beloved Paris once more, and breathes its clear and life-giving air, and looks out across its gardens and glit-

tering gables and spires, and again meets her French acquaintances, and throws herself into their arms and into their interests with all her old warmth and excitability. The little grey bonnet only gives certain incongruous piquancy to her pleasant, kind-hearted exuberance. She returns to England, but far-away echoes reach her soon of changes and revolutions concerning all the people for whom her regard is so warm. In August, 1830, came the news of a new revolution—'The Chamber of Deputies dissolved for ever; the liberty of the press abolished; king, ministers, court, and ambassadors flying from Paris to Vincennes; cannon planted against the city; 5,000 people killed, and the Rue de Rivoli running with blood.' No wonder such rumours stirred and overwhelmed the staunch but excitable lady. 'You will readily believe how anxious, interested, and excited I feel,' she says; and then she goes on to speak of Lafayette, 'miraculously preserved through two revolutions, and in chains and in a dungeon, now the leading mind in another conflict, and lifting not only an armed but a restraining hand in a third revolution.'

Her heart was with her French friends and intimates, and though she kept silence she was not the less determined to follow its leading, and, without announcing her intention, she started off from Norwich and, after travelling without intermission, once more arrived in her beloved city. But what was become of the Revolution? 'Paris seemed as bright and peaceful as I had seen it thirteen months ago! The people, the busy people passing to and fro, and soldiers, omnibuses, cabriolets, citadenes, carts, horsemen hurrying along the Rue de Rivoli, while foot passengers were crossing the gardens, or loungers were sitting on its benches to enjoy the beauty of the May-November.' She describes two men crossing the Place Royale singing a national song, the result of the Revolution:

Pour briser leurs masses profondes,
 Qui conduit nos drapeaux sanglants,
 C'est la Liberté de deux mondes,
 C'est Lafayette en cheveux blancs.

Mrs. Opie was full of enthusiasm for noble Lafayette, surveying his court of turbulent intrigue and shifting politics; for Cuvier in his own realm, among more tranquil laws, less mutable decrees. She should have been born a Frenchwoman, to play a real and brilliant part among all these scenes and people, instead of only looking on. Something stirred in her veins too eager and

bubbling for an Englishwoman's scant share of life and outward events. No wonder that her friends at Norwich were anxious, and urged her to return. They heard of her living in the midst of excitement, of admiration, and with persons of a different religion and way of thinking from themselves. Their warning admonitions carried their weight; that little Quaker bonnet which she took so much care of was a talisman, drawing the most friendly of Friends away from the place of her adoption. But she came back unchanged to her home, to her quiet associations; she had lost none of her spirits, none of her cheerful interest in her natural surroundings. As life burnt on, her kind soul seemed to shine more and more brightly. Everyone came to see her, to be cheered and warmed by her genial spirit. She loved flowers, of which her room was full. She had a sort of passion for prisms, says her biographer; she had several set in a frame and mounted like a screen, and the colour flew about the little room. She kept up a great correspondence; she was never tired of writing, though the letters on other people's business were apt to prove a serious burden at times. But she lives on only to be of use. 'Take care of indulging in little selfishnesses,' she writes in her diary; 'learn to consider others in trifles: the mind so disciplined will find it easier to fulfil the greater duties, and the character will not exhibit that trying inconsistency which one sees in great and often in pious persons.' Her health fails, but not her courage. She goes up to London for the last time to her cousin's house. She is interested in all the people she meets, in their wants and necessities, in the events of the time. She returns home, contented with all; with the house which she feels so 'desirable to die in,' with her window through which she can view the woods and rising ground of Thorpe. 'My prisms to-day are quite in their glory,' she writes; 'the atmosphere must be very clear, for the radiance is brighter than ever I saw it before,' and then she wonders whether the mansions in heaven will be draped in such brightness, and to the last the kind, bright *rainbow* lady remained surrounded by kind and smiling faces, by pictures, by flowers, and with the light of her favourite prismatic colours shining round about the couch on which she lay.

THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÀ.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER X.

REPENTE TURPISSIMUS.



O sooner had Mark declared himself the author of his dead friend's book than he would have given almost anything to recall his words, not so much from conscience (though he did feel he had suddenly developed into a surprisingly finished scoundrel), as from a fear that his lie might after all be detected. He sat staring stupidly at Mr. Fladgate, who patted him on the shoulder with well-meant encouragement; he had never seen quite so coy an author before. 'I'm very glad to make Mr. Vincent Beauchamp's acquaintance—at last,' he said, beaming with honest

pride at the success of his tactics, 'and now we can come to terms again.'

He did not find Mark more difficult to deal with than most budding authors, and in this case Mark was morbidly anxious to get the money part of the transaction over as soon as possible; he could not decide whether his conscience would be better or worse satisfied if he insisted on the best pecuniary terms he could obtain, so in his indecision he took the easier course of agreeing to everything.

'About the title now?' said Mr. Fladgate, when the terms

had been reduced to a formal memorandum. 'I don't think I quite like your present one; too moonshiny, eh?'

Mark owned that it did sound a little moonshiny.

'I think, too, I rather think, there's something very like it out already, and that may lead to unpleasantness, you know. Now, can you suggest something else which will give a general idea of the nature of the book?'

As Mark had absolutely no idea what the book was about, he could not.

'Well, Mr. Blackshaw suggested something like "Enchantment," or "Witchery."'

'I don't care about either of those,' said Mark, who found this sort of dissembling unexpectedly easy.

'No,' said Mr. Fladgate, 'No. I think you're right. Now, I had a notion—I don't know what you will think of it—but I thought you might call it "A Modern Merlin," eh?'

"A Modern Merlin," repeated Mark thoughtfully.

'Yes, it's not *quite* the right thing, perhaps, but it's taking, I think, taking.'

Mark said it was taking.

'Of course *your* hero is not exactly a magician, but it brings in the "Vivien" part of the story, don't you see?' Of course Mark did not see, but he thought it best to agree. 'Well,' continued Mr. Fladgate, who was secretly rather proud of his title, 'how does it strike you now? it seems to me as good a title as we are likely to hit upon.'

After all, Mark thought, what did it matter? it wasn't his book, except in name. 'I think it's excellent,' he said, 'excellent; and, by the way, Mr. Fladgate,' he added, 'I should like to change the *nom de plume*: it's a whim of mine, perhaps, but there's another I've been thinking lately I should like better.'

'By all means,' said the other, taking up a pencil to make the necessary alteration on the manuscript, 'but why not use your real name? I prophesy you'll be proud of that book some day; think over it.'

'No,' said Mark, 'I don't wish my real name to appear just yet' (he hardly knew why; perhaps a lingering sense of shame held him back from this more open dishonesty). 'Will you strike out "Vincent Beauchamp," and put in "Cyril Ernstone," please?' For 'Cyril Ernstone' had been the pseudonym which he had

chosen long ago for himself, and he wished to be able to use it now, since he must not use his own.

‘Very well, then, we may consider that settled. We think of bringing out the book as soon as possible, without waiting for the spring season; it will go to press at once and we will send you the proofs as soon as we get them in.’

‘There’s one thing, perhaps, I’d better mention,’ said Mark suddenly; after he had turned to go a new danger had occurred to him, ‘the handwriting of the manuscript is not mine. I—I thought it as well to tell you that beforehand; it might lead to mistakes. I had it copied out for me by—by a friend.’

Mr. Fladgate burst out laughing. ‘Pardon me,’ he said, when he had finished, ‘but really I couldn’t help it, you do seem to have been so bent on hoodwinking us.’

‘And yet you have found me out, you see,’ said Mark, with a very unmirthful smile.

Mr. Fladgate smiled, too, making a little gesture of his hand, thinking very possibly that few precautions would be proof against his sagacity, and they parted.

Mark went down the stairs and through the clerks’ room into the street, with a dazed and rather awestruck feeling upon him. He hardly realised the treachery he had been guilty of, the temptation had burst upon him so suddenly, his fall had been made so easy for him, that he scarcely felt his dishonour, nor was he likely to feel it very keenly so long as only good results should flow from it. But he was vaguely conscious that he was not the same Mark Ashburn who had parted from old Shelford not an hour ago in the street there; he was a man with a new hope in his breast, and it might be a new fear, but the hope was near and bright, the fear shadowy and remote as yet: he had only to keep his own counsel and be patient for a while, and the course of events would assuredly bring him the stake he had played so high for.

At home that evening he took down his manuscript novels (which of course he had *not* burnt) and read them again carefully. Yes; there was power in them, he felt it, a copious flow of words, burning eloquence, and melting pathos. The white heat at which the lines were written surprised even himself. It was humiliating to think that without the subterfuge that had been forced upon him he might have found it impossible to find publishers who would appreciate these merits, for after Messrs.

Leadbitter and Gandy's refusal he had recognised this to the full; but now, at least, they were insured against any such fate. A careful reading was absolutely necessary to a proper estimation of them, and a careful reading they had never had as yet, and would receive at last, or if they did not, it would only be because the reputation he had appropriated would procure them a ready acceptance without any such preliminary ordeal. The great point gained was that they would be published, and after that he feared nothing.

If anything whispered to him that he might have accomplished even this by honourable means; that in time and with economy he could have produced them at his own expense; that perhaps a little more perseverance might even have discovered a firm with sufficient faith to take the risk upon themselves; if these doubts suggested themselves to him he had little difficulty in arguing them down. They might have had some weight once, but they came too late; the thing was done now and could never be recalled; his whole interest lay in persuading himself that what he had done was the only thing that could be done, unless he was content to resign his ambition for ever, and Mark succeeded in persuading himself of this.

Very soon his chief feeling was one of impatience for Holroyd's book to come out and make way for his own: then any self-reproach he might still feel would be drowned in a sense of triumph which would justify the means he had taken; so he waited eagerly for the arrival of the first proofs.

They arrived at last. As he came back one evening to Malakoff Terrace, Trixie ran to meet him, holding up two tightly rolled parcels, with a great curiosity in her eyes. 'They came this afternoon,' she whispered, 'and oh, Mark, I couldn't help it; I tore one end a little and peeped; are they really part of a book—is it *yours*?'

Mark thought he had better accustom himself to this kind of thing as early as possible. 'Yes, Trixie,' he said, 'they're the first proofs of my book.'

'O-oh!' cried Trixie, with a gasp of delight, 'not "Sweet Bells Jangled," Mark?'

'No, *not* "Sweet Bells Jangled," it—it's a book you don't know about—a little thing I don't expect very much from, but my publishers seem to like it, and I can follow it up with the "Bells" afterwards.'

He was turning over the rough greyish pages as he spoke, and Trixie was peeping greedily at them, too, with her pretty chin dug into his shoulder.

'And did you really write all that?' she said; 'how interesting it looks, you clever boy! You *might* have told me you were doing it though. What's it about?'

'How can I tell you before I know myself,' said Mark, quite forgetting himself in his impatience. 'I—I mean, Trixie, that I can't correct these proofs as they ought to be corrected while you stay here chattering.'

'I'll go in a minute, Mark; but you won't have time to correct them before dinner, you know. When did you write it?'

'What *does* it matter when I wrote it!' said Mark irritably; 'if it hadn't been written the proofs wouldn't be here, would they? Is there anything else you would like to know—*how* I wrote it, where I wrote it, why I wrote it? You seem to think it a most extraordinary thing that anything I write should be printed at all, Trixie.'

'I don't know why you should speak like that, Mark,' said Trixie, rather hurt; 'you know a little while ago you never expected such a thing yourself. I can't help wanting to know all I can about it. What *will* you say to Uncle Solomon?' she added, with a little quiver of laughter in her voice. 'You promised him to give up literature, you know.'

'Don't you remember the Arab gentleman in the poem?' said Mark lightly. 'He agreed to sell his steed, but when the time came it didn't come off—he didn't come off, either—he "flung them back their gold," and rode away. I shall fling Uncle Solomon back *his* gold, metaphorically, and gallop off on my Pegasus.'

'Ma won't like that,' prophesied Trixie, shaking her head wisely.

'No; mother objects to that kind of horse-exercise, and, ahem, Trixie, it might be as well to say nothing about it to any of them just at present. There will only be a fuss about it, and I can't stand that.'

Trixie promised silence. 'I'm so glad about it, though, you can't think, Mark,' she said; 'and this isn't one of your *great* books, either, you said, didn't you?'

'No,' said Mark; 'it's not one of *them*. I haven't put my best work into it.'

'You put your best work into the two that came back, didn't you?' asked Trixie naïvely. 'But they won't come back any more, will they? They'll be glad of them if this is a success.'

'Fladgate will be glad of them, I fancy, in any case. I've got a chance at last, Trixie. A chance at last!'

Later that night he locked himself in the room which he used as a sitting-room and bed-room combined, and set himself, not without repugnance, to go steadily through the proofs, and make the acquaintance of the work he had made his own.

Much has been said of the delight with which an author reads his first proofs, and possibly the sensation is a wholly pleasurable one to some; to others it is not without its drawbacks. Ideas that seemed vivid and bright enough when they were penned have a bald tame look in the new form in which they come back. The writer finds himself judging the work as a stranger's, and forming the worst opinions of it. He sees hideous gaps and crudities beyond all power of correction, and for the first time, perhaps, since he learned that his manuscript was accepted, his self-doubts return to him.

But Mark's feelings were much more complicated than this; all the gratified pride of an author was naturally denied to him, and it was thoroughly distasteful to him to carry out his scheme of deception by such 'sordid details as the necessary corrections of printers' errors.

But he was anxiously eager to find out what kind of a literary bantling was this which he had fathered so fraudulently; he had claimed it in blind reliance on the publisher's evident enthusiasm—had he made a mistake after all? What if it proved something which could do him no credit whatever—a trap into which his ambition had led him! The thought that this might be so made him very uneasy. Poor Holroyd, he thought, was a very good fellow—an excellent fellow, but not exactly the man to write a book of extraordinary merit—clever, perhaps, but clever in an unobtrusive way—and Mark's tendency was to judge, as he expected to be judged himself, by outsiders.

With these misgivings crowding upon him, he sat down to read the opening chapters; he was not likely to be much overcome by admiration in any case, for his habitual attitude in studying even the greatest works was critical, as he felt the presence of eccentricities or shortcomings which he himself would have avoided.

But at least, as he read on, his greatest anxiety was set at rest—if he could judge by the instalment before him, the book was not in any danger of coming absolutely to grief—it would do his reputation no harm. It was not, to be sure, the sort of book he would have written himself, as he affected the cynical mode of treatment and the indiscriminate satire which a rather young writer feels instinctively that the world expects from him. Still, it was not so bad. It was slightly dreamy and mystical in parts, the work of a man who had lived more amongst books than in the world, but some of the passages glowed with the rich imagery of a true poet, and here and there were indications of a quiet and cultivated humour which would recommend itself to all who do not consider the humorous element in literature as uncanny, if not personally offensive. The situations were strong, too, and as nearly new as situations can be and retain any probability in this over-plagiarised world; and at least one of the characters was obviously studied from life with a true and tender observation.

All of this Mark did not see, nor was he capable of seeing, but he thought that, with a little 'weeding' and 'writing-up,' the book would do, and set himself to supply what was wanting with a laudable self-devotion—his general plan of accomplishing this may be described here once for all.

He freshened up chapters with touches of satire, and gave them a more scholarly air by liberal allusions to the classics; he rewrote some of the more descriptive and romantic passages, putting his finest and most florid epithets into them with what he felt was very like disinterestedness, and a reckless waste of good material. And he cut down the dialogue in places, or gave it a more colloquial turn, so as to suit the tastes of the average reader, and he worked up some of the crises which struck him as inadequately treated.

After that he felt much easier; either considering that these improvements constituted a sort of atonement, or that they removed any chance of failure—as this book was to go forth and herald his own, it was vitally important that it should make as imposing an appearance as possible.

CHAPTER XI.

REVOLT.



NE afternoon, early in the year, Mark had betaken himself to the 'Cock,' where he was to lunch with his uncle by appointment before going with him to the steward's office of his Inn to pay his fees for the privilege of being called to the Bar. For Mark had duly presented himself for the not very searching ordeal by which the public is guaranteed against the incompetence of practitioners, and, rather to his own surprise, had not been required to try again. 'Call night' was already announced in the windows of the law wig-makers, and Uncle Solomon, in high delight, resolved that his nephew

should join the next batch of barristers, had appointed this day for choosing the wig and gown and settling all other preliminaries—he had been so much pleased, in fact, as to inclose a handsome cheque in the letter which conveyed his desires.

So Mark waited by the hoardings of the New Law Courts, opposite the Corporation's well-meant attempt to give the City their notion of Mr. Lewis Carroll's 'Snark'—for it has since been semi-officially explained that it is *not* a Boojum—until his relative should join him. Mark was not at ease—he was nerving himself to make a statement which he felt would come upon his uncle as a far from gratifying surprise—he had put it off from time to time, out of weakness, or, as he had told himself, from diplomacy. Now he could do so no longer. Uncle Solomon had hinted terrible things in his letter of a certain brief with which his own solicitor was to entrust the bran-new barrister the morning after his call! But for this, Mark might have let things drift, as he would strongly have preferred to do, but this threat of immediate employment drove him to declare himself. He firmly believed that his true vocation was the one he had secured at such cost to

his self-respect; he saw little more attraction in the Bar than in teaching, and the most self-confident man might have recoiled at having work thrust into his hands before he had undergone the slightest practical training for conducting it. And Mark's imagination saw his first brief bringing others in its train, until he should sink in a sea of blue foolscap, helpless and entangled in clinging tentacles of red-tape. Perhaps this was a groundless alarm, but he had planned out a particular career for himself, a career of going about and observing (and it is well known that what a man of genius calls 'observing' is uncommonly like ordinary people's enjoyment), being famous and flattered, and sitting down in moments of inspiration to compose with a clear head and a mind unhampered by all other considerations. Now the responsibility of legal work *would* hamper him—he felt his muse to be of that jealous disposition which will suffer no rival—if he meant to be free at all, he must strike the blow at once. And so, as has been said, he was not at his ease.

Mr. Lightowler appeared as St. Clement Danes struck half-past one; he was in high good-humour, jubilant, and ruddy. 'Well, Master Barrister,' he said, chuckling; 'to think o' my living to see you figurin' about in a wig and gown—you must cut off that moustache of yours, though, Mark; none of the young barrister fellows I see goin' up in the train of a mornin' wear 'em. I'm told the judges don't consider too much 'air respectful, hay? Well, s'pose we go in and have a bit of something, eh? The "Cock," is it? Ah, I haven't been in here—I haven't been in here not since I was a young man "on the road," as we used to call it. I don't mean I was ever in the Dick Turpin line, but a commercial gentleman, you know. Well, I've made my way since. You'll have to make yours, with more help than I ever had, though.'

Mark led the way up a steep little passage and into the well-known room, with its boxes darkened by age, its sanded floor and quaint carved Jacobean mantelpiece. He chose a compartment well down at the bottom of the room.

'What's your partickler preference, eh?' said Uncle Solomon, rather as if he was treating a schoolboy. 'What's their speciality 'ere, now? Well, you can give me,' he added to the waiter, with the manner of a man conferring a particular favour, 'you can give me a chump chop, underdone, and a sausage. And bring this young gentleman the same. I don't care about anything 'eavier at this time o' day,' he explained.

Mark talked on all kinds of topics with desperate brilliancy for some time; he wanted time before approaching *the* subject.

Uncle Solomon broached it for him; 'You'll want a regler set o' chambers by-and-by,' he said; 'I've seen a room down Middle Temple Lane that'll do for you for the present. When the briefs begin to come in, we'll see about something better. I was talkin' about you to Ferret the other day,' he went on. 'It'll be all right; he's goin' to instruct their London agent to send you in a little something that you can try your 'prentice hand at directly. Isn't *that* be'avin' like an uncle to you, eh? I hope you will go and do me credit over it; that's the only way you can pay me back a little—I ask but that of you, Mark.'

For all his bumptiousness and despotism, there was a real kindness, possibly not of the purest and most unselfish order, but still kindness, in his manner, and Mark felt a pang at having to reward it as he must.

The meal was over now, and Uncle Solomon was puffing at one of the churchwardens supplied by the establishment, and Mark, it being a half-holiday, was indulging himself in a cigar; it seemed to give him more composure. 'Well,' said the former, laying down the long pipe and finishing the glass of whisky and water before him, 'Well, we'd better be off now to the place where I'm to pay the fees for you. Ah, what you young fellows cost to start nowadays!'

'That's it,' said Mark; 'I—I would rather not cost you anything, uncle.'

'It's rather late in the day to be partickler about that, I should say.'

'It is. I feel that; but I mean, I don't want to cost you any *more*.'

'What d'ye mean by that?'

'I mean that I don't care about being called to the Bar at present.'

'Don't you? Well, I do, so let that be enough for you. If I'm willin' to pay, I don't see what you 'ave to say against it. All *you've* got to do is to work.'

'Uncle,' said Mark in a low voice, 'I must tell you what I feel about this. I—I don't want to cause you to spend your money on false pretences.'

'You'd better not: that's all I can tell you!'

'Precisely,' said Mark; 'so I'll be quite frank with you before-

hand. If you set your mind on it, I will take my call to the Bar.'

'Will yer, though? That's very affable of you, now!'

'Yes, I will; but I shall never practise; if Ferret's agent sends me this brief, I shall decline it.'

'I would; that's the way to get on at the Bar; you're a sharp feller, *you* are!'

'I don't want to get on at the Bar. I don't mean to take it up; there, if you choose to be angry, I can't help it. I've told you.'

'Then may I take the liberty of inquirin' 'ow you purpose to live?' demanded Uncle Solomon.

'I mean to live by literature,' said Mark; 'I know I promised I wouldn't write any more: well, as far as that goes, I've kept my word; but—but a former book of mine has been accepted on very liberal terms, I see my way now to making a living by my pen, and though I'm sorry, of course, if it disappoints you, I mean to choose my life for myself, while I can.'

It must be highly annoying when one has, after infinite labour, succeeded in converting a clown, to see him come to chapel with a red-hot poker and his pockets full of stolen sausages, but even that shock is nothing to Uncle Solomon's.

He turned deadly pale and sank back in the box, glaring at Mark and opening his mouth once or twice with a fish-like action, but without speaking. When he could articulate, he called the waiter, giving Mark reason for a moment to fear that he was going to pour out his rage and disappointment into the ears of one of the smug and active attendants.

'Take for me and this young man, will yer?' was all he said, however. When the waiter had reckoned up the sum in the time-honoured manner and departed, Uncle Solomon turned and began to struggle into his great-coat. 'Let me help you,' said Mark, but Mr. Lightowler indignantly jerked himself away. 'I don't want to be helped into my coat by you,' he said; 'you've helped me into my grave by what you've done this day, you have; let that be sufficient for you!'

When he had rendered himself rather conspicuous by his ineffectual attempts to put on the coat, and was reduced to accept the assistance of two waiters who shook him into it obsequiously, he came back to the box where Mark was sitting in a relieved but still vaguely uncomfortable frame of mind.

'I don't want to 'ave many words with you about this,' he

began with a sternness that was not unimpressive. 'If I was to let myself out in 'ere, I should go too far. I'll only just tell you this much; this is the second time you've played me this trick, and it's the last! I warned you before that I should have done with you if you did it again: you'll 'ave no more chances like the



last, so mind that. Take care of that cheque, you needn't fear I shall stop it, but you won't get many more out o' me. And now I'll bid you good-day, young gentleman; I'm goin' to Kensington, and then I shall do a little littery composing on my own account, since it's so pop'lar, and get Ferret to help me with it. I'm not

one of your littery men, but I dessay I can compose something yet that'll be read some day with a good deal of interest; it won't be pleasant reading for you, though, I can tell yer!

He went noisily out, the waiters staring after him and the people looking up from their boxes as he passed, and Mark was left to his own reflections, which were of a mixed order.

He had accomplished his main object—his slavery was over, and he felt an indescribable relief at the thought; still, he could not avoid the suspicion that his freedom might have been dearly purchased. His uncle's words had pointed to a state of things in which he would have benefited to a considerable extent under his will, and that was over now. Would it not have been worth while to endure a little longer—but Mark felt strongly that it would not. With such prospects as he now saw opening before him, the idea of submitting himself to an old man's ambitious whims for the sake of a reward which might, after all, be withheld at last was utterly revolting. He felt a certain excitement, too, at the idea of conquering the world single-handed.

When he left the 'Cock' he walked slowly and irresolutely down the Strand. 'If I go home now I shall find *him* blustering there. I don't feel equal to any more of him just now,' he thought.

He had no club to go to at that time, so he went and read the papers, and drank coffee at a cigar divan until it was late enough to dine, and after dinner tried to drown his care by going to see one of those anomalous productions—a 'three-act burlesque'—at a neighbouring theatre, which he sat through with a growing gloom, in spite of the pretty faces and graceful dances which have now made plot and humour so unnecessary. Each leading member of the clever company danced his or her special *pas seul* as if for a competitive examination, but left him unthrilled amidst all the enthusiasm that thundered from most parts of the house. It is true that there were faces there—and young men's faces—quite as solemn as his own, but then theirs was the solemnity of an enjoyment too deep for expression, while Mark's face was blank from a depression he could not shake off.

He went away at the end of the second act with a confused recollection of glowing groups of silk-clad figures, forming up into a tableau for no obvious dramatic reason, and, thinking it better to face his family before the morning, went straight home to Malakoff Terrace. He could not help a slight nervousness as he opened the gate and went up the narrow path of flag-stones. The

lower window was dark, but there were no lights in the upper rooms, so that he guessed that the family had not retired. Mrs. Ashburn was entirely opposed to the latch-key as a domestic implement, and had sternly refused to allow such a thing to pass her threshold, so that Mark refrained from making use of the key—which of course he had—in all cases where it was not absolutely necessary, and he knocked and rang now.

Trixie came to the door and let him in. 'They've sent Ann to bed,' she whispered, 'but ma and pa are sitting up for you.'

'Are they though?' said Mark grimly, as he hung up his hat.

'Yes,' said Trixie; 'come in here for a minute, Mark, while I tell you all about it. Uncle Solomon has been here this afternoon and stayed to dinner and he's been saying, oh, such dreadful things about you. Why weren't you here?'

'I thought I should enjoy my dinner more if I dined out,' said Mark. 'Well, and what's the end of it all, Trixie?'

'I'm sure I don't know what it will be. Uncle Solomon actually wanted me to come and live with him at Chigbourne, and said he would make it worth my while in the end, if I would promise not to have anything more to do with you.'

'Ah, and when are you going?' said Mark, with a cynicism that was only on the surface.

'When!' said Trixie indignantly, 'why, never. Horrid old man! As if I cared about his money! I told him what I thought about things, and I think I made him angrier. I hope so, I'm sure.'

'Did he make the same offer to Martha or Cuthbert?' asked Mark; 'and were they indignant too?'

'They weren't asked. I don't think Uncle Solomon cares about them much; *you're* his favourite, Mark.'

'Yes, *I'm* his favourite,' said Mark; 'but I'm not proud, Trixie. Besides, I rather think all that is over now.'

Here the door of the next room opened, and Mrs. Ashburn's voice was heard saying, 'Trixie, tell your brother Mark that, if he is in a condition to be spoken to, his father and I have something to say to him at once.'

'Encouraging that,' said Mark. 'Well, Trixie, here goes. You'd better go to bed. I'm afraid we are going to have a scene in there.'

He went in with a rather over-done cheerfulness. 'Well, mother,' he began, attempting to kiss her, 'I didn't dine at home to-night because——'

'I know why you didn't dine at home,' she said. 'I wish for no kisses from you, Mark. We have seen your uncle.'

'So have I,' said Mark; 'I lunched with him.'

'It is useless to trifle now,' she said; 'we know all.'

'I assure you I *did* lunch with him; we had chops,' said Mark, who sometimes found the bland and childlike manner very useful in these emergencies. It did not serve him then, however.

'How could you deceive your uncle in such a manner?' she resumed.

'I didn't. I *undeceived* him.'



'You have disappointed all his plans for you; thrown up the Bar, your position at St. Peter's, all your prospects in life—and for what?'

'For fun, of course, mother. I don't know what I'm fit for or what I want; it's pure idiotic recklessness, isn't it?'

'It is; but don't talk to me in that ribald tone, Mark; I have enough to bear as it is. Once for all I ask you, Is it true what my brother tells me, that you have returned to the mire like the sow in the Scriptures; that you are going to let your name be connected with—with a novel, after all you have promised?'

‘Quite true,’ said Mark; ‘I hope to be connected with many novels.’

‘Mark,’ said his mother, ‘you know what I think about that. I implore you to pause while there’s time still, before doing what you can never recall. It’s not only from worldly motives that I ask it. Surely you can sacrifice a contemptible vanity to your duty towards your mother. I may be wrong in my prejudices, but still I have a right to expect you to regard them. I ask you once more to withdraw from this. Are you going to refuse me?’

Mrs. Ashburn’s harsh tones carried a very genuine feeling and concern. She truly believed that the paths of fiction would lead to her son’s spiritual as well as his material ruin, and Mark had sense enough to recognise the reality of this belief of hers, and drop the levity he had assumed for defensive purposes.

His father had, as usual, taken no part in the interview; he sat looking dolefully at the fire, as if anxious to remain neutral as long as possible; he had long been a mere suzerain, and felt a very modified resentment at a rebellion against an authority that was only nominally his own.

So Mark addressed himself to his mother only. ‘I’m sorry if it grieves you, mother,’ he said, gently enough; ‘but you really must let me go my own way in this—it is no use at all asking me to withdraw now. . . . I have gone too far. . . . Some day you will see that I was not so very foolish after all. I promise you that. Wouldn’t you rather think of me as living the life I could be happy in—being famous, perhaps, even, some day—than dragging out my days in a school or slaving at a profession I can never care for? Of course you would! And a novel isn’t such an awful thing, if you could only bring yourself to think so. You never will read one, you know, so you can’t be a very impartial judge.’

Mrs. Ashburn read very little of any literature; what she did read being chiefly the sermons and biographies of Dissenting divines, and she had never felt any desire to stimulate her imagination by anything much more exciting, especially by accounts of things that never happened, and were consequently untruthful. Her extreme horror of fiction was a form of bigotry now almost extinct, but she had grown up in it and retained it in all the old Puritan vigour.

She showed no signs of being at all impressed by Mark’s remonstrance; her eyes were severely cold, and her voice measured and loud as she replied, without looking at him.

'You won't make me change my opinions in the least, Mark, if you were to talk till daylight. If you set yourself against my wishes in this, we have quite made up our minds how to act, have we not, Matthew?'

'Yes, quite,' said Mr. Ashburn, uneasily, 'quite; but I hope, Mark, my boy, I hope you won't cross your mother in this, when you see how strongly she feels about it. I want to keep my children about me while I can; I don't wish anyone to go if it can be arranged—if it can be arranged.'

'Do you mean, mother, that if I don't do as Uncle Solomon and you wish, I am to go?' asked Mark.

'I do,' said his mother. 'I won't encourage any son of mine against my conscience and my principles. If you choose to live a life of frivolity and idleness, you shall not lead it under my roof; so you know what to expect if you persist in disobeying me—us, I mean.'

'I think I had better go,' said Mark; 'I don't quite see what enormity I have been guilty of, but if you look at things in that light, there is no more to be said. I have chosen my life, and I don't mean to go back from it. I will see about finding lodgings as soon as I can, and you shall not be troubled with me any longer than I can help.'

'Mark, don't be headstrong—don't let your passion get the better of you!' cried his mother, moved out of all her stoniness—for she had not quite expected this, believing that the amount of Mark's salary and his expenses made him practically dependent on her. She had forgotten his uncle's cheque, and did not believe in any serious profits to be gained from literature.

'I'm not in the least angry,' he said; 'I don't wish to go, if you wish me to stay, but if you meant what you said just now, I have no choice.'

His mother was much too proud to weaken her authority by retracting. She still hoped that he would yield if she remained firm, but yielding was out of the question with Mark then, and, besides, independence had its charms, though he would not have been the first to loosen the tie.

'Blame your wicked pride and selfishness, Mark, not your mother, who is only anxious for your good. Go, if you will, but don't dare to expect a blessing on your disobedience.'

'Do you say go, too, father?' said Mark.

'You hear what your mother says. What else can I say?' he

answered feebly; 'it's very painful to me—all this—but you must take your own course.'

'I see I must,' said Mark, and left the room.

'You've been very hard with the boy, Jane,' said her husband, when they were alone, and she had sat for some time with a book open but unread before her; 'I really do think you've been very hard.'

'Do you want to encourage him against his mother?' she asked.

'No, no, you know I don't, Jane. Anything you think right—but I think you were hard.'

'If I was, it was for his good,' she said; 'I have done what I thought right, and we have sat up long enough. We can do no good by talking over it any more, Matthew. Perhaps Mark will think differently to-morrow.'

Trixie had been waiting for Mark in the adjoining room into which she beckoned him as he passed the door. 'How did it end?' she whispered. 'You were very quiet in there; is it settled?'

'Yes, it's settled,' he said. 'I'm to go, Trixie; I shall have to shift for myself. They won't have me here any longer!'

'Oh, Mark!' cried Trixie. 'Take me with you, do, it will be so horrid at home with only Martha and Cuthbert. You and I always got on together; let me come too!'

'I can't,' said Mark, 'not yet—by-and-by, perhaps, Trixie, when I'm a rich man, you know, we can manage it—just now I shall hardly be able to keep myself.'

'I'll work hard at my drawing and get into the Academy. I've begun features already, and I shall soon get into the antique—then we can be famous together, you know.'

'We shall see,' said Mark; 'and in the meantime, Trixie, I think we had better both go to bed.'

When he was alone again and had time to think over the day which had proved so eventful, he could not find it in him to regret what had happened. He had got rid of Uncle Solomon, he had cast off the wig and gown which were to him as the garb of slavery, and the petty restraints of his home life were gone as well; he had no sentimental feelings about his banishment, the bosom of his family had not been a very appreciative or sympathetic one, and he had always intended to go forth from it as soon as he could afford it.

If he had really committed the offence for which he was to be driven from home, he could have considered himself as a most interesting martyr; he did his best to do so as it was, but not with complete success. Betraying a dead man's trust is scarcely heroic, and even Mark felt that dimly, and could not dwell on his ill-treatment as he would dearly like to have done.

But there was something exciting for him, notwithstanding, in the future; he was to go out into the world and shift for himself, and conquer; he would have a part, and it might be a difficult one, to play for a season; but after that he could resume his own character and take the place he meant to fill in the world, feeling at last that the applause he won was his by right.

Vincent Holroyd had been unselfish in life; Mark had always recognised that trait in his character, though the liking he had for the man had not been much the stronger on that account—if now Vincent could see any brief and fleeting fame which his book might gain used as the stepping-stone to his friend's advancement, surely, Mark told himself, he would scarcely grudge it.

But he hardly cared to justify to himself what he had done by any casuistry of this kind; he preferred to shut his eyes resolutely to the morality of the thing; he might have acted like the basest scoundrel, very likely he had. Still, no one did, no one need, suspect him. All he had to do was to make the best use of the advantage he had snatched; when he could feel that he had done that, then he would feel justified, meanwhile he must put up with a few natural twinges of conscience now and then, when he was not feeling well.

The next morning breakfast passed without any reference to the scene of the night before; Martha and Cuthbert both knew of what had happened, but kept silence, and if Mrs. Ashburn had any hopes that Mark would recant, she was disappointed.

That evening he informed them that he had taken rooms, and should not remain at Malakoff Terrace for more than a few days longer; his announcement being met by a grim 'Very well, Mark, just as you please,' from his mother; and though her heart sank at his words, and her last hope of prevailing died away, she never returned to the charge in any way, recognising that it was useless.

When the day for his departure came, there were no scenes; even Trixie, who felt it most, was calm, for, after all, Mark would not be so very far away, he had said she might come and see him

sometimes ; the other two were civil, and cold, there being that curious latent antipathy between them and him which sometimes exists between members of a family.

Mr. Ashburn had mumbled his good-byes with a touch of emotion and even shame in his manner as he shuffled away to his office. 'I don't want you to feel we've cast you off,' he had said nervously. 'Your mother says rather more than she exactly feels at times ; but it's better for you to go, my boy, better for all parties concerned. Only, if you find yourself in—in any difficulties, come back to us, or—that is,' he amended, 'write, or come to me at the office, that will be better, perhaps.'

But Mrs. Ashburn's last words were, 'Good-bye, Mark. I never thought to part with a son of mine in anger ; we may never meet again, but you may live to be sorry for the grief you have caused your mother, when you stand one day over her grave.'

This would have been more impressive if Mrs. Ashburn had not been so much addicted to indulging in such doleful predictions on less adequate occasions that she had discounted much of the effect that properly belonged to them ; even as it was, however, they cut Mark for the moment ; he half offered to embrace his mother, but she made no response, and after waiting for a while, and finding that she made no sign, he went out with a slight shrug of expostulation.

When he had left the room, she half rose as if to follow, but stopped half-way irresolute, while the cab which he had engaged to take himself and his luggage to his new quarters drove off, and when she went upstairs and shut herself in her bedroom for half-an-hour, and the maid, who was 'doing the rooms' hard by, reported afterwards to the cook that she had 'heard missus takin' on awful in there, a-sobbin', and groanin', and prayin' she was, all together like, it quite upset her to 'ear it.'

There were no traces of emotion on her face, however, when she came down again, and only an additional shade of grimness in her voice and manner to tell of the half-hour's agony in which her mother's heart had warred against her pride and her principles.

CHAPTER XII.

LAUNCHED.



ARK had now cut himself adrift and established himself in rooms in one of the small streets about Connaught Square, where he waited for his schemes to accomplish themselves. He still retained his mastership at St. Peter's, although he hoped to be able to throw that up as soon as he could do so with any prudence, and the time that

was not occupied by his school duties he devoted to the perfecting of his friend's work. It was hardly a labour of love, and he came to it with an ever-increasing weariness; all the tedious toiling through piles of proofs and revised proofs, the weeding out of ingenious perversions which seemed to possess a hydra-like power of multiplication after the first eradication, began to inspire him with an infinite loathing of this book which was his and not his own.

It had never interested him; he had never been able to feel the slightest admiration for any part of it, and at times he ceased to believe in it altogether, and think that, after all, he had transgressed to no purpose, and that his own book would have been a stronger staff to lean upon than this reed he had borrowed. But he had to go on with it now, and trust to his good-luck for the consequences; but still there were moments when he trembled at what he had done, and could not bear to be so constantly reminded of it.

There was a little story in the book which one of the subordinate characters told to a child, the distressing history of a small sugar prince on a Twelfth-cake, who believed himself to be a fairy and was taken tenderly away from a children's party by a little girl who, as the prince supposed, would restore him somehow to his proper position in Fairyland; instead of which, however, she took him home to an ordinary nursery and ate him.

Mark was doubtful of the wisdom of retaining this story in the book at all—it seemed to him childish and unnecessary—but as

he had some scruples about cutting it out, he allowed it to remain, a decision which was not without after-effect upon his fortunes.

The title of the book underwent one more change, for Mr. Fladgate's mind misgave him at the last moment as to his own first suggestion, and it was finally settled that the book should be called 'Illusion,' which suited Mark quite as well as anything else.

And so in due time Mark read, with a certain curious thrill, the announcement that 'Illusion,' a romance by Cyril Ernstone, was 'now ready at all libraries;' he sent no presentation copies, not even to Trixie—he had thought of doing so, but when it came to the point he could not.

It was early one Saturday afternoon in March, Mark had walked back by a long round from the school to his lodgings through the parks, and the flower-beds were gay with the lilac, yellow and white of crocus and snowdrop, the smoke-blackened twigs were studded with tiny spikes of tender green, and the air was warm and subtly aromatic with the promise of spring—even in the muddy tainted streets the Lent-lilies and narcissus flowers in the street-sellers' baskets gave touches of passing sweetness to the breeze.

Mark felt a longing to get further away from the town and enjoy what remained of the afternoon on higher ground and in purer air; he would go up to Hampstead, he thought, and see the lights sweeping over the rusty bracken on the heath, or walk down over Highgate Hill, and past the quaint old brick houses with their high-trim laurel hedges and their last-century wrought-iron gateways and lamps in which the light of other days no longer burns.

But he did not go to either place that afternoon, for when he ran up to his rooms to change his hat and coat, he saw that on his table which made him forget his purpose altogether. It was a packet inclosed in a wrapper which bore the name of his publishers on the outside, and he knew at once before opening it that it contained reviews. He tore off the wrapper eagerly, for now at last he would learn whether he had made a bold and successful stroke, or only a frightful mistake.

Beginners have taken up reviews before now, cowering in anticipation before the curse of Balaam, to receive an unexpected benediction; but perhaps no one could be quite so unprepared for this pleasant form of surprise as Mark, for others have written the works that are criticised, and though they may have worked themselves up into a surface ferment of doubt and humility, deep

down in their hearts there is a wonderfully calm acceptance, after the first shock, of the most extravagant eulogy.

The opening paragraphs of the first critique were enough to relieve Mark's main anxiety; Holroyd's book was not a failure—there could be no doubt of that—it was treated with respectful consideration as the work of a man who was entitled to be taken seriously; if reviews had any influence (and it can scarcely be questioned that a favourable review has much) this one alone could not fail to bring 'Illusion' its fair share of attention.

Mark laid down the first paper with a sense of triumph. If a very ordinary book like poor Holroyd's was received in this way, what might he not expect when he produced his own!

Then he took up the next. Here the critic was more measured in his praise. The book he pronounced to be on the whole a good and very nearly a great one, a fine conception fairly worked out, but there was too strong a tendency in parts to a certain dreamy mysticism (here Mark began to regret that he had not been more careful over the proofs), while the general tone was a little too metaphysical, and the whole marred by even more serious blemishes.

'The author,' continued the reviewer, 'whose style is for the most part easy and dignified, with a praiseworthy absence of all inflation or bombast, seems at times to have been smitten by a fatal desire to "split the ears of the groundlings" and produce an impression by showy parades of a not overwhelmingly profound scholarship; and the effect of these contrasts would be grotesque in the extreme, were it not absolutely painful in a work of such high average merit. What, for instance, will be thought of the taste of a writer who could close a really pathetic scene of estrangement between the lovers by such a sentence as the following? . . .'

The sentence which followed was one of those which Mark had felt it due to himself to interpolate. This was but one example, said the inexorable critic, there were other instances more flagrant still—and in all of these the astonished Mark recognised his own improvements!

To say that this was for the moment an exceedingly unpleasant shock to his self-satisfaction is to state a sufficiently obvious fact; but Mark's character must have been very imperfectly indicated if it surprises anyone to hear that it did not take him long to recover from the blow.

Perhaps he had been wrong in grafting his own strong individuality on an entirely foreign trunk—he had not been careful enough to harmonise the two styles—it was merely an odd coincidence that the reviewer, struck naturally enough by the disparity, should have pitched upon *him* as the offender. By-and-by he grew to believe it a positive compliment that the reviewer (no doubt a dull person) had simply singled out for disapproval all the passages which were out of his depth—if there had been nothing remarkable about them, they would not have been noticed at all.

And so, as it is a remarkable peculiarity in the mind of man, that it can frequently be set at ease by some self-constructed theory which would not bear its own examination for a minute—as if a quack were to treat himself with his own bread-pills and feel better—Mark, having convinced himself that the reviewer was a crass fool whose praise and blame were to be read conversely, found the wound to his self-love begin to heal from that moment.

That same Saturday afternoon Mabel was sitting in the little room at the back of the house, in which she received her own particular friends, wrote her letters, and read; just then she was engaged in the last-named occupation, for the books had come in from the library that day, and she had sat down after luncheon to skim them through before selecting any which seemed worth more careful reading.

Mabel had grown to be fastidious in the matter of fiction, the natural result of a sense of humour combined with an instinctive love of reading. There had been a time of course, when, released from the strict censorship of a boarding-school under which all novels on the very lengthy *index expurgatorius* had to be read in delicious stealth, she had devoured eagerly any literature which was in bright covers and three volumes—but that time was past now.

She could not cry over cheap pathos, or laugh at second-hand humour, or shudder at sham cynicism any longer—desperate escapes and rescues moved her not, and she had wearied of beautiful wicked fiends and effeminate golden-haired guardsmen, who hold a Titanic strength in reserve as their one practical joke, but the liberty she had enjoyed had done her no particular harm, even if many mothers might have thought it their duty to restrict it, which Mrs. Langton was too languid or too confiding to attempt.

Mabel had only returned to the works of the great masters of this century with an appreciation heightened by contrast, and though her new delight in them did not blind her—as why should it?—to the lesser lights in whom something may be found to learn or enjoy, she now had standards by which she could form her opinions of them.

Amongst the books sent in that week was 'Illusion,' a romance by Cyril Ernstone, and Mabel had looked at its neat grey-green covers and red lettering with a little curiosity, for somebody had spoken of it to her the day before, and she took it up with the intention of reading a chapter or two before going out with her racket into the square, where the tennis season had already set in on the level corner of the lawn.

But the afternoon wore on, and she remained by the window in a low wicker chair, indifferent to the spring sunshine outside, to the attractions of lawn-tennis, or the occasional sounds of callers, reading on with parted lips and an occasional little musical laugh or involuntary sigh, as Holroyd had once dreamed of seeing his book read by her.

His strong and self-contained nature had unfolded all its deepest tenderness and his most cherished fancies in that his first book, and the pages had the interest of a confession. Mabel felt that personal affection for the unknown writer which to have aroused must be the crown of crowns to those who love their art.

The faults of style and errors of taste here and there which jarred upon her were still too rare or too foreign to the general tone of the book to prejudice her seriously, and she put down the book half finished, not from weariness but with an unusual desire to economise the pleasure it gave her.

'I wonder what "Cyril Ernstone" is like,' she thought, half unconsciously.

Perhaps a popular but plain author who finds it necessary to cultivate society, would discover, if he would go about veiled or engage a better-looking man to personate him, a speedy increase in the circulation of his next work.

And, if at all sensitive as to his own shortcomings, he would certainly be spared a considerable amount of pain, for it is trying for a man who rather enjoys being idolised to be compelled to act as his own iconoclast.

While Mabel was speculating on the personal appearance of

the author of 'Illusion,' Dolly darted in suddenly. 'Oh, there you are, Mabel,' she said, 'how lazy of you! Mother thought you were playing tennis, and some people have called, and she and I have had to do all the talking to them!'

'Come and rest then, Dolly,' said Mabel, putting an arm up and drawing her down to a low stool by her chair.

'I've got my new sash on,' said Dolly warningly.



'I'll be careful,' said Mabel, 'and I've found a little story in this book I am going to read to you, Dolly, if you care about it.'

'Not a long story is it, Mab?' inquired Dolly rather dubiously. But she finally settled herself comfortably down to listen, with her bright little face laid against Mabel's side, while she read the melancholy fate of the sugar fairy prince.

Dolly heard it all out in silence, and with a growing trouble in her eyes. When it was all over, and the heartless mortal

princess had swallowed the sugar prince, she turned half away and said softly, 'Mabel, that was *me*.'

Mabel laughed. 'What *do* you mean, Dolly?' she said.

'I thought he was plain sugar,' Dolly protested piteously; 'how was I to know? I never heard of sugar fairies before. And he did look pretty at first, but I spilt some tea over him, and the colour got all mixed up, just as the story says it did, and so I ate him.'

'It's only a story, Dolly, you know; you needn't make yourself unhappy about it—it isn't true really.'

'But it must be true, it's all put down exactly as it happened . . . And it was me . . . I've eaten up a real fairy prince . . . Mabel, I'm a greedy pig. If I hadn't done it, perhaps we could have got him out of the sugar somehow, and then Colin and I would have had a live fairy to play with. That's what he expected me to do, and I ate him instead. I know he was a fairy, Mabel, he tasted so nice . . . Poor, poor little prince!'

Dolly was so evidently distressed that Mabel tried hard to convince her that the story was about another little girl, the prince was only a sugar one, and so on; but she did not succeed, until the idea struck her that a writer whose book seemed to indicate a sympathetic nature would not object to the trouble of removing the childish fears he had aroused, and she said: 'Listen, Dolly; suppose you write a letter to Mr. Ernstone—at his publishers', you know—I'll show you how to address it, but you must write the rest yourself, and ask him to tell you if the sugar prince was really a fairy, and then you will know all about it; but my own belief is, Dolly, that there aren't any fairies—now, at any rate.'

'If there weren't,' argued Dolly, 'people wouldn't write books about them. I've seen pictures of them lots of times.'

'And they dance in rows at the pantomime, don't they, Dolly?' said Mabel.

'Oh, I know *those* aren't fairies—only thin little girls,' said Dolly contemptuously. 'I'm not a baby, Mabel, but I *would* write to Mr.—what you said just now—only I hate letter-writing so—ink is such blotty, messy stuff—and I daresay he wouldn't answer after all.'

'Try him, dear,' said Mabel.

Dolly looked obstinate and said nothing just then, and Mabel did not think it well to refer to the matter again. But the next week, from certain little affectations of tremendous mystery on

Dolly's part, and the absence of the library copy of 'Illusion' from the morning-room during one whole afternoon, after which it reappeared in a state of preternatural inkiness, Mabel had a suspicion that her suggestion was not so disregarded as it had seemed.

And a few days afterwards Mark found on his breakfast table an envelope from his publishers, which proved to contain a letter directed to 'Mr. Ciril Ernstone,' at the office. The letter was written in a round childish hand, with scrapings here and there to record the fall of a vanquished blot.

'Dear Mr. Ciril Ernstone,' it ran, 'I want you to tell me how you knew that I ate that sugar prince in your story, and if you meant me really. Perhaps you made that part of it up, or else it was some other girl, but please write and tell me who it was and all about it, because I do so hate to think I've eaten up a real fairy without knowing it. DOROTHY MARGARET LANGTON.'

This poor little letter made Mark very angry; if he had written the story he would, of course, have been amused if not pleased by this naïve testimony to his power; but, as it was, it annoyed him to a quite unreasonable extent.

He threw Dolly's note pettishly across the table; 'I wish I had cut that sugar prince story out; I can't tell the child anything about it. Langton, too—wonder if it's any relation to *my* Langton—sister of his, perhaps—*he* lives at Notting Hill somewhere. Well, I won't write; if I do I shall put my foot in it somehow . . . It's quite likely that Vincent knew this child. She can't be seriously unhappy about such a piece of nonsense, and if she is it's not *my* fault.'

Mark had never quite lost the memory of that morning in the fog, his brief meeting with Mabel, and the untimely parting by the hedge. Subsequent events had naturally done something to efface the impression which her charm and grace had made upon him then; but even yet he saw her face at times as clearly as ever, and suffered once more the dull pain he had felt when he first knew that she had gone from him without leaving him the faintest hope of being ever privileged to know her more intimately or even see her again.

Sometimes, when he dreamed most wildly of the brilliant future that was to come to him, he saw himself, as the author of several famous and successful works (amongst which 'Illusion' was entirely obscured), meeting her once more, and marking his sense of her past ingratitude by a coldly elaborate courtesy. But

this was a possibility that never, even in his most sanguine moments, was other than remote.

If he had but known it, there had long been close at hand—in the shape of young Langton—a means which, if judiciously managed, might have brought that part of his dream to pass immediately, and now he had that which would realise it even more surely and effectually.

But he did not know, and let the appeal lie unanswered that was due to Mabel's suggestion—'the moral of which,' as Alice's Duchess might say, is that one should never neglect a child's letter.

(To be continued.)

ON BEING 'PILLED.'

THERE may be some folks who don't know—I *do*—what it is to be 'pilled.' They may confound it with a calamity which, though not to be thought lightly of by any one, is especially dreaded by juveniles. We talk of 'sugaring the plum of education,' but as a rule pills for children are not silvered. Who does not remember the shiver from head to heel that seized our little frame at the sight of those addled egglets lying in their cardboard nest, directed so neatly to Master Jones, 'two to be taken at bedtime'? Some strong things have been said about gunpowder, but what is *that* compared with the loathsome powder in which *they* reposed, and at which our gorge rose while it was yet yards away. My contempt for medical science began at that epoch; for what could be the worth of it, if after four thousand years of 'practice' the doctors gave you a thing like that? How I pitied the chemists' assistants that 'made it up.' I might have been a chemist myself, and have benefited the human race by the greatest discoveries, but for that initial difficulty.

The 'pilling,' however, that I have in my mind affects adults only: it is the delicate expression in club circles for black-balling. Half a century ago the operation was very uncommon and greatly resented. There is a story of a certain Irish gentleman, Mr. F., who, though destitute of those genial qualities for which his nation used to be so famous, and, to say truth, not at all a 'clubbable man,' had a great gift with the pistol. He proposed himself—that is, he frightened somebody into proposing him—for some aristocratic club, and was 'pilled.' As he felt certain no one would dare do this, he waited at the door on the day of the election, intending to walk in, after the few minutes consumed in this mere matter of form, as a duly elected member. A waiter presently came out to him, and in a trembling voice broke the terrible news that a black ball had been given which had excluded him. What happened to that unhappy menial is not recorded; he was probably butchered on the spot; but in those days no one cared about accidents to the lower classes.

The Irish gentleman waited on, and as each member of the club stepped out, he inquired of him, in those dulcet tones which

used to precede the thunders of Mr. Chuck the boatswain, whether it was to his individual action that he was indebted for his exclusion.

It was taking a considerable liberty with the principles of the ballot, but that did not enter Mr. F.'s mind, which was monopolised with the sole idea of entering the club. Every one answered him with an assuring smile that he had not been responsible for the black ball.

'Then it was evidently dropped in by mistake,' observed Mr. F. : 'there must be a new election.'

So there was ; and that time he only got one *white* ball.

Nothing has ever happened to *me* so bad as that.

It is not surprising that the ballot came into vogue in clubs before it was accepted in politics. It would be intolerable to enter a social circle in which one's enemies were known to one, and not very agreeable to one's enemies. As a matter of fact, however, unless he is a public character and better known than liked, the black balls a man gets from private motives are very few. Those barbed arrows are really aimed through him at his proposer and seconder. It is my belief that if an unknown man, however offensive, should be proposed by two others equally unknown, but *inoffensive*, he could get into any club in London. A man of mark, on the other hand, however meritorious, must needs have his enemies.

The possession of anything out of the way in the candidate himself, even of a queer name, is dangerous ; his very profession, nay, his religious opinions, may be a source of peril. Some clubs will not have solicitors ; some object to journalists ; some to Jews ; and I know one club (a charming one) that will not have lords at any price. Their society is held to foster snobbism, and to be therefore demoralising.

I am afraid that in all large clubs there is a certain small percentage of persons, who, finding themselves in circumstances of social comfort to which they have been unaccustomed—astonished, like Mr. Squeers in his Sunday coat, at finding themselves so respectable—make a point of black-balling every one. They think that by debarring others from the advantages of which they have unexpectedly come into possession, they surround themselves with an atmosphere of exclusiveness. Nothing else can account for the black balls found in the ballot box in the case of so many blameless and unknown men. To a sensitive person,

unconscious of wrong-doing, it is unpleasant to know that even one person would rather have his room than his company; but human nature must be taken as we find it, and we can only hug ourselves with the reflection (ready made for us by a great social philosopher) that we don't belong to it.

One of the most curious instances of club malice occurred at the Sword and Gun Club a few years ago. It is a society composed for the most part of very ancient warriors, who resent any accession to their numbers considerably more than any diminution of them by death, and who have a deep-seated antipathy to promotion by merit. No one was eligible to the club under the rank of a brigadier, or a rear-admiral, so that under the late seniority system it was tolerably safe from the intrusion of youth. Still one cannot guard against everything. A young gentleman of eight-and-forty greatly distinguished himself in the field, got his brigade, and was entered in the candidates' book of the Sword and Gun. The circumstance caused great excitement. General Nestor and Admiral Oldbuck were especially furious. The proposition, they said, was little less than an insult. If boys should be admitted to the club, all would be over with it. They might stick up, 'Lads prepared for the Army and Navy' over the portico and retire. It would be no longer a club but a seminary. As to the candidate in question, he might be an Infant Phenomenon as to talents and professional services—they had not a word to say against him on any ground save that of age: let him come up for election, say, thirty years hence, and they would willingly support him. But the present proceeding was positively indecent. There was a legend extant that some abnormally active, though sufficiently ancient member, had once run up the steps of the club (he had been refused admittance by the porter, and had had to appeal to the secretary for identification), but if this new comer was admitted, a precedent of the most objectionable kind would be established. Marbles might come to be played upon the club steps, and prisoners' base among its pillars. No; such sacrilege must be guarded against; and General Nestor and Admiral Oldbuck kept their eyes upon the candidates' book, ready to do their duty on the day of rejection.

As it happened, the ballot took place out of the season, and very few men belonging to the club were in town. General Nestor, however, was one of them; he had too long an experience of life to leave London. On one occasion I inquired of him, very

respectfully (for his temper was what his flatterers called 'uncertain'), whether he ever went into the country. 'Once, sir,' he replied, with the air of a man who has seen the error of his ways—'once I was fool enough to go to Brighton.' But Admiral Oldbuck was in Cornwall. Just as an actor who gets a holiday always goes to the theatre, so that gallant mariner, though long superannuated and pensioned, and with no necessity for risking seasickness, found nothing so much to his mind as yachting. In the first week of August he received a telegram from the General (he never wrote to anybody because of his spelling, which had been found fault with by the hypercritical), 'The Infant comes up here for election on the twenty-first, remember.'

It was a most disagreeable reminder, for the Admiral hated London as much as the General liked it; he also detested travelling, except by sea. He could have come by the yacht, of course, but there is an element of uncertainty about the arrival of sailing yachts to date, and date was everything in this case.

'Cannot the Infant be made safe without my coming?' he wired back.

'No,' was the swift and stern reply; 'there is a cabal against us' (which meant that the Infant had his private friends in the club). 'Do your duty.'

'I shall come on board on the twenty-first,' returned the Admiral. And he came on board.

One in seven 'excludes' at the Sword and Gun Club, which is a more open regulation than usual. The usual rule is one in ten (which nine people *out* of ten, by-the-by, believe to be less exclusive), but at the 'Sword and Gun' no checks were considered necessary; it was such a very close borough.

At the close of the ballot the Infant Phenomenon was found to have been elected.

The General and the Admiral repaired to the secretary's room at once.

'There has been foul play,' they exclaimed, 'in this election.'

Their aspect was menacing and ferocious. The secretary, who took in the whole circumstances at a glance, sprang to the door and kept his hand on it while he made his explanation.

'It all arose from the Admiral's coming up to vote,' he faltered.

'Why, you villain, I black-balled him.'

'Very true, sir, but there were only fourteen without you. It takes fifteen to make a quorum, *and you made it*. If you had

stopped away, the election must have been postponed, and all would have been well. As it is, there were only two black balls to thirteen white ones, and the young gentleman is elected.'

Another misadventure of quite a different kind occurred at a certain University club. No one is ever black-balled in it. If by any chance an objectionable person is proposed, his name is always withdrawn in time. It is very unusual for any candidate to get even one black ball. My dear friend Cruciform Pyx was a member of the club, but hardly ever entered it. He was too much engaged in his country parish, with his choir and other ecclesiastical institutions, to admit of his coming much to town. He had a waistcoat and cravat which astonished the unlearned; how he got into them and out of them, and how they were fastened, were, I regret to say, the subject of wagers among the more frivolous and youthful members of the society. Some thought he had been born in them, but I had known him at the University (where he had had a very pretty taste in colours), and knew this was not the case. He was one of the kindest-hearted men I ever met; a true lover of his fellow-creatures (perhaps because he knew so little of them), but very shy and sensitive. Any novel experience perturbed him. A ballot happened to come on at the club during one of his rare visits to the metropolis, and he was asked to vote for a man. Of course he consented; he would have consented to anything that was not criminal; but it almost threw him into a fever. I think he imagined that he would have to appear on some sort of hustings, and record his suffrage amid a hail of brickbats and dead cats. When the day arrived it was noticed that his cravat was not nearly so stiff as usual. He came to my house after the ceremony and asked for a glass of water.

'Thank heaven,' he said, 'it's over: I hope I have done right.'

'Right? why, of course you have,' I replied. 'What possible objection can there be to Jones? I should think he would not have a single right-hand ball from anybody.'

'A what?' he gasped. 'Why, I gave him a right-hand ball.'

'But that is a black ball, my good fellow. Did you not see the "No" written on the right-hand side of the box?'

Pyx shook his head and murmured, 'I saw nothing; I was too nervous. I naturally thought the right hand must mean all right, and I didn't dare stay for the end of it. Oh dear! oh dear! what *shall* I do?'

'Well, you had better write to the secretary,' I said, 'and explain that if one black ball has done for Jones——'

'Done for Jones!' he echoed; 'this is too horrible!'

Then somehow or other—I don't know how it was done, but it *was* done—he loosened both his cravat and waistcoat, and stood before me as limp as any layman.

'Give me some notepaper—send for a commissionaire,' he entreated passionately. 'Oh, what a dreadful day!'

He wrote the letter, and I despatched the commissionaire with it immediately. In half an hour—which seemed like half a century to poor Pyx—the messenger returned with the secretary's reply.

'Mr. Jones was elected,' it said, 'as were all the rest; but, as in his case, every one had one black ball.'

Pyx had 'pilled' the whole lot of them.

Most people are very sensitive about being pilled (a circumstance which those who black-ball freely, and 'with a light heart,' forgetting that others have not the rhinoceros-hide which they themselves possess, should reflect upon); but the unpleasant sensation—like that of being horsewhipped for the first time, which I am told is very disagreeable—soon wears off. Some folks even are rather proud of it: their modest natures seem to be satisfied in having been 'in for a good thing,' though they did not get it, like half-bred colts entered for the Derby. They speak of these little social failures like men who have contested counties upon principle and have been unsuccessful. I know a man of this kind who always reminded me of Byron's friend, 'one of the most agreeable fellows I ever met, but a pickpocket.' He did not, indeed, come under that precise category, but he had acquired property at one time which he had had to part with under pressure of the criminal law. In his own opinion he had a right to it, and when reminded that twelve of his fellow-countrymen (in a jury box) had taken a different view, he would say with a gentle smile, 'Providence and I together make a majority,' which showed that if he was not a thief he was at least a plagiarist. He used quietly to remark when clubs were the topic, 'I was proposed for the So-and-So, in such and such a year,' just as a man might say, 'I write for the "Times,"' not so much to convey the erroneous idea that his contributions are accepted, as to show himself capable of an honourable ambition.

Another example of patience and fortitude under this social tribulation was my friend R., a man of a widely different kind. He

was an excellent fellow and of a lively wit, but fell a victim to the too great eminence of his proposer and seconder. So essentially clubbable a man was probably never 'pilled' at a club. At a dinner-party at his own house, some guest, unconscious of this catastrophe, was discoursing, in a way that displayed his ignorance to perfection, upon the subject of black-balling. 'For my part,' he concluded, 'I should never get over such a thing. What do you say, R.? If it happened to you, wouldn't you at once set sail for Australia?' 'Yes,' said R., with a smile that betrayed his consciousness of the neat rejoinder, 'and by the Black Ball line.'

THE TOWERS OF SILENCE.

In strange antithesis to the swarming streets of Bombay with their restless crowds of Hindoo, Mussulman, and European inhabitants, and to the never-ceasing movement of the multifarious Indian life of the city, are those still 'Towers of Silence' that crown the height of Malabar Hill. No sound disturbs their slumber but some faint echo of the far-off life in the teeming town below; no movement but the heavy flight of some grim, awful bird. The hot sun pours down its ardour, pitiless, on those bare, round walls, and the tall palms bedraggled by the vultures that rest upon them scarce move their lightest filament in the languid, breathless air. Here stillness and silence reign supreme, save in the early morning or at sunset when some white-clad procession mounts the steep pathway to this great garden of the dead, bearing its still burden, at sight of which the birds, now all in motion, wheel in heavy circles above the tower.

All that relates to the Parsees—their religion, their customs, and their history—is of the deepest interest, an interest given by and rising from that hoariest antiquity to which they belong. A religion that is of the most ancient of the earth, and one that, although few and unimportant are its adherents to-day, at one time bade fair to be the creed of almost the whole civilised world. It was the belief of Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes; and, had not the advancing armies of the Persians fallen before the phalanges of the Greek, the religion of the East, the worship of one God, might have flowed over Europe and raised it from the paganism in which it grovelled until the doctrines of Christ, centuries after, spread and were received. Marathon, that greatest battle of the world, preserved the integrity of Greece, but it stayed the purer teaching of Zoroaster from flowing to the West as it would have done under the empire of the Eastern satraps. Long after in the East was Ormuzd worshipped; long did the Persian temples shelter the pure flame of their holy fire; and not until the fierce followers of Mahomet with fire and sword—true fanatics' weapons—conquered them in Arabia did the followers of Zoroaster dwindle in number and decline in power till at length, persecuted and oppressed by a power they could not resist but to which they would

not bow, they migrated, 1,200 years ago, to India, where, in Bombay and Poona, the remnants of this ancient faith still linger with their worship.

Zerdusht, or Zoroaster, about whose birth and childhood later superstition has flung an almost impenetrable veil of fable and of myth, was one of those great leaders of men—philosophic and enthusiastic—that only the ardent East seems powerful to produce; one of those men whose belief in their own teaching is so intense and perfect as to convince all others of its truth. He was born about 500 B.C. (?) and at an early age retired from the world, it is said for thirty years, for meditation and for prayer, during which time he composed those books of his teaching whose fragments remain a priceless treasure to this day, collected in the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the Parsees. His creed was simple and comprehensive, but he doubtless taught with it laws, ceremonies and restrictions, much as were given with that other Eastern faith which it so much resembles in many ways; and to these the priestly caste has added much in the succeeding generations. He taught that there was one Almighty Power—a deity existent from all time and for eternity, who created two spirits, Ormuzd and Ahriman, each of whom was also a creating force. Ormuzd was the beneficent and Ahriman the malevolent power, and between them and their followers raged, and has raged since their beginning, a constant warfare. Zoroaster taught that at length Ormuzd should prevail, and for a season, before the end of all things, peace should reign on the earth. The great teacher is supposed to have received this knowledge from Ormuzd himself, with whom he was for a space in heaven. He taught that there is a heaven and a hell, and for our actions, good or ill, shall be judged to all a meet reward of happiness or of sorrow, each one upon his merits. Ormuzd told him also to ‘teach the nations that my light is hidden under all that shines; whenever you turn your face to the light and follow my command, Ahriman’ (the evil spirit) ‘will be seen to fly. In this world there is nothing superior to light.’ Hence it is that fire, though not worshipped by the true Parsee, is held in reverence by all. In their temples the sacred fires, the first bright seed of which was originally brought by Zerdusht from heaven, are constantly kept burning, and from this fact the Parsees have gained the name—a misleading one for the true followers of their prophet—of Fire-worshippers. But with that strange, sad decay

that seems the inevitable fate of all religions, corruptions entered their pure faith, until the Monotheistic Parsee, the worshipper of one Almighty Power, degenerating, became almost universally a mere worshipper of its symbol, with ceremonials and customs that had lost all significance, and prayers whose meaning had long since been forgot.

Until late years, their very priests, who must learn the Zend-Avesta by heart before they can be admitted to their calling, were ignorant of the old Zend tongue in which their sacred books are written, and, scrupulous to the letter in the observance of their rites, were ignorant entirely of the loftiest teaching of their master, and even of the significance of the ritual they practised. These things now are changed, and the old pure teaching, though with many tedious, sometimes disgusting, ceremonies, is resumed, and the simple creed, 'There is one God whom all must worship,' is dear to the Parsee's heart not only for its universality, its wide-embracing scope, but from the fact that now for thousands of years, through success and through suffering, through changes of country, home, and language, his fathers have adhered to the worshipping of Ormuzd and the honouring of fire.

'Thou shalt not defile the earth,' had Zerdusht taught, and, mindful of this teaching, no dead Parsee is laid in mother earth to taint her with his corruption. Stone towers are built, upon whose summit are exposed the bodies of the dead to all the fowls of air, who quickly remove all flesh from off the skeleton, and the dead body, giving fresh strength to the living, is more quickly returned to its elements than by our slow and repulsive method of interment.

This manner of disposing of their dead, so repugnant to some feelings, has always had for me a curious attraction; so when I was in Bombay some time ago, I induced my friend, Mr. Jehangir Rustumjee, an intelligent and well-educated Parsee gentleman with whom I lived for some weeks in very close companionship, to obtain for me permission to visit those Towers of Silence, that are the strange last resting-place of his race, and that will be, at some future period, of himself. This permission was gained with some small difficulty, but at length it was obtained, and one hot cloudless day we drove to Malabar Hill for the purpose of visiting that weird place of sepulture. Through the rich groves of palms and beneath the luxuriant boughs of the tropic never-fading trees that clothe with verdure this part of the island, past the grand houses

of the wealthiest of Bombay, who here build their homes, until, ascending to the highest part of the hill, we gain the entrance to the Parsee enclosure and leave the close *gharry* that has brought us. Entering the grounds we mount a long flight of low and shallow steps that leads by an easy gradient to the closed iron inner gate; by the side of this stairway, but separated from it, runs another broader one, that is, I believe, for the funeral *cortège*. This gateway checked our progress, and we could not have passed it had not Mr. Jehangir Rustomjee shown our permission, when instantly the barrier was opened and we entered the compound. The whole place blooms with flowers and the air is redolent with their sweet perfume; jasmine, the glorious crimson hibiscus, and hundreds of roses make the garden lovely with their colour, so that this pathway to the tomb is bright and beautiful.

An old and venerable Parsee received us and conducted us the whole time that we stayed within the grounds. He led us first along a well-kept pathway to an old stone-vaulted building with open colonnades all round; this is the house of prayer where the friends of the deceased remain whilst the body is placed upon the tower. The whole place is shaded and dim and the still cool air heavy with the scent of sandal-wood, for here the sacred fire for ever burns, tended day and night by a watchful priest whose mission is to feed the holy flame with perfumed precious woods. Near by, in somewhat similar buildings, dwell the custodians of the place, and the bearers of the dead, who live apart. There, too, is the bathing-house where at each funeral the corpse-bearers change their clothes and wash themselves clean from the defilement of having touched the dead. In front and round these buildings is a garden of flowers as luxuriant and beautiful as constant care and attention can make them; the beds have strange and mystic forms, some of them are sun-shaped, spoked round with rays, and others, symbolic doubtless, that had no meaning for me. From this garden we enter a wild and uncultivated part, where the herbage is rank and bushes grow, and tall palm trees whose fair crests are crushed and draggled by the weight of the crows and vultures that rest and perch upon them. Here the towers are placed. There are six in all, five placed together, some of which are very old and closed, and one, that stands apart, where the bones of notorious criminals of their faith lie crumbling in eternal separation from those of pure living and good repute.

It is somewhat misleading to call these buildings towers, for

they are not high, though how else to describe them is difficult. I had always imagined them as being lofty towers on whose wind-swept summits the bodies of the dead were exposed until the bones of themselves fell through the grating that they lay on. No such thing. The buildings are low, massive, and circular, of about thirty yards in diameter, but not more than five or six in height. They are built of most carefully-joined blocks of granite, and then plastered all over with a white cement so that none of the water that falls upon the tower can possibly defile the earth by oozing out except at the proper outlets for it, where are placed a sort of filters of sandstone and charcoal for its purification. The tower stands in a shallow, dry moat, and there is one narrow stone bridge or causeway which leads from the ground to the small square door through which the body is taken. The top of the tower, which is the platform where are laid the bodies, is quite hidden by a parapet that completely surrounds it, on which, in one close, unbroken rank, the vultures perch, motionless themselves as stone, with their bare heads half sunk in their bodies. Facing inwards, there they rest, silent and still as is all around them, till the white-robed bearers of the dead place the corpse upon the floor below them. Then all swoop down.

The arrangement of the platform is curious. The surface is divided into three concentric circles of shallow receptacles for the dead; between each circle and between each receptacle is a narrow pathway for the bearers, and in the centre is the grated opening to the well, down which are thrust the dry bones of the dead—men, women, and children, great and small, and rich and poor, all in this one place mingle their dust. I was told afterwards by my friend, Mr. Hormazdji Maki-Dalal, with whom I talked much on this interesting subject, that these three rings represent the three maxims of Zoroaster: 'Good acts, good words, good thoughts.' The outer ring that lies next the parapet is for the bodies of men which represent 'good acts;'; the next, that of the women, 'good words;'; and the last, the smallest circle round the well itself, is for the little children, who represent 'good thoughts.'

All the Parsees that I have ever talked with upon this subject have expressed a strongly affectionate feeling for their mode of sepulture, and for these grim towers where all at last will rest together, great and simple, with their ancestors and descendants, in the one grand equality that death alone bestows. Nor is there really anything more painful to the feelings of the survivors in

this manner of burial than in ours. They do not see the sudden downflight of the birds upon the corpse, for they are then devoutly bowed in prayer in the fire temple near at hand, and there they remain until the work is ended and nothing but a skeleton lies bleaching on the sunny summit of the tower. But half an hour elapses from the time the corpse is laid reverently upon the platform till these winged assistants have ended the work that takes, may be, months with us; a fortnight later the same men that carried in the corpse visit once more the tower and with a kind of tongs place the dry and separated bones in the central well. No other person than the duly appointed bearers ever enter the building; neither priest nor layman may approach nearer than a distance of ten or fifteen yards.

The impression that the whole place gives is very far from repulsive; there is little to shock one, and much to admire in this, the Parsee mode of burial, and in the place of their sepulture. The air is sweet and pure thus high up on the hill, the constant sun, archetype of their deity, shines bright and clear, and the flame-rayed bed of crimson roses in their garden is a promise as well as a present joy; and as the calm white-robed old Parsee said as he gave me a bunch of the glowing blossoms when I left, 'This life is not the end of all things.'

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING.



NOW that it is all over, I feel dreadfully depressed. Weddings are always depressing things ; but in London they are not so bad, because, when once one has disposed of the bride and bridegroom, one can change one's frock and drive off somewhere and forget about it. Down here in the country it is quite another thing. There can be no escape from the atmosphere of laborious festivity which will brood over us, I suppose,

for another two days at least ; there can be no escape from the ball at which I am to entertain the neighbourhood to-night, nor from the foolish remarks which I know will be made to me several hundreds of times and to which I shall have to listen with a smiling face. The house is full of relations of *his*, whom I scarcely know and have no particular wish to know, besides a host of our own people, whom of course I do know, and only wish I didn't ! I have got rid of them until dinner-time, though, which is one small mercy. The moment that the happy pair had driven away, I said I had a headache and must go upstairs to rest ; so here I am, securely locked into my bedroom, sitting by the open window

which overlooks the garden, where I can see some of my guests disporting themselves in the sunshine. I retired partly owing to my really having a headache, partly, of course, on account of these people being one and all such bores, but principally because I have an overpowering desire to talk the whole thing over, and because I was afraid that if I remained downstairs I should pour forth my tale into somebody or other's ear and be sorry for it afterwards.

I am not altogether satisfied with Lucy's marriage. Most likely it will turn out quite as well as other marriages; still one always has a few misgivings at the last moment, and then it is that a discreet and sympathetic friend is so truly valuable. In all this great house full of people I can't think of one who corresponds to that description. Of course there is Henry; but I can't tell Henry everything, and if I did, he wouldn't understand. I was lamenting over my enforced reserve just now when all of a sudden a bright idea occurred to me and cheered me up a good deal. Why should I not make a confidant of the public? I immediately made up my mind that I would. I seated myself at my writing-table, got out paper and a pen, and now I am going to begin. When my manuscript is completed I shall send it to a certain editor, who, I hope, will have the interests of his magazine sufficiently at heart to publish it. If he won't have it, it must be burnt, I suppose; but either way I shall have gained the safety-valve which is what my feelings require at the present moment.

I was reading a little volume of French poems the other day, in which the author incidentally remarks:

Soyons francs ! à bas la frime !
Ce n'est pas pour toi, lecteur,
C'est pour moi que l'on m'imprime.

That is precisely my case. I am writing this sketch simply and solely for my own satisfaction, and because I can't hold my tongue. If the public gains any amusement or instruction from it, so much the better for the public. Its chief value will consist in the absolute candour with which my sense of security from detection will enable me to speak. I shall call myself Lady Devereux—which is as pretty a name as my real one—and with the few additional changes of names and places that I shall make, I am sure that I shall prevent my friends from recognising either themselves or me in the individuals about to be mentioned. For one thing, I doubt whether they read magazines much; and for another, I know that they don't consider me capable of writing in one. Maria is

the only person who is in the least likely to suspect anything; and really I don't much care if she does. She has deserved all I may have occasion to say of her—and *more*; besides which, if she is foolish enough to put the cap on and assert that I made it, nobody will believe her. Never shake thy curly front at me, Maria! Thou canst not say I did it!

It is strange upon what trifling accidents our fate in life depends. Not that Henry's accident was a trifling one for him, poor old fellow, since it deprived him of a whole season's hunting; still when one thinks of all that happened in consequence of it, one can't help making an observation which has been made once or twice before, perhaps. For my own part, although I was frightened out of my wits when my husband was carried home, one day shortly after the hunting began, with a broken leg and two or three ribs staved in, I couldn't and didn't regret going up to London two months before our usual time. As Henry himself said, there was no earthly use in our staying down here when he couldn't mount a horse; and so, as soon as he was able to hobble about again, we moved up to Grosvenor Place and began to see our friends, of whom there were plenty about. I believe there are plenty of people in town all through the winter nowadays.

What made me particularly anxious to begin the season in good time this year was that I had undertaken to bring out my sister Lucy, and I naturally wished her to have as long an innings as possible. Certainly there is a delightful freedom from responsibility in writing under an assumed name. It enables me to say what otherwise I could hardly have put into plain terms: namely, that as papa was too poor, or too stingy, or too much of an invalid (I would state which it was, only really I don't quite know), to take a house in London for the season this year, I had been entrusted with the task of marrying Lucy well; and I may add that I had been chosen instead of my elder sister Maria, not only because I am so much more good-natured than she is, but because she and her husband, in spite of all their money, are not *quite* in the same sort of society as we are. I should never dream of saying this by word of mouth to anybody, and indeed I have always tried to make the best of Mr. M'Coyne and to ignore his horrible vulgarity and his Glasgow accent, and I used to ask him to dinner twice every year, until Henry said he could not stand the man any longer. After that, what could I do? One must give way to one's husband in some things, and it is absurd of

Maria to go on about it as she does. I have told her over and over again that she is welcome to come herself to any of my parties, and even to bring her dreadful old man with her when there is a crowd and nobody is likely to notice him.

Well, Lucy arrived a few days after we had established ourselves in London, and upon the whole I was very well satisfied with her appearance. One thing and another had prevented me from going down to Wales, where my father's place is, for more than two years; and the last time I had seen my youngest sister she had been a gawky schoolgirl, about whom it was impossible to foretell anything, except that she was going to be extremely tall; so that it was an immense relief to me to find her developed into a really good-looking young woman. I don't think her as pretty as—well, as some members of our family; but she has a certain freshness of colouring and timidity of manner, and a sort of startled-fawn look in her big brown eyes—in short, that innocent style of beauty which so many men fall in love with. I felt quite easy in my mind about her, being sure that there would be no difficulty in finding her a suitable husband; and then, as often happens, the very thing that I was looking for turned up in the person of Sir Charles Thorpe.

Sir Charles was a baronet; he was young and handsome and very well off; if mamma was not satisfied with that, I thought, she must be too ambitious. He was a captain—shall we say in the 4th Life Guards, so as to throw people a little off the scent?—and was very well known about London. I had been acquainted with him for some years, but I don't remember his calling upon me—at least, I don't remember his coming at tea-time—until one day shortly after Lucy and I happened to meet him at a dinner-party. The moment that he entered the room I saw that he had come with a purpose—men have an unmistakable look at such times—and I was glad to notice Lucy blushing becomingly in a corner. I was glad, too, that Sir Charles had had the sense to bring with him a brother-officer, one Frank Llewellyn, a very nice boy whose people live near us in Wales and whom I had known more or less all my life. When I say that I was glad to see Frank Llewellyn, I simply mean that three is an awkward number, and that Frank was a nice boy—nothing more than that. And perhaps it may be as well to state at once that I like young men to admire me in a respectful way and do commissions for me and make themselves generally useful, and that *I don't*

see the slightest harm in it. I am not going to enter upon that tiresome old question of whether there can be such a thing as friendship between the two sexes. Men always look at the matter in such a horrid, coarse way, except when they are trying to make out a case for themselves; while women shrink from admitting the truth, which is that such friendships, though rare, are quite possible, but that friendships with a dash of flirtation in them are far more common, and are, as a general rule, perfectly harmless. However, as I said before, I have no desire to discuss the subject. All I wish to say is that if certain Moody-and-Sankeymonious ladies, who wear blue ribbons and blow a trumpet when they do their alms (yes, my dear Maria, you are quite right, I mean you), had no worse sins on their consciences than I have, they would not feel obliged to assert their own virtues by perpetually moaning over the wickedness of others.

After that first day the two men came often to see us and always came together. They were both very nice in their different ways, but Frank was decidedly the more amusing of the two. Sir Charles, I must confess, was not brilliant. He was one of those quiet, smiling men who will sit contentedly listening to you by the hour together, and never originate a single remark; which, under the circumstances, was a pity, for men of that stamp always require a good deal of drawing out, and I felt sure that poor Lucy, with her shyness and inexperience, would never be able to manage this. However, I took him in hand myself, and soon found out what his subjects were, while Frank, in the most accommodating manner, chattered away to my sister until a change of partners could be effected. Sir Charles put me very much in mind of one of those narghilés which require an able-bodied slave to start them, but can be kept going for a long time afterwards with very little exertion on the part of the smoker. It fell to my lot to start him every afternoon; and when once I had got him into swing, I passed him on to Lucy with my best wishes. I can't say that he was particularly marked in his attentions to her; yet, since he turned up with the utmost regularity day after day, it was natural to infer that he was slowly bringing his mind to bear upon the subject of matrimony.

During the season I never seem able to find any time to amuse myself; but as we were now only in the month of February I had an abundance of spare evenings, which we employed very pleasantly in dining together a little earlier than usual and going

to the theatre afterwards. Henry, who, when he is in London, simply *lives* at his clubs, never spoilt the symmetry of our party on these occasions, and Frank looked after my comfort as assiduously as I could have wished. By the way, I hope no one will think that I am one of those vulgar women who habitually address men by their Christian names. Frank Llewellyn was hardly to be called a man, and I have known him since he was a baby. At the same time, I don't profess to deny that he may have understood our intimacy in a rather different spirit. The truth—and I am determined to write nothing but the truth—is that you can't make yourself and your house attractive to a young man for weeks together by treating him as a nonentity, and it seemed to me very desirable that, on Lucy's account, Grosvenor Place should be made attractive to some one besides Sir Charles Thorpe. Therefore I permitted and encouraged Frank to pay me certain small attentions, and was only sorry that Sir Charles should consider it necessary to waste so much time and brain-power in saying flattering things to me which would have been much more appropriately addressed to my sister.

I wonder why some kind of *neuter* human being was not created. Both the masculine and feminine varieties of the species become so desperately wearisome, after their respective fashions, when one has had too long a dose of them. Of all the people whom I know, Henry is the only one who never bores me; but perhaps that is because he so seldom honours me with his company, and also because I am a little bit afraid of him. Everybody else is a greater or less burden, and when I am in low spirits I do yearn for a third sex, with ways and manners of its own. I remember mentioning this one day to Sir Charles, who replied with that delighted smile which comes over his face when he thinks he has hit upon something clever: 'You must mean angels, Lady Devereux, and I'm sure I don't wonder at your discovering that they are the only fit company for *you*.'

However, I don't think that was quite what I meant. The fact was that I was getting a little tired of the society of these two amiable young men, and the more so because I felt, like the farmer with his bottle of claret, that we 'didn't seem to get no forrarder.' I knew that Sir Charles was not at all the kind of person to commit himself to a proposal hastily; but it is discouraging to toil for a month without making any perceptible progress, and it did not appear to me that he was the least more

attentive to Lucy at the end of that time than he had been at the beginning. Besides, he was always making stupid little mistakes, as when, on the day of the Drawing-room, he sent me a magnificent bouquet (which I didn't want), leaving Frank to present Lucy with hers. I had decided that my sister should be presented at the first Drawing-room, because I wanted to get the thing over, and because I hate the crush at the later ones; but if I had known what a bitter day it was going to be I should not have dreamt of facing it. I don't think I ever suffered such misery in my life, and I caught a frightful cold, and then, to crown all, I lost a little brooch which I was fond of; so that when the two inevitables dropped in to tea the next afternoon they found my naturally sweet temper a shade less sweet than usual. I performed my customary duty of winding up Sir Charles as quickly as I could; after which I turned upon Frank savagely.

'If there is one thing that I hate more than another,' I remarked, 'it is having to make conversation when I have a cold in my head.'

He looked pained and surprised, as men always do if a woman exhibits any sign of ill-humour (though when they themselves are put out, they take very good care that every one in the house shall know it), and said: 'Oh, but you needn't make conversation for us, you know.'

I replied that somebody must do it, and that they seemed quite incapable of doing it for themselves, adding that I felt extremely unwell and thought I wanted a change.

'You don't mean that you are going away!' he exclaimed, in unaffected alarm.

Of course I hadn't the slightest intention of doing anything of the sort, but I wanted to vex him, so I said carelessly: 'Oh, I don't know. Unless I feel less bored to-morrow I may run over to Paris, perhaps, and I shouldn't wonder if I decided to go on to Aix-les-Bains, or some such place, afterwards. When I have gone through the horrors of the Channel passage once, I don't generally feel inclined to face them again for a month or two.'

His face of utter consternation almost restored me to good humour. He mumbled something, and presently crossed the room to the sofa where the others were sitting; whereupon that idiot Sir Charles immediately jumped up and took the vacant place beside me. I believe he began to talk, but I didn't listen to his observations, as I was a good deal amused in watching

Frank and Lucy, who were consulting earnestly together, and glancing apprehensively at me—as though there were the smallest likelihood of my cutting off my nose to spite my face!

I suppose the result of their conference was that it would be prudent to propitiate me with a gift; for the next day Frank brought me a very pretty little diamond brooch in the shape of a pig



to replace the one that I had lost; and so we made friends again over that. My cold was still so bad that I could not leave the house, and I was not long troubled that afternoon with the trio, who soon went off somewhere, I forget where, chaperoned by I forget whom. I gave orders that no visitors were to be admitted, and prepared to make myself comparatively comfortable with a novel and a bottle of that black stuff which one smells, and which

is said to be a sovereign remedy for colds; but hardly had I read a page when the butler came in, with an apologetic mien, to say: 'Mrs. M'Coyne, my lady, wishes to see you for a few minutes.'

'Not at home!' I shrieked; but it was too late, Maria was already in the room.

'So you have got a cold,' she began. 'Well, I am sure I don't wonder at it.'

Her tone implied that catarrh was the customary wages of sin; but I did not ask her why it should be so, nor for which of my many delinquencies it was inflicted on me, because no one who knows Maria would ever think of requesting her to explain herself. What I could perceive, without any need for questions, was that she was going to make herself very disagreeable, and, wishing to get the inevitable row over as soon as possible, I said: 'I am feeling so wretchedly ill, my dear, that I am quite unfit to take the war-path. Tell me what I have done, and I will make an ample apology forthwith.'

'I am sorry,' she answered, 'that you should turn the mere fact of my entering your house into a pretext for being rude to me, and trying to quarrel with me. It is a pity that such a feeling should exist between sisters, and I happen to know that it has been very generally remarked upon. As for me, Ethel, I need not tell you that, though I cannot, in common self-respect, come to see you often, I shall never cease to desire your welfare, and that I shall always try to do my duty to you and to all my younger sisters.'

Maria is ever so much older than the rest of us—and looks it too, in spite of the appliances of art which she does not disdain. It was useless to say anything, so I sniffed at my bottle and held my tongue.

'I think I ought to tell you,' she went on, 'that people have been talking a great deal lately about you and Sir Charles Thorpe. Unfortunately, you seem to take a pleasure in setting the good opinion of the world at defiance' (this was an absurd calumny); 'and if Lord Devereux does not object to see his wife making herself conspicuous in so undesirable a manner, perhaps I ought not to interfere; but I do feel that I have a right to protest against your folly in doing all that you possibly can to throw poor Lucy at the head of a penniless young fellow like Frank Llewellyn.'

Maria's mistake rather diverted me, so I only said: 'Oh, he

isn't quite penniless. He has a few hundreds a year of his own, I believe.'

Whereupon she lost her temper, and abused me in a most unchristian manner for ten minutes. I was selfish, reckless, and utterly devoid of principle, she declared. All that I thought of was obtaining some sort of cloak for my flirtations, without caring in the least what might be the consequences to others. She was sorry to have to say it of me, but she must say that I was not a fit companion for young girls, &c., &c. But the truth was that she was angry because Lucy had been sent to my house instead of to hers; though, if the contrary arrangement had been made, she would have complained bitterly of what she always called 'mamma's want of consideration.'

When her breath failed her, I endeavoured to point out to her as delicately as I could what a donkey she was. 'My dear Maria,' said I, 'the truth of all that you urge against my personal morality is undeniable; yet I am not quite the abandoned wretch you take me for, and though I don't pretend to be as religious as you are, I do assure you that I am every bit as worldly. Nothing would persuade me to marry Lucy to a pauper, even though the pauper should be as good a fellow as Frank Llewellyn. On the contrary, I intend, in due time, to hand her over with my blessing to Sir Charles Thorpe, who is not only rich, but is such a perfect booby that he will no more think of interfering with her liberty in the future than he does of flirting with me at present.'

Maria grunted and looked at me distrustfully. She herself, she said, had married from motives of affection (only those who have seen Mr. M'Coyne in the flesh can realise the monstrosity of this assertion), and she could not approve of any other kind of marriage. Nevertheless the trials of poverty were not to be lightly incurred, and therefore she would be glad to believe that Lucy had an inclination for Sir Charles. 'Unfortunately, however, the probabilities are quite the other way. Lucy and young Llewellyn have been a great deal together in the country, and they are very nearly of an age; and, whatever you may say, Ethel, I really cannot think that any man would frequent your society day after day merely for the pleasure of seeing somebody else make love to your sister.'

She went on in this stupid way for such a long time that at last I was obliged to hint that my society might conceivably be a sufficient attraction in itself, and, as she looked sceptical, I showed

her the diamond pig by way of a conclusive argument. This seemed to satisfy her. She muttered a sort of apology, remonstrated with me gently upon my 'incurable levity,' and, after bestowing a chaste salute upon the tip of my right ear, went away.

And whither does the reader of this true narrative suppose that Maria betook herself on leaving me? If I were to allow a hundred people a hundred guesses apiece, I don't believe they would hit upon the right answer among them, nor, I hope and trust, is there another woman in London who, after such an interview as I have described, would have driven straight off to her brother-in-law's club, brought him out on to the pavement by an urgent message, and then and there 'felt it her duty' to inform him that his wife was in the habit of accepting presents of valuable jewellery from impecunious young guardsmen.

If there is anything that Henry detests more than talebearing it is being interrupted in the middle of a rubber of whist, and if there is a person whom he dislikes more than Mr. M'Coyne it is Mrs. M'Coyne. Nevertheless he had not the strength of mind to treat Maria's statement with the contempt that it deserved, but came home very angry; and when I was obliged to confess that Mr. Llewellyn had given me a little brooch I thought the roof would fly off. It was not until I had been reduced to floods of tears that Henry consented to listen to reason and to beg my pardon; after which I promised and vowed that I would never again allow any man, except my husband, to present me with so much as a pair of gloves.

A few days later I had to go to the jeweller's about something, and I took my pig with me, when it turned out that there was only one *real* diamond in the entire animal. All the rest were rose diamonds, which was just what I had suspected from the first. I don't mention this out of any ingratitude to poor Frank, who very likely paid more for the brooch than he could well afford; but it did seem a pity that all that fuss should have been made over such a trumpery thing.

In my opinion there are very few things worth making a fuss about in this world, and I am glad to say that Henry entirely agrees with me. It is not often that he and I indulge in a scene, but when we do he is invariably very humble and penitent for some time afterwards; and he chose to show his remorse now by coming home every afternoon between five and six and behaving with marked civility to Frank, whom of course he always found in

the drawing-room at that hour. Whether Frank altogether enjoyed an addition to our little circle which made private conversation impossible seemed rather doubtful; but there could be no doubt at all that Sir Charles disliked it particularly, and, as it was far more important to please Sir Charles than Frank, I soon sent Henry back to his beloved whist. I had not mentioned to him my intentions with regard to Lucy, because he has a disagreeable way of throwing cold water upon my most cherished schemes; but I thought it best to tell him the truth now, in order to avoid any future misconceptions. When I had divulged my plan he laughed a good deal more than the occasion appeared to warrant, but only said: 'All right, little woman; play your own hand, and I'll engage not to interfere with you.'

I must say for Henry that he seldom does interfere with me. Sometimes I almost wish that he would interfere a little more; but perhaps, after all, I should find it rather a nuisance if he did.

I took no notice of Maria's unspeakable behaviour, for I knew that reproaches would be thrown away upon her, and, besides, I did not wish her to think that she had it in her power to annoy me. Indeed, I did not happen to meet her again until the day of the 'Old Englysshe Fayre' (I think that was the preposterous way that they spelt it), which she had been very busy organising for months beforehand, and at which I, like everybody else, had consented to hold a stall. I forget what the exact object of the thing was, but it had something to do with total abstention, I know; perhaps it was to provide funds for the purchase of bunches of blue ribbons for Maria and her friends to tie up their fuzzy brown wigs with. Henry declined to have anything to do with it, disapproving of the whole movement, and saying that the examples of Saint Paul and Timothy were good enough for the likes of him; and I daresay he may be quite right. Only, as the Duchess of Doublechin and several others have chosen to go in for it, I suppose we shall all have to follow the fashion while it lasts, and I must say that our costumes were lovely. Lucy and I were dressed as a landlady and a barmaid of the period—though I can't imagine at what period landladies and barmaids can have been thus arrayed—and stood under the shadow of an ancient sign-board, selling non-intoxicating beverages, in which we soon began to drive a brisk trade.

Sir Charles arrived quite early in the afternoon, and stationed

himself in front of our stall with the air of a man resolved to do his duty, no matter at what cost. Others came and went, swallowing their stuff hastily and retreating with muffled execrations, but he, like the brook, went on for ever. I watched him in amazement



as he stood there stolidly swilling and swilling, and laying down sovereign after sovereign upon the counter, until at last I began to fear that his system would become overcharged with gas and that the most frightful consequences would ensue. So I whispered to him that there would be no objection to his paying for his drink without emptying his glass, which seemed to give him relief, for he sighed

and said gratefully, 'Oh, thank you!' After that he continued at regular intervals to deposit gold pieces, which Lucy or I promptly swept into the till. I was too busy to talk much to him, but I was very much pleased to see him behaving in that way, for it was plain that no man who was not insanely in love would have made such a conspicuous fool of himself.

Frank's sense of duty did not lead him into similar extremes. He made hideous faces over the liquor provided for him, refused to pay anything beyond the nominal price of one shilling per glass for it, and persisted in leaning over the counter and chattering when he ought to have been making room for more liberal purchasers. However, I didn't send him away, because Sir Charles seemed rather to lean upon the moral support of his presence, and I thought that perhaps if the one moved on, the other would think it necessary to do likewise.

I am not sure that I altogether like selling at fancy fairs. After one has spent three or four hours on one's legs, smiling sweetly the whole time, one can't be anything except dead tired; one has generally overheard a few unpleasant remarks, and sometimes one has the consciousness of failure to add to one's other causes for discontent. But upon the occasion of which I am writing, this last mortification at least was spared me, and it was with a certain triumph that I carried my heavy sack of money to the end of the building, where Maria was standing beside the Duchess. Maria, I noticed, was looking as black as a thundercloud; but that is a phenomenon of such frequent occurrence with her that it did not specially interest me, nor did I think of connecting myself with her displeasure until she took occasion to hiss into my ear in a tragic whisper: 'Never expect me to trust you again, Ethel!'

'What *is* the matter now?' I asked.

'As if you didn't know!' retorted she. 'I wash my hands of it, that's all!'

'If you propose to wash your hands of all your iniquity, Maria,' said I, 'you will want every drop of water in the world, and there will be nothing left for your interesting *protégés* to drink; but I know it is more in your line to disclaim responsibility for other people's offences—especially mine. I wonder what I have done now. I should have thought you would have been pleased with me after my success this afternoon.'

'Success!' she echoed, with a snort.

'I have just handed a colossal sum to the Duchess, and I have kept Sir Charles at Lucy's elbow ever since the doors were opened,' said I. 'I call that success.'

During our little sisterly altercation we had moved away from the group of ladies who were counting the spoil, and had now reached a sequestered spot behind one of the booths.

'You may have deceived me unintentionally,' said Maria, in a hollow voice; 'I trust, for your sake, that it is so. But certainly I have been deceived. Sir Charles—has no intentions!'

The solemnity of her manner was such that for a moment it gave me a most unpleasant shock; but then I remembered Sir Charles's late unbridled sobriety and was reassured. 'My dear Maria,' I answered, quite good-humouredly, 'you can't have been watching him, or you would not try to frighten me with such a cock-and-bull story as that. I assure you that he has paid for as much non-intoxicating liquor to-day as would have floated an ironclad.'

'He did that to please *you*, most likely,' returned Maria gloomily. 'At all events, he has no intentions. I have the best authority for saying so—his own.'

'Good gracious!' I exclaimed aghast; 'you don't mean to say that you asked him?'

That senseless woman tightened her lips and nodded. 'I was not satisfied with what I saw. It seemed to me that there was a want of earnestness about the man, and, as I had an opportunity of saying a word or two to him in private, I determined to get at the truth. I said: "I know that I am about to put a very unusual question to you, Sir Charles, but I must trust to your proper feeling to excuse me. My poor little sister has no mother here to take care of her, and Lady Devereux is far too giddy and self-engrossed to supply a mother's place. You cannot but be aware that your attentions to Lucy have been extremely marked: now let me for once disregard conventional rules and ask you plainly whether you mean those attentions to be serious. Because, if you do not, I shall consider it my duty to write to my father upon the subject." Well, he stared and got very red in the face, but answered most distinctly: "You are quite mistaken, Mrs. M'Coyne; I deny the truth of every word that you have said, and, as we are going in for plain speaking, I will take the liberty of advising you to mind your own business in future." And with that he turned on his heel and walked away as fast as he could.

A more ungentlemanly reply could hardly have been made; but at least it showed beyond a doubt——'

'Maria,' I interrupted, out of all patience, 'you ought not to be at large. It is a positive scandal that such malignant idiots as you should be loose upon society, and I hope—yes, I do most earnestly hope—that Mr. M'Coyne will have you removed to some nice private asylum, where you will want for nothing and where you will have no further opportunity of ruining your sister's prospects.'

I left her without giving her time to answer me, and, having secured Lucy, drove off home, only restraining my tears with the utmost difficulty. It was not alone the loss of Sir Charles—for, after all, there were plenty more rich bachelors in London, and though valuable, he was not unique—no; it was not so much that catastrophe that vexed me as the unheard-of means by which Maria had brought it to pass. I was horribly disgraced as well as defeated. What would he think of us all?—and what would the world think? Because, quiet as Sir Charles was, it was too much to expect that he should refrain from telling such a capital story at least to a few intimate friends; which would be equivalent to advertising it in the first column of the 'Times.' Added to this, there was Lucy's disappointment, which I sincerely regretted. She had not, perhaps, been violently in love with Sir Charles; but she had certainly, I thought, been favourably disposed towards him, and it is not pleasant to be suddenly deserted even by a man whom one intends to refuse. The poor girl evidently suspected that something was wrong, and kept casting uneasy glances at me all the evening; so, as I really hadn't the heart to break the bad news to her immediately, I pleaded fatigue and went to bed early.

The next morning I was very glad that I had held my peace; for after a night's rest I was able to take a calmer view of the situation and to remember that, whether Sir Charles had had serious intentions or not, it was in the last degree improbable that he would have admitted them to Maria. Moreover, if he was really attached to Lucy—and I felt convinced that he was—he would surely not abandon her for no other reason than that she was afflicted with an objectionable sister. 'At all events,' thought I, 'we shall soon see what he intends to do, and in the meantime I shall do nothing. Let him make the first move.'

This he did without any delay, and I confess that I was as

much pleased as I was surprised to see him walk in the same afternoon, accompanied as usual by Frank Llewellyn, and looking as if nothing had happened. I always admire command of countenance. It is a tolerably common gift, I admit; but Sir Charles, poor fellow, had not so many gifts that one could take his possession of this one as a matter of course, and I could not help welcoming him with something more than my customary warmth. He had come, he said, to remind us of a promise which we had made (and which I, for one, had completely forgotten) to spend the following day at a riverside cottage, belonging to him, near Maidenhead. We were to go out by train, lunch at the cottage, and return as far as Windsor by water. It was much too early in the year for that kind of thing, and I can't say that I am particularly fond, at any time, of excursions which keep one's conversational faculties on the stretch for seven or eight consecutive hours; still one must be prepared to make sacrifices in a good cause, and Sir Charles was so eager over it that I no longer felt the slightest doubt as to his sincerity. Frank was very eager too; but I certainly should not have run the risk of catching cold to please Frank, of whose perpetual good humour I was becoming very weary.

As there are certain days in one's life the date of which will always be marked in our memory by a white stone, so there are others which must for ever stand out from the rest by reason of their unmitigated blackness, and when April 6 comes round again I shall look out for squalls. Assuredly that day is no lucky one for me. Some people derive, or profess to derive, a sort of satisfaction from remembering that the misfortunes which have happened to them have been unmerited; but I have no such feeling. On the contrary, it seems to me that if I had done anything whatever to deserve what befel me at Sir Charles Thorpe's ill-starred picnic, I should at least be able to think of some bygone pleasure or amusement to set against the odious *dénouement*; whereas goodness knows!—But perhaps the best way is to relate exactly what occurred.

We started from Paddington a party of eight, Henry being with us and also a Colonel Something-or-other, with his wife and daughter—friends of Sir Charles's, I believe. I never can remember people's names, and in the present instance it is of no consequence. Henry at once began to devote himself to the young woman, who was prettyish, though rather common-looking, I

thought, and I suppose the father and mother entertained each other, for I did not notice any one else speaking to them. As for me, I can't talk in the train on account of my throat, which is extremely delicate; so I retreated into a corner of the saloon carriage, and after dismissing Frank and Sir Charles, both of whom had borne down upon me with conversational designs, I got behind a newspaper and was lost to view. I peeped round the corner of a leading article, every now and then, to see how my travelling companions were getting on, and was sorry to notice that Sir Charles fought decidedly shy of Lucy. He did not look conscious, nor awkward, nor anything of that sort; but instead of sitting down beside her, which would have been the natural thing to do, he chose a secluded corner facing mine, where he sat pulling his moustache and gazing vacantly at the flying woods and fields and telegraph-posts. This was not quite satisfactory, and after turning it all over in my mind and weighing one consideration against another, I decided that I would avail myself of the first chance of saying a few words to him about Maria's indiscretion. Of course it would have been far pleasanter to ignore the incident; but I knew that the poor fellow was quite stupid enough to imagine that I had sanctioned it, and, both for Lucy's sake and my own, I was anxious to correct that impression.

With a painful interview like that hanging over one, it is impossible to be cheerful, and I don't suppose that I should have enjoyed myself much even if Sir Charles's cottage had not been damp and chilly, and the drawing-room fire had not smoked, and the luncheon had not been composed exclusively of things which I am unable to eat, and Henry had not flirted so atrociously with that vulgar girl. (Not that he isn't welcome to flirt as much as he likes; only, as I told him afterwards, I think it would show a little more consideration for my feelings if he were to choose *ladies* as the subjects of his attentions.) I daresay I was cross and disagreeable. I certainly felt so; and when one is out of sorts, nothing is more exasperating than to hear everybody around one cracking feeble jokes and laughing wildly at them. However, when luncheon was over and the men had lighted their cigars, I made an effort, assumed my most engaging smile, and requested Sir Charles to show me his domain.

He consented with an alacrity for which I had hardly been prepared. The others decided to adjourn to the billiard-room and play pool, declaring that it was a great deal too cold to wander

about damp shrubberies—in which opinion I cordially agreed with them. But duty called me to the shrubberies, and inclination apparently drew my host in my wake.

I began by making some allusion to the fancy-fair, and I should have approached my point gradually if he had not saved me all trouble by saying in a confidential tone: ‘Do you know that your sister, Mrs. M’Coyne, gave me a most awful blowing-up just before I left?’

‘Yes,’ I answered; ‘she told me what she had done.’

‘Did you ever in your life—?’ he began, laughing.

‘No, never!’ said I. ‘I can’t tell you how distressed I was about it. I almost cried.’

At this he put on a face of such profound concern that I hastened to add: ‘Oh, that’s nothing. I often shed tears; it relieves the brain. What I wanted to say to you was that Maria is really not responsible for her utterances. She may not be exactly insane; but she is so entirely devoid of tact and mother-wit that it comes to very nearly the same thing. If you could only manage to dismiss what she said from your mind——’

‘Oh,’ he interrupted, ‘there is no need for that. What does it signify? I was a great deal more amused than angry even at the time, and—and’—here he lowered his voice and spoke more gravely—‘of course it could make no difference.’

This was a speech to which it was not easy to find any fitting reply, so I offered none, knowing that if I remained silent he would have to be more explicit.

He did not disappoint me. ‘Lady Devereux,’ he resumed hesitatingly, ‘you know—I am sure you know—what my feelings are.’

‘Well,’ said I, smiling, ‘I dare say I can guess.’

‘And can you,’ he went on, with considerable agitation, ‘oh, dear Lady Devereux, *can* you give me a word of hope?’

A man in love is always rather ridiculous, but a naturally impassive man in love is positively grotesque. I could not keep myself from laughing, but I endeavoured to make my laugh sound very kindly as I replied: ‘I should think you ought to know best whether there is any hope for you or not.’

To my horror and amazement, he suddenly let his umbrella fall to the ground, made a plunge at my hand, which he grasped in both of his, and exclaimed: ‘Ethel, I adore you!’

Now, I am not going to pretend that nothing of this sort had

ever happened to me before. I don't say that such experiences fall to the lot of all married women; but I do say that most women who go much into the world—and I am not speaking of fast women, or pretty women, or silly women, but simply of *most*



women—receive occasional declarations of love from some gaby or other whom they have never been guilty of encouraging in the slightest degree. I know that this assertion will be sneered at by many men who fancy themselves wise, and who pin their faith to the axiom that none of their sex ever make fools of themselves

unless they have been led on to do so by one of ours. Nevertheless I take leave to maintain that it is true; and the proof is that here was that wretched Sir Charles, of whose infatuation I solemnly declare that I had never had the faintest suspicion, posturing and prancing about on the gravel path, and addressing me in terms which I sincerely trust that he still remembers and is ashamed of. A pretty return for all the weary hours that I had spent in his society!

The very first thing that he did, after I had convinced him that I had about as much personal regard for him as for the umbrella which he had just dropped, was to entreat me not to say a word about it to any one. This is what they invariably request; and I hope I may make some persons a little uncomfortable when I mention that we *generally do tell*; although for obvious reasons we seldom admit our husbands into our confidence with regard to such matters. I assured Sir Charles that he need not be in the least alarmed; that I was not proud of the honour which he had been pleased to show me, and that I had no wish to make it known to my friends. But I added that I should take it as a favour if he would remove himself out of London or fall ill, so that his visits to my house might not seem to cease too abruptly, and he answered gloomily that I should be obeyed.

As we passed back to the cottage in solemn silence I inwardly reviewed the situation, and I suppose I shall be thought very foolish if I confess that I did not even yet despair of carrying out my project. Instances of men who have transferred their affections from an elder to a younger sister are not so very uncommon, and when one has harboured a fixed idea for a couple of months or so, it is apt to die hard. Still, taking the most sanguine view of possibilities, it was pretty clear that, so far as that season was concerned, I had sowed in vain. Harvest-time was likely to be postponed for another twelvemonth at least, and full well I knew what indignant letters would reach me from mamma when Lucy returned home, free as air, in August. These thoughts naturally prevented me from showing a very joyful countenance to our friends; but probably my downcast mien escaped notice, for we found them all in a great hurry to be off, and Henry said we must look sharp if we wanted to catch the train at Windsor.

I scarcely remarked what arrangements had been made for our embarkation. I saw a big boat and a little one at the landing-steps; but the question of who was to go in which no longer in-

terested me in the least, and it was not until I found myself seated in the skiff, with Frank for my sole companion, that I wished I had thought of claiming a place among the crowd. I was not at all in the humour for a *tête-à-tête* with Frank, and I opened the conversation by asking rather crossly: 'Why are we sent off alone like this?'

'Oh, I arranged all that,' answered he, with a nod and a grin, as though he had done something wonderfully clever. 'The fact of the matter is that Thorpe meant to have sculled you down, but I begged him to let me have his place, and he gave it up like a shot. Awfully good-natured of him, wasn't it?'

I had my own reasons for thinking that good nature had had very little to do with this act of self-sacrifice, and I was wondering whether it would have been worse to be left with Sir Charles, to whom I should not have felt called upon to address a single word, than with my present companion, who would probably expect me to be talkative, when Frank surpassed my worst apprehensions by bending forward over his sculls and murmuring in an insinuating voice: 'I do want so to say something to you!'

Two in one day! it was really more than I could stand. 'Then, for goodness gracious sake,' I exclaimed vehemently, 'don't say it! I don't want to hear anything of the kind.'

He sighed, and said: 'Ah, I was afraid you would be angry.'

'I shall not be angry if you will but hold your tongue,' I answered. 'It is very silly of you; but, after all, you are only a boy.'

'Four-and-twenty last birthday,' Frank remarked. 'Many men marry younger than that.'

'This is not a question of marriage,' I returned; whereupon he sighed again, and observed he had known I should say that.

'As you seem to have had a premonition of every answer that I should make,' said I, 'it is a pity that you should have thought it necessary to introduce the subject at all. Anyhow, we will drop it now.'

'Oh, but Lady Devereux,' objected Frank, 'I think you ought to hear me out. I don't despair of overcoming your scruples, and, I assure you, I mean to say my say. You can't get rid of me now, you know,' he added with a chuckle, 'so you may as well be reasonable and listen.'

The calm impudence of this youth fairly staggered me. 'Very well, Mr. Llewellyn,' I answered; 'pray go on. As you

say, I have no choice but to listen to you ; and the very moment that I set foot on shore I shall have much pleasure in repeating to my husband every word you have uttered.'

'Oh, if that's all,' said he laughing, 'I don't mind. It was Lord Devereux himself who advised me to get you into the boat and have it out with you.'

For a moment I really thought the boy had taken leave of his senses ; but then, all of a sudden, the truth flashed across me. The truth has, no doubt, been apparent all along to the reader, but that is owing to the way in which I have told my story. Of course I may be more dense than the rest of the world ; but I am bound, in justice to myself, to say that I believe Frank and Lucy had done their very best to hoodwink me throughout. He stoutly denies this ; but she has as good as admitted it; when put to the torture of private cross-examination.

For the moment I was so thankful that I had been preserved from floundering into a most humiliating mistake that I hardly scolded Frank as much as I ought to have done, and listened to his account of how he and Lucy had worshipped one another from their earliest childhood without interrupting him. But when he went on to say that they were counting upon what he was pleased to call my kind heart to make things smooth for them with my father and mother, I gave him distinctly to understand that he was wasting his breath. He got no promise of support out of me, and I landed at Windsor determined to avenge myself upon Henry, who, it seemed, had been aiding and abetting in this precious scheme ever since that episode of the diamond pig had made it advisable that he should be taken into the counsels of the conspirators.

Yet I made but a poor fight of it. I didn't approve of the engagement ; I abhor pauper marriages (and a man with 1,500*l.* a year *is* a pauper, whatever Henry may say) ; but I couldn't hold out against the arguments with which I was assailed—and perhaps I *have* a kind heart. At any rate, I must endeavour to flatter myself that it is so, for I can't excuse my feebleness upon any other plea.

It was not upon 1,500*l.* a year, nor upon anything like it, that this absurd pair proposed to set up house. It was Henry who, when I pointed out to him that their means would barely suffice to provide them with bread, looked desperately ashamed of himself, as he always does when he is contemplating a generous

action, and muttered something about his being able to help them out a little, and about our having no children and more money than we could spend. Well, I don't wish to detract in any way from Henry's generosity, or to say that Frank and Lucy are not quite right in showering blessings upon his head; but perhaps I may be allowed to mention that I was the one who had to do the dirty work of breaking the news to our parents, receiving the full bitterness of their reproaches, and finally extorting from them an ungracious consent to the match. They absolutely declined to let the ceremony take place down in Wales. Papa said he was not strong enough to bear the noise and fatigue; but Maria, in her amiable way, avers that they only wanted an excuse to shirk the expense of the wedding-breakfast. I have had a good deal to bear from Maria, too; but it is all over now, and, as I began by saying, I hope it may turn out well, though I have my misgivings.

I have written this narrative by fits and starts, and it is now nearly a fortnight since the event took place. Lucy, in a long and rather foolish letter which I received from her yesterday, asks me whether I have heard that Sir Charles Thorpe is about to be married to an enormously wealthy widow. I had not heard it; but I am not at all surprised. May the enormously wealthy one be happy, and may she find her husband less of an infliction than I did! I shall be curious to see whether he will send me an invitation to his wedding.

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THE DEANERY BALL.



ON a certain May afternoon, when the air was so soft and the sun so brilliant that Mrs. Vrater, the wife of the Canon in residence at Gleicester, was inclined to think the world more pleasant than it should be, she was surprised by an invitation which promptly restored the due equilibrium. In her own words, it took her breath away. Despite some slight forewarnings, or things which should have served as such, she could hardly believe her eyes.

Yet there it was before her in black and white, and Italian penmanship; and, being a woman of character, instead of sitting down and giving way to her natural indignation, she—no, she did not accept the fact; on the contrary, she put on her best bonnet and mantle, and contrived during this simple operation to efface from her mind all consciousness of the existence of the invitation. Thus prepared

she left the residence by the back door, and, walking quietly round the Abbot's Square, called at the Deanery. Mrs. Anson was at home. So was the Dean.

'My dear Mrs. Anson, the most ridiculous thing!' began the visitor; 'really you ought to know of it, though contradiction is quite unnecessary. It carries its own refutation with it. Have you heard what is the absurd report which is abroad in the city?'

'No,' answered the Dean's wife, who was sitting in front of a pile of cards and envelopes. Her curiosity was aroused. But the Dean had a miserable foreboding of what was to come, and writhed upon his seat.

'It is asserted that you are going to give a dance at the Deanery! Ha! ha! ha! I knew that it would amuse you. Fancy a ball at the Deanery of all places!' And Mrs. Vrater laughed with so fair a show of airy enjoyment that the Dean plunged his head into a newspaper, and wished he possessed the self-deceptive powers of the ostrich. This was terrible! What could have induced him to give his consent?—As for Mrs. Anson, she dropped the envelope she was folding, and prepared for battle.

'Dear Mrs. Vrater, why should you think it so absurd?' she asked, smiling sweetly, but with colour a little heightened.

'At the Deanery? Why, your position, dear Mrs. Anson, and—and—how can you ask? It would have been quite a Church scandal. You would be having the Praecentor hunting next. *He* would not stick at it,' with vicious emphasis. 'But I knew that you never dreamt of such a thing.'

'Then I fear that you are not among the prophets, for we really propose to venture upon it. As for a Church scandal, Mrs. Vrater, the Dean is the best judge of that.'

Whereat the Dean groaned, poor man. Mrs. Vrater regarded him, he regarded himself, as a renegade; but he showed none of a renegade's enthusiasm on his new side.

'You do intend to have a dance!' cried the Canon's wife, with well-affected surprise, considering the circumstances.

'We do indeed. Just a quiet evening for the young people, though we shall hope to see you, dear Mrs. Vrater. Times are changed since we were young,' she added sweetly, 'and we cannot stand still, however much we may try.'

If Mrs. Vrater had a weakness, it was a love for a style of dress which, though severe, was in a degree youthful. Her bonnet while Mrs. Anson spoke seemed to attract and fix that

lady's eye. It must be confessed that at Mrs. Vrater's age it was a youthful bonnet. However, she did not appear to heed this, but rose and took her departure with a shocked expression of countenance. She had given the poor Dean, her recreant ally, a very wretched ten minutes; otherwise she had not been successful. When Greek meets Greek neither is wont to get much satisfaction. She said no more there; but she hastened to pay some other friendly calls.

The manner in which the Dean came to give his consent must



be told at some length. There is a small house in a quiet corner of the Abbot's Square at Glicester, which stands back a few yards from the general line of frontage. It is not alone in this respect. The Deanery on the opposite side of the Square, and the Praecentor's house—we beg his pardon, the Praecentory—in the far corner also shrink from the public gaze. But then there is, and very properly, the retirement of exclusiveness. In the small house in question such self-effacement must have a different origin; perhaps in the modesty of conscious insignificance, along with a due sense of the important neighbourhood in which No. 13 blooms

like a violet almost unseen. For Abbot's Square is virtually the Close of Gleicester—at any rate, there is no other—while No. 13 is little more than a two-storied cottage with a tiled roof, and outside shutters painted green, and a green door with a brass knocker. The path from the wicket-gate to the unpretending porch has been known to be gay with patterns now rather indistinct, composed of the humble oyster-shell; and the occupants have varied from a bachelor organist, or an artist painting the mediæval, to the Dean's favourite verger.

Such was the little house in the Abbot's Square; but Gleicester, sleepy old Gleicester, arose one morning to find a rare tit-bit of news served up with its breakfast. Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, a fashionable couple bent on retrenchment, had taken No. 13 for the summer. They brought with them a letter of introduction from the Marquis of Gleicester, and owing to that, and something perhaps to the three letters which distinguished Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's card from the pasteboards of the common throng, they were received by the Deanery people with enthusiasm, at the residence with open arms. The most select of coteries threw wide its doors to the tenants of No. 13. The Dean might be seen of a morning strolling in the little garden, and his wife's carriage of an afternoon taking up and setting down in front of the green shutters. The Archdeacon and the Praeceptor, nay, the very minor canons followed the Dean's lead. And Gleicester, seeing these things, opened its eyes—its mouth was always open—and awoke to the fact that the little house had risen in the world to a very giddy height indeed.

But the position which under these unforeseen circumstances No. 13 might assume was hardly to be understood by the lay portion of the city. The Abbot's Square and its doings were subjects of great interest to them, as to people well brought up they would be: but with a few exceptions, such as Sir Titus Wort, the brewer, and General Jones, C.B., and Dr. Tobin. These people gazed on that Olympus from afar. Possibly they called there and were called upon in return; but that was all. Their knowledge of the inner politics of the Square was not intimate.

They knew that the Dean's wife (Regina Jones) was a pleasant and pleasure-loving lady; but they had no idea that she was the leader of an organised party of pleasure, whose tenets were water-parties and lawn-tennis, who pinned their faith to the clerical quadrille (only square dances as yet), who supported the

Praeceptor, the author of that secular but charming song, 'Love me to-day,' and who upheld theatricals, and threatened to patronise the City Theatre itself; a party who drove their opponents, headed by the Dean and Mrs. Vrater, and that grim clergyman the Archdeacon, to the verge of distraction; who were dubbed by the minor canons 'the Epicureans,' and finally whose heart and soul, even as Mrs. Dean was their head and front, was to be discovered in Canon Vrater.

The Canon deserves to be more particularly described. He was a man of handsome presence and mature age, pink-faced and white-haired, young for his years, and connected, though not so closely as Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, with the nobility. Perfectly adapted to shine in society, he prided himself with good reason upon his polished manners, which united in a very just degree the most gracious suavity with the blindest dignity. They were so fine, indeed, as to be almost unfit for home use. He made it a rule never to differ from a woman, his wife (and antipodes) excepted, and seldom with a man. As he also invariably granted a request if the petitioner were well dressed and the matter *in futuro*, he was surely not to be blamed if his performances failed to keep pace with his promises. In fine, a most pleasant, agreeable gentleman, whom it was impossible to dislike to his face.

Yet I think the Archdeacon, a 'new man,' to whom the aristocratic Canon's popularity was wormwood, did dislike him. Certainly the Dean did not; he was a liberal-minded man in the main, but he had some old-fashioned ideas, and a great sense of his own position and its proprieties, and so perforce he found himself arrayed against his wife's party along with Mrs. Vrater and the Archdeacon.

Such was the state of things in the Abbot's Square when No. 13 received its new tenants. Now the Epicureans and now their opponents would gain some slight advantage. The vergers and beadles arrayed themselves upon one side or the other, and by the solemnity or levity of their carriage, the twinkle in the eye or the far-off, absent gaze, made known their views. The first lay clerk, a man qualified to talk with his enemies in the gate, gave monthly dances; the leading tenor assisted at scientific demonstrations.

But of what weight were such adherents beside the new-comers at No. 13? Which party would they join? If appearances might be trusted there could be little doubt. Mr. Curzon-Bowlby was a tall, long-faced man, with a dark beard and moustache.

His appearance was genteel, not to say aristocratic—but fatuous. He walked with an upright carriage and dressed correctly—indeed, with taste: beyond that, being a man of few words, he seemed a man of no character. His wife was unlike him in everything, save that she too dressed to perfection. A lively little blonde, blue-eyed and bewitching, with a lovely pink-and-white complexion, and a thick fringe of fair hair, she positively effervesced with life and innocent gaiety. She sparkled and bubbled like champagne; she flitted to and fro all day long like a butterfly in the sunshine. She charmed the Dean: the Canon declared her perfection. And though she was hardly the person (*minus* the three letters before mentioned) to fascinate his wife, she disarmed even Mrs. Vrater. And yet, whether the little woman of the world had, with all her apparent impulsiveness, a great store of tact, or that she was slow to comprehend the position, and was puzzled at finding the Dean arrayed against his wife, and Mrs. Vrater opposed to the Canon, she certainly dallied with her choice. Upon being invited to attend the science classes at the residence, she faltered and hesitated, and rather pleaded for time than declined. Mrs. Vrater, excellent woman, was pleasantly surprised; and determining to try again, went home with a light heart and good courage.

But this was before the little lady learned that the clerical quadrille—the party of progress, as has been hinted, wisely ignored the existence of round dances—was the burning question of the time.

‘Good gracious! Mrs. Anson,’ she cried, clapping her little hands, and her blue eyes wide with amazement over this discovery, ‘do you mean to say that none of your clergy dance? that they never dance at all?’

The Dean’s wife shook her head, and shrugged her shoulders contemptuously. She was a little out of temper this afternoon. Why was she not the wife of a cavalry colonel?

‘Not even the Canon? Oh, I am sure Canon Vrater does.—Now, don’t you?’

For the Canon, too, was in the little drawing-room. Small as the house was, our impoverished fashionables had not furnished all of it; but this room was a triumph of taste, in a quiet and inexpensive way. A man and a maid whom they brought to Gloucester with them made up the household. So there was an empty room or two.

‘No, Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby,’ he said; ‘if I danced I should be tripping indeed, in Gleicester opinion.’

‘You don’t! well, I am surprised. Now confess, Canon, when did you dance last? So long ago that you have forgotten the steps? Years and years ago?’ The old gentleman reddened, and fidgeted a little. ‘Canon, did you ever’—the little woman glanced roguishly round the room, and brought out the last word with a tragic accent positively fascinating, ‘did you ever—waltz?’

‘Well,’ he answered guardedly, with an eye to his friend Mrs. Anson, who was mightily amused, ‘I have waltzed.’

‘Something like this, was it not?’ She went to the piano and played a few bars of a dreamy, old-fashioned German dance; played it as it should be played. The Canon’s wholesome pink face grew pinker, and he began to sway a little as he sat.

She turned swiftly round upon the music-stool. ‘Don’t you feel at times a desire to do something naughty, Canon—just because it is naughty?’

He nodded.

‘And don’t you think,’ continued the fair casuist, with a delicious air of wisdom, ‘that when it is not very naughty, only a little bad, you know, you should sometimes indulge yourself, as a sort of safety-valve?’

He smiled, of course, a gentle dissent. But at the same time he muttered something which sounded like ‘desipere in loco.’

‘Mrs. Anson, you play a waltz, I know?’

She acknowledged the impeachment with none of the Canon’s modesty.

‘You are so kind, I am sure you will oblige me for five minutes. The Canon is going to try his steps with me in the next room. How lucky it is empty! and quite a good floor, I declare.—Now, Canon Vrater, you are far too gallant to refuse?’

He laughed, but Mrs. Anson entered thoroughly into the fun, took off her gloves, and sitting down at the piano played the same dreamy air. In vain the old gentleman pleasantly protested: he was swept away, so to speak, by the little woman’s vivacity. How it came about, whether there was some magic in the air, or in Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby’s eyes, the Canon was never able to make quite clear to himself, and far less to Mrs. Vrater, but in two minutes he was revolving round the room in stately measure, an expression of anxious enjoyment on his handsome old face as he carefully counted his steps, such as would have

diverted the eye of the charmed bystander even from the arch mischief that rippled over his fair partner's features. Had there been any bystander to witness the scene, that is.

‘Hem!’

It was very loud and full of meaning, and came from the open window. The Canon's arm fell from the lady's waist as if she had suddenly turned into the spiky maiden of Nuremberg. Mrs. Dean stopped playing with equal suddenness, and an exclamation of annoyance. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, thus deserted in the



middle of the room, dropped the prettiest of ‘cheeses,’ and broke into a merry peal of unaffected laughter. It was the Dean. Coming up the oyster-shell path, there was no choice for him but to witness the *dénouement* through the green-shuttered window. He *was* shocked; perhaps of the four he was the most embarrassed, though the Canon looked, for him, very foolish. But nothing could stand against Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's gaiety. She laughed so long, so innocently, and with such pure enjoyment of the situation, that one by one they joined her. The Dean at-

tempted to be a little sarcastic, but the laugh took all sting from his satire; and the Canon, when he had once recovered his presence of mind, and his breath, parried the raillery with his usual polished ease.

So Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's freak ended in no more serious result than her own conversion into the staunchest of Epicureans, a very goddess of pleasure; and in familiarising the Dean's mind with the idea of the Terpsichorean innovation, until the proposition of a dance at the Deanery—yes, at the Deanery itself—was mooted to his decanal ears. Of course he rejected it, but still he survived the shock, and the project had been brought within the range of practical politics. Its novelty faded from his mind, and its impropriety ceased to strike him. He had never told Mrs. Vrater of her husband's afternoon waltz, and this reticence divided them. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby exerted all her wiles; she gave him no peace. The plan was mooted again and again: he wavered, remonstrated, argued, and finally (thanks chiefly to No. 13), in a moment of good-natured weakness, when the fear of Mrs. Vrater was not before his eyes, succumbed. Be sure his wife and her allies left him no *locus pœnitentiæ*. Never was triumph greater. Within the week the minor canons had their invitations stuck in their mirrors, and rejoiced in their liberty. And Mrs. Vrater made a certain call upon Mrs. Anson, of which the reader knows.

But Mrs. Dean's pleasure was not unclouded. There were spots upon the sun. The Dean was not always so tractable, and the Deanery house was not large, and the garden positively small. True, a gateway and a descent of two or three steps led from the latter into the picturesque cloisters, which had lately been cleaned and repaired, and the sight of this suggested a brilliant idea to flighty Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby. She lost no time in communicating it to Mrs. Anson, who received it at first with some doubt. Her friend, however, painted it in such pleasant hues, and set it in so many brilliant lights, that later she too became enamoured of the project, and boldly proceeded to carry it into execution.

The Dean stumbled upon this magnificent plan; in so many words, stumbled upon it, in a rather unfortunate way. He was taking his wonted morning stroll in the garden two or three days before the 24th, the date fixed for the now famous dance. His thoughts were not upon it at the moment: it was a bright

sunny day, and the balmy life-inspiring air had expelled the regret which it must be confessed was the Dean's normal frame of mind as to his ill-considered acquiescence. He was not thinking of what the Bishop would say, or what the city would say, or, worst of all, what Mrs. Vrater had said. He turned a corner of the summerhouse a few yards from the steps which we have mentioned as leading to the cloisters, and as he did so with the free gait of a man walking in his own garden—bump!—he brought his right knee violently against the edge of some object, a packing-case, a half-opened packing-case which was lying there, where, so far as the Dean could see, it had no earthly business. The packing-case edge was sharp, the blow a forcible one. For a moment the Dean hopped about, moaning to himself and embracing his shin. The spring air lost all its virtue on the instant, and his regret for his moral weakness returned with added and local poignancy. For he had not a doubt that the offending box had something to do with the 24th. As he tenderly rubbed his leg he regarded the box with no friendly eyes. To school-boys and policemen, and the tag-rag and bobtail, a sharp blow on the shin may not be much; but stout and dignified clerics above the rank of a ritualistic vicar are, to say the least of it, not accustomed to the thing at all.

‘What the—ahem—what in heaven's name may this be?’ he exclaimed with irritation. Resentment adding vigour to his curiosity, he gingerly removed the covering from the case, which appeared to be full of particoloured paper globes of all shapes and sizes. They were symmetrically arranged; they might have been tiny fire-balloons. But the Dean's mind reverted to infernal machines, the smart of his shin suggesting this line of thought. He put on his glasses in some trepidation, and looking more closely made out the objects to be—Chinese lanterns.

The sound of a hasty step upon the gravel made him turn. It was Mrs. Anson, looking a little perturbed—by her hurry, perhaps. Her husband lifted one of the lanterns from the case with the end of his stick, and contemplated it with a good deal of contempt.

‘My dear,’ he said, ‘what in the name of goodness are these foolish things for?’

‘Well, you know the house is not very large,’ she began, ‘and the supper will occupy the dining-room and breakfast-room—it would be a pity to cramp the supper, my dear, when we have

such beautiful plate, and so few chances of showing it—and conservatory we have none, so——’

‘Yes, yes, my dear, true,’ broke in the Dean impatiently; ‘but what of these? what of these?’ He raised the poor lantern anew.

‘Well, we thought it would be nice to—to light the cloisters with these lanterns, and so form a conservatory of a kind. Now that the cloisters are cleaned and restored they will look so pretty, and the people can walk there between the dances. I thought it would be an excellent arrangement, and—and save us pulling your study about.’

There was an awful pause. The lantern, held at arm’s length on the ferrule of the Dean’s stick, shook like an aspen leaf.

‘You thought—it would be nice—to light the cloisters—with Chinese lanterns! The cloisters of Gleicester Cathedral, Mrs. Anson! Good heavens!’

No mere words can express the tone of amazed disapprobation, of horror, disgust, and wrath combined, in which the Dean, whose face was purple with the same emotions, spoke these words. He dashed the lantern to the ground, and set one foot upon it in a manner not unworthy of St. George—the Chinese lantern being a natural symbol of the dragon.

‘It would be rank sacrilege; sacrilege, Mrs. Anson. Never let me hear of it again. I am shocked that you should have proposed such a thing; and I see now what I feared before, that I was very wrong in giving my consent to a frivolity unbecoming our position. You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled. But I never dreamt it would come to this. Let me hear no more of it, I beg.’

The Dean, as he walked away after these decisive words, felt very sore—and not only about the knee, to do him justice. He repeated over and over again to himself the proverb about touching pitch. Until the last few days, no one had cherished his position more highly. And now his very wife was so far demoralised as to have suggested things dreadful to him and subversive of it. He had given way to the Canon and that little witch at No. 13; and this was the first result. What a peck of troubles, he said to himself, this wretched dance was bringing upon him! He was sick of it, sick to death of it, he told himself. So sick, indeed, that when he was out of his wife’s hearing he groaned aloud with a great sense of self-pity, and almost brought himself in his disgust to believe that Mrs. Vrater would have been a more fit and sympathetic helpmeet for him.

And Mrs. Dean was bitterly disappointed. She had set her heart upon the cloisters scheme, and in most things she had been wont to enjoy her own way. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby had depicted it in such gorgeous hues, and portrayed so movingly the guests' admiration and surprise—and envy. Oaklea Castle, the seat of the Marquis of Gleicester, with its spacious and costly conservatories and fineries, could present no more picturesque or charming scene than would be afforded by the many-arched cloisters brilliantly lighted and decorated, and filled with handsome dresses and pretty faces still aglow with the music's enthusiasm. Mrs. Anson had pictured it all. But she was a wise woman, and a comparatively old married woman, and she recognised that the matter was not one for argument. Not even to the Canon, her ally, did she confide her chagrin, being after her husband's outburst a little dubious of the light in which the project might present itself to him.

Only into Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's bosom did she pour her sorrow without reserve. That lady made a delicious *move* after her fashion on hearing of the Dean's indignation, but she seemed almost as disappointed as Mrs. Anson herself. 'And he actually forbade you, dear?' she asked, with her blue eyes full of pity and wondering surprise.

'Well, he told me never to let him hear of it again.'

'Oh!' answered the little woman thoughtfully, and was silent for a time. When she recovered herself she changed the subject, and soon coaxed and petted her friend into a good humour.

Still this was a large spot on the sun of Mrs. Anson's triumph. And yet another, a mere speck indeed in comparison, and very endurable, appeared at the last moment, the very day before the 24th. The Dean was summoned to London; was summoned so privately, so peremptorily, and so importantly, that the thought of what might come of the journey (there was a new bishopric in act of being formed) almost reconciled his wife to his absence; and this the more when she had effectually disposed of his suggestion that the party should be indefinitely postponed. The Dean was not persistent in pushing his proposal; the harm, he felt, was already done. And besides, being himself away, he would now be freed from some personal embarrassment. It must go on; if he went up it would signify little. So he started for London very cheerfully, all Gleicester knowing of his errand, and the porters at the station spying a phantom apron at his girdle.

When the evening, marked in the minor canons' rubric with so red a letter, arrived, the excitement in the Abbot's Square rose to a great height.

Vague rumours of some surprise in store for the guests, which should surpass the novelty of the dance, were abroad. Strange workmen of reticent manners had passed in and out, and mysterious packages and bundles, as self-contained as their bearers, had been seen to enter the Deanery gates. A jealous awning, which altered the normal appearance of the garden as seen from the second-floor windows of the Square, hid the exact nature of the alteration, and served only to whet the keen curiosity of the Gloucester public. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, from No. 13, ran to and fro, smiling with a charming air of effervescent reserve, which raised Mrs. Anson's older friends to an aggravated pitch of curiosity. The Square knew not what to expect. Conjecture was—in more senses than one, as the event proved—abroad.

For no one had in the least foreseen the spectacle that met their eyes upon their arrival. Certainly not the Bishop, though he betrayed no surprise; good cheery man, he was every inch a bishop, and therefore by tradition a great-hearted, liberal-minded gentleman. Certainly not Sir Titus Wort, nor General Jones, much less the Archdeacon. No, nor even the minor canons; their anticipations, keen as long abstinence from such enjoyments could make them, had yet fallen far short of the scene presented to their gaze upon entering the Deanery garden.

Even Canon Vratér—at home, it was rumoured, in courts; he had certainly once lunched at Windsor—stood in almost speechless wonder by the garden steps.

'It is very beautiful!' he said simply, gazing with all his eyes down the arched vista formed by the tree-like pillars of the cloisters; the brilliant light of many lanterns picked out every leaf of their delicate carving and fretted broidery, and made of their fair whiteness a glittering background for the dark-hued dresses of the promenaders beneath. It was indeed more like fairy-land than a part of the cathedral precincts. Those who traversed it every day looked round and wondered where they were.

'It is very beautiful!' That was all. And he said it so gravely that Mrs. Anson's spirits, elevated by the open admiration of the bulk of her guests, would have fallen rapidly had she not at that moment met the arch glance of Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby. That lady,

a very mistress of the revels, was flitting here and there and everywhere, witching the world of Gleicester with noble womanhood.

Nor was the sight less of a surprise to the Canon's wife. But Mrs. Vrater, as was to be expected, had more to say upon the subject. She had taken possession of the youngest and most timid of the minor canons, and even he was lifted a little above himself by the scene and a chance smile shot in his direction by the mistress of No. 13. Still he was not sufficiently intoxicated to venture to disagree with the resident Canon's lady.

'I never thought I should live to see this or anything like it!' she said, with a groan of grimmest disapprobation.

'No, indeed,' he assented, 'nor did I.' But it is doubtful if he meant quite the same thing as the lady.

'This will not be the end of it, Mr. Smallgunn,' said Cassandra, nodding her head in so gloomy a manner that it recalled nothing so much as a hearse-plume.

'Not a bit of it,' he answered briskly. — But again it is a matter of some uncertainty whether the two wits—supposing that so irreverent an expression may be applied to Mrs. Vrater's wit—jumped together. He not improbably in his mind's eye saw a succession of such evenings strewn like flowers in the minor canons' path; and this was not at all Mrs. Vrater's view. She felt that there was a lack of sympathy between them, and left him for the Archdeacon, with whom she conferred in a corner, glowering the while at the triumphant Epicureans, who strutted up and down the carpeted cloisters, and flirted their fans, and spread their feathers like peacocks in the sunshine.

And there were moments when Mrs. Dean felt as proud as a peacock: but then there were other times when she felt quite the reverse. True, she fully intended strenuously to perform, so far as in her lay, her husband's order, 'never to let him hear of it again,' quite heartily and sincerely; that amount of justice must be done her; she intended to obey him in this, only she doubted of her success. And being in the main a good woman, with some amount of love and reverence for her husband, there were moments in the evening when she turned quite cold with fear, and wondered who or what on earth could have induced her to do it. But her guests saw nothing of this; nor did it occur to them, whatever might be their private views, that their hostess had the smallest doubt of the propriety of her picturesque arrangement—her guests

generally, that is. There was one exception—the gay, laughing, sail-with-the-wind little lady from No. 13.

But she did not form one of the group around Mrs. Anson during the last dance before supper. It was a waltz, and it had but just commenced, the rhythmical strains had but just penetrated to their nook within the cloisters, when suddenly, with some degree of abruptness, the music stopped. They, not knowing their hostess's train of thought, were surprised to see her turn pale and half rise. She paused in the middle of a sentence, and could not disguise the fact that she was listening. The others became silent also, and listened as people will. The dancing had ceased, and there was some commotion in the house, that was clear. There were loud voices, and the sound of hurrying to and fro, and of people calling and answering; and finally, while they were yet looking at one another with eyes half fearful, half assuring, there came quite a rush of people from the house in the direction of the cloisters. Mrs. Anson rose, as did the others. She alone had no doubt of what it meant. The Dean had come back—the Dean had come back! The matter could not be disguised; she was caught literally *flagrante delicto*, the cloisters one blaze of light from end to end. How would he take it? She peered at the approaching group to try and distinguish his burly form and mark the aspect of his face. But though it was hardly dark in the little strip of garden which separated them from the house, she could not see him; and as they came nearer she could hear several voices, if it was not her imagination playing her tricks, naming him in tones of condolence and pity. Then another and, as she was afterwards thankful to remember, a far more painful idea came into her mind, and she stepped forward with a buzzing in her ears.

‘What is it, James? The Dean?’ with a catch in her voice.

‘Well, ma’am, yes. I’m very sorry, ma’am. There’s been a——’

‘An accident? Speak, quick! what is it?’ she cried, her hand to her side.

‘No, ma’am, but a burglary; and the Dean, who has just come, says——’

‘The Dean, James, will speak for himself,’ said her husband, who had followed the group at a more leisurely pace, taking in the aspect of affairs as he came. He had heard the latter part of her

words, and been softened, perhaps, by the look upon her face. 'You have plenty of light here, my dear,' with a glance at the illumination, in which annoyance and contempt were finely mingled; 'but I fear that will not enable our guests to eat their supper in the absence of plate. Every spoon and fork has been stolen; a feat rendered, I expect, much more easy by this injudicious plan of yours.'

Which was all the public punishment she received at his hands. But his news was sufficient. Mrs. Dean remembered her magnificent silver-gilt *épergne* and salver to match—never more to be anything but a memory to her—and fainted.

Mrs. Vrater, too, remembered that *épergne*. It was the finest piece in the Dean's collection, and the Dean's plate was famous through the county. She remembered it, and felt that her triumph could hardly have been more complete; the shafts of Nemesis could hardly have been driven into a more fitting crevice in her adversary's armour. This was what had come of the clergy dancing, of the Dean's weakness, and Mrs. Anson's secular frivolity and friendships! Mrs. Vrater looked round her with a great sense of the wisdom of Providence, and ejaculated, 'This is precisely what I foresaw!'

'Then it is a pity you did not inform the police,' answered her husband, tartly.

But his lady shook her head. In the triumph of the moment she could afford to leave such a gibe unanswered. The Arch-deacon was condoling with the Dean in terms almost cordial, and certainly sincere; but Mrs. Vrater was made of sterner stuff, and was not one to lose the sweetness of victory by indulging a foolish sympathy for the vanquished. She would annihilate all her enemies at one blow, and looked round upon the excited group surrounding Mrs. Anson to see that no one of that lady's faction was lacking to her triumph.

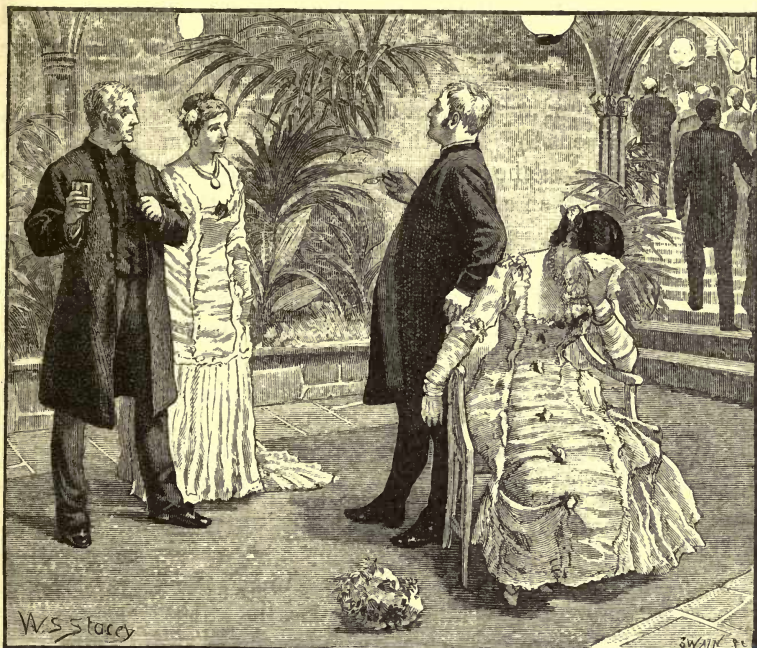
What was this? Surely she was here! The prime mover, the instigator of this folly, should have been in closest attendance upon her dear friend? But no.

'Where is Mrs. Curzon-Boulby?' Mrs. Vrater asked rather sharply, what with surprise, and what with some pardonable disappointment.

'I believe,' said the Dean, turning from his wife, who was slowly reviving—'I believe that the Hon. Mrs. Curzon-Boulby is in the Mediterranean.'

'In the Mediterranean? why, she was here an hour ago.' The man's head was turned by the loss of his cherished plate.

'No, not Mrs. Curzon-Boulby, as I learned before I left London. Some one so calling herself was, though she too is probably far away in the up train by this time, and her plunder with her. To her and her confederates we are indebted for this loss.' The Dean may be excused if he spoke a little bitterly.



'Good Lord!' cried the Canon, dropping the glass of water he was holding.

'I felt sure of it!' cried his wife, in a tone of deep conviction.

As the party entered the house, which was in huge disorder, full of guests collecting their wraps and calling for their carriages, of imperative policemen and frightened servants, the Dean drew back. He returned alone to the cloisters, and very carefully with his own hands extinguished all the lamps. As the faint moonlight regained its lost ascendancy, falling in a silver sheet pale and pure upon the central grass-plot, and dimly playing round the

carven pillars, the Dean closed the gate and heaved a sigh of relief.

And so ended the Dean's ball, the triumph as brief as disastrous of the Gleicester Epicureans. The dreams of the minor canons have not become facts. They may play lawn-tennis, may attend water-parties and amateur theatricals—nay, may play cards for such stakes as they can afford, but the dance is tabooed. The Dean is Dean still, and is still looking hopefully—what Dean is not?—to the immediate future to make him a bishop. And Mrs. Dean is still Mrs. Dean, but not quite the Mrs. Dean she was. As for No. 13, its day of prosperity also closed with that night. It relapsed into its old condition of modest insignificance, nor ever recalled the fact that a reverend canon had waltzed within its walls. The green shutters and oyster-shells are no longer considered an anomaly, for they adorn the residence of a master mason.

One more episode of that evening remains to be told. The Canon and his wife walked home together, and if he said little, she left little to be said. Upon entering the dining-room the Canon sat down wearily. The servant, surprised to see them return so early, brought in the lamp. The Canon looked, rubbed his eyes, and looked again.

'Mary,' he said, 'where is—don't be alarmed, my dear; Mary has no doubt put it upstairs for safety—where is my great silver tankard? Ah, yes; and the goblets, too, where are they?'

'If you please, ma'am,' said Mary glibly, answering rather Mrs. Vrater's agonised look than the Canon's question—'if you please, ma'am, the Hon. Mrs. Curzon-Boulby called after you left, and said she'd run in to borrow them for the Deanery claret-cup, as they'd be short of silver.'

MADAME D'ARBLAY.

WITHIN the last year or two Madame d'Arblay's novels have been republished with an appreciative introduction, and modern readers may discover for themselves whether they can understand the raptures with which the author was welcomed into the literary world. The last edition of 'Cecilia' is separated by just a century from the first; and some critics have asserted survival for that period is the true test of an author's title to be a classic. How far Madame d'Arblay deserves that name is problematical. Even her most zealous admirers, however, will scarcely venture to place her in the first class. Her reputation is not as the reputation of Miss Austen. We may dissent from the orthodox view without suffering excommunication. If we do not read 'Evelina' simply from a sense of duty we require the stimulus of curiosity. We seek in her pages for illustrations of the manners and customs of the times or of the development of a literary fashion. We do not become so deeply absorbed in the books themselves as to forget for the time all extrinsic interests. No book can be said to be thoroughly alive which is not capable of blinding us for the time to everything outside its own pages. It must be whilst we read our whole world—the sole reality, which makes all outside tangible things mere transitory phantoms. When reading Miss Austen, we can believe in Emma Woodhouse, and consider the young ladies of our own families as characters in fiction. But no such illusion, no inversion, however temporary, of the worlds of fact and fancy is possible to the student of 'Evelina' and 'Cecilia.' The 'genial' critic, indeed, still simulates enthusiasm and calls everybody a dullard who dares to dissent. Let us hope that he believes in his own utterance, and take courage to admit that we would rather read one volume of 'Cecilia' than five. And when once we admit that the novels are most interesting chiefly from the historical point of view, it becomes a question whether genuine history is not preferable.

The 'Diaries' and the 'Memoirs of Dr. Burney' are fully as lively as the novels; and we prefer portraits of Boswell and George III. to Lord Orville and Mr. Delville, who are less

interesting in themselves and whose adventures are not very thrilling. Miss Burney, however, is worth a study in more ways than one. We can see many interesting people through her eyes, and her novels mark at least an important transition in the art. Her personal story is sufficiently familiar from Macaulay's essay; and, whatever be Macaulay's shortcomings, we always have the advantage in following him, of knowing that a firm and distinct outline of fact has been vigorously put down in unmistakable black and white on his readers' memories. Macaulay's article, indeed, was obviously prompted by something besides simple zeal for Madame d'Arblay. He was delivering a damaging blow at his old enemy Croker; and it is worth while to look back at the articles which gave the offence. Poor Madame d'Arblay undertook in her old age to publish three volumes of Memoirs of her father, Dr. Burney. She was eighty in the year (1832) of their publication. To most people it would seem that, if her dates were rather vague, and that, if her own figure appeared rather prominently in the foreground of her own recollections, the weakness was natural and pardonable enough. Croker, however, fell upon her in one of those fine slashing articles which are happily less common than of old; he hit upon an expedient well adapted to give pain to his victim.

It had been reported—where or when it does not appear (probably from a hasty identification of the author with her heroine)—that 'Evelina' was written at the surprisingly early age of seventeen. Madame d'Arblay did not say so herself; but neither did she deny it. Still the vagueness of her dates might seem to give some colour to the statement, supposing it to have been made; and undoubtedly she does lay a good deal of stress upon her youthfulness at the time of composition. Accordingly Croker, so it is said, put himself into a post-chaise and went all the way to Lynn to examine the parish registers. He discovered, to his unspeakable triumph, that Frances Burney had been christened in 1752. Beyond all doubt, then, she was twenty-five when 'Evelina' actually appeared at the beginning of 1778. He came back overflowing with virtuous complacency. He felt as one who had unmasked a wicked impostor. He was not the man to bring out this great discovery incidentally or modestly, or to spare the feelings of an old woman whose guilt he had laid bare. He wrote an article in which the criticism of the book is merely by the way, and the whole pith and

point of which is this mighty revelation. A hint of it is given in the opening pages; but it is not yet to be set forth. It must be duly emphasised with a sufficient blast upon the critical trumpet. We have to look at Madame d'Arblay's vanity from different points of view to prepare us for believing in her atrocity. It must be shown that the success of 'Evelina' was due chiefly or exclusively to the belief in the youthfulness of the author; and then, when all is ripe, this crushing disclosure is brought forth as the counsel for the prosecution of a criminal produces the clenching and damning bit of evidence which is to make defence impossible.

When, some years later, the posthumous Diaries were published, Croker returned to the charge, and once more exulted in his discovery. Certainly one can understand Macaulay's desire to retaliate; though his angry retort—namely, that Croker was a bad writer, whose spite Madame d'Arblay 'had provoked by not furnishing him with materials for a worthless edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, some sheets of which our readers have doubtless seen round parcels of better books'—strikes one as being slightly irrelevant. Croker's mighty discovery might have been met by quiet contempt. Miss Burney, as her Diary shows, did in fact get a good deal of credit for her youthfulness. Mrs. Thrale, talking to Johnson, quoted the precedent of Pope's 'Windsor Forest,'¹ which is rather oddly ambiguous; for Pope published this poem at twenty-five, but claimed to have written the chief part of it at sixteen. Mrs. Thrale would probably have this claim in her mind when referring to the poem as a precedent of precocity; but it is also certain that she knew her young friend to be over twenty in 1779; and, indeed, could hardly be so far wrong as to suppose her to be anything like seventeen at the time of publication.

Madame d'Arblay's own account is that she burnt all her childish manuscripts on her fifteenth birthday, and continued in her head one of the destroyed stories which ultimately became 'Evelina.' The composition is thus extended over a very indefinite period, the final redaction taking place some time before the actual publication in her twenty-sixth year. That her friends and she herself should be rather inaccurate is natural enough; and if in her old age she inclined to favour the more flattering

¹ It is fully discussed by her last editor; who is not perfectly fair, however, in considering the reference to *Windsor Forest*.

hypothesis, nobody but the bloodthirsty reviewers of her period would have cared to dwell upon such a trifle.

The error would tend to prove, indeed, that Madame d'Arblay had a certain share of vanity. Nobody who reads her books can have very much doubt upon that point. She was most unmistakably vain ; but her vanity need hardly offend the most morose of critics. It is the vanity which goes with good-nature, and implies a sort of touching confidence in her readers. How could she be otherwise than vain ? No young author was ever exposed to a more intoxicating chorus of admiration. Richardson's great success was not achieved till he was past middle life ; Sterne published the first volumes of 'Tristram Shandy' at the ripe age of forty-five ; Scott was well past thirty when he published the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' and past forty when he published 'Waverley.' To find any instance of a sudden youthful popularity equal to hers we must go back to Pope, or onwards to Byron or Dickens. Now, with the exception of Scott, none of these famous authors have escaped the charge of excessive vanity ; and more than one of them showed unmistakable signs of moral deterioration of a more serious kind.

If Fanny Burney's celebrity was not quite so wide as in their case, the want of quantity was amply made up by the quality. She seems to have been still treated as a girl up to the time of her celebrity. Her father, who was strikingly like herself—an excitable, vivacious, sociable, impulsive creature—had been for years popular in London society. He knew all the wits, and was petted in the great houses. 'To enumerate the friends and acquaintance with whom he associated in the world at large,' says his daughter, 'would be nearly to ransack the Court Calendar, the list of the Royal Society, of the Literary Club, of all assemblages of eminent artists ; and almost every other list that includes the celebrated or active characters then moving, like himself, in the vortex of public existence.' But Fanny had scarcely emerged from the nursery ; she had been left to pick up her education for herself ; her proposal to publish a novel had been treated as a school-girl's joke ; she had ventured only to the extreme edge of the 'vortex ;' she had seen Garrick when he came to play with the children ; gone on a visit with her father to the opera, or taken a back seat at the concerts which he sometimes gave in his own house. She had looked on in reverent awe when for the first time the gigantic Johnson rolled himself into their drawing-

room, and twitched and twirled and fell into brown studies, and bestowed a huge smack upon her elder sister, and scandalised the musical circle by asking whether Bach was a piper. Suddenly she became the centre of all admirers. Johnson did her homage after his elephantine fashion, compared her advantageously to Richardson and Fielding, quoted his favourite passages, and actually mimicked the characters; Reynolds forgot his dinner, and had to be fed whilst reading; Burke sat up over it all night; Sheridan offered to take a comedy from her pen without even reading it—a proposal as characteristic, perhaps, of Sheridan's carelessness as of his admiration; 'all the Streathamites' emulated each other in compliment; and the magnificent Mrs. Montagu condescended to bestow some notice upon this new ornament of her sex. If she danced round the mulberry-tree in Mr. Crisp's garden upon hearing such news, and kept a diary to record the multitudinous fine things that were pouring in upon her from all the recognised literary authorities of the day, it is certainly not surprising.

Clearly a young lady who could have kept her head under such a welcome from men to whom she had hitherto looked up from an indefinite distance as the intellectual sovereigns of her world would have been more than human. But this does not by any means prove that her head was not turned; only that the turning implied no inordinate vanity as a previous condition. It is, in fact, evident enough that Miss Fanny did begin to think herself a very wonderful person indeed. She collected all the sugar-plums for the benefit of her family, and of good Mr. Crisp, the amiable misanthropist, who was as much a father to her as Dr. Burney. We can doubtless count upon our innermost circle for honouring certain drafts upon their admiration which seem rather extravagant when presented to the outside world; and yet that innermost circle has its terrors for a modest person. Miss Austen, one fancies, with her keen eyes for humbugs of various kinds, would have made certain deductions from such flatteries, had she been unlucky enough to receive them, and even when passing them on to her sister or her brothers, have allowed a sub-sarcastic smile to appear upon her face. Some little reservation, some admittance of the possibility that praise may be not entirely sincere, is necessary—much as most of us enjoy flattery—before we can make up our minds to relish its sweetness, even when we are passing it on to our second selves. We wish, it may be, to

propitiate the jealous gods who punish excessive complacency, and to take some precautions for breaking our fall in case the shrine upon which we are elevated should not be composed of thoroughly sound materials. But Miss Burney shows no signs of misgiving. She swallows the flattery whole. Page after page of the Diary is full of conversations, in which all the brilliant wits and intellectual ladies are constantly circling round 'Evelina;' resort to it for telling illustrations; ridicule any luckless wight who does not immediately take an allusion to the Branghtons or Madame Duval; unite to make him ashamed of his ignorance; take Miss Burney aside to pour out the fulness of their hearts; or carry on little discussions in her presence as to their favourite passages. In her old age Madame d'Arblay had developed the peculiar style which alone could do justice to the subject. 'The climax of her glory was reached,' she says, 'when Johnson and Burke vied in praising "Cecilia," each animated by the spirit of the other in the noblest terms that our language, in its highest glory, is capable of emitting.' . . . 'Thus, radiant with a warmth which Sol in his summer's glory could not deepen,' she says, 'had gone on the winter to 1783, through the glowing suffrage of the two first luminaries that brightened the constellation of genius of the reign of George III.—Dr. Johnson and Edmund Burke.'

Miss Burney, however, had not adopted this strain of eloquence at the time. Her Diaries explain the process by which her style was being spoilt, but are not themselves the worse for it. In the early volumes we have a vivid portrait of the society in which Boswell has made us at home as Boswell would himself have given. We can hardly admit that she makes Johnson himself better known to us; though Miss Burney must have been a very inferior artist had she not caught a telling likeness of his features. But the little pictures of Streatham society, of shrewd social Mrs. Thrale in particular, worthily fill up gaps in Boswell's description; and such glimpses as that of the society at Brighton, with the quaint, blustering, gallant old Irish dandy, Mr. B——y, are at least as spirited as anything in 'Evelina.' Unfortunately, we can trace the approach of the catastrophe which was to ruin the author. Nobody who made so brilliant a start has ever ended in so lamentable a failure.

'Evelina,' whatever its shortcomings, when put beside the best work in its class, can at least be read with an understanding

of its astonishing success. It would be a mistake to say that 'Cecilia' succeeded because it was by the author of 'Evelina;' for it contains, especially in the earlier part, a great deal of writing which is equal to 'Evelina' in style and spirit, and the story is far more carefully worked out. But it is also true that a great deal of 'Cecilia' is now intolerable; the style at once slipshod and pompous, and the sentiment absurd. Her later writings were a tragedy which failed and was never printed; the 'Camilla' which some people are believed to have read, and report as full of extravagant sentimentalism, and 'The Wanderer,' of which there is not even a tradition that anybody ever got beyond the first pages. Many people have failed to follow up a first success; but so complete a decline, so sheer and hopeless a fall from the heights of popularity to utter unreadability is scarcely to be paralleled. The failure does not appear to have been due to any want of care.

'The Wanderer,' according to Madame d'Arblay, was the result of ten years' labour, and 'Camilla' seems to have been elaborated as carefully as 'Cecilia.' We might, if we pleased, attribute it to the miserable years passed in her splendid house of bondage. Undoubtedly one can hardly imagine a more unfavourable condition for the development of her powers. She had quite sufficient acuteness to see the ludicrous side of her position. She reads a description of herself in a French newspaper, where she is said to be 'a person whose most extraordinary literary talents had so fascinated *Sa Majesté la Reine de la Grande Bretagne* that she had appointed her *surintendante* of all her wardrobe.' 'It really,' says Miss Burney, 'read so Irish a compensation stated in that manner that I could scarce read it with gravity;' and yet the statement was substantially accurate. Miss Burney was rewarded for 'Evelina' and 'Cecilia' by the place of ladies' maid to the Queen.

Her duties were attending her mistress's toilette, and her pleasures the society of an illiterate and preposterous old German lady, resembling her own Madame Duval so absurdly that, but for the dates, one might have supposed an intended portrait, and of half-a-dozen equerries and other sublime domestics. Others besides Croker have condemned poor Miss Burney for her lamentations. She ought, it is said, to have known perfectly well what to expect. Her duties were clearly explained to her; and she was past thirty when she went into service with her eyes open. She grumbled, it is said, because she did not receive the admiration for

which she thirsted. She expected to be surrounded by adorers, and unluckily most of the gentlemen whom she saw were already married; and the one equerry—called 'Fairly,' in the Diary and really a certain Colonel Digby—with whom she got up a kind of flirtation failed her cruelly. He was a widower, and used to come and pour his sorrows into her willing ears; and find opportunities to enlarge upon the consolations of religion, and to read Akenside's 'Pleasures of the Imagination,' and other substitutes for Tennyson and Browning current in those days. Unfortunately he consoled himself more effectually, to her evident vexation, by marrying another lady (called 'Fuzilier' in the Diary), and after that time, poor Miss Burney broke down completely, and had no resource against the scoldings and petty tyrannies of the Schwellenberg. If, as certainly seems probable, Miss Burney had a little tenderness for Colonel Digby, and was bitterly depressed by the end of her flirtation, she may perhaps be thought to deserve rather compassion than condemnation. Most readers, in fact, will sympathise unreservedly with Macaulay's indignant denunciation of the selfishness of the 'sweet Queen' who allowed a woman of education and genius to wear herself out in menial duties, and still more in condemning the easy-going father, who evidently thought that a daughter at the palace might do him some useful offices, and who, even when he saw her health breaking down and her spirits destroyed, could hardly be persuaded by the indignant remonstrances of Burke and Windham and Boswell and the whole Literary Club to allow of her resignation.

It is, however, not quite so easy to judge of Miss Burney herself. Are we to regard her worship of the Royal Family as a beautiful example of old-fashioned loyalty lingering into uncongenial times, or as marking the period at which loyalty was transforming itself too easily into contemptible flunkeyism. Perhaps the line was never quite so easily drawn as we fancy. The grand old cavalier who gave his life in the loftiest spirit of unselfish devotion might be more easily corruptible than we could wish in the unwholesome atmosphere of Whitehall. Miss Burney, we fancy, was not altogether as clear-headed in this matter as she might have been. She could see the foibles of her Royal master as clearly as anybody. The Diary gives us a portrait of George II. which exactly falls in with the wicked fun of Peter Pindar or of the Probationary Odes (in the 'Rolliad'). 'Methinks I hear,' says one of those bards—

Methinks I hear,
 In accents clear,
 Great Brunswick's voice still vibrate on my ear—
 'What? what? what?
 Scott! Scott! Scott!
 Hot! hot! hot!
 What? what? what?'

O fancy quick! O judgment true!
 O sacred oracle of regal taste!
 So hasty and so generous too!
 Not one of all thy questions will an answer wait!

So, on her first interview with the King, the great man cross-examined her about 'Evelina':—

"But what? what?—how was it?" "Sir," cried I, not well understanding him. "How came you—how happened it—what?—what?" "I—I only wrote, sir, for my own amusement—only at some odd idle hours. That was only, sir, only because——" I hesitated most abominably, not knowing how to tell him a long story, confused at these questions; besides, to say the truth, his own "What? what?" so reminded me of those vile Probationary Odes, that, in the midst of all my flutter, I was really hardly able to keep my countenance." She was obviously in a false position; the poor little satirist, brought face to face with her idol, and unable to dull her own perceptions, is throughout like a worshipper seized with a sense of the ludicrous in church. She had indeed to go through some genuine tragedy, when the poor King went out of his mind; but all through her story we see the keen-eyed observer painfully united in a single person with the would-be abject adorer. To be brought into the very innermost shrine, and see the object of your aspiration a kindly, commonplace, and thoroughly stupid old gentleman—to be forced into the proverbial position of valet to a hero, is clearly a most uncomfortable state of things. On the whole, we must say that in this struggle between the two selves, the abject worshipper rather gets the best of it. Miss Burney contrived to make Madame Schwellenberg the scapegoat for all the satirical impulses generated by her position. The King and Queen can never do wrong; they are always excusable for overlooking the sufferings of their dependent; they cannot be expected to manifest a consideration to which they were never educated; if they show a touch of human feeling, play with their little child, or say a civil thing to an inferior, it is a proof of their angelic condescension; if a young prince drinks too much and forces others to

drink, it is delightful affability ; and if some constitutional question has to be decided about their dignity, the fate of Europe hangs trembling in the balance. Even Macaulay is rather indignant when Miss Burney attends the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and presumes to be cold to her father's warm friend, Burke, for taking the wrong side. We have often wished, it may be said, in passing, that some keen satirist would show us the reverse side of that great scene in Westminster Hall, described in a famous 'purple patch' in Macaulay's essay on Warren Hastings. We should like to know, for example, how many of the actors in all that splendid assemblage were better qualified to have any opinion in the matter than Miss Burney herself? Magnificent as the spectacle may have been, was it not in substance a solemn dramatic enthronement of utter ignorance, hopeless prejudice, or bigoted self-interest upon matters which were entirely beyond the sphere of knowledge of the performers? As for Miss Burney, it was of course enough for her that the Court was supposed to be on the other side. She knew, as well as anybody knows now, that George III. was not a Solomon: But her instincts of loyalty or servility told her that whatever cause he approved must be the cause of justice and virtue ; and how many people have better reasons for their judgments in our enlightened period? When this or that young lady sympathised with Napoleon III., or Garibaldi, or Abraham Lincoln, or Jefferson Davis, and felt indignant with Mill or Carlyle for taking the opposite side, were they more or less foolish? In any case, would they deserve any solemn objurgation for their rash little outbursts of enthusiasm? Miss Burney no doubt took up all the prejudices of the atmosphere in which she lived ; not the less keenly because she felt it to be unwholesome in some ways for herself, and could even see very clearly the weak side of the sacred personages whom it surrounded. In those early days of the French Revolution, such an indiscriminating enthusiasm was too natural to justify any severe judgment. We need only say that she was an impetuous little loyalist, and loathed everything connected, however remotely, with Robespierre and Tom Paine. Probably her descendants are not much profounder.

And yet, it must be added that we cannot altogether admire her sentiments. She crouches rather too exuberantly before her Royal mistress. Her father gets most of the blame for not removing her from her bondage. Perhaps he deserves it.

But, to say the truth, they seem to have been uncommonly alike in temperament. They had an amazing supply of fine sentiment always on hand, which somehow does not impress upon one a conviction of its reality. They meet with ecstasy and correspond with effusion; but they seem to part with perfect ease and go their own separate ways. The father lets his daughter pick up an education anyhow; cares nothing about her book till it succeeds; leaves her in the palace till everybody but himself sees that she is seriously weakened; disapproves of her marriage to a ruined French emigrant, and is reconciled just as easily when he can't help it; and never interferes with her conduct except to prevent her producing a play, when he anticipates a ludicrous failure. They keep up all the language of the most affectionate father and daughter; but, what with his musical parties and his social engagements, and the claims of other members of his family, they seem to have lived perfectly independent lives. She stays with her second 'daddy,' Mr. Crisp, or with Mrs. Thrale, or Mrs. Delany, or whoever it might be, and remembers at intervals that she is the most affectionate of daughters, and writes a letter in character. He remembers her when it strikes him that her talents or reputation may be useful to him, and poses with perfect complacency as the affectionate parent, though the most selfish could not have behaved worse. The conversation in which, after seeing next to nothing of him for four years, she has a long talk with her 'dearest father' is a charming specimen of their relations. He is full of gaiety, but complains that some distinguished foreigners have attacked him for not introducing them to his daughter. His excuses brought out, to their astonishment, the fact that she had no holidays. He apparently then began to think himself that in fact it was rather odd. Poor Miss Burney hereupon breaks out as to all her miseries; and he nobly says, after a struggle, that if she is forced to resign, he will—receive her in his house. 'The emotion of my whole heart at this speech—this sweet, this generous speech—oh, my dear friends, I need not say it.' It was, she declares, her 'guardian angel, it was Providence in its own benignity, that inspired him with such goodness!'

The noble being, having actually consented to receive his own daughter, if her health made it absolutely necessary, she succeeded in little more than a year in bringing him up to the mark of definitely approving her resignation; and, on regaining

her freedom, seems to have taken up her abode with her married sisters and other friends. If we are left to wonder whether Miss Burney's loyalty was such as entirely to blind her, we are constrained to ask whether her filial affection was equally powerful. Dr. Burney, in her Memoirs, is never mentioned without superlatives of the most glowing panegyric; but somehow the impression is conveyed that he was a proficient in that valuable art of life which enables a man to get all possible comforts out of his domestic relations, and to take the responsibilities with marvellous light-heartedness. Nobody could be a pleasanter companion; and the flow of affectionate sentiment broke out again at any moment, just as freely after interruptions borne without a sign of discontent. The daughter appears to have been perfectly satisfied, and to have gone her own way with equal complacency.

In short, we can partly understand the view which some of her contemporaries seem to have taken, that she was an accomplished little flatterer, who could make herself charming by an exuberant display of enthusiasm, not very serious or very deeply rooted. To make such a judgment at all fair, we should doubtless have to add that she was a good wife and mother, and of a really kindly though sufficiently vain nature, who was quite as much the dupe of her own fine sentiments as anybody else, and probably the last to see through them. If this should seem a little harsh, we must notice that it is the only explanation of her literary deterioration. Macaulay, who dwells rather solemnly upon the defects of her later style, seems to ascribe her weakness to an imitation of Johnson. He thinks that Johnson actually assisted her in 'Cecilia;' though he must surely have overlooked the passage in the Diary (November 11, 1782) in which Johnson expressly denies that he had seen one word of the book before it was printed. The resemblance is easily explicable by an imitation of the standard authority of the time. Her latest editor accounts for her degeneracy by saying that her English was not based upon Latin. To us it seems quite as likely that Latin studies would have corrupted her early style as that they would have preserved its purity. In any case, the bad style is surely a symptom of something more serious than this. The Memoirs of Dr. Burney are written in a marvellous mixture of stilted and pure English—the latter being chiefly the reproduction of early letters and diaries—which Macaulay gravely denounces, but which we are rather inclined to call delicious. One phrase may

be given as a sufficient illustration:—‘If beneficence be judged by the happiness which it diffuses, whose claim, by that proof, shall stand higher than that of Mrs. Montagu, from the munificence with which she celebrated her annual festival for those hapless artificers who perform the most abject offices of any authorised calling, in being the active guardians of our blazing hearths?’ This is translated in a footnote:—‘Every May-day Mrs. Montagu gave an annual breakfast, in front of her new mansion, of roast beef and plum pudding to all the chimney-sweepers of the metropolis.’ We may surely read the verbiage of the text in the spirit in which we study that remarkable work ‘English as She is Spoke,’ and put off for the moment our judicial robes. Three volumes of such magniloquence are, it is true, a rather large allowance; but, as they are mixed with a good deal of lively writing of the old kind, they are really—in a slightly equivocal sense—worth the reading.

It is certainly rather melancholy that the author of ‘Evelina’ should be said to be the author of such twaddle as fills many pages of the Memoirs. But we can now see clearly enough the ominous signs which might have revealed themselves to a judicious adviser. The charm of ‘Evelina’ is, in one sense, what Croker took it to be. Readers, indeed, were not delighted with an otherwise inferior book because they supposed it to be written by a girl of seventeen. Such a belief counts for very little in the success of any performance; a novel, otherwise dull, would not be long read even if we knew it to have been written by a child of seven; and, moreover, the book had achieved success before the authorship had ceased to be a secret. It was the youthfulness of the book, not the youthfulness of the author, which constituted the charm. It professed to give the impressions of a ‘young female, educated in the most secluded retirement,’ who ‘makes, at the age of seventeen, her first appearance upon the great and busy stage of life.’ The freshness, the *naïveté* and sincerity of the impressions is preserved, though the author was just old enough to give them literary form, and to be capable of interpreting the feelings from the vantage-ground of the next stage in life. She was, like some greater artists, summing up an experience still vivid in recollection, though not actually present. In doing this, she had unconsciously made a great literary discovery. It had been known from an early period that young ladies could be very charming; and that fact had been very generally turned to account by poets,

novelists, and others. But the charming young lady who appears in the novels of the preceding generation is obviously described from without. Amelia and Sophia Western, and even Clarissa Harlowe, though she is supposed to be speaking for herself, are felt to be the creations of the masculine imagination, if such a word can be applied to Richardson; and are at least placed in a world seen from a masculine point of view.

It had not occurred to anyone capable of giving effect to the thought that the world seen through a young woman's eyes and described with thorough frankness and spontaneity could be worth a temporary visit. The feminine writers of plays and novels—of whom, of course, there had been plenty—had tried to imitate the procedure of their male relations. Sarah Fielding had endeavoured to tread in the steps of her big brother; and an earlier race had been disciples in the school of Wycherley and Congreve, and had begun by throwing aside some qualities which we generally associate with feminine excellence. But in 'Evelina' we have for the first time the genuine young woman coming forwards and claiming a hearing on her own merits. She is not going to affect a kind of knowledge which she cannot possess except at second-hand or at the price of losing her distinctive excellence. She admits herself to be perfectly simple-minded, no scholar or philosopher, deficient of all that knowledge of human nature which Tom Jones and his like had acquired in rough contact with the uglier facts of life, and yet she presumes to think that her little impressions may have an interest of their own. Many later writers have appropriated this discovery; we have been told with such fulness and minuteness what are the views of young ladies about things in general, from the earliest period at which they issue from their nurseries, that we scarcely do justice to Miss Burney as the first to make what was then a daring experiment. Ladies who wished to put forwards the claims of their sex to some equality of intellect, when they did not belong to the genus adventuress, took ponderous airs of learning. They translated Epictetus, or wrote essays upon Shakspeare after the manner of the great lexicographer; and obtained that kind of admiration which Johnson described too accurately by the parallel of the 'dancing dogs'—a wonder, not that they could do it well, but that they could do it at all. Under the conditions of the time even such wonder was perhaps legitimate and worth accepting. But Miss Burney had gallantly come forwards to show that there was

one thing, at least, which women could not only do, but do incomparably better than men—namely, express their own sentiments and draw their own portraits.

It seems, indeed, that Miss Burney, much as she had been kept in the background, must have seen a good deal more of the world than most young women of her position. Her father's profession was socially ambiguous; as a music-master he belonged to a class not very highly esteemed by our ancestors, and scarcely regarded as respectable by the solid, prosperous tradesmen against whom she levels a good deal of satire in 'Evelina;' as a music-master of an unusual kind, he was at the same time welcomed and petted by all the connoisseurs and patrons of the fine arts. 'Evelina' is devised so as to make the young lady alternate between the grand society of Lord Orville and the coarse tradesmen who kept shops and took in lodgers. We may doubtless trace some reflections of Miss Burney's personal experiences in this matter. In her Memoirs she dwells chiefly upon the noble patrons who admitted her father to their houses; but she had had more than glimpses of their social inferiors; and her father's best anecdote about her describes her as playing with the daughters of his next-door neighbour, a wig-maker, and spoiling one of his wigs by immersion in a water-tub. Clearly she had originals for those portraits of the Branghton circle, which so much delighted the critics of Streatham; and, without putting her down as a full-blown snob, we must say that she had a very strong conviction that the loftier natures were generally to be found in aristocratic circles. The tradesmen and their friends who figure in her pages are treated with merciless ridicule, and she plainly prefers even the immoral fine gentleman who has a due knowledge of the ways of good society.

With that, however, we need not trouble ourselves. Her critics were agreed—and it is idle to argue so superfluous a point—that she does not describe individuals after the fashion of the immortal Shakspeare and others, but abstract types, mere general likenesses of the mean tradesman, the perfect gentleman, the proud aristocrat, the reckless prodigal, and so forth. Each character is an embodiment of some 'humour'—in the Ben Jonson sense—and never comes upon the stage except to illustrate his peculiar weakness in every speech he utters. We are, in fact, properly speaking, in the reign of light comedy; we must not ask for profound insight or for delicate observation; a brilliant, boldly-

sketched portrait of some tolerably obvious type is all that we can fairly demand ; and such portraits are abundant and lively enough to explain the general impression of her friends, sanctioned by Sheridan and Murphy, that her natural talents would come out in writing for the stage. Perhaps the point which strikes us most in this series of social sketches is rather different from what the ordinary criticisms seem to imply. Thackeray, in one of the 'Roundabout Papers' (the 'Peal of Bells'), quotes a passage from 'Evelina,' in which Lord Orville makes an offer to the heroine, and contrasts this 'old perfumed, powdered d'Arblay conversation' with a bit of modern slang. Undoubtedly, when Miss Burney wanted to describe a Grandison of her own, she put into his mouth the courtly compliment which might still go with laced coats and diamond buckles. But it is curious to observe what one must almost call the blackguardly behaviour of the fine gentlemen as a class. Evelina goes about with the vulgar relations with whom she is doomed to associate to the various amusements of the day. They visit the opera as a strange region set apart for a loftier order of beings ; and are grossly inattentive to music which Dr. Burney's daughter could of course appreciate. But they seem to be quite at home when visiting Vauxhall and Ranelagh and 'Marylebone Gardens,' and 'the long room at Hampstead,' where the middle classes appear to have enjoyed themselves very heartily with dances and fireworks and other entertainments. In such places she meets with the fine young gentlemen who succeeded to the Lovelaces of a previous period, and preceded the bucks and dandies of the Tom and Jerry period. Evelina is always getting separated from her party, falling into the most questionable company, receiving the rudest attentions from these young men of fashion, and being rescued by the chivalrous Lord Orville, who, however, seems to be more shocked than surprised. At her first ball, Sir Clement Willoughby, who is supposed to be a gentleman and a man of fashion, persecutes her to dance—never having been introduced to her—with a continuous impertinence almost inconceivable in what is meant for decent society, yet most insufficiently resented. She welcomes him afterwards as a pleasant contrast to the coarse manners of her friends ; he takes part in a brutal practical joke upon her grandmother in order to ingratiate himself with one of her guardians ; he tries to persuade her to elope with him out of hand in his carriage on the return from Vauxhall ; forges an insulting letter to her from Lord Orville ; and, though

he is meant to be wicked, he does not apparently cease to be regarded as a finished gentleman. Two of his friends show their good taste by getting up a race between two decrepit old women of eighty; all the ladies attend to see the event decided; and Lord Orville shows unparalleled humanity by picking up one of the poor old creatures who has fallen, in spite of the protests from the backer of her competitor. It must be said that, if this be a fair picture of the men of fashion of the day, the impressions of a girl of seventeen, brought up in the strictest seclusion, upon her first entrance into the world must occasionally have been startling.

Readers of Horace Walpole or George Selwyn will certainly not be inclined to doubt that courtliness of manner, such as Chesterfield would have approved, might be a mere varnish over coarseness and profligacy. In her portraits of this kind, however, we suspect that Miss Burney was eking out the limited experience of a young lady by secondhand characters. Grandison and Lovelace were the models from whom she was drawing rather than any of the gentlemen who visited Dr. Burney's musical parties. The discovery which she had made was not fully realised even by herself. It is pleasant to enter a young lady's world, but we must add the condition that it should be the world which a young lady can really understand. 'Evelina' implies at most a partial recognition of this condition. Miss Austen's instinctive tact made her confine herself strictly to the little incidents of domestic history, which the young lady not only understands, but understands better than anyone. The men who enter her stories show only those aspects which are visible to their sisters. We never see them except at a tea-table or taking a lady for a drive in their curricles. Miss Burney is not quite so discreet. She does not, indeed, venture to accompany her masculine characters into regions beyond the female view; but she takes her heroines into scenes where the fine gentleman disports himself with considerable freedom; and we feel that the heroine is giving her impressions of men and things not really intelligible to her, and is forced to supplement them by drawing upon the common stock of previous novelists.

Her men are apt to be even more conventional than the ordinary male cousins of a feminine imagination. This, indeed, does not seriously injure the general effect of 'Evelina.' The portraits of the vulgar Branghtons and their circle seem to have been generally regarded as the most successful parts of the book; and

these we can admire without stint. Taking them as they are meant, for bright telling social caricatures, and not asking for the delicacy or insight of a higher art, we must admit that they are dashed off with admirable vivacity, and that we see for the first time the keen little feminine satirist with a charming quickness of perception for the foibles of her 'social environment.' This is the really new element in our literature : the discovery of a vein of ridicule not worked by any of her predecessors. The rapid glancing intuitions of the feminine observer are now being for the first time turned to account to give a brilliant picture of one aspect of human nature. Before her time, talent of a similar kind must have been wasted in the kind of feminine gossip which was treated with supercilious good-nature by writers in the 'Spectator.' Miss Burney discovered that it had a value of its own, and could be embodied in literary form.

Unluckily she mistook her own gifts. Admiration of her novel took its usual form. People talked about her insight into the human heart, her extraordinary capacity for penetrating or representing character, and so forth. It is no wonder that Miss Burney took herself too seriously, and mistook her admirable facility for rapid sketching for a power of grand historical painting. When a judicious admirer of Miss Austen's suggested to her that she should write a romance illustrative of the history of the House of Brunswick, Miss Austen received the suggestion in a manner worthy of her good sense. One cannot help fancying that Miss Burney would have caught at the proposal ; unless, indeed, she had felt herself to be rather too familiar with some members of that noble family. The weakest part of 'Evelina' is a bit of melodrama with a romantic Scotchman, saved from suicide by the expostulations of the heroine, who turns out to be somebody else, whilst she herself has been more or less changed at nurse. It does not appear that anybody had the kindness to tell her that this part of the story, fortunately not one which occupies much space, was rubbish, or that the elderly benevolent parson who does the heavy moralising was an old bore. She probably fancied, like most young authors, that she was at her best when most pretentiously solemn and didactic. In her next story, 'Cecilia,' she according takes the airs of a solemn moralist, which do not sit upon her quite so easily as might be wished. She desires to be not merely the lively describer, but the judicious Mentor of society, worthy to be ranked with those distinguished females, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Carter, and Mrs. Chapone,

and, drawing her sentiments and, to some degree, her style of writing from that repertory of eighteenth-century wisdom, the 'Rambler,' which, indeed, deserves more respect than it always received for its own merits, but which, as diluted through the brain of a clever young lady, anxious to be a good deal wiser and more solemn than nature permits, becomes decidedly tedious when it escapes being unintentionally comic. 'Cecilia,' indeed, is by no means entirely ruined by the infusion of the superlatively sententious. Miss Burney had learnt a good deal in the Streatham society during the period of composition; and, so long as she is discharging her natural function, her perception shows no signs of falling off.

The story, though of the elaborate and conventional kind intended to give effect to a particular moral application, has at least been thought out, and is developed with a good deal of spirit, though with a rather superfluous effusion of fine sentiment. Though 'Evelina' appears to us to be greatly superior, in proportion as it is more spontaneous, we can believe that the readers of 'Cecilia' might still enjoy the old qualities and take the ominous increase of pomposity as implying merely the riper reflectiveness of later life. The worst symptom is, however, that Miss Burney evidently relishes her most stilted performances best, and brings in the more comic scenes, in which she condescends to be amusing, with an air of apology. The critical part of the story, which is reached in the fourth volume, is sufficiently characteristic. Cecilia loves Mortimer Delville, and Mortimer Delville loves Cecilia Beverley. He is the son of a proud Delville, or rather of a Delville who is nothing but pride, and whose fortunes are ruined. Cecilia has 3,000*l.* a year and all the virtues. Why should they not marry? Because Mortimer would have either to take the name of Beverley or to abandon Miss Beverley's fortune. The young pair, to do them justice, are willing that he should call himself Beverley instead of Mortimer; but the stern parents, Mr. Delville and his obedient wife, decline to permit such a sacrifice. Mrs. Delville, the mother, calls upon Cecilia to explain the wickedness of gratifying her love at the expense of Delville's family. She takes the highest possible moral tone. 'To your family, I assure you, whatever may be the pride of your own, *you* being its offspring, we would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted, your character has our highest esteem, and your fortune exceeds our most sanguine desires. Strange at once and

afflicting! Now not all these requisites for the satisfaction of prudence, not all these allurements for the gratification of happiness, can suffice to fulfil or to silence the claims of either! There are other demands to which we must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they assert their rights with the authority of prescription; they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination or stoop to interest, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for redress, should their noble and long unsullied name be consigned to oblivion.'

The admirable Cecilia does not intimate to Mrs. Delville, in the politest way possible, that she is an old fool, but admits the claim expounded in this and a good deal more of similar eloquence, and determines to give up the son. The young gentleman is not quite so reasonable in his remonstrances, causes his mother to break a blood-vessel, and leads to various agonies protracted through a volume and a half before the great problem is happily resolved. 'The whole of this unfortunate business,' as a sage physician sums up the moral of the work, 'has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE;' though, as he adds, 'so wonderfully is good and evil balanced that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe the termination' of your miseries. How that happens may be discovered from the book.

It is superfluous to observe that it is not by such twaddle as we have quoted that *Pride and Prejudice* has become a familiar phrase to us, and that it is not through Miss Burney's achievements in the direction of the old-fashioned romance that she has any claim to be a founder of a modern novel. In fact, when we read these stilted declamations, uttered apparently in a *bona fide* conviction that she is presenting a grand moral problem, and observe further that her friends admired her wonderful skill in making Mrs. Delville loveable in spite of her pride, we can understand how Miss Burney fell a victim to the fascinations of the Royal palace. She could ridicule vulgarity with admirable quickness; but when she becomes solemn and didactic, she does not see the difference between humbugs and realities. She gets altogether out of her depth, and gives us the emptiest of lay figures, gesticulating and perorating, instead of any real representation of human passion. There is an old semi-lunatic in 'Cecilia,' who goes about declaiming on the virtues of the poor and the selfishness of the rich, who is evidently in-

tended to be a striking study of half-witted benevolence. Really he strikes one chiefly as an embodiment of that vein of insincere declamation into which Miss Burney afterwards diverged, and which takes such comic proportions in the memoir of her father. First discoverers are apt to misunderstand the nature of their own discovery; and the worst that can be said of Miss Burney is that after hitting upon a really new and excellent literary novelty, she knew so little what she had done that she sank into Madame d'Arblay. A tract which she published in behalf of the emigrant French priests is an amusing example of the same tendency. She evidently thought that, as she had adopted Johnsonese in 'Cecilia,' she might try to rival Burke in declamations upon revolutionary wickedness.

To overlook this weakness would be impossible; and, indeed, it gives the only explanation of the complete failure to sustain her early reputation. Her discovery, however, though she was herself unconscious of its true nature, was to bear fruit in later hands. She generally receives credit as the first writer who made the novel decent. Macaulay compares the reform which she brought about with the reform of the stage at the time of Collier. Without examining the precedent, we must say that there is some truth in this, if decency is to be identified unreservedly with morality. Some books, however, were really moral in a high degree which offend modern notions of decorum, and some books are very distinctly the reverse which pay the most scrupulous respect to our modern regulations. Miss Burney's novels are no doubt inoffensive in this respect, and may possibly be regarded as edifying; but the true inference, as it appears to us, is rather more limited. They were, no doubt, one of the first precedents for that kind of literature which is intended to be read by young ladies, and which can therefore be provided most effectually by young ladies. In the previous generation, Richardson and Fielding and their friends were fond of arguing the question whether young women ought to be allowed to learn Latin, or should find a sufficient outlet for their energies in cooking their husband's dinner and mending his shirts. Ladies who had courage enough to break through the conventional rules acted under protest; and were rather apt to assume a preternatural pomposity by way of a faint apology for their audacity. Their intentions were so very good that they must be pardoned for infringing the ordinary regulations. In our own time we have shaken off so many pre-

judices that the sentiment is scarcely intelligible. Miss Burney's career as an authoress came at the time when the change was beginning. She broke ground in a field afterwards to be cultivated by such a host of successors as showed something of its capabilities. But when she had made her success, she misinterpreted its meaning, and set up as a professor of the fine old vein of didactic sentimentalism. She could not understand the value of her spontaneous and natural perceptions; and thought that, in spite of nature, she must set up as a successor to Richardson, full of moral saws and edifying reflections. Meanwhile, however, she had given an impulse to her successors, which no doubt encouraged Miss Austen and Miss Edgeworth, and through them a whole host of literary descendants. It is clear enough that one result has been the production of a whole literature, which has at least the negative merit of freedom from certain stains which exclude Fielding and even the edifying Richardson from the list of universally readable books. But to judge of it as a whole and pronounce upon its value, either ethically or æsthetically, would be to enter a wide and debatable field of inquiry.

ON THE DOWNWARD SLOPE.

THERE have been some creditable attempts by ancient writers—who have also been pretty well advanced in years—to beatify old age; but not very much has come of it. Upon the whole, the world has remained so far unconvinced that no one gets old if he can help it; we take these raptures with a little salt, or at all events, if we credit them, are content to wait till in due time we inherit the mature privileges that have been promised to us. There is one thing, too, about which these optimists have been silent—namely, that to a considerable portion of the human race (say nineteen-twentieths) old age offers no immunity from toil, though it is quite unequal to bear it. Leisure and competence, with good health, are taken for granted. This, however, is the weak point of most philosophies, which persist in regarding the human race as persons of culture, reclining in easy chairs, with things handsome about them, and in ignoring such trivial matters as disease and penury—an omission which proves that the sublimest intuition can never supply the want of experience, since the sharpest pang of the soul produced by the contemplation of the Infinities is a mere flea-bite to the spectacle of one's children wanting bread, which, through old age or any other cause, we are unable to procure for them. In such cases, it is true, 'there is always the workhouse;' but even that reflection, such is the unphilosophic character of the ordinary mind, often fails to be consolatory.

Still, to the public I am addressing at all events, there will be in old age, I hope, meat, drink, and clothing, and even (for a reason that it is not necessary to particularise) a spare sixpence, without their being troubled about such matters, so that, in considering this question of growing old, I may, like the philosophers above alluded to, take so much for granted.

It is not necessary for us to be poets to have an impression in youth that we shall never see old age. The reason of this pretty general feeling is, I think, that we are unable to picture such a state of things; it is necessary to grow old oneself in order to understand the transformation that circumstance effects in us. The failing limb and the scanty breath can, it is true, be understood—approximately, for they are not quite the same in

illness—by those who have been invalids. As he reads the noble book of Ecclesiastes, even a young man can understand what sort of day that is with us in which the keepers of the house (the arms) begin to tremble, and the strong men (the legs) to bow themselves, and those that look out of the window (the eyes) to be darkened; how we ‘rise up at the voice of the bird,’ not, alas! because we hear it more distinctly (‘the daughters of music,’ so far as we are concerned, are indeed ‘brought low’), but because we can sleep no longer as in youth, or perhaps—more pitiful reason still!—because we wish to get the most out of the little daylight that remains to us, before we go to ‘the sunless land;’ he may comprehend even how the almond tree flourishes (a strange word indeed for the growth of ‘sad grey hairs’!), and the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails; but what the young man can *not* understand, and is wholly unable to picture, is the mental depression consequent on all these things, as the curtain gradually falls upon the stage of existence. It does not indeed ‘fall,’ except in rare instances, but gradually closes in and darkens, fold on fold, just as the coming on of night is represented in a theatre. Even youth sees bad weather occasionally, but the rain is soon ‘over and gone;’ he knows not what it is to see ‘the clouds return *after* the rain;’ he cannot conceive the years whereof we say, ‘We have no pleasure in them.’

When a man grows old, most pleasures indeed, properly so called, are dead to him; and if, in spite of Nature’s warning, he will still pursue them, his experience is the reverse of that of Don Juan, who instead of a spirit found ‘her frolic grace Fitz Fulke;’ he finds them the mere ghosts of his dead follies. There is nothing, for example, more pitiable than any pretensions to gallantry in an old man; let him adopt the *rôle* of ‘heavy father,’ ‘benevolent uncle,’ or whatever best suits his character, but at all events discard that of ‘lover’ once for all. The only possible ground for his retaining it would be that his doing so affords amusement to his fellow-creatures—at the expense, however, of all who wear grey hairs.

There is another pleasure just as inappropriate, but to which old age is much more inclined—that of money-getting. It has been said of it, as of whist, that it is the only pleasure that lasts. It may be so—for unfortunately I have never been in a position to test it—but certainly, to the looker-on, nothing can be more contemptible than this piling-up heaps of money upon the verge

of the grave. If, as the wit suggested, one could 'begin the next world with it,' then, indeed, such solicitude would be explicable enough. How little would people then 'leave behind them'! How small would be the probate duties! How rare the bequests to missionary enterprise! But since it must all be left, and that so soon, how amazing is the satisfaction derived from its increase! There is an idea among the baser sort of wealthy persons that the more money they can hoard, the more 'respected' they are; but as a matter of fact they are the more detested for it. 'How much have we lived worth?' not 'How much shall we die worth?' is the question. The agreement of his fellow-creatures about Harpax is quite unanimous on that point. A few folks may be disappointed by the posthumous disposition of his property, but everybody is glad when he dies. Even the hope expressed of his going to heaven is a selfish one: 'if Harpax gets there,' men say, 'then it will be all right for everybody; it must be a club from which no amount of black balls can exclude.' On the other hand, under the most favourable circumstances, we feel it would be very unpleasant to meet Harpax again.

On the whole I think we old folks had better give up the idea of taking pleasure altogether; but happiness is not denied us, and in some respects is easier of attainment than when we were young. There are at least no false joys. Unless a man is a born fool, he knows, after fifty, the worthlessness of all pretence. He does not wear tight boots or cultivate the nobility. He is content with his own position, and has learnt that an ounce of comfort is worth a pound of swelldom. He has no more illusions, at all events of the material kind. He knows what he likes, and sticks to it. He has no curiosity about strange sherries. He is quite sure as to whether the sea agrees with him, and that moving after dinner does not. He may not 'know himself' in a philosophical sense, but he is admirably posted up in that subject for all practical purposes. The accuracy of his views in this direction does not necessarily imply selfishness or even egotism; it is merely the fruit of long experience. Of course there are old men who think of nothing but themselves; but if you consult their contemporaries, you will find that the habit began with them some time ago. Selfish or not, old age is certainly inclined to be tender-hearted as regards little children; I don't mean rude, mischievous brats, whom nobody really likes but their mothers, but nice children. I have seen the tenderest friendships existing

between April and November, the overtures for which have always come, of course, from the latter, from the six with the nought to the six without it; and I am inclined to think that children's happiness is shared by old people more than by those less mature. This is not, as some cynic may say, because we ourselves are nearing second childhood; it arises from the far-back recollection of our own youth (itself sufficient to inspire tenderness), and from the reflection, born of the fulness of our years, that it is well for these little ones to gather the roses while they may.

On the other hand, we do not 'go a wooing in our boys' with quite the gusto that has been imputed to us; it reminds us too much of our own vanished pleasures; and besides, it generally ends in our having to make them (what, by the bye, they seldom make for *us*) an allowance.

Next to the young, as the years creep upon ourselves, we love and admire what is old. As a rule, though there are rare exceptions—Victor-Hugo-like old men, who hail every new invention as heaven-born, and behold in every gleam of promise the Sunrise—there are no such true conservatives as we old people. Change is abhorrent to us, even to the finding our slippers on one side of the fireplace instead of the other. We cling to old customs and old manners, to old books, old servants, and old friends. These last fit us like old boots, and are as welcome, and, if lost (for they are never worn out), are as difficult to replace. Never did the great London sage give a wiser piece of advice to us than to make friends with younger men, lest, being suffered by the cruel kindness of fate to survive our contemporaries, we should find ourselves without friends at all. It is advice, however, not easy to follow; for as, for swimming and running, we now find our joints too stiff, so for the exercise of new friendships (which require a certain nimbleness of spirit) our minds are too indolent and torpid. Some of us, indeed, have a certain mental agility, which itself, I have read, is to be deplored. 'There is something,' says a great authority on human nature, 'in the very vivacity of old age which is contemptible.' This is a hard saying, but not altogether undeserved, if, as I imagine, 'the authority' had in his mind that description of old man which may be called Falstaffian. Everyone knows that terrible line—

'The witless Falstaff of a hoary Hal;'

and even though the Hals be not hoary, anything more graceless than such a personage is not to be conceived. He may secure the society of youth by pretending to their vices, and by setting before them what is drawn from the impure wells of his remembrance—all the more dangerous when it sparkles—but never their friendship. Humanity stands aloof from him; at the very best a will-of-the-wisp wandering over a waste of mud, he fails and wanes, and, having done his worst to lead astray, presently goes out in utter darkness, leaving behind him, instead of that gracious memory which is the old man's hope, an evil odour and the seeds of ill.

Old men have far other and better parts to play as regards their juniors, if they will. Some of us have power, some influence, some riches, and all of us, who have not misused our lives, some sympathy with those who need it. To us come the young with their confidences, their aspirations, their requests, that for various reasons cannot be made to those on whom they have nearer claims. The young inventor brings his project, the maiden her tender secret, the bashful poet his lay. At the lowest we can encourage them, and put our experience at their service. If such help as we can render cannot be called a pleasure, it is only because the satisfaction we derive from it is so serene and lofty as to merit a higher name.

I have said that we have no illusions, but of course I did not mean to imply that we have got at the root of things. Our views of life may not be more correct than those of younger men, but such as they are they content us; and they are not liable to change. The same may be said of our views of death. As a rule, the older we grow, the less terrible death appears to us. We have lost so many of those we love, that we have more friends on the other shore than on this side. They have crossed the silent river, and are waiting for us somewhere. Unlike the child so exquisitely described by the Dorsetshire poet—

She wore no black, she wore her white,
 She wore no black, she wore her blue;
 She never mourned another's flight,
 She was herself the first that flew—

we alas, are among the last to fly. To what is vaguely called 'the Believer' this makes an enormous difference in the outlook. But surely to all of us it is something. To die, since these dear folks have all gone through that ordeal before us, cannot be such

a very dreadful thing. I have never believed, as some pious people do, that the devil takes the majority of our friends, just as he used to take all the best tunes ; and, after all, let the parsons say what they will, we have not all been Neros nor even Napoleons.

Nevertheless, we that are old do fear death more than the young, for one thing : it is more dangerous than it was wont to be to those we love best. Every post breathes peril, every telegram speaks of loss. We look around on the few contemporaries who remain, and tremble. When we part from them on a voyage or on a journey, it seems no longer an *au revoir* that we are bidding them, but a good-bye. And the nearest and the dearest, how we cling to them and grudge their being out of our sight !

There is another fear, and a much more terrible one than that of death—namely, that of too long a life. Strangely enough, this terror, which is in the heart of every one of us, has seldom been alluded to by those who have discoursed upon this subject. ‘There is no man so old,’ says an ancient writer, ‘but thinks he may live a year ;’ he might well have added, ‘and hopes he may not do so.’ With every appliance that wealth and even affection can bestow, extreme old age is appalling. Swift, we are told, expired ‘a driveller and a show,’ but he had at least once been Swift. The spectators were not all contemptuous mockers ; some surely pitied the wreck of what had held so rich a freight of genius. But to decline from ordinary old age into dotage, as happens to so many of us—a ghastly present without a past !—*that*, indeed, is a thing to fear. Add to this a sense, however dim, of the necessity of working and of our impotence to do so, and what need is there for the most zealous devil-worshipper to imagine a Gehenna ?

THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÂ.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER XIII.

A 'THORN AND FLOWER PIECE.'



'ILLUSION' had not been very long published before Mark began to have uncomfortable anticipations that it might be on the way to achieve an unexpected success, and he was nearer the truth in this than he himself believed as yet. It might not become popular in the wider and coarser sense of the word, being somewhat over the heads of the large class who read fiction for the 'story;' it might never find its way to railway book-stalls (though even this, as will appear, befell it in time,) or be considered a profitable subject for Transatlantic piracy; but it was

already gaining recognition as a book that people of any culture should, for their own sakes, at least assume to have read and appreciated.

Mark was hailed by many judges of such things as a new and powerful thinker, who had chosen to veil his theories under the garb of romance, and if the theory was dissented from in some quarters, the power and charm of the book were universally admitted. At dinner-parties, and in all circles where literature

is discussed at all, 'Illusion' was becoming a standard topic; friendships were cemented and intimacies dissolved over it; it became a kind of 'shibboleth.'

At first Mark had little opportunity of realising this to the full extent, for he went out seldom if at all. There had been a time in his life—before he had left Cambridge, that is—when he had mixed more in society; his undergraduate friends had been proud to present to their family circle a man with his reputation for general brilliancy, and so his engagements in the vacations had been frequent. But this did not last; from a feeling that his own domestic surroundings would scarcely bear out a vaguely magnificent way he had of alluding to his 'place' and his 'people'—a way which was not so much deliberate imposition as a habit caught from associates richer and higher up in the social scale—from this feeling, he never offered to return any of these hospitalities, and though this was not rigorously expected of him, it did serve to prevent any one of his numerous acquaintanceships from ripening into something more. When the crash came, and it was generally discovered that the reputed brilliant man of his year was a very ordinary failure, Mark found himself speedily forgotten, and in the first soreness of disappointment was not sorry to remain in obscurity for a season.

But now a reaction in his favour was setting in; his publishers were already talking of a second edition of 'Illusion,' and he received, under his name of 'Cyril Ernstone,' countless letters of congratulation and kindly criticism, all so pleasantly and cordially worded, that each successive note made him angrier, the only one that consoled him at all being a communication in a female hand which abused the book and its writer in the most unmeasured terms. For his correspondent's estimate of the work was the one which he had a secret wish to see more prevalent (so long, of course, as it did not interfere with the success of his scheme), and he could almost have written to thank her—by some unfortunate oversight, however, she had forgotten to append her name and address.

The next stage in the career of the book was a discovery on someone's part that the name of its author was an assumed one, and although there are many who would think as little of looking for the name of the man who wrote the play they see or the book they read as they would for that of the locomotive behind which they travel, there are still circles for whom the first two matters at least possess an interest.

And so several set out to run the actual author to earth, well assured that, as is fabled of the fox, he himself would enjoy the sport as much as his pursuers; and it is the fact that Mark might have given them a much longer run had he been anxious to do so, but, though he regretted it afterwards, the fruits of popularity were too desirable to be foregone.

There were some false cries at first. A 'London correspondent' knew for a fact that the book was written by an old lady at a lunatic asylum in her lucid intervals; while a ladies' journal had heard that the author was a common carpenter and entirely self-educated; and there were other similar discoveries. But before they had time to circulate widely, it became somehow common knowledge that the author was a young schoolmaster, and that his real name was Mark Ashburn.

And Mark at once began to reap the benefit. His old friends sought him out once more; men who had passed him in the streets with a careless nod that was almost as bad as a cut direct, or without even the smallest acknowledgment that a time had been when they were inseparables, now found time to stop him and ask if the rumours of his *début* in literature were really true.

By-and-by cards began to line his mantelpiece as in the old days; he went out once more, and met everywhere the kindness and courtesy that the world of London, whatever may be said against it, is never chary of showing towards the most insignificant person who has once had the good fortune to arouse its interest.

Mark liked it all at first, but as he saw the book growing more and more in favour, and the honours paid to himself increasing, he began to be uneasy at his own success.

He would not have objected to the book's securing a moderate degree of attention, so as to prepare the public mind for the blaze of intellect he had in reserve for it—that he had expected, or at least hoped for—but the mischief of this ridiculous enthusiasm which everyone he met seemed to be affecting over this book of Holroyd's was that it made an anticlimax only too possible when his own should see the light.

Mark heard compliments and thanks with much the annoyance a practised *raconteur* must feel with the feeble listener who laughs heartily, while the point of the story he is being told is still in perspective.

And soon he wished heartily that the halo he felt was burning

round his undeserving head could be moderated or put out, like a lamp—it was such an inconvenience. He could never escape from Holroyd's book ; people *would* talk to him about it.

Sooner or later, in conversation with the most charming persons, just when he was feeling himself conversationally at his very best, he would see the symptoms he dreaded warning him that the one fatal topic was about to be introduced, which seemed to have the effect of paralysing his brain. He would struggle hard against it, making frantic efforts to turn the subject, and doubling with infinite dexterity ; but generally his interlocutor was not to be put off, 'running cunning,' as it were, like a greyhound dead to sporting instincts, and fixing him at once with a 'Now, Mr. Ashburn, you really must allow me to express to you some of the pleasure and instruction I have received from your book,' and so on ; and then Mark found himself forced to listen with ghastly smiles of sham gratification to the praises of his rival, as he now felt Holroyd was after all becoming, and had to discuss with the air of a creator this book which he had never cared to understand, and soon came cordially to detest.

If he had been the real author, all this would of course have been delightful to him ; it was all so kind and so evidently sincere for the most part, that only a very priggish or cynical person could have affected to undervalue it, and any other, even if he felt it overstrained now and then, would have enjoyed it frankly while it lasted, remembering that, in the nature of things, it could not last very long.

But unfortunately, Mark, as we know, had not written 'Illusion,' which made all the difference. No author could have shrunk more sensitively in his inmost soul than he did from the praise of his fellow-men, and his modesty would have been more generally remarked had he not been wise enough to perceive that modesty, in a man, is a virtue with a dangerous streak of the ridiculous about it.

And so he braced himself to go through with it and play out his part. It would not be for long ; soon he would have his own book to be complimented upon and to explain. Meanwhile he worked hard at 'Illusion,' until he came to have a considerable surface acquaintance with it ; he knew the names of all the more important characters in it now, and hardly ever mixed them up ; he worked out most of the allusions, and made a careful analysis of the plot and pedigrees of some of the families. It was much

harder work than reading law, and quite as distasteful; but then it had to be done if he meant to preserve appearances at all.

His fame had penetrated to St. Peter's, where his fellow-masters treated him with an unaccustomed deference, only partially veiled by mild *badinage* on the part of the younger men, while even the boys were vaguely aware that he had distinguished himself in the outside world, and Mark found his authority much easier to maintain.

'How's that young rascal—what's his name? Langton?—the little scamp who said he called me "Prawn," but not "Shellfish," the impudent fellow! How's *he* getting on, hey?' said Mr. Shelford to Mark one day about this time.

Mark replied that the boy had left his form now, but that he heard he was doing very well, and had begun to acquire the graceful art of verse-making. 'Verse-making? ay, ay; is he indeed? You know, Ashburn, I often think it's a good thing there are none of the old Romans alive now. They weren't a humorous nation, taken as a whole; but I fancy some of our prize Latin verses would set the stiffest of 'em sniggering. And we laugh at "Baboo English," as they call it! But you tell Langton from me, when you see him, that if he likes to try his hand at a set of elegiacs on a poor old cat of mine that died the other day, I'll look 'em over if he brings them to me after school some day, and if they're what I consider worthy of the deceased's many virtues, I'll find some way of rewarding him. She was a black Persian and her name was "Jinks," but he'll find it Latinise well as "Jinxia," tell him. And now I think of it,' he added, 'I never congratulated you on the effort of *your* muse. It's not often I read these things now, but I took your book up, and—maybe I'm too candid in telling you so—but it fairly surprised me. I'd no idea you had it in you.'

Mark found it difficult to hit the right expression of countenance at such a compliment, but he did it. 'There are some very fine things in that book, sir,' continued Mr. Shelford, 'some very noble words; remarkable for so young a man as you must be. You have lived, Ashburn, it's easy to see that!'

'Oh, well,' said Mark, 'I—I've knocked about, you know.'

'Ah, and you've knocked something into you, too, which is more to the purpose. I'd like to know now when you found time to construct your theories of life and conduct.'

Mark began to find this embarrassing; he said he had hit upon them at odd times ('*very* odd times' he could not help

remembering), and shifted his ground a little uneasily, but he was held fast by the buttonhole. 'They're remarkably sound and striking, I must say that, and your story is interesting, too. I found myself looking at the end, sir, ha, ha! to see what became of your characters. Ah, I *knew* there was something I wanted to ask you. There's a heading you've got for one of your chapters, a quotation from some Latin author, which I can't place to my satisfaction; I mean that one beginning "*Non terret principes.*"'

'Oh, *that* one?' repeated Mark blankly.

'Yes, it reads to me like later Latin; where did you take it from? One of the Fathers?'

'One of them, I forget which,' said Mark quickly, wishing he had cut the quotations out.

'That *ægritudo*, now, "*ægritudo superveniens*," you know—how do you understand that?'

Mark had never troubled himself to understand it at all, so he stared at his interrogator in rather a lost way.

'I mean, do you take it as of the mind or body (that's what made me fancy it must be later Latin); and then there's the *correxit*?'

Mark admitted that there was the '*correxit*.' 'It's mind,' he said quickly. 'Oh, decidedly the mind, *not* body, and—er—I think that's my bus passing. I'll say good-bye;' and he escaped with a weary conviction that he must devote yet more study to the detested 'Illusion.'

This is only a sample of the petty vexations to which he had exposed himself. He had taken over a business which he did not understand, and naturally found the technicalities troublesome, for though, as has been seen, his own tendencies were literary, he had not soared so high as a philosophical romance, while his scholarship, more brilliant than profound, was not always equal to the 'unseen passages' from out-of-the-way authors with which Holroyd had embellished his chapters.

But a little more care made him feel easier on this score, and then there were many compensations; for one unexpected piece of good fortune, which will be recorded presently, he had mainly to thank his friend's book.

He had met an old acquaintance of his, a certain young Herbert Featherstone, who had, on any previous chance encounter seemed affected by a kind of trance, during which his eyes lost all power of vision, but was now completely recovered, so much so indeed as to greet Mark with a quite unexpected warmth.

Was it true that he had written this new book? What was its name—'Delusion' or something? Fellows were saying he had; hadn't read it himself; his mother and sister had; said it was a devilish good book, too. Where was he hanging out now? and what was he doing on the 10th? Could he come to a little dance his people had that night? Very well, then, he should have a card.

Mark was slightly inclined to let the other understand that he knew the worth of this resuscitated friendliness, but he refrained. He knew of the Featherstones as wealthy people, with the reputation of giving the pleasantest entertainments in London. He had his way to make in the world, and could not afford, he thought, to neglect these opportunities. So he went to the dance and, as he happened to dance well, enjoyed himself, in spite of the fact that two of his partners had read 'Illusion' and knew him as the author of it. They were both pretty and charming girls, but Mark did not enjoy either of those particular vales. In the course of the evening he had a brief conversation with his hostess, and was fortunate enough to produce a favourable impression. Mrs. Featherstone was literary herself, as a reputedly strong-minded lady who had once written two particularly weak-minded novels, would necessarily be. She liked to have a few rising young literary men in her train, with whom she might discuss subjects loftier than ordinary society cares to grasp; but she was careful at the same time that her daughter should not share too frequently in these intellectual privileges, for Gilda Featherstone was very handsome, and literary men are as impressionable as other people.

Mark called one Saturday afternoon at the Featherstones' house in Grosvenor Place, as he had been expressly invited to do on the occasion of the dance, and found Mrs. Featherstone at home. It was not her regular day, and she received him alone, though Mark heard voices and laughter now and then from behind the hangings which concealed the end room of the long suite.

'And now let us talk about your delightful "Illusion," Mr. Ernstone,' she said graciously. 'Do you know, I felt when I read your book that some of my innermost thoughts, my highest aspirations, had been put into words—and *such* words—for me! It was soul speaking to soul, and you get that in so few novels, you know! What a rapture literary creation is! Don't you feel

that? I am sure, even in my own poor little way—you must know that *I* have scribbled once upon a time—even in my own experience, I know what a state of excitement I got into over my own stories. One's characters get to be actual living companions to one; they act by themselves, and all one has to do is just to sit by and look on, and describe.'

This seemed to Mark to prove a vividness of imagination on Mrs. Featherstone's part to which her literary productions had not, so far as he knew, done full credit. But he was equal to the occasion.

'Your characters, Mrs. Featherstone, are companions to many more than their creator. I must confess that I, for one, fell hopelessly in love with your Gwendoline Vane, in "Mammon and Moonshine." Mark had once read a slashing review of a flabby little novel with a wooden heroine of that name, and turned it to good account now, after his fashion.

'Now, how nice of you to say that,' she said, highly pleased. 'I am very fond of Gwendoline myself—my ideal, you know. I won't quote that about "praise from Sir Hubert," because it's so very trite, but I feel it. But do you *really* like Gwendoline better than my Magdalen Harwood, in "Strawberries and Cream."

Here Mark got into deep water once more; but he was no mean conversational swimmer, and reached dry land without any unseemly floundering.

'It has been suggested to me, do you know,' she said, when her own works had been at last disposed of, 'that your "Illusion" would make such an admirable play; the central motive really so dramatic. Of course one would have to leave the philosophy out, and all the beautiful reflections, but the story would be left. Have you ever thought of dramatising it yourself, Mr. Ashburn?'

Mark had not. 'Ah, well,' she said, 'if ever I have time again to give to literature, I shall ask your permission to let me see what *I* can do with it. I have written some little charades for drawing-room theatricals, you know, so I am not *quite* without experience.'

Mark, wondering inwardly how Holroyd would relish this proposal if he were alive, said that he was sure the story would gain by her treatment; and presently she proposed that they should go to the further room and see 'how the young people were getting on,' which Mark received with an immense relief, and followed her through the *portière* to the inner room, in which,

as will be seen, an unexpected stroke of good fortune was to befall him.

They found the young people, with a married sister of Mrs. Featherstone, sitting round a small table on which was a heap of *cartes-de-visite*, as they used to be called for no very obvious reason.

Gilda Featherstone, a lively brunette, with the manner of a young lady accustomed to her own way, looked up from the table to welcome Mark. 'You've caught us all at a very frivolous game, Mr. Ashburn. I hope you won't be shocked. We've all had our feelings outraged at least once, so we're going to stop now, while we're still on speaking terms.'

'But what is it?' said Mrs. Featherstone. 'It isn't cards, Gilda dearest, is it?'

* 'No, mother, not quite; very nearly though. Mr. Caffyn showed it us; *he* calls it "photo-nap."'

'Let me explain, Mrs. Featherstone,' said Caffyn, who liked to drop in at Grosvenor Place occasionally, where he was on terms of some intimacy. 'I don't know if you're acquainted with the game of "nap"?' Mrs. Featherstone shook her head, not too amiably, for she had been growing alarmed of late by a habit her daughter had acquired of mentioning or quoting this versatile young man whom her husband persisted so blindly in encouraging. 'Ah!' said Caffyn, unabashed. 'Well, anyway, this is modelled on it. We take out a selection of photographs, the oldest preferred, shuffle them, and deal round five photographs to each player, and the ugliest card in each round takes the trick.'

'I call it a most ill-natured game,' said the aunt, who had seen an old and unrecognised portrait of herself and the likenesses of several of her husband's family (a plain one) voted the master-cards.

'Oh, so much *must* be said for it,' said Caffyn; 'it isn't a game to be played everywhere, of course; but it gives great scope for the emotions. Think of the pleasure of gaining a trick with the portrait of your dearest friend, and then it's such a capital way of ascertaining your own and others' precise positions in the beauty scale, and all the plain people acquire quite a new value as picture-cards.'

He had played his own very cautiously, having found his amusement in watching the various revelations of pique and vanity amongst the others, and so could speak with security.

‘My brothers *all* took tricks,’ said one young lady, who had inherited her mother’s delicate beauty, while the rest of the family resembled a singularly unhandsome father—which enabled her to speak without very deep resentment.

‘So did poor dear papa,’ said Gilda, ‘but that was the one taken in fancy dress, and he *would* go as *Dante*.’

‘Nothing could stand against Gurgoyle,’ observed Caffyn. ‘He was a sure ace every time. He’ll be glad to know he was such a success. You must tell him, Miss Featherstone.’

‘Now I won’t have poor Mr. Gurgoyle made fun of,’ said Mrs. Featherstone, but with a considerable return of amiability. ‘People always tell me that with all his plainness he’s the most amusing young man in town, though I confess I never could see any signs of it myself.’

The fact was that an unlucky epigram by the Mr. Gurgoyle in question at Mrs. Featherstone’s expense, which of course had found its way to her, had produced a coolness on her part, as Caffyn was perfectly well aware.

‘“*Ars est celare artem*,” as Mr. Bancroft remarks at the Haymarket,’ he said lightly. ‘Gurgoyle is one of those people who is always put down as witty till he has the indiscretion to try. *Then* they put him down some other way.’

‘But why is he considered witty then, if he isn’t?’ asked Gilda Featherstone.

‘I don’t know. I suppose because we like to think Nature makes these compensations sometimes, but Gurgoyle must have put her out of temper at the very beginning. She’s done nothing in that way for *him*.’

Mrs. Featherstone, although aware that the verdict on the absent Gurgoyle was far from being a just one, was not altogether above being pleased by it, and showed it by a manner many degrees more thawed than that she had originally prescribed to herself in dealing with this very ineligible young actor.

‘Mr. Ashburn,’ said Miss Featherstone, after one or two glances in the direction of Caffyn, who was absorbed in following up the advantage he had gained with her mother, ‘will you come and help me to put these photos back? There are lots of Bertie’s Cambridge friends here, and you can tell me who those I don’t know are.’

So Mark followed her to a side table, and then came the stroke of good fortune which has been spoken of; for, as he was replacing

the likenesses in the albums in the order they were given to him, he was given one at the sight of which he could not avoid a slight start. It was a *vignette*, very delicately and artistically executed, of a girl's head, and as he looked, hardly daring to believe in such a coincidence, he was almost certain that the pure brow, with the tendrils of soft hair curling above it,



the deep clear eyes, and the mouth which for all its sweetness had the possibility of disdain in its curves, were those of no other than the girl he had met months ago, and had almost resigned himself never to meet again.

His voice trembled a little with excitement as he said, 'May I ask the name of this lady?'

'That is Mabel Langton. I think she's perfectly lovely; don't you? She was to have been at our dance the other night, and then you would have seen her. But she couldn't come at the last moment.'

'I think I have met Miss Langton,' said Mark, beginning to see now all that he had gained by learning this simple surname. 'Hasn't she a little sister called Dorothy?'

'Dolly? Oh yes. Sweetly pretty child, but terribly spoilt. I think she will put dear Mabel quite in the shade by the time she comes out; her features are so much more regular. Yes; I see you know *our* Mabel Langton. And now, *do* tell me, Mr. Ashburn, because of course you can read people's characters so clearly, you know, what do *you* think of Mabel, really and truly?'

Miss Featherstone was fond of getting her views on the characters of her friends revised and corrected for her by competent male opinion, but it was sometimes embarrassing to be appealed to in this way, while only a very unsophisticated person would permit himself to be entirely candid, either in praise or detraction.

'Well, really,' said Mark, 'you see, I have only met her once in my life.'

'Oh, but that is quite enough for *you*, Mr. Ashburn! And Mabel Langton is always such a puzzle to me. I never can quite make up my mind if she is really as sweet as she seems. Sometimes I fancy I have noticed—and yet I can't be sure—I've heard people say that she's just the least bit, not exactly conceited, perhaps, but too inclined to trust her own opinion about things, and snub people who won't agree with her. But she isn't, is she? I always say that is *quite* a wrong idea about her. Still perhaps—Oh, wouldn't you like to know Mr. Caffyn? He is very clever and amusing, you know, and has just gone on the stage. "Mr. Delamere" he calls himself. But he's not as good there as we all thought he would be. He's coming this way now.' Here Caffyn strolled leisurely towards them, and the introduction was made. 'Of course you have heard of Mr. Ashburn's great book, "Illusion"?' Gilda Featherstone said, as she mentioned Mark's name.

'Heard of nothing else lately,' said Caffyn. 'After which I am ashamed to have to own I haven't read it, but it's the disgraceful truth.'

Mark felt the danger of being betrayed by a speech like this into saying something too hideously fatuous, over the memory of

which he would grow hot with shame in the night-watches, so he contented himself with an indulgent smile, perhaps, in default of some impossible combination of wit and modesty, his best available resource.

Besides, the new acquaintance made him strangely uneasy; he felt warned to avoid him by one of those odd instincts which (although we scarcely ever obey them) are surely given us for our protection; he could not meet the cold light eyes which seemed to search him through and through.

'Mr. Ashburn and I were just discussing somebody's character,' said Miss Featherstone, by way of ending an awkward pause.

'Poor somebody!' drawled Caffyn, with an easy impertinence which he had induced many girls, and Gilda amongst them, to tolerate, if not admire.

'You need not pity her,' said Gilda indignantly; 'we were *defending* her.'

'Ah!' said Caffyn, 'from one another?'

'No, we were not; and if you are going to be cynical, and satirical, and all that, you can go away. Well, sit down, then, and behave yourself. What, must you go, Mr. Ashburn? Good-bye, then. Mr. Caffyn, I want you to tell me what you *really* think about——'

Mark heard no more than this; he was glad to escape, to get away from Caffyn's scrutiny. 'He looked as if he knew I was a humbug!' he thought afterwards; and also to think at his leisure over this new discovery, and all it meant for him.

He knew her name now; he saw a prospect of meeting her at some time or other in the house he had just left; but perhaps he might not have even to wait for that.

This little girl, whose childish letter he had tossed aside a few days since in his blindness, who else could she be but the owner of the dog after which he had clambered up the railway slope? And he had actually been about to neglect her appeal!

Well, he would write now. Who could say what might not come of it? At all events *she* would read his letter.

That letter gave Mark an infinite deal of trouble. After attentively reading the little story to which it referred, he sat down to write, and tore up sheet after sheet in disgust, for he had never given much study to the childish understanding, with its unexpected deeps and shallows, and found the task of writing down to it go much against the grain. But the desire of satisfying a more

fastidious critic than Dolly gave him at last a kind of inspiration, and the letter he did send, with some misgiving, could hardly have been better written for the particular purpose.

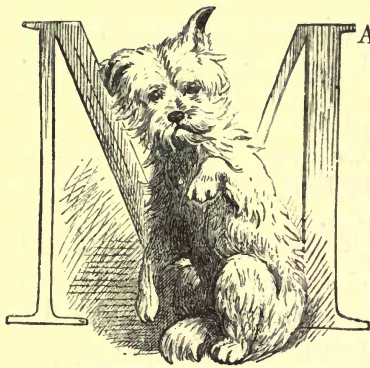
He was pleasantly reassured as to this a day or two later by another little note from Dolly, asking him to come to tea at Kensington Park Gardens on any afternoon except Monday or Thursday, and adding (evidently by external suggestion) that her mother and sister would be pleased to make his acquaintance.

Mark read this with a thrill of eager joy. What he had longed for had come to pass, then; he was to see her, speak with her, once more. At least he was indebted to 'Illusion' for this result, which a few months since seemed of all things the most unlikely. This time, perhaps, she would not leave him without a word or sign, as when last they met; he might be allowed to come again; even in time to know her intimately.

And he welcomed this first piece of good fortune as a happy omen for the future.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE SPRING.



MARK lost no time in obeying Dolly's summons, and it was with an exhilaration a little tempered by a nervousness to which he was not usually subject, that he leaped into the dipping and lurching hansom that was to carry him to Kensington Park Gardens.

As Mark drove through the Park across the Serpentine, and saw the black branches of the trees looking as if they had all been sprinkled with a feathery green powder, and noticed the new delicacy in the bright-hued grass, he hailed these signs as fresh confirmation of the approach of summer—a summer that might prove a golden one for him.

But as he drew nearer Notting Hill, his spirits sank again. What if this opportunity were to collapse as hopelessly as the

first? Mabel would of course have forgotten him—would she let him drop indifferently as before? He felt far from hopeful as he rang the bell.

He asked for Miss Dorothy Langton, giving his name as 'Mr. Ernstone,' and was shown into a little room filled with the



pretty contrivances which the modern young lady collects around her. He found Dolly there alone, in a very stately and self-possessed mood.

'You can bring up tea here, Champion,' she said, 'and some tea-cake—you like tea-cake of course?' she said to Mark, with something of afterthought. 'Mother and Mabel are out,

calling or something,' she added, 'so we shall be quite alone. And now sit down there in that chair and tell me everything you know about fairies.'

Mark's heart sank—this was not at all what he had hoped for; but Dolly had thrown herself back in her own chair, with such evident expectation, and a persuasion that she had got hold of an authority on fairy-lore, that he did not dare to expostulate—although in truth his acquaintance with the subject was decidedly limited.

'You can begin now,' said Dolly calmly, as Mark stared blankly into his hat.

'Well,' he said, 'what do you want to know about them?'

'All about them,' said Dolly, with the air of a little person accustomed to instant obedience; Mark's letter had not quite dispelled her doubts, and she wanted to be quite certain that such cases as that of the sugar prince were by no means common.

'Well,' said Mark again, clearing his throat, 'they dance round in rings, you know, and live inside flowers, and play tricks with people—that is,' he added, with a sort of idea that he must not encourage superstition, 'they did once—of course there are no such things now.'

'Then how was it that that little girl you knew—who was not me—ate one up?'

'He was the last one,' said Mark.

'But how did he get turned into sugar? Had he done anything wrong?'

'That's how it was.'

'What was it—he hadn't told a story, had he?'

'It's exactly what he *had* done,' said Mark, accepting this solution gratefully; 'an *awful* story!'

'What was the story?' Dolly demanded at this, and Mark floundered on, beginning to consider Dolly, for all her pretty looks and ways, a decided little nuisance.

'He—he said the Queen of the Fairies squinted,' he stammered in his extremity.

'Then it was she who turned him into sugar?'

'Of course it was,' said Mark.

'But you said he was the last fairy left!' persisted the terrible Dolly.

'Did I?' said Mark miserably; 'I meant the last but one—she was the *other*.'

‘Then who was there to tell the story to?’ Dolly cross-examined, and Mark quailed, feeling that any more explanation would probably land him in worse difficulties.

‘I don’t think you know very much about it, after all,’ she said with severity. ‘I suppose you put all you knew into the story. But you’re quite sure there was no fairy inside the figure I ate, aren’t you?’

‘Oh yes,’ said Mark, ‘I—I happen to know that.’

‘That’s all right, then,’ said Dolly, with a little sigh of relief. ‘Was that the only fairy story you know?’

‘Yes,’ Mark hastened to explain, in deadly fear lest he might be called upon for another.

‘Oh,’ said Dolly, ‘then we’d better have tea’—for the door had opened.

‘It’s not Champion after all,’ she cried; ‘it’s Mabel. I never heard you come back, Mabel.’

And Mark turned to realise his dearest hopes and find himself face to face once more with Mabel.

She came in, looking even lovelier, he thought, in her fresh spring toilette than in the winter furs she had worn when he had seen her last, bent down to kiss Dolly, and then glanced at him with the light of recognition coming into her grey eyes.

‘This is Mr. Ernstone, Mab,’ said Dolly.

The pink in Mabel’s cheeks deepened slightly; the author of the book which had stirred her so unusually was the young man who had not thought it worth his while to see any more of them. Probably had he known who had written to him, he would not have been there now, and this gave a certain distance to her manner as she spoke.

‘We have met before, Mr. Ernstone,’ she said, giving him her ungloved hand. ‘Very likely you have forgotten when and how, but I am sure Dolly had not, had you, Dolly?’

But Dolly had, having been too much engrossed with her dog on the day of the breakdown to notice appearances, even of his preserver, very particularly. ‘When did I see him before, Mabel?’ she whispered.

‘Oh, Dolly, ungrateful child! don’t you remember who brought Frisk out of the train for you that day in the fog?’ But Dolly hung her head and drooped her long lashes, twining her fingers with one of those sudden attacks of awkwardness that sometimes seize the most self-possessed children. ‘You never

thanked him then, you know,' continued Mabel; 'aren't you going to say a word to him now?'

'Thank you very much for saving my dog,' murmured Dolly, very quickly and without looking at him; when Mabel, seeing that she was not at her ease, suggested that she should run and fetch Frisk to return thanks in person, which Dolly accepted gladly as permission to escape.

Mark had risen, of course, at Mabel's entrance, and was standing at one corner of the curtained mantelpiece; Mabel was at the other, absently smoothing the fringe with the delicate curves of her hand and with her eyes bent on the rug at her feet. Both were silent for a few moments. Mark had felt the coldness in her manner. 'She remembers how shabbily she treated me,' he thought, 'and she's too proud to show it.'

'You must forgive Dolly,' said Mabel at last, thinking that if Mark meant to be stiff and disagreeable, there was no need at least for the interview to be made ridiculous. 'Children have short memories—for faces only, I hope, not kindnesses. But if you had cared to be thanked we should have seen you before.'

'Rather cool that,' Mark thought. 'I am only surprised,' he said, 'that *you* should remember it; you gave me more thanks than I deserved at the time. Still, as I had no opportunity of learning your name or where you lived—if you recollect we parted very suddenly, and you gave me no permission——'

'But I sent a line to you by the guard,' she said; 'I gave you our address and asked you to call and see my mother, and let Dolly thank you properly.'

She was not proud and ungracious after all, then. He felt a great joy at the thought, and shame, too, for having so misjudged her. 'If I had ever received it,' he said, 'I hope you will believe that you would have seen me before this; but I asked for news of you from that burly old impostor of a guard, and he—he gave me no intelligible message (Mark remembered suddenly the official's extempore effort), 'and certainly nothing in writing.'

Mark's words were evidently sincere, and as she heard them, the coldness and constraint died out of Mabel's face, the slight misunderstanding between them was over.

'After all, you are here, in spite of guards,' she said, with a gay little laugh. 'And now we have even more to be grateful to you for.' And then, simply and frankly, she told him of the pleasure 'Illusion' had given her, while, at her gracious words, Mark

felt almost for the first time the full meanness of his fraud, and wished, as he had certainly never wished before, that he had indeed written the book.

But this only made him shrink from the subject; he acknowledged what she said in a few formal words, and attempted to turn the conversation, more abruptly than he had done for some time on such occasions. Mabel was of opinion, and with perfect justice, that even genius itself would scarcely be warranted in treating her approval in this summary fashion, and felt slightly inclined to resent it, even while excusing it to herself as the unintentional *gaucherie* of an over-modest man.

'I ought to have remembered perhaps,' she said, with a touch of pique in her voice, 'that you must long ago have tired of hearing such things.'

He had indeed, but he saw that his brusqueness had annoyed her, and hastened to explain. 'You must not think that is so,' he said, very earnestly; 'only, there is praise one cannot trust oneself to listen to long——'

'And it really makes you uncomfortable to be talked to about "Illusion"?' said Mabel.

'I will be quite frank, Miss Langton,' said Mark (and he really felt that he must for his own peace of mind convince her of this); '*really* it does. Because, you see, I feel all the time—I hope, that is—that I can do much better work in the future.'

'And we have all been admiring in the wrong place? I see,' said Mabel, with apparent innocence, but a rather dangerous gleam in her eyes.

'Oh, I know it sounds conceited,' said Mark, 'but the real truth is, that when I hear such kind things said about a work which—which gave me so very little trouble to produce, it makes me a little uncomfortable sometimes, because (you know how perversely things happen sometimes), because I can't help a sort of fear that my next book, to which I really am giving serious labour, may be utterly unnoticed, or—or worse!'

There was no possibility of mistaking this for mock-modesty, and though Mabel thought such sensitiveness rather overstrained, she liked him for it notwithstanding.

'I think you need not fear that,' she said; 'but you shall not be made uncomfortable any more. And you are writing another book? May I ask you about that, or is that another indiscretion?'

Mark was only too delighted to be able to talk about a book which he really *had* written; it was at least a change; and he plunged into the subject with much zest. 'It deals with things and men,' he concluded, 'on rather a larger scale than "Illusion" has done. I have tried to keep it clear of all commonplace characters.'

'But then it will not be quite so lifelike, will it?' suggested Mabel; 'and in "Illusion" you made even commonplace characters interesting.'

'That is very well,' he said, a little impatiently, 'for a book which does not aim at the first rank. It is easy enough to register exactly what happens around one. Anybody who keeps a diary can do that. The highest fiction should idealise.'

'I'm afraid I prefer the other fiction, then,' said Mabel. 'I like to sympathise with the characters, and you can't sympathise with an ideal hero and heroine. I hope you will let your heroine have one or two little weaknesses, Mr. Ernstone.'

'Now you are laughing at me,' said Mark, more humbly. 'I must leave you to judge between the two books, and if I can only win your approval, Miss Langton, I shall prize it more than I dare to say.'

'If it is at all like "Illusion——" Oh, I forgot,' Mabel broke off suddenly. 'That is forbidden ground, isn't it? And now, will you come into the drawing-room and be introduced to mamma? We shall find some tea there.'

Mrs. Langton was a little sleepy after a long afternoon of card-leaving and call-paying, but she was sufficiently awake to be gracious when she had quite understood who Mark was.

'So very kind of you to write to my little daughter about such nonsense,' she said. 'Of course I don't mean that the story itself was anything of the kind, but little girls have such silly fancies—at least mine seem to have. *You* were just the same at Dolly's age, Mabel . . . Now *I* never recollect worrying myself about such ideas . . . I'm sure I don't know how they get it. But I hear it is such a wonderful book you have written, Mr. Ernstone. I've not read it yet. My wretched health, you know. But really, when I think how clever you must be, I feel quite afraid to talk to you. I always consider it must require so *much* cleverness and—and perseverance—you know, to write *any* book.'

'Oh, Mabel, only think,' cried Dolly, now quite herself again, from one of the window-seats, 'Frisk has run away again, and

been out ever since yesterday morning. I forgot that just now. And now Mr. Ernstone can't see him after all!

And Mabel explained to her mother that they had recognised in the author of 'Illusion' the unknown rescuer of Dolly's dog.

'You mustn't risk such a valuable life as yours is now any more,' said Mrs. Langton, after purring out thanks which were hazily expressed, owing to an imperfect recollection of the circumstances. 'You must be more selfish after this, for other people's sakes.'

'I'm afraid such consideration would not be quite understood,' said Mark, laughing.

'Oh, you must expect to be misunderstood, else there would be no merit in it, would there? Dolly, my pet, there's something scratching outside the door. Run and see what it is.'

Mark rose and opened the door, and presently a ridiculous little draggled object, as black as a cinder, its long hair caked and clotted with dried mud, shuffled into the room with the evident intention of sneaking into a warm corner without attracting public notice—an intention promptly foiled by the indignant Dolly.

'O-oh!' she cried; 'it's Frisk. Look at him, everybody—*do* look at him.'

The unhappy animal backed into the corner by the door with his eyes on Dolly's, and made a conscience-stricken attempt to sit up and wave one paw in deprecation, doubtless prepared with a plausible explanation of his singular appearance, which much resembled that of 'Mr. Dolls' returning to Jenny Wren after a long course of 'three-penn'orths.'

'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' demanded Dolly. ('Don't laugh, Mr. Ernstone, *please*—it encourages him so.) Oh, I believe you're the very worst dog in Notting Hill.'

The possessor of that bad eminence sat and shivered, as if engaged in a rough calculation of his chances of a whipping; but Dolly governed him on these occasions chiefly by the moral sanction—an immunity he owed to his condition.

'And this,' said Dolly, scathingly, 'this is the dog you saved from the train, Mr. Ernstone! There's gratitude! The next time he shall be left to be killed—he's not worth saving!'

Either the announcement or the suspense, according as one's estimate of his intellectual powers may vary, made the culprit snuffle dolefully, and after Dolly had made a few further uncomplimentary observations on the general vileness of his conduct

and the extreme uncleanliness of his person, which he heard abjectly, he was dismissed with his tail well under him, probably to meditate that if he did not wish to rejoin his race altogether, he really would have to pull up.

Soon after this sounds were heard in the hall, as of a hat being pitched into a corner, and a bag with some heavy objects in it slammed on a table to a whistling accompaniment. 'That's Colin,' said Dolly, confidentially. 'Mother says he ought to be getting more repose of manner, but he hasn't begun yet.'

And soon after Colin himself made his appearance. 'Hullo, Mabel! Hullo, mother! Yes, I've washed my hands and I've brushed my hair. It's *all* right, really. Well, Dolly. What, Mr. Ashburn here!' he broke off, staring a little as he went up to shake hands with Mark.

'I ought to have explained, perhaps,' said Mark. 'Ernstone is only the name I write under. And I had the pleasure of having your son in my form at St. Peter's for some time. Hadn't I, Colin?'

'Yes, sir,' said Colin, shyly, still rather overcome by so unexpected an apparition, and thinking this would be something to tell 'the fellows' next day.

Mabel laughed merrily. 'Mr. Ashburn, I wonder how many more people you will turn out to be!' she said. 'If you knew how afraid I was of you when I used to help Colin with his Latin exercises, and how angry when you found me out in any mistakes! I pictured you as a very awful personage indeed.'

'So I am,' said Mark, 'officially. I'm sure your brother will agree to that.'

'I don't think he will,' said Mabel. 'He was so sorry when they moved him out of your form, that you can't have been so very bad.'

'I liked being in the Middle Third, sir,' said Colin, regaining confidence. 'It was much better fun than old—I mean Mr. Blatherwick's is. I wish I was back again—for *some* things,' he added conscientiously.

When the time came to take his leave, Mrs. Langton asked for his address, with a view to an invitation at no distant time. A young man, already a sort of celebrity, and quite presentable on other accounts, would be useful at dances, while he might serve to leaven some of her husband's slightly heavy professional dinners.

Mabel gave him her hand at parting with an air of entire friendliness and good understanding which she did not usually display on so short a probation. But she liked this Mr. Ashburn

already, who on the last time she had met him had figured as a kind of hero, who was the 'swell' master for whom, without having seen him, she had caught something of Colin's boyish admiration, and who, lastly, had stirred and roused her imagination through the work of his own.

Perhaps, after all, he was a little conceited, but then it was not an offensive conceit, but one born of a confidence in himself which was fairly justified. She had not liked his manner of disparaging his first work, and she rather distrusted his idealising theories; still, she knew that clever people often find it difficult to do justice to their ideas in words. He *might* produce a work which would take rank with the very greatest, and till then she could admire what he had already accomplished.

And besides he was good-looking—very good-looking; his dark eyes had expressed a very evident satisfaction at being there and talking to her—which of course was in his favour; his manner was bright and pleasant; and so Mabel found it agreeable to listen to her mother's praise of their departed visitor.

'A very charming young man, my dear. You've only to look at him to see he's a true genius; and so unaffected and pleasant with it all. Quite an acquisition, really.'

'I found him, mother,' interrupted Dolly; 'he wouldn't have come but for me. But I'm rather disappointed in him myself; he didn't seem to care to talk to *me* much; and I don't believe he knows much about fairies.'

'Don't be ungrateful, Dolly,' said Mabel. 'Who saved Frisk for you?'

'Oh, *he* did; I know all that; but not because he liked Frisk, or me either. It was because—I don't know *why* it was because.'

'Because he is a good young man, I suppose,' said Mrs. Langton instructively.

'No, it wasn't that; he doesn't look so *very* good; not so good as poor Vincent did; more good than Harold, though. But he doesn't care about dogs, and he doesn't care about me, and I don't care about him!' concluded Dolly, rather defiantly.

As for Mark, he left the house thoroughly and helplessly in love. As he walked back to his rooms he found a dreamy pleasure in recalling the different stages of the interview. Mabel's slender figure as she stood opposite him by the mantelpiece, her reserve at first, and the manner in which it had thawed to a frank and gracious interest; the suspicion of a critical but not unkindly

mockery in her eyes and tone at times—it all came back to him with a vividness that rendered him deaf and blind to his actual surroundings. He saw again the group in the dim, violet-scented drawing-room, the handsome languid woman murmuring her pleasant commonplaces, and the pretty child lecturing the prodigal dog, and still felt the warm light touch of Mabel's hand as it had lain in his for an instant at parting.

This time, too, the parting was not without hope; he might look forward to seeing her again after this. A summer of golden dreams and fancies had indeed begun for him from that day, and as he thought again that he owed these high privileges to 'Illusion,' events seemed more than ever to be justifying an act which was fast becoming as remote and unreproachful as acts will, when the dread of discovery—that great awakener of conscience—is sleeping too.

CHAPTER XV.

HAROLD CAFFYN MAKES A DISCOVERY.



HAROLD CAFFYN had not found much improvement in his professional prospects since we first made his acquaintance; his disenchantment was in fact becoming complete. He had taken to the stage at first in reliance on the extravagant eulogies of friends, forgetting that the standard for amateurs in any form of art is not a high one, and he was very soon brought to his proper level. A good appearance and complete self-possession were about his sole qualifications, unless we add the voice and manner of a man in good society, which are not by any means the distinctive advantages that they

were a few years ago. The general verdict of his fellow-professionals was, 'Clever enough, but no actor,' and he was without

the sympathy or imagination to identify himself completely with any character and feelings opposed to his own; he had obtained one distinct success, and one only—at a *matinée*, when a new comedy was presented in which a part of some consequence had been entrusted to him. He was cast for a cool and cynical adventurer, with a considerable dash of the villain in him, and played it admirably, winning very favourable notices from the press, although the comedy itself resulted in a dismal fiasco. However, the *matinée* proved for a time of immense service to him in the profession, and even led to his being chosen by his manager to represent the hero of the next production at his own theatre—a poetical drama which had excited great interest before its appearance—and if Caffyn could only have made his mark in it, his position would have been assured from that moment. But the part was one of rather strained sentiment, and he could not, rather than would not, make it effective. In spite of himself, his manner suggested rather than concealed any extravagances in the dialogue, and, worse still, gave the impression that he was himself contemptuously conscious of them; the consequence being that he repelled the sympathies of his audience to a degree that very nearly proved fatal to the play. After that unlucky first night the part was taken from him, and his engagement, which terminated shortly afterwards, was not renewed.

Caffyn was not the man to overcome his deficiencies by hard and patient toil; he had counted upon an easy life with immediate triumphs, and the reality baffled and disheartened him. He might soon have slid into the lounging life of a man about town, with a moderate income, expensive tastes, and no occupation, and from that perhaps even to shady and questionable walks of life. But he had an object still in keeping his head above the social waters, and the object was Mabel Langton.

He had long felt that there was a secret antagonism on her side towards himself, which at first he had found amusement in provoking to an occasional outburst, but was soon piqued into trying to overcome and disarm, and the unexpected difficulty of this had produced in him a state of mind as nearly approaching love as he was capable of.

He longed for the time when his wounded pride would be salved by the consciousness that he had at last obtained the mastery of this wayward nature, when he would be able to pay off the long score of slights and disdains which he had come to

exaggerate morbidly; he was resolved to conquer her sooner or later in defiance of all obstacles, and he had found few natures capable of resisting him long after he had set himself seriously to subdue them.

But Mabel had been long in showing any sign of yielding. For some time after the loss of the 'Mangalore' she had been depressed and silent to a degree which persuaded Caffyn that his old jealousy of Holroyd was well-grounded, and when she recovered her spirits somewhat, while she was willing to listen and laugh or talk to him, there was always the suggestion of an armistice in her manner, and any attempt on his part to lead the conversation to something beyond mere *badinage* was sure to be adroitly parried or severely put down, as her mood varied.

Quite recently, however, there had been a slight change for the better; she had seemed more pleased to see him, and had shown more sympathy and interest in his doings. This was since his one success at the *matinée*, and he told himself triumphantly that she had at last recognised his power; that the long siege was nearly over.

He would have been much less complacent had he known the truth, which was this. At the *matinée* Mabel had certainly been at first surprised almost to admiration by an unexpected display of force on Caffyn's part. But as the piece went on, she could not resist an impression that this was not acting, but rather an unconscious revelation of his secret self; the footlights seemed to be bringing out the hidden character of the man as though it had been written on him in sympathetic ink.

As she leaned back in the corner of the box he had sent them, she began to remember little traits of boyish malice and cruelty. Had they worked out of his nature, as such stains sometimes will, or was this stage adventurer, cold-blooded, unscrupulous, with a vein of diabolical humour in his malevolence, the *real* Harold Caffyn?

And then she had seen the injustice of this and felt almost ashamed of her thoughts, and with the wish to make some sort of reparation, and perhaps the consciousness that she had not given him many opportunities of showing her his better side, her manner towards him had softened appreciably.

Caffyn only saw the effects, and argued favourably. 'Now that fellow Holroyd is happily out of the way,' he thought, 'she doesn't care for anybody in particular. I've only to wait.'

There were considerations other than love or pride which made the marriage a desirable one to him. Mabel's father was a rich man, and Mabel herself was entitled independently to a considerable sum on coming of age. He could hardly do better for himself than by making such a match, even from the pecuniary point of view.

And so he looked about him anxiously for some opening more suitable to his talents than the stage-door, for he was quite aware that at present Mabel's father, whatever Mabel herself might think, would scarcely consider him a desirable *parti*.

Caffyn had been lucky enough to impress a business friend of his with a firm conviction of his talents for business and management, and this had led to a proposal that he should leave the stage and join him, with a prospect of a partnership should the alliance prove a success.

The business was a flourishing one, and the friend a young man who had but recently succeeded to the complete control of it, while Caffyn had succeeded somehow in acquiring a tolerably complete control of *him*. So the prospect was really an attractive one, and he felt that now at last he might consider the worst obstacles to his success with Mabel were disposed of.

He had plenty of leisure time on his hands at present, and thought he would call at Kensington Park Gardens one afternoon, and try the effect of telling Mabel of his new prospects. She had been so sweet and sympathetic of late that it would be strange if she did not express some sort of pleasure, and it would be for him to decide then whether or not his time had come to speak of his hopes.

Mrs. and Miss Langton were out, he was told at the door. 'Miss Dolly was in,' added Champion, to whom Caffyn was well known.

'Then I'll see Miss Dolly,' said Caffyn, thinking that he might be able to pass the time until Mabel's return. 'In the morning-room is she? All right.'

He walked in alone, to find Dolly engaged in tearing off the postage stamp from a letter. 'Hallo, Miss Juggins, what mischief are you up to now?' he began, as he stood in the doorway.

'It's not mischief at all,' said Dolly, hardly deigning to look up from her occupation. 'What have *you* come in for, Harold?'

'For the pleasure of your conversation,' said Caffyn. 'You know you always enjoy a talk with me, Dolly.' (Dolly made a

little mouth at this.) 'But what are you doing with those scissors and that envelope, if I'm not indiscreet in asking?'

Dolly was in a subdued and repentant mood just then, for she had been so unlucky as to offend Colin the day before, and he had not yet forgiven her. It had happened in this way. It had been a half-holiday, and Colin had brought home an especial friend of his to spend the afternoon, to be shown his treasures and, in particular, to give his opinion as an expert on the merits of Colin's collection of foreign postage-stamps.

Unhappily for Colin's purpose, however, Dolly had completely enslaved the friend from the outset. Charmed by his sudden interest in the most unboyish topics, she had carried him off to see her doll's house and, in spite of Colin's grumbling dissuasion, the base friend had gone meekly. Worse still, he had remained up there listening to Dolly's personal anecdotes and reminiscences and seeing Frisk put through his performances, until it was too late to do anything like justice to the stamp album, over which Colin had been sulkily fuming below, divided between hospitality and impatience.

Dolly had been perfectly guiltless of the least touch of coquetry in thus monopolising the visitor, for she was not precocious in this respect, and was merely delighted to find a boy who, unlike Colin, would condescend to sympathise with her pursuits; but perhaps the boy himself, a susceptible youth, found Dolly's animated face and eager confidences more attractive than the rarest postal issues.

When he had gone, Colin's pent-up indignation burst out on the unsuspecting Dolly. She had done it on purpose. She knew Dickinson major came to see his stamps. What did *he* care about her rubbishy dolls? And there she had kept him up in the nursery for hours wasting his time! It was too bad of her, and so on, until she wept with grief and penitence.

And now she was seizing the opportunity of purchasing his forgiveness by an act of atonement in kind, in securing what seemed to her to be probably a stamp of some unknown value—to a boy. But she did not tell all this to Caffyn.

'Do you know about stamps—is this a rare one?' she said, and brought the stamp she had removed to Caffyn. The post-mark had obliterated the name upon it.

'Let's look at the letter,' said Caffyn; and Dolly put it in his hand.

He took it to the window, and gave a slight start. 'When did this come?' he said sharply.

'Just now,' said Dolly; 'a minute or two before you came. I heard the postman, and I ran out into the hall to see the letters drop in the box, and then I saw this one with the stamp, and the box wasn't locked, so I took it out and tore the stamp off. Why do you look like that, Harold? It's only for Mabel, and she won't mind.'

Caffyn was still at the window; he had just received a highly unpleasant shock, and was trying to get over it and adjust himself to the facts revealed by what he held in his hand.

The letter was from India, bore a Colombo postmark, and was in Vincent Holroyd's hand, which Caffyn happened to know; if further proof were required he had it by pressing the thin paper of the envelope against the enclosure beneath, when several words became distinctly legible, besides those visible already through the gap left by the stamp. Thus he read, 'Shall not write again till you——' and lower down Holroyd's full signature.

And the letter had that moment arrived. He saw no other possible conclusion than that, by some extraordinary chance, Holroyd had escaped the fate which was supposed to have befallen him. He was alive; a more dangerous rival after this than ever. This letter might even contain a proposal!

'No use speaking to Mabel after she has once seen this. Confound the fellow! Why the deuce couldn't he stay in the sea? It's just my infernal luck!'

As he thought of the change this letter would work in his prospects, and his own complete powerlessness to prevent it, the gloom and perplexity on his face deepened. He had been congratulating himself on the removal of this particular man as a providential arrangement made with some regard to his own convenience. And to see him resuscitated, at that time of all others, was hard indeed to bear. And yet what could he do?

(To be continued.)

WONDERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY.

TWENTY years ago, to have one's likeness taken was a trying ordeal. The patient to be operated on was placed in as strained an attitude as the ingenuity of the photographer could devise; his head fixed in something resembling a vice; he was cautioned not to wink for a length of time which seemed to depend on the state of the photographer's temper; and then in the course of a few weeks he received pictures of a staring idiot supposed to be himself. All who were at all proud of their personal appearance—all women and most men—were disgusted with the art. Now all is changed; the operation is generally over in a second or two; freckles, pimples, and cross-eyes are improved away, and everybody is surprised how comely he is. This rapid progress in the art of photography is to some extent due to improvements in lenses and various mechanical appliances, but more especially to the discovery that the salts of silver in combination with gelatine yield a far more sensitive plate than could ever be obtained by the old collodion process.

Within the last two years some remarkable photographs have been taken which show the wonderful perfection to which the art has attained. Likenesses of restless children, crying or laughing, are now so common as hardly to need mention; even the act of kissing, transitory as it is, is sufficiently prolonged to enable a photograph to be taken, the momentary rest, when lips meet lips, are enough for the artist's purpose. But movements far more rapid than the act of kissing (which, after all, is often not so very transitory) are now seized by photography. Athletes performing in mid-air, birds flying, the course of projectiles, waves breaking on the coast, have all been photographed with a definition and clearness that leaves little to be desired. Photos of the Irish mail, rushing along at the rate of forty-five miles an hour, show the outlines perfectly defined; while the spokes of the engine-wheels are plainly delineated, proving the operation to have been so rapid that the wheels had not time to move any appreciable distance. Perhaps, however, the most remarkable photographs of moving objects are those obtained by Mr. Muybridge of horses running and jumping: in these, positions of the

limbs are shown which are far too transitory for the human eye to detect ; what the eye sees in watching a horse running is an average of the successive positions assumed by the horse's legs ; photography alone can give an accurate idea of their position at any definite point of time. The attitudes shown in photographs seem at first sight to be absurd, and certainly differ very much from representations by engravers and painters ; photographs show the real positions at certain moments of time, while painters depict, and rightly too, the apparent positions.

To the astronomer the art is invaluable, and some of the most remarkable discoveries in astronomy have been made by its aid. Large photos of the sun are taken every day it is visible at Greenwich and elsewhere, and thus a permanent record of the exact size and shape of every sunspot is obtained ; these, when compared with electrical and other meteorological conditions, will help to settle the question whether and in what way the sunspots affect the weather. To such a perfection has the manufacture of gelatino-bromide of silver attained, that M. Janssen, of Paris, photographs the sun in less than one two-thousandth of a second. Again, the solar corona, as to the nature of which such varied speculations have been rife, is only visible during the very few minutes that a total eclipse of the sun lasts, and the observations that can be made in so short a time are necessarily very imperfect. Recently, however, Dr. Huggins has succeeded in photographing the corona without the intervention of an eclipse. The corona is especially rich in violet rays ; now, the eye is less sensitive to small variations in the violet rays than it is to the other colours of the spectrum, whereas the violet is just what photography deals with most effectively. By cutting off the other rays, Dr. Huggins has succeeded in photographing the corona by means of its own violet light, and that, too, at a time when hitherto observations have been impossible. When his method is perfected, astronomers will be able, with the help of the camera, to study the corona and solar protuberances at their leisure.

The recent transit of Venus has afforded a fine opportunity for calculating the distance of the sun, and it is expected that, with the assistance of the hundreds of photographs obtained, the distance of the sun from the earth will be calculated to within 300,000 miles. The numerous comets, too, have not been allowed to pass without leaving their images behind, which show their shapes and positions far more perfectly than has hitherto been

possible. But perhaps the most remarkable achievements are the photographs of spectra of stars and nebulæ. Not long ago it was hardly possible to photograph stars of the fourth or fifth magnitude, and even the brighter nebulæ shone with far too faint light to enable photographs to be taken. But, recently, not only have the fainter nebulæ and stars, as low as those of the fourteenth magnitude which are only visible through most powerful telescopes, been photographed, but their light, even when dispersed by the prism, has still been strong enough to leave its impress on the sensitive plate. Dr. Huggins and Professor H. Draper have each succeeded in photographing spectra of nebulæ and stars of the twelfth magnitude, and thus determining some of the elements contained in worlds so distant from us that their light, travelling 186,000 miles per second, has taken thousands of years to reach us. Such photographs are especially useful, because they show the faintest lines in the spectra which have hitherto escaped the most practised eye.

Hardly less remarkable are some of the discoveries of Captain Abney, the prince of photographers, in his experiments on the infra-red of the spectrum; he has recently shown that between the earth and the sun and quite outside our atmosphere, there exist accumulations of benzine and alcoholic derivatives. Alcohol in temperance drinks, alcohol in rain water, *alcohol in space*, alcohol everywhere.

Again, in meteorology the art of photography will prove to be of immense use. A regular system of photographing the clouds by means of a specially made cloud-camera, which acts automatically, has just been commenced. The form and disposition of clouds have always been regarded as an index to the weather, and weather records compared with cloud-photographs will doubtless afford valuable information and assistance in weather prognostications.

To the geographer and ordnance surveyor the camera will soon be regarded as an indispensable part of their outfit. The tedious operations of making sketches of a district will be obviated, and perfect pictures with hardly a chance of error will easily be obtained.

To the medical man too, and the chemist, photography is found to be a valuable assistant. At the Glasgow Medical School the successive stages of surgical operations, sections of tumours and diseased structures, and in fact any remarkable forms of disease, are photographed, and the prints shown to medical students and

distributed among the profession to assist in the diagnosis of rare forms of disease. Dr. Lennox Brown and Mr. Cadett have recently got some wonderful photos of the interior of the larynx. By an adjustment of mirrors in the mouth and the electric light to illuminate the throat, they obtained perfect pictures of the various positions of the laryngeal muscles *during the act of singing*; and we may expect that such photos will be found of great value, not only in the teaching of classes of medical students, but as aids to the study of the mechanism of the voice. Further, Dr. Koch has recently got some remarkable photographs of bacteria and bacilli by the aid of the camera and microscope; and here, again, such pictures may be made of incalculable value in disseminating a knowledge of these minute but most formidable enemies of mankind.

In medical jurisprudence, when it is stated that the crystals formed by the one-thousandth of a grain of arsenic have been successfully photographed, it will easily be seen that, in cases of poisoning, photography may prove a very valuable assistant in the detection of crime. A novel use of the art is now being made in the Municipal Laboratory of Chemistry at Paris; photographs of chocolate, tea, coffee, pepper, milk, cheese, &c., as seen through the microscope, are taken and distributed; and, by comparing samples of such articles with photos of the pure article, an easy method is afforded even to non-professionals of detecting adulteration.

Photography is utilised by the microscopist in other directions. Accurate views have been secured of the most minute objects, just as they appear under the most powerful microscope. Photos of minute diatoms, polycystina, infusoria in motion, bacilli, and trichini have recently been obtained by the writer of this article under a power of 1,000 diameters. The cilia of animalcula, blood corpuscles, the microscopic structure of bone and tissue are shown most distinctly, and details are seen easily which often escape the eye in microscopic examinations. A large photo, six inches in length, of a small fly's tongue measuring about one-seventieth of an inch, shows the hairs and various markings with remarkable clearness. A simple calculation shows this photograph to cover an area 176,000 times as large as the original object. Again, views of the internal structure of wood show conclusively whether the wood is weak or strong: in strong wood the concentric rings appear close in texture, while the radial plates are numerous, broad, and thick. It has even been suggested that such photos

might be used as trade advertisements. The internal structure of metals, too, has been examined by the joint aid of the camera and microscope: laminæ of the metals are reduced to extreme tenuity by the action of acids, and when sufficiently translucent are photographed through the microscope; gold and silver are said to have a fibrous structure, while tin is granular.

Till recently, no one would ever have dreamed of applying photography to acoustics: but it is now possible to photograph sound, or, speaking more accurately, sound-vibrations; and Professor Boltzmann is now announced as the discoverer of what at first might well be regarded with incredulity. The sound-vibrations are communicated to a thin platinum plate, and the movements of the plate, after being magnified by a solar microscope, are reflected on to a screen, and photographed by rapidly drawing a sensitive plate across the image. Every letter when pronounced gives a separate and distinct impression, the vowels showing regular undulatory vibrations, while the consonants give curves and lines of very varied forms. The uses of an arrangement like this may be innumerable. We can almost imagine that when the process is perfected, eavesdroppers and spies will have a very easy time, and need to run no risks in order to obtain secret information; a small instrument secretly placed in a room, and acting automatically, may copy down every word spoken: nay, it is far from chimerical to expect that photography may one day take the place of shorthand reporters.

But besides all the varied ways in which photography has been utilised in science, it has miscellaneous uses without number, and especially noticeable are the ways in which the British and foreign Governments have found it serviceable. No army is now ever despatched on service without a full equipment of photographic requisites. In reconnoitring and surveying the enemy's positions and entrenchments, it was formerly necessary to have sketches made; considerable time was needed, many dangers incurred, and, after all, important details were often accidentally omitted. Now the photographer accompanies the reconnoitring party, and in a second or two he secures views which show the exact positions of the enemy's works without a chance of mistake. Such photos were found of great use in the recent war in Egypt.

Again, during the last siege of Paris, it is well known of what enormous value the pigeon-post was. The beleaguered Parisians were able to keep up correspondence with their friends outside,

in spite of the German army. Letters and despatches were printed on a large sheet which was then photographed to a very small scale on pellicles of six by two centimètres in dimensions; and these, being tied to the legs of trained pigeons, were carried over the heads of the Germans safely to their destination. The small photos had then only to be placed in an enlarging lantern, the letters transcribed and sent to the various addresses. The Germans have now established a regular system of pigeon-post in all their large towns, in the event of war.

At the Government dockyards, when experiments were being made with torpedoes, the aid of photography was invoked. Rapid views of the torpedo explosions were taken, showing the upraised fountain of water and registering the exact height to which it was thrown. Views of rocks, buildings, or old vessels being blown up with dynamite, show the fragments as it were suspended in the air, the artist being able to expose his plate precisely at the moment required. At Shoeburyness a regular staff of artists was employed in photographing the effects of artillery experiments against iron and steel armour-plates. Again, in many of our prisons, portraits of all prisoners of a certain class are regularly taken, and, if necessary, produced by hundreds and distributed throughout the country. The detective camera, a small instrument which can be held in one hand, may be of incalculable use in obtaining portraits of any suspected persons in the streets, and in this way identification of criminals might be much facilitated.

Recently, quite a novel use has been found for photography. The Chinese, who in their own way are an extremely enterprising race, are troubled with a language which is a stumbling-block not only to foreigners but even to themselves. The number of signs or letters is so great that an ordinary printer's compositor would be perfectly bewildered; his type case would be a wilderness of boxes; in fact, to print a newspaper in Chinese would be nearly impossible. An enterprising publisher, however, has recently hit on the plan of having one copy of a newspaper written out and then multiplying the copies by photography, using one of the many mechanical photographic printing processes.

But to enumerate all the wonders of photography is impossible: one more must suffice. It has been found practicable, under certain conditions, to photograph *invisible* objects. It is well known that in the spectrum of white light there are rays which are quite invisible to the human eye: we refer to the

chemical rays beyond the violet end and the ultra-red or heat rays. But the eye is far from perfect, and the rays that it cannot see can still be rendered perceptible by other means; for instance, bisulphate of quinine placed in the invisible chemical rays is at once rendered fluorescent. In a similar way, Captain Abney finds that the bromide of silver used by the photographer can be so modified as to become sensitive to the invisible ultra-red rays; and we are told by Mr. Proctor that he has 'taken the photograph of a kettle of boiling water *in the dark* by means of its own radiation.' In some of the photographs of the great nebula of Orion are clearly seen traces of certain dark bodies in space, which are invisible through the telescope; and it is at any rate not within the region of absurdity to suggest that photography may some day reveal to us the existence of worlds enveloped in perpetual darkness—suns, perhaps once as bright as ours, but whose light has been dimmed by the lapse of millions of years; stars and systems which are no longer visible, but which still move in space in accordance with the unailing laws of the universe.

MY POOR WIFE.



CHAPTER I.

‘If every word were the stroke of a cutting whip, it might ease my heart to write of this pitiful scoundrel. I know I have no power of writing; and, if I had such power, I should not hope to persuade the world. To the world he seems a patriot, an honest man, and, God help me! a sorrowful widower. I know he killed his wife. I know that he killed her as surely as if he had driven a knife into the best and purest heart of all the hearts of women. Perhaps it is she who checks my hand now. It is all that is left for me, to believe that she knows my thoughts, and that she knows too my great love for her. Oh, my darling!—oh, my darling! that you ever fancied that you cared for this vile man. Is not that enough to keep him safe from me? For

him, what good is it to abuse him? He would feel my fingers on his throat, but nothing less. Oh, my love, my darling, that was this man's wife!

These words I found on a piece of paper which I picked up on the very grave of my poor wife. Of the pain which they caused me in those early days of my sorrow I need say nothing. I have quoted them here because they explain, better than I could, why I have determined to publish this brief record of my married life, which was, alas! almost as brief. It will be easily believed how painful is this task to me. It is not only that I reopen a recent wound; but also that I am compelled to raise the curtain which shaded from the world my short domestic life. A public man must become somewhat thick-skinned; but to one originally sensitive beyond his fellows what can be more painful than to drag into the light of day the tender secrets of his hearth and home? And yet it will be readily understood that I have no other course. The savage words which head this paper may be amplified at any moment, and published as a libellous attack upon my personal character. It is true that the writer, my poor wife's cousin, after desecrating the very churchyard with his deplorable violence, has taken himself back to his savage life in the far West, to his cattle and his horses, his bowie-knives and revolvers. But there is no safety for me in his absence. Every morning I fear the appearance of some pamphlet, or of some anonymous attack—the true assassin's weapon—in the Press. Thus I am driven, sorely against my will, to anticipate the blow. I shall use all possible delicacy. I shall name no names. But those who watch my career will understand me and believe me, and if the attack be made, I shall be able to point to this brief record, and ask a just and generous public to judge between its temperate statement of facts and the shocking fury of the unhappy young man whose awful words I have quoted.

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
 But he who filches from me my good name, &c.

It is in defence of my good name that I pen these pages.

A few years ago (it is sad to think how few), when I was conducting that successful campaign, which, by gaining for me my present seat in the House, relieved me for ever from the patronage of a political family, I was attacked by a local magnate with a vehemence which I shall never forget. He not only found fault

with the party to which I am devoted, but he went so far as to accuse me personally in no ambiguous phrases of insincerity and ingratitude. He was popular with his brother sportsmen and with his brother magistrates, but he was a dull fellow. Long ere this he has forgotten that he attacked me: the next day's hunting or the next poaching case must have driven it clean out of his memory; yet I confess that his words stung me. Unjust as they were, I could not forget them. These stupid men, when they are unaccustomed to making speeches, are apt to be brutally frank in their public utterances. Polite enough in private life, they blunder into strong language on the platform. The arts of insinuation and covert satire which we study are to them unknown. They blurt out their crude coarse charges. But it is enough to say that my opponent used the plainest language, and that I, not unnaturally, was stung by it. Of course I showed no sign of my annoyance. I passed by his words with the slightest allusion, the lightest jest; but none the less I confess that I was hurt, and with the pugnacity of a Briton I looked for a chance of returning the blow.

Now, it happened that I heard something, when I was canvassing the neighbourhood, of a claim to some part of my opponent's property. As the claimant had not moved in the matter it seemed unlikely that he had any valid grounds. It was only my habit of noting trifles, even though they seem of no importance, which placed this weapon in my hand. I expected but little from the inquiries, which I made carelessly enough; but I found more than I hoped. The apathy of the claimant, who was a stranger to me, seemed from all accounts to be due less to the weakness of his case than to a pride which approached mania. He enjoyed the reputation of harmless eccentricity; it seemed likely that he enjoyed his grievance. He had never shown a sign of moving in the matter; perhaps he feared that he should lose his grievance and gain nothing more tangible. As soon as I was convinced that the claim against my opponent was not a mere delusion, I transferred the task of private inquiry to a lawyer whom I could trust. He is not my own lawyer, but is one who has his own reasons for keeping me his friend; he had been of service to me on several occasions. He did not keep me long in doubt, and his conclusion was eminently satisfactory. He was convinced of the justice of the claim. I had been working hard at a dull mass of statistics; I felt that I needed a holiday. I determined to combine business

with pleasure. I wrote to the eccentric claimant. I announced that I was going into the southern county where he lived, for a brief period of repose, and I begged that I might call upon him. I explained my strange request by telling him that a legal acquaintance, who gave some part of his time to examining obscure claims to landed property, had called my attention to a case of gross injustice ; that as a public man it was my constant wish to remedy injustice where I could ; that if he would listen to me for an hour or two I felt sure of convincing him that he was entitled to a small but valuable estate which I named. I ended my letter with sincere apologies for intruding on a stranger my offers of assistance. In answer to mine I received by return of post a most courteous, if somewhat old-fashioned, epistle, in which the writer, after a graceful reference to my public character and to my gratuitous labours in the cause of justice, begged that I would make his house my home during my sojourn in the county where he had been born and bred. On the next day I wrote a few lines of acknowledgment and acceptance, and on the next I followed my letter.

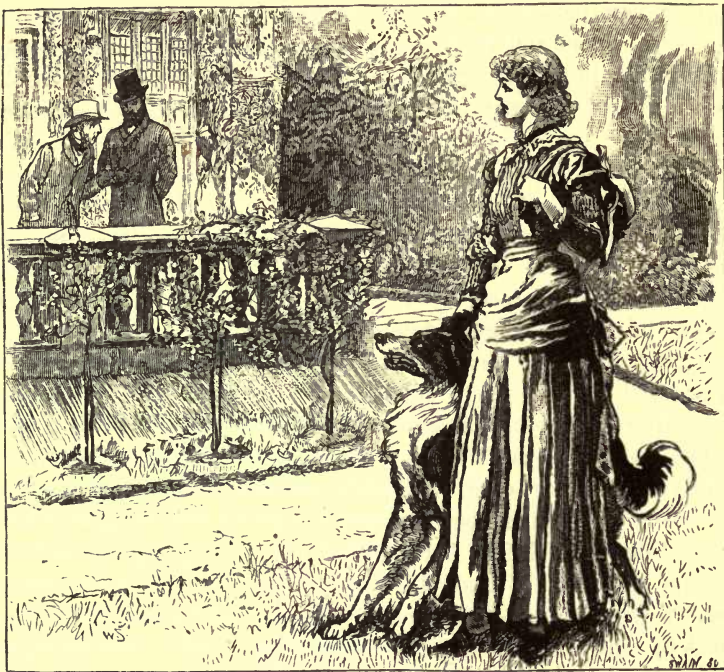
Never shall I forget my first view of the old house. I can see it now as I saw it then. It all comes back to me in my more tender moments. I little knew, as I looked with a gentle pleasure on its venerable and quiet front, that it held the woman who was to be so much to me. Good had it been for me had I compelled the driver beside me to turn his dog-cart from that hospitable door. And yet, how one lingers over this checkered landscape, this brief time of smiles and tears ! Though I know that I made a great mistake, how can I resist a feeling of melancholy, which is not wholly sad, as I recall those golden hours which filled the fateful days ? One may recall the errors of love with a smile which is not far from tears. As I muse, the old house is clear to me again as on that autumn afternoon. I can see the old stone front, more dignified than spacious, mellowed by time, and yellowed here and there by tiny, close, bright lichen ; the broad steps leading to the open doors, the great stone ball on either hand, the stiff stone balustrade which bounds the unseen roof. Spreading over the wide space on the right of the door is plentiful ivy ; on the left the Virginia creeper glows with the richest of autumn colour. Where the balustrade is cut in the centre by a stone peak a young ash had forced itself, and, like a stout young sapling, reared its slender length defiantly. This twig on the edge of the roof, with

the ivy which grows quick and luxuriant in that soft air, and the widespread creeper, and the stains of yellow growth upon the stone, suggested to the fanciful mind that Nature had taken the place under her special charge. I am devoted to Nature. Nothing affords me such repose as to turn from the strife of parties to that eternal peace. I marked the details of the scene that I might refresh myself in future days. I paused a moment on the lower step that I might feel the soft autumnal sunlight, which embraced the long stone front from end to end. Some cows were feeding in the long grass before the house; a small hen fluttered anxiously up the steps before me, and, as I followed her, her small brood of chickens hurried out from the uncarpeted hall within and stopped irresolute before me. Smiling at the rustic charm of the whole, with a mind singularly free from all anxiety, I laid my hand upon the bell.

The sound of the bell was almost startling in that quiet time, but scarcely had it broken the afternoon slumber of the house when a door opened on my right, and my host came hurrying into the hall. My first impression was that the little old gentleman must have been a pretty boy; he was slightly and rather delicately made, and wore the everyday dress of a country gentleman with an almost excessive neatness. My second impression was of his suppressed nervousness. When you think that a man is hiding something from you, it is well to look at the corners of his mouth and at the tips of his fingers. The eyes of an impostor will confront yours in most cases without a quiver. The eyes of my host showed nothing but recognition and welcome; but the hand which he held out trembled as I delayed an instant to grasp it, and there was an unnaturally fixed look about his lips. As he began to speak his mouth was tremulous. I knew that he was making an effort to control his feelings. He was determined to show no eagerness. He began to talk quickly of other matters, and to ask questions about my journey. He was persistent in his offers of refreshment; he was fussy in his directions to his servant about my luggage.

When I had humoured the pride of my new friend for a little while (I could hardly help thinking of him as of a spoiled child), I turned rather abruptly to the object of my mission. Even then he was eager to interrupt me with suggestions of indifference. 'It can make little difference to me,' he said; and, a little later, 'I have never cared to move in the matter.' 'It was for my

kinsman to resign it,' he said, with some warmth, when I expressed surprise at his patience; 'after our family quarrel it was of course impossible for me to make secret inquiries into his title.' With such fantastic reasons did he interrupt me, as I quietly and gravely impressed upon him my conviction that he had suffered great injustice; and all the while I was as certain as I was certain of my own identity that I had roused him to the keenest excitement. At last he broke into a high nervous laugh, and laid his hand on my arm. We were still walking up and down



before the door, and his nervous grasp seemed to direct my attention to the road below us. 'If I care at all about it, that's why,' he said, almost incoherently. I looked, and saw his daughter.' How can I describe her? And yet, if I do not describe her, this brief account, which I am compelled to write, will be meaningless. I cannot help hoping that this record, which is so painful to me, may not only anticipate a dastardly blow aimed at my character, but may also convey some warning to rash and ardent youth. Where the cautious and prudent err so sadly in

their arrangements for domestic happiness, how shall the headstrong and perfervid hope to succeed ?

The poor child had been running in the meadow with her dog, and had stopped short at sight of us ; she had more colour than usual ; she stood with her hand dropped in light restraint on the collie's head ; her eyes looked frankly up to mine ; she was exquisitely beautiful. The thick fair hair, which was cut short for ease, and did not reach her shoulders, was neither straight nor curly, but every lock seemed ready to curl ; it gave an added delicacy to her delicate face, and made her look younger than she was. Her figure, too, with all its freedom and grace of movement, kept something of the awkwardness of the growing girl—an awkwardness which has its own charm. She might have been the youngest of the nymphs of Artemis ; and even her country-made gown seemed to my fanciful eyes to take the air of virgin draperies. Poor child ! It is sad enough for me to recall that presence full of the very spirit of the innocent country. The description which I have tried to give is more detailed than I should have attempted on that first day of our meeting. Then, though I felt the charm, I saw little else than the eyes upturned to mine—eyes wide apart, and grey and grave, but, more than all, remarkable for their alertness. They seemed like the eyes of one who awaits command. I remember that I fancifully compared their look to that of a little angel ready and very eager to do the divine bidding. She reminded me of a face seen on a church window. When I knew the face better I gradually lost my impression of this alert look, but at first it was always with me ; and now I sometimes see it, as I saw it at first in those grave open eyes which came to mine in the light of that autumn afternoon. Before we had spoken to each other, the dog began to growl—I don't like collies—and the charm was broken.



CHAPTER II.

DAY followed day in that simple but agreeable home, and each new day was sweeter than the last. I never felt better; I knew that my holiday was doing me good. I gave a few hours to business talk with my host and to the examination of necessary papers; and for the rest I resigned myself to tranquil happiness; I determined to breathe deep the spirit of the place and of the time. It is a peaceful country. The wide grass valley slopes upward into broad grass downs; and between these gentle hills, small woods creep down into hollows where villages nestle. Here and there is a field of roots which are growing for the sheep to eat; everywhere is the tinkle of sheep-bells. If in the morning you open a gate in the lane, you will find it open at eventide. Few men are on the road. You may walk for hours

and see nobody but a couple of stone-breakers, a hedger with a wire hidden in his pocket, a farmer looking for a hare. The sign-posts are green and meaningless: they are of use to nobody but the rook, who perches and explores the cracks; at last they fall, or are helped to fall, and so go to warm the labourer's cottage. In my wanderings in this drowsy land, and in my search for new force, what more natural guide could I find than my host's fair daughter? She was never tired, for all her delicate face and her slight figure. She could vault over a fence like a boy, and run lightly and nimbly. Her quick eyes saw everything in hedge or ditch or sky. She was like a boy: the thick hair standing away from the slender neck, the wide brow, fine cheeks, and pointed chin, made her look like some deft Italian page from an old picture. She was like a boy; and yet she was more like a young angel on a church window, an angel who looked grave, and was ready for action, and waited. I cannot tell when I began to think that she might wait for me: that it would be a keen delight to see those eyes look grave and trustful for my commands: that I might mould this supple creature to my will. At first I dallied with the idea, and found a new delightful luxury. I know my weakness, my sensibility to refined pleasures. It is too late now. I made a great mistake. I might have ruined my life beyond repair. In this brief record I shall not attempt to explain away my error.

At least, I have not to blame myself for undue haste. Even when I had fairly faced the idea of making this beautiful girl my own, I delayed and doubted. I forced myself to assume an impartial position. Cool as I was, I could not long be uncertain of her feeling for me. Though she was not aware of it herself, I knew that she loved me. I am no fop; I have never considered myself as eminently attractive in the eyes of women; though I am not ill-looking, I know well that a rougher style has a more wide success with the gentle sex. And yet I could not blind myself to the affection of this beautiful child. Her eyes sought mine for guidance, and betrayed their love. She was only happy as my companion. The motherless girl had given all her love to the father, who was almost an old man at her birth. As soon as she could think about him, she had found that he needed her loving care; and her daughter's affection had something of a mother's responsibility. She was not blind—though she would have been wretched had she guessed that I detected her clear sight—to her father's weakness and foolish pride. Was it to be

wondered at, then, that she gave her innocent heart to the man who came to her dear one's rescue, and awakened him from a lethargy of discontent to new hope—even to the certainty of victory? Slowly I led her to ask questions about myself; and, while I told her little, I made her show me in her sweet simplicity what manner of man she took me to be. Is there anything more intoxicating for the fighter in life's battle than to find himself appreciated by one innocent and beautiful soul whom the world has had no chance to mar? I at least can imagine no more subtle poison. In her eyes I was a born leader of men. Buried in that obscure corner of England, she had never seen a man whose name is in the papers. She knew nothing of the grades of public men. She regarded me as already a leader of the party, as one of the rulers of the country. From my lofty place she had seen me step down to do an act of justice. My brief holiday, snatched from the service of the State, was devoted to the cause of an injured old man, whom a heartless world had left to pine in an obscure corner of the land. No wonder that I read in her eyes the old sweet tale which Cophetua saw in the eyes of the beggar-maid. She loved me.

Did I love her? Ought I to permit myself to love her? I determined to be deaf to the sound of my heart, and to listen to reason only. Only thus can a man see clearly the path of duty when a woman is by the wayside. In my conduct to the other sex there is little with which I need blame myself. Since my boyish days, when I made love to a pretty cousin in an old suburban garden, I had pretended to no serious devotion. Women had been to me an agreeable accident of life, a soothing influence, a refreshment. I had never allowed them to divert me from my appointed work. When little more than a boy, I had come to a fixed resolution on the marriage question. I would not think of it till I had reached a certain position in the career before me; and then I would only permit myself this luxury under certain conditions. I am not a mercenary man; but I knew well that I must never marry a penniless wife. As a bachelor I was so far wealthy that I could give all my attention to party management and to public affairs. As the husband of a woman who brought me nothing, I should have to give half my energy and half my time to my private business.

To such a narrowing of my life it was my duty not to yield. I had reconciled myself early to my duty. But now the constant

presence of this lovely girl forced me to review my position with more anxiety. I could not tell if she had anything. Of course, I might infer that she would inherit the bulk of the property of her father; and I was now almost confident that her father would be made a richer man by my interference; and, moreover, he was old. Still I could not afford to speak. This man who was in possession might fight the case with the same robust energy which he had directed against me; and I knew enough of the uncertainty and delay of English law to know that the claimant's money might be wasted in the struggle, and the victory remain with the wrong-doer. Besides, there might be other claims on my friend of which the world knew nothing. One can never be sure of these respectable old gentlemen who live lonely lives in the country. But if I could be sure that my wife would have a fortune equal to my own (and I asked no more), I felt sure that this was the wife for me. I foresaw a brilliant social success as the complement of my political progress. She was so beautiful, and so uncommon, that a jaded society would welcome her with rapture. Men would rave about her, and she remain as good and true as when she ran with her dog in the meadows. This dog was, indeed, the only drawback which I could see. She and her collie were inseparable. I have never liked collies; they always appear to me a treacherous class of creatures. This particular dog was positively hateful to me, and he seemed to like me as little. But though it was unpleasant to have a wolf-like animal prowling about one's steps, he was scarcely to be regarded as a serious bar to matrimony. And he was the only bar. If men were likely to rave about my young wife, I counted with even more security on the kindly patronage of the most influential women. She was so young, so beautiful, so innocent, and with manners of such natural refinement, that she must appeal to great ladies of varied experience with an irresistible charm. Then I thought, too, that with all her simplicity she would soon learn to play her part in this new world; that the same eyes which were so quick in observation of bird and beast and flower would not be slow to understand the men and women who were so far more interesting. I was wrong here—I confess it; but was it not a natural mistake? Perhaps one is wrong to prophesy about women: they are strange creatures, as many wise men have discovered. Shall not even the most sober of us feel a tremor of the blood, and a delirious certainty that all must turn to good when he dreams of youth and innocence and

love—and all for him? Am I to be blamed if I credited this beautiful girl with a cleverness which was not hers?

Nothing hindered me from laying bare my whole heart but the uncertainty of the money question. I knew that I ought not to speak till I was certain about the money; but it was hard to stifle the voice of inclination. So hard was it that I determined to absent myself for a little time. Not only would this absence test the strength of my feelings, but I could also make some inquiries about the financial position of my host. I wrote to the same lawyer who had served me so well in this matter; I sent him the fresh evidence about the claim which I had gathered on the spot; and I told him to find out the state of our client's affairs, and if there were any other secret claims upon him. Having written this important letter, I announced my immediate departure. If I had been doubtful of the girl's feelings I should have doubted no longer. When I said, with some proper expressions of regret, that I must go away on the morrow, her delicate cheek grew suddenly paler, and her eyes seemed to grow greater with wonder and sorrow. Lest I should betray my feelings, I hurried away to pack my portmanteau.

The next morning everything was ready for my departure, but I had still time to spare. As I came slowly down the old oak staircase, I was in an autumnal mood, which suited well the stillness and the beauty of the day. The clear October weather showed no sign of change; day after day, when the early mist had melted, the sun shone temperate on golden and red leaf unstirred by any breeze. I remember that I tasted the melancholy of the declining year with a tranquil pleasure as I stepped noiselessly down the old staircase. The windows at the back of the house, where the stone is even more mellow and lovely than in front, are high, and all divided into little diamond panes. Across one of these windows the staircase runs, and there is an oak bar so placed that it seems to invite the idle man to lean and look into the garden below. I did not resist the invitation; I knew that I had plenty of time; I leaned and looked. This little old-fashioned garden was very delightful. It was not well kept, but perhaps it seemed all the more luxuriant on that account. It was full of old-fashioned flowers, of old-fashioned perfumes. It nestled in the angle made by the house and some lower buildings, and all the morning it held the sunlight like a cup. Hives stood against the warm stone wall, and bees went in and out with their murmur

of drowsy industry. Nothing could be more peaceful; I sighed—not sadly—as I leaned on the oaken bar. But I had scarcely looked down into the sweet familiar garden before I saw that my little girl was there, and somebody else beside her. For an instant my tranquil mood was crossed by a spasm of disgust. Then I gave all my attention to watching the demeanour of the pair. What a memory I have! Every gesture, every look, though they would have seemed to most people unimportant enough, remains engraven on my memory.

The new-comer had the advantage of youth, and of a certain kind of beauty. I will write of him with strict impartiality. If I can put aside my love in estimating a woman, I can put aside my just dislike in drawing the picture of a man who has injured me. He is tall and dark, with quick impulsive movements, and black eyes which can look both fierce and tender. I hope he may never in those wild lands, where he elects to live, be tempted to any sudden act of fury or revenge. There is something untamable in his air, something which has led me at moments to suspect some taint of insanity. Perhaps this is the most charitable explanation of his conduct to me; and I wish to be charitable. There was something, too, in his Southern tints and his sudden passions which suggested a taint of negro blood. I found out that his mother was a creole, or some such thing; and a suspicion of the tar-brush is probable, if not certain. Still the young man had a certain beauty, though in spite of his arched feet and lithe active figure it was accompanied by no air of breeding. It needed but a single glance into that sunny garden to show me that this dusky youth was passionately in love with the fair girl whom I had almost destined for myself. How eagerly did my eyes turn from his speaking looks to his gentle companion. If I had read there acceptance of this suitor's ardent passion, I should have gone away and returned no more. Women are such strange creatures that my faith in this girl's love for me had tottered as I looked at this undoubted rival. But when I turned my eyes to her fair face, it was like an open book to me, and therein I read, not only that she did not love this young man, but that she was unconscious of his passion. I do not hesitate to confess that I felt a thrill of triumph, as I was sure that her affection for me blinded her to this obvious devotion of another. Where I stood by the open window their voices came up to me from the garden. She said little, but wandered rather listlessly

on the narrow unweeded path, stooping now and then to pick a lingering flower, and hugging, whenever she stooped, the rough head of her dog, who seemed to grin with satisfaction. But as her companion followed her slowly, he talked more than enough. He said no word of love—it was only his looks which betrayed that ; but he talked of his wild cattle-lifting or cattle-breeding life in the Western plains ; of long rides ; of bears and Indians ; of camping in the Rockies. It was poor stuff to listen to, and had an



air of braggadocia, which I hoped would not escape the fair young listener. I was pleased that she seemed absent ; I thought that she was thinking of the hour of my going away. The young man was gaitered and spurred and splashed. As she gave small heed to him, he said something suddenly of his hope of riding over again, vaulted the railings, and disappeared. She stood looking after him with a little smile half lighting the sadness of the face. I could not be deceiving myself : the face was paler than usual, and sad for my departure. She smiled at his abruptness, and then she sighed ; I knew that the sigh was for me. If I had

obeyed my inclination, I should have gone down into the sun-steeped garden, and kissed the little pale face. But I was master of my feelings; I went slowly down the rest of the staircase, and going out of the front door betook myself to the stables to make sure of the readiness of the dog-cart. A little later I stood on the wide stone steps and said good-bye. My host was fussing about the luggage, and divided between his wish to detain me



and his fear lest I should miss the train. He had made up his mind to inform his kinsman's lawyer of his new movement in the matter of the property. He had assured me again and again that he could not work longer in the dark. I no longer discouraged him from publishing the affair; it had become most important to me that his prospects should be clearly defined as soon as possible. While he was half holding me back, half push-

ing me down the steps, his daughter stood silent beside him. Suddenly, without a word, but with a quick faint blush, she held out to me the few flowers which I had seen her gather in the old garden. The shadow of coming winter was on them; but she had picked them for me. I held the little hand a moment in mine, and looked into the honest tell-tale eyes. 'I shall come back,' I said, with much intention in my voice.

How true it is that man should trust no seeming gift of fortune! In his own care and prudence let him confide as much as he will; but when he seems most lucky let him take heed. To such thoughts as these I slide, whether I will or no, when I recall this sweet romantic time. Everything seemed to turn out so well that my heart swelled sometimes with all the arrogance of a favourite of fortune. Of course I smiled at my folly, and calmed the tumult of my feelings; but something of the baseless confidence remained; I felt like a spoiled child. Everything seemed to turn out so well. This claim on my opponent's property, which I had thought it hardly worth while to examine, now seemed to me unanswerable. The one girl who had profoundly affected my heart was probably an heiress; and I could not shut my eyes to the fact that she loved me. The lawyer whom I employed and my lesser agents were serving me with unusual dexterity and success. When, after an interval much shorter than I had dared to hope, I received a letter from my late host, who informed me that his kinsman would give up the property in question without a struggle, I almost danced for joy of my brilliant victory. My opponent—the man who had attacked me so crudely, clumsily mixing disapproval of my public career with criticism of my private position—my opponent had made no fight at all. He had scarcely allowed himself time to go through the evidence with his lawyer, when he wrote to the claimant a letter full of extravagant regrets that he had enjoyed even for an hour a property which rightly belonged to another. His protestations were overdone. He declared that though he had been told, on coming into possession, that there was a claim on some part of the estate, he had been content to leave everything to the family lawyer, confident that if there were any grounds for the claim the claimant would soon move in the matter. He almost abused the old gentleman, of whose peculiar pride and nervousness he had clearly no notion, for remaining passive so long. He suggested compensation. It

seemed that there was nothing which he was not willing to do. On the whole, though the letter was over-coloured, it gave me a higher idea of the writer's ability. He was clever enough to see that he had no case, and to come down with grace.

Everything seemed to fall out as I wished. When I had finished the perusal of my late host's characteristic letter, in which his elation was but poorly concealed by phrases studiously cool and conventional allusions to the indifference of old age, and when I had read with even more attention my opponent's impulsive epistle, which had been forwarded to me in the same envelope, I leapt to my feet with the determination to be bold. One must risk something. I would not wait for absolute certainty. I had been making indirect inquiries, and I could hear nothing to the claimant's disadvantage. His neighbours believed him to be over-scrupulous and over-sensitive; there had never been even a rumour of scandal connected with him; there was not the faintest suspicion of any claim upon him, save that of his dear little girl; it was supposed as a matter of course that he would leave her everything. I would not wait for certainty. One must know how to dare. I determined to be bold. I would hasten to congratulate my friend in person; I would listen to my heart, and see the girl I loved; I would trust to myself to secure a fair settlement before my wedding-day. For the rest I would take the plunge without further premeditation. As I stood there with the old man's letters in my hand, and my heart beating, I felt like a romantic boy. The grand old words of Montrose were ringing in my ears. I would put it to the touch; I was ready 'to win or lose it all'; I would greatly dare.

Not yet did Fortune seem weary of showering her gifts upon me. I had established myself comfortably in my favourite corner of the railway carriage, with my plaid about my knees, a little pile of newspapers by my side, and my mind full of thoughts of the dear girl who was awaiting me. I was congratulating myself on my solitude, for I wished to taste the luxury of sentimental dreams; the train was already in motion, when the door was pulled violently open and a young man stumbled into the compartment. As he steadied himself and dropped into his seat, I recognised the dusky youth whom I had seen in the garden with my beloved. Though I had seen him from that pleasant window on the stairs, I knew that he had not seen me. I no longer resented his headlong intrusion, nor sighed for my lost solitude; I

saw my chance in a moment of gaining some further information. I could hardly help laughing at this new gift of Fortune; it seemed as if the fickle goddess had thrown in this lithe mulatto, or creole, or whatever he is, like the last of a baker's dozen.

It needed no skill to get into conversation with my companion. With a quick grin, which showed his white teeth (it is likely enough that the contrast between his dark skin and that gleaming row had been admired by women), he apologised for the suddenness of his entry. I joined in his laughter; I made some light allusion to the weather; I expressed a hope that I should still find bright autumnal weather in the place whither I was bound; and, having thus named the village near which my host lived, I asked the young man if by chance he knew that part of the world. 'Know it!' he cried; 'I know every brick of that village; I was born there; my mother's house is not a stone's throw from it.' 'Then you must know a friend of mine,' I said smiling, and I named my host. It needed but that name to open the flood-gates. The young man's black eyes shone, and his dusky cheek was flushed, as he rushed into a eulogy on his friend. One would have thought that there had never been so honourable, so high-minded an old gentleman. I deprecated with much good humour this excessive praise, and thus easily induced my companion to be more explicit. He told me half-a-dozen stories of my host's kindness to his poorer neighbours. With an assumption of cynicism, I hinted that the kindness of landlords had been sometimes a little too great—a little harmful. At this my friend blazed into indignation. He told me with excessive emphasis that this old gentleman's life from the hour of his birth had been as open as his Bible; that for simple piety he stood alone; that in all the gossip of the country-side, which he, my informant, knew from the first word to the last, there had never been a whisper against this remarkable old man. I hastened to apologise for my cynical tone; to assure him that I shared to the full his good opinion of our common friend; that it did my heart good to hear him praised so warmly. Indeed, I spoke with warmth. I was truly glad to hold so high an opinion of the old gentleman, and my belief that he had no secret claims upon his purse was increased almost to certainty.

Suddenly a thought seemed to strike my impulsive companion, who had been regarding me with a straightforward stare which was almost embarrassing. 'You can't be Mr. ——?' he said, naming

me. 'Yes, I can,' I answered lightly, for of course further disguise was impossible. He stared at me a full minute more, until I laughed nervously. Then, with a quick movement, as if he flung some doubt from him, he stretched out his hand to me. 'You must let me thank you for my old friend's sake.' I spoke lightly of the service which I had rendered the old gentleman. 'No, no,' he cried; 'it was nobly done; it was a fine thing; and from a stranger. If you had known him of course you could not have helped helping him.' Then, with his enthusiasm growing warmer as he spoke, he went on more quickly—'But you had never seen them; that's what makes it great; I am so angry with myself for not having looked into that claim—I had known of it all my life, but I was brought up to think it a mere delusion of the dear old man; I can hardly help hating you for having done it.' I held up my hand in deprecation. 'If you had known them,' he began again; 'but you had never seen them' (he had the air of bringing up my virtues as accusations against me)—'you had never seen her.' He gave a long whistle, as if a sigh went out in it. 'You had never seen her,' he repeated more slowly; 'you did not know what an honour it was to do the least thing for her. She's an angel.' 'You speak with enthusiasm,' I said, smiling. 'Oh, I've been in love with her,' he cried out carelessly, 'ever since I could see.'

Now, though I had recognised this young man's feeling when I saw him with my little girl in the garden, I confess that I experienced a painful thrill when I heard him proclaim his love. It was with difficulty that I preserved the smile with which I listened to him. As I said nothing, he presently spoke again, and spoke more quietly. 'Of course you won't betray me,' he said. 'Of course she knows nothing of this; and she won't know till I've made my pile in Montana. You see, I've nothing yet, except a few beasts; and she'll have money—why, she'll be almost an heiress now—thanks to you.'

'Does she inherit?' I asked carelessly.

'How can she help it?' he asked dismally; 'he hasn't another near relation in the world, and he'd give her his last penny to-morrow, if she asked him. If she asked him! As if she'd ever ask for anything in the world, except his love—and that she has without asking—and the love of all the world if she looked at it.' Then he became silent. I took up a paper, and held it before me, as I thought. After a time I picked up the

talk again by asking him some questions about cattle-breeding in America. He was full of confidence; he scarcely saw the risks for the profits; he was sure that a few more years like the last would make a man of him. He explained to me that he should not stay in America till he had made a fortune, but that he should come back to England as soon as he had saved a small capital. 'Before I go back now,' he said, 'I shall speak to the dear old man, and show him my position, and tell him that I shall come back to her; and if he lets me, I shall say a word to her—just a word of hope——' Here he stopped so long that I thought he had no more to say; but after a time he said slowly and with emphasis, as if he were talking seriously to himself: 'And yet I swear, if I were not going so far away, I'd rather not say a word of love to her yet. It seems like breaking into a shrine.' I suppose that I could not restrain some movement of surprise, for he turned short upon me. 'You don't know what innocence is,' he cried; 'nobody does who isn't her friend—oh, yes, of course, all girls are innocent; but she—she hasn't a thought nor a dream that isn't pure; and she loves me as if I were her dog, or a flower in her garden—and I wish I were.'

Fancy a sane young man talking like that in a railway train, and to a stranger! I could quote more of his wild speeches, if it were worth while: my memory is really extraordinary—I can't forget (alas!) even when I would. One thing became clear to me as I travelled with my wild companion. He was the very last man to whom the happiness of a young girl should be confided. It seemed the most charitable conclusion that his brain was not quite right. I thought of the dear child who awaited me at my journey's end with a spasm of fear. At all risks I must save her from linking her lot with a madman. Even if he could not be called mad, he was clearly so flighty and so unstable that he was unfit to take care of a wife. It is not restless youth, with fierce and tender eyes and olive skins, who make fortunes by the dull methodical business of cattle-breeding. Surely, such men are not constant even in their love. They cannot resist the temptation of women's eyes; and though there was to me something un-English and panther-like in the appearance of this impulsive being, I could suppose that women admired him. When we had reached the familiar station, he swung himself from the carriage, and immediately leapt into it again that he might help me with my lighter luggage. He seemed eager to conciliate me; he had good

reason for trying to secure my friendship. 'Good-bye,' he said; 'I shall see you before you leave them; I shall ride over as soon as my mother will let me. My mother has the first claim on her prodigal; but I shall come as soon as I can.' He spoke of his mother like the hero of a French drama; it was part of that want of reserve which was so unpleasant to me. Nevertheless, civility demanded that I should be polite; I thanked him for his companionship and courtesy, and expressed my hope that we should meet again soon. He wrung my hand fiercely, and climbed quickly into the shabby old dog-cart which awaited him. He flourished his whip, and with some cry to me which I did not understand, drove quickly away.

(To be continued.)

A WAGON TRIP AT THE CAPE.

ALTHOUGH not what can be termed 'raw,' I am still somewhat of a new hand at the Cape. This is the first time that I have been trusted to convoy a wagon-load of meal (wheat, coarsely ground and generally used as a substitute for Australian flour) from what, in these parts, is termed 'a corn-growing district,' to the 'City of Saints,' Grahamstown, in the eastern province, a distance of over 120 miles.

It is Thursday, a doubtful showery day, and the thunder-clouds drifting overhead make us fear one of those sudden and terrific thunderstorms which come down with such fury during the hot months, about Christmas-time, often turning what before were almost dry watercourses into broad and rapid-flowing torrents. These may stop travelling for many days, and they sometimes wash trees, cattle, sheep, and corn from the adjoining lands.

We are (as is generally the case) in great doubt as to whether we shall be able to start to-day, or any time this month; nevertheless, before breakfast, we send for the herd of oxen, select sixteen of the strongest and fattest, herd them near the homestead, and devote the whole morning to loading and preparing the huge buck-wagon peculiar to the country.

At 2.30 P.M. we are still in doubt, and anxiously watching the dark clouds drifting across the mountains; but at length decide to try a start. Notwithstanding there are twenty-five drifts to be crossed before sunrise to-morrow, I feel tolerably confident of getting through a few of them, although, should the storm burst, and the rivers 'come down,' we must inevitably stick in the immediate neighbourhood of home for some days, with swollen and unfordable torrents before and behind.

My provisions, viz., the carcase of a sheep, a bag of rusks, ditto of potatoes, ditto of coffee, and some bread made of meal are thrown into the wagon. My bed, consisting of sheets, blankets, and counterpane, is made upon a stretcher, slung under the tent at the hinder part of the vehicle, its appearance before we move almost deluding one into the idea that it will be as snug as any bed at home.

The oxen are now driven into a line like a file of soldiers, raw-hide reins are thrown over their long formidable-looking horns, then fastened, and with much shouting and pulling, the pairs of beasts are drawn to their proper yokes, and inspanned, as it is termed. By 3.30 we (that is to say, myself and the two Caffres selected to attend me) are ready. Saying 'good-bye' to the owner of the farm, I give the order 'trek Dinezeer,' and climb into the wagon. Now comes a sight that would astonish, *not* the natives, but any home person. The leader holds on to the rein attached to the two front oxen, and shouts in Caffre; the driver yells out the names of the oxen in quick succession, swinging his long two-handed whip in every direction. Each movement varies the sound from a sharp crack, like the report of a pistol, to a deep sounding pop echoed by the adjacent mountains; and the whip finally lands somewhere on one of the unfortunate team, which starts off at a brisk trot.

Away we go, scrambling over the low bushes and boulders; the cattle fearing nothing but that long heavy piece of raw hide; and the wagon dancing, jumping, pitching, rattling, and creaking as though it would come to pieces every moment. This alarming and decidedly uncomfortable state of things often proves dangerous, and causes serious accidents, but it is considered the correct thing to depart with a grand flourish, amid the excitement and delight of the numerous bystanders. Soon after the first mile, the niggers have yelled themselves hoarse, and we settle down into a steady tramp, only varied by putting on a spurt occasionally when going down the sharp inclines into the drifts, and in urging the oxen, by an extra allowance of whip, to renewed exertions up the opposite banks.

After about fifteen miles, we reach the homestead of a hospitable Dutchman. Here the yokes are taken off the oxen's necks, placed on the ground, and the oxen tied to them to have a rest before their night's work. All travelling is done at night, both on account of its being less exhausting for the cattle than during the heat and glare of the day, and because the daylight is the only time at which they can be let loose to feed. Even then, a most strict watch has to be kept to prevent their getting lost in their restless endeavours to obtain all they can of the parched and scanty herbage. Only give them a chance, and they are off home altogether.

Leaving the cattle lying down and contentedly chewing their

and, I follow my kind-hearted friend into his house (a low, roughly-built cottage, but considered a good house) to see the 'Vrouw und Kinder,' and partake of an acceptable supper in the form of an ostrich-egg omelette. We converse freely upon the state of the crops, cattle, sheep, &c.—topics always uppermost in the bucolic mind. Having made the most of this opportunity to gain all the information possible regarding those parts of the road where grazing and water are still to be found, at 9.30 I make ready to inspan again.

When this is accomplished, the natives having received full and minute instructions to call me at certain dangerous points on the road, I turn into bed half undressed, but ready at a moment's notice to be up and doing in case of emergency. It is impossible to read, as the motion of a wagon will not permit of a light—and to-night's journey among the mountains being rougher than usual (even in South Africa), the fraction of a wink of sleep is also out of the question. So I lie on my back with elbows well out, yet bouncing about like a shuttlecock; at one moment banging my head against the lantern on one side, and then being jerked vigorously against the opposite extremity of the tent—in fact, it is the superlative of perpetual motion.

However, at last the worst part of the road is safely passed; and meeting a wagon about to tie fast at one o'clock A.M., we decide to give our oxen the usual rest. The yokes are therefore taken off, and the boys (all natives are so called) commence to light a fire and prepare the inevitable black coffee. Knowing their slow ways, I take the opportunity of indulging in forty winks, and am only awakened by hearing a voice at the back of the wagon calling, 'Côfēēē, baas,' with the appearance of a dusky hand bearing a tin mug of the boiling liquor, minus both milk and sugar. My throat, however, fails to appreciate what is nectar to a Caffre, so I turn out to enjoy the fire and hear the gossip.

A white Scotch mist hangs close overhead, entirely obscuring the moon. Around the fire between the wagons squat a group of savages, each enveloped in his kaross or discarded military cloak, and smoking an enormous pipe filled with coarse green Boer tobacco. Their countenances, as disclosed by the reflecting light, look even more hideous and unearthly than usual; while beyond, and but just visible in the red glow of the embers, are the long lines of oxen. The hard and sandy desert stretches away into the darkness, forming a fitting background to the weird

picture, and almost misleading one into the idea that we are the only remnants of life left in the country.

We trek on, and at sunrise find ourselves close to a shallow dam, somewhat redder than the surrounding country. Our night's work is done, the oxen are turned loose, and after wading into the water stroll off in charge of the leader. Then the driver slowly (how slowly none unaccustomed to the Caffre way of doing things can imagine) sets things to rights, lights a fire, replenishes our stock of water from the aforesaid dam, and prepares the meal of the day by chopping the mutton up into small pieces on the worn and greasy disselboom (pole), and putting it to boil with some potatoes.

As usual at the sight and smell of cooking, sundry wandering and hungry-looking Caffres make their appearance 'like vultures that scent the battle from afar.' These hang about gossiping until the boys bestow upon them something in the way of food, and then pass on. It is useless remonstrating with one's escort on such occasions as the present, and saying, 'We shall run short of provisions.' The visitors are always introduced as 'dear relations,' but are in reality the natives' only newspaper. At this, the customary appeal, I cannot be hard (although I know what it means, as will be seen hereafter), for have I not my own old newspaper from England wherewith to solace myself until eleven o'clock, at which hour the rough stew is ready and very acceptable? Then shaking the dust off one's clothing, an attempt at washing is made in the muddy dam, a sleep is got through the hot hours of the day, and at four o'clock we inspan and are off again.

This evening's journey is rather more interesting than the last, the road is not so hilly, and consequently less rough and tiring. We pass a few ostrich farms with their enclosed camps, the sight of which little oases in so sterile a country is quite cheering.

On an undulating plain we see a few herds of springboks, an antelope now fast disappearing and only existing here on account of being carefully preserved.

Another sight is that of a farmer with 'an addition to his family.' He has (as is the usual custom) hired a house for two or three months in a town, and is now taking his wife and infant home, to introduce the latter to its elder brothers and sisters. The husband considers that his wife has had her holiday, and probably she will not see a town again for a year to come, or

maybe several. Two women, whom I knew to be well off and fairly educated, were tramping behind the wagon, a mass of dust and dirt, yet quite contented; and they would have told you, had you cared to inquire, that ox-wagon travelling was as good as any in the world.

This slow tramp through a monotonous, waterless waste, with the usual mountains in the distance and nothing to occupy the mind, seems ineffably dreary to one accustomed to English railway travel, and I amuse myself by helping the leader to obtain a little fuel for to-night's fire, as now is our only chance.

We are on the main road from the diamond fields to the coast, and have outspanned on a piece of Government ground reserved for that purpose. Around us are fifteen large wagons laden with wool, on its way from the Orange Free State for shipment to England. Our camping-ground is on the side of a mountain against which the wind blows terrifically, requiring the bucksails to be lashed over the top and down to the ground on the windward side of the wagons. Under one of these a Dutchman is busy kneading bread, made on such occasions without fermentation, in the form of a large solid wagon wheel, and then baked in the centre of the ashes of a wood fire. Several sheep tied to the wagons are watching the cooking-pots on the fires, and looking so distressed that one cannot help thinking they know the fate in store for them.

Whilst returning from a stroll to see that the oxen are safe, I am accosted by a tall, dirty-looking young man, dressed in dilapidated corduroys, who asks if I have seen any oxen. Thereupon, I take him to a group of skins and bones that have left flesh behind them; and learn that he, their happy proprietor, has made a most successful trip. 'Only four head lost from six spans, and the rest, with the exception of two, look tolerably up to completing the journey.' My new acquaintance gives me an invitation to dinner, which I gladly accept, and go to what is his migratory house during six months in the year. After climbing up a double row of wool bales, we crawl into the top of a small tent, simply lined with green baize. There I behold luxuries which I have not seen for many a long day, viz. tinned beef, pickles, condensed milk, and a small tin of butter, originally from England, but lately obtained from a Free State town. This may seem curious to those who have not experienced country life on the 'Frontier,' where butter and milk are often scarce articles for a considerable part of the year, and beef is hardly ever seen; inferior mutton,

boiled mealies (maize), and other cereals, being our chief diet. All the above luxuries at the same time, together with a sooty cauldron of stew, are enjoyed by me more than any 'City Dinner.' My host enters into details regarding himself. He and his brother are transport riders (carriers) and the fortunate proprietors of a large farm and several thousand pounds' worth of wagons, oxen, and gear. They relieve each other alternately to keep things constantly on the road, and desire nothing better than such work so long as a living is to be made by it.

It is now 3 P.M., and I must prepare to resume my journey. My friend begs me to wait for him—he will be off soon—but, not having so much faith in his 'lean kine' as in my own farm cattle, I make ready. After receiving a few warnings with regard to the dangers of the road, and an assurance that he will catch me up, we part for the rest of the journey.

Being now on the 'main transport line,' skeletons of oxen are frequently passed. They are the remains of poor unfortunates which have died in the yoke, or worse, being unable to keep on their legs any longer, have been thus cruelly left to perish from starvation, the vultures doing the work that the natives would gladly have undertaken had time permitted.

The locality is called the 'Fish River Bush.' A rocky district, covered with bush and prickly pears, upon which all creatures are compelled to subsist, for grass or herbage is unknown. It is one of the few remaining strongholds for game.

Soon we see the Great Fish River in the valley below, and after several hours more travelling, we reach the hotel and toll-house on its banks. This being also the first 'Winkel' or general shop, the driver, as I anticipated, informs me with much grimacing, that the coffee is finished; but, knowing the reason of this failure in the commissariat, I resolve to deprive myself of the luxury for the rest of the journey; and he perforce must follow my example, as a slight punishment for his lavish expenditure of that article and a warning to be more economical in future.

We soon cross over an iron bridge, forty feet in height above the level of the water—no unnecessary precaution in this country, for its predecessor, equally high, was carried away in a flood a few years ago.

Arrived at what was once the 'Frontier Boundary' of the colony, and which is the last watering-place, we stop for supper. In the dark distance we occasionally hear the yelling of drivers,

the crack of whips and heavy rumbling of wagons, which supply the Free State, Kimberley, and Diamond Fields with the necessaries of life. The proximity of these cheering sounds acquaints one with the fact that there is a sprinkling of civilised people in these lone melancholy regions.

As it is Saturday evening and we wish to reach Monday morning's market, we remain here throughout the night so that the oxen may be fit to hurry through the rest of the journey without a drink.

Somewhat early on Sunday morning we trek on, passing a few transport trains of wool outspanned like our friends of Saturday. We slowly approach, not a church with bells ringing for morning service, but the entrance to what is appropriately termed 'Hell Port,' an unpleasant pass justly compared to the infernal regions on account of the intense heat concentrated by the sun at this point. A few abandoned and baked-up hovels near the roadside tell, more graphically than words can paint, the want of water; for notwithstanding the efforts of Africanders to conceal all drawbacks, this one fact always has prevented progress, and must continue to do so.

Threading the windings of the mountain side, we ascend gradually into a drizzling mist, which forms the surface of the dust into a paste, not pleasant, but decidedly preferable to the thick cloud raised by beasts in the sun. I will not attempt to relate the many tales of peace and war told by colonists in connection with this pass, but proceed to the next hotel—a small, low cottage at the 'Poort Exit'—possessing a large artificial dam as dry as the whole valley. Involuntarily, I glance towards the 'final scene' of a chequered career—that of a well-educated Englishman, who, after becoming a wanderer, tramp, and 'Jack-of-all-trades,' married the former landlady of this uninviting abode. He shot both her and himself in a drunken fit, was dragged away by the heels, and only covered with earth at the intercession of a few of the passing travellers who discovered the catastrophe and 'dropped the curtain.' Nothing marks the spot where murderer and victim lie apart, soon to be forgotten in this ever-changing world.

At a short distance from this place, we stop for a meal; and with the darkness commences the mournful wail of jackals, echoing in all directions, and serenading us with their 'Evening Hymn' until we are off again and out of hearing.

On we jolt and creak through Sunday night, dawn disclosing the blue gum-trees planted around the prettiest town of the Eastern Province.

At length the 120 miles are accomplished by our arrival at the Market Square at six A.M. We take our place in the long line of wagons laden with wood, corn, skins, vegetables, and other natural productions. Arranged in small lots on the ground and benches around us are live stock, poultry, hides, meat, pumpkins and other vegetables; fruit, butter, bottles of milk, and in fact anything that the population wish to dispose of; for every imaginable thing, good, bad, or indifferent, has a sale at a South African market.

Whilst we are engaged in taking down and opening a sample bag of meal, a ragged loafer (with nothing to recommend him save a skin that was once white) asks if I require an 'agent,' meaning a man to direct our wagon to the houses of customers. This gentleman's fee is 7s. 6d., an imposition to which I submit for reasons that will soon be apparent.

People in various *negligé* costumes are hurrying to the square from all quarters of the town; and as soon as our sample is opened, the buyers gather round, tasting the meal, and asking innumerable questions, Is it sweet? Where does it come from? and so on.

Punctually at seven o'clock the market master and his clerk make their appearance and the auction commences—vegetables, meat, fruit, cattle, hides, &c., are gradually 'knocked down,' and comes our turn. Two bags go to Jones, three to Smith, one to Robinson, and so on, until the whole load has been disposed of, at various prices.

When the market is over, I receive a slip of paper with the names of my customers and the prices they have given, but no addresses. Now comes the use of my 'agent'; he knows these people and where they live; so, giving him the lists, I despatch him with the wagon. Had I attempted to deliver the load myself, I might have been tramping backwards and forwards about the town all day, in dire perplexity as to the identity of Jones, Smith, and Robinson.

My responsibility has ceased until twelve o'clock noon, and I retire to have a general clean up and breakfast, and to don more civilised garments, in order to make myself presentable for indulging in a stroll down town.

I need hardly describe the curious sensations one has upon being once more in civilised society, seeing stores with all their varieties of manufactured goods, and well-dressed ladies walking about, after a lengthy sojourn in the wilds; but will pass on to noon, at which time I duly present myself at the market master's office. Here I meet my 'agent,' find that the load has been delivered, the money paid in, and receive my cheque.

Such is wagon-travelling in South Africa, which every man who leads a country life there must needs experience.

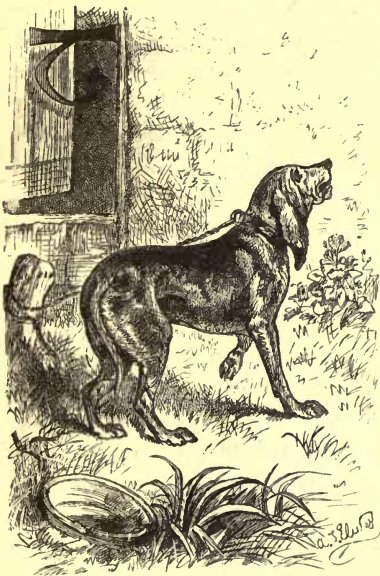
Many respectable young men, who have been brought up in luxurious England, and go to the Cape with a few hundred pounds and the assurance that they are 'bound to make a fortune,' upon finding they cannot obtain employment, invest in a wagon or so (costing with oxen and gear about 300*l.* each) and become 'transport riders.' Their wagon is their home, and they may make a few successful trips; but I fear that in most cases they do not see their capital again.

In concluding, I hope that my endeavours to describe 'A wagon journey at the Cape' may be of some service to young men who think of pushing their fortunes in the colony. But let me warn those who with small means desire to see the country and experience its life, that they may have to sleep in the open in all weathers and to learn long fasting; and, above all, let them beware of disinterested acquaintances who may be anxious to invest their capital to the best advantage.

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AN HISTORIC BLOODHOUND.¹



THE animal world has of late years had so much kindness bestowed upon it, and the virtues and good deeds of all sorts of creatures have been so much lauded, that it is a bold thing for anyone to say anything implying wickedness in any animals, especially dogs. In giving, indeed, an account of the evil deeds of certain dogs, we do not impute to them much individual responsibility for their wickedness. We know that carnivorous animals cannot be blamed for what we should call cruelty; and dogs, if cruel, must have been trained by men who have either ne-

glected to repress their ferocious instincts, or who for some purpose, which can hardly be a good one, have encouraged or even stimulated them. The blame, therefore, we cast upon these dogs

¹ The incidents on which this narrative is founded are taken from authentic sixteenth-century records.

is only a feeble reflection, be it remembered, of that we bestow upon their masters.

Our purpose is to speak of the deeds of dogs in the West Indies and the Spanish main in the early days after the discovery of those regions, and especially to relate the premature end of one of the most noted of them, which was attended with all the pomp and circumstance of a tragedy of the heroic order.

Historians do not tell us in what year the Spaniards first took bloodhounds with them to the West Indies to aid in fighting the unclothed natives; but there is circumstantial evidence to show that some of these ferocious brutes must have been part of the equipment of Columbus in his second expedition, if not in the first. Very early in the naïve records of the early chroniclers we read of certain unfortunate Indians, *caciques* and others, being punished by being *aperreado*—given to the dogs. Modern writers for the most part have overlooked this formidable kind of warfare which was practised by the Spaniards. No one can deny the undaunted courage which prompted those men to attack coolly and confidently overwhelming masses of natives; but we should always remember the immense superiority they had over them in every way. Especially was this so in the case of the first islanders with whom they came in contact. The inhabitants of Hayti had not even their muscles developed by labour. They ‘tickled the earth’ with a stick instead of a hoe, and it ‘laughed’ yams, maize, and many other kinds of tropical produce. They had no wild animals that gave the trouble of being hunted. The *hutias* were taken out of holes in trees and crevices in rocks, and the *agoutas*, the ‘dumb dogs’ of the *conquistadores*, were so sluggish that they were easily run down. The Spaniards used to despatch them with a kick of their iron-shod boots. The only food-producing employment that gave the natives any trouble, exercised their wits, and brought them face to face with danger was fishing. It is true that they experienced from time to time the horrors of war, when the Caribs made a raid on them; but there is little doubt that the misdeeds of these latter were exaggerated by the Spaniards to excuse their own red-handed dealings with them and with other tribes.

These poor Indians of the Antilles, literally naked people, armed with clubs and wooden swords, had now to face not only iron-headed spears and lances, swords of Bilbao steel (*bilboes*, as our seventeenth-century writers call them), shafts from cross-

bows, and occasional stones from culverins and bullets from clumsy muskets, which perhaps caused more terror than real damage, but horses—animals which must have seemed as formidable to them as elephants would be to us—and other strong and savage beasts trained, horrible to relate, to disembowel them.

Once, when the Spanish dominion was firmly established over the island of Hayti, then called Hispaniola, two Spaniards were



sent by Bartolomé Columbus to see to the loading of a ship with cassavi bread or biscuit, which the natives of that district had to supply their masters with by way of tribute. The bread was ready, and the two men were watching a gang of natives who were carrying the bread to the boats. One of the Spaniards had brought his dog with him, held by a stout cord tied to his collar. Following the regulations laid down by their taskmasters, who employed the *caciques* as foremen of the wretched Indians, the

cacique of the district, dressed like his subjects in a loin cloth, but with a diadem of highly-coloured feathers, on his head and a wand of office, also decked with feathers, in his hand, was busy-ing himself in ordering and encouraging the *peons*; now shouting at a laggard, now animating a weary man, now administering a little mild correction with his wand; and all this hoping doubtless that the representatives of the Crown of Castile there present might report favourably of his zeal and energy.

But the devil, who we have good authority for believing is ever prompting idle hands to some mischief, put it into the head of one of the Spaniards, not the owner of the bloodhound, that it would be rare fun to see the dog bring down that brightly-coloured crest to the ground, actuated doubtless by the same motive that prompts a mischievous schoolboy to shy a stone at the red-crested cock who is lording it over the more soberly clad denizens of the poultry yard. As ill-luck would have it the same idea had already occurred to the dog, who, believing that he had a right to attack every redskin that he could get at, had become furious at the flourishing of the stick and the bobbing up and down of the coloured plumes. So the man said to his companion, pointing to the *cacique*—

‘Shall I say *Fetch him* to Almanzor?’

‘Virgen santisima!’ cried the other, ‘dost thou not see that ’tis as much as I can do to hold him?’

‘So much the better fun. I should like to see this cock-o’-the-walk jump when he sees the dog on him. *Fetch him*, old fellow!’

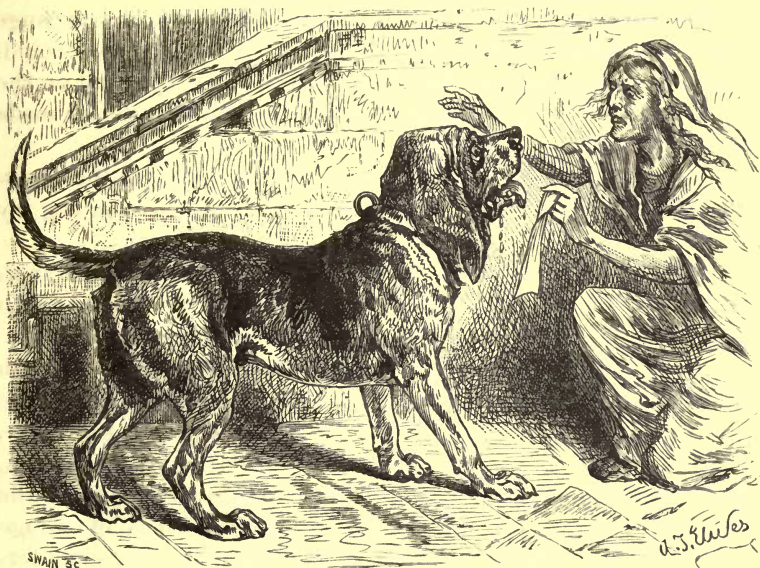
The dog, who seemed to have divined what the Spaniards were talking about, was by this time almost ungovernable, and on hearing the word of command he bounded forward with all his might, dragging his master after him. The latter, either prompted by the same devil that had incited his companion or really unable to hold in the hound, let go the leash, and in a moment the wretched *cacique* was writhing on the ground, his entrails torn out by the ferocious brute.

The Indians, panic-stricken, ran away; no more bread was loaded that day; and the next, when the captain went on shore for the rest of the cargo, the village was found to be deserted: the natives had fled to the hills.

The consequence of this cruel folly was that the trodden worm turned. The neighbouring *caciques* rose in arms; twelve Spaniards were surprised and killed; and the first energetic and only for-

midable struggle of the inhabitants against the Spaniards took place, which, though quite ineffectual, was not repressed until thousands of the wretched natives had perished, butchered and burnt, and hunted to the death like vermin.

The same kind of deeds went on by the instrumentality of dogs in the other fair islands of that sea, which has witnessed so many horrors. In that of San Juan, now called Puertorico, there flourished a very fiendish dog whose name was Becerrillo—*little calf*. So renowned a man-eater was he that he was promoted to a military grade, received the pay of a sergeant



of horse and a proportionate share of prize money and spoils. He was much dreaded by the natives, although, being more exposed to the raids of the Caribs than the inhabitants of the other islands, they were less contemptible warriors. The annalist says that 'ten men with Becerrillo were equal to a hundred without him.' He lived a long life, fighting and destroying; but at last, when age had blunted his teeth and relaxed his muscles, he died on the battle-field like a grim old warrior that he was.

Let us give the devil his due. Becerrillo once showed that his bad education had not utterly exterminated the good within him. One day the Governor, Don Juan Ponce de Leon, had a

letter to send to some Spaniards who lived at a distance from the port of San Juan. So he handed it to an old Indian woman, with orders to take it at once to its destination. On her way her evil star led her to the church, where, it being a feast day, the young *hidalgos*, waiting for service to begin, were standing before the doors, clad in their best, doubtless regretting that there were so few *niñas* in the island, before whom they might display their gallant plumes and brand-new sword-belts. Becerrillo and his master, or rather his comrade in arms, was there; so one young spark suggested setting Becerrillo to worry the old woman, by way of whiling away the time before mass should begin.

No sooner said than done. The poor woman saw the huge creature making for her open-mouthed, and did the best she could, defending herself by her utter helplessness. She squatted on the ground, held out the letter in front of her, and, trembling, made her little speech.

‘My lord dog, thy servant is sent with this letter to the Christian lords down yonder. See, here it is. Do me no harm, dog my lord!’¹

Becerrillo graciously admitted this claim to his forbearance. He went up to her, sniffed at her, and, though treating her with some indignity, left her to go on her way rejoicing.

Cortes, *facile princeps* in good and evil among the Spanish captains, did not fail to take with him man-eating dogs from Cuba when he went on his expedition to New Spain. But there, the Mexican warriors being clothed in jackets of quilted cotton, the bloodhounds were taught to attack the throat instead of the abdomen. Although these people had several kinds of savage animals in the country, and had offensive weapons of a more formidable kind than the natives of the Antilles could make, the Spanish bloodhounds were feared almost as much as the horses, and were well-nigh as effectual in breaking the ranks of the warriors.

When Cortes and his army were resting from their labours after the siege and destruction of Mexico, having heard many accounts of a certain king of a neighbouring country called Michoacan, to the west of Mexico, which king was an hereditary

¹ The annalist calls attention to the curious custom of the natives of the Antilles of repeating epithets in inverted order at the end of a phrase. Would they had condescended to preserve more of the peculiarities of the speech of that ill-fated race!

enemy of Montezuma, the great captain resolved to send an exploring expedition there, to ascertain if the accounts he had heard of the greatness of the monarch and the richness of his country were true. To this end he made choice of a soldier of fortune named Montaña, a man of some education, for he wrote an account of his journey; and to him he gave as colleagues one Peñalosa and two others, all 'men of discretion and valour.' Peñalosa owed this distinction to his being the owner of a very celebrated dog, who had not his equal in New Spain. 'So big and courageous was he,' says the annalist, 'and so dextrous in war, and so much dreaded by the Indians, that when let loose, although there might be a thousand Indians in front of him, they dared not stand up before him.' His tactics were simple but effectual. He rushed at the nearest Indian, knocking him down by his weight and the impetus of his attack, turning with amazing swiftness to another and another, till he had left a dozen or twenty men on the ground, whom the Spaniards would then despatch with their spears. By this time the front rank of the enemy had generally retired to a distance; so the dog would turn round to see if those whom he had thrown down were motionless. Those who lay quiet, either paralysed with dread or already despatched by his two-legged comrades, he took no notice of; but the faintest sign of life was a signal for him to rush upon them and tear their throats to pieces with his powerful jaws. These men being disposed of, he would go in search of fresh victims until tired out, or until there were no more to tear.

To these Castilians were associated twenty Mexican nobles, now thoroughly subjugated and anxious to gain the goodwill of their new masters; an interpreter, who, besides some knowledge of Spanish, was acquainted with Tarasca and Otomi, the two languages spoken in Michoacan, besides his native Mexican or Azteca; and as guides two men of the class of itinerant traders. These men, who were something between merchants and pedlars, formed a caste by themselves, having their little villages, serving them as goods depôts and resting-places, all over the more civilised part of tropical and semi-tropical North America, from Panamá to the farthest of the settled tribes in the North of Mexico. In war and in peace they were always recognised as neutrals; and apart from their villages they could always find in bad weather or in inclement regions some cave or hut where to shelter themselves, although in good weather they were accustomed to pass the night

out of doors. Cortes also gave the party a quantity of Spanish cutlery and trinkets, such as beads and brass ornaments, and told off some Indians to carry the wares, and also a quantity of such provisions as would not spoil, so that they need not be absolutely dependent on the chances of the journey.

All being ready, the party set out one fine morning in the month of October, the Spaniards delighting in the thought of seeing new lands and new people, the Mexican nobles glad to get away from the scenes of desolation so apparent in their own country, and the guides proud of the honour of conducting so distinguished a party. Only the poor porters, with their burden suspended by a strap from their foreheads, marched in advance in single file, uncomplaining but stolid, and apparently indifferent what masters they were serving.

The early autumn on the high Mexican plateau, about 7,000 feet above the sea-level, is the most delightful season of the year. The summer is exceeding damp and rainy; the winter and spring, though bright and sunny, are so droughty that, what with the nightly frosts and the dry winds, the grass shrivels up and the trees look parched and withered. It is true that in the neighbourhood of the Spanish camp, though the grass was green and tall, and abundance of wild dahlias and the yellow flowers of an allied species adorned the sides of the narrow track that served them as a road, and the fields, uncultivated or left fallow from former years, were ablaze with the bright pink flowers of the *maravilla*,¹ that lightened up the landscape, the *adobe* huts were mostly deserted and in ruins, the trees cut down, and the few people who were met with ran to hide themselves as the *cortège* filed past. But as they went on, and began gradually to ascend the mountains which enclosed the valley of Mexico, the maize fields came into view, the yellowing leaves and the tarnished brilliancy of the tassel showing that the grain was beginning to ripen, and the way began to be strewn with yellow crab-apples which had fallen from the trees, that for two months longer would still remain adorned with abundance of bright-coloured but sour-tasted fruit. Myriads of small grain-eating

¹ The *maravilla* (*Cosmos bipinnatus parviflorus*), with its fennel-like leaves and its bright flowers gracefully posed on their slender stalks, is very lovely, and is as abundant in the high Mexican valleys as poppies in England. Last year it bloomed in the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society, and it is hoped that it may become a permanent addition to our autumn flora.

birds, blue-black like crows, misnamed *tordos*, flew twittering along the fields; the bronze-winged pigeon started whirring from the bushes; the saucy *urraca* haunted the pools and the banks of the watercourses; the mocking bird sang from the taller trees; bright wren-like creatures, all blue, all crimson, or all gold, darted like living gems across their path; the *colibris* were



busy among the yellow cups of the large-flowered acacias; while a grey hare would occasionally leap from her form, or a sandy hare-like rabbit would scamper among the grass.

By degrees, as they mounted higher, firs began to be seen among the evergreen oaks, the bright green *thuja*, and a more sombre-leaved cedar-like pine. Lupins, hawk's-bill geranium, various kinds of *oxalis* and mallow, and other flowers of colder regions now represented the humbler flora; squirrels began to

bound among the trees ; an occasional fox scudded before them ; and as Lobo, the dog, began to grow restless and to whimper, the interpreter discoursed in broken Spanish of the extraordinary cunning and trickiness of the pricked-eared *coyote*, who even then, unseen by the Spaniards, was following them and spying their movements. Some deer were descried in the distance, and the Spaniards eagerly discharged their cross-bows, but without effect.

At the close of the day they had just begun to descend the western slopes of the mountains, and as the sun was now low the cold was disagreeably severe, especially following the copious perspiration caused by the toilsome ascent ; so that the Spaniards were not a little delighted when the guides pointed out a cluster of huts in the mountains, where their party could find sleeping room, and where a copious meal was soon prepared for them, while the resinous pitch-pine afforded abundant light and heat.

Thus passed three days with no event of importance to relate ; but at the close of the fourth day, after some rough climbing and the descent of another mountain range, they reached the frontier and came in sight of the Michoacanese border town of Tajimaroa, situated in a warm and fertile valley. The town still survives, but being no longer on the highway from Mexico to the great towns of Michoacan, it has lost what importance it once enjoyed.

Although the New World possessed at that time neither beasts of burden nor wheeled vehicles, the rulers of both North and South America had what may be called a postal service and information department of their own. The annalists continually remind us that the kings of those countries had speedy and accurate information of what was going on within their territories and even beyond their borders. Thus it was that almost before Montañó and his party came in sight of Tajimaroa they were met by a great procession, consisting of all the principal personages of the town in gala costume, headed by the local *cacique* and accompanied by a great crowd of the common folk.

The *cacique*, coming up to Montañó, embraced him, and his lords did the same to the other three Spaniards and the Mexican nobles. Some young men, sons of the principal inhabitants, carrying bunches of roses and nosegays of other flowers, offered one of each of the bouquets to Montañó and his party, and the *cacique*, taking Montañó by the hand, and the rest of the travellers being duly paired off in the same fashion, they went towards the town in procession. The town was enclosed by a very formid-

able wall made of huge blocks of oak timber, mostly brown with age, closely joined at the seams and well smoothed. This wall was nearly twelve feet high and six feet wide, with a parapet, and towers at intervals—a most marvellous work, taking into consideration that the Michoacanese, like the Mexicans, were unacquainted with the use of iron. The Spaniards were informed that some of the priests had charge of the repair of the wall, taking out a block as soon as it gave signs of decay and replacing it by another. The old wood was considered as something sacred, and was used as fuel in the ceremonies of the temple.

As soon as they arrived at the principal square they were met by two bodies of musicians and dancers, one composed of young men and the other of girls, who danced before them, enlivening the dance with strange songs in a high falsetto voice, and accompanied by still stranger music of flutes, horns, and drums. They were taken to the principal temple, in the courtyard of which they piled the goods they had brought with them, while they were lodged in rooms opening on it, which were clean and comfortable, with little low stools serving as chairs and tables, and a continuous bench running round the walls, where mats were laid four deep, with cotton cloths thereon, to serve as beds. The *cacique* ushered them to their apartments and left them, telling them through the interpreter to make themselves comfortable; and before long a plentiful meal of flesh, fish, various dishes of maize, and fruits of the tropics was set before them, washed down by several kinds of wine or beer from maize and the *maguey*, or aloe, which the Spaniards called *chicha*, the name which they had brought from the Antilles for similar drinks. The word *pulque*, by which the beverage from the *maguey* is now known, is said to be a Peruvian word.

Montaño and his party were disposed to be very happy; but the Mexican lords threw a damper over their jollity by telling dreadful things of the treachery and cruelty of the Michoacanese, hinting that it might well be that this good reception was only intended to lull their suspicions, so that they might all be massacred more readily, or that the meal which had caused them to look upon things more pleasantly might be the commencement of a fattening process whereby they would be rendered more acceptable as sacrifices to the gods.

So Montaño, knowing that although they, in their capacity of messengers or ambassadors, were sacred, and that any infringe-

ment of that rule was considered an abominable crime, such sacrilegious deeds were not unseldom committed by unscrupulous monarchs (in fact, traditional Mexican history is full of these outrages on public morality), and believing that jealousy and hate of the new-comers might prevail over the pleasure which the King of Michoacan would naturally feel on account of the fall of his great rival and hereditary enemy Montezuma, thought it necessary to take all proper precautions. So they looked well to their cross-bows and other weapons, Peñalosa tied the leash of his dog to his wrist, and they kept watch and watch all night, as if they were in a hostile country.

But all passed over quietly; the *cacique* paid them a visit at dawn, bringing them an ample supply of provisions, with porters to carry them, telling that he had orders from the great lord to treat them with all respect and kindness, and to send an escort with them to their next sleeping-place. So Montaña sent back his Mexican porters, with a letter to Cortes informing him of their well-being, and they went on their way to the capital of Michoacan—not, however, before native artists had taken coloured sketches of the Spaniards, showing them walking, eating, and lying down, with grotesque but graphic details of their clothes and arms, and last, but not least, the fierce beast which accompanied them, an exaggerated account of whose prowess was in everybody's mouth. These paintings were forwarded by a special messenger to King Sinziecha, so that he might not be taken by surprise on the arrival of such strange people.

Their further progress was for some days something like a triumphal procession; for a numerous escort from one town always accompanied them until they reached the next, where they were taken in charge by the new authorities. The people of the villages near which they passed also came out to meet them, bringing them presents of food and *chicha* or *pulque*, and whenever they halted, crowded round them to examine the clothes, arms, the strange whiteness of their skins, and their great beards, and propitiating the fierce beast they brought with them by such ample offerings of food that Peñalosa began to fear that he would become too fat and good-tempered to aid them effectually in case of danger.

Gradually, however, all idea of danger faded from their minds, in spite of the nightly repeated cautions of the Mexicans, and it was with feelings of unalloyed pleasure that they saw the mag-

nificent lake of Pátzcuaro spread out before them, and discovered the white walls and towers of Tzintzontzan, the capital, embowered in trees, on the afternoon of the sixth day after leaving Tajimaroa.

When about a mile from the city they were met by so numerous a host of people that, as the annalist says, 'they covered the plain.' Foremost came King Sinziecha, the great *Cultzontzin*, in person, accompanied by 800 of the *élite* of the nation, and attended by 10,000 warriors. When they approached the Spaniards one of the *grandees* came forward and embraced Montaña and his companions in the name of the monarch, made them the offering of roses and other flowers and a speech of cordial welcome, which we need not translate, as we cannot vouch for its accuracy.

Thus, escorted in the most honourable manner, with music playing and standards adorned with gold and coloured feathers shining in the rays of the level sun, they entered the great square, and were lodged in a spacious apartment of the King's palace. There they were installed; water was brought, so that they might get rid of the dust of the road, and shortly afterwards the King himself came to see that they were well lodged, and many ceremonies of politeness ensued. Montaña thought it his duty to go to kiss the hands of so kind a king; but the latter drew back in consternation, and two of the lords instantly sprang forward in order to prevent such a desecration of the royal person. However, he did not seem offended, but spoke a friendly welcome to one of his lords, who repeated it to the highest in rank of the Mexicans, after which it was interpreted to the Spaniards; for without such ceremonies the King could not put himself in communication with an inferior.

Two hours afterwards, when the Spaniards had supped, his Majesty made his appearance once more, escorted with his nobles, who bore torches of pitch pine. This time he had not the smiling aspect that he had before, and as soon as he entered some armed men went before him, so as to keep a considerable space between himself and the party. He said something in grave and severe tones, which in the same roundabout way came to the Spaniards in this wise:—

'Who are ye? Whence come ye? What seek ye? Why come ye from your distant country? Peradventure ye have no meat or drink there in the land where ye were born? What had the Mexicans done to you that, having entered their city, ye

should destroy it? Do ye imagine ye will do the same to me? Take heed, for ye will find it quite another matter to treat me as ye have treated the Mexicans, whom I cannot but pity although they have always been bitter enemies of mine.'

This sudden change of manner of their royal host caused the Spaniards to feel like men caught in a trap, and they called to mind the warning of the Mexicans during the journey. But Montaña, putting a good face on the matter, made a speech in reply, in which he eulogised the great goodness and nobleness of soul of Cortes, and the might of the Emperor, and said that the latter had sent his captains with the most friendly intentions to bestow all manner of kindness on the people of that hitherto unknown world, and especially to save their souls from everlasting perdition, which they were in danger of if they did not forsake their false gods. He concluded by referring him to the twenty Mexican nobles, who could corroborate all that he had said.

This discussion, most likely softened down and modified by the interpreter, seemed to mollify Sinziecha somewhat. He remained awhile absorbed in thought, and at length gave them to understand that he was glad that he had heard them, that they might repose in peace, and that by-and-by he would give them an answer.

When the room was cleared the Spaniards took counsel together; agreed that their situation was somewhat precarious, but determined to show a bold front, so as not to diminish the reputation which they had of invincible 'children of the sun.' They also agreed to set a watch in military style, to treat their Mexican companions as loyal allies, who were moreover in the same boat with them, to keep their arms in good condition and ready to their hands, and to put Lobo, their dog, on half rations, so as not to let him become too good-humoured.

In the night they heard a noise of people going and coming, which caused Lobo to growl and bark continually, and effectually prevented them from sleeping, had they been so inclined; and the next morning they found about two hundred armed men posted in the spacious courtyard, who, relieved at intervals, never left them subsequently. After their morning meal, which though abundant was not so sumptuous as their supper had been, two nobles made their appearance, who ceremoniously drew a line in the courtyard some paces distant from the door of the hall where they were lodged, and gave them to understand that they must not cross that line without permission, under penalty of their

lives. This arbitrary and discourteous order gave them no little concern ; but Montaña put a cheerful face upon it, and told them to tell their great lord—

‘Ambassadors are we in the house and kingdom of a most noble and puissant monarch. With desire to serve him have we come, and prompt to do all that he may command us, and ready even to do greater things than this which he now orders us in order to show our respect and goodwill.’

The evening meal came in due time ; but as they stood outside their lodgings enjoying the delicious coolness of the evening air, a lurid light from one of the temple towers near them, but invisible from where they stood, lit up a part of the yard, gleaming on the white clothes and bronze ornaments of the soldiers who were guarding them ; and almost simultaneously a hideous din of drums and other dissonant instruments began, above which the hoarse roar of the sacrificial drum of serpent’s skin thrilled their nerves with a new horror. By-and-by a strange, weird noise, the tread of multitudes of bare-footed or sandal-shodded people walking in procession or dancing to a measured cadence, could be distinguished, and the noise of the smaller musical instruments in use among them, joined to voices of men and women singing wild, wailing songs and choruses of such unearthly notes and melody (if melody it could be called) that it made the blood curdle in their veins to hear it.

Their Mexican friends gave them small comfort on this occasion, for they told them that sacrifices in honour (!) of their arrival had begun, and that most likely the crowning sacrifice would be that of their whole party. The fact was that they had arrived on the eve of the annual festival in praise of the god who superintended the harvest, which was always celebrated before the maize ingathering. The Mexicans did not tell them that, but left them to imagine that the ceremony was a prelude to their own sacrifice. Perhaps they themselves thought it not unlikely ; for Montezuma, in the dearth of prisoners of war, often had recourse to extraordinary and even sacrilegious measures to supply the want ; and after all that they had suffered from the Spaniards they probably, though not intending to be treacherous, or not having the chance of being so if they had intended it, were not displeased at giving the Spaniards a ‘bad time’ for once in a way at the hands of people of their own race, though not countrymen or friends of theirs.

They also told the Spaniards that there was one peculiarity about the human sacrifices of Michoacan which made them still more horrible than those of Mexico. The Mexicans sacrificed almost invariably men who were prisoners of war or malefactors, women and children being victims only on rare and exceptional occasions; but the Michoacanese sacrificed not only men, but women and children habitually, and the Spaniards fancied that they could distinguish their shrieks above the songs, the horns and flutes, and the diabolical roar of the serpent's-skin drum.

Montaño says that the King had fully made up his mind to sacrifice them as the climax and conclusion of the feast, and was only restrained from doing so by the remonstrances of one of his chief lords and councillors, who represented to him that his doing so would be a mistake as well as a crime, because Cortes would be sure to resent it and to do his best to punish such a breach of public morality, and that, however dangerous to the peace of the country the arrival of the Spaniards might be, it would always be better to have them as friends than as enemies. Be this as it may, the Spaniards remained thus caged in, and subjected to the torture of hearing those dreadful sounds day and night, and more especially in the night time, seeing the reflection of those lurid altar flames, following in imagination the victims in their procession through the streets, the ascent of the temple stairs, the ghastly ceremony of the sacrifice, done with the speed and horrid deftness that comes from long practice, then the casting down of the quivering body from the summit of the temple, the crowd below hacking it to fragments to make their ghoulish meal; all this they had to endure for eighteen days and nights. In vain they questioned the servants who brought their meals; they politely bowed and refused to say a word. Their meals, too, were a source of horror to them, as they feared that human flesh might be in the stews that were often served; and at every meal they consulted with the Mexicans, who pretended to be able to say which was human flesh and which was not. But the Spaniards were still suspicious, and contented themselves with eating only dishes which were unmistakably fish or vegetables and fruits.

At length, after a night of unusual clamour and what appeared to be infernal orgies, a day of great silence followed. On the next, four nobles came to see them, to summon four Mexicans to a conference with the King. But first Montaño took his

allies apart, and told them that for the sake of the whole party, Mexicans and Spaniards, they ought to speak with boldness and dignity of Cortes, of his great power, his valour, his great superiority in weapons—since his swords and spears were made of a metal much harder and keener than bronze, his crossbows shot a shaft that would pierce through shield, cotton cuirass, and body, his artillery was taken from the thunders of heaven, and one bolt would kill a hundred Indians; that his horses were swifter than stags and fiercer than jaguars, and his dogs were each one a match for a thousand men; that those four now present, with their dog, did not fear his whole army, and that they had refrained from doing any harm hitherto because they had strict orders from their great captain to be friendly to the King of Michoacan.

The four nobles, thus primed, went off with the interpreter, and in all that day did not make their appearance, which added not a little to the consternation of the Spaniards. The next day dawned, and they still did not return; but soon after noon they came with joyful countenances, saying that they had spoken to the King with the same courage and confidence as if Cortes with all his Spaniards and a large army of allies had been at the gates; that the King had heard them with attention, had regaled them well, and had promised, after an interview with the Spaniards, to send them back to Cortes loaded with presents.

The excitement of this good news was still fresh when the King made his appearance with a troop of youths gaily dressed with garlands on their heads, some forty lords, and an immense body of men behind him, which Montañó says numbered 20,000; but we do not know how, under the circumstances, he could have counted them. All were armed, flourished their bows and arrows in their hands, and came shouting in great excitement. The Spaniards, thinking their last hour was come, looked to their weapons, and Peñalosa unmuzzled his dog and held the leash ready to slip, vowing that the King should be the first victim. However, their suspense did not last long. The King came forward, his courtiers following him, into the middle of the courtyard, with his bow all brilliant with gold and precious stones, and a quiver of gold on his shoulder, blazing in the sun with emeralds, topazes, and opals. He waved his hand with a smiling countenance to the Spaniards, who came forward as far as the mark, making their reverence and trying to look as if they had no cause for suspicion

or dissatisfaction. He then went on one side, made a sign, and a troop of Indians brought forward an immense number of wild animals and birds of all kinds, living and dead, which they placed close to the door of the hall where the Spaniards were lodged. Such abundance and variety of game they declared they had never seen in the most successful day's hunt which they had ever witnessed.

Sinziecha then, calling to his chief captain, gave him the outlines of a speech, which he delivered to the chief of the Mexican nobles, who delivered it to the interpreter, and the interpreter to Montaña. The gist of it was that, having been occupied for eighteen days in the autumn festivities to his gods, he had been unable to attend to his guests; but, in proof of his affection for them and for their great captain, he made them that present of game, which he had killed and caught with his own royal hands; that he would never consent to their going further to explore the country, for they would come next to the territory of some ill-disposed people, and he could not allow their great captain to blame him ever so slightly for the death of such brave men; that they might return on the morrow, when he would send a small and mean present as a token of affection to Cortes and (as the annalists say, but we decline to believe it implicitly) of homage to the great King of Castile; and that he would send messages to that effect by some of his principal lords, who would accompany them on their return.

The order about toeing the mark was then rescinded; but we are not aware if Montaña availed himself of it in order to see the town. However they slept better that night, and even the Mexicans admitted that it was now probable that they might return in safety.

The next morning some nobles made their appearance, escorting *peons* who carried bundles, which, when opened out, were found to be finely-worked stuffs of cotton embroidered in colours, some of them with beautiful designs in feather fibres, and others, most lovely in hue and design, altogether made up of feathers; bales of sandals, or perhaps moccasins, of exquisitely prepared deer's skin, white, yellow, and red; and an immense quantity of gold and silver jewellery. These they spread on mats laid down on the floor, a coarse one below, then a finer one, and a still finer one, soft and pliable like cotton stuff, on the top. The larger pile was in the middle of the yard, and this they were told was

for the great captain, while the smaller piles of less costly goods were for the messengers.

The King then came to take leave of them, which he did with great ceremony, trusting their great captain would pardon the mean present which he sent him, repeating his offers of friendship and homage and announcing that eight of his lords, his most private and intimate friends, were to go with them, and that he committed them as such to their care and kindness. He had also ordered a company of attendants to escort them, hunters to chase for them on the road, and porters to carry the baggage, including not only the presents of the morning but the game of the night before.

The Castilians and Mexicans duly responded with much courtesy and ceremony; the King withdrew, the presents were packed up in the matting, and the porters marched on before in single file with the presents, the game, provisions, &c. The annalist says that there were 800 of them, and that they formed so long a file that the first was out of sight before the last had left the yard.

The Spaniards, with light hearts, were just leaving the yard with the Mexican nobles and the eight Michoacanese, when several lords presented themselves, saying that they came in the name of the great lord to tell them that, as that bloodhound was the finest animal he had ever seen, and would be of great use to him to guard his person and his treasures, he requested that they would leave him for him, especially as he should delight in him as a keepsake from such gallant men and 'children of the sun' who had come to visit him; that he could not imagine that they would say him nay, especially as they had plenty more in the Spanish army, but that they might put what price they pleased upon him, as he was ready to send them in return all the silver and gold which he possessed.

This message came like a thunderbolt upon the Spaniards. They reflected that they had a numerous escort of Michoacanese, they had six days' journey before them in King Sinziecha's country, and it seemed to be a snare to take from them their best defence in order to practise some treachery. Peñalosa was so indignant that he could not contain himself; he cursed King Sinziecha, Michoacan, and all its people, and vowed that while he lived he would never part with Lobo, who was his companion from his own native village and the best dog in the New World

into the bargain. Montaña, glumly enough, called the Mexicans to council. Their opinion was that the gods of Michoacan had announced to the King, through their priests, that they were offended that so many strangers and hereditary foes of the country had come and were going away, and had not left them a victim; and that, through the same priests, a compromise had been effected, and that the gods would be content with the sacrifice of that ferocious animal, who had been the death of Indians beyond number; that, in the event of their refusing to give up the dog, they would not be allowed to leave the palace, and that doubtless the lives of the whole party would be sacrificed. Still Peñalosa would not yield, alleging among other things that the pecuniary loss to him would be great, since he would no longer get double pay and double prize money, as he had hitherto done. Montaña answered this objection, pledging his word that if Cortes would not make it good to him he personally would be responsible; the other two men joined him in this, and said that for the sake of the dog they ought not to sacrifice the lives of all the party. So Peñalosa, grimly and silently, tied his dog to a pillar of the courtyard.

On this Montaña, through the interpreter, sent a message to the King that they willingly made that present to so great a monarch, glad that they had something that he thought worthy of his acceptance; that all they had was at his disposal, and that they could not think of accepting payment from a great lord who had made them such presents and treated them so royally. The nobles made a courteous acknowledgment, and the party left the palace like men who have escaped from the jaws of death, Lobo howling and barking in rage and terror at being left behind.

Before they had lost sight of the town they saw fire and smoke ascending from the tower of the principal temple, and heard the hateful sound of the great drum, which, though softened by distance, sent a thrill of horror through their hearts.

So they went on their way, arranging to keep close together, they and the Mexicans, with the Michoacanese lords in the middle, who were to be the first victims in the event of an attack, and at night they kept watch and watch, sleeping with armour buckled on, their swords loose in their sheaths, and their cross-bows all ready.

The third day of their march a party of traders overtook them, who told them that soon after their departure a most solemn procession was arranged. The dog, with fore and hind legs closely

bound to two poles, was carried by four of the principal priests up to the high altar, with music and solemn songs, such as they used at the sacrifice of a captive of the highest rank. Arrived at the fatal spot, the high priest, after asking pardon of their gods for having allowed the other victims to slip through their hands, addressed the whining Lobo in these terms: 'Now, king of wild beasts, with thy death thou hast to expiate the death of so many men of our race, enemies of ours though they be; and the gods will accept thy heart as if it were the hearts of all the Aztecas whom thou hast slain, and will pardon us for not having sacrificed thy masters the Christians when we had them in our power.'

Saying this, they held Lobo firmly on the convex sacrificial stone, so as to draw tight the flesh and skin of the breast; the high priest, with the sacred knife of obsidian, sharp as a razor, made the incision, plunged his hand into the gaping wound, tore out the heart, which, still palpitating, he held for a moment in the sun, and then rubbed with it the grim visage of the idol, while the quivering body was thrown down to the crowd, who eagerly divided it, and took the fragments home to eat solemnly, as if they were partaking of consecrated food.

Never had dog so magnificently tragical an ending.

This tale did not act as a tonic to the nerves of Montaña and his party. The landscape delighted them not, nor the prowess of their Michoacanese escort in the chase; they ate and drank with suspicion; they imagined that enemies were lurking in every bush and in hiding behind every rock. When they reached Tajimaroa they refused to lodge a night in the town, and their distrust only came to an end when they beheld the Lake of Mexico once more, and saw a party of horse from the camp come out to give them joy of their return, as Cortes had begun to be uneasy at their long absence.

MYTHS OF THE PRECIOUS STONES.

SUN, moon, and stars, flowers and trees, birds, beasts, and fishes, are the objects of sense with which the mythology of every age or country has naturally most busied itself. The need of an explanation of things, like that which has produced our own science, natural history, metaphysics, or even theology, gave rise to the mythology of the past; which, as nothing more than primitive and imperfect science, is still in process of formation not only among the lower races, but among the lower strata of our own civilised societies, in virtue of the same mental laws and exigencies that formed it for the Greeks or Egyptians in the days of old.

That the animate or moving world should excite a more special curiosity than things inanimate and immobile is what we might expect *à priori*; and the conjecture is confirmed by mythology, which exists in much lesser quantity in relation to the mineral kingdom than to any other of the great divisions of our knowledge. Nevertheless, the mythology that has been produced regarding remarkable rocks, fossils, stones, or gems is so similar to that which explains the peculiarities of flowers, trees, animals, or stars, that it may be taken to furnish yet another proof that mythology in general is much more the result of primitive guesses at truth than of forgotten poetical fictions concerning the relations of light and darkness, or the sequence of sunrise and sunset.

The first thing that strikes a wanderer into these less-beaten paths of mythology is that the barrier set up by our later science between the animate and inanimate world (though even about that science is less positive than it once was) no more exists than it does between different kinds of the animate creation. In other words, that a man may as readily interchange forms with a rock or a stone as with a flower, an animal, or a star. We all remember the story of Niobe, how she plumed herself on being the mother of a larger family than the divine mother of Apollo and Diana; and how Latona in consequence avenged herself by the destruction of all Niobe's children save one, so that grief of heart turned her into stone. To early Greek thought there was nothing absurd in such a story, any more than there was in the supposition that Atlas, the man, became Atlas, the mountain; and this

helps to explain why stones have been and still are such common objects of direct worship and reverence ; so much so, indeed, that as late as the sixth century Christian priests had to be bidden to shut their churches against all persons who were in the habit of worshipping upright stones, and that Charlemagne in the ninth century, Edgar in the tenth, and Canute in the eleventh found it necessary to pass special laws prohibiting such idolatry by professing Christians.

The famous Kaaba stone at Mecca is a good case in illustration. According to one theory it was a precious stone in Paradise that fell to the earth at Adam's fall, and was then lost in the slime of the deluge till it was recovered by the angel Gabriel. It was originally a jacinth of such extreme whiteness that it dazzled people's eyes at the distance even of four days' journey, and only gradually became black as it now is from shame and sorrow for the sins of the world.¹ But according to the better opinion, it was not merely a jacinth of Paradise, but the actual guardian angel who, having been sent to watch over Adam therein, was at his fall, and as a punishment for not having more vigilantly executed his trust, changed into a stone, and driven from Paradise, but destined to resume his angelic form when the days of the world are all numbered and finished.²

Both Germany and France still bear vestiges of the same capability of thought. In the former you may still be shown upon a certain heath a large stone, embodying a bridal pair and their followers, who were thus transformed because the musicians who attended them continued to play festive airs, though a thunderstorm broke over them as they were driving over the heath.³ You may still learn a lesson, too, from the petrified form of a girl who, when once gathering flax on a Sunday, swore she would be turned into stone sooner than go home ;⁴ or from two great stones, which are really boys, so transfixed for quarrelling over so sacred a thing as a piece of bread, the gift of God to man.⁵

In France certain of the gigantic stones of Carnac are, in the popular mythology, soldiers so transformed for pursuing St.

¹ Niebuhr's *Travels in Arabia*. Pinkerton, x. 90.

² Washington Irving's *Mahomet*, c. iii.

³ Kuhn, *Norddeutsche Sagen*, 69.

⁴ Shaubach, *Niedersächsische Sagen*, 41.

⁵ Muellenhof, *Sagen des Holsteins*, 547.

Cornély; whilst others in Brittany are sportsmen and their dogs, so punished for hunting on Sunday; or, as in the case of the so-called Barking Rock, near Bains, a dog that once pursued St. Convoyon, and was by that saint converted into stone.¹ So in the far-off Andaman islands two large boulders are held to be two enormous animals, who, when in the pursuit of the first man and his friends, tried to cross some shallows and stuck fast in the mud, where they now stand. Primitive mythology makes no difficulty over these things, but rather accepts them as the ordinary laws of nature, familiar as the tides or the seasons.

The Andamanese also explain a large block of sandstone with deep incisions in it as the account left by the first man of the origin of things; just as in Europe similar incisions are explained as the finger-marks of giants, or more often of the devil, when attempting to hurl some enormous boulder against a church. It would seem that most German villages still have their *Teufelstein*, or Devil's Stone, connected with some such foolish legend; and the battles of giants or the tricks of devils afforded a ready explanation for those great dark boulder stones of the Silurian strata which in parts of England lie above and in marked contrast to the lighter limestone formation that ought geologically to be the higher of the two, till science adopted the more wonderful hypothesis that glaciers or icebergs had deposited them there, as they moved from the snow-capped mountains or among the frozen seas of North Britain.

The well-known fossil called the Belemnite (from its fancied resemblance to a dart, which in Greek was *βέλεμνον*) is in reality the relic of a marine creature belonging to the class of Dibranchiate Cephalopods, and is most common among the Jurassic mountains of the Continent, where it is known as the Devil's Fingers.² Such an appellation accords with the tendency of primitive systems of nomenclature to adopt names for things from reference to some leading mythological existence, as many flowers derived their names from Zeus, Indra, or the Sun, or in Christian times from the Virgin Mary or St. Peter. So Pliny mentions some precious stones called in Greek the Finger or the Eye of Adad, an Assyrian god, sometimes identified with the sun; also a black lustrous stone, called Venus' Hair, from the appearance of red hairs with

¹ Sébillot, *Traditions de la Haute-Bretagne*, i. 18.

² Rochholz, *Schweizersagen*, i. 205

which it was marked; and we may guess that many names for stones, at present unexplained, had their origin in a similar way.

The comparative scarcity of precious stones in Europe accounts for the general absence of any mythological nomenclature for them in our modern languages. Most of our names for jewels are from Greek or Latin words that were in use more than 2,000 years ago, and were themselves perhaps of Semitic or Persian origin. Our jasper, for instance, is from the Greek *ἵασπις* (Latin *jaspis*), and that in turn may be from the Semitic *jashpeh*, tough; but we cannot get with any certainty beyond the Greek or Latin term, and the mediæval lapidaries derived it from *aspis*, either because they believed, or believing in consequence, that the gem had its habitat in the head of an asp. In the same way our sapphire is from the Greek *σάφειρος*, of which the origin is quite lost, though the Greeks meant by the word not our sapphire, of which they had no knowledge, but in all probability our lapis-lazuli.

It is, indeed, remarkable how little is really known about the derivation of our common names for precious stones. The opal comes clearly from the Greek *ὀπάλλιος*, but whence the latter word? A modern German writer says from *ὄψ*, *the eye*, and *ἀλλάττειν*, *to change*, in reference to the variable colour of the stone; whilst an Italian authority prefers for the same reason *οπ*, the root of an obsolete word, *ὄπτω*, *to see*, and *ἄλλος*, *another*.¹ Marbodius, bishop of Rennes in the eleventh century, whose work in Latin hexameters, called 'De Lapidibus Enchiridion,' is among the most interesting extant works on the mineralogy of that time, spoke of it under the title of *ophthalmius*, which derivation perhaps gave rise to the superstition that it was beneficial to the wearer's eyesight. Isidore, bishop of Seville in the seventh century, derived it from the name of a country in India, where it was found; which, if a more probable etymology than the rest, adds further proof of our fundamental ignorance on the matter.

Our word *pearl* suggests similar reflections. Is it a diminutive of *beere*, a berry; is it from *perna*, the Latin for a shell-fish; is it from *perula*, for *sphærule*, a diminutive of *sphæra*; or is it from *perula*, a diminutive for *pera*, from its supposed resemblance to a small bag that used to be suspended round the neck? We may choose between all these, and in any case have good authority. And there is the same difficulty about the Latin word *unio*, for

¹ Kluge, *Handbuch der Edelsteinkunde*, 344.

a pearl. Marbodius verified the common derivation in the following lines:—

Unio dictus ab hoc quod ab una nascitur unus,
Nec duo vel plures unquam simul inveniuntur.

And in this he followed Pliny.¹ But *unio* was also the Latin for an onion, whence our word for that vegetable and the French *oignon*; and a passage in Sir John Mandeville's book on stones, in the fourteenth century, supports this less prosaic etymology of the word. Speaking of the pearl he says: 'Marguerite est une pierre appelée oignon, car elle est de plusieurs vêtements; elle a plusieurs côtes l'une après l'autre comme un oignon.'

The onyx, from the Greek word ὄνυξ, a *finger-nail*, which it was supposed to resemble, may have been the cause or the consequence of the following Greek myth regarding it. Cupid, one day finding his mother Venus asleep, pared her nails with the point of one of his arrows, and flew off. But the nail-parings of the goddess fell on the Indian sands, where the Fates, in their zeal lest anything divine should perish, transformed them into onyx.² The diminutive for onyx in Italian became *onicolo*, and this passed into *nicolo*. Then the need of a derivation for *nicolo* drove the Italians to the hypothesis of a certain artist, Nicolo, who worked in onyx in preference to any other stone; or of a certain Nicolaus, which means a conqueror of nations, whence the onyx came to be thought a sure talisman for victory over an enemy.³ In this way do legend and superstition arise and work together, acting and reacting upon one another, till it is often impossible to say which stands in the relation of parent, and which of offspring each to each.

Our diamond is generally referred to the Greek ἀδάμας, which means invincible or unconquerable (from ἀ, *not*, and δαμάω, *to conquer*), and came to be applied to the diamond because of its hardness, or the supposed inability of fire to melt it. This was the derivation current in Pliny's time, and the one that he accepted. But even if *adamas* does mean the invincible, and is derived as suggested, the older account seems to have been that it was so called, not from its resistance to fire or to the anvil, but from the inability of the gods to resist the prayer of any supplicant

¹ *Hist. Nat.* ix. 35. 'In tantum ut nulli duo reperiantur indiscreti, unde nomen unionum romanæ imposuere deliciæ.'

² De Berguem, *Les Merveilles des Indes*, 61.

³ C. W. King, *Natural History of Precious Stones*, 259–60.

who carried it with him. The ancients, says Onomakritus, a Greek priest of the fifth century before Christ, who wrote a poem on stones and ascribed it to Orpheus, called the Anaktites Adamas, because it conquers the mind of the blessed gods, so that, giving heed to sacrifices, they will deign to take pity upon mortals.¹ But is it not even more likely that the word as applied by the Greeks to the diamond (and not as it was at first to some hard metal) came straight from Adamas, the name of a river, now called the Brahmani, in Bengal, which ran through the oldest diamond country of India, and which is marked on the maps of Ptolemy's Geography? At all events the Greeks supplied themselves with a mythological derivation, for they said that Adamas was the name of a Cretan youth who, for his careful attendance upon Zeus, when that deity was in the cradle, was transformed into a beautiful stone, and also placed among the stars, as the nymphs and goat were, too, who helped to rear that great deity in his helpless infancy.²

A similar fancy saw in the amethyst a beautiful youth who was transformed by Diana into that lovely purple-tinted stone which is in reality nothing but rock crystal so coloured by manganese and iron. Bacchus, in memory of his love for the youth, gave to the stone the colour of wine, and at the same time the power to preserve wine-drinkers from the natural results of over-indulgence.³ Was it this story that gave rise to the Greek derivation of ἀμέθυστον from ἀ, not, μεθύω, to intoxicate, or was the story suggested by the derivation? There is no possibility of determining, but Pliny rejected the common derivation in favour apparently of one that is even still more far-fetched, that is, as meaning not-wine, because, though approaching to the purple of wine, it fell short of it in a tint of violet. But whichever interpretation is right, and perhaps neither is, the belief in the power of the amethyst, like that of a crown of crocus, to defeat the consequences of too much alcohol, continued for many ages, even if it be yet extinct, for we find Marbodius, in singing its praises, describing it as 'facilis sculpi, contrarius ebrietati.' How like the legend of its origin is to that of the origin of Daphne, the laurel, or of Arethusa, the fountain, who, being both of human origin,

¹ Περὶ λίθων, 189.

τὸν δὲ παλαιγενεὲς μὲν Ἀνάκτιτιν Ἀδάμαντα
κλέον, ὅτι γνάμπτει μακάρων νόον ἔφρα θυηλάς
ἄζόμενοι ἐθέλωσιν ἐπιχθονίους ἐλεαίρειν.

² Mrs. Barrera, *Gems and Jewels*, 115.

³ *Ib.* 185.

were rescued by the powers on whom they called from importunate lovers, and transformed the one into a tree and the other into water, will be obvious to everyone.

From an island in the Red Sea, called *Topazus*, from a word meaning *to seek*, because it was so beset with fogs that navigators could only find it with difficulty, comes, according to a theory that existed in Pliny's time, the name *topazius* for the stone that was found there. Whence our topaz, of course, though that of the ancients corresponded probably to our chrysolite or peridot, since it was a greenish and soft stone, whereas our topaz is extremely hard and has no appearance of green. Another thing connected the word with topaze, said to have been an Indian town, where it was found accidentally by some quarrymen, and by them mistaken for alabaster.

There seems a greater inherent probability in derivations of the names of stones from the places where they were originally or chiefly found, for, in default of a name bearing allusion to a mythological origin, or to some flower like the hyacinth or heliotrope, to which it might bear some resemblance, no better reason for a name could suggest itself than that it was that of the place whence it came. Accordingly a great number of our stone-names have no more mysterious origin than this. Our jet is from the Latin word for it—*Gagates*, from Gages, the name of a town and river in Lycia. Our agate is from Achates, the old name for the river Drillo in Sicily, where they say it was first found. Our chalcedony is from Chalcedon, near Constantinople. Our turquoise from Turkey, that country having been the chief mart of it from Persia. For our sard we may choose between Sardis, which Pliny adopts, and *sered*, the Persian for yellowish-red, which Mr. King prefers.¹ Our magnet comes to us from Magnesia, though the stone that the early Greeks called *μαγνήτις λίθος* was not the loadstone, but a white silvery stone with no attractive force, and much admired, according to Theophrastus, for its resemblance to silver; nor was it till later that the loadstone, called at first Heraclion, came also to be called *μαγνήτις*, in reference to the same Magnesia, the common country of both. Here again mythology found occasion to step in; for the real origin of the word came to be forgotten, and resort was had to that shepherd called Magnes, who, as Pliny tells us, when one day driving his sheep to pasture on Mount Ida, suddenly found the nails of his

¹ *Precious Stones*, 296.

shoes and the iron tip of his staff adhering to the ground upon which he walked.

Since, therefore, most of our precious stones are of foreign importation, as is proved by the remote birthplace and ancient origin of their names, it would be in vain to expect to find them entering into European mythology like flowers or animals, or other things of common daily occurrence. At most we meet with pearls as the tears of fallen angels, or, according to the fancy of Sir Walter Scott—

See these pearls that long have slept,
These were tears that naiads wept.

Or, again, we find in Norse mythology a stone that was perhaps the opal formed by the artificer Volundr out of the eyes of little children.¹

But if we pass to countries where the precious stones are commonly found, or whither they come as frequent objects of commerce, we at once find myths regarding them exactly like those associated with the ordinary surroundings of our lives. Take for instance the Tonquin legend of the origin of pearls. There was once a king of that country so well skilled in magic as to make a bow of pure gold, whose arrows never failed of dealing death, and which, therefore, was a sure guarantee of perpetual victory. This king, being attacked by another, easily defeated the aggressor. The daughter of the conqueror married the son of the conquered king; and the husband prevailed on his wife to obtain possession of the bow and substitute another just like it in its place. This she did in ignorance of its virtues, but the result was that her father was conquered in his turn, and compelled to fly. A demon informing him of the source of his misfortune, he seized his daughter and, drawing his scimitar, prepared to kill her, but before he did so, she had time to predict that in order to afford to future ages an enduring proof of her innocence, the blood that he shed should be turned into pearls. And so it was, for the spot where she was slain is still the place where men discover the loveliest and fairest pearls.²

The names *Gorgonia antipathes* for the black coral, and that of the Medusa head for the so-called sea-pollen, are perhaps traceable to a faint recollection of the Greek legend concerning

¹ Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1167.

² Helvetius, *L'esprit*, ii. 17.

the origin of coral which is told at length in the poem on 'Stones by Onamakritus,' and is repeated by Ovid in the 'Metamorphoses.'¹ In both we may read how Perseus, after he had cut off the Medusa's head, yet felt it necessary to cleanse himself from the pollution even of a murder so beneficial to mankind, and therefore placed the still dripping head on some green sea-weed on the beach whilst he bathed in the waves; and how the daughters of the sea then came and turned the weed into stone, yet so that henceforth it was red instead of green.² Our word coral is from the Greek *κοράλλιον*, which in Pliny's time was derived from *κείρειν*, *to shear*, because, from the belief that if touched by the hand the coral would immediately harden into stone, pains were taken to cut it short with a sharp-edged instrument of iron.³

Nor is this the only case in which the redness of a stone, like the redness of flowers, has been associated with tales of blood. In the same way that the Fates suffered not even the nail-parings of Venus to be lost, but turned them into onyx, so they suffered not the drops of blood that fled from Ouranos to perish when he was so cruelly maltreated by Saturn, but preserved them for ever in the redly-coloured hæmatite (*αἱματόεις* ⁴); another proof of the literalness with which the early Greeks formed those gross conceptions of their original cosmogony which writers of this century have been at such pains to refine and to reduce to mere allegories of natural phenomena. It was exactly in accordance with this old Greek belief about the hæmatite that in the middle ages the blood of Christ was imagined to be diffused through the heliotrope or bloodstone.⁵

Better known than the Greek myth of the coral or the hæmatite is that of the fossilised gum of the pine-tree, which we call amber, and which as the *ἤλεκτρον* of the Greeks and on account of its powers of attraction is the parent word of our term electricity. There were several accounts of the origin of amber. According to one, when Phaethon was struck by a thunderbolt from Zeus into the Eridanus, to save the world from destruction from his bad driving of the sun, his sisters, who bewailed him on

¹ Pliny, *H. N.* xxxvii. 59, mentions Gorgonia as in his day the name for a coral.

² Orpheus, *Περὶ λίθων*, 504-603. Ovid, *Met.* iv. 730.

³ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxii. 11.

⁴ Orpheus, 636.

⁵ W. Jones, *History of Precious Stones*, 29.

the banks, became poplars, and the tears they shed turned to drops of amber. With the story that they were the tears shed by the birds Meleagrides for their dead brother Meleager, the most amusing point is Pliny's irritation with Sophocles for having endorsed with his name so great an absurdity. 'What child,' he asks, 'could be so ignorant as to believe in the annual weepings of birds, or to think that their tears could be so large, or that they would go from Greece, where Meleager died, to India to lament him? . . . For a person to say anything so absurd of a thing of such daily occurrence and abundance as amber evinces the greatest contempt for the opinions of mankind, and reaches a pitch of unpunished falsehood that is altogether intolerable.'

The word *ἤλεκτρον* is generally derived from *ἥλιος*, the sun. Pliny says that *elector* was a synonym for the sun. But, though Phaeton drove the chariot of the sun, the transition of the name of the latter to the tears shed by Phaeton's sisters is the reverse of obvious. We must therefore forego the satisfaction of a credible derivation, noticing that the mediæval philologists derived it from *ἀ, not,* and *λέκτρον, a bed,* because the sun brought men from their beds.¹ This derivation is certainly not inferior to many that have been since suggested by philologists of far greater reputation than most scholars of the middle ages.

Of course we have long since left behind us all such fancies about precious stones as those here regathered from the mythology of ancient times. Our more scientific mineralogy is so busied with measuring the specific gravity of stones, of testing them with the blow-pipe, of comparing their relative density, crystallisation, and so forth, that there is no room left for anything like poetry to play round these most beautiful products of nature. Let us not over-estimate our gain. For the possible purposes of artificial reproduction it may be useful to know that the sapphire and ruby are simply transparent blue and red varieties of corundum, containing 98 per cent. of alumina, of conchoidal fracture, and infusible before the blow-pipe; and in any case it is desirable to reduce natural objects to their ultimate analysis; but there is, after all, a certain barrenness in such knowledge, nor is any duller reading brought to light by the printing press than is contained in our scientific mineralogical treatises. The poets themselves have as a rule taken but little notice of the precious stones, using them less as fitting objects of verse in themselves than as similes,

¹ 'Quia homines ἀλέκτρον, i.e. sine lecto, faciat, hoc est a somno excitet.'

as when a songster compares the lips of his mistress to rubies, or her eyes to diamonds, or for descriptions of gaudy magnificence, as when one of the writers of our church hymns thus addresses the new Jerusalem:—

With jasper glow thy bulwarks,
Thy streets with emeralds blaze,
The sardius and the topaz
Unite in thee their rays.

Stephen Herrick affords an illustration of the other use of them:—

Some asked me where the rubies grew,
And nothing I did say;
But with my finger pointed to
The lips of Julia.

Some asked how pearls did grow, and where;
Then spake I to my girl
To pout her lips, and showed them there
The quarelets of pearl.

But even science has not entirely broken off from the earlier and more romantic view of minerals, when writers like Theophrastus and Pliny could believe that stones of the same kind differed in gender according to the paler or darker brightness of their rays. 'The transparent and reddish kind,' says Theophrastus, speaking of the carnelian, 'is called the female, and the transparent but darker kind the male;' and Pliny has a similar remark about the sandastros and the cyanus. But it is more surprising to find the same theory in a scientific Italian dictionary of gems of this century; wherein we are informed, for instance, that the first difference between calamites is that of males and females; or, again, that the Sard is the mother of the Amethyst, so that one sees some gems that are sards on one side and amethysts on the other.¹ And in Iceland, where a modern writer asserts the existence of more superstition about stones than even about plants, the *Lausnarstein*, which is really nothing more than the fruit of the plant *Mimosa scandens*, and has to be sought for in an eagle's nest for the same useful virtues in child-birth that made the eagle-stone or the Greek *αἰτητῆς* so desirable a possession, is distinguished as male and female and offspring.²

The mention of the eagle-stone, which, besides the virtue indicated, had the additional charms of insuring its possessor's

¹ Robbio, *Dizionario delle Gemme* (1824), 36.

² Maurer, *Isländische Sagen*, 180, 1.

sobriety, of increasing his riches, of compelling him to be loved as well as to be victorious and popular, brings us to another aspect of mineralogy which, like its mythology, has been rudely shaken by the cold touch of science. That is, its connection with magic and superstition; for in these mineralogy had its roots and beginnings, like botany, astronomy, or even theology. Indeed, when we reflect on the past history of our race, we may fairly doubt whether, without superstition to foster observation, science of any kind would ever have sprung into being at all; which is a consideration that should make us more tolerant than our newly and with difficulty acquired taste for exact knowledge in general allows us to be.

So rich, in fact, in superstition is the older mineralogy that, beautiful in themselves as are many of the earth's stones, we may almost suspect that the original attraction men found in them lay less in any strong feeling of their beauty than in a desire to employ them for magical and medicinal uses. This is confirmed by the fact that till the real precious stones found their way into Greece from India, the lapis-lazuli, which was the Greek sapphire, was almost the only stone known to the Greeks with much beauty of colour to recommend it.¹ And in the Tirol mountains, where agates, emeralds, garnets, heliotrope, and serpentine are frequently found, they are chiefly valued for superstitious purposes; the agate, for instance, making its wearer proof against serpent bites, or conferring on him the qualities of a good speaker, the emerald strengthening the sight and memory, and drinking-cups of serpentine being security against poison.²

When, therefore, we gaze in admiration at the splendid Crown jewels among the Regalia at the Tower, we should not forget, as throwing light upon their history and meaning, that in the reign of Henry III. Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, was accused of having stolen from the King's jewel-house a gem that had the virtue of making its possessor invisible in battle, and of having given it to the King's enemy, Llewellyn, Prince of Wales.³ Was, then, its primary value that of conferring invisibility in battle, and was the belief in such a faculty of certain stones the motive of the gift of handsome jewels that was made to Joinville and his knights by the Abbot of St. Urban previous to their departure

¹ King, *Precious Stones*, 294.

² Alpenburg, *Mythen und Sagen des Tirols*, 411.

³ Jones, *Precious Stones*, 25.

with Louis IX. on his disastrous crusade, when the usual custom was rather to part with all property at the beginning of such an expedition? Queen Elizabeth, too, was thought to heal disease by the royal touch in virtue of some precious stone in the possession of the Crown of England; ¹ and we may suspect that it was not altogether without a political purpose that Ivan IV., the contemporary Czar of Russia, took pains to point out to his ambassador Horsey the surprising virtues of the jewels that appertained to the monarchs of Moscow.

War having been from time immemorial the chief pastime of kings and nobles, it was sufficient, to give the diamond its first rank among stones, that it was supposed, perhaps as the result of a false derivation from *ἀ* and *δαμάω*, to render its possessor invincible in war, and to enable him to repel an enemy, besides having the minor virtues of averting bad dreams, poison, and insanity, which are all three the peculiar dangers of royalty. The lines of Marbodius on this subject are worth quoting as a general sample of his method in mineralogy. Speaking of the adamas or diamond, he says:

Ad magicas artes idem lapis aptus habetur,
Indomitumque facit mira virtute gerentem,
Et noctis lemures et somnia vana repellit.
Atra venena fugat, rixas et jurgia vincit,
Insanosque curat, durosque reverberat hostes.

Wherein it is easier to forgive the good bishop his belief in the magical virtues of the diamond than the egregious and most unnecessary false quantity he is guilty of in the last line.

But the diamond was far from being the only stone that was useful, for those who wished to combine safety with bravery in battle. The amethyst was another; for the physician Camillo Leonardus, who wrote the 'Mirror of Stones' (*Lapidum Speculum*) for Cæsar Borgia, speaks of it as the preserver of military men and the giver of victory over an enemy. Other stones all had their virtues, derived in many cases from the most remote days of paganism. The chrysolite could drive away evil spirits. The heliotrope conferred the gift of prophecy. The onyx dispelled sadness, but was a multiplier of strife and quarrelling. Coral kept off storm and thunderbolts from fields, or houses, or ships. Marbodius is full of these things, which certainly, till the seventeenth century, constituted the chief interest of mineralogy.

¹ Jones, *Precious Stones*, 19.

Next, or perhaps equal in importance, to the value of a stone as a pledge of victory in battle with an enemy would stand its capacity to ensure to its possessor the fulfilment of his prayers addressed to the immortal gods. This is what stands out in the poem of Onamakritus on stones, the oldest extant, as their chief interest and purport. The great virtue of the crystal, the adamas, the tree-agate, the jasper, the topaz, the opal, is that the gods cannot resist the spell of their influence. Only let a man go to a temple with a crystal in his hand, and none of the immortals will refuse to hear his prayer.¹

Did then the same belief in the power of minerals to influence the gods in favour of their petitioners pass from pagan into Christian thought, and even into the services of the new religion? Is this the origin of the great wealth of jewelry expended on shrines, crucifixes, vestments, in the Christian Church? During the whole of the Gothic ages, says Mr. King, rings both in their setting and their stone were designed to act as talismans or amulets;² and in the case of the sapphire there is at least strong probability that this magical employment of stones was not disdained in the service of the Church. A decree of Innocent III. in the twelfth century ordained for the future the sapphire should always be the stone used for the rings with which bishops at their investiture were wedded to the Church. The question then arises, Why the sapphire? It has been suggested that the use of this stone had some reference either to the harmony of its colour with the rest of the priestly vestments, or to its supposed efficacy in assisting those who were pledged to celibacy in the due and proper observation of their engagement.³ But though the sapphire of the ancients may have been our lapis-lazuli, it would have been but natural that the virtues ascribed to the latter under the title of sapphire should have passed to the stone to which the old name was transferred; and one of the principal virtues of the ancient sapphire was that of its inducing the gods to lend a favourable ear to their petitioners. 'When sacrifices were offered,' says De Boot, 'and responses sought from Phœbus, it was thought that he was better pleased, and that it was easier to get anything from him, if the sapphire were exhibited, as it were a sign of concord.'⁴ By sapphire he may mean the lapis-lazuli,

¹ τὸν δ' εἶπερ μετὰ χειρὰς ἔχων περὶ νηδὺν ἵκηαι
οὕτως τοὶ μακάρων ἀρνήσεται ἐυχωλήσαι.

² *Antique Gems*, 378.

³ *Ib.* 387.

⁴ Chap. xlv.

but Marbodius certainly meant our sapphire when he spoke of it as called the holy stone, and ascribed to it the following virtues among others :

Educit carcere victos,
Obstrictasque fores et vincula tacta resolvit,
Pacatumque Deum reddit precibusque faventem.

We may, therefore, conjecture that the reason why the sapphire became the episcopal stone was, because it was thought to have the same efficacy in regard to prayer that was attributed in ancient times to the lapis-lazuli.

It is strange then that the sapphire, which, in addition to its other merits, possessed that also of keeping a man safe from the influences of fraud, or fear, or envy, should have come in modern superstition to hold the position of an unlucky stone. It is not easy to account for this change of feeling, for nothing is so conservative as superstition, or less liable to freaks and fluctuations. The same is true of that most glorious of all stones, the opal. If any stone deserves worship for its beauty it is the opal; and so rightly valued at its proper worth was the opal in olden days, that after ages admired the Roman senator who, when Mark Anthony coveted his opal ring, went into voluntary exile, preferring to part with his country rather than his gem.² Yet in these days there are numbers of people who will refuse the gift of an opal or sell any they may possess, on account of its bad reputation as a bringer of bad luck and dispeller of affection. Yet it was the reverse of an inauspicious stone in former days. According to Onamakritus, it was one of the stones that would ensure the efficacy of prayer. According to Berquem the opal made its wearer loveable and conciliated love; it rejoiced the heart, preserved from poison and infection, dissipated melancholy, and strengthened the sight. What then could be more desirable either as a gift or a possession?

Whence, then, arose the bad reputation of the opal? Barbot, in his 'Treatise on Precious Stones,' says that it is evidently due to its connection with the legend of Robert the Devil, without explaining further; ² whilst sometimes it is traced to the story of the opal in Sir Walter Scott's 'Anne of Geierstein.' It will be remembered that in the weird tale of Anne's grandfather, the Persian lady whom he married possessed a marvellous opal which,

¹ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxvii. 21.

² *Pierres Précieuses*, 454.

on the day of the christening of their child, when some holy water came in contact with it, first shot out a brilliant spark, and was the next instant 'lightless and colourless as a common pebble.' The Persian heroine fainted and died, and was followed by her husband, Herman of Arnheim, three years afterwards; and their granddaughter, referring to the story, said that she had heard of the opal growing pale, it being the nature of that noble stone to do so on the approach of poison, and Hermione having been thought to have been poisoned by the jealous Baroness Steinfeldt.¹ But it is evident that there is not enough in either of these tales to account for a total change of popular superstition, neither the legend of Robert the Devil nor of the Persian Hermione having ever been sufficiently known to have had the slightest influence on common opinion. Till, therefore, some better explanation can be thought of, the wrong that is at present done to that fairest of all gems, the opal, must be set down as one of those freaks of superstition which are absolutely without justification or reason.

But the superstition that yet lingers about the precious stones represents happily a fast diminishing quantity. Who would think now of attributing to each stone a special influence over each month, and wearing, therefore, the sapphire in April, the agate in May, and so forth? Yet our ancestors did this, and even appropriated to twelve kinds of precious stones the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the twelve Apostles. Perhaps there was some pious intent in making the jasper the symbol of St. Peter, the chrysolite of St. Matthew, or the uncertain beryl of the disbelieving St. Thomas; but the modern spirit needs not these reminders, and their value at any time must have been very doubtful. But, smile as we may at the superstition that ruled in bygone times with regard to precious stones, we have to admit that it was not altogether without its brighter side. In the dark ages, for instance, it can have been no mean happiness to possess gems which, like the sapphire, ensured the fulfilment of prayer, or, like the diamond and amethyst, reduced war to a safe and pleasant pastime. What charm have we wherewith to face the perils and misfortunes of life comparable to the faith in their talisman which supported our ancestors? Who that remembers the agitations of a lawsuit, and the nervous reliance placed in his solicitor, but might regret the faith which in a

¹ B. i., c. xi., and B. ii., c. iv.

previous age and similar plight he might have felt in a morsel of chalcedony?

Science, moreover, in many cases leaves no compensation for the beliefs she dispels. It was no trifling alleviation of the peasant's lot that he might hope any day to find a rich jewel left by a snake in the grass, or vast treasures hidden in a mountain. This hope is now gone or going from him, and perhaps few living Cornish peasants now look for the blue stone ring which their ancestors attributed to the action of snakes breathing upon hazel. Who now that drinks the refreshing Vouvray wine, from Vouvray in France, would ever think that the name of both wine and place had come from an old local belief in a dragon or viper (vouivre) that possessed a single eye or carbuncle, which it laid aside on the ground, and which if discovered would lead its finder to immeasurable riches.¹

The Scotch used to think that stone arrow-heads, which they called elf-shots, and seriously believed to be aimed by the fairies at their cattle, could cure any malady affecting a cow, either by contact with such a stone, or by water in which it had been dipped. They also attributed the same virtue to crystal gems, and to the adder-stone; and Pennant the traveller was shown a stone of this sort set in silver, for the use of which the natives would often travel a distance of a hundred miles, or carry back with them water in which it had been immersed.² A foolish faith doubtless, we say, but surely one not without its comfort to the much-enduring farmer class, and better than no hope at all against the many ailments to which cattle is heir.

Nor is it always easy to say where superstition touches upon, and perhaps conceals, higher and better knowledge. Let us disbelieve in and laugh at, as much as we please, these cattle-curing stones of Scotland, or the rain-producing stones of the Orientals, but can we be sure in every case that some germ or basis of truth, destined perhaps to be of use and benefit to mankind, may not underlie certain talismans whose virtues we now treat as so much mythology. The tendency of superstitious formalities and chicanery to crystallise round the most useful practices founded on the truest knowledge is so universal and far-reaching, that we are often tempted to scorn as total imposture what, if carefully ana-

¹ Rochholz, *Schweizersagen*, ii. 7; Menzel, *Zur deutschen Mythologie*, i. 55; Stolber, *Sagen des Elsasses*, 1.

² Pennant's *Tour*. Pinkerton, iii. 51.

lysed, might yield a residuum of solid truth as distinct from its aftergrowth or overgrowth.

As an instance of such talismans lying still in the uncertain borderland between science and superstition, it may not be altogether fanciful to refer to the famous snake-stones so popular in the East for the cure of snake-bites. Sir James Tennant, having once sent some of these stones to the great chemist Faraday for analysis, and the latter having expressed his belief that the one with any power to absorb poison consisted of charred bone, and the others of chalk or some vegetable, the virtue of the genuine stones has perhaps been too hastily discredited, when further inquiry might discover in them a real and valuable cure, not merely for the poison of snake-bites, but for poisons of other kinds. Faraday's verdict was hardly meant to be final, for he gave it rather as his belief than with any dogmatic assurance; and that some snake-stones should be counterfeits only accords with the history of better recognised remedies invested with all the authority that can be given to them by the faculty of medicine.

The two classical descriptions of the snake-stone occur in the French traveller Turpin's 'History of Siam' (1771), and in Thunberg's account of the Cape of Good Hope (1770-9), and their remarks are in every respect deserving of comparison. 'They call snake-stones,' says the former of the Siamese, 'those which cure the venomous bites of snakes. They are black, round, and flat, and thicker in the middle than at the sides. This stone is applied to the bite. If the wound is oval, it sticks to it immediately, and does not fall off till it has extracted all the venom. As soon as it detaches itself it should be put into milk, which draws all the poison from it, otherwise it breaks and becomes useless. The milk into which it is put turns blue and green, a proof of the venom it has extracted. . . . These stones are spread all over India; but one is often deceived, because counterfeits are made, which are found out on using them.'¹ According to Thunberg, these stones were held in such great esteem at the Cape, and sold at so high a price, that but few of the farmers could afford to purchase them. They were imported from the Indies, and especially Malabar. And he proceeds to give the following description of the stone: 'It is round and convex, on one side of a black colour with a pale ash-grey speck in the middle, and tubulated with very minute pores. When thrown

¹ In Pinkerton ix., 619.

into water it causes bubbles to rise, which is a proof of its being genuine, as it is also that if put into the mouth it adheres to the palate. When it is applied to any part that has been bitten by a serpent, it sticks fast to the wound and extracts the poison. As soon as it is saturated it falls off of itself. If it be then put into milk it is supposed to be purified from the poison that it has absorbed, and the milk is said to be turned blue by it. Frequently, however, the wound is scarified by a razor previous to the application of the stone.¹

Thunberg mentions a case in which it seems to have been used with success when other remedies had failed.² Tavernier, also, a century earlier, attests a similar cure; and Sir James Tennant was told by an eye-witness of more than one well-authenticated case of cure by the Pamboo-Kaloo, as it is called in Ceylon, two of which he relates.

It is, therefore, plainly a matter that calls for no further investigation. Turpin's statement that counterfeit snake-stones were often made, together with the fact that they are still in the East a well-known object of manufacture and commerce, and Tavernier's allusion to the popular Indian belief that they came out of serpents' heads, ought not to deter us from submitting the claims of the stone to a more searching scientific trial than has yet been bestowed upon it. Considering the enormous annual loss of life in India through snake-bites, we ought to assure ourselves thoroughly whether there is any stone or any other substance possessing the virtues attributed to it, and whether the cases of cure by it are real or mythological. It is a case as yet for suspense of judgment, not for contemptuous ridicule and denial. If on careful investigation the stone's virtues are proved to be purely fanciful, we are in no worse position than we were before; whereas, should the trial result in a verdict for the stone, we should have discovered a jewel of greater price than rubies or diamonds, since it is impossible to prescribe limits to its possible efficacy; for who shall say that that which is a cure for the bite of a cobra might not be equally serviceable as a preventive of hydrophobia? Poison of every kind is so fatal to human life, the possibilities of nature are so infinite and inexhaustible, and our real knowledge of them still so limited, that we can ill afford out of mere arrogance or idleness to overlook any prospect of remedy that either chance may throw in our way or a widespread belief recommend to our observation.

¹ In Pinkerton, xvi. 20.

² *Ib.* 38, 39.

CASTLE BELLEISLE.

THE enormous hills run smoothly down
 In fold on fold of shaven green,
 And in the gap a little town
 Sleeps, and a river moves between.

It bubbled from a heathery hill,
 And channelled through the grey ribbed sand,
 And now slides seaward, strong and still,
 Through hazy leagues of level land.

A stone's throw from its fringing sedge
 Grey mouldering walls to ruin slip,
 And from the turret's ragged edge
 The brimming ivy seems to drip.

Where once the guardian pool was deep
 The moorhen flaps among the reeds
 And broad-backed waterlilies sleep,
 Anchored amid the shifting weeds.

There, where the green turf laps the walls,
 Slow oxen graze, shrill children play,
 And when the kindly summer falls
 Swart sun-browned rustics toss the hay.

A farmstead steams where hung the door,
 Whence smiling gallants paced the hall—
 Where roysterers drank, and soldiers swore,
 The curly cottage-children call.

Here, where the old priest, day by day,
 Saw sunrise gild his blazoned panes,
 Between tall stacks of scented hay,
 A grumbling ciderpress complains.

Look o'er the ill-swung gate, and see
 The black swine rout the streaming soil,
 And piled or strewn neglectfully
 The sordid furniture of toil.

The king that smiled so royally
 Around him, and the sad sweet queen
 With restless children round her knee,
 Are all as they had never been.

Dark in their oozy bed to-night
 They slumber: all about their bones
 The ivy casts his fingers white,
 Whose fibres know the place of stones.

Think of the aching hearts, the sighs,
 This old house heard, which stands so still,
 And all the million memories
 That haunt the hollows of the hill.

Think of the eyes that must have stared
 From those blank windows, on the same
 Grey misty flats through which we fared,
 We twain, and doubted of their name.

O'er grassy mound and marble rim,
 Where one dead friend's poor vesture lies,
 The easy tears unwitting brim
 Decorous lashes, down-dropt eyes.

Or one dear brother whom we miss,—
 We mount with reverent step above:
 'This was his room,' we say, 'and this
 The picture that he used to love.'

In these walls too young hope was high,
 And love was glorious then as now;
 Shall we behold, and pass them by
 Nor write one sorrow on our brow?

Shall we not spare one tear to-day,
 And pray one prayer in order due?
 'Here is a human heart,' we'll say,
 'That beats as yours, and thinks of you.'

THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÂ.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER XV. (*continued*).

A DESPERATE REMEDY.



S Caffyn stood there by the window with Holroyd's letter in his hand, he felt an insane temptation for a moment to destroy or retain it. Time was everything just then, and even without the fragment he had been able to read, he could, from his knowledge of the writer, conclude with tolerable certainty that he would not write again without having received an answer to his first letter. 'If I was only alone with it!'

he thought impatiently. But he was a prudent young man, and perfectly aware of the consequences of purloining correspondence, and besides there was Dolly to be reckoned with—she alone had seen the thing as yet. But then she *had* seen it, and was not more likely to hold her tongue about that than any other given subject. No, he could do nothing; he must let things take their own course and be hanged to them!

His gloomy face filled Dolly with a sudden fear; she forgot her dislike, and came timidly up to him and touched his arm. 'What's the matter, Harold?' she faltered. 'Mabel won't be angry. I—I haven't done anything *wrong*, have I, Harold?'

He came out of his reverie to see her upturned face raised to his—and started; his active brain had in that instant decided on a desperate expedient, suggested by the sight of the trouble in her eyes. ‘By Jove, I’ll try!’ he thought; ‘it’s worth it—she’s such a child—I may manage it yet!’

‘Wrong!’ he said impressively, ‘it’s worse than that. My poor Dolly, didn’t you really know what you were doing?’

‘N—no,’ said Dolly; ‘Harold, don’t tease me—don’t tell me what isn’t true . . . it—it frightens me so!’

‘My dear child, what can I tell you? Surely you know that what you did was stealing?’

‘Stealing!’ echoed Dolly, with great surprised eyes. ‘Oh, no, Harold—not *stealing*. Why, of course I shall tell Mabel, and ask her for the stamp afterwards—only if I hadn’t torn it off first, she might throw it away before I could ask, you know!’

‘I’m afraid it was stealing all the same,’ said Caffyn, affecting a sorrowfully compassionate tone; ‘nothing can alter that now, Dolly.’

‘Mabel won’t be angry with me for that, I know,’ said Dolly; ‘she will see how it was really.’

‘If it was only Mabel,’ said Caffyn, ‘we should have no reason to fear; but Mabel can’t do anything for you, poor Dolly! It’s the *law* that punishes these things. You know what law is?—the police, and the judges.’

The piteous change in the child’s face, the dark eyes brimming with rising tears, and the little mouth drawn and trembling, might have touched some men; indeed, even Caffyn felt a languid compunction for what he was doing. But his only chance lay in working upon her fears; he could not afford to be sentimental just then, and so he went on, carefully calculating each word.

‘Oh, I won’t believe it,’ cried Dolly, with a last despairing effort to resist the effect his grave pity was producing; ‘I can’t. Harold, you’re trying to frighten me. I’m not frightened a bit. *Say* you are only in fun!’

But Caffyn turned away in well-feigned distress. ‘Do I look as if it was fun, Dolly?’ he asked, with an effective quiver in his low voice; he had never acted so well as this before. ‘Is that this morning’s paper over there?’ he asked, with a sudden recollection, as he saw the sheet on a little round wicker table. ‘Fetch it, Dolly, will you?’

'I must manage the obstinate little witch somehow,' he thought impatiently, and turned to the police reports, where he remembered that morning to have read the case of an unhappy postman who had stolen stamps from the letters entrusted to him.

He found it now and read it aloud to her. 'If you don't believe me,' he added, 'look for yourself—you can read. Do you see now—those stamps were marked. Well, isn't *this* one marked?'

'Oh, it is!' cried Dolly, 'marked all over! Yes, I do believe you now, Harold. But what shall I do? I know—I'll tell papa—he won't let me go to prison!'

'Why, papa's a lawyer—you know that,' said Caffyn; 'he has to *help* the law—not hinder it. Whatever you do, I shouldn't advise you to tell him, or he would be obliged to do his duty. You don't want to be shut up for years all alone in a dark prison, do you, Dolly? And yet, if what you've done is once found out, nothing can help you—not your father, not your mamma—not Mabel herself—the law's too strong for them all!'

This strange and horrible idea of an unknown power into whose clutches she had suddenly fallen, and from which even love and home were unable to shield her, drove the poor child almost frantic; she clung to him convulsively, with her face white as death, terrified beyond tears. 'Harold!' she cried, seizing his hand in both hers, 'you won't let them! I—I can't go to prison, and leave them all. I don't like the dark. I *couldn't* stay in it till I was grown up, and never see Mabel or Colin or anybody. Tell me what to do—only tell me, and I'll do it!'

Again some quite advanced scoundrels might have hesitated to cast so fearful a shadow over a child's bright life, and the necessity annoyed Caffyn to some extent, but his game was nearly won—there would not be much more of it.

'I mustn't *do* anything for you,' he said; 'if I did my duty, I should have to give you up to—— No, it's all right, Dolly, I should never dream of doing that. But I can do no more. Still, if you choose, you can help *yourself*—and I promise to say nothing about it.'

'How do you mean?' said Dolly; 'if—if I stuck it together and left it?'

'Do you think that wouldn't be seen? It would, though!

No, Dolly, if anyone but you and I catches sight of that letter, it will all be found out—must be!’

‘Do you mean?—oh, no, Harold, I couldn’t *burn* it!’

There was a fire in the grate, for the morning, in spite of the season, had been chilly.

‘Don’t suppose *I* advise you to *burn* it,’ said Caffyn. ‘It’s a bad business from beginning to end - it’s wrong (at least it isn’t



right) to burn the letter. Only—there’s no other way, if you want to keep out of prison. And if you make up your mind to burn it, Dolly, why you can rely on me to keep the secret. *I* don’t want to see a poor little girl shut up in prison if I can help it, *I* can tell you. But do as you like about it, Dolly; *I* mustn’t interfere.’

Dolly could bear it no more; she snatched the flimsy foreign

paper, tore it across and flung it into the heart of the fire. Then, as the flames began to play round the edges, she repented, and made a wild dart forward to recover the letter. 'It's Mabel's,' she cried; 'I'm afraid to burn it—I'm afraid!'

But Caffyn caught her, and held her little trembling hands fast in his cool grasp, while the letter that Holroyd had written in Ceylon with such wild secret hopes flared away to a speckled grey rag, and floated lightly up the chimney. 'Too late now, Dolly!' he said, with a ring of triumph in his voice. 'You would only have blistered those pretty little fingers of yours, my child. And now,' he said, indicating the scrap of paper which bore the stamp, 'if you'll take my advice, you'll send that thing after the other.'

For the sake of this paltry bit of coloured paper Dolly had done it all, and now that must go!—she had not even purchased Colin's forgiveness by her wrong—and this last drop in her cup was perhaps the bitterest. She dropped the stamp guiltily between two red-hot coals, watched that too as it burnt, and then threw herself into an arm-chair and sobbed in passionate remorse.

'Oh, why did I do it?' she wailed; 'why did you make me do it, Harold?'

'Come, Dolly, I like that,' said Caffyn, who saw the necessity for having this understood at once. 'I made you do nothing, if you please—it was all done before I came in. I may think you were very sensible in getting rid of the letter in that way—I do—but you did it of your own accord—remember that.'

'I was quite good half an hour ago,' moaned the child, 'and now I'm a wicked girl—a—a thief! No one will speak to me any more—they'll send me to prison!'

'Now don't talk nonsense,' said Caffyn, a little alarmed, not having expected a child to have such strong feelings about anything. 'And for goodness sake don't cry like that—there's nothing to cry about *now* . . . You're perfectly safe as long as you hold your tongue. You don't suppose I shall tell of you, do you?' (and it really was highly improbable). 'There's nothing to show what you've done. And—and you didn't mean to do anything bad, I know *that*, of course. You needn't make yourself wretched about it. It's only the way the law looks at stealing stamps, you know. Come, I must be off now; can't wait for Mabel any longer. But I must see a smile before I go—just a little one, Juggins—to thank me for helping you out of your scrape, eh?' (Dolly's

mouth relaxed in a very faint smile.) 'That's right—now you're feeling jolly again; cheer up, you can trust me, you know.' And he went out, feeling tolerably secure of her silence.

'It's rough on her, poor little thing!' he soliloquised as he walked briskly away; 'but she'll forget all about it soon enough—children do. And what the deuce could I do? No, I'm glad I looked in just then. Our resuscitated friend won't write again for a month or two—and by that time it will be too late. And if this business comes out (which I don't imagine it ever will) *I've* done nothing anyone could lay hold of. I was very careful about that. I must have it out with Mabel as soon as I can now—there's nothing to be gained by waiting!'

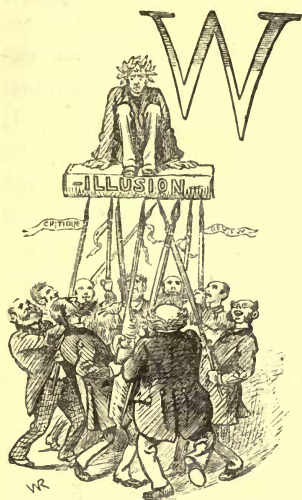
Would Dolly forget all about it? She did not like Harold Caffyn, but it never occurred to her to disbelieve the terrible things he had told her. She was firmly convinced that she had done something which, if known, would cut her off completely from home and sympathy and love; she who had hardly known a more than five minutes' sorrow in her happy innocent little life, believed herself a guilty thing with a secret. Henceforth in the shadows there would lurk something more dreadful even than the bogeys with which some foolish nursemaids people shadows for their charges—the gigantic hand of the law, ready to drag her off at any moment from all she loved. And there seemed no help for her anywhere—for had not Harold said that if her father or anyone were to know, they would be obliged to give her up to punishment.

Perhaps if Caffyn had been capable of fully realising what a deadly poison he had been instilling into this poor child's mind, he might have softened matters a little more (provided his object could have been equally well attained thereby), and that is all that can be said for him. But, as it was, he only saw that he must make as deep an impression as he could for the moment, and never doubted that she would forget his words as soon as he should himself.

But if there was some want of thought in the evil he had done, the want of thought in this case arose from a constitutional want of heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CHANGE OF FRONT.



WELL Jane,' said Mr. Lightowler one evening, when he had invited himself to dine and sleep at the house in Malakoff Terrace, 'I suppose you haven't heard anything of that grand young gentleman of yours yet?'

The Ashburns, with the single exception of Trixie, had remained obstinately indifferent to the celebrity which Mark had so suddenly obtained; it did not occur to most of them indeed that distinction was possible in the course he had taken. Perhaps many of Mahomet's relations thought it a pity that he should abandon his excellent prospects in the caravan business (where he was making him-

self so much respected), for the precarious and unremunerative career of a prophet.

Trixie, however, had followed the book's career with wondering delight; she had bought a copy for herself, Mark not having found himself equal to sending her one, and she had eagerly collected reviews and allusions of all kinds, and tried hard to induce Martha at least to read the book.

Martha had coldly declined. She had something of her mother's hard, unimaginative nature, and read but little fiction; and besides, having from the first sided strongly against Mark, she would not compromise her dignity now by betraying so much interest in his performances. Cuthbert read the book, but in secret, and as he said nothing to its discredit, it may be presumed that he could find no particular fault with it. Mrs. Ashburn would have felt almost inclined, had she known the book was in the house, to order it to be put away from among them like an evil thing, so strong was her prejudice; and her husband, whatever he felt, expressed no interest or curiosity on the subject.

So at Mr. Lightowler's question, which was put more as a

vent for his own outraged feelings than with any real desire for information, Mrs. Ashburn's face assumed its grimmest and coldest expression as she replied—'No, Solomon. Mark has chosen his own road—we neither have nor expect to have any news of him. At this very moment he may be bitterly repenting his folly and disobedience somewhere.'

Upon which Cuthbert observed that he considered that extremely probable, and Mr. Ashburn found courage to ask a question. 'I—I suppose he hasn't come or written to *you* yet, Solomon?' he said.

'No, Matthew,' said his brother-in-law, 'he 'as not. I'd just like to see him coming to me; he wouldn't come twice, I can tell him! No, I tell you, as I told him, I've done with him. When a young man repays all I've spent on him with base ingratitude like that, I wash my hands of him—I say deliberately—I wash my 'ands. Why, he might have worked on at his law, and I'd a' set him up and put him in the way of making his living in a few years; made him a credit to all connected with him, I would! But he's chosen to turn a low scribbler, and starve in a garret, which he'll come to soon enough, and that's what I get for trying to help a nephew. Well, it will be a lesson to me, I know that. Young men have gone off since my young days; a lazy, selfish, conceited lot they are, all of 'em.'

'Not *all*, Solomon,' said his sister. 'I'm sure there are young men still who—— Cuthbert, *how* long was it you stayed at the office after hours to make up your books? Of his own free will, too, Solomon! And *he's* never had anyone to encourage him, or help him on, poor boy!'

Mrs. Ashburn was not without hopes that her brother might be brought to understand in time that the family did not end with Mark, but she might have spared her pains just then.

'Oh,' he said, with a rather contemptuous toss of the head, 'I wasn't hinting. I've nothing partickler against him—*he's* steady enough, I dessay. One of the other kind's enough in a small family, in all conscience! Ah, Jane, if ever a man was regularly taken in by a boy, I was by his brother Mark—a bright, smart, clever young chap he was as I'd wish to see. Give that fellow an education and send him to college, thinks I, and he'll be a credit to you some of these days. And see what's come of it!'

'It's very sad—very sad for all of us, I'm sure,' sighed Mrs. Ashburn.

At this, Trixie, who had been listening to it all with hot cheeks and trembling lips, could hold out no longer.

'You talk of Mark—Uncle and all of you,' she said, looking prettier for her indignation, 'as if he was a disgrace to us all! You seem to think he's starving somewhere in a garret, and unknown to everybody. But he's nothing of the sort—he's famous already, whether you believe it or not. You ought to be proud of him.'

'Beatrix, you forget yourself,' said her mother; 'before your uncle, too!'

'I can't help it,' said Trixie; 'there's no one to speak up for poor Mark but me, ma, and I must. And it's all quite true. I hear all about books and things from—at the Art School where I go, and Mark's book is being talked about *everywhere*! And you needn't be afraid of his coming to you for money, Uncle, for I was told that Mark will be able to get as much money as ever he likes for his next books; he will be quite rich, and all just by writing! And nobody but you here seems to think the worse of him for what he has done! I'll show you what the papers say about him presently. Why, even *your* paper, ma, the "Weekly Horeb," has a long article praising Mark's book this week, so I should think it can't be so very wicked. Wait a minute, and you shall see!'

And Trixie burst impetuously out of the room to fetch the book in which she had pasted the reviews, leaving the others in a rather crestfallen condition, Uncle Solomon especially looking straight in front of him with a fish-like stare, being engaged in trying to assimilate the very novel ideas of a literary career which had just been put before him.

Mrs. Ashburn muttered something about Trixie being always headstrong and never given to serious things, but even she was a little shaken by the unexpected testimony of her favourite oracle, the 'Horeb.'

'Look here, Uncle,' said Trixie, returning with the book and laying it down open before him. 'See what the ——— says, and the ———; oh, and all of them!'

'I don't want to see 'em,' he said, sulkily pushing the book from him. 'Take the things away, child; who cares what they say? They're all at the same scribbling business themselves; o' course they'd crack up one another.'

But he listened with a dull, glazed look in his eyes, and a grunt

now and then, while she read extracts aloud, until by-and-by, in spite of his efforts to repress it, a kind of hard grin of satisfaction began to widen his mouth.

'Where's this precious book to be got?' he said at last.

'Are you so sure he's disgraced you, *now*, Uncle?' demanded Trixie triumphantly.

'Men's praise is of little value,' said Mrs. Ashburn, harshly. 'Your Uncle and we look at what Mark has done from the Christian's standpoint.'

'Well, look here, y'know. Suppose we go into the matter now; let's talk it out a bit,' said Uncle Solomon, coming out of a second brown study. 'What 'ave you got against Mark?'

'What have I got against him, Solomon?' echoed his sister in supreme amazement.

'Yes; what's he done to set you all shaking your heads at?'

'Why, surely there's no need to tell you? Well, first there's his ingratitude to *you*, after all you've done for him!'

'Put me out of the question!' said Mr. Lightowler, with a magnanimous sweep of his hand, 'I can take care of myself, I should 'ope. What *I* want to get at is what he's done to *you*. What do *you* accuse the boy of doing, Matthew, eh?'

Poor little Mr. Ashburn seemed completely overwhelmed by this sudden demand on him. 'I? oh, I—well, Jane has strong views, you know, Solomon, decided opinions on these subjects, and—and so have I!' he concluded feebly.

'Um,' said Mr. Lightowler, half to himself, 'shouldn't a thought that was what's the matter with *you*! Well, Jane, then I come back to you. What's he done? Come, he hasn't robbed a church, or forged a cheque, has he?'

'If you wish me to tell you what you know perfectly well already, he has, in defiance of what he knows I feel on this subject, connected himself with a thing I strongly disapprove of—a light-minded fiction.'

'Now you know, Jane, that's all your confounded—I'm speaking to you as a brother, you know—your confounded narrer-minded nonsense! Supposing he has written a "light-minded fiction," as you call it, where's the harm of it?'

'With the early training you received together with me, Solomon, I wonder you can ask! You know very well what would have been thought of reading, to say nothing of writing, a novel in

our young days. And it cuts me to the heart to think that a son of mine should place another stumbling-block in the hands of youth.'

'Stumbling grandmother!' cried Mr. Lightowler. 'In our young days, as you say, we didn't go to playhouses, and only read good and improving books, and a dull time we 'ad of it! I don't read novels myself now, having other things to think about. But the world's gone round since then, Jane. Even chapel-folk read these light-minded fictions nowadays, and don't seem to be stumblin' about more than usual.'

'If they take no harm, their own consciences must be their guide; but I've a right to judge for myself as well as they, I think, Solomon.'

'Exactly, but not for them too—that's what *you're* doin', Jane. Who the dickens are you, to go about groaning that Mark's a prodigal son, or a lost sheep, or a goat, or one of those uncomplimentary animals, all because he's written a book that everyone else is praising? Why are you to be right and all the rest of the world wrong, I'd like to know? Here you've gone and hunted the lad out of the house, without ever consulting *me* (who, I think, Jane, I *do* think, have acted so as to deserve to be considered and consulted in the matter), and all for what?'

'I'm sure, Solomon,' said Mrs. Ashburn, with one or two hard sniffs which were her nearest approach to public emotion; 'I'm sure I never expected this from you, and you were quite as angry with Mark as any of us.'

'Because I didn't know all—I was kep' in the dark. From what you said I didn't know but what he'd written some rubbish which wouldn't keep him in bread and cheese for a fortnight, and leave him as unknown as it found him. Naterally I didn't care about *that*, when I'd hoped he'd be a credit to me. But it appears he *is* being a credit to me—he's making his fortune, getting famous, setting the upper circles talking of him. I thought Sir Andrew, up at the Manor House, was a chaffing me the other day when he began complimenting me on my nephew, and I answered him precious short; but I begin to think now as he meant it, and I went and made a fool of myself! All I ever asked of Mark was to be a credit to me, and so long as he goes and is a credit to me, what do I care how he does it? Not *that*!'

At sentiments of such un hoped-for breadth, Trixie was so far carried away by delight and gratitude as to throw her arms round

her uncle's puffy red neck, and bestow two or three warm kisses upon him. 'Then you won't give him up after all, will you, Uncle?' she cried; '*you* don't think him a disgrace to you!'

Uncle Solomon looked round him with the sense that he was coming out uncommonly well. 'There's no narrermindedness about *me*, Trixie, my girl,' he said; 'I never have said, nor I don't say now, that I have given your brother Mark up; he chose not to take the advantages I offered him, and I don't deny feeling put out by it. But what's done can't be helped. I shall give a look into this book of his, and if I see nothing to disapprove of in it, why I shall let him know he can still look to his old uncle if he wants anything. I don't say more than that at present. But I do think, Jane, that you've been too 'ard on the boy. We can't be all such partickler Baptists as *you* are, yer know!'

'I'm glad to hear you say that, Solomon,' quavered Mr. Ashburn, 'because I said as much to Jane (if you recollect my mentioning it, my dear?) at the time; but she has decided views, and she thought otherwise.'

The unfortunate Jane, seeing herself deserted on all sides, began to qualify, not sorry in her inmost heart to be able to think more leniently, since the 'Weekly Horeb' sanctioned it, of her son's act of independence.

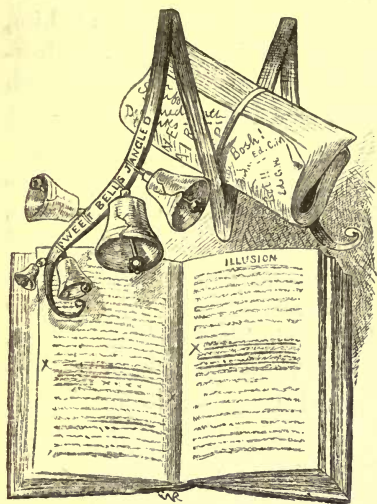
'I may have acted on imperfect knowledge,' she said; 'I may have been too hasty in concluding that Mark had only written some worldly and frivolous love-tale to keep minds from dwelling on higher subjects. If so, I'm willing to own it, and if Mark was to come to me——'

But Mr. Lightowler did not care to lose his monopoly of magnanimity in this way. 'That comes too late now, Jane,' he said; 'he won't come back to you now, after the way you've treated him. You've taken your line, and you'll have to keep to it. But he shan't lose by that while *I* live—or afterwards, for that matter—he was always more of a son to me than ever you made of him!'

And when he went to bed, after some elaboration of his views on the question, he left the family, with one exception, to the highly unsatisfactory reflection that they had cut themselves off from all right to feel proud and gratified at Mark's renown, and that the breach between them was too wide now to be bridged.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH MARK MAKES AN ENEMY AND RECOVERS A FRIEND.



ARK'S fame was still increasing, and he began to have proofs of this in a pleasanter and more substantial form than empty compliment. He was constantly receiving letters from editors or publishers inviting him to write for them, and offering terms which exceeded his highest expectations. Several of these proposals—all the more tempting ones, in fact—he accepted at once; not that he had anything by him in manuscript just then of the kind required from him, but he felt a vague sense

of power to turn out something very fine indeed, long before the time appointed for fulfilment of his promises.

But so far, he had not done any regular literary work since his defection: he was still at St. Peter's, which occupied most of his time, but somehow, now that he could devote his evenings without scruple to the delights of composition, those delights seemed to have lost their keenness, and besides, he had begun to go out a great deal.

He had plenty of time before him, however, and his prospects were excellent; he was sure of considerable sums under his many agreements as soon as he had leisure to set to work. There could be no greater mistake than for a young writer to flood the market from his inkstand—a reflection which comforted Mark for a rather long and unexpected season of drought.

Chilton and Fladgate had begun to sound him respecting a second book, but Mark could not yet decide whether to make his *coup* with 'One Fair Daughter' or 'Sweet Bells Jangled.' At first he had been feverishly anxious to get a book out which should be legitimately his own as soon as possible, but now, when the time had come, he hung back.

He did not exactly feel any misgivings as to their merits, but he could not help seeing that with every day it was becoming more and more difficult to put 'Illusion' completely in the shade, and that if he meant to effect this, he could afford to neglect no precautions. New and brilliant ideas, necessitating the entire reconstruction of the plots, were constantly occurring to him, and he set impulsively to work, shifting and interpolating, polishing and repolishing, until he must have invested his work with a dazzling glitter—and yet he could not bring himself to part with it.

He was engaged in this manner one Wednesday afternoon in his rooms, when he heard a slow heavy step coming up the stairs, followed by a sharp rap at the door of his bedroom, which adjoined his sitting-room. He shouted to the stranger to come in, and an old gentleman entered presently by the door connecting the two rooms, in whom he recognised Mr. Lightowler's irascible neighbour. He stood there for a few moments without a word, evidently overcome by anger, which Mark supposed was due to annoyance at having first blundered into the bedroom. 'It's old Humpage,' he thought. 'What can he want with *me*?' The other found words at last, beginning with a deadly politeness. 'I see I am in the presence of the right person,' he began. 'I have come to ask you a plain question.' Here he took something from his coat-tail pocket, and threw it on the table before Mark—it was a copy of 'Illusion.' 'I am told you are in the best position to give me information on the subject. Will you kindly give me the name—the *real* name—of the author of this book? I have reasons, valid reasons, for requiring it.' And he glared down at Mark, who had a sudden and disagreeable sensation as if his heart had just turned a somersault. Could this terrible old person have detected him, and if so what would become of him?

Instinct rather than reason kept him from betraying himself by words. 'Th—that's a rather extraordinary question, sir,' he gasped faintly.

'Perhaps it is,' said the other; 'but I've asked it, and I want an answer.'

'If the author of the book,' said Mark, 'had wished his real name to be known, I suppose he would have printed it.'

'Have the goodness not to equivocate with me, sir. It's quite useless, as you will understand when I tell you that I happen to *know*.' (He repeated this with withering scorn.) 'I happen to

know the name of the real author of this—this precious production. I had it, let me tell you, on very excellent authority.'

'Who told you?' said Mark, and his voice seemed to him to come from downstairs. Had Holroyd made a confidant of this angry old gentleman?

'A gentleman whose relation I think you have the privilege to be, sir. Come, you see *I* know you, Mr.—Mr. Cyril Ernstone,' he sneered. 'Are you prepared to deny it?'



Mark drew a long sweet breath of relief. What a fright he had had! This old gentleman evidently supposed he had unearthed a great literary secret; but why had it made him so angry?

'Certainly not,' he replied, firm and composed again now. 'I am Mr. Cyril Ernstone. I'm very sorry if it annoys you.'

'It *does* annoy me, sir. I have a right to be annoyed, and you know the reason well enough!'

'Do you know?' said Mark languidly; 'I'm really afraid I don't.'

'Then I'll tell you, sir. In this novel of yours you've put a character called—wait a bit—ah, yes, called Blackshaw, a retired country solicitor, sir.'

'Very likely,' said Mark, who had been getting rather rusty with 'Illusion' of late.

'I'm a retired country solicitor, sir! You've made him a man of low character; you show him up all through the book as perpetually mixing in petty squabbles, sir; on one occasion you actually allow him to get drunk. Now what do you mean by it?'

'Good heavens!' said Mark, with a laugh, 'you don't seriously mean to tell me you consider all this personal?'

'I do very seriously mean to tell you so, young gentleman,' said Mr. Humpage, showing his teeth with a kind of snarl.

'There are people who will see personalities in a proposition of Euclid,' said Mark, now completely himself again, and rather amused by the scene; 'I should think you must be one of them, Mr. Humpage. Will it comfort you if I let you know that I—that this book was written months before I first had the pleasure of seeing you?'

'No, sir, not at all. That only shows me more clearly what I knew already. That there has been another hand at work here. I see that uncle of yours behind your back here.'

'Do you though?' said Mark. 'He's not considered literary as a general rule.'

'Oh, he's quite literary enough to be libellous. Just cast your eye over this copy. Your uncle sent this to me as a present, the first work of his nephew. I thought at first he was trying to be friendly again, till I opened the book! Just look at it, sir!' And the old man fumbled through the leaves with his trembling hands. 'Here's a passage where your solicitor is guilty of a bit of sharp practice—underlined by your precious uncle! And here he sets two parties by the ears—underlined by your uncle, in red ink, sir; and it's like that all through the book. Now what do you say?'

'What *can* I say?' said Mark, with a shrug. 'You must really go and fight it out with my uncle; if he is foolish enough to insult you, that's not exactly a reason for coming here to roar at me.'

'You're as bad as he is, every bit. I had him up at sessions over that gander, and he hasn't forgotten it. You had a hand in that affair, too, I remember. Your victim, sir, was never

the same bird again—you'll be pleased to hear that—never the same bird again !'

'Very much to its credit, I'm sure,' said Mark. 'But oblige me by not calling it *my* victim. I don't suppose you'll believe me, but the one offence is as imaginary as the other.'

'I *don't* believe you, sir. I consider that to recommend yourself to your highly respectable uncle, you have deliberately set yourself to blacken my character, which may bear comparison with your own, let me tell you. No words can do justice to such baseness as that !'

'I agree with you. If I had done such a thing no words could ; but as I happen to be quite blameless of the least idea of hurting your feelings, I'm beginning to be rather tired of this, you see, Mr. Humpage.'

'I'm going, sir, I'm going. I've nearly said my say. You have not altered my opinion in the least. I'm not blind, and I saw your face change when you saw me. You were *afraid* of me. You know you were ! What reason but one could you have for that ?'

Of course Mark could have explained even this rather suspicious appearance, but then he would not have improved matters very much ; and so, like many better men, he had to submit to be cruelly misunderstood, when a word might have saved him, although in his case silence was neither quixotic nor heroic.

'I can only say again,' he replied in his haughtiest manner, 'that when this book was written, I had never seen you, nor even heard of your existence. If you don't believe me, I can't help it.'

'You've got your own uncle and your own manner to thank for it if I don't believe you, and I don't. There are ways of juggling with words to make them cover anything, and from all I know of you, you are likely enough to be apt at that sort of thing. I've come here to tell you what I think of you, and I mean to do it before I go. You've abused such talents as you've been gifted with, sir ; gone out of your way to attack a man who never did you any harm. You're a hired literary assassin—that's my opinion of you ! I'm not going to take any legal proceedings against you—I'm not such a fool. If I was a younger man, I might take the law, in the shape of a stout horsewhip, into my own hands ; as it is, I leave you to go your own way, unpunished by me. Only, mark my words—you'll come to no good. There's a rough sort of justice in this world, whatever may be said, and a beginning like yours

will bring its own reward. Some day, sir, you'll be found out for what you are! That's what I came to say!

And he turned on his heel and marched downstairs, leaving Mark with a superstitious fear at his heart at his last words, and some annoyance with Holroyd for having exposed him to this, and even with himself for turning craven at the first panic.

'I must look up that infernal book again!' he thought. 'Holroyd may have libelled half London in it for all I know.'

Now it may be as well to state here that Vincent Holroyd was as guiltless as Mark himself of any intention to portray Mr. Humpage in the pages of 'Illusion'; he had indeed heard of him from the Langtons, but the resemblances in his imaginary solicitor to Dolly's godfather were few and trivial enough, and, like most of such half-unconscious reminiscences, required the aid of a malicious dulness to pass as anything more than mere coincidences.

But the next day while Mark was thinking apprehensively of 'Illusion' as a perfect mine of personalities, the heavy steps were heard again in the passage and up the staircase; he sighed wearily, thinking that perhaps the outraged Mr. Humpage had remembered something more offensive, and had called again to give him the benefit of it.

However, this time the visitor was Mr. Solomon Lightowler, who stood in the doorway with what he meant to be a reassuring smile on his face—though, owing to a certain want of flexibility in his uncle's features, Mark misunderstood it.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' he said bitterly. 'Come in, Uncle, *come in*. You undertook when I saw you last never to speak to me again, but *I* don't mind if you don't. I had a thorough good blackguarding yesterday from your friend Humpage, so I've got my hand in. Will you curse me sitting down or standing? The other one stood!'

'No, no, it ain't that, my boy. I don't want to use 'ard words. I've come to say, let bygones be bygones. Mark, my boy, I'm *proud* of yer!'

'What, of a literary man! My dear uncle, you can't be well—or you've lost money.'

'I'm much as usual, thanky, and I haven't lost any money that I know of, and—and I *mean* it, Mark, I've read your book.'

'I know you have—so has Humpage,' said Mark.

Uncle Solomon chuckled. 'You made some smart 'its at 'Umpage,' he said. 'When I first saw there was a country solici-

tor in the book, I said to myself, "That's goin' to be 'Umpage," and you 'ad him fine, I *will* say that. I never thought to be so pleased with yer.'

'You need not have shown your pleasure by sending him a marked copy.'

'I was afraid he wouldn't see it if I didn't,' explained Mr. Lightowler, 'and I owed him one over that gander, which he summonsed me for, and got his summons dismissed for his trouble. But I've not forgotten it. P'r'aps it was going rather far to mark the places; but there, I couldn't 'elp it.'

'Well, I suppose you know that amounts to libel?' said Mark, either from too hazy a recollection of the law on the subject of 'publication' or the desire to give his uncle a lesson.

'Libel! Why, I never wrote anything—only underlined a passage 'ere and there. You don't call that libelling!'

'A judge might, and, any way, Uncle, it's deuced unpleasant for *me*. He was here abusing me all the afternoon—when I never had any idea of putting the hotheaded old idiot into a book. It's too bad—it really is!'

'Umpage won't law me—he's had enough of that. Don't you be afraid, and don't show yourself poor-spirited. You've done me a good turn by showing up 'Umpage as what I believe him to be—what's the good of pretending you never meant it—to me? You don't know how pleased you've made me. It's made a great difference in *your* prospects, young man, I can tell yer!'

'So you told me at the "Cock,"' said Mark.

'I don't mean that way, this time. I dessay I spoke rather 'asty then; I didn't know what sort of littery line you were going to take up with, but if you go on as you've begun, you're all right. And when I have a nephew that makes people talk about him and shows up them that makes themselves unpleasant as neighbours, why, what I say is, Make the most of him! And that brings me to what I've come about. How are you off in the matter o' money, hey?'

Mark was already beginning to feel rather anxious about his expenses. His uncle's cheque was by this time nearly exhausted, his salary at St. Peter's was not high, and, as he had already sent in his resignation, that source of income would dry up very shortly. He had the money paid him for 'Illusion,' but that of course he could not use; he had not sunk low enough for that, though he had no clear ideas what to do with it. He would receive handsome

sums for his next two novels, but that would not be for some time, and meanwhile his expenses had increased with his new life to a degree that surprised himself, for Mark was not a young man of provident habits.

So he gave his uncle to understand that, though he expected to be paid some heavy sums in a few months, his purse was somewhat light at present.

'Why didn't you come to me?' cried his uncle; 'you might a' known *I* shouldn't have stinted you. You've never found me near with you. And now you're getting a big littery pot, and going about among the nobs as I see your name with, why, you must keep up the position you've made—and you shall too! You're quite right to drop the schoolmastering, since you make more money with your scribbling. Your time's valuable now. Set to and scribble away while you're the fashion; make your 'ay while the sun shines, my boy. I'll see yer through it. I want you to do me credit. I want everyone to know that you're not like some of these poor devils, but have got a rich old uncle at your back. You let 'em know that, will yer?'

And, quite in the manner of the traditional stage uncle, he produced his cheque book and wrote a cheque for a handsome sum, intimating that that would be Mark's quarterly allowance while he continued to do him credit, and until he should be independent of it. Mark was almost too astounded for thanks at first by such very unexpected liberality, and something, too, in the old man's coarse satisfaction jarred on him and made him ashamed of himself. But he contrived to express his gratitude at last.

'It's all right,' said Uncle Solomon; 'I don't grudge it yer. You just go on as you've begun.' ('I hope that doesn't mean "making more hits at Humpage,"' thought Mark.) 'You thought you could do without me, but you see you can't; and look here, make a friend of me after this, d'ye hear? Don't do nothing without my advice. I'm a bit older than you are, and p'r'aps I can give you a wrinkle or two, even about littery matters, though you mayn't think it. You needn't a' been afraid your uncle would cast you off, Mark—so long as you're doing well. As I told your mother the other day, there's nothing narrer-minded about me, and if you feel you've a call to write, why, I don't think the worse of you for it. I'm not *that* kind of man.'

And after many more speeches of this kind, in the course of

which he fully persuaded himself, and very nearly his nephew, that his views had been of this broad nature from the beginning, and were entirely uninfluenced by events, he left Mark to think over this new turn of fortune's wheel, by which he had provoked a bitter foe and regained a powerful protector, without deserving one more than the other.

He thought lightly enough of the first interview now; it was cheaply bought at the price of the other. 'And after all,' as he said to himself, 'what man has no enemies?'

But only those whose past is quite stainless, or quite stained, can afford to hold their enemies in calm indifference, and although Mark never knew how old Mr. Humpage's enmity was destined to affect him, it was not without influence on his fortunes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DINNER PARTY.



MR. LANGTON did not forget Mark; and before many days had gone by since his call, he received an invitation to dine at Kensington Park Gardens on a certain Saturday, to which he counted the days like a school-boy. The hour came at last, and he found himself in the pretty drawing-room once more. There were people there already; a stout judge and his pretty daughter, a meek but eminent conveyancer with a gorgeous wife, and a distinguished professor with a bland subtle smile, a gentle voice and a dangerous eye. Other guests came in afterwards, but Mark hardly saw

them. He talked a little to Mrs. Langton, and Mrs. Langton talked considerably to him during the first few minutes after his entrance, but his thoughts kept wandering, like his eyes, to

Mabel as she moved from group to group in her character of supplementary hostess, for Mrs. Langton's health did not allow her to exert herself on these occasions.

Mabel was looking very lovely that evening, in some soft light dress of pale rose, with a trail of pure white buds and flowers at her shoulder. Mark watched her as she went about, now listening with pretty submission to the gorgeous woman in the ruby velvet and diamond star, who was laying down some 'little new law' of her own, now demurely acknowledging the old judge's semi-paternal compliments, audaciously rallying the learned professor, or laughing brightly at something a spoony-looking, fair-haired youth was saying to her.

Somehow she seemed to Mark to be further removed than ever from him; he was nothing to her amongst all these people; she had not even noticed him yet. He began to be jealous of the judge, and the professor too, and absolutely to hate the spoony youth.

But she came to him at last. Perhaps she had seen him from the first, and felt his dark eyes following her with that pathetic look they had whenever things were not going perfectly well with him. She came now, and was pleased to be gracious to him for a few minutes, till dinner was announced.

Mark heard it with a pang. Now they would be separated, of course; he would be given to the ruby woman, or that tall, keen-faced girl with the *pince-nez*; he would be lucky if he got two minutes' conversation with Mabel in the drawing-room later on. But he waited for instructions resignedly.

'Didn't papa tell you?' she said; 'you are to take me in—if you will?' If he would! He felt a thrill as her light fingers rested on his arm; he could scarcely believe his own good-fortune, even when he found himself seated next to her as the general rustle subsided, and might accept the delightful certainty that she would be there by his side for the next two hours at least.

He forgot to consult his *menu*; he had no very distinct idea of what he ate or drank, or what was going on around him, at least as long as Mabel talked to him. They were just outside the radius of the big centre lamp, and that and the talk around them produced a sort of semi-privacy.

The spoony young man was at Mabel's right hand, to be sure, but he had been sent in with the keen-faced young lady who

came from Girton, where it was well known that the marks she had gained in one of the great Triposes under the old order, would—but for her sex—have placed her very high indeed in the class list. Somebody had told the young man of this, and, as he was from Cambridge too, but had never been placed anywhere except in one or two walking races at Fenner's, it had damped him too much for conversation just yet.

'Have you been down to Chigbourne lately?' Mabel asked Mark suddenly, and her smile and manner showed him that she remembered their first meeting. He took this opportunity of disclaiming all share in the treatment of the unfortunate gander, and was assured that it was quite unnecessary to do so.

'I wish your uncle, Mr. Humpage, thought with you,' he said ruefully, 'but he has quite made up his mind that I am a villain of the deepest dye;' and then, encouraged to confide in her, he told the story of the old gentleman's furious entry and accusation.

Mabel looked rather grave. 'How could he get such an idea into his head?' she said.

'I'm afraid *my* uncle had something to do with that,' said Mark, and explained Mr. Lightowler's conduct.

'It's very, very silly of both of them,' she said; 'and then to drag *you* into the quarrel, too! You know, old Mr. Humpage is not really my uncle—only one of those relations that sound like a prize puzzle when you try to make them out. Dolly always calls him Uncle Antony—he's her godfather. But I wish you hadn't offended him, Mr. Ashburn, I do really. I've heard he can be a very bitter enemy. He has been a very good friend to papa; I believe he gave him almost the very first brief he ever had; and he's kind to all of us. But it's dangerous to offend him. Perhaps you will meet him here some day,' she added, 'and then we may be able to make him see how mistaken he has been.'

'How kind of you to care about it!' said he, and his eyes spoke his gratitude for the frank interest she had taken in his fortunes.

'Of course I care,' said Mabel, looking down as she spoke. 'I can't bear to see anyone I like and respect—as I do poor Uncle Antony—persisting in misjudging *anybody* like that.'

Mark had hoped more from the beginning of this speech than the conclusion quite bore out, but it was delightful to hear her talking something more than society nothings to him. However,

that was ended for the present by the sudden irruption of the spoony young man into the conversation; he had come out very shattered from a desperate intellectual conflict with the young lady from Girton, to whom he had ventured on a remark which, as he made it, had seemed to him likely to turn out brilliant. 'You know,' he had announced solemnly, 'opinions may differ, but in these things I must say I don't think the exception's *always* the rule—eh? don't you find that?' And his neighbour had replied that she thought he had hit upon a profound philosophical truth, and then spoilt it by laughing. After which the young man, thinking internally 'it *sounded* all right, wonder if it was such bosh as she seems to think,' had fled to Mabel for sanctuary and plunged into an account of his University disasters.

'I should have floored my "General" all right, you know,' he said, 'only I went in for too much poetry.'

'Poetry?' echoed Mabel, with a slight involuntary accent of surprise.

'Rhymes, you know, not regular poetry!'

'But, Mr. Pidgely, I don't quite see; why can't you floor generals with rhymes which are not regular poetry? Are they so particular in the army?'

'It isn't an army exam.; it's at Cambridge; and the rhymes are all the chief tips done into poetry—like "Paley" rhymes, y' know. Paley rhymes give you, for instance, all the miracles or all the parables right off in about four lines of gibberish, and you learn the gibberish and then you're all right. I got through my Little go that way, but I couldn't the General. Fact is, my coach gave me too *many* rhymes!'

'And couldn't you recollect the—the tips without rhymes?'

'Couldn't remember *with* 'em,' he said. 'I could have corked down the verses all right enough, but the beggars won't take them. I forgot what they were all about, so I had to show up blank papers. And I'd stayed up all one Long too!'

'Working?' asked Mabel, with some sympathy.

'Well—and cricketing,' he said ingenuously. 'I call it a swindle.'

'He talks quite a dialect of his own,' thought Mabel, surprised. 'Vincent didn't. I wonder if Mr. Ashburn can.'

Mr. Ashburn, after a short period of enforced silence spent in uncharitable feelings respecting fair-haired Mr. Pidgely, had been suddenly attacked by the lady on his left, a plump lady with queer

comic inflections in her voice, the least touch of brogue, and a reputation for daring originality.

'I suppose now,' she began, 'ye've read the new book they're talking so much about—this "Illusion"? And h'wat's your private opinion? I wonder if I'll find a man with the courage to agree with me, for *I* said when I'd come to the last page, "Well, they may say what they like, but I never read such weary rubbish in all me life," and I never did!'

Mark laughed—he could not help it—but it was a laugh of real enjoyment, without the slightest trace of pique or wounded vanity in it. 'I'll make a confession,' he said. 'I do think myself that the book has been luckier than it deserves—only, as the—the man who wrote it is a—a very old friend of mine—you see, I mustn't join in abusing it.'

Mabel heard this and liked Mark the better for it. 'I suppose he couldn't do anything else very well without making a scene,' she thought, 'but he did it very nicely. I hope that woman will find out who he is though; it will be a lesson to her!' Here Mabel was not quite fair, perhaps, for the lady had a right to her opinion, and anything is better than humbug. But she was very needlessly pitying Mark for having to listen to such unpalatable candour, little dreaming how welcome it was to him, or how grateful he felt to his critic. When Mark was free again, after an animated discussion with his candid neighbour, in which each had amused the other and both were on the way to becoming intimate, he found the spoony youth finishing the description of a new figure he had seen in a *cotillon*. 'You all sit down on chairs, don't you know,' he was saying, 'and then the rest come through doors;' and Mabel said, with a spice of malice (for she was being excessively bored), that that must be very pretty and original.

Mr. Langton was chatting ponderously at his end of the table, and Mrs. Langton was being interested at hers by an account the judge's lady was giving of a *protégé* of hers, an imbecile, who made his living by calling neighbours who had to be up early.

'Perhaps it's prejudice,' said Mrs. Langton, 'but I do *not* think I should like to be called by an *idiot*; he might turn into a maniac some day. They do quite suddenly at times, don't they?' she added, appealing to the professor, 'and that wouldn't be *nice*, you know, if he did. What *would* you do?' she inquired generally.

'Shouldn't get up,' said a rising young barrister.

'*I* should—under the bed, and scream,' said the lively young

lady he had taken down. And so for some minutes that end of the table applied itself zealously to solving the difficult problem of the proper course to take on being called early by a raving maniac.

Meanwhile Mabel had succeeded in dropping poor Mr. Pidgely and resuming conversation with Mark; this time on ordinary topics—pictures, books, theatres, and people (especially people); he talked well, and the sympathy between them increased.

Then as the dessert was being taken round, Dolly and Colin came in. 'I've had ices, Mabel,' said the latter confidentially in her ear as he passed her chair on his way to his mother; but Dolly stole quietly in and sat down by her father's side without a word.

'Do you notice any difference in my sister Dolly?' Mabel asked Mark, with a little anxious line on her forehead.

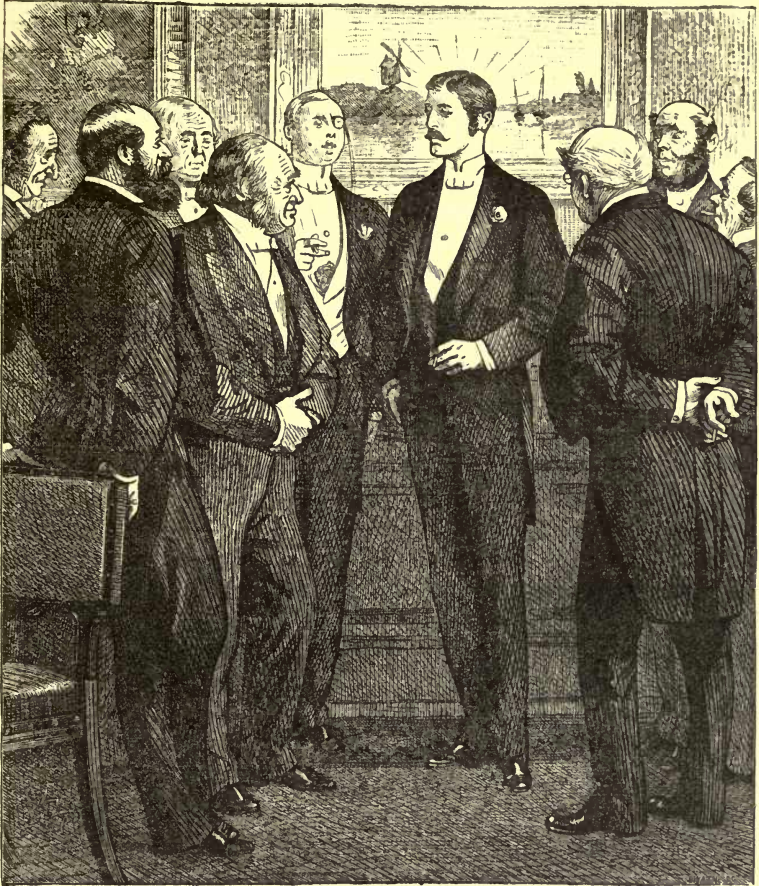
'She is not looking at all well,' said Mark, following the direction of her glance. There certainly was a change in Dolly; she had lost all her usual animation, and sat there silent and constrained, leaving the delicacies with which her father had loaded her plate untouched, and starting nervously whenever he spoke to her. When good-natured Mr. Pidgely displayed his one accomplishment of fashioning a galloping pig out of orange-peel for her amusement, she seemed almost touched by his offering, instead of slightly offended, as the natural Dolly would have been.

'I don't think she is ill,' said Mabel, 'though I was uneasy about that at first. Fräulein and I fancy she must be worrying herself about something, but we can't get her to say what it is, and I don't like to tease her; very likely she is afraid of being laughed at if she tells anybody. But I do so wish I could find out; children can make themselves so terribly wretched over mere trifles sometimes.'

But the hour of 'bereavement,' as Mr. Du Maurier calls it, had come; gloves were being drawn on, the signal was given. Mr. Pidgely, after first carefully barricading the path on his side of the table with his chair, opened the door, and the men, left to themselves, dropped their hypocritical mask of resigned regret as the handle turned on Mrs. Langton's train, and settled down with something very like relief.

Mark of course could not share this, though it is to be feared that even he found some consolation in his cigarette; the sound of Mabel's voice had not ceased to ring in his ears when her father took him by the arm and led him up to be introduced to the professor, who was standing before a picture. The man of science

seemed at first a little astonished at having an ordinary young man presented to him in this way, but when his host explained that Mark was the author of the book of which the professor had been speaking so highly, his manner changed, and he overwhelmed him with his courtly compliments, while the other guests



gathered gradually nearer, envying the fortunate object of so marked a distinction.

But the object himself was horribly uncomfortable; for it appeared that the professor in reading 'Illusion' had been greatly struck by a brilliant simile drawn from some recent scientific discoveries with which he had had some connection, and had even discovered in some passages what he pronounced to be the germ

of a striking theory that had already suggested itself to his own brain, and he was consequently very anxious to find out exactly what was in Mark's mind when he wrote. Before Mark knew where he was, he found himself let in for a scientific discussion with one of the leading authorities on the subject, while nearly every one was listening with interest for his explanation. His forehead grew damp and cold with the horror of the situation—he almost lost his head, for he knew very little about science. Thanks, however, to his recent industry, he kept some recollection of the passages in question, and without any clear idea of what he was going to say, plunged desperately into a long and complicated explanation. He talked the wildest nonsense, but with such confidence that everybody in the room but the professor was impressed. Mark had the mortification of seeing, as the great man heard him out with a quiet dry smile, and a look in his grey eyes which he did not at all like, that he was found out. But the professor only said at the end, 'Well, that's very interesting, Mr. Ashburn, very interesting indeed—you have given me a really considerable insight into your—ah—mental process.' And for the rest of the evening he talked to his host. As he drove home with his wife that night, however, his disappointment found vent: 'Never been so taken in in my life,' he remarked; 'I did think from his book that that young Ernstone and I would have something in common; but I tried him and got nothing out of him but rubbish; probably got the whole thing up out of some British Association speech and forgotten it! I hate your shallow fellows, and 'pon my word I felt strongly inclined to show him up, only I didn't care to annoy Langton!'

'I'm glad you didn't, dear,' said his wife; 'I don't think dinner-parties are good places to show people up in, and really Mr. Ernstone, or Ashburn, whatever his name is, struck me as being so very charming—perhaps you expected too much from him?'

'H'm, I shall know better another time,' he said.

But the incident, even as it was, left Mark with an uncomfortable feeling that his evening had somehow been spoilt, particularly as he did not succeed in getting any further conversation with Mabel in the drawing-room afterwards to make him forget the unpleasantness. Vincent Holroyd's work was still proving itself in some measure an avenger of his wrongs.

(To be continued)

SOME LITERARY RECOLLECTIONS.

I.

ABOVE all writers, I envy and admire autobiographers. Unhappily the feat of narrating one's own life in print can only be performed once. I should like to do it ever so many times, regarding myself in each case from a new standpoint; but to me it is marvellous how it can be done at all. It doubtless arises from modesty and the total absence of egotism, but for my part I don't remember more than half-a-dozen things that ever happened to me, and still less *when* they happened. There is Scriptural authority for not thinking very highly of the individuals who make a practice of observing 'days and months and times and years,' and so far at least I am a Christian man; but to be able to put every event of one's life into the proper pigeon-hole is nevertheless a gift I envy.

It is necessary, even for the autobiographers, however, to have kept a diary, which unhappily I never did, except for a week or two. I retain a fragment written in boyhood: genuine, but for any benefit I derive from it in the way of assistance to the memory, it might be the Shapira manuscript.

Sunday.—Twice to church. Revs. Jones and Robinson preached. A collection. Sixpence? (I wonder why this note of interrogation.)

Monday.—Wet. Improved my mind. Duck for supper. Tommy. (Who was Tommy? Or was it an ejaculation? The name of a place never mentioned to ears polite is sometimes associated with the word Tommy to express a catastrophe. Perhaps this was an abbreviation.)

Tuesday.—Called on Uncle B.; grumpy and unsociable. Accounts: lucifers and sundries, four pounds.

I suppose I had always a distaste for detail; at all events I seem to have very soon 'dropped off gorged' from these personal memoranda, the perusal of which makes turbid the stream of life from its very source. I can't even remember who 'Uncle B.' was; it was probably a pseudonym for some person in authority of business habits, whose individuality I have forgotten. In the next entry I find a Bishop mentioned.

Wednesday.—(No month, or even year, are ever stated; the diary seems, like Shakespeare, to have been ‘for all time.’) The Bishop called.

Did he? And if so, what did he want? And who was he? Our home was not so overrun with Bishops but that I should have remembered him had he been a real one. My conviction is that this also was a pseudonym. Out of such materials as these, though no doubt attractive to the commentator, it is obviously impossible to construct an autobiography. However ‘keen to track suggestion to her inmost cell’ might be the writer, he could not compress it within reasonable limits: if, as usual, there is to be prefixed a narrative of his ancestors during the civil wars (mine were all there) and an ample description of his great-grandmother (from whom he inherited his genius), the work would assume portentous dimensions.

For these reasons, an autobiography (which has been more than once requested from my humble pen) is out of the question. On the other hand, I have certain recollections. My mind, though a blank as to dates and even ordinary details, retains personal impressions vividly enough; and it is possible in the case of certain noteworthy persons, with whom during a life of letters I have come in contact, that my reminiscences of them may have some interest. They extend, alas! over many years, but I must premise that I have no ‘scandal about Queen Elizabeth,’ nor anyone else, to communicate. This is, I feel, a drawback. The cry—

Proclaim the faults they would not show!
Break lock and seal; betray the trust;
Keep nothing sacred—

goes forth stronger than ever. But unhappily my memory is so defective that I recollect nothing against these good folk. There were matters amiss with them, doubtless, for they were mortal; but so far as I was concerned—a very young aspirant to fame—they gave me of their best. People talk of the vanity of authors; of their selfish egotism; of their crying out, ‘Whip behind!’ when some poor fellow would hang on to the footboard of the chariot in which they themselves ride forth so triumphantly. But then some people lie. My experience of men and women of letters—which has been continuous and extends over thirty years—is that for kindness of heart they have no equals.

The profession of healing comprehends, it is true, natures as generous and as gentle, but in that there is (technically speaking) a mixture. I have never known but one absolutely offensive man of letters; and even he was said to be pleasant when sober; though, as I only met him some half-a-dozen times, and his habits were peculiar, it did not give me a fair chance of finding him in that condition.

As a very young man I remember expressing this rose-coloured view of the calling I had made up my mind to follow to Charles Dickens. He put on that comical look of his—every feature full of humorous significance—and turned to John Forster with ‘It is plain our young friend has yet to know——’

It so happened that I never did know——, a circumstance which one can hardly regret. But I have often heard hard things said of Forster himself, in my opinion very unfairly. I can only say that no one could have been gentler, or more encouraging, to a young neophyte in literature than he always was to me. I have never, indeed, found it otherwise in any of those who have made their mark in letters. Even the Reviewers—who are popularly supposed to be a young author’s natural enemies—have been, so far as my experience goes, no exception to this rule. De Quincey had not only very gracious manners, but most generous sympathies. George Brimley, though less genial, was not less kind. Indeed, with the exception of a few young gentlemen, who were ‘nothing if they were not critical,’ and who were trying their prentice hands in not very first-class literary organs, I have always found reviewers at least as quick to appreciate as to condemn. Their power to injure merit, where it really exists, has been absurdly exaggerated, but not more so than their will. The best of them are authors themselves who (notwithstanding the popular sneer) have *not* failed in authorship; and the same circumstances—the love of books, and the society of genial and cultured folk—which mollify the minds of authors, and prevent them from becoming ferocious, have the same effect upon themselves.

It is with authors, however, and not with critics, that I have just now to do. A desk lies before me, of plain make, but mighty size: one that used to hold all sorts of things, from caterpillars (which never spun a thread) to ‘cribs,’ when I was a boy at school; but which, for more than a quarter of a century, has held ‘those dead leaves which keep their green, the noble letters of the dead.’ Their writers were no ordinary men and women; they have all left

name and fame behind them ; but that which smells sweeter to me and blossoms in their dust, is their unfailing kindness. It is not because they are dead and gone that I feel so sure of this. With me Death has never afforded, as it does with so many folks, a cheap asylum for unpleasant people : I think none the better of them for having gone, though I am sincerely glad they went, for I am sure they would not have gone could they have helped it. But when I think of these my Mentors (which most of them were), my heart brims full of gracious memories. I contrast their behaviour to the Young and Struggling with the harshness of the Lawyer, the hardness of the Man of Business, the contempt of the Man of the World, and am proud to belong to their calling.

There are intelligent persons who make a living out of their fellow-creatures by pretending to read character in handwriting. It would be rather hard upon their art to send them half a dozen letters out of this desk. What would they make I wonder, for example, out of this delicate microscopic writing, looking as if it were done with a stylus, and without blot or flaw. The paper is all odds and ends, and not a scrap of it but is covered and crossed. The very flaps of the envelopes, and even the outsides of them, have their message. The reason of this is, that the writer, a lady, had lived in a time when postage was very dear ; like Southey, she used to boast that she could send more for her money by post than any one else ; and when the necessity no longer existed, the custom remained.

How, at her age, her eyes could read what she herself had written, used to puzzle me. She was known to those of the last generation as having written the most graphic and wholesome description of country life of her time ; she was known to their fathers as a writer of historical plays which were performed at the two great national theatres with marked success—two of them, I believe, at the same time. Conceive what a fuss would be made nowadays about any woman in an obscure country village whose dramas were being played by the first actors of the day (Young and Macready were her exponents) at Drury Lane and Covent Garden ! Yet this was the case with Mary Russell Mitford.

‘My “Rienzi,”’ she says in a letter now before me, ‘ran a hundred nights in the best days of the drama.’ She used to tell a capital story anent this play, illustrative of the ignorance of great lawyers of matters outside their own profession. One of her

Majesty's judges was calling on her in her village home, and congratulated her upon the performance of her "Rienzi," which he had just been to see. 'It's an admirable play,' he said. 'Has it any foundation in fact?' 'Well, of course; you have surely read of Rienzi? It's all in Gibbon yonder,' and she pointed to that author's works upon her crowded bookshelves. 'Is it indeed?' he answered; 'then I should like to read about him.' And he took away the *first volume*.

To hear her narrate that story was as good as any play. I seem to see the dear little old lady now, looking like a venerable fairy, with bright sparkling eyes, a clear, incisive voice, and a laugh that carried you away with it. I never saw a woman with such an enjoyment of—I was about to say a joke, but the word is too coarse for her—of a pleasantry. She was the warmest of friends, and with all her love of fun never alluded to their weaknesses. For Talfourd (who did know about 'Rienzi') she had a very affectionate regard. I once told her what was at that time a new story about his 'Ion; a tragedy.' He was very vain of that drama, and never missed an opportunity of seeing it acted, whether in town or country. Some wit, who had this narrated to him, observed, 'But surely he does not go to see "Ion" *now that he has become a judge?*'

How she laughed, and then how grave she looked! 'You would not have told me that story, I am sure, my dear,' she said, laying her hand upon my arm reprovingly, 'if you had known that Talfourd is a great friend of mine.'

She had a right to rebuke me, for there was half a century or so between our ages. I had been introduced to her when a very young man, and had sought her advice about literary matters, with the intention, as usual, of taking my own way at all events. I well remember our first interview. I expected to find the authoress of 'Our Village' in a most picturesque residence, overgrown with honeysuckle and roses, and set in an old-fashioned garden. Her little cottage at Swallowfield, near Reading, did not answer this picture at all. It was a cottage, but not a pretty one, placed where three roads met, with only a piece of green before it. But if the dwelling disappointed me, the owner did not. I was ushered up stairs (for at that time, crippled by rheumatism, she was unable to leave her room) into a small apartment, lined with books from floor to ceiling, and fragrant with flowers; its tenant rose from her armchair with difficulty, but with a sunny

smile and a charming manner bade me welcome.¹ My father had been an old friend of hers, and she spoke of my home and belongings as only a woman can speak of such things. Then we plunged *in medias res*—into men and books.

She seemed to me to have known everybody worth knowing, from the Duke of Wellington (her near neighbour) to the last new verse-maker, whom I had just superseded; he had become the last but one. She talked like an angel, but her views upon poetry, as a calling in life, shocked me not a little. I was in love, of course, and she shocked me even more upon that subject. She said she preferred a marriage *de convenance* to a love match, because it generally turned out better. 'This surprises you,' she said smiling, 'but then I suppose I am the least romantic person that ever wrote plays.'

She was much more proud of her plays (which had even then been well-nigh forgotten) than of the works by which she was so well known, and which at that time brought people from the ends of the earth to see her. I suppose she was one of the earliest English authors who was 'interviewed' by the Americans. She was far from democratic, but always spoke of that nation with great respect. What surprised me much more was her admiration for Louis Napoleon, upon which point, as on many others, we soon agreed to differ. She even approved of the *coup d'état*; concerning which she writes to me a little apologetically, 'My enthusiasm is always ready laid, you know, like a housemaid's fire : ' which was very true.

Nothing ever destroyed her faith in those she loved. If I had not known all about him (from my own folk of another generation

¹ In the desk above-mentioned there is a letter of Charles Kingsley's which describes Miss Mitford very graphically as follows :—'I can never forget the little figure rolled up in two chairs in the little Swallowfield room, packed round with books up to the ceiling, on to the floor—the little figure with clothes on, of course, but of no recognised or recognisable pattern; and somewhere out of the upper end of the heap, gleaming under a great deep globular brow, two such eyes as I never, perhaps, saw in any other English woman—though I believe she must have had French blood in her veins, to breed such eyes, and such a tongue, for the beautiful speech which came out of that ugly (it was that) face; and the glitter and depth too of the eyes, like live coals—perfectly honest the while, both lips and eyes—these seemed to me to be attributes of the highest French—or rather Gallic—not of the highest English, woman. In any case, she was a triumph of mind over matter; of spirit over flesh, which gave the lie to all Materialism, and puts Professor Bain out of court—at least out of court with those who use fair induction about the men and women whom they meet and know.'

who had known him well), I should have thought her father had been a patriot and a martyr. She spoke of him as if there had never been such a father—which in a sense was true. He had spent his wife's fortune, and then another which had fallen in to him, and then the 10,000*l.* which 'little Mary' herself had got for him by hitting on the lucky number in a lottery, and was rapidly getting through her own modest earnings, in the same free-handed manner, when good fortune removed him; but she always deemed it an irreparable loss. 'I used to contrive to keep our house in order,' she would say speaking of her literary gains, 'and a little pony carriage, and my dear dear father.' To my mind he seemed like a Mr. Turveydrop, but he had really been a most accomplished and agreeable person, though with nothing sublime about him except his selfishness.

She had the same exaggerated notions of the virtues and talents of her friends (including myself), nay, her sympathies extended even to *their* friends, whom she did not know. Of course she had her prejudices by way of complement; and when she spoke of those who did not please her, her tongue played about their reputations like sheet lightning—for there was much more flash than fork in it.

Literature in those days monopolised its disciples much more than it does now, when 'cultured' persons of all kinds favour the world with their lucubrations. Miss Mitford lived and breathed and moved in an atmosphere of books; and when she was not writing books, she was writing about them.¹ There is hardly any work of merit of that time—I am speaking of thirty years ago—which she does not discuss in these letters, and always with a vehemence of feeling and expression as though it were a thing of life. A bad book—I mean one with distinct faults of style or tone—made her as indignant as a bad man. Her views in this respect were of immense service to me. A young writer who has high spirits (and mine were mountains high in those days) is almost always flippant, and needs the pruning knife. 'Be careful as to style,' she writes; 'give as much character as you can, and as much *truth*, that being the foundation of all merit in literature and art.'

My earliest efforts in story-telling were of a very morbid character; an undisciplined imagination, with ill-health to help it,

¹ 'This is the twelfth letter I have written to-day,' she says on one occasion, apologising for a shorter epistle than usual.

caused me to dwell upon the eerie aspects of life. She warned me against all such monopolising influences. 'Let me tell you what Charles Kingsley told me the first time we ever met. He said that he had flung himself into a remote and bygone historical subject ('Hypatia') in order to escape from the too vivid impressions of the social evils of England at the present day. They pressed upon him, he said, unceasingly and dangerously, and he felt he could not get too soon out of their influence. Once before he had been so carried away by the metaphysics of the elder Coleridge (Derwent Coleridge was his tutor), that he for some years read nothing but science and natural history. So there is a fear.'

Her own mind was a most wholesome one. She delighted in simple pleasures, kind natures, and enthusiastic people; her love for the country approached idolatry.

'So you do not write out of doors? I *do*—but in a very anti-pastoral manner, sitting in a great chair at a table. I am writing so at this moment at a corner of the house under a beautiful acacia tree with as many snowy tassels as leaves. It is waving its world of fragrance over my head, mingled with the orange-like odours of a syringa bush; and there is a jar of pinks and roses on the table. I have a love of sweet smells that amounts to a passion. My chief reason, however, just now for being here, is that it is a means of enjoying the fresh air without fatigue. I am still unable to obtain it in any other way than this, and by being led in the pony-chair most ignominiously at a foot's pace through the lanes.'

The smallest object in nature was not beneath her notice, and any occurrence of the simplest sort connected with natural beauty impressed itself on her mind. 'A night or two ago my maid K. (that initial, by which she is always called, stands for her very Scriptural but most unmusical name of Keren-happuch), while putting me to bed, burst into a series of exclamations which it was impossible to stop: her attention, however, was clearly fixed upon the candlestick, and, following her eyes, I saw what seemed a dusky caterpillar; it moved, and then appeared the bright reflection of a tiny spot of greenish light, now increasing, now diminishing, according to the position of the insect. It was a glow-worm. Upon the table were two jars of flowers, and one of wild woodbine from the lane had only just been taken away. With one or other of those flowers it doubtless came. But was it not singular? Extinguishing the candle, I sent the candlestick down

to the little court in front of the house, where it was deposited upon the turf, and in ten minutes my visitor had crawled out upon the grass, where it will, I trust, live out its little life in peace. K., who has lived with me fifteen years (and whom you must learn to know and like), said, knowing how fond I used to be of these stars of the earth, that, "now I could not go to them, they came to me."

She was exceedingly attached to this domestic, and had therefore, as usual, the highest admiration for her. 'K. is a great curiosity; by far the cleverest woman in these parts, not in a literary way [this was not to disappoint me, who was all for literature], but in everything that is useful. She could make a court dress for a duchess, or cook a dinner for a Lord Mayor; but her principal talent is shown in managing everybody whom she comes near, especially her husband and myself. She keeps the money of both, and never allows either of us to spend sixpence without her knowledge, and is quite inflexible in case she happens to disapprove of the intended expenditure. You should see the manner in which she makes Sam reckon with her, and her contempt for all women who do not manage their husbands.'

This is surely a homely picture, very characteristic, and appropriate to the authoress of 'Our Village.' She detested everything affected and artificial, of course, and what she would have said of the æsthetic and classical writers of the present day who call our old favourites, in despite of custom, by new-fangled names (such as Kikero for Cicero), I tremble to think!

I suppose in my brand-new University 'culture,' I had found something amiss with the pronunciation of the names in one of her plays, for she writes: 'The false quantity in "Foscari" is derived from the Kembles: John Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, Charles Kemble (I don't know about Mrs. Fanny), all anglicised proper names as Shakespeare did before them. Indeed it is the best way to avoid discrepancies, and I have always found the most accomplished persons doing it whenever they can, and eschewing foreign pronunciation as they eschew French phrases—one of those worst vulgarities that smack of Theodore Hook and the silver fork school. Remember, too, that my play was written before the publication of Lord Byron's.'

What an impression of the lapse of time does that sentence give us! Here is another. Speaking of Haydon, whose *Life* by Tom Taylor had just appeared, she says: 'When I and Wordsworth and Keats, and many others, my betters, first knew him, and were

writing, as if in concert, sonnets to him,' &c. : it makes me feel a veteran, indeed, to remember that I once was intimate with a contemporary of such writers. De Quincey, however—of whom more hereafter—to whom Miss Mitford was so good as to introduce me, though born in the same year, was connected with a still earlier race of literary giants.

Besides her general admiration for good books of all sorts, Miss Mitford had an especial fondness for those writers who had sung the beauties of the neighbourhood in which she dwelt, or were otherwise connected with it. I believe she loved Gray the better because Stoke Pogis was the churchyard he immortalised; that Pope was dearer to her for his lines on her beloved Windsor Forest; that her favourite, Burke, had a greater attraction for her from his having chosen Beaconsfield for his place of retirement; and that she admired Milton, even more than her fine taste inclined her to do, from his having lived at Chalfont.

It was for this reason, perhaps, though he had very real merits of his own, that Thomas Noel's verses so delighted her. He was the only man of letters whom at that time I knew, and all that I could tell her about him was interesting to her. He lived a very retired life in a secluded cottage at Boyne Hill, near Maidenhead, where he cultivated his garden and his muse. I believe he was related to Lord Byron, a circumstance which, combined with certain 'peculiar views' (as they were then called) upon religious matters, caused him to be regarded somewhat askance by his more commonplace neighbours. There was a rumour—whether true or not, I cannot say—that on the death of a favourite child, he preferred to bury it in his own grounds rather than in the churchyard, which disturbed the minds of the good folk in those parts not a little, and caused me, until I came to know him well, to feel a 'fearful joy' in his society.

He was a very dark, handsome man, of reserved demeanour, and, so far, might have sat for one of his relative's stagey heroes, but he was in reality of a most gracious nature. I have letters from him, written to me when quite a boy, of a very interesting kind. He lived more out of the world than even the little lady at Swallowfield, and quite as much in books. These, however, were of a less modern kind. I never knew a man so well acquainted with the Elizabethan dramatists, or who could quote from them so opportunely. From one of them, perhaps, he drew his inspiration for the somewhat old-fashioned inscription on the spring in his garden, but the lines have a freshness of their own:—

Toads, and newts, and snails, avaunt !
 Come not near, nor dwell,
 Where the dapper Fairies haunt,
 By this crystal well.
 But upon the moss-tufts damp
 In the summer night,
 Let the glow-worm from her lamp
 Sprinkle starry light :
 And the butterfly by day
 Here her painted wings display ;
 And the humming bee be heard,
 And the pretty lady-bird,
 Clad in scarlet dropt with jet,
 Here her tiny footsteps set ;
 And the russet-suited wren,
 Ever skipping out of ken,
 And, in gayer plumage vested,
 His wee brother, golden-crested,
 Plying each his busy bill,
 Hither come, and peck at will ;
 And the redbreast on the brink
 Of this basin, perch and drink,
 Elf-folk such in favour hold : —
 And if aught of human mould,
 Wending hitherward its way,
 Haply here awhile should linger,
 Let it heed this rhymed lay,
 Harmless keep both foot and finger
 And propitious glances fling
 On the smiling Fairy-Spring.

Thomas Noel's mind invested all the scenes about him—and indeed they were fair enough to evoke it—with its own poetry. In the 'Recollections of a Literary Life' Miss Mitford has devoted a chapter to him, but unfortunately these two friends on paper never met. The one was too much of an invalid, the other of a recluse, to surmount even the few miles that lay between them. They were both passionately attached to river scenery, and Noel's 'Thames Voyage' was one of her favourite poems. His description of the swan and her family used to strike her as very tender and graphic.

Lo ! a sailing swan, with a little fleet
 Of cygnets by her side,
 Pushing her snowy bosom sweet
 Against the bubbling tide !

And see—was ever a lovelier sight ?
 One little bird afloat
 On its mother's back, 'neath her wing so white !
 A beauteous living boat.

The threatenful male, as he sails ahead
 Like a champion proud and brave,
 Makes, with his ruffling plumes outspread,
 Fierce jerks along the wave.

He tramples the stream, as we pass him by,—
 In wrath from its surface springs,
 And after our boat begins to fly
 With loudly flapping wings.

Thomas Noel's lines on 'Clifden Spring' should be known to every lover of the Thames ; but they are not known. Poetry did not even bring him fame, though it was its own exceeding great reward.

Rhyme-craft, many-hued mosaic
 Of the mind, which souls prosaic
 Sneer at in their cold conceit,
 Is it not a pastime sweet ?
 Oh ! what twirling of the brains !
 Painful pleasures ! pleasing pains !
 Oh ! what making, marring, mending !
 Patching, paring and perpending !
 Oh ! what hope, and fear, and doubt,
 Putting in, and pulling out,
 Till a word is found to fit !
 Then what joy is like to it ?

Brother bards, and bardlings all,
 Ye, who up Parnassus crawl,
 Ye who, at a rate surprising,
 Set your brains teetotum-ising—
 Boldly I appeal to you ;
 Say, is not my picture true ?
 Ye, whom mammon-slaves deem daft,
 Have I slandered sweet rhyme-craft ?

What Thomas Noel was known, far and wide, for, was his 'Pauper's Drive,' of which the second verse often rings in my memory.

Oh, where are the mourners ? Alas ! there are none ;—
 He has left not a gap in the world now he's gone ;
 Not a tear in the eye of child, woman, or man :—
 To the grave with his carcase as fast as you can.
 ' Rattle his bones over the stones ;
 He's *only* a pauper, whom nobody owns !'

This poem, until Miss Mitford rescued it from the almost still-born little volume of poems entitled 'Rymes and Roundelays,' was always attributed to another Thomas—Thomas Hood.

It has been conjectured from the extreme polish and attraction of her letters, that Miss Mitford wrote them with a view to

their publication ; but this I am sure was not the case. She often described to different correspondents the same occurrence ; and indeed I think that very incident of the glow-worm, above mentioned, is narrated in another place. In her day, letter-writing was an art of itself, and literary folk, not being so continuously employed in their profession as they are now, could afford to practise it. In the next generation authors did not write long letters, very seldom indeed wrote letters at all, with the exception of Charles Dickens, whose genius was so superabundant that he gave of it in all kinds, and, as it were, with both hands.

Miss Mitford herself never knew him ; ill health and, I am sorry to add, poverty, kept her for many years remote from society of all kinds, which was another reason doubtless why she devoted herself so much to letter-writing. She corresponded with scores of persons whom she had never met face to face. In this way she had very considerable influence in the world of letters, which was always at the service of her friends. She was never tired of thus furthering my own ends, even when she did not quite approve of them. I have set down, elsewhere, the admirable advice with which she favoured me ; the endeavours she made to turn a very young gentleman, of unsettled prospects and feverish hopes, to embrace some calling less precarious than that which (as poor Leitch Ritchie used to say), 'I hate to hear called "Light Literature."' Never had a Telemachus so wise and kind a Mentor ; but it was all of no use. I made my own bed, and have lain upon it ever since with tolerable comfort. At last she gave it up, and helped me as I wanted to be helped, not with the apostle's lukewarm assent, 'You will have trouble, but I spare you,' but with the liveliest interest. 'I should like to spoil you, my dear, very much, if I had the means,' she writes ; 'as it is, I am like Ailie Dinmont, who, when accused of giving the children their own way, replied, 'Eh, puir things, I hae nothing else to gie 'em !'

I had been brought up in the country, without the least link to literature in any direction, and she gave me introductions to everybody I wanted to know. They were of immense advantage to me, but one of the greatest gratifications they afforded me was that through one of them I became the humble means of establishing friendly relations between her and another large-hearted woman of letters, of whom Miss Mitford had at that time an unfavourable opinion—Harriet Martineau.

At first she seems to have hesitated to put herself in commu-

nication with her sister authoress. 'I never saw Miss Martineau but once in my life, and have not happened to know, or to care for, the same people. Moreover, dear friend, without being in the slightest degree bigoted or prudish, I have, to say the least, no sympathy with her. . . . The truth is, although a clever woman, there is nothing about her that tempts one into a forgetfulness of faults as in George Sand. She is not, to my fancy, a woman of genius; all her works are incomplete. Indeed the only things of hers I ever liked were her political economy stories, which I used to read skipping the political economy. Fifty years hence she will be heard of as one of the curiosities of our age, but she will not be read. This is my Harriet Martineau creed. Nevertheless, if you still wish an introduction, why, you have a thousand claims upon me, and at a word I will put my prejudices into my pocket, and send you the best I can concoct.'

In spite of this, I had the audacity to be importunate. I had a great desire to be acquainted with the authoress of 'Deerbrook,' and I was going up to Lakeland where she lived. To my reiterated request, Miss Mitford, with her usual kindness and good nature, gave way at once.

'I cannot bear to think, my dear friend, that you should have such good reason to believe me what in reality I am not, a ferocious bigot or a starched prude; so I do what I ought to have done before, and send you a note to Miss Martineau, who is beyond all doubt a remarkable woman. I have never read her History, and did not fancy her novels, especially the one where she compares (?) her black hero with Napoleon, and even accuses the great Emperor of killing him by cold and starvation; but I agree with you that her boys' stories are charming—how could I ever forget them!—while her papers on Deafness and Invalid Life are full of thought and feeling. I have, at all events, now done my best for her in presenting to her a very different sort of visitor from those who commonly present themselves at our doors with letters of introduction. Would you like one to De Quincey? Mr. F——, the American, who during his last year in England was one of the favourite habitués of Rogers, and familiar with all that is current in London, saw no one, he says, equal to De Quincey, and calls him "the most courtly gentleman in Europe." He is certainly the finest living writer of English prose.'

(To be continued occasionally.)

THE METROPOLITAN EDITOR'S SONG.

BY A PROVINCIAL ASPIRANT.

My priestly right's a mystery still,
 And who will dare to ask it?
 With odds and ends of soul I fill
 The sacrificial basket.
 In vain you preach progressive truth,
 And fancy you'll reform me;
 The glorious holocaust of youth
 Still flares away to warm me.

Chorus. So heap the altar, pour the wine!
 Young life, a crimson fluid,
 Shall cheer the gods when'er they dine,
 As long as I'm the Druid.

Here, devil, break again this bit
 Of broken aspiration,
 And let that wasted love be lit
 To swell my waste cremation;
 And as for yonder brain—let's see—
 Well, pitch it in the gutter:
 No, fling it on the fire for me;
 I want to see it sputter!

Chorus. So heap the altar &c.

Some coxcomb here is all for soul—
 My magazine wants heating—
 So sends a heart alive and whole:
 Confound the thing—it's beating!

Cold water ! quick ! Why stare and start ?
 Antiquity's defender,
 'Tis what I hate the most—a heart,
 Especially when tender.

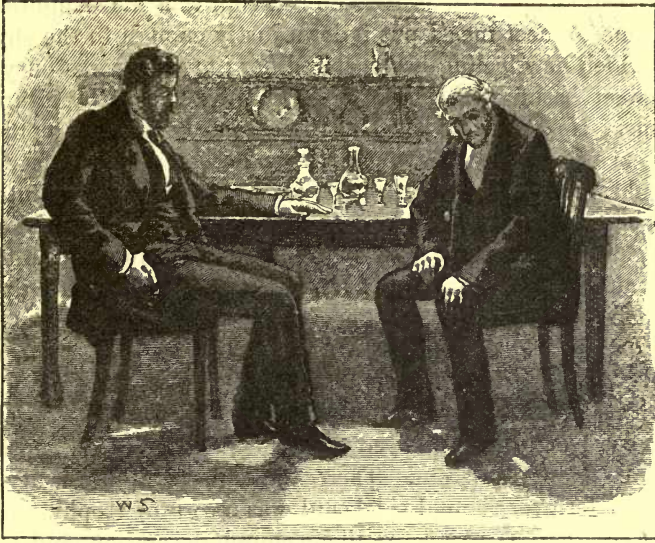
Chorus. So heap the altar &c.

The new and young, away with them
 To fire or crucifixion !
 For London and Jerusalem
 Were always of conviction
 That no good thing can come to hand,
 Or beautiful or witty,
 From Nazareth or Sunderland,
 Or any heathen city.

Chorus. So heap the altar, pour the wine !
 Young life, a crimson fluid,
 Shall cheer the gods whene'er they dine,
 As long as I'm the Druid.

MY POOR WIFE.

PART II.



CHAPTER III.

It was clear that no time was to be lost. If I would secure the prize, I must close my ears to the voice of prudence. The unasked confidences of my travelling-companion had strengthened my belief that my marriage would not be an imprudent one even from a money point of view; I must be content with this probability; there was no time for further inquiry. Who could prophesy the next move of this wild youth? On the very next day he might come galloping over, and, forgetting all his fine determination of speaking to the girl's father, fling himself on his knees on the gravel path before the girl herself. His talk about the girl's extraordinary simplicity I dismissed with a smile. That was my error. I confess my mistake. I ought to have read between his fantastic speeches the truth of the poor child's ignorance of life and inability to understand its intricacies. I confess my mistake, when it is too late; but I cannot bear to linger over it. I have

not the heart to moralise on this sad error, which might have ruined my career. Let love plead for me! Let it suffice that I made up my mind to speak, and to speak on that very evening.

Though my mind was full of my purpose, I could not help smiling at the eccentricity of my host. It was not far from dinner-time when I reached the old house, and I found the old gentleman alone. I took it as no bad sign that his daughter did not come to meet me; I put it down justly enough to the shyness with which new feeling had inspired her; my fancy was busy with her sweet bashfulness. But my host gave me little leisure for dreams. He still kept up the little comedy of philosophic indifference to his good fortune, but was bothered by the fear that I should mistake his indifference for ingratitude. He fluttered about me with fussy little attentions. He pressed my hand again and again in both of his; he insisted on accompanying me to my room, and himself lighted my candles. He pointed with a pride, at which he made haste to laugh, to the fact that even at that time of year they could provide me with flowers for my mantel-piece. I did not need to be told whose little hands had placed them there. But though I smiled not unkindly at the old gentleman's eccentricities, I did not feel inclined to laugh, until we entered the dining-room. There the climax of absurdity was reached; for over the old sideboard was a sort of trophy erected, with FIAT JUSTITIA writ large like a church decoration, and a trite old proverb in honour of helpful friends. Luckily, it was easy to explain my laughter as the result of surprise and modesty acting on the nerves. We were only three at dinner, not counting that beast of a dog; and neither of my human companions was in a mood to be critical of me. My public life had brought me in contact with the strange decorations of platforms and halls; but to find them rivalled in the old-fashioned oak-panelled dining-room of private life was irresistibly comical.

When dinner was done the dear child left us. The squire, though he cared little for wine, respected the old custom of sitting with the decanters; and on this occasion for the first time I was glad of it. I should have liked to delay my communication; but the thought of the wild youth in the neighbourhood made silence impossible. As briefly and as simply as I could I told the old gentleman of my love.

'You must have seen it,' I said, as I noticed the trembling of his hands.

‘Yes, yes,’ he answered, ‘I saw it; of course I saw it—I saw something.’ I was doubtful of the strict accuracy of this statement, as I marked the nervous flutter, which he could not hide. ‘But she’s a child,’ he cried rather sharply; ‘she’s a child, you know.’

‘And you have not seen,’ I said sadly, ‘that lately—only lately—the child has been growing into a woman?’

‘No,’ he answered, ‘no, no, no.’

‘At least,’ I asked, with a faint tone of injury in my voice, ‘at least I may hope that you have no personal objection to me?’ He laid a rather shaky hand upon my sleeve, as if he would beg me to say no more till he had found his voice again.

‘You must know what I think of you,’ he said, ‘how highly, how very highly!’ As I said nothing, he began again presently, with a watery smile, ‘It has given me a higher idea of political life than I have held since my salad days, to know that you are a rising man, that you will be a great man, a leader, a——’

‘Put that on one side,’ I said promptly; ‘don’t consider that; it’s a risky career; a man’s scruples may make him a failure at any time.’

‘Ah, but it’s not your ability—your great ability—that I think most of; it’s your goodness. You are a good man, and a good friend, and a good friend to justice.’ He turned himself half round in his chair that he might look at the trophy over the sideboard. I was afraid to look at it.

‘Put that on one side,’ I said, with becoming gravity. He turned to me again with his nervous excitement growing stronger.

‘How can I refuse you?’ he cried sharply. ‘How can I refuse you anything? Think what you’ve done for me.’ I made a gesture of deprecation. ‘Of course,’ he went on, hurrying back to his familiar line, ‘it can’t be much to me—I’m an old man—a little property more or less; but that’s nothing. You behaved nobly, with a rare nobility. I can’t forget how deeply I am in your debt.’

‘Ah,’ I said, ‘you must put that on one side too.’

‘I can’t put everything on one side,’ he said rather feebly. I made no comment; I made no claim upon his gratitude. I am glad that I showed this generosity; that is still a comfort to me. After a silence which seemed long, there came a reference, which I had half expected and feared. ‘I had some idle thoughts for my girl,’ he said; ‘I ought to tell you that—but a long time hence—a long time hence. There’s a friend and neighbour of ours, a fine young fellow, who’s pushing his fortune like a man. He’s a

good son, and I used to think that he would make a good husband—but years hence, years hence.’

I showed a natural curiosity. ‘And is this young man a suitor?’ I asked anxiously.

‘He has never said a word,’ the old gentleman answered, shaking his head. ‘Perhaps it was no more than my fancy. I fancied that he was waiting till she had grown up; but if she has really grown up, I think he must have said something.’

‘You must put him on one side, too,’ I said, with a frank smile. ‘I can’t admit anybody else’s claim.’

‘No, no; he has no claim. It may have been my fancy. But you’ve been drinking nothing. Shan’t we? shall we——’

As the old gentleman moved uneasily in his chair, I rose promptly from mine. I had made up my mind. In the passage I detained him with my hand on his shoulder. ‘At least do this for me,’ I said sadly but firmly; ‘go into your study for a little while.’ I pushed him gently to the door of his comfortable den. ‘I must speak to her,’ I said; ‘I must learn my fate.’

He was rather dazed, I think. ‘You won’t frighten her,’ he said; ‘she’s a child—a mere child; you won’t frighten her?’

‘Ah,’ I said, in a tone of deep disappointment, ‘you don’t trust me.’

I felt him leap under my hand. ‘Whom should I trust if not you?’ he cried eagerly. ‘You know what I owe you.’

‘Put that on one side,’ I said gravely, as I gently pushed him into his room.

The little drawing-room soothed my senses like a spell. It was all warmth, and its faded furniture was warmed to a subdued beauty of colour. With the firelight flickering on the gown, and the shaded lamplight on her hair, she was bending over the wide book on her lap. I shall never forget the picture. As I came into the room she looked up. I have said that she often reminded me of an angel on a church window, an angel who awaited command. As her eyes came frankly to meet mine, I saw with a new thrill that mine was the command for which she waited. I felt my power over this lovely child. As I drew nearer, I saw her look change to a grave surprise, but she did not turn away her head. I bent down to her, and with some murmured words of tenderness pressed my lips to hers. The colour left her face, but she showed no sign of fear. Only her eyes were filled with a strange wonder and awe. There are scenes too sacred for the pen. When the

hour of good-night had come, and we three stood together at the foot of the stairs, I saw that the tears ran unchecked down the cheeks of the old gentleman; and I confess that my own eyes were not free from moisture.

I awoke the next morning from a sound and refreshing sleep, and with good courage for the task before me. I knew that that wild youth who had thrust his confidences upon me might give me trouble. I had determined to anticipate his first move. In the early dawn I went down the stairs as quietly as I could. All



Nature seemed to smile on me, as if it were already my marriage morning. But I had no time to note, as I love to do, the beauty of the eastern sky. I slipped out of the house and into the stable-yard. I found my host's groom, whom I had already made my friend by common but efficient means, preparing to exercise the small but useful stud; and after the usual compliments on his care of the beasts, I asked him if he were going near the house of the troublesome young man to leave a note there. This note was brief and to the point. In it I told my rival that it seemed to me

the frankest course to inform him at once of my engagement. I added that I had been so much puzzled and confused by his sudden and unlooked-for confidences, that I had not decided to tell him then and there of my intentions until I had seen him drive away and my chance was lost. I then gave expression to the hope (which I most sincerely felt) that, since he had been content to defer all expression of his feelings so long, they were less deeply engaged than he fancied. I finished my letter with the wish that he would always remain her friend and mine.

When I had watched the groom ride slowly away with my missive in his pocket, I breathed more freely. I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the early hour and of love's young dream. My darling was exquisitely lovely and charming on that day. She was very pale and quiet; but her stillness seemed to me the outward sign of the exactly right mood: I would not have wished her a shade more lively. As I walked beside her in the little old-fashioned garden, I turned the current of my talk at last to the young man, my neighbour. The groom had returned before breakfast, but had brought no answer to my note. I was relieved, for I had half feared a hurried and violent reply. I watched my little girl's face narrowly as I smiled carelessly upon it. I saw that at the mention of his name it brightened with open affection, but showed no trace of sentiment. She seemed to wake from her silence. 'I wonder what he will say!' she said aloud, with the frank curiosity of a child.

I was going to say something, when I saw the servant coming round the corner of the house with a letter in his hand. I stepped hastily between the girl and him, and took the note from him. As she strolled on with her eyes dropped to the gravel-path, I stood still and read my rival's answer. I copy it here. It had no beginning and no signature. 'You ought to have told me. If this is true, and she is engaged to you, I shall hold my tongue. For God's sake, be good to her. You don't know what a delicate sweet soul she is, and how noble. Be good to her.' That was all. It was curt, and seemed unfriendly. He almost seemed to doubt my word; and the passionate appeal to me to be good to her seemed almost insulting. He might have been writing to a tyrant, or an ogre, or to the villain of a three-volume novel. Like everything which the unfortunate youth did, it was exaggerated and out of taste. As I put it away carefully in my pocket-book, I made up my mind to leave the place before

night. I felt sure that he would follow his note, that he would not have the good sense to keep away. A meeting would be pleasant to neither; I would not come back until he had said good-bye. Of course he would hasten his departure for America; I would leave the coast clear for his farewell interview. I did not fear anything which he might say behind my back. What had he to say except that I had not imitated his ridiculous loquacity—his silly want of reserve—in a railway-carriage? As for my life at large, I felt a glad confidence that no man could find anything which was not eminently respectable either in my public or my private career. Besides, if he tried to blacken my character in the eyes of my future wife, I was sure that he would only condemn himself. Had I not seen the absolute trust—even veneration—in those eyes? Ah me for the stability of woman! If she had but kept her trust in me unweakened! But—as the novelists say—to my story! I must not linger over my task.

When I had put my rival's letter in my pocket, I made haste to the side of my beloved. Stealing my arm gently round her, I told her that I must leave her on that day. I felt her tremble, but she did not withdraw herself from me. I told her that I had broken away from most important public business, because I could not do my work until I had heard my fate from her lips; that now I must hurry back to my duty; that I should come to her again in the first hour of my freedom. 'And did you care for me like that?' she said, with awe in her voice. I stooped to look into her eyes, and I saw that they were full of veneration. That, I said to my heart, was the true foundation for the airy palace of love. On that what might I not build? Ah me for the prophecies of men, where woman is the theme! Ah me for the crumbling of foundations, which seem strong enough to resist the ages! My girl was strangely silent; and I did not wish it otherwise. She walked beside me with a beautiful docility; she neither vaulted now, nor ran races with her treacherous wolfish animal, who was puzzled by the change. She was no longer busy noting all the tiny objects in earth and air; but she led me on a little round of visits to the creatures and the corners, which had been the objects of her especial affection. She introduced me with perfect gravity to the last litter of pigs and to the spaniel puppies. She led me, stooping, into that nook in the midst of the unkempt shrubbery, where she had played so often at keeping house—she, who was to keep a real house now. She took it for

granted that I was deeply interested in these trifles which she showed me. It crossed my mind once or twice that she showed them to me as if they were to be part of our future life, as if I too were to live there with the little pigs and the rabbits in the hutch. Poor little girl! It was no part of my task on that morning to woo her from her simple visions of the future. She was strangely sweet to me. I never felt more certain of anything than that I had made no mistake in my choice. Her gravity had an intense charm, and her innocence an absolute fragrance. She did not laugh nor leap; she was very quiet; she took my kisses like a child. There are things too sacred for the pen. On that afternoon I left her.

Her first letter which she wrote to me lies before me now. The paper is a little crumpled, the ink perhaps a little faded; and yet it seems but yesterday that I smiled at it so tenderly for the first time. It was a prim little note; but it charmed me: its formality had an old-fashioned fragrance; it was like the lavender which her sunny garden of bees furnished so bountifully to her ancient house. She wrote that all was well; and after the latest news of her father, and of the young puppies, and of the new calf, she told me that the dusky youth had already made his farewell visit. She was so sorry that he had to go at once; she supposed that there was something wrong with the beasts, for he seemed very silent and as if he were thinking of something else; and he was to start on the very next day for Liverpool; she was very sorry. She ended with an apology for childish handwriting; and she signed herself 'very truly' mine. I remember that when I saw the formal conclusion, written in a hand which was certainly unformed, I turned back to the beginning and noted, with a low laugh, that she had begun with 'Dear Mr. ——.' How sweet it would be to teach her modest lips to use my Christian name! I was delighted with her news of my would-be rival. To-day, or to-morrow at latest, he would be at sea. I telegraphed to my dear girl's father that I would be with him on the morrow. I told myself that the end of my doubts and hesitations had come. I had had quite enough of this travelling up and down, which unsettled my ideas and interfered with my work. I determined that my wedding should be performed with the least possible delay.

Of that fateful day there is next to nothing which need be said. I was full of confidence, and serenely happy. After a brief time of damp and wintry weather, the sun shone glorious on

my wedding morn. And yet, if I were of a superstitious character, I might have trembled. My father-in-law was in his most nervous state, and between his eagerness to do me honour and his unreasonable grief at losing his child, he made a series of the most ludicrous mistakes. It seemed a mere chance that he was in church to give away the bride. The bride herself was pale as a little ghost, and her great eyes looked out at me as if she were some maiden newly come into a pagan temple, and dumbly imploring with veneration and fear the clemency of her deity. But the omen—the ridiculous omen—which might have frightened a superstitious man, was this. I can laugh at it now, but at the moment it made me furious, and not unnaturally. That beast of a dog, who had prowled round me like a wolf ever since I set foot in the place, was lying at the bottom of the staircase when I came down dressed for the ceremony. I had scarcely stepped over him with some conciliatory words, when he sprang at my back and tore my new coat from top to bottom. I confess that I was frightened, and I had no time to collect myself before I was hurried to church. I was married in an old black coat and a new blue waistcoat; I dropped the ring; I felt that I appeared from first to last to the least possible advantage. Some hours had passed before I was myself again.



CHAPTER IV.

MANY times since I took this pen in hand have I been tempted to fling it from me, but never so strongly tempted as now. Is it not hard that a man should be compelled to lift the decent veil which hides the sacred drama of his married life? But I will not waste time in complaints. The headstrong character of another has made this task inevitable. I will make it as short as I can.

The rest of the tale which I have to tell is a tale of bitter disappointment—of my quick awakening from a foolish dream. I had made a mistake; I had now to reap the fruits. It is true that in the mere matter of money I had no reason to complain. My father-in-law was so full of gratitude to me and of a blind devotion to his only child, that he seemed ready to give away everything at the slightest hint. But, though I make no pretence of despising wealth, I know well that it is not the one thing needful. It is only valuable as a means; though it might aid me to success, it was not success. Besides, there was not enough of it. Even if we had

acquired all the property of the old gentleman, we should not have been rich among the rich ; our wealth would not have been a power. And though my pale young bride had brought me money, and would certainly inherit more, where was the full sympathy for which I had given myself away ? Where was the loving helpmate ever ready to assist me on my upward course ? Where was the trustful and helpful companion of my career ? I had dreamed of the absolute union of two souls. With the folly of a boy, perhaps, I had dreamed that marriage might be no less than this. I had allowed myself to dream—and sad indeed was the awakening.

I had felt certain that my wife's social success would be of great use to me as a politician. I had counted on it. I am no less certain now that she might have enjoyed it almost without an effort. But not only would she make no effort, she seemed to shrink with an inexplicable repugnance from the obvious path before her. I will not be unjust to her. I cannot say that she ever refused to do anything which I told her. She obeyed me in detail ; but her obedience was spiritless. When I left her without specific commands, she did nothing. I had looked to her to court an amiable and indulgent society with all her heart—alas ! you would have thought that she had no heart at all. I was very busy ; I necessarily left her much alone. I could not be for ever dictating her little social duties ; if I neglected to dictate them, she sat at home and read books. She grew pale and listless. She, who had run like a young huntress in the country, would scarcely walk in London, unless I sent her out. Of course I could not let her walk alone. She took an irrational dislike to the society of her French maid, who had come with the highest character from one of the best houses. She suggested one day that she might walk with her dog, if I would let him come to us in London ; but of course it was impossible for me to have that dangerous animal in the house ; and I reminded her that collies are notoriously unhappy in towns. So she sat at home on most days, till her silence and docility became irritating. In the evenings I took her to all the parties which were likely to be useful. Wherever we went I was complimented on her loveliness, and I perceived a sensation on all sides which was far more complimentary. Her unusual style and extraordinary beauty made her conspicuous in spite of herself. But I soon found out that men thought her dull. She did not seem to understand even the plainest compliments to her looks. She was distressed by the frank stare of admiration, which is a sign

nowadays of the best breeding. I was very patient with her and kind. I trusted to time; I thought that time would work wonders.

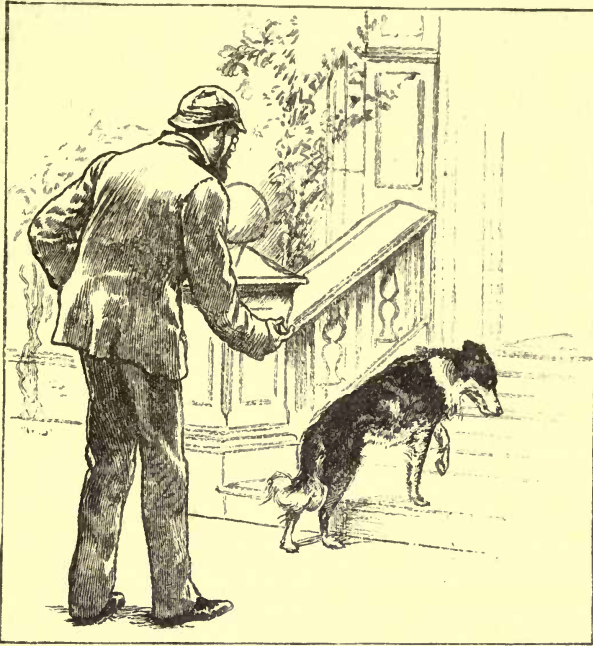
Though I had counted on my wife's popularity with all the desirable world, I counted less on her success with men than with women. I had felt sure that her youth, her innocence, and her helplessness would appeal to the motherly instincts, which are to be found even in the most fashionable as in the most vulgar women. I had looked forward to this lovely married child being taken up by the most influential ladies of the great world; and among these ladies I had from the first selected one who was to be enchanted beyond all the rest. At that time there was nobody who could be of more use to me than that fair marchioness whose story is now in every mouth. At that time she was a power. She was not young; but she had an air of insolence which was more effective than youth. She was not clever; but she made men talk to her, and never forgot to look appreciative. I need no longer hesitate to say that she was not good; but she had so blunt a method of announcing the frailties of her female friends, that for the most part they were careful to let her character alone. Nobody can be surprised to hear now that she exercised at the time of my marriage an extraordinary influence on a prominent member of the party to which I belong. This prominent member was a friend of her husband also: the world had no right to talk. Since then the poor lady has sunk; the man, whom she has ruined, has lost his chance of power; and I can do no harm by this reference to an ill-omened friendship which has been discussed in every gin-palace. All this belongs now to the unsavoury history of notorious scandals. It is enough for me to say that at the time of my marriage there was nothing more likely to do me good than a friendship between this influential marchioness and my wife. That member of the party over whom the lady had such strange power was the one man to whom I then pinned my faith. Of course the influence of women on politics is not what it was. They have a formidable rival in the admirable improvement of local machinery. Nevertheless, they have still more power than the outside world will easily believe. I knew the strength of this one lady; I knew, too, that she regarded me with a certain suspicion, perhaps a suspicion of my clear sight. I counted with certainty on her capture by the guileless charm of my childlike wife. I was not mistaken. The *grande dame* was delighted with

a style so unlike her own ; she showed the most amiable eagerness to adopt the modest new-comer, and to introduce her to the very best people ; for my wife's sake she was for the first time decently civil to me. But though this great lady took some pains to be agreeable, my wife would not respond. She called, as I bade her ; she went to tea and to luncheon, as I bade her ; she accepted a seat in her new friend's victoria, because I begged her never to refuse that offer. But she was as cold as a snow image. She did what I told her, but no more. She said nothing of the marchioness, till one day she broke from her silence and said more than enough. I recall my amazement as I listened. I had no idea that she knew so much of the wickedness of the world, and I told her so. She answered passionately that it was this 'woman' who had shown it to her ; that she was a wicked woman, who believed in no goodness, and wished every one to be wicked like her. I was astonished. Though I listened with pain, I remember that even then I was struck by my young wife's loveliness. This glow of feeling gave colour to her cheek and light to her eye. She looked like an angel still, but it was a slim Michael with a fiery sword. I was very patient with her. I made her sit beside me on the sofa, and I talked to her of the world. I pointed out to her that, whatever one's own selfish preferences, one must live in the world, because there was no other at present. I told her that the fashionable talk of the day was worse than the conduct of fashionable people ; and that it was uncharitable, if not un-Christian, to think otherwise. It was not for us to condemn this lady, nor to turn our backs on her. Was it fanciful, I asked, to hope that her great liking for one so pure and innocent was the first sign of an inclination towards better thoughts and a higher level of feelings ? I talked as well and as kindly as I could ; and yet, before I had finished, I saw for the first time in my wife's eyes a look which I shall never forget. It was almost a look of horror. Instead of those eyes which had met mine of yore with the expression of one who waits eager to obey the directing glance—instead of the old alertness and frank trustfulness—here were eyes with something like horror in them. I was dumb for a moment. One might have thought from her look that I had proposed to beat her. Not a word too much has been said of the strangeness of women, nor of the terrible uncertainty of marriage.

If my wife had shown any eagerness to go back to her old home, I would have taken her there at the end of the season,

though it would have been highly inconvenient. But she acquiesced in all my plans with a listless obedience which was even a little dispiriting. We had several invitations, which it was well for me to accept ; and our round of visits filled so much time that I was summoned to London before I had found time to look up my father-in-law. I suggested that my wife should go to him, though I could not ; and it was when she showed no eagerness for this (though she had been parted from him for little less than a year) that I feared for the first time that she was not well. I took her with me to town. I consulted an eminent physician. During all that winter she had the best advice. Nobody could find anything the matter with her ; but they told me that it was important to keep up her health and strength while she was in her present condition. I consulted the best doctors. I spared no expense. I have nothing to reproach myself with ; and yet how poor this consolation seems as I recall that troublous time.

Why should I linger now? The spring came (the second spring since my ill-omened marriage) and found my wife white as its whitest snowdrop. She told me that she must go home. I remember the pang with which I heard her speak of home, and knew that she did not mean her husband's house. I made no objection ; I was anxious to humour her ; I was growing daily more anxious about her health. Of course it was impossible for me to go. The s^éssion had but just begun, and my hands were full. I promised to follow her at Easter. I half hoped to the last that she would not leave me to my lonely duties in London, that her heart would fail her when the moment of parting came. But she said very little when it was time to go. She looked at me with great sad eyes when I kissed her and spoke cheerfully of our happy meeting in that dear old house where I had seen her first. I spoke cheerfully for her sake ; but I was sad at my solitary dinner. How unlike it was to that ideal marriage of which I had dreamed ! Alone on my hearth on that gloomy evening I almost confessed to myself that my marriage was a mistake—that it might even ruin my career.



CHAPTER V.

EASTER had not yet arrived when I was summoned to my wife. The doctor's message was peremptory; and I obeyed it without hesitation. Of my thoughts and tender feelings on that lonely journey how can I bear to write? As I drove from the station to the house, and saw on all sides traces of the coming of the spring, I could not believe that my sweetest flower lay nipped by winter's frost. Cool shadow lay on the cool grey front of the beautiful old house, for it was yet morning; and I seemed to feel a chill at the ominous silence. I forgot my wife's mistakes and my disappointments; I thought only of her young life and loveliness, and of the crisis which was at hand. On the very threshold another sorrow awaited me. The doctor, who was an old friend of my father-in-law, came to meet me, and told me rather curtly that his patient had begged that I might be kept from her. Of course I promised obedience; I fancied that the poor child did not like me to see her when she was not in looks; I smiled, and though sadly, at my fancy.

For a whole day I stole about the house noiselessly, or wandered in the little garden, or the meadow rich with primroses. I had no companion to share the burden of my grief. The old gentleman would scarcely speak; he seemed confused with anxiety to such an extent that I feared for his reason; he shut himself in his own room when he was not admitted to hers. I even tried to conciliate the dog who had torn my coat on my wedding-day; but the brute would only whine and walk stiffly back with his tail drooping to the front steps, where he lay and waited for his mistress. The silence and the loneliness took hold of my nerves. I felt that I must see somebody. I could not help believing that the sight of me would have a beneficial effect on my wife, though the anticipation of a visit was too great a trial for her nerves. Convinced that my appearance must do good, I softly ascended the stairs on the second morning, and walked into the shaded room. Her white face turned to me as I entered, and I saw in it an expression of horror. Was it not awful to read in the face of her whom I had chosen from all women for myself an expression of horror? I had not known that the doctor was with her, or I should have timed my visit otherwise. I did not recognise his presence till I felt him push me with scant ceremony from the room. Outside the door he told me, without the least disguise, that if my wife saw me again he would not answer for the consequences. 'She has taken an overwhelming dislike of you,' he said—'doubtless unreasonable,' he added after a moment, 'but none the less real.' How sad was this to hear! If I had been anxious before, I was doubly anxious now. This causeless antipathy, this distressing mania, was a very bad sign.

It was on the next day towards evening that they told me that I was a father: and hardly twenty-four hours had passed away when they told me that the baby was dead. I am not ashamed to say that I wept for this little blossom untimely plucked, for this little daughter, who had never seen her father.

A few more hours went from me, and I was called to the bedside of my dying wife. With what tender feelings did I cross once more the threshold. She lay like an angel, with her fair hair spread wide on the pillow. At a glance I knew that there was no hope, for she seemed hardly to recognise me. Her eyes scarcely rested on my face before they turned again to her father, who knelt on the opposite side of the bed. I was hurt and grieved, but I forebore to press my claims to her love and duty. All her weakened thought was centred on the old man, who knelt beside the

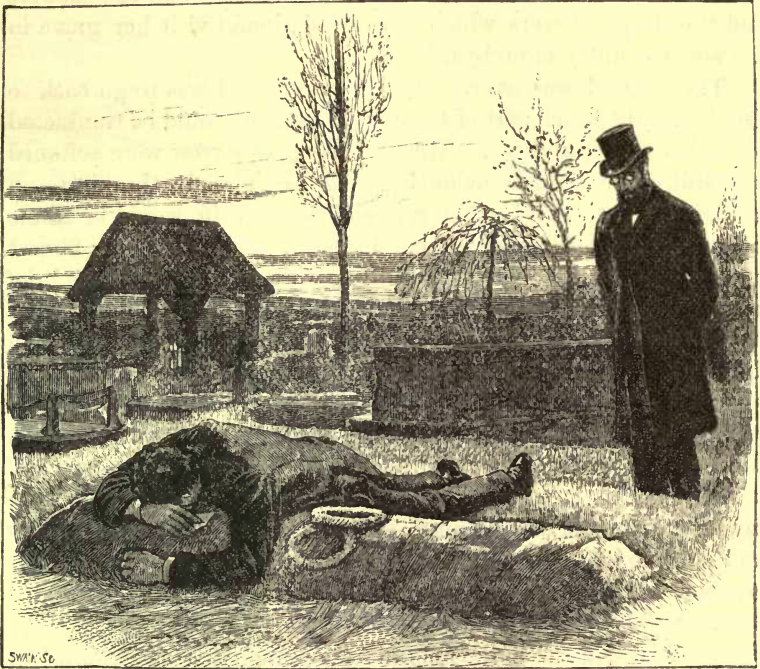
bed with his face hidden. She seemed to croon over him like a mother with her baby; and when the faint sound ceased there was the silence of death in the room.

I wish that I could end my sad story here. Slowly the lagging hours passed away from the house of mourning, till the day of the funeral came. Of course I should have shrunk from no observance which could have done honour to the dead; but it was the wish of my father-in-law that everything should be of the simplest. It pleased my fancy, too, that green grass should be there instead of ponderous marble: that the dews and the showers and the simple flowers which she loved should visit her grave in the sweet country churchyard.

The funeral was over. On the next day I was to go back to London, and to such part of my daily labours as could be transacted without undue publicity. The first pangs of sorrow were softened mercifully to a tender melancholy. I was already thinking—ah me how pathetic it is!—that my brief married life would be to me in time no more than an episode half-sad, half-sweet, and almost unreal. I should go back manfully to work; and only in the brief pauses of the strife of parties should I have leisure to muse on that boyish dream of love which might have been my ruin. I had dined alone, for my father-in-law had begged to be excused; it was a lovely balmy evening, full of the sweetness of the youthful year; I strolled out, and wayward fancy led me down the road to the quiet churchyard where I had stood on that day as chief mourner. On the morrow I should take up again the business of my life; but that one evening I might yield to tender thoughts and sentiments. The quiet of the place and of the hour soothed my troubled spirit; and I drew near with gentle thoughts to the sacred spot. Suddenly I felt a shock which was most painful. A black figure—black in the fading night—was flung face downwards on my wife's grave. I suppose I uttered an exclamation, for in an instant he had leapt up; and I saw that it was the savage youth, who ought to have been three thousand miles away. With the instinctive feeling of a gentleman I put out my hand, but he kept his arms by his side. He stood between me and the grave of my own wife, as if he would keep me from it. 'Thank God,' he said, in a hoarse, unpleasant voice, 'that your baby is dead! You won't have another woman's soul to torture.' He turned and knelt on the ground, and stroked the damp grass with his hand as if I were not there. 'Oh, my love!—my love!' I heard him muttering: while I, her husband, stood close beside. I recoiled from him with

horror. What a man was this! And it is this man—this boy whose folly has almost the stamp of madness—who has compelled me to interrupt my important duties with this most melancholy task. I learned that at the first rumour of my poor wife's illness he had abandoned his duties in a moment, and had travelled unasked and unlooked for to find her. It is a mercy that he was too late to disturb with his fierce presence those last peaceful hours.

Early on the next morning I paid a last hurried visit to the churchyard; and it was on the very grave of my poor wife that I



picked up the crumpled scrap of paper which has compelled me to write this melancholy tale. Though he had dropped this paper in his frenzy, I knew that he might write others, and I have thus anticipated his possible attack. To the many this may seem a story of some melancholy interest; the few will recognise an episode in a life of some public utility; and I myself shall be ready to point to it at any time as the true account of a sad period of my life, and to appeal from the rash and frenzied attack of my bitter foe, whenever it may come, to this plain record of facts, with its tone of candour and sobriety.





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