



THE
CORNHILL
MAGAZINE

v. 52

NEW SERIES

VOL. V.

JULY TO DECEMBER 1885

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1885



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CONTENTS

52
OF VOL. V.

		PAGE
COURT ROYAL. (<i>Illustrated by G. du Maurier.</i>)		
Chapter	XIII. The Ems Water	1
"	XIV. The Monokeratic Principle	8
"	XV. Wanted, a Housemaid	14
"	XVI. Venite	19
"	XVII. Stock-taking	113
"	XVIII. Lady Grace	122
"	XIX. Sleepy Hollow	131
"	XX. Dulcina	136
"	XXI. Home-thrusts	225
"	XXII. A Family Council	231
"	XXIII. Reflorescence	238
"	XXIV. Caught Napping	246
"	XXV. Without Warning	337
"	XXVI. Unstable as Water	344
"	XXVII. Revolt	350
"	XXVIII. A Playbill	359
"	XXIX. Two Stage Boxes	449
"	XXX. Palma	458
"	XXXI. A Spoke in the Wheel	465
"	XXXII. A Drop of Comfort	472
"	XXXIII. Broken Off	561
"	XXXIV. Incurables	566
"	XXXV. A Card Castle	574
"	XXXVI. The Council of Court Royal	583

RAINBOW GOLD.

BOOK IV.—HOW AARON WHITTAKER BEGAN TO LONG FOR THE RAINBOW GOLD, AND JOB ROUND THREW IT AWAY.

	PAGE
Chapter I.	84
" II.	91
" III.	103
" IV.	196
" V.	205
" VI.	215

BOOK V.—HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD ELUDED TWO ADVENTURERS.

Chapter I.	307
" II.	317
" III.	325
" IV.	416
" V.	428
" VI.	437

BOOK VI.—HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD GREW REAL.

Chapter I.	533
" II.	542
" III.	551
" IV.	636
" V.	647
" VI.	656
A CHEAP NIGGER (<i>Illustrated by E. J. Wheeler</i>)	154
ANDROMEDA, THE NEW STAR IN	591
ASCOT, A CHINESE	73
AUTOMATON CHESS-PLAYER, THE	299
BARROWS, OGBURY	512
BIRTH OF MOUNTAINS, THE	185
BOROUGH, UNPARLIAMENTARY	174
CHEAP NIGGER, A (<i>Illustrated by E. J. Wheeler</i>)	154

	PAGE
CHESS-PLAYER, THE AUTOMATON	299
CHINESE ASCOT, A	73
DEER-STALK, MY FIRST	387
DESERTER, MY (<i>Illustrated by M. Fitzgerald</i>)	492
DOLLY'S DREAM	606
ENGLISH, SUPERFINE	626
FIFINE'S FUNERAL	397
FIREWORKS AT HOME AND ABROAD	220
FIRST DEER-STALK, MY	387
FISH OUT OF WATER	523
FOOL, LEAR'S	365
FOSSIL FOOD	142
FRANCONIAN JURA, THE	26
GENIUS, THE RECIPE FOR	406
HAIR-DEVICE WORKERS	62
HOLLAND, IMPRESSIONS OF	258
HOME AND ABROAD, FIREWORKS AT	290
IMPRESSIONS OF HOLLAND	258
IN THE PIT OF A THEATRE	275
IN URBE, RUSTICUS	598
JURA, THE FRANCONIAN	26
LEAR'S FOOL	365
LIBRETTISTS, WITH SOME	481
MOUNTAINS, THE BIRTH OF	185
MY DESERTER (<i>Illustrated by M. Fitzgerald</i>)	492

	PAGE
MY FIRST DEER-STALK	387
MYSTERIOUS MRS. WILKINSON (<i>Illustrated by R. Barnes</i>)	37
NEW STAR IN ANDROMEDA, THE	591
NIGGER, A CHEAP (<i>Illustrated by E. J. Wheeler</i>)	154
OGBURY BARROWS	512
OUT OF WATER, FISH	523
PIT OF A THEATRE, IN THE	275
RECIPE FOR GENIUS, THE	406
RUSTICUS IN URBE	598
SUPERFINE ENGLISH	626
THEATRE, IN THE PIT OF A	275
THE AUTOMATON CHESS-PLAYER	299
THE BIRTH OF MOUNTAINS	185
THE FRANCONIAN JURA	26
THE NEW STAR IN ANDROMEDA	591
THE RECIPE FOR GENIUS	406
UNPARLIAMENTARY BOROUGHS	174
WITH SOME LIBRETTISTS	481

COURT ROYAL

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JULY, 1885.

COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EMS WATER.



JOANNA was unable to sleep that night. The champagne had excited her brain, and she lay watchful under the counter in the shop, tossing on the sack of shavings. The night was cold, so she had thrown a military greatcoat over her, and a black rug across her feet. She mused on what had taken place—the wonder in the eyes of the young man when he saw her in the silk attire, the interest she had awakened in him by her conversation and her good looks. She had a cool head, and was able to weigh

the value of his admiration. She had measured the man. She knew him to be amiable, with fair abilities, but shallow. He was good-natured and weak. He had promised to return, but she placed no reliance on his promises. If he had nothing better to

amuse him, he would come, not otherwise. But though she was aware that his liking for her was not deep, easy to be effaced, she was pleased with having aroused a transient fancy. A light had flashed into her dull life. She was unaccustomed to amusement of any sort. She had not associated with the children of the Barbican, nor shared in their games. Her master's unpopularity had affected her; the exigencies of his service had cut her off from social pleasures.

She had spoken to Mr. Cheek with force and freedom on the distinction between the lots of rich and poor. She had spoken more strongly than she felt. Her ideas formulated on her tongue as she spoke. She had no sympathy with the poor; they were the proper prey of a usurer. That they brought wretchedness on themselves by their own recklessness, improvidence, and idleness, she knew very well. She took advantage of their necessities without compunction. But she felt keenly her own condition and her powerlessness to escape from it. The enigmas of life, that lie unperceived in savagedom, rise into prominence with civilisation, and as culture advances become more perplexing and insoluble.

Joanna sat up under the counter. Lazarus was asleep. She could hear his snoring. He was a noisy sleeper, and though his door was shut and locked, his nasal trumpeting was audible in the shop, and annoyed the girl. On the counter above her was a tin case containing a ball of twine; the end of the twine hung down over the edge, and as she tossed on her sack touched and tickled her face. She laid hold of the end of string and threw it up, but it fell back on her face. Then she began to pull at it, and unwind the ball, and rewind on her fingers. The ball seemed interminable. She was engaged on it half an hour, running the twine out and rolling it again. She did it for a distraction, and as she did it the thought came on her that it was thus with her life; she was drawing out yard after yard of existence, all alike, with a knot here and there, all much the same, and then, suddenly—there was an end. It mattered nothing when the end came, the entire string was so utterly uninteresting.

As sleep would not come to her, she shook off the rug and crawled from her bed. The night was cold, and she was partially undressed. Therefore she drew on the military greatcoat. Thus attired, in her stocking soles, she stole out of the shop to the stairs. She had a favourite retreat on the roof, where she could

be quiet and think. There she had a few pots of flowers and a little stool. Perhaps the night air would bring drowsiness to her lids. A problem was perplexing her restless mind; she could not sleep with that unsolved. The problem was this: Why were artisans and domestic servants dissatisfied, and why were shopkeepers content with their lot? All were workers alike. Lazarus worked harder than most day labourers; the man at the ham and pork shop worked like a slave, so did the greengrocer, so did the paperhanger next door but one. These were cheery folk, and did not grumble at their condition. It was otherwise with the journeyman plumber, and carpenter, and the factory hand, and the maid-of-all-work. These were impatient of their position and hated their labour.

Joanna traversed the storerooms. The gas-lamp in the street threw in sufficient light for her to see the furniture, and to thread her way without touching and upsetting anything. Had the lamp indeed been extinguished she would have found her way noiselessly about those rooms, and brought from them whatever was required. She went to the window, and looked across the way at the ruin of the house that had been consumed the night before. Every pane of glass was broken; the entire roof had fallen in. Then Joanna went into the room from which the carpets had been removed to protect the roof, and which still covered it. Here alone was an empty space. Joanna cast off the thick coat, and sprang lightly into the middle, stood on tiptoe and threw about her arms and twirled as she had seen in pictures of ballet-dancers. Then she hummed to herself a waltz of Strauss, and began to dance, with fantastic gesture, the step she had acquired that evening from Charles Cheek.

Presently, fearing lest her tread should disturb the Jew, she reinvested herself in the long grey overcoat, and ascended the ladder to the roof.

The cold air made her shiver, but it was fresh after the close, dust-laden atmosphere of the house. The stars were burning brightly overhead.

She looked at her plants; several of the pots were knocked down. One was broken, and the earth had fallen from the roots. She had the ball of twine in the pocket of the coat, and she took from it sufficient to bind together the broken sherds. She cut the string with her teeth; then she put in the earth again. The geranium in the spoutless teapot must come in, and sleep for the

winter. The fuchsia must have fresh earth about the roots; the Guernsey lily needed to be divided. All this would have to be done by daylight on the morrow. Then she took up a pot in which was heather, a little heather in peat she had taken up wild and carried home on one rare occasion when she had been in the country for a holiday, on Roborough Down. She loved the heather above every flower she had, yet it was sickly in confinement. Perhaps it was cold up there on the slates. So she took the pot in her arms, seated herself, hugging it, with the greatcoat wrapped round her and the heather, and began to think. She could not see into the streets from where she sat, as the parapet cut them off, but she saw the yellow haze that hung over Plymouth, the reflection of the lights in the fine vapour that overarched it. The taverns were shut; no drunken men were about the Barbican. The outline of the citadel stood dark above the harbour. She could see the lighthouse at the pier-head, and far out, reflected in the quivering water, the spark of Mount Batten light. Joanna thought first of her flowers, and then, last of all, of the problem she had climbed to the roof to solve: Why did the labouring class hate work, and the trading class love it greedily? The girls from the country streamed into Plymouth, because they had been taught to read and write—to read novels and write love-letters—and therefore counted themselves superior to feeding pigs and making butter. They went into service, and when they found that there they were expected to dust chairs and wash up breakfast things they went on the streets. That was an everyday story. They fled work because work was hateful. The young men poured into town from the country to escape the plough and the spade, and when they found that they were expected to work at a trade, they earned their bread with resentment at their hearts, because *prava necessitas* insisted on labour; and they blasphemed God and dreamed of upsetting the social order because forced to work. Why was this? The moment, however, that the parlour-maid became a married woman and had a home to care for, she toiled without grudging time or labour. The moment the artisan opened a shop and worked for himself, he was reconciled with Providence and the social system. Why was this? Unconsciously, Joanna had struck the solution. Content came when man or woman worked for self. Discontent was consequent on working for others. ‘This is it,’ she exclaimed; ‘to be happy and good one must care only for self, and not a brass farthing for

anyone besides.' That was Joanna's philosophy of life, hammered out of her experience and observation.

Having arrived at this conclusion she stood up. 'I am cold,' she said, 'so is the pot of heath. We must go in.' Then she stole downstairs.

Joanna descended very softly, lest she should rouse Lazarus. She listened on the stair for his snore. If that were inaudible, it would behove her to walk warily. He might be lurking in a corner or behind a door, ready to leap forth with his stick and batter her. No—she did not hear it. She put foot after foot before her most cautiously, listening and peering about her in the dark. Then—she heard a sound, an unusual sound, which made her heart stand still; she stood with poised foot and uplifted hand to her ear.

The sound came from the back kitchen, and simultaneously she heard the choking snort of Mr. Lazarus in his bedroom.

She crept so noiselessly down the last steps that she would not have scared a mouse, and craned her neck to see who or what was in the back kitchen. In that back kitchen was a low, square window over the sink. Her eyes were sufficiently accustomed to the dark for her to see that the window was obscured by a dark body. She made out that the sash had been thrown up, and that a man was crawling in at the narrow opening. She saw also, by a feeble glimmer, that a second man stood in the outer kitchen, holding a dark lantern, waiting for his fellow to enter as he had come in.

Joanna did not scream. Her lungs were more powerful than when, as a child, her mother had commended her powers of screaming. She knew that if she set up an alarm the first impulse of the burglar would be to stop her voice, and that he would have no scruples as to the manner in which he attained his object. Joanna had matches within reach, but she did not strike a light. She was too wise to expose herself to observation. She preferred observing unseen. She considered what she had better do, and, having rapidly determined, proceeded to take her course with celerity, circumspection, and silence. She stepped, unobserved, from the stair into the passage leading to the chamber of her master and to the shop. She was sure that the burglars would not ascend to the storerooms, to burden themselves with sets of bedroom crockery or chests of drawers. They would look for what was most valuable in the smallest portable form, money and

winter. The fuchsia must have fresh earth about the roots; the Guernsey lily needed to be divided. All this would have to be done by daylight on the morrow. Then she took up a pot in which was heather, a little heather in peat she had taken up wild and carried home on one rare occasion when she had been in the country for a holiday, on Roborough Down. She loved the heather above every flower she had, yet it was sickly in confinement. Perhaps it was cold up there on the slates. So she took the pot in her arms, seated herself, hugging it, with the greatcoat wrapped round her and the heather, and began to think. She could not see into the streets from where she sat, as the parapet cut them off, but she saw the yellow haze that hung over Plymouth, the reflection of the lights in the fine vapour that overarched it. The taverns were shut; no drunken men were about the Barbican. The outline of the citadel stood dark above the harbour. She could see the lighthouse at the pier-head, and far out, reflected in the quivering water, the spark of Mount Batten light. Joanna thought first of her flowers, and then, last of all, of the problem she had climbed to the roof to solve: Why did the labouring class hate work, and the trading class love it greedily? The girls from the country streamed into Plymouth, because they had been taught to read and write—to read novels and write love-letters—and therefore counted themselves superior to feeding pigs and making butter. They went into service, and when they found that there they were expected to dust chairs and wash up breakfast things they went on the streets. That was an everyday story. They fled work because work was hateful. The young men poured into town from the country to escape the plough and the spade, and when they found that they were expected to work at a trade, they earned their bread with resentment at their hearts, because *prava necessitas* insisted on labour; and they blasphemed God and dreamed of upsetting the social order because forced to work. Why was this? The moment, however, that the parlour-maid became a married woman and had a home to care for, she toiled without grudging time or labour. The moment the artisan opened a shop and worked for himself, he was reconciled with Providence and the social system. Why was this? Unconsciously, Joanna had struck the solution. Content came when man or woman worked for self. Discontent was consequent on working for others. ‘This is it,’ she exclaimed; ‘to be happy and good one must care only for self, and not a brass farthing for

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jewels and plate; and all these were in the bedroom of Lazarus. This was the point of attack that must be defended.

Now the thought crossed the mind of Joanna that she might slip into the shop, close the door between and open the shop door, run into the street and give the alarm; but her blood was up. She was a brave girl, she was also a girl quickly roused to anger, and she was now, not afraid, but furious. If men had dared to break into her master's house, she was determined they should not leave it without a lasting lesson not to do so again, at least while she was there to protect it.

Joanna was unprovided with firearms. Lazarus had a revolver in his room, always loaded; but he took time to rouse, being a heavy sleeper. Against the wall ranged in the passage were the bottles of Ems water. Above, on nails hung a large locked saw. She took it down, and removed the wooden cover to the teeth. Then she crouched on the ground, waiting, watching like a terrier at a rat-hole. Her eyes were on the back kitchen door.

Presently she saw the faint light of the closed lantern in the front kitchen, and heard the fall of bare feet on the floor. She raised her arm with deliberation, with eyes riveted on her object, and flung a bottle of Ems water, not under hand, as a girl casts, but as a boy hurls. A gasp, a crash, and a smothered cry! The lantern fell on the kitchen floor. At once Joanna glided forward, secured the lantern, and retired whence she had crept, and covered the light with her coat. The kitchen was dark as pitch. She heard a spluttering and grumbling, then a whispered query from the second burglar—what was the matter? where was the light? Suddenly she sent a ray across the space; it fell on a face with staring eyes, a coarse ragged beard, and a great cut across the brow from which blood was running. That was all. With a click the lantern was closed, the light cut off, and with level directness another bottle struck the same mark.

Then came a scuffle, a cry, and curses. She listened, holding the light under the flap of her greatcoat, and did not stir till she was sure that the burglars, hurt, frightened, bewildered, were scrambling back through the outer kitchen, one falling over or clinging to the other. Then, once again, she sent a beam of light upon them. She let it travel from one to the other. She marked both faces. One man had his hand to his head, and hand and face were smeared with blood. Again she flung a bottle, and the

man went down. Then she retired to the shop and put on her shoes. She drew on her shoes because the floor of the kitchen was strewn with broken bottles, and she did not choose to cut her feet. Then she took the saw and pursued the burglars. One was already through the window over the sink, the other was making his way through. With that generosity which is found



even among criminals, the uninjured burglar had helped his wounded companion through before he attempted escape himself. Joanna attacked this man with the saw.

Hitherto the only sounds to which they had given vent were muffled cries and groans. Now this second burglar uttered screams terrible to hear.

Presently Lazarus appeared in his nightgown, holding a candle, white with fear, with a pistol in his trembling hand.

‘Put down the revolver,’ called Joanna. ‘I’ve done the job without you.’

‘What is the matter? What is it? Joanna! O Lord! O Lord! Whose are these horrible shrieks?’

‘He is like to shriek,’ said the girl, wiping her brow with the left hand; ‘you’d shriek, I reckon, if sawed at whilst crawling through a little window.’

‘What are you doing?’ asked the bewildered, frightened Jew.

‘Sawing, I tell you,’ answered the girl. ‘Don’t come forward; you’ll cut your feet on the broken bottles. There! we are clear of them.’

‘Clear of what?’

Joanna quietly shut the sash of the window over the sink.

‘I see how it was done,’ she said; ‘they removed a pane, and so got their hands in to turn the hasp.’

‘Who, child, who?’

‘Burglars, of course. Who else?’

‘Burglars in my house?’

‘They won’t come again,’ said the girl dryly. ‘Stay where you are, and let them get away through the back-yard door. They came over the wall, but neither of them is in a fit condition for scrambling now.’

‘But, Joanna!’

‘When my mother pawned me,’ said the girl, ‘she said I could scream enough to scare away robbers. I’m older now. I make the robbers scream.’

So Joanna was false to her philosophy ten minutes after having formulâted her view of life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MONOKERATIC PRINCIPLE.

‘You are a capital girl,’ said Lazarus, ‘and I will not forget what you have done. The Ems water was no loss to cry over, as the demand for it is slack. I am grateful, and to show you my gratitude I will give sound advice.’

‘Advice!’ echoed Joanna contemptuously. ‘That costs nothing. Take mine, and get into your clothes.’

‘To be sure I will,’ said the Jew. ‘Whilst I am getting on

my garments, do you, Joanna, see that the back-yard is clear, and bolt and bar the door. I'll provide that the sink window is fastened up to-morrow. Every downstairs window but that has iron bars. That, I suppose, was neglected because it looked into the yard. How did they get the window open ?'

'Go to your room and get on your clothes, and I'll find out.'

'To be sure. I am shivery, and might catch cold, and be forced to send for a doctor. Look here, Joanna; after this affair there will be no more sleep to-night for either of us, so I will allow you to light the fire. We will sit up and talk matters over till daybreak.' Then he retired to his room, taking the candle with him, and locking his door behind him.

Joanna took the lantern. She examined the window that had been entered. The burglars had affixed a diachylum heart-plaster to a pane of glass, and cut the pane out. By this means it had been removed noiselessly, and was laid outside against the wall, unbroken. She found the door in the yard open, as she expected. The burglars had come in over the wall, but had escaped by means of the door.

She made all the doors fast, and put a tray before the paneless window to exclude the cold. Then she lighted a cheerful fire in the stove. By this time Lazarus was clothed and came out of his room.

'I think,' said he, 'as there is a good fire, we might get the Persian carpet down from the roof and dry it. Always kill two birds with one stone, if they will stand for it.'

Assisted by the Jew, the carpet was brought down and hung on a horse in the kitchen.

Then Lazarus drew his chair to the fire and warmed his palms at the blaze.

'When I consider,' said he, 'the deliberation and coolness with which you worked off those burglars, all I can say is you ought to have been a Jew.'

The girl made no reply. It was a matter of indifference to her whether she were a Jew or a Gentile. She collected the broken stone bottle sherds from the floor and mopped up the slop of mineral water.

'I have been counting the Ems water,' said Lazarus; 'there are but six bottles left.'

'You are not going to make me drink the remainder, are you,' asked Joanna, standing up, 'to show that you are grateful

because I saved your house from being burnt and your throat from being cut?’

‘No, I am not,’ answered Lazarus.

‘Whatever you do won’t cost you much,’ said Joanna.

‘Now, don’t say that,’ Lazarus remonstrated, nettled with the truth of the observation; ‘I am not bound to do anything for you.’

‘Nor was I bound to save your roof from flames and your throat from the knife.’

‘How coarsely you speak!’ said Lazarus. Then he was silent, looking into the fire and then at Joanna, with something trembling on his tongue, yet doubtful whether to utter it. Probably he had resolved not to speak, for he merely said to himself, ‘Ems ain’t bad; but its day is over. Double dahlias one day, single next. Such is the world. So the pendulum swings.’

Joanna continued her work without a reply.

‘You are a good girl,’ he added, looking into the fire; ‘there is a splendid future in store for you, only you don’t know it. When that does break on you you will cry out, “O Lazarus! O Lazarus!” and swoon away for delight.’

‘I’d rather have something now,’ said Joanna; ‘the gift of a sheet in winter is better than the promise of a blanket in summer.’

‘You are fed, clothed, shod at my expense,’ said the Jew. ‘Your mind has been formed and your morals moulded by me. You have no cause to grumble.’

‘Fed on scraps, clothed in rags, and educated to keep your accounts,’ muttered the girl.

‘You are discontented, peevish, and don’t know when you are well off.’

‘Every man knows the warmth of his own jacket,’ said Joanna.

‘How I’ve stored your mind with knowledge!’ exclaimed the Jew. ‘You know the value of an article as well as I, whether furniture, plate, clothing, china. I’ve taught you a lot of useful information, summing, bookkeeping.’

‘What is the good of striking matches for those who don’t want light?’ asked the girl, sullenly.

‘What has put you out of temper to-night, Joanna?’

‘I have good reason to be in bad humour. What have I done for Mr. Cheek that he should give me the silk dress and the necklace? Nothing but amuse him for an hour. What have I

done for you? Everything. I have saved your house from fire and your throat from the razor. What do I get in return? Nothing.'

'I am not ungrateful,' said Lazarus, seriously. 'Wait a bit longer, my girl, and I will show you that I am not. I cannot tell you now what I will do for you, but I will in time. I promise you this—you shall have a reward such as you have not dreamed to possess. Have I ever failed to keep my word, Joanna? No, never; it don't pay in business to be shiftly about promises. Now you have alluded to Mr. Charles Cheek, I wish to speak to you about him, and to give you a word of advice.'

'Which again will cost you nothing,' threw in the girl.

'It is clear to me, Joanna, that Mr. Charles Cheek is interested in you. Now, you are no longer a child. You have swelled on my good fare into a big, handsome girl, not at all of the ordinary type. If Mr. Cheek continues to come here, you are the attraction. I am well pleased that he should come here, and provide beefsteak pie and champagne, and if you behave discreetly all is well. He is weak and careless, and you may entangle him in a web whilst I suck his blood; but let it be understood between us that I will not have you entangled in any thread of his spinning—not caught by finger or toe, Joanna. Keep your head clear and your heart cool. Be very careful of yourself, not to allow the smallest feeling of regard to lodge in your bosom; if you do you lose all control over yourself.'

'What is the advantage of offering a wig to one with a head of hair?' asked the girl, contemptuously. 'I know how to take care of myself. Tell me now, who is this Charles Cheek?'

'He is the offspring of the Monokeratic principle.'

'Of what?'

'Of the Monokeratic system of business,' answered Lazarus.

'I do not understand.'

'I will explain to you. Sit down, child, on the other side of the fire. Old Joe Cheek—Lord! I knew him well, years ago, with a little shop and a long head. He was in Devonport when he began, but Devonport wasn't a sphere for one like him, so he moved up country. Not content with a small retail shop, he opened a store of combined grocery, haberdashery, stationery, hosiery, wifes, drugs, and oriental goods, and sold everything for ready money. Others have done the same, but not on the Monokeratic system.'

‘What is that?’

‘Well, he advertised all over England, “Try Cheek’s Monokeratic system.” “Monokeratic” is a Greek word, and means “the unicorn.” Cheek’s system is the unicorn system. That is the principle on which he does business and realises a great fortune.’

‘What is the unicorn system?’

‘The system of ready money. Most tradesmen have two systems—the cash system and the credit system, and they do business on both. Cheek does solely ready-money business.’

‘So do others, but they don’t call it by so wonderful a name.’

‘Exactly, and that is why they don’t make it answer so well. It is *because* Cheek calls a simple thing by a sounding name that he does a roaring trade. You know nothing, Joanna, worth calling knowledge if you do not know this, that English people love humbug as Italians love oil and Spaniards love garlic. Nothing goes down with them in politics, religion, business, unless it be seasoned to rankness with humbug. Mr. Cheek is sufficiently man of the world to know that, and sufficiently clever to take advantage of it. If old Joe Cheek did as others, and sold for tenpence cash what his neighbours sold for a shilling credit, he would not have many customers, but he has managed very cleverly. Every article is priced at credit value, and when a customer leaves his shop he is given a cheque for the discount. He pays full credit price as cash, and receives the discount back as a cheque to be deducted from his bill when next he purchases at Cheek’s. Do you understand? By this means he secures the return of the customer, who thinks he must come back and buy something more so as to recover the money on his cheque.’

‘But if he does not go back?’

‘Then he forfeits it. He has paid credit price in cash. This is the Monokeratic principle of business. You have no idea what a fascination the name and the cheque exercise on simple people.’

‘But what has this to do with the unicorn?’

‘Nothing whatever. The unicorn has one horn, and Cheek one way of doing business. That is the connection of ideas. The great charm lies in the word “Monokeratic,” of the meaning of which the purchasers have not the smallest idea.’

‘And he does a good business?’ asked Joanna, interested.

‘A roaring business. I wish I did one half as good. I lent him money when starting; but I knew my man. He slipped out of my fingers very quickly.’

‘He must have brains,’ said Joanna with admiration.

‘He has indeed.’

‘Then Mr. Charles is his son?’

‘Yes—without the brains.’

‘Is he in the business?’

‘Oh dear no! Charlie is far too fine a gentleman to soil his fingers with trade. He can spend money, but cannot make it. Old Joe Cheek was very anxious to have his son in the concern. His idea was not bad. The old man is a Dissenter and a Radical, and he wanted Charlie to be a Churchman and Tory. Then he calculated each could milk his own cow. But Charlie had not the pluck and energy for it. There is where we Jews have the pull over you Christians. Now and then you have among you a man of genius who makes a business, but the son has not his ability or perseverance, and lets it fall. With us the faculty of business is transmitted hereditarily, like our features; it never fails, leaps a generation, dies out.’

‘And Mr. Charles—what does he do with his time?’

‘Throws it away. Faculties? Throws them away. Money? Throws it away. He has come to me for money, and I have helped him. The old man turns rusty at times; but everything must go to Charlie in the end, as he is the only son; and then the business also will be thrown away.’

‘I suppose,’ said Joanna, ‘if he be such a fool, he may even throw himself away.’

Lazarus looked at her in surprise. ‘You are clever,’ said he, ‘but not clever enough to manage that. The thing you must consider is, to keep yourself secure. I don’t want to lose you as I lost——’

‘Lost what?’

‘Rachel.’

‘Who ran away with Rachel?’

‘Never mind. No one you ever heard of.’

‘Where is she now?’

‘I have told you I do not know.’

‘Is she alone?’

‘I do not know.’

‘Is he with her?’

‘No.’

‘I suppose,’ said the girl, ‘if the burglar had cut your throat to-night, that Rachel would have heard of it, and come and

claimed everything—your money, your jewels, your plate—and turned me out penniless.’

The Jew was startled, and looked at Joanna speechlessly.

‘You have never been legally divorced?’

‘No. I don’t fling money among lawyers. We are separated for ever practically, though perhaps not legally.’

‘Then she could take everything you have—or had, supposing your throat cut?’

‘I suppose so,’ was his slowly uttered reply, and he rubbed his legs before the fire, frowning and studying the coals.

‘Joanna,’ he said, after consideration of some minutes, which she did not interrupt, ‘that shall never be. Rather than that I will bequeath everything to you, every stick in the storerooms, and crumb in the larder, and farthing in my chest.’

‘That is your most sensible course,’ said Joanna; ‘that suits me better than stale advice and flat Ems.’

‘I will do it,’ said the Jew. ‘I will write to Crudge.’

‘I will bring the pen and ink at once.’

‘Not now—there is time. I’ll do it some time.’

‘That will not suit me,’ said Joanna. ‘What has to be done must be done on the spot. Do you not see that your interests are at stake? You secure me in the shop, ensuring my caring for everything as if it were my own, protect yourself against speculation by me,’ she laughed mockingly. ‘You tie me to you as a faithful servant for ever. I shall no more grumble. I shall be active, and on the alert to drive hard bargains. I shall be bound to you Monokeratically.’

‘What do you mean? How Monokeratically?’

‘By one principle, the strongest of all—self-interest.’

CHAPTER XV.

WANTED, A HOUSEMAID.

A FEW days after the events related in the foregoing chapters, Lazarus plunged into the kitchen with the newspaper in his hand, in hot excitement.

‘Joanna!’ he exclaimed, ‘my dear Joanna, put down the saucepan at once, and follow me into my room. I have something very particular to say. Providence is playing into our hands. Look at the paper, read that!’

He thrust it towards her.

‘My hands are wet,’ she said; ‘I cannot take the paper without reducing it to pulp. Read what you want me to know; I can listen and scour the saucepan.’

‘You cannot. I want your close attention. Put down the pan. Here, come into my room, away from the distractions of a kitchen. Take a seat. I have much to explain to you. Now, at last, you may render me valuable service.’

‘I have rendered you that for many years. I have recently saved your house from fire and your throat——’

‘Do leave my throat alone; you are continually making allusions to it which are painful.’

Joanna followed him into his room, and wiped her hands on her apron. He held the sheet to her, and indicated the lines she was to read. The paper was a Plymouth daily newspaper of local circulation, widely distributed in the West of England. The Jew had indicated the advertisement columns.

‘Well,’ said Joanna, ‘this does not concern me. “Wanted, a housemaid, immediately, in a gentleman’s family; steady, experienced, not under twenty, a churchwoman; must have good recommendations. Wages, 16*l*. Apply, Mr. C. Worthivale, Court Royal Lodge, Kingsbridge.”’

‘It does concern you.’

‘Only so far as to show me how little I get working for you. I am not going into service elsewhere—no such luck.’

‘But I do want you to go into service with the advertiser.’

‘What! Leave you?’

‘Yes, for three months; then to return.’

‘Why so?’

‘I will give you my reasons presently.’

Joanna looked again at the advertisement with a puzzled face.

‘I am a maid-of-all-work. I am not an experienced housemaid, fit to go into a gentleman’s family.’

‘That does not matter. There is no mistress—no lady in the house to see if you do your work well or badly. Gentlemen do not care how they pig.’

‘Steady,’ said Joanna, thoughtfully; ‘I am steady as the Eddy-stone, but I am not more than seventeen, and the advertiser requires a servant to be over twenty.’

‘That does not matter. Gentlemen are no judges of the ages of ladies. Besides, you look old for your years.’

‘A churchwoman,’ mused Joanna; ‘I am nothing; I have not been to any place of worship except the board-school, and there we worshipped the inspector. How can I say I am a churchwoman when I’ve been neither to church nor chapel?’

‘That does not matter,’ answered the Jew. ‘It is all a matter of sitting and standing. When church does one thing chapel does contrary. Go to church for a Sunday or two, and you’ll get enough scrape of ideas to pass muster.’

‘Then, how about references? I do not suppose a character from you will count heavy.’

‘I do not suppose it will,’ answered the Jew. ‘I’ll get Mrs. Delany to give you one, the wife of Colonel Delany—a tip-top respectable party that.’

‘She has never seen me.’

‘That don’t matter. I have lent her money.’

Presently Lazarus said, ‘Go to the table, Joanna, and we will rough out a character for Mrs. Delany to put in form and write in her best hand.’

Joanna took a pen, dipped it in the ink, and drew a sheet of old dirty letter-paper before her. ‘Go ahead,’ she said, somewhat sulkily.

“Mrs. Delany presents her compliments to Mr. C. Worthivale, and begs to recommend a strong, healthy young woman, who has been in her service three years, with whom she would not have parted on any consideration had not the girl been called to nurse a dying mother.”

‘No,’ said Joanna, putting down her pen, ‘I will not write that.’

‘It is as true as the rest.’

‘That is not what I scruple about. I will not have my mother mentioned. She may be back any day with my ticket and ten shillings.’

‘Very well,’ said the Jew, ‘then we will make it “white swelling.” No—that won’t do. Say, “domestic affliction.”’

‘Domestic affliction,’ repeated Joanna after her dictator.

“When released,” continued Lazarus, “Mrs. Delany had supplied her place, and could not in conscience dismiss her new housemaid.”

‘Go on,’ said the girl. ‘I have written as far as “housemaid.”’

‘Full stop after “maid,”’ said the Jew. ‘Begin again with a capital. “Mrs. Delany has always found the girl Joanna steady,

conscientious, and hard-working ; very clean, both in her person and her work ; and, though young-looking for her age, is turned twenty.”’

‘This is the first time you’ve said a good word for me,’ muttered the girl, ‘and now it is half lies. Shall I add “eats voraciously and grows at a gallop”?’

‘On no account, my dear child. Continue writing from my dictation,’ said the Jew ; ‘“Joanna is unable to read or write.”’

Joanna laid down her pen. ‘Why do you say that?’

‘Because it is the best recommendation that can be given. It is as much as saying that you are a good servant. Besides, Mr. C. Worthivale will be less afraid of leaving about letters and account-books if he thinks they are unintelligible to you.’

‘I have written after your dictation that I cannot write. Is that all?’

‘Yes, that will suffice. I will take the letter to Mrs. Delany, and get her to transcribe and post it—and put the penny stamp on also. You are sure of the situation.’

‘You have not told me yet why I am to take it.’

‘I will tell you now. Mr. Christopher Worthivale is steward to the Duke of Kingsbridge. I have advanced a great deal of money on the property of the duke—more money than was prudent to put in one bag. The estate is so hampered with mortgages, and the requirements of the duke are so great, that Court Royal must come to the hammer. The family is pretty well in my hands. I have the mortgage on the home estate, which is the same as a grip on their very heart. Now I want you to ascertain for me how matters really stand there. You must pry and discover. I want to know when to close the trap on the noble duke, and whether I should leave it open a little longer. All the requisite information can be had at the steward’s. You will have access to his office, and must look at his books. You are keen of wit as myself, and cunning at accounts as a banker’s clerk.’

‘I must give up my dancing lessons for this!’ exclaimed the girl, pouting, and disposed to cry.

‘The dancing lessons! I had forgotten them.’

‘I have not ; nor Mr. Charles Cheek, and his suppers, and the rose silk dress, and the Roman pearls.’

‘You shall have the lessons on your return.’

‘By that time Mr. Cheek will have forgotten me.’

‘That is possible.’

‘But that does not suit me. *I will not go.*’

‘I have my plans, Joanna.’

‘And I have mine, Lazarus.’

He looked at her for some minutes, irresolutely. Her brow was clouded, her eyes dull; the tears were filling them, and her lips quivered. She restrained the fall of the rain with effort.

‘Joanna, I am sending you where you may observe the manners of the gentry. You are sharp enough, and can use your knowledge. You must study their habits of action and their modes of speech. Some day you may have to assume a position in which this knowledge will be of service to you. Remember, you are my heiress.’ He opened a locked drawer, and drew forth his will. ‘Look! I have kept my word. I have left everything to you. Now, in your own interest it behoves you to see after my investments at Court Royal. Look well at the place. It may be yours some day. Such is the way of the world. That which is at the top comes down, and that which is at the bottom mounts. It is so in every saucepan, in every stew, and the world is but a boiling cauldron where the currents cross one another unceasingly.’

Joanna’s face flushed, and the tears disappeared from her eyes, which waxed bright and eager. ‘I will go,’ she said; ‘I will do everything you desire; I will find out everything.’

‘Very well,’ said Lazarus, laughing. ‘Now hunt up the sort of clothes you will need to wear, and let me see how you look in the rig-out of a respectable, sober-minded, and stupid English housemaid.’

After a few minutes she returned.

She had assumed a dark, quiet gown, with a white apron. She had brushed back her hair, and put on her a pretty white cap.

‘Oh ho! on my word!’ exclaimed the Jew. ‘What sweet simplicity! Holloa, my pert Betsy Jane!’ He chucked her under the chin insolently.

Joanna flushed crimson, and, striking him in the chest, sent him staggering back, to tumble over a stool and sprawl on the ground.

‘I will do what you bid,’ she said, angrily, ‘but touch me if you dare.’

Then the shop-door rang, and Joanna heard a voice calling her. She left Lazarus on the floor, rubbing his shin, and went into the shop. There stood Charles Cheek.

‘Well now!’ exclaimed the young man, ‘this is a transformation scene in a pantomime. What is the meaning of this?’

‘Mr. Cheek,’ said Joanna, ‘I have been considering what you said to me the other day. I am going into another element, to learn the manners of the gulls. It is a voyage of discovery. I know no more of the habits and speech and thoughts of those I am going to see than if I were about to visit Esquimaux.’

CHAPTER XVI.

VENITE.

ON the last day of November Joanna was deposited with her box at the gate of Court Royal Lodge. A servant came out, and helped her to carry the box round by the back door into the house. She was taken to her room, where she rapidly divested herself of her travelling clothes and assumed apron and cap. The fellow-servant looked critically at her, and said, ‘Oh my! how young you be! How many sweethearts have you had? Among them a redcoat, I reckon, if you’ve been in Plymouth. I should dearly like to have a redcoat. They be beautiful creatures.’

‘I have no sweetheart,’ answered Joanna.

‘Then I reckon you won’t be long without one here. There be gamekeepers here and the footmen. But of that another time. I tell you this is an easy place. There is no missus. There ought to be proper-ly, but the young lady is swallowed up by the folks at the Court, so she is never here. All the better for us. Master is a good sort of a man—very soft. Lets us have our own way, and believes all the crams we tell. As soon as you’re ready the master ’ll want to see you.’

‘I am ready now.’

‘And,’ continued the servant, ‘I’ll bet you a shilling I know what he’ll say to y’.’

‘I never bet. Shillings are too hardly earned to be cast away.’

‘I didn’t mean naught, really. I’ll tell y’ exactly what master ’ll say. He’ll begin like the minister in church: “O come, let us worship, and fall down.” He always does with every lady who comes into service here for the first time. There is his bell. I reckon he won’t think you can be old enough, judging by you

looks. I shouldn't believe you was twenty, if you swore it till black in the face.'

Joanna was shown into the drawing-room, where Mr. Worthivale stood on the mat, with his back to the fire, moving his feet uneasily. He disliked an interview with servants, not from pride, but from consciousness that he was helpless in their hands—a defenceless fort.

'Good day,' he said; 'please shut the door. Miss Worthivale is not here at present, so I must tell you what you have to do. Your name is Joanna?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And your age is twenty?'

'So I am told, sir. I don't remember my birth.'

'I suppose not. Of course not. You are highly recommended to me. Mrs. Delany is the wife of Colonel Delany, of the Royal Engineers, I presume. One cannot make too sure. I turned up the name in the Directory. I understand you have suffered a domestic affliction. I see you wear a black gown. I am sorry. I hope you have not lost a very near relative—not a father or a mother?' He spoke in a kind, sympathetic tone.

'My father is dead, sir,' she answered, looking down and slightly colouring.

'Dear me—how sad! and your poor mother is alone in the world—a rough world for a fresh-bleeding heart to battle with. Have you brothers and sisters?'

Joanna answered, in a low voice, 'None, sir.'

'It must have been a hard matter for your poor widowed mother to make up her mind to part with you. Sad also for you to have to leave her in her bereavement and desolation. Well, you have the comfort of knowing that a Hand is extended over the widow and the fatherless. Don't cry, child.'

Joanna was strangely agitated. The kind tone touched her, conscious of, and beginning to be ashamed of, her false position. Her cheeks darkened and her eyes clouded. She hung her head to conceal her face.

'You must write to your mother by this evening's post. Tell her you have arrived here quite safely, and—I think you may add you are in a house where you will be treated with consideration. Oh! I forgot—you cannot write. I beg you a thousand pardons; it had escaped me. Shall I drop your mother a line? It would comfort her. Or, if you prefer it, get your fellow-servant, Emily,

to write. I will let you have paper and envelope and stamp from the office shortly.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Joanna, looking up. She had recovered herself. 'My mother—I do not know where she is. She is not dead, but lost!'

'Good God!—poor child!—Lord bless me!—what tragedies are



played in the depths below the surface on which we swim serene! But, for the matter of that,' he added with a sigh, 'there are sad enough stories, cares, and breakdowns about and above us. I suppose happiness and sorrow are pretty equally distributed through all the strata of life—only differing in kind, hardly in intensity. You look very young, my child; I should not have thought you as old as Mrs. Delany affirms.'

‘I have had more experience than many who are much older.’

‘I have no doubt about that. Trouble and responsibility ripen the character prematurely. Sit down, Joanna; you must be tired with your long journey. I hope Emily has given you something to eat. The drive from the station is long and cold, over exposed moor. Lord bless me! when shall we have a junction line?’

‘Thank you kindly, sir, I am not hungry. The cook is going to give me some dinner presently.’

‘That is right. I will not detain you long. I must put you in the way of things at the outset, and then all will go smoothly afterwards. I dare say your attention was called to a wall for nearly two miles along the roadside?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Very fine trees on the other side. Unfortunately, the trees are not now in leaf, so that they do not show to advantage. I always think that a park tree in winter is like a man of family without a landed estate. You know he is great, but he does not look it.’

‘I saw the trees, sir.’

‘Well, Joan. That is your name, is it not? The wall encloses the park, and the trees you saw grow in the park enclosed by that wall.’

‘Yes, sir, I understand.’

‘The park covers nearly—not quite—a thousand acres, and some of the timber is magnificent.’ After a pause, to allow of the absorption and assimilation of what he had communicated, Mr. Worthivale said slowly, ‘That park is Court Royal.’

‘Does it belong to this house, sir?’ asked Joanna, with affected simplicity.

Mr. Worthivale fell back against the mantelshelf, dropped his coat-tails, which must have touched the bars of the grate, as an odour of singed wool pervaded the room. ‘Good heavens! what are you thinking of? You must indeed be ignorant, very ignorant, to suppose that so magnificent a park could belong to this humble residence. This house is Court Royal Lodge. Not, you understand, the lodge at the park gates, but an ornate cottage situated on a patch of ground cut out from the park, where was once an overgrown, ragged, and unsightly bed of laurels. His grace was pleased to erect the lodge for my late father. It is the house of the steward. I am the steward.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And the park and the land as far as you can see—that is to say, almost all, not quite all—belongs to his grace the Duke of Kingsbridge. I am the steward of his grace. Now you understand my position.’

‘Yes, sir, and I am to be housemaid to the steward of his grace the Duke of Kingsbridge?’

‘Quite so,’ said Mr. Worthivale; ‘you have grasped the situation. Bless my soul! I have burnt my tail. I thought I smelt something. How can I have done that? Now, what I want you particularly to understand, Joan, from the outset is this—the proper manner in which to address those of the ducal family who do me the honour of calling. As it happens, one or other comes here nearly every day. You, of course, have not had to do with people of title at Mrs. Delany’s?’

‘Mrs. Delany’s husband is a colonel, sir.’

‘A colonel!’ echoed Mr. Worthivale, looking offended and disgusted. ‘What is a colonel? Nothing.’

‘Then,’ continued Joanna, running over the uniforms in Mr. Lazarus’s store with a mental eye, ‘there was a field-marshal, and an admiral of the Blue, and half-a-dozen generals, and a silk cassock, red hood, and college cap.’

The steward silenced her with a wave of the hand.

‘What I particularly wish you to understand, Joan, from the beginning is how you are to comport yourself at the door should his grace, or Lord Edward, or Lord Ronald, or the marquess, or Lady Grace ring the bell. Emily and you will have alternate afternoons at home. She likes to go out every other day, and I dare say you will be glad to do the same; exercise and fresh air are good for health. When Emily is out you will answer the bell. Open that photographic album on the table, and look at the first carte-de-visite—no, cabinet-size portrait. You perceive a venerable gentleman with white hair and fine aristocratic countenance. That is the duke. He does not come here often. He cannot walk so far. If he comes, the carriage brings him. You cannot mistake him if you observe his waxlike complexion, and if you notice that the carriage stands at the gate. It is essential that you make no mistake in addressing him. I could pardon a lapse with the others, but not with him; so impress his features on your memory. When you open the door to him, mind you curtsy. Can you curtsy? The art is dying out. Ask Emily to put you in the way, and practise it till you are proficient.

You must address the duke as "your grace." He will probably say, "My child, is Mr. Worthivale at home?" Then you curtsy a second time and say, "Yes, your grace." If I am out—which God forbid!—then say, "No, your grace." If you are uncertain, say, "Will it please your grace to step in, and I will inquire." You understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Turn the page, and you will see two dignified gentlemen. One is Lord Ronald, the other Lord Edward. Look at them well. They are like the duke, but have not quite his presence and beauty. They are his brothers—younger brothers, of course—which accounts for their slight inferiority; of course, I mean relative—relative only to his grace. You address them each as "my lord." "Is Mr. Worthivale at home?" "Yes, my lord," or "No, my lord," as the case may be. Here, Joan, I will go into the passage and knock at the door. Then you open and curtsy, and I will represent—I am ashamed to do it—the Duke of Kingsbridge, and you will receive me according as I have instructed you. Let me see if you have taken the lesson to heart. After that I will represent Lord Ronald or Lord Edward. Let me have the satisfaction of knowing that you have apprehended my instructions.'

So Mr. Worthivale rehearsed with Joanna what he had taught her. He was void of all sense of humour, and unconscious of the absurdity of his conduct, and that the girl was laughing in her sleeve.

'Turn the page again,' said the steward. 'You see the marquis. You address him also as "my lord." You understand?'

'Yes, sir,' said Joanna, distractedly. She was looking at the next portrait with interest. 'Oh, sir! please, sir, who is this beautiful lady?'

'That lady is as perfect and sweet in mind and soul as she is in feature,' answered Mr. Worthivale. 'That is the Lady Grace Eveleigh. And, remember, she is not Lady Grace, but *the* Lady Grace. A Knight's wife is a Lady, you know. *The* makes all the difference in the world. Everyone who knows that lady loves her, she is so good, so kind.'

'I am sure they do,' said Joanna, eagerly. 'I am certain I shall love her, too.'

The steward was pleased; he smiled and nodded. 'You will address her as "my lady," you understand?'

'Yes.'

‘Turn the page again, and you will see a photograph of Court Royal.’

‘That house?’ inquired the girl; ‘why, it has got pillars before the door just like the Royal Hotel at Plymouth.’

Mr. Worthivale shuddered and drew back.

‘My good girl! For heaven’s sake don’t liken a ducal mansion to—to—an—an inn, however respectable and old established. It is possible that the Royal Hotel may have a portico——’

‘It has two,’ said Joan, eager for the credit of the Plymouth house. ‘Has this place got two? I only see one in the picture.’

Mr. Worthivale was silenced; he coloured, and looked down on the rug, frowning. Court Royal had but one portico. Presently he said in an embarrassed tone, ‘It may be true—I do not dispute it—that the inn in question has two porticos. But there is a difference, my girl, between porticos. Some are shams, shabby, and stucco; two, even five, porticos would be insignificant beside one real portico, such as that which graces the front of Court Royal. The pillars are of granite, red granite from Exmoor. When your eyes rest on the mansion you will feel at once the temerity of drawing comparisons between it and—and—an inn. Upon my word, I think you had better go there at once—that is, after you have had something to eat and drink. By the way, do not speak of the mansion as “the house;” that is scarcely respectful, and is contrary to usage. You mention it always as “the Court.” You shall go down, Joan, to the Court after you have partaken of some refreshment. I will write a note which will serve as an excuse for sending you. When there, ask to see the housekeeper, Mrs. Probus, a most admirable woman. She will show you over the state apartments. His grace is out. He has gone for a drive. I saw the carriage pass half an hour ago, and unquestionably the Lady Grace is with him. Lord Edward is away, back at his Somersetshire living, superintending the preparations for Christmas and the charities. The marquess, I have no doubt, is out shooting, and you are not likely to come across Lord Ronald. Mrs. Probus knows what to do and where to take you. Rely upon her. Do not put off your walk too late. The days close in rapidly, and I want you to see the Court to advantage, and to be impressed by the influences of the Place and the Family.’

(To be continued.)

THE FRANCONIAN JURA.

FORTY years ago! How time flies! It creeps with children, walks with adults, flies with the old! My acquaintance with the so-called Fränkischer-Schweiz dates from 1843, when, as a child of ten, I spent a summer among its lovely valleys and quaint rocks. Then came an hiatus of thirty years, after which I revisited it. Then again a gap of ten; I renewed my acquaintance with the familiar scenes last year on my way to Baireuth, to hear the 'Parsifal,' and I found it as lovely and wonderful as I thought it as a child. The Franconian Jura is a portion of that horseshoe of limestone mountain which begins with the Rauhe Alb near the source of the Danube, and sweeps round to the north near Ratisbon, and dies away into the main valley between Bamberg and Baireuth. This great horseshoe encloses the basins of the Main and the Neckar. The elevation is nowhere very great; the highest point reached is 2,840 feet,¹ and that is in the south. The range consists, in reality, of the lip of a great dish of limestone tilted on one side, broken in half. The abrupt scarp is towards the Danube, the Nab, and the Pegnitz, and the hollow of the broken plate forms the great inclined plateau of Würtemberg and Lower Bavaria.

Although the elevation of the mountains is inconsiderable, it is by no means a despicable region. Mountains is the term I have used, and yet, properly speaking, there are no mountains in the Jura. It is, as I have said, the lip of a great dish. It is an elevated plateau which has been torn to pieces, partly through denudation and partly through the burrowing and ploughing of streams. The beauty of the scenery is to be sought in the valleys, and not on the heights. The foot-traveller, for instance, walking from Forcheim to Gössweinstein, traverses a dull and bleak country. He sees no mountains; all around, as far as the eye can reach, extends an undulating and very barren plain under cultivation, yielding a sparse crop of barley, and with unhealthy cherry trees lining the sides of the high road. Before him stands the little town of Gössweinstein, with a square castle on one side, surmounting a low elevation, and a handsome rococo church with double

¹ In the Fränkischer-Schweiz itself the height is never over 1,600 feet.

bulbous spires on another. The town occupies a shallow basin between them. But let him step a few strides out of the town towards the north, and he finds himself, to his amazement, at the edge of a precipice rising many hundred feet above the valley of the Wiesent, which winds a silver streak between emerald meadows in a cleft of the fantastic limestone cliffs and rich woods of pine and oak and beech. Or let the traveller walk to Gössweinstein from Muggendorf, and he will wonder at the castle and church and town perched on the top of a crag, like an eagle's nest, and apparently as inaccessible.

The Franconian Jura is essentially a country of surprises. The rocks assume the most fantastic shapes, the rivers wind in the most capricious manner, and the castles and villages are planted in apparently the most inaccessible positions.

The best mode of getting into the heart of the Franconian Jura is to start from Forchheim on the line between Bamberg and Nürnberg, and to take a droschky thence to Muggendorf on the Wiesent, a drive of about three and a half hours.

Between Nürnberg and Bamberg the range of the Jura lies to the east, presenting something of the appearance of the Malvern Hills, giving the traveller the idea that there may be pretty scenery of the ordinary hill type to be found among them, much like that of the Spessart or Odenwald, but nothing more. In this he is greatly mistaken. It would be difficult to find elsewhere, out of the Alps, a region which contains within a small compass so much varied beauty and so many objects of interest. If the reader desire to know of a nook where he can take holiday for a few weeks without the chance of exchanging a word with another English traveller, and find some fresh excursion every day, let him settle down at Muggendorf, Gössweinstein, or Pottenstein, and I believe he will thank me for having sent him thither. If, moreover, he desires to begin his expedition with a characteristic and beautiful scene, let him be at Bamberg on July 13, the festival of Henry II., the founder of the cathedral and see, who was buried in the glorious church he built.

Bamberg is one of the most picturesque cities in Europe, and it is a pity that, lying out of the way, it is not more frequently visited by holiday-takers. It is built about five hills, or rather crags, rising precipitously from the valley of the Rednitz. The summit of one rock is covered with the beautiful early cathedral, and the palace of the bishops with its delicious Renaissance gate-

way. Another rock is topped by the parish church with its slender spire. The great Benedictine abbey and church of St. Michael occupy the summit of a third; St. Jacob stands on a fourth. The river forms two branches, which are crossed by bridges; the stone bridge over the main channel was constructed in 1456; it took advantage of a rocky islet in the stream. This was built over for a Rath-haus or town-hall, and the road carried through it by a picturesque archway between the bridges.

I had arrived at Bamberg with a friend on July 12, in complete ignorance that the morrow was the great gala day of the city. Our first intimation of the approaching festival was the assembly of a large party of old friends in the evening to salute our worthy host of the 'Golden Sun' on his name-day. He was a Henry, and in Roman Catholic countries the name-day rather than the birthday is observed. Two great posies of flowers were planted before him on the table, at the head of which he sat, and beer flowed freely. Then two great logs of wood were introduced, trunks of silver pine sawn across, and planted on the table. Each of these contained a monstrous glass of ale, which was passed round and tasted to the health and happiness of the landlord, a taciturn Boniface, who merely grunted, puffed a cloud of smoke, and nodded in acknowledgment of each toast. Singing, with zither and guitar, ensued, and long speeches, of which we waxed tired, and so went to bed.

Next morning we were roused at five o'clock by singing, and on looking out of the window saw a procession of country people from a neighbouring village coming into the city and to their mother church, headed by a gilded shield on a pole bearing the name of their village wreathed with roses. They sang a plaintive hymn, and the effect in the early morning air was striking. If any one desires to hear popular church singing, let him go into Franconia. Nowhere, out of Yorkshire, have I heard such magnificent voices and such tuneful throats.

By the time we were dressed, and had breakfasted, all Bamberg was afoot. The main streets were being strewn with green rushes, and we saw at once that there was to be a procession. In the Carolinen Platz an altar had been erected, and from every window blue and white flags were waving—the Bavarian colours. We saw the imperial black and yellow nowhere. The day was lovely. About eight o'clock the procession left the cathedral, and the boom of cannon from the rocks above announced its departure. Down

the long flights of steps and steep inclines that lead from the cathedral to the town the long glittering train began to ripple, a river of light and colour and music, banners of all colours waving, candles and gilded trophies twinkling, and the glorious 'Tantum Ergo,' to a tune with which we in England are familiar, sung first by the choir with brass instruments, and then taken up by the crowd till it rolled along the streets and swirled round the corners. Perhaps the most striking musical effect was after a momentary silence in the great square, when the trombone gave forth the first notes of the familiar hymn, when the whole crowd of many thousands raised their voices as in one shout and sang, so that one could not distinguish the voices of the choir in the volume of sound that rose. We were at a corner where the main street opened out of the square, and wound like a letter S towards the bridge. The crowd lining the street, hearing the strain in the square, sang also; and as the music ran on down the street the time naturally became different, and then it seemed to us more like a flood of tumultuous music invading and enveloping the town, washing down the thoroughfares and clashing with the melodious waves that rolled and leaped in the open spaces. If that was the most striking musical moment in the scene, the most picturesque moment was when the procession passed over the bridge and through the archway in the island. The buildings are eminently quaint; the bands of shadow and sunshine through which the glittering, many-coloured line passed produced a picture the chiaroscuro and tints of which are never to be forgotten.

I must not leave Bamberg without mention of our bill at the 'Golden Sun:' a good supper, bed, and breakfast, three marks—three shillings—each.

We took the train to Forchheim, where we dined, and drove in the afternoon to Muggendorf. The drive is very charming after the valley of the Wiesent has been entered, and the mountains close in on the river. The village of Streitberg is dominated by an ancient castle among rocks so spiry and quaint that it is difficult to distinguish broken wall from rock pinnacle. Here there is a whey cure establishment and a comfortable inn, but it is not far enough into the heart of the mountains to be recommended. The valley narrows; on the right on a rock stands the white tower of the crumbling Neideck—'Envy-corner.' A scramble to the ruins can be made from Muggendorf, through bushes of sweet-briar, and over tracts of wild strawberry. Then Muggendorf is reached—

a quiet, unpretending village, that contains three inns in addition to a milk cure establishment. The inns are the 'Star,' the 'Sun,' and the 'Swan.' The 'Star' is very comfortable, clean, and reasonable, with a decent cuisine and good wines. The terms are about six shillings a day. I, however, go to the 'Sun' from sentimental reasons. Judge if I could do other.

Forty years ago I spent a summer in that 'Sun' inn. The party then consisted of my father, my mother, a governess, my brother and sister. I was the eldest of the children, and was aged ten. That was a very happy summer. I think the sun shone on us all day and all night then! I recall no rain, no cloud, no darkness. I remember only brilliant sunshine, green meadows, Solomon's seal, forget-me-not, lilies of the valley, rocks and pines, picnics and drives, and endless merriment.

But perhaps foremost among the pleasant reminiscences of Muggendorf was a little maiden called Gretchen, aged nine, with large soft brown eyes, the sweetest little mouth of coral, a clear brown skin, bare feet, a blue frock, and a scarlet kerchief knotted round her head. This little girl became our daily playmate, and I fear our German bore for long after a Franconian intonation, and contained many vernacular peculiarities of expression due to our chattering all day with the pretty little maiden, Gretchen. I remember when the day of parting came, we children were inconsolable, and Gretchen gave me a tin ring in which was set a piece of blue glass, and we separated with vows of perpetual friendship.

Just thirty years after, that is in May 1873, I paid my second visit to Muggendorf, on this occasion accompanied by my wife; and of course—could I do other?—I went to the 'Sun.' When we ascended the inn steps, a pretty young woman came to the door. 'Did we want rooms?' 'Yes, certainly; we would stay there some time.'

We were introduced into the public room. I looked wistfully at the young woman. 'What is your name?' 'Katharina.' No—it was ridiculous of me to suppose that could be Gretchen. I studied the room, I knew it perfectly. That stove was an intimate acquaintance. There was the birdcage in the window, exactly where it had hung thirty years before; and in it—as I live!—a bullfinch. Surely not that same finch we used to feed? Yet it was like the bird.

'I was here thirty years ago,' said I to Katharina.

'That is possible. I am five-and-twenty, and so, naturally, do not recollect you. I will call my father.'

An old peasant came in, with blue worsted cap on his grey hairs, and a long brown pipe in his mouth, a short brown jacket, and trousers of the same colour; his face also brown. 'Herr Sonnen-Wirth,' said I, 'do you remember an English family which spent a summer with you thirty years ago?'

He went to a cupboard by the stove, pulled out the visitors' book, turned back to 1843, put the book down on the table, and pointed to my father's handwriting, and the entry of his name 'and family.'

In the thirty years that had elapsed only one other English name appeared, that of a colonial judge, sent thither in 1844 by my father.

'And how is the Herr Papa?' asked the old man. 'Dead.' He drew off his blue worsted cap. 'And the Frau Mamma?' 'Dead also.' 'And the Fräulein Governess?' 'Dead.' 'And the brother?' 'Dead.' 'And now,' said I, 'tell me, where is the pastor?' 'Dead,' answered the host. 'We have had three pastors since him you knew, and two also are dead.' 'And the schoolmaster, who taught us to sing?' 'He is at Bamberg now, very aged and infirm.' 'And—' I was afraid to ask—'Gretchen?' The old man pondered, then shook his head. 'We had a daughter, Gretchen; she died. But you cannot have known her.'

The hostess was called in. 'Gretchen! of course, he means Margarett K., who was in the house with us three years. Gretchen is married and doing well at Nürnberg.'

'You have her address?'

'Certainly.'

'When I go to Nürnberg I will call upon her.' Call upon her I did, a few weeks later, in Nürnberg. We found a little grocer's shop, which was full of Franconian peasantesses—for it was market-day—brown-faced, sturdy, their heads tied up in scarlet kerchiefs. Attending to them was a middle-aged woman. She looked up with some surprise as we entered. 'Can I serve you with anything?'

'Yes, with your memory. Were you not at Muggendorf thirty years ago? and do you remember—'

Before I finished the sentence she uttered an exclamation of delight, and held up her hands. 'Herr Je! who would have believed it possible! So you have not forgotten the little Gretchen?'

'How could I forget? Did you not give me a little white metal ring with a bit of blue glass in it, and—I opened my purse—'is not this it?—too small even for my little finger now!'

Perhaps the most singular feature of this interview was the want of correspondence between the faces of Gretchen's husband and of my wife, and those of us two—the main performers in the scene. The Herr was seated at one end of the shop on a sack of split peas, and my wife was resting on a sack of haricot beans at the other. They cast depressed glances at each other and at us, whilst we were animated with the liveliest delight. Next Christmas there arrived in England a box of Nürnberg toys and cakes—a present from Gretchen to my little ones.

But to return to Muggendorf, which I revisited last summer, after a further interval of ten years. Then I found the old host dead, his wife dead, and the 'Sun' passed into other hands. Katharina is now hostess of the 'Swan,' and no longer young.

Like all other limestone regions, the Franconian Jura abounds in caverns; but few others possess caves of such extent and interest. That of Gailenreuth, with its collection of hyena, cave bear, and urochs bones, is of world-wide fame. I remember a picture of it in 'Peter Parley's Wonders of the World,' as long as I can remember anything. There are other caverns quite as interesting and rich, as those of Streitberg and the Sophien-höhle, near Rabenstein. Another, recently discovered, and not as yet thoroughly explored, is the König Ludwig's Höhle. Close to Muggendorf are two, the caves of Rosenmüller and Oswald. But, for the matter of that, the whole neighbourhood abounds with them, the vast majority of which are quite unexplored. The hills are honeycombed with them. The precipices from Pottenstein to Tüchersfeld are drilled with holes, now blocked some little way in, but easily opened, and probably containing beds of stalagmite-encrusted relics of the primeval world. The caverns consist of several stories or stages of vaulted passages and halls, one over the other. They formed originally the subterranean beds of streams. In course of time the water flowing through them worked itself down through their floors to another stratum of porous rock, and forced its way through that. As the main artery in the valley deepened its furrow, this process was again repeated, till the water that fell on the surface of the plateau had reached the level of the valley. There can be little doubt, however, that below that level are other caverns filled with water, which are never able to discharge their contents. In some of the caves the stream is seen to sink; it runs out into the day many feet below the mouth of the cavern we explore.

Caves present great sameness. They have all their stalactite 'waterfalls,' and 'organs,' and 'beehives,' and 'curtains.' I have seen caves in all parts of Europe, and I give my verdict of preference in point of extent and interest to those of the Franconian Switzerland, only excepting the Istrian Adelsberg cavern.

The dolomitic limestone of the Jura is very rich in fossils. I remember forty years ago one enormous ammonite five feet in diameter, which six men managed to heave on to the top of our carriage, but which we were obliged to abandon, because my mother positively refused to travel with this monster threatening to crush in the head and come down on herself and children. The finest beds in the world are those of Solnhoven, further south in the same chain. The limestone there is peculiarly fine of texture, and is easily split into films like slate. It is largely worked for lithographic purposes. The coarser pieces are used for tablets. A room in the former Austrian imperial palace at Freiburg is lined with this beautiful stone, carved, polished like marble, and picked out with gold. The bed is seventy-five feet thick, and has been worked for centuries. The stone is unique in its kind; it contains the most marvellously preserved relics of the Jurassic world, in the fossil fish, crustaceans, &c.; even butterflies' wings have been preserved, with the colours of the plumage still distinguishable. The impression of the feathers of birds is also found on these stones, and the scales of fish with their gloss and prismatic hues. The archæopteryx in the British Museum came from these quarries. The works are in the face of a cliff two hundred feet high, and, having been quarried for several centuries, present the appearance of an enormous fortress occupying the summit of a mountain.

An interesting drive from Muggendorf may be made to Pottenstein. Formerly the road traversed the valley only as far as Tüchersfeld, when it ascended and struck across the plateau to Baireuth; but now a new road has been cut and blasted up the rest of the gorge to Pottenstein.

The valley is winding, shut in by steep and often precipitous sides, every rocky cranny and available slope made rich with foliage. Flowers abound—Solomon's seal, lilies of the valley, anemones, St. Bruno's lilies, white mullein, *Primula farinosa*, and many others, in such abundance that a walk must be preferred to a drive.

After passing the castle of Schlossberg, the valley widens to receive collateral ravines, and above their junction rises the castle

and pilgrimage church of Gössweinstein. A winding road, with the stations of the cross at intervals, ascends a slope, and starts from a bridge under the protection of a statue of St. John Nepomuck, patron of bridges, because he tumbled over one at Prague, and was drowned in the Moldau. At the foot of the precipice below the castle burst three copious streams from one spring, and turn a water-wheel. This spring may have originated the idea of making a pilgrimage to the church in honour of the Trinity. The castle of Gössweinstein is large, and not remarkable for architectural beauty. It is owned by a lady, the Baroness von Rabeneck, who resides in St. Petersburg. Though not in itself of much pretence, the appearance of the pile of buildings crowning a mighty rock, seen as I saw it one day rising into sunshine above drifting fog, after a thunderstorm, was certainly imposing.

The road now leaves the Wiesent, which turns sharply round and flows parallel to itself for some way, and ascends the Puttlach to Tüchersfeld, the most astonishing, picturesque, and fantastic village in Europe, if I am not greatly mistaken. At this spot two streams flow almost parallel into the Puttlach. Between them shoot up two lofty minarets or needles of limestone, one topped by a solitary tree, both quite inaccessible. One of these needles has, moreover, been scooped out at the side by the action of water at some vastly remote period, and in this hollow, on a platform, stands part of an old castle that clings to and scrambles about these extraordinary prongs, a castle partly of stone, and partly of black oak and plaster, and russet red-tiled roofs. The rocks of the main hills that overtop the village are, moreover, sculptured and insulated in the most fantastic manner. I should advise a foot-traveller to leave the Wiesent valley by the bridge below Gössweinstein, ascend to that town and inspect there the curious Olivienberg—rocks standing on the highest summit of the hill, yet perforated and scooped out into caves by water, one of which is turned into a Garden of Olives, with life-sized figures. He should visit the splendid church built by one of the Bishops of Bamberg, and then descend through beech and pine woods to Tüchersfeld, which he comes upon suddenly, and the appearance of which is so astonishing that he feels disposed to rub his eyes and ask himself whether he is not dreaming.

The road thence to Pottenstein is through pine-woods, at places high above the river. The opposite side of the valley consists of grey walls of barren rock, pierced with caverns, the

mouths of which one could only reach by ladders from below, or by being let down with ropes from above.

Pottenstein itself is a picturesque town with two churches, and a white chapel on the summit and extreme edge of a precipice overhanging the town on the west. Above Pottenstein rises a pile of rocky spikes, but they have been converted into a platform, and a castle erected on it, which is reached by a wooden staircase boldly flung on arches from one rock to another. Ten years ago this fortress was falling into ruin; but the town sold it to an apothecary in Nürnberg for the sum of 7*l.* 10*s.*, and a second castle some way off, Bärenfeld, for under a pound. He has restored Pottenstein with considerable taste. This castle belonged originally to the Bishops of Bamberg, and in 1228 St. Elizabeth of Hungary was given shelter in it from Henry Raspe, Landgrave of Thuringia, who drove her from the Wartburg on the death of her husband Ludwig. Her room—the little bedroom where the sad widow, bereft of husband and children, wept—is preserved; it is now the apothecary's smoking divan.

The castellans of Pottenstein formerly had the right of chopping off the left hand of any malefactor found guilty of theft, arson, or murder within the jurisdiction of the castle; and at the door the axe is suspended wherewith these executions took place. With questionable taste, beside it the apothecary has placed an india-rubber left hand, coloured to life. In the castle are preserved two of the banners of the Hussites, who under the one-eyed Zisca with the Flail attacked the town, and were driven off with the loss of these colours. It is said to have been the only place that held against and defeated these terrible Hungarian fanatics.

The castle well has been cleared out, and numerous objects of interest recovered from it. The well is of great depth, bored in the solid limestone column of rock. There is no spring to feed it, but the water from the roofs is conducted into it; and this is the way in which all the old castles were supplied when occupying lofty crags. They had very steep gabled roofs, on which much rain was caught, and every drop was preserved.

In the dining hall, in the bedroom, everywhere, are portraits of the worthy apothecary in knightly armour, and in an engraved view sold on the spot he is represented mounted on his charger leaving the gates of his castle.

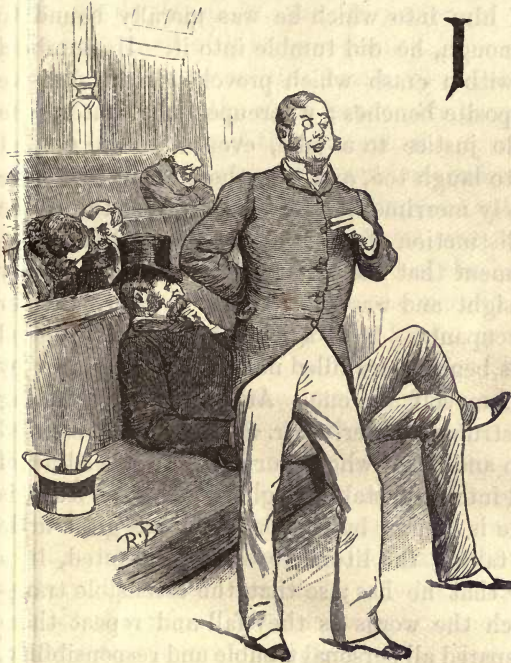
A week later I was in Nürnberg, in the Trödel Markt—the rag-fair—looking at all the lumber, new and old, there exposed for

sale. I was chaffering with one dirty and venerable huckster over some scraps of old flowered silk, when he said suddenly, 'By the way, I have here such a queer thing, a wee casket, and in that casket—what do you think? A lady's hand, the *left* hand cut off at the wrist—the skin only, mind you, neatly folded and put away. You may have it and welcome for a mark. I don't relish keeping it, I can assure you.' Of course, it was the hand of one of those executed at Pottenstein!—the *left* hand. I like to imagine so, and spin a web of romance out of that shrivelled bit of skin.

A castle with historic associations for a hundred and fifty shillings! Does it not make one's mouth water? If any of my readers would like to purchase and restore a far more picturesque and romantic castle, I can tell him of another—Rabeneck, the roof of which is falling in on the poor peasant who is living under it. This castle is not far from Muggendorf, above the valley of the Wiesent, on the way to Waischenfeld, another eccentric little town surmounted by an inaccessible tower on the top of a rock that stands up like a thumb.

I have said that for a considerable distance the Wiesent flows parallel to itself; consequently, by cutting across a neck of hill from Muggendorf, one can reach the upper valley of the Wiesent many miles before it turns a corner and retraces its steps. Here also may be visited the Giant's Castle, a huge cavern, the roof of which has fallen in in two places, leaving natural arches of rock. The bottom of the valley and the gliding river are reached at a mill called Töss, and thence the walk to Waischenfeld is full of interest. For eccentricity of form the rocks surpass those on the road to Gössweinstein. In one place we have a round window of rock, with the top fallen down; in another a monstrous goose's head of limestone at the summit of a hill; here needles, there mushrooms of solid rock. The valley is still, not a sound heard but the creak of a great wheel that is turned by the gliding river, and which raises a stream to water the meadows. Then comes an opening in the valley, and high above it towers a wonderfully picturesque castle, red-roofed, with a drawbridge thrown across a chasm; a little white chapel perched like a dove upon a point of rock below its base; and at the bottom of the precipice an old mill of rich black timber and white plaster. The scene is exquisite for its beauty, incomparable for its picturesqueness—Rabeneck—the Raven Rock—baronial hall, dungeons, lady's bower, ghosts, traditions, ancestors, going—going—going for ten pounds!

MYSTERIOUS MRS. WILKINSON.



I WONDER whether a man ever really forgets a single incident of his life— forgets it, I mean, beyond all possibility of recovery. I should be almost inclined to doubt it. I can't help fancying that all my personal experiences are stored up somewhere about me in a sort of ghostly Record Office, and that I might search the archives if only I knew the trick of discovering them. It so often happens

that some chance association of ideas awakens the most unexpected echoes in our memories, restores to us our youth, our boyhood, our childhood, and not only enables us to recall something that took place in those far-away days, but actually lifts us for a moment or two out of our present into our past selves, so that we feel as we once felt, and see as we once saw—until the vision fades and leaves us with a queer, painful sense of loss.

I suppose everybody experiences this sensation occasionally. It came upon me very strongly one evening when I was sitting in the House, listening to Pole, who had embarked upon one of his deliberate attacks on the Home Secretary. Pole was humming and hawing a good deal; frequently he paused for some seconds, trying to find the word that he wanted, and more than once, failing to find it, he went on quite cheerfully without it. He was not in the least embarrassed by his lack of eloquence; he had

a general idea of what he meant to express, and that was enough for him; every now and again he looked at the Speaker with a kindly reassuring smile, as who should say, 'It's all right. Only give me time and I'll get through this thing somehow.' I knew he would get through it somehow, and I also knew that there was a pitfall ahead of him into which he was morally bound to tumble. And, sure enough, he did tumble into it. He tumbled into it, so to speak, with a crash which provoked some derisive laughter from the opposite benches; whereupon the orator, who is always ready to do justice to a joke, even when he doesn't understand it, began to laugh too, and then those about him were infected by his untimely merriment, and so by degrees the entire assemblage, without distinction of party, became convulsed.

It was at this moment that the House of Commons suddenly disappeared from my sight and was replaced by another chamber and quite different occupants. It is a long, low room, panelled with old black oak; its benches are filled not by legislators but by schoolboys, of whom I myself am one. Another boy is standing up, book in hand, construing Homer. Mr. Speaker is represented by a gentleman in cap and gown who is turning line after line of the Iliad out of literal into respectable English. This, at least, is what he thinks that he is doing; but in reality he has got a little too far ahead and is taking the literal reading for granted, in a certain impatient way that he has; so that the ostensible translator has only to catch the words as they fall and repeat them rapidly in order to be spared all personal trouble and responsibility.

"Thus he spoke, and hurled his spear," murmurs the master.

'Hurled his spear,' echoes the boy.

"Nor did he miss him."

'Nordidemissim.'

'Well,' says the master, looking up with a dawning suspicion, 'what is that?'

'What's what, sir?'

'What is "nor did he miss him"?''

A pause; and then—"First aorist, sir," responds dear old Pole triumphantly, 'from *nordidemizo*!'

He always used to be called 'dear stupid old Pole' in those days: I believe there are people who call him so still. And yet I don't think he ever quite deserved the epithet of stupid. He didn't take the trouble to learn his lessons when he was a boy; he

doesn't take the trouble to master the details of a subject now ; but he is so perfectly good-humoured and so imperturbable that he always has his wits, such as they are, about him, and it is difficult to make him look foolish. In later years I have known him, under pressure of emergency, show an ingenuity equal to that which he displayed in the invention of that amazing verb *νορδιδημιζω*, and with happier results.

I returned to actualities from my brief excursion into the past just in time to see the right honourable gentleman, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, rise to crush the honourable member for Mid-Wessex. He could not order Pole to write out the lesson three times in Greek and English, but such punishment as he could inflict he did. His sarcasm was tremendous ; his allusions to the extraordinary ignorance of the laws of the land which seemed to prevail amongst those who were liable to be called upon to administer the same were of a kind to make members of the unpaid magistracy blush for their order ; and when in feeling accents he deprecated the wanton waste of public time entailed by such speeches as that to which the House had just listened, I am sure we all felt that the complaint was for once not an ill-founded one. And Pole sat with his hands in his pockets and smiled and did not care two straws. If Pole can go on not caring like this, I shouldn't be surprised to hear of his obtaining an under-secretaryship one of these days. To be sure, he will have to make haste about it ; for, alas ! it is something more than a quarter of a century since the verb *νορδιδημιζω* was discovered.

Pole and I had been friends—more or less friends—all our lives. There had been long periods during which we had seen little or nothing of each other, and latterly we had met as a couple of middle-aged men do, who have each his own affairs to think about and have half forgotten that they were once boys together. But on that particular night I felt very kindly towards my old schoolfellow. He had unconsciously given me back a few moments out of the good days that I shall never see again. I thought I should like to have a chat with him, and I was glad when he joined me later and, passing his arm through mine, said we would walk homewards together, as it was such a fine night.

It appeared afterwards that he had something to say to me, but I didn't know that at the time, and I began by reminding him of the old yarn above narrated, whereat he roared with

laughter; and so we fell to talking about Eton and about the masters who ruled there in our time, and about Spankie and Silly Billy (I can't help asking *où sont les neiges d'antan?* I know it is among the phrases which ought to be abandoned, but let me put it into a parenthesis just for this once only)—I say, we went on entertaining one another with reminiscences of persons and things profoundly interesting to us, but perhaps not equally so to the general public, until we reached Bury Street, St. James's, where I live when I am in London, and Pole remembered that he had not followed me for mere purposes of gossip.

'I rather wanted to have a little talk with you, Walmisley,' he said. 'Might I come in for a few minutes?'

Naturally, I made him welcome, and when I had provided him with a cigar and with something to drink he confided to me that he was in trouble.

'What is it?' I asked. 'It isn't money, I presume.' Indeed I knew it could hardly be that; for Pole is a wealthy man, and has never been a specially extravagant one.

'No,' he answered; 'it isn't money.'

'Then,' said I, 'of course it's——'

He replied, without giving me time to finish my sentence, 'Yes; it's the other thing. I met her at an hotel in Switzerland last summer, and when you have seen her, I think you'll admit that, as far as looks and manners go, she is the equal of any woman in London. If I had only myself to consider, I shouldn't hesitate for a moment; but there are the children to be thought of, and then my people have been bothering me about it; and if there's one thing that I hate more than another, it's having a row with my people.'

Pole had been for some years a widower, and had two little girls, of whom his mother took the principal charge. It had always been expected that he would marry again some day; but I suppose old Mrs. Pole had a not unnatural wish that his second wife should be, as his first had been, a lady of rank.

'Well, who is she?' I inquired.

He said that she was a Mrs. Wilkinson, and that she was a widow; after which he came to a standstill, as though there were no more to be told about her.

'Yes,' said I, 'and afterwards?'

'Ah, my dear fellow, that's just it; there's nothing afterwards. I know nothing more, and I can't find out anything more.'

And then, you know, my mother cuts up rough and begins to cry. Mrs. Wilkinson is in London ; she has taken a house for the season—and a very pretty little house it is—and she seems to have lots of friends, only nobody can tell me her history.'



'Pole,' said I gravely, 'you did well to come to me. You must not be allowed to make a fool of yourself. May I ask whether you are very much in love with this widow?'

He looked a little sheepish and answered, with a laugh, 'Oh, well—aren't we rather too old to talk about that sort of thing? I thought her awfully kind and pleasant, and I have always felt that

as my girls grew up they would need somebody to look after them. That was how it began, and——'

'I feel sure that it ought not to go on,' I interrupted. 'If your daughters are to be provided with a stepmother, she mustn't be an unknown Wilkinson.'

'Well, no—perhaps not. But she may not be utterly unknown, after all. I thought I'd consult you about it, because, in the first place, you're such a sober, sensible sort of chap, and also because Mrs. Wilkinson has a Miss Warde staying with her whom I expect you know. Her family live in your part of the world, and I dare say she could give you information. I didn't like to pump her myself.'

As the Wardes are neighbours of mine in the country, it seemed probable that I should have no difficulty in finding out about Mrs. Wilkinson's antecedents from them; but my impression was that Pole was not particularly anxious that these should prove satisfactory. Before he left me I was able to form a tolerably shrewd guess at the state of affairs. My poor friend had evidently fallen a victim to the stratagems of the wily widow. He had gone farther than he had intended, and now wished to withdraw; only he did not see how an honourable withdrawal was to be accomplished. Now I flattered myself that I had some little knowledge of the world and of women (am I not forty-two years of age and a bachelor?), and I thought it would be odd if I couldn't disentangle this excellent and scrupulous man from the meshes. 'Leave it to me,' said I. 'To-morrow you shall take me to call upon your mysterious Wilkinson, and whether she proves to be a suitable person or not, you may depend upon it that she shall not marry you against your will.'

He demurred a little to this way of putting the case. 'It wouldn't be exactly against my will, you know, Walmisley; only it *is* such a bore to have family rows, isn't it?'

I replied that it was the first duty of a good citizen to avoid such calamities; and with that we parted.

One ought always to be upon one's guard against forming preconceived notions of people. The result of finding them altogether unlike what one had expected them to be is that one's judgment is thrown off its balance, and one's power of arriving at a really impartial estimate lost. For some reason—or no reason—I had taken it into my head that Mrs. Wilkinson would be big and handsome, that she would have a good deal of manner, that

she would still be in half-mourning for her late husband, that she would not improbably wear about her neck a large jet locket with the date of his demise incrusting upon it in diamonds, and finally, that she would be much pleased at adding the reader's humble servant to the list of her acquaintances. When, therefore, I was introduced on the following afternoon to an extremely pretty and rather demure-looking little woman, whose blue eyes had an expression of almost childlike innocence, and whose quiet, but perfectly-fitting frock matched these in colour, I was, I must confess, somewhat taken aback. Moreover, although she received me very civilly, and did not look exactly surprised at seeing me, there was just something in her demeanour which suggested the query, 'To what do I owe this pleasure?'—and such suggestions are disconcerting. Pole was not the sort of man who would see anything out of the way in taking one of his friends to call upon a lady with whom he was intimate, but the proceeding was, of course, a trifle irregular, and I should never have been guilty of such an irregularity had I not chosen to assume that Mrs. Wilkinson was a person with whom there was no occasion to stand upon ceremony. As it was, I was glad to be able to explain my visit by saying that I knew Miss Warde's father and mother, and hoped to have an opportunity of paying my respects to the young lady herself now that she was in London.

Miss Warde, however, had gone out; and so we sat and talked for a while to the widow, who, as I was obliged to acknowledge to myself, was not only unobjectionable, but decidedly attractive.

'You are a great politician, are you not, Colonel Walmisley?' she asked. 'I think I ought to tell you at once that I am a Liberal, so that you may know the worst of me. But Mr. Pole says my case is not such a very bad one as some people's, because I don't really know the difference between the two parties.'

'I am rejoiced, Mrs. Wilkinson,' quoth I, in my happiest manner, 'to hear that your Liberalism is not very profound; because, if it were, I should tremble for our friend Pole's allegiance.'

She looked full at me with a momentary seriousness, but began to smile again almost immediately. 'I suppose,' she remarked, 'that a good many of us accept our political convictions as we do our religious creeds. We are born Catholics or Protestants, Conservatives or Liberals, and it isn't worth while to change.'

'Were you born a Liberal?' I inquired, for I thought she might take this occasion of enlightening us as to her origin.

‘Those with whom I have lived have been Liberals for the most part,’ she replied. ‘But you are a soldier first, and a Conservative afterwards, isn’t that so? You would let the Radicals have their wicked will as regards a great many things, if only they would leave the army alone. I am sure you must be right. How can a civilian Minister know anything of military matters? I read your speech the other day about the difficulty of getting good non-commissioned officers, and, ignorant as I am, I could not help seeing that your facts are unassailable. And is it really the case that our poor army is going from bad to worse?’

I said it was—and so it is. That is perfectly true. If I am asked for my opinion, of course I must give it; but I would not have it supposed that I am so simple as to be taken in by every lady who has found out my hobby, and chooses to simulate an interest in it. Very nearly all of them do this, and I hope I know their ways well enough to be aware that they act in a precisely similar manner when they have to deal with my friend Admiral Bunting, or with Drinkwater, the great temperance advocate, or indeed with any individual who happens to be more or less of a specialist. Nevertheless, I am quite willing to admit that flattery soothes me, even when I know it to be flattery, and that to be listened to with respect and every appearance of pleasure by a pretty woman is a great deal more agreeable to me than being contradicted, and pooh-poohed, and snarled at, as I too often am by certain other hearers of mine. I certainly enjoyed my visit, and when Mrs. Wilkinson invited me to dine with her quietly on the following Thursday, I accepted without hesitation. Why shouldn’t I dine with her? She lived in a remarkably well-appointed little house in South Kensington, and from the general look of her surroundings I judged that she would give me a good dinner. I thought her very nice, and said so candidly to Pole, as we walked away.

‘But you know, my dear fellow,’ I added, ‘it is one thing to make friends with a pleasant, chatty woman from no one knows where, and quite another thing to marry her. If you will be advised by me, you won’t drop her suddenly, but go on visiting her just as usual, and gradually let her see that you don’t intend to propose. Then, if I know anything of women, *she* will drop *you*.’

‘That,’ said Pole, rubbing his head rather ruefully, ‘will be most satisfactory, no doubt.’

Very evident it was to me that Pole stood in sore need of a staunch and determined friend to look after him. I suspected as much then, and I was quite certain of it a few days later, when the little dinner to which I had been so hospitably invited took place. Estimated by the number of guests who sat down to it, it was a very little dinner, for these consisted simply of Pole and myself. So long as we remained at table, the conversation was general, and indeed could not very well have been anything else with only four people present; it was in the drawing-room afterwards that I discovered how serious matters were. I found that I had to talk to Miss Warde (who is twenty-two years younger than I am, and may possibly think me an old bore), while the other couple withdrew to a remote corner, and conversed together in an undertone. Pole was sitting very close to his fair hostess; I saw him gazing at her with an immense admiration in those sleepy eyes of his. It was clear that he was no more able to escape than a mouse with whom a cat has begun to play. I can't say that Mrs. Wilkinson flirted vulgarly, nor perhaps was she flirting at all, in any offensive acceptance of the word; but I could not doubt that it was her purpose to change her present name for that of Pole, and I felt sure that, if she were not interfered with, she would do it too.

Well, I didn't blame her. A cat may look at a king, or may play with a mouse, or may marry a Pole, without infringing any law, human or divine. From her point of view, she was perfectly entitled to behave as she was doing; it was only from my point of view, and from that of my friend's relatives, that she was bound to give an account of herself first.

I was not long in arriving at the conclusion that no account of her was obtainable from Miss Warde. That young lady was so reticent, when casually questioned upon the subject, that I at first suspected her of having something to conceal; but I satisfied myself after a time that she only withheld particulars from me because she did not happen to be in possession of any. I elicited the fact that the Wardes had spent the previous summer in Switzerland, where it seemed tolerably safe to assume that they had picked up Mrs. Wilkinson; and that the latter should be anxious to establish a connection with people of such undoubted respectability was comprehensible enough.

'It was so very kind of her to ask me to stay with her,' Miss Warde said gratefully. 'I had made up my mind that I was to

have no season this year; for papa's gout has been so bad lately that he hated the idea of leaving home, and mamma would not consent to come up without him.'

It struck me that both papa and mamma would have been more prudent if they had not consented to let the young lady come up without them; but that was just what might have been expected of the Wardes. They are a simple, innocent old pair, who follow the absurd rule of trusting every one who has not been proved unworthy of trust, and I was not at all surprised that they should have confided their daughter to the chaperonage of a total stranger.

However, that was their affair, not mine. My business was to get upon Mrs. Wilkinson's track, and follow it back to its starting-point. When I say that this was my business, I mean that I had resolved, in poor Pole's interest, to make it so. He honestly avowed to me, after we had left the house, that he distrusted himself. 'It's all very well to tell me that I'm thinking of doing a confoundedly foolish thing,' he said; 'but between you and me, my dear old chap, I've been doing foolish things all my life long, and I suppose I shall keep up the same game to the end of the chapter, unless somebody is kind enough to knock me down and sit on my head until the temptation passes.'

I assured him that he might rely upon me to do him this service, in a figurative sense, if necessary, and that I would at once set about making the inquiries which the case appeared to call for.

I did so; and my surprise at finding what a number of people knew Mrs. Wilkinson was equalled only by my disappointment at the very meagre information that they were able to give me respecting her. Most of them had made her acquaintance through Miss Warde, and those who had not had been introduced to her by those who had. It seems to me that people have come to attach very little importance to credentials in these days. Here was a woman about whom absolutely nothing was known, except that she was pretty and agreeable, and apparently well off; but that was quite enough for the easy-going folks who partook of her hospitality, and made her welcome to theirs. She might have been the daughter of the common hangman, for anything that they cared.

Of course I heard rumours about her. One well-informed person declared that her husband had been an American pork-butcher in a large way of business; another professed to have dis-

covered that she had an interest in the firm of Wilkinson and Simpson, linendrapers in the City; while a third was sure that he had seen her upon the stage not many years back. But all this was obviously pure conjecture. The only certain thing was that she did not belong to any family that one had ever heard of; and this negative conclusion was all that I could carry back to Pole at the end of ten days of diligent research.

During this time I had seen Mrs. Wilkinson more than once, and I cannot deny that the favourable impression which she had made upon me at the outset was increased by each visit that I paid to her. I was obliged to acquit her of being an adventuress: her quiet self-possession, her unconsciousness of being watched, everything about her made it impossible for any unprejudiced observer to think of her as that. If her position was not quite assured, and if she desired to make it more so by a good marriage, her ambition was surely a natural and pardonable one. But I need hardly point out that this made her all the more dangerous. Pole, I could see, was wavering miserably. Common sense, his duty to his children, and a horror of family jars were drawing him in one direction; Mrs. Wilkinson and his inclinations were pulling hard all in the other. One did not need to be a conjuror to foretell which side would get the best of it in that tug of war.

And now, I suppose, I may as well confess what, under these circumstances, commended itself to me as the best course for a true friend to pursue. What I am going to say may sound a little fatuous, but I am sure that those who know me will concede that vanity is not one of my defects. I must explain that I had called upon Mrs. Wilkinson several times, that I had found her alone, and had sat some time with her, and that we had got on very well together—remarkably well. Now, although I am neither as rich, nor as good-looking, nor, it may be, as amiable as Pole, I am still among those whom many ladies are pleased to consider eligible bachelors, and I could not help fancying that, as a *pis-aller*, Mrs. Wilkinson might be willing to substitute me for the suitor of whom I was resolved to deprive her. I thought that when she found out that Pole's attentions were not likely to have a serious result (and we know how soon women discover these things), her first wish would be to show him that she had another string to her bow, and I thought also that a natural feeling of resentment would prompt her to dismiss the old love immediately on taking up with the new. As for me, I had no fear of falling into the

snare out of which I intended to drag my friend. I am not susceptible, like poor Pole; I bear a character for cautiousness, which I believe that I deserve; and I doubted not but that, at the end of the season, I should be able to retire quietly, without having compromised either Mrs. Wilkinson or myself.

So I set to work to delude this poor, confiding little woman, who only wished to secure a protector in a world where women are sadly in need of protection, and who was evidently far from imagining that middle-aged gentlemen were capable of practising those arts of which her sex is apt to claim a monopoly. It really was too bad of me. I quite felt that at the time, and took myself to task rather severely about it. But in arguing the case out with my conscience, I put it in this way. My first duty was to my friend. Very well: was there any other method of saving him? I could see none. For his sake, then, I must inflict a slight disappointment upon a lady whom it grieved me to disappoint, but to whom, nevertheless, I was bound by no special tie. Observe, the disappointment would only be a slight one. I did not for one moment suppose that Mrs. Wilkinson would fall in love with me, nor was it any part of my design to ensnare her affections. No! I can lay my hand upon my waistcoat and say that no feminine heart has ever been broken by me. What I proposed to do was to rescue Pole by means of a little harmless stratagem—nothing more than that; and I must say that my first efforts were crowned with a success which I had hardly anticipated.

I won't assert that Mrs. Wilkinson exactly led me on, but she certainly seemed to be very much pleased with the various signs of friendship which I thought fit to display towards her, and responded to them almost eagerly. It was not all pretence on my part; I really liked her, and enjoyed listening to her artless prattle. I dare say she humbugged me a little, but I think I have already mentioned that I don't mind being humbugged by pretty people.

'Colonel Walmisley,' she said to me one day, 'will you do me a great kindness? Will you get me a place in the ladies' gallery of the House of Commons for the day after to-morrow?'

'With the greatest pleasure,' I replied; 'only I am afraid you will not be amused. There will be nothing worth listening to the day after to-morrow.'

'Oh!' she said, 'but I thought I saw that you had given notice of a question for that day.'

I explained that questions and debates were two different things. I was not going to make a speech; and if I were——

‘If you were,’ she interrupted, ‘I should certainly manage to be present, by hook or by crook. Why do you speak so very, very seldom? But I think, if you don’t mind, I should like to be in the House the day after to-morrow, all the same.’ And as she said this she glanced up at me with a sort of timid look in her blue eyes, which I dare say I should have found perilous if I had been a younger man.

Since she made a point of it, I did as I was requested, and in due time she had the satisfaction of hearing me ask the Secretary of State for War whether it was the case that the 124th, 160th, and 176th regiments had only been raised to the required strength for proceeding on foreign service by means of reducing their respective linked battalions to a condition of practical non-existence, and whether it was proposed to take measures, and if so, what measures, to put an end to a state of things calculated to convey a false impression of the numerical efficiency of the standing army. The right honourable gentleman, who, I think, is sometimes needlessly curt in his replies, got up, grunted out, ‘No, sir,’ and sat down again. On being further pressed, he said that his answer referred to the first part of the question put by the honourable member for Weehampton; the remainder, being grounded upon a mistaken assumption, did not, he conceived, call for any remarks from him. Thereupon his colleagues cheered—though I really don’t see what there was to cheer about—and the incident ended.

An ordinary, common-place person might have been disposed to think that I had been rather snubbed than otherwise, and might have refrained from complimenting me upon the lucidity with which I had expressed myself; but not so Mrs. Wilkinson, whose forget-me-not blue eyes saw many things that were hidden from duller mortals. She had seen, for instance—so, at least, she afterwards assured me—that the War Minister had fidgeted about uneasily on the Treasury bench while I was speaking, and she was convinced that I had made him very uncomfortable and angry. ‘Why,’ she asked, ‘did you not go on at him until he told the truth? I feel certain that he was not telling the truth, and I think you let him off far too easily. If I had been in your place, I should have insisted upon his giving me some proof that those unfortunate regiments had not really been robbed of all their men.’

I pointed out to her that such a course would not have been in accordance with parliamentary usage; but she rejoined that that only showed that parliamentary usage was one of the things which cried aloud for reform. 'How can you be a Conservative,' she exclaimed, 'when there is so much that requires to be improved or done away with? A Conservative, I suppose, does not wish to see anything that is established altered, whether it is bad or good.'

Possibly she made this preposterous assertion only in order to give me an opportunity of expounding the true meaning of Conservatism. She may have guessed that that task would not be distasteful to me, and may have intended all along to declare—as she did the moment that I had made an end of speaking—that she now understood the dangers of the Radical programme, and would never call herself so much as a Whig again. It is not at all likely that her sudden conversion to patriotic principles was the result of my eloquence; but after all, a convert is a convert, and I imagine that there is joy among the missionaries over more than one ex-Pagan who has been brought into the fold by other incentives than those of pure conviction.

Pole, who chanced to be present when Mrs. Wilkinson made her new profession of faith, looked rather disgusted. 'You never allowed *me* to convince you that you had taken up with the wrong side,' he said reproachfully.

'You never tried,' she retorted. 'You only laughed at me, and said I didn't know what I was talking about.'

'Well, but that wasn't so far off the truth, was it?'

'I am afraid it was very near the truth indeed; but there are some truths which it is polite and politic to ignore. Colonel Walmisley, you see, was kind enough to treat me as if I were a rational being.'

'And he has his reward,' muttered Pole, with as near an approach to ill-temper as his nature was capable of.

In truth my friend showed little gratitude for the trouble that I was taking on his behalf. The next time that we were alone together he assumed so dissatisfied and moody an air, that I thought I had better come to some sort of understanding with him. I did not deem it wise to reveal my plan to him in all its crudity, but I gave him a general idea of what I was about. 'It is for your sake, my dear fellow,' said I, 'that I am trying to make myself agreeable to Mrs. Wilkinson. I want to create a diversion, in

order to cover your retreat, and I believe I shall manage it, if you don't put spokes in my wheels.'

He was so good as to say that he supposed I meant well. 'But is it necessary to be so—so *infernally* agreeable?' he asked.

I replied that it was, and that I hoped he would eventually appreciate the sacrifice that I was making in giving up my after-



noon rubber of whist for the sake of drinking tea daily with a lady of whom I did not happen to be enamoured. I was not so unreasonable as to expect that he would thank me at the time. No one likes to be cut out, and I was not at all surprised to find that his attentions to Mrs. Wilkinson increased after this, and kept step with my own. There was no longer so much reason why he should not be attentive to her if he liked. My impression was that she had taken his measure, and that she considered me far

more likely to make her an offer of marriage than he. She treated him very kindly in the main, only every now and then allowing herself a little smiling, feminine home-thrust, under which he winced; but it was for me that all her favours were reserved.

I never saw a man more bewildered than Pole was by this abrupt change of front. Even I, who have long since ceased to be astonished at the keenness of women's vision, had hardly been prepared for so speedy a success, and my poor friend evidently could not make head or tail of it. Sometimes he seemed inclined to accept the situation, and would absent himself for two or three days together; but he always came back at the end of that time, looking like a schoolboy who has been playing truant, and bearing in his hand, as a peace-offering, a box of French bonbons, of which Mrs. Wilkinson was excessively fond.

It was after one of these periodical returns to his allegiance that he invited us—that is to say, Mrs. Wilkinson, Miss Warde, and myself—to dine with him quietly at Richmond. He remarked ingenuously that he thought we all wanted something to raise our spirits a little.

‘I am not conscious of being in low spirits,’ Mrs. Wilkinson said; ‘but I should like very much to dine at Richmond, though I haven't that excuse. Only I don't know—is it quite the proper thing to do? I have lived so much out of England that I am afraid I have forgotten what is permissible and what isn't. Colonel Walmisley, would it be right for me to take Miss Warde to an entertainment in the suburbs with two gentlemen?’

‘Perfectly right in the present instance,’ I answered. ‘It all depends upon who the two gentlemen are.’

She had taken lately to appealing to me in this way, and really I rather liked it. I suppose that no man would find it altogether objectionable to be appointed director of a charming woman's conscience, and I was glad—for Pole's sake—that she should thus openly show how much importance she attached to my good opinion. For Pole's sake, too, I betook myself cheerfully to Richmond on the day named. As a general thing, I don't see much fun in going such a long way for one's dinner; but when one has made up one's mind to do a good turn to a friend, one must not stop at small sacrifices. I say, I accompanied my friends to the Star and Garter with a smiling countenance, and as the dinner proved fairly good and the evening was a lovely one, I may add that I enjoyed myself.

To all appearance Mrs. Wilkinson also enjoyed herself. As for the remaining two members of the quartette, they doubtless had their respective reasons for looking somewhat sad. I should have mentioned before this that Miss Warde had an admirer—a young man of fortune, Seymour by name, whom I often met at Mrs. Wilkinson's, and who received a good deal of friendly encouragement from that lady. The willingness of Mr. and Mrs. Warde to let their daughter appear through a whole season under the wing of a chance acquaintance was perhaps not wholly unconnected with Mr. Seymour's presence in London. By an oversight, Pole had not asked him to join our little party; and this, I suppose, accounted for Miss Warde's grave looks, which both I and our host noticed. The latter took me aside just before dinner and whispered his regret at this unfortunate omission.

'Awfully stupid of me!' he said. 'What a duffer I am! But one can't think of everything,' he added, sighing.

'There are some things which one had much better not think of at all,' returned I, somewhat severely; for I could not approve of the habit into which Pole had fallen of drawing long breaths and throwing languishing glances at Mrs. Wilkinson.

'Don't!' he groaned. 'I wish you wouldn't! What is the use of going on at a fellow like that, when he is trying all he can to run straight?'

I don't know whether he devoted himself so assiduously to Miss Warde after this because he felt that the least he could do was to endeavour to divert the poor girl whom he had unintentionally disappointed, or because he wished, as he said, to 'run straight,' or because Mrs. Wilkinson declined to have anything to say to him; but whatever may have been the motive of his conduct, the effect of it was that the fair widow and I were left to entertain one another throughout the evening. After dinner we went out on to the terrace, and, seating ourselves there while the sun sank in the west, surveyed that pleasant landscape which is associated with the digestive process in the minds of so many hundreds of persons. For me it had other associations—a great many others. I am no longer young; I have dined at Richmond I should be sorry to say how often; and in that familiar twilight ghosts from the past began to float before me and drift away, like the smoke of the cigar which Mrs. Wilkinson had kindly permitted me to light. I was in a soft and sentimental mood; and so, I imagine, was she. We had remained silent for some time when she said, in that low,

gentle voice of hers, which always sounded to me as if it could only belong to a well-bred woman—

‘Colonel Walmisley, I wonder whether you would give me a little advice, if I asked you.’

‘I shall be delighted,’ answered I. ‘Advice is emphatically one of the things which it is more blessed to give than to receive. Never in my life have I sent any one who has begged me for it empty away.’

I adopted this rather flippant tone because the fact of being in a sentimental mood always puts me more than usual upon the alert against surprises.

I could see that she looked hurt. She turned her head away, saying: ‘After all, I don’t know that I will trouble you. You would not be interested in what I was going to ask you about; it only referred to myself.’

‘Then,’ said I, more seriously, ‘you may be sure that it will interest me very much indeed.’ And this was no more than the truth. Could she, I wondered, be going to consult me as to Pole’s intentions?

But it soon appeared that no such delicate question as that was to be laid before me. What Mrs. Wilkinson wanted to know was whether I should recommend her to take up her residence in London permanently or not. She had thought a great deal about it, she said, and was quite unable to arrive at a decision. ‘It has so happened that I have lived almost entirely abroad until lately, and perhaps I should be happier in some ways if I were to go abroad again. Yet—there would be objections to that, would there not? Don’t people often say unkind things about women who live out of their own country?’

She turned to me with one of her half-timid, half-confiding glances, and I replied: ‘People say unkind things everywhere and about every one, Mrs. Wilkinson; but it doesn’t matter much, so long as they are not repeated to the person of whom they are said. I know one humble individual who won’t be able to help saying unkind things of you, if you go away and leave us. You ought not to have consulted me about this matter. How can you expect me to give you a disinterested opinion?’

‘I did not expect you to answer me in that way,’ she said, with more of sadness than reproach in her tone. ‘I thought—perhaps I had no business to think so—but I thought you were inclined to be my friend, and that if I asked you what it would be best for

me to do, you would tell me. You have always been friendly until now.'

Certainly, as she spoke these last words, she had *les larmes dans la voix*. I know that this effective sound can be produced by a trick which is easily learnt, and I also know that when a woman desires to make a fool of you, she almost invariably begins with a display of helplessness; but really suspicion must have limits, and I do possess a heart—a somewhat tough and battered one, it may be—still quite serviceable and ready to beat with generous emotion upon cause shown. I did not believe that poor little Mrs. Wilkinson was trying to impose upon me; but in any case it would have been impossible to reply to her otherwise than as I did reply. I begged her pardon; I assured her that I was indeed her friend, and I added a few pretty phrases, such as I take it that any one, circumstanced as I was, would have uttered. She was easily conciliated, poor little soul. She told me all her doubts and fears, and very natural they were. People in London had been kind to her; but then she had heard that people in London often were kind to strangers for a time, and afterwards dropped them. She did not think she would be able to bear being dropped. She confessed that she was fond of society, and perhaps she was more dependent upon it than others, because she was so lonely. Other people had their relations to fall back upon.

'And have you none?' I ventured to inquire.

She shook her head mournfully. 'They are all dead. I should think no one is more utterly alone in the world than I am.'

'But at least you have friends,' I urged. 'Miss Warde, for instance—I suppose you have known her for a long time, have you not?'

Perhaps this question was not in the best possible taste, but I never allowed such opportunities to slip; and not the least puzzling thing about Mrs. Wilkinson was the perfectly easy and unconscious manner in which she avoided giving a direct reply.

'Charlotte Warde is a great friend of mine, of course,' she answered; 'but Charlotte will marry some day—indeed, I should not wonder if she were to marry very soon; and marriage annuls previous friendships, you know. I don't mean that she will drop me, but I shall certainly see less of her.'

'And are there no others besides Miss Warde?'

'None, I think. I don't make friends easily, though I get on quickly enough with acquaintances.' She paused for a moment,

and then added, with a rather tremulous little laugh, 'Do you know, I think you are the only other friend that I have—and I am not at all sure that you care to accept my friendship.'

'Dear Mrs. Wilkinson,' I exclaimed, 'how can you doubt me so? Pray, never doubt me again! There is nothing in the world that I prize more than your friendship; and no privilege that I should consider greater than that of being allowed to serve you.'

I protest that I said this with the most perfect sincerity. I was carried away by my feelings. I had entirely forgotten for the moment that I was engaged in an intrigue which had for its aim the defeat of another intrigue. So completely, indeed, had I forgotten what I was about, that I ended by taking her hand, which was resting upon the arm of her chair, and raising it to my lips.

She started and got up at once. 'Thank you, Colonel Walmisley,' she said, rather hurriedly; 'I—I am sure you mean what you say. Ought we not to be going home now?'

Our drive back to London was not enlivened by much dialogue. Probably we all had our own thoughts, and in the case of some of us these may have been more engrossing than exhilarating. Pole looked as solemn as a judge, and hardly opened his lips the whole time. When we had seen the ladies home, and were walking away arm in arm, he began to remonstrate with me.

'I say, old chap, aren't you rather overdoing this?'

'Not in the least,' I replied decisively; 'you can't overdo a thing of this kind. I have an object before me, and I pursue that object. You ought to be admiring my thoroughness, instead of perpetually grumbling.' And then, as I did not wish to prolong the discussion, I hailed a passing hansom and said 'Good night.'

The fact of the matter was that Pole's warning was only too justifiable. I was conscious that I was indeed overdoing it—nay, that I had already overdone it, and had committed myself to a line of conduct of which the possible consequences were too painful to contemplate. I suppose a good many readers will smile when they hear what it was that caused me to spend an almost sleepless night. Well, I can't help it; they must smile. All I can say is that if they had been in my place, the same conviction would have been forced upon them that was forced upon me. I have stated before that, in forming my little stratagem, I had no thought of inspiring a lady with sentiments which I was unable to reciprocate, nor any suspicion that so lamentable a result would occur. Yet, of course, it *might* occur; and remembering Mrs. Wilkinson's agitation on the

terrace at Richmond, I feared—I greatly feared—that it actually had occurred. This was what I thought about during the silent watches of the night, and I must say that it made me dreadfully unhappy.

I went to call upon her the next day, and my worst apprehensions were at once confirmed. The slight pressure of the hand with which she welcomed me; her questioning glance; her somewhat forced gaiety; the vibration of her voice—all, all combined to tell the same sad tale, and to show me beyond the possibility of a doubt that, in trying to extricate my friend from an awkward predicament, I had got into a far more awkward one myself. Far more awkward, because I was now convinced that Mrs. Wilkinson had never been in love with Pole. She would have consented to marry him, perhaps, on account of her loneliness; but at the worst it was only her pride that would have suffered by his desertion of her. Pole must surely have been able to see that much for himself; yet he had felt very strongly, and still continued to feel, that, after having paid Mrs. Wilkinson marked attention, he was bound in honour to propose to her. And if he was bound to take that course, what, in the name of gracious goodness, was *I* bound to do? ‘I do not,’ said a certain pompous Radical politician, speaking in the House about this time, upon I forget what question connected with army matters—‘I do not envy the feelings with which the honourable member for Weehampton must recall at night the reiterated misrepresentations of which he has been guilty during the day.’

I was unable to join in the laughter that greeted this burst of censure. ‘I dare say you don’t,’ thought I, ‘and you would envy them still less if you only knew what they were!’

I prefer not to dwell upon the truly wretched period of three weeks, during which I was tossed upon the ocean of fate and driven hither and thither by baffling winds. Like the unfortunate persons described by Byron, ‘the magnet of my course was gone, or only pointed in vain the shore to which my shiver’d sail should never stretch again.’ (I allude to the quiet shore of celibacy.) Ah, yes! I knew, though I tried not to know, whither I was drifting. I couldn’t see my way out of it; I couldn’t help becoming more and more lover-like in my manner towards Mrs. Wilkinson; I couldn’t help stammering and looking guilty when Pole roundly accused me of being his rival. To carry on the novel imagery with which I began this paragraph, I may say that I had given up all attempt

at scientific navigation, and that probably no man was ever more hopelessly out of his reckoning since St. Paul's celebrated Mediterranean cruise.

'Pole,' I said one day to my friend, with dismal jocularly, 'can you take an observation?'

'No,' he replied, 'I can't. But I can make an observation—and I will!'

'Pray don't,' I interrupted. 'You needn't—it's quite unnecessary. I know what you want to say, and you are perfectly right. I have been madly, criminally rash, and I have come to howling grief. But at least it doesn't lie in your mouth to blame me.'

'Doesn't it?' said he; 'I'm not so sure of that.' And he walked off, with his hands in his pockets and his head bent.

Well, after all, light dawned upon me at last, and I was able to shape a course. Somehow or other, in the midst of all my misery I had not been quite so miserable as by rights I ought to have been, and this struck me as a singular phenomenon, which might repay investigation. I sat me down, looked things in the face, and said to myself, why not? What if Mrs. Wilkinson's husband had been a pork butcher, or her father a swindler? What if she had had no father at all, to speak of? She herself was charming—I found her more charming every day—and my case was not like Pole's. I am not a county magnate; I have not a pedigree yards long; I am not blessed with a couple of daughters, nor do I possess a mother imbued with aristocratic prejudices. And then all of a sudden it flashed across me not only that I should not mind marrying Mrs. Wilkinson, but that it would distress me beyond measure if she married any one else.

I despair of conveying any notion of the effect that this delightful discovery produced upon me. I can only compare my sensations to those of a man who has dreamt that he was about to be hanged, and who wakes to find a letter by his bedside informing him that he has succeeded to a fortune. No sooner had I realised what my wishes were than I tore off impetuously to give effect to them, and the first thing that Mrs. Wilkinson said on seeing me was:

'How beaming you look! One would think that you had heard the good news already!'

'What good news?' I inquired.

‘The news of Charlotte Warde’s engagement to Mr. Seymour. I am so very glad about it, and they are both so happy.’

‘Oh, that!’ I answered rather unsympathetically. ‘I have known for ever so long that that was coming off sooner or later. But I came here to say—to ask—to tell you—oh, Mrs. Wilkinson, I am sure you must understand what I mean! Can you—will you make me as happy as Miss Warde has made Mr. Seymour?’

She did not answer, and on looking up I saw that she was pressing her handkerchief tightly against her lips, and that her features were convulsed by some powerful emotion. That was all very well, but it gave me rather a shock to discover presently that it was laughter, not tears, that she was trying to subdue. ‘Well,’ she said quietly, when she could control her voice, ‘I am glad that is over. I swore to myself that you should propose to me before the season was at an end, and I have kept my vow.’

‘Mrs. Wilkinson!’ I exclaimed in dismay.

‘Oh, yes,’ she said calmly; ‘and perhaps I may claim some credit for having accomplished what you would have considered a sheer impossibility not many weeks ago. I think you will understand now that, if I had wished to marry your friend Mr. Pole, I could have done so without much difficulty. Do you really imagine that I didn’t see through you the very first day that you came here? Do you imagine that there were not plenty of people kind enough to tell me of the inquiries that you set on foot about my parentage and history? My dear Colonel Walmisley, I am willing to believe that you stand without a rival in your knowledge of military statistics; but may I tell you that you don’t know a very great deal about women? You had much better not try to outwit us in future. You see, if I had been what you were so flattering as to think me, you would have rued this day to the end of your life. Will you, please, tell Mr. Pole that he need not think himself called upon to follow your noble example? I quite understand that he would feel as if he had done the proper thing after proposing to me and being refused; but it will save trouble if he will consider that performance as having been gone through.’

I hardly know how I got out of the house. I did make some feeble effort to convince Mrs. Wilkinson that I was at all events sincere in my professions of attachment now, whatever I might have been at an earlier stage of our acquaintance; but I felt that it was too much to expect of her that she should believe me, and as a matter of fact, she did not believe me.

‘I assure you you are not in love with me,’ she said. ‘My humble little triumph is that I have made you propose to me without being so.’

I went straight off to Pole and told him exactly what had happened. ‘This has been a most unfortunate business for me,’ I said; ‘but there is some consolation in the thought that you couldn’t have got out of it better if I had been completely successful.’

‘I don’t know whether you call this getting out of it well,’ returned Pole gloomily, ‘but I don’t. What must she think of me! I’ll tell you what it is, old chap: I don’t doubt that your intentions were good, but I wish to Heaven you hadn’t interfered with me.’

I suppose he must have forgotten that it was he who had asked me to interfere. I made no rejoinder, and he went on to say that he had resolved to set his family at defiance. He loved Mrs. Wilkinson, and he was going to tell her so, be the consequences what they might.

‘Very well,’ I returned; ‘go and tell her, then, since you can’t be contented to let well alone. She may refuse you, she says she will; but I wouldn’t answer for her. I am sure you know that I speak without any personal feeling of bitterness; but she is quite the most perfect adept at deception that I ever met in my life.’

The next time that I saw Pole, he informed me briefly that Mrs. Wilkinson had dismissed him. ‘I don’t want to talk about it,’ he said; ‘I’ve had a regular facer, and I suppose I have only myself to thank for it. All the same, I believe she would have accepted me if it hadn’t been for you.’

Well, that was quite possible; but I could not get Pole to see that all had fallen out for the best, and the whole affair brought about a coolness between us which I am sorry to say has not yet passed away. Down in the country the other day I chanced to encounter Miss Warde, who is shortly about to become Mrs. Seymour, and of course I could do no less than inquire after our common friend Mrs. Wilkinson.

Miss Warde replied that she was quite well, and then looked at me with a peculiar smile.

‘I see,’ said I, ‘that you are in possession of certain secrets, and I dare say you have a worse opinion of me than I deserve. I consider that I was more sinned against than sinning; but never

mind. And now that it is all over, will you tell me one thing? What was the mystery about Mrs. Wilkinson?’

‘There never was any mystery at all,’ she replied; ‘it was only you who chose to imagine that there must be one. If you had asked my parents, they would have told you that her husband was a naturalised Austrian subject and a distinguished officer, and that she herself belongs to a good old family. I believe she married General Wilkinson, who was much older than herself, to please her father. Naturally, she was not well known in London, having lived abroad for so many years; but there are people enough in different parts of England who could have proved to you that she was quite entitled by birth and position to marry Mr. Pole.’

‘And pray, why did you not tell me this before?’ I asked, with some indignation.

‘Because Mrs. Wilkinson would not let me. She was very angry with you, and I think she had some reason to be angry. Of course she was angry with Mr. Pole too; but I believe she understood all along that he was not responsible for your outrageous behaviour.’

I didn’t mind being accused of outrageous behaviour, for in truth I had not seemed to behave well; but I was really sorry on Pole’s account that I had been misled, and I said so.

‘Do not reproach yourself too bitterly,’ replied Miss Warde, laughing. ‘He and Mrs. Wilkinson have met again, and I believe there have been explanations, and I shouldn’t wonder if she were to forgive him. Yes, I think she will forgive him; but if you ask me my candid opinion, I doubt whether she will ever forgive you.’

HAIR-DEVICE WORKERS.

THERE may still be sometimes seen by the curious in old-fashioned jewellers' shops—those hospitals for buckles, snuff-boxes, quizzing-glasses, seals, huge cameo pins, and battered silver fruit-knives—those flat and lustreless brooches almost as large as door-plates, on which drooping female figures mourn in deep distress under the shadow of a weeping elm, the branches of which are fashioned of a straight-gummed hair that once curled in life, and now falls stiffly over a long sarcophagus. Broken pillars lie about among anchors and other symbols of hope and piety; railings and yews and melancholy firs are there in brooding clumps and clusters; and down the sky wherein the sun is emblematically setting, there not infrequently descends a dove that either bills another in descending, or settles touchingly on the capitals and cupola of a classic mausoleum. It may be a cemetery where the high-waisted lady grieves, adorned with walks that wind up to temples or down to other groups of mourners. Often the scene of woe lies in a grove, where the faithful Charlotte in an enormous hat comes to deposit a wreath on the final resting-place of that restless spirit Werther, over whose sorrows scarcely a tear has been shed for fifty years, and whose power to touch the heart of youth seems almost to have vanished. Wherever it may be, cemetery or grove, on the banks of a river or by the waves of the sea, figures and tombs and landscape will be all found to be outlined and shaded in hair, with infinite patience, with no little skill, in a taste as faded and dead as that of the old samplers that hang in Yorkshire farmhouses under the gun, the brass beer-warmer, and the polished coal-pincers. In those old days—the days of those great flat brooches—sensibility was a fashionable virtue. Every young lady wept with Werther, and sighed with the unfortunate and amiable heroines of the marble-backed little volumes one still finds on bookstalls, next Shinely on 'Revelations' and Whackleton on 'Tubercular Meningitis.' Every young gentleman claimed to be a man of feeling, and dropped easy tears over a noble sentiment or a distressful tale, where now it is more in vogue for him to laugh and show his teeth. It was a sensibility, we are bound to say, that, like most fashionable virtues, was not altogether natural—an imported sensibility, in fact, and in

its Teutonic excess difficult to assimilate with the general hardness of our national character ; but mitigated, chastened, and restrained, it might have been with us still (greatly to the hair-worker's pecuniary benefit), had not the fashion changed as fashion will, and the Vernons and the Falklands, who a year before had melted and sighed and thrilled, taken instead to knitting their dark brows, to curving their haughty lips, and flashing fire from their sombre eyes. The Giaour with his scowl knocked Werther, in the language of the ring, out of time, and closed the eyes that had been so ready to overflow ; and youth, always prompt to exaggerate, discarded its sensibility, and wrapped itself instead in boat cloaks of lonely contemplation and bitter remorse. With the appearance of Childe Harold, the reign of the high-waisted lady sorrowing among the tombs was over, and in her place, as in a dissolving view, there appeared the crime-steeped scion of the aristocracy, mouthing on a peak of the Jura in the heart of a theatrical thunderstorm.

The hair-device worker does not precisely charge Byron with ruining his trade. It is we who, with the full conviction of it, do it on his behalf. For consider if there was not once a time when your companion at dinner, your partner in the waltz, your *vis-à-vis* in the railway carriage, your neighbour at the *table-d'hôte*, were all hung with chains, were all decked with bracelets, with brooches, even with earrings formed of the hair of departed relatives and friends, finely woven memorials of almost every one they had lost. Did not their mothers and fathers hang round their necks and on their bosoms, their uncles and aunts twine round their wrists, their dearest school friends, their favourite brothers and sisters, silently guard their double eye-glasses and solemn ticking watches ? Above all, did not from their ears often depend chestnut-hair acorns tipped with gold, whispering perhaps the very tales the boyish owner of the locks had whispered as he pressed the tissue-papered cutting into his mistress's hand ? And where are they now, those snakes and crosses and delicate globes of hair ? Where are the mourning rings, the Albert chains, without which no gentleman was once complete ? They have been slashed and torn and rent to pieces by Byron. They are unwoven and unravelled by him as surely as though he had done it with his teeth. Thanks to him and the blow he dealt our sensibility of 1814, they lie in the limbo of the behind-the-times jeweller ; but for him, and we might be all of us hung with them now as with

ex voto offerings; but for him, and the pining hair-worker might be riding in his carriage (on hair springs), instead of toiling in the obscurity of Soho and the purlieus of Clerkenwell. If the gods had only made the hair-worker poetical, he might know this, and might curse Byron and die. As it is, he contents himself with murmuring that the world is grown colder and harder, and that he no longer finds the employment he did of old. The hair-device workers take no apprentices now, and they all die poor. In twenty years there will not be one of them left.

There is not far from Oxford Street a narrow court that ends in brittle iron railings and a noisy yard, down which in the keen spring sunshine children are spinning tops, are nursing their little brothers on the worn door-steps; are quarrelling and laughing and crying, running up and down the whole scale of disorder and uproar; or are 'leavin' off a-doing it' in obedience to haggard cries from their frowsy mothers overhead. A philosopher of five, with patched knees, a smudged face, and a dingy comforter, licks the jam off a piece of bread curved like a boomerang, and surveys with calm contempt the ecstatic evolutions of a burlesque Salvation Army that, headed by an urchin with a squint and a knotted piece of rope, mocks the jerky enthusiasm of the order, and yells their hymns up and down the length of the court. They sweep dancing round and in front of us below the paper-patched panes, the wheezy and despondent thrush caged against the mouldy stucco of the first-floor window; past the apprentices to the sofa business, who dodge each other in the adjoining yard, and pelt each other with fragments of their employers' material; while the mistress of No. 5 goes to fetch her friend, the hair-device worker, who in despair of an order has stepped over to her room to buy a pinch or two of tea-dust and see to her sick child. And as we wait we have time to wonder why, when each dwelling-house is equally dirty and dilapidated, every door-scraper is equally and scrupulously bright.

The hair-device worker and her friend from No. 5 are not long in coming, tumbling up against each other, in their excitement, over the cobbles of the yard. She carries specimens of her skill in a crumpled paper bag, and in the front sitting-room pours them trembling out on the table, Albert chains and bracelets and watch-guards, her dumpy, hard-working hands pulling them here and there to show their elasticity and firmness; her broad and honest face flushing at the thought of an order that has come

at last. As she watches us handle her patterns, scarcely daring to breathe for anxiety, no doubt her memory goes backwards five-and-twenty years, to the days of her full employment at the famous hair-jeweller's in Regent Street, when she had more to do than she well could manage, and nervously settling her bonnet and touching her face, she thinks of the sick child mewed up in the back room at home over the slaughterhouse, lying shoeless by the empty grate, hungry and cold, starting and shuddering at the cries and murmurs of the animals below, and the sickly odour of blood. She will buy boots for her now, and take her out on Primrose Hill; she will give her better food, and she will soon grow strong; perhaps, even, they will be able to save enough to join her married sister at Lausanne, the dream of her life, and leave behind her brutal, careless husband to work out his drunken destruction alone as best may please him.

What would our lives be without these streams of hope to freshen their aridity? The trade is as dead and dusty as Queen Anne; we are no traveller, no foreman from Birmingham with orders to give; we are only a collector of notes, the curious biographer of a moribund employment, striving to catch the last words of the hair-worker *in extremis*; but to the poor little German woman we are the magnificent dispenser of health and life, the shield between herself and cruelty and degradation, the good fairy that has come to transport her on the enchanter's carpet away from the gloom and starvation of the Tottenham-Court Road, back to the sunshine and the childhood's memories of Lausanne. Everywhere the same story; everywhere the same hope, the same eager eyes, the same disappointment. In Chelsea a Swede tells us how she came here seven-and-twenty years ago, recommended to Jenny Lind, who has ever since been her constant patroness and friend, whose hair she shows us worked into an elaborate and mournful device of stiff and rustling buds and flowers. She learned the art as a girl in her native province, from no master, but, as an accomplishment, from her companions in the village; and she describes to us how in the long winter nights, the solitary winters, when the only snow paths open were to the cowhouse and the barn, she would sit without candle or lamp and work in the firelight, listening to the sombre and vague stories with which the northern peoples beguile their bitter hours of darkness. They carried their work into the towns in the summer, and sold it there to the gentry, dressed in the picturesque costume of Dalecarlia, her province;

as here, when, a handsome girl of seven-and-twenty years ago, in the same dress she sold it among her countrywomen, the residents and sojourners, to whom the recommendation of the great singer was as a personal command from their Queen. Occasionally still she works a bracelet or a chain, but not nearly enough of it to live on; she would like to do more if only she could get the orders; perhaps the book we are going to write will do something for her, she asks wistfully and doubtfully. Can we literary gentlemen breathe life into the nostrils of a corpse, O Dalecarlian? True, we can sometimes shield a murderer from the gallows; we can occasionally collect subscriptions for an impostor; but we can no more direct our ladies again to wear hair bracelets than we can order them to reassume the chignon or the crinoline. So she puts up her specimens with the usual sigh into the usual paper bag, and says she shall take her husband from his employment in the Bach Choir, and go and live out her days on a little farm at home, as near the old one as she can. O wise Dalecarlian! return and prosper, for here there is nothing for you; and better surely the long winter nights and the patches of rye and oats at home, surely better by far, than this blank and bald Chelsea street, with little else to do in it but listen to the cries of the fish-hawkers, and the shuffle of the children's feet as they dance round the piano-organ.

Lower still, by Long Acre, is there mourning for the dying trade, down in a coal and wood and greengrocer's shop, where the once proud and happy mistress of thirty bobbins has no other use for her time now than to watch her bandy-legged grandchild tumble over the billets, and scream and scuffle in conflict with a bandit from next door, who lies in wait for him and beats his misplaced calves with the flat of a wooden sword. Can't we do anything for her and her silent bobbins? Can't we let the public know what elegant *memoriums*—'Keep quiet, Tommy!—Oh that boy!'—elegant *memoriums* friends can have of hair? They only want to be told about it to give orders; the fact is, they don't know the work is still done, or—'Yah, you little vagabond!'—and the hair-worker leaves us to raise her grandchild, yelling and kicking his toes on the pavement, while his assailant is off, whooping triumphantly down the street, the seat of his ancestral trousers, as he presents his back view to us, being somewhere under the nape of his scrubby neck. The trade is dying—nay, we have said that it is dead; but though the true

life of it has flickered out, there are still to be detected in the remains certain spasmodic and convulsive twitches of a semi-animation. The head and trunk of the business are separated, and no skill will ever join them again as once they were, of that we feel sure; but take up the head and call to it, and the eyes will open, and the pallid lips make an effort to reply. Call to the hair-device worker, and he too will answer, though in faint and desponding accents; take him your mistress's hair, and he will fashion what you will of the tress—he, the last of his company, sitting and working and grumbling alone, with no good apprentice in whom to confide his secrets of workmanship, to whom to give his daughter in marriage, or hand over the table and bobbins when his hand grows untrustworthy and his eye dim.

There are a few such in the old artist quarters of Soho, and more (for the most part women) up in Clerkenwell and Islington, plastering gummy curls and plaiting guards and bracelets, but devising no more mourning ladies or melancholy weeping willows. Let us visit one of these as we have visited the others, in a panelled Soho mansion where a Georgian portrait-painter might have received his aristocratic patrons, or a foreign ambassador have set up his establishment, but where now are dressmakers and electricians and German tailors. Once a single bell, and that of a lofty and sonorous tone, sufficed to summon the splendid lackey to the waiter on the threshold, but now there is a whole row of knobs beside the doorpost, each with its thin and worn tinkle sounding for each of the many occupants, and each answered by the owner, whose vanishing name is scarcely visible on the dusty plate beneath.

The hair-worker brings us—as they all do—specimens of his skill—specimens even of the skill of masters long since passed away—light auburn hair on blue oval glass round an initial in seed pearls, the whole a breastplate that might have rested on the Boadicean bosom of Mrs. Gandish herself. Beyond that, he has little to show and scarcely anything to tell. Literature of the trade or history there appears to be none, with the exception of a book written on the subject by some one whose name the hair-worker forgets—published he doesn't know when, and which, indeed, he has never seen, but has only heard of from some one whom he doesn't remember—and a thin volume of engraved devices done about thirty years ago, when he first entered the business, from Dutch designs. It is fifty years since the trade

was at its best; fifty years since the universal world wore mourning rings and bracelets. Many fashions have come and gone since then, and the hair ornaments that received a first shock from their adoption among the attractions of the kitchen and the servants' hall, have been finally shattered by bangles at eighteen-pence and earrings at a shilling; above all, perhaps, by the Emmas and Marys of the cheap and thin fretwork name brooches. Upstairs you see they will have none of it now, and downstairs it is too dear; to what class, then, can the puzzled and hungry hair-worker appeal? Does there remain, perchance, something hitherto untouched between the two, an *entresol* of custom, as it were—a dress circle of patrons between the pit and the stalls? If any such there be, they do not show themselves, and of all the old *clientèle* there remain only a few who arrange curls like ostrich feathers in albums; a few who indulge rarely in a wreath of hair forget-me-nots and pansies round enlarged photographs; a few who in 'box and glass' wear simple locks tied with a ribbon and initialled with a date.

And yet sometimes even now, our friend tells us, there is something approaching a rush, a press of work. In war-time? we suggest, or following such a calamity as that of the loss of the 'Princess Alice'? No, scarcely; though, to be sure, in the Crimean days the hair-worker did uncommonly well, and again in the American civil war there was plenty of work in New York, when, foreseeing the end, he first began to emigrate. No; the rush he refers to comes unexpectedly, and for no apparent reason, and vanishes as mysteriously as it came, though to us on examination it appears rather to resemble that oft-quoted rush round the provincial pit door, a rush of one; nothing like the old press of orders, for instance, from the city gentry and country middle class, who in the old days, being largely ground-baited for with specially designed advertisements, rose to the hook with an alacrity they have long lost, and, as far as we can see, are never likely again to acquire. Strangely enough, the only country where anything approaching the old business is done appears to be South America, for there, with but a slight change of design due to a change of climate, the tender-hearted Spaniard droops and mourns in hair outline, beside the tombs and under the willows that once were English. If there are few now who find employment in counting and plaiting, finishing and curl-arranging, there are still fewer to pretend to a mastery of the

old device work, the melancholy pageantry that once pleased our simple forefathers, and satisfied at once their taste and their grief. If there were any demand for it, there would be, without doubt, a new school of workmen forthcoming to do it, but, as far as the older men are concerned, there appear to be scarcely any sufficiently instructed; for the little masters of the last generation were soon stripped of their apprentices (careful and far-seeing parents having no inclination to bind their sons to a vanishing trade), and for want of tradition, and in the absence of literature, the secrets of the art are almost as completely of the past as the colour secrets and schemes of some of the old artists who wrote no books and took no pupils.

Those for whom there is no place in our civilisation quickly pass out of it, driven into corners and fastnesses, as the Indian tribes are driven and fall back before the imperious white man. There is, indeed, something akin between the last of the hair-device workers and that touching figure upon whom a traveller once told us he happened to light, on turning a rocky corner of one of the stupendous mountain passes in the north-west of America. There he sat, the old Indian chief, huddled in his blanket, his old eyes and his old pipe ablaze, worn and bent with privation and years, his only companions a monkey and a parrot almost as old as himself, and the flickering and changing memories of his faded power and independence. 'Where are the rest of your tribe?' demanded of him the traveller; to which the only answer the old chief vouchsafed was to raise and point upwards to the heavens a knotted and trembling hand.

Gathered to their Great Father long since, the young and the old, the squaws and the braves, and he alone remaining, waiting for the summons to go home and rest; the last representative of a people and a language, the last remembrancer of customs and traditions, with him about to pass away from human life and human memory for ever.

He, therefore, who now desires to learn something of hair-devicings, who perhaps may wish to add it to the list of his elegant accomplishments, can apparently only do so by repeated experiment, and by studying from repeated failure the best method of handling and fixing the delicate strands into the artistic position they are designed to hold. So at least assures us the only practitioner whose actual and personal designs we have been fortunate enough to see, who has not only executed his birthplace in hair

with the town bridge and the names and trades over the shops—*Vve. Briard, Epicerie, Comestibles, Charcuterie*—quite natural and lifelike, but has further successfully completed in the same material a portrait of the late Duke of Albany, and a medley of theatrical celebrities, of course of *le plus beau sexe*, that does equal honour to his powers of observation and reproduction. With other and lesser artists, whatever the investigation we may have been at the time pursuing, we have not uncommonly found a reticence of communication that has called forth all our powers of persuasion and examination to stimulate into talkativeness; we have been met by unworthy suspicions, even by point-blank refusal, and the announcement that, not seeing what good it would do him, the examinee did not propose to tell us anything, the fact being, no doubt, he had nothing much to tell; but far from that being so in the present instance, the artist not only showed us his designs, his set piece of cornflowers, roses, and pansies, his stupendous curls, but wrote for our special use a little essay on the subject, of which, with the full conviction that such a course will be equally interesting and instructive, we do not hesitate to translate the following salient passages:—

First, writes our artist, considering the affair historically, hair-devicing, or the art of working the hair *comme la peinture*, goes back a certain period of years, though assuredly it is not an art so widely known or so easily learnt as designing in charcoal, pencil, or water-colour. It is more nature's gift—*un don de nature*—than anything else.

Certainly it was so in his own case, for though he has always had an ungovernable passion—*un amour effréné*—for subject pictures, and, above all, the human head, his education in art was confined to joining a class of outline drawing and geographical maps. Once comprehend the intelligence of the hair, once put yourself in sympathy with it, and the artist insists it can be worked as easily as you please. By intelligence—*le sens*—is meant a certain suppleness and elasticity which must not be ignored; for if the hair be inartistically or improperly posed, on becoming dry it will be found to assume its natural form. That is to say, if you have thoughtlessly posed it to the right when its natural intelligence tells it it should be posed to the left, directly your coarse influence is withdrawn you will find it quietly turn itself to the side where it should be; and *vice versâ*.

Above all, as we have already pointed out, the idea of design-

ing in hair can be especially applied to family souvenirs, or those of intimate friends, of whom we have treasured the precious relic of a lock, sometimes the entire crop—*la coupe entière*—the whole capable of being worked up to such a point, and even of figuring in the most artistic *salon*, at the same time that it is a precious souvenir of family love. The artist's first effort, and that which first developed his remarkable taste for design, was made in 1874, when, at the age of fifteen, he executed a mausoleum out of the hair of his late father—a taste which so grew that in 1879 he undertook and completed a view of his native place—*Moret-sur-Loing, près Fontainebleau, Seine-et-Marne, France*—bridge and overhanging shops and pleasure-boats below, wholly fashioned of hair of different shades, with the idea of imitating nature as closely as possible.

In 1881 our artist-author made and exposed at a competition held at St. James's Hall a hair picture of one mètre seventy centimètres high, and one mètre twenty centimètres broad, representing a crown of wild flowers, and composed of daisies, poppies, corn-flowers, *boutons d'or*, wheat-ears, oats, and all sorts of grasses—the whole in a relief of from twelve to fifteen centimètres, mounted, detached, and worked on a bright crimson ground of velvet. This masterpiece we have ourselves inspected, though unfortunately not at its best, for in an evil hour, in one of Puck's most malicious freaks, it fell forward against a corner, broke the glass, and huddled the bouquet together as though crumpled up in the hot hand of an excursionist. Still, from the fragments that remained we gathered a fair notion of what it must have been in its splendour.

In 1883, his development now going forward with regularity, the artist exposed two hair pictures, the first '*Le portrait of the late Duke of Albany*;' the second an open fan, containing the photographs and monograms of the renowned artists whose names follow:—Kate Vaughan, Connie Gilchrist, Ellen Terry, Maude Branscombe, Adelina Patti, Sarah Bernhardt, Florence St. John, Marie Roze Mapleson, Violet Cameron, and Evelyn Rayne.

In conclusion, it follows that hair can be worked on ivory, satin, velvet, &c.; can be trained to represent initials, monograms, crest, photograph, mausoleums, palms, monuments, landscapes, &c.; can be in relief, bas-relief, or altogether flat, and even embroidered on it matters not what material if the length of the hair permit it. For certain work it must not be forgotten that the hair should

be cut extremely fine—even, where shadows are to be represented, almost reduced to powder.

Finally, the generous artist, with complete self-abandonment, gives us some idea of the implements necessary for the aspirant towards success; and these, for fear of making some technical mistake, we do not hesitate to reproduce in his own tongue:—

- 1°. Des ciseaux très fins droits.
- 2°. Des ciseaux très fins courbés.
- 3°. Des pinces très fines.
- 4°. Un couteau à feuillage.
- 5°. Une gomme spéciale.
- 6°. Une main sûre et de bons yeux.

With these and the necessary practice, surely none of us need fear to deal with any of the precious relics that may be all that fate or the envious years have left us of those we have cared for. That sad lover himself of the old Scotch ballad, he who, for loss of his mistress, was 'weary o' the skies,' might in one of his many lonely and melancholy hours, with this free and complete counsel, have worked into a belt for his hunting-horn a tress of the true and devoted girl's hair, who died on fair Kirkconnell lee to succour him, who dropped at his feet and *spak' nae mair*, pierced by the shot fired from the cursed hand of the maddened rival down the waterside.

Perhaps alone he did it—who knows?—with only the light of his love and his poor clumsy fingers to work with, sitting in his father's tower among the rustling floor-rushes, and trying to plait and forget, or looking down from the battlements on the lee where he wishes so often his grave were growing green, where Helen lies, and where she calls to him night and day, 'Haste and come to me.'

Perhaps he did, we say, with his mother's help and under her guidance; who knows? for does he not cry?—

O Helen fair beyond compare,
I'll mak' a garland o' thy hair
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
Until the day I dee.

A CHINESE ASCOT.

THE Hong Kong race-week is one of those rare occasions when the Chinese come out of their swarming ant-hills, habitually so difficult of penetration to strangers. When, in the afternoon of the Cup day, I descend from a residence halfway up the Peak—the healthy, cool Elysium overlooking the beautiful harbour, and contrasting with the hot Tartarus of the town—I find the broad, handsome main road taken possession of for miles by a swiftly circulating mass of chattering, pig-tailed, and most uncanny-looking Chinese, with their equally strange-looking vehicles. Their means of passenger transport are two—the light covered arm-chair carried by means of bamboo poles on the shoulders of two coolies, and the rickshaw, a two-wheeled vehicle about the size of a roomy Bath-chair, furnished with a pair of shafts, between which is placed, not a horse, a mule, a pony, or even a donkey, but one of those unceasingly toiling Chinese who are of opinion that no labour is too severe, and not even draught work is derogatory, if there are a few cents to be looked for at the end. The sedan chair is the transport of dignity, deliberation, and dulness, but the rickshaw corresponds with the sleigh of Canada, the gondola of Venice, or the hansom cab of London. ‘Lickshaw, Lickshaw!’—they cannot manage our ‘R’—shout half a dozen eager competitors to the instantly-spied-out Englishman whose nation has acclimatised in the Celestial Empire this strange festivity of racing. I nod assent and jump in, exclaiming ‘Racecourse;’ probably the only English word comprehensible to the coolie, who, placing himself between the shafts, starts off at a sharp trot, slips into the first gap in the string, and we become one of the moving atoms of the ever-flowing current.

My first thought was one which suggested the title of this paper—‘A Chinese Ascot;’ an absurdly unconscious burlesque of its prototype, it is true, but this merely illustrates the fact that the characteristics of racing are identical in Surrey and in Hong Kong. The rows of rickshaws, about three deep, every one at a brisk trot, with not an inch interval in front, behind, or on one side, are kept rigidly in their places by tall, stalwart policemen, English or Sikhs, stationed along the route; and if any driver or

horse—one and the same in the present case—dares to deviate from the prescribed line, the policeman, with great tact and sagacity, instantly steps forward and whacks him—not taps him, but showers down hearty whacks on the offender's hollow-sounding, shaven skull, who, so far from defiantly desiring his high-handed assailant to 'come on,' submissively, and quite as a matter of course, rubs his pate, dodges between the shafts or wheels, and resumes his journey not one pin the worse for his rough handling.

Trot, trot, trot, along the smooth, sunny, but bamboo-shaded high road, I have a little leisure now to observe these astonishing rickshaw coolies. They wear the enormous traditional mushroom Chinese hat, suitable in case either of beating rain or fierce sun, under which are tucked their hard plaited pigtails—for even a coolie would feel himself disgraced were he minus a pigtail. They are bare-footed, bare-legged, bare-armed, and wear just sufficient rags to save themselves from the charge of indelicacy. Their skins are sallow, their Mongolian faces are pinched, their stature is small, their limbs seem attenuated and loosely put together. And yet these demoniacal-looking wretches, to call whom 'brethren' is indeed a heavy demand on our charity, throw themselves forward into the shafts and drag their carriages with its passengers, who may be ten or may be twenty stone, not at a walk, or a shuffle, or an amble, but at a good round trot of about six miles an hour. They neither flag, pant, nor perspire, but keep up this pace for two or three miles at a stretch. Would not the most renowned European athlete or pedestrian be but a feeble coney in comparison? Moreover, these coolies have to content themselves at the end of their journey with five cents—a cent is a fraction less than a half-penny. They exult if they receive ten cents, and consider the donor an utter fool if he gives them fifteen cents.

The first sensations at being conveyed in a rickshaw are those of mingled amusement and shame. One likens oneself to a drunken masquerader or to an ostentatious buffoon. Then habit begets indifference. Dignitaries of the Church, dignitaries of the government, dignitaries of the law, soldiers, sailors, and even the well-to-do Chinese, all have recourse to them; and the sergeant in his rickshaw salutes the colonel in *his* rickshaw with precisely the same gravity as though both were on parade. Perhaps the full absurdity can be best realised by considering what would be the effect produced were the Dean of Westminster to be trundled in a wheelbarrow down Piccadilly by a dirty ragged little London Arab.

But we must not lose sight altogether of a very important element in the throng, the sedan chairs. These are more suitable for the staid elderly ladies, and for the 'spins (Anglice, spinsters) long in the tooth,' as Jockey Hong Kong would designate them. 'Sweet seventeen' is not one of the productions of the soil. The bearers, two or—if the weight of the lovely burden should try the supporting bamboo poles—four in number, shuffle rapidly and unwearyedly along, and the occupants, perched high in the air, endeavour to look dignified, but only succeed in appearing supremely absurd. Their coolies, if in private employment, are habitually clad in light, bright cotton liveries—barefooted of course—and the effect is thoroughly Oriental and rather pretty. There, I see, is the chair belonging to the establishment of the Governor of the colony. It is borne by four coolies in our brilliant national scarlet uniform, and this dazzling colour in the midst of the Chinese green, yellow, and blue really looks very imposing. There is a different sort of chair, carefully covered and closed around with straw lattice-work. It veils from public view some Chinese beauty of high degree. But as I pass I strain my eyes to obtain a glimpse, and am of opinion that she is a foot-deformed, high cheek-boned, wide-mouthed, leprous-white, rouge-ruddled dwarf, in whose behalf it is not worth while to strain one's eyes.

Soldiers under the rank of sergeant are forbidden by garrison orders to travel in rickshaws, so there are but few of the scarlet Buffs or blue Artillery men along the road, who, with their warlike, serviceable-looking white helmets, add such picturesqueness to the scene; but the route is freely interspersed with Jack ashore, especially where our journey leads us along the busy quays—English Jack, French Jack, German Jack, Russian Jack, and Italian Jack from the vessels in the harbour, the shipping of which may be estimated from the fact that in 1882 the tonnage which entered the port was 5,000,000, or somewhat greater than that which entered London in the year Hong Kong was acquired—1842.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin, and the sense of fun, of being out for a day's novel lark, seems to soften even the bureaucratic swagger and pedantry of Teutonic strangers. At all events the faces of all the blue-jackets are beaming with merriment at the contrast between their Simon Legree sort of servitude on board ship, and the sensation of being toiled for instead of being themselves the subjects of hounding and vituperation.

Thus far I have been chiefly noting the European race-going folk, but as a matter of fact the Europeans are only as units among thousands. True, the natives, high and low, rich and poor, afoot or transported, will instantly shrink aside at the incessant warning 'Hyah' of the running coolie, who thus intimates that he is conveying an Englishman in all the pride, a pride which is not without its merits, of the ruling race, but the enormous majority of the streaming throng is of course Asiatic Chinese. They are of all classes, and are enjoying themselves in their way, to judge from the incessant wooden clatter of their uncouth language, so desperately difficult that only erudite sages and infant English children brought up by Chinese nurses (amas) can master it. Here and there are some Sikhs, and there is that about these grave, dignified Orientals—Nature's gentlemen, albeit I like not the misused term—which instantly dispels all notion of ridicule or contempt; there are some Madrassesees, far inferior to their other congeners of India; and there again are some snuffy Parsee merchants, eager, rich, covetous-looking—types of Shylock, of Isaac of York, or of Faust ere the exorcism of shabby clothes and wrinkles enabled him to captivate Margaret.

Hitherto I have been bowling through strange rows of houses, through wonderful China-town, so unlike aught else in the world that not Gulliver, when he found himself in Laputa, could have been more amazed at the marvellous sights and people which he beheld. Now, as I emerge into the country, the scene changes as Sunningdale varies from Hyde Park Corner. The route is lined with palms, with banyan trees, and with bamboos, and the red, fever-causing, disintegrated granite dust flies up into our faces. Up go the umbrellas. The multitude are satisfied with the picturesque blue 'Gamps,' while the Chinese Beau Brummels proudly shade themselves with 'Briggs,' evidently a very high mark of distinction. Uphill, and my trotting coolie never flags; downhill, and his speed becomes so breakneck that every moment I expect an upset, a collision, or a smash, irrespective of the contingency of broken bones to a few English foot-travellers who would scorn to move out of the way for any number of Chinese cries of 'Hyah.' 'My breechless friend, I entreat of you to moderate your pace.' But not one word does he, or will he understand. Indeed, the Chinese, so apt in learning many things, are singularly dull in picking up English, and all, with very few exceptions, are totally ignorant of our language—unless, indeed, the case be, as some

French naval officers assured me, that they simulate for convenience sake ignorance—but loud tones and a few smacks soon impart to them the required knowledge.

Now we pass an enclosure over the gateway of which are inscribed the words 'Hodie mihi, cras tibi,' freely translated 'Your turn next.' It is the Christian cemetery, the 'Happy Valley,' as it is not inaptly locally termed. It would be out of place were I to enlarge on this beautifully undulating spot, but I cannot forbear saying that in tranquil loveliness this God's Acre is by far the most perfect I have ever seen, while the tombstone records of youthful and wholesale deaths must affect even the most frivolous visitor with seriousness.

Here we are at the entrance to the Grand Stand. My coolie almost grovels on the ground in his ecstasy of delight at receiving terpence for the performance of a labour which would lay up most athletes for a week, and hastens off in quest of a new but probably less profitable fare. A payment of about five dollars procures admission to the lawn, and once more the strangeness of the scene seems for a time to baffle any systematic observation, however painstaking. In lieu of stands are some seven or eight large mat-houses, light picturesque structures supported on bamboo poles, with sides and roofs of rushes, and decorated with tropical evergreens and bright cloth or calico, the effect of which is excessively pretty. Each mat-house is the property of some one private individual or of an association, and the refreshments provided are so costly and abundant, that the imputation of excessive eating and immoderate drinking can scarcely be resented. One species of decoration is deplorably wanting—pretty women. There are certainly a few nicely dressed pretty English ladies, the wives of officials whom capricious ill-fortune has shot into an exile far more complete than exists in any other part of the world; but there is equally certainly a collection of dirty-gloved, tawdry-ribboned, unhandsome, fast vulgarians, who ape the patronesses of Ascot in the gaudy elaboration of their dress, and differ from them in their entire ill-success.

The race crowd, without which a race meeting is as dull as a German steeplechase, is of large proportions, with representatives of almost every Asiatic State, but of course Chinese enormously preponderate. Nearly all are chattering, and quite all are in high good humour, enjoying the general sense of holiday. Not a single case of drunkenness did I see—no bickering, no rowdyism,

and yet no lack of fun. Our scarlet-coated soldiers, though few in comparison with the grand totals, stand out with singular distinctness, and catch the eye above all other objects.

The saddling bell rings, the numbers are hoisted, a thud of hoofs announces the preliminary canter. Well, what of the racing? Beneath criticism, almost beneath contempt. The ponies are from Australia, Japan, or Chefoo—doubtless serviceable for the work of their respective countries, but as racers, wretched, weedy, groggy, undersized brutes; while the chief features to be noticed of the amateur jockeys are the paraphernalia of their business, the preposterous length of their legs, their heavy weights, their horse-coping idiosyncrasies, and their indifferent riding.

I bought a very average type of racer for 6*l.* 10*s.* In fact, the sport is merely a peg on which to hang the love of gambling, which, like the love of drink, runs very high in this part of the world. Innumerable and high prize lotteries are started, and three-legged screws are merely bought and entered on the off chance of winning the stakes, which, in addition, are very considerable.

‘Three to one bar one’ is an unknown cry on this course—all the better, perhaps—and the excitement among the masses of Chinese is *nil*. As the ponies gallop past the post, the English, it is true, begin to cheer; but a cheer, unless contributed to by many voices, sounds as artificial as stage shouting behind the scenes.

Let us give up ‘le sport’ as a bad job. There is plenty else to admire of which Ascot has never dreamed. The excellent racecourse is situated at the very bottom of one of Nature’s splendid amphitheatres, and if we lose a little in a tendency to swampiness, we gain enormously in the green soft turf. Our immediate edging is of unbroken lines of bamboo—that tree which shows how Nature can be perfectly straight and stiff, and yet perfectly graceful. Then there is an upward sloping mass of palm and banyan foliage; then, higher, the austere but friendly-looking Scotch fir; then, to crown all, the vast framework of rugged hills, both in form and in heathery aspect recalling the ‘Coils’ about Deeside Ballater, only their denizens are eagles and cobras instead of grouse and roe deer. Still further, through a large gap, are the red mountains of the China mainland, overlooking Kowloon, nobly setting off the relatively lower level beauties of the Hong Kong racecourse.

While pondering on the scene, my attention is suddenly aroused by an unwonted hum, bustle, and excitement among the Chinese mob. A race is in course of being run, but to this incident they are habitually very indifferent. Something unusual is certainly arousing them. Here come the horses. How queer the jockeys look, how strangely they are hunched up, how wildly they throw their arms about, how fiercely they flog, what diabolical faces—and, bless my heart, why, they have got pigtails streaming in the wind! The puzzle is explained. It is a race ridden under special arrangements by Chinese ‘mafoos,’ or grooms—the best race of the meeting, the only one which has caused any real enthusiasm. Roused by the half-laughter, half-cheers, of their white masters, stimulated by the cries of their fellow-countrymen—‘Go it, Fordham!’ I once heard an encouraging Chinese lad shout—the mafoos, as they ‘finish’ up their Walpurgis ride, wild with excitement, seem to have lost still further their semblance to humanity, and to be transformed into distorted-visaged, horribly frenzied demons. The race over, how they strutted about in all the pride of jockey caps and jackets, and how they clung to their costume to the last possible moment!

The tenants of the numerous mat-fashioned grand stands belonging to the higher class natives have become very jubilant and vivacious in consequence of the above-described race, and I avail myself of an opportunity to enter one tenanted chiefly by Chinese and Japanese ladies. I must confess that my bashfulness compelled me to retreat after a very few moments from the battery of their half wondering, half scornful glances at the European intruder, but not before I had time to remark that their faces were flushed all over with skilfully applied pink tints, excepting in patches, which revealed disagreeably even and intensely opaque whiteness. Their eyebrows were pencilled into narrow stiff arches; their headdress, vests, and trousers—for in China all the women wear large, loose trousers—were of variegated colours, quite ingenious in their contrasts and brightness; their black hair was dragged back into lumpy, slimy rolls like jelly fish; their stature was ugly and stunted, and their feet, their extraordinary feet, in many cases had been contracted since childhood into mere deformed knobs, hideous to look at, on which they painfully tottered for a few yards.

At the conclusion of the races they were conveyed away in a

body in chairs ; and as the procession hindered the traffic, the English policemen whacked the bearers, and—did not whack the girls.

By-and-by there is a ceremonious stir about the picturesquely decorated stand of the Governor, Sir George Bowen ; the Japanese mission, consisting of General Oyama and fourteen members of the suite, on their way to Paris and London, are ushered in, and a great deal of rather grotesque bowing and somewhat dumb show ensues. Dumb, because the visitors cannot speak one word of English, but flounder in bad French and worse German. Indeed, if one may judge from a numerous representative mission, it would appear, notwithstanding the much-belauded progress of Japan, that her civilisation is but a thin veneer. After the interchange of a few conventional superficial phrases, it becomes apparent that their knowledge of the world, their practical information concerning administration and science, and even their book learning, are exceedingly small. In fact, it is scarcely unfair to say that their civilisation is comprised in a glossy black coat, a Lincoln and Bennett hat, a pair of yellow kid gloves, and an aptitude for making a bow.

My curiosity in the *élite* of the Chinese Ascot meeting is, however, now appeased. Perhaps even more interest and fun is to be dug out of the native rascaldom who have clustered in such numerous thousands on the other side of the course, and from whom we are separated by a wide, deep, wet ditch running parallel to the Grand Stand side of the rails. A welsher would certainly view this handy ditch with mistrust, but I noticed a Chinese imp utilise it with much ingenuity. Pursued and gradually overtaken by an infuriated and whip-brandishing jockey, the fugitive, at the critical moment, waded through the slime and water, from whence he telegraphed to his baffled foe those signs of ridicule and contempt which have been adopted by urchin impudence all over the world.

A wide detour round the ditch brings us into the very thick of China racecourse dregs. Yet these dregs differ from their English congeners in being friends of soap and water, and destitute of *esprit de corps*. There are no shooting stalls, no shows, and no Aunt Sallies—real cracks over their own heads, which must be received with patience, are so frequent that they lose the zest of a joke—but in lieu of them, gambling booths of every shade and description illustrate the Chinese passion for

play. Gambling booths for large sums, gambling booths for small sums, gambling booths for nick-nacks, gambling booths for high-priced drinkables, gambling booths for low-priced carrion; each booth with an eager throng of both sexes and of all ages around it, which renders circulation difficult.

Private Thomas Atkins thinks it will be pleasant and easy to win a dollar or so from the heathen Chinee, but ere long he discovers that he has been bested, and that the heathen Chinee is infinitely too clever for him.

What is that turmoil I see in the distance, with a scuttling about of the crowd, among whom two white-helmeted red coats are conspicuously prominent? Enraged at having been 'done' at the native *rouge et noir*, they put in practice a little lynch law, tear down the fragile canvas booth, arm themselves with the supporting bamboo poles, clear a space by whirling them around like the arms of a windmill, impartially rain down cracks on the skulls of the unresisting surrounders, and then quietly withdraw to a more reputable part of the course. Each party is perfectly satisfied; the Chinese sharper gloats over his filched gains, and the soldiers think they have taken change in the vengeance they have executed.

The fracas has scarcely interrupted the flow, or rather the torrent, of gambling. This young imp, of about eight years old, is really a study of innate human nature in this department of vice. He is gambling for his dinner at the booth of a wrinkled, demoniacal, loathsome old male atrocity, and still more loathsome hag. A form of 'Blind Hookey' is, I fancy, the favourite form of vice. Coin after coin, each worth about one-fifth of a farthing, he loses at his ventures. The imp's face lowers, and his features become contorted with angry excitement; faster, faster he plays, regardless of his fifths of farthings, until at last he wins. With a growl one would never have supposed that babyish throat could have emitted, he dashes on one side up to the tray of raw meat, seizes a lump of horrible garbage with singular dexterity by means of chop-sticks, plunges it into a kettle of boiling rancid grease, and then rams the dreadful morsel into his throat. His cheeks are distended to near bursting, the tears of scalding suffocation stand in his eyes, and he nearly chokes; but still he wears your thorough gambler's expression of delight at having at last won. Childhood's innocence is not a pretty sight out here. Are these creatures really akin to English childhood?

After all, the love of gambling is more or less common to all nations, and here the representatives are singularly diversified. Look at that group crowding around another gaming booth. Mingled with the demon Chinese are stray specimens of English, French, Germans, Italians, and Russians from the ironclads in the harbour; of tallowy, unwholesome Portuguese from their settlement at Macao; of stalwart dignified Punjaubees, of mean-looking Madrassesees, of snuffy Shylock Arabs, of effeminate stunted Japanese. 'Of what country is that man there?' I ask a Madras Lascar, pointing to a nondescript, strange old villainous specimen, who altogether baffles my cognisance. 'Seaman, sar, but I find out,' says the Lascar, delighted at being thus appealed to as an authority by a European. 'You old man of sea,' singling him out imperiously, 'you come here. Major Sahib want to know what your country,' and, rather to my dismay, the weird old man feebly totters up to me, and, salaaming with a humility which is painful to witness, quavers out a few words to his swaggering interrogator. 'Old man of sea, old Malay pirate, sar.' I am not surprised. Doubtless he has cut many a throat in his time.

Evening closes in as the last race is run, and so I set out on foot, as a variety, on my way homeward. There is the same dust, the same aspect of fatigue common to the conclusion of all race meetings; the same tokens of dissatisfied realisation common to experience of all so-called pleasures, but not the same quarrelling, drunkenness, and rowdyism habitual in England. The English are too much in a minority to render tipsiness prominent, and the Chinaman is at all events a good-tempered fellow; if bullied, he is submissive; and if hustled, he laughs—a wooden, joyless laugh, but still a laugh. The police really have some difficulty in exemplifying their utility. Perhaps an inexperienced rickshaw coolie tries on a little extortion or cheek. You mention it casually to the English watch-dog. 'Oh, did he, sir? thank you,' he replies gratefully, bolts after the man whom he assumes to have been tried, convicted, and sentenced, and administers the one invariable Hong Kong panacea—he soundly whacks his skull until the criminal dodges, runs, and finally escapes. These police comprise a great many grades, shades, and races, as is a characteristic feature of all Hong Kong humanity. The imperious and imperial European policeman; the efficient, proud, taciturn, turbaned Sikh; and the trumpety native watchman, incapable of saying 'Bo' even to his compatriots, and dressed up to resemble

a valuable, rare old China chimney ornament, equally ugly, and equally worthless.

What is this fragrant and yet somewhat sickly smell, a mixture of burning spills and sandal-wood, emanating from some of the closed chairs conveying home the Chinese ladies? It is due to the joss-sticks, in consuming which they utilise their leisure moments, an exercise which they consider as equivalent to an act of worship.

Well, this afternoon has afforded me one more opportunity of observing the various features of various types of Chinese population. Am I favourably impressed? They are certainly industrious to a remarkable extent, intelligent, sober, and good-tempered—rare combinations of rare virtues—and yet my feeling is one of abhorrence. Their sly civilisation, their crafty dealing, their apparent absence of what I may call kindly feelings, their inhumanlike expression, even their beardless, smooth faces, their high cheek bones, their Mongolian mouths, their long slit eyes, and their flat noses all give one a feeling of extreme repugnance. I would regard more as my brethren the scoundrelly Egyptians, the scowling Malays, even the half-women Cingalese, than these more than semi-civilised Chinese, who, as they shuffle along in never-ending haste, and with the wooden clatter of their discordant chatter, seem to me like the emissaries of some evil spiritual potentate intent on the performance of some malignant errand.

Rapidly, yet steadily, the pedestrian, the sedan chair, and the rickshaw lines of wayfarers stream into the orderly, quiet town, just beginning to glitter with gas jets from the English lamp-posts—those ubiquitous lamp-posts which in common with the gallows may now be regarded as the symbol of advancing civilisation. If I have been successful in my attempts at delineation, the reader will admit that the beauties of Hong Kong—though splendid and numerous—may be exceeded by those of other climes; but that in marvels of scene, people, and human nature generally, there is nothing to exceed a Chinese Ascot.

*RAINBOW GOLD.*¹

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK IV.

HOW AARON WHITTAKER BEGAN TO LONG FOR THE RAINBOW
GOLD, AND JOB ROUND THREW IT AWAY.

CHAPTER I.

CASTLE BARFIELD at this epoch was unblest by even one of those half-dozen local journals which now exercise so profound an influence upon current politics in the neighbourhood, but the great town near at hand sent forth its daily sheet of news, and Saturday's proceedings in the police court were reported at length in Monday's issue. The bench of magistrates, undoubtedly animated by a partisan spirit, had dismissed the case against Job Round, though the line of defence had simply tended to justify the assault, and no denial had been attempted. This, as the local censor pointed out, was a high-handed proceeding, and was obviously outside the rights of the tribunal. Their sense of the merits of the case might fittingly have been expressed by the imposition of a nominal fine, but in dismissing the summons they had made common cause with one of the parties to the case, and had deserted their judicial position.

This idea was amplified with befitting gravity until it filled a column of the journal, and the history of the feud between Job Round and General Coningham became public property.

The story brought Clem Bache out of his solitude. Since the day when Job had asked his advice and help in the matter of Aaron Whittaker, Clem had not visited Konak Cottage. Job was fairly certain of the reason for his continued absence, but Sarah never so much as guessed it. She held now, and had always held since she could remember, the tenderest affection for poor Clem. He had always been poor Clem in her thoughts, even when she was a child, and sisterly love had grown up side by side in her

¹ This novel has been dramatised by the author.

heart with pity. Then, whatever the critics might say, Clem was no minor poet to her fancy, but destined to be a great man and to charm the world. There were not many people of artistic tastes in Castle Barfield, and a man who wrote verses and painted and modelled, and who, in addition to all this, could talk French and read Greek and Latin, was naturally something of a wonder. Affection, pity, and hero-worship were all mingled in equal proportions in Sarah's regard for Clem, and he knew them all three.

The girl thought less of his prolonged absence than she would have done at another time, for her heart and her thoughts were filled with the contemplation of that statue of all human excellences, Aaron Whittaker. The North Pole and the South Pole are not so far apart as were her conceptions of this young man, and the young man himself. As for young men in general she had been inclined to esteem them a nuisance, and to look upon them with a certain scorn. Her experience was that they came a-courting in a manner infinitely annoying and absurd, dogging a girl's private walks and making solemnly foolish eyes at her, for a greater or smaller length of time, that at the end they proposed marriage and being rejected vowed a life of celibate devotion, and in the course of a month or two began to dog another young woman and to make solemnly foolish eyes at number two. Sometimes number two did their business. Sometimes they went on to number three or even to number four.

Of course, Aaron, in contrast with these young people, shone as Romeo might have shone amongst Messieurs Gobbo, Dull, and Costard, and when he came a-courting he came like a Sultan who has but to throw his handkerchief to indicate his choice. When Aaron's predecessors had made love she had found them infinitely stupid and wearisome, and had dismissed them with no sense of pity for their complainings. They always justified her by consoling themselves, and she had come at last to entertain quite a queenly contempt for young men in general, and even despised, though less profoundly, the young women who tolerated their addresses. But Aaron came, and was seen, and conquered. What does the heart discern in these cases? *Why*, in the name of all that is wonderful, does Miranda fall in love with Caliban, whilst Prince Ferdinand lives on the island?

As for Clem he had looked in the glass long ago. What right had he to breathe a word of love to a girl like a young Juno, a creature made of majesty and gentle goodness? Silent love was

his right, and nothing could rob him of it, but to speak would be to terrify, perhaps to awake loathing. And indeed, until the news of Aaron's arrival on the scene had reached him, it had not seemed hard to be silent.

If he had grown up like other young men, strong and vigorous, he would have spoken his mind a year before, and have had Yea or Nay. But he was a misshapen dwarf, and the woman he loved showed like a child of Anak amongst the ordinary daughters of men. The very majesty of her beauty was against him, and Clem mocked and ridiculed his own passion often enough in bitterness of heart, for he was splenetic at times, like most men who suffer from his particular affliction.

It chanced when he reached the cottage on that Monday afternoon that he found Sarah alone. She welcomed him cordially, with smiling eyes and both hands outstretched in greeting.

'What has kept you away so long?' she asked. 'Your father has brought news of you, and grandfather Armstrong has brought news, and father has brought news. So we have known that you weren't unwell.'

'I have meant to come score of times,' he answered, 'but I have never managed it. What's this news about your father and the new man at the Warren? I've seen the papers, but of course they don't tell everything.'

Sarah told all she knew, and she and Clem were of a mind about the matter. Job had acted like himself, and the magistrates had done their duty.

'But I can't understand grandfather Armstrong,' said the girl. 'You know what a sensible man he is, and how courageous he is generally. Well, he is actually afraid of this General Coninghame, and believes that he will do father some dreadful mischief. I came home last night after chapel, and he and father were sitting together, and he was begging father "for pity's sake" not to provoke the man.'

'And what did your father say?' asked Clem.

'Oh! He lifted his eyebrows and smiled,' she answered, laughing. 'You know his way.'

'Yes,' said Clem, 'I know it. If General Coninghame knew it, he might save himself a little trouble. He can't hurt your father.'

'How should he?' returned Sarah. 'But grandfather Armstrong says "the man's just horribly dangerous."' She imitated Armstrong's accent and manner with much glee, and Clem smiled.

'Old people have nervous fancies,' he said, without thinking much of his answer. So they put by this ugly question of which they knew so little, and went on to other topics.

They made a singular contrast as they sat together. The girl was the very type of health and youth. Her skin of rose and cream; her ruddy lips; her eyes, clear and joyous; her superb figure, elastic and lithe; these, and every gesture of head and hand bespoke the fresh vigour which made mere life a joy to her. He, with his long blanched hands, his pale features pinched and drawn with frequent pain, his unnaturally large bright eyes, and his bald forehead, looked more than ever prematurely aged beside her. His face was by no means without beauty, and his sensitive lips and unconsciously pleading eyes gave him a sort of piteous attraction in the eyes of most women and some men.

Job Round, speaking of this once on a time to Armstrong, had said: 'The lad half hurts me when he has that look on him. There's something in it like the look in a dog's eyes when he thinks you're angry with him—"You can thrash me if you like; I can't love you the less." I get that sore and tender, looking at the lad, I vow I have hard work to prevent myself from saying out aloud that I wouldn't lay a harmful finger on him for the world.'

But perhaps Job, in his own prodigious strength and massiveness, was likelier than most men to be moved by Clem's ailments.

'Clem,' said Sarah, 'father tells me you are disappointed about the reception of your book.'

He had been looking depressed and sad for a minute or two, and she had thought that this was on his mind, but he cleared on the instant and laughed with perfect naturalness.

'Oh!' he said, 'I had forgotten to think of that.'

'I have seen nothing written about it that was not favourable,' said Sarah, 'though nobody speaks of it as it deserves. But I have read and re-read every line until I know it all by heart. I like it more, and more, and more.'

'Well,' returned Clem, as lightly as he could, 'it's pleasant to have pleased.' It was the praise he wished for most and valued most, and yet it was bitter to have it thus bestowed.

'Of course,' she said, 'the critics are nothing if not critical.'

'Well,' Clem answered valiantly, 'the critics were quite right, except in the cases where they were too kind. If I was disappointed—and I was at first—it was because I thought more highly of myself than I ought to think. "It's easy to go mad," as Mrs.

Browning says, "and ape a Bourbon in a crown of straws." The critics woke me from a foolish dream, and did it very gently.'

'You won't stop writing, Clem?' she asked solicitously.

'Why, no,' he answered. 'I don't think I can undertake to promise that. But I can undertake to consume my own smoke in future.'

'Not publish any more?' she said. 'Oh Clem! you have more courage.'

'I am too proud,' said Clem, laughingly, 'to be a little poet, and to come out of my den, book in hand, every three years or so, to claim the little poet's tribute of faint praise.'

'Oh Clem!' cried Sarah, mournfully, 'now *I* am disappointed. Remember how we used to talk of Keats, and the way in which the critics served him when he first appeared.'

'No,' said Clem, blushing fiercely, 'don't remind me of all that. You can't guess how ashamed you make me feel.'

'If I were you, Clem,' said the girl, rising with flushed face and sparkling eyes, 'I would sit down and write a new "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." I'd make them own me, and give me the laurel which was mine by right.'

'Think of Tom Thumb,' answered Clem, 'going out to battle with the porridge-pot of Guy, Earl of Warwick, for a helmet! Don't you think Tom might be a little humiliated if you offered him that sort of panoply, all the more perhaps if in his little heart he really wanted to beat Blunderbore?'

'Clem,' cried Sarah, bending over him with both hands extended in a sudden impulsive entreaty for his own, 'don't be so bitter.'

He laid both his hands in hers, and looked up at her with a blush which mounted to his pale forehead.

'Don't think that I am bitter. Don't think that I am disappointed overmuch. I don't know that I have altogether a right to be ashamed of having had hopes which were too high for me. But surely I have a right, having measured myself, to say, "Five feet high, Clem, and not an inch beyond it!"'

She dropped his hands, and, moving across the room, took up a book which lay upon a corner bracket.

'This,' she said, holding it above her head, 'is a book of genuine poetry.'

'Minor,' said Clem, recognising his own work.

'Not minor,' she responded, 'unless Tennyson and Keats are

minor. Major! Sweet and true. And the man who wrote it is a poet, and will be a great poet if he pleases.'

She spoke this with a charming wilfulness. An air of comedy detracted nothing from the obvious sincerity of her words, and in her compound mood of scorn and humour, challenge and affection, she looked more lovely than she had ever looked before—even in the eyes of a poet and lover.

Clem was two-and-thirty years of age, and Sarah was twenty. He had known her from the day of her birth, and the lad of twelve and the new-born baby had gone on growing side by side as if they had been brother and sister. The writhen little hunchback was nine-and-twenty when he walked about with his shoulder on a level with the elbow of an exquisite girl of seventeen, of noble stature and proportion, like some young goddess sent to grace those common fields and to make them Elysian by her presence. She began to have sweethearts dangling about after her, and Clem discovered that he himself loved her. This was likely to be the beginning of a lingering tragedy for him, and he saw that; but he set to work to make the tragedy bearable. Somebody would come by-and-by to take her out of his life, and he could only hope that the somebody should be an honest and manly creature who should love her soundly and like a man—such another as her father. Job had always been Clem's hero.

He never thought of speaking for himself, though women as lovely have blessed men as forlorn and have themselves been blessed.

If Clem's own ideal of a husband had come to claim her, he would still have felt something, for the lover never lived who did not want the woman he loved for his own possession. But Aaron was very, very far from being Clem's ideal, and his heart was doubly wounded when he thought of the man who was destined to come and take her away from him.

And now that she stood before him, actually sparkling and glowing in his own defence and praise, the thought went through him like a barbed arrow—he might have spoken to some purpose, and now it was too late. You cannot expect the unhappiest of men always to remember his own unhappiness. For a second or two now and then Clem could forget his distorted frame.

'We must have no more misgivings, Clem,' said Sarah, gaily, as she restored the little green and gold volume to its bracket; 'no more misgivings, and no more fears of the critics.'

‘Very well,’ said Clem. “‘A fico for the world and worldlings base!’” He tried to laugh, but failed dismally.

Sarah sat down at the other end of the sofa on which Clem was seated, and looked at him tenderly and seriously.

‘You take this to heart more than I thought you did,’ she said.

‘I give you my word of honour,’ cried Clem, ‘that I do not take it to heart at all.’

‘Clem!’ she answered, lifting a reproachful finger.

‘I don’t. Honestly, I don’t greatly care. I did at first, but it soon went away.’

She shook her head at him as still adhering to her own opinion in spite of his disclaimer, and he smiled at her obstinacy, though the smile was somewhat mournful.

They were such old friends that they could easily bear to be in each other’s presence without wanting to speak to each other, and after this they kept silence for a long time—for so long a time, indeed, that Sarah forgot Clem, and took to dreaming with her eyes open. She leaned back in an attitude of unconscious grace, her elbow resting on the arm of the sofa and her head upon her hand. It was the fashion at that time to wear the hair quite smooth and fastened in a knot behind; but Sarah’s hair disdained to be smooth, and, howsoever carefully dressed, rebelled into curls and ripples. It was of natural gold, and as different from the gold produced by dyes as yellow sunshine is from yellow fog. It grew low upon her broad and creamy forehead, and the escaping curls almost touched the dark, fine line of the eyebrows, which were scarcely arched at all. Her face was settled in a sweet gravity, but her eyes were filled with a dreamy sunshine, and at intervals even the lips made a scarcely perceptible movement towards a smile. At the back of the sofa was a window frame, filled with the flowering plants she loved, and through these the afternoon sunlight fell in mellow flakes upon her hair, her ears, her throat, the bosom of her dress.

Clem sat and thought his own thoughts beside her until he turned to look at her, and beheld her as if in a vision beautified. She was thinking of Aaron, and Clem’s heart told him so with a fierce pang of passion and despair. He did not often quarrel with his own fate. Even inward complainings were rare with him, and a spoken complaint from him would have most surprised those who were most familiar with him. But for once the bitter waters rose high in him and overflowed his heart.

This mood did not last long, for as he looked her beauty stole

more and more upon him, the beauty of youth and goodness and innocent happiness of heart, and he grew completely tender in his thoughts. 'Be happy!' he said inwardly. 'Be happy, and let me be as I may!'

But a man at two-and-thirty, even when his experiences have been as tranquil as Clement Bache's, has begun to learn that human happiness is a plant of rare and uncertain growth. He thought he saw already the beginning of a blight on hers, and he could less endure to fear that than he could bear to know of any on his own.

CHAPTER II.

THE untutored savage, being hungry, gorges himself with food, and is probably conscious of nothing but an eager longing to be rid of his appetite. Civilised man, being hungry, plays with appetite and tantalises it, makes the process of satisfaction as lengthy as he can, and sometimes sighs that all is over. He expends great art not only in the preparation but in the order of his viands to the end that hunger may endure, and he triumphs nobly over that wild instinct of the natural man which would induce him to follow the pattern of the Dingo dog and take his four or five pounds of raw meat at a gulp, knocking appetite on the head with a bludgeon, so to speak, instead of lulling it softly and slowly into a perfumed slumber.

By a long enforced absence from food even the most devoted gourmet may be hurried into temptation, but his carefully trained moral sense will triumph. The cold round may be excellent, but he will resist it. He will have his two or three oysters, his clear soup, his bit of fish, and so forth, and his enjoyment will be in proportion to his self-repression. This is an agreeable reflection, and seems to lead in its own way to the most delightful moral conclusions.

General Coningham's first conscious desire, after his recognition of John Smith in the person of Job Round, was to share his knowledge with the court at once by denouncing him then and there as a deserter who already owed a flogging and a two years' imprisonment to justice, and who had still his trial to take for another offence when this punishment was completed. But prudence warned him against precipitation. His own certainty, without evidence to back it, would go for nothing, and John Smith would simply have had a warning to disappear.

This first impulse conquered, the General began to experience his reward at once. He began to feel a joy which was only possible to a man who could nurse a genuine hatred. It became an actual keen pleasure to him to be calmly bullied and brow-beaten and despised by the man he was going to have so completely in his power. Job Round's insolence became not merely endurable but delightful. There was hardly any triumph Job Round might publicly secure in that fashion which the General would not have endured with the most pleasurable sensations.

When, after the high-handed decision of the magistrates, General Coningham was hooted in the street and Job Round was cheered, the hoots and the cheers were alike music to each of them. They were agreeable to Job—simply and directly agreeable—because they were likely to be disagreeable to Coningham. They were agreeable to Coningham because he knew that his enemy triumphed in them.

There was one factor in the case which on reflection afforded the General a keen delight. He never doubted that Job knew him, and boasted ignorantly of his own certainty of escape from recognition. The flavour of this belief was exquisite, and Coningham rolled the sweet morsel over and over.

Hatred, when taken in this philosophic manner, has few rivals as a lasting pleasure.

Naturally, the first thing to be done was to establish Job's identity with John. To start open questions in that direction would set the enemy upon his guard. To denounce him without tolerably clear evidence would be fruitless. In the first place, a *primâ facie* case must be made out before a magistrate—and before a magistrate of Castle Barfield, where Job Round was a person of consideration and General Coningham was already profoundly disliked. That he himself was prepared to swear to the deserter would go for little. The charge was terrible, the lapse of time was great, and Coningham was known as having a grievance against Job. Before a man in such a position could be handed over to the military authorities all legal forms must be complied with. There was no sending a policeman after him, running him before a magistrate, swearing to him off-hand, transferring him to the charge of a corporal's guard, and landing him in a military guard-room, as if the case were one of yesterday and the man a common vagabond. These reflections whetted appetite and stimulated invention.

The General went up to London and stayed there for a little while. The population of Castle Barfield was not decreased by one in consequence of this migration, for on the very evening of the day on which Coningham left the little Midland town for London a professional person left London for Castle Barfield, and took up his quarters at the Barfield Arms.

This professional person may be worth a word or two. He was a man of a languid habit, with a manner self-possessed to the verge of insolence, and he had a curiously alert and observant eye. He was dressed in irreproachable black, and he wore a white scarf with a small diamond pin in it. He was clean shaven, and his English—in accent, but not in phrase—had the picked precision of a schoolmaster's. His name—for the time being—was Walker, and he had business—for the time being—somewhat vaguely in the coal and iron way. He told the landlord casually that he might stay a week, a fortnight, or a month. Perhaps he might stay even more than a month. He had a biggish thing in hand, and should stay till he had done with it.

On the morning after his arrival he called at Armstrong's shop, and asked to be supplied with one of the London dailies during his stay. He had a little chat about the weather, about the state of local trade, and kindred topics; paid a week in advance for his paper, and took his way. His way led him along the quiet High Street. He walked idly, and everything about him bespoke idleness, with the solitary exception of his eyes.

'The church stands back from the street at a distance of eighty or a hundred yards,' he said to himself, 'and the third house beyond it is—precisely, Konak Cottage painted on the gate.'

Behind the gate, with massive arms resting upon it, a man of unusual proportions.

'Grey eyes,' said Mr. Walker inwardly, 'prominent nose, big red beard and moustache, and remarkably heavy eyebrows.' He sauntered on a step or two without a second glance, and, turning with a casual air, raised his hat, with a somewhat foreign-seeming politeness, and said, 'I beg your pardon, sir. Will this lead me to the Hoargate Road?'

'The first turning on the right,' said the other, removing a well-blackened meerschaum from his lips, and pointing with it. 'A hundred yards ahead.'

'So near?' returned the stranger with a smile. 'Thank you.' He sauntered on again. 'Deep bass voice,' he said within. 'Pre-

cisely.' He turned into the Hoargate Road, and walked along it without seeming to have any particular business in it. By-and-by he found himself getting into the country, and coming in a little while upon what looked like a detached village, with a church—a grey old church with a squab Norman tower—a pound, and a rustic public-house all to itself. He stopped at the rustic house for a glass of home-brewed ale, and had a comfortable chat with the landlord.

'Capital beer, landlord,' he said. 'Will you take a glass with me? Is it your own brewing?'

'Thenky, sir,' returned the landlord; 'I don't mind if I do. It's about my time for a drop of a mornin'. It's a wholesome beer. We're own brewin'? Yes; it's we're own brewin', to be sure.'

'How far is it from here to Castle Barfield?' asked the stranger.

'Well, it ain't fur,' replied the landlord. 'Theer's Castle Barfield parish church in front. 'The town itself's shifted away like. The coalmines has drawed it further down that way. The town's maybe a mile off. You'm a stranger i' these parts, perhaps?'

'Almost,' said Mr. Walker; 'almost. Don't stand, landlord. Take a seat.' The landlord took a seat. 'That makes a difference to you, I suppose, the town having drifted away, as you say?'

'Well, I do'know,' said the landlord, 'as it meks much difference.'

'Been here long?' asked the stranger, throwing one leg over the other, and leaning back comfortably on the wooden settle.

'Man an' lad a matter o' fifty 'ear,' said the landlord.

'You breed a fine set of men down here,' remarked the stranger, casually. 'What is it?' he asked, with a little laugh. 'Is it the air?—or the beer?—or what is it?'

'Well,' said the landlord, 'I shouldn't like to undertek to say, but it is a fact, mister, as the men runnin' bigger about here than in other parts o' the country.'

'Yes,' the stranger assented; 'that's a fact. Fine big fellows they are. I was in Castle Barfield this morning—I lost my way in roaming about the country since I left it—and I saw in the High Street there a wonderfully big man, a fellow with a pair of shoulders pretty nearly as wide as that door, I should say—a splendid fellow, with a great big red beard.'

'Ab! Mr. Round as like as not,' said the landlord.

'Very likely you know him?' the stranger went on tranquilly,

and with a scarcely visible smile. 'A big man, with a big nose and very thick eyebrows.'

'Mr. Round right enough,' said the landlord. 'You'n got him to a T.'

'An old soldier, isn't he?' asked the guest, looking idly out of window. 'I thought he had a bit of that kind of look about him.'

'No,' returned the landlord; 'I've known him from a lad, but I don't remember as iver that was alleged of him. He's travelled a good deal, but as fur as I've understood he niver went a sojerin'.'

'Travelled a good deal, has he?' said the stranger. 'He looks as if he had. 'I dare say you've noticed now'—he was as familiarly easy with the landlord as if he had known him for a lifetime—'I dare say you've noticed now the difference there is between the looks of a man who has knocked about and one who has stayed at home?'

'Ah! Bless thy heart, yes. Many an' many a time.'

'Round?' said the visitor questioningly. 'Didn't you say his name was Round?' The landlord nodded. 'That would be the man I read about in the papers, eh? The man who was summoned for assaulting General—General——' The landlord helped him to the name. 'Ah yes; thank you, General Coningham?'

'That's him, sure enough,' cried the landlord with a chuckle.

'But the papers said he was an old resident here, and you call him a great traveller.'

'He was i' foreign parts for four or five 'ear,' said the landlord. 'He's been pretty nigh all over the world, I know.'

'Ah then,' said the guest, rising as if to go, and again looking lazily out of window, 'he's been settled down here a considerable length of time?'

'He was a bit wild of his youth, I've heerd 'em say,' the landlord answered. 'But he's been back for more than twenty 'ear now, as stiddy as a rock.'

'Landlord,' said the stranger, 'I can see that you're a bit like me.'

'Ah!' said the landlord. 'As how?'

'Why, you've no head for figures.' Mr. Walker turned from the window with a bland and open smile. 'There are some men who always give you a date for everything. Left home, for instance, such a day, such a month, such a year. Came back such a day, such a month, such a year. Now, I couldn't fix a thing in that way to save my life.'

‘Nor me, nayther,’ said the landlord.

The guest showed no sign of discomfiture, but started on another tack.

‘That’s capital beer, landlord. Give me another glass, and give me a mouthful of bread and cheese with it.’ The landlord disappeared for a minute, and returned with the beer, the bread and cheese, and a knife, and set them down on the clean-scoured table. ‘Now, here’s an odd sort of thing,’ said Mr. Walker, genially. ‘We were talking about memory just now, weren’t we?’ The landlord assented. ‘Well now’—Mr. Walker smiled more blandly than before—‘you mention a Mr. Round, living in Castle Barfield. I never was in Castle Barfield in my life till yesterday, and never saw Mr. Round in my life till this morning. And when you mentioned the name it sounded familiar to me. I heard it five-and-twenty years ago, and I’ll tell you how. There was a friend of mine came down here from London, a great dog-fancier, and I remember his telling me that he’d seen in Castle Barfield the finest bulldog he ever set eyes on in his life. Now, that dog belonged to a Mr. Round down here. There’s a curious thing for a man to remember after five-and-twenty years. I’ll tell you another thing,’ said Mr. Walker, fairly beaming and almost energetic in his surprise at the accuracy of his own remembrance. ‘I can recall the dog’s name. His name was Pincher. I dare say you remember him?’

‘No,’ said the landlord, ‘I niver was a doggy sort of a man, like some of ’em about here. It’s gone out o’ fashion mostly nowadaysen, but in ode times iverybody kep’ a dog, moor or less.’

‘I’m very fond of dogs myself,’ said the guest. Nobody could have guessed that he was disappointed, or that he had any other interest in the conversation than to while away a few idle minutes. He went on chattering whilst he ate his bread and cheese and drank his beer, paid his eightpence with the air of a man to whom expense was nothing, and stood awhile at the door to light a cigar and then to admire the prospect before he strolled away. Parker, the landlord, thought he had not often met a more agreeable and conversational gentleman. In Castle Barfield a man who talks with ease is said to be conversational.

Mr. Walker, placidly puffing at his cigar, walked leisurely in the direction of the town.

‘He’s been back for twenty years, and has been as steady as a rock, has he?’ he said to himself. ‘And he was away four or five

years. Well, that tallies with the instructions so far. We shall see a little further by-and-by.'

Half an hour at his easiest pae brought him to the Barfield Arms. The landlord sat alone in the bar, with last week's *Midland Counties Herald* for a companion.

'Fine open weather, sir,' said Mr. Walker brightly. 'The season's getting pretty late now, but this is the finest autumn I can remember.'

'Beautiful weather for the time o' 'ear,' said the landlord; 'and, thank God, a splendid harvest well over.'

'I stepped into the stationer's this morning,' said Mr. Walker, leaning against the mantelpiece, with his hands in his pockets and his eyes half-closed. 'Scotchman, isn't he?'

'Well, yes, sir,' replied the landlord; 'I suppose he is a sort of Scotchman. He's got the brogue, in a manner o' speakin'.'

'Struck me as being a very intelligent man,' said Mr. Walker.

'All that, sir,' the landlord answered. 'Very scholarly reader, I'm informed. I'm ignorant o' the game myself, but he's put up for the finest chess-player for some miles around.'

'Is that so?' asked Mr. Walker. 'I must get him to give me a thrashing. I'm very fond of a game at chess myself.' He smiled, and the landlord thought the smile a little self-satisfied.

'You think, maybe, you'll beat him, sir?'

'Oh dear no,' returned Mr. Walker. 'Not if he is really a strong player. By the by, I want a pocket-book. I'll step over and get one.' He was a singularly open-minded man, this Mr. Walker, and had a knack of telling people what he was going to do. 'He's an old resident here, is he—this Mr.—Mr.—'

'Armstrong.'

'Ah, yes, thank you! Armstrong. He is an old resident. He said something of having been here a good many years this morning.'

'He's been here time out o' mind. I've known the place this thirty 'ear, and he was here afore my time.'

'Indeed?' said Mr. Walker, nodding and smiling in his own innocent and open way. 'Is he the sort of old gentleman who wouldn't feel offended if a stranger asked him to play a game? No? Amiable old gentleman? Ah, that's pleasant, very pleasant! I'll just step over.'

He sauntered out of the bar-parlour, down the hall, and into the street.

‘And so my one intelligent old inhabitant is a chess-player, is he? And an amiable old gentleman as well? Perhaps he remembers something. It isn’t a bad day’s work already.’

He lounged on smiling with his air of laziness flatly contradicted by the quick observant eye, and in a minute or two the shrill tinkle of the shop-bell announced to Mrs. Armstrong the arrival of a customer. That excellent housewife was busily engaged in the preparation of the weekly batch of bread, and was floury to the elbows. She walked to the back door and called the grey man her husband, who was walking up and down the weedy garden with his book of chess hanging in his right hand, with a forefinger between its pages. He obeyed his wife’s summons mechanically, and by the time he reached the shop had forgotten all about it. Mr. Walker looked at him and smiled as the old Scotchman stood absently staring before him and playing a tattoo on the counter with his left hand.

‘Oblige me by allowing me to see a pocket-book or two,’ he said after half a minute’s pause. Armstrong started, awoke, laid his book on the counter, and opened a dusty glass case. Mr. Walker stretched out his hand and took up the chess book, which had fallen open. ‘You are a chess-player, sir?’

‘Yes, sir,’ returned Armstrong, looking up at him with mild blue-grey eyes between his spectacles and his grey penthouse eyebrows. ‘That is if a man can call himself a chess-player when he has next to nobody to play with.’

‘And you are obliged to fall back upon the problems,’ said Mr. Walker in a sympathetic voice. ‘Well, the problems are very amusing and very good practice, but they are not like the game.’ Armstrong shook his head almost mournfully. ‘I am a stranger here,’ pursued Mr. Walker, with an open-hearted confidence which was almost childlike. ‘I have a commission—rather a large commission—in respect to coal and iron, and I expect to be here two or three weeks at least before I can discharge it. I am staying at the Barfield Arms. My name is Walker. I am particularly fond of a game at chess, and it will be a charity to a lonely man if you will give me a game in my private room at the hotel when you have an evening to spare.’

‘Well, sir,’ returned Armstrong, ‘I’ll give y’ a game with vary great pleasure.’

‘If you are not otherwise engaged this evening, sir,’ said Mr. Walker suavely. ‘At about eight o’clock.’

'I'll look in, sir,' said Armstrong, 'and I hope I'll find y' a decent player, for I'm just weary of being challenged by halting cripples that want to give check with the king.'

'I shall not want to do that, Mr. Armstrong,' returned Mr. Walker blandly. He chose his pocket-book, paid for it, and, with a reminder to the stationer about the appointment, went his way. 'We will play your game to begin with, old gentleman,' he said to himself, 'and then we will play mine. In a place like this everybody ought to know everybody. It ought to be an easy game to pump *him*,' he concluded rather scornfully.

In effect it proved a more difficult game than he fancied, but then even a detective may make mistakes sometimes. Armstrong appeared dressed in black, and looking almost distinguished in that attire. A small clear fire burned upon the hearth; Mr. Walker had induced the landlord to draw from his scanty stores a bottle of admirable port, and had wisely provided his own cigars. Two lamps were set upon a centre table, a chessboard with the men already arranged upon it stood between them, and the maroon curtains being drawn at the windows, the whole scene looked cozy and homelike enough.

'Ah!' said Armstrong, bestowing his hat upon a sideboard and looking about him. 'A clean hearth, a clear fire, and the rigour of the game.'

Mr. Walker poured out a glass of wine for his guest and one for himself, lit a cigar, pushed the box across the table, and took his seat. The game began, and not a word was spoken for half an hour, when Armstrong said 'Check.' The silence reigned for another half-hour, at the end of which Armstrong spoke.

'Mate in three.'

'You are quite right, sir,' Mr. Walker said sweetly. 'You are a leetle too strong for me, but shall we try again?'

'Oo, ay!' said the Scot. 'We'll try again.'

'Now,' said Mr. Walker to himself, 'we'll show you what chess is like, old gentleman.' Mr. Walker, when he chose, was a rather remarkable chess-player. 'If I beat you to-night, my friend, you'll be willing to come to the scratch to-morrow, and if you should fight shy of the pump to-night, you may allow me to apply it then.'

He opened out a strong and subtle attack, one of those combinations which, to the eyes of a commonplace player, present so harmless and innocent an aspect until, too late for the defence,

their purpose is revealed, and the complacent defender, who has a notable scheme in his head for mating in six moves, finds himself seized and penned, a hopeless prey. Mr. Walker was blessed with a fiery temper, which he had under perfect control at all times, but it ruffled his inward equanimity a little when, at the one inevitable moment of weakness, the old gentleman opposite gave him his queen for a pawn, and, having by this prodigious sacrifice turned the tables, calmly annihilated him in a dozen moves. The stranger restrained himself with an admirable self-command.

‘I was quite right when I said at the end of last game that you were a little too strong for me,’ he said, smiling.

‘Eh, that’s pretty!’ said Armstrong, rapidly rearranging the men. ‘Eh! eh! eh! Ah’ve niver seen the like o’ that till this night. Man! ye’re a vary fine player.’ The old man had not been so Scotch for years, but this glorious tussle excited him. Chess’s a wonderful game; a wonderful game. Ay, it’s just wonderful. See here. The attack’s pairfect up to this point, and then it melts like water. There it is, sootle an’ strong. But there’s your heel, Achilles, my man!’ He took the sacrificial pawn again, and brought the queen down in its place resoundingly. Then having gazed admiringly at the position for a minute, he swept up the pieces and began to set them in order for another beginning.

‘I’m afraid I mustn’t play any more to-night,’ said Mr. Walker. ‘I get a headache if I play too long. We’ll have another fight to-morrow if you’re not tired of me—if you think it worth while to fight so weak an enemy.’

‘Oh,’ returned Armstrong simply, ‘ye’re strong enough to make the game a pleasure.’ Mr. Walker winced a little at this, but he kept up his smile and offered his guest a second cigar. ‘There’s a gentleman here gives me a game at times—a Mr. Round—that has very much your style of play. His attacks are admirable. I’ll show you now a very interesting position that we came to a couple of years ago.’

‘Mr. Round?’ said Mr. Walker. ‘Is that the Mr. Round whose name was in the papers the other day—the gentleman who beat the general?’

‘Ay, that’s he. Ye see there’s nothing very particular in the position up to now. The opening’s irregular, but there’s nothing original or striking in it. But now, mark this.’

Mr. Walker sat in excellent patience for a quarter of an hour

or so whilst Armstrong played through the game. The chance introduction into their talk of the very name he wished to introduce was curiously favourable. Armstrong was interested enough for two, and Mr. Walker paid but scant attention to the game, being employed in thinking by what means he could best approach his theme. He decided to play the memory card again.

‘Surely,’ he said, ‘you don’t remember all the games you play?’

‘No, no,’ returned Armstrong, ‘but here and there a game that interests.’

‘What you may call the chess memory is a thing by itself,’ said Mr. Walker, rising. He took a lamp in either hand and set the two upon the mantelpiece whilst he went on talking. ‘I’ve a pretty good memory for chess, but it isn’t the real chess memory like yours. I couldn’t play a game over again after two years had gone by, for instance. But I have a most singular knack of recalling trifles—things that are not of the slightest interest to me—things that haven’t the remotest connection with my own affairs.’ He was standing by this time with his back to the fire, with his coat-tails tucked up beneath his arms, and the lamps behind him. ‘Here’s rather a droll example now: you mentioned a Mr. Round just now.’

‘Ay,’ said Armstrong, looking up between his spectacles and his eyebrows. His face was fully illuminated. Mr. Walker’s features were scarcely visible.

‘Well,’ continued Mr. Walker, resting his back against the mantelpiece, and speaking with a laugh in his voice, ‘it’s five-and-twenty years ago last July since I was in Birmingham for the first time, and I met a young gentleman of that name who came from Castle Barfield—Mr. Job Round. Directly I saw his name in the papers I remembered it, though I hadn’t seen or thought of him for five-and-twenty years. Now what should make me remember it? There are curious little holes and corners in the mind, sir. You drop a fact into one of them, and you never think of it for years, but you happen to find the hole it fell into, and there it is again as fresh as ever.’

‘Ay,’ said Armstrong, ‘the human memory’s a curious thing.’

‘Did you know Mr. Round in his youth?’ asked Mr. Walker.

‘I’ve known him from the time he was as high ’s the table.’

‘It’s the oddest thing,’ said Mr. Walker, and it was easy to tell from his voice that he was smiling at the idea. ‘He had nothing in the world to do with me, and I had nothing in the

world to do with him. We spoke a word or two together, and when he left the hotel I observed to the landlord what a remarkably well set-up and handsome young fellow that was. He told me his name and where he came from. That was all. Now why *should* I remember that?’

‘My friend,’ said Armstrong within himself, ‘I dislike you more and more. The bag looks innocent, but I’m thinking I heard a mew.’ He smiled as innocently as Mr. Walker himself. ‘Ay, now,’ he said, ‘why should ye?’

‘That little episode’s as vivid as possible. I remember the very dog he had with him.’

‘Well mewed, pussy,’ said the grey Scot to himself. ‘The dogue?’ he asked with an accent of mild surprise.

‘M’m,’ returned Mr. Walker, with an exquisitely uninterested affirmation. ‘A bull dog; splendid brute.’

‘A bull dogue?’ said Armstrong with the same faint accent of surprise. Mr. Walker’s eyes, keen and observant as they were, saw nothing of value to himself. A twinkle of dry humour which looked habitual, and as if it answered to some inward thought, declared itself in the blue-grey eyes, and the corners of the mouth twitched ever so faintly. These signs might mean anything or nothing.

‘I remember his very name,’ said Mr. Walker, flicking the ash from his cigar behind him, ‘“Pincher.”’ Nothing in Armstrong’s face but mild inquiry and a hint of doubt. ‘That was the name the bull-dog answered to, “Pincher.”’

‘M’m,’ returned Armstrong, in exquisitely uninterested inquiry.

‘Odd I should recall such trifles,’ said Mr. Walker. ‘Shall we try the chess again? My head is all right now.’

‘No, sir, I thank you,’ replied Armstrong, consulting an old silver watch. ‘The hour’s too late for beginning a second time. To-morrow if you are in the mood.’

‘Very well then, Mr. Armstrong,’ said the other, ‘to-morrow. Must you be going? Well, good night, sir, and many thanks for your society.’ He opened the door for his guest. ‘There is a light upon the stairs, I see. Good night.’ He stood looking after the bowed old figure until it turned the corner of the stair. ‘I have made nothing of him,’ he thought; ‘but I may to-morrow. The bid for the dog was a thought too open, but then the general was so cock-sure of him. I haven’t shown my hand, though.’

'Pussy,' said Armstrong under his breath, 'ye're out of the bag now fairly, and an ugly beast y'are. Job shall see ye without loss of time, and if he's wise he'll refuse to stay in the same land with you.'

CHAPTER III.

OUTSIDE the Barfield Arms he stood still to wipe a sudden perspiration from his forehead.

'Lord,' he said, 'I thank ye that ye sent the blagyard spy to me. The smooth villain! Check, ma dirty little friend. And unless I'm mightily mistaken, mate next move.'

He walked on, revolving things in his mind in alternate dread and triumph. When he reached the gate of Job's cottage he saw a light in the windows, and the fresh odours of the garden met him pleasantly as he pushed open the clanking gate. Evidently aroused by the sound of the gate, Job himself threw open the front door and looked out into the night.

'Hillo, Mr. Armstrong,' he said cheerily, 'where's Sarah?'

'I haven't seen her,' said Armstrong. 'Is she at my house? I haven't been there these two-and-a-half hours. I've serious news for you, Job.'

'What about? Sarah?' He spoke eagerly and almost fiercely.

'No; yourself.' Job's face cleared at once.

'Ay? What is it? Come in, Mr. Armstrong, come in.'

'Job,' said Armstrong, entering and closing the door, 'that scoundrel knew ye in court last Saturday. Ye mind I told ye so at the moment. I guessed it then, and now I know it.'

'How?' asked Job with tranquil gravity.

Armstrong told the story of the evening. 'The sairpent's as wily and as smooth as his Auld Master,' he concluded. 'But we'll leave him nothing to bite at. You must get away, Job. We'll take care of the girl.'

'No,' said Job. 'I won't run—yet. Wait a bit; let me think. The first mention of my name came from you?'

'Yes, it came from me. But, Job, lad, make no mistake. I'll tell ye. I saw a look in his eye when I named you that I couldn't read at the time, for I had no light to read it by. But now I can read it as plain 's a buik. "There's a stroke of fortune," says the sairpent's eye.'

'I'm pretty much of the same mind with you, Mr. Armstrong,'

said Job, rumpling his beard against his chest with his chin, and rolling his head from side to side. 'I think he knew me. What's the fellow like? Parker couldn't tell me anything worth knowing.'

'Parker?' said Armstrong. For a mere second it crossed his mind that Job's mind was wandering, but he dismissed the fancy as preposterous.

'Ah!' said Job, with his own singular smile, 'I didn't tell you. Chance, fortune, luck, Providence, or whatsoever guides the destinies of men, or leaves them to guide themselves, took me out for a stroll this afternoon.' He laughed there, and resumed, 'This serpent of yours leaves a trail like a slug. I called at the "Ring o' Bells" in Church Vale; you know the house. Parker no sooner sees me than he cries out in his polished way, "Talk o' the Devil! Here's Mr. Round." Inquiry elicited the fact that a strange gentleman had been admiring my proportions, and learning my name had quite suddenly called me to mind. He remembered Pincher. Pincher seems to be my friend's clue. Let us see where it will lead him.' He paused a minute, and his wilful brows came down, and even through his beard Armstrong could see his obstinate lower jaw push itself forward.

'Job!' cried Armstrong, alarmed at these signs, which he knew but too well how to read. 'Think of Sarah; think of nothing else.'

'Wait a bit,' said Job, waving a hand against him. 'You're sure you were the first to name me? Not that it matters much, either.'

'I named ye first,' said Armstrong angrily, 'but, God guide us, can't ye see the plain truth of the thing? And after what ye've told me?'

'There would be nothing very odd,' said Job, paying no attention to this outburst, 'if you happened to have some little business on hand to-morrow evening. There would be nothing either very odd in your wishing, in spite of that, to give the gentleman his game at chess. And since you have named me already as a player, there wouldn't be anything very curious in your asking me to go and take your place.'

'And what would that be for?' asked Armstrong gravely.

'Well,' returned Job, 'in the first place it would certainly be very amusing, and in the next place it might be useful.'

'Job, I believe ye'd dance on the very brink of the pit.'

'Not I. I haven't danced these twenty years.' Job laughed, and, stretching out his two powerful hands, took the little grey

man by the shoulders. 'Come, come, Mr. Armstrong, give me credit for a grain of prudence.'

'There's only one course open, Job, and if ye don't take it ye haven't a grain of prudence under your skin.'

'And that course is——'

'To get out of England with all speed, and leave this man in the lurch. How long do you think this private inquirer will be baffled? Ye can't warn everybody in Castle Barfield. Hark! what's that?'

The creak of the opening garden-gate and the clank with which it fell back into its place sounded noisily in the silence of the night.

'It's Sarah come home,' said Job. 'We'll say no more now. I'll see you in the morning.'

'Think of the girl, Job,' whispered Armstrong, laying a hand upon his arm, and looking at him pleadingly.

'Man,' answered Job, his deep voice vibrating, 'what else have I in the world to think of?'

He stepped forward to open the door, and welcomed his daughter playfully.

'Roses,' he said, pinching her cheek. 'Roses that bloom all the year round. There's a grandchild for you, Mr. Armstrong—the Scotch and Staffordshire mixture!'

But when Armstrong had gone anxiously away, and Sarah had retired for the night, Job sat down alone by the fireside, with his foot upon the fender, his elbow on his knee, and his bearded chin resting in his hand. An hour went by, and he scarcely moved. An awful hour! An hour of communion with the past and dead—the irrevocable. Home scenes that made the heart ache to recall them, though they were sweet and tender in themselves, and scenes in foreign lands, of wild dangers, and wild revels, and one appalling crime.

At length he cast himself back in his chair with folded arms, and as he stared blindly at the dying fire he broke into a deep and tremulous murmur.

'I can't believe that He's like that. A Jewish spirit. A hard old race that loved revenge, and thought that He must love it as well. Justice? I'll take all the justice, but God spare the child!'

With such an inward passion as he knew must master him, he rose, and stepping on tiptoe like a thief, he opened the door in silence, and, closing it behind him silently, sprang from the doorstep to the grass plot, and alighted noiselessly. The night was

clear and starlit, and balmy with many odours. He ran lightly along the grass, leapt the low hedge which bounded the garden at its foot, and raced at full speed across the field beyond. At the next hedge he stopped, and casting himself full length face downwards on the turf, he lay for a while like a dead man, until a sob broke from him and shook him from head to foot. Then another, and another, agonising to soul and body, and he lay still again. He could shed no tears, for tears are the beginning of healing.

A weaker man, or a tenderer, or one less impiously proud, would have sought repentance long ago, believing as he did, but he shrank from that as the last and crowning horror of baseness. What? Cower for fear of anything that might come to *him*? Never. In face of God and man and the invisible hosts—never!

He had loved his mother as sons do, he had loved his wife as the average of husbands love their wives, but he loved his child with a profound and tender passion of fatherly affection. She was the apple of his eye, the heart of his heart, the dearest and most intimate fibre of his soul. Where is the good of piling words on words? She was his all, his everything. To save her he would willingly become himself a castaway, and he had dowered her with a curse.

The night grew to its darkest, and then came the first tinge of dawn. He had lain like a stone for six hours when he lifted his head and looked about him, and his hair and beard were drenched with dew. He arose and walked towards the cottage with his customary solid footsteps, but when he had bestridden the low hedge of close-trimmed privet and had reached the garden, he began to reel a little, and was fain for a minute or more to hold on by the stem of a gnarled apple tree. The clock of the near church struck six, and the clock of the old Roman tower near the 'Ring o' Bells,' a mile away across the silent fields, answered as he stealthily opened and closed the cottage door. The fire was dead and the lamp was flickering its last. He locked the door, drew off his boots, took his slippers in his hand, blew out the lamp, and stole up the staircase. Reaching his own room in the darkness, he made fast the door and threw himself upon the bed. When the dawn stole in through the curtained windows, it saw his vast limbs thrown broadcast and at ease, and he was sleeping soundly like a child.

Three hours later he awoke, and, having refreshed himself with a bath, descended to breakfast.

'You are late this morning, father,' said Sarah, setting a dish of eggs and bacon before him, and pouring out his coffee.

'It was nine o'clock when I awoke,' he answered, in his customary manner, and propping the morning newspaper against the coffee-pot he began to eat and drink in silence. Sarah went hither and thither, singing in a low tone to herself, as happy as youth and health could make her.

Breakfast over, Job pulled on his boots, stuck his wideawake on the back of his head, and, having kissed his daughter affectionately, strolled into the street with no change in him that any man might read. He had not gone far when he sighted Clem and his father in a sprightly little trap bowling towards him. At a word from Clem the farmer arrested the horse at the curb, and Job paused to shake hands.

'Off to market?' asked Job. The farmer nodded. 'And you, Clem?'

'I'm going into town to buy some painting tools,' said Clem. 'Job, it's a treat to meet you. I feel stronger after seeing you, as if you gave out muscle, and I imbibed it.'

'Thee beest a fine figure of a mon, Job,' said the farmer, critically surveying him. 'I said to Clem just now, when I set eyes on thee, "Here's Job Round a-comin' along," says I, "like a oak-tree a-tekin' a walk after breakfast."'

'The poetic fount flows backwards, you see, Job,' said Clem, dryly, 'and mounts from son to sire.' Job laughed and held out his hand.

'Good-bye, lad. Good-bye, farmer. Profitable market. Pleasant drive.'

'Good-bye, ode oak tree,' said the farmer. 'If I was twenty 'ear younger, I'd get out and have a tussle wi' thee for the fun o' the thing.' Job laughed again, and walked on with a farewell wave of the hand. 'He's a tough un, that is,' said the farmer, as he drove on again. 'Hard as nails, inside *an'* out.'

'Ah!' returned Clem. 'He has tender places in him.'

'It 'd trouble me, or thee, to find 'em,' said the farmer, and Clem said no more. 'Him an' ode 'Zekiel's a real pair,' his father continued, not being the sort of man to be silenced by silence. 'Pluck in plenty, in a way o' speakin', but the heart left out on it—the heart left out on it.'

Job pursued his way, ignorant of this judgment, but caring not a whit less for it than he would have cared if he had heard it,

and reached Armstrong's house. He found the grey man waiting for him behind the counter of his shop, a study in dusty grey, and his grey clothes more wrinkled and shrunken than himself.

'Well, Job,' he said anxiously, after opening and re-closing the door at the rear of the shop to make certain that they were unobserved. 'Have you slept on it, and are you wiser? For my own poor part, look ye, I haven't had the heart to sleep on it.'

'I'm sorry to have broken your rest, sir,' said Job. 'Don't be under any fears for me. I'll see the man to-night, and he'll be away to-morrow or next day, and you'll be at peace again.'

'What d'ye think ye'll do?' asked the old man, with an impatient sigh.

'You shall know all I've done in twelve hours from now,' returned Job. 'Be in no sort of alarm, sir. It will all come right. Here!' he said suddenly, after a moment's thought. 'I don't see why you shouldn't know in an hour, if he's at the hotel now.'

'Job,' cried Armstrong, in a vague terror. 'Ye'll do nothing desperate?'

'My good sir, no,' he answered. 'There's nothing desperate in the business. Give me an hour, and be as little anxious as you can.'

Armstrong followed him to the door, and looked after him as he walked along the street and into the hotel.

'Of all the names in the Scripture catalogue,' he said, 'ye've the one that fits ye least, ye poor blind Samson. I doubt ye'll have the house in ruins yet, and that without slaying the Philistines.'

'A Mr. Walker is staying here?' said Job to the landlord.

'Yes, Mr. Round,' said the landlord. 'He's at breakfast in Number Five.'

'That's lucky,' said Mr. Round. 'I'll walk up and see him. Don't let us be interrupted unless he rings.'

'Very good, Mr. Round. You know the way, sir. The door facing the top of the stairway.'

Job nodded, and walking upstairs rapped at the door of Number Five.

'Come in,' said a voice, and he entered, hat in hand. Mr. Walker was seated with his back to the door, and did not trouble himself to turn for a look at the newcomer. Job closed the door softly, and having turned the key in the lock withdrew it. The sound he made in doing this struck oddly on Mr. Walker's ear,

and he turned round in time to see his gigantic visitor calmly putting away the key in his waistcoat pocket. He rose swiftly, but his visitor was before him and intercepted his passage to the bell-pull.

‘Mr. Walker, I believe?’ said Job, taking his stand on the hearthrug.

Mr. Walker, panting somewhat, set a glittering and observant eye on Job’s, and kept it there. Then he slid a hand into his breast pocket and produced a revolver, not one of the neat modern articles, but a clumsy thing with six complete barrels. Then he slipped into a chair, and had his hand with the weapon in it on the table.

‘Mr. Walker, I believe?’ said the visitor a second time.

‘At your service, sir,’ said Mr. Walker. At this moment there was a distinctly foreign accent in Mr. Walker’s voice.

‘My name is Round,’ said the visitor politely. ‘Job Round.’

‘Well, sir,’ returned the other, ‘your business, if you please?’

‘You have been giving yourself the pains,’ said Job, to make some inquiries about me. Suppose, now, you ask me what you want to know instead of asking my neighbours.’ Mr. Walker made no answer to this overture. ‘You may not notice it, said Job casually, ‘but your finger trembles somewhat. I wouldn’t keep it on the trigger if I were you. You might smash something and alarm the house.’

‘You make rather a peculiar entry here, Mr. Round,’ said the detective. ‘And I do not quite understand your purpose.’

‘My purpose is quite peaceable, and in the way of business,’ Job answered. ‘There’s not the remotest need for that, or any likelihood of need for it,’ pointing to the revolver. ‘Keep it handy by all means if you think you’ll want it, but really that finger’s hardly safe upon the trigger. You don’t mind my sitting down?’

‘We do not make any great progress towards your business,’ said Mr. Walker. He could not help sighing a little for momentary relief when Job took a chair with the greater part of the room’s width between them.

‘My name is Round,’ said Job again, ‘and yours is—Walker. No vulgar jest, sir, I assure you. Your name is no affair of mine. Will you kindly stop me if I go wrong? You are by profession a private detective. You are not a private detective from any abstract love of the business, but because you make money by it.

You probably like the business well enough. Why not? It is a safe, easy, honourable, and lucrative line of life, and judging from your appearance, and the sort of client who employs you, you prosper in it. In this particular case you are employed by a military man of rather high standing to make inquiries about me. Now, for private reasons of my own, I object to having a gentleman of your profession on my trail.'

'Sound reasons, I dare say,' said Mr. Walker.

'Possibly,' returned Job, 'if they were examined into, sound enough. There is not the slightest need for a present examination. But let us go to business. What is your charge for failing to find out anything about me?'

'You see, Mr. Round,' said Mr. Walker, 'that this is putting things in a way not quite flattering to me.' His accent was precise and picked, but it was English now, and had lost its foreign tone. 'Assuming for the moment that you are correct in your suppositions, you ask me to betray an employer. Assuming that I am employed for such a purpose as you describe, I am in a post of trust.'

'I fully expected,' said Job, 'to encounter this nice sense of honour. Name your price for it.'

'You see, sir,' returned Mr. Walker suavely, 'there's nothing to prevent *my* retiring in perfect safety, and sending down another man. There is nothing even to prevent me from declaring, after this present interview' (here he took up the clumsy revolver again and toyed with it in both hands, still keeping an observant eye on his visitor)—'literally nothing, sir, after this present interview, to prevent me from swearing to a full confession, and deposing to an attempt to buy me off.'

'Really, Mr. Walker,' said Job, with a cool sardonic smile at him, 'you are a poorer tactician than I fancied you likely to be. The market value of that nice sense of honour is destroyed.'

'Never mind the nice sense of honour,' said the detective. 'Have the goodness to see how far you're in the trap, and then bid for what you think you're worth.'

'Very well,' said Job. 'Let us see how far I am in the trap. I am so far in the trap that I can walk away at this minute without your having the power to stop me. I am so far in the trap that by an adoption of your own nice sense of honour I can give you in charge on any ground I like to invent, and be believed (being an old resident here, and you a stranger), and have you

laid by the heels until I am five hundred miles away and out of reach for good and all. And now will *you* bid, sir, for what you think you are worth?’

‘I should have no more to do,’ said Mr. Walker, ‘than to give a police-officer half-a-sovereign to take a note into Birmingham. The superintendent there happens to know me well. I should expose the trick. I should be free in an hour, and you’d be tighter in the trap than ever.’

‘Admirably argued,’ cried Job, laughingly. ‘You see I am poor as a strategist. Perhaps something might occur to me with thinking. But let us cease to threaten each other. Up to now you have no hold on me.’

‘My dear sir,’ returned Mr. Walker, ‘you mustn’t talk nonsense. I could have you detained and watched after you were remanded. I could advertise in the papers for what I want to know, and offer a reward, and have the information in a day. I could have done that at first, but it would have set you on the wing, and have lost me a little money.’

‘You *will* threaten,’ said Job. ‘Take your case as proved, and name your price.’

‘They tell me,’ said Mr. Walker, ‘that you are a substantial man, Mr. Round. It’s quite likely, in a case like this, that before finding out all our friend would like to know I might have asked a gentleman to treat with you. You came yourself to simplify matters.’

‘Well, how much do you want?’

‘I want from you, Mr. Round, a thousand pounds.’

‘A thousand pounds?’

‘A thousand pounds.’

‘And what do you propose to do for that?’

‘I propose to draw up, for my employer’s information, a complete history of your life.’ Mr. Walker winked.

‘And how would that profit me?’

‘I should account for every date, sir,’ returned this honourable man of business, ‘without the mention of a recruit who bore the name of Smith, or of a dog who bore the name of “Pincher.”’

‘And how do I know that, having had my thousand pounds, you would not betray me after all, or come upon me again for hush-money? You see, Mr. Walker, that I make no pretence of believing in your nice sense of honour. Perhaps it is superfluous to mention that.’

‘I am prepared to give you a receipt with full particulars. My business is worth three thousand a year to me. The publication of that receipt would ruin me, and if I ever tried to come on you again you would have your hold on me as I should have mine on you.’

‘Suppose,’ said Job, ‘I threaten the production of the receipt to get my money back?’

‘I beg your pardon. The receipt is my receipt and your confession. We both sign it. You seal it and you place it with your lawyers for your own safety, and you mark it “To be destroyed unopened in the presence of so-and-so and so-and-so after my death.” Or better still, “To be delivered after my death” to *me*. In case of my death before yours *you* can destroy it, or expose it, or do what you please with it. There’s a certain amount of risk in every game, the double game especially. I take my risk and I charge a thousand pounds for it.’

‘Suppose your client should suspect collusion between you and me?’

‘He is in London, waiting my report. He does not know what name I pass by here, or where I am. He gave his instructions to my chief man, and does not know me even if he sees us in talk together.’

‘And how am I to know that the name by which you sign will be the true one?’

‘I was waiting to see if you would ask that,’ said Mr. Walker, smiling. ‘Do you know Inspector ——?’ He named a man well known at this epoch in the Birmingham police.

‘I know him by sight.’

‘Very well. He knows me. He shall tell you who I am.’

‘And when do you want the money?’

‘There is no moment like the present, Mr. Round.’

‘I have not a thousand pounds at the bank.’

‘Title-deeds, copyholds, sureties,’ suggested Mr. Walker.

‘Do you mind being seen in the street with me, or shall I send a note to the bank manager asking him to oblige me by walking over here? The bank is only across the way.’

‘I can watch you across the way,’ said Mr. Walker.

(*To be continued.*)

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST, 1885.

COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

STOCK-TAKING.



JOANNA was given the letter by Mr. Worthivale, and walked through the park to Court Royal. The evergreen shrubs on both sides of the drive relieved the monotony of winter bleakness. The pines were clothed; of them there was great variety. The oak, though turned brown, was not divested of all its leaves. The day was fine and the air

mild. Joanna knew nothing of the country; she was surprised

at and delighted with all she saw. She stood watching the fallow deer, till she was frightened by the rush past her, on wing, of a pheasant. The wood-pigeons were flying in hundreds from one beech clump to another, rejoicing over the fallen masts. The afternoon sun shone yellow over the front of Court Royal, making the windows glitter like sheets of gold leaf. Joanna went round to the back of the house, and delivered her letter and message. She was taken into the servants' hall, where some of the maids were receiving visitors from Kingsbridge, and stuffing them with veal pie, ham, tarts and clotted cream. They ate cream with their ham, heaped it on their bread, and jam on top of the cream equally deep; they drank it with their tea, and filled the cups with lump sugar till the lumps stood out of the tea like Ararat above the flood. Some of the servants' friends had brought their children with them; these over-ate themselves, were unwell, retired, and came back to repeat the process.

Joanna looked on in amazement. She was invited to take her place with the rest, but declined, as she had dined recently.

Then the housekeeper came in, smiled benevolently on the visitors, bade them enjoy themselves, and called Joanna away to see round the Court.

The housekeeper had been bred in the traditions of the knowledge and love and fear of the great Kingsbridge family. Her father had been a footman, her mother (a lady's maid in the service of the late Duke), who had married and kept the lodge. The first recollection of her infant mind was being noticed as a healthy, pretty child, by the late Dowager Duchess. She had been educated, gratis, at the school supported by his Grace, a school which had in its window the Ducal arms and supporters in stained glass, and outside, in the gable, the Ducal coronet and initials of Bevis, seventh Duke of Kingsbridge. At an early age she had served the family by opening the gates of the drive, and had worshipped the family with curtsies before she had been found old enough to go to church and worship God. Then she had been taken into the Court, and been a servant there all her life, first in one capacity, then in another, till she married the red-faced coachman, who wore a white wig and sat on a hammercloth emblazoned with the Ducal arms. Upon the death of the coachman, Mrs. Probus returned to the great house as housekeeper. It was unnecessary for her to do so. She had saved, during her

long service, a good deal of money. The pickings had been considerable. But the pickings were too considerable, the living too good, the work too light to be resigned hastily, and Mrs. Probus felt that it would be banishment to hyperborean night to be consigned to an almshouse for the rest of her days, away from the splendour of the Ducal system, illumined only by the flicker of consciousness that the almshouses had been founded for the reception of worn-out Ducal retainers. So, though Mrs. Probus often spoke of retiring, she postponed the evil day.

Her little sitting-room, into which she introduced Joanna, was furnished with memorials of the Eveleighs. Over the chimney-piece, of course, was the portrait of the present Duke; over the sideboard, the picture of the late Duke. On the cheffonier were the silver tea-kettle given her by the Duke on her marriage, and a silver salver with a long inscription, presented to the late lamented coachman on his completion of the fiftieth year of service. On all sides were presents—remembrances of the Dowager Duchess Anna Maria, of the late Duchess Sophia. On her bosom she bore a brooch containing the hair of the Marquess and Lady Grace, whom she had nursed as infants; and about her finger was a white ring woven of silver hair, cut from the head of Frederick Augustus, sixth Duke of Kingsbridge, Marquess of Saltcombe, Viscount Churchstowe, Baron Portlemouth, Baronet, Grand Commander of the Bath, Knight of the Garter, of Saint Patrick, of the Black Eagle, etc., etc., etc., cut off his head when she had laid him out for burial.

Mrs. Probus was proud to show the house to Joanna. When she learned that Joanna was the new servant come to the Lodge, she understood at once that she had been sent down there to be impressed, and Mrs. Probus was never happier than when stamping the Ducal family on young minds. A reverent fear and love of the family was the best preservative youth could have against the trials and temptations of life. It would save a girl from flightiness. Everyone who moved in the Kingsbridge system was respectable to the tips of little finger and little toe. Imprudence was impossible to one nurtured in the Kingsbridge atmosphere. When the butler heard of a young man who had taken to drinking and gone to the bad, 'Poor fellow,' he said, 'if only he could have been received as a stableboy here!' When the housekeeper was told of a young woman who had lost her character, 'How dreadful!' she exclaimed; 'would that she had been kitchen-maid

at Court Royal!’ As the monks and nuns of old believed that salvation was hardly possible outside the cloister, the domestics in the Kingsbridge constellation held that no one went to hell from Court Royal or Kingsbridge House, Piccadilly. The same feeling pervaded the entire estate. The tenants were steeped in it. They were all respectable; the farmers Conservative, churchgoers, and temperate; their wives clean and rosy-cheeked, attending to their dairies themselves, and curtseying like schoolgirls, and standing with their hands under their aprons, when visited by one of the family. The cottagers reared their children to abstain from evil and do that which is good, because there was a great Duke far above them who knew everything that went on upon his estates, and who, if the children were clean and respectful, would take them up into service in the Great House, and provide for them and make them happy for ever. No more moral, respectable, orderly, religious people were to be found in the West of England than those on the Kingsbridge estate; but all this morality, respectability, order, and religion rested on the foundation of the love and fear of the Duke. One Sunday, when the Rector’s wife was catechising the school children, she inquired who were ‘the elect people of God,’ whereupon they responded, as with one voice, ‘The tenants of the Duke, ma’am.’ And what they said, they believed.

Mrs. Probus took Joanna up the grand staircase, turning and glancing at her face at the landings, to see that the proper expression of wondering awe was there. She bade her look at the pictures, and narrated the hackneyed story of their acquisition on the Continent by the great Duke who was a general in the reign of George I. The keen eyes of the girl were in every corner, not on the pictures, which she did not understand, but on the cabinets, the Chinese vases, the pile carpet, the exotic ferns. In the state drawing-room she made a halt, and caught her breath.

‘O my goodness!’ she gasped; ‘the Chippendale!’

‘The *what*?’

‘The Chippendale!’ exclaimed Joanna. ‘What first quality chairs and tables and cabinets. Why, they are worth a pot of money, just now that the fashion runs on Chippendale.’

‘Of course the furniture is valuable,’ said Mrs. Probus with dignity. ‘But pray do not speak of it as though it were about to be sold at an auction.’

‘And the china!’ cried Joanna excitedly. ‘That pair of Sèvres

vases any dealer would give a hundred pounds for, and ask for them two hundred and fifty, and take two hundred.'

'No doubt the vases are precious. They were given to the late Duke by King Charles X. from the royal manufactory.'

'That nude figure of a woman seated on a dolphin is fine,' said Joanna. 'Oh, please may I look at the mark. Double C crowned—Ludwigsburg, modelled by Ringler. Look at the glaze. Observe the moulding!'

'It is scarcely delicate,' said Mrs. Probus.

'On the contrary, it is most delicate, and considering the delicacy in admirable condition. Only some of the flowers on the pedestal are chipped.'

'I did not allude to the fragility of the china, but to the impropriety of a lady going about with only a scarf over her. However, the subject must be right, or it would not be here.'

'Of course it is right,' said Joanna, excitedly. 'It is splendid; worth thirty pounds to a dealer, double to a purchaser. That is a pretty First Empire clock.'

'It don't go,' said Mrs. Probus.

'Who cares for that?' answered Joanna. 'The shape is the thing. The ornaments are very chaste. There you have some old Plymouth.'

'You seem to know a great deal about porcelain.'

'I do know something.'

'Ah, you ought to see the collection the Marquess has in his room. He is a fancier, and does not care what he pays to secure a piece to his taste.' The housekeeper was gratified at the enthusiasm and delight of the girl.

'May I—oh, may I see it?'

'Let me see—the Marquess has gone out. I think it would be possible, though not allowed. We may not show strangers over the private apartments inhabited by the family. Still, this is a different case; you are a servant, almost I may say, of the family, as you are in the house of the steward. Follow me through the dining-room. I must show you the Rubens and Ostades and Van Dycks, and the Murillo bought by the late Duke Frederick Augustus; he gave for it seven thousand pounds.'

Joanna sighed. 'I am ashamed to say I know nothing of the value of pictures. That requires a special education, which I have not had. It is a branch of the business—' She stopped abruptly, and then said, 'I dare say you have a catalogue of the

paintings, which you could let me have. I should so much like to know what you have here; what to admire. Then, on another occasion, I shall be better able to enter into the merits of the pictures. You see, ma'am, with so much that is wonderful about one, the mind becomes bewildered. I will not look at the paintings to-day, I will look only at the china and the furniture.'

'Certainly,' said the housekeeper, 'what you say is just. I will give you a printed catalogue—privately printed, you understand.'

'That is a magnificent inlaid Florentine cabinet,' said Joanna; 'worth a hundred guineas. Oh, what treasures you have here!'

'Treasures indeed,' said Mrs. Probus; 'you see their Graces the Dukes of Kingsbridge have always been patrons of art, and have collected beautiful things in their travels through Europe.'

'If only there were to be a sale here—'

'Sale!' exclaimed the housekeeper; 'good heavens above! What do you mean? Sale!—sale in a Ducal mansion! Young woman, restrain your tongue. The word is indecent.'

She tossed her head, frowned, and walked forward stiffly, expressing disgust in every rustle of her silk gown and in the very creak of her shoes.

'I beg your pardon, ma'am. I was dazzled, and did not know what I was talking about.'

'Oh,' said Mrs. Probus, 'that alters the case. Now we are in the wing containing the private apartments. Here everything is more modern and comfortable. You admire the flowers I perceive. Yes, there are camellia and ferns in the corridor. If you like it, I will conduct you over the conservatories—not now—presently. His Grace sets great store on the green-houses and the winter-garden.'

'Dear ma'am, I should so greatly like to see them. I love flowers above everything in the world. I have only five little pots at home, on the roof, and one of them contains a bit of wild heather I dug up with my scissors, on the rare occasion of a holiday. Now that I am away, I do not know who will attend to my poor plants, and whether I shall find them alive when I return. I have no one in the world whom I can ask to do a thing for me.'

'This is the apartment of Lord Ronald,' said the housekeeper. 'I will not show you in there. It contains nothing of interest—that is, nothing very extraordinary. His lordship was a soldier,

and loves to have everything plain. No doubt it contains much that would interest military men, but such as you and me don't understand those pursuits. Here is the Marquess's door. Wait a moment, whilst I tap and peep in to make sure he is out. I am sure he went out shooting, I saw him with the keeper and the dogs—that is,' she corrected herself, 'I saw the keeper and the dogs with him.'

Mrs. Probus tapped timidly, and then opened. 'Look about you,' she said, 'at the costly china. He is out, as I supposed. It is very bold of me to enter and introduce you. See what abundance of porcelain there is here. The Marquess is most particular. He will not allow the housemaids to touch it. When dusty, Lady Grace takes it down and cleans it. He allows no other fingers than hers to touch his valuable collection.'

'How pretty the flowers are,' said Joanna, looking at the bouquets on the table and on the chimney-piece. 'So many posies—and specimen glasses everywhere.'

'Lady Grace always arranges them for her brother,' answered the housekeeper.

'No wonder that they are lovely,' said the girl. 'I should so much like to see Lady Grace.'

'You will do so some day. Yes—' she said, as she saw that Joanna was looking at a miniature on the wall over the fireplace, 'that is her ladyship when she was younger—when she was about eighteen.'

Joanna looked at the portrait with interest for a long while. Reluctantly, at last, she turned away and began to examine the china.

'This is Chelsea,' she said, contemptuously, 'bad of its kind.'

'It cannot be bad,' protested Mrs. Probus, 'or it would not be here.'

'This group—' began Joanna, putting forth her finger.

Mrs. Probus arrested her hand. 'For heaven's sake do not touch. You might break—and then—dear life! I should sink through the floor in shame and sorrow.'

'I shall not break anything,' answered Joanna. 'I could walk like a cat among Dresden figures, or a best Swansea service, and not upset or injure one article. Besides, if that group were broken, what odds! It is a modern imitation.'

'What! a connoisseur among my china! Condemning it, moreover!'

Mrs. Probus turned, shivered through all the gathers of her silk gown, raised her hands deprecatingly, and turned pale.

Joanna looked round at the speaker and recognised the Marquess from the photograph she had been shown. She said,



with perfect composure, 'Yes, my lord, this piece is not genuine. I can tell it by the colour of the glaze.'

'Indeed! I gave a long price for it.'

'You were taken in, my lord. It is not worth fifteen shillings.'

'Oh, my lord,' gasped Mrs. Probus, 'I beg your pardon ten thousand times. I thought you was out, and I dared take the liberty—the inexcusable liberty—of bringing this young person

in, who pretended to be interested in porcelain—and her to dare and say your lordship was taken in! You'll excuse my audacity, my lord, I pray, and her ignorance and impertinence.'

'My dear Probus,' said the Marquess, smiling, 'I am over-pleased to have my collection shown to one who has taste and knowledge, and discrimination.' Turning to Joanna, he added, 'I believe, to my cost, that you are right. Doctor Jenkyn, who knows more about china than anyone else in this county, has pronounced unhesitatingly against this piece. You are of the same opinion.'

'I know it, my lord. I know where it was made. There is a manufactory of these sham antiques. I can tell their articles at a glance.'

'You seem to have an accurate eye and considerable knowledge.'

'In my former situation I was with a master who collected china, and so I learned all about it—if I broke any, I got whacks.'

'Don't be so familiar,' whispered Mrs. Probus, greatly shocked.

'And,' continued Joanna, 'my master, after a while, so trusted my judgment, that he would let me spend pounds on pounds on porcelain for him.'

'Were you never taken in?'

Joanna laughed. *She* taken in! 'Never, my lord.'

'I should like to know your opinion of these bits of Chelsea.'

'I have already given it,' said Joanna, disregarding the monitions of the housekeeper. 'I told Mrs. Probus it was a lot of rubbish.'

The Marquess laughed.

'Right again. That is exactly Dr. Jenkyn's opinion, not expressed quite as forcibly as by you.'

'Here, my lord, you have a charming little Dresden cup and saucer; really good; canary yellow, with the cherubs in pink. It is well painted, and good of its kind.'

'Keep it,' said the Marquess. 'I make you a present of it as a remembrance of my den which you have invaded.'

'Thank you, thank you! this is kind,' said Joanna, with sparkling eye. 'I will never part with my little cup, never; and I beg pardon, my lord, for having persuaded Mrs. Probus to bring me in here, against her better judgment. It was not her fault, it was mine. I entreated her to let me see your china.'

‘Not another word; you are heartily welcome. If I want to buy china again, I will consult you.’

Joanna withdrew with a curtsey. Lord Saltcombe signed to the housekeeper to remain behind.

‘Who is the little china-fancier?’ he asked, in a low tone.

‘Oh, my lord! I am so ashamed. Only the new housemaid at the Lodge.’

‘Indeed! How education advances!’ laughed the Marquess. ‘In the march of culture we are being overtaken. Who would have supposed to find a housemaid so thorough a connoisseur? Well, she looks brimming over with brains, she has plenty of assurance, and is deucedly pretty.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

LADY GRACE.

THE words of commendation spoken by the Marquess were sufficient to make Mrs. Probus think of Joanna with more favour than before. She had recovered from her panic, Joanna had cleverly taken all the blame on herself, so the old woman’s face was wreathed with smiles, and she professed her readiness to show the girl whatever she desired. The Marquess had pronounced on her abilities—a word of commendation from him was enough for Mrs. Probus.

‘I daresay, my dear,’ said she, confidentially, ‘that Mr. Blomfield, the butler, will let you see the plate.’

‘I am a judge of plate,’ said Joanna, gravely. ‘I know the hall marks on silver as I do those on china.’

‘You do? Lord bless me!’ exclaimed the housekeeper. ‘Well, what is education coming to? That shows his lordship was right. He said you had brains.’

‘Did he? Then he can judge people as I judge china. I should very much like to see the plate.’

Mr. Blomfield did not require much pressing; he was proud to show the splendour of the house in his department. He allowed Joanna to enter the plate room, and he opened for her the iron doors of the cupboards in the wall, and exhibited the shelves, lined with green cloth, on which shone centre-pieces, goblets, urns, tea and coffee pots, spoons and forks, salvers large and

small, candlesticks and candelabra. All were in perfect order, shining brilliantly.

'This,' said Mr. Blomfield, opening another case, 'contains very old family plate. It is only brought out on the grandest state occasions. Here is a silver gilt ewer, magnificently chased, said to be three hundred years old; the present Duke was baptized out of it, but I believe it was a punchbowl formerly. Much of this is admired, but I cannot say I like it. The forks have but two prongs, and the spoons are rat-tailed. There is no accounting for the taste that can admire such things as these.'

'I suppose, sir, you have an inventory of all the plate,' said Joanna timidly, raising her large dark eyes to those of the butler.

'Of course, miss, I have; and I go over it with the steward on occasions. Very proper it should be so, though a mere matter of form. You will not find many mansions where there is such choice of plate. There is a great salver which was presented to Field-Marshal John, Duke of Kingsbridge, when he was Lord Saltecombe, in King George's reign, by the mayor and citizens of Ghent. I've heard,' continued the butler, 'that in some of your parvenu families there is a lot of plate, a great and vulgar display—but the quality is not there. All this is old and fine, and in good style. The new plate looks to-dayish; there is not the character about it that our ancestral store possesses.'

'Do you know, sir, what you have got in each cupboard?'

'Of course I do, miss. Do you not see that a list of the contents of each is pasted against the iron door, inside? And with the list is the weight in silver and gold.'

'What is the weight of the whole amount of silver, Mr. Blomfield?' asked the housekeeper.

'I have never counted,' was his reply. 'It is easily done; sum the totals affixed to each list on the doors.'

'I should dearly like to know,' said Joanna. 'Where I was before I came here there was a good deal of plate; but nothing like this, oh, nothing!'

'I suppose not,' said Mr. Blomfield with dignity. 'No one with a title, I suppose?'

'Oh dear no. What about now, do you think, sir, is the weight?'

'I will take the numbers down and add them up,' said Mrs. Probus good-naturedly.

‘Excuse me, sir,’ said Joanna; ‘you have a very beautiful bread-basket there. Might I look at it more closely, and see the hall mark?’

‘Certainly.’ He handed the basket to her. Joanna looked at the handle. ‘It belongs to the reign of William and Mary. The year I cannot say without a book.’

‘Dear, now! To think you have found that out! I have had to do with plate all my life, and know nothing more of the marks than to look for the lion and the head.’

‘Here is the sum of the weight of plate,’ said Mrs. Probus. ‘The silver in this column, the gold in that.’

‘All that?’ exclaimed Joanna. ‘Why, the silver at six-and-six an ounce, without allowing anything for workmanship, is—five thousand ounces—sixteen hundred and twenty-five pounds; but it would sell at a pound an ounce. Five thousand pounds’ worth of plate at the lowest.’

‘You can calculate pretty quickly,’ laughed the butler.

‘The Marquess said she had brains,’ said Mrs. Probus aside to Mr. Blomfield; ‘he was quite taken with her cleverness.’ Then to Joanna, ‘Now I will show you over the conservatories. You may keep the sum of the plate if you like.’

‘Thank you,’ answered Joanna. ‘I shall like it very much.’

Joanna was one of those children of this century, and of town civilisation, in whom shrewdness and simplicity, precocity and childishness, are strangely mixed together. When in the house among the furniture, china, and plate, she was reserved, observant, calculating, storing her observations in her retentive memory, prizing everything she saw; but when she entered the green-houses, that calculating spirit left her, and she was an unspoiled girl, overflowing with fresh delight, full of exuberant spirits. In the house, amidst the artistic valuables, she was in a world with which she was acquainted; in the conservatories she had passed to another and unfamiliar sphere. She had been reared in the midst of manufactured goods, apart from nature; now she was introduced to nature’s best creations. Mrs. Probus was amused at the girl’s expressions of rapture at the beauty of what she saw. Grapes she saw for the first time hanging from the vines, and oranges shining among the glossy leaves of the trees, side by side with silvery flowers. The dwarf apricots and nectarines were still burdened with fruit.

When she saw the flowers her excitement was unbounded.

She laughed and cried at once. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, hands and feet were in incessant agitation. The primulas, the cyclamen, were in full, delicate bloom. The wax-like camellias, white and crimson, were in flower; chrysanthemums, screened from frost, were in tufts of every colour. The air was scented with white Roman hyacinths.

‘Oh!’ cried Joanna, with hands uplifted, ‘I would that the Barbican and all the world would sink into the ocean, and leave me alone here, to be happy with the flowers, for ever.’

At that moment the door from the next, the orchid house, opened, and Lady Grace Eveleigh appeared, dressed in silvery grey, with a quiet, close bonnet on her head. She looked at the excited girl with a sweet, confidence-inspiring smile, and came forward.

‘Dear alive, my lady!’ exclaimed Mrs. Probus, ‘I am a most unfortunate body to-day. I took the liberty of taking this young woman through the conservatories, without a thought that your ladyship was here. I have been unfortunate, indeed, this afternoon.’

‘Not at all, not at all, Probus,’ said Lady Grace, ‘I am always delighted that others should enjoy our pretty flowers. You like flowers,’ she added, turning to Joanna, her voice soft as the cooing of a dove.

‘I love them,’ said the girl, clasping her hands together.

‘What were you saying as I came in?’ asked Lady Grace.

Joanna answered, half laughing, half crying, ‘I said that I wished the world would sink under the sea and leave me alone with the flowers.’

‘That was rather a selfish wish,’ said Lady Grace. ‘Do you not care that others should share your pleasure?’

‘No, not at all,’ answered Joanna, bluntly.

‘Excuse her, my lady,’ put in Mrs. Probus, with a frightened look, ‘she doesn’t mean really to differ from your ladyship; she doesn’t understand what she says.’

‘I do! hold your tongue,’ said Joanna, turning sharply on the housekeeper.

‘Do not trouble yourself, dear Probus. Whoever loves flowers has a kindred feeling with me. I love them with all my heart.’ She looked at Joanna, who stood undecided what to say or do. Then, turning to Mrs. Probus, she said, ‘Will you do me a favour, and yield your place to me, nurse? Let me take her round the

houses. You do not know the pleasure it gives me to show the flowers to one who can feel towards them like myself.'

'Very well, my lady,' said the old woman, 'but you must not take it amiss—if this young person—'

'I shall take it greatly amiss,' interrupted the lady, 'if she does not admire what I admire. I can see in her bright eyes that she is happy with my pets. Leave us alone together; we shall perfectly understand each other. We flower fanciers have a language of our own, understandable among ourselves, sealed to outsiders.'

When Mrs. Probus was gone, Lady Grace, looking kindly into the girl's excited face, asked, 'Will you tell me what is your name?'

'Joanna.'

'Joanna!' repeated Lady Grace. 'That name is uncommon. It is pretty, very pretty, and quaint. I like it.'

The girl flushed with pleasure and pride.

'I am glad you like it,' she said; 'I never thought a button about my name before. Now I shall like it.'

'I hope you like Probus,' said the lady. 'She was my nurse long, long ago. She used to scold me a little and caress me a great deal.'

'Please, my lady,' Joanna spoke timidly, 'may I go very, very slowly along, because all this is so new and so beautiful that I cannot bear to miss anything. Mrs. Probus walked so fast, and was afraid of staying long anywhere.'

'I will go as slow as you like, and stop as long as suits you beside any flower. That is a yellow primula; look, under the leaves is white flour, it comes off on your finger, and that gives the plant its Latin name. It has a sweet scent. Whence do you come from, Joanna?'

The girl pointed downwards.

The questioner looked at her with surprise, not understanding the significance of the indication.

'Out of the depths. Picked out of the mud—true as my word unvarnished,' explained Joanna.

'So is it with the water-lily,' said Lady Grace, 'one of the purest and most glorious of flowers. Its roots are in the basest slime, its flowers in the sunshine without soil. I am sure, Joanna, you will grow up as the water-lily.'

The girl shook her head. 'You don't understand. I am not a flower, but a grub.'

‘And the grub becomes a butterfly, that soars far above the garbage on which it crawled and fed.’

‘I can never be a butterfly.’

‘You can rise.’

‘I am rising,’ said Joanna, firmly; ‘I intend to rise. But you think your way and I think mine. You rise your way, which I cannot understand or copy, and I rise mine as I may, in whatever direction chance gives me an opening.’

Lady Grace looked into the girl’s face and tried to decipher its language. She saw that the mind was full of intelligence, precociously developed. She saw that ideas were working which Joanna was powerless to express. The girl misunderstood the intent look of the lady, and said, ‘I have made you angry. Everyone here is taught to agree with you. I say what I think. Whether it jumps or jars with the opinions of others matters little to me.’

‘I like you to speak out of your heart freshly what you think.’

‘Then,’ said Joanna, eagerly, ‘I think there is not a flower in all this place so sweet and so beautiful as you, lady.’

‘You must not say that.’ Lady Grace coloured.

‘Why not? It is true.’

‘No, it is not true.’

‘I think it.’

‘Never mind. Do not speak such things. I do not like them, and they will make me distrust you.’

Both were silent for a few minutes, and then Joanna said, ‘How very, very happy you must be here, my lady.’

‘Yes,’ answered the lady, in her soft, sweet voice, in which was a tone of sadness, ‘I am happy.’

Joanna noticed the omission.

‘Why do you not say *very* happy?’

‘I am indeed happy and thankful.’

Joanna now looked at her as intently as Lady Grace had previously observed *her*. The expression on Joanna’s face was one of perplexity. At last she said, ‘I don’t understand, and I can’t understand.’

‘What, Joanna?’

‘My lady, you do not and you cannot understand me, and I do not, and try as I may I cannot, understand you. We belong to different worlds.’

‘And are forgetting the bond between us—the flowers.’

Presently Lady Grace pointed to an arcade, where, against the wall, oranges, limes, and citrons were growing.

‘Do you notice these trees?’ she said; ‘they are very ancient, one or two of them are as much as two hundred years old.’

‘What a pity!’ answered Joanna; ‘they must be worn out. You should stub them out and plant new, improved sorts.’

Lady Grace went into the vinery, and brought thence a large bunch of green Muscatel grapes on a leaf. She presented it, smiling, to Joanna.

‘It is a pleasure,’ she said, ‘to have grapes for the sick and those who have no vineries of their own. They do enjoy them so greatly.’

‘Do you give grapes away?’

‘Yes, of course we do.’

‘But you might sell them and make a lot of money—enough to pay the gardener’s wage.’

Lady Grace coloured and laughed. ‘We couldn’t possibly do that.’

‘Why not?’

‘For one reason, because then we should have no grapes to give away.’

‘But you are not obliged to give them away?’

‘To the sick, of course we are.’

‘Why of course?’

‘Why, *because* they are sick.’

‘They should buy grapes for themselves if they require them.’

‘They are poor, and cannot do so.’

‘Then let them do without. You are not bound to them, nor they to you.’

Lady Grace, with a little sadness on her brow, but a smile on her lips, said, observing her, ‘It is a pleasure to give them what they cannot get themselves. There, it is a greater pleasure to me to watch you enjoying that bunch of Muscatel than if I were eating it myself.’

Joanna shook her head. ‘We belong to different worlds,’ she said. ‘If these greenhouses were mine I would keep everyone out but myself, and I would spend my life in them, looking at the flowers and eating the grapes.’

‘You would not spare me a bunch?’

‘I would give you everything,’ said Joanna, vehemently.

‘Why?’

‘Because I love you, and would want to make you love me.’

‘You ought to love the sick, the suffering, and the needy, and be ready to relieve them.’

‘They are nothing to me. They can do nothing for me.’

‘We are all one family, tied together by common blood, bound by mutual duties, members of one body; and the hand cannot say to the foot, “I have no need of you,” nor the head to the hand, “I have no need of you.”’

‘We are individuals,’ answered Joanna. ‘To look out for self is the law of life and of progress. I have heard Laz—I mean my late master—say that this it is which makes the United States so great and prosperous, that every man lives as an unit, cares nothing for his fellows, and beats his way through and over all who stand in his path. This it is which makes the old order fail, that every man under it was entangled in responsibilities to every man around him, above, below, and on his level, and was not free. The old order must give way to the new. That is what my master said.’

‘I do not like your theory, Joanna. It grates with my notions of right and wrong.’

‘I daresay not, my lady. You have been reared under the old principle of social life, I under the new. Each man for himself, my master said, is the motto of the coming age, and those who are hampered with the old doctrines of mutual responsibilities must go down.’

‘You are a very extraordinary girl.’

‘No, my lady, I am not. I am merely the child of the period, a representative of the coming age; there are thousands and tens of thousands like me, trained in the same school. To us belongs the future.’

Lady Grace Eveleigh sighed, and put her hand to her brow, unconsciously. ‘I have no doubt you are right,’ she said; ‘I feel rather than see that it is so. Yes—perhaps it is well. I do not know. I suppose I am prejudiced. I like the old order best.’

Joanna was frightened. She had spoken too boldly; not insolently, but confidently. She feared she had hurt her guide. When Lady Grace put her hand to her brow, it was as though she had received a blow. Joanna touched her.

‘Was I rude? Have I pained you? I am very, very sorry. I would die rather than hurt you.’ She caught Lady Grace’s hand and kissed it.

‘No, not a bit,’ answered the lady. ‘It does one good to know

the truth. Sooner or later it must be brought home to us, and rather from your lips than from a ruder tongue. We go on in a dream, with the poor always about and with us, and will wake up with surprise to find them above us. I hear my father and uncles forecasting the future, with dismal faces; I did not expect to hear the same forecast animating the rising power. Do not let us talk of that longer. Let us consider the flowers. By the way, I suppose you will be at our Christmas tenants' ball. We give one in the winter to the farmers and their families, and to the servants and their friends. Of course you will be there.'

'Oh what a pity, what a pity, what a pity!'

Lady Grace was unable to refrain a laugh at the girl's exclamations and droll consternation.

'What is such a pity?' she asked.

'I was to have learned to dance, but my coming here interfered with my lessons, so I can only look on and not be able to take a part.'

'You shall have some lessons,' said Lady Grace Eveleigh, with a sweet, kind smile. 'I will see to that. Miss Worthivale will arrange what times will suit best, and you shall be taught by me, in my own room. Miss Worthivale is so good and sweet that she will help me.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you,' exclaimed Joanna; 'that is prime!'

'There is one thing more,' said the lady; 'as you are fond of flowers, I suppose you must have something like a garden at home.'

'I have five pots—one cracked, and an old teapot without a spout.'

'What grow in them?'

'Fuchsias, Guernsey lilies, geranium, and wild heath.'

'Will you accept this from me? It is nothing to look at now; only a crowd of little horns poking out of the earth; but they will expand in time into lilies of the valley, full of beauty and fragrance. Keep them as a remembrance of me.'

'I will never, never part with them,' said Joanna. 'This is the second present I have had to-day. Look here! Your brother gave me this.' She showed the porcelain cup and saucer.

'Lord Saltcombe gave you that! What—have you been talking to and astonishing him?'

'Yes,' said the girl, 'I did astonish him a bit. He gave me this; but I like your flowers best.'

‘I must leave you now; I saw my father return in the carriage.’ Lady Grace hesitated a moment, looked questioningly at Joanna, and then touched her, drew her to her, and pressed a light kiss on her brow. ‘We are travellers over one pass. Some ascend as others go down; as they meet and pass, they salute,’ she said, and slipped away.

CHAPTER XIX.

SLEEPY HOLLOW.

THE Venerable the Archdeacon of Wellington, Bachelor of Divinity, Canon of Glastonbury, Rector of Sleepy Hollow, and Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of Kingsbridge, was sitting in his study with his wife one morning in November, discussing the list of poor people to whom Christmas benefactions were to be given.

The Archdeacon regarded himself, and was regarded, as a man of business. He was secretary to several diocesan societies; he was a stay to the Kingsbridge family. Whenever a spasm recurred in the financial condition of the Eveleighs, a telegram summoned him to South Devon, and he spent some hours in consultation with the steward at Court Royal. When he returned to Somersetshire he felt that his presence had been of use. So it had on more occasions than one, for he had advanced money to relieve the strain.

‘Really,’ said Lady Elizabeth Eveleigh—the Venerable the Archdeaconess, and Grey Mare of Sleepy Hollow—‘I think we do a great deal more than is necessary. There are the coal club, and the clothing club, and the blanket club, and the shoe club, and the Sunday school club, and the widows’ alms, and the three yards of flannel to every married woman in the place, and the Christmas largess and the Christmas beef. This comes very heavy. You cannot put our charities at a less figure than sixty pounds per annum; then that great imposture, Queen Anne’s Bounty, absorbs sixty pounds more, and the rates come to eighty, and the curate gets one hundred and twenty-five. Church expenses amount to ten pounds; the living is worth three hundred and forty pounds—that leaves us just five pounds on which to keep house, pay five servants, and entertain all the neighbourhood, subscribe to every church restoration, and contribute to every bazaar.’

‘My dear Elizabeth, I have my canonry.’

‘Worth eight hundred pounds, which goes into that Goodwin

Sand, the Kingsbridge debt. I know it does. Do not pull a face; I know it. I never finger the money.'

'Then there is my archdeaconry, worth two hundred.'

'Out of which we pay the servants and keep the carriage. Edward, it is really too bad; you ought to have been a Bishop.'

'Elizabeth, how is that possible, with the Liberals in power?'

'I am sure that ought to be no hindrance to your promotion. You have never offered an opinion decidedly on any topic, political or ecclesiastical, that could be objected to by anyone. You have been most tolerant. Your charities have been given indiscriminately to Dissenters and Church people. You never have taken a side. You have been scrupulously *via media*.'

'I do not want to be a Bishop. I have not the physical strength.'

'I do. A bishopric means a good deal more than the four thousand set down in "Whitaker"—it means getting a haul out of Queen Anne, and some pickings, may be, from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.'

'Let us return to the lists, Elizabeth. We are considering Betty Perkins, not me.'

'Betty Perkins puts me out of patience,' said the Venerable the Grey Mare. 'She has only just paid into the clubs one lump sum. I cannot see the good of clubs and rules, if she is to be allowed to reap the benefit of the former whilst violating the latter. She has sent in four-and-fourpence for the coal club, four-and-fourpence for the clothing club, four-and-fourpence for the shoe club, four-and-fourpence for the blanket club, and twenty-one shillings and eightpence for her five children, who only attend Sunday school now and then—just before the treat and the Christmas tree. I have her money in my pocket now—listen how it rattles—thirty-nine shillings in all. She will get her cards with seventy-eight shillings on them, just thirty-nine shillings allowed her for putting in her money to-day, to receive it out with interest to-morrow. It is preposterous. I believe she borrowed the sum for the occasion. I refuse to be treasurer and secretary to the charitable clubs if you wink at such flagrant cases.'

'My dear Elizabeth, there is no one else in the parish capable of managing the clubs. As to Betty Perkins, consider how poor she is, with a husband given to drink, and five children.'

'Rules are rules,' said Lady Elizabeth.

‘Yes, my dear, but justice must be tempered with mercy.’

‘I do not think the clubs and alms do good. The people take what is given them as a right. They are not grateful; they do not come to church a bit the better for being bribed at the rate of five pounds per house to come.’

‘We cannot give up the clubs, Elizabeth. They really are a great comfort to the people.’

‘You pauperise them, Edward. Well?’ to the man-servant who appeared at the door; ‘what is it, Thomas?’

‘Please, my lady, there is a gentleman in the drawing-room who wants to see his lordship.’

‘Let me look at the card,’ said the Archdeaconess. ‘Rigsby! Rigsby—I do not know the name. Some traveller for a wine merchant, I suppose.’

‘Bless me!’ exclaimed Lord Edward Eveleigh, when, by his wife’s kind permission, he was allowed to look at the card; ‘my old college friend Rigsby. I thought he was in Ceylon, coffee-growing. I heard he had realised a great fortune. Excuse me, my dear Elizabeth. Settle Betty Perkins as you like—that is, no, let her off this time, and I will have a talk with her. She will be more regular next year. Elizabeth, I must ask Rigsby to lunch.’

‘There is cold mutton and mince,’ answered Lady Elizabeth. ‘Also tapioca pudding.’

‘I haven’t seen Rigsby for forty years—no, not for forty years. I must insist on his paying us a visit. You can manage it, Elizabeth?’

‘The sheets in the best bedroom are aired.’

The Archdeacon hastened into the parlour, where he found a tall brown man, with grey hair, seated, awaiting him.

‘I am so glad—so delighted to see you again,’ said Lord Edward, extending both hands.

‘I have come,’ said Mr. Rigsby, ‘on my daughter’s account. We have been visiting Glastonbury, and she has been taken ill there, whether with neuralgia or toothache it is not for me to determine. She is a sad sufferer—and I thought, being in a strange place, that I might venture on calling, trusting you might not have quite forgotten me—’

‘My dear Rigsby—’ interrupted the Archdeacon, with overflowing cordiality.

‘Excuse me,’ said the visitor, putting up his hand to stop him,

‘I will say what I desire first, and then shall be thankful for your remarks on it. I was observing that I relied on your kindness, which I well remembered, to help me with your advice. I am a stranger in Glastonbury, indeed a stranger in England. You have a local dentist here—that is, at Glastonbury. I want to know—’

‘Vigurs is the man for you,’ said Lord Edward.

‘One moment, and I have done,’ continued Mr. Rigsby, looking with impatience at the Archdeacon. ‘I have no confidence, myself, in local practitioners; if there be real genius it will unquestionably gravitate to town, and the dregs of the profession be left in the country.’

‘I beg your pardon—’

‘You will allow me to finish what I was saying.’ Rigsby looked Lord Edward down. ‘One hears atrocious stories of the misdeeds of these men—breaking jaws, drawing the wrong teeth, and so on. I could not suffer Dulcina to run such a risk unless I were perfectly satisfied that the man was really first-rate.’

‘Vigurs is a splendid fellow; a thorough Churchman, and always stays—’

‘Excuse me if I say that this is neither here nor there. I do not care a snap for the religion and politics of Mr. Vigurs, but I do care for his being a first-class dentist. It is a long way to town, and Dulcina’s sufferings are so intense that I am inclined to place my sweet child in the hands of a man, even if in the country, if he may be trusted. I suppose that in Bath or in Bristol a dentist of some experience and intelligence—’

‘I can assure you—’

‘I shall have done directly. I was observing, when interrupted, that in Bath or Bristol a dentist of experience may be found, but that would entail a journey to Bath or Bristol. Dulcina, poor child, is so prostrated by her pains last night that I hardly like to move her so far. If you saw the sweet flower, you would say the same—so fragile, so fair, so languishing.’

‘You may rely on Vigurs,’ said the Archdeacon. ‘He has drawn many of my teeth and stopped others. Vigurs is quite a first-rate man.’

‘If the tooth be drawn, ether or nitrous oxide must be used. Can I trust this man to employ such means? My child’s life is too precious to be played with. She is my only child, heiress to all the fortune I have toiled for forty years to gain. She

will be worth ten thousand a year after I am gone. Judge if the world can do without one so gifted. As for me, I live only for Dulcina. Were she to expire under nitrous oxide I should blow out my brains.'

'Have perfect confidence in Vigurs. He is a man of note. This neighbourhood is well peopled with county families, and they all go to Vigurs in preference to London dentists. Where is your daughter now?'

'She is at the White Hart. Miss Stokes, her aunt, is with her. She has administered soothing drops, and Dulcina is asleep. Poor soul, she needs repose after the torture of toothache or neuralgia. I do not pretend to determine which it is, but she has a carious molar. I have seen it. You are positive that Mr. Vigurs may be allowed to look at my daughter's jaw?'

'Positive. First-rate man, gentle as a lamb with ladies. Now Rigsby, as your daughter is asleep, spare me a few minutes to tell me something about yourself. You look well burnt like a coffee-berry, but hearty—more so than myself, who am but a creaking gate. Have you definitely left Ceylon?'

'Yes; Dulcina and I came here to look at a house and park that is for sale. Dulcina and I intend to settle in the country. I have sold my estates in Ceylon, providentially before the coffee disease invaded the island, so that I sold them well, and the purchaser, not I, has been ruined, for which I cannot be too thankful. We like this county, and this part of the country. It is rich, well wooded, and there seem to be many gentlemen's seats about. I cannot say that Shotley Park is quite to our taste, but we will think over it, and discuss it together when Dulcina's tooth ceases to distract her. Poor dear, she can give her attention to nothing now but her tooth and the nerve that runs up into the head across the cheek from the jaw.'

'Will you take anything?'

'I should not object to a glass of sherry and a biscuit. Nervousness about my daughter has rather shaken me.'

'Now look here, Rigsby. I will not hear of your staying at the White Hart. You must positively come to my house and stay a fortnight. Under that time I will not let you off; stay over it as long as you like.'

'Thank you. I do not mind if I accept. If anything has to be done to my dear Dulcina's jaw, it would be more satisfactory to be in your Rectory than in an inn. One cannot secure all the

comforts requisite for an invalid at an hotel. Should the tooth be extracted or the nerve destroyed, my daughter will be so shattered that further travel will be impossible for some days. The people at the White Hart are good and kind; still an inn is not a place for a person with a carious tooth. Dulcina is made uncomfortable by the scream of the engines. Glastonbury is a terminus, and every engine that comes in shrieks to announce its arrival, and every one that leaves shrieks to proclaim its departure. Dulcina's nerves are in that quivering state of irritation that the least noise upsets her.'

'She shall come here at once. I will send my carriage.'

'We will come in the afternoon. I must go and see the dentist myself. I shall be able to judge by his looks whether he is intelligent—as for his experience, of that I cannot form an opinion. Has he studied in America? The Yankees are far ahead of us in dentistry. They transplant teeth as we do trees.'

'Wait a moment,' said the Archdeacon; 'I will fetch Lady Elizabeth.'

He ran out of the room, and found his wife still engaged over the club accounts.

'My dear Edward,' said she, 'I will meet your wishes half-way; I can do no more. Betty Perkins shall have two-and-twopence instead of four-and-fourpence in each club.'

'Elizabeth,' exclaimed the Archdeacon, 'come into the drawing-room and see Rigsby. But stay—first give me the telegraph forms; I must send off at once for Saltcombe.'

'Why so? What has occurred?'

'My dear Elizabeth, Rigsby has an only daughter, worth ten thousand a year. That represents about two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand pounds. Oh, Elizabeth, if only some of the Kingsbridge estates might be cleared with this sum, how happy we should all be!'

CHAPTER XX.

DULCINA.

IN the afternoon Lord and Lady Edward Eveleigh called on the Rigsbys. The Archdeaconess was full of civility. She was a pleasant, fine-looking woman, with grey hair, and very clear eyes. She spoke in a decided manner. She had ruled her house, her

husband—almost the Archdeaconry—for many years. She had ruled society—at least clerical society—for a wide radius. This had given decision to her character and a determination to be obeyed which few were strong enough to stand against.

Miss Rigby was seated on a sofa. She had expected the visit, and was prepared for it. She wore a crude blue shawl thrown over her shoulders, and a mauve handkerchief was tied round her aching



jaws. She had bracelets on both arms, and her fingers were encrusted with rings. She was a pale, freckled young lady, not ugly, and not pretty, with very light eyebrows, and hair thick and coarse. She was proud of her red hair, and had it frizzed into a mass. Her grey eyes were dull, but the pain she had endured had perhaps quenched their light.

‘I am going to carry you off to the Rectory,’ said Lady Elizabeth. ‘It is of no use your protesting. What I have made up my

mind to I carry out, as the diocese well knows. I restored Sleepy Hollow church myself. I said to the Archdeacon, "It must be done," and as he would not put his shoulder to the wheel, I begged, got up a bazaar, and did it. I am going to make much of you. You want the quiet and comfort of an English home. We'll soon set you on your feet again, and screw up the relaxed nerves. I know exactly what you want.'

Mr. Rigsby looked entreatingly at his daughter. He had made up his mind to spend a fortnight at Sleepy Hollow, but he did not dare to accept the invitation without the consent of his spoiled child.

Dulcina answered, in a condescending tone, 'I am afraid we shall be in your way.'

'Not at all, or I would not have asked you.'

Mr. Rigsby brightened. His daughter was yielding.

'The invitation is kind,' said Dulcina, 'and if I did not fear trespassing on your goodness I should like to accept.'

'Then accept,' said Lady Elizabeth. 'There—the matter is concluded. I gave orders for the rooms to be got ready before I left the Rectory.'

'You are perhaps expecting visitors?'

'Only Lord Saltcombe—he could be stowed anywhere if we were hard put to, but we are not. Our predecessor at Sleepy Hollow had fourteen children, and added to the Rectory to accommodate them. We have no family, and so there are any number of spare rooms.'

'I am not in a visiting condition,' protested Miss Rigsby; 'my nerves are shaken; I have suffered a great deal.'

'We will put you to rights,' said Lady Elizabeth; 'I understand all that is needed. I doctor the parish—I may almost say I feed it; my opinion is that most maladies proceed from over-feeding or underfeeding. With the poor it is over and under-feeding simultaneously: they overfeed themselves with heavy, lumpy pastry without much nutriment in it, that weighs like lead in them, and they under-feed themselves by not taking good blood and tissue-making diet. You understand me?'

'I think so,' answered Miss Rigsby, listlessly. The poor interested her little or nothing—she occupied her own entire horizon. 'But I,' she said, 'eat neither what is lumpy, nor what is insufficient.'

'My dear,' said the Archdeaconess, 'here in an inn you cannot

have the requisite comforts. There is no house in the world like an English house for a person who is sick or convalescent. So it is settled that you come.'

'I really am not up to meeting strangers and making conversation,' said Dulcina.

'Strangers! Oh, Saltcombe! He is my nephew; a nice young man, very agreeable. He will talk, and I can always talk. Besides, Miss Rigsby, if you are going to buy Shotley and settle among us, we must introduce you to the neighbours, when you are well.'

'I do not think papa has settled about Shotley yet.'

'I'll go over the place with him. I will manage everything. I know the quality of the soil on which it is built, the nature of the drainage, and the water supply. I can tell you all the advantages and disadvantages of the place, and I should wish to have a word about the price. I do not choose to have you taken in and pay a fancy price. There is not a glut of country-houses in the market. Leave it to me.'

'Lady Elizabeth is a most knowing and business-like person, you will find,' said the Archdeacon. 'Dear young lady, be persuaded, and spend at least a fortnight with us.'

'Besides,' said the Venerable the Archdeaconess, 'I should like to have Vigurs under my eye. You have no conception what a stimulus it gives to activity and genius when I overlook the workmen. Vigurs, the dentist, has a great respect for me. He would take infinite pains over you, if he knew I was watching him. Vigurs is a good man—still, the best need supervision.'

'There's something in that,' said Mr. Rigsby.

'Then, again,' said Lady Elizabeth, 'I am bent on getting my niece, Lady Grace Eveleigh, to us after Christmas, and I am eager that you, Miss Rigsby, should know her, and see, if that could possibly be contrived, the Duke's beautiful place, Court Royal, which I assure you is one of the finest residences in the West of England. The Duke would be so interested to hear from your father all about Indian affairs; his Grace is particularly interested in India, and, of course, also Ceylon. It would be a treat to him to talk them over with your father, and you—you will be enraptured with the beauty and comfort of Court Royal. Leave this to me: I am a manager. I will get Lady Grace to visit us, and she will invite you there. You are sure to get on well together.'

Lady Elizabeth played to her husband's bat, but the Rigbys did not see her play. Father and daughter were flattered. The invitation was accepted.

As the Archdeacon and his wife drove home in their brougham, Lord Edward said to his better half—

‘What do you think of her? She is not ugly.’

‘Not pronouncedly ugly, certainly. She is simply uninteresting. I do not think that Saltcombe will care for her.’

‘He *must* take her,’ said the Archdeacon, agitated, putting his hand on that of his wife, and it shook. ‘If he does not, the whole house of Kingsbridge will collapse. My dear Elizabeth, the crash is imminent. I cannot see how that it can be averted except by Saltcombe's marriage.’

‘But he is so inert. He will not realise the state of affairs.’

‘That is true. But I take on myself to make him realise it, and that excellent young fellow, Beavis Worthivale, who regards him as a brother, will help me.’

Lady Elizabeth shook her head. ‘The time is past when men sacrificed themselves for their families. I do not believe that Saltcombe cares sufficiently for his position, and the family dignity, to saddle himself with a wretched, selfish, inane, pasty-faced East Indian, so that he may redeem the family from ruin and give his position a new lease of splendour.’

‘I will write to him directly I get home,’ said Lord Edward. ‘I have sent a premonitory telegram. He is not so dead to duty as to reject a solemn appeal from me.’

So the Archdeacon, on his return, took up his pen and wrote his nephew the following letter:—

‘My dear Saltcombe,—I particularly want you to come here at once. Pack your portmanteau and start as soon as you possibly can after the receipt of this letter. There are reasons which make me desire your presence here. My dear fellow, you must allow an old man like me to give you a word of advice. You are supposed to know that the property of your dear father, which will one day be yours, is so involved as to be almost past recovery. I say almost, not altogether. It depends on you whether a grand family of historic renown shall sink and disappear. I have no family, your uncle Ronald lost his wife and children. You are unmarried. If you die a bachelor the Ducal title goes, the family becomes extinct. You are bound to continue a race which has

been illustrious and honourable. I cannot bear to think of dear Court Royal passing into other hands. Now, if you marry, you must marry so as to recover the property from its embarrassments. Such an opportunity presents itself. I will speak to you more fully on this when we meet. I pray you, as an old man, your uncle—one who has your welfare, and that of dear Grace, at heart—do not shrug your shoulders and write to say you cannot come. Come at once. Rouse yourself to the emergencies of the case. Rouse yourself to your duty. An Eveleigh has never hitherto wanted goading to perform a duty; never—when required—to commit an act of self-sacrifice.

‘Till we meet—which will be to-morrow,

‘Yours most affectionately,

‘EDWARD EVELEIGH.

‘P.S.—Elizabeth sends her tenderest love to dear Grace. Kiss her sweet face for me.’

(To be continued.)

FOSSIL FOOD.

THERE is something at first sight rather ridiculous in the idea of eating a fossil. To be sure, when the frozen mammoths of Siberia were first discovered, though they had been dead for at least 80,000 years (according to Dr. Croll's minimum reckoning for the end of the great ice age), and might therefore naturally have begun to get a little musty, they had nevertheless been kept so fresh, like a sort of prehistoric Australian mutton, in their vast natural refrigerators, that the wolves and bears greedily devoured the precious relics for which the naturalists of Europe would have been ready gladly to pay the highest market price of best beefsteak. Those carnivorous vandals gnawed off the skin and flesh with the utmost appreciation, and left nothing but the tusks and bones to adorn the galleries of the new Natural History Museum at South Kensington. But then wolves and bears, especially in Siberia, are not exactly fastidious about the nature of their meat diet. Furthermore, some of the bones of extinct animals found beneath the stalagmitic floor of caves, in England and elsewhere, presumably of about the same age as the Siberian mammoths, still contain enough animal matter to produce a good strong stock for antediluvian broth, which has been scientifically described by a high authority as pre-Adamite jelly. The congress of naturalists at Tübingen a few years since had a smoking tureen of this cave-bone soup placed upon the dinner table at their hotel one evening, and pronounced it with geological enthusiasm 'scarcely inferior to prime oxtail.' But men of science, too, are accustomed to trying unsavoury experiments, which would go sadly against the grain with less philosophic and more squeamish palates. They think nothing of tasting a caterpillar that birds will not touch, in order to discover whether it owes its immunity from attack to some nauseous, bitter, or pungent flavouring; and they even advise you calmly to discriminate between two closely similar species of snails by trying which of them when chewed has a delicate *soupeçon* of oniony aroma. So that naturalists in this matter, as the children say, don't count: their universal thirst for knowledge will prompt them to drink anything, down even to *consommé* of quaternary cave-bear.

There is one form of fossil food, however, which appears con-

stantly upon all our tables at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, every day, and which is so perfectly familiar to every one of us that we almost forget entirely its immensely remote geological origin. The salt in our salt-cellars is a fossil product, laid down ages ago in some primæval Dead Sea or Caspian, and derived in all probability (through the medium of the grocer) from the triassic rocks of Cheshire or Worcestershire. Since that thick bed of rock-salt was first precipitated upon the dry floor of some old evaporated inland sea, the greater part of the geological history known to the world at large has slowly unrolled itself through incalculable ages. The dragons of the prime have begun and finished their long (and Lord Tennyson says slimy) race. The fish-like saurians and flying pterodactyls of the secondary period have come into existence and gone out of it gracefully again. The whole family of birds has been developed and diversified into its modern variety of eagles and titmice. The beasts of the field have passed through sundry stages of mammoth and mastodon, of sabre-toothed lion and huge rhinoceros. Man himself has progressed gradually from the humble condition of a 'hairy arboreal quadruped'—these bad words are Mr. Darwin's own—to the glorious elevation of an erect two-handed creature, with a county suffrage question and an intelligent interest in the latest proceedings of the central divorce court. And after all those manifold changes, compared to which the entire period of English history, from the landing of Julius Cæsar to the appearance of this present article (to take two important landmarks), is as one hour to a human lifetime, we quietly dig up the salt to-day from that dry lake bottom, and proceed to eat it with the eggs laid by the hens this morning for this morning's breakfast, just as though the one foodstuff were not a whit more ancient or more dignified in nature than the other. Why, mammoth steak is really quite modern and commonplace by the side of the salt in the salt-cellar that we treat so cavalierly every day of our ephemeral existence.

The way salt got originally deposited in these great rock beds is very well illustrated for us by the way it is still being deposited in the evaporating waters of many inland seas. Every schoolboy knows of course (though some persons who are no longer schoolboys may just possibly have forgotten) that the Caspian is in reality only a little bit of the Mediterranean, which has been cut off from the main sea by the gradual elevation of the country between them. For many ages the intermediate soil has been quite

literally rising in the world, but to this day a continuous chain of salt lakes and marshes runs between the Caspian and the Black Sea, and does its best to keep alive the memory of the time when they were both united in a single basin. All along this intervening tract, once sea but now dry land, banks of shells belonging to kinds still living in the Caspian and the Black Sea alike testify to the old line of water communication. One fine morning (date unknown) the intermediate belt began to rise up between them; the water was all pushed off into the Caspian, but the shells remained to tell the tale even unto this day.

Now, when a bit of the sea gets cut off in this way from the main ocean, evaporation of its waters generally takes place rather faster than the return supply of rain, rivers, and lesser tributaries. In other words, the inland sea or salt lake begins slowly to dry up. This is now just happening in the Caspian, which is in fact a big pool in course of being slowly evaporated. By-and-by a point is reached when the water can no longer hold in solution the amount of salts of various sorts that it originally contained. In the technical language of chemists and physicists, it begins to get supersaturated. Then the salts are thrown down as a sediment at the bottom of the sea or lake, exactly as crust forms on the bottom of a kettle. Gypsum is the first material to be so thrown down; because it is less soluble than common salt, and therefore sooner got rid of. It forms a thick bottom layer in the bed of all evaporating inland seas; and as plaster of Paris it not only gives rise finally to artistic monstrosities hawked about the streets for the degradation of national taste, but also plays an important part in the manufacture of bonbons, the destruction of the human digestion, and the ultimate ruin of the dominant white European race. Only about a third of the water in a salt lake need be evaporated before the gypsum begins to be deposited in a solid layer over its whole bed; it is not till 93 per cent. of the water has gone, and only 7 per cent. is left, that common salt begins to be thrown down. When that point of intensity is reached, the salt, too, falls as a sediment to the bottom, and there overlies the gypsum deposit. Hence all the world over, wherever we come upon a bed of rock salt, it almost invariably lies upon a floor of solid gypsum.

The Caspian, being still a very respectably modern sea, constantly supplied with fresh water from the surrounding rivers, has

not yet begun by any means to deposit salt on its bottom from its whole mass, but the shallow pools and long bays around its edge have crusts of beautiful rose-coloured salt-crystals forming upon their sides; and as these lesser basins gradually dry up, the sand, blown before the wind, slowly drifts over them, so as to form miniature rock-salt beds on a very small scale. Nevertheless, the young and vigorous Caspian only represents the first stage in the process of evaporation of an inland sea. It is still fresh enough to form the abode of fish and mollusks; and the irrepressible young lady of the present generation is perhaps even aware that it contains numbers of seals, being in fact the seat of one of the most important and valuable seal-fisheries in the whole world. It may be regarded as a typical example of a yet youthful and lively inland sea.

The Dead Sea, on the other hand, is an old and decrepit salt lake in a very advanced stage of evaporation. It lies several feet below the level of the Mediterranean, just as the Caspian lies several feet below the level of the Black Sea; and as in both cases the surface must once have been continuous, it is clear that the water of either sheet must have dried up to a very considerable extent. But while the Caspian has shrunk only to 85 feet below the Black Sea, the Dead Sea has shrunk to the enormous depth of 1,292 feet below the Mediterranean. Every now and then, some enterprising De Lesseps or other proposes to dig a canal from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, and so re-establish the old high level. The effect of this very revolutionary proceeding would be to flood the entire Jordan Valley, connect the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea, and play the dickens generally with Scripture geography, to the infinite delight of Sunday school classes. Now, when the Dead Sea first began its independent career as a separate sheet of water on its own account, it no doubt occupied the whole bed of this imaginary engineers' lake—spreading, if not from Dan to Beersheba, at any rate from Dan to Edom, or, in other words, along the whole Jordan Valley from the Sea of Galilee and even the Waters of Merom to the southern desert. (I will not insult the reader's intelligence and orthodoxy by suggesting that perhaps he may not be precisely certain as to the exact position of the Waters of Merom; but I will merely recommend him just to refresh his memory by turning to his atlas, as this is an opportunity which may not again occur.) The modern Dead Sea is the last shrunken relic of such a considerable

ancient lake. Its waters are now so very concentrated and so very nasty that no fish or other self-respecting animal can consent to live in them; and so buoyant that a man can't drown himself, even if he tries, because the sea is saturated with salts of various sorts till it has become a kind of soup or porridge, in which a swimmer floats, will he, nill he. Persons in the neighbourhood who wish to commit suicide are therefore obliged to go elsewhere: much as in Tasmania, the healthiest climate in the world, people who want to die are obliged to run across for a week to Sydney or Melbourne.

The waters of the Dead Sea are thus in the condition of having already deposited almost all their gypsum, as well as the greater part of the salt they originally contained. They are, in fact, much like sea water which has been boiled down till it has reached the state of a thick salty liquid; and though most of the salt is now already deposited in a deep layer on the bottom, enough still remains in solution to make the Dead Sea infinitely saltier than the general ocean. At the same time, there are a good many other things in solution in sea water besides gypsum and common salt; such as chloride of magnesium, sulphate of potassium, and other interesting substances with pretty chemical names, well calculated to endear them at first sight to the sentimental affections of the general public. These other by-contents of the water are often still longer in getting deposited than common salt; and owing to their intermixture in a very concentrated form with the mother-liquid of the Dead Sea, the water of that evaporating lake is not only salt but also slimy and fetid to the last degree, its taste being accurately described as half brine, half rancid oil. Indeed, the salt has been so far precipitated already that there is now five times as much chloride of magnesium left in the water as there is common salt. By the way, it is a lucky thing for us that these various soluble minerals are of such constitution as to be thrown down separately at different stages of concentration in the evaporating liquid; for if it were otherwise, they would all get deposited together, and we should find on all old salt lake beds only a mixed layer of gypsum, salt, and other chlorides and sulphates, absolutely useless for any practical human purpose. In that case, we should be entirely dependent upon marine salt pans and evaporation of sea water for our entire salt supply. As it is, we find the materials deposited one above another in regular layers; first, the gypsum at the bottom;

then, the rock-salt; and last of all, on top, the more soluble mineral constituents.

The Great Salt Lake of Utah, sacred to the memory of Brigham Young, gives us an example of a modern saline sheet of very different origin, since it is in fact not a branch of the sea at all, but a mere shrunken remnant of a very large freshwater-lake system, like that of the still-existing St. Lawrence chain. Once upon a time, American geologists say, a huge sheet of water, for which they have even invented a definite name, Lake Bonneville, occupied a far larger valley among the outliers of the Rocky Mountains, measuring 300 miles in one direction by 180 miles in the other. Beside this primitive Superior lay a second great sheet—an early Huron—(Lake Lahontan, the geologists call it) almost as big, and equally of fresh water. By-and-by—the precise dates are necessarily indefinite—some change in the rainfall, unregistered by any contemporary 'New York Herald,' made the waters of these big lakes shrink and evaporate. Lake Lahontan shrank away like Alice in Wonderland, till there was absolutely nothing left of it; Lake Bonneville shrank till it attained the diminished size of the existing Great Salt Lake. Terrace after terrace, running in long parallel lines on the sides of the Wahsatch Mountains around, mark the various levels at which it rested for a while on its gradual downward course. It is still falling indeed: and the plain around is being gradually uncovered, forming the white salt-encrusted shore with which all visitors to the Mormon city are so familiar.

But why should the water have become briny? Why should the evaporation of an old Superior produce at last a Great Salt Lake? Well, there is a small quantity of salt in solution even in the freshest of lakes and ponds, brought down to them by the streams or rivers; and as the water of the hypothetical Lake Bonneville slowly evaporated, the salt and other mineral constituents remained behind. Thus the solution grew constantly more and more concentrated, till at the present day it is extremely saline. Professor Geikie (to whose works the present paper is much indebted) found that he floated on the water in spite of himself; and the under sides of the steps at the bathing-places are all encrusted with short stalactites of salt, produced from the drip of the bathers as they leave the water. The mineral constituents, however, differ considerably in their proportions from those found in true salt lakes of marine origin; and the point at

which the salt is thrown down is still far from having been reached. Great Salt Lake must simmer in the sun for many centuries yet before the point arrives at which (as cooks say) it begins to settle.

That is the way in which deposits of salt are being now produced on the world's surface, in preparation for that man of the future who, as we learn from a duly constituted authority, is to be hairless, toothless, web-footed, and far too respectable ever to be funny. Man of the present derives his existing salt-supply chiefly from beds of rock-salt similarly laid down against his expected appearance some hundred thousand æons or so ago. (An æon is a very convenient geological unit indeed to reckon by; as nobody has any idea how long it is, they can't carp at you for a matter of an æon or two one way or the other.) Rock-salt is found in most parts of the world, in beds of very various ages. The great Salt Range of the Punjaub is probably the earliest in date of all salt deposits; it was laid down at the bottom of some very ancient Asiatic Mediterranean, whose last shrunken remnant covered the upper basin of the Indus and its tributaries during the Silurian age. Europe had then hardly begun to be; and England was probably still covered from end to end by the primæval ocean. From this very primitive salt deposit the greater part of India and Central Asia is still supplied; and the Indian Government makes a pretty penny out of the dues in the shape of the justly detested salt-tax—a tax especially odious because it wrings the fraction of a farthing even from those unhappy agricultural labourers who have never tasted ghee with their rice.

The thickness of the beds in each salt deposit of course depends entirely upon the area of the original sea or salt-lake, and the length of time during which the evaporation went on. Sometimes we may get a mere film of salt; sometimes a solid bed six hundred feet thick. Perfectly pure rock-salt is colourless and transparent; but one doesn't often find it pure. Alas for a degenerate world! even in its original site, Nature herself has taken the trouble to adulterate it beforehand. (If she hadn't done so, one may be perfectly sure that commercial enterprise would have proved equal to the occasion in the long run.) But the adulteration hasn't spoilt the beauty of the salt; on the contrary, it serves, like rouge, to give a fine fresh colour where none existed. When iron is the chief colouring matter, rock-salt assumes a beautiful clear red tint; in other cases it is emerald

green or pale blue. As a rule, salt is prepared from it for table by a regular process; but it has become a fad of late with a few people to put crystals of native rock-salt on their tables; and they decidedly look very pretty, and have a certain distinctive flavour of their own that is not unpleasant.

Our English salt supply is chiefly derived from the Cheshire and Worcestershire salt-regions, which are of triassic age. Many of the places at which the salt is mined have names ending in *wich*, such as Northwich, Middlewich, Nantwich, Droitwich, Netherwich, and Shirleywich. This termination *wich* is itself curiously significant, as Mr. Isaac Taylor has shown, of the necessary connection between salt and the sea. The earliest known way of producing salt was of course in shallow pans on the sea-shore, at the bottom of a shoal bay, called in Norse and early English a wick or wich; and the material so produced is still known in trade as bay-salt. By-and-by, when people came to discover the inland brine pits and salt mines, they transferred to them the familiar name, a wick; and the places where the salt was manufactured came to be known as wych-houses. Droitwich, for example, was originally such a wick, where the droits or dues on salt were paid at the time when William the Conqueror's commissioners drew up their great survey for Domesday Book. But the good easy-going mediæval people who gave these quaint names to the inland wiches had probably no idea that they were really and truly dried-up bays, and that the salt they mined from their pits was genuine ancient bay-salt, the deposit of an old inland sea, evaporated by slow degrees a countless number of ages since, exactly as the Dead Sea and the Great Salt Lake are getting evaporated in our own time.

Such nevertheless is actually the case. A good-sized Caspian used to spread across the centre of England and north of Ireland in triassic times, bounded here and there, as well as Dr. Hull can make out, by the Welsh Mountains, the Cheviots, and the Donegal Hills, and with the Peak of Derbyshire and the Isle of Man standing out as separate islands from its blue expanse. (We will beg the question that the English seas were then blue. They are certainly marked so in a very fine cerulean tint on Dr. Hull's map of Triassic Britain.) Slowly, like most other inland seas, this early British Caspian began to lose weight and to shrivel away to ever smaller dimensions. In Devonshire, where it appears to have first dried up, we get no salt, but only red marl, with here

and there a cubical cast, filling a hole once occupied by rock-salt, though the percolation of the rain has long since melted out that very soluble substance, and replaced it by a mere mould in the characteristic square shape of salt crystals. But Worcestershire and Cheshire were the seat of the inland sea when it had contracted to the dimensions of a mere salt lake, and begun to throw down its dissolved saline materials. One of the Cheshire beds is sometimes a hundred feet thick of almost pure and crystalline rock-salt. The absence of fossils shows that animals must have had as bad a time of it there as in the Dead Sea of our modern Palestine.

The Droitwich brine-pits have been known for many centuries, since they were worked (and taxed) even before the Norman Conquest, as were many other similar wells elsewhere. But the actual mining of rock-salt as such in England dates back only as far as the reign of King Charles II. of blessed memory, or more definitely to the very year in which the 'Pilgrim's Progress' was conceived and written by John Bunyan. During that particular summer, an enterprising person at Nantwich had sunk a shaft for coal, which he failed to find; but on his way down he came unexpectedly across the bed of rock-salt, then for the first time discovered as a native mineral. Since that fortunate accident, the beds have been so energetically worked and the springs so energetically pumped that some of the towns built on top of them have got undermined, and now threaten from year to year, in the most literal sense, to cave in. In fact, one or two subsidences of considerable extent have already taken place, due in part, no doubt, to the dissolving action of rain-water, but in part also to the mode of working. The mines are approached by a shaft; and when you get down to the level of the old sea bottom, you find yourself in a sort of artificial gallery, whose roof, with all the world on top of it, is supported every here and there by massive pillars, about fifteen feet thick. Considering that the salt lies often a hundred and fifty yards deep, and that these pillars have to bear the weight of all that depth of solid rock, it is not surprising that subsidences should sometimes occur in abandoned shafts, where the water is allowed to collect, and slowly dissolve away the supporting columns.

Salt is a necessary article of food for animals, but in a far less degree than is commonly supposed. Each of us eats on an average about ten times as much salt as we actually require. In this

respect popular notions are as inexact as in the very similar case of the supply of phosphorus. Because phosphorus is needful for brain action, people jump forthwith to the absurd conclusion that fish and other foods rich in phosphates ought to be specially good for students preparing for examination, great thinkers, and literary men. Mark Twain indeed once advised a poetical aspirant, who sent him a few verses for his critical opinion, that fish was very feeding for the brains: he would recommend a couple of young whales, to begin upon. As a matter of fact, there is more phosphorus in our daily bread than would have sufficed Shakespeare to write 'Hamlet,' or Newton to discover the law of gravitation. It isn't phosphorus that most of us need, but brains to burn it in. A man might as well light a fire in a carriage, because coal makes an engine go, as hope to mend the pace of his dull pate by eating fish for the sake of the phosphates.

The question still remains, How did the salt originally get there? After all, when we say that it was produced, as rock-salt, by evaporation of the water in inland seas, we leave unanswered the main problem, How did the brine in solution get into the sea at all in the first place? Well, one might almost as well ask, How did anything come to be upon the earth at any time, in any way? How did the sea itself get there? How did this planet swim into existence at all? In the Indian mythology the world is supported upon the back of an elephant, who is supported upon the back of a tortoise; but what the tortoise in the last resort is supported upon the Indian philosophers prudently say not. If we once begin thus pushing back our inquiries into the genesis of the cosmos, we shall find our search retreating step after step *ad infinitum*. The negro preacher, describing the creation of Adam, and drawing slightly upon his imagination, observed that when our prime forefather first came to consciousness he found himself 'sot up agin a fence.' One of his hearers ventured sceptically to ejaculate, 'Den whar dat fence come from, ninishah?' The outraged divine scratched his grey wool reflectively for a moment, and replied, after a pause, with stern solemnity, 'Tree more ob dem questions will undermine de whole system ob teology.'

However, we are not permitted humbly to imitate the prudent reticence of the Indian philosophers. In these days of evolution hypotheses, and nebular theories, and kinetic energy, and all the rest of it, the question why the sea is salt rises up irrepressible

and imperatively demands to get itself answered. There was a sapient inquirer, recently deceased, who had a short way out of this difficulty. He held that the sea was only salt because of all the salt rivers that ran into it. Considering that the salt rivers are themselves salted by passing through salt regions, or being fed by saline springs, all of which derive their saltiness from deposits laid down long ago by evaporation from earlier seas or lake basins, this explanation savours somewhat of circularity. It amounts in effect to saying that the sea is salt because of the large amount of saline matter which it holds in solution. Cheese is also a caseous preparation of milk; the duties of an archdeacon are to perform archidiaconal functions; and opium puts one to sleep because it possesses a soporific virtue.

Apart from such purely verbal explanations of the saltiness of the sea, however, one can only give some such account of the way it came to be 'the briny' as the following:—

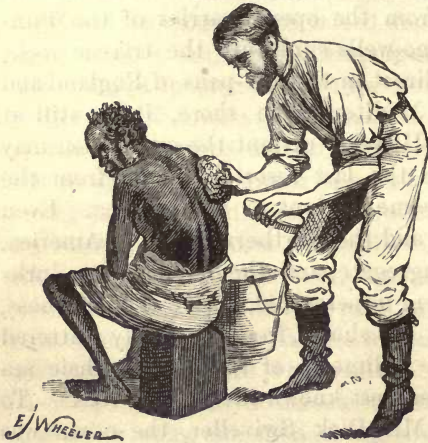
This world was once a haze of fluid light, as the poets and the men of science agree in informing us. As soon as it began to cool down a little, the heavier materials naturally sank towards the centre, while the lighter, now represented by the ocean and the atmosphere, floated in a gaseous condition on the outside. But the great envelope of vapour thus produced did not consist merely of the constituents of air and water: many other gases and vapours mingled with them, as they still do to a far less extent in our existing atmosphere. By-and-by, as the cooling and condensing process continued, the water settled down from the condition of steam into one of a liquid at a dull red heat. As it condensed, it carried down with it a great many other substances, held in solution, whose component elements had previously existed in the primitive gaseous atmosphere. Thus the early ocean which covered the whole earth was in all probability not only very salt, but also quite thick with other mineral matters close up to the point of saturation. It was full of lime, and raw flint, and sulphates, and many other miscellaneous bodies. Moreover, it was not only just as salt as at the present day, but even a great deal salter. For from that time to this evaporation has constantly been going on in certain shallow isolated areas, laying down great beds of gypsum and then of salt, which still remain in the solid condition, while the water has, of course, been correspondingly purified. The same thing has likewise happened in a slightly different way with the lime and flint, which have been

separated from the water chiefly by living animals, and afterwards deposited on the bottom of the ocean in immense layers as limestone, chalk, sandstone, and clay.

Thus it turns out that in the end all our sources of salt-supply are alike ultimately derived from the briny ocean. Whether we dig it out as solid rock-salt from the open quarries of the Punjab, or pump it up from brine-wells sunk into the triassic rocks of Cheshire, or evaporate it direct in the salt-pans of England and the shallow *salines* of the Mediterranean shore, it is still at bottom essentially sea-salt. However distant the connection may seem, our salt is always in the last resort obtained from the material held in solution in some ancient or modern sea. Even the saline springs of Canada and the Northern States of America, where the wapiti love to congregate, and the noble hunter lurks in the thicket to murder them unperceived, derive their saltness, as an able Canadian geologist has shown, from the thinly scattered salts still retained among the sediments of that very archaic sea whose precipitates form the earliest known life-bearing rocks. To the Homeric Greek, as to Mr. Dick Swiveller, the ocean was always the briny; to modern science, on the other hand (which neither of those worthies would probably have appreciated at its own valuation), the briny is always the oceanic. The fossil food which we find to-day on all our dinner-tables dates back its origin primarily to the first seas that ever covered the surface of our planet, and secondarily to the great rock deposits of the dried-up triassic inland sea. And yet even our men of science habitually describe that ancient mineral as common salt.

A CHEAP NIGGER.

I.



‘HAVE you seen the “Clayville Dime”?’

Moore chucked me a very shabby little sheet of printed matter. It fluttered feebly in the warm air, and finally dropped on my recumbent frame. I was lolling in a hammock in the shade of the verandah.

I did not feel much inclined for study, but I picked up the ‘Clayville Dime’ and lazily glanced

at that periodical, while Moore relapsed into the pages of *Ixtlilochtl*. He was a literary character for a planter, had been educated at Oxford (where I made his acquaintance), and had inherited from his father, with a large collection of Indian and Mexican curiosities, a taste for the ancient history of the New World.

Sometimes I glanced at the newspaper, sometimes I looked out at the pleasant Southern garden, where the fountain flashed and fell among weeping willows, and laurels, orange trees, and myrtles.

‘Hullo!’ I cried suddenly, disturbing Moore’s Aztec researches, ‘here is a queer affair in the usually quiet town of Clayville. Listen to this;’ and I read aloud the following ‘par,’ as I believe paragraphs are styled in newspaper offices:—

“*Instinct and Accident*.—As Colonel Randolph was driving through our town yesterday and was passing Captain Jones’s ‘sample-room,’ where the Colonel lately shot Moses Widlake in the street, the horses took alarm and started violently down hill. The Colonel kept his seat till rounding the corner by the Clayville Bank, when his wheels came into collision with that edifice, and our gallant townsman was violently shot out. He is now lying in a very precarious condition. This may relieve Tom Widlake of the duty of

shooting the Colonel in revenge for his father. It is commonly believed that Colonel Randolph's horses were maddened by the smell of the blood which has dried up where old Widlake was shot. Much sympathy is felt for the Colonel. Neither of the horses was injured."

'Clayville appears to be a lively kind of place,' I said. 'Do you often have shootings down here?'

'We do,' said Moore, rather gravely; 'it is one of our institutions with which I could dispense.'

'And do you "carry iron," as the Greeks used to say, or "go heeled," as you citizens express it?'

'No, I don't; neither pistol nor knife. If anyone shoots me, he shoots an unarmed man. The local bullies know it, and they have some scruple about shooting in that case. Besides, they know I am an awkward customer at close quarters.'

Moore relapsed into his Mexican historian, and I into the newspaper.

'Here is a chance of seeing one of your institutions at last,' I said.

I had found an advertisement concerning a lot of negroes to be sold that very day by public auction in Clayville.

'Well, I suppose you ought to see it,' said Moore rather reluctantly. He was gradually emancipating his own servants, as I knew, and was even suspected of being a director of 'the Underground Railroad' to Canada.

'Peter,' he cried, 'will you be good enough to saddle three horses and bring them round?'

Peter, a 'darkey boy' who had been hanging about in the garden, grinned and went off. He was a queer fellow, Peter, a plantation humourist, well taught in all the then unpublished lore of 'Uncle Remus.' Peter had a way of his own, too, with animals, and often aided Moore in collecting objects of natural history.

'Did you get me those hornets, Peter?' said Moore when the black returned with the horses.

'Got 'em safe, massa, in a little box,' replied Peter, who then mounted and followed at a respectful distance as our squire.

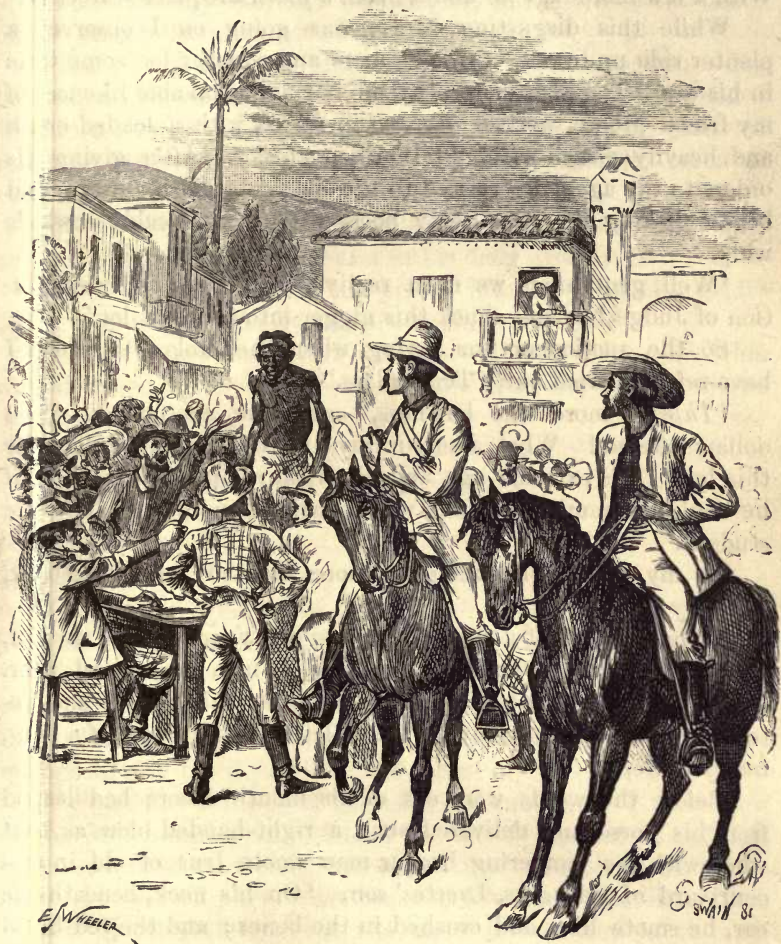
Without many more words we rode into the forest which lay between Clayville and Moore's plantation. Through the pine barrens ran the road, and on each side of the way was luxuriance of flowering creepers. The sweet faint scent of the white jessamine and the homely fragrance of honeysuckle filled the air, and the wild white roses were in perfect blossom. Here and there an

aloe reminded me that we were not at home, and dwarf palms and bayonet palmettoes, with the small pointed leaf of the 'live oak,' combined to make the scenery look foreign and unfamiliar. There was a soft haze in the air, and the sun's beams only painted, as it were, the capitals of the tall pillar-like pines, while the road was canopied and shaded by the skeins of grey moss that hung thickly on all the boughs.

The trees grew thinner as the road approached the town. Dusty were the ways, and sultry the air, when we rode into Clayville and were making for 'the noisy middle marketplace.' Clayville was but a small border town, though it could then boast the presence of a squadron of cavalry, sent there to watch the 'border ruffians.' The square was neither large nor crowded, but the spectacle was strange and interesting to me. Men who had horses or carts to dispose of were driving or riding about, noisily proclaiming the excellence of their wares. But buyers were more concerned, like myself, with the slave market. In the open air, in the middle of the place, a long table was set. The crowd gathered round this, and presented types of various sorts of citizens. The common 'mean white' was spitting and staring—a man fallen so low that he had no nigger to wallop, and was thus even more abject, because he had no natural place and functions in local society, than the slaves themselves. The local drunkard was uttering sagacities to which no mortal attended. Two or three speculators were bidding on commission, and there were a few planters, some of them mounted, and a mixed multitude of tradesmen, loafers, bar-keepers, newspaper reporters, and idlers in general. At either end of the long table sat an auctioneer, who behaved with the traditional facetiousness of the profession. As the 'lots' came on for sale they mounted the platform, generally in family parties. A party would fetch from one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars, according to its numbers and 'condition.' The spectacle was painful and monstrous. Most of the 'lots' bore the examination of their points with a kind of placid dignity, and only showed some little interest when the biddings grew keen and flattered their pride.

The sale was almost over, and we were just about to leave, when a howl of derision from the mob made us look round. What *I* saw was the apparition of an extremely aged and debilitated black man standing on the table. What Moore saw to interest him *I* could not guess, but he grew pale and uttered an oath of

surprise under his breath, though he rarely swore. Then he turned his horse's head again towards the auctioneer. That merry tradesman was extolling the merits of nearly his last lot. 'A very remarkable specimen, gentlemen! Admirers of the



antique cannot dispense with this curious nigger—very old and quite imperfect. Like so many of the treasures of Greek art which have reached us, he has had the misfortune to lose his nose and several of his fingers. How much offered for this exceptional lot—unmarried and without encumbrances of any kind? He is dumb too, and may be trusted with any secret.'

‘Take him off!’ howled some one in the crowd.

‘Order his funeral!’

‘Chuck him into the next lot.’

What, gentlemen, *no* bids for this very eligible nigger? With a few more rags he would make a most adequate scarecrow.’

While this disgusting banter was going on I observed a planter ride up to one of the brokers and whisper for some time in his ear. The planter was a bad but unmistakable likeness of my friend Moore, worked over, so to speak, with a loaded brush and heavily glazed with old Bourbon whisky. After giving his orders to the agent he retired to the outskirts of the crowd, and began flicking his long dusty boots with a serviceable cowhide whip.

‘Well, gentlemen, we must really adopt the friendly suggestion of Judge Lee and chuck this nigger into the next lot.’

So the auctioneer was saying, when the broker to whom I have referred cried out, ‘Ten dollars.’

‘*This* is more like business,’ cried the auctioneer. ‘Ten dollars offered! What amateur says more than ten dollars for this lot? His extreme age and historical reminiscences alone, if he could communicate them, would make him invaluable to the student.’

To my intense amazement Moore shouted from horseback, ‘Twenty dollars.’

‘What, *you* want a cheap nigger to get your hand in, do you, you blank-blanked abolitionist?’ cried a man who stood near. He was a big, dirty-looking bully, at least half drunk, and attending (not unnecessarily) to his toilet with the point of a long, heavy knife.

Before the words were out of his mouth Moore had leaped from his horse and delivered such a right-handed blow as that wherewith the wandering beggar man smote Iruis of old in the courtyard of Odysseus, Laertes’ son. ‘On his neck, beneath the ear, he smote him, and crushed in the bones; and the red blood gushed up through his mouth, and he gnashed his teeth together as he kicked the ground.’ Moore stooped, picked up the bowie knife, and sent it glittering high through the air.

‘Take him away,’ he said, and two rough fellows, laughing, carried the bully to the edge of the fountain that played in the corner of the square. He was still lying crumpled up there when we rode out of Clayville.

The biddings, of course, had stopped, owing to the unaffected interest which the public took in this more dramatic interlude. The broker, it is true, had bid twenty-five dollars, and was wrangling with the auctioneer.

'You have my bid, Mr. Brinton, sir, and there is no other offer. Knock down the lot to me.'

'You wait your time, Mr. Isaacs,' said the auctioneer. 'No man can do two things at once and do them well. When Squire Moore has settled with Dick Bligh he will desert the paths of military adventure for the calmer and more lucrative track of commercial enterprise.'

The auctioneer's command of long words was considerable, and was obviously of use to him in his daily avocations.

When he had rounded his period Moore was in the saddle again, and nodded silently to the auctioneer.

'Squire Moore bids thirty dollars. Thirty dollars for this once despised but now appreciated fellow-creature,' rattled on the auctioneer.

The agent nodded again.

'Forty dollars bid,' said the auctioneer.

'Fifty,' cried Moore.

The broker nodded.

'Sixty.'

The agent nodded again.

The bidding ran rapidly up to three hundred and fifty dollars.

The crowd were growing excited, and had been joined by every child in the town, by every draggled and sun-burnt woman, and the drinking bar had disgorged every loafer who felt sober enough to stay the distance to the centre of the square.

My own first feelings of curiosity had subsided. I knew how strong and burning was Moore's hatred of oppression, and felt convinced that he merely wished at any sacrifice of money to secure for this old negro some peaceful days and a quiet death-bed.

The crowd doubtless took the same obvious view of the case as I did, and was now eagerly urging on the two competitors.

'Never say die, Isaacs.'

'Stick to it, Squire; the nigger's well worth the dollars.'

So they howled, and now the biddings were mounting towards one thousand dollars, when the sulky planter rode up to the neighbourhood of the table—much to the inconvenience of the 'gallery'—and whispered to his agent. The conference lasted

some minutes, and at the end of it the agent capped Moore's last offer, 1,000 dollars, with a bid of 1,200.

'Fifteen hundred,' said Moore amidst applause.

'Look here, Mr. Knock-'em-down,' cried Mr. Isaacs: 'it's hot and thirsty work sitting nodding here; I likes my ease on a warm day; so just you reckon that I see the Squire, and go 100 dollars more as long as I hold up my pencil.'

He stuck a long gnawed pencil erect between his finger and thumb, and stared impertinently at Moore. The Squire nodded, and the bidding went on in this silent fashion till the bids had actually run up to three thousand four hundred dollars. All this while the poor negro, whose limbs no longer supported him, crouched in a heap on the table, turning his haggard eye alternately on Moore and on the erect and motionless pencil of the broker. The crowd had become silent with excitement. Unable to stand the heat and agitation, Moore's unfriendly brother had crossed the square in search of a 'short drink.' Moore nodded once more.

'Three thousand six hundred dollars bid,' cried the auctioneer, and looked at Isaacs.

With a wild howl Isaacs dashed his pencil in the air, tossed up his hands, and thrust them deep down between his coat collar and his body, uttering all the while yells of pain.

'Don't you bid, Mr. Isaacs?' asked the auctioneer, without receiving any answer except Semitic appeals to holy Abraham, blended with Aryan profanity.

'Come,' said Moore very severely, 'his pencil is down, and he has withdrawn his bid. There is no other bidder; knock the lot down to me.'

'No more offers?' said the auctioneer slowly, looking all round the square.

There were certainly no offers from Mr. Isaacs, who now was bounding like the gad-stung Io to the furthest end of the place.

'This fine buck-negro, warranted absolutely unsound of wind and limb, going, going, a shameful sacrifice, for a poor three thousand seven hundred dollars. Going, going—gone!'

The hammer fell with a sharp, decisive sound.

A fearful volley of oaths rattled after the noise, like thunder rolling away in the distance.

Moore's brother had returned from achieving a 'short drink' just in time to see his coveted lot knocked down to his rival.

We left the spot, with the negro in the care of Peter, as quickly as might be.

'I wonder,' said Moore, as we reached the inn and ordered a trap to carry our valuable bargain home in, 'I wonder what on earth made Isaacs run off like a maniac.'

'Massa,' whispered Peter, 'yesterday I jes' caught yer Brer Hornet a-loafin' around in the wood. "Come wi' me," says I, and bottled him in this yer pasteboard box,' showing one which had held Turkish tobacco. 'When I saw that Hebrew Jew wouldn't stir his pencil, I jes' crept up softly and dropped Brer Hornet down his neck. Then he jes' rose and went. Spec's he and Brer Hornet had business of their own.'

'Peter,' said Moore, 'you are a good boy, but you will come to a bad end.'

II.

As we rode slowly homeward, behind the trap which conveyed the dear-bought slave, Moore was extremely moody and disinclined for conversation.

'Is your purchase not rather an expensive one?' I ventured to ask, to which Moore replied shortly—

'No; think he is perhaps the cheapest nigger that was ever bought.'

To put any more questions would have been impertinent, and I possessed my curiosity in silence till we reached the plantation.

Here Moore's conduct became decidedly eccentric. He had the black man conveyed at once into a cool, dark, strong room with a heavy iron door, where the new acquisition was locked up in company with a sufficient meal. Moore and I dined hastily, and then he summoned all his negroes together into the court of the house. 'Look here, boys,' he cried: 'all these trees'—and he pointed to several clumps—'must come down immediately, and all the shrubs on the lawn and in the garden. Fall to at once, those of you that have axes, and let the rest take hoes and knives and make a clean sweep of the shrubs.' The idea of wholesale destruction seemed not disagreeable to the slaves, who went at their work with eagerness, though it made my heart ache to see the fine old oaks beginning to fall and to watch the green garden becoming a desert. Moore first busied himself with directing the women, who, under his orders, piled up mattresses and bags of cotton against the parapets of the verandahs. The house stood on

the summit of a gradually sloping height, and before the moon began to set (for we worked without intermission through the evening and far into the night) there was nothing but a bare slope of grass all round the place, while smoke and flame went up from the piles of fallen timber. The plantation, in fact, was ready to stand a short siege.

Moore now produced a number of rifles, which he put, with ammunition, into the hands of some of the more stalwart negroes. These he sent to their cabins, which lay at a distance of about a furlong and a half on various sides of the house. The men had orders to fire on any advancing enemy, and then to fall back at once on the main building, which was now barricaded and fortified. One lad was told to lurk in a thicket below the slope of the hill and invisible from the house.

‘If Wild Bill’s men come on, and you give them the slip, cry thrice like the “Bob White,”’ said Moore; ‘if they take you, cry once. If you get off run straight to Clayville, and give this note to the officer commanding the cavalry.’

The hour was now about one in the morning; by three the dawn would begin. In spite of his fatigues, Moore had no idea of snatching an hour’s rest. He called up Peter (who had been sleeping, coiled up like a black cat, in the smoking-room), and bade him take a bath and hot water into the room where Gumbo, the newly purchased black, had all this time been left to his own reflections. ‘Soap him and lather him well, Peter,’ said Moore; ‘wash him white, if you can, and let me know when he’s fit to come near.’

Peter withdrew with his stereotyped grin to make his preparations.

Presently, through the open door of the smoking-room, we heard the sounds of energetic splashings, mingled with the inarticulate groans of the miserable Gumbo. Moore could not sit still, but kept pacing the room, smoking fiercely. Presently Peter came to the door—

‘Nigger’s clean now, massa.’

‘Bring me a razor, then,’ said Moore, ‘and leave me alone with him.’

When Moore had retired, with the razor, into the chamber where his purchase lay, I had time to reflect on the singularity of the situation. In every room loaded rifles were ready; all the

windows were cunningly barricaded, and had sufficient loopholes. The peaceful planter's house had become a castle; a dreadful quiet had succeeded to the hubbub of preparation, and my host, yesterday so pleasant, was now locked up alone with a dumb negro and a razor! I had long ago given up the hypothesis that Gumbo had been purchased out of pure philanthropy. The disappointment of baffled cruelty in Moore's brother would not alone account for the necessity of such defensive preparations as had just been made. Clearly Gumbo was not a mere fancy article, but a negro of real value, whose person it was desirable to obtain possession of at any risk or cost. The ghastly idea occurred to me (suggested, I fancy, by Moore's demand for a razor) that Gumbo, at some period of his career, must have swallowed a priceless diamond. This gem must still be concealed about his person, and Moore must have determined by foul means, as no fair means were available, to become its owner. When this fancy struck me I began to feel that it was my duty to interfere. I could not sit by within call (had poor Gumbo been capable of calling) and allow my friend to commit such a deed of cruelty. As I thus parleyed with myself, the heavy iron door of the store-room opened, and Moore came out, with the razor (bloodless, thank Heaven!) in his hand. Anxiety had given place to a more joyous excitement.

'Well?' I said interrogatively.

'Well, all's well. That man has, as I felt sure, the Secret of the Pyramid.'

I now became quite certain that Moore, in spite of all his apparent method, had gone out of his mind. It seemed best to humour him, especially as so many loaded rifles were lying about.

'He has seen the myst'ry hid
Under Egypt's pyramid,'

I quoted; 'but, my dear fellow, as the negro is dumb, I don't see how you are to get the secret out of him.'

'I did not say he *knew* it,' answered Moore crossly; 'I said he *had* it. As to Egypt, I don't know what you are talking about——'

At this moment we heard the crack of rifles, and in the instant of silence which followed came the note of the 'Bob White.'

Once it shrilled, and we listened eagerly; then the notes came twice rapidly, and a sound of voices rose up from the negro

outposts, who had been driven in and were making fast the one door of the house that had been left open. From the negroes we learned that our assailants (Bill Hicoek's band of border ruffians, 'specially engaged for this occasion') had picketed their horses behind the dip of the hill and were advancing on foot. Moore hurried to the roof to reconnoitre. The dawn was stealing on,



and the smoke from the still smouldering trees, which we had felled and burned, rose through the twilight air.

'Moore, you hound,' cried a voice through the smoke of the furthest pile, 'we have come for your nigger. Will you give him up or will you fight?'

Moore's only reply was a bullet fired in the direction whence the voice was heard. His shot was answered by a perfect volley from men who could just be discerned creeping through the grass about four hundred yards out. The bullets rattled harm-

lessly against wooden walls and iron shutters, or came with a thud against the mattress fortifications of the verandah. The firing was all directed against the front of the house.

'I see their game,' said Moore. 'The front attack is only a feint. When they think we are all busy here, another detachment will try to rush the place from the back and to set fire to the building. We'll "give them their kail through the reek."'

Moore's dispositions were quickly made. He left me with some ten of the blacks to keep up as heavy a fire as possible from the roof against the advancing skirmishers. He posted himself, with six fellows on whom he could depend, in a room of one of the wings which commanded the back entrance. As many men, with plenty of ready-loaded rifles, were told off to a room in the opposite wing. Both parties were thus in a position to rake the entrance with a cross fire. Moore gave orders that not a trigger should be pulled till the still invisible assailants had arrived between the two projecting wings. 'Then fire into them, and let everyone choose his man.'

On the roof our business was simple enough. We lay behind bags of cotton, firing as rapidly and making as much show of force as possible, while women kept loading for us. Our position was extremely strong, as we were quite invisible to men crouching or running hurriedly far below. Our practice was not particularly good; still three or four of the skirmishers had ceased to advance, and this naturally discouraged the others, who were aware, of course, that their movement was only a feint. The siege had now lasted about half an hour, and I had begun to fancy that Moore's theory of the attack was a mistake, and that he had credited the enemy with more generalship than they possessed, when a perfect storm of fire broke out beneath us, from the rooms where Moore and his company were posted. Dangerous as it was to cease for a moment from watching the enemy, I stole across the roof, and looking down between two of the cotton bags which filled the open spaces of the balustrades, I saw the narrow ground between the two wings simply strewn with dead or wounded men. The cross fire still poured from the windows, though here and there a marksman tried to pick off the fugitives. Rapidly did I cross the roof to my post. To my horror the skirmishers had advanced, as if at the signal of the firing, and were now running up at full speed and close to the walls of the house. At that moment the door opened, and Moore, heading a number of

negroes, picked off the leading ruffian and rushed out into the open. The other assailants fired hurriedly and without aim, then—daunted by the attack so suddenly carried into their midst, and by the appearance of one or two of their own beaten comrades—the enemy turned and fairly bolted. We did not pursue. Far away down the road we heard the clatter of hoofs, and thin and clear came the thrice-repeated cry of the ‘Bob White.’

‘Dick’s coming back with the soldiers,’ said Moore; ‘and now I think we may look after the wounded.’

I did not see much of Moore that day. The fact is that I slept a good deal, and Moore was mysteriously engaged with Gumbo. Night came, and very much needed quiet and sleep came with it. Then we passed an indolent day, and I presumed that adventures were over, and that on the subject of ‘the Secret of the Pyramid’ Moore had recovered his sanity. I was just taking my bedroom candle when Moore said, ‘Don’t go to bed yet. You will come with me, won’t you, and see out the adventure of the Cheap Nigger?’

‘You don’t mean to say the story is to be continued?’ I asked.

‘Continued? Why the fun is only beginning,’ Moore answered. ‘The night is cloudy, and will just suit us. Come down to the branch.’

The ‘branch,’ as Moore called it, was a strong stream that separated, as I knew, his lands from his brother’s. We walked down slowly, and reached the broad boat which was dragged over by a chain when anyone wanted to cross. At the ‘scow,’ as the ferry-boat was called, Peter joined us; he ferried us deftly over the deep and rapid water, and then led on, as rapidly as if it had been daylight, along a path through the pines.

‘How often I came here when I was a boy,’ said Moore; ‘but now I might lose myself in the wood, for this is my brother’s land, and I have forgotten the way.’

As I knew that Mr. Bob Moore was confined to his room by an accident, through which an ounce of lead had been lodged in a portion of his frame, I had no fear of being arrested for trespass. Presently the negro stopped in front of a cliff.

‘Here is the “Sachem’s Cave,”’ said Moore. ‘You’ll help us to explore the cave, won’t you?’

I did not think the occasion an opportune one for exploring

caves, but to have withdrawn would have demanded a "moral courage," as people commonly say when they mean cowardice, which I did not possess. We stepped within a narrow crevice of the great cliff. Moore lit a lantern and went in advance; the negro followed with a flaring torch.

Suddenly an idea occurred to me, which I felt bound to communicate to Moore. 'My dear fellow,' I said in a whisper, 'is this quite sportsmanlike? You know you are after some treasure, real or imaginary, and, I put it to you as a candid friend, is not this just a little bit like poaching? Your brother's land, you know.'

'What I am looking for is in my own land,' said Moore. 'The river is the march. Come on.'

We went on, now advancing through fairy halls, glistening with stalactites or paved with silver sand, and finally pushing our way through a concealed crevice down dank and narrow passages in the rock. The darkness increased; the pavement plashed beneath our feet, and the drip, drip of water was incessant. 'We are under the river-bed,' said Moore, 'in a kind of natural Thames Tunnel.' We made what speed we might through this combination of the Valley of the Shadow with the Slough of Despond, and soon were on firmer ground again beneath Moore's own territory. Probably no other white men had ever crawled through the hidden passage and gained the further penetralia of the cave, which now again began to narrow. Finally we reached four tall pillars, of about ten feet in height, closely surrounded by the walls of rock. As we approached these pillars, that were dimly discerned by the torchlight, our feet made a faint metallic jingling sound among heaps of ashes which strewed the floor. Moore and I went up to the pillars and tried them with our knives. They were of wood, all soaked and green with the eternal damp. 'Peter,' said Moore, 'go in with the lantern and try if you can find anything there.'

Peter had none of the superstitions of his race, or he would never have been our companion. 'All right, massa; me look for Brer Spook.'

So saying Peter walked into a kind of roofed over-room, open only at the front, and examined the floor with his lantern, stamping occasionally to detect any hollowness in the ground.

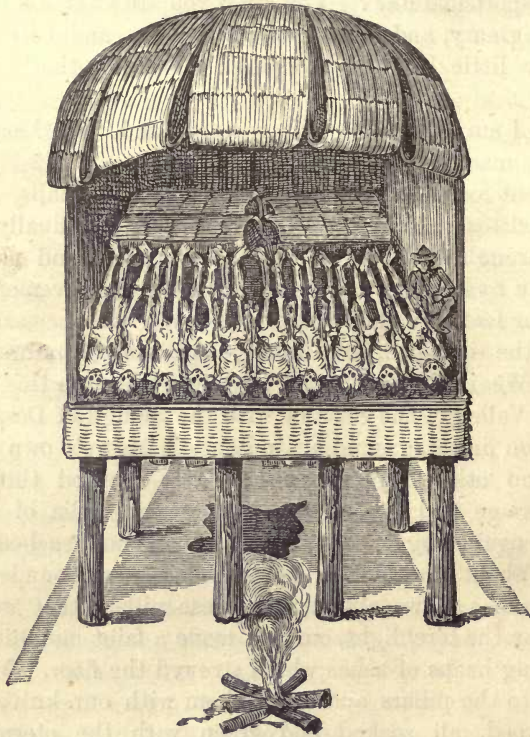
'Nothing here, massa, but this dead fellow's leg-bone and little

bits of broken jugs,' and the dauntless Peter came out with his ghastly trophy.

Moore seemed not to lose heart.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'there is something on the roof. Peter, give me a back.'

Peter stooped down beside one of the wooden pillars and firmly grasped his own legs above the knee. Moore climbed on



the improvised ladder, and was just able to seize the edge of the roof, as it seemed to be, with his hands.

'Now steady, Peter,' he exclaimed, and with a spring he drew himself up till his head was above the level of the roof. Then he uttered a cry, and, leaping from Peter's back, retreated to the level where we stood in some confusion.

'Good God!' he said, 'what a sight!'

'What on earth is the matter?' I asked.

'Look for yourself, if you choose,' said Moore, who was somewhat shaken, and at the same time irritated and ashamed.

Grasping the lantern, I managed to get on to Peter's shoulders, and by a considerable gymnastic effort to raise my head to the level of the ledge, and at the same time to cast the light up and within.

The spectacle was sufficiently awful.

I was looking along a platform, on which ten skeletons were disposed at full length, with the skulls still covered with long hair, and the fleshless limbs glimmering white and stretching back into the darkness.

On the right hand, and crouching between a skeleton and the wall of the chamber (what we had taken for a roof was the floor of a room raised on pillars), I saw the form of a man. He was dressed in gay colours, and, as he sat with his legs drawn up, his arms rested on his knees.

On the first beholding of a dreadful thing, our instinct forces us to rush against it, as if to bring the horror to the test of touch. This instinct wakened in me. For a moment I felt dazed, and then I continued to stare involuntarily at the watcher of the dead. He had not stirred. My eyes became accustomed to the dim and flickering light which the lantern cast in that dark place.

'Hold on, Peter,' I cried, and leaped down to the floor of the cave.

'It's all right, Moore,' I said. 'Don't you remember the picture in old Lafitau's "Mœurs des Sauvages Américains"? We are in a burying-place of the Cherouines, and the seated man is only the *kywash*, "which is an image of woode keeping the deade."'

'Ass that I am!' cried Moore. 'I knew the cave led us from the Sachem's Cave to the Sachem's Mound, and I forgot for a moment how the fellows disposed of their dead. We must search the platform. Peter, make a ladder again.'

Moore mounted nimbly enough this time, and I followed him.

The *kywash* had no more terrors for us, and we penetrated beyond the fleshless dead into the further extremity of the sepulchre. Here we lifted and removed vast piles of deerskin bags, and of mats, filled as they were with 'the dreadful dust that once was man.' As we reached the bottom of the first pile something glittered yellow and bright beneath the lantern.

Moore stooped and tried to lift what looked like an enormous plate. He was unable to raise the object, still weighed down as it was with the ghastly remnants of the dead. With

feverish haste we cleared away the débris, and at last lifted and brought to light a huge and massive disk of gold, divided into rays which spread from the centre, each division being adorned with strange figures in relief—figures of animals, plants, and what looked like rude hieroglyphs.

This was only the firstfruits of the treasure.

A silver disk, still larger, and decorated in the same manner, was next uncovered, and last, in a hollow dug in the flooring of the sepulchre, we came on a great number of objects in gold and silver, which somewhat reminded us of Indian idols. These were thickly crusted with precious stones, and were accompanied by many of the sacred emeralds and opals of old American religion. There were also some extraordinary manuscripts, if the term may be applied to picture writing on prepared deerskins that were now decaying. We paid little attention to cloaks of the famous feather-work, now a lost art, of which one or two examples are found in European museums. The gold, and silver, and precious stones, as may be imagined, overcame for the moment any ethnological curiosity.

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Dawn was growing into day before we reached the mouth of the cave again, and after a series of journeys brought all our spoil to the light of the upper air. It was quickly enough bestowed in bags and baskets. Then, aided by three of Moore's stoutest hands, whom we found waiting for us in the pine wood, we carried the whole treasure back, and lodged it in the strong room which had been the retreat of Gumbo.

III.

The conclusion of my story shall be very short. What was the connection between Gumbo and the spoils of the Sachem's Mound, and how did the treasures of the Aztec Temple of the Sun come to be concealed in the burial place of the Red Man? All this Moore explained to me the day after we secured the treasures.

'My father,' said Moore, 'was, as you know, a great antiquarian, and a great collector of Mexican and native relics. He had given almost as much time as Brasseur de Bourbourg to Mexican hieroglyphics, and naturally had made nothing out of them. His chief desire was to discover the Secret of the Pyramid—not the pyramids of Egypt, as you fancied, but the Pyramid of the Sun,

Tonatiuh, at Teohuacan. To the problem connected with this mysterious structure, infinitely older than the empire of Montezuma, which Cortes destroyed, he fancied he had a clue in this scroll.'

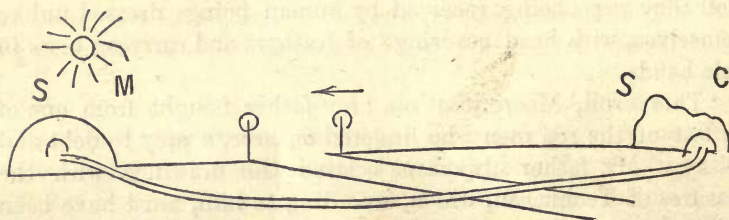
Moore handed me a prepared sheet of birch bark, like those which the red men use for their rude picture writings. It was very old, but the painted characters were still brilliant, and even a tyro could see that they were not Indian, but of the ancient Mexican description. In the upper left-hand corner was painted a pyramidal structure, above which the sun beamed. Eight men, over whose heads the moon was painted, were issuing from the pyramid; the two foremost bore in their hands effigies of the sun and moon; each of the others seemed to carry smaller objects with a certain religious awe. Then came a singular chart, which one might conjecture represented the wanderings of these men, bearing the sacred things of their gods. In the lowest corner of the scroll they were being received by human beings dressed unlike themselves, with head coverings of feathers and carrying bows in their hands.

'This scroll,' Moore went on, 'my father bought from one of the last of the red men who lingered on here, a prey to debt and whisky. My father always associated the drawings with the treasures of Teohuacan, which, according to him, must have been withdrawn from the pyramid, and conveyed secretly to the north, the direction from which the old Toltec pyramid builders originally came. In the north they would find no civilised people like themselves, he said, but only the Indians. Probably, however, the Indians would receive with respect the bearers of mysterious images and rites, and my father concluded that the sacred treasures of the Sun might still be concealed among some wandering tribe of red men. He had come to this conclusion for some time, when I and my brother returned from school, hastily summoned back, to find him extremely ill. He had suffered from a paralytic stroke, and he scarcely recognised us. But we made out, partly from his broken and wandering words, partly from old Tom (Peter's father, now dead), that my father's illness had followed on a violent fit of passion. He had picked up, it seems, from some Indians a scroll which he considered of the utmost value, and which he placed in a shelf of the library. Now, old Gunbo was a house servant at that time, and, dumb as he was, and stupid as he was, my father had treated him with peculiar

kindness. Unluckily Gumbo yielded to the favourite illusion of all servants, white and black, male and female, that anything they find in the library may be used to light a fire with. One chilly day Gumbo lighted the fire with the newly purchased Indian birch scroll. My father, when he heard of this performance, lost all self-command. In his ordinary temper the most humane of men, he simply raged at Gumbo. He would teach him, he said, to destroy his papers. And it appeared, from what we could piece together (for old Tom was very reticent and my father very incoherent), that he actually branded or tattooed a copy of what Gumbo had burnt on the nigger's body!

'But,' I interrupted, 'your father knew all the scroll had to tell him, else he could not have copied it on Gumbo. So why was he in such a rage.'

'You,' said Moore, with some indignation, 'are not a collector, and you can't understand a collector's feelings. My father knew



the contents of the scroll, but what of that? The scroll was the first edition, the real original, and Gumbo had destroyed it. Job would have lost his temper, if Job had been a collector. Let me go on. My brother and I both conjectured that the scroll had some connection with the famous riches of the Sun and the secret of the Pyramid of Tehuacan. Probably he thought it had contained a chart (now transferred to Gumbo's frame) of the hiding-place of the treasure. However, in the confusion caused by my father's illness, death, and burial, Gumbo escaped, and, being an unusually stupid nigger, he escaped due south-west. Here he seems to have fallen into the hands of some slave-holding Indians, who used him even worse than any white owners would have done, and left him the mere fragment you saw. He filtered back here through the exchange of commerce, and as soon as I recognised him at the sale I made up my mind to purchase him. So did my brother; but, thanks to Peter and his hornets, I became Gumbo's owner. On examining him, after he was well washed on the night

of the attack, I found this chart, as you may call it, branded on Gumbo's back.' Here Moore made a rapid tracing on a sheet of paper. 'I concluded that the letters S M (introduced by my father, of course, as the Indian scroll must have been "before letters") referred to the Sachem's Mound, which is in my land, that Sun above referred to the treasures of the Sun, that S C stood for the Sachem's Cave, and that the cave led, under the river, within the mound. We might have opened the mound by digging on our own land, but it would have been a long job, and must have attracted curiosity and brought us into trouble. So, you see, the chart Gumbo destroyed was imprinted by my father on his black back, and though he *knew* nothing of the secret he distinctly *had* it.'

'Yes,' said I, 'but why did you ask for a razor when you were left alone with Gumbo?'

'Why,' said Moore, 'I knew Gumbo was marked somewhere and somehow, but the place and manner I didn't know. And my father might have remembered the dodge of Histæus in Herodotus: he might have shaved Gumbo's head, tattooed the chart on that, and then allowed the natural covering to hide the secret "on the place where the wool ought to grow."''

UNPARLIAMENTARY BOROUGHS.

THIS is not a political disquisition. I am not going to discourse of Redistribution, or to cite appalling instances of destitution of votes in large towns possessing a population of over 100,000 souls, all still sighing in vain by their own firesides for the one-hundred-thousandth fraction of a voice in the Great National Debating Club at Westminster. To say the truth, are we not all just a little weary at present of parliamentary boroughs? and is it not about time that the unparliamentary ones should have at last an innings of their own? Why this exclusive attention to the towns (mostly uninteresting) which are big enough to own a real live member all to themselves, and this cold shade of neglect cast so unworthily upon the pleasant and pretty out-of-the-way places which fail to come up to the modern standard of numerical and political significance? Birmingham might be easily cut up, no doubt, into four hundred and twenty boroughs quite as big as most of those which still bear that proud title in Dorset and Devon; but even supposing it were to be so divided, and accordingly mitigated (as a big polype often breaks up into a host of little ones), would any one of the aliquot parts thus produced be equal in interest to Shaftesbury or Modbury, to Lyme Regis or Kingsbridge? Besides, though such a scheme for the redistribution of Birmingham among the agricultural counties might be very nice for the Birmingham people themselves, would it not undeniably be very hard lines upon the agricultural counties among which the embryonic hardware villages would be redistributed?

In the first place, then, let us begin by inquiring, What is a borough?—just as Sir Robert Peel at once hopelessly befogged that distressful currency question by asking outright, What is a pound? Everybody who had a sovereign in his purse always firmly believed till that particular moment that he knew exactly what a pound meant: why, he had one actually there in his pocket. But iconoclastic Sir Robert dashed to pieces immediately the unsophisticated belief by merely asking that point-blank question; and from that day to this, nobody has ever been able satisfactorily to answer what a pound is, except by the mean and evasive subterfuge of replying, ‘Twenty shillings.’ It is

exactly the same with the definition of a borough. There are many specific forms of borough—the parliamentary borough, the municipal borough, the borough by prescription, and so forth, *ad infinitum*—which the hair-splitting ingenuity of the British lawyer has been able to define or to describe with sufficient rough accuracy for all practical purposes. But what is the meaning of a borough *per se*? What is the borough, viewed widely, not as parliamentary, or municipal, or so forth, but simply and solely as a borough in the abstract? That is a question in order to answer which we shall have to have recourse to the etymology and derivation of the word borough, burgh, or bury.

Now, etymology is notoriously a very slippery and deceptive subject. Voltaire said of it long ago, in a famous and oft-quoted epigram, that it was a science in which the vowels counted for nothing and the consonants for very little. But since Voltaire's time we have altered all that by modern improvements, and the proper spelling and pronunciation of borough has now become a question of national importance, embarrassing even the scanty leisure of her Majesty's Ministers at their places in the council of the nation. Only a very little time ago, Sir George Campbell, in Parliament assembled, asked—as I learn from a daily paper—'whether the Government would not consider the arrangement of a conference between English and Scotch members with the view of arriving at some compromise as to the spelling of the word "borough," and stopping the mispronunciation of the word "burgh" by the English members.' The putting of this plain and sensible question, I regret to say, was twice interrupted by unseemly laughter on the part of unsympathetic Southern members; but it is clear that the difficulty as to the spelling and pronunciation of the word borough on either side the border, having thus been brought within measurable distance of practical politics, must sooner or later be met and answered; and it is in order to prevent any untimely repeal of the Act of Union, or any hasty appearance of Sir George Campbell in the part of a modern William Wallace, that this paper is humbly offered as a contribution towards the partial solution of so momentous a national problem.

In its most primitive and fundamental acceptation, a borough is simply a fort or earthwork. The word is one of a large family of words, all of which have for their common ancestor a verb meaning to dig or delve. The verb itself takes various forms, as,

'to bury' and 'to burrow;' but its prime sense is that of throwing up earth, whether for the purpose of making a hole like a rabbit, or for that of raising a mound or earthwork like a civilised human being. The earth thus thrown up may be intended to cover the remains of a dead man, in which case the man is said to be buried, and the mound under which he rests is called a barrow. Or it may surround a stockaded village or primitive hill-fort, in which case the work is commonly known by this present title of a bury or borough.

It is from hill-forts of such an ancient and primitive kind that all our modern buries, burghs, and boroughs, however spelt, are lineally descended. In the old English tongue (I am afraid of calling it Anglo-Saxon, because I know if I were once to mention that awe-inspiring word you would at once leave off the perusal of this present article), a hill-fort, or a town fortified with earthworks, was called a *burh*, which fearsome combination of letters was pronounced exactly as Scotchmen still pronounce their native sound 'burgh,' and as Sir George Campbell will never persuade any modern English lips to pronounce it, even if he gets an Act of Parliament for that special purpose. All the other spellings and pronunciations are simply attempts on the part of modern tongues to get as near as possible by violent efforts to this harsh and barbaric early monstrosity. In Germany the word has generally hardened down simply into burg, as in Marburg, Homburg, Hamburg, and Magdeburg. In Scotland, it has retained its original roughness of burgh, as in Edinburgh, Jedburgh, and Roxburgh. In northern England, it usually softens into borough, as in Gainsborough, Middlesborough, and Loughborough. And in the south and west, it finally weakens into the very mitigated form of bury, as in Salisbury, Shaftesbury, and Bury St. Edmunds. Once only, so far as I know, it assumes in a place-name its alternative form of barrow, the form which it almost always keeps when applied to an ancient tomb or tumulus, and that is in the case of Barrow-in-Furness. A still odder and more incongruous shape is Brough, in Yorkshire, a sort of irregular north-country compromise between the English borough and the Scotch burgh, as if to keep the peace between the two countries.

The case of that particular part of South London which is still distinctively called the Borough throws a flood of light on the origin and meaning of the whole group of words with which

we are here cursorily dealing. Why *the* Borough in particular, one may naturally ask, when there are so many other undoubted boroughs all round it? What has this one individual borough done more than Finsbury, say, or Chelsea, that it should merit a definite article and a capital letter above all the other assorted boroughs, parliamentary or prescriptive, that spread about it in every direction? The answer to this obvious question carries us far back into the history of London—to the days when there was only one road across the river, by the primitive structure whose modern successor still bears the distinctive name of London Bridge. To guard the southern end of that important highway against our disagreeable thieving neighbours the Danes, the men of London built a *burh* or earthwork, a fortified *tête de pont*, in fact, on the Surrey side of the great river. The fort or bury thus erected was called indiscriminately the South Work—or, as we say nowadays, Southwark—and the *burh*, or, as we say nowadays, the Borough. The word in this sense means simply and solely the fort, the *tête de pont*, and is a good piece of archaic English surviving (with all its original signification lost) into the common speech of the nineteenth century.

The buries that lie scattered all over the face of the good old West Country also give one an excellent idea of the primitive hill-fort from which every modern borough is lineally descended. There are many villages in Wilts, Dorset, and Devon bearing such quaint old-world names as Musbury, Membury, Modbury, and Silbury. Above every one of these bury-named hamlets the inquiring traveller will find (if he chooses to climb to it) an old earthwork now known by the curious name of Musbury Castle or Membury Castle, as the case may be; for castle in the West Country is locally understood to mean, not a great ivy-covered Norman ruin, but the bare ridges of a far more ancient and grass-grown Celtic stronghold. So far as I know, there is no bury anywhere in the five western counties that hasn't got immediately overlooking it just such a mouldering old prehistoric earthwork. Originally, of course, the bury was the name of the earthwork itself, which was only slowly transferred to the newer village that grew up in later ages around the little Christian church on the slope of the hillside. There are dozens upon dozens of such very ancient western boroughs, each once the fortress of some little forgotten Celtic tribe, and each capping its own steep hill above the fertile valley of some minor streamlet. They were mere stockades, these

ancient buries, where those twin chattels, the women and the cows, might be driven for security in time of war; while in intervals of peace the tribe inhabited rather the unfortified village of wattled huts conveniently situated by the waterside below. Many of these old lingering buries occupy sites of famous antiquity, like Silbury, the most gigantic of British barrows, and Abury, 'a beautiful mushroom grown up at the expense of the Druidical circles in whose midst it nestles.' Very few, like Shaftesbury, continue to be still inhabited on their airy heights. Others, like Salisbury, once situated at Old Sarum, have come down from the precincts of the original earthwork to a more convenient position in the valley at its foot. This practical 'redistribution of seats' has affected almost all the hill-forts in southern England; the village which bears the name in bury generally standing below the earthwork to which it owes its existing title.

Some strange changes have elsewhere come over sundry of the old buries and boroughs. Take, for example, the case of Canterbury by the side of Carisbrooke, in the Isle of Wight. In their clipped modern forms there seems to be very little connection indeed between these two fairly dissimilar names. But in their origin they are strictly analogous to one another. The Cantware were the men of Kent, and the Wightware, or Wightgare (I modernise slightly for simplicity's sake), were the men of Wight. Thus Cantwarebury is the Kent-men's-bury, and Wightgaresbury is the Wight-men's-bury; the former form being still partially preserved in the archiepiscopal signature 'Cantuar.' But while the one word has gradually softened down into Canterbury, the other has incontinently lost its head and changed its tail, till it reappears in the incongruous and meaningless modern form of Carisbrooke.

Peterborough and Bury St. Edmunds are two other towns whose names have undergone almost equally curious vicissitudes. The first was originally known as Medeshamstead; but after the foundation of the great abbey, with its accompanying protective works against the intrusive Danes, it came to be called simply Burh, like the Borough in South London, and Bury in Lancashire. Owing to the immense wealth of the monastery, however, the epithet of Golden was often added to the mere name of the fort; and the town was spoken of as the Golden Borough, so that it narrowly escaped being modernised into the alternative forms of Goldenbury or Guildborough. But in the end the name of the patron saint, St. Peter, got merged with the original simple Burh, and the town

became accordingly Peterborough, the English equivalent of Peter the Great's St. Petersburg, on the Neva. As to the Suffolk Bury, that took its name, of course, from St. Edmund of East Anglia, the canonised king killed by the Danish pirates; but its proper title of St. Edmundsbury or, reversed, Bury St. Edmunds, means, I need hardly say, nothing more than St. Edmund's town, the borough of St. Edmund. True, the shrine of the great East Anglian saint was preserved there religiously, so that in that sense St. Edmund was there buried; but save in the remote etymological connection between the noun 'borough' and the verb 'to bury,' there is no relation whatever between these two separate facts. Yet all Bury men religiously believe their town to be so called because St. Edmund the king was buried there. Even so in the West Country local tradition accounts for the names of the villages already mentioned by saying that the Danes in a great battle were maimed at Membury, and their corpses carried to Musbury where they 'must bury' them. Such charmingly childish etymological explanations are amply sufficient for the bucolic intelligence.

To add to the pleasing confusion between the various buries, boroughs, and burghs, it must be further noted that there is another very dissimilar derivative from the same root, namely *berg*, a mountain. In modern English this word has almost entirely dropped out, save only in the familiar compound, iceberg; but in the older forms of the language it was very common, till slowly superseded by the Norman French equivalent, mountain. In German the two words retain their original close similarity, as *burg*, a town, and *berg*, a hill. At first sight, indeed, the modern reader may not perceive any very close resemblance between the two ideas thus somewhat arbitrarily brought together. But to earlier races the connection was indeed a very natural one. For to *kurrow* or *dig* implies the throwing up at the place dug of a considerable heap, dyke, or barrow; and the barrow is itself a small hill so thrown up over the dead body of a fallen chieftain. Barrows generally cap the hill-tops, and so also do prehistoric forts, buries, or boroughs. Moreover, the mountain or hill is, as it were, a pile or mound, probably thought of as originally thrown up by the definite act of some god or demon. Thus from a variety of causes the distinction between a mountain and a borough came to be a very faint one for early minds. At the present day we have no difficulty at all in discriminating between Berlin and the Matterhorn, or between Paris and the Pic du Midi; but in more

primitive times the hill and the hill-fort, the town and the earthwork, merged mentally into one and the same picture. We can see how hard it was to discriminate the berg from the burg if we think of Heidelberg by the side of Wurtemberg, or of the alternative spellings so long in vogue of Nuremberg and Nuremburg. Perhaps one of the oddest among all these confused forms is the name of the town of Mons, in Belgium, which is only a quaintly Gallicised variant of its native Teutonic title, Bergen.

In England itself there are not very many hills or mountains which bear the distinctive name of borough. But one Yorkshire case at least is quite indubitable, to wit, Ingleborough. Ingle is good old English for a fire, and the word still survives as a poetical archaism in the phrase 'the ingle-nook'; so that Ingleborough is just equivalent to our modern name Beacon Hill, which is given to the pretty little rocky tor beside the lighthouse at Ilfracombe. I mention this latter case with the greater confidence because researches into the visitors' book at the hotels of that Devonshire watering-place, and scientific observation of the solitary couples dotted at intervals among the rocks and slopes close by, lead me to infer that almost everyone in the whole of England has gone to Ilfracombe (not alone) on at least one important turning-point in his personal history. Ingleborough has never returned a member to Parliament; though, to be sure, it has quite as good a right to do so as the deserted hill-top of Old Sarum ever had.

Crowborough Beacon, in Kent, is another instance of the very unparliamentary English borough. The hill so called is the highest point of the Forest Ridge of Surrey and Sussex, and the word borough, which enters into its composition, undoubtedly means here a hill only, not a town, bury, or earthwork. To be sure, there is now a hamlet of Crowborough close at hand, while the termination Beacon has been added to the hill-name; but the word is far older than the modern hamlet, and though Crowborough now means the village only, while the height is always spoken of as Crowborough Beacon, that is only part of the usual perversity of modern English speech, which persists in reduplicating Windermere into Windermere Lake, and refusing to allow even Grasmere and Derwentwater to tell their own tale in their own pretty primitive fashion. I have lived to see Newhaven Harbour and Cranbourne Brook. I fully expect to see before I die, Mount Snowdon, Loch Katrine Lake, and perhaps even Manchester City. Flamborough, now commonly called Flamborough Head, shows us

the Beacon Hill in as early a form as Ingleborough itself. The word of course means Flame-borough, that is to say, the Light-house Berg or promontory.

Hillsborough, in Devonshire, is another very good example of a borough, absolutely bare and grassy since the beginning of all things. If it had ever been a town indeed, and not a mere hill, it would have been Hillsbury, not Hillsborough; for in the west country all the burghs are buries, while, on the contrary, all the bergs are perversely boroughs. That is a little topsy-turvy peculiarity of the Devonian rustic: if a man's name is Pulsford, for instance, he calls him Spulford; but if his name is Sperling, he calls him Persling, just to make things even. Instead of running, the west-countryman urns; instead of asking, he axes; his ruddy robins are urdocks or urdbreasts; Crediton on his lips is Kurton, and furze is fuzz. Now Hillsborough stands close beside the village of Hele, and its meaning is simply Hele's Borough or Hele's Berg,—that is to say, being interpreted, the hill of Hele. Thus the part of the name which says Hill means the village, but the part of it which says Borough means the hill, just out of pure contrariety. So a raisin in Devonshire is called a fig, while a fig is called a dough fig. Clotted cream is 'cream,' *sans phrase*, but cream itself is always 'raw cream.'

In England at large, on the other hand, the buries, even when the name belongs to a hill, are almost always relics of forts or hill-villages. Cissbury Hill, near Worthing, for example, is now absolutely uninhabited, but it is crowned along its summit by a very fine prehistoric fort, within whose precincts an enterprising local archæologist has unearthed a genuine manufactory of flint implements—the original cores with the flakes struck off them, and the finished hatchets, or tomahawks, in every degree of perfection, broken and unbroken, lying scattered about beneath the modern soil, exactly as the old Stone-Age artisans had left them at the moment when their palisaded stronghold was surprised and captured. Hollingsbury Castle, again, on the downs behind Brighton, is now no longer either a castle or a bury in the latter-day sense; but when the name it still bears was first bestowed upon it, bury designated a hill-fort alone, so that Hollingsbury meant simply the camp of the Hollings. Later on, the original meaning of the termination became obscured, and, a newer word being added to the whole, it came out as Hollingsbury Castle. By-and-by, when even antiquaries have forgotten the old application of

the last element to a hill-stronghold, we may expect that it will be described by the trebly tautological name of Hollingsbury Castle Fort. Bury Hill, near Dorking, is a similar instance, where the old berg has been supplemented by the modern hill, just as we all talk about the river Avon, the Bourne brook, and the Pen head, in all which cases the second half of the name is only a modernisation or translation of the now forgotten and obsolete first.

Sometimes these older borough names are absurdly paralleled by later modern ones. For example, there is Scarborough. Scar, as everybody doubtless knows, is northern English for a cliff; and the word must be familiar in this sense to all visitors to the lake district. Hence Scarborough is, in all probability, the exact equivalent of Clifton—a name which has itself undergone a still more vile builder's-English transformation into Cliftonville. But it is quite possible that the title of Scarborough dates further back than the existence of any village at all at the base of the hill, and that we ought rather to translate the name as Cliff Hill, like the Cleeve Hills near Cheltenham. A very similar overhanging cliff in the half Danish Orkneys bears yet another variety of borough name, as the Brough of Birsá.

Others among the old English boroughs enclose for us still little fossil bits of forgotten history, often deeply interesting to the local inquirer, and full of hints as to the real nature of our early social and domestic arrangements. Take as an excellent instance of this historical type of borough names the word Gainsborough. In very early English days, before our ancestors had even taken to spelling badly, there was a little independent principality in Lincolnshire whose people called themselves the Gainas, and even as late as the time of good King Alfred (whom we reckon as quite a modern personage in these days of prehistoric archæology) the Prince of the Gainas was considered to be a fitting match for the King's own daughter. (Of course nowadays such an alliance would be quite *infra dig.*: we would marry our princess, instead, to a very petty German Grand Duke with about half the same extent of territory.) The prince in question had his capital at Gainsborough—that is to say, the borough or fortified village of the Gainas. In fact it was his *Schloss*. So, again, Shrewsbury, now the county town of a flourishing shire, was originally Scrobbsbury or Scrubsbury, the borough in the scrub, bush, or forest. It may be generally noted, indeed, that almost every hill-fort or very ancient town in England bears a bury or

borough name. Taking three or four western counties alone, one may instance among inhabited towns Malmesbury, Marlborough, Amesbury, Salisbury, Heytesbury, Shaftesbury, Glastonbury, and Abbotsbury; while as to earthworks and hills, too numerous to catalogue, here are a few of the best-known picnicking places—Sidbury, Ogbury Camp, Yarnbury Castle, Battlesbury (overhanging Warminster), Scratchbury, Chiselbury, Badbury Rings, Ell Barrow, Thorncombe Barrow, Weatherbury Castle, Bulbarrow, Rawlsbury, Trent Barrow, Winkelbury, Cadbury, Elbury, and Twin Barrows. Sometimes the orthography shows a tendency to grow phonetic, which must take the bread out of the mouth of the spelling reformers—as in Preston Berry Castle, the heather-grown hill-fort that overlooks the deep gorge of the Teign, near Moreton Hampstead, and Masberry Castle, the old British fortress in the ever-unconquered Mendips, beside the Roman Fosseway that leads across the uplands from Bath to Shepton Mallet and Ilchester. But these little orthographical vagaries do not for a moment mislead the practised archæologist; he knows at sight that Oldborough, near Chippenham, is the same name as Oldbury, near Wilton, and that Berry Pomeroy, not far from Torquay, is identical in meaning with Bury Hill among the Surrey outliers of the bare North Downs.

Oldbury, of course, implies Newbury, of which Berkshire supplies us with a well-known example. Many of the unparliamentary boroughs, indeed, are thus grouped together by natural contrast. If there is a Highbury in the Hampstead district, there is a Netherbury to match it near Beaminster, in Dorset. Kingsbury Episcopi answers indifferently well to Queenborough, the familiar port for Flushing, while unparliamentary pairs like Hanbury and Barbury, Cherbury and Burbury, Scarborough and Warborough, may be found scattered about all over the ordnance map of England in wild profusion. I am not quite sure whether one can completely box the compass with Norbury and Sudbury, Eastbury and Westbury. The two first names and the last, indeed, are familiar to us all, but I don't myself remember ever to have met with a case of Eastbury. However, I say this under correction, and no doubt I shall get it. I am far too wise by this time to assert a negative. In a moment of weakness I once incautiously stated in this magazine that though Chadwick as a personal name implied the former existence of a village so-called, there was no hamlet of Chadwick at present to be found by diligent search in these kingdoms. By the first post after I had committed myself

to that deadly error an obliging and well-informed correspondent sent me a list of thirteen distinct and separate villages of Chadwick, collected in various counties of England and Wales. I may add that I do not personally yearn and burn for the discovery of an Eastbury. Persons having large numbers of Eastburies on hand may keep them entirely in their own bosoms for their own private gratification.

Burghs are far less common in England than in Scotland, but they flourish to some extent on the east coast, where their pronunciation would not by any means come up to Sir George Campbell's rigorous requirements. Aldeburgh, near the mouth of the little river Alde, is pronounced Alde-boro', while Happisburgh, a growing watering-place and future rival of its neighbour Cromer, is softened down on local lips to Haze-boro'. And since I have made mention of these East Anglian burghs, it would be an unpardonable slip not to add in this connection that Aldeburgh is the original of Crabbe's 'Borough,' a poem once much read and unduly admired, and now as much and unduly neglected. Burgh Castle, near Great Yarmouth—a Roman ruin of massive grandeur—is similarly pronounced borough, and affords also another capital example of reduplicated place-names.

It might be supposed that the fairly extensive list I have here given pretty well exhausted the whole catalogue of buries and boroughs in the United Kingdom, as I have no doubt it has long since done the reader's patience. But that is very far indeed from being the case. Among large and well-known places, in fact, I have not mentioned at all Knaresborough and Wellingborough, Aylesbury and Tewkesbury, Finsbury and Shoebury, Maryborough and Helensburgh. The entire list of buries and boroughs for England alone would fill out a great many closely printed pages. I will only give one more example, and that (for the sake of the bull) shall be a French one. Cherbourg is interesting as a burgh situated in what is now a purely French district, but its name was given to it by the Saxon settlers of the fifth century, the very same people whose piratical longships founded at the same time the Saxon colonies on the opposite coast of Hants and Dorset, and whose half-mythical leader left his own mark on his own bury at Hengistbury Head. All the other towns or villages from Caen to Cherbourg also bear purely English names, a little twisted aside by French spelling, but still unmistakably betraying in etymology and meaning the impress of their ancient Saxon origin.

THE BIRTH OF MOUNTAINS.

PRETENDERS to longevity usually turn out upon strict inquiry to be hoary impostors: they are not half so aged in reality as they make themselves out to be. Mountains themselves, for all their show of antiquity, form no exception to this almost universal rule of evidence. The eternal hills have no proper claim to the honours of eternity; some of them, indeed, which now hold their heads very high in the world, and go in for coronets of snow or diadems of ice, and so forth (for particulars of which see the poets), are really of very modern origin, and cannot show half so good a pedigree after all as many an unobtrusive little granite knoll, upon which they now look down with sublime scorn from the proud height of their *parvenu* complacency. 'As old as the hills' seems to most of us the extreme limit of possible age; and yet, since all created things must needs at some time have had a beginning, it is immediately obvious to the meanest capacity—and much more, then, to the courteous reader—that even the eternal hills themselves must in their own time have slowly passed through the various stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and full maturity. Old as they are, they have yet once been young and foolish; grey as they are, they have yet once been green and grassy; solemn as they are, they have yet once indulged in a boisterous, noisy, and even skittish youth, before settling down by slow degrees into the sober respectability of middle age. Every dog has his day, and the eternal hills have had theirs. As little hills they have skipped audaciously; they have grown and grown by slow increment; they have passed gradually from a state of youthful activity and mobility and life to a state of discreet and immovable senile solidity. Yet many of them are young at heart even now, and some of them, that look demure enough on ordinary occasions, are still distracted by fiery passions within, which rend and tear them from time to time with fierce convulsions in their inmost bowels.

Yes, the eternal hills have had a beginning, and the beginning was often far more modern than most people usually imagine. There are small hillocks in these islands of Britain that were already great mountains while the Alps and the Himalayas still lay slumbering sweetly beneath half-a-mile of superincumbent

ocean. Indeed, as a general rule, it may be said that the biggest mountains are very new, and that the oldest mountains are very small. Size is here no criterion of age; for when once a mountain has ceased growing and attained maturity, it begins to grow down again, by mere wear and tear, until at last wind and weather, rain and river, have slowly beaten it back to the level of the plain from which it sprang. Let us look briefly at the whole life-history of an adult mountain, thus regarded as an organic unity, from the time when it first begins to raise its young head timidly from the mother ocean, to the time when, decrepit and worn-out, a broken remnant, it loses individuality altogether in the broad expanse of the surrounding lowlands.

Everybody in these days knows, of course, that every mountain worth speaking of (bar the inevitable exceptions that 'prove the rule') has once been a portion of the sea-bottom. Unless it be a volcano or self-made mountain, the rocks and stones of which it is composed have been laid down, some time or other, on the bed of some forgotten and primæval ocean. So much all the world has long known, ever since geology as a science first fought its way against severe odds into general recognition; but, strange to say, it has only been in very recent years indeed that any real progress has been made in the comprehension of the life-history of mountains. They had once lain *perdu* at the bottom of the sea; they now soar away among the moist, cold, and uncomfortable clouds:—that was all that science could tell us about them; but how they got there or what pushed them up was for many years an insoluble mystery.

Your volcano, indeed, may at once be put out of court in this respect, because everyone can see at a glance the *modus operandi* of the common volcano. Like a clumsy conjuror it does the trick openly before your eyes; it lets you see it in the very act of tossing out great showers of stones and ashes, which fall symmetrically on every side, and produce the well-known regular cone that one sees exemplified in the sugar-loaf outline of Etna or Fusi Yama, or in the topmost summit of Vesuvius itself. Or again, in some other cases, your volcano works by squirting up a mass of viscid lava through a fissure in the earth, and allowing it to cool slowly into dome-shaped mountains like the Puy of Auvergne, or the odd-looking Mamelors of the African islands. Either of these cheap and easy ways of forming a mountain is simple enough to understand; but then, they only explain themselves; they cast

no light at all upon that other and vastly larger group of mountains which have been slowly raised by secular action from the bottom of deep and ancient oceans. We don't, most of us, come across many active or even extinct volcanoes in the course of a lifetime. I could count, myself, on the fingers of one hand, the total number of confirmed smokers of this description that I have ever met with in all my wanderings. Teneriffe and Pico, Hecla and Cotopaxi do not fall in everybody's way casually during the average spell of a summer holiday. The mountain with whose personal peculiarities we are most of us most familiar—the average Swiss, or Scotch, or Welsh specimen—consists mainly or entirely of sedimentary material from the sea-bottom, and is only very remotely connected in any way with volcanic action. How did such an eternal hill as this begin to be, and what power raised it from abysmal degradation to its present proud and lofty position in the world of mountains?

I don't suppose that, to answer this question, we could possibly do better than take the life-history of the Alps themselves, as expounded for us in very choice geological English by Professor Judd and other observers; whose remarks I shall humbly endeavour to the best of my ability to translate here into the vernacular dialect.

Once upon a time there were no Alps—indeed, during the whole vast primary period of geology (embracing in all probability four-fifths of the duration of life upon this planet) there is every reason to believe that central Europe lay consistently and persistently beneath the depths of the sea. The German Ocean was then really conterminous with the whole of Germany, and the Sea of Rome embraced the greater part of Catholic Europe. It was only at the opening of the secondary period—the age of the great marine lizards—that the first faint embryo of the baby Alps began to be formed. Now, the origin of a mountain chain is not really due, as most people used once to imagine, to a direct vertical up-thrust from below, as when you push a handkerchief up with a pencil—the old lecture illustration; its causes and conditions are far more complex and varied than that; it is, in fact, strange as it may sound to say so, a result of subsidence rather than of upheaval—a symptom rather of general shrinkage than of local eruption. For nothing can shrink without wrinkling and corrugating its surface; a result which one commonly sees alike in a withered apple, an old man's hand, and a dry pond cracked and fissured all

over by the hot sun. The Alps are thus ultimately due to the shrinkage of the earth upon its own centre; they are dislocations of the crust at a weak point, where it finally collapsed, and threw up in collapsing a huge heap of tangled and contorted rubbish.

The beginning of the Alps, in fact, was due to the development in Permian times—everybody is, of course, quite familiarly acquainted with the Permian period—of a line of weakness in the earth's crust, right along the very centre of what is now Switzerland, but what was then probably nowhere in particular. The line of weakness thus produced showed itself overtly by the opening of a number of fissures in the solid crust, like cracks in a ceiling—not, indeed, visible to the naked eye of any inquiring saurian who may have chanced to investigate the phenomena in person, but manifesting their existence none the less by the outburst along their line of volcanic vents, hot springs, geysers, and all the other outer and visible signs of direct communication with the heated regions beneath the earth. From these fissures masses of lava, tuff, and other volcanic materials rapidly poured forth, some of which still form the core of the Alpine system, though most of them are buried at the present day under other layers of later deposition.

'Aha,' you say, 'so after all, in spite of promises to the contrary, the Alps themselves turn out to be at bottom of volcanic origin.' Not a bit of it: let us suspend judgment for the present. The actual Alps, as we know them to-day, are of far later and more modern date. The very next thing the volcanoes did after bursting out frantically into action was to disappear bodily beneath the bed of the ocean. This is a very common and natural proceeding on the part of extensive volcanic ranges. First they pop up and then they pop down again. You see, the line of weakness had resulted in the pouring out of immense quantities of molten lava, in some places twelve or fifteen thousand feet thick; and that necessarily left a hole below, besides piling up a lot of very heavy matter on top of the hole thus occasioned. The natural consequence was a general collapse; the age of great volcanic outbursts was followed by an age of gradual subsidence. Of course the young Alps, already a very sturdy infant range, didn't sink all in a moment beneath the engulfing waters of the Triassic sea. All through the Triassic period—the age of the English salt beds—smaller volcanoes went on pushing themselves up more or less feebly from time to time, and doing their level best to frighten the big

lizards with their molten ejections; but still the support was steadily removed from below this portion of the earth's crust, and the weight above made it sink slowly, slowly, slowly beneath the waters of the sea, just as southern Sweden is now sinking, an inch at a time, under the brackish waves of the encroaching Baltic. Streets in Swedish towns, originally built, no doubt (like most other streets), above high-water mark, now lie below the tide (which must be very uncomfortable for their owners), with other earlier and still lower streets beneath and beyond them. The whole peninsula, in fact, is gradually disappearing beneath the waters of the Baltic, as regardless as Mr. George himself of the vested interests of the landed proprietors. Just so, in all probability, by very slow degrees the Triassic volcanoes sank and sank, till at last the blue Triassic sea flowed uninterruptedly over the whole of Switzerland. During all the Triassic time, indeed, the igneous forces were getting gradually exhausted, and by the close of that long period they had fallen into a pitiable state of complete extinction.

Year after year and age after age the buried core of the future Alps went on sinking further and yet further under the deepening waters of an ever profounder and profounder ocean. One kind of sediment after another was deposited on top of it, and these sediments, of very diverse hardnesses and thicknesses, form the mass of the rocks of which the existing Alps are now composed. The line of weakness occupied most probably the centre of the great Mediterranean thus produced; for the sediments lie far thicker in the Alps themselves than round the shallow edges of the sea, in whose midst they were laid down. In fact, many of the strata which, away from the Alpine axis, measure only hundreds of feet thick, increase along that central line till their thickness may rather be measured by thousands. The united depth of all the sediments accumulated along the sinking line during the whole secondary age amounts to about ten miles. In other words, the core of the Alps must have sunk from fifteen thousand feet above the sea to at least ten miles below it. Not, of course, that the sea itself was ever ten miles deep, for the sediment went on accumulating all the time, and sinking and sinking as fast as it accumulated; but the volcanic core, which was once perhaps nearly a mile above sea level, must at last have sunk far beneath it, with not less than ten miles of accumulated rubbish lying on its top.

With the setting in of the tertiary period—the age of the

great extinct mammals—opens the third chapter in the history of the origin and rise of the Alps. The trough-like hollow, filled with thick layers of sediment, which then covered the line of weakness in the earth's surface, began to be pressed, and crushed, and pushed sideways by the lateral strain of the subsiding crust. Naturally, as the crust falls in slowly by its own weight upon the cooling centre, it thrusts from either side against the weakest points, and in so doing it twists, contorts, and crumples the layers of rock about the lines of weakness in the most extraordinary and almost incredible fashion. To put it quite simply, if a solid shell big enough to cover a globe of so many miles in diameter is compelled to fall in, so as to accommodate itself to the shrunken circumference of a globe so many miles less in diameter, it must necessarily form folds every here and there, in which the various layers of which it is composed will be doubled over one another in picturesque confusion. Such a fold or doubling of the layers are the Alps and the Jura. Our world is growing old and growing cold; and as it waxes older and colder it shrinks and shrinks, and shakes and quivers, so that its coat is perpetually getting a little too big for it, and has to be taken in at the seams from time to time. The taking in is done by the simple and primitive method of making a bulging tuck. The Alps are situated just above a seam, and are themselves one of the huge bulging tucks in question.

The inner hot nucleus of the globe (which is not liquid, as the old-fashioned geologists did vainly hold, but solid and rigid) contracts faster than the cooler outside. The cold upper shell therefore falls in upon it more or less continually, and thus, occupying less horizontal space, must necessarily cause great lateral pressure. Imagine for a moment a solid weight of millions upon millions and millions of tons all falling in towards a common centre, and all squeezing sideways the parts about the crack at which the crust of the earth is weakest. The present structure of the Alps shows us admirably how enormous is the force thus exerted. The solid rocks which compose their surface are twisted and contorted in the most extraordinary way, great groups of strata, once horizontal, being folded over and over each other, exactly as one might fold a carpet in several layers. Professor Heim, of Zurich, has shown by careful measurements that the strata of rock which now go to make up the northern half of the central Alps alone once occupied just twice as much horizontal space as they do at present. The crushing and folding due to the lateral pres-

sure has been powerful enough to wrinkle up the different layers, and throw them back upon one another like a blanket doubled over and over, in huge folds, that often reach from base to summit of lofty mountains, and stretch over whole square miles of the surface of Switzerland. According to Professor Heim, the folding of the crust has been so enormous, that points originally far apart have been brought seventy-four miles nearer one another than they were at the beginning of the movement of pressure. In fact, Switzerland must have been originally quite a large country, with some natural pretensions to be regarded in the light of a first-rate European power; but its outside has been folded over and over so often that there is now very little of it left upon the surface. What it once possessed in area it has nowadays to take out in elevation only.

Of course, if you make such colossal folds as these in solid rocks and other comparatively incompressible materials, you must necessarily raise them a great deal above the original level. You must put the extra material somewhere, and to heap it up in huge folds is the simplest and easiest thing to do with it. At the same time the compression is so immense that it succeeds in hardening and altering the composition of the rocks themselves, so much so that even if you pick out a single small piece of the stone you will find it puckered and crumpled in the most intricate manner by the enormous side-thrust of half a continent. Masses of soft clay, like that sticky stuff thrown up in laying down London gas-pipes, have been pressed close into the condition of hard roofing slates by the lateral pressure. Soft muds have been hardened and thickened into crystalline rock, and sands converted into solid masses as dense as granite. The whole great fold of crumpled, hardened, and distorted strata thus piled confusedly one on top of the other is the modern Alps, and the minor folds that lead up to it compose the lesser parallel ranges, like the Jura, that run quietly along their foot. In some parts of the Jura these folds follow one another in regular undulations, exactly like so many thicknesses of cloth, puckered up into ridges and hollows by side pressure.

That, put briefly, is just how the Alps came to be raised visibly above the earth's surface. They are there, not because they were pushed up from below, but because they were crushed up sideways by the collapsing earth-crust: they represent not vertical thrust, but lateral pressure. How terrific, says everybody, must have

been the grand convulsion of nature to which so enormous a mass of mountains was originally due ! Not a bit of it. The convulsion of nature was probably not in the least terrific. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that it continues its slow, quiet, and unobtrusive action uninterruptedly even down to the present day. The Alps are still being built up yet higher by the selfsame side-thrust, and the occasional earthquakes to which they have always been subject are good evidence that the work of mountain-making still proceeds slowly within them. What a comfort to reflect, when one's hotel is rudely shaken on the lake of Geneva or at Interlaken, that the shake has probably added half an inch to the stature of Mont Blanc or the Bernese Oberland ! For aught we mortals know to the contrary, the Matterhorn itself may still be regarded in cosmical circles as a rising mountain. To be sure, during the period of greatest movement there may have been from time to time occasional paroxysms far more violent than any that have occurred in Switzerland during historical ages—terrific pangs of Mother Earth in labour—but on the other hand there may not. Slow and steady pressure long exerted would amply suffice to account for all the twists and folds, the distortions and dislocations, of the Swiss Alps as we see them at present.

But the existing contour of the various chains is not, of course, the contour due to the original upheaval or folding process. Nature is a very perverse goddess : the first thing she does is to heave up a mountain range, and the very next thing she tries to do is to knock it down again as fast as possible. No sooner is a ridge raised to an appreciable height above the surrounding plain than wind and rainfall, torrent and glacier, do their best to wear it down once more to indistinguishable uniformity with the neighbouring country. Water, as we all know, is the great leveller, the most democratic among the forces of nature ; it brings down the mountain from its lofty height, and fills up lake and valley and estuary and ocean with the powdered detritus it has slowly worn from the disintegrated summit. As rain, it washes away soil and crumbles rocks ; as river or torrent, it cuts itself deep ravines and precipitous gorges ; as ice, it grinds down hills, and wears profound glens among the solid strata ; as snow, it equalises all the rugged surfaces with its deceptive covering of virgin white. So, even while the upward movement of the Alps was still in active and constant progress, the reverse process of disintegration must have been steadily going on, side by side with it, in a thousand

unobtrusive minor ways. The whole existing contour of dome and *aiguille*, peak and valley, gorge and scarp, chasm and corrie, is due to the continuous close inter-action of these two forces—the upheaving and the disintegrating, the building and the unbuilding.

If the force which raised the mountains had acted all at once, and no disintegrating action had afterwards taken place, the Alps would have consisted on the whole of one great folded mass, led up to by a number of lesser undulations, and rising at the centre into a huge boss or elongated hog's back, which might, perhaps, be more or less broken here and there by an occasional dislocation. They would have formed, not a varied range of mountains, but a continuous ridge. From the picturesque point of view, such an Alp as this would be practically worthless; it would be nothing more than one gigantic down, without any variety, romance, or mystery—a mere dome of swelling rock, covered on the summit by a curved sheet of monotonous, dull, and uninteresting snow. Fortunately for the British tourist and the canny Swiss hotel-keeper, nature managed the thing in a different way. Frost and rain scaped out the range, as fast as it rose, into jagged peaks like those of Chamouni, or precipitous cliffs like those of Grindelwald. Rivers carved out for themselves deep glens like that of the Valais, and glaciers wore themselves profound beds like that of the Mer de Glace, or round lake basins like those of the Grimsel. The softer parts were cut away by this ceaseless action of wind and rain and frost and ice-sheet; the harder and more crystalline portions alone were left behind, scarred and weathered into fantastic shapes as jagged peak or craggy summit. The final outcome of the whole process is the modern Alps, as we actually see them—rising here into snow-clad bosses, jutting out there in naked needles; traversed at one spot by deeply cut torrents, sculptured at another into beautiful valleys. 'They remain,' says Professor Geikie, 'a marvellous monument of stupendous earth-throes, followed by a prolonged gigantic denudation.' The whole mass is not, in short, nearly so high as it would have been had erosion never kept pace with elevation; but it is a thousand times more picturesque, more varied, more wonderful, and more dangerous. I add the last epithet advisedly, out of compliment to the genius of the Alpine Club.

Professor Judd has well shown how great is the amount of wear and tear to which mountains are thus subjected, and how enormous is the loss of material they undergo, in the case of the

extinct volcano of Mull, which rose during the not very remote Miocene period to a height of some ten or twelve thousand feet above the sea level. It had a diameter of thirty miles at its base, and its great cone rose gigantic like that of Etna, or of Fusi on a Japanese fan, far into the sky, unseen by any eye save that of the half-human, ape-like creatures whose rude fire-marked flint flakes the Abbé Bourgeois has disinterred from contemporary strata in the north of France. Since the Miocene days, rain and frost and wind and weather have wreaked their will unchecked upon the poor old broken-down, ruined volcano, till now, in its feeble old age, its youthful fires long since extinguished, it stands a mere worn stump, consisting of a few scattered hills, none of which exceeds three thousand feet in height above sea level. All the rest—cone and ashes, lava and débris—has been washed away by the pitiless rain, or split and destroyed by the powerful ice-wedges, leaving only the central core of harder matter, with a few outlying weather-beaten patches of solid basalt and volcanic conglomerate.

All the other great mountain chains of the earth have been produced in the same way as the Alps, and have passed through exactly parallel phases. But many isolated mountains and lesser hills have a somewhat different and simpler origin, being really nothing more than harder masses of a once continuous upland plain, which have resisted the disintegrating action of rain and wind far longer than the softer and more friable surrounding portions. It should be remembered, too, that all the great existing chains are of very recent origin indeed. There do exist in Europe many very ancient mountain ranges; but these consist for the most part of worn-down and degraded relics of far higher original masses—the central core of now disintegrated Alps and Himalayas. The older a range, the lower it must be; the higher a range, the newer its origin.

I cannot better close this brief *résumé* of the life-history of an eternal hill than by quoting the lucid summing-up of Professor Judd on the origin and progress of a young mountain. 'It will be seen,' he says, 'that mountain chains may be regarded as cicatrised wounds in the earth's solid crust. A line of weakness first betrays itself at a certain part of the earth's surface by fissures, from which volcanic outbursts take place; and thus the position of the future mountain chain is determined. Next, subsidence during many millions of years permits of the accumulation of the

raw materials out of which the mountain range is to be formed; subsequent earth-movements cause these raw materials to be elaborated into the hardest and most crystalline rock-masses, and place them in elevated and favourable positions; and, lastly, denudation sculptsures from these hardened rock-masses all the varied mountain forms. Thus the work of mountain-making is not, as was formerly supposed by geologists, the result of a simple upheaving force, but is the outcome of a long and complicated series of operations.' That is the last word of modern science on the birth, the babyhood, and the maturity of mountains.

RAINBOW GOLD.¹

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK IV.—*continued.*

HOW AARON WHITTAKER BEGAN TO LONG FOR THE RAINBOW GOLD, AND JOB ROUND THREW IT AWAY.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILST all these things were enacting Mr. Thomas Bowling's greed and rage became daily more and more aggravated. The fancy of the buried treasure haunted him, and Job Round being for the hour the hero of the parish, and his name in everybody's mouth, Mr. Bowling heard so much of him that at times he was well nigh beside himself. He thought of the treasure, and he dreamt of the treasure, and he longed and pined to be at it with the actual passion of concupiscence. In his own clumsy fancy many a hundred times he begged his way across the continent, or worked his way by sea to Constantinople and Varna, and deserting the ship struck into the country towards the Balkans, and there by happy chance lighted on the place where the gold lay buried. Awake and asleep he handled it, poured it in a glittering musical stream from both hands; saw it, and felt it, and heard it, and went mad over it.

If that split Besh-Lira on which was engraved the clue to the buried wealth had been in the possession of any other creature than Job Round, and Mr. Bowling had known of it, he would have done murder to become possessed of it, and would have thought it cheaply gained. But in Job's keeping it was safe from Mr. Bowling. A man who took poison enough to kill an elephant and survived it had something supernatural in him to Mr. Bowling's mind, and he was too ignorant to know that a fortieth part of the dose he had administered would have proved fatal. He had had half the treasure for his own, and had thought it worth a comrade's life to have the other half. To have it all he would have poisoned a village full of people, if the thing could have been done with safety.

¹ This novel has been dramatised by the author.

Among Western people it takes a great deal of mental anguish to make a man tear his hair, but this became a common private relaxation with Mr. Bowling. There were times when he would punch his own hat savagely off his head, and taking his grizzled head with both big knuckly hands, would tear at it and tug at it as if it were his bitterest enemy's, snarling and gnashing his teeth meanwhile in an ecstasy of impotence. He would reach to this tragic height of self-abandonment sometimes twice or thrice a week, and in the intervals between his rages would subside into a humour so sullen and scowling that his mere aspect was unpleasant to women and children, and his presence an embarrassment to his co-mates in labour.

In a degree infinitely milder, but with a remarkably persistent habit of recurrence, the same fancy made itself present to the mind of Aaron Whittaker. When the idea became too exigent to be pleasant, and grew tantalising, as it sometimes did, he would try to dismiss it, and would tell himself what most people who had heard the story devoutly believed—namely, that Mr. Bowling was a liar. But Aaron's belief in the tale was too well rooted to be easily torn up, and it was nourished and strengthened by another belief, which he himself admitted to be singular and yet could not succeed in escaping. This second belief was that Job Round knew of the truth of Mr. Bowling's narrative, and was, in some way, Mr. Bowling's master, and a hatred and a terror to him.

If there was one thing on which Aaron prided himself more than another it was the power to put two and two together. He was by nature and habit suspicious, and he had a rather vulgar strain of romantic fancy. It was interesting, and made him feel rather like a personage in a book, to fancy that there was a mystery at his own doors, and that his prospective father-in-law was in it.

Casting about for any sort of ground on which to rest this fancy-bred hypothesis of his, he recalled to mind the fact that in his first interview with Mr. Bowling that gentleman's conversion from insolence to civility had followed on the mention of Job Round's name. Putting this together with the man's evident fear of Job, in that curious garden scene at which Aaron had himself assisted; remembering the talk in a strange tongue which had prefaced Mr. Bowling's story; the air of reluctance under compulsion with which the tale was told; the deadly look the

narrator had once cast at Job ; and, above all, Mr. Bowling's apparent certainty that Aaron had come to him as an authorised messenger ; the young man became persuaded that he was in the midst of a strange story which might somehow end to his own profit. And daily rubbing the itch of his curiosity until it grew inflamed, and growing day by day more certain of his own theories, he became possessed of some weak likeness of that concupiscence of greed which animated Mr. Bowling. It was much weaker than Mr. Bowling's passion—partly because it was in his nature that it should be weaker, but partly also because he had not, in spite of his faith in his theories, that excellent person's certainty of knowledge.

Now Aaron had been for some time engaged in a commercial speculation which might result in great profit to himself or in great loss to other people. His mother, whose sole heir he was likely to be, had the freehold of a small farm which had long been looked upon as being almost valueless. The soil was poor and thin, and the crops it yielded were of a corresponding quality. It occurred to Aaron that it was not improbable that great riches lay below this poverty-stricken surface, and possessing himself of a geological map of the district, he had studied it to such effect as to become persuaded that beneath his mother's freehold lay a richer buried treasure than that of which Mr. Bowling was forbidden to speak. Fired with this idea, he laid it before the two capitalists of his acquaintance, Farmer Bache and old Ezekiel Round, and they, after consultation with a mine-surveyor of no particular reputation, decided to embark with Aaron in the scheme—Mrs. Whittaker having already given her consent to it.

Aaron became the practical man, and superintended the sinking of the shaft with great ardour. The new scheme was going to fill with money the pockets of all people concerned in it, and the young man took a great pride in being seen in his working clothes and with the soil of strange earths upon his boots. The impression that Mr. Whittaker was going to settle down became general, and it was known everywhere that he visited Konak Cottage with Job Round's approval as a suitor for his daughter's hand.

The ' Ring o' Bells ' lay in Mr. Whittaker's way from the new sinking to his mother's house, and the young man, being in spite of some magnificences of self-opinion a genial person, and willing to unbend for a gossip, would sometimes call there, and let the assembled rustics know how the mine was getting on.

'Coal's all round us, Mr. Parker,' the young man would say with a fine air of certainty. 'The real old-fashioned thirty-foot Staffordshire. None of your Welsh three-foot seams, but the old-fashioned ten-yard stuff, worth a thousand pounds an acre, and all expenses paid.'

He would invent with great fluency stories of applications from local magnates who desired to join the firm, and were heart-struck at exclusion from so rich a scheme.

The days were already drawing in, and the out-door parliaments of the 'Ring o' Bells' were over for the season, but the sittings were held within doors now, the session of drinkers and drawlers lasting all the year round. Mr. Bowling still took an occasional seat among the frequenters of the place, but he was no longer regarded as enjoyable company. His surly presence cast a gloom upon the house, and he could be moved neither by disbelief nor credence, by chaff nor cajolery, to revert to those stories of his wandering life which at one time had been found so entertaining. He was not only a less agreeable but a less frequent guest than of old, and it became evident by-and-by that Mr. Bowling's object in visiting the 'Ring o' Bells' was to get drunk. To that end he saved his money, and to that end, when he had saved enough, he would sit and drink sulkily until his purpose was accomplished, growing surlier and savager with each succeeding tankard, and finally rolling away in an access of ill-temper.

Aaron came in pretty late one evening, when the company had already gathered and the candles were alight on the heavy tables. Hearing the landlord's voice raised in tones of expostulation he entered the common room, and saw between two lights the projected head of Mr. Bowling, who was looking at the opposite wall with an expression of drunken scorn, and feigning to take no notice of the landlord's upbraidings.

'It's come to this, mister,' said the landlord: 'your room's growed to be more highly thought on than your company, and the less you puttin' your head within these doors, the better opinion we shall have on you. A house of entertainment *is* a house of entertainment—for man an' beast. But the place for the beast is i' the stables, or the cow-shed, or the pigsty, as the case may be, and not among a number of decent men, as knowin' nothin' better than when they'n had as much as is good for 'em. Thee can't sit theeer just as long as thee lik'st, but thee'st get no moor to drink i' this house.'

To this Mr. Bowling returned no other answer than was conveyed by tapping the quart pot in front of him, which was full to the brim.

'Very well,' returned the landlord, 'mek the most on it. Drunk or dry, Sunday or wick-day, that's the last sarvin' thee'st get at the "Ring o' Bells."'

'Why, Parker,' said Aaron, who was as yet unseen by the landlord, 'what's the matter?'

'The matter's this, Mr. Whittaker,' said Parker: 'the man nivver quits the house sober, and that's a scandal to a decent public. He's oncivil when he speaks, which is but seldom, and he uses language, which is a thing as I cannot abide. I'll have no man usin' language i' my house.'

'For the first week or two,' said the withered ancient, who had a seat in the chimney-corner, 'the man was righteously amusin'; but o' late days theer's a change upon him.'

Aaron looked at Mr. Bowling, and Mr. Bowling looked at him.

'I've got my orders,' said Mr. Bowling, 'and I'm a-carrying of 'em out. Hold your jaw's the word. Very well then. I'm a-holdin' of it.' He took a pull at his beer, and nodded twice or thrice after it. 'Ask 'em,' he added, with a drunken wave of the hand which overthrew one of the candles; 'ask 'em if I've spoke a word.'

'Theer's a speeches of delusion on his sperrit, Mr. Whittaker,' said the withered ancient. 'He's been seen to knock that theer head of hisn agen a pollard, wheer the brook runs through the Thirteen Acre, and that self-treatment's a sign o' possession, an' has been so sence the time of the mon as lived among the tombs in the Noo Testyment. Bedlam's the place for him, beyand a doubt.'

'Come, come,' said Aaron patronisingly, addressing Mr. Bowling; 'you shouldn't get drunk, you know. You'll do yourself no good that way.' Mr. Bowling nodded gloomily at him, not in acquiescence, but as if to signify some sort of understanding private to himself. 'What do you do it for?' pursued Aaron. 'Where's the good of it?'

Murmurs from the assembly, 'That's the p'int, Mr. Whittaker.' 'Wheer *is* the good on it?'

'Ah!' said Mr. Bowling, looking with drunken contempt about him. 'Wheer's the good of it? Ask these swine, and what do they know? They ain't got nothing on their minds. They ain't got the minds to have nothing on.'

‘Look here!’ cried the landlord wrathfully, ‘keep a civiler tongue than that, or out thee goest, neck and crop.’

Again Mr. Bowling nodded in private understanding with himself, and having taken a great pull at his delf tankard, sat with his head thrust forward, and stared savagely at the opposite wall. Aaron called for a glass of beer, and, standing with his back to the fire-place, looked every now and again, as if in spite of himself, at Mr. Bowling, and once or twice Mr. Bowling appeared to awaken to the fact that Aaron was looking at him, and would divert his sulky gaze from the wall to stare him out of countenance.

At length the seaman finished his beer, and, rising with a swaying motion, looked round upon the assembled company as if intending to speak, but contenting himself with a scowl and a muttered curse or two, bored his way out of the room, head forward. A minute later, Aaron set down his glass, bade the landlord and his guests a general good-night, and followed in Mr. Bowling’s footsteps.

When he had first seen the sailor he had pronounced him an ugly customer, and the coffee-coloured visage, the great scar, and the scowling eyes still made their owner look formidable to him. At another time he might have hesitated to follow the man, knowing his mood as he did now, but all the oddities of Mr. Bowling’s late behaviour, which excited nothing but doubts of his sanity in the minds of his rustic compeers, were confirmation strong to Aaron with respect to the real existence of that buried treasure, and for the life of him he could not resist the temptation to know more, if by any chance more were to be known. He did not altogether like to tackle the man in his present condition, but being cheered and encouraged by the reflection that in case of extremity he could probably run a great deal faster than Mr. Bowling, and animated by the hope that in his drunken humour the man might be trapped into saying things he would keep to himself when sober, Aaron made bold to follow.

The night was dusky and chill, with a wandering white mist abroad, but by-and-by Aaron sighted the dim figure of the sailor, who was walking at a great rate, though he tacked so often and at such acute angles that he made but small progress.

‘Here, I say,’ cried Aaron genially, coming on a level with him; ‘you’ll walk into the ditch if you don’t mind.’

Mr. Bowling turned to look at the speaker and fell into his

arms, but his language made it clear that the embrace was not dictated by affection.

'Hold up, you lubber,' cried Mr. Bowling. 'What do you yaw like that for?'

'All right,' said Aaron, propping him upright and holding him by the arms. 'Now you're all right, eh? Come along.'

'Come along?' returned Mr. Bowling. 'Come along wheer?'

'Why, come along home, to be sure, to the farm.'

'Very well then,' said Mr. Bowling, as if he had triumphantly maintained a point in argument, and he suffered Aaron to hold him by the sleeve of his smockfrock, and in that way to guide his devious footsteps.

'What makes you afraid of Mr. Round?' said Aaron suddenly.

'Who says as I'm afraid of Mr. Round?' demanded the other, stopping short in his walk and swaying against his questioner.

'I do,' replied Aaron.

'Very well then,' replied Mr. Bowling, 'so I am.' Aaron's heart gave an odd little bump at his side.

'What makes you afraid of him?' he asked.

'Look here!' returned the sailor. 'I'm intoxicated, I am. Ain't I? Look here! Am I the wuss for drink, or am I not?' He took Aaron by the shoulders, and held tight to steady himself. 'You can tell as I'm the wuss for liquor, can't you?'

'Yes, I can,' returned Aaron.

'Very well then. You go back and tell Joby Round, Esquire, you seen me. Like this. Regular right-down rollin' intoxicated, like this.'

'Yes,' said Aaron, with his heart playing on his ribs in quite a series of little bumps. 'Yes.'

'You tell him,' said Mr. Bowling, holding on more tightly, 'as I never said a word.'

'I'll tell him,' replied Aaron. 'You never said a word about the buried treasure? Eh?'

'Not a word,' said Mr. Bowling, with a lurch.

'And that you never have said a word since he told you not to?'

'Not a synnable,' answered Mr. Bowling.

It is one thing to have a theory which looks plausible and to persuade yourself that you believe it, and it is another thing to have the theory confirmed. Aaron had rather a dreamlike feeling for a second or two. Theory turned into fact. Cloud turned into rock.

'All right,' said Aaron, 'I'll tell him. Is there anything else you'd like me to say?'

'He ain't got a call for to try and trap me. I shan't say nothing. He needn't be afeard of me breathing of a word. I don't deny as it weighs upon me. That's nayther here nor theer. But I've got my orders, and I'm a-sticking to 'em. Drunk or sober, I'm a-sticking to 'em. D'ye hear?'

'I hear,' replied Aaron. 'I'll tell him what you say.'

'I don't deny,' said Mr. Bowling, stumbling along the road in spite of Aaron's assisting hand, and threatening every instant to pitch upon his nose—'I don't deny it weighs upon me. I don't pretend to think as I've been treated fair.'

'Of course you don't!' cried Aaron, in a stifled voice which he tried in vain to make natural. 'I say, what a downy chap you are! You knew he sent me, didn't you? It was no use my trying to draw the feather over *your* eyes—was it?'

'Not much,' said Mr. Bowling. 'I knowed who sent you, right enough.'

'Of course you did,' said Aaron, with his head whirling. 'There wasn't anybody else to send me. Was there?'

'Who should there be?' They went on along the darkened lane in silence for a while, but at last Aaron, who was stumbling in his thoughts pretty much as his companion stumbled in his footsteps, caught a sudden inspiration.

'I say,' he began, jerking at Mr. Bowling's arm. 'He's close, isn't he? He doesn't let anybody know the latitude and longitude, does he? But he's got a memorandum somewhere. Eh? I wonder where he keeps it.'

'Pump away, all hands!' cried Mr. Bowling, with a violent hicough. He stopped short in his walk once more, and after two or three wandering attempts to grip Aaron, succeeded, and, holding him by the shoulders with both hands, brought himself to an uncertain anchorage. 'You tell him,' he said thickly, 'as you asked me that. You tell him as you put it cunning. And then you tell him as all I says was "Pump away, all hands!" Just you tell him that. And mind you,' he added, with a weighty solemnity, 'it was while I was intox—intoxicalery—I can't say that—but while I was the worse for liquor. You tell him.'

'I'll tell him,' returned Aaron. 'Ah! you're a cunning fellow.' He ventured to thrust a playful finger at Mr. Bowling's chest, but the action was so ill-received that he repented it. 'No, no,' he

cried, in answer to the staggering demonstrations of war upon which his companion entered. 'You don't want to fight with me. Why, I may turn out to be one of the best friends you ever had.'

'Very well then,' responded Mr. Bowling, suffering himself to be appeased. 'Don't you lay a hand on me no more.'

Aaron promised, and they went on again together, but from that point there was no more to be got out of Mr. Bowling, who, having decided upon his formula, stuck to it with a parrot-like pertinacity, and greeted all hints and inquiries with a hiccoughed injunction to all hands to pump. Recognising the impossibility of going further at that time, Aaron bade him good-night at the corner of the lane which led to Bache's farm, and pursued his own thoughtful way homewards.

So Job Round was mixed up, after all, in this story of Tom Bowling's. Well, it was hardly likely that he would let such a secret perish with him. It was hardly likely, indeed, that he would allow the treasure forever to lie idle. Aaron cudgelled his brains to guess why it should have been left so long, and at last he believed himself to have lighted on the truth. It was likely enough, argued Aaron, that at first, and whilst the rumour of the existence of the treasure was still abroad, it had been too dangerous to attempt to transport it. Then, within a year or two of the time, Job Round had come back home, and had been married. He had very likely been looking forward to a return, when his wife died and he was left alone with his daughter on his hands. Everybody knew how he was wrapped up in Sarah. He would not leave his child behind him, and it was the height of absurdity to suppose that he could have taken her with him upon such an expedition. As for the declaration Mr. Bowling had made in Job's own presence, to the effect that Job had never had the courage to go—that might be dismissed at once. Aaron, though not a courageous man himself, was convinced that there were few things in the world which could frighten Job Round, and before he slept that night he had arrived at a comfortable conclusion. The likeliest thing was that when Sarah was once fairly married, Job would set off once more upon his travels, with an object which only himself and Aaron—with, perhaps, Mr. Bowling—would be aware of. He would bring back the money, and his daughter would inherit it.

With these happy reflections, Aaron, after some hours of excited

tossing to and fro, contrived to sleep. He dreamed, and it was not unnatural that he should dream, of buried treasure. He found himself in a valley, surrounded on all sides by vast hills, and something led him to the place where the gold had been hidden. He dug and dug, without ceasing, for many years it seemed, and at last he came upon a huge flat stone with a ring in it. When he had seized the ring and had raised the stone, which came up from its bed as light as a feather in his hands, he saw a vault where golden coins lay piled in vast heaps, shining like the sun. He leaped in, and handled the glittering heaps, and with a clang, everything went dark. The stone had fallen back into its place, and he was powerless to remove it.

He awoke in a cold sweat of dread, and with the clanging noise still in his ears. In the morning he discovered that an obscure old oil painting, which had hung upon his bedroom wall, had fallen to the floor, and so made the noise which awakened him. But for that accident the dream would have been altogether of good omen. But, as everybody knows, the falling of a picture is of itself a sign of ill-fortune.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN we were little people, and credulous, we believed, because our elders told us, that good people were always happy, and wicked people always miserable; that an approving conscience was a shield against all possible misconstruction, suspicion, and wrongfully inflicted suffering, and that conscience itself was a monitor altogether divine—a warning voice, whose warnings were never to be silenced or perverted. Perhaps these beliefs were good for us. It would certainly be an admirable thing if everybody could retain them, with eyes open and intelligence awake. But that moral Utopia of childhood, with many other things as desirable as itself, has crumbled and decayed. We have seen the righteous forsaken, and the children of the good man wanting bread. We have met happy rascals whose vitals were gnawn by no cankerworm of reproach, and who had no more trouble with their consciences than they had with their nerves. We have met people by the score whose consciences approved them in malice and hatred, in the swindling devices of trades, in countless meannesses and trickeries.

It is noticeable, however, that there is a sort of grown-up person for whom the world is still governed on the principle of that childish Utopia of the copybooks. This sort of grown-up person is not, as might at first thought be supposed, the most innocent of men or women, the most amiable or the most trustful. General Coningham, for an example, held to these beliefs, and would have thought poorly of the man who presumed to contradict them.

In his middle age, General Coningham took to religion; for he had come into what money there was in his family, and had outlived some of his youthful tastes. He was a hard, high Tory, because he thought that all low-bred people ought to be kept in their places, and made to respect their pastors and masters. He was a Christian, because the Church, as he understood it, was on the respectable Tory side. His religion and his politics were mixed of verjuice and oppression, and he was profoundly contented with his own spiritual flavours and his own mental attitude. To doubt his own conscience would have been as bad as to doubt the Scriptures, and that, of course, would have been blasphemy—a sin from which General Coningham was made safe by the fact that he neither studied them nor cared about them. He knew that conscience was the divine guide, and he followed his conscience, or, at least, he and his conscience were always to be found on the same track.

He reviewed the whole of his association with Job Round (for he had not the faintest doubt left in his mind of the new enemy's identity with the old one), and he was perfectly contented with himself from start to finish. A recruit had been represented to him as having with him a dangerous brute of a dog, with which he would not part. A clear infringement of military rule. A barrack square would be a singular spectacle if every private were allowed to keep a dog about him. He had ordered the dog to be killed, and the owner of the dog had knocked him down and deserted. Assault of a superior officer and desertion are without question the most serious of military crimes. The criminal had been captured and his dog with him. Captain Coningham had poisoned the dog, and his conscience absolutely approved of the action. After more than a quarter of a century that blackguard act looked like a virtue still. The criminal had again assaulted him—the criminal a second time had succeeded in escaping, before a twentieth part, or indeed a thousandth part, of his punishment had been

inflicted. General Coningham told himself, with perfect truth, that after the expiry of all this time he would have denounced the offender under any given conditions, though another and not himself had been the object of his violence.

So much for the old account. Now for the new. The Warren Leasowes had not within human memory been common lands, and he had taken the trouble to discover that even so far back as the reign of Edward the Confessor they had been held by a private owner. To his mind that fact morally justified any owner of the lands in withdrawing a privilege which had been voluntarily extended by himself or others, and could never have been originally claimed by the populace as a right. He withdrew the privilege, and the insolent commonalty of Castle Barfield dared to bring force against him. One vulgar old person insolently refused to cease his trespass. He had that insolent old person ejected, and for that his son had actually had the daring to offer him—him, General Coningham—physical violence.

In this General Coningham recognised the hand of Providence. Some people may find it difficult to believe, but the General had no doubts. It was Providence which had brought Ezekiel to his fields; it was Providence which had inspired the deserter with the mad presumption with which he had behaved; it was Providence which had enabled General Coningham to recognise him after so great a lapse of time. In his unregenerate younger days he would have been impious enough to call it accident, but he knew better now. What changes religion can bring about, to be sure—in a certain order of mind.

When the General went down to a certain old-fashioned military club of which he was a member, he told the story with a careful suppression of names and places, for he would not trust the slightest seed of chance to mar the evident designs of Providence, as it might have done.

‘The fellow,’ he said, ‘has escaped for five-and-twenty years, and now they’ll have him in a day or two.’

‘And what on earth,’ said one, ‘do you suppose they’ll do with him? Upon my word, the man’s time of service having long expired, I doubt whether they have the legal right to lay a hand upon him. I don’t know, for the position’s new to me, and I never met a parallel case.’

Coningham’s face flushed crimson, and then paled.

‘Do you mean to tell me, Colonel Alured, that you doubt the

power of the military law to punish an offence of that nature? Why, sir, you propose to pardon the offence because the offence succeeds, and that, to my mind, is its aggravation.'

'Well, now,' said Colonel Alured, who was a red-faced man with white whiskers, and a mingled look of good sense and good nature; 'suppose the right of arrest exists, what do you think they'll do with the man? If I understand you rightly, he has the second half of a flogging to get, and then two years' imprisonment. After that he is to be tried for a new offence, which will be more than seven-and-twenty years old at the time of trial. If I were the man he had assaulted I should let him go. I've known the service now for five-and-forty years, Coninghame, and I never knew a man strike an officer who was a decent sort of fellow. It's always your cantankerous, meddling fellow, who gets hated by the men, who ever finds a private to break out with him. I give you that as my experience. And he must be a nasty beggar, you know, or he wouldn't have the heart to pull the poor devil up again after all this length of time. You see his present action goes to prove what manner of man he was.'

'Perhaps,' said Coninghame, 'it is almost time I should tell you that I am the officer whose conduct and character you are giving yourself the trouble to describe.'

'Oh!' returned the other, with a cool stare, after his first expression of astonishment. 'Of course I'm devilish sorry, you know, and all that sort of thing.' And he began immediately to read the paper he had laid in his lap to listen to Coninghame's story. 'Gad!' said Colonel Alured, when he told the story afterwards, 'I wish I knew where the poor beggar was. I'd give him warning to look out, and a fiver to get away with.' The knot of officers to whom he spoke concurred with him.

'I didn't catch the case at first,' said one, 'but I recall it now. Hudson—Chowpack Hudson, you know—was on the court-martial. He told me all about it. Said the prisoner was a fine young fellow, gentlemanly fellow, and must have been awfully attached to the dog. Some fellows do get attached to dogs. I do. Uncle of mine shot a dog of mine. Perfect accident of course. Very favourite old bitch she was, and upon my word I was pretty nearly fit to cry at the time.' The gallant officer looked a little ashamed of himself, and hastened on. 'That's years ago, and I was a bit soft-hearted as a lad. But about this fellow, now, I remember very well the general opinion was that everybody was well out of it

when he gave 'em leg-bail. They *had* to be severe, don't you see? if they had him.'

Job's chances formed a fruitful theme for discussion in London military circles. Some gentlemen, like Colonel Alured, doubted whether a court-martial had power to take cognisance of an offence so far removed by time. Others were certain that no limitation of time existed theoretically or practically, but most men thought it a difficult and perplexing case, and the news of the arrest was awaited with considerable curiosity. Nobody thought the better of Coningham for pursuing so stale a vengeance, but then Coningham had never been popular, and actions of his performance were blamed often enough when another man would have been praised for them.

But Coningham enjoyed that happy state of mind which is the reward conferred by a good conscience. He was bringing a criminal to justice, performing an act of public utility (so he said and thought, though it is a little difficult to see it), and was delighting himself at the same time. To be severely virtuous, and in the same act to have your enemy upon the hip, is to taste a joy known to few.

In spite, however, of his sustaining sense of duty, and the personal pleasure he enjoyed in the prospect of its performance, the ten or twelve days which intervened between his departure from Castle Barfield and his first news of Job Round passed somewhat drearily. He sat in his own room in the hotel he stayed at, and looked out of window, biting at his nails, when a waiter tapped at the door, and being told to enter presented an envelope on a salver. The General took the envelope, opened it and drew from it a card—an ordinary visiting card—on glancing at which he smiled.

'Show the—ah—gentleman here,' he said. The waiter retired, and after the passage of a minute or two came back ushering into General Coningham's room a man with a languid manner, an air of self possession which verged on insolence, and a curiously quick and observant eye. This gentleman was dressed in irreproachable black, was clean shaven, and wore a white scarf with a small diamond pin.

'Mr. Latazzi?' said the General, when the door was closed and the waiter had departed.

'At your service, sir,' said the new-comer. Mr. Latazzi was more like Mr. Walker than one man was ever like another in this world.

‘Ah!’ said Coningham. ‘Take a seat, sir.’ He spoke with great frigidity, for he could not help remembering that he was a gentleman and a man of unblemished honour, whilst the person before him was a spy whose base services were to be sold to anybody for money. ‘You have completed your investigations?’

‘I regret,’ said Mr. Latazzi, ‘that I was abroad when you called to offer me this little commission, sir. I got back from Paris on the following day, and seeing that it was likely to be a matter of some difficulty and delicacy, I resolved not to entrust it to a subordinate, but to undertake it myself.’

‘I am very much obliged to you,’ returned the General, still frigid with the sense of his own unblemished honour.

‘I have been actually engaged ten days,’ said Mr. Latazzi. ‘Ten days’ personal service, fifty-two pounds ten; retaining-fee ten guineas; sixty-three pounds in all. I have to return you thirty-seven pounds, sir.’ Producing a pocket-book he counted out seven five-pound notes, and then drew forth a purse from which with gloved thumb and finger he extracted a couple of sovereigns. ‘I have reduced the result of my inquiry to writing.’ He drew a legal-looking packet from his breast-pocket—folded blue foolscap tied round with red-tape—and handed it to his client with a bow.

The client took it gingerly, and his aristocratic nostrils betrayed a little sensation of disgust, such as a man of delicate honour would be likely to experience on coming into contact with a person of Mr. Latazzi’s profession.

‘Perhaps,’ said the private detective, ‘it may be more convenient to you if I stay until you have read through my report. You may have some questions to ask.’

‘Take a seat, sir,’ said the General a second time; but Mr. Latazzi seemed to prefer to stand. He wandered about the room looking at the pictures on the walls, and Coningham having straightened the papers, sent his delicate fingers twinkling about the bosom of his black frock coat until they found his gold-rimmed folding-glasses. These he polished deliberately with the skirt of his coat, and then settling them on his nose, sank back into an arm-chair with a smile and began to read.

Mr. Latazzi had paused with some seeming of interest before an engraving in a darkish corner. This engraving hung aslant from the wall, as engravings generally do, and, as engravings commonly are, it was faced with a clear sheet of glass. Mr.

Latazzi, like the engraving, was in the shadow, and General Coningham, in order to read with ease, had taken up the most brilliantly lighted position in the room. The glass reflected him with absolute clearness without reflecting the gentleman who feigned to examine the work behind it. This was why Mr. Latazzi preferred it to the mirror, which as he knew by experience was likely to betray the most guarded watchfulness. In the course of his professional experience Mr. Latazzi had found such trifles as this of use to him. He used it now less because he wanted it than because a habit of foxlike vigilance had grown habitual to him.

When he had watched a little while he saw General Coningham start and shift in his chair. Then he saw him turn back a leaf and begin to read it again. Next the General looked up with a frowning forehead in the direction of the unconscious Latazzi, who was examining the darkened engraving with his head on one side.

‘Mr. Latazzi,’ said the General, ‘I do not quite understand this. There is an obvious error in the date.’

‘I think not,’ returned Mr. Latazzi, tranquilly marching across the room. ‘Permit me.’ He took the papers from Coningham’s fingers. ‘Quite right, sir.’

‘The man left home in ’33,’ said Coningham.

‘In ’35, sir,’ replied Mr. Latazzi.

‘I tell you, sir,’ the General answered in icy anger, ‘that the events upon which I desired you to base your inquiry took place in 1833.’

‘As you please, sir,’ said Mr. Latazzi coolly. ‘My instructions were to ascertain all that could be known of the man’s history. There is all that can be known.’

‘You tell me that this man first left Castle Barfield in the year 1835?’ demanded Coningham, rising.

‘He never spent a week out of Castle Barfield in his life, so far as I can learn, until the summer of that year.’ Mr. Latazzi was perfectly quiet and under his own control. He was not angry at being doubted, he was apparently not surprised at being doubted.

‘You can learn but very little, sir,’ said Coningham bitterly. ‘This man enlisted on the fifteenth day of June, 1833, and deserted on the twenty-second. On the sixteenth of July he was captured in London. On the third of September he was tried by court-martial in Dublin, and on the fifth October he escaped from the hospital. For nearly four months I can trace the man’s

whereabouts, and you, who profess to be a private detective, bring me this barren story.'

'Wait a moment, if you please,' said Mr. Latazzi. 'You assume that these two men are the same, you see. Now it so happens that I have definitely proved that they are not.'

'Not the same?' cried General Coningham. 'I know the man. I swear to him. I—I am prepared to swear to him. As a Christian and a gentleman I am prepared to pledge my oath.'

'Ah!' replied Mr. Latazzi, 'that doesn't make any difference, you see. If you'll take the trouble to read on you'll find I've traced 'em both.'

General Coningham's head began to reel, and he had to sit down again, for fear of falling.

'Both?' he stammered.

'Both,' returned Mr. Latazzi. 'John Smith, identical with John Wybrow, son of the landlord of the "Shoulder of Mutton," at Haydon Hey, ten miles from Castle Barfield. Father bred a particular breed of bulldogs, famous in the district. Son quarrelled with father, left home, date uncertain, but as near as can be fixed, in April 1833. Took with him valuable dog, his own property; local prize taken, well known, name Pincher. Not heard of again until two or three years after, when he wrote from Liverpool stating that he had obtained a situation in New York and was going out to it. Since then no news of him. Supposed to have been lost at sea.'

When he began this history Mr. Latazzi produced a book of memoranda, and referring to its pages, dropped one by one the items of the information he had gathered.

'You will find it all set down there, sir, at some length, though I have spared you the unnecessary details. This hasn't been at all a profitable piece of business for me, but you'll find it has been pretty thoroughly done, for all that.'

'I knew the man,' said Coningham, with a lingering obstinacy. 'I could have sworn to him.'

'After five-and-twenty years it is a difficult thing to swear to a man,' replied Mr. Latazzi.

'How do I know that you are not in collusion with the man?' cried the General, rising, in a passionate flush of certainty in his own first opinion. 'I'll swear to the fellow. I know him to be the same.'

'Very well, sir,' replied the detective with phlegmatic dignity.

‘I have received from you in payment for the service for which you engaged me the sum of sixty-three pounds.’ He drew out the pocket-book from which he had already counted out the seven bank-notes, and deliberately laid thirteen others by the side of them. Then he slipped the two loose sovereigns into his waistcoat pocket. ‘You dispute my right to receive this,’ he went on, ‘and in effect you challenge me with having obtained it by fraud. Under those circumstances, sir, you compel me to recover this money by legal means. I shall be pleased to hear you renew the accusations you have made against me here in open court.’

With this he walked to the other end of the room for his hat and cane.

‘Nonsense!’ cried General Coningham. ‘You were paid in advance. I decline to touch the money.’

‘Very well, sir,’ said Mr. Latazzi, ‘that is as you please. You touch my professional probity, sir, and you touch all I have. My sole object in proceeding against you will be to secure an open hearing for these charges.’

‘Charges!’ repeated Coningham petulantly; ‘I make no charges.’

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ replied the detective, who really contrived for the moment to look the more dignified of the two; ‘you make a very serious charge against me, a charge under which I cannot consent to labour. How am I to know that that charge will not be repeated in quarters where it will be of the gravest injury to me? This charge shall be made, sir, in public, or it shall be withdrawn in public.’

‘There’s your money, sir,’ snarled the General. He would not for a hundred thousand pounds have had the story of his fruitless employment of Mr. Latazzi known, and Mr. Latazzi guessed as much. ‘Your money lies there on the table. You may take it and begone.’

‘No, sir,’ answered Mr. Latazzi, with a touch almost of gentle pathos. ‘I cannot accept the money whilst this charge remains unwithdrawn.’

‘I make no charge,’ said Coningham. Latazzi bowed and moved towards the door, but paused halfway.

‘May I understand, sir,’ he said, ‘that you are perfectly satisfied with my manner of conducting this inquiry, and that you cast no doubt upon my honour?’

General Coningham was not the man to withdraw gracefully,

but he snapped a 'Yes' in answer to this inquiry, and added 'Perfectly' and 'Exactly,' and 'Of course,' with a manner expressive of bitter irritation.

'I am obliged to you, sir,' said Mr. Latazzi. 'The expression was the result of a momentary annoyance?'

The General grunted, and Mr. Latazzi counted up his thirteen banknotes, again restored them to his pocket-book, laid the two sovereigns beside the remaining notes upon the table, and turned once more to his client.

'Pray oblige me, sir, by seeing that this is correct.'

Coningham pushed the notes apart with the tips of his fingers as if he were reluctant to touch them.

'Quite correct,' he said. 'Good day, Mr. Latazzi.'

Mr. Latazzi withdrew with a cordial response, and the General sat down with the papers in his hand and tapped savagely with his foot upon the floor.

'I was right,' he muttered to himself. 'I knew the man. I am not mistaken. John Smith and Job Round are one and the same person. I will see to this myself.'

The very next morning the village of Haydon Hey was aware of an aristocratic-looking stranger, who walked its principal street and looked about him with an air of inquiry. The stranger ventured down a by-street or two, and his movements were a source of speculation to the populace. When he had rambled for some time he stopped an elderly police-officer.

'Officer.'

'Yes, sir,' said the policeman, recognising something military in the stranger's aspect, and touching the peak of his shiny cap to it.

'Direct me to the "Shoulder of Mutton" Inn.'

'Can't do that, sir,' returned the policeman. 'It's been pulled down this ten or twelve years.' The stranger's visage, which had perceptibly lightened at the first part of the officer's reply, perceptibly darkened at the second.

'There was such a place then?' he asked. 'Was it here five or six-and-twenty years ago?'

'Yes, sir. Very old house, sir. Very old house indeed.'

'Do you remember who kept it?'

'Yes, sir. A John Wybrow. The Wybrows are gone, sir, kith and kin. Not a soul of 'em left.'

'Ah!' The stranger stood with a thoughtful frown and

flicked at the pebbles in the road with his cane. 'Are you an old inhabitant here?'

'Yes, sir. Born here, sir. Served my country abroad, sir, though.'

'Do you happen to know if this Wybrow had a son who ran away from home five-and-twenty years ago?'

'Why yes, sir, I heard he had when I came back again. Is there any news of him, sir? Excuse me, but what makes me ask is, there was another gentleman down here some days back making very particular inquiries about him, sir.'

'I had particular reasons for inquiring,' said the stranger. He drew a purse from his pocket, bestowed a fourpenny-piece which he sought with some pains amongst a little pile of silver, on the officer, and walked leisurely to the railway station. He had arrived from Birmingham, and he booked for Castle Barfield.

If General Coningham had held any clue beyond the mere suspicion which his own personal certainty of Job Round gave him, he might have reflected that it was not difficult within ten miles of Castle Barfield to discover an old story of a young man who ran away from home. He might have thought that a gentleman of Mr. Latazzi's profession and experience would, in the event of his having a double game to play, take care to play it pretty closely.

CHAPTER VI.

CASTLE BARFIELD had settled back into its normal tranquillity. The battle of the right of way had been fought and won, and the enemy showed no appetite for a renewal of the struggle. For a time people who had never before been in the habit of walking through the Warren Leasowes, directed all their strolls that way, and on fine Sunday afternoons in especial there was to be seen a long procession of Castle Barfield folk leisurely promenading the recovered pathway, but by-and-by the place lost its fascination, and General Coningham's privacy was no more disturbed than it would have been if he had never made his ill-judged effort to exclude the people altogether. The General meditated a retirement from the Warren, and Armstrong, looking daily over the advertisement columns of the *Times*, saw the place announced for sale. The present proprietor had resolved to take up his residence abroad, so said the advertisement, and Armstrong had never been

more sincerely thankful in his life than he felt on reading that statement.

The grey man had never known by what means his obstinate son-in-law had got rid of Mr. Walker. To have bought off that dangerous spy was the most humiliating thing to which Job had ever found himself compelled. He had been tied to the triangles and flogged, but it was not in him to feel that as a humiliation. That came from without, and irresistible physical force constrained him. He rebelled against it with more than fire enough, and it was that which had thrown him as a prey into the wicked hands of Monsieur Bonaventure. It was not a thing over which to feel humiliated, but a thing to be revenged. The purchase of safety at the hands of Mr. Walker was his own act and deed, but no earthly consideration except Sarah's happiness would have had a straw's weight with him in persuasion to it, and even with that exigent influence behind him, he felt the transaction shameful and revolting. He drew some satisfaction from its very bitterness, for, in Job's uncompromising theology, a certain sum of human misery was to be exacted for a certain sum of wrongdoing, and the more he himself suffered, the less Sarah would have to suffer. God was cruel, but, on His own stern lines, was just, and would exact no tittle beyond His proper payment of revenge.

So Job learned to welcome his own self-abasement for his daughter's sake, and treasured even the agony of his own remorse and fears as being set on the right side in the awful ledger.

Aaron came more and more assuredly as the weeks went on, and Job grew more accustomed to hope well of him. The young man was always a shade too smooth and acquiescent for his prospective father-in-law's taste, but Job admitted that he seemed devoted to Sarah, and that he stuck to his new concerns with an admirable assiduity.

It was winter time, the sacred season was near at hand, and Job and Sarah were seated in the little sitting-room of the cottage, with Armstrong for sole visitor at present. The fire burned brightly, the drawn curtains and the mellow lamp gave the room a snug and cosy air, and the white and gold china tea-set sparkled on the table, which was laid for four. Sarah wore an expectant air, and was caught now and then in the act of listening for a step outside. She took her share of the talk, but lost the thread of it at times, and was inclined to be restless and even fidgety. But at last the latch of the gate clicked, the

hinges shrieked, the gate clashed back into its place, and a step scounded on the gravel. Sarah ran to open the door and welcome her sweetheart.

Aaron entered beaming and bustling, and shook hands all round. Sarah took from him his hat and great-coat, and hung them on a peg in a little dark passage between the front room and the kitchen, and, being in the dark and safe from observation, she kissed the cuff of the great-coat before she left it hanging there.

‘You’re a bit late, Mr. Whittaker,’ said Job.

‘I am, sir,’ returned Aaron, smoothly; ‘but I couldn’t very well help it. I’ve been detained at the mine. We have come upon coal, sir. I’ve brought a bit with me.’ He stepped into the little darkened passage, and, encountering Sarah there, gave her a silent kiss, and then, feeling for his overcoat, drew from one of the pockets a small brown-paper parcel. Returning with this to the sitting-room, he opened it, and revealed a shining lump of coal, of about a pound in weight. ‘Good stuff, sir,’ he said, holding it out to Job.

‘Ay,’ said he. ‘It looks all right.’

‘We’re going to make a good thing of it, sir,’ said Aaron. ‘It’s worth a thousand pounds an acre, all expenses paid.’

‘Ah!’ Job answered. ‘Who says so?’

‘That’s Morley’s estimate,’ said Aaron. Morley was the mine surveyor, but the estimate was Aaron’s own. ‘Look here, Miss Round. That’s the first piece out of the solid in the new mine. I cut it out,’ he added in an undertone, ‘with my own hands, to show you. It’ll be worth a thousand pounds an acre.’

‘Can I keep it?’ asked Sarah. Aaron nodded, with a gratified smile, and she ran away upstairs to lock the black memento in one of her own drawers. She would have been just as well pleased had Aaron said that it was going to be worth a thousand pence an acre as she was when he told her it was going to be worth a thousand pounds. The money meant nothing to her, but if Aaron were going to be prosperous, of course she was delighted.

It does not say much for Aaron, perhaps, that as a matter of fact this precious souvenir, which Sarah had just triumphantly locked away, came from his mother’s coal-shed. It may be urged in his excuse that he actually had cut out a piece of something which deserved to be called coal, from the floor of the new mine, and that, contrasting and comparing it with the sample of the local

supply to be found at home, had come to the conclusion that the quality of his own find was hardly as high as it might have been. He had dropped the morsel, therefore, and had picked up another piece, by purposed accident, in the place of it, and, being a born liar, had almost persuaded himself by this time that he had picked up the original fragment. Nay, such a piece of work is a man (when he is built on the lines of Aaron Whittaker), that the young man's prospective thousand pounds an acre had come to be almost as real a thing to him, with much talking of it, as if it were already earned and entered to his credit at the bank.

'I'm in treaty for a piece of property, Mr. Round,' said Aaron, when they were all four seated at the tea-table, 'and I'm having plans prepared for building a house upon it.'

This, like the thousand pounds an acre, had been one of Aaron's day-dreams for some months past, and when the thousand pounds an acre had been realised, he meant to translate it into fact.

'M—m,' said Job, sipping at his tea. 'And where do you think of building?'

Fortunately for young Mr. Whittaker, he had already decided on his *locale*, and was able to reply without embarrassment.

'Isn't the spot rather exposed?' asked Armstrong.

'Well, it *is* a little exposed towards the east,' replied Aaron; 'but I think of planting at the back.'

He was the only child of a widowed mother, who was known to be well-to-do, and neither Job nor Armstrong had any reason to doubt him. One must either be a liar oneself, like the gentleman in the story, or have had experience of a young man who can lie, with no purpose, with Aaron's fluency, before one can feel suspicious of him. He had a way of running before things, of counting for the moment with actual certainty on the future. If anybody had told him he was a liar, he would have been bitterly and naturally indignant. Perhaps within himself he might have admitted that this habit of forestalling the future was not quite consistent with a strict veracity, but an outsider would have had no right to that opinion.

'You haven't actually bought it yet?' said Job.

'Not exactly,' replied Aaron, lightly. 'But it's almost as good as done.'

'Let me see,' said Job. 'Who's the owner?'

Aaron had scalded himself with his tea, and could not reply

for the moment. Armstrong happened to know, and came unconsciously to the young man's rescue.

'What's he want for it?' Job asked, when he had learned the owner's name.

'We're standing off a little about the price,' answered Aaron airily. 'He wants a couple of hundred more than I feel inclined to give him.'

The talk drifted to other matters, and the young man bore his part in it until tea was over. Then, after the manner of the household, Sarah cleared away with her own hands, and retired to the kitchen to wash up the tea-things. Aaron slid out after her, and did a little courtship, whilst the two elders drew near the fire, and lit their pipes.

'Hear to the wind and the rain, Job,' said Armstrong, after a pause. 'There's an odd sort of human distress in the sound of it. It's like Sterne's starling, with the difference that it wants to get in, in place of wanting to get out. D'ye hear it? "I can't get in—I can't get in," says the wind and the rain.'

Job grunted an assent, and sat smoking, staring at the fire, and listening. By-and-by he took up the parable at the point to which his own thoughts had carried it.

'One can't wonder that ignorance is superstitious,' he said. 'Go where you will, the world's full of voices.'

'Have ye any sort o' faith in ghosts, Job?' demanded Armstrong. 'I'm not thinking of a hollow illuminated turnip on a stick, with a bit of a sheet depending from it. I'm scarcely thinking of a visible ghost at all, I fancy. But sometimes, when ye're alone and thinking, did y'ever have the sense that somebody was near ye in the spirit?'

'Nerves,' said Job curtly, still staring at the fire, and pulling slowly at his pipe.

'Maybe,' returned the Scot. 'And maybe something more than nerves. Science is a grand thing, Job, but it's young, and, like most young things, it's inclined, if ye give it its way overmuch, to be headlong, and a wee bit tyrannical. "Get awa' oot o' the hoose, feyther," says young Science. "I'll dooms soon fetch the old rubbish heap down." And, says old Civilisation, "Bide awhile, lad. There's a thing or two I'd like to carry away with me." Ye see, Job, lad,' the old man continued, looking mildly at his son-in-law between his eyebrows and his glasses, 'ye try to kill one wonder with another. I say "A spiritual

presence," and y'answer "Nerves." Man alive, the human economy's as wonderful and as little understandable as anything in the whole procession of ghostly things.'

'Ay, ay,' said Job, 'everything's wonderful. There's no end to wonder.' He sat looking seriously at the fire, with his face half in shadow and half in the dusky glow of the steady firelight.

'But that young Jackanapes they call Science tells ye he's found the end to it. He's a fine lad, a fine lad, but cock-a-whoop, and over certain for his years.'

'What set you on this tack, sir?' asked Job, still staring into the fire. 'You don't believe in ghosts?'

'It was the night's noises that set me thinking,' the old man responded. 'As for believing in ghosts, that's a hard thing to say yes or no to. Say yes, without reserve, and ye may as well stick straws in your hair and set up a private Bedlam out of hand at once. Say no, without reserve, and ye may shut yourself out of more than it's easy to guess of. Ye've heard of these new table-turning, spirit-rapping gentry that draw Burns and Shakespeare out of their heavenly contemplations, and set them knocking double knocks like the ghosts of a pair of demented postmen? They'll knock a while before they knock faith into me. Burns wanders by the heavenly brooks, lad, in heavenly solitudes, and just ance in a while a seraph passes him, and sees a song in the air. And as for Shakespeare, he sits in the middle of a silent ring, and the mighty thoughts just float out of him, and the audience sees and hears. Eh, lad, that pair's got better work on hand than the nightly staggering of noodles at five pounds a head.' He paused, with a little laugh at himself. 'All these are facts, lad,' he added, with his customary look of dry humour.

It was Job who renewed the theme.

'You think,' he said, 'that the dead know us—that they want sometimes to get near us.'

'Why not?' answered Armstrong. 'Ye know "The Age of Reason"?' Job nodded, without looking at him. 'Poor Paine's notion was that all the worlds are inhabited, but it's as likely as not we'll have separate heavens. Ye'd be a bit ill at ease at first with a man out o' Saturn or Jupiter. I'm thinking the human interest may endure, and that maybe a soul that's lived in flesh upon this planet has no liking for strange ground. And ye can fancy even the happiest spirit asking the master-seraph for a

holiday. "I beg your pardon, my lord, but I've been behaving myself fairly of late, and I'd like to get away back to Castle Farfield for an hour, and have a look at the husband and the little girl." And ye can fancy the permission being given. Ye can fancy, too, that it's a little hard to be doubted and denied when they do come. "Here's your poor dead mother's soul come to see ye." And then says the flesh-clothed soul, "Nerves," and tries to chase his poor old mother with a decoction o' Peruvian bark.'

'No,' said Job, after a lengthy pause, 'I can't believe it. The things of this world are mercifully hidden. How if the pure mother comes back to find her little girl a painted drab on the town streets, or her son a murderer—the little lad she nursed?'

'Eh!' said Armstrong softly, 'but who knows but, if she could come, she'd fetch the poor wench from the mire.'

'They rest from their labours,' said Job. There was so singular a break in his voice that Armstrong cast back his head to look at him through his glasses, but saw no change in his aspect. Job, for a minute or two past, had been toying with the poker, and now he thrust it into the fire, which broke into bright light. His face was as placid as ever, and Armstrong could see it quite plainly. 'There's no reason,' the giant went on, rising to take down his tobacco-pot from the lofty mantel-shelf, and sitting down again to fill his pipe—'there's no reason to believe that the saints are troubled with the concerns of this world, and, for my own part, I should be sorry to believe in any such doctrine. A good man dies, and his son turns out a blackguard. We say it's well he died—that he died in time. To my mind, that speaks the wise view of the case. There are people in heaven now who'd fill the place with wailings if they knew what you and I know. And heaven is no place for wailings.'

'Ah, well!' said Armstrong; 'that's a more convincing argument, to my mind, than nerves.' He knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and Job, in obedience to a gesture of his hand, pushed the tobacco-jar across the table, and then lay back in his chair smoking. They were both silent for awhile, and then said Armstrong, 'In the midst of all the insoluble puzzles the world's filled with, I see nothing for it, Job, for a pair o' sensible men like you and me, but to settle down to a solid game at chess.'

'Come along,' said Job; and five minutes later, Armstrong's

fingers were pattering on the table out of time in accompaniment to his tuneless whistle. The whole tribe of ghosts had disappeared for him out of the economy of nature. Job sat over the board with a thoughtful frown, and played his game solidly and steadily, though his ghosts were thick about him, and would, but for the stony resolution with which he held them off, have flowed in a crowd between his thoughts and himself.

They played for a couple of hours, and in the meantime Aaron and Sarah sat in the next room. Aaron was full of his own wonderful prospects, and, with pen, ink, and paper before him, drew a sketch plan of the visionary house. Sarah did not know a great deal about practical architecture, and though Aaron's house, if it had been built on the lines he showed, would have tumbled inwards with the builders before the roof was on it, she was quite satisfied with the plans; and when her lover gave her the one grain of truth he had to offer, and told her this palace was entirely of his own designing, she thought him the most remarkable and admirable of men. What was there that he could not do? She asked this with the most innocent delight and pride, and Aaron smiled the question on one side with an air of satisfied humility.

'But, Aaron,' said she, 'can you afford to live in such a house?'

'Yes,' he answered, in a sort of tolerant astonishment at her inquiry. 'You don't suppose I should think of building it if I couldn't afford it.' He laughed at her, and pinched her cheek in his own superior way. 'What sort of a head for business do you think I have?' he asked good-humouredly.

She laughed at him admiringly, and, of course, thought him fit to control the exchequer of the United Kingdom.

'I don't mean to exceed my income,' said Aaron. 'A man who lives beyond his income is a foolish fellow. I don't think it's wise even to live up to it, because a man never knows when a rainy day may come, and in all sorts of commercial enterprises, a man's liable to have sudden calls and sudden drains on his resources. But I couldn't live like a miser. I hate a niggardly fellow.' He arose, and, thrusting his hands in his pockets, nodded at her with a good-humoured imperiousness which, in the girl's eyes, became him infinitely well. 'I mean my wife to live in a first-rate house,' he said, 'and to go well-dressed, and have everything handsome about her. Why, there's scarcely

anybody knows what fortunes there are to be made by judicious speculation in this part of the country. I've got two or three things in my mind that I can't speak about yet, for fear of putting other fellows on the track. But I'm not going to have too many irons in the fire. You know the old saying, Sarah,

One thing at a time, and that done well,
Is a very good thing, as many can tell.'

If her thoughts had given themselves words she would have said with Titania, 'Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.'

'I hate a bragging fellow,' pursued the ingenuous Aaron, 'but I've got my head pretty well screwed on, though I say it that shouldn't, and I'll startle some of these clever people about here before many more years are gone over their heads. They don't know what they're treading on, Sarah. They can't see the wealth that's under their very noses.'

If his boastful vaticinations had had a solid foundation in fact he could scarcely have been happier in making them. And of course Sarah was certain that everything he prophesied was going to come true, and she took him at even more than his own estimate. A woman who is in love lives in a house with tinted windows, and looking on the landscape of her lover's life sees it all rose-colour.

Aaron had a longish walk before him this wintry night, and left a little after ten o'clock. Armstrong took his way also, and father and daughter were left together. Sarah, seeing that Job was in a thoughtful mood, moved about lightly, straightening the room and putting away the chessmen and the board; but when all was done, and she had lit her bedroom candle, she still lingered before bidding him good-night. Job looked up at her suddenly and caught a timid look of half decision on her face.

'Well, lass,' he said, rising and putting an arm about her waist, 'what is it?'

'You think well of—of Aaron, now, don't you, father?'

'I've better hopes, dear,' he answered; 'better hopes. I hope he'll turn out a good man for your sake. Good-night, sweet-heart. Run away to bed.'

She answered his good-night kiss, and left him sitting by the fire nursing one knee in his great hands, and already staring absently at the embers. She had not left him long when the ghosts he had held away till then came trooping thick about him.

'Would you care to come in?' he murmured half aloud to one of them. 'Better to hold you at arm's length if I can.' After this murmur he sat in silence for an hour or more. 'You shall have your way,' he said then, and rising he walked upstairs in the dark, and into his own room. The rain and the wind beat dismally at the window, and except for a flickering distant light or two the night was as dark as pitch. He stood to look out at it for a moment only, and then turning away walked with groping hands before him to a chest of drawers which stood in one corner of the room. Having reached the chest he drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and felt for the key he wanted. 'You shall have your way,' he murmured gravely a second time, and having found the key he opened a drawer and took from it a cash-box, with which he returned to the sitting-room.

There he drew his chair to the table, and opening the box reversed it, and shook it so that a double handful of papers strewn themselves about the table-cloth. He went through these carefully, selected from amongst them a little sheaf of documents, picked up one by one, and returned the others to the cash-box, which he locked. Next he arose again, and stirring the fire, which by this time was fading and thickly strewn with grey ashes, he dropped one of the papers and watched it as it flamed, curled, shrivelled, blackened with bright sparks in it, and then turned grey. Then he dropped another and watched its progress to a feathery nothing. Then another and another. When he had dropped them all he spoke.

'The fortune's gone, and God grant the curse goes with it. There was blood on it. Scoundrels? Yes. But their blood was on it all the same. Go back! Go back to your heavenly hymns again, and forget me. You have had your way.'

(To be continued.)

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER, 1885.

COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOME-THRUSTS.



HE Marquess of Saltcombe sat in his pretty room of gold and peacock blue and green, in an easy-chair, holding a book in his hand, without reading it. On the table was a zither. Every now and then he put the book down and struck a few chords on the instrument, but he could not play a melody through. The zither demands much practice, and Lord Saltcombe could not or would not devote time to mastering the instrument.

At his side was a desk, open. He put his hand into one of the drawers, from which issued a scent of rose-leaves, and drew forth a red miniature case. He touched the spring, with a sigh, and exposed a portrait on ivory. The portrait represented a young and beautiful woman, with large lustrous dark eyes, full of

dreamy idealism. The ivory lent the face a pearly whiteness, and gave brilliance to the coral of the lips. The painter had succeeded in giving to the countenance an expression of tender yearning, tinged with melancholy; it was one of those exquisitely expressive faces which is sometimes given by nature to angels, but sometimes also, in irony, to beings with little of heaven in their souls. The picture, as a work of art, was a masterpiece; the original, unless greatly idealised, must have been irresistible. The face combined in it the simplicity of the child and the earnest of an eager mind, the charm of perfect beauty and the promise of a gifted soul, liveliness and pathos blent together.

Lord Saltcombe looked long at the lovely picture, and his brow clouded. Then he closed the morocco case, laid it on his knee in his hand, and looked dreamily before him into space. The past rose before him, full of pleasure and of pain. Presently he sighed, put his hand to his brow, made a motion of again opening the case, refrained from doing so, and replaced it in the drawer of his desk, which he closed and locked.

He was removing the key from the lock, when Beavis came in.

Lord Saltcombe was sufficiently man of the world to have control over his features. Every trace of his late sadness departed, and his face cleared to meet Beavis' eye. No one would have supposed that, a moment earlier, he had been a prey to the most mournful recollections.

'Well, Beavis,' he exclaimed; 'what has brought you here?'

'Have you seen the paper?'

'No—there can be nothing in it to interest me.'

'Our member is dead.'

'What, Woodley! My father will feel this. Does he know it?'

'I think so. He reads his daily paper. Besides, the telegraph boy was up here last night, and no doubt——'

'O no, that was with a message for me from Uncle Edward. He wants me immediately at Sleepy Hollow.'

'Are you going?'

'I don't know; I may. I have nothing to detain me here.'

'Saltcombe, will you not go into Parliament? Now that Woodley is dead, we must have a new election.'

The Marquess made a gesture of impatience.

'There would be no opposition.'

'I do not see why I should go into the House. I have no opinions. I have not made up my mind on any question that

now agitates the political world, and I do not want the trouble of thinking and studying these questions.'

'This is unworthy of you.'

'You shall be our new member.'

'No, I have no ambition that way. You are the proper person to represent our pocket borough of Kingsbridge. Of course you have principles. You have inherited those of the family. You are Conservative.'

'I will open my breast to you, dear Beavis. I know that my father's and uncles' opinions are all right, but then I have no doubt that the opinions of the other side are all equally right. My father's views are exaggerated, and the Radicals are exaggerated in their views, and with Aristotle I hold that in equilibrium is safety.'

'Both cannot be right,' said young Worthivale.

'Yes, they can be, and they are. There are two sides to every question, and he who only sees and becomes hot and vehement on one side is a bigot, narrow-minded and purblind. I am sure that in politics, and in religion, and in ethics—in everything, in fact, much is to be said on each side, quite as much on one side as on the other; so I make up my mind to have no fixed opinions on anything, I shrug my shoulders, and let the world go on and muddle its way from one blunder into another. There now, Beavis, you have my creed. How can I go into Parliament with such doctrine in my heart?'

'That is not a creed at all; it is the confession of a mind that is too lazy to think.'

'You are very rude.'

'I speak the truth, Saltcombe. You know it.'

Lord Saltcombe laughed. 'Of course you are right, Beavis. It is not pleasant, however, to hear the truth put so plainly. Nevertheless, I maintain that my position is a right one. No man can be a partisan in any cause unless he is ignorant of what is to be said on the opposite side. To be an enthusiast you must be narrow. The man of culture is an all-round man; he sees good everywhere, is tolerant of every form of faith, religious and political, because he believes that no party holds a monopoly of the right. The man of culture, then, must be indifferent to all parties.'

'With your abilities, and your position, it is wicked to waste your life over shooting partridges and pheasants, collecting china, and reading ephemeral literature.'

‘Upon my word, Beavis, you are sharp on me.’

‘I am plain-spoken, Saltcombe, because you must be roused. You are throwing away life in that most miserable of all follies—killing time.’

Lord Saltcombe was annoyed. He raised his eyebrows, and lit a cigar.

‘You are striving to deaden the impulses of your nobler nature, which would force you into active life.’

‘Indeed,’ said the Marquess, coldly, ‘I do not contradict you. You feel strongly, speak over-vehemently, because you know only one side.’

‘I know what is right, what your own conscience tells you is right; and I say it at the risk of forfeiting your friendship.’

‘You strain the relation between us, Beavis,’ said Lord Saltcombe.

Young Worthivale was silent a moment. Lord Saltcombe crossed his legs and leaned back in his chair. He did not look at Beavis, whom he allowed to stand. He was annoyed, and wanted the young man to go. Presently, as Beavis did not move, he said: ‘Life is either a blank or a torture chamber. If we act in it, we involve ourselves in annoyances; if we aim at anything, we bring on ourselves disappointment; if we take a part in politics we are covered with obloquy by our opponents—that is, by the press of the opposite party; if we appear in society we are subjected to the insulting inquisitorial eyes of the Society papers; if we attempt anything in literature we are cut to pieces by critics who know nothing of the subject to which we have devoted our lives. No, Beavis, a man with self-respect should shut himself up in a walled garden and never leave it, but die there of ennui.’

‘And the enthusiasm of youth is given us only to drive us to disenchantment and disbelief.’

‘That is all.’

‘You look on life, really, from this point of view?’

‘Yes, ever since my disenchantment. Let me alone, Beavis. It may be pleasure to you to anatomise me, but I have no desire to be the subject of your vivisection.’

‘It is no pleasure to me to vivisect you,’ answered Beavis Worthivale. ‘I speak strongly because I feel strongly. Here is Kingsbridge vacant, and you are the right person to represent it. I speak out what everyone thinks. The Duke, I am sure, wishes it.’

‘I have told you, I am no politician.’

‘But, surely, you could master the subjects of debate as well as another. Where there is a will there is a way.’

‘Exactly—but I have not the *will*.’

Beavis sighed.

‘You are not the only man who has been at me to-day. Look at my uncle Edward’s letter, if you like ; it lies on the table.’

Beavis took it up, and read it with growing interest. When he came to the end a slight agitation overcame him.

‘What is it?’ asked the Marquess, who had been watching him. The young man coloured.

‘Oh, Saltcombe,’ he said, ‘the chance has come at last. You must not delay. Why are you now here smoking and reading a book? Have you told Robert to pack your portmanteau? You must catch the next train.’

‘I do not like to be brought up to Glastonbury to have my uncle and aunt show me an heiress, and say, “There, look at her coat, how glossy, her hoofs are sound, so is her wind, and she is worth her weight in money.” She knows she is on show. I know I am there to criticise. The situation is detestable. We both look absurd, and the natural result is, we dislike each other, and fly in opposite directions. Besides, I do not want to marry.’

‘You must accept Lord Edward’s invitation. He would not write so pressing unless he had found the right person for you.’

‘But I should prefer to find the right person myself.’

‘Where? In the walled garden in which, as you say, a man of self-respect immures himself. No woman with self-respect will come over the wall to you ; you must go about to see women.’

‘I do not want to see any, much less to have one hang herself round my neck. The more she is weighted with gold the more burdensome she will be to me. Besides, here I have the society of the best and sweetest women that ever bloomed outside Paradise, Grace and Lucy ; they have spoiled me for others.’

‘You cannot decline Lord Edward’s invitation. It is too urgent to be neglected, couched in too tender a tone to be denied. You must go.’

‘I shall return as I go. I want rest ; to be left alone.’

‘You cannot be left alone. Go out of the world if you want rest. You are building yourself, like a child, a sand castle against the advancing tide ; the waves will sweep your walls away and overwhelm you. You desire the impossible. As your uncle

says, you have duties to perform, and you will not be the coward to shirk them. You may have to sacrifice much that is dear to you, but every man is made better by self-sacrifice. You are not happy as you are, wasting your days in reading books that do not interest you, following sports that do not amuse you, and collecting cups and saucers that are valueless to you. The books weary you because they are books, and your proper study is life. Your sports fail to distract you because you pursue such poor and wretched game, and the cups and saucers—' Beavis did not finish his sentence; his brow was red, he was excited, angry—his face expressed contempt.

Lord Saltcombe did not interrupt him. Beavis went on: 'My father and I devote our lives to your affairs, which are desperate; but we are met at every turn by your inactivity. We cannot save you because you will not put out a finger by which you can be caught. For the sake of your father, your uncles, your sister, throw aside this paralysing indifference and bestir yourself. You must marry, and marry an heiress, such as your uncle has found for you because you would not put your head outside your walled garden to find one for yourself. You—you must save the family. You alone can do it. Your father—all—look to you, and you take no step *proprio motu*, but have to be driven on with sharp, perhaps cruel, reproaches. Your father does not know the desperate state of your affairs. You ought to know, but will not face it, though the books have been shown you. Your uncles know it, but you repel them when they offer you advice. Lady Grace suspects it, but is too gentle to speak what may give pain. There is absolutely no hope of salvation anywhere else, except in your marriage. If I urged you into political life, it was in the expectation of your being thrown in the way of choosing for yourself. If you stood alone, I would say, sacrifice the estate, sell Court Royal, and begin life on straitened means, working hard, and working your way upward. Seek a regeneration of your family by work. Work makes happy. But you are not alone, Saltcombe, and love for your family forces you to make some sacrifice to maintain it in its proper position. You have no choice. Be a man, brace your heart, and face the necessity.'

Lord Saltcombe became deadly pale. He stood up, and looked at Beavis, who spoke with flushed brow and sparkling eye. After a moment's silence he held out his hand and caught that of Beavis.

'My dear fellow,' he said, pressing his hand, and speaking in

a choking voice, 'I honour and love you more than ever. I know what it has cost you to speak to me thus. I feel your reproaches. I will not make a promise to—to—' he looked down. 'Beavis, ring the bell for Robert. He shall pack my traps at once, and to-night I shall be at Sleepy Hollow. There, give me Uncle Edward's letter. I will go see my father at once.'

CHAPTER XXII.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

MR. WORTHIVALE had summoned Lucy from the Court. Beavis was there. A consultation was to be held on family affairs. The fire was lighted in the drawing-room, and father and son were there awaiting the arrival of Lucy.

'Father,' said Beavis, 'I do not like that new maid you have got.'

'Why not? She is very respectable and respectful.'

'She puzzles me. There is a shrewd look about her face that one does not generally meet with in a slavey.'

'And you dislike her because she is not an unthinking machine?'

'No, father, that is not it. I expressed myself too strongly when I said that I did not like her; I should rather have said that I mistrusted her.'

'Why mistrust her?'

'Because I am continually lighting upon her in the office.'

'What of that? Is not that the most used room in the house? Because it is so much used, and so many people come in there to see one, it requires more sweeping than any other part of the establishment. Besides, I make a litter there with my papers. No other maid has arranged the papers so well before. Joanna puts everything where I can lay my hand on it at once.'

'You leave books and papers about, without locking them up, more than I think wise.'

'My dear Beavis, who is there to read them? Do you suppose a chambermaid cares one farthing for the accounts, and is greedy to know the clauses of a lease? Besides, Joanna cannot read. Here comes Lucy.'

‘I suppose she has heard the news,’ said Beavis.

‘I don’t know. Lady Grace would be told it last of all.’

Lucy entered. She did not look herself that morning. Generally bright and smiling, with a brilliant colour in her cheeks, she was on this occasion dispirited and somewhat pale.

‘Why, Lucy, what is the matter?’ asked her father.

‘I have had a headache,’ she answered. ‘But I am better now. I could not sleep last night.’ She brightened with an effort, came to her father and kissed him tenderly.

‘How are all at the Court?’ asked Mr. Worthivale. (Here be it noted that he asked this question, however often he met his daughter during the day, before he approached affairs of private interest. The health and welfare of *the* family stood before everything.)

‘The Duke is not so well this morning,’ answered Lucy. ‘He has heard news which has excited him, and excitement always upsets his heart.’

‘The news is of a joyful nature,’ said the steward.

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ answered Lucy, faintly, and her eyes fell involuntarily before the observant look of her brother.

‘Stay a bit,’ said the steward; ‘I had clean forgotten old Barberry, who is in the kitchen waiting to speak to me. My memory is going, I believe. It was high time for me to recall Beavis to assist me. I shall be back directly.’

Mr. Worthivale left the room.

‘You have heard, Lucy,’ said Beavis in a low tone.

‘Yes, dear, I have heard what I presume you allude to—that the Marquess is engaged.’

‘It is both his father’s wish and that of his uncles. I urged it strongly on him.’

‘I am very glad,’ said Lucy; ‘I hope she is worthy of him. Grace is startled, and does not know what to make of the tidings. She ought to rejoice, but cannot till she knows the lady.’

Beavis took his sister’s head between his hands and kissed her on the forehead. ‘What is for the good of the house gives us the greatest happiness,’ he said.

She looked him frankly in the eyes and smiled, but there was moisture in her eyes and her lips quivered. She saw that Beavis had read the secret of her heart, which she had never confessed even to herself. She pressed his hand to her bosom. Then Mr. Worthivale came in.

‘Tiresome old man!’ said the steward. ‘Like all the rest, Barberry wants something. The farmer must have a new calves’ house, and the cotter a fresh pigsty. No one is content with the accommodation that suited his forefathers. Barberry came here with a box for Joan, which he had brought in his cart from the station, and being here, thought he might as well make a demand on his Grace’s pocket. I have said I would look to the lianey. He wants to have one for his carrier’s cart. I can’t see that the Duke is bound to build him one. If a man buys a donkey his Grace must build a shed for it; and if a woman catches a bullfinch the Duke must provide her with a cage. Hark! Good Lord, what is the matter?’ He ran to the door and opened it.

‘What is that noise? Who is squalling?’

‘Please, sir,’ said Emily, ‘it is only Joanna.’

‘Only Joanna! Has she scalded herself? What is the noise about? Send her down to me. Why are you laughing?’

‘Yes, sir,’ said the maid; ‘I’ll tell her you want to see her, sir.’

Presently Joanna came down, her face flushed, in great excitement.

‘What was that row about?’ asked Mr. Worthivale, still in the hall. ‘Were you and Emily having romps or tickling each other? Or have you hurt yourself? I care not. I will not have a caterwauling in my house. Why, bless my soul! the Duke, or one of their Lordships might have been here, and then—what would have been thought of my house, I should like to know? What made you scream, or laugh, or cry, or whatever was the noise I heard?’

‘Please, sir,’ said Joanna, half crying, ‘it is too bad! I had set my heart on it, and now it is utterly spoiled.’

‘What is spoiled?’

‘The pink silk.’

‘Pink silk! What pink silk?’

‘Oh, sir! I had a beautiful pink silk dress, and as there was to be a dance at Court Royal for the tenants and servants, I sent to Plymouth to have it forwarded.’

‘Pink silk! What next! *You* come out in pink silk!’

‘Lady Grace has been teaching me to dance. Miss Lucy can tell you, sir; she has helped.’

‘But—that does not justify pink silk.’

‘I can’t wear it; it is spoiled,’ said Joanna in a doleful voice. ‘The Ems Water has run all over it.’

‘Ems Water!’ gasped Mr. Worthivale. ‘What have you to do with Ems Water?’

‘Please, sir, the master put in three bottles with the pink silk, because, he said, the change of diet here might have heated my blood, and something cooling and lowering——’

‘The master!—What master?—Colonel Delany?’

‘No, sir, not Colonel Delany; another master.’

‘What, a doctor? I did not know you had been with a doctor.’

‘He was not exactly a doctor—but he did bleed people pretty freely.’

‘Oh, a surgeon. Right. Only the ignorant call surgeons by the title of doctor.’

‘And one of the bottles of Ems Water is broken. I found it broken in the box, and the water has wetted and stained my dear, beautiful dress. I shall never be able to wear it now—never!’

‘That is what you cried out about, is it?’

‘Yes.’

‘Go upstairs, and thank your stars the Ems Water did spoil your pink silk; you would only have made yourself ridiculous had you appeared in it.’

Then Mr. Worthivale returned to the drawing-room. There was no need for him to repeat the story. The door had been left open, and his son and daughter had heard, and were laughing over, Joanna’s misadventure.

Joanna went to her room, half in wrath, half in sorrow. She opened the window and dashed from it the two remaining bottles, casting them into a large bank of rhododendrons.

‘That is the end of you,’ she said. ‘Now there are but three left at the Golden Balls. I wonder what will become of them.’

We shall not hear till we come to the third volume of this story. Three bottles were disposed of in the first volume, three in this, the first chapter of the second. The Ems Water will not be finished till we come to the third.

‘Sit down,’ said Mr. Worthivale. ‘I have sent for you, Lucy, and you, Beavis, to meet me here, because a crisis has arrived in the affairs of the Kingsbridge house—because an emergency has arisen which we shall have to meet, and I do not see how it can be met—except in one way.’ He paused and looked at his daughter, then at his son. ‘I suppose you know that the Marquess is engaged to be married to a young lady of immense fortune, a

lady not in his position, a commoner, but of respectable family. Her father belongs to a Norfolk house; he was a younger son, and sought his fortune in Ceylon, coffee-planting. What he sought he found. He has returned to England worth enough to extinguish some of the charges on the Kingsbridge estate. Now we may look to the Ducal House flourishing and putting forth leaves in old style once more. I am glad. I confess I was despondent at one time. But one should not despair. I have learnt a lesson. There is a special Providence which watches over our great and glorious Aristocracy.'

Mr. Worthivale drew a sigh of relief and touched his breast with his right hand, much as though he were crying 'Peccavi, I have sinned, in that for a season my faith in the English Aristocracy was shaken. I have now passed through the trial; my faith is restored to me.'

'There is one thing I must mention,' continued the steward. 'I have called you together, not only to announce to you that a turn in the affairs of the House has been reached, but also to impress on you the fact that a supreme effort is needed to bring these affairs to a conclusion. Of course the father of the young lady, and the young lady herself, have been invited to Court Royal for Christmas. Their reception must be splendid. It will never do to allow Mr. Rigsby to see that the family is pinched. Now Christmas is one of the most distressing seasons to a well-ordered mind. It means the influx of bills, the demand for boxes, the payment of annuities, and what is due on mortgages and loans of various sorts; add to these the very copious customary charities. I know that, theoretically and theologically, Christmas is all right, and a festival, and a time of rejoicing, but practically it is the contrary, even to those in affluent circumstances. They cannot escape the annoyances if they are not sensible of the suffering caused by Christmas. I am sorry to say that the closing year will find us in a worse predicament than last. I have strained every nerve to meet our liabilities, but have not been as successful as I could have desired—indeed, to be plain, I have been very unsuccessful. Very heavy charges have to be met, and I do not know where to turn to find the money. The older mortgages are held by insurance offices, and I am afraid to fall in arrear to them. The newer mortgages I do not see how I can meet, and find the money that is wanted for current expenditure. Just now the expenses of the house cannot be reduced. The Rigsbys are

coming, and we must find a good deal of money for their entertainment; balls and dinner-parties must be given on a large scale. The old gentleman must be impressed with the greatness of the family into which he is to be received. I do not see how we can press payment from the farmers; their sheep have been diseased, and they have lost entire flocks. The Americans have beaten the wheat they grow below the cost of growing. The importation of foreign cattle has reduced the price of home-grown meat. I have sounded the tenants, and they give me no hope of paying arrears. Now all we want is time. The marriage of the Marquess will relieve the pressure, if not remove it altogether. We must manage somehow to tide over the time till that takes place. Lord Ronald very generously placed three thousand pounds at our disposal, but we want at least as much more. We must prevent the evil from coming to a head before the marriage takes place. As I said before, we have only one thing to consider—how to gain time.'

Mr. Worthivale looked at his son, then at his daughter, questioningly, entreatingly.

'I apprehend your meaning,' said Beavis. 'You ask me to sanction what you have already resolved on in your own heart, the sinking our little savings—I mean yours: I have nothing—in the Kingsbridge debt. The money is yours. It is what you have laid by. Do with it what you will. I will not reproach you.'

'It is not that exactly,' said Mr. Worthivale, rubbing his hands nervously together. 'Most providentially, most providentially, I say,' with great emphasis on the word, 'I took my money out of Argentine bonds in time—before they went to zero.'

'Well, father, and then.'

'Then—I looked about for a safe investment, and really, upon my word, I saw none better than a small mortgage on the Charlecombe estate of the Duke's.'

'Very well. It is there. What then do you want?'

'If I had left it in the Argentines,' argued Mr. Worthivale, 'I should have had nothing for it.'

'And have you drawn your interest since?'

'Not of late,' answered the steward. 'There have been other and more pressing demands.'

'Then what do you want us to consent to, father?'

Mr. Worthivale fidgeted with his hands and feet, then, whilst

feeling the button of his collar, which he pretended was coming off, he said, shyly, 'There is Lucy's four thousand pounds, left her by her mother.'

'No,' said Beavis sharply; 'they shall not be touched.'

'Beavis,' exclaimed his sister, 'I entreat you, do not deprive me of the pleasure, the pride, of contributing my little share.'

'No,' said her brother hotly, 'I will never consent to this.'

'Then you will deprive me of a great happiness. I have spent my life, so far, at Court Royal, lived on the kindness of the dear people there. They have loved me as if I were of their blood. The Duke makes no distinction between me and his own daughter. Lord Ronald is kindness itself. I would give my heart's blood for Lady Grace. Oh, Beavis! you are cruel. Do you not understand that it is a privilege and a pleasure to do something, to sacrifice something, for those one loves? Let the money go. Who cares?'

'No, Lucy, emphatically no,' said Beavis firmly.

'The money is now in the consols at three per cent.,' said Mr. Worthivale. 'Really, Beavis, I think you unreasonable. I can get four-and-a-half for Lucy if I lend it to the Duke—on security of course. There is absolutely no risk. Lord Saltcombe will be married within six months, and at once, if you desire it, the money can be replaced in the funds.'

'It shall not be taken out.'

'Beavis,' said the steward, testily, 'I am not responsible to you. I am trustee of my daughter's money, and she is old enough to know her own mind. I did not wish to do anything without your knowledge, but I am not bound to follow your advice. If I thought there was the smallest doubt about the safety of the money, I would not make this proposal; but I have not a shadow of doubt. All I want is time; with time everything will come right.'

'I protest,' said Beavis.

'Beavis!' exclaimed Lucy, throwing her arms round his neck, and hiding her face on his shoulder, to conceal the tears that were gathering in her eyes; 'Beavis, it goes to my heart to oppose you in anything, but in this I am as resolute as yourself. Father, you have my full consent. Do not listen to my brother. Oh, Beavis! I am ready to do all I can—for dear Lady Grace's sake.'

Then Beavis sighed.

'It is as you will, Lucy. I am powerless to do more than protest. When a great ship founders, it draws down all the vessels round it into the abyss.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

REFLORESCENCE.

COURT ROYAL resumed its old appearance. Invitations were sent round, and the whole of South Devon was thrilled with expectation. There was to be a succession of dinner-parties and a splendid ball, which would be attended by the officers from Plymouth and Exeter, and by all the young ladies of position in the neighbourhood. For some years the Duke had given no great entertainments. His health furnished the excuse; now, in spite of his health, Court Royal was to become the scene of festivities on a large scale.

Not only were the gentry to be entertained, but the tenants were to have a dance as well—the usual Christmas dance, greatly magnified. So all classes were pleased, all looked forward with eagerness to the arrival of the Marquess, which was to be the signal for the commencement of the gaieties.

The secret was well kept. None knew of the engagement except the Worthivales, and their lips were sealed. The Duke and Lord Ronald confided nothing to their acquaintances, and yet it was clear to all that something of importance had occasioned this divergence from the routine of retirement. The servants suspected it, and were eager to make Court Royal as splendid and hospitable as it should be. They spared themselves no pains, and they invited all their friends and friends' most distant acquaintances to partake of the profusion.

The Rigsbys would arrive a few days after the Marquess, from Plymouth, where they had taken a house for the winter. Mr. Rigsby thought Torquay too relaxing, yet the proximity to the sea advisable for his daughter.

Lord and Lady Pomeroy and their daughter, the Earl of Stratton and the Ladies Evelyn and Augusta Burrington, Lord and Lady Dawlish, Sir Henry Hillersdon of Membland and his party, were expected to stay in the Court over the ball. The house was so large, it could contain a regiment. New liveries were ordered for the servants. The paper-hangers, the painters of Kingsbridge were occupied in redecorating several of the rooms. Supplies of every sort were ordered from local grocers, wine-merchants, butchers, fishmongers. The Duke patronised local tradesmen.

He disliked co-operative stores. He would rather pay than break a tradition. The carriages were relined, new carriages and additional horses purchased. The only person who did not seem to share in the general excitement was Lady Grace. She moved about the house with her usual composure, looked after the flowers, saw that everyone had a sweet and well-assorted bouquet in his room, had a kind word for the servants whom she passed or came on engaged on dusting and polishing, and was interested in the work of the tradesmen, watched them and asked them questions. There was not a person who came within the circle of her influence, and that was everyone to whom she spoke, who would not have sprung into the fire had she desired it.

She was glad that at last her brother was engaged. She had been his close companion for some years, and she felt an ache in her heart that they were now to be parted, but she had never become her brother's confidant, and she knew that it was well for him to find a sympathetic woman's soul to which he could open his inmost thoughts. Such a woman she trusted Dulcinea Rigsby would prove. She was ready to receive her with love because she was Saltcombe's ideal, and his ideal must be perfect.

Lucy was not as much with her as usual. Lucy was a ready, intelligent, active manager; she saw to everything. Mrs. Probus was old and slow. At her father's request, Lucy took on her own shoulders the care of preparing for the visitors and the entertainments. She was pleased to be occupied, she worked restlessly, she was not quiet for one moment in the day. Lady Grace reproached her for doing everything herself, without imposing any task on her.

'Yours will come when the house is full, and you have to entertain,' answered Lucy; 'leave me to make preparations.'

Lucy was the inseparable companion of Lady Grace, her right hand; she loved her with an adoring devotion, received all her thoughts, and devoted herself to ward off all unpleasantnesses from her friend.

Lady Grace was in the room prepared for Miss Rigsby, adjoining which was another for her aunt, Miss Stokes. She was arranging the flowers on the dressing-table, some white jessamine and pink geranium, and a spray of maidenhair fern. She only touched them with the points of her taper fingers, and they fell into place.

'Do you know, dearest,' she said to Lucy, 'I believe that this

engagement will make me perfectly happy. It has been a trouble to me that Saltcombe has been here so long without pursuits, squandering his life and his brilliant talents. I have never understood him, though he has stood nearer to me than anyone else. He is melancholy, as though lamenting something, but he has nothing to regret; or as longing for something, but he has made no effort to attain what he longs for. Which is it? That has been a puzzle to me, and it has distressed me to be unable to unriddle it. Now he has found some one after his own heart, and now real life will open to him. He will put forth his energies, he will wake out of a dream, and we shall find that he will make for himself a place in the history of the present time. All our ancestors have been men of note, though one or two noted only as spendthrifts; yet all have taken some part in politics, or as patrons of literature or art, and I cannot believe my brother will be content to reckon as a cypher. He seems to me to be one who has either been wrecked when first starting, or as one who has never yet started on the great voyage of adventure—which is life. He cannot have undergone shipwreck—that is impossible, or I should have heard of his disaster; now he is about to start. He has been waiting for the precious lading to fill the empty hold of his heart. Now that is in, the anchor will be weighed, the pennant run to mast-top, the white sails be spread; and with a cheer from all of us who stand on the shore, the gallant vessel will start.'

'I believe you are right, Grace,' said Lucy.

'I do long so to see my future sister-in-law; my heart yearns to love her. Do not be jealous, darling, nothing will ever make me love another as I love you. No one can ever be to me the sweet, strong, enduring friend—the sister that you have been. Do you know, I have been teasing Uncle Ronald about Dulcina. I don't like the name, do you? He has seen her. When he heard they were at Plymouth, he went down to call on them in Saltcombe's yacht. I have asked him a thousand questions about her, but I cannot get much out of the General. Men are so funny; they have no descriptive faculty. All he can say is that she is amiable. Well, amiable is one of those unpleasant words which mean nothing—worse than nothing. When you don't want to say an unkind thing about persons, and you know no good of them, you describe them as *amiable*. I am sure Uncle Ronald does not mean that. It is only his clumsy man's way of describing a lady. She has auburn hair and a pale face. I managed to extract

that from him, and the father is tall and burnt brown. Uncle Ronald can tell me much more about Mr. Rigby than he can about Dulcina.'

The Archdeacon and Lady Elizabeth arrived. The excellent curate could be trusted to manage the parish, feed all the fledglings on sop, and the adults on wind. Lord Edward hastened at once to the Duke's room before he went to his own apartments. The Duke was expecting him, excited, but disguising his excitement. For the last hour he had been looking at his watch every five minutes. The brothers greeted each other with great cordiality.

'Have I not managed well?' asked the Archdeacon. 'Who will deny that I am a man of business?'

'I am much indebted to you, Edward. Without your help we should never have got Saltcombe away from this place. I hope she is a suitable person.'

'She has plenty of money,' answered the Archdeacon, looking down abashed.

'But, Edward! money is a very small consideration. I am sorry he has not chosen one in his own position. Still—if she is a lady, and one likely to make him happy, I shall not object. What attracted him to her? Is she very beautiful? Fair, I understand. I cannot get much out of Ronald; he is either unobservant or reticent.'

'Fair, fair of course,' answered Lord Edward. 'I should not call her exactly a beauty, but then men's tastes differ. I really am no judge of women's faces, I have other things to look at—the Fathers, and the Diocesan Charity accounts.'

'But you can surely tell me something more than Ronald. I should like particulars. Are her manners easy and polished?'

'I should not say exactly polished in the old acceptance of the word. Easy they are, I suppose. She makes herself at home in your house at once, and is rather exacting. But then her father spoils her. She turns him round her finger. It is really a study to see how she manages him. That is good; she will exert herself to direct Saltcombe, and make something of him.'

'I hope so,' said the Duke.

'I am sure of it. I am sanguine that the marriage will be a happy one.'

'I have seen little of Saltcombe since he returned the day before yesterday. He is shy, as you may understand, of speaking

on such a topic to me. He always was a reserved man, and now his reserve is intensified.'

'I will go and see him myself,' said Lord Edward. 'I suppose the Rigsbys will be here to-day.'

'I expect them by the next train. They will be here for dinner. We have invited no one for to-day, but every other day of their visit is provided for.'

The Archdeacon hurried to his nephew's apartments. He was a man of business, and before he attended to himself he was determined to have everyone else in order. He found Lord Saltcombe by himself in his sitting-room, pretending to read. He shook him warmly by the hand. 'Saltcombe,' he said, 'remember what is expected of you. I have done all that I can, so has Elizabeth. Upon my word I believe the girl is in love with you, over head and ears. Now, for heaven's sake, do not spoil everything by faintheartedness at the last. Keep your spirits up. Show a good face before your father. There is a great deal in the girl. It only wants drawing out. Her father has spoiled her, and her natural excellence is a little obscured, that is all. I like her, and think she will make a first-rate wife.' Lord Edward saw everything in rosy light.

A couple of hours later the carriages arrived. Two had been sent to Kingsbridge Road station. Mr. Rigsby, his daughter, and Miss Stokes were in the first, a fine new carriage with splendid appointments; Miss Rigsby's maid alone in the second with the parcels, and the boxes on the roof. Mr. Rigsby dispensed with a valet.

The evening was fine, the sun cast his last golden rays over the house, and the park looked its best to greet its future mistress.

Lady Grace and Lucy came to the entrance hall, Lord Edward and the Marquess were there as well, to receive the guests. Dulcinea looked about her with surprise and admiration which lent vivacity to her face; unfortunately the setting sun sent its saffron rays over her; her complexion was naturally pasty: in the sunlight she looked sallow. Lucy Worthivale stood back, unnoticed, watching Dulcinea attentively. Then she hastened to Miss Stokes, and offered to relieve her of some of her wraps.

Dulcinea wore a tall hat, boat-shaped, with a great dancing plume in it. She could not have chosen a head-dress less suitable to her style. Colour came into Lady Grace's cheeks for a moment when she met and saw her future sister-in-law for the first time,

but not a muscle of her features moved. She greeted her with gentle cordiality that won Dulcina's confidence immediately. The Marquess turned pale when he saw the young lady in her hideous hat, standing in the yellow blaze, looking plain, almost vulgar, but he speedily recovered himself and behaved with courtesy and geniality.

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Mr. Rigsby, looking round, 'what a place you have! Why, you English nobles are princes indeed.'



Mr. Rigsby and his daughter were received by the Duke in the drawing-room; the audience was very short. Dulcina was carried off almost before the Duke could make out what she was like, and conveyed by Lady Grace and Lucy to her apartments. She looked about her eagerly; on the stairs, in the corridors; she said little, she was oppressed by the stateliness and splendour about her, to which she was wholly unaccustomed, brought up in

a wooden bungalow in the coffee plantations of Ceylon, far from society and from settled habitations.

When she had been taken to her rooms the Marquess went to his own. He was followed by Beavis, who had kept in the background. He had observed Miss Rigsby as attentively as had his sister. He was unnoticed, and able to study her unrestrainedly. From his love for Lord Saltcombe, and because he had himself urged him to this engagement, he was eager to judge favourably of Dulcina; but in spite of this prepossession he was unfavourably impressed. It was not merely her complexion and tasteless dress which displeased his critical eye. He thought he saw in her a selfish, querulous spirit, and a lack of womanly tenderness. The geniality of her father, his eagerness to forestall her wishes, to screen her from all vexations, met with no recognition, were accepted as a right, and awoke no gratitude.

When he came into Lord Saltcombe's room he found his friend in the arm-chair by the fire, his head resting in his hand, seeming pale and dispirited. The Marquess looked up, and with a faint smile said, 'Well, old fellow, come to congratulate me? Satisfied with what you have done? Now tell me, on your honour, your opinion of *ma fiancée*.'

Beavis was confused. He felt some self-reproach. He could not expect that his friend would find happiness at the side of such a dry stick as Dulcina.

'What do you think of her?' asked Lord Saltcombe again.

'I have had only a glimpse. I have not as yet exchanged a word with her.'

'Tell me frankly, are you struck with her?'

'I will speak to you frankly. She is not bad-looking at all. We are so accustomed here to see lovely complexions, that one spoiled by the sun of the south seems to us strange. She has a profusion of warm-coloured hair and good teeth.'

'This is not fair, Beavis. You are cataloguing what I am competent to catalogue myself. She has a nose, and eyes, and fingers and feet. The latter small, the ankles good.'

'What do you want?'

'What do you think of her character?'

'Now you are unreasonable with me, Saltcombe. I have seen her for a few moments only, and you demand what you have no right to expect, and what would be unfair to her. I will tell you more after I have had a talk with her.'

‘You are evading my question. I want your first impressions.’

‘Then you shall have them. I think she has been spoiled. What has been spoiled it will be your place to restore. What lies below the surface, what has been crippled and what stunted by mismanagement, I cannot tell. I never will believe in any woman being other than an angel.’

‘Is it possible to make good what is broken?’

‘There are crippled hearts as well as crippled limbs. Miss Rigsby is young: kindness and firmness may put the crippled heart to rights; it is only warped by having been allowed to twist as it liked, unrestrained.’

‘Thank you, Beavis. You set me a task. You are determined to make me work against my will. I am marrying without love, without regard even, because it is a family necessity. Perhaps the union will turn out well in spite of its being loveless. The French system of *mariage de convenance* is not so bad as novelists would have us suppose, and the love matches these misleaders of youth extol are generally disastrous. Young folks idealise each other, and their marriage is a miserable disenchantment. Where two take each other without any expectation of finding any treasure, every discovery of a good quality, every peaceful pleasure in marriage, comes on them as a surprise, and they are delighted in the end to find each other worth having.’

The Marquess laughed, but constrainedly. Beavis looked at him sadly, sympathetically. He was afraid to speak. He doubted what to say.

Mr. Rigsby gave his key to a manservant, who unpacked his portmanteau for him. He had been accustomed to attend on himself, and was impatient of having this taken from him. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on. Then he went to his daughter’s room, tapped, and walked in.

‘Well, Dullie, what do you think of this? Is not the house magnificent? Did you ever see such livery before, and such a lot of it? Buff and scarlet, red plush breeches—’

‘Really, James,’ exclaimed Miss Stokes, ‘would you—would you be more constrained in tongue before ladies?’

‘Lord bless me!’ exclaimed the old planter, ‘what is wrong? If they wear ’em, mayn’t one speak of them?’

‘Papa!’ cried Dulcinea, ‘you must observe the decencies of speech, if not before me, before the great folks here.’

‘Great folks,’ said Mr. Rigsby; ‘I believe you, Dullie. They are great folks indeed! Tell me, now, is not everything here magnificent?’

‘Oh, all is very nice.’

‘Nice! Superb! You do not employ proper expressions. You never saw the like in your wildest dreams, because the like is not to be found out of old England.’

‘I suppose there are the courts of the native princes in India——’

‘Native fiddlesticks!’ exclaimed Mr. Rigsby.

‘Really, really, James,’ interposed Miss Stokes, ‘would you allow my niece to finish her sentences? She cannot endure interruptions; you shake her nerves. Moreover, the expression is burlesque and improper.’

‘I was only about to remark,’ said the abashed Rigsby, ‘that *Dulcina* has seen no native princes. There are none in Ceylon, and she has not been on a visit to Maharajahs on the continent.’

‘If she has not, she has read of their palaces and heard of their state.’

‘They are nothing to the mansions of our nobility. And, Dullie, my dear, the beauty is, that you will one day be mistress here. Listen! Don’t it sound well, *Dulcina*, Duchess of Kingsbridge? Upon my word, I will have you painted in a ducal coronet and red velvet mantle turned up with ermine. My dear, look round here on everything as your own. The old cock can’t last long.’

‘What old cock, papa?’

‘I mean the Duke.’

‘Really, James, really!’ exclaimed Miss Stokes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CAUGHT NAPPING.

NEVER within man’s memory had there been such a succession of gaieties at Court Royal as at this Christmas season. The weather was favourable, bright and mild, as is so frequent in these days, when the seasons, as the world of men and manners, are out of joint. The climate of the south coast of Devon, especially of that favoured portion about the Kingsbridge estuary and the mouths

of the Erme, the Avon, and the Yealm, is like that of Penzance. Oranges, myrtles, geraniums grow in the open air, and frosts do not fall sharply on the vegetation in winter.

With an ebbing tide the Marquess took a party down the creek in his yacht to Bolt Head. The sun was brilliant, and under the rocks on the sands the air was so soft and summery that luncheon was spread and taken out of doors. They returned by moonlight. The yacht was illumined with coloured lanterns; an awning was spread on deck to cut off the falling dews; a band played, and the party danced. The villagers along the shore turned out to watch the glittering vessel as she ran up with the flowing tide, and listen to the strains of music wafted over the water.

Miss Rigsby caught cold on this expedition, and could not appear for a few days. Lord Saltcombe inquired after her health formally two or three times every day, and secretly felt relieved that he was off duty for a while.

When Dulcina reappeared in public her nose was red and glistening—red because it had been much rubbed, glistening because glycerine had been applied to reduce the soreness of the organ. Miss Rigsby's temper had not been at its prime whilst she was unwell, and Miss Stokes' patience and good nature were tried. Dulcina was not even pleased with the Marquess. The trip in the yacht had been planned by him. 'Who ever heard of such nonsense,' she said, 'as a picnic and a dance *al fresco* at Christmas? Did the creature want to kill me? Is he tired of me already?'

'Oh, dearest Dullie,' answered the aunt, 'forgive him. He has become delirious with love. He cannot do enough to please you. He is always inventing some excuse to be with you. If he acted foolishly, forgive; you have driven the wits out of him. I never saw devotion so delicate, and at the same time so passionate, in all my experience.'

'That is not saying much,' snapped Dulcina. 'You haven't had much experience of love, aunt, I will be bound.'

Never was Mr. Rigsby in finer feather than at Court Royal. At dinner he worked the conversation into the groove of coffee-planting in which he could run for hours. Then, when he had got it on his subject, he poured forth his experience on coffee, and absorbed the entire conversation till coffee itself came in on a silver tray and stopped his mouth. He talked also a good deal on Indian affairs, and pretended intimacy with all the viceroys,

lieutenant-governors, chief commissioners, and British Residents and native princes for the last quarter of a century. He knew the secret history of all that had been done and neglected. He had in his hands the clue to all the tangles, financial and political, of the empire. What might he not expect, when father-in-law to a Marquess, with the influence of a great Duke to back him? Surely, he might aspire to the viceroyalty! He would take nothing less. So he talked long and loud, and made himself a general bore, in the firm belief that he was stamping on the minds of the Duke, the Earl of Stratton, Lord Dawlish, Lord Pomeroy, and all the distinguished guests at the table, that he, Rigsby, was the man England wanted to do in India everything that ought to be done, and to undo every muddle made by every preceding governor. Mr. Rigsby was not a vulgar man, but he was a man without tact; preoccupied with his own ideas, he regarded no one else. This was the secret of his success in life. He had gone forward with the one idea of making money, and he had made it. Now he had got hold of the notion that he was about to make himself a name in Eastern politics, and he therefore talked down and contradicted everyone who attempted to turn the conversation or to dispute his views.

The Marquess played his part in the *Comedy of Love* with resolution and patience. He was devoted in his attention to Miss Rigsby; he did his utmost to draw out her better qualities. These were few; she had read little, observed little, associated little with superior persons. She regarded her father, though she tyrannised over him. She ruled as a despot over her feeble aunt, a person of inferior culture, and no mind. There was some kindness of heart in her, but most of her thoughts were on herself. Her taste was detestable, uncultivated and originally defective. Here Lady Grace came to the aid of her brother; she ingratiated herself into the confidence of Dulcina, and advised her how to dress; she did so with such delicate adroitness that Miss Rigsby had no idea she was receiving and obeying advice.

Mr. Worthivale was radiant. The cloud that had hung over the house was rolling away; the golden age was returning. His spirits bounded with the hopeful prospects. Not within his memory could Beavis recall a time when he was so extravagantly magnificent in his building of cloud-castles and in throwing golden bridges over Sloughs of Despond. Court Royal was itself again. The old splendour revived; the old hospitality extended on all sides.

Not for one moment did the thought cross the steward's horizon and trouble it, that this revival was due to Lucy's fortune. Nor was his daughter more concerned than he. Generous, self-sacrificing, devoted heart and soul to the family, she was ready to give everything without demanding a return, without grudging if it were lost.

It was other with Beavis. He knew exactly how matters stood. He knew the extent of the peril. He knew whose money paid for all these gaieties and stopped the mouths of the clamorous creditors. For himself he did not care, but for his sister he cared a great deal. A sense of uneasiness that he could not shake off oppressed his spirits. He looked on at the festivities; he partook of them with perception of their hollowness and without enjoying them.

On the evening of the ball he was present, standing in a recessed window, half screened by the blue silk curtains, looking on in a dreamy state—the cloud of apprehension hanging over him—conscious at the moment, however, only of irritation at the dance strains of Strauss, which seemed to his fastidious ear as music full of unclean *double-entendre* unsuitable for such a place and such company.

The ball-room, built by Frederick Augustus, Duke of Kingsbridge, was a noble hall, lighted by two cut-glass lustres of great size. It was painted in panels with pastoral subjects, divided by pilasters of white and gold. The ceiling was of plaster flower-work containing paintings; walls and ceiling were the work of French artists, brought over for the purpose by the art- and splendour-loving Frederick Augustus.

The Duke appeared for a short while, but his delicate condition of health did not permit a long stay. He was surrounded on his appearance by a cluster of ladies, eager for a word and one of his charming speeches full of old-world courtesy and wit.

Beavis did not go to him. For a while, on his appearance, the music ceased, then the doors were flung open, and two Highland pipers entered, one an immense man with sandy hair. They strode up the ball-room to the Duke's chair, stood there a moment playing, then turned sharply and strode down the room still playing, made a second circuit, and disappeared. They were the pipers of a Highland regiment stationed at Exeter.

After this diversion the Duke retired with an apology, and the dancing recommenced with vigour. Then it was, whilst teased by a waltz of Strauss, that Beavis was startled by a voice at his elbow

—a soft, low voice, a voice not to be mistaken. He turned and saw Lady Grace.

‘Mr. Beavis,’ she said, ‘how have I offended you? You have not asked me to dance with you once to-night; but see’—she held out her tablet to him—‘I have put you down, unsolicited, for the next quadrille.’

His eye caught a single B on the place indicated. He coloured with pleasure, and looked his gratitude without speaking.

‘We have not had a confidential talk together for an age,’ she said in her gentle tones, so soft, yet quite distinct; ‘and I want it. Dear Lucy has been engaged night and day, and could spare me none of her precious time. Besides, she is reserved with me on the subject of all others that occupies my thoughts. I have no one to speak to but yourself, and I can only speak with you in the midst of a ball. You will be candid with me, will you not? You are a crystal moorstream, and when I look in I see the spars and the sparkling mica, even the grains of black hornblende. Now I want to look in and find what is the gravel over which your clear thoughts run.’

She smiled. The look of her sweet eyes, the dimple on her delicate cheek, the flutter of the throat, the intonation of the voice, were full of pleading.

‘Dear Lady Grace,’ answered Beavis, ‘you know that I am devoted to your service. I can deny you nothing.’

‘Then, Mr. Beavis, be frank with me. I know how kind and good you and all your family are. You are too kind, if I may dare say that. I mean that to spare me a moment’s pain you would cover up from my eyes all the little black grains. But, I pray you, let me have the very truth. Hide nothing; let me see all I ask to see. Will you not trust me? Am I a coward to turn pale and fly at the sight of a spider? I am stronger than you think. I can bear more than you give me credit for. That which tortures me most of all is uncertainty. You will trust me—do, pray!’

She put her fingers to her fan beseechingly, and looked at him.

‘What do you desire to know, Lady Grace?’ he asked with restraint. There were things he could not tell her, however suppliantly and sweetly she might plead.

‘I cannot understand my brother’s engagement. Does he love her? Does he admire her? I have tried my best. I have done all I can to find out what there is admirable in her, and I cannot

like her; I can only endure her, and that only for a little while. I thought that I knew Herbert so well; what he likes I like, and what I fancy he fancies; in that we are almost as tied as twins, but in this one matter I have no sympathy with him. You do not know, Mr. Beavis, how I have striven to regard her as a sister. I cannot; I cannot do it! But it is not *that* that troubles me. I would never let her suppose I could not love her, but I am not sure that Herbert loves her. I cannot think they will be happy together. What *is* the attraction in her?’

She looked round to make sure that she was not overheard.

‘I had a battle with myself; at last I plucked up sufficient courage to approach the subject with him. You know that she has had a bad cold, and has kept her room. During this time I have been able to talk to my brother and walk with him, with my hand through his arm, on the terrace, whilst he smokes, just as before this—this affair. I have crept very near to the question that perplexes me, but he will not allow me to touch it. He glances aside and bids me keep at arm’s length. He turns the conversation to indifferent subjects, and then my heart sinks. Only once did I wring anything like an answer from him, and that was “Beavis approves.” That was referring me to you, was it not? That is why I speak now. O prithee tell me the truth. Why do you approve?’

Beavis look down. What could he answer?

‘I have not had much conversation with Saltcombe since his engagement,’ he answered in a low tone. He blushed as he spoke, for it was an evasion, but he could not help himself.

‘Oh, Mr. Beavis!’ she exclaimed, with pain and discouragement in her expressive voice, ‘you are playing with me. I ask for the truth, and you throw up a soap-bubble!’

‘Lady Grace,’ he said gravely, ‘this is not the place, nor have we now the time, for speaking on this matter. I must, unworthy as I may seem, ask you to do that which I appear unwilling to do to you. I must ask you to trust me. I do approve of Saltcombe’s engagement—I may add, I advised it. This latter was a responsibility—a terrible one; nevertheless, I took it upon me. I did advise this engagement.’

‘So did Uncle Edward, I know, and Aunt Elizabeth as well,’ said Lady Grace sadly. ‘I am treated like a child. I am given no reasons. I can hardly bear it. I am no longer a child; I am growing into the old woman.’

‘Never, never, Lady Grace! with a heart as fresh and a spirit as bright as a May morning.’

She smiled very faintly, almost imperceptibly, slight dimples forming at the corners of her mouth. The tears were very near the surface.

‘I must trust you,’ she said. Then, thinking she had spoken grudgingly and ungenerously, she looked up and said, ‘I trust you frankly, freely, from the bottom of my soul. Excuse my petulance, my curiosity. From the days of Eve woman has wanted to know what she had better not know!’

Beavis was uneasy. He felt that she was hurt by his want of confidence—hurt and disappointed. He knew that this disappointment would cost her tears when alone. He could not do otherwise. He could not tell her that this marriage was *de convenance*, one for money, and money only. Her healthy, pure mind would recoil from such a truth. She would think such a union unholy, dishonouring. But it was necessary. She did not know the bankrupt condition of the family. If told it, she would not realise it. If she did realise it, she would refuse to sanction escape from it by such means. Beavis knew this. He could see into that transparent soul better far than she could look into his.

‘The quadrille is forming,’ she said; ‘let us take our places.’

They did so under one of the great chandeliers.

How beautiful was the scene: the background of old paintings and white and gold, the brilliant light from above, the brightly polished floor of inlaid woods, the figures in gay colours—the turquoise blue, the eschscholtzia yellow, the carnation pink, the lily white—flickering in and out like pieces in a kaleidoscope. The beautiful faces, bright eyes, the various hairs—golden, chestnut brown, black—the flash of diamonds, the flowers—how lovely was the scene! Yet, lovely above every person and every object there, incomparable in every way, Beavis thought Lady Grace—not wrongly, not with any exaggeration. Incomparable she was in white and the palest blue satin, so pale as to be scarcely blue at all, with aquamarine parure, and a cross of the same hanging from her necklet and resting on her pure bosom. The delicate blue veins in her temples and on her throat and bosom showed through her transparent skin. Her eyes were of deep violet blue—the only dark colour about her. In her cheeks was the faintest tinge of rose. Lady Grace, as has been said before, was not a young girl; she

was sliding out of youth. But age, as it drew on, added sweetness to her face; it gave expression where it withdrew bloom.

Miss Rigsby flared by in yellow and red; the Misses Sheepwash were in the same quadrille, hot with dancing, their cheeks aflame, and their fans working vigorously; they were bouncing girls.

Beavis turned his eyes away. He looked at his partner, moving easily, without exertion, full of grace in every undulation. It was a delight to the eye to rest on her.

She did not look at Beavis during the dance. When he had the chance he said, 'I have offended you—'

'No, you cannot do that; only disappointed me.'

'I cannot help myself. I am obliged to say, Trust me. I can do no other. Rely on me that I advise nothing which is not best for your brother and your family; best attainable, I mean, not ideally best.'

He had to lead her across in the dance. She slightly pressed his hand. It was to say, 'I trust.'

When she returned to his side she said, 'Do me a favour. Poor Miss Stokes is sitting yonder, the picture of woebegonedness. Please me by dancing once with her. You do not know how dreadful the world seems to a young lady who has been a wall-flower one whole night. A single round alters the aspect of life.'

In the country there is generally a preponderance of ladies at a ball. It was not so on this occasion at Court Royal. Officers had been invited from Plymouth and Exeter, so that every young lady—except Miss Stokes, who was not young, but refused to consider herself old—found a partner, and every young lady said afterwards that this was the most perfect ball she had ever attended. Even Miss Stokes said it was a nice ball. She danced twice with Beavis. Beavis was not obliged to dance. He preferred looking on. He watched Miss Rigsby, and he saw that she was flattered with the attentions of the Marquess, and that, so far as her cold nature could feel affection, she loved him. Her eyes followed him when he danced with another, with an expression in them much like jealousy. Lucy had been compulsorily relieved of her superintendentship of preparations for, and conduct of the ball, by Lady Elizabeth Eveleigh, who on her arrival took everything upon herself. Lady Elizabeth was full of system, and Lucy was obliged to admit that everything went more smoothly; the servants became more prompt under the rule of Lady Elizabeth

than under herself. She would have kept in the background in the ball-room had she been allowed, but she who had thought of others was thought of by them. The Marquess insisted on her dancing with him, then Lady Grace introduced officers to her. Lord Ronald would not be refused her hand in the lancers. Lord Edward, the Archdeacon, did not dance, but he drew Lucy into a window and talked with her for half-an-hour in an affectionate manner. Whenever Lady Grace passed her in valse, or quadrille, or cotillon, she smiled, and if possible gave her a kindly word. In spite of her efforts to escape, for she was not in good spirits, Lucy was not allowed to retire. She danced as often as any young girl in the room. Her partners liked her. She was unaffected, full of good sense and modesty. About three o'clock in the morning Beavis told his sister he was going home.

'Papa has the key,' said she. 'Our maid, Emily, is here helping. She and that other, Joanna, could not both come to-morrow, so they arranged between them that one should be here to-night and the other be at the tenants' ball. Papa said she was to go to bed, and that he and you would let yourselves in.'

'I'll get the key,' answered Beavis; 'then I will sit and smoke in the study till our father comes. I do not suppose he will leave yet.'

'Oh dear no! not till the last moment; he enjoys the ball as much as a girl does her first coming out.'

Beavis got the key and walked home.

When he left the house, and was in the park, he turned and looked back at the illuminated mansion; the strains of music came to him faintly through the trees. Then the sense of oppression, which had hung over him all the evening in the glitter of the ball-room, descended heavily on his spirits.

Was it possible that the Marquess would continue in the same resolution and marry Miss Rigsby? If he did not, then the earthquake would follow, and engulf not only the Kingsbridge family, but his own. As yet Lord Saltcombe had shown no token of wavering. He was too honourable a man to shrink from an engagement when once he had passed his word. On this Beavis assured himself that he could rely. As far as he could see the marriage would certainly take place. That which troubled him was not the doubt of its accomplishment, but the probable result afterwards. Was there any prospect of happiness to the Marquess in such an union? There was none—none at all. The characters

were incompatible. The marriage must lead to mutual estrangement. It would end Saltcombe's friendship for Beavis, whom he would always regard as the evil adviser who had brought him into hateful bonds. Beavis opened his house door noiselessly, and as noiselessly entered the hall. He wore goloshes over his patent leather boots, and his steps were soundless on the kamptulicon



floorcloth. To his surprise he saw that the office door was ajar, and that there was a light within.

He walked down the passage and entered.

He saw the girl Joanna at his father's writing-desk, seated on the stool asleep, her head reposing on her arm upon the desk. A candle was burning beside her. The book-cupboard or press, in which the ledgers were kept, was unlocked and open. The bunch of his father's keys was there, hanging in the lock. On the desk were some of the ledgers, open.

Beavis stepped up to the girl in great surprise, and saw that under her hand was a small account book, in which, as far as he could see, without removing her hand, was a series of extracts from the ledger; of particulars of rents, payments, incumbrances, neatly written, not in his father's hand.

'Joanna!' he called, and laid his hand on her shoulder. Instantly she sprang to her feet, looked at him in a bewildered manner, gathering her senses with difficulty, put her hand firmly on the account book, and with the other knocked the candle over. It was instantly extinguished on the floor.

'What is the meaning of this?' asked Beavis, confronting her in the dark.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' answered the girl; 'I am sorry. I fell asleep whilst sitting up to open when you came home. I thought you might want some hot water and sugar and the whisky. I'm sorry the light has gone out. If you'll please to excuse me a moment, I will fetch a candle from the kitchen.'

She was fumbling with her hands whilst speaking.

'What are you about?' asked Beavis sharply.

'Please, sir, I can't find the candle where it has fallen.'

'Never mind the candle. Go, fetch another.'

She slipped away, but not at once, as bidden. Presently she returned, holding a bedroom candle alight. She looked sleepy, her eyes were dull, her hair tangled.

'Joanna,' said Beavis, looking at the desk, 'I must know the meaning of this.'

'I told you I was sitting up,' she answered. 'In the kitchen I might not have heard, and I made so bold as to come in here, where I'd be sure, I thought, to hear when you were at the front door. I'm sorry I was that bold to do so.'

'What has become of the note-book I saw on the desk a moment ago?'

'What note-book, sir?'

'One I saw beneath your hand as you lay asleep.'

Joanna shrugged her shoulders. 'There are a power of books of all sorts here,' she answered. 'Which would you please to want, sir?'

'I insist on your producing the book.'

'I have none to produce,' she answered, stupidly or doggedly.

'Joanna, how came the cabinet open, and the books about?'

'I suppose the master left them so.'

‘And the cabinet unlocked?’

She shrugged her shoulders, then yawned. ‘I beg pardon, sir, but I am that sleepy I can neither think nor speak. Do you want some hot water and tumblers, and the sugar, and the whisky?’

‘Go along—to bed at once,’ said Beavis. ‘I’ll inquire into this to-morrow.’

‘And the whisky, and the sugar, and the hot water?’

‘Go along,’ said Beavis, stamping. ‘I want nothing but an explanation of your conduct, and that I will have from you to-morrow.’

‘Yes, sir.’ She looked at him. In that quick glance there was neither stupidity nor sleep.

Before he could speak again she had stolen away.

(To be continued.)

IMPRESSIONS OF HOLLAND.

ONE of the thoughts uppermost in my mind when I started from Paris last August for the purpose of making a trip through Holland was the prospect of seeing innumerable windmills. In all the countries I had hitherto visited windmills are no longer held in high esteem. In France the few windmills that still exist look like colossal wounded birds beating the ground sadly with their wings. They no longer enjoy the confidence of opulent and influential millers, and the corn that they grind can only be a dark-coloured inferior grain, destined to be eaten by the poor and the unfortunate. Their glory has departed; they are no longer triumphant, as they were when they first arrived with the Crusaders—at least, so says the legend—from the East, the country of all inventions; but still they seem to have something human about them, all fallen into dishonour as they are. A windmill always has its individuality and its peculiar aspect. See how constantly the Dutch painters make one of them to animate their landscapes. In the immense battle-pieces of Van der Meulen these wooden-winged giants seem to smile at those heroic combats, as it were at the struggles of pigmies; in Ruysdael's sunny solitudes the windmill often appears; and Hobbema places its eccentric contour in the golden dust of his woodland roads. Amongst the moderns, Jongkind, to whom the French impressionist school of painting owes so much, excels in planting the enormous arms of a windmill against the pale sky of his fantastic landscapes. The black or red sails turn dismally; the roof is torn and rent by the angry winds; the staircase is worn out by the use of ages; the giant groans with the groans of the vanquished, and the hour is fast approaching when its death-rattle will be smothered by the roar of machinery, and its ruined carcase delivered up to utilitarian flames. But in presence of the new steam-mills the painter's brush falls from his fingers in disgust, while the image of the old windmill will live for ever in the works of the great masters, and the artists will for ever lament the captive flight of its wings in the serenity of a broad horizon.

Happily, in Holland the windmill still holds its position in the landscape and in the industry of the country; it stands out

against the horizon triumphantly, like a brilliant star, or, as at Rotterdam and Amsterdam, towers up on the top of a huge brick pediment, right in the midst of the town. The windmills and the canals are still the two chief characteristics of Dutch landscape.

The first Dutch town I visited was Rotterdam. Nowadays, thanks to railways and modern improvements, the approach to nearly all towns is spoiled. You enter Rotterdam on a higher level than the roofs of the houses, amidst the usual maze of rail tracks, stacks of coal, and sooty serpentine water-hose. The station and the people about it look modern and dirty and commonplace. The only thing that strikes and makes one feel that one is travelling in a foreign country is the inscriptions and advertisements written in that queer Dutch language, that seems now a corruption of English, and now of German—a language which one is constantly on the point of understanding, but without ever quite achieving that happy result. Once outside the station the charm begins. First of all there is the triumphant and monumental windmill in the centre of the town, and then, wherever you turn, you find yourself in a labyrinth of canals, crowded with ships and boats of all kinds, bordered with trees and boulevards lined with lofty houses. The city is different from anything that can be seen elsewhere in Europe. It is a combination of streets, quays, canals, and bridges, so complicated that you can hardly feel sure whether it is a dockyard or a town, whether there is more land than water, and more ships than houses; for each canal is crowded with ships of all sizes except in the middle, where there remains a dark-green channel, by which the boats pass in and out. You are moving along with the tranquil crowd of Dutchmen, with their serious air and their broad yellow faces—but faces of a yellow such as you do not see elsewhere, the yellow of Parmesan cheese—with their blonde, reddish, or yellowish hair; some of them beardless, others with a fringe of hair around their faces, such as the English call a Newgate frill; and amongst them women, with equally yellow faces, long teeth, broad haunches, and formless bodies, by no means reminding one of the robust beauties which Rubens painted. The men in this crowd are neither well-looking nor stalwart, but small and lean; as for the women, they are almost invariably very plain, and not always so clean and tidy as tradition reports. Suddenly there is a halt; the crowd thickens, a balance-bridge rises in the air, a

ship or barge glides past; the toll-taker swings a wooden shoe, attached to a rod and line, and angles for the toll money; the bridge falls into position again, and the crowds and the carts pass on, calmly, seriously, as if they were trying to show the observant stranger how good they can be. Yet the streets of Rotterdam are full of animation. Tramways run in every direction, and there is a constant tinkling of their bells to warn the innumerable carts to clear the track. But all the movement is commercial; you see very few carriages, no display of elegance, and very few showy shops. In fact, the vast majority of the shops in the streets of Rotterdam are tobacco and cigar shops, silversmiths, and provision stores. The profusion of shops for the sale of eatables and household wares is extraordinary. Evidently it is more profitable in Rotterdam to appeal to the palate than to the eye.

With all their movement there is a singular calm reigning in the streets of Rotterdam. The faces of the passers-by are stolid; there is no chattering, no gesticulating. The population is imperturbably good. I was constantly struck by this feature of the Dutch wherever I went; they are preternaturally tranquil. At Rotterdam, it may be argued, the people are preoccupied with business, and have no time to be gay and noisy. But at their holiday resorts they are equally quiet. One Sunday afternoon I went down to Scheveningen, the famous seaside resort, near the Hague, and I was utterly astounded at the bearing of the crowd of holiday-seekers. I could hardly help thinking that the whole thing must be a toy, and that the people were playing at being good. The hotels on the top of the sand-dunes, the neat brick-paved, winding footpath that runs the whole length of the upper part of the beach, the villas, the casino, the village; the church, with its clock-dial painted red and blue, with the hours picked out in white; the little canvas bathing-machines, brilliant with new paint; the little tents on the beach, the fishing boats, all seemed to accord with this idea, they were so neat and proper. When we arrived, all the people were out on the beach; the Sunday holiday-makers, too, had arrived; and yet the tranquillity, the stillness, the absence of the sounds of gaiety, or, indeed, of any human sounds, were so marked that it made one feel quite uneasy. You met groups walking quietly; here and there were groups sitting quietly and talking quietly; and quiet smiles pervaded at rare intervals their buttery physiognomies. I presume these people were enjoying themselves in

their own quiet way. But how unlike a Latin crowd at the sea-side!

At Scheveningen I saw no more style, no more elegance, no more coquetry than at Rotterdam. Very few of the Dutch women wore their quaint native head-dress, and these few had surmounted it by horrible Parisian bonnets. As for their dress, it was horrible. Their hips were extravagantly bulged out with skirts, and their general appearance was painful to eyes heedful of grace of line. Once for all, I may say that, generally speaking, I found the Dutch women uncomely, the children unpleasing, and the men ugly, coarse, and unsympathetic. Dutch cleanliness is proverbial, I know; but, nevertheless, the Dutch are not a well-washed nation. In all their towns I found but poor washing appliances and a sad absence of bath-houses.

But let us leave the Dutch people, with their austere airs and their dismal black costume, and talk rather about their country, the most curious, the most charming, and the most *far-away* country one can find without going outside of Europe. What struck me most in the country itself were the colour and the light and shade. It has been said that if all the visible testimonies of the existence of Holland in the last two centuries had disappeared, except the work of the Dutch painters, we should be able to form an idea of the whole country and of its life and manners in its pictures; the towns, the country, the ports, the canals, the markets, the shops, the costumes, the arms, the household utensils, the food, the pleasures, the linen, the religious beliefs, all the customs, manners, qualities, and defects of the people are expressed in its painting. And through seeing specimens of this painting in the museums of the world one becomes so familiar with every detail of Dutch life and landscape that when one does visit the country and sees the real thing one is tempted to remark naïvely, 'How like a Dutch picture!' But none of these pictures, excellent and truthful as they are, can give a thoroughly adequate idea of the colour and the effects of light and shade one sees everywhere in Holland. To see and appreciate that you must visit the country itself. You must travel through miles and miles of terrestrial platitude, where the horizon has no accidents except a windmill or a clump of trees; where the cottages are deep red, the meadows deep green, the sky grey-blue, capable of changing almost at any moment into the most curious shades of black-grey and burnished copper, torn up and shredded and twisted as if some aërial giant

had amused himself by combing the clouds into a tangle. And these dark-green meadows are intersected by innumerable little canals filled with black water, and over the canals are black bridges and black gates, and in the meadows are black cattle; in the distance the inevitable but welcome windmill has black sails, and even the rows of willows and poplars have a black tinge in their green. And over this country the sun shines blazingly in high summer time, and especially in the late afternoon it sets off vast spaces of golden light against other spaces of that black, intense, bituminous shadow that you see in the paintings of the Dutch school.

Then when you come into the town you find rows of deep red brick houses, with tile roofs of all shades from black up to scarlet, with gables of all imaginable shapes, and with an inclination over the street at any angle except the angle of the house next door. To look along the façade of a quay at Rotterdam, for instance, you might almost think that the city had been disturbed by an earthquake, so curiously and irregularly do the houses lean outwards. The front doors are brilliant with brass name-plates and fittings; the sash windows are painted white and dressed with white blinds, white curtains, flowers and plants in pots, and outside these is an arrangement of mirrors called *speis*, or spies, which enables the people inside to see what is going on in the street without themselves being seen. The façades of the streets of Rotterdam present but two colours—dark red and white. Seen from a distance, the houses seem to be almost black, and with the strong contrast of the white lines of the windows and cornices they look quite funereal. On the other hand, when you examine them more closely, they assume a comical and carnivalesque aspect. Most of the houses have only a breadth of two windows and a height of two or three stories, but the façade rises above and conceals the roof, narrowing up into a truncated triangle, into depressed and interrupted arches, or more commonly the frontal is cut into steps like the toy houses that children build with wooden bricks. These frontals are bordered with a white cornice and often adorned with heavy ornaments and arabesques in relief, and in the middle a beam juts out with a pulley at the end to draw up baskets or weights. But all these houses are so clean, so spick and span, so neat, so miniature, and so comic in aspect that you can hardly believe that they are the dwellings of sober and worthy citizens, and not the back-scene of some comic opera or the paraphernalia of some immense carnival.

This impression that you are in a toy-land constantly strikes you in the Dutch towns. Everything is so orderly, and so much care is given to details. The very trees that run in tall rows along the canals seem unreal, so dark is the green of their foliage, and so calm and sleepy their outline. The canals themselves, with their serried ranks of imprisoned ships, seem hardly practical. Surely these gaily painted barks cannot carry merchandise; they cannot come from anywhere or go anywhere; they cannot pass the innumerable bridges with their tall masts; certainly they can only be toy boats placed there to fill up the scene! In reality nothing could be more serious than the Rotterdam canals and the Rotterdam boats. Along the quay of the Meuse Transatlantic steamers can be moored, and many of the canals in the heart of the town are so deep that sea-going ships can come up them and unload their cargoes at the very warehouse doors. But most of the boats that you see on the Rotterdam canals navigate only on the Rhine and the Dutch canals. These have only one or two masts; they are broad, bulky, robust boats, tricked out with paint and varnish like gala barges. Many are painted green exteriorly, with broad bands of white or red running from end to end. The poop is gilded; the deck, the masts, and the spars glisten with varnish. The deck-house, the hatches, the tips of the masts and spars, the water-barrel, the hen-coop, the chains, rings, and blocks are all painted with gay tints of red, green, or blue picked out with white. The house on board, where the skipper and his family live, is generally as gaily painted as a Chinese kiosk, and at the little windows the curtains are tied up with gay ribbons, and the flower-pots are painted bright red, and the brass curtain-rods are rubbed till they shine like mirrors.

Now imagine the effect of all this mass of colour, of this forest of masts and ropes and sails and streamers, set off against the dark background of the trees and houses and quays; in mid-canal imagine a little row-boat laden with fruit and vegetables standing out with their brilliant reds and greens and yellows against the black water of the canal; at the end of the canal picture the square cathedral tower and a vision of huge windmill sails, and overhead a sky full of sinister obscurations, changing and moving perpetually; add to this vision the human element—sombrely dressed men working tranquilly, little servant-maids with lilac dresses and quaint white head-dresses, perpetually occupied in scrubbing and sweeping and rubbing—and you will then have

some idea of the superficial aspect of Rotterdam, the chief commercial city of Holland.

In going from Rotterdam to Delft I saw for the first time what Dutch landscape really is. We started one afternoon from the Delft Gate on a *stoomboot* unworthy of the name. It was a sort of barge with cabins fore and aft, and engine and smoke-stack amidships. The craft was painted green with white stripes. The roofs of the cabins were asphalted, and on the roof of the fore-cabin were placed folding X chairs; while on the roof of the aft, or second-class cabin, were placed queer, stubby little benches about six inches high. We wondered why the Dutchmen liked to sit so low, but being strangers we made no remarks. The start was uneventful. We took on board three pigs—much against their wills—an ice-cream machine with its roof and fixings, several hampers and baskets of fruit, a young Parisian married couple, Georges and Thérèse, and some odd native passengers. By means of poles and strenuous efforts the boat's head was got round and we steamed ahead. Remark that during the difficult operation of taking the pigs on board and turning the boat scarcely a word was spoken; the sky was grey; the water of the canal was still as an oil tank; the tranquillity was only disturbed by an old man who was scooping water out of the canal with a long shovel and flinging it over the quay to lay the dust, regardless of the convenience of the passers-by, some of whom mildly protested. Soon after starting we met a barge with a large family on board, towed along by the eldest brother, the eldest sister, and an ugly bastard bull-dog, harnessed together one in front of the other, the dog leading. Then we sighted a bridge, apparently only about six feet above the water; we neared the bridge, but the bridge neither swung round nor rose in the air. How were we to pass under it? The situation became alarming the nearer we approached. Georges and Thérèse grew pale, but the *stoomboot* continued its course. Then, with a rattle of chains, the funnel was lowered, and to save our lives we tourists on the cabin roof lay flat on our stomachs, much to the amusement of the native passengers who had prudently remained on the deck below. The passage of this first bridge taught us the way down the ladder, and explained the lowness of the benches.

Soon we sighted Schiedam, surrounded with a cordon of gigantic windmills, which give it the air of a fortified town crowned with towers. Thence we glided along rapidly through vast plains of

pasture-land, full of black and white cattle and horses. On either side were broad flowery meadows, traversed by long lines of poplars and willows. In the distance we saw village spires. Often the meadows were far below the level of the canal. The solitude was only enlivened by two or three chocolate-coloured sails which loomed into view from time to time. The steamer would slacken speed to see what course they would take, and then they would glide past us, their sail-boom grazing our heads. Other boats would come along, with a man pushing against the bow with a long pole fixed at right angles; others again were hauled by trios of dogs, men, and women. At intervals all along the route were windmills, not the broken-down, piteous windmills of France, but triumphant monsters which even Don Quixote would have hesitated to attack. Some are built of masonry, round or octagon, like mediæval towers; other smaller mills are of wood, perched on the point of a pyramid of brickwork. Most of them are thatched and surrounded halfway up with a wooden gallery. The windows are neatly draped with white curtains, the doors are painted green, and over the door is a sign indicating the nature of the mill. The small mills are mostly used for pumping water and draining the meadows; the larger ones are used for all sorts of purposes, grinding corn, limestone, or colza, tobacco manufacturing, paper making, and, above all, sawing. Most of the mills between Rotterdam and Delft are saw-mills. They are placed close at the water's edge, and surrounded by reservoirs in which are seen floating thousands of logs of wood, which the lumbermen manipulate with long hooks, but always silently. The only noise you hear is the monotonous tic-tac of the windmills. The villages along the canal are equally silent. The houses are built at the very edge of the water, and the women do their washing from their doorstep in the canal itself, while the watch-dog sleeps in his basket and the big, square-headed heavy Dutch cats lie basking in the sun.

From time to time the stern of the *stoomboot* was steered in-shore, and a passenger got on or off, and so on we glided sleepily through brilliant green pastures and windmills, and beds of rushes, all calm and tranquil until we came to the village of Overschie. Here there was a tangle of boats coming in opposite directions; the canal was narrow, and everything seemed to be in an inextricable mess. The steamer slowed, not a word was said, and the men calmly went to work with poles and cleared the passage. Not a single impatient word was uttered, and yet the confusion

was formidable. At the risk of seeming to repeat myself, I cannot help again remarking the curious silence and tranquillity of this trip. There was no exchange of greetings between the crews of the barges; the men on our boat did not talk; the cattle in the meadows did not low; there were no birds twittering and flying about, nothing winged visible but ducks and occasionally a sea-gull, and even the ducks were silent and cleared out of the way of the approaching steamer without uttering a single couac. Naturally we could not help being struck by this phenomenal calmness and stillness of the Dutch people and of Dutch landscape. Wherever we went afterwards we made the same observation. The whole country seemed asleep, like the waters of the canals, and you travel as it were in a dream. The canal-boat is the real vehicle from which to see Holland, and you will get a truer and more complete impression of the country of dykes, polders, canals, and windmills, from an afternoon's journey on a *trekshuit* or a *stoomboot* than from days of travelling from town to town in a railway car.

Naturally it strikes the traveller as exceedingly odd to find that the level of the country is just as often as not below the level of the navigable canals, while the whole country itself is intersected by a whole net-work of minor canals, into which or out of which there are innumerable little windmills constantly pumping water. And over this country there circulates a cool, fresh, moist air impregnated with that savoury odour of peat which is characteristic of Holland. The Hollanders have no coal, and the wood that they have has been raised painfully and planted with jealous care to consolidate the land conquered from marshes or from the sea. These trees are too precious to burn, and so the national fuel is fibrous earth, which gives a comfortable, homely smell to the towns and villages, suggestive of tea-brewing in brilliantly burnished utensils, and of cosy fires smouldering away in neatly brushed-up hearths. Every traveller will understand this matter of national odours; they tell one everything, the latitude, the distance from the pole or the equator, from the coal-mines or the aloes plant, the climate, the seasons, the habits, the history even of a country. Every land favoured by nature has its aromatic perfumes and its odoriferous smoke that speaks to the imagination. The smell of the peat smoke of Holland brings up to the mind the whole existence and history of the country of dykes, polders, and canals.

It may be said of the three principal Dutch towns, that at Rotterdam the Dutchman makes his fortune, at Amsterdam he consolidates it, and at the Hague he spends it. The Hague is one of the least Dutch of Dutch towns. It reminds one at once of Versailles, of the Parc Monceau at Paris, and of the West End of London. It has just enough local address to give it a peculiar charm, and just enough elegant cosmopolitanism to render it a European capital. At the Hague we find a native aristocracy, a foreign aristocracy, and imposing wealth established in conditions of ample and somewhat haughty luxury. The Hague is even a royal city, and it only wants a palace worthy of its rank in order to make all the traits of its physiognomy in harmony with its final destiny. You feel that its old stathouders were princes, that these princes were in their way Medicis, that they had a taste for the throne, that they ought to have reigned somewhere, and that it was not their fault that it was not here.

Thus the Hague is an exceedingly distinguished town, as it has a right to be, for it is very rich, and riches entail as a duty fine manners and opulence; it is correct and peaceable; its streets are broad and handsome; its houses substantial and brilliant with paint, varnish, and burnished brasses; the waters of its canals are green, and reflect only the bright verdure of their banks. The woods of the Hague are admirable. Born of the caprice of a prince, as its Dutch name, s'Gravenhaag—counts' park—indicates, formerly a hunting-seat of the Counts of Holland, the Hague has a passion for trees, and the forest is the favourite promenade of the inhabitants, the place where they hold their fêtes, their concerts, their military parades, and their rendezvous. The great domestic luxury of the Hague is an abundance of plants and flowers. The gardens, the houses, the verandahs, the windows are full of rare plants; on the lawns are noble animals grazing at liberty; for the Hague has inherited from the Nassau princes the taste for gardening, for forest promenades in sumptuous carriages, for menageries and other princely *fantaisies*. The architecture of the town reminds one of the French architecture of the seventeenth century. Its exotic luxury comes from Asia. Its practical comfort and solid homeliness reminds one so much of London that one can hardly say which town has served as a model for the other. In short, with its splendid promenades, its woods, its beautiful water-walks, its private mansions, its collections of pictures, its ancient palace where so much of the history of Holland has been made, the Hague

is a town to be seen, and a town which predisposes to calm and studious meditation. The lake in the centre of the town, the Vidjer, is a most original spot. Imagine an immense reservoir surrounded by quays and palaces. To the right is a promenade planted with trees, and, beyond the trees, mansions enclosed in their gardens; to the left is the Binnenhof, built in the thirteenth century, the residence of the stathouders, the scene of the massacre of Barneveldt. The palace walls are washed by the waters of the reservoir; its façade of red brick, its slate roofs, its morose air, its physiognomy of another age, its tragic souvenirs, give it that vague something which is peculiar to certain places famous in history. Beyond, in the distance, you see the cathedral spire; in the midst of the lake is a green island where the swans preen themselves; above in the air and around the irregular roofs of the palace are swarms of swallows. All around perfect silence reigns, profound repose, complete oblivion of things present and past.

At the southern angle of the reservoir is the Mauritshuis, where the royal collection of pictures is now hung. What a contrast and what a lesson are contained in these two neighbouring palaces! The Binnenhof is full of the memories of William the Silent, of the brothers De Witt, of Barneveldt, of Maurice of Nassau, of Heinsius, of the States-General, which for fifty years held out against Spain and England, and dictated conditions to Louis XIV. In the Mauritshuis are the masterworks of two painters, Rembrandt and Paul Potter. Every day some pilgrims from the four quarters of the world go and knock at the door of the museum; not half-a-dozen times in the year does a tourist disturb the solitude of the Binnenhof, or the Buitenhof, or derange the spiders in their dust-spinning operation in the historic chamber of the States-General. Why should there be so much curiosity felt about a picture and so little about the historic palace where great statesmen and great citizens struggled most heroically for their country, their religion, and their liberty? The fact is that the heroes of history do not always owe their lasting renown to their own acts. A nation disappears with its laws, its manners, its conquests; there remains of its history but a fragment of marble or bronze, and this testimony is enough. By his intelligence, his courage, his political sense, and his public acts, Pericles was a very great man; but perhaps humanity would not know even his name if it were not embalmed in literature, and if he had not employed a friend of his, a great sculptor, to decorate the temples of Athens. Alcibiades was frivolous, dissipated,

witty, foppish, libertine, though valiant when duty called him ; and yet he is more universally spoken of than Solon, Plato, Socrates, or Themistocles. Was he wiser or braver than they ? Did he serve better than they truth, justice, and the interests of his country ? No. He simply had the advantage of an immense charm ; he loved passionately all that was beautiful—women, books, statues, and pictures. Antony was an unfortunate general, a mediocre politician, a giddy ruler ; but he had the good fortune to love one of the most seductive women in history, that ‘rare Egyptian,’ as Shakespeare calls her, who was the incarnation of all beauty.

The ingenious James Howell, in one of his ‘*Epistolæ Hollandianæ*,’ remarks of the Dutch that their towns are beautiful and neatly built, but with such uniformity that who sees one sees all. The same observer remarks that the Hollander is slow, surly, and disrespectful of gentry and strangers, homely in his clothing, of very few words, and heavy in action. The Hollanders and their towns remain to-day very much the same as they were nearly three centuries ago when Howell wrote. The principal changes are that the national costume is no longer worn much except in the extreme north ; that the national head-dresses of the different provinces are rapidly falling out of use ; that there are railways all over the country and tramways all over the towns, even in such quiet places as Leyden and Utrecht, which the guide-books perversely describe as dead cities. Furthermore, Colman’s starch, Huntley and Palmer’s biscuits, Pears’s soap, Singer’s sewing machines, Stephens’s ink, English stationery, English cutlery, English children’s books, and Bass’s bitter pursue the traveller all over the Low Countries. Of Amsterdam I need say very little. Like Rotterdam, it is a city of quays and canals and brick façades, only it is more gloomy and dingy, and, as if the deepest red bricks were not dark enough, some of the Amsterdam houses are actually painted black. Built upon ninety islands, which are connected together by three hundred and fifty bridges, intersected by canals in every direction, Amsterdam is a sort of Northern Venice, a Venice enlarged and made ugly, and not particularly agreeable to explore in detail. But the first view of the town as you approach in the train is very striking even after having seen Rotterdam. You seem to have before you a veritable forest of windmills rising in the forms of towers, spires, pyramids, and cones, and agitating their colossal wings high above the housetops. Amid these

mills rise factory chimneys, spires of strange architecture, roofs, pinnacles and points of unknown forms, masts of ships, and beyond, other windmills fading away over the surrounding plains. The effect is grandiose and imposing. But for characteristic Dutchness, if I may so express myself, and quiet sleepy charm, I prefer Leyden and Utrecht, which towns travellers are generally advised not to visit because they contain few monuments, museums, or 'sights.' To my mind one of the great charms of Holland is that, apart from the incomparable picture galleries of Amsterdam, Haarlem, and the Hague, the country has no special sights; the chief pleasure of the traveller consists in taking in general impressions which are utterly new and strange, and he may visit almost any town in Holland without feeling himself in duty bound to examine any particular monument, church, or palace. Unlike their neighbours the Belgians, the Hollanders are not great in architecture. In all their towns you feel that the people were in a hurry to instal themselves on the mud they had conquered from sea or marsh, but, being concerned solely with their commerce, their labour, their individual and limited comfort, they never thought, even in their grandest days of prosperity, of building palaces. Ten minutes passed on the Grand Canal at Venice, and ten others passed on the Kalverstraat at Amsterdam, will tell you all that history has to teach about the genius of the two countries. In the land of Spinoza and Rembrandt, the windows of the houses taking up more space than the walls; the little balconies with their flower-pots, the spy-mirrors fixed on the windows, the careful neatness of the blinds and curtains, indicate that in this climate the winter is long, the sun unfaithful, the light sparing of its rays, and life of necessity sedentary; that open-air revelries are rare, and indoor joys lively; and that the eye, the mind, and the soul naturally contract in these conditions that form of patient, attentive, minute investigation, as it were with a screwing up of the eyes, which is common to all Dutch thinkers, from the metaphysicians down to the painters.

At Leyden I stayed a whole week without seeing a single sight. The country all around is more wooded than any other part of Holland, and Leyden itself is a perfect paradise. The canals there are beautiful beyond expression, and the water almost limpid and quite unlike the black fluid we had seen at Amsterdam and Rotterdam; the people are better-looking, especially the women and children, who appeared to spend much time in basking

in the sun and loafing in the beautiful public gardens of the city. The streets of Leyden are lined with fine shops brilliantly lighted up at night, and reflected in the tranquil waters of the canals. I may remark generally that the Dutch shops are all admirably illuminated and give a peculiar aspect to the streets at night, for this reason: the Dutch houses are narrow; the shop fronts, generally of plate glass, occupy the whole width of the ground floor; the upper part of the façade remains in gloom. The consequence is that when the shops are lighted up they form, as it were, one continuous band of light, which seems to support the houses. The dark upper stories represent old-fashioned Holland; the dazzling ground-floor represents the new life of fashion, luxury, and elegance. Thanks to this lavish burning of gas the Dutch towns are quite gay at night; the streets are full of promenaders, and in fact the evening is the busy part of the day for the shopkeepers. But what delighted me most at Leyden was the daylight aspect of the town, with its canals bordered with fine old trees and quaintly gabled houses, the innumerable bridges, the swans, the calm, the happy-looking people, the carillon of the cathedral, the gardens and water-walks. One could not desire a more delightful place for tranquil meditation, and as a university town it is almost as perfect as Oxford. But alas! the University of Leyden has fallen from its high estate, and only a few hundred students now tread the streets where thousands used to crowd to hear Lipsius, Vossius, Heinsius, Gronovius, Hemsterhuys, the great Julius Cæsar Scaliger, and other mighty doctors whose names are immortal in the annals of classical learning. Vanished, too, the house of those famous printers, the Elzevirs. In 1807 the whole quarter was destroyed by the explosion of a powder magazine, and with it the printing establishment of Jean Elzevir, 'so renowned throughout all Christendom for its fine characters,' as pompous old Percival says in his quaint volume, 'Les délices de la Hollande.'

Our stay at Leyden was rendered all the more agreeable by the excellent hospitality of the Hôtel du Lion d'Or, which must have been a palace in the old days of Leyden's prosperity. The entrance hall is very lofty; the front door is a massive and finely sculptured piece of eighteenth century *rocaille* work; the floor is of white marble veined with rose, and the walls are wainscoted some way up with the same marble; at the end of the hall opposite the dining-room door is a delicately carved marble *fontaine*

with a silver swan's-neck tap, where you may wash your fingers. The staircase, with its massive handrail of mahogany, was roofed over with an octagon lantern with small square pane windows, the lantern being decorated with *mascarons* and scrolls at the eight angles, while in the middle on the white ground was a dark blue dial with a gold finger and gold lettering. This dial was connected with the weathercock on the roof outside and indicated the direction of the wind. What could be more characteristic of an inclement northern climate, what more suggestive of a Dutchman's love of comfort than this interior weathercock indicator? The idea struck me as very sensible, and the mysterious and silent movement of the hand on the dial gave a pleasing animation to this stately staircase.

Quitting sleepy Leyden, with its souvenirs of ancient learning and ancient splendour, we made an excursion in an unpoetical steam tramway to Katwyk-an-Zee, a little seaside village much frequented by the Dutch, and within three-quarters of an hour's ride from Leyden. The journey is interesting. The steam tram rattles along through fields, between little canals, along village streets lined with trees cropped fan-shape, whose branches rustle against the windows. All these cottages are clean and excessively tidy, and each window is provided with that blue wire-gauze screen in a black frame which is one of the distinguishing features of window furniture throughout Holland. You pass the *château* of Endegeest, where Descartes wrote his principal philosophical and mathematical works; about half-way you come to a seminary of priests, whom you see clad like the characters in the pictures of the seventeenth century, smoking their cigars and pipes calmly in a garden gay with all kinds of flowers. Then gradually the country becomes less smiling, and you sight a belt of low irregular grey hillocks or sand dunes. The land grows more desolate and sandy, the rich green grass of the Dutch pastures yields place to wiry sand-squitch, and you see only here and there a sunken patch of potatoes or black oats growing some four or five feet below the level of the sand. Then deep down amidst the dunes, in a sort of ravine, there is a pond of black water and in the pond a green barge. This is the Leyden Canal boat, and here is the termination of the Leyden Canal, with which the Rhine has consented to amalgamate. What a piteous ending for the glorious stream that tumbles tumultuously over the rocks of Schaffhausen, passes triumphantly past Ehrenbreitstein, and

reflects in its long course princely castles, Gothic cathedrals, historical ruins, famous vineyards, and storied mountains! Can that poor little dingy stream flowing mildly between two flat and desolate banks be the Rhine that we have all heard celebrated in music and song?

Proceeding a little further on at a higher level we come to the village of Katwyk, whose streets are beautifully paved with red and yellow bricks, and lined with fishermen's cottages with gardens hedged around with many-coloured fragments of broken-up old boats. On this queer fencing the small nets are hung to dry, while the long nets used for herring-fishing may be seen darkening the slopes of the dunes with their black meshes. At the end of the village you find yourself on the summit of an immense dyke which runs away along the coast in either direction, and in front of you stretches the North Sea, grey, wrinkled, rough and desolate. At a short distance along the dyke you come to a black channel running into the sea at right angles, and banked in on either side by huge slabs of black granite, bordered with an edging of stakes and fascines to break up the waves. At the head of this canal, on a line with the dykes, whose continuity is uninterrupted at this spot, are four huge pillars of grey stone surmounted by a tremendous blank wall, built of cyclopean blocks of stone. Between the pillars are five sets of sluice gates. It is thanks to these sluice gates that the poor old Rhine finally gets into the sea; formerly it lost itself utterly in the swamps of Holland, and presented the strange phenomenon of a river without a mouth. Under the reign of Louis Bonaparte in 1807 the waters of the Rhine were collected in a canal and conducted to the sea by a series of locks and sluice gates which form the most grandiose monument in Holland and the most admirable piece of hydraulic engineering in Europe. The locks of Katwyk are three in number. The first has two pairs of sluice gates, the second four pairs, and the third nearest the sea five pairs. When the tide runs in the gates are closed to prevent the sea-water running into the lock, for the tide rises four mètres high up the gates and is often far above the level of the canal, and consequently of all the country protected by the dykes. When the tide runs out the gates are opened for five or six hours, and the water stored up in the three locks is let out at the rate of 3,000 cubic mètres a second. The dykes themselves

look like more or less regular earthworks of sand planted in diagonal lines with tufts of squitch grass.

A more desolate, cold, dreary, inhospitable spot than Katwyk after sunset or in the grey of the evening I never saw. The wild and tumultuous dunes that slope down inland beyond the dykes like monstrous petrified waves, the monotonous desolation of the sand-covered dykes, the roaring of the horrid sea, and that still black channel running up to the blankest and dimmest of walls against which, at high water, the waves dash and storm in vain—all this is profoundly desolate and profoundly impressive. Here, indeed, the Hollanders, in their calm and morose way, say to the sea, 'Thus far shalt thou come and no further!' And the North Sea has to confess itself conquered and leave the Hollanders to cultivate their tulips in peace, and to churn their butter in prosperity behind the enormous and wonderful fortress of the dykes and locks of Katwyk.

IN THE PIT OF A THEATRE.

DURING an enforced holiday, when the 'Sovereign people' in London and other cities wills it that business shall be laid aside between a Saturday and a Tuesday, it is no small rest to a busy man to find himself safe in his *sanctum* at home, and monarch of all he surveys, in the company of his truest friends—his old books. Amongst these old friends are many who have seen better days, as regards their outside covers, in the shape of old dramas, play-bills, operas, and other books pertaining to the stage; and it is not strange that my mind wanders back to the time when, as a boy, passing through London on my way to a public school, I was generally allowed one, and sometimes two nights in Town to 'go to the play.'

In country villages, people who had been to London and had gone to the play were 'somebodies' when they described the glories of a London theatre, and though there were amongst our rural population people who thought 'a "playhouse" a "pandemonium,"' still I observed that they listened attentively to the narrative of any bold explorer, who on his return was relating the wonders which he had seen, before they gave vent to their opinions against secular amusement. As a schoolboy, of course, if I went to the play, nothing would satisfy me but a seat in the dress circle, and going in full evening dress, and white kid gloves, and possibly scented—for the abomination called 'scent' was much used by young men and affected by boys many years ago. Not unlike Master Augustus Jones, who accompanied Mr. 'Spec' to the play and overflowed with delight on recognising 'Smith,' a schoolfellow, in the pit (for details whereof see Thackeray's 'A Night's Pleasure,') I was recognised by a schoolfellow who was sitting in the pit, but I tried not to catch his eye; so you see, if we all speak the truth, we cannot help admitting that in our passage through life we feel self-convicted of having been contaminated by puppydom and false pride.

It must have been nearer fifty than forty years ago that I first was introduced to the London theatres; and on coming to reside in London, after leaving school in 1842, it so happened that I boarded at a house, the owners of which were connected with the

theatrical profession, and I had the opportunity of learning what was the best thing to see or hear. I soon abandoned my grand ideas about the dress circle, evening costume, and white kid gloves, and learnt the lesson that the coat must be cut according to the cloth, and my experience was that, not only was the pit much cheaper than the boxes, but there were two other great advantages in going there: first, there was an absence of the nuisance of the opening and shutting of doors, and being disturbed by people coming late and chattering; and secondly, in the pit, those on all sides of you came to see and hear the performance and enjoy it, and by a general agreement the greatest order and silence were preserved, while there was a strong feeling of mutual respect between the actors and the pit audience.

London was half its present size before the railway days, money was much scarcer than now, and amusements which cost money were less frequently indulged in by young men who were learning a profession. And the birds of passage, in London to-day and gone to-morrow, were comparatively few.

There were no stalls, and people did not come to the pit for fashion's sake; and on Shakspeare nights a large number of the audience brought their books and ran over the coming scenes before each act. Whenever any celebrated passage was about to be delivered, there was a deep 'hush' amongst the old playgoers, who had been *habitués* perhaps for the last forty years, and it was interesting to watch their faces for expressions of approval or disapproval, as the case might be; if the former, when a thing was well done they almost exploded with delight; if on the contrary, there would be a suppressed sigh and half-uttered expression of reproach.

Many of the old school had seen Mrs. Siddons, John Kemble, Edmund Kean, and Miss O'Neil, and were very ready, when asked by youngsters who wished to learn, to give their experiences of the great actors and actresses of the past. Of course there were amongst them *laudatores temporis acti*, but the old critics on the whole were very fair, and kept before their eyes the fact that the performers were working for their bread, and if they did their best, any errors in the opinion of their judges in the pit were lightly passed over, provided there was not any suspicion of carelessness. If an actor or actress was not word-perfect, or altered the text in any way, it was a grave offence to the pit; and such things have been seen as an unsteadiness of gait or huskiness

of voice which told their own tale, but this was very seldom. I remember one very painful scene, when a singer came on to sing a time-honoured ballad which was anxiously waited for, and, staring vacantly at the house, he fairly winked, and then lurched against the scenery. The same thing had happened once before to the same actor, so it was not the first offence. There was a howl of execration, and cries of 'Put him to bed!' 'Put him under the pump!' No apology would be accepted.

The supper after the play was a great institution. Young men went pretty much to one of the singing places so graphically described by Thackeray under the names of the 'Cave of Harmony,' or 'The Back Kitchen;' but the Café de l'Europe, in the Haymarket, or the Albion, opposite to Drury Lane Theatre, were much frequented by the regular play-goers, as many actors came to one or the other after the performance; and though they kept pretty much to themselves, people liked to see them off the stage.

It was at such places as these that we met some of our old friends whom we sat near in the pit, and they would not be unwilling to continue their talk about the past days, and the celebrities in the days of their youth.

The prominent actors and actresses whom I saw when I was a boy and a young man, and whose names come to my mind, were Macready, Phelps, Charles Kemble, the Keans (Mr. and Mrs. Charles), Vandenhoff, Miss Vandenhoff, Madame Vestris, Mrs. Nisbet, Charles Mathews, Mrs. Warner, Miss Helen Faucit (Lady Martin), James Anderson, Miss Priscilla Horton (Mrs. Gernan Reed), Mrs. Glover, W. Farren (the most finished English gentleman as regarded perfect ease and lofty courtesy on the stage), James Wallack, the Keeleys, Buckstone, Bartley, Elton, Harley, Compton (an admirable Touchstone), Anderson, Terry, Walter Lacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews, Leigh Murray and Mrs. Leigh Murray, Ryder (who has just died in harness after fifty years' service), Mr. and Mrs. Yates, Benjamin Webster, O. Smith, Wright, Paul Bedford, Oxberry, Madame Céleste, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Miss Woolgar (Mrs. Alfred Mellon), not forgetting T. P. Cooke, R.N., the prince of stage sailors, and 'little Clark' as he was always called at the Haymarket, which is believed to have been his *only stage*.

One old public favourite deserves a special notice, for his life was very eventful, and a fair specimen of what used to be 'general

utility.' Those of the present generation saw him at the end of his performance when he was almost worn out, not *exactly* playing 'the buffoon,' but when (as he said himself) he had become 'very dicky on his pins,' because the old *habitués* of the Adelphi '*would* have Paul on' to look at him. I allude, of course, to Paul Bedford. Probably no man ever played so many parts. He was well educated and came from Bath, where he was articled to an auctioneer's firm of great eminence; but being stage-struck from witnessing Richardson's show, he first plunged into private theatricals, and when very young, after making his *début* at Swansea, was engaged at the Bath Theatre, which ranked in the early part of this century next to London.

Paul Bedford, when almost a youth, played Norfolk in 'Richard III.,' when Edmund Kean was starring in the West, and was taken up by and became a fast friend for life of the great tragedian. He had a rich and well-cultivated voice, and sang much at concerts, amongst others with Malibran, Catalani, and old Braham; took good parts in English operas under good managers; sang at churches, chapels, Vauxhall, and public dinners, and was equally at home in 'L' Elisir d'Amore' and 'The Crown Diamonds'; in 'Jolly Nose' in 'Jack Sheppard' and in the 'Gloria in Excelsis' in a Roman Catholic chapel; he played in melodrama, 'screaming farces,' and burlesques, and was the king of men at a Greenwich or Richmond dinner. He was recognised by every one in London, from a royal duke to a crossing-sweeper, and in his time had been well known to Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Daniel O'Connell (by the last two of whom he had been specially noticed), and to Louis Napoleon, afterwards Emperor of the French, Count d'Orsay and Lady Blessington's circle at Kensington Gore, and also to the dandies in London, old and young, lords and commons, military and civilian. He was genial, eccentric, good-natured, and never out of temper. Bedford and Wright, who was a foil to him—in fact, to use a vulgarism, they were 'chopping-blocks to each other'—were inseparables on the Adelphi stage; and Miss Woolgar, so to say, grew up on that stage under them, and was a kind of adopted daughter to both. The three acted so much together that their daily work became almost a relationship; the two actors were old stagers, and Miss Woolgar was a young girl beginning life. Wright was allowed the greatest liberties in 'gagging,' and such a thing has been witnessed as a personal appeal by Wright to the audience against

the rough conduct of Mr. Bedford to him in the farce, the tendering and acceptance of Mr. Bedford's apology, the applause of the audience at two such good fellows having shaken hands; numbers of the audience who came from the country thinking that the scene was real.

Paul Bedford was a fair specimen of a 'general utility' man; one who did a great many things which others could not, who amused at least three generations, and who laboured according to his lights in a kindly and humorous manner; though never within the meaning of the word 'an actor.'

In this article I am not alluding to the operatic and musical world, but to those who belong to what we called 'the play' in days gone by. The transpontine theatres were mostly given up to the nautical drama at the Surrey, 'cut-and-thrust and murder' at the Victoria (where the nobility and gentry of the Borough Road sat with their coats off in the boxes sometimes, and publicly eat 'whelks' with a pin, and whistled cheerfully to any friend they might recognise); and to horsemanship at Astley's.

Acting must in those days have been terribly hard work, for the performance went on from half-past six or seven till midnight, and there was a half-price at nine o'clock—now very wisely abolished—and those who came at half-price wanted a long spell for their money. I have seen Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris play through a whole evening at the Olympic (including the fairy extravaganza); and the Keeleys would do the same at the Lyceum. Acting was not mixed up much with tableaux, and processions, and dancing, as is the custom at some theatres of to-day, and the staff must have been sorely taxed to fill up the evening.

Charles Mathews, Keeley, Buckstone, Paul Bedford, and Wright were in their everyday characters precisely the same off the stage as on; there was something irresistibly comic in everything each of them said or did. The first named was possibly the most accomplished man in the profession, for he was a splendid linguist, and could play, draw, fence, dance, sing, and mimic anything or anybody; yet, curiously enough, he regretted throughout his life that he did not follow his profession as an architect.

In Macready's Reminiscences it is stated that the great tragedian did not follow his calling for love of it; and Mrs. Butler (*née* Fanny Kemble), in her Reminiscences says that she *hated* acting Shakspeare's characters, as she thought the plays were

intended for private study and reading, and ought *never* to have been put on the stage at all.

The Mrs. Glover of the past is represented by the Mrs. Stirling of the present, who is now filling such parts as the Nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet,' Mrs. Malaprop, &c., which characters can only be represented by some lady who has passed a lifetime on the boards; and it is a great pleasure to have seen them both and to write them down in one's mind as *æquales*. Accomplished ladies of this class hand down the traditions of the stage. It is always pleasant, when one meets any of the few remaining old favourites in the street, to take one's hat off in grateful respect for the amusement and instruction which we have received from them in our and their younger days.

Now let us look into old Drury Lane in the Macready days. Macready was notoriously one of the most violent tempered men in England, and in his Life it is recorded that he prayed earnestly to be delivered from his violent fits of passion. Macready was a scholar and a gentleman, and most conscientious in his endeavours to make the stage what it ought to be, a school of dramatic art to his audience. Naturally he had a very fine voice, susceptible of great modulation, especially in the representation of pathos. But, from an over-anxiety to make everything that he said reach every one of his audience, he had fallen into a painful habit of breaking up his sentences, which not only marred the rhythm of the verse he had to speak but gave a 'jerky' unevenness to his elocution that became at times irritating. Another drawback that he created for himself was this: he made the most horrible faces when his passions were roused, insomuch that I was once nearly put out of the theatre for bursting out laughing in 'King Lear,' when the mad king *shrieked* out, 'Look! look! a mouse,' and he made such a tremendous face and rolled his eyes in such a supernatural manner at so small an animal, in his imagination, that if it had been at the end of the world, I could not have kept my countenance. Nevertheless, on looking back I feel fully convinced that a Shakspearian performance at Macready's theatre gave one a great zest for reading and trying to understand Shakspeare.

There was great public sympathy with Macready in his management, because he made the hazardous experiment of trying to make the house pay its own expenses without the 'Saloon,' which used to be let at a very high price for the purpose of making

it a lounge for the least desirable company, and of selling the worst possible wine at the highest possible prices.

'Macbeth' was a great draw at Drury Lane, and Mrs. Warner often played Lady Macbeth. It was a favourite piece, as the music by Locke, and the witches and the general weirdness of the scenes, always have had a fascination for the British public. In the first 'Macbeth' I saw, Macready was Macbeth, Phelps was Macduff, Anderson Banquo, Elton was Rosse, and Mrs. Warner Lady Macbeth.

'As You Like It' was also popular, and perhaps the best adapted of all the plays for putting on the stage, and Macready's Jaques was a very fine study: the character fitted him exactly, and the music also was attractive. In the first performance of 'As You Like It' under Macready which I saw, Mrs. Nisbet was Rosalind: in the last 'As You Like It' I saw under Macready—and that was by Royal command—Anderson was Orlando, Helen Faucit was Rosalind, Keeley was Touchstone, and Mrs. Keeley was Awdry. I am not going to make out a list of performances from old play-bills, but I venture to remark here that it appears from memory and from record that there was in those days in London a sure supply of first-rate talent for tragedy and comedy; and well-known actors and actresses migrated from theatre to theatre as seasons ended and engagements closed, and whether there were special stars or not, at the first-class theatres the parts were well filled.

Phelps was a great deal with Macready, and was of the same high stamp, a scholar and a gentleman. His Iago played to Macready's Othello, with Helen Faucit as Desdemona, was a treat to see; and when Phelps took his benefit they reversed the parts, and Macready played Iago to Phelps' Othello. Phelps made a bold experiment and opened Sadler's Wells Theatre, which used to be a very second-rate suburban theatre, with Shakspeare. He 'lived down' the opposition of the 'roughs' in the gallery, and fairly educated his audience to understand the beauties of the greatest of dramatists. His Master Ford in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' was a masterpiece; so, too, was his Bottom in 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and he must be ranked amongst those who in a somewhat rough theatre promoted the interests of the drama most successfully.

And now, if you please, I must ask for 'hats off' to a lady—who was supposed to be a link between the days of the Siddons and the O'Neil school and her own day—whom I saw play 'The

Lady Constance' (as it was always called, though the text says 'Constance' only) in 'King John.'

Of course we youngsters only knew of Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neil by tradition, but we sat side by side with those who had seen both of the celebrated *tragédiennes*, and they admitted Miss Faucit's excellence—sometimes possibly with a little qualification, such as 'Oh, yes, sir, that is very good, but *the* Siddons and *the* O'Neil each of them raised her right arm in that exit, which "took her off" better.' I liked the Toryism of the old boys who stuck to the friends of their youth, whether they were right or wrong.

Sydney Smith said that Mrs. Siddons, when he met her at dinner, 'stabbed the potatoes, and called for a fork as she would for a dagger.' Well, times alter; counsel, who used to hold up both hands and appeal to heaven as Brougham did, would be nowhere now; while men who, under the guise of preaching used to fill a church by bringing to bear a white cambric pocket handkerchief, a diamond ring, and gesticulation—à la Charles Honyman—accompanied by brimstone threats, would in these days empty a cathedral.

Just so the rant and 'the wait' for the roar of the house, which was the custom in Mrs. Siddons' days, as our forefathers informed us, was out of fashion when Helen Faucit held the stage at Drury Lane.

I first saw that lady, then in or just out of her teens, as Constance in 'King John.' Macready was the King; Phelps was Hubert; Anderson was Faulconbridge; and little Miss Murray, I think, was Arthur, and played the part in *white kid gloves*!

Now King John was my favourite aversion in history; I always looked on him as a coward and a sneak, and I hated the horrible legend about Prince Arthur and the red-hot irons; the very story kept me awake of a night. So I went rather against the grain, but I wanted to see Helen Faucit.

Of course numbers of good-natured friends told me that I was wasting my time and money to go and see 'Helen Faucit go mad in white satin.' However, I went on my own account, not much liking the play, and I am bound to say that the first part fell rather flat. I had it on my mind that there would be 'alarums' and soldiers and armies in saucepans without handles for head-pieces; and having lived near a garrison town all my life I always had a contempt for stage 'supers' as substitutes for soldiers.

In the second act, directly Constance speaks for the first time—

Oh, take his mother's thanks, a widow's thanks,
Till your strong hand shall help to give him strength
To make a more requital to your love—

I felt in hearing Helen Faucit I was listening to something different to anything I had ever heard before.

Helen Faucit's personation of character was a gift. Indignation, irony, scorn, tenderness, affection, and sorrow were depicted by her in the most natural manner, and she had the advantage of a grand presence, great flexibility, clearness, and mellowness of voice, somewhat of a low pitch, but very distinct, with a passionate expression; anyone could see that she felt the part she played, whatever it was.

Her burst of indignation at the opening of the third act in 'King John'—

Gone to be married! Gone to swear a peace!
False blood to false blood joined! &c.

was very grand. Later on, when Arthur says, 'I *do* beseech thee, madam, be content,' and she replies—

If thou that bidst me be content were grim,
Ugly, and slanderous to thy mother's womb,
Full of unpleasing blots and sightless stains,
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious,
Patched with foul moles, and eye-offending marks,
I would *not* care; I then would be content,
For then I should not love thee; no, nor thou
Become thy great birth, nor deserve a crown;
But thou art fair—and at thy birth, dear boy,
Nature and fortune joined to make thee great—&c.

the wonderful tenderness and pathos and change of voice and manner at the words 'But thou art fair,' &c., were very effective.

In the same scene, when she refuses to go with Salisbury to the Kings of France and England, and Salisbury says—

Pardon me, madam,
I may not go without you to the kings,

Helen Faucit, without any ranting, turned on Salisbury with withering scorn—

Thou may'st, thou shalt, I will *not* go with thee,
I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
For grief is proud and makes his owner stout, &c.

and I call to mind the stately way in which she seemed gradually to sink into the ground—never taking her eyes off Salisbury—

with a kind of long sweeping curtsey, and never dropping her voice until her body rested on the stage, and the mournful cadence of the words—

Here I and sorrow sit ;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.

And I can hear also in imagination the taunting sarcasm to Austria—

Thou wear a lion's hide ! Doff it for shame,
And hang a calf's skin on thy recreant limbs ;

and then again the prayerful appeal to the Cardinal,

And, Father Cardinal, I have heard thee say
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven ;
If that be true I shall see my son again.

The scene before the final exit of Constance, commencing with—

Constance. He talks to me that never had a son.
King Philip. You are as fond of grief as of your son.
Constance. Grief fills the room up of my absent child—
Lies in his bed—walks up and down with me—
Puts on his pretty looks—repeats his words—&c.,

was very memorable ; and when Helen Faucit tore off her head-dress, exclaiming—

I will not keep this form upon my head
When there is such disorder in my wit !

crazed with grief, she concluded with the agonizing cry—

Oh Lord ! my boy ! my Arthur ; my fair son !
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world,
My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure ! (*Exit.*)

This made a grand exit, and I was glad that Helen Faucit's part ended there, for the nerves may get overstrung, when the whole thing to the mind was a reality : it was not an actress that spoke, but a deeply wronged and cruelly treated mother—just as Shakspeare meant it.

I saw Helen Faucit in very many of her characters, but her Lady Constance was my beau-ideal of a tragic actress, and I thought she could not equal it until I saw her in 'The Lady of Lyons,' some time afterwards.

Now, it is high treason to say so, but the play itself does *not* display much amiability among the characters. Old Damas, the tough old soldier, is the *only* unselfish, honest-spoken character in the piece. All the other people are scheming and lying and deceiving, worshipping money and rank, and planning revenge

and ill-nature. Pauline is a frivolous, empty-headed girl; and her rhapsody of fervid love, in answer to Claude Melnotte's suggestion that if he *had* been the gardener's son she would not love him, is worth nothing, because she believes that he is a prince all the time.

There is not a scintilla of evidence that she cared for him any more than a London beauty in her first season would be believed by her mother, in her heart of hearts, if her daughter suddenly told her that a Duke had proposed to her and that she *must* die if she did not marry him.

It is all a pretty picture, and a good stage story for effect; but the first time that we really sympathise with her fate is when Pauline breaks out with the natural burst of indignation—

This is thy palace! where the perfumed light
Steals through the mist of alabaster lamps, &c.

That passage took the house by storm, and if Pauline had been Jezebel herself we would have fought for her—it was so grand and majestic in delivery, and she had been so brutally wronged.

Then the lover preaches a sermon on love, and tells his story, and she 'tones herself down' to him off-hand. This kind of thing may be *art* quà the stage, but it is not nature.

We are up and down like buckets in a well, and are relieved at last when Melnotte has done preaching and comes forward to take Pauline's hand; and then the actress takes the weight off our minds. Without any artificial stage effect, but shrinking from the man as any one would from a noisome reptile, Helen Faucit let word by word drop in a tone of settled despair and contempt—

No—touch me not!
I know my fate; you are by law my tyrant.
And I—oh Heaven!—a peasant's wife. I'll work,
Toil, drudge—do what you will—but *touch* me not!
Let my wrongs make me sacred.

Nothing could surpass the acting of Helen Faucit throughout the fourth act, when she is persecuted and jeered at by Beau-séant, or the effectiveness of the scene when in Melnotte's absence she crushes Beau-séant, her persecutor, with her indignant reply—

A husband's roof, however humble, in the eyes of God and man, is the temple of a wife's honour.

The situation was startling and the sentiment noble; but,

unfortunately for its reality, we must give Pauline credit, according to the text of the play, for using it out of disgust towards Beauséant, and not out of regard to her husband's roof, as, a minute or two before, Pauline, in her soliloquy, says—

If he were but a poor gentleman, or even a merchant—but a gardener's son!—and *such* a home! Ah, no!—it is *too* dreadful.

All Melnotte's fine speeches and quasi-penitence come when the man is 'cornered' and disgraced, and is the object of general detestation; somehow there is little interest in his character.

Throughout the last act, when Pauline is about to be sacrificed to Beauséant to save her father's fortune, and Melnotte, as Colonel Morier, under a feigned name, is talking to her about the absent Melnotte (as she supposes), Helen Faucit's acting was very fine; and after two years and a half one has a right to suppose that she would prefer Melnotte to Beauséant, a man whom she hated and despised; when the *dénouement* came, and Morier turns out to be her own husband, her surprise and joy were so real and natural that one would imagine it to be like what anyone would be at coming back from the dead. The acting was a great triumph, without exaggeration. The drawback to the play is that Melnotte is rather a bore and preaches too much; as even at the end, when he has a great deal to repent of in reality for all the misery he has caused, he gives himself rather a good character than otherwise—like Zacchæus extolling himself from the sycamore-tree—and walks off with the honours of war. There can be no doubt that Helen Faucit made the success of 'The Lady of Lyons' by her creation of a very difficult character; and the great compliment to such creation is that the ambition of every new star on the stage is to play Pauline to a London audience (who are very particular about the old traditions), and many have made the attempt with varied results.

I am bound to say that I never saw a Claude Melnotte—that is, any one who could look and play the part of a love-sick peasant. I saw Macready when middle-aged, also Anderson, and G. V. Brooke; and not one of them came up to the ideal Claude Melnotte; it requires a young man and a very finished actor. Perhaps there may be Claude Melnottes now, and Paulines too, but I left off with Helen Faucit's Pauline, and I like the green spot on my memory which has been left by her splendid acting to remain

there. There was no secret about the cause of Helen Faucit's success. Her very soul was in her art, and she made her audience feel the reality of the scene she was representing just as Grisi did in *Lucrezia Borgia*.

Madame Vestris possibly was a woman of the finest taste in her stage arrangements of her time, and one of the most charming actresses and singers. Nothing came amiss to her; she was quite at home in Shakspeare, light comedy, farce, as a 'Buy a broom' girl, or Scotch fishwife, or a waiting-woman, and her singing was very charming. Her 'little Olympic,' as it was called, was what would now be styled 'a bijou theatre.' Economy was *not* her forte. Her entertainment at the Olympic consisted mostly of light, sparkling pieces, and a fairy story at Christmas. Her Covent Garden management was very unfortunate, and involved both her and Charles Mathews in heavy pecuniary difficulty.

Mrs. Nisbet again was a universal popular favourite. She sparkled all over with brilliant wit and humour, and she liked to have a part where her laugh could be heard before coming on. It is doubtful whether her Mrs. Ford or Rosalind was her best Shakspeare character, but she was admirable in both, while her Lady Gay Spanker in 'London Assurance,' her Miss Hardcastle in 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and her Constance in the 'Love Chase,' were perfection.

The Keeleys had a great time of it at the Lyceum, and brought out a number of Planché's fairy stories at Christmas, and they always had a good company. 'To Parents and Guardians' was a piece which had a long run, and it was in that that Alfred Wigan made a great hit as a poor French usher in a school of which Mrs. Keeley as a boy, Bob Nettles, was champion.

When the Shakspearian drama had nearly died out in London the Keans, some few years later on, took the Princess's for the reproduction of the 'legitimate drama.' They were supported by the first people in London society, and antiquaries and savants conspired to have the plays mounted *secundum artem*.

'Richard II.,' with a very good reproduction of Old London, very much in the style lately exhibited at the Fisheries, was a great draw. Amongst other plays, some of the old stock pieces of the Kemble and Siddons days, such as 'The Gamester' and 'The Stranger,' appeared again, but it was clear that the British public was not much enamoured of either, as these plays belonged to the days when Dr. Watts' hymns formed the only 'pathway of

safety' to young sinners, and vice and virtue had to be painted in very strong colours.

There was a mannerism about Charles Kean which many people could not tolerate at any price, and of course there was a 'Kean' and 'Anti-Kean' party; but impartial people should take a broad view of things when judging a manager, and should consider whether he is doing all he can within his means to promote the pure drama. Money, of course, is the main object in opening a theatre, but it must never be forgotten that in the theatrical profession there was, and is, a great deal of honest pride, and, in promoting their own interests, managers were, and are, delighted to find their audiences and public opinion with them.

It would be ungrateful to omit all notice of the 'old Adelphi'—the home of melodrama and screaming farce; and where, when a boy, I saw Rice—

Turn about, wheel about, and do just so;
Every time I turn about I jump Jim Crow—

in a kind of patter song and dance, which introduced all imaginable eccentricities, and which were the forerunners of minstrel melody and of great fun and laughter, aye! and of tears, too, for 'Lucy Neal' and 'Mary Blane,' before the abolition of slavery, caused many a moist eye.

The world has changed immensely during the last forty or fifty years. We travel by express; talk—and for our sins quarrel too—with all the world by telegraph; we are living two days to our forefathers' one now; we cannot stand the solid beef and pudding, and beer and sherry, and strong port after dinner, and five act plays, and a pantomime to follow, with oysters and porter, and cold beef and salad and bottled stout, and punch and tobacco on the top of the lot, as our forefathers did, and as we used to do, once in a way. No—our manners and customs have changed; we like a light dinner and light wines, a good entertainment to amuse us, and not too much of it.

Our old-fashioned clown and pantaloon, and the conventional sausages, and goose, and red-hot poker are giving way to 'semi-political,' 'semi-society' pieces, called the 'sacred lamp of Burlesque,' supported by singing, dancing, grand spectacles, and grotesque fun and humour at very high prices. Stalls have usurped the places of private boxes, and the world goes its own way, and pays what it pleases for what it has, and no one has a right to

complain if the public get what they want ; and if the stage gives a living to more people so much the better.

It is childish to compare the past with the present, but the pleasures of memory are very grateful and very harmless. No doubt the Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble school would be quite out of place now, as it would have been in the days of which I write ; but we have reason to believe that could Edmund Kean come back as he was when he made his *début* as Shylock, he would have delighted and surprised us still. Belonging myself to a school who sit mostly at home, I do not often see modern performances of any kind ; but when I do I make a note of them, and I vote cordially with those who maintain that dramatic art belongs to this age as much as to any other, according to the peculiar style and fashion of the present time.

I am as ready to take up the cudgels for the creators of such characters as 'Lord Dundreary,' or 'The Buttermilk,' or 'Galatea,' or 'Polly Eccles,' or 'Sam Gerridge,' as I am for actors and actresses and the plays of days gone by.

The stage is to the public a *table d'hôte* which people may dine at or not ; the banquet is spread nightly, and those who wish to sit down may do so, and those who do *not* so wish may pass it by.

FIREWORKS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

IN the year—upon my word, I forget the precise date—and when I consider, the date is unimportant. The facts I am about to relate are historical, but are not of historical importance. I was at Ghent with my wife, staying at the Hôtel du Panier d'Or. We had difficulty in obtaining rooms, because at that very time the London Volunteers had been invited over, and were being fêted by the town. This will fix the date for any one curious to know it. The town swarmed with English Volunteers in their various uniforms, and in various stages of tipsiness. The Ghent folk were very hospitable, they fed them, liquored them with horrible *bierre de Diest*, more horrible *Faro*, and, most horrible of all, black *Louvaine* ale. In the evening, to their honour, the town provided a firework exhibition.

At *table d'hôte* that day I sat beside an American lady on my left, and my dear little wife on my right. I say 'little' not merely as an expression of tenderness, in case this should meet her eye, but because she is small of stature. Being small of stature, her head is, naturally, small also; and the head being small, also naturally, the brain is not, cannot be, other than small. I would not for the world say anything disrespectful of my wife, but I cannot see that there is anything disrespectful in the statement of a truth, and in giving a logical, intelligible reason for its being truth. Besides, picture to yourself a little woman with a big mind, you picture to yourself a monster, a thing to be hung in spirits of wine in a bottle in an anatomical museum, not a thing to meet in the streets, associate with in daily life, take to your bosom.

A little mind has its disadvantages, it looks about it in a little way, has a narrow horizon, has little whims, little spites, little taste.

I am writing my story now in the hope that my wife's little mind may yield to the pressure of public opinion, and accept my statement of a fact, which she absolutely refuses to believe from my lips, and which has troubled our married life ever since that visit to Ghent. Little minds are prone to accept the general, vulgar view of things, and I hope by these pages to form a popular

opinion which will so enclose her, and impress her, that she will yield her own distorted conviction, and so peace may be established between us.

I have headed my paper, 'Fireworks at Home and Abroad,' but to be accurate I should have inverted the order, and written 'Abroad and at Home,' but this does not sound so well. Repeat to yourself rapidly three or four times 'at home and abroad,' and then say 'abroad and at home,' and you will perceive there is a flow, a music, a rhythm, in the latter, which fails wholly in the first. For euphony I have headed my paper as it stands, but let these few words of explanation suffice to make you understand that the logical, chronological, historical sequence is 'abroad and at home.'

All this while I have neglected the little American lady on my left. She in no way deserved this neglect. She was a lively, agreeable, pretty young person, with sallow complexion, bright hazel eyes, dark hair, and the most charming mouth and nose I ever saw.

Add to this, perfect self-possession, a ready wit, shrewd observation, and a copious flow of agreeable conversation, and you may suppose that I had a pleasant *table d'hôte* dinner. The dinner would have been absolutely delightful, but that my dear wife on the right of me has an unhappy habit of becoming jealous and getting out of temper whenever I talk to another lady.

I did my best to draw my wife into the conversation. I appealed to her now and then, asked her questions, repeated to her remarks of my left-hand neighbour that struck me as being specially clever, but to no purpose; my wife answered with curtneſs, and received the remarks retailed with indifference.

When dinner was over my wife rose, and, without a bow to the American lady, left the room. I remained behind to smoke a cigar. When I had done my cigar, I went upstairs to ask my dear partner on life's journey to come with me a stroll to see the sights, Van Eyck's 'Adam and Eve,' the Town Hall, and so on.

I found her sitting at the window, looking out across the square with vacancy in her eye, her chin resting on the palm of her hand, and her elbow on the window-ledge. She replied to my invitation that she had seen sights (emphasising *sights*) enough for that day, and that if I wanted to go out, I could no doubt find more agreeable companions than herself to go with me.

I was not at all put out; I made her a pretty speech to the effect that of all companions only one was perfectly agreeable to me, and that was herself. Then she turned round at me sternly, and said, 'Hollow, hollow, hollow.' She meant that my words were void of reality. So they were, I admit, because she could and did at times make herself so disagreeable that I had rather be anywhere (except in one of the Ghent canals, which are disgusting) than with her. When, however, she tries to be pleasant, I would rather walk with her than with—Mr. Gladstone, or Lord Randolph Churchill, or both together, one on each arm.

So I went out by myself, and looked at Van Eyck's 'Adam and Eve.' I cannot say that the great master impressed me much, nor did his subject inspire me with lively thoughts. I considered that his Adam had a cowed look, and in Eve's eye was a twinkle of despotic power. I thought how much better it would have been for all of us if Adam had taken the bull by the horns—I mean, Eve by the scruff of the neck, kicked her out of the garden, and pitched the apple after her, taking care to hit her in the small of the back to accelerate her movements. Then he could have smoked all day in the sun, and taken off his collar, when hot, and put his feet on the mantlepiece, and put his hands in his pockets, and done a thousand things which a married man can't do, he is so screwed up by his wife.

When I came home, I persuaded my dear partner to descend and have some tea. A woman never declines the offer of a cup of tea; so we went to the coffee-room, and I ordered that favourite beverage. Presently the waiter appeared with cups of thick white crockery and two white pots, one containing hot milk, the other tea.

My wife made a remonstrance at the hot milk, and cried out with disgust and dismay at the liquid poured out as tea. The smell it emitted was that of a druggist's shop. We examined the pot, and fished out the leaves that were soaking in it; they were the flowers of the lime-tree, and not tea-leaves.

My wife retired to her room in no very amiable mood, and seated herself at the window again. I took my place at the other window. The evening had closed in, but the square offered a moving picture to our eyes of Belgians in and out of uniform, women in black cloaks and white caps, and English Volunteers.

It was dull work, sitting at the window, in spite of the animation of the scene, for my wife's mood oppressed me. Every

remark I addressed to her fell flat. She maintained her position, chin in hand, but apparently took no interest in what passed before her eyes. I got up and walked round the room, lit a candle and studied the pictures, then took up a Tauchnitz edition of a recent novel, and tried to read, but gave it up after four pages, and went back to the window. I sat there another space, perhaps for ten minutes, and then, unable to endure the monotony, I rose and said, 'Emily, darling pet, I think I will go out and see the fireworks. Give me a kiss before I go.'

'You must deserve a kiss, and till you do—I reserve them,' she said. 'Even now, I know why you spring up with such impatience to go after the fireworks.'

'Exactly, my golden honey! I am eager after the fireworks.'

'Golden fiddlesticks!' said she contemptuously. 'The young American hussy has just stepped out of the hotel door.'

'Indeed! I did not observe her. I won't go if you don't like.'

'You did not ask *me* to go with you. You didn't think it possible that *I*, your wife, might like to see fireworks as well as yourself.'

'My precious! My Bird of Paradise!' I exclaimed enthusiastically, 'will you come with me? I shall be only too happy to take you to the fireworks.'

'I will put on my bonnet,' she said coldly. 'You see I am obliged to force myself upon you. I should see nothing unless I insisted upon being taken out. You are greedy to see everything yourself, Adams and Eves, town halls, churches, fireworks—but I am begrudged everything. I do not suppose we shall have to pay to see the fireworks, so I cannot see why you should wish to cut me out of the pleasure, unless, indeed, you want to take the American lady. Nice story that! you a married man, a respectable man of middle age, a solicitor in good practice, capering about in the dark, in a foreign town, with a ballet-dancer from a New York theatre on your arm.'

'Emily! How can you? She is a Penn of Fourth Avenue, New York, one of the best families in the States, descended from the founder of Pennsylvania. Besides, they are Quakers—or,' I hesitated, 'were.'

'And pray how did you find out her name? Did you ask her name and address, so as to begin a correspondence?'

'Not at all; I saw it in the visitors' book.'

'You were so eager to know who she was, that you had no rest till you had poked through the visitors' book and found it.'

'I beg your pardon, Peerless Pearl! The visitors' book was brought by the *garçon* for me to enter our names, and her name was the last inscribed; I added mine.'

'Your memory is uncommonly good when you want to remember something. Other things you forget fast enough. Only last month I asked you to remember the name of the milliner recommended by Mrs. Buchanan, and you forgot it.'

'If you are ready, Costliest Treasure! we will go out.'

'You want to cut short a conversation which is becoming unpleasant to you.' Then after a pause, 'I have touched a raw.'

'My Dearest Delight! when you flick at me on all sides and at all times, there is a tendency in me to become raw all over.'

We went out.

'Take my arm, sweetest Emily,' I said.

'No, I won't,' she answered curtly.

'Then keep close by me, Golden Heart!' I said, 'lest we be separated in the crowd.'

'Separated!' she echoed, 'you are going the right way to get separated from me.'

'I am going to the Grand Canal,' I answered, purposely misunderstanding her. 'The performance is to take place on the canal; the fireworks will be discharged from barges that will be punted along.'

We made our way to the quay opposite the church of St. Michel, the apse of which rose out of the water. Beside the church was a lofty building with stepped gables, and many rows of windows; I presume it was an orphanage, as the windows were crowded with children's heads. The quay was lined by a dense throng. The night was dark, there was no moon, clouds overcast the sky and cut off the twinkling light of the stars. Below were no gas-lights, at least where we were. But then—so much the better for seeing the fireworks.

'For goodness sake, Emily,' said I, 'keep close to me, and whatever you do, don't allow yourself to be forced by the crowd over the edge into the canal.'

'I do not suppose you would be sorry if I did go over. It would leave you free—then.'

'I should go distracted.'

'You would not even jump in to save me.'

‘Emily! I love you so passionately, that to save you I would; but I would jump into a Ghent canal for no one in the world else—not even the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Do keep close to me.’

The crowd was densely packed; it swayed to and fro. Now and then a desperate man who could see nothing forced his way to the front with an oath, or a woman elbowed herself a path, working her elbows like the fins of a fish. At one time there was a hubbub and cry for the police, as three British Volunteers, linked together like the Graces—I mean as to their linking, not their personal appearance—drove a way for themselves by solid impetus over the toes and into the backs of a party of women, and upset a bench on which some ladies were standing, and all but precipitated some children into the canal. The crowd was like india-rubber, it contracted and then expanded again; but there is a limit beyond which contraction is impossible, and when an attempt such as that of the three Volunteers is made to force themselves into a vantage-point in a throng compacted and condensed as close as it can go, it results in some of the feeblest and smallest falling under foot, or being thrust over the edge. In that squeeze I was so crushed that I felt the brass buttons at the back of an officer in uniform in front of me grate against my spinal column—fortunately but for a moment, and then I became again aware that I had a stomach between my vertebræ and the buttons in front of me, with the arms of Belgium on them.

Alarmed lest my little wife should have sunk and been trampled on, I turned my head and said, looking down into a dark, stuffy mass of well-wedged-together human body and cloth, ‘Is that you?’

From out of this dense mass of cloth and humanity issued a feeble response, ‘Yes.’

‘Mind you keep close to me,’ I said.

‘Yes,’ was the reply.

‘Hold me,’ I said again; ‘I cannot give you my arm, I am too closely plugged into this living mass; but cling to my coat lapet.’

‘Yes,’ she answered.

I sighed. ‘Curt still,’ I said to myself. ‘When will she become diffusive again?’

Unfortunately my wife knows how to deal with me. If she keeps up this short cold manner for a day, or a day and a half,

I become as pliable as greased leather. Unfortunately, however, she does not perceive when I am pliable, and persists when the need for persistence is past.

All at once the crowd thrilled with excitement, and buzzed with expectation; round a bend in the canal came a glow of light. All those about me stood on tiptoe. Now, had some only stood on tiptoe, they would have seen over the heads of the others, but when all went up in a mass three inches, the result was that none saw better than before, and tired their toes greatly. I am not a tall man, but, fortunately, before me were some Belgian soldiers, and these are always very little men, consequently I was able to see a raft descend on which was seated a noble female figure, crowned with walls, dressed in the colours of the city arms, seated on a throne from which issued crystal streams of illuminated glass. Around this figure stood halbardiers in mediæval costume, and pages who held Bengal lights. The figure represented the City of Ghent, and the crystal streams—the dirty stinking canals, highly idealised. In her hand she held a shining laurel wreath, and before her bent a British Volunteer with his hand to his heart, in the uniform of the City of London corps. A band seated in front of the barge or raft played ‘Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves,’ but I could not make out whether this was meant as a delicate compliment to the British, or whether the Belgians have adopted our tune and wedded it to words significative of the regency of Ghent over the canals, as they have adopted Waterloo as a grand Belgian victory.

The church of St. Michel, and the great convent or orphanage opposite, were illumined by the Bengal fires, and the people cheered with delight. The sight was pretty, and when the barge had slowly slidden out of sight, I turned to my dear companion, and throwing my voice down into the indistinguishable mass at my side, I said, ‘That was really very pretty, was it not?’

‘I can see nothing,’ was the plaintive reply.

Then an idea struck me, an idea more brilliant than the brightest of those Bengal fires. I would take my darling Emily upon my shoulder, and hold her so that she should see everything over the heads of the people.

‘Look here, little woman,’ said I, ‘can you manage, if I stoop, to work your way up on my arm? Then I daresay you can manage to plant yourself on my shoulder. Put your arm round my neck, and you will see better than any one else.’

‘Thank you—delighted!’

Hah! The first token of relaxation. Emily was about to become amiable again. My move promised rich success.

I bent down, and with alacrity she was up and perched comfortably on me with her hand grasping the collar of my great coat.

What a storm I raised among those behind! Such remonstrances, objurgations, threats; but as they were all in Flemish I did not understand them, and for the sake of a reconciliation with Emily, I would have braved them had they been in German.

One wretched Belgian managed to get his umbrella in position to dig the handle into my back, in revenge for my blocking his view with Emily. I bore the pains cheerfully for her. Then he kicked at my heels. I did not, I could not remonstrate. I could not because I was bent so low under my precious burden that my voice was muffled, and my head was held so tight that I could not turn it.

Presently I heard an explosion of rockets, and saw a blaze of light penetrate even to me, now bowed into the mass of hot, steaming, very black humanity. I tried to look up and see Emily’s face, but found it quite impossible.

How heavy she was! I had no idea that dear little wife of mine weighed so much. I had put my arm round her feet to keep her firm; and, indeed, she sat most comfortably, securely, and composedly on my shoulder, without consciousness of the greatness of my sufferings below.

Chief among these sufferings was the absence of fresh air. Little whiffs came to me from the canal, from among the feet of the crowd, but that, of course, was not fresh by any means. Then the Belgians, judging from my experiences that night, are not a clean people. I was inhaling at every inspiration an atmosphere that reminded me of a rabbit hutch that has been neglected for a week.

My back began to ache, and the pain in it resembled at last acute lumbago. I am not accustomed to bear heavy burdens, and my spine almost gave way and took a curvilinear shape. Then the muscles of my shoulders suffered as when one wears a knapsack for the first time. Now, a knapsack is painful for the first day; judge the torture of a solid woman on the shoulder!

Oh, how hot I became! The perspiration streamed off me; pain, want of air, the vitiated atmosphere that entered my lungs, combined to dissolve me. The water dripped from my face.

I could not put up my right hand to wipe it away, so I wiped it against the uniform of the Belgian officer before me.

I thought the procession of rafts and fireworks would never come to an end. I saw nothing but light above me, and little speckles around me where it could penetrate among the interstices of the human beings on the quay. It was like moonlight in a dense forest.

My knees shivered, a convulsive shaking took possession of the muscles. I could not prevent it. I sighed, I groaned. A sick faint sensation came over me. I felt that if this continued five minutes longer I should give way.

Then I heard a shout of applause, and saw a red glare.

The little woman aloft patted my shoulder impatiently and said, 'You must see this!' With a frantic superhuman effort I reared myself up, straightened my vertebral column, and raised my head.

Vesuvius was passing on a barge. A mountain with little gnomes in red and black around, and old Vulcan hammering on his forge within; visible through an opening in the side. When he smote with his hammer, a discharge of crackers and fire balls issued from the crater, and then with a roar he plied his bellows, and red fires leaped up and illumined the grand, quaint old houses on the canal side.

At that moment, however, and by that light, I saw the face of her I carried aloft. I had the little American lady on my shoulder, and separated from me by a great butcher was my Emily, her eyes on me, and I felt that an explosion worse than that of Vesuvius awaited me at home.

I remember nothing more. Whether I dropped the American girl into the canal or into the crowd, I do not know.

Since that night, I never go abroad to see fireworks. If I go abroad it is to escape them—the fireworks at home.

THE AUTOMATON CHESS-PLAYER.

SEVERAL years ago an automaton chess-player was exhibited at the Crystal Palace for some time. But the Turk was not a player *de la première force*, for the writer, although not boasting any particular proficiency in the game, won with ease the only *partie* he contested with him. The mechanism, too, of the android was decidedly inferior to the one invented by Von Kempelen about the middle of the eighteenth century. In fact, in the case of the automaton at Sydenham, it was tolerably obvious in what part of the figure the chess-player was concealed who conducted the games.

The original automaton, on the other hand, was not only seldom beaten, but so remarkable was the ingenuity displayed in its construction that notwithstanding many attempts from time to time were made to find out the principle of its mechanism, not one of the explanations offered of the puzzle proved to be the correct one. Indeed, the secret was so well kept that it was not until the automaton had been in existence for upwards of half a century that a solution of the problem was given to the public. In 1834, however, one Mouret, a skilful chess-player who some years previously had been in the employment of the proprietor of the exhibition, sold the 'secret of his prison house.' On information furnished by him was based an article entitled 'Automate Joueur d'Échecs' in the *Magazin Pittoresque* for 1834. In that contribution a full description of the mechanism of the android was given.

It does not come within the scope of this paper to reproduce that statement *in extenso* here, the object of the writer being, primarily, to furnish a brief account of the career of the automaton and to give some anecdotes connected with its adventures in various countries. But before doing this, it will not be altogether superfluous to furnish some particulars with respect to the inventor of the android, and to describe briefly the ingenious and successful attempts made by him to prevent any discovery of the place of concealment of the person who directed the moves of the Turk.

Wolffeng, Baron von Kempelen, the inventor of the automaton, was born in Hungary about the year 1723. He was an Aulic Councillor of the Royal Chamber of the Hungarian States; a man of extraordinary mechanical ability, a good naturalist, and an

excellent artist. In 1769, when at Vienna on official business, he, during his intervals of leisure, constructed the mechanical chess-player which was destined to render him famous.

The automaton consisted of a chest or box, upon which was seated the figure of a Turk. The chest was three feet and a-half long, two feet broad, and two and a-half feet high, placed on casters, which enabled the exhibitor to move it occasionally from one part of an apartment to another. The object of this arrangement was to show to the spectators that no trap-door communicated with the chest. The left arm of the Turk was hollow, and through it a wire ran which communicated with the interior of the chest, where, by means of a lever, the operator concealed within it was enabled to give every desired motion to the arm, hand, and fingers of the figure.

The chest was divided into two compartments above and a drawer beneath. In the smaller of the two compartments, occupying about the third of the longitudinal dimensions of the chest, were placed a number of pieces of brass, made very thin, and designed only for the purpose of misleading the spectators, for they were no part of the machinery by which the moves of the game were effected. In the other compartment were also similar pieces of brass, representing quadrants and other philosophical instruments, intended, as in the previous instance, to give the impression that they conduced to the working of the automaton. The two compartments communicated with each other by means of a sliding panel, but so carefully was it contrived that the partition had the appearance of being immovable. The drawer, which when drawn out seemed to be the entire horizontal dimensions of the chest, was deceptive, as it was so constructed that it could not be pressed back more than a foot and a half, whilst by a species of telescopic arrangement of the sides of the drawer, it had, when pulled out, the appearance of being quite two feet six inches in depth. Behind this movable back of the drawer there was consequently an unoccupied space left which extended the whole length of the chest, and was more than a foot in breadth.

At the commencement of the exhibition, on every occasion, the operator of the automaton sat behind the mock machinery of the smaller of the two upper compartments of the chest, his legs occupying the hidden portion of the drawer. Then the front doors of both apartments were opened at the same time; a lighted candle was placed *in* the larger one, so that it could be distinctly seen

that the space not occupied by the quadrants and other instruments was vacant. Another candle was placed, not *in*, but *in front* of, the other apartment, which was apparently completely filled with machinery. Next, after closing the doors the exhibitor turned the automaton round, so as to show the back of the chest to the spectators. While this was being done, the concealed operator moved into the large compartment, closing after him the sliding panel. In this position he remained until the back door of the small compartment had been opened and shut again.

Thus by these ingenious contrivances the spectators were led to believe that it was quite impossible that anyone could be hidden in the chest. As regards the Turk, seated cross-legged on the box, it was perfectly obvious that, putting aside the fact that his body was shown to be occupied by machinery, the figure was not large enough to hold a human being.

When the doors of the automaton had been closed, the operator began to make his arrangements for the game. This he did by swinging the whole furniture of the interior of the chest—wheels, machinery, and partition—against the outer doors and walls of the box, so as to throw all the subdivided compartments into one apartment. By this means he had room enough to seat himself comfortably before the chess board on which he played. The moves of the adversary of the Turk, when made on the board before the figure, were communicated to the occupant of the chest by means of wires connected with a number of discs inserted in the top of the apartment, and directly any one of the pieces on the Turk's board was touched the fact was indicated by the corresponding disc being put in motion. The concealed chess-player reproduced his opponent's moves on his own board, and when he was ready to reply to them he made use of the left arm of the figure for that purpose, as already stated.

The automaton was exhibited in Vienna for some months, attracting a crowd of *savants* from all parts of the empire. From the capital, Von Kempelen removed the android to Presburg, where it remained for a considerable period. Finally, the scientific and mechanical pursuits of the Baron having made sad inroads upon [his] patrimony, he [set out] on a tour through Europe with the object of endeavouring to retrieve his impaired fortunes by giving exhibitions of his curious invention in the principal cities on the Continent.

Before starting on his travels, Von Kempelen engaged the

services of the most skilful chess-player he could find to operate the android. To secure, too, the Turk, so far as practicable, from all hazard of defeat at the hands of more able adversaries, endings of games only were usually played, under the pretext that complete games would occupy too much time. A book, containing a series of end-games, was always handed to the opponents of the automaton, and they were allowed their choice of the white or black pieces. Nothing, in appearance, could be fairer than this; but, as a matter of fact, the positions were so contrived that whosoever took the first move—which the Turk invariably claimed—had a forced-won game. However, it was not, on all occasions, possible for Von Kempelen, without discourtesy, to refuse to permit the automaton to play entire games with some of the adversaries who presented themselves. Consequently the Turk was sometimes beaten. In 1783, at the Café de la Régence, at Paris, he encountered Philidor and Legal, being vanquished by them both. From Paris Von Kempelen went to Berlin, where the android played with Frederick the Great, who was compelled to succumb to his prowess. It has been stated that the king bought the automaton in 1785, but this is an error, for Von Kempelen died with it in his own possession in 1804. It is possible that the *secret* of the invention may have been sold to Frederick, but even that is doubtful.

Directly after the death of Von Kempelen his son disposed of the automaton to one Maelzel, 'Mechanician to the Court' (Hof-Mechanikus) at Berlin, who occasionally exhibited it. In 1809, Maelzel was occupying some portion of the Palace of Schönbrun, when Napoleon made this building headquarters after the battle of Wagram. It was there that the automaton played with the Emperor the historic game of chess, the particulars of which—if Maelzel's own account of the occurrence may be accepted—have been not a little distorted and embellished by the various narrators of the incident. The real facts seem to have been as follows: In Von Kempelen's days the antagonist of the Turk had played upon the board in front of the figure, but Maelzel always placed a table, with another chessboard, a few paces from the automaton, with the object—as was asserted—not to intercept the view of the spectators. Maelzel therefore was constantly passing between the Turk and his adversary's table to repeat each move on the board of the other party. The space occupied by the automaton was separated from the rest of the apartment by a silken cord. When Napoleon evinced an intention of passing the barrier, Maelzel

checked him with '*Sire, il est défendu de passer outre.*' The Emperor at once acquiesced, with a good-natured '*Eh bien!*' and took his seat at the little table on his side of the cord. It has been asserted that Napoleon, overstepping the barrier, struck his hand on the automaton's chessboard, and exclaimed, 'I will not contend at a distance. We fight face to face.' Also, that he placed a large magnet on the board to see if it would have the effect of disarranging the machinery. Neither of these statements is correct. In fact, on this occasion, the conduct of the Emperor was perfectly free from the *brusquerie* which has been attributed to him. Napoleon, who was a poor player, quickly lost the game. He then challenged the automaton to a second encounter. In the course of the game he purposely made a false move; the Turk bowed gravely, and replaced the piece on its proper square. A few moments later the Emperor repeated his manœuvre and with a similar result. But when the same thing occurred a third time, his opponent swept the whole of the chessmen off the board. Napoleon, however, instead of being irritated by this treatment, only laughed, saying '*C'est juste!*' He added, too, a *quasi* apology for the violation of the laws of the game of which he had been guilty, by alleging that it had arisen from his desire to learn what course the automaton would pursue in the event of so unexpected a contingency presenting itself. Allgair—the inventor of the gambit named after him—is believed to have been the player who had the temerity to inflict so merited a rebuke upon the 'Victor of a hundred battles.'

About two years later, Eugène Beauharnais, then Viceroy of the Kingdom of Italy, witnessed an exhibition of the automaton at Milan. His curiosity was so great to penetrate the mystery of the Turk, that he bought of Maelzel both the android and the secret of its mechanism for thirty thousand francs. The Prince, however, soon tired of his purchase, and the automaton, relegated to a lumber-room, remained for the succeeding four or five years in inglorious retirement.

In 1817 Maelzel, who, at this period, had settled down in Paris as a manufacturer of philosophical instruments, proposed to Eugène Beauharnais to buy back the automaton from him for the same price which had been paid for it. This offer was accepted, and, as Maelzel was not able to pay the whole purchase-money in one sum, it was stipulated that the debt should be liquidated by instalments, out of the proceeds arising from exhibiting the android.

In conformity with this arrangement, the Turk once more set out on his travels. He visited this country in 1818. Whilst in London he measured himself against the leading chess-players of the day, being usually, but by no means invariably, victorious in these encounters. Returning to the Continent in 1820, Maelzel continued to give exhibitions of the automaton for several successive years, but with only indifferent success. Finally, he conceived the project of trying his fortunes in the New World.

Maelzel, having failed to meet the instalments of the debt payable to the heirs of Eugène Beauharnais (the Prince had died in 1824) as they came due, was in danger of being arrested by his creditors, and his proposed journey prevented. He, therefore, left Paris, suddenly, without waiting to make arrangements with any skilful chess-player to accompany him, contenting himself with leaving instructions with a friend to send one out to him as soon as practicable.

Maelzel sailed from Havre on the 20th of December, 1825, for New York taking with him, besides the automaton, a *fantoccino* of his own invention, consisting of mechanical rope-dancers. He arrived at his destination on the 3rd of February, 1826, and after waiting in vain two months for the chess-player he was expecting, he opened his exhibition without him. He confided the duty of operating the android to a Frenchwoman, the wife of a man who guided the motions of the puppets. She was faithful to the trust reposed in her, and her conduct in this respect offered a practical refutation to the cynical proverb that 'a woman cannot keep a secret.' Only few persons attended the first exhibition of the automaton, but their report of the performance was so favourable that the rooms where it took place were soon crowded night after night.

End-games only were played until the arrival of the long-expected chess-player, who only reached New York on the 27th of September. This gentleman, an Alsatian, of the name of Schlumberger, was an exceptionally strong player, and could be with safety relied upon to beat the best amateurs that New York, or any other city in the Union, could then boast. Consequently, during the tour of the Turk through the United States he was almost invariably victorious.

When Maelzel was in Baltimore, by a curious accident a discovery was made of the fact that some one was concealed in the automaton. The affair happened in this wise: One day two lads mounted upon the roof of a shed commanding a view of the back

room to which the Turk retired when the exhibition was over. On this occasion Maelzel, directly the audience had dispersed, rolled the android behind the curtain. Intent only upon relieving his ally from his irksome confinement—for the heat in that southern city is in summer well-nigh intolerable—Maelzel stepped to the window, threw the shutters wide open, and then, returning to the automaton, he removed the top of the chest. From this hiding-place there emerged, in full sight of the youths, the figure of a man in his shirt-sleeves, whom there was no difficulty in recognizing as Schlumberger. To be the depositaries of so important a secret was a burthen under which their strength gave way; and the story, confided in the first instance to their respective parents, soon spread and reached the public. But the tale obtained very little credence. The general opinion was that a secret which had baffled for upwards of half a century the best mechanics and mathematicians of the age was something altogether too deep to be penetrated by a couple of schoolboys.

This danger, therefore, Maelzel safely tided over; but not long afterwards a more serious one presented itself. One day a young man of the name of Walker called upon him in New York and said, 'Mr. Maelzel, would you like to buy another chess-player? I have one ready made for you.' Surely enough, this was the case. Maelzel saw the automaton in question, and made the inventor an offer of one thousand dollars for it; for, although the mechanism of the machine was very different from that of the original, there seemed to be some likelihood of its competing injuriously with his own. The offer, however, was declined by the owner of the new android, who proceeded to exhibit it on his own account. In this he was unsuccessful, for there existed in the community a deeply-rooted prejudice in favour of the historical invention of Von Kempelen, which gave Maelzel a vantage-ground from which no efforts of rival exhibitors could easily have driven him.

The automaton consequently remained as profitable a property to its owner as ever, and Maelzel continued to travel with it in the United States, Mexico, and the West Indies until 1837. In that year he died on his passage from Havana to Philadelphia. Notwithstanding the large sums he had realised during the eleven years he had successfully exhibited not only the chess-player but a panorama of the Conflagration of Moscow, he died poor and in debt.

A short time after Maelzel's death his effects were sold at auction in Philadelphia. The automaton was the first lot put up, and was knocked down to a bid of four hundred dollars only. Undoubtedly the purchaser was under the impression that before long he should meet with some enterprising *entrepreneur* willing to give him a considerably higher price for the android than he had paid for it. But he was mistaken, and, more than a year having elapsed without a single offer being made for the automaton, the owner was glad to dispose of it for the same sum as that for which he himself had bought it. The purchaser was a Dr. Mitchell, and his idea was to constitute the Turk the property of a club. Each member was to subscribe ten dollars, and thereby become a joint owner of the automaton and a joint depository of its secret—when discovered. The plan was carried out with success; the machine was unpacked, and, with some difficulty, its *dissecta membra* put together. Private exhibitions to the families of the shareholders and their friends followed. Becoming tired of giving these, the question arose what disposition to make of the property. Such interest as had been re-excited in the automaton after Maelzel's death had been confined to a narrow circle; it had not sufficed to create a demand on the part of the community for public exhibitions, nor to elicit an offer for it from any speculative showman.

Finally, the automaton was deposited in the Chinese Museum in Philadelphia, where it occupied a recess in a small room in a part of the building but little frequented by visitors. In this position few persons inquired for, few even saw, the once famous invention, and the latter days of the veteran chess-player were spent in complete obscurity.

Fourteen years later the end of the Turk came. On the 5th of July, 1854, a fire broke out in the National Theatre, which extended to the Museum, which was separated from it by only a narrow alley. There was ample time to have rescued the automaton, if any one had thought of doing so. But so entirely had all interest in it died out that not only was no effort made to save it, but its fate attracted no notice whatsoever. In fact, the Philadelphia press, whilst giving full details in other respects of the loss of property caused by the conflagration, did not devote even one brief paragraph to chronicle the destruction of a piece of mechanism which for originality of conception and ingenuity of execution has never been excelled.

RAINBOW GOLD.

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK V.

HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD ELUDED TWO ADVENTURERS.

CHAPTER I.

ON a bright and springlike day in early March, Aaron Whittaker was standing near the mouth of the new mine, which, according to his own declarations, was so soon to enrich everybody who was connected with it. His features were twisted into a disgusted sneer, and he bit angrily at a piece of straw, ejecting the successive morsels from his lips with a look of increasing distaste. A greasy man coming to the door of the engine-house looked up at the bright sky, looked round at such part of the landscape as the raw mounds of earth and waste allowed him to see, and shouted to Aaron that it was beautiful weather. Aaron cursed the weather, and kicked at a small stone. The small stone turned out to be fast-rooted, and hurt his toes, and he swore with more energy than before. Then he went on biting at the piece of straw as if he had a spite against it.

By-and-by a bell rang in the engine-house. The greasy man retired from the doorway and disappeared. The little tin pot of a boiler began to hiss and snort, and the pulley on the tripod at the top of the shaft to revolve. Aaron turned his back to the shaft and strolled away a yard or two, then took a resolved step, then stopped as if to think, and finally turned reluctantly to face the shaft. He did this in time to see the head and shoulders of a man swing upwards. The engine stopped, and the man, with one foot in a big metal bucket and one hand grasping the rope by which he had been drawn upward, swung in the air and hailed him.

'Give us a hand, Whittaker.'

Aaron advanced to the edge of the shaft, and extended his hand. The other grasped it, and, the engine being reversed so as

to let out some two or three yards of rope, he swung easily to land. He was a sturdily built fellow, coarsely dressed, but with a voice and bearing expressive of good breeding.

‘Well?’ said Aaron, looking at him somewhat shiftily, and then glancing round as if to make sure that nobody was within earshot.

‘Well?’ said the other.

‘Don’t be a fool, Morley,’ said Aaron viciously. ‘Out with it.’

‘Oh,’ replied the stiff-set man, ‘I won’t be a fool if you won’t.’

‘Out with it. What sort of a report are you going to make?’

‘You’re on the wrong tack, Whittaker. That’s my private advice to you.’

‘You mean the mine isn’t worth working?’ asked Aaron. He stooped to pick up a bit of straw that lay at his feet and began to twine it round his fingers.

‘Yes,’ said the other, ‘I mean that, and perhaps a little more than that. I thought you’d make a mess of things when you took them into your own hands, whether you found coal or no. But I didn’t think you’d want to make this sort of mess.’ Aaron said nothing, but his face began to take an odd mottled tinge, its natural pink and white no more appearing smoothly, but breaking into little patches. ‘Come,’ renewed his companion, ‘let’s have it out. You didn’t look as if I was very welcome when I came this morning.’

‘Why shouldn’t you be welcome?’ asked Aaron. He stole a look at his companion, and, meeting a pair of very bright and penetrating eyes, shot his own away from them, and fell to biting the straw ring he had wound about his forefinger.

‘You want me to think that you’re a fool, do you?’ Aaron stole another look at him.

‘Why shouldn’t you be welcome?’ he asked. ‘The mine’s going on well. It’s dry and it’s safe. The yield’s good, and the seam’s thickening every yard.’

‘Yes,’ said the other, dryly, ‘the yield’s good, and the further you go the thicker the seam gets. But whose coal is it?’ As he put this question he drew near suddenly, and tapped Aaron on the chest. ‘Come now, whose coal is it?’

‘Ours,’ said Aaron. All the little pink spots had disappeared from his cheeks and he was as white as a sheet.

‘Look here,’ returned the professional man, brusquely; ‘don’t

fool with me, if you please. You've been outside the limit of your land this two months. Was that what you started on the very edge of your own property for? Did you think of getting a dip into your neighbour's stuff when you began?'

'No, I didn't,' replied Aaron, with feeble bluster. 'I wanted to be as near the canal as I could. I expected to save three or four pounds a week in carting if I had a wharf close at hand.'

'That may be as it may,' said his companion; 'but you're into your neighbour's property now, and if it happened to be your own you'd be on the way to a good thing no doubt. It happens, unluckily for you, that you've dropped on to the very edge of it, that's all.'

'I say,' said Aaron, 'isn't there any chance on the other side? On the north?'

'Well,' said the other, 'so far as I can make out, you seem to have looked there for yourself. The plain fact is the fault slopes like the roof of a house. As it runs up the seam thins. You've dropped on to the thin end. As for the upper seam it isn't worth the getting.'

There was a lengthy pause, and Aaron, still biting at his ring of straw, shot a shifty glance every two or three seconds at his companion, who was engaged in shredding a piece of plug tobacco with a pocket-knife.

'Morley!' said Aaron, suddenly. His voice was choked and husky, and he cleared his throat. 'Morley!' he said again.

'Well?' returned Morley, rubbing the cut tobacco slowly between the palms of his hands.

It isn't as if the other side had sent you.'

'What isn't as if the other side had sent me?'

'Why—it isn't as if old Whitehouse had sent you to see if we were on the square and keeping our own boundaries, you know.'

'Oh, isn't it? Why isn't it?' Mr. Morley seemed peculiarly resolved to have his tobacco fine, and he picked all the larger fragments to pieces with great assiduity.

'If I made it worth your while—'

'If you made what worth my while?' Morley rounded his mouth into an O, and looked at Aaron sideways.

'To hold your tongue,' said Aaron.

'Yes?' He produced a well-blacked meerschaum and filled it tenderly. Aaron looked right and left. The greasy man was

sunning himself at the engine-room door, smoking and lolling against the doorpost thirty yards away.

‘How long do you think it will take Whitehouse to get up to where we are?’ he asked, in a half whisper.

‘That isn’t the question,’ replied the other. ‘How long will it be before your men know where they are?’

‘Oh,’ returned Aaron, ‘they won’t know anything.’ Morley’s face drew into a sneer, but he was turning away from Aaron to nurse the flame of a lucifer-match between his hands, and the look passed unnoticed. ‘The thing’s been done a hundred times,’ said Mr. Whittaker, sinking his voice, with a side glance to the engine-room.

‘How do you know it has been done?’

‘It has been done,’ responded Aaron, ‘scores and scores of times.’

‘You don’t mean to say,’ said Morley, ‘that old Bache is in this. And old Round. Do they know what you’re up to here?’

‘No,’ said Aaron; ‘that’s where it is.’

‘Oh!’ Mr. Morley’s manner was drier than the desert sand. ‘That’s where it is, is it? And it’s been done before, has it, scores and scores of times?’

‘Why, everybody knows it’s been done,’ replied Aaron, with some show of impatience.

‘Yes,’ said the other, and then paused for two or three swift whiffs at his pipe, looking keenly at Aaron meanwhile. ‘Everybody knows it’s been done, but *how* does everybody know it? It’s always been found out.’

‘I’ll take my chance of that,’ said Aaron, ‘if you’ll keep dark.’

‘If I keep dark? That’s all very well. But I am to send in a report. What am I to say?’

Aaron took him by the coat sleeve and said in a voice reduced almost to a whisper:

‘Tell the plain truth about everything—but—’

‘Yes. But?’ said the other.

‘Put the coal on the north side.’

‘Ah!’ Mr. Morley put his hands into the pockets of the coarse pea-jacket he wore, and stared at the ground. ‘You think,’ he said, ‘that you could make it worth my while?’

‘Yes,’ said Aaron, eagerly, ‘I could.’ He bent nearer. ‘Will a hundred pounds do?’

‘No,’ replied the surveyor; ‘not enough.’

‘A hundred and fifty? Come. Don’t press an old friend too hard. A hundred and fifty?’

‘No,’ said the surveyor again; ‘not enough.’

‘I can’t go further. Two hundred?’

‘Not enough.’

‘Why, man alive,’ cried Aaron, desperately, ‘what *do* you want?’

‘You can’t make it worth my while, you see,’ said Morley, still staring at the ground.

‘Well. What do you want? Open your mouth. I can see you’re likely to open it wide enough.’

‘I’ve made up my mind to the sum I am for sale for,’ said Morley. ‘I’ve made up my mind, Whittaker’—he raised his head and looked Aaron full in the face—‘that if ever I am to be a rogue for money I won’t make less than a million sterling by it. I think that resolution’s likely to keep me pretty straight. You’ve been wasting your time, you know. That’s what you’ve been doing.’ Mr. Morley said this with a certain air of banter, but his virtuous indignation mastered him. ‘Who the devil, sir, told you that I was for sale for two hundred pounds? A hundred! That’s what you offered me to begin with. They’ll give more than that for a nigger in America. You’re a fool as well as a scamp, Whittaker. When you try to buy a man’s honesty next time, you offer him a decent price for it. It’ll be a good deal more agreeable to him, and you’ll be less likely to have your head punched. Here!’ cried Mr. Morley, falling into a sudden mimicry of Aaron’s manner, ‘you give me your worldly reputation and your immortal soul, and I’ll give you half-a-crown. You ever dare to speak to me again, and I’ll kick you as far as I can follow you.’

‘I say, Morley,’ cried Aaron, seizing him by the pea-jacket as he started to leave the field. ‘I beg your pardon. I do indeed. I—I didn’t mean—— I say, Morley, don’t go yet. I’m half mad, begad I am. You don’t know what a mess I’m in.’

‘Loose my coat,’ said Morley, wrathfully, ‘or I’ll knock you into the middle of next week.’

‘No, no,’ cried Aaron, clinging to him almost wildly. ‘You didn’t understand. You didn’t really. Look here, Morley. What I wanted was to keep it dark for a little while—only a

little while. You don't know what a mess I'm in. You don't; upon my word you don't.'

'I know as much as I care,' said the other, standing doggedly still, and looking straight before him with eyes half closed and his lower lip stuck forward. 'Loose my coat.'

'I say, Morley. For God's sake don't send in for a day or two. Give me a day or two to turn about in. Morley, old fellow, look here. You know I always liked you, Morley, and we were always chums and all that.'

'You've got yourself into a mess,' said Morley, relenting a little in his inmost heart, 'and you must get yourself out of it as best you can. On your own side you might as well chuck money in the sea as try to work it, and on the other side it's a simple dead robbery. That's all. You loose my coat.'

'I have got myself into a mess,' said Aaron, still clinging to him. 'You don't know half the mess I'm in. Look here, Morley, I beg your pardon, I do indeed. I say, don't send that report in for a week. I'm—I'm ruined, anyway,' he concluded; and holding on with one hand to the lappel of Morley's coat, he groped with the other for his handkerchief.

'I don't know half of it?' said the offended mine surveyor, relenting more and more. 'Well, so much the worse for you. I can't help you.'

'Yes, you can,' said Aaron, sniffing behind the handkerchief. 'If I had a week I could work round.'

'Work what round?' cried Morley, losing his temper again. 'You can't put the coal back. You can't pay Bache and Round the money you've made 'em fool away on this mule-game of yours. Not that there wasn't a chance of finding coal,' he muttered; 'only you've gone bouncing so that everybody will be delighted when you've come to grief.'

'Morley,' said Aaron, blowing his nose with violence, and then appearing from behind his handkerchief, 'it's a thing that might have occurred to anybody.'

'What—to miss finding coal? Yes. But then it might have occurred to an honest man to tell his partners the truth, and not to go lying and bouncing about his find, and putting his hand into his neighbour's pocket to make his lies look good.'

There are some people who can pour out torrents of anger and still have whole deeps in store within them, but this young man had spent his wrath already and was beginning to be pitiful.

'I won't dig another ounce weight of Whitehouse's coal,' said Aaron, 'I won't indeed. And look here, Morley, I'm sorry I asked you to do that; I am indeed. But I'm half mad, and I hardly knew what I was saying. I didn't really. But will you give me a week, Morley? It isn't much to ask, when you can ruin a man, and—and'—the handkerchief came into play again—'and break his heart.'

'Rot about breaking his heart,' said the surveyor; but he was melting.

'I was go—going to be married to old Round's granddaughter,' sobbed Aaron. 'You know what a man her father is.'

'Ah!' replied Morley, feeling bound to sustain his character for severity, especially since he was on the point of yielding. 'You'll make a nice husband for any fellow's granddaughter.' Aaron kept silence under his friend's disparagement, and stayed behind his handkerchief. 'I don't see what good I'm going to do you,' the surveyor began to grumble. 'I don't see what you want a week for. You don't want to cut and run?'

'Cut and run!' said Aaron; 'what is there to cut and run for? Even if Whitehouse hears about it, he can only bring an action to recover damages.'

'Well, what do you want a week's time for? Mind you, I draw up my report to-day, and it goes in this day week. I'll have no more humbug.'

'No,' said Aaron, 'I won't ask you to delay an hour beyond the week.' He had not the remotest idea in the world as to what he should do to extricate himself from this terrible scrape, but his faculties as a practised life-long liar came to his aid, and soothed him mightily. 'I've got two or three irons in the fire, said Aaron. 'The one thing's a failure, and I must make the others pay for it. I can't pay everything all at once, but if I can let 'em have five hundred apiece it'll keep 'em quiet till I can turn round further. I don't intend to let 'em lose a penny by me. I never did. I——'

'I wouldn't say any more if I were you,' said Morley, with infinite dryness. 'My report goes in this day week, mind. And if there's another skip-load brought to bank between now and then I'll tell Whitehouse straight. Now we understand each other.'

The surveyor departed, and Aaron, sitting down upon a little mound of shale, pondered on the situation. Suddenly he

bethought him of the engine-man, and gazing about him, was relieved to find that the engine-house was hidden by the intervening mound of waste. He had not begun to use his handkerchief, he remembered, until Morley and he had passed the edge of the mound, and were out of sight. As for what had happened before, that might mean anything.

He felt cruelly that he had spread a net for himself. Had he been content to admit that the mine was a failure the thing would have been over, and though everybody would have been disappointed, and he would have had to bear the brunt of his partners' anger, he would have escaped his present dilemma. He did not despair, for he had a week before him, and many things might happen in a week. What he expected to happen he did not know, but something would intervene, or something might intervene, and in the meantime he was saved.

What could he do? How could he mitigate the coming storm, or hide himself from it? Job Round had never liked him, and would be only too delighted to find a chance to send him adrift. He had lost Sarah, then? He wept to think so, but he was helpless. What *could* he do?

The sound of voices startled him, and, fearful of being seen just then, whilst his face and eyes betrayed him, he rose and walked away across the fields, choosing the road where at that hour of the day he was least likely to meet inquiring eyes.

He asked himself, naturally, what those two old fools, his partners, meant by mistrusting his management. They could leave him alone until the moment came when, after all their disbursements, they had received a dividend, and then they must needs stickle for a monthly examination of the mine by that confounded snob of a Morley, whom Aaron had always hated, now that he came to think of it. Five-and-twenty years ago Parliament vexed itself less than it does now about mines and miners, and a good deal of the coal-getting of that district, and probably of most others, was done by rule of thumb. Aaron had been doing capitally by rule of thumb, with the aid of half-a-dozen experienced old hands and two or three dozen young ones, and nothing but the accident of the coal being on his neighbour's ground instead of on his own had prevented his operations from achieving the most flourishing success. As for poaching—well, his neighbour's mine was a mile away; there was not a man in his own employ who understood the use of the dial; nobody but him—

self had known that he had exceeded his own boundaries, and in all probability the thing might have been allowed to go on for a year or two but for the employment of the snob Morley. Long before detection could have come about he would have been safely married. Ezekiel's fortune, known to be considerable, would have fallen into his hands in due time, and that hidden fortune of Job Round's would have followed it. With these windfalls, or with only one of them, he could have closed the mine, and have left the owner of the disembowelled ground to his remedy at law. It would have been easy, after working to a certain distance, to have discovered that he had reached his boundary, and to have informed his partners of that fact.

Revolving a hundred tricks and turns in his mind, with the full confession that they were useless now underlying all his thoughts of them, he walked himself into an outward appearance of tranquillity. A stranger passing him might have guessed that he was out of temper, but his guesses could scarcely have pierced deeper.

There was no disguising it—he began to find it necessary to tell himself so to keep the thing in his mind at all—he was in a mess. Morley had talked about running. Well, what was there to prevent him from running? To begin with—his mother's fortune. Then—Sarah! Sarah would believe in him. Sarah would accept any colour he chose to put upon his own proceedings; but after the exposure that was coming her father would be inexorable, and against her father's will she would not marry him. On the other hand, why should he run? What had he to run away from, and what to run to? Plenty to run away from, beyond a doubt, but little enough to run to. If he only knew the whereabouts of that buried treasure now!

He set himself idly to think of the means by which the secret of Job's hidden hoard might be surprised. He poisoned Job, simply and purely as an exercise of fancy, and searched amongst his papers after marrying Sarah. Then he went away and dug up the treasure. He drugged Job, again simply as the exercise of a vacant fancy, and found the guiding document whilst the big man slept. Then again he went away and dug up the treasure, and this time came back wealthy to marry Sarah, and to compromise with Ezekiel and Bache and Whitehouse, and no man had the slightest fancy—Job least of all—as to how he had enriched himself. Then Job, seeing his daughter safely married, went away in

turn, and found his treasure cave empty. After that a variety of things happened. Job shot himself in despair. He did not shoot himself in despair, but, suspecting Aaron, came back and shot *him*, after which he escaped to a wild life in foreign places, or—which was better—was caught and tried and hanged.

Then, and still to charm an empty idle fancy, supposing he had the clue to the buried treasure, how could he get out to it? Where were the necessary funds to come from? He sold the mine, representing it as his own sole property, but could produce no title-deeds, and so could get no pay. He sold the yield of coal for the next month and got paid partly in advance. No! He presented a bill in the names of his partners and himself, or a cheque for the firm, got it cashed, and was away. Then, when he had the treasure, he negotiated through a confidential solicitor to pay everybody, keeping abroad meanwhile.

It was all futile—all childish—all absurd. He knew that well enough; but these fancies did to play with, and the realities of his own position were too dreadful to be faced.

He had been strolling for an hour, and except that he had kept himself sufficiently awake to outward things to choose the most sequestered ways, had gone almost without thought of the road on which his footsteps took him. He could hear the sound of a hedger's shears beyond the bend of the lane, and looking about him discovered that he was in the immediate neighbourhood of General Coningham's residence, the Warren. Three miles from home, then. He was tending homewards, and might as well go there as anywhere. He rounded the bend in the lane, and looked up as he passed, at a man in corduroys, and a smock frock which was tucked to his waist. The fellow was clipping the hedge with great industry, and Aaron was looking away from him again when he noticed the curious fact that the man had a thin ring of gold wire in his ear.

'Hillo!' said Aaron, pausing. 'What brings you here?'

'For the matter o' that,' replied Mr. Bowling, turning round upon the questioner, 'what brings you here? You mind your business, young governor, and I'll mind mine!'

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CONINGHAME had found a purchaser for the Warren, and was making ready to shake the dust of Castle Barfield from his feet. He wondered why he had ever persuaded himself to attempt to settle down there. Gentlemen were extremely rare in the neighbourhood, and the people who filled their places were coal-owners and ironmasters, grandfatherless persons whose manners smacked of mine and foundry and counting-house. The common people were simple savages, and in the contemplation of them the General, in his superior mind, experienced a shuddering disdain. Their manners had not that repose of submission to the will of their betters which Coninghame loved to see amongst the lower orders, and had actually found at its best and most peaceful growth in India, where the poor heathen knew better how to behave himself than did his white brother in Castle Barfield.

When the General had bought the Warren and its surrounding leasowes he had thought them dear. Now that he came to sell them he thought that an absurdly low value was placed upon them. He got a hundred or two more than he gave, but it was demanded of him that house and grounds should be put into perfect order. Early as it was, therefore, the house was surrounded by workmen; and bricklayers, paperhangers, painters, and glaziers had everything in an abominable litter. Coninghame stayed on and worried the men as much as their presence worried him. As for himself, he was so driven about that at last he found himself with only one place to sit in—unless he invaded the servants' quarters or went into his bedroom—a little summer room which opened on the lawn at the back of the house. He sat here one day when he heard through the open door, as he smoked his morning cigar and read his newspaper, a conversation which deeply interested him.

Another person who was deeply interested in this same conversation was Mr. Bowling, whose presence in the neighbourhood of the Warren asks for a word of explanation. Mr. Bowling's temper, never of the sweetest, had been so completely soured by the constant contemplation of his wrongs that he became insupportable to his employer. He had received a week's wages and his dismissal, and, after being drunk as long as his money lasted, had sought new employment, and had found it at the

Warren, where for a week or two a roughly handy man was in request.

The bricklayers had been repairing the garden wall, and had left, after the manner of their kind, a great heap of rubbish and débris behind them. Mr. Bowling was leisurely shovelling a part of this into a wheelbarrow, a dozen yards away from the open glass door of the General's room. The General, hidden by the curtains, sat within the room, and smoked and read, pishing and pshawing to himself at the uninteresting character of the news, and midway between the two an old man and a young one were at work, the old one painting the woodwork of a window and the young one pumice-stoning the blistered paint of the neighbour window.

'I reckon,' said the ancient, who was withered like a rosy old apple that has lain for months in the straw, 'I reckon, Isaiah, thee doesn't remember Jabez Harget.'

'I knowed his widdier,' said the younger man, stopping his work awhile to fill and light his pipe.

'Dids't?' said the withered ancient, stopping work also and leaning on his ladder. 'Her used to say about poor ode Jabez, "Tek him in the main," her used to say, "and you'll find him bad all round!" Now, that wa'n't quite true about Jabez, but it's true about this cove.'

'Which cove?' asked the younger man.

'This sojer fellow,' said the old man. 'This Ginerel. Chap as lives here.'

Mr. Bowling had not smiled so delightedly for many a day as he now smiled. He had seen the General enter the room and seat himself, and as these words were spoken he saw a newspaper flutter to the ground, and saw also the slippered feet of the gallant gentleman, which lay visible beyond the edge of the flowing curtain, comfortably folded the one over the other, suddenly withdraw as if at the touch of a red-hot poker. Mr. Bowling was not much of a humourist, but the fun of this situation was plain to him. He expected the General to emerge at once, but the comedy of which he was the sole observer was prolonged.

'Reuben,' said the younger man, 'how comes it as a man can be a ginerel and ha' no more pluck in him than this chap makes a show on?'

'Money and Merit is two lads as is likely to thrive,' replied the ancient. 'Together they're flourishin' like the green bay tree

of Scripser. Separate 'em, and Money's just as lusty as iver, but Merit gets as thin as a skull and cross-bones.'

'Gaffer,' said the younger man, turning on his ladder to seat himself, 'thee beest as full o' bywords as a red herrin's full o' little bones. How dost come by 'em?'

'Natur,' said the elder, 'natur. Notions is like dandelion seed, lad. They fly here an' thither, and it's as like as not as hundreds on 'em dies for lack of nourishment. But when they fall on a fat brain they tek root, lad. When thee'st finished, I'll beg a pull at thy pipe, Isaiah.'

'Beest welcome,' said Isaiah, politely wiping the stem of his clay pipe on his trousers before handing it over. The two ladders were just within arm's length. The old man accepted the pipe, and turning round on his ladder as his companion had done before him, sat down, hugged his thin old knees with his veined and knucky hands, and settled himself for a comfortable spell of idleness.

'A sojer without valour, lad,' began the ancient (to the great delight of Mr. Bowling, who had begun to fear that the General was forgotten), 'is like a bad half-crown. He runs under fire. He's like a bad egg in a dishful of good 'uns. Looks just as good as the rest on 'em till it comes to blows, and then he's a stench in thy nostrils.'

'Goo it, gaffer!' said Isaiah; 'I wish he was by to hear thee.'

Mr. Bowling laughed silently, and sat down upon one of the handles of his wheelbarrow.

'I wish he might be,' replied the unconscious ancient. 'They do say as he fled in the war afore the Roosians.'

'No, no,' said Isaiah; 'Lord Raglan 'ud niver have sat idle by and let that pass. No, no. They'd ha' kicked him out, gaffer; they'd ha' kicked him out.'

'I'm told, lad,' said the elder, 'as Mr. Round said as much to his face the night they made a bonfire of his fences.'

'He'd be rare and wroth at that, I reckon,' returned the younger man.

'Wroth?' said the ancient with a chuckling cough. 'I seed him i' Castle Barfield High Street yesterday, an' who should pass him i' the road but Mr. Round. My back was turned on Mr. Round, and I was facin' the Ginerel. Gadzook, lad! thee shouldst have seen his eye. He looked as wicked as a trapped weasel. I

turns me round to see who he was lookin' at i' thatnin, and ther was Mr. Round a smilin' at him as cheerful as a child. He ketches me up wi' them great legs of his'n in a minute, and I meks bold to say, "Mr. Round," says I, "if eyes was razors," I says, "you'd ha' been pretty clean shaved that time." He turns round o' me, and, "Hillo, old Truep'ny! beest thee above ground yit?" says he; "Drink my health," he says, and he gi'en me half-a-crown.'

'He's as free-handed a man as iver lived,' said Isaiah. 'I painted his house from top to bottom last 'ear. He never thought o' letting me walk home to dinner, and he'd come out wi' a mug o' beer regular of a evening.'

'I've knowed him,' said the ancient, 'since he was that high.' The extended hand was some fifteen feet from the ground, but the old boy meant to indicate the height of his own knee. 'He was allays ventersome and bold, but rare good-hearted. Theer's them as calls him hard, but they are them as has no savin' knowledge of human natur. What do you think he gi'en me that half-crown for? Not for me to drink his health in wantonness. He knows as half-a-crown is worth two shillings and a sixpence to an old man like me, as has to work for his livin' at the scriptural age of three score year and ten.'

'He's a good sort,' said Isaiah. 'A good sort.'

The conversation was no longer so interesting to Mr. Bowling as it had been, though it still had a flavour of fun so long as the General listened. But he had almost made up his mind to begin work again, when he began once more to be interested. Anything that related to Job's history had a fascination for Mr. Bowling, the more perhaps that he was forbidden to talk of it.

'I mind him leaving Castle Barfield,' said the ancient. 'The talk run at the time as he'd listed i' the Life Guards, but, as far as I mek out, that was no more than a rumour, as rose most likely from his bein' more than common tall. What's thy age, Isaiah?'

'I'm six-and-twenty next June,' said Isaiah. 'What dost fly off at the handle like that for?'

'He went away the week as thee wast born,' said the old man. 'Struth! is it six-and-twenty 'ear ago? I shouldn't ha' believed it. My blessid! It looks like yesterday. He had a kick-up with his feyther, an' off he went, hot-foot.'

The General was standing upright, with his hands clenched

and his pale blue eyes enlarged and staring. He would have given a thousand pounds to be able to ask a question and to secure an answer to it. He forgot the rage he had felt a moment before at the old man's insolent allusions to himself. He forgot everything, in short, but John Smith and the renewed certainty that he and Job Round were one.

'He wa'n't long away,' said the younger man. 'That strappin' wench of his is nigh on twenty, ain't her? That's a fine figure of a gal, gaffer.'

'Thee hast rayson, lad: thee hast rayson,' said the oldster. 'Her's th' apple of his eye. It's like a picter to see 'em together. Him that big and stalworth, and her that tall and lithe. The rose o' Sharon, lad: the rose o' Sharon.' The old fellow sat sucking at the borrowed pipe for a time, and Mr. Bowling, with a backward ear, attentive for a possible renewal of talk, began to shovel some part of the heap of rubbish into his wheelbarrow. Nothing further happening just then, he filled the wheelbarrow and trundled it away.

General Coningham listened from within, but heard no more. The ancient, having finished his smoke, returned the pipe to his companion, and the two resumed work in silence. It was impossible to secure a continuance of their talk, but the one fact about the date of Job's departure had so renewed his old certainties, and had awakened so passionate a desire to know more, that he was half beside himself. He withdrew noiselessly but in great agitation from the room, and, gaining his own chamber, changed his indoor costume for coat and boots, and sallied out into the leasowes, resolved on intercepting the old man and questioning him. It puzzled him at first to think how he could begin the conversation without a tacit acknowledgment that he had overheard the morning's talk, but by-and-by he saw his way.

The workmen engaged at the Warren were in the habit of taking their meals at a little public house which stood some two or three hundred yards away from the western entry to the leasowes, where the men had the use of a fire, a room, and knives and forks, in consideration of their expenditure on beer. It was already near the time for the midday meal, and the General walked on the path they would shortly take. This path was near a hedge, and on the other side of the hedge Mr. Bowling was already seated to open a handkerchief containing half a loaf and a number of broken scraps and ends of meat and bacon. The

habits of Mr. Bowling were becoming daily more and more unsocial, and, for the most part, his fellows knew his reputation, and were willing to leave him to the solitude he loved. Seeing his employer for the time being approaching, and knowing what a martinet he was, and how likely to make a disturbance in case he found a man stealing so much as a minute of his time, Mr. Bowling, who had appropriated a good ten minutes, prudently slid into the dry ditch and there ate and drank in peaceful silence, whilst the General paced up and down.

The clock of the old church sounded the hour of midday across the fields, and the workmen came trooping along the path on which the General walked. Almost last among them came the withered ancient, and him the General accosted.

‘Wait here a moment,’ said Coninghame. ‘I have something to say to you.’

Mr. Bowling peered through the hedge, and catching sight of the old fellow, grinned his broadest.

‘You’re a going to have a tongue-walking, you are,’ said Mr. Bowling within himself.

The ancient, having no suspicion that his speech had been overheard, and not being very likely to care even if it had, awaited composedly. Coninghame, seeing that one or two of the men had still to pass, walked back into the house and stayed there a minute. Then seeing, as he fancied, a clear field for operations, he advanced. Mr. Bowling, secure from observation, listened to his returning footsteps, and grinned afresh, in anticipation of a pleasing scene. The General’s first words took him by surprise.

‘I passed you in the High Street yesterday, I fancy.’

‘Yes,’ said the ancient. ‘You did so.’

‘A minute afterwards you spoke to a man with a great red beard—a man named Round.’

‘Yes,’ said the ancient a second time, ‘I did so.’ He thought perhaps that Coninghame had overheard his speech to Job and was about to rate him for it. As a guard therefore against any unphilosophic swiftness of reply he pulled a stick of tobacco from his pocket, and biting a biggish piece from it began to chew it. This, like smoking, is an operation which can be employed to slow down the rapidity of speech.

‘Have you known this man Round for any length of time?’ demanded Coninghame. The ancient considered awhile and saw no reason against telling the truth.

‘All his life,’ he said.

‘You knew him,’ asked Coningham, ‘before he left home six-and-twenty years ago?’ The ancient considered once more, and again saw no reason against telling the truth.

‘I knowed him well.’

‘Do you happen to know the exact date of his leaving home? Was it five-and-twenty years ago last June?’

The old man began to consider within himself. Job Round was an old friend and benefactor of his. General Coningham was an enemy of Job Round’s, and was not likely to ask for information concerning him for any friendly purpose.

‘I could ask him,’ he answered, ‘and mek sure in a minute.’

‘I don’t want you to ask him,’ said Coningham, who saw that the old fellow was fencing with him. He was so savagely eager that he determined on breaking through his fence at once. ‘I suppose you remember the dog he took away with him—the bull-dog—Pincher.’

Pincher, thought Mr. Bowling to himself. That was the name of the dog that John Smith used to talk about, the dog the officer had poisoned. John Smith was a deserter. Bonaventure had held something over everybody, and that was the thing he held above John Smith, now Job Round, Esquire. Was this the officer who poisoned the dog, and was Mr. Bowling himself on the eve of a discovery?

‘The dog?’ said the old man in answer to Coningham’s question. ‘I never seed him with a dog in all his life.’

‘You can hold your tongue I suppose?’ said the General, looking about him, and sliding his hand into his pocket. ‘Here is half-a-crown. Find out for me, quietly, the name of the dog Job Round took away with him when he left Castle Barfield, and there is a sovereign waiting for you.’

‘You’m no friend to Mr. Round, governor,’ said the ancient when he had secured the coin. ‘May I mek bode to ask what you’re wantin’ to know that for?’

‘Never mind what I want it for,’ returned Coningham. ‘What harm is it likely to do Mr. Round if I find out the name of his dog?’

‘That’s more than I know,’ said the old man.

Coningham took out his purse, and counted five sovereigns into the palm of his hand.

‘Keep your own counsel,’ he said, displaying these, ‘and

find out what I want to know. You can do it easily. There are scores of people who are likely to remember the dog if you remind them of him. Come to me when you can prove that the dog's name was Pincher, and there are five pounds waiting for you.'

It is within the bounds of possibility that if the old man had known anything of Pincher, so large a bribe might have tempted him, but it is certain that he would have resisted a larger bribe if he had known how much hung upon the answer to that simple and innocent-seeming question.

'Maybe I'll earn that money, gaffer,' he said aloud, but added inwardly, 'Maybe I'll get as much from Mr. Round. If it's worth your while,' thought the old fellow, 'to know it to his hurt, it's worth his while not to have you know it.'

'Very well,' replied Coningham. 'Hold your tongue. Find out what I want to know, and these five pounds are yours.'

'I'll bear it in mind, gaffer,' said the ancient. Coningham contented himself with a nod in answer, but showed him the gold once more before sliding it back into his purse. Then, with the purse still in hand, he stood watching the old artificer's retreating figure.

'If I could prove it,' said Coningham aloud, 'I would give a thousand pounds.' And with that he too walked slowly away, leaving Mr. Bowling behind the hedge unseen, in a very vertigo of wonder.

Roughly, he knew Job's story. He knew that Job had enlisted and had deserted. He knew the story of the dog, and the rest was within an easy leap—a leap so easy indeed, that any man who did not suffer under an actual mental paralysis must needs have taken it involuntarily. This was the officer the desperate John Smith had almost strangled in the presence of the court-martial, and had knocked down before his men? If this were true, Mr. Bowling had been near revenge at least for many months, and had never guessed it. Being himself a deserter of six-and-twenty years' standing from a man of war, Mr. Bowling could argue to Job's fear of detection from what his own had been. If it were true (and he had self-possession left to know that he might have lighted on a mare's nest) there might be more than mere revenge in store for him. That buried hoard after which his soul yearned might come into his fingers after all. He had dreaded Job's warnings and they had kept him silent, but he would have no need to

dread him any longer if General Coningham were really the man he fancied.

He ate his dinner with meditative slowness, and his thoughts gave a dreadful relish to it. At one o'clock he went back to his rubbish heap, and having finally dealt with it, was sent to his hedge-clipping at the garden. And there, as if the devil had primed them both for mischief, Aaron Whittaker, driven desperate, and Mr. Bowling, savage for vengeance and the buried treasure, met together.

CHAPTER III.

'THERE'S nobody on the other side of that hedge, is there?' asked Aaron in a mysterious whisper, stealing near to Mr. Bowling.

'No, there ain't,' said Mr. Bowling discourteously.

'I want to speak to you,' said Aaron. 'I've got something to say to you that'll be worth your while to hear.'

'You haven't got nothing to say to me,' returned Mr. Bowling, 'as I'm in the least degree greedy to listen to, I do assure you. I've had about enough of you. What do you come a-worrying me for?'

'Look here,' said Aaron, taking hold of a massive bough in the hedge, and swinging himself up to the seaman's side by it, 'do you want a share of that money?'

'What money?' asked Mr. Bowling with a curse.

'You know what money,' returned Aaron, still speaking in a whisper. 'You want a share of it, don't you? Well, so do I.' Mr. Bowling faced about and stared at him. Aaron's face was wild and white.

'Very well,' said Mr. Bowling; 'go and ask them as knows to it where it is, and then take a pick and a shuffe, and set to work and dig it up. That's your lay, young man.'

'You think I come from Mr. Round, don't you?' demanded Aaron, hoarsely and rapidly. 'You think he's fool enough to trust me with his secret? Not he. I found it all out myself. Don't you see, you fool, that you and I could work together?'

'Don't I see, you fool?' said Mr. Bowling in elegant repartee. 'Yes, I do see, you fool.'

'Look here,' whispered Aaron; 'I'm in the most cursed mess that ever man got into. I can get about Round's house whenever

I want to. If you know where to look for that paper, or what it's like, it's a hundred to one I can lay my hands upon it. You help me, and I'll help you. We could share and share alike.'

Again the man faced round about, and stared at him. Aaron met his scowling inquiry without shrinking.

'I've got my head screwed on pretty tight at present,' the scarred man said, nodding at him twice or thrice, 'and I'd rather keep it where it is. When I want it screwed off of my shoulders, I'll let you know.'

'You cursed coward,' snarled Aaron, 'can't you tell when a man's in earnest? Look at me.' Mr. Bowling was doing that with all his might. 'I tell you I'm in a mess. I'm desperate. If Round found out the mess I'm in he'd kick me out of his house. He'll know it in a week's time for certain. You help me, and I'll use that week to a purpose. Why shouldn't we both be rich for life? If you knew where the paper was, with the latitude and longitude, and could lay your hands on it, wouldn't you do it?'

Mr. Bowling dropped from the mound into the road, and Aaron followed his example.

'This here,' said the seaman, taking him by the coat with both hands, 'is getting past a joke. I won't be tortured in this sort o' way not for forty Joby Rounds. Go back and tell him yes. If I knowed wheer to lay my hands on that theer latitood an' longitood I'd do it, if had to tear 'em out of his inside. I'd do it if I had to chop him into little bits and search each mossel. So now you've got that much, you go an' tell him.'

'Tell him!' said Aaron, half with a groan and half with a snarl; 'I tell you I'd do the same. You think he's a friend of mine! He hates me like poison.'

'You're a-going to wed his daughter, ain't you?' demanded Mr. Bowling. Aaron groaned and turned away.

'No,' he said. 'No chance of that for me.' He had been crying already that day, and the tears found their way to his eyes anew. 'I tell you,' he said, in a rage to which his whisper gave a remarkable intensity of expression, considering how flippant and vacuous a young man he had always been until now, when his tongue began to awake his passions, and his passions began to awake him; 'I tell you that within a week he will kick me out of his house if I dare to show up there, as I never shall. Can't you see? Can't you tell when a man's in earnest and when he's making believe?'

‘You march in front o’ me,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘that way, a hundred yards ahead you march. When you hear me whistle, you turn to the right. When you hear me whistle again, you stop. This is no place to talk of these here matters. March.’ Aaron hesitated, and looked at him with some bewilderment. ‘March,’ said Mr. Bowling again; and half automatically he turned in the direction indicated by the seaman’s outstretched hand, and walked down the lane.

Aaron was one of those curious, but by no means uncommon people, whose whole spiritual forces seem to be controlled by the tongue, if the tongue is not the actual seat these forces occupy. It might be interesting to inquire into the first secret spring of unconscious action which in the case of such people sets the tongue going. The commoner method is to think a thing and then to say it. Aaron’s method was to say a thing and then to think it. If he gave his thoughts no tongue he seemed to have no thoughts, and it was only after a tolerably forcible utterance of them that his emotions began to stir in him. He knew by observation, by reading, and perhaps, in a faint dim sort of way, by intuition, the emotions proper to most of the varying circumstances of life, and when the circumstances arose he expressed those emotions—generally in an exaggerative way—and the emotions, being thus verbally taxed and called upon, yawned, and awoke, and stretched themselves. When once they were fairly awake it must be admitted that they atoned for their customary sluggishness, and gave their owner the prettiest possible exhibitions of agility.

Until Aaron had seen Mr. Bowling, and had spoken to him, his thoughts about the buried treasure had been dreamily speculative. His thoughts about the dangers and disgraces which threatened himself had been dreamy and speculative. But now he had given them tongue they awoke, they dilated, they grew in muscle and activity, until they created a sort of internal earthquake with their gambollings.

One consequence of this spiritual peculiarity of his was that he passed for a young man of rather more than average feeling, because when he talked tears it came natural to weep a little, and when he talked wrath or courage he could grow mightily fiery and red in the face, and wondrous martial within-doors, so that to the observer (and even to himself) he would seem ready to face dragons. Another consequence was that he was given to be some-

what melodramatic in manner, and to express himself with a distinguishing absence of the sense of measurement in words. But this, having once been mentioned, must be taken for granted for the most part, because Aaron's conversational style at such moments is only to be reproduced on paper by a writer who allows himself the freedom of the modern Parisian school, and English readers who admire M. Zola would be very properly shocked to find his liberties emulated by an English story-teller.

With all his emotions wide awake and engaged in the most sprightly feats of ground and lofty tumbling within him, Aaron walked straight along the lane until Mr. Bowling's promised whistle turned him to the right, where a mere cart road, deeply rutted, led between the leafless hedges to the open fields. The rut-marks continued up a gentle hillside, and this being climbed Aaron saw a tumbledown little building, half cottage half hut, where, as he afterwards learned, Mr. Bowling, for the nominal sum of eighteen-pence a week, was permitted to nurse his love of solitude. The second whistle stopped him at the door, and he looked fearfully about him to see if he were observed or followed by any other person than Mr. Bowling. Job Round had suddenly begun in a very remarkable manner to permeate space for Aaron Whittaker, and to lurk in a dozen concealments at once.

Mr. Bowling came up with his exaggerated nautical roll, and producing a great rusty key, inserted it in the rickety complaining lock, and opening the door, motioned to Aaron to enter. The young man obeyed his companion's gesture, and found himself in a room floored with bricks like a stable, and lighted by one small window pierced high in the wall. A small bare table with half-obliterated signs of green paint upon it reposed one foot upon a brick, with an odd look of having been arrested in a contemplated climb uphill. A cane chair, with the back broken away and the seat in a condition of staring shockheadedness, stood near the table, a forlorn grate full of dead ashes lifted its brick shoulders in a shrug of cold discomfort, and a sailor's chest sulked in one corner.

Mr. Bowling, having withdrawn the key from the outside, locked the door from within, and walking straight to the chest, fell upon his knees before it, threw it open, and began to rummage with both hands amidst its disorderly contents. By-and-by he arose, holding at arm's length a misshapen thick little volume towards Aaron.

'Tek your hat off,' said Mr. Bowling. He threw his own

battered billycock into a corner, and what with the Old Father Time forelock and the bald forehead, which showed strikingly pure and white in contrast with the coffee brown of his complexion where the sun and wind of many years at sea had touched it, he looked almost venerable. Aaron obeyed him, and laid his own hat upon the little table.

‘This,’ said Mr. Bowling, opening the misshapen volume and fluttering its leaves with both thumbs, ‘is as right and proper as if you was in a police-court or Old Bailey Sessions. It’s got the testyments in it. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Ax. Look at it yourself; see it’s all right.’ He handed the book to Aaron.

‘Yes,’ said Aaron, beginning to see that Mr. Bowling intended him to be sworn, ‘it’s a Bible.’

‘See as it’s complete. Look at it,’ said Mr. Bowling.

‘It’s all right,’ returned Aaron, fluttering the leaves.

‘Very well then; hold it in your right hand. Now then, say these here words after me: “I hereby swear as I will do fair doos along of William Dean, otherwise known as Thomas Bowling. If I betray the aforesaid William Dean, otherwise known as Thomas Bowling, to Joby Round or any other man, or if I fail in anyways to do fair doos with William Dean, I wish I may be damned. So help me God.” Now kiss the book—not your thumb, mind!—kiss the book.’

Aaron having repeated this formula, with some verbal alterations dictated by his own finer sense of responsibility towards the Queen’s English, kissed the book and handed it back to Mr. Bowling, who threw it into the chest and slammed the lid down after it, with no superfluous display of reverence for the magic qualities with which he appeared to gift it in his own mind.

‘Now you’ve swore,’ he said, ‘and now you know what you’ve got to expect if you try to come any hankypanky dodge with me.’ Aaron nodded seriously, and at the dogged scowling resolution of his companion experienced an inward quaking. ‘Now then,’ said Mr. Bowling, ‘what is this mess as you’ve got into?’

‘I went into partnership,’ said Aaron, ‘with Mr. Bache, your master—’

‘Empl’yer,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘I don’t own such a thing as a master. Cap’n I have not an objection to, because, aboard ship, somebody must rule.’

‘With Mr. Bache, your employer,’ said Aaron, accepting the correction, ‘and Mr. Ezekiel Round, Job Round’s father. We

sank a mine, and it turned out to be good for nothing. You wouldn't understand it unless I made a map to show you.'

'Here's a piece o' chalk,' returned Mr. Bowling. 'Draw a map on that there table.'

Aaron obediently took the piece of chalk, and by a simple diagram made the matter clear to his companion's apprehension. He related the gist of the morning's talk with the mine surveyor, and Mr. Bowling nodded now and then to signify understanding.

'Sit down,' said the seaman, when the story was complete. Aaron sat upon the broken chair, and Mr. Bowling took a seat upon the table. 'I am a-going,' he said, looking down at Aaron, 'to do a dangerous act, and you are a going to do a dangerous act. Do you see this?' He traced the scar upon his face with the finger which had lost a nail. 'That's a specimen of Joby Round's handiwork, that is. Do you see it?' The ugly thing was not difficult to see, and Aaron said as much. 'Very well then,' said Mr. Bowling, 'now you know what you're a-facing, and you've got to say to yourself, "Have I got the pluck, or have I not, to go through with this here business?" That's what you've got to answer, yes or no.'

'I'll go through it if I begin it,' said Aaron. 'You leave me alone for that.'

'I ain't a-going to tell you now,' resumed Mr. Bowling, 'where and in what manner Joby Round keeps what you and me wants to find. I ain't a-going to tell you that afore to-morrow. I mayn't tell you even then. I've got one thing to settle first.'

'We're not going on a wildgoose chase, are we?' asked Aaron. 'You are certain that the treasure's there?'

'I see it afore it was buried,' replied Mr. Bowling, with heavy emphasis. 'I know to a dead certainty it *was* buried, and I've got it from Joby Round's own lips as it's never been unburied. I am as certain it's there as I am certain I'm standing here alive.' He rose to his feet and spread both hands abroad. His eyes shone with a wild light, and beneath his tan crept a singular pallor, which was succeeded by a crimson flush. 'I know it's there. There's no shadow of a doubt as it's been found. There ain't a house for miles and miles. There ain't a living thing, unless a fox, or a wolf, or a bear, as treads that ground from year to year. It's a desert, that's what it is—a desert.'

'Then,' said Aaron, 'why should we lose an hour?'

'I ain't a-going to lose a minute,' returned Mr. Bowling. 'Fair

and soft goes far. I know what there is in front of me, and I mean to be safe afore I start. Look here; you be here at eight o'clock to-night. It's as dark as pitch by then, and nobody'll see you coming. If Joby Round knew as you and me was laying our heads together, he'd scent us in a minute. Now I'll see if the coast's clear, and you can get away.'

'And what are you going to do this afternoon?' demanded Aaron.

'Never you mind what I'm going to do this afternoon,' said Mr. Bowling. 'Perhaps I'm a-going to earn enough to carry me out there. You'll have to get money to start with; you can't go to the Bawlkans for nothing, mind you.' He opened the door, turning the key in the rusty lock with a long slow creak, and peered out of doors. Then, returning to the room, he picked up his wideawake, dusted it on his knee, punched it into some approach to its original shape, and, sallying out, made the tour of the cottage, surveying the fields on all sides. 'You can get now,' he said, re-entering; 'the coast's clear. Eight o'clock to-night; then I may tell you something.'

Mr. Bowling, as he appeared in the presence of Job Round, was altogether a different person to the Mr. Bowling who appeared before Aaron Whittaker. A mongrel in the presence of the game dog who has beaten him, and that same mongrel in the presence of a smaller dog whom he knows that he can beat, exhibits much the same peculiarities of bearing. The scarred, swaggering, coffee-coloured braggadocio was terrible to Aaron, though in the presence of his master he could be meek enough. To do Mr. Bowling's force of character the justice it deserves, Job Round, and a certain French adventurer who called himself Hercule Asmodée Bonaventure, and who long since disappeared from these pages, were the only men who had ever inspired him with a genuine fear. He had recognised the strong hand of authority now and then perforce, and had bowed to it, but those two men only had ever been Mr. Bowling's real masters.

In a case like this, even physical proportions go for something, and though Aaron was a well-proportioned and sturdy fellow, he was no match for his new comrade, who was a man of great width and weight, and carried no more fat about him than a greyhound. Altogether, Aaron had found his master, and though he did not like to think so, he knew it perfectly, and was disposed to tender obedient service. Nobody, however, who has

done anything like justice to the young man's character will accuse him of intending—on anything less than sheer compulsion—to divide the treasure with Mr. Bowling, and before Aaron had left his companion half an hour, he had mapped out half-a-dozen ways of getting rid of him, in case he should once reveal his secret.

Mr. Bowling had been absent without leave, and in ordinary circumstances of the like sort, was wont to assume a sulky and defiant swagger, but he walked back towards the scene of his recent labours with a slow and thoughtful air. His hedger's gloves and shears lay under the hedge where he had thrown them down on leaving the spot with Aaron. He took them up, looked at them contemptuously, and smiled.

'I shan't use you no more,' said Mr. Bowling. He climbed the fence, entered the leasowes, and swinging the gloves in one hand and the shears in the other, marched on leisurely towards the Warren. Arrived there, he made his way to the servants' quarters, and rapped at a door. A groom who happened to be idling within responded to his summons. 'My respectful service to the governor,' he said, throwing the shears and the gloves down together, 'and I should like to see him.' The groom smiled.

'Oh!' said he. 'And what might *you* want to see the governor for?'

'When I've done my business along with your governor, young man,' responded Mr. Bowling calmly, 'you can ask him what I wanted him for. My respectful service to the governor, if you please, and I should like to see him. You may think it odd, perhaps, but the governor'd like to see me just as much as I should like to see him. I'm here with a special message.'

'What's your name?' asked the groom. 'Who do you come from?'

'My name's Tom Bowling. As for who I came from, that's for your governor's hearing. No, you needn't shut the door. My respectful service to your governor, and Thomas Bowling has something to say as he'll be pleased to hear. I've got particular news for him.'

'I'm not going to send a message like that from a man like you,' returned the groom; 'it isn't likely. Oh, there's the General across at the stables; you can go and speak to him, and take your chance. That's no affair of mine.'

Mr. Bowling turned him about, and crossed the paved yard to

where the General stood, pointing something out with his cane to a stable underling, who plainly trembled before him. Coningham turned round as the new-comer drew near, hat in hand, touching his grizzled forelock with a tattooed knuckle.

'Well,' said Coningham sharply, 'what do you want?'

'My respectful service, sir,' returned Mr. Bowling, 'and I should like a private word with you.'

'Well, what have you to say?' Mr. Bowling glanced round at the underling, who was still near at hand. 'Speak out,' said Coningham.

'My respectful service, sir,' repeated Mr. Bowling once more, touching the grizzled forelock a second time, 'I should like a private word. With regards, sir, to a bulldog of the name of Pincher.' He muttered the last words in a tone so low that they did but just reach the General's ear. Coningham started, and for a second or two absolutely glared at him.

'Come this way,' he said, when he had partly recovered from the shock Mr. Bowling had given him. He walked rapidly down the yard, pushed open the gate by which Mr. Bowling had entered a minute or two before, and came upon the field beyond. 'Now,' he said, suffering the gate to fall back into its place, 'what have you to say to me?'

'I may have come here in a error,' said the seaman, twisting his billycock in both hands, 'but are you in want of information with regards to a bulldog of the name of Pincher?'

'What do you know of the dog,' inquired Coningham, 'and how do you come to suppose that I want information?'

'I know a good deal about the dog,' returned Mr. Bowling. 'If it's the same dog, I know the man that owned him. Look here, governor. With my respectful service, I'm going to ask a question. Was you ever struck by a man calling himself John Smith, as owned a bulldog by the name of Pincher?'

Coningham's pale blue eyes glittered at this inquiry, and Mr. Bowling knew before he heard the compromising words which followed that he was not there upon an idle errand.

'I was assaulted by such a man,' said the General.

'Was you afterwards, saving your presence, three parts killed afore a court-martial by that same man?'

'I was a second time assaulted, in the presence of a martial court, by the same man,' replied Coningham. His frozen blue eyes glittered like icicles in the sunlight, and the hands that

bent his cane across his breast trembled, though ever so little. 'Go on,' he said; 'you say you know the man?'

'I've cause to know the man,' said Mr. Bowling, purposely tantalising the other's suppressed eagerness. 'That's his trade-mark;' he indicated the scar. 'I've carried that for five-and-twenty year. I know him, never fear.'

'Well?' said Coningham, cutting at the air with his cane. 'Well? You know the man?'

'Excuse me, governor,' Mr. Bowling went on slowly, 'if you know who that man is, and if you can prove it, will he be locked up safe, out of the way of doing harm?'

'I will answer for that,' responded Coningham. 'You need be under no apprehension for your own safety.'

'Very well then,' said Mr. Bowling, with a deliberative air; 'what may it be worth your while to pay for what I can prove?'

'I will give,' replied the General, surveying his man, and balancing his own passion of eagerness against the fellow's humbleness of dress, and his probable desire to be revenged, 'I will give—ten pounds.'

'Oh!' said Mr. Bowling, staring at him broadly. 'You said this morning as you'd ha' give a thousand pound to know about the dog. Look here, governor, strike the iron while it's hot. Take me while I'm here. I'll put that man into your hands, and I'll do it for a hundred pounds, but not a penny less.'

'Who told you I would give a thousand pounds to know about the dog?' asked Coningham.

'Why, you did,' answered Mr. Bowling. 'I heard you when you was the other side that hedge. You was labberd o' that there hedge, and I was stabberd, and says you, "I'd give a thousand pound to know about that dog," you says.' Coningham took a pace or two away and then came back again. 'I'll do it for a hundred pounds,' said Bowling, 'but not a penny less.'

'You shall have your hundred pounds on the day of his conviction,' answered the General.

'That won't do neither,' said Mr. Bowling. 'I must have that hundred pound down the minute as you've got your proof. I shan't appear again him, I shan't show at all. I shall be thousands o' miles away afore he's tried.'

'You can put proofs into my hands?' demanded Coningham. 'What sort of proofs?'

'I can tell you where to find two men alive in Plymouth now

—men as knowed Johnny Smith intimate, and can swear to him. I can tell you where to find a man, alive in Plymouth now, as heard him tell the tale and threaten to have the life of the man as killed his dog. You know who that was, governor?’

‘You are growing a little too familiar, my good friend,’ said the General, shaking off the tattooed hand Mr. Bowling had laid upon his arm.

‘Will them proofs serve your turn, governor?’ asked Mr. Bowling. ‘Find the men I’ve spoke of, and they’ll most like be able to find you twenty more, or put you in the way of finding ’em.’

‘And who is the man you charge?’ asked Coninghame. Mr. Bowling shook his head with an ugly smile.

‘Not yet, governor,’ he said; ‘not yet. It don’t suit me to say at present. The man mustn’t be touched till I’m ready to go away. I shall ask you, governor, to take your solemn oath not to try to touch that man till I say I’m ready.’

Coninghame had no objection to using this tool, but he had the strongest possible objection to the tool himself. The man was coarse in manner, obstinate, insolent, and apparently only half sensible of the social division which existed between the General and himself.

‘You need be under no apprehension for yourself,’ the General said. ‘If you can furnish me with the proofs you speak of your name need not appear, and you need not be recognised in the matter.’

‘Never you mind,’ said the seaman roughly, ‘what I need be under no apprehension. That’s my affair, that is, not yourn. I shall want you to take your solemn oath you won’t try to touch that man till I say I’m ready.’

‘And when will that be?’ asked Coninghame, suppressing his own choler and repugnance as he might.

‘It can’t be later than a week from now,’ returned Mr. Bowling. ‘It may be less.’

‘And in the meantime, will you put the names you speak of into my hands and permit me to make inquiries as to the truth of your statement?’

‘In Plymouth, mind you,’ said Mr. Bowling, insensible to the angry satire of Coninghame’s politeness, ‘yes. But first you’ll take your solemn oath not to move until I give you the word—not to move down here, I mean. You can do what you like in

Plymouth, cause none of his old pals but me knows where he is. You'll take your solemn oath, likewise, not to let out as you ever so much as heard o' me. And also you'll take your solemn oath to pay me a hundred pounds down in gold as soon as ever you've found the men as I shall give you their names, and found they knew Johnny Smith, and can swear to him.'

'How am I to tell that they can swear to him,' asked Coningham, 'until they see him?'

'Can you swear to him?' asked Mr. Bowling. 'If all they say's true, you've felt his hand's weight since you've come to live down here. I could swear to him, mind you,' he cried, striving to correct himself. 'I name no names.'

'Come,' said the General, who was wincing in every nerve against the other's insolence and brutality, and yet must needs bear with him, 'you have gone too far to go back. Who is the man?'

'Not yet,' said Bowling; 'not yet, governor. I want your solemn oath.' He repeated his conditions.

'You have my promise,' said Coningham frozenly.

'That won't do for me,' returned Mr. Bowling. And he stuck to the point with so much persistence that at last Coningham yielded, and much against the grain, and absurdly conscious of the want of dignity involved in the proceeding, swore to observe Mr. Bowling's conditions.

'The name,' said Mr. Bowling, then, 'is Joby Round, Esquire, of Konak Cottage. Now, you mind what you've swore upon your solemn oath.'

A sacred joy illumined Coningham's heart.

'Providence,' he said to himself, 'has given the scoundrel into my hands at last.'

(To be continued.)

COURT ROYAL

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

OCTOBER, 1885,

COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

WITHOUT WARNING.



BEAVIS remained up, smoking and musing in the study till his father returned. He did not speak to him about Joanna that night, as the old man looked tired. He gave him his candle, made a joke about a midday breakfast and lunch rolled into one, at which they would meet, and retired to rest.

Neither Beavis nor his father

came down till late next morning, and then only, over their breakfast, was Joanna's behaviour discussed.

‘I never take tea with meat. What is it this morning? Kidneys? Kidneys above all. No tea, Beavis, coffee for me; less tannin in it. Can you conceive anything more calculated to give dyspepsia than to immerse meat in a fluid charged with tannin? You convert it at one stroke into leather, and make demands on the gastric juice which it is not qualified to perform. No, tea is poison; give me coffee.’

‘Certainly, my dear father,’ said Beavis with a smile. ‘I fear I have something to communicate which will disagree with you more than tea.’

‘Then reserve it.’

‘I must not. We must act upon it at once.’

Mr. Worthivale sighed. ‘I enjoyed myself so greatly last night. Indeed, I do not think I have spent such a happy ten days as these last since I was a boy. Well, what is it?’

Then Beavis told his father what he had seen that morning early on his return from Court Royal. Mr. Worthivale was annoyed. ‘One cannot get along a week without unpleasantnesses,’ he said peevishly. ‘Really, at my time of life I expect relief from worries.’

‘Where did you leave your keys?’

‘I cannot say for certain. Yes, I can. I am positive: that is, I think I locked everything up as usual, and put the keys in my trousers pocket. I generally—I may say always—do so on principle. But yesterday I was in such a hurry about the ball. My time and thoughts were in such requisition that I may have committed the oversight of leaving them in the bookcase. I was not at the office at all after half-past three, and then I was there for an hour only. There was no money in the drawers.’

‘No, but there was information concerning the Duke’s affairs worth to some people a good deal of money.’

‘It would certainly be annoying if stupid gossip got about concerning the family embarrassments.’

‘I do not allude to gossip.’

‘I’ll tell you what I will do, Beavis. I’ll ring for the girl, and then we will examine her together. I see no cause for alarm. She can neither read nor write.’

‘Who told you so?’

‘A Mrs. Delany, in whose service she was before she came to us. Touch the bell, Beavis.’

In response to the summons Emily appeared.

‘Look here,’ said the steward; ‘send the other girl to me. I mean Joan or Joanna, whichever she is called, I cannot remember. I want a word with her.’

‘Please sir,’ answered Emily, ‘she is gone.’

‘Gone!’ exclaimed father and son in a breath.

‘Yes, sir. She went by the first coach this morning, when you were asleep. She said as how the young master had given her notice to be off at once. She took her box out into the road herself. She was in a pretty take on too, sir, because, as she said—to use her very words—she was chiselled out of a dance. She’d set her heart on going to the tenants’ ball to-night. Her and I had a regular breeze because we could not both go, and it ended in the usual way. She got her way, and made me go last night just to look on and help. She was crying with vexation because she could not be at the dance. When she went away she said, What would Lady Grace think, who had been so kind to her, and Miss Lucy, who’d taught her to dance!’

‘I did not give her notice,’ said Beavis in a low tone to his father.

‘She has not had her wage,’ said the steward aloud to Beavis and Emily.

‘Well, now, that is queer,’ began the maid, when the young man cut her short with,

‘You may go.’

As soon as the girl was gone Beavis said, ‘This makes matters more suspicious. I told Joanna that I would examine her with you to-day, and rather than subject herself to interrogation she takes herself off without warning.’

‘She forfeits her wages,’ said Mr. Worthivale. ‘But I dare be bound she misunderstood you. Beavis, you speak rather sharp with servants. I dare say Emily would have talked on for half an hour if you had not cut her over the knuckles so sharp.’

‘I have no doubt whatever she would.’

‘She might have told us a good deal,’ said his father. ‘I have no doubt in my mind that a misapprehension lies at the bottom of this unfortunate affair. Of course, Joan had no right to be in the office, but perhaps she was dusting and tidying. You know yourself how neat she keeps that room, which of old was always in a litter. Once I never knew where to lay my hand on anything. I shall miss her; she had her good points. I dare say you snapped off her head when you came in and found the poor creature dozing over her work. No doubt she was tired. You

are too hasty, Beavis, too hasty by far. No question she has left her address with Emily. I will ring and inquire.'

Beavis stayed his father. 'I am sure she has not. This is a more serious matter than you suppose. I never liked the looks of the girl; she was too clever.'

'That comes of education; the over-education of this nineteenth century.'

'But she can neither read nor write.'

'Oh! I beg your pardon. I mean the reverse. She is clever because not overtaxed by Board School masters straining poor, underfed brains to reach standards that are far above their level.'

'Whence did she come?'

'From Plymouth, from Colonel Delany's—a very respectable family. He is connected by marriage with the Pomeroy's. I do not know who Mrs. Delany was, but of course she is a lady, and she wrote in highest commendation of the girl.'

'Let me see the letter.'

'It is somewhere in the office; I think I can find it; follow me. But mind, Beavis,' said the steward, stopping at the door, and holding up his finger; 'remember what I have said about drinking tea with meat. You deliberately tan your food, and yet you expect to digest it. As well eat sole-leather.'

The old man fumbled in his drawers.

'I thought I had put it in this pigeon-hole, among sundries. It seems to have made itself wings and gone.'

'I have little doubt Joanna has taken it.'

'She could not read or write,' said Mr. Worthivale.

'If she does not read, why did she pull out the ledgers? If she does not write, who made a précis of the debts and income of the family in the little note-book I saw?'

'It may have been in my handwriting. I often take odd scraps of paper and figure on them the revenue of the Kingsbridge estates, and the outgoings, and try to extract some comfort from them. I dare say you will find a score of such balances in the wastepaper basket.'

'They ought not to be there.'

'Who is the wiser? I put initials to the debts.'

'What I saw was not in your handwriting, and was done very clearly and systematically. It was done by some one experienced in bookkeeping—that is the only point that shakes my conviction that the girl has bled your books.'

‘What was the back of the account-book like?’

‘I did not see it. Joanna knocked the candle over, as I am convinced, deliberately, and in the dark secreted the notes and put away the ledgers. I heard her do the latter, and when she returned with the candle, everything was in place, and the account-book nowhere that I could see.’

‘We will overhaul the cabinet.’

‘I should like to overhaul her room.’

‘I will call Emily.’

The maid conducted Beavis upstairs.

He looked round. The bed had not been slept in. Some scraps of paper lay scattered on the floor; a saucer with water in it stood in the window.

‘Ah!’ said Emily, ‘never was nobody so stuck up as Joanna over nothing as she was over the pot of lily of the valley her ladyship gave her. She went off on the top of the coach, hugging it like a baby, and I seed her kiss her hand and wave it, right away over the woods towards Court Royal; and she was crying. I reckon she was sorry to go. She was so taken with Lady Grace, she nigh worshipped the ground she trod on; and the last thing I heard her say was, “Oh, what will Lady Grace think!” Why, sir, I reckon her ladyship won’t cast a thought after her.’

Beavis shook his head.

‘Joanna has not left a pin that was her own. She looked about the room a score of times to make sure she had everything. She carried away her pink silk as she minded to have worn at the tenants’ ball, had it not been spoiled with mineral water.’

‘Did she give you her address?’

‘No, sir, her and me wasn’t over-good friends. She was one that would have all her own way, she was that overbearing. I did think it was not fair that she should go to the dance to-night and not I, who am the longest in the place, but she was that set on it, I reckon there was no withstanding her. Lady Grace and Miss Lucy had taught her to dance for the purpose—she brought this up on me, and what was I to say?’

‘That will do,’ said Beavis. ‘I asked a simple question and required a simple answer.’

‘And after all, sir,’ said the unabashed Emily, ‘she won’t go to the ball neither. That’s sweet comfort.’

The tenants’ ball began at seven, and by tacit understanding was to be over at two in the morning. The hours were very

much earlier than at the grand ball of the evening before. Mr. Worthivale and Beavis were there, as a matter of course, and all the Ducal family appeared. His Grace remained in the ball-room longer than on the former occasion, talking to the young farmers' sons and daughters, showing that he knew them all by name, took an interest in their welfare, and was delighted to have them about him enjoying themselves. He was obstinate on this evening, he would not go when his daughter thought advisable.

'No, dear,' he said, 'it refreshes me to see all their happy faces. How hearty they are; how well they behave; they are so courteous and kindly. I do like our English peasantry; there is a gentility of feeling about them I meet with nowhere else—good hearts and clear heads.'

The Duke knew nearly every one. He had the happy faculty of never forgetting a face, and of remembering the circumstances of every family. He had the tact of inquiring after absent members, by name, with such real or well-simulated interest, as to gratify those he addressed, and convince them of his sincerity and friendship.

'What! Mrs. Prowse! You here? This is an unexpected pleasure. How many years ago was it that you were pretty Mary Eastlake, with whom I opened the ball? The belle of Aveston Gifford.'

'Well, your Grace, my daughter has come for her first dance, and as I've no other children—you'll excuse me, your Grace—I thought I'd come with her and see her safe home.'

'Bring her to me. If she is like you in old days, she will kill many hearts this evening.'

'Well, Richard Palmer! I hope you have brought your voice and will favour us with a song, when the dancers give over for a moment. How is poor Jane? Is she still suffering from her spine. I was so grieved to hear of her accident, I had counted on her presence this evening.'

'How are you, Mr. Newberry? Last time I saw you, your wife was bent on the great ash being cut down in front of the gate. It went to my heart to deny her, the tree was so fine, but I learnt a lesson; the gale of last October tore the tree to pieces and pelted your roof with the boughs.'

'Broke the roof through and through, your Grace.'

'That is a lesson never to deny the ladies anything; I dare say your own experience teaches you the same.'

‘How do you do, Mr. Nesbitt?’ to a schoolmaster; ‘glad I secured your services for the new school at Wooley. I read your account of your misadventures—that you sent to *Blackwood*—with great amusement. Never laughed so much in my life. It was smartly written—very. You will do something with your pen some day.’

‘Oh, Lucy, dear,’ said Lady Grace, ‘do go to papa and persuade him to retire. He is so happy when he gets with the young people that he will stay on here longer than is judicious. He will suffer for it to-morrow, and I am sure that they will dance with more ease when the restraint of his presence is removed. Look! there are only three circling round the room now, to the strains of the whole marine band, and they are blushing and disposed to give it up. Where is Joanna? What has become of that odd girl? I see her nowhere.’

‘I do not know; I will ask my father, or Beavis.’

‘Do, Lucy, go to the Duke. He will listen to you when he will not obey me or Uncle Ronald—not even the Archdeacon. You have such a coaxing way, and yet you are so resolute, he will not refuse to go. Dear old man! it is always “Where is Lucy?” with him. Nothing goes right unless under your hands.’

Then Lady Grace caught the eye of Beavis, and beckoned him to her. ‘Where is your maid Joanna?’ she asked. ‘Do see how shy the young folk are. These couples are only dancing because I have set them spinning, and they do it out of duty, not because they enjoy themselves. Joanna has no shyness, I will get her a partner and set her off.’

‘She is not here, Lady Grace.’

‘Not here! But how is this? Could you not spare her? I am sorry; Lucy and I have been teaching her to dance, and she had so set her heart on this evening.’

‘She is a perplexing, queer girl.’

‘She is a girl worth studying, a girl from whom a great deal may be learnt; delightfully fresh and yet terribly worn out, if you can understand such a compound of opposites. Is not that the sum of Hegel’s philosophy, the conciliation of antagonisms? Well, that is Joanna. I am so sorry she is not here. I should have delighted to see how she profited by my teaching.’

‘She is gone, Lady Grace.’

‘Gone!’

‘Yes, gone without warning.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNSTABLE AS WATER.

THREE days after the grand ball the Rigsbys left. Miss Rigsby had not appeared at the tenants' ball; she was tired, and did not feel well. The rumour of the projected marriage had got about, and the tenants would have liked to have seen their future Duchess, but she was ungracious; she disliked vulgar people and would not appear, to the disappointment of the tenants and of the Duke, who thought that, in this matter, she did not act with the consideration proper to her position.

The Marquess and she had seen a good deal of each other, and everything seemed favourable to a marriage. Mr. Rigsby held long conferences with the Duke, and came away greatly impressed with his urbanity, and still more impressed with the conviction that he had made his own wisdom and importance clear to the Duke. Miss Rigsby had convinced herself that she was in love with the Marquess. Miss Stokes assured her of the passion that consumed the bosom of her lover. Lord Saltcombe did not in any way vary in his behaviour; always courteous and considerate, ready to be with her on every occasion, conversing on her reminiscences of Ceylon, and attracting her attention to what was interesting in the country that was shortly to be her home. She had no appreciation of what was good in art, and he amused himself and her in endeavouring to instil into her some of the first principles of taste.

The day after the departure of the Rigsbys Beavis went to his friend's rooms. He found the Marquess in his arm-chair among a heap of papers that he had torn up and cast about him on the floor. He was so deep in his thoughts, which were of a painful nature, that he did not notice the entrance of Beavis. At his first word he started and sprang up bewildered, unable at once to recognise the speaker.

'You are, I hear, going to Plymouth, Saltcombe.'

'I—Plymouth—oh yes, I forgot. To be sure, yes, Beavis, I am going there for a while. How hot it is in the room.'

The Marquess went to the window and threw it open, drew a long breath, passed his red silk handkerchief over his brow, and then returning to his chair, said, 'Oh, Beavis! you have no conception of the strain on one's powers to keep up the appearance of being a lover.'

‘Good heavens!’ exclaimed Beavis; ‘speak lower, or say nothing on the matter.’

‘I must speak. I have no one but yourself to whom I can give vent to my feelings. This is your doing; you have put me on the rack.’

‘I have advised for the best.’

‘I know you have,’ answered the Marquess with a bitter laugh. ‘I will go through with it now, my honour is engaged, so do not fear. *Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes.* You must excuse me if, at times, my courage gives way.’

Beavis had never before seen Lord Saltcombe so excited. He was usually composed and cool.

‘The Duke wants a word with you,’ said Beavis. ‘I have come to tell you that he wishes to speak to you in the rose boudoir.’

The Marquess nodded. ‘One moment, Beavis, before I go.’

‘I am at your service.’

‘Tell me, how is it that we are spending money right and left just now, and that there is not the ever-recurring worry of a deficit?’

Beavis hesitated.

‘I insist on knowing,’ said Lord Saltcombe.

‘The necessary sums have been lent.’

‘What! a fresh loan to crush us! At what rate of interest now? Who is the lender? Another Jew?’

‘No Jew,’ answered Beavis. ‘No interest is asked, as all will be repaid as soon as your marriage takes place.’

‘Who is the Good Samaritan that has flown to the rescue?’

‘There is nothing of the Good Samaritan in this. It is but a temporary accommodation.’

‘But who is this most accommodating party?’

‘My father.’

The Marquess stood still and looked at Beavis. He put his hand to his chin; it shook. ‘Good God!’ he exclaimed. ‘You -- you dear good friends! You again helping us!’ He was greatly moved. He took Beavis’ hand and held it tightly in his whilst he looked out of the window. ‘Oh Beavis! how kind, how noble you are. I insist on the whole truth. What is the sum advanced?’

‘Four thousand.’

‘Is that your father’s money?’

‘No.’

‘Whose is it then?’

Beavis did not reply. He looked down.

‘I insist on being told.’

‘Lucy’s.’

‘What!’ exclaimed the Marquess, colouring; ‘indebted to dear Lucy more deeply still. Oh, Beavis, never, never can we repay the debt we owe your house. So Lucy finds the money to wreath the ox for the sacrifice.’ He was silent, he let go his friend’s hand and stood before the fire, looking down and kicking the hearth. ‘It shall all be repaid,’ he said at last; ‘I mean the money. The good intent, the self-sacrifice, that can only be treasured in our hearts, a priceless possession. Beavis, do not fear. The marriage will take place, and that speedily. I cannot bear to be indebted so deeply to you.’

‘Your father is awaiting you,’ said Beavis, anxious to cut short a scene painful to both.

The Marquess left the room, and sought his father.

The Duke led a very regular life, regulated to the smallest details. He suffered from sleeplessness, and therefore did not rise till late. He breakfasted at half-past ten, after which he was visited by his son and daughter, and occasionally by Lord Ronald. The General was up at half-past six, and took a constitutional till eight, when he came in and had a cup of coffee. He breakfasted with the rest at nine. The Duke read his letters whilst dressing, and arranged them in three piles; those he must himself reply to, those that might be answered by his daughter or son, and those on business, which he passed over to the steward. Mr. Worthivale called daily—or almost daily—at noon, and sat with him for an hour. The Duke partook of a light luncheon at half-past one, and when the weather permitted he took a drive; if the weather was unfavourable he walked in his conservatories.

He generally dined with the family, and sat with them for a couple of hours after dinner. Then he retired for the night. On Sundays he breakfasted half-an-hour earlier, in order that he might attend church.

Sometimes after dinner he took a hand at whist, or played chess with the Vicar, who was frequently invited to Court Royal. In former years he had spent the season in town, but his health no longer permitted his travelling by rail, and his children had accommodated themselves to a country life.

The Duke had pretended to pass over the care of the property to his son, and he no longer inquired into the balance; that the

Marquess was expected to see to; but he amused himself with details, the complaints of the farmers, their demands for fresh buildings, their applications for drainage operations. These he took up, and it gave a zest to his drives to inspect the farms and see the proposed improvements. This was a little vexatious to the steward, who endeavoured to cut down expenses. The tenants knew that they were sure of a favourable answer from his Grace, and therefore applied direct to him.

The Duke had his private account at the bank; a modest sum of a thousand pounds was always paid in to this account, on which he drew independently of the house. The cost of keeping up Court Royal, the wages, the housekeeping, the gardens, belonged to a separate account, with which he did not concern himself. That was under the control of Lucy and her father; subject, of course, to Lady Grace, if she chose to supervise it, but this she never did.

The general accounts, the rent roll, the receipts, the outlay on the estates, the charges on the property, the interest on the mortgages and loans, these the Marquess was supposed to examine every half-year; but he did so in a careless, impatient manner, and refused to take an interest in the property. Time enough, he thought, when forced to do so, on his succession to the estates.

‘Sit down, Herbert,’ said the Duke, when Lord Saltcombe entered. ‘We must have a little quiet conversation together. You are going to Plymouth; it is well, you must be with your *fiancée* as much as you can to learn each other’s characters and habits. I confess to a little surprise. I had thought you would have been guided in your choice less by caprice. Still—you are the judge of what is best for yourself. In the matter of fortune everything is satisfactory, and perhaps that is not a point to be disregarded, as our fortunes are not exactly what they were. The property was heavily burdened when it came to me; still, I have lived very quietly of late, and a margin must be left to turn over and extinguish such debts as were formerly contracted.’

The Marquess looked down.

‘You have been shut out from the world for some years, Herbert. That has not met with my approval. Your place was in London, and you ought to have been in Parliament. Now that you are about to be married I expect you will take your proper position in the social and political constellations. I hope this union is one of genuine affection.’

‘I trust it meets with your approval.’

‘I have nothing against it. The young lady has been properly educated, the family is respectable. The Rigsbys of Lincolnshire are known; they have been settled in that most dismal of counties for several centuries. They have a Baronet in the family—a late creation. Well, in these days one must not



be too nice.’ After a pause, the Duke went on: ‘You are quite right to go to Plymouth. I wish you there to take a good suite of rooms in the Royal Hotel, and live up to your station. Take some of your own servants with you; your valet, and your own riding and driving horses, and your groom. I should advise a dog-cart and a drag. I am not one to encourage extravagance, indeed I hate display, it is vulgar; but your position demands a certain amount of appearance. You are the representative of the

house, now that I am a poor broken creature, and cannot show in public. An Eveleigh must always maintain his dignity. I beg you to remember this. Never let yourself down.'

Lord Saltcombe, not knowing what answer to make, bowed. His father accepted this movement as a sign of submission to his will.

'One thing more. I believe you have not as yet made your *fiancée* a present. This, of course, you must do. I have looked through the family jewels, but see nothing that quite answers the purpose. I should like you to spare no expense; run up to town and choose out a suitable present, a diamond necklet or tiara. It is possible you may not have the sum sufficient at your command. I have therefore drawn you a blank cheque on my private account. Fill in the sum when you know what you want.'

'I cannot—my father.'

'You must, Herbert. It is my desire. I shall be annoyed if you give your betrothed a present unworthy of a future Duchess of Kingsbridge.'

Lord Saltcombe was too agitated to speak.

'Herbert,' continued the old Duke, 'I give my full consent to this union, and I ask the Almighty on my knees to shower His richest blessing upon it. May you be happy as I was happy with your dear, never-to-be-forgotten mother. You deserve it. A blessing is attached to filial obedience, and you have always been a dutiful and loving son; you have never caused me an hour's pain, never given me occasion to blush to think that a son of mine has stained the hereditary honour.'

Lord Saltcombe returned to his apartments in a condition of confusion and distress that made him thankful Beavis was not there to see him. He threw himself in his chair, covered his face with his hands, and a sob broke from his bosom and relieved the immediate tension.

He sat thus thinking, hiding his face from no one, for he was alone, for a quarter of an hour. Then, as though fired by a sudden resolution, he took a key from his pocket and opened his cabinet. He drew forth a drawer and took from it a bundle of faded letters. He set his lips closely, and his brows were contracted.

The fire was low. He took the tongs and raked it together, and put on a billet of wood. Then, to brisk it up, cast on it the scraps of paper from the floor. Now the fire flamed, and the dry wood caught and crackled.

Lord Saltcombe leaned back in his chair, and untied the bundle of letters. He drew the notes from their envelopes, and looked at one, then another. His face relaxed; an expression of pain of a different sort settled on it. He made an effort to recover his firmness and to carry out his resolution. He threw one, two, three envelopes on the flames, and sighed as they flared. He knelt down, and placed the letters on the hearth. Then he drew from the cabinet the little miniature already described, and looked at it long, with face that twitched with suffering. He put it towards his lips—as about to kiss it, then recovered himself, and placed it on the little pyre of old letters.

‘They must all go together now,’ he said, and put his hand to the billet of wood to bring it to the little pile. But the wood was hot and burnt his fingers. Then he took the tongs, and picked up a coal, and laid it on one of the papers. The coal died out, and Lord Saltcombe took the paper, and brushed away the charred fragments. He struck a vesta match, but his hand trembled and he was unable to fire with it the old letters.

Then he stood up, and leaning his elbow on the chimney-piece, rested his head against his hand, and looked down on the miniature on the hearth. How lovely that face was! The great dark eyes seemed to plead for pity. ‘Why should I?’ asked the Marquess. ‘It must be done before I am married. Then I must utterly destroy all memories of the past—but not yet! surely not yet!’ He stooped, picked up the miniature, tied the letters together again, and replaced them and the picture in their old drawer.

The resolution of Lord Saltcombe had led him to burn three envelopes.

CHAPTER XXVII.

REVOLT.

MR. LAZARUS was engaged on his dinner. He sat on the chair without a bottom, with a plate on his knees. In that plate were three cold Jerusalem artichokes. He had a fourth on the end of an iron fork, and he held it between his eye and the window. ‘It is deadly grey in flesh,’ he said, ‘and sits cold on the stomick. I wish Joanna were back to warm my victuals. It is not the quality I object to, it’s the coldness. There is a sort of damp chill about

these cold artichokes, like grey November fog solidified into vegetable pills. Joanna is a long time about her business. I know what it is—the great dinners she gets there, goose and sage stuffing, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, the beef with little white curls of horse-radish on it, like the first locks on the head of an innocent babe, that a mother loves to play with. One of the first things that ever I can remember, when I turn my eyes lovingly



back upon childhood, is tapioca pudding; how delicious it was, golden on top like cream, and browned here and there, made with good milk and an egg. There is a deal of difference between the tapioca now and what it was then. Now best Rio is eightpence-halfpenny, Penang is fivepence; then it cost me nothing. Those childish days were lovely. I paid for nothing, I consumed everything gratis. They will never return, never. I wish Joanna were back; I can't stomach these artichokes. I'd make her eat them,

it is a sin to waste them, and I'd get myself a cheesecake.' The door was thrown open, and Joanna appeared, thrusting her box before her with one hand and both knees, whilst with the left hand she clasped a flower-pot.

'There!' said she, 'I'm back, Mr. Lazarus. The man outside is waiting to be paid for carrying my box. He wants a shilling, but he can be forced to be content with ninepence if you refuse to give more. I want some dinner.'

'Here, take it,' said Lazarus, handing her the plate; 'do as you always have done—tear the very food from my mouth. You long-necked cormorant! You've done growing, and ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

'The porter is waiting to be paid,' said Joanna.

'I suppose eightpence and a French sou will do, if I slip it among the English coppers. Take this; you shall get no more. With a little effort you might have carried the box yourself.'

An altercation was heard outside when the girl offered the porter the eightpence and sou. Lazarus put his hands in his pockets and listened with composure. To put his hands in his pockets he was forced to stand up; then he sat down in the bottomless chair, and clenched them in the position where he had thrust them. Not another halfpenny would he give, but if the porter were inclined to deal, that was another matter.

Joanna returned triumphant. 'He went away cursing all Jews,' she said.

'Let him curse,' answered Lazarus; 'that relieves temper and don't hurt. There are your victuals, Joanna. I hope you've not been so pampered as to have your stomach spoiled. I suppose geese have been thick as quails in Kibroth-hataavah. I don't like goose, it is greasy food. Mutton, boiled, with caper sauce, roast with currant jelly,—bah! you are puffy about the face, laying on fat in flakes. Tapioca, I suppose, every day, gorging yourself on it,—guzzling greengage trifle, making a beast of yourself on meringues. I had a meringue once, the day I was married, that ended in gall and bitterness. I don't mean the meringue, I mean the marriage. The meringue cost me fourpence.'

Joanna took the plate of cold artichokes, turned them contemptuously over, and ate them.

'I'll tell you what it is, master,' she said; 'I've toiled and lied for you, and done a deal of dirty work. I've done dirty work here, mending old clothes, and patching and darning carpets, but

the dirtiest work you ever set me to do is what I have done at Court Royal. What has come of it all? I am cheated out of two dances. You sent me there, just when I was about to get a little amusement and learn dancing, and when I got there, and did learn, you gave me work to do that forced me to run away and miss the tenants' ball. It is not fair.'

'Run away!' echoed Lazarus. 'You haven't run away, and not done what you was sent after? You can't have been so wicked?'

'I've done it,' said Joanna, 'and truly ashamed of myself I am. I tell you what it is, Mr. Lazarus, unless I was pawned to you and couldn't do otherwise, I'd strike. But you know you've got me, and can drive me where you will. I give you fair warning, I'll kill myself rather than do more of that sort of dirty work; then you may whistle for your half-a-sovereign, and the interest—seven shillings. I reckon you'll be careful not to drive me to extremities, lest you are left seventeen shillings to the bad.' Joanna looked round the kitchen. 'What a proper mess you've got everything into whilst I've been away. It is a piggery. No wonder Moses forbade you eating swine's flesh, it would be sheer cannibalism. Everything was bad before, but it is bad and rusty and dirty now. I will not have it. Take yourself out of that seatless chair; you're sinking through it so low that in another minute you'll be sitting on the floor. Get out; I'll bring you down a sound chair from upstairs.'

'The chair is good, Joanna, it only wants the oven tray across it.'

'I will not have it here. I have been in kitchens that were a pleasure to live in. There every bit of wood was white, and every bit of metal shone. I could have been happy there, but for what you'd set me at, and that took the pleasure out of everything. Look at that window-pane, cracked where the boys threw a stone eighteen months ago. A dab of putty holds it together, and stops the hole where the stone went through. It must be mended. I will not bear it left like this.'

'Go along, Joanna; now you have glutted your appetite, go and get on your old clothes. Those you have on are too good for this shop.'

'No—I will not put on such mean, miserable rags again. I have worn what are neat and clean, and neat and clean I shall dress henceforth. Unless I have my own way, I won't light the fire and boil the kettle, I won't peel the potatoes, nor turn uni-

forms, nor sell anything. I'll lie in bed, and you won't get me out except with dynamite.'

'You've been spoiled,' said the pawnbroker. 'Oh, the wickedness of the world! I had you here, sheltered under my wing from every harm, and when I send you out a little way, you become a prey to all kinds of vice and corruption of morals. You're too grand now to do anything. Why wasn't you a Jewess born, and then nothing you went through would have taken the love of economy out of you. I suppose you've seen such grand things that nothing here seems good. Perhaps you'd like plate-glass in the kitchen window, and a silver stewpan for the potatoes, and an eider-down petticoat, and a dado round the walls of the scullery?'

'He who has seen the sea doesn't call every puddle a lake,' said Joanna. 'I'd rather live in one of the Duke's cottages with deal tables and clean plates than among your valuables, allowed only to use what is worthless. No, master,' added Joanna, looking round, 'it has done me good to go away. I've seen a bit of a new world, and I am wiser than I was. You can't get a shirt off a naked man, nor feathers off a toad, so I do not expect of you to let me have everything new and bright, but I will have things sound and clean.'

'Whither are you going now?' he asked, as she made a movement towards the stairs.

'I am going after my flowers,' she answered; 'I want to see how they are. I've thought of them and longed to see them again, and they are about the only things here I have cared to see once more. I'll tell you another thing. Get the sack of shavings from under the counter, and empty it in the cupboard under the stairs, where I keep my kindling. I'll sleep in the shop no more. I'll have a proper bed and a room to myself. I am eighteen; in another year mother will redeem me; if not, I shall redeem myself, my own way.' Then she ascended the stairs.

Lazarus struggled out of his chair. Having his hands in his pockets, and sinking deeper through the place where the seat had been, he was nipped, and could not extricate himself with ease. He shook his head, and, when his hands were free, withdrew them from his pockets, and rubbed his frowsy chin. 'What democratic ideas are afloat!' he said. 'What will the world come to!'

Then he seated himself on the flour-barrel. 'She'll be too proud to occupy this place of honour,' said he, 'where she's

squatted time out of mind. I made a sad mistake plunging her in the whirlpool; now she'll never be to me what she was—she'll be exacting in her food, for one thing. That reminds me, I have not had my dinner. I'll go and get something at the shop over the way.'

When Joanna came down, to her surprise she saw that the Jew had put a beefsteak pie and a plate of cheesecakes on the table, as well as a jug of porter. He had been across the street, and procured these delicacies. After a struggle with himself, he made the purchases, both because he was hungry himself, and because he was afraid of losing Joanna's services unless he treated her better. The contrast between her life at Court Royal Lodge and the Golden Balls, Barbican, was too dreadful not to shock her; he resolved to bridge the chasm with beefsteak pie and cheesecakes.

'There, there, my child,' he said; 'you see how I love you, and how glad I am to have you home. If you had given me earlier notice I would have had better fare ready for you; as it is, I have run out and spared no expense to provide you with dainties. Sit down, bring a chair from upstairs—two, one for me, I can endure that bottomless affair no longer, and tell me what of my business you have done at Court Royal.'

Joanna was mollified by what she saw. 'I thank you,' she said; 'you have watered my plants whilst I have been away. I thank you.'

'Don't mention it,' answered the Jew; 'the water cost nothing. What have you ascertained?'

'Here is the account,' said the girl, extending to him the note-book Beavis had observed under her hand in the office. 'I was caught taking my extracts, and I got away with difficulty. I lost my dance by it.'

The Jew clutched the book eagerly.

'To-night,' she said, 'is the tenants' ball, and I was to have been there. Lady Grace and Miss Lucy taught me to dance, and I should have been happy—but I was caught over the accounts and had to make off.'

The Jew was immersed in the accounts. He chuckled, and rubbed his knees.

'Past all recovery,' he said, and laughed.

'I do not know that,' said Joanna, helping herself to some pie. 'The Marquess is going to marry an heiress, tremendously wealthy, and that will set the property afloat again.'

‘What—what is that?’ exclaimed the Jew, starting up with almost a scream.

‘There is a leathery coffee-planter come home from Ceylon with a pale daughter. Their name is Rigsby. A match has been made up between the Marquess of Saltcombe and Miss Rigsby. I don’t suppose he cares much for her; but she is worth a vast sum of money, and the steward, Mr. Worthivale, calculates to clear the property with her fortune. If you’ve got some of the mortgages, it is all right. You’ll have the money.’

‘I do not want the money. I will not be paid off!’ cried the Jew, dashing his hands against his forehead.

Joanna took some more beefsteak pie. ‘That is the first time I have heard you decline money,’ she said dryly. ‘What do you want? Not the property? Not to be a great landlord? Not to pig in Court Royal?’

‘I will refuse the money. I will keep my grip on them.’

Joanna poured herself out some stout.

‘If they choose to clear you off they can. I believe it is Mr. Worthivale’s intention to do so immediately after the marriage has taken place,’ she said.

‘Who are these Rigsbys? Where are they?’

‘I have told you what Mr. Rigsby is. They have taken a house in Plymouth or Stoke. They have taken a house there for the winter.’

‘Do they know the state of affairs?’

‘I cannot tell. I have not talked with them. I have found out a great deal. You cannot expect me to see into people’s heads as if they were water-bottles. It is only cheap-jacks who expose all their contents to the public.’

‘Is this Rigsby a fool to sink his fortune in redeeming land which is daily depreciating in value?’

‘I do not think he is a fool. He does not look like it.’

‘Joanna! this spoils all my schemes. I have toiled and spun to get my web round them; and now are they to escape me? I could knock my brains out against the wall to think it.’

‘Why should you wish the family harm? They are good people, a long way above such goodness as you or I could aspire to. They are loved and respected by all who know them. They hurt no one, and bless many. I am glad that there is a chance of their recovery.’

‘I do not care for my money. I want to have them down, down under my feet.’

‘Then I will help you no more. What harm have they done you?’

‘The worst, the deadliest harm of all.’

‘And you are moving against them out of personal revenge? I thought all you wanted was to be sure of your money.’

‘I will tell you all—then you may judge if I have cause to love them; if I desire to spare them.’

Joanna laid aside her knife and fork; she was interested now, and alarmed. She was afraid to think that she had been working for the downfall of that dear Lady Grace whom she regarded above every mortal being.

‘As you say, you are no longer a child. You are a woman, so you can hear the whole story. I was married eight years ago to Rachel; she was seventeen, and beautiful. She was very fond of theatrical performances; her mother had been on the stage, and it ran in the blood. Our people, leastways our Jewish girls, take to the stage as ducks to water, and as Jewish men to business. I married her on that day I spoke of, when I ate a meringue that cost fourpence. At that time the Marquess of Saltcombe was in the army, and with his regiment at Plymouth. He and some other officers got up amateur theatricals, for some charitable purpose nominally, really for their own entertainment. There was difficulty about filling the ladies’ parts. They tried a professional, but she was not good-looking enough, or a stick, I do not recollect which, and so my wife was asked to assist. I objected, and we had a quarrel. She was headstrong and took her own way. We did not run smoothly together. It was with us broad and narrow gauge running over the same line; constant hitches, nothing to time, an occasional smash, and then a block. I suppose the performances went off to general satisfaction. I believe a hundred pounds was cleared for the charitable institution, but that did not concern me. What did concern me was the conduct of my wife; she got more estranged from me than before, and the end was she left me and went abroad with the Marquess.’

‘Did you go after her?’ asked Joanna.

‘Not I. They went to the Island of Sicily—to Palermo. It would not have cost me a halfpenny less than fifty pounds to have gone in pursuit. My business would have suffered. In the time I would have been absent I might have turned over three hundred pounds. Besides, what was the good? I couldn’t take her back. Was not that a dreadful thing, Joanna?’

‘I am not surprised at anyone running away from you. I suppose you fed her on cold artichokes, and made her drink Ems water.’

‘I did not,’ said Lazarus angrily. ‘I treated her as I ought. I know my duty. A queen is a queen; a pawn is a pawn.’

‘Go on with your story,’ said the girl. ‘What happened after that?’

‘To me?’

‘I know without your telling me what happened to you. You settled deeper into dirt and drudgery.’

‘As for her and the Marquess,’ Lazarus continued, ‘they were soon separated. His uncle, the Lord Ronald Eveleigh, went out after them as hard as he could. What took place between them I do not know; but I know the end was that the Marquess returned to England, left the army, and settled at Court Royal. What became of Rachel I never heard. She took care not to communicate with me, and I did not trouble myself to inquire after her. Whether she is on the stage or at the bottom of the sea is one to me. We have not met since, but I have a sort of idea she has taken to the theatre as her profession. It suited her tastes; she was fond of dress and display, and excitement, and was vain of her beauty. The Golden Balls did not agree with her; the Barbican, and the smell of Sutton Pool, and the life in a shop were all distasteful; besides, she never took keenly to me.’

‘Did you love her very much?’

‘Of course I did. She was young and beautiful, and I had never cared for any woman before. We might have been so happy,’ sighed the Jew, ‘and had a family to attend to the business; a girl to mind the kitchen, another to turn the old coats; and a boy would have been mighty useful to me in the shop and at my office up in town.’

‘Do you love her still?’

‘I know this: I hate the Marquess mortally,’ he said. ‘He has spoiled my life, he has taken from me my wife, has made a home to be no home at all, and has robbed me of every hope in the future.’

‘But why do you try to drag down those who have never offended you—the Duke, and Lady Grace, and Lord Ronald?’

‘I cannot touch him apart from them. They are all tied in one bundle, and must go together. You can see that, I suppose, by the light of reason.’

Joanna was silent.

Then the Jew looked round at the table and growled. 'A precious big hole you've eaten in the beefsteak pie, and gobbled up three-quarters of the cheesecakes. I hope you are satisfied at last, eh?'

'No, I am not.'

'What more do you want, next?' he asked sneeringly.

'I want to go to a dance, and till I have been at a ball I shall not be satisfied—there.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PLAYBILL.

MR. LAZARUS left the house in the afternoon, and Joanna was alone. She at once set to work to make the kitchen tidy. She scoured the grease and rust from the pans, she washed the table, she sandpapered the fire-irons, she carried all the broken crockery to the ash-heap and smashed it up there, then replaced the pieces with sound articles from the stores above. She knew where there was a glazier's diamond, with it she cut a pane, she made her own putty, and reglazed the broken window.

Then she went upstairs to an attic room, with a pail of water, soap, and a scrubbing-brush, and washed the floor. She took up, piece by piece, a small iron bed, and put it together in the room; she fitted it with mattress, blankets, sheets, and coverlet. She dragged up a washhand-stand, and hung a looking-glass against the wall. She carried up a chair and a towel-horse, and then looked round with triumph. She had made for herself a very decent bedroom. One article of furniture was wanting—a chest of drawers. This she did not convey to her room, partly because she had nothing of her own to put in the drawers, and partly because it was too heavy for her to move unassisted. In the window she set her precious pot of lilies of the valley.

Then, tired with her journey and exertion, she seated herself on the bed, rested her head in both hands, and her elbows on her knees, and gave way to tears.

The contrast between the cleanliness and comfort of the Lodge and the dirt and disorder of the Golden Balls was too great not to make itself felt. She had gone on in one weary round of drudgery before because she knew of nothing different, now she

had seen a better mode of life, and the old was insupportable ; a return to it, unaltered, impossible. This she let Lazarus understand. She would work for him as hard as before, but she would insist on being treated properly.

But her own condition was not that which disturbed Joanna ; that which troubled her was the knowledge that she had been made use of by her master to work mischief against a family she had learned to respect. Of the Duke, indeed, she knew little, except what she had heard, but that had impressed her more than she acknowledged to herself. His greatness, the deference with which all regarded him—the way in which he was looked to as the source of all benefits, as the one who was the mainstay of the social order, as the one to whom, in cases of dispute, the ultimate appeal lay—this had formed an atmosphere of public opinion which she had inhaled, and which had nourished in her respect. She had seen little of Lord Ronald, but she had heard him spoken of as a man of strict integrity and perfect guilelessness. She had seen and spoken with the Marquess. Her box was unpacked. On the chimney-piece stood the canary yellow Dresden cup and saucer he had given her. Once he had come to his sister's room whilst she was having a dancing lesson, had recognised and spoken kindly to her. She could not feel towards him other than friendly regard.

‘As for running away with Rachel,’ she mused, ‘I dare swear Rachel wanted to be run away with. If I had been the wife of Lazarus, I'd have done the same, have run with him to Palermo or Hong Kong—anywhere to be rid of Lazarus and the Barbican. To be married and to be pawned are two totally different cases,’ argued the girl. ‘To be married one gives consent, and if the situation don't suit, you leave it ; but pawned is another matter—mother did that, and I can't run away. She must come with the ticket and release me. One would be wickedness, the other would not.’

Lady Grace she knew and loved as she loved no one else. She was miserable at the thought that she had been acting towards her with ingratitude, that Lady Grace might be able with justice one day to reproach her for having ill-repaid the kindness shown her. What would Lady Grace think of her now ! of the way in which she had left her situation ? Would she be told that she was detected at the account-books ? Joanna's bosom heaved, her face was crimson, her cheeks stained with tears. She could

not, she would not, leave the dear, good lady troubled with thoughts that she was ungrateful.

Joanna stood up, washed her face, and went downstairs. She entered the shop, and looked about for a little wooden box. When she had found one to her mind, she lined it with cotton-wool, and placed in it her necklace of Roman pearls. Then she wrote a letter in what she knew was servant-maid English, which she folded and fastened up in the box with the pearls. This was the letter:

‘For dear Lady Grace,—This is a present from her devoted, loving, faithful servant, Joanna. Joanna knows very well that it is not worthy of her acceptance (it cost only 2*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* second-hand), but nevertheless she hopes Lady Grace Eveleigh will condescend to accept it, as Joanna has nothing in the world else except what she stands up in, and the pink silk dress which is spoiled. Joanna takes this opportunity of informing your ladyship that I didn’t run away from my place, nor misbehave myself any way, but was summoned home on *urgent business*. Joanna will never, never, never forget and cease to love dear, sweet Lady Grace, and she begs to inform her ladyship that I value my pot of lily of the valley above every treasure the world contains.’

The girl’s mind was relieved when she had written and fastened up this letter in the box. Then she directed the case, and as she had a few coppers still in her pocket, she was able to post and register it. Whilst she ran to the post-office, she left the shop locked. On her return she found a billsticker at the door, trying to get in.

‘All right,’ he said, ‘I don’t want to pawn nothing. Will y’ take a bill and place it in the winder, please.’

He handed Joanna a bill, and went his way.

Lazarus was accommodating in the matter of bills of this description. Notices of Missionary Meetings, Harvest Festivals, a Circus, Services of Song, Ethiopian Serenaders, Prayer-meetings, dramatic performances, all went into his window promiscuously. He argued that folks might be attracted to read the bills and then see and fancy an article lying adjacent exposed for sale, a watch, a china figure, a church-service, a pair of opera-glasses, Baxter’s ‘Saints’ Rest,’ a Methodist hymnal, some old lace, a bicycle, or the portrait of an ancestor. Accordingly Joanna accepted the bill, and, before placing it in the window, spread it on the counter, and read it.

The bill was a theatrical notice. It announced that the dis-

tinguished Polish actress, Mlle. Palma Kaminski, of the Court Theatre, Warsaw, who had created such enthusiasm in London by her abilities, was about to favour Plymouth with her presence, assisted by a corps of artists, all of eminence only inferior to her own.

The first performance would be a revival of Shakespeare's tragedy of 'Romeo and Juliet,' to be performed the ensuing week.

Joanna had never been to a play, but she was a greedy devourer of playbills. To her imagination, nothing—hardly a ball—could surpass the delight of a dramatic performance. She had read plays that had come into the shop—old comedies, tragedies, modern farces, and had formed an idea of what a theatre was, but Lazarus had never allowed her the pleasure of seeing a performance, even from the gallery.

Whilst she was studying the bill, suddenly Lazarus burst into the shop with livid face. He saw what she was reading, seized it, and crumpled it in his hands.

'Why do you do that?' asked Joanna.

'I have seen her,' gasped the Jew. 'She is here—in Plymouth.'

'Seen whom—Lady Grace?'

'I have seen her—Rachel. She has dared to come here!'

'What has she come here for? Does she want to return to you? If so, she's a fool.'

'This is she,' he said, opening out the bill he had crushed, and with trembling finger he pointed to the name. 'She calls herself Palma Kaminski, but she is Rachel Lazarus. A Pole! She is nothing of the sort; she was born on Ratcliff Highway, and bred in Princes Street, Leicester Square.'

'Are you going to reclaim her, or kill yourself, like Romeo, because she is lost to you?'

'I do not know what I shall do. I am in a maze,' gasped the Jew. 'I'd serve her bad if I knew how. I'd beat her brains out if it weren't against the law. Where is the liberty of the subject, I'd like to know, as is so boasted of in this precious British empire? Ah! Joanna, I wish I could get her here and put her to sleep in the press bed, and shut it up when she was sound. The coroner and jury would be sure to find 'accidental death,' and one could have a raffle of half-a-crown a share for the press-bed afterwards, and make a lot of money. I've known five pounds got out of a rope a man hanged himself with. The English lower orders are passionately attached to crime; they like to read about

it, and talk about it, and think about it, and relish it in every way. If you come to consider, Joanna, what a dreary world this would be without crime to season it! It would be like a dinner of cold beef without pickles. There'd be no yellow novels on the railway bookstalls, no sensational dramas on the boards; nothing but politics in the papers. I believe there wouldn't be any pawn shops. I'd like to know where we should be, we Jews, Joanna, in such a world as that. There would be no place for us at all. We must be thankful for things as we find them. The world without wickedness in it, and one with it, would be, to my taste, the difference between still hock and sparkling Moselle.'

'I reckon,' said Joanna, 'that in such a place as Kingsbridge, where all is goodness and kindness, and thought of one another, you'd be out of place like a rook on a frosty morning when the worms are in their holes.'

'They've hoodwinked you, like all those who come near them,' said Lazarus. 'But I can't talk of them. I must think of Rachel. Give me the paper.' He drew the bill from Joanna, who had smoothed it out on the counter. 'Kaminski! What a name! to change the beautiful Lazarus for an outlandish name like that, and she was Moses before I married her. To my mind, Joanna, our British aristocracy is like a scene on a stage, very beautiful to look at, but there is a lot hid away behind very shabby and very bad, of which most folk see and know nothing. You've looked on the grand Kingsbridge House like a young playgoer; all is beautiful, and innocence, and splendour. I know the other side. There is the great burden of debt, fresh loans, that scandal of the Marquess and Rachel. The world knows nothing of all this, but there it is.'

'I should like so much to go to a theatre,' said Joanna with a sigh.

Lazarus considered a moment, then his face lightened; he passed his fingers through his hair, ruffling it on end, giving him a wild look. 'You shall, Joanna; I promise you.'

'The gallery is only sixpence.'

'You shan't go in the gallery.'

'What? Stand outside, where a place costs nothing?'

'No, Joanna, you shall have the most expensive place in the whole theatre, that will cost two or three pounds.'

The girl stared at him. Then he smoothed down his hair, and elaborately and noisily blew his nose. He was excited.

‘Yes, you shall. I will go also.’

‘When? At doomsday?’

‘No, we will go together, and sit in the stage-box, and see Romeo and Juliet.’ Joanna clapped her hands.

‘You shall see Rachel—Kaminski indeed. If she didn’t like Moses, why not condense it to Moss; if she didn’t like Lazarus, why not pull it out into St. Lazare? I’ve known some of our names turned about till you can’t recognise them. Levi and Levison, for instance, who’d know them again as Lewis and Lawson? Even Cohen I’ve known altered into Colquhoun, and but for his nose you’d have thought the man a Scotchman.’

‘You will really let me go?’

‘I will take you myself. We shall be right above her, face her, and see if we do not spoil her play. Joanna, I’ll heap on you all the jewelry in the shop, and you shall blaze in her eyes with diamonds and rubies and sapphires, and you shall have the most splendid dress of silk or satin money can buy; an old second-hand affair won’t do. The best—if I have to send to Worth at Paris for it.’

Joanna looked at him in amazement. Had he lost his senses?

‘Then she’ll see you and me behind, and, sure as she is a daughter of Israel, it will cut her to the heart to think she has forfeited all that heap of jewelry.’

‘But what will she think of me?’

‘I do not know, nor care; she’ll never suppose you are my maid of all work, a pawned piece of goods.’

‘I don’t believe a proper lady would pile on jewelry that way,’ mused Joanna. ‘I heard Lady Grace and Miss Lucy say something about real ladies being known by their quiet dressing. I can’t imagine Lady Grace dressed like that, even at a play.’

‘But you are not Lady Grace,’ argued the Jew. ‘That makes all the difference. She is at the top, and can afford to dress quietly. You are at the bottom, and must dress extravagantly, or you remain what you are—nothing.’

The girl considered; then she said, ‘Miss Riggsby will be there, I am sure she will. She will be all of a blaze. It will be killing fun just to outblaze her. I’ll put on everything I can, and I wish I’d two necks like an Austrian eagle to be able to put on more still.’

(To be continued.)

LEAR'S FOOL.

WHILE taking that nonpareil of Fools for our theme, it may not be amiss to say a few words on Shakspearean humour as displayed in those unique characters; for, though each one of them is so individually distinct, they all belong to a certain line of parts, which have ever puzzled the commentator, attracted the student, and perplexed the player, and yet will well repay intelligent reflection and careful study. For there is a two-fold charm in Shakspearean *dramatis personæ*; in the first place, to regard them as creatures of imagination truly, but made so real to us that we feel as if they were all personally known; and secondly, to consider them as objects for stage representation. We must know and understand them thoroughly ere we can attempt to impersonate them, and not only study their individual lines, but every shade of relation in which they stand to the rest of the play. These poor Fools have been sadly misrepresented and misunderstood from time immemorial, while some have solved the difficulty by the simple expedient of cutting them out altogether.

Yet there is nothing so fresh and evergreen as these humorous character-parts; when the turgid wit of Ben Jonson or the licentious rallies of a Wycherley in a later century are obsolete, and when our modern farcical comedies seem but writ for the present hour, shallow and evanescent for the most part, audiences will still be found to laugh at the gravediggers, the immortal constables, or Falstaff, *et cetera omnes*, and the lower the class in the social scale—pit and gallery rather than stalls—the reader is their aptitude to seize the time-honoured points, while a select few of the fashionable world may foolishly say, ‘We want something funny—not Shakspeare!’ As if the rollicking humours of the above-named were not far funnier, in the highest sense of the word, than many of the ephemeral pieces that so tickle our palates at the present time. Funnier because they have a human interest in themselves, well assorted with the play as a whole, while we generally find that the third or last act of these mere farces hangs fire from want of a sufficient basis of real interest. The remark of Gay in the last century aptly applies to the present time, who complains ‘that a great number of dramatic entertain-

ments are not comedies but five-act farces.' And it was that age who could see no wit in Lear's Fool. Wit so intricately interwoven with pathos that we are puzzled whether to laugh or cry—wit as recklessly overflowing as Falstaff's, yet showing us the warm sad heart beneath—showing us the truth of which Shelley sang, that 'Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught.' And it is this which endears him to us, just as that one touch of nature in Falstaff's death wins our pity for even so gross a sinner, or as we appreciate the dry jests of Touchstone all the more because we are drawn to him by his faithful attachment to his young mistresses. It is this marvellous blending of humour and pathos in startling yet not unnatural juxtaposition which is the glory of Shakspeare, and in spite of the failure of many a generation to understand it—in spite of all mutilations—all attempts to smother it, it has lived through all vicissitudes to burst forth with renewed vitality.

This is an age of restorations; and, to anyone who looks back upon the history of the British drama, he will find it has caught the same moving spirit which has impelled our Church—in fact Church and Stage is no newfangled conjunction, they have both been unconsciously moving on the same lines for the last fifty or sixty years; the Tractarian movement and Macready's revivals were nearly contemporary. 'Scrape off your plaster! Awake from the unaccountable mania which seized our respected ancestors for whitewashing their churches as well as their Shakspeare.' 'Restore the primitive beauties of fresco and carving in our puritanically defaced temples of worship. Clear off and purge from our Shakspeare the disfigurements from the bedaubing brush of a Tate, a Cibber, or, alas! of a Garrick, under the approval of Dr. Johnson.' Such have been the two calls to which there has been a prolonged response—a gradually swelling but undying echo.

We are emerging from a long darkness of depraved taste to an era which has given and is giving us Shakspeare pure and undefiled, just as the Church has awakened from its long slumbers of dullness and whitewash to restore the primitive beauties of our services, as well as of our Church architecture. Yet all honour to those dramatic giants of old, for in their own generation they were the precursors of reformation—so much alive to the true beauties of Shakspeare, that their strange perversity of blindness in understanding him is all the more astonishing. Garrick restored

his dramas to their proper position at Drury Lane, performing annually some eighteen to twenty of them; whereas in Charles II.'s time only six or eight were played in twenty years, and only about six or eight annually under Willes, Booth, and Quin—yet even that might put our generation to shame. 'Like a hawk,' a contemporary magazine says of Garrick, 'who flies directly at his prey, he seized the most finished and difficult parts of our great bard, and made them his own'—that is, cut and altered them according to fancy, omitting the gravediggers from Hamlet, and inflicting on the stage for the next fifty years Tate's miserable perversion of King Lear, till Macready, to his honour, put on the original Lear and *reinstated his Fool*.

The more is the pity for Garrick's unaccountable bad taste, inasmuch as he was perhaps the finest representative of what was left of King Lear that had ever been seen, or, we are afraid, that ever will be seen. The reason why this grandest of all plays was so long in abeyance was its too painful appropriateness to the unhappy condition of King George III., and it was on that account unrepresented. Edmund Kean must have been superb in the cursing scenes, but we should doubt if on the whole it was entirely suited to his line, or rather that he was unequal to its sustained pathos and varying moods, and he still worked on Tate's lines. At length came Macready's revival of Lear *with the Fool*, yet he was almost staggered at the attempt. He notes in regard to it: 'My opinion of the introduction of the Fool is that, like many such terrible contrasts in poetry and painting, in acting representation it will fail of effect; it will either weary and annoy, or distract the spectator. I have no hope of it, and think that at the last we shall be obliged to dispense with it.' 'I described the sort of fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced boy that he should be,—Bartley observed that a woman should play it. I caught at the idea, and instantly exclaimed, "Miss P. Horton is the very person."¹ And so, in spite of his first despair, this makeshift of giving it to a woman proved, as we have been told by an eyewitness, very effective, Miss Horton² having a good voice for the songs, masculine in its depth, and a boyish manner—in fact, the

¹ *Macready Reminiscences*, vol. ii.

² Afterwards the well-known Mrs. German Reed. The part was subsequently very successfully played by Mr. Henry Scharf—when a young man—to Mr. Phelps's King Lear at Sadler's Wells Theatre. Mr. Scharf also played Touchstone, Feste, &c., and was a genuine comedian gifted with the requisite good voice.

Fool was as great a success as Macready himself in the person of King Lear, of which *rôle* he appears to have been equally desponding, as the following notes in his Diary show :

'I scarcely know how I acted the part—I did not satisfy myself.' 'Lay down and tried to think of Lear.' One thing that gave greater effect to his Lear than that of any previous actor was his playing it in a long regal robe, thereby giving the dignity that should be so characteristic of one who is even in his madness 'every inch a king.'

From the above extracts we begin to realise how difficult—how great a part that of the Fool is—almost harder to give a satisfactory representation of than Lear himself. We cannot agree in thinking with Macready that the contrast is too terrible if properly given, as we shall see later on suggested by the great commentator Gervinus, but that, on the contrary, it serves to heighten the grandeur of Lear—to make the tragedy more vivid, and if at times it does distract one's attention, it comes as a relief for a moment from the strain of watching the prolonged agony of Lear. The one answer to Macready's doubt whether it ever could be played is that it has stood its ground ever since, and no one now would accept a revival of King Lear without his Fool. Not that we can see any player who would be likely to give us a wholly satisfactory rendering. The late comparative failure to catch the true spirit of Shakspearean humorous and character-parts in 'Twelfth Night,' and we might add Mr. Hare's very ineffective rendering of Touchstone, show us that, though we have a few actors who can give us his tragedy fairly, intelligently and picturesquely, if not greatly, we still lack the requisite sister art which ever in Shakspeare walks hand in hand with the graver muse. Where is our Tarleton, Kempe, or, in later days, a Fawcett? That excellent representative of Bottom, Falstaff, or Malvolio, the late Samuel Phelps, seems to have ended the line of Shakspearean comedians. As the age of restoration advances, perhaps, we may still hope for some to catch the inspirations of the past, and give us the Fools and clowns of Shakspeare. Reformer and almost new founder of the British drama as he became, no more wonderful reformation did he accomplish than that of moulding the rude clowns of the previous era, who appeared only to 'set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too'—mere excrescences, buffoons filling the intervals between acts as our orchestra does now—into his immortal Fools, part and parcel of the piece, men of distinct individual character

and sympathies, culminating in that most pathetic and sublime one—that missing link, we may call him, between Tragedy and Comedy—Lear's Fool! Shakspeare knew well the old adage of one step between the sublime and the ridiculous, and delighted to go to the very verge, yet without overstepping the line between them—'he o'erstepped not the modesty of nature.' Terrible contrasts—'risky business,' *i.e.*, to excite a laugh in the wrong place—are always the bane of an actor, but let him trust himself in the bold but experienced hands of that great actor-manager, Shakspeare, and he need not fear. The Fool and Lear are terrible contrasts truly, but not on that account to be unrepresentable.

The more we look into it the less unnatural it will appear, till at length, in the midst of apparent harshness, we catch in the concord of rude sounds the true heartfelt harmony, majestically vibrating throughout under the guidance of that master mind who owned no rule but nature's changeless plan, and gave us men and women as he found them in life—in the streets of London, in the green lanes of Stratford—not a set of lay figures on stilts of equal jingling lines like those which Corneille and Racine fashioned for the French drama.

We come across terrible contrasts every day of our lives—more incongruous couples, with far less bond of sympathy between them, whether man and wife, or friend and friend, than Lear and his poor Fool. If they are ill-assorted in the mere matter of years, what is it? They are brief at the most. We have—

Nor youth nor age,
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep
Dreaming on both.

A life may be utterly wasted and 'used up' at thirty as at eighty, or, as in the tragedy before us, the usual course of life be inverted, and the old man Lear retain the fiery passions of hot-blooded youth—still be young in his intemperate vigour—while the young man, his Fool, old enough to have found out the hollowness of life, become coldly wise by bitter experience. Or again, if it appear strange and incongruous to us to have always a professional Fool at our side, in the most grave and critical moments as well as in our lighter moods, yet it is a custom that has had its survival in the conversational wits of the last generation—Sheridan, Sydney Smith, or Theodore Hook, the Yoricks of their age, who 'were wont to set the table in a roar;' and even

in our own time some remnant of the Fool still exists, only now he attends not on the Sovereign but on the majesty of the House of Commons.

Yet though the players have failed to embody and fully realise this unique character, not so the discriminating minds who have poured out their wealth of commentary and results of careful study, such as Coleridge, Gervinus, Knight, or Professor Dowden. These have lent their aid in the restoration of Shakspeare's characters from the defamation of Grub Street scribblers, who delighted to smother or obscure a plain meaning beneath a cloud of words. The heavy roll of the Johnsonian thunder has been lifted by the lightning flashes from such a mind as Coleridge, and the bright sunlight of other expositors, who show us the whole broad system on which he worked, and, keeping that well in view, we need not start away from 'terrible contrasts' when they present themselves.

Lear's Fool shares his anomalous character with one or two prominent ones, notably with 'the Duke living in exile' of 'As You Like It,' but in this instance the want of a name does not seem felt, for he is so intimately associated with his master that he hardly has a separate existence. He is 'Lear's Fool' from the beginning to the end. Without Lear he would be nothing. Lear without him loses half his force. Now to picture this strange, nameless, fascinating creation, so that he may become to our eyes as vivid a reality as the mad old king himself. In the first place, we venture to doubt if he was quite the fragile, hectic *boy* of Macready's imagination, and though Miss Horton may have succeeded in her difficult task, it by no means follows that it is a suitable one for a woman. That he was beautiful-faced, 'a pretty knave,' and may have been 'hectic' we admit willingly; but several things point to his having reached manhood—youthful manhood, no doubt, precocity beyond his years—but still he had passed the mystic line between boyhood and youth, had arrived anyhow at that vague border-land, 'years of discretion.' The king could never have stood such rebuffs and taken so to heart the reproaches of a mere boy. Because he constantly calls him 'boy' is no more proof of his age than when we term any French waiter 'garçon,' no matter though he should happen to be sixty. In Lear's case it is only a term of endearment, just like 'the dearest chuck' of Macbeth, or the 'excellent wretch' of Othello. It is like 'my lad,' 'pretty knave,' 'sirrah,' which are used as well, and to a man of 'fourscore and

upwards' a youth of twenty-five or thirty would appear a boy in comparison. But note that none of the others venture to call him 'boy'; it is 'Fool' with them. Even the haughty Goneril says: 'You, sir, more knave than Fool,' &c., and again, on his exit, 'This man has had good counsel'; while even Lear, in his most earnest moods, calls him 'Fool': 'O Fool, I shall go mad.' 'Go, call my Fool.' 'And my poor Fool is hanged.' And to conclude with a proof of the inaccuracy of the term 'boy,' the Fool himself returns the compliment to Lear—'Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter Fool and a sweet one?' In the second place, his keen insight into character, his common-sense view of looking at things, his distrust of mere words—and, indeed, the coarseness of some of his allusions to women, all militate against the 'boy' theory. The king's jester was, as a rule, a full-grown man, like Henry VIII.'s Will Somers, and, in short, as all the other Fools in Shakspeare are. We never think of Touchstone as a boy.

It may not be without interest while upon this point, as well as to help our imaginations as to a Fool's appearance, to give the following list of Henry V.'s jester's wardrobe, which by its ampleness and mention of boots, spurs, and a servant, seem to point to that of a man's. (From the original Latin, translated in Rymer's 'Fœdera.')

To be allowed and granted to William, the King's Fool, for his apparel, gowns, and tabards for him and his servant, & for making & furring divers garments, hoods, boots, doublets, robes, linen, and divers other necessaries at sundry times, viz., for the winter season against the Feasts of Christmas, Circumcision, and Epiphany, & for the summer season against the Feasts of Easter, Whitsuntide, and divers other:—

- 1½ ells scarlet cloth.
- 3 ells of broadcloth, scarlet in grain.
- 25½ ells of coloured broadcloth.
- 8 ells of coloured narrow cloth.
- 6 ells of narrow blanket.
- 136 skins of Calabrian fur.
- 12 ermins.
- 6 skins, 2 vent of purple menevere.
- 3 skins of black boug (sable?).
- 24 ells of Flanders linen cloth.
- 12 pairs of stockings.
- 2 pairs of boots.
- 2 pairs of spurs.

Well, then, granted him to be a young man with a handsome face and 'a mellifluous voice,' it is all the more touching a picture

to find that he is a youth who has utterly lost the fresh glow, the ready trustfulness, the devotion and belief in a gentle word or a sweet face—the envied rights of youth emerging from boyhood; but this poor Fool has been nurtured under no tender auspices; he has been plunged headlong into a rough, boisterous world, where he has soon lost that innocence which has once been given to us all, ‘and only once’: that simplicity which has looked at the unbarred gates of life as admitting us into a hidden Paradise, which we eagerly enter with no afterthought, no suspicion that all is not so fair as it looks, entering with those rays of a heavenly dawn still lingering on us, and ‘*by that vision splendid*’ are ‘*on our way attended*’; but

At length the man beholds it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

And to this stage has the Fool come—‘*the common day.*’ He has witnessed, perchance, that fading of sunrise hues, has been cruelly awakened from ‘love’s young dream,’ that crushing of bright hopes, when our eyes are open to the shams, hypocrisies, and coldness of heart around. He bears ‘the heart once crushed less quick to rise again,’ and the warm-hearted, affectionate youth becomes the keen cynic who sees at once the hollowness of the two daughters’ professions, the folly of the king’s injustice, who rails at love and woman in the coarsest terms.

F. He’s mad that trusts in a wolf’s tameness, a boy’s love, a horse’s health, or a whore’s oath. (Act iii. sc. 6.)

F. No heretics burned but wenches’ suitors. (Act iii. sc. 2.)

F. There was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass. (Ibid.)

These and such-like railings may be excused to one who had ever before him those hideous examples of womanhood, the sister fiends. But yet, midst all this heartlessness, folly, riot, and corruption, he is quick enough to see the sterling worth of the silent Cordelia; he retains through good and evil the cherished memory of that pure, deep-loving, still water, the fair Cordelia; and it is her image that keeps him faithful to his trust, and brings out all that is good and true in his nature. ‘*Since my young lady’s going into France the Fool hath much pined away,*’ is the first we hear of him. It is the key-note to his character. He may be one whose ‘*blessèd*’ (or, as some would read, *blasted*) ‘*youth Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms Of palsied eld*’—i.e. has become old before his time, a young man devoid of passion by

nature, like Horatio, or crushed out of him by bitter experience, as we have hinted before;—and yet withal he is the true friend to that ‘passion’s slave,’ his master king, and shines out as the redeeming light of affection and faithfulness even unto death mid a world of turbulent convulsions, of upheavings of nature, of utter darkness and despair. Truly there is a surpassing nobleness in that close clinging of Kent and the poor Fool, in spite of a conscious prevision of impending ruin, that wins our admiration, and is the one bright spot upon the lurid picture in the absence of Cordelia. This rude, unswerving self-sacrifice stands out stedfastly when ‘the bond’ is snapped between father and child. ‘The king falls from the bias of nature—we have seen the best of our times,’ cries that other aged sufferer, Glo’ster. ‘Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us with disquiet to our graves.’ Surely, here the rough-and-ready Kent and the poor Fool form, not a terrible, but a glorious and unexampled contrast.

It is worthy of note to observe how Touchstone, Feste (the clown in ‘All’s Well that Ends Well’), and Peter are all more or less under the influence and attached to the most refined creations among Shakspearean women. The rougher and coarser their nature the more magical is the change; and we forgive the coarseness of the clown for his chivalrous devotion to the graces of pure womanhood. Thus Celia says of Touchstone, who is called a ‘clownish’ and ‘roynish’ fool—

He’ll go along o’er the wide world with me;
Leave me to woo him.

And thus the loss of Juliet awakens in the breast of that still more clownish knave Peter an outburst of heartfelt grief. So once more, and in a deeper key, we learn that ‘the Fool has much pined away since my young lady’s going into France.’ ‘No more of that,’ replies Lear; ‘I have noted it well.’ He is a standing reproach to the king already before he has appeared on the scene, and has awakened in him that first pang of remorse on which he never ceases to harp from his first entry, when he says—

F. Why, this fellow has banish’d two of his daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. (Act i. sc. 4.)

until he soon wrings from Lear that muttered ‘*I did her (Cordelia) wrong.*’ Their two natures are alike in this, that, having

once got an idea of wrong into their minds, they never leave go of it; they brood over it—Lear over his own wrongs, the Fool over Cordelia's.

But before the Fool enters let us pause to ask a question which has often occurred to me—Why was not he in the first scene? why does he only enter now when the deed is done? Is it not a curious coincidence that he was not at the king's side at first, for he never leaves him after his first appearance to the end of his short career? Wherever he was, I think the motive of keeping him away, in the playwright's point of view, is not hard to fathom. He might have marred the whole plot of the play; his bitter taunts might have stopped Lear on the brink of his act of folly in dividing the kingdoms; perhaps he would have succeeded better than Kent in his pleadings for Cordelia—he has always more moral influence over the king than Kent afterwards; or else, like Touchstone, he would have shared Cordelia's exile rather than see her unjustly cast off, and Lear, in his distressful after-scenes, would have lost half his effect. Few people can stand having their most serious resolves and pet schemes turned into ridicule, and it is the Fool and not Kent that touches Lear to the quick, and rouses his better self. In short, Shakspeare wanted the Fool to complete the tragedy, and had he stood by a quiescent spectator of the injustice, his railings would have lost all their force. So at the critical moment he keeps him away. There is another instance of keeping an inconvenient character out of a scene in 'Much Ado about Nothing.' Why is not Antonio, Leonato's brother, at the wedding of his niece, whom he has been so anxious to see married? Is it not because his headstrong indignation would have repelled the slander at once and challenged Claudio there and then, and so have prevented the Friar's more cautious and elaborate device. Well, the instance before us is still more notable, and we find that the Fool has shunned meeting the unjust father for two days; but just when Lear is engaging another attendant, Kent, disguised as Caius, he aptly appears, perhaps hastening all the more to prevent being supplanted in his master's affections. He enters with the mocking '*Let me hire him too; here's my cock-comb.*' Though he never misses an opportunity of turning a laugh against Kent, as we shall see in the next act, when he finds Kent in the stocks, yet it is a friendly rivalry; they know each other's worth. 'This is not altogether Fool, my lord,' says

Kent; while the Fool recognises one of his own true sort under the affected sarcasm of

F. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

K. Why, Fool?

F. Why, for taking one's part that is out of favour.

Then he turns from Kent to his master, and, heedless of threats, probes at the very root of the evil, and uses his bitter tongue like a skilful surgeon's knife, thinking it to be the truer kindness to cut deeper as his patient winces under the pain. Thus he rings the changes on that one sore reproach in order to rouse the king to his better feelings, and gall him into recalling Cordelia and reasserting himself in his proper position. This is the object the Fool has set himself, and, if his jests seem almost too heartless, it shows the very earnestness of his well-intentioned but over-reaching aim. Skilfully at the same time, too, he distracts the king with his wayward rhymes to soothe the rankling of the bitter shafts he launches under their covert, as thus—

L. A pestilent gall to me.

F. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

L. Do.

F. Mark it, nuncle, &c., &c.

Then again he harks back with the reminder of—

F. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

L. Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

(almost repeating his speech to Cordelia in the first scene:—
Cor. Nothing.—L. Nothing can come of nothing.

F. Prythee tell him; so much the rent of his land comes to he'll not believe a Fool.

L. A bitter Fool!

And so on, with many odd metaphors and snatches of song, he goads the king into a fit mood for the encounter with Goneril, not leaving off till he has irritated her too, and thus almost forced on the already smouldering quarrel, which wanted but slight friction to make it kindle. Observe, too, there is a particular grudge between Goneril and this 'all licensed Fool.' She comes on in the previous scene, saying to her steward, 'Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his Fool?'

Evidently the Fool had been chidden for speaking too plain truths of the worth of Goneril and Regan. 'They'll have me whipped for speaking true,' he complains.

Wonderful indeed is this fierce battle of words between Lear and Fool against Goneril, the Fool playing the part of light cavalry in warfare ; he gives warning of the enemy's tactics ; he commences the action by a preliminary skirmish, till the enemy advances in force, when he retires to clear the way for the heavy cannonade of Lear's fearful curses, keeping close to his side to support him at any opportunity, and boldly stays behind to cover Lear's retreat with a parting shot. Quick at first is his interchange of shot and shot. Mockingly he retorts on Goneril—

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long
That it had its head bit off by its young.
So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

While Lear seems almost too taken aback to say more than 'Are you our daughter?'

Gon. Come, sir, I would you would make use of that good wisdom whereof I know you are fraught, and put away these dispositions which transform you from what you rightly are.

Quick the Fool returns to the attack.

*May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?
Whoop, Jug, I love thee!*

As if with this wild '*Whoop, Jug!*' he taunts Goneril with her first profession. '*Beyond all manner of so much I love thee.*' Yes, though he was not present he has evidently been well informed of those overdone professions. This line of his should be most marked of all in this scene, for it is the climax that rouses to the quick Lear's swelling indignation. In fierce and incoherently broken sentences he breaks out: 'Doth any here know me?' &c., &c.; and in this speech the quarto is evidently to be followed, and not the modern copies of the *folio*, viz. when Lear exclaims: '*Who is it that can tell me who I am?*' the Fool, and not Lear himself, answers, '*Lear's shadow,*' and Lear catches at the sad insinuation: '*I would learn that; for by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters.*' *F.* '*Which they will make an obedient father.*' The Fool does not allow a pause in the bitter conflict, and even when Lear rushes out, crying to his people, 'Away! away!' the Fool remains. Again the king re-enters to launch his final curse, and declare his intention of seeking consolation with Regan and resuming his proper shape. Still the Fool boldly stays to deliver his parting volley, pathetically calling to Lear not to forget him.

'Nuncle Lear! nuncle Lear! tarry and take the Fool with thee!'

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a halter!
So the Fool follows after.

'Thus unwittingly hinting at his own fate in the double meaning, 'If my cap would buy a halter.'

Then follows a most touching little scene between the two when the fury of the fight is over, but the deep wound is rankling still in Lear's galled breast; while the Fool still implacably drives home his one purpose, till he wrings out from Lear that 'I did her wrong.' Yet he endeavours pathetically to accomplish that other half of his task, so well described by the 'gentleman' a little further on: he labours 'to outjest his heart-strook injuries,' and at the same time seeks to break the force of the oncoming storm, which he clearly foresees, by breaking to the King the reception he is likely to get from one who will taste, like Goneril, 'as a crab does to a crab.' The remorse he has aroused in Lear never leaves the King even in madness when, '*a sovereign shame so elbows him,*' and '*burning shame detains him from Cordelia,*' '*and by no means he will yield to see his daughter*' (Act iv. sc. 3). Yes! the Fool succeeds in this object too well, but fails to perceive how he overreaches his aim in driving that bitter reflection into the o'erwrought brain of Lear, who, stung by that last sad reproach, '*Thou should'st not have been old before thou had'st been wise,*' realises the shadow of coming insanity, and utters that most pitiful cry, '*Let me not go mad—not mad! sweet heavens! Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!*' This again is brought home to the Fool, in the next act, in that fearful despairing '*O Fool! I shall go mad!*' But though the Fool failed in his self-imposed task, his failure was only in common with that of every good intention in this heartrending tragedy. Kent fails, first, in averting the blow from Cordelia, and then in getting the King to rest patient under his woes; Cordelia fails in her noble endeavours to restore her father's rights; the physician fails in completely restoring his shattered senses; Glo'ster fails in sheltering him. Cordelia says herself—

We are not the first
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst.

And so, too, the Fool loses no merit for failing with these. It was a glorious failure—far better to fail with Cordelia than to triumph with Goneril, Regan, and Edmund—a failure which has its reward elsewhere. ‘Man proposes, God disposes,’ is the motto throughout; and even when wisdom and goodness are combined, yet in this terrible convulsion they strike out blindly, wildly, hopelessly, not seeing the Providence overhead—‘the stars which govern our condition,’ as Kent says.

In Act ii. the Fool has his laugh at Kent’s misfortunes, not being without that human weakness of enjoying a rival’s fall and his own superior wisdom. Indeed, he seems so elated at the immediate fulfilment of his forewarning that this daughter would taste ‘as a crab does to a crab,’ that he almost revels in the gathering thunder-clouds of fresh disasters which take his unsuspecting master by surprise. He scoffs at Kent’s dullness of perception, and gives him ironically the piece of worldly wisdom—

Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down hill, lest it *break thy neck* with following it.

(Again foreshadowing his own fate.)

But the great one that goes up hill let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel give me mine again. I would have none but knaves follow it since a fool gives it.

And following this up by the more unselfish choice of his song—

That, sir, which serves and seeks for gain,
 And follows but for form,
 Will pack when it begins to rain,
 And leave thee in the storm.
 But I will tarry—the Fool will stay,
 And let the wise man fly;
 The knave turns Fool that runs away,
 The Fool—no knave, perdy!

Kent. Where learnt you this, Fool?

F. Not in the stocks, Fool!

is the curt answer. No; the lesson of duty is not to be learned by fear of punishment, as little as it is by the desire of gain. His was a duty for duty’s sake, which is higher than any instinct ruled by fear or greed—that sense of duty which fixes the soldier to his post, the captain to his ship, in the face of imminent death—that duty which was Nelson’s most stirring watchword, and has ever been the conspicuous characteristic, as well as the pride, of the Englishman century after century, making him fittest of all to rule as well as to obey. Never was there a truer, more

thorough-going Englishman than Shakspeare, and he nobly dared to place this highest perfection of duty for duty's sake in a poor Fool.

In this second and final conflict with the two daughters combined the Fool is silent, mutely despairing at his master's side, till with the fatal 'O Fool, I shall go mad!' Lear staggers for his support, and is almost borne out by him, assisted by the still constant Glo'ster and Kent. This time the Fool tarries not for a parting shot; the defeat is overwhelming, and he goes out into the storm, fragile and weak of body as he is, into the wild night and the barren heath, 'where the bleak winds do sorely ruffle, and for many miles about there's scarce a bush.' Where the King is, there is his post of duty; howbeit he is conscious of the impending ruin—conscious, too, that Lear has in great measure brought it on himself by his folly and violence. Yet out he goes to suffer with him, and while the cruel daughters and son-in-law cry—

Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night ;

Lear is left with

None but the Fool, who labours to outjest
His heart-strook injuries.

Then follows that tremendous storm-scene of Act iii., the finest as well as the hardest to render adequately of any in Shakspeare—in fact, the whole play requires a company of giants in talent, and then the three following scenes would tax their powers to the uttermost, more especially the two parts of the Fool and Edgar in his assumed madness. One would expect that in braving the elements it would have been Lear who would suffer most physically, but here the order of things is reversed, and it is the young man who succumbs to the force of the storm, while the old man of fourscore and upwards greets the warring of the heavens as a kindred passion like his own.

*L. This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more.*

He whose heart gave way at the harsh ingratitude of his daughters seems to gain strength in the bare and weaponless conflict with the storm. So the madman is ever physically stronger than the sane, and puts to shame the shivering, cowering youth who had before abashed him in his superior wisdom. Vainly now the Fool entreats him to go in and beg pardon of his daughters; vainly Glo'ster tries to lead him from his strange companion, 'poor Tom'; vainly Kent expostulates with him to be patient and seek rest and

shelter. Like a huge wreck torn from its moorings, Lear obeys neither rudder nor sail, but plunges and heaves with the mad impulse of the waves in a night when

Man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the fear.

Yet, though the Fool for a moment loses his philosophy in the breakdown of his fragile physique, he soon recovers his unswerving determination to share Lear's fortunes, and shouts out defiantly his wild songs to the wind, still harping, like his master, on the old theme, the deceitfulness and shallowness of woman. '*For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass.*' All are alike in his experience; they are not worth railing at—forgetting Cordelia for an instant. Such is the lesson he now flings out to Lear, who seems to catch for a moment the spirit of stolid indifference. '*No,*' he cries, '*I will be the pattern of all patience—I will say nothing;*' till once more he seems to swell and heave with the rolling thunder that makes '*this dreadful pudder o'er our heads.*' Mark how the stage directions for the storm without seem to indicate its unison with the storm within Lear's breast—the short spells of passionate outbreaks, the rumblings and mutterings, with the fitful sobbing and sougning of the wind. It forcibly reminds one of the beautiful description by the player in 'Hamlet':—

But as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stands still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hushed as death; anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region.

So, after another pause, with a brief consciousness of growing insanity, Lear pathetically murmurs, 'My wits begin to turn,' and catching sight of his poor shivering Fool, all the warm affection of his nature is roused in those most touching lines, sobbed out in broken sentences—

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy?
Art cold? I am cold myself.

And for his sake he yields to their entreaties to seek shelter:

Where is this straw? Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart that's sorry yet for thee.

That warm, generous heart, that could love as deeply as it could hate, finds the sole object for its outlet in the poor dependant, and in their mutual misery they find the comfort of sympathy.

Both have been bereft of that gentle, sweet influence of Cordelia ; both have learned the one solace—pity, pity akin to love. As the Fool has pitied Lear in his bitter remorse and cruel mental sufferings, so in his turn Lear shows a noble pity for the Fool's physical weakness, which the latter as nobly struggles against, and though the storm still rages, yet with a strained affectation of cheerfulness sings under the shelter of his master's cloak as they go out close hugging each other for warmth :—

He that has and a little tiny wit,
With heigh ho ! the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortune fit,
For the rain it raineth every day.

L. True, boy ! Come, bring us to this hovel.

A picture, truly, to move a heart of steel ! Thus they go out, for one feels convinced that the lines of the Fool that follow—

I'll speak a prophecy ere I go, &c.,

if not an interpolation of the players in the folio, which seems likely, as they are not found in the earlier quarto, are certainly out of place here and devoid of meaning or effect ; perhaps this may be a case where the clown spoke more than was set down for him, 'and that, too, when a most necessary question of the play is to be considered.'

The end of this first storm-scene seems to mark a lull in this hurricane of mind and matter, which is only to break out with more despairing fierceness in the next, where the thunder is still rolling, and, in Kent's words, '*the tyranny of the open night's too rough for nature to endure*' (*storm still*), and so Lear in sympathy refuses to go in—the tempest rumbles and rankles within like the clouds without. Once more the sight of the poor Fool moves him to yield : 'But I'll go in ; in, boy, go first.' How these little touches soften our hearts to the fiery old King ! We forget the violence, the fearful curses, in that thought for his Fool ; and in the next line another delicate touch shows us the reluctance of the latter to leave his master's side even then :

L. Nay, get thee in ; I'll pray and then I'll sleep.

Then the Fool runs out frightened by the discovery of the hovel's pre-occupation by 'poor Tom,' and it is his magnanimous rival in affection, the noble-hearted Kent, who shields and helps him from the unexpected encounter :

K. Give me thy hand. Who's there ?

and both join now in a last vain endeavour to prevent the King catching the infection of madness—'storm continues,' is the stage direction—the elements and the tempest in his mind breaks out anew wilder than ever by the accession of forces,—ripping the clouds from east to west,—rending the last bonds of reason. All covering is useless ; reckless is Lear's mad longing to be

A sharer in their fierce and far delight,

A portion of the tempest.

L. Off, off, you lendings !—come, unbutton here.

And now it is the Fool who has regained his courage, and prevents the last act of unreason ; it is his turn to shelter his master—to protect him against himself ; and Glo'ster with torch arrives in the nick of time to soothe the distracted King. Again there is a lull, and that small, strange knot of weird sufferers once more seek shelter.

The third storm-scene presents one of the finest dramatic creations, short as it is, in the weird combination of the real madman,—the assumed maniac,—and the professional Fool. We cannot do better than quote the words of Gervinus in support of an intelligent appreciation of these terrible contrasts:—'The scenes in which Lear, on the point of madness, appears in company with Edgar, who feigns madness, and with the Fool, who still endeavours, crushed in spirit, to follow his vocation, have not their equal on the stage, and far from being too horribly distorted and too harsh in effects, they produce throughout a deep, though not too painful, impression, if the silent acting of the person is correct, if Edgar's asides are uttered in suitable tones, and if the Fool's last words are properly prepared—words with which the poet indisputably intended to designate the faithful dependent's breaking heart.'

Thus, in the scene before us (sc. 6, Act iii.), the Fool enters, 'labouring to outjest the king's heart-strook injuries' with the pointed riddle—

F. Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman ?

L. A king, a king !

F. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman for his son ; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

There seems in this answer a covert allusion to Shakspeare's own circumstances—at least, we are strongly reminded by it of John Shakspeare's applications for quartering arms and apparently ruining himself in order to write 'armiger' after his name though

yeoman born, and living to see his son's prosperous fortune, and, in fact, living in the comfort of his affectionate support—a son who could indeed write himself most truly 'gentleman.' However this may have been in Shakspeare's mind, Lear at once catches this metaphorical allusion to his own act of making his daughters his mothers, as the Fool puts it in another scene, and follows up the idea of vengeance on them :

To have a thousand with red burning spits come hissing in upon them ;
and in his madness pitifully fulfils his threat to Goneril—

That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever.

Once more he is king, on an imaginary throne of justice, and with dignified courtesy invites his 'learnèd justice' (poor Tom) and his 'sapient sir' (the Fool) to bench by his side ; and poor Caius, too, he elects on the commission to arraign these 'she foxes.' Then the Fool tries to break through these mad delusions, which are driving his master to spasmodic outbursts of vengeful fury and of such painful tenderness, as the following :—

L. The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me ;

and

Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts ?

Lear is one who wears his heart upon his sleeve ; he loves or hates equally passionately, and expects to meet with the same from all around him. But now, as the Fool finds, it is too late to bring him back to reason. 'All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience,' and no capping of the mad verses of—

Tom. Come o'er the bourne, Bessy, to me.

Fool. Her boat hath a leak,

And she *must not speak*

Why she dares not come over to thee ;

(which seems, too, an indirect allusion to Cordelia, in France)—no riddles—no endeavour to open Lear's eyes to the plain fact of his imaginary Goneril being only 'a joint stool,' will wring even one forced 'Ha, ha !' from the poor demented King, who raves on till he sinks at last exhausted with his own passion, and the effect of the visionary forms he has conjured up ; and as the mental excitement subsides, the pangs of hunger assert themselves, and for lack of food that sturdy frame yields to a deep rest in the pitiful, confused sentences, which alone could realise for us

the touching picture which closes the three storm-scenes—Lear assisted to his rest by Caius and the Fool :

L. Make no noise, make no noise. Draw the curtains, so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' the morning, so, so, so.

F. And I'll go to bed at noon.

He, too, at last falling in with this mad unsettlement of all time and place—this upsetting of all natural courses. 'This cold night,' as he said previously, 'will turn us all to fools and madmen,' and with this last equally unmeaning utterance, he, too, sinks exhausted beside the King; the bond of sympathy is closer knit by their mutual sufferings. But, alas! the Fool is not allowed to gain that rest to 'balm his broken senses,' but at Glo'ster's alarm he is aroused by the ever-wakeful Caius (Kent), with the summons—

Come, help to bear thy master ;
Thou must not stay behind ;

and thus these true-hearted rivals in affection share the burden of the still sleeping King; and this is the last appearance—a touching and appropriate exit—of Lear's Fool.

Yet we could wish that Shakspeare had once more raised the curtain and showed us the end of this inimitable character. It is a want in the play to hear no more of him; he seems to have been almost forgotten and literally left out in the cold. In the next mad scene we find Lear wandering quite alone, and he makes no direct complaint of their absence—he misses them not, but remembers only those who 'flattered him like a dog,' who 'were not men of their word.' Yet he momentarily looks for Kent and the Fool's assistance; when surprised by Cordelia's messengers he cries—

No seconds; all myself!

Yet still, when he wakes up to partial recovery of reason, oblivion seems to envelop the memory of his lost Fool; but at the very last there is one sublimely pathetic allusion to him, which many have endeavoured to wrest from its obvious meaning, and spoil that 'one touch of nature,' by applying its purport to Cordelia:

And my poor Fool is hanged! No, no, no life!

Lear has entered with Cordelia dead in his arms. Kent has pressed his recognition of himself on the 'dull sight' of the dying old man, who fails, however, to identify him with his other missing

attendant, his poor Caius, whose memory is still vivid in his mind :

L. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that ;
He'll strike, and quickly too—he's dead and rotten.

And then the thread is broken again—' he knows not what he says'—but the mention of Caius leads back his wandering thoughts, ' with somewhat of a sad perplexity,' to that other true friend who is also dead and rotten—' all's cheerless, dark, and dreary.' He looks around for the familiar forms ; he lists in vain for the jesting voice—the merry song that hid a breaking heart ; and then he looks down on the dead Cordelia, and there is '*No, no, no* life.' The three 'no's' seem to point to the three who had been ever true to him—Kent, Fool, and Cordelia. This last heart-rending speech is 'the lightening before death'—that strange, awful last moment when, we are told, all our past life rises before us in rapid review—the voices long silent—the faces almost forgot—the grasp of loving hands ; and once more, in the innocence of childhood, 'we play with flowers, smile on our finger-ends, and babble o' green fields,' like poor Falstaff. So with the dying Lear, left utterly alone. All have gone, one by one, the Fool first ; and though the absorbing joy of the reconciliation with Cordelia, and then her merciless murder, have for a time obliterated the Fool from Lear's memory, that form seems to rise again before his tear-closing sight, and he cries, 'And my poor Fool is hanged !' Surely this is the most natural and pathetic reading of the passage.

We can only conjecture the poor Fool's fate : in all probability, in that hurried flight his fragile physique and over-wearied and chilled limbs forced him to lag behind, when, overtaken by some of Cornwall's cruel myrmidons, he met with short shrift, and the death that he himself had prophesied to him who should cling to a wheel that runs down hill. His reward was that of being the earliest of those loving storm-tossed souls to gain that rest denied them here, and find his peace 'in another and a better world.' Who can say the tragedy does not end happily? Not as Tate would have twisted it into a conventional fairy tale, with the usual 'tag' of 'married and lived happy ever afterwards'—not as the regulation fifth act of a melodrama—virtue in triumphant priggishness and vice consigned to the police court. No ! Lear has a unique grandeur of its own. When Albany offers earthly reward to Kent, that heroic soul contemns all—he puts

his regained honour and position by at once—his sole desire is to follow his master still :

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go ;
My master calls, and I must not say no.

When the worn-out Lear has gone to rejoin Cordelia and his poor Fool, death has lost all terror ; it is the reward of devotion—‘the balm of hurt minds’—the rest of the weary sufferer. ‘Vex not his ghost,’ cries Kent—

Oh, let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

We rise from the contemplation of this wonderful, painful drama with a sigh of relief, a thankful uplifting from our narrow everyday life from earth to heaven. The tragedy of ‘Lear’ can scarcely be said to end ; it leaves us on the verge of that Eternity where death shall make ‘these odds all even.’

MY FIRST DEER-STALK.

A BRILLIANT September day. Glorious sunshine, a keen biting breeze, so refreshing that it makes a new man of one, and an atmosphere limpid as that of Greece, but lighter, colder, healthier. Overhead no Grecian sky, but the clear pale blue of fairest Scottish weather, fretted every here and there with delicate streaks of white, with some few treacherous cloudbanks looming on either horizon. Around, behind, beneath, what a panorama! Tell me, ye southerners, if there be any sight like unto this? On both sides, a far undulating heathery plateau, stretching back behind us to the rocky base of encircling hills, which tower above the intersecting glens, and stand clear in massive strength against the sky. Beneath, a vision of loch and valley gloriously mingled, relieved in turn by shelving green hillsides, on whose slopes the same heathery plateau stretches, the same lochs, the same wilderness of limestone rocks, right to the base of yon further range of far blue hills, which fill the eye on every side but one, and there—the sea. Unutterable blue, mist-shrouded, wind-rippled, fading through mist into darkness, with, far away, faint and dreamlike, the dim peak-broken outline of fairy islands. Eyes filled with loveliest scenery, every sense alert and employed with delicious fulfilment, heart throbbing in unison with nature, surely this is Paradise on earth. Nay, it is only a Scottish deer-forest, hemmed in and fenced off from the rude outer world.

Hither, in the early morning, have we leisurely arrived on the back of sure-footed Highland ponies, knowing every step of the way, with train of stalkers and gillies bearing rifles, lunch-bags, and the like. We have felt the chill morning mist pass by degrees into brilliant sunshine, tempered here upon the heights into freshening breeze. No pilgrimage more delicious than that early morning ride. Every care and care forgotten, every prospect charming, the heather yielding its most exquisite perfume, the air its most fragrant ozone, the whole body reanimated and vigorous, rejoicing in its youth and the zest of mere animal vigour.

There are times when every intellectual principle and guide are abandoned in the luxury of untrammelled natural living. Such is now our state. Though lawyers, economists, philanthropists,

cry out on us and our intentions, here we are, and here will remain. 'Tis the most glorious recreation and sport yet invented of man, on which once entered no argument can aught avail. As for the killing and the victims and so forth, these are necessary evils, and to us, in the present temper, very much exaggerated.

Yet killing, after all, is what we have come for. And of this, even as we lie, we are reminded. To us this respite from climbing is a mere sense-luxury. But to others—to yon canny, grey-haired stalker, with wondrous brown clothes and brick-coloured stockings, or to his fellow with keen grey eyes and dear rugged head, so like one of the apostles in Raphael's cartoon of the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes,' there is work to be done whilst we luxuriate. The one is lying on his back with long dull-coloured telescope, cunningly inserted between upholding knees, for all the world like a Wimbledon marksman; the other, cannier still, with stick inserted in the ground, and his glass resting in the crook, both sweeping their glance from cranny to cranny of the hillside behind us. Long and careful is the scrutiny. At length, just when the strain seems no longer endurable, there is a low muttering of Gaelic gutturals, and we are informed 'there she'll be—a lot of hinds and twa staags.' Vain is it for the novice to endeavour to spy out the latent herd. That is a matter of long-acquired intuition. First and foremost, the glass never will remain steady, but wriggles about distractingly. Even when steadied he finds a true *focus* impossible, or sweeps too broadly over the hillside, generally ending in a triumphant discovery of two or three rocks, which, he strongly asseverates, are the prey he seeks. Happy is he who, *post tot tantosque labores*, or by the premature luck which is the portion of some men, catches a glimpse of the few little brown specks on the hillside, and realises that he is 'on' them at last. That is a sight to make the blood tingle—at a distance of a mile or more to note one's booty, and to know that therewith a campaign has begun between man and one of nature's noblest animals. 'Ay, twa staags, the one an eight-pointer—terrible bonnie, the other only a knobber.' Such is the verdict of the master stalker, who now summons us to be ready for the fray. Fortunately the wind is favourable—just perfect, blowing right off the deer into our faces. There is no chance of our scent reaching them, anyhow. But the strategical problem is this—given those deer to windward at a distance of a mile or so, but with next to no cover between you and them, how to get within shot. You are

just beginning to recognise the points for cogitation, when the chief campaigners have made up their minds. In a trice, everything is ready for the start. The ponies are sent off down the hill and out of sight, all the gillies with them save one, who is to follow us at a safe distance and well within cover, with the inevitable sandwiches and whiskey. The novice is accompanied on this his first march out by the two stalkers. No doubt this is a special mark of favour, one man being enough in all conscience for any sportsman. But this is a special case, for the laird has given strict orders that the novice is to have as good a chance as possible of accomplishing the grand feat. So the two go to coach him, to prevent mistakes, and to keep things straight. All at once, the novice, who has just begun to understand the problem as to want of cover, is agreeably startled by a rapid movement of his guides, who suddenly snatch up their *impedimenta*, and with body-bent motion disappear under the shelter of a little gully on the right hand. The novice, following, is led step by step into a burn with deep shelving sides, and the three promenade leisurely along its banks in complete shelter. Naturally, the novice is eager to understand things, and having gathered why they have sought the burn, he tremulously asks whether they are not getting too far to the side so as to scatter the scent somewhat. Reassured, he plies other questions. He is answered civilly, but with a trifle of impatience. To his companions this is no frivolous pastime; there is no time for the childish prattlings of curiosity. It is a serious business that we are upon—a sixteen-stone stag before us—well worth a shot, capable even of raising the year's average. Yet he learns enough to know some of the strange theories of these people. To these wild children of nature this is no mimic campaign. It is a veritable contest between man and beast, in which the 'cuteness is not all upon the man's side. They will tell you, and they evidently believe it, that the deer know perfectly well what your object is in pursuing them. How? Oh, they have been chased before, and know what a bullet is. And besides, can they not compare notes with their fellows? You think not? Ah, wait until you know them better. Then again, the deer has his two weapons—the eye and the nose. That is all he has to fight with. We are now defeating the nose, which is the more wonderful and useful of the two; but the eye must also be evaded shortly. Such is their running comment.

We are now at a point where the burn's sides cease to shelve,

and the burn itself becomes a mere prattling stream, which runs level with the grass. We pause on the flat where the cover just ceases, and an interval of spying ensues. Even to the novice the brown specks on the hillside are now visible. But, with miraculous sagacity, the stalkers have discovered that the larger stag has a ninth point, small and hidden, therefore not espied before. 'Ah, terrible bonnie,' repeats the younger. 'I wuss I had my knife in him whatever,' says the elder laconically. Then follows an awesome creep over the hillside to get under the hill and out of sight. Flat on the stomach we crawl across a rocky soil, then for a brief space head foremost down along the hillside, with dread discomfort and apoplexy imminent. But when it is over, and the sky-line safely crossed, our difficulties, overcome for the meantime, are by no means at an end. A swift, half-running movement, which rather jars one, brings us at length under our final cover, a long stretching heap of rocks, over which we are to mount, and progress safely on the flat until we come to two successive natural tiers, by which we shall at length approximate to our victims. O the agony of that climb upon those rocks! How many slips and barkings of the shins, how many scratchings of the hands, how many infernal falls of one rock against another, giving rise to agonised alarm that the enemy will overhear us! These make up no primrose path. But at length it is surmounted, at length we are again on flat ground, and moving cautiously on and on, with infinite care that no slightest sound shall escape us. An exclamation hastily dropped by the novice brings out a loud 'Wheesht!' from the men. On and up alternately we go, until at length we reach the final bank which separates us from the deer. Cautiously and slowly, the stalker raises himself on his hands from behind the farthest edge of the bank, and, with head kept absolutely steady when once it is over the line, looks carefully around. As cautiously and slowly he descends again, to announce that it is all right, and that the whole lot are lying feeding within one hundred and twenty yards. Then the second stalker rises similarly for a view, and lastly the novice. At first his eyes, dazzled by the unfamiliar sight, distinguish nothing. Then quickly some half-dozen recumbent brown bodies dawn on his view, and an excited gesture draws forth an angry remonstrance from the keeper. At first, too, they all seem like stags to his view, so like are the hinds' ears to small upstanding horns like those of the 'knobber.' But after a moment his eyes

light upon *the* stag, whose grand head moves slowly and majestically from side to side as he steadily browses. Then, full of excitement, he retires below. Of course he is all eager to begin the fray and get into position at once. But that cannot be thought of. The stalker's word in such a situation is law. 'It wass a good staag, and she'll not be going to loss it by letting her fire at her lying.' The doom is that the novice must wait until the deer choose to rise. How long will that be? 'Maybe an hour, maybe more,' is the cold comfort of his answer. What in the world is to be done till then? All this in loud whispers. The young stalker has already answered that question for himself. This is the best opportunity yet afforded for the standing Highland ceremony of a 'taste.' Afterwards the novice will learn that nothing great in deer-stalking is ever done, or even contemplated, without a 'taste.' So the bottles are produced and partaken of, the novice refusing. What need has he of whiskey, with such a fever in the blood? 'Ah, it wass a good thing whiskey; it will make you cold in summer and warm in winter.' Yet a worse thing follows: two pipes are produced, two plugs of ropelike tobacco cut up and inserted. The novice is in a tremor. 'Surely you are not going to smoke?' he says. 'Of course; why not?' is the reply: 'they'll smell you as soon as your smoke.' So perforce the novice gives in—nay, joins them in the fragrant weed; and thus they lie, every now and then taking a peep at the deer, the novice oftenest. They lie immovable and careless. Nay, two of the hinds even play on the grass and butt each other.

See how unconscious of their doom
The little victims play!

And now, whilst this weary waiting is begun, and the novice lies smarting with an impatience which even tobacco cannot allay, recking no longer of valley and sea and sky, a change is apparent. Gradually and unperceived by our trio, the sky above has darkened, and the blue is hidden in part. Not long have they lain, when suddenly and without warning the white, steamlike mist of the morning overshadows them again, and this time wets them thoroughly in the few minutes it takes to pass. Nothing now is visible around or behind. One may be careless of arousing the deer. Now is the temper of the novice tried. Wet to the skin, with only a half-drowned pipe to comfort him, he falls back upon the flask so lately disdained. He is tumultuously angry

that he did not shoot before this 'infernal shower.' At which the stalker only smiles sardonically, thereby enhancing his rage. To lie and do nothing is undignified, but nothing can be done which shall be less so. By-and-by the shower and mist clear off, with a parting touch of sleet, and the blue reappears. An eager look is satisfied by the spectacle of the deer still lying above, mightily unconcerned but comfortably settled, with never a thought of rising. There is nothing for it but to wait. But, oh! the misery of that long, wet, comfortless watch, the frequent draughts of whiskey, as the novice discovers that fingers and feet alike are numb, the terrible suspicion that if the deer should now rise, though never so nicely, they will rise for him in vain! For one long hour and a half they have been recumbent. Impatience has given way to weariness, hope to despair. But nothing all this time has ruffled the stalkers' philosophic equanimity. There they lie, chatting a little in low tones, quite unconcerned as it seems. There is nothing like a placid temperament for a sportsman.

At length, when the novice begins to think it hopeless to attempt to rouse his companions at all, one of them after a scrutiny announces that one of the hinds is up. The rest will follow shortly. So the rifle is got ready and laid up on the top of the bank. The novice, his excitement now returning, is adjured to aim quietly and steadily, to put the bead of the sight upon the deer's heart when it rises, and to pull the trigger slowly and gently, just as if he were squeezing a lemon. He advances with palpitating heart to rest upon the bankside, and so secure a comfortable position, before the crucial moment comes for taking aim. And now, at the very instant when he is so adjusting himself, a very unexpected thing happens. How it takes place, no one ever knows. Whether the novice displayed too much of his head and it caught the hind's eye, or whether he made some slight noise which caught her ear, or whether the movement of the rifle through the air attracted her, none can tell; but, all at once, she looks straight at him with cocked-up ears. He lies as still as may be, not daring to move a muscle. Then another hind rises and also looks. Quick as thought the whole herd turn their eyes upon the very spot where we are hidden. Then follows a sharp angry bark from the first hind, who is clearly dissatisfied with what her senses report. One by one, the whole herd rise and stand erect, the great stag last of all, his graceful head moving to and fro with excitement. He turns full broadside on, and the whole

lot stand on the *qui vive*, ready at once to run. Now is the novice's chance. Ah! he is ready and eager to take it, but the Fates are against him. For safety's sake the rifle has been left locked on half-cock. It has to be opened and cocked, and is so opened frantically. There is too much movement and clicking. With the enemy suspicion has become certainty, and in a moment they are off! Frenzied now is the novice, frantically he covers them in response to the stalker's call of 'Quick!' But just when he is on the point of pulling he is called on to stop; and luckily he does stop, just in time. For there, about thirty yards farther on, making one hundred and fifty yards in all, the curious creatures stop and gaze back again at the seat of their disturbance, amongst them the stag, which slowly turns round and sniffs the air, presenting a grand broadside. Now or never is the chance. And the novice has seized it: at once he has his wavering rifle on the brown body, as carefully as may be, he finds the bead on the right spot, aims, and pulls. When his senses have recovered from the shock and smoke, he perceives that the stag has moved forward slightly, and stands groggily, as if stunned by the report. Hope springs up at once. 'He is hit!—No—Yes—he is only walking on—,' but the words are left unfinished. Probably they have stood for a second, and then all of them, stag included, dash off at a high pace, unscathed and contemptuous. Now is the revulsion of horror. Language, unprofitable but terrible, follows from the novice. Despair, resentment, all bad human passions surge in his mind. Too well he realises now that he has given that fatal upward jerk in firing which is the chief symptom of 'stag fever,' and ruins many a good stalk. But we forbear. There are some occasions on which a man is best left alone with his sorrow.

There follows, of course, that usual panacea for all ills, as it is the consummation of all joys—a 'taste.' Then tongues are loosened, and sympathy flows forth. It was not a real chance—quite impossible to kill after so long and numb a waiting, and with so short an aim. Besides, the day is still young, and another chance may well be had before nightfall. And so the novice gradually relents from his despair, and conceals the canker at his heart with talk about the future. The interval of 'tasting' extends itself into lunch, a meal of which the novice partakes heartily, in spite of his chagrin. A pipe follows, and it is about half past one o'clock before they start, this time with full determination to be successful. The day is now bright again,

and the practised eye sees no longer any chance of disturbing weather. Their way varies from the previous journey. Now they are at the base of the hills, and have to pass the line in order to reach the farther part of the forest, where is one special, never-failing glen, the last resort in case of failure on the nearer side of the forest. Curious, indeed, and awe-inspiring is the road. It is a corrie winding between the hills, and almost grassless. Most of the way winds about amongst heaps of gigantic limestone rocks, which literally cover the ground. Nay, the very hills seem covered with, and almost composed of, them. It is a wild desolation, suggestive of strange thoughts. Here these stones have lain in their heaps, undisturbed and mostly unvisited, exactly as they fell ages ago, when the great cataclysm took place of which this land was the result. One tries vainly to imagine how it all happened—how these lowering hills rocked about, and some were raised and others fell, and the sea was dashing about them, and the rocks were hurled in showers of fire, until at length the sea parted from off the dry land, and it rose solid and sound. And thus it has remained ever since that final revolution, unaltered, mostly unseen by man, and so shall endure until the end comes. Many a mad theorist would be tamed to reason, and purified of arguments as to cultivation of these deer-forests, if he could but be brought to see them as they are, the lower pasture-lands merging into these wastes. Here is no home, save for straying sheep, or for the passing of nimble deer. It has no settled inhabitants, save the soaring eagle and the rock-coloured ptarmigan. As we pass through it we realise that probably it can be put to no better use than it now is.

But pass it we do, and emerge upon the country beyond the high hills, which is fair and green and far-stretching, with plains and valleys and hills again repeated. Tiresome is this journey, for eight good miles have been walked from our last resting-place, and the afternoon is well advanced ere we reach the limit of the ground. Hitherto we have encountered nothing, but luck does not desert us. At the farthest end of the ground we are perched on a point from which the final plateau shelves down on two sides of its square into a deep valley. Right and left from us in the valley run the silvery streams that form our 'march.' Beyond are the neighbouring forests, and in that upon the right we are privileged to see a strange sight. It is now the very end of September, and the neighbouring sportsmen, keen to increase

their bag, have fixed upon to-day for a great drive. We are not long in discovering men posted at different sides of the plateau before us. Ere long, a low, shrill whistle sounds, and soon we see two large herds of deer appear rapidly upon the hillside, and pace wildly about. Some instinct drives them together, and as they run along by our right side they gradually coalesce. Up and up the hill they speed, with frequent stoppage, but ever aroused again and driven on. And then, just when our stalker has espied the ambush, as the herd defiles along, three hundred in number, like a mimic army, we see white flashes of smoke, and hear the sharp ping of rifles. At right angles the herd turns, and now we are breathless with excitement, and care not to note the damage done across the way; for are they not heading straight for our ground? and will there not be a splendid chance at last? True, they come straight enough, at breakneck speed. Down the hill in confused disorder, then straggling at the burn which forms the march, each one crossing separately and gingerly. In a trice they are on our ground, that splendid herd, containing I know not how many stags, gladdening the keeper's heart. They approach the jutting corner of the hill from whose summit we watch them below, and there they settle, the run shading off into a gentle walk, and that into complete rest. Quick as may be, we commence the steep descent of the other side of the hill, so as to catch them at the corner. Ours is a breakneck speed, but on we go. Yet, once arrived at the foot of the hill, and all exhausted, what do we find on carefully surveying the corner? Not a hoof or horn, where lately the sward was brown with deer. Not a sound is uttered, but away in the far distance we descry a galloping herd. Something has startled them, and again we are undone.

It is with true fortitude that we retrace our steps up the hillside again, and prepare to make for home. Such ill-fortune is enough to make a saint swear. It is a really unlucky day; and now the afternoon is just beginning to fade into dusk. We shall have to retrace our steps home, tired and disappointed, over the rough way, and will return empty-handed and late for dinner. Involuntarily there comes into our novice's mind, as he plods along, the discouraging story of the man who had walked a whole day, got near a very good stag, and missed an easy shot; and how the stalker said never a word of condolence or reproach, but sighed and gently remarked—'A-weel! ye're eichteen miles frae yer denner.' His own fate is parallel. He curses the whole

thing, about which he has been so romantic. Never will he make a fool of himself again. What do the hills and skies matter to him? Let him shoot at cows for targets. He may be keen on sport, but nature will never make of him a sportsman. Not that it is his fault—no, only his ill-luck; it is all these blundering devils of—

Hush! What is this? As if at one bound the two stalkers are prone on the ground, and the gillie, first of all, raises a warning hand as he crouches down. Down, too, flops the novice. Can it really be yet another chance? Then the luck is not so bad. Yes indeed, he hears, a herd, that has somehow escaped them as they went forward, or come up from behind after them, is there, in the hollow ahead. Steadily they crawl onward in the gathering dusk, eager to seize the chance thus offered, and in one head, at least, the blood is surging. Dusk though it be, even though light be failing, victory shall now be his. Steadily he seizes the ready rifle, like iron he holds it, for after all it may only be a snapshot he will get. Yes! there at last they are, just discernible in the dulling grey air, on the far side of the small hollow before them. Steady as a rock, with nerves on the stretch, and every sense agog, he stretches himself at full length, poises his rifle, seeks for it a rest, finds it, levels, and aims carefully at 'the body' clearest seen, with antlers just discernible. Not wavering now, no fatal jerk. Soft as velvet, hard as iron is the pull; clear the hit. Startled by the report, there is a lightning-like run of many; but one—the one—staggers gently to the side, and falls prone. Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious. There he lies, when we reach him, a fine eight-pointer, fat and flourishing. Now, indeed, is the time for 'tasting,' for guttural congratulation, for smearing a fair young face with blood, for all the brutality of 'grollaching.' As the deer's last toilette is completed, the victor sits rejoicing in his triumph. No longer he thinks of the discomfort and disappointment he has endured, nor of that terrible rock-bound trudge, twelve miles of which lie before him on his homeward way. Rather is it of the cosy room and the abundant dinner, of the glories of narration, the drinkings of whiskey, the wholesale distribution of largesses. Like Homer's heroes, he will fill himself out with fat meat and red wine, and then will stretch himself at length in well-earned and dreamless slumbers, happy to know that when the morning comes he will arise with a reputation that can never leave him. He has shot his stag.

FIFINE'S FUNERAL.

Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring !

It was Christmas Eve. Bob Sheldon had brought with him his wife and his child, a little girl of four years of age, all rose and blond. The foreign *cénacle* was in full force, and the excellent Madame Stiefel and her husband, invited to our table, were joining in our talk and toasts. Madame Stiefel liked her foreigner customers—'*mes étrangers*' as she called us; and that night, too, we were having a special festivity in honour of Mrs. Sheldon and little Fifine who only came rarely to the restaurant. For that matter, the day itself was a sufficient excuse for something extra. Even in Central Africa an Englishman can scarcely allow Christmas Eve to pass unnoticed. And so we had clubbed together to have a dinner worthy of the occasion; Madame Stiefel had done justice to her reputation; we had dined magnificently for Bohemians as we all were, and now we were mixing our grog, smoking our pipes, and feeling peculiarly happy.

Little Fifine seemed to feel quite at home in this mixed company: she had never seen any other. Her father, amongst other youthful adventures, had been an actor and stage manager of a provincial theatre in England; he had even written several dramas, and when I knew him in 185—, he obtained a precarious living as an essayist and polygraph, if that excessively scholastic name may be applied to the versatile contributors to our modern periodical literature. Prodigal beyond all hope of remedy, Bob Sheldon never had a penny in his pocket; a fact which did not for one moment prevent him from falling in love with an actress who was no richer than himself. The actress having accepted Bob's suit, he borrowed five pounds of a friend and married his ladylove. Neither he nor she having any money, and Bob's earnings being uncertain, the young couple ran into debt, and, in order to escape accepting the hospitality of the King's Bench prison, Bob and his wife had thought fit to cross the Channel and come to Paris.

Accustomed to this life of chance and adventure, little Fifine felt quite at home in the Restaurant Stiefel. Why should she not?

She had never known any home. And so the little girl was quite happy as she danced and laughed and chattered on her father's knees:

'Papa! papa! Boum! boum!'

Sheldon was proud of the heiress of his debts. He looked at her and kissed her tenderly, and the little one repeated:

'Papa! Boum! boum!'

And she thumped on his shoulder with her little hands clenched.

'Ah! it's to be Boum! boum! is it? You want to hear about Boum! boum! Very good! Gentlemen, Fifine demands Boum! boum!'

And amidst the ready laughter of the Bohemians, who had been rendered extraordinarily indulgent by a good dinner, Sheldon proceeded to recite a mock showman's harangue to please the little one:

'Tara, ta ta ta, dzing, dzing, boum, boum! Walk up! Walk up! Ladies and gentlemen, princes and princesses, nobles and commoners. The spectacle that we have the honour of presenting to you is unique in this world and unknown in any other, as far as we know. Walk up! Walk up and take your places to see the wonderful phenomenon, the great and inimitable Perilipton, known in British India under the name of the Rhamadan-Fla, and in Patagonia as the squatting salamander. Only two of these formidable quadrupeds have ever been brought into Europe. One was bought by the Emperor of the French, and the other by this menagerie. The Emperor's Perilipton died of a squirrous cancer in the tail. The Perilipton of this menagerie is in perfect health and condition, and will now perform before the public his graceful and unparalleled tricks. Ladies and gentlemen! the front seats be twopence and the back ditto a penny! Walk up! The Perilipton, I hear, is getting impatient to show himself to the company, with his body like the keel of a boat and his foot like a warming-pan! Walk up! Boum, boum! Dzing, balaboum!' &c.

The joyous cries of Fifine increased as the harangue proceeded, and 'the foot like a warming-pan' brought her gaiety to a climax. When Bob had done imitating the drum and the roarings of the Perilipton, we mixed fresh grogs and drank to Fifine's health, to Madame Stiefel's health, and to everybody's health. George Grant, in his quality of poet of the *cénacle*, recited some verses; while Philip Lake, pupil of Couture, and native of Ithaca, N.Y., drew an

anticipatory caricature of Fifine's presentation at the Court of the Tuileries as the tamer of the Perilippton. Chaseville, the other member of the *cénacle*, was overwhelmed with emotion. He was shedding tears! Why? Chaseville was a pessimist. Theoretically he believed the birth of a child to be a matter for sadness. The natural gaiety of youth he regarded as a cruel mockery, and joyousness itself an abdication of the reasoning powers. Death he looked upon as a deliverance, if it were not the much-to-be-desired entrance upon the state of Nirvaña. Chaseville had elaborated, with the assistance of Hartmann, Schopenhauer, Leopardi, and the Greek anthology, a philosophic system of vague and cloudy profundity, the only conclusion of which was that there was no remedy for the evils of this life but annihilation. He figured to himself the earth and its inhabitants as a barrel floating on the surface of the unfathomable waters. The greatest benefit that a superior power could confer upon mankind would be, according to Chaseville, to pull out the bung and let the barrel sink. 'Pull out the bung' was Chaseville's panacea. With all his intermittent philosophy, Chaseville was nevertheless a gay and seemingly happy fellow five days out of seven; he even had a weakness. After dinner he delighted to drink raw spirits until he arrived at a certain point of intoxication, what he called the tender note in the gamut of ebriety. At this moment he had reached this point: he was bewailing in silence the woes of humanity.

At last the moment came to separate. Chaseville, as usual on grand occasions, insisted upon proposing and drinking a toast to Buddha and another to the divine Sophocles, who in the chorus of the 'Œdipus Coloneus' had said those profound words, the epigraph of Chaseville's forthcoming 'Primer of Pessimism,' *μη φύναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾷ λόγον*. Not wishing to be disagreeable to Chaseville, we drank this toast, though under reserves; and so, with mutual good wishes, the meeting of the *cénacle* broke up.

But what was this *cénacle*? It was simply a group of friends and compatriots, or rather of Anglo-Saxon cosmopolitans. Chaseville was the occasional correspondent of a New York journal; George Grant represented an English journal; Philip Lake, of Ithaca, N.Y., was studying at the same time painting and 'la vie de Bohème.' These three, together with Bob Sheldon, were the pillars of the *cénacle*, of which several other English and Americans and a few Frenchmen were honorary members, and were welcomed

boisterously whenever they chose to come to the Restaurant Stiefel, the place where the *cénacle* held its nightly meetings.

The Crémérie Restaurant, kept by Polydore Stiefel, was not remarkable for the excessive luxury of its ornamentation. The walls were bare and sombre; they were painted, it is true, but in what colour it was no longer possible even to guess. The floor was sprinkled with yellow sand; the chairs and tables were of the most ordinary and cheap kind. To the left as one entered was the *caisse* or desk on which stood a vase of cut flowers, a plated urn, or save-all, for the waiter's *pourboires*, and the book in which Madame Stiefel wrote her accounts. On each side of the long room were tables covered with coarse but snowy-white cloths. At the end of the room to the right was the kitchen, and to the left the *salon*. Madame Stiefel presided in the kitchen and at the desk, and nevertheless found time to have a little chat with each of her guests. She was a treasure, this Madame Stiefel, a stout, rosy-faced woman of fifty, with regular features, fine black eyes, and black hair.

Her husband, Polydore Stiefel, was of a strange type—tall, well made, his white hair close cropped, a very thin and phenomenally long neck, the back of which was flat and hairless, just as if it had been shaved and then polished with emery paper. This flat waste was, so to speak, the smooth and polished reverse of that wrinkled, drawn, and melancholy medal, his face. Polydore Stiefel had had, indeed, his days of glory, even of literary glory. He had been a professor at one time, and had given German lessons in several noble families of the Faubourg Saint Germain; but that was years ago, in the good time of which Polydore Stiefel loved to talk while drinking *petits verres* with his customers. But unfortunately Stiefel, like Ariadne when deserted by Theseus, had abandoned himself to Bacchus; and now, it was to be feared, there was an unequal contest between the modest profits of the restaurant and the permanent and Saharian aridity of Polydore's throat.

The poor man, too, was nearly blind. It appears that in his days of prosperity he had studied and pored over books, and worked and worked until his eyes failed him and his brain too. For a year he was smitten down with a nervous trouble and obliged to give up his pupils and his hack literary work. It was then that, in order to gain their daily bread, Madame Stiefel had opened the little restaurant in the Rue de la Rochefoucauld, with the sign:—

POLYDORE STIEFEL,
CRÉMERIE RESTAURANT,

and painted on the two windows the supplementary announcements, 'Chocolat et Café au lait,' 'Bouillon et Bœuf,' 'On porte en ville,' and the charmingly honest notice, 'English spoken *a little*.'

But Polydore Stiefel, far from recovering, grew blinder and blinder, and more and more demoralised. He now did nothing but smoke his pipe, talk liberalism when he felt sure of his hearers, and drink *petits verres*. Three times a week he used to go down to the boulevards, but, being nearly blind, he needed a guide. For this service a boy named Zadok had been engaged. Zadok's body was so slender that it almost escaped notice; his head on the contrary was colossal, and adorned with a nose of the noblest form. This nose was unmistakable proof that Zadok descended from a family as old as the world. He took his wages out in kind, and in such a manner as made one suspect that on the days when he was not on duty as Polydore's guide he economised his appetite.

Of the other *habitués* of the Restaurant Stiefel—Poles, Greeks, Russians, painters, poets, and Bohemians of all kinds—nothing need be said specially, as they do not have any share in this narrative.

One day, about a fortnight after our Christmas Eve dinner, I arrived at the restaurant after an absence of eight or ten days.

'Have you heard the news?' asked Madame Stiefel.

'What news?'

'Madame Sheldon has lost her daughter.'

Imagining how great must be grief of the father, who was a mere bundle of nerves, I hurried up to the hotel at Montmartre, in the Rue Lepic, where Sheldon and his wife were lodging.

I found him in despair, sobbing and weeping bitterly.

I did my best to console him for his irreparable loss, and at last suggested that, as we were foreigners here in Paris, we ought to make haste to accomplish the usual formalities.

'Formalities! What formalities?' he asked.

'The formalities at the Mairie. The declarations . . .'

'The devil take the Mairie and the declarations! The Mairie won't give me back my daughter.'

And he poured out a glass of brandy, weeping more bitterly than ever. It was of no use to hesitate, so I took down his hat and coat from the peg, threw the coat over his shoulders, telling him that I would do the talking and arrange matters, but that his

presence was absolutely necessary. Thereupon we went to the Mairie and made the necessary declarations, and thence across the street to the office of the Pompes Funèbres. There I explained to the clerk that we wanted to bury a child of four years of age, and that we wanted to manage the affair as economically as possible. Poor Bob, of course, had not a sou.

'Bien, monsieur,' replied the clerk, as he took note of the order. Then, after a pause—

'Faudra-t-il un prêtre?'

I did not know what to answer. I turned to consult Bob, but he was in a state of stupor, and his eyes were still full of tears. He could not answer. The situation was evidently understood by the clerk, who said in a half compassionate, half contemptuous tone:

'Eh bien—Monsieur is a foreigner . . . English, if I am not mistaken . . . probably a Protestant . . . no priest then, eh?'

And the detail 'no priest' was added to the other particulars in the ruled columns of the lugubrious order-book.

Bob Sheldon was indeed a stranger and an Englishman and a Protestant, though not much given to religious practice. He did not need a priest, as the clerk had concluded.

However, while we were at the Mairie, George Grant had, at Mrs. Sheldon's request, gone to see a Protestant chaplain, who at that time had charge of errant souls in Paris, a robust, hearty man, and withal a Doctor of Divinity. George Grant explained to this reverend Doctor that Sheldon had lost his child, that he wished to have a prayer said over the grave, and that the funeral would take place the next morning at ten o'clock at the Montmartre cemetery. George added that Sheldon was a literary man, and intimated that his pockets were not overloaded with golden guineas. But the reverend gentleman interrupted these details in a sharp and dry tone:

'I never officiate for less than twenty francs.'

Reckoning on the charitableness of the Doctor's soul, since every Sunday the Doctor preached the Gospel, and since the Gospel preached charity, George had taken care to change a napoleon, in the hope that the reverend gentleman, learning the pecuniary embarrassment of Sheldon, might content himself with a five-franc piece in order not to have the air of officiating purely out of charity.

But Dr. X. was firm; and so George Grant, seeing that de-

cidedly there was no help for it, counted out the burial fee in twenty pieces of one franc—one franc, two francs, three francs, four francs, up to twenty—saying to himself that by so doing each franc would be an arrow fixed in the conscience of the Doctor of Divinity.

The next morning—it was in the middle of the month of January—the undertaker's men, the *croquemorts*, as the French term them, arrived at the hour agreed upon. It was snowing. It had been snowing all night, and these bony, grimy, cynical *croquemorts* looked like sinister crows, so black did they appear in contrast with the dazzling whiteness of the snow.

Madame Stiefel had come the previous night to wash the body of Fifine and to place it in the bier. The poor mother was in a state of mute and helpless despair. The father had lost his head altogether. What could he do? And, not knowing what he was doing, he went and drank half a tumbler of brandy, and then went and sat in a corner of the room sobbing and weeping, while Madame Stiefel, like a good, practical woman, performed the last duties towards the lifeless child.

On the morning of the burial, between eight and nine o'clock, Madame Stiefel had sent her nephew, a fat and rosy-cheeked country boy, who was waiter in the restaurant. His aunt sent her compliments to Mrs. Sheldon and asked if there was anything she could do. No, everything had been done; Madame Stiefel was really too kind. Would Monsieur allow him to see the corpse? the boy asked.

'Yes, yes,' replied Sheldon, scarcely relishing the curiosity of the red-faced peasant boy, although his request had been made with the greatest gravity and politeness.

Sheldon opened the door; the boy entered and immediately fell on his knees before the coffin, and began praying and making innumerable signs of the cross, while the warmth of the chamber melted into little rivulets the clods of snow on his upturned shosoles. This manifestation was the boy's way of showing sympathy. He was praying sincerely for the soul of little 'Mam'selle Fifine.'

At ten o'clock everybody had arrived except George Grant and the minister—Philip Lake, Chaseville, Professor Stiefel, accompanied by Zadok and Zadok's nose. But where was the minister? Where was Grant?

Finally the *croquemorts* began to grow impatient. They

could not wait. They had their orders. They had another funeral to go to. Perhaps the minister had gone directly to the cemetery. We must start.

The snow lay thick and crisp on the ground. It was still snowing, and the big flakes lashed your face as the wind whirled them along. The sound of footsteps was deadened; the few vehicles that passed betrayed their presence only by a dull rumbling and groaning of the springs. The roaring of busy Paris was still; the streets were deserted; the great city in its silent stillness seemed like a great corpse under its shroud of snow.

Still, as we neared the cemetery signs of life became once more evident. No sooner had the modest *cortège* entered the avenue leading up to the cemetery than two marble-masons pounced upon us like birds of prey, proposing monuments, 'crosses of black wood very cheap,' 'an article in wrought iron altogether exceptional, quite within the means of Monsieur.' Happily these harpies are no longer allowed to trouble mourners with their lugubrious offers.

At length, after a long promenade through the old cemetery, we passed under the bridge and reached the bare and desert anexe where Fifine's grave had been dug. But we found neither Grant nor the minister. What was to be done? The *croque-morts* insisted that they could not wait. After all, they said, what was the good of waiting? So, after having brushed off the snow that had fallen on the bier, we let them lower it into the grave, into the carpet of snow that contrasted with the yellow clayey earth of the side of the trench. Each one threw a handful of cold earth upon the coffin, and then we hurried away, sad, silent, and shivering.

As we were descending the avenue from the cemetery gate to the exterior boulevard we saw coming towards us through the drifting snow a strange little phantom dressed in black, wearing black gloves and a black comforter, which set off conspicuously a flaming red nose. The phantom held its hands up to shelter its eyes from the snow. It was George Grant, who had arrived too late for the ceremony. George was in a state of furious anger. Still, we could not stay to listen to explanations in that blinding snowstorm. Sheldon, too, was anxious to do things decently, although he had not a sou; he had an idea that funeral baked meats were necessary, and so we repaired to a wineshop on the Boulevard de Clichy, where George gave us an explanation of his absence

and of that of the reverend Doctor. It was a long history, which may be briefly summed up. George had taken a cab to fetch the minister; the cab had broken down at the head of the Rue Pigalle, within ten minutes' walk of the cemetery. The Doctor refused to walk. It was impossible to get another carriage. Grant tried at several stables in the neighbourhood, but none of the *loueurs* would trust a horse out for love or money. Grant therefore returned to the scene of the disaster, where he found the Doctor of Divinity sitting in the cab. He told him there was no means of getting another carriage, and proposed that they should go to the cemetery on foot.

'I never go to a funeral on foot,' replied the reverend gentleman, as he got out of the cab and started on his return home, with his twenty francs in his pocket, leaving Grant and the broken-down cab to get on as best they could.

And this was the reason why Fifine was buried without book or candle.

THE RECIPE FOR GENIUS.

LET us start fair by frankly admitting that the genius, like the poet, is born and not made. If you wish to apply the recipe for producing him, it is unfortunately necessary to set out by selecting beforehand his grandfathers and grandmothers, to the third and fourth generation of those that precede him. Nevertheless, there *is* a recipe for the production of genius, and every actual concrete genius who ever yet adorned or disgraced this oblate spheroid of ours has been produced, I believe, in strict accordance with its unwritten rules and unknown regulations. In other words, geniuses don't crop up irregularly anywhere, 'quite promiscuous like;' they have their fixed laws and their adequate causes: they are the result and effect of certain fairly demonstrable concatenations of circumstance: they are, in short, a natural product, not a *lusus naturæ*. You get them only under sundry relatively definite and settled conditions; and though it isn't (unfortunately) quite true that the conditions will always infallibly bring forth the genius, it is quite true that the genius can never be brought forth at all without the conditions. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? No more can you get a poet from a family of stockbrokers who have intermarried with the daughters of an eminent alderman, or make a philosopher out of a country grocer's eldest son whose amiable mother had no soul above the half-pounds of tea and sugar.

In the first place, by way of clearing the decks for action, I am going to start even by getting rid once for all (so far as we are here concerned) of that famous but misleading old distinction between genius and talent. It is really a distinction without a difference. I suppose there is probably no subject under heaven on which so much high-flown stuff and nonsense has been talked and written as upon this well-known and much-debated hair-splitting discrimination. It is just like that other great distinction between fancy and imagination, about which poets and essayists discoursed so fluently at the beginning of the present century, until at last one fine day the world at large woke up suddenly to the unpleasant consciousness that it had been wasting its time over a non-existent difference, and that fancy and imagination were after all absolutely identical. Now, I won't

dogmatically assert that talent and genius are exactly one and the same thing; but I do assert that genius is simply talent raised to a slightly higher power; it differs from it not in kind but merely in degree: it is talent at its best. There is no drawing a hard-and-fast line of demarcation between the two. You might just as well try to classify all mankind into tall men and short men, and then endeavour to prove that a real distinction existed in nature between your two artificial classes. As a matter of fact, men differ in height and in ability by infinitesimal gradations: some men are very short, others rather short, others medium-sized, others tall, and yet others again of portentous stature like Mr. Chang and Jacob Omnium. So, too, some men are idiots, some are next door to a fool, some are stupid, some are worthy people, some are intelligent, some are clever, and some geniuses. But genius is only the culminating point of ordinary cleverness, and if you were to try and draw up a list of all the real geniuses in the last hundred years, no two people could ever be found to agree among themselves as to which should be included and which excluded from the artificial catalogue. I have heard Kingsley and Charles Lamb described as geniuses, and I have heard them both absolutely denied every sort of literary merit. Carlyle thought Darwin a poor creature, and Comte regarded Hegel himself as an empty windbag.

The fact is, most of the grandiose talk about the vast gulf which separates genius from mere talent has been published and set abroad by those fortunate persons who fell, or fancied themselves to fall, under the former highly satisfactory and agreeable category. Genius, in short, real or self-suspected, has always been at great pains to glorify itself at the expense of poor commonplace inferior talent. There is a certain type of great man in particular which is never tired of dilating upon the noble supremacy of its own greatness over the spurious imitation. It offers incense obliquely to itself in offering it generically to the class genius. It brings ghee to its own image. There are great men, for example, such as Lord Lytton, Disraeli, Victor Hugo, the Lion Comique, and Mr. Oscar Wilde, who pose perpetually as great men; they cry aloud to the poor silly public so far beneath them, 'I am a genius! Admire me! Worship me!' Against this Byronic self-elevation on an aerial pedestal, high above the heads of the blind and battling multitude, we poor common mortals, who are not unfortunately geniuses, are surely entitled to enter

occasionally our humble protest. Our contention is that the genius only differs from the man of ability as the man of ability differs from the intelligent man, and the intelligent man from the worthy person of sound common sense. The sliding scale of brains has infinite gradations: and the gradations merge insensibly into one another. There is no gulf, no gap, no sudden jump of nature; here as elsewhere, throughout the whole range of her manifold productions, our common mother *non facit saltum*.

The question before the house, then, narrows itself down finally to this: what are the conditions under which exceptional ability or high talent is likely to arise?

Now I suppose everybody is ready to admit that two complete born fools are not at all likely to become the proud father and happy mother of a Shakespeare or a Newton. I suppose everybody will unhesitatingly allow that a great mathematician could hardly by any conceivable chance arise among the South African Bushmen, who cannot understand the arduous arithmetical proposition that two and two make four. No amount of education or careful training, I take it, would suffice to elevate the most profoundly artistic among the Veddahs of Ceylon, who cannot even comprehend an English drawing of a dog or horse, into a respectable president of the Royal Academy. It is equally unlikely (as it seems to me) that a Mendelssohn or a Beethoven could be raised in the bosom of a family all of whose members on either side were incapable (like a distinguished modern English poet) of discriminating any one note in an octave from any other. Such leaps as these would be little short of pure miracles. They would be equivalent to the sudden creation, without antecedent cause, of a whole vast system of nerves and nerve-centres in the prodigious brain of some infant phenomenon.

On the other hand, much of the commonplace shallow fashionable talk about hereditary genius—I don't mean, of course, the talk of our Darwins and Galtons, but the cheap drawing-room philosophy of easy sciolists who can't understand them—is itself fully as absurd in its own way as the idea that something can come out of nothing. For it is no explanation of the existence of genius to say that it is hereditary. You only put the difficulty one place back. Granting that young Alastor Jones is a budding poet because his father, Percy Bysshe Jones, was a poet before him, why, pray, was Jones the elder a poet at all, to start with? This kind of explanation, in fact, explains nothing; it begins by

positing the existence of one original genius, absolutely unaccounted for, and then proceeds blandly to point out that the other geniuses derive their characteristics from him, by virtue of descent, just as all the sons of a peer are born honourables. The elephant supports the earth, and the tortoise supports the elephant, but who, pray, supports the tortoise? If the first chicken came out of an egg, what was the origin of the hen that laid it?

Besides, the allegation as it stands is not even a true one. Genius, as we actually know it, is by no means hereditary. The great man is not necessarily the son of a great man or the father of a great man: often enough, he stands quite isolated, a solitary golden link in a chain of baser metal on either side of him. Mr. John Shakespeare, woolstapler, of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, was no doubt an eminently respectable person in his own trade, and he had sufficient intelligence to be mayor of his native town once upon a time: but, so far as is known, none of his literary remains are at all equal to *Macbeth* or *Othello*. Parson Newton, of the parish of Woolsthorpe, in Lincolnshire, may have preached a great many very excellent and convincing discourses: but there is no evidence of any sort that he ever attempted to write the *Principia*. *Per contra*, the Miss Miltons, good young ladies that they were (though of conflicting memory), do not appear to have differed conspicuously in ability from the other Priscillas and Patiences and Mercies amongst whom their lot was cast; while the Marlboroughs and the Wellingtons do not seem to bud out spontaneously into great commanders in the second generation. True, there are numerous cases such as that of the Herschels, father and son, or the two Scaligers, or the Caracci, or the Pitts, or the Scipios, and a dozen more, where the genius, once developed, has persisted for two, three, or even four lives: but these instances really cast no light at all upon our central problem, which is just this—How does the genius come in the first place to be developed at all from parents in whom individually no particular genius is ultimately to be seen?

Suppose we take, to start with; a race of hunting savages, in the earliest, lowest, and most undifferentiated stage, we shall get really next to no personal peculiarities or idiosyncrasies of any sort amongst them. Every one of them will be a good hunter, a good fisherman, a good scalper, and a good manufacturer of bows and arrows. Division of labour, and the other troublesome technicalities

of our modern political economy, are as unknown among such folk as the modern nuisance of dressing for dinner. Each man performs all the functions of a citizen on his own account, because there is nobody else to perform them for him—the medium of exchange, known as hard cash, has not, so far as he is concerned, yet been invented; and he performs them well, such as they are, because he inherits from all his ancestors aptitudes of brain and muscle in these directions, owing to the simple fact that those among his collateral predecessors who didn't know how to snare a bird, or were hopelessly stupid in the art of chipping flint arrowheads, died out of starvation, leaving no representatives. The beneficent institution of the poor law does not exist among savages, in order to enable the helpless and incompetent to bring up families in their own image. There, survival of the fittest still works out its own ultimately benevolent and useful end in its own directly cruel and relentless way, cutting off ruthlessly the stupid or the weak, and allowing only the strong and the cunning to become the parents of future generations.

Hence every young savage, being descended on both sides from ancestors who in their own way perfectly fulfilled the ideal of complete savagery—were good hunters, good fishers, good fighters, good craftsmen of bow or boomerang—inherits from these his successful predecessors all those qualities of eye and hand and brain and nervous system which go to make up the abstractly Admirable Crichton of a savage. The qualities in question are ensured in him by two separate means. In the first place, survival of the fittest takes care that he and all his ancestors shall have duly possessed them to some extent to start with; in the second place, constant practice from boyhood upward increases and develops the original faculty. Thus savages, as a rule, display absolutely astonishing ability and cleverness in the few lines which they have made their own. Their cunning in hunting, their patience in fishing, their skill in trapping, their infinite dodges for deceiving and cajoling the animals or enemies that they need to outwit, have moved the wonder and admiration of innumerable travellers. The savage, in fact, is not stupid: in his own way his cleverness is extraordinary. But the way is a very narrow and restricted one, and all savages of the same race walk in it exactly alike. Cunning they have, skill they have, instinct they have, to a most marvellous degree; but of spontaneity, originality, initiative, variability, not a single spark. Know one savage of a tribe

and you know them all. Their cleverness is not the cleverness of the individual man: it is the inherited and garnered intelligence or instinct of the entire race.

How, then, do originality, diversity, individuality, genius, begin to come in? In this way, as it seems to me, looking at the matter both *à priori* and by the light of actual experience.

Suppose a country inhabited in its interior by a savage race of hunters and fighters, and on its seaboard by an equally savage race of pirates and fishermen, like the Dyaks of Borneo. Each of these races, if left to itself, will develop in time its own peculiar and special type of savage cleverness. Each (in the scientific slang of the day) will adapt itself to its particular environment. The people of the interior will acquire and inherit a wonderful facility in spearing monkeys and knocking down parrots; while the people of the sea-coast will become skilful managers of canoes upon the water, and merciless plunderers of one another's villages, after the universal fashion of all pirates. These original differences of position and function will necessarily entail a thousand minor differences of intelligence and skill in a thousand different ways. For example, the sea-coast people, having of pure need to make themselves canoes and paddles, will probably learn to decorate their handicraft with ornamental patterns; and the æsthetic taste thus aroused will, no doubt, finally lead them to adorn the façades of their wooden huts with the grinning skulls of slaughtered enemies, prettily disposed at measured distances. A thoughtless world may laugh, indeed, at these naïve expressions of the nascent artistic and decorative faculties in the savage breast, but the æsthetic philosopher knows how to appreciate them at their true worth, and to see in them the earliest ingenuous precursors of our own Salisbury, Lichfield, and Westminster.

Now, so long as these two imaginary races of ours continue to remain distinct and separate, it is not likely that idiosyncrasies or varieties to any great extent will arise among them. But, as soon as you permit intermarriage to take place, the inherited and developed qualities of the one race will be liable to crop up in the next generation, diversely intermixed in every variety of degree with the inherited and developed qualities of the other. The children may take after either parent in any combination of qualities whatsoever. You have admitted an apparently capricious element of individuality; a power on the part of the half-breeds of differing from one another to an extent quite impossible in the two

original homogeneous societies. In one word, you have made possible the future existence of diversity in character.

If, now, we turn from these perfectly simple savage communities to our own very complex and heterogeneous world, what do we find? An endless variety of soldiers, sailors, tinkers, tailors, butchers, bakers, candlestick makers, and jolly undertakers, most of whom fall into a certain rough number of classes, each with its own developed and inherited traits and peculiarities. Our world is made up, like the world of ancient Egypt and of modern India, of an immense variety of separate castes—not, indeed, rigidly demarcated and strictly limited, as in those extremely hierarchical societies, but still very fairly hereditary in character—and given on the average to a tolerably close system of intermarriage within the caste.

For example, there is the agricultural labourer caste—the Hodge Chawbacon of urban humour, who in his military avatar also reappears as Tommy Atkins, a little transfigured, but at bottom identical—the alternative aspect of a single undivided central reality. Hodge for the most part lives and dies in his ancestral village: marries Mary, the daughter of Hodge Secundus of that parish, and begets assorted Hodges and Marys in vast quantities, all of the same pattern, to replenish the earth in the next generation. There you have a very well-marked hereditary caste, little given to intermixture with others, and from whose members, however recruited by fresh blood, the object of our quest, the Divine Genius, is very unlikely to find his point of origin. Then there is the town artisan caste, sprung originally, indeed, from the ranks of the Hodges, but naturally selected out of its most active, enterprising, and intelligent individuals, and often of many generations standing in various forms of handicraft. This is a far higher and more promising type of humanity, from the judicious intermixture of whose best elements we are apt to get our Stephensons, our Arkwrights, our Telfords, and our Edisons. In a rank of life just above the last, we find the fixed and immobile farmer caste, which only rarely blossoms out, under favourable circumstances on both sides, into a stray Cobbett or an almost miraculous miller Constable. The shopkeepers are a tribe of more varied interests and more diversified lives. An immense variety of brain elements are called into play by their diverse functions in diverse lines; and when we take them in conjunction with the upper mercantile grades, which are chiefly composed of

their ablest and most successful members, we get considerable chances of those happy blendings of individual excellences in their casual marriages which go to make up talent, and, in their final outcome, genius. Last of all, in the professional and upper classes there is a freedom and play of faculty everywhere going on, which in the chances of intermarriage between lawyer-folk and doctor-folk, scientific people and artistic people, county families and bishops or law lords, and so forth *ad infinitum*, offers by far the best opportunities of any for the occasional development of that rare product of the highest humanity, the genuine genius.

But in every case it is, I believe, essentially intermixture of variously acquired hereditary characteristics that makes the best and truest geniuses. Left to itself, each separate line of caste ancestry would tend to produce a certain fixed Chinese or Japanese perfection of handicraft in a certain definite restricted direction, but not probably anything worth calling real genius. For example, a family of artists, starting with some sort of manual dexterity in imitating natural forms and colours with paint and pencil, and strictly intermarrying always with other families possessing exactly the same inherited endowments, would probably go on getting more and more woodenly accurate in its drawing; more and more conventionally correct in its grouping; more and more technically perfect in its perspective and light-and-shade, and so forth, by pure dint of accumulated hereditary experience from generation to generation. It would pass from the Egyptian to the Chinese style of art by slow degrees and with infinite gradations. But suppose, instead of thus rigorously confining itself to its own caste, this family of handicraft artists were to intermarry freely with poetical, or sea-faring, or candlestick-making stocks. What would be the consequence? Why, such an infiltration of other hereditary characteristics, otherwise acquired, as might make the young painters of future generations more wide-minded, more diversified, more individualistic, more vivid and life-like. Some divine spark of poetical imagination, some tenderness of sentiment, some play of fancy, unknown perhaps to the hard, dry, matter-of-fact limners of the ancestral school, might thus be introduced into the original line of hereditary artists. In this way one can easily see how even intermarriage with non-artistic stocks might improve the breed of a family of painters. For while each caste, left to itself, is liable to harden down into a mere technical excellence after its own kind, a

wooden facility for drawing faces, or casting up columns of figures, or hacking down enemies, or building steam-engines, a healthy cross with other castes is liable to bring in all kinds of new and valuable qualities, each of which, though acquired perhaps in a totally different line of life, is apt to bear a new application in the new complex whereof it now forms a part.

In our very varied modern societies, every man and every woman, in the upper and middle ranks of life at least, has an individuality and an idiosyncrasy so compounded of endless varying stocks and races. Here is one whose father was an Irishman and his mother a Scotchwoman; here is another whose paternal line were country parsons, while his maternal ancestors were city merchants or distinguished soldiers. Take almost anybody's 'sixteen quarters'—his great-great grandfathers and great-great grandmothers, of whom he has sixteen all told—and what do you often find? A peer, a cobbler, a barrister, a common sailor, a Welsh doctor, a Dutch merchant, a Huguenot pastor, a cornet of horse; an Irish heiress, a farmer's daughter, a housemaid, an actress, a Devonshire beauty, a rich young lady of sugar-broking extraction, a Lady Carolina, a London lodging-house keeper. This is not by any means an exaggerated case; it would be easy, indeed, from one's own knowledge of family histories to supply a great many real examples far more startling than this partially imaginary one. With such a variety of racial and professional antecedents behind us, what infinite possibilities are opened before us of children with ability, folly, stupidity, genius?

Infinite numbers of intermixtures everywhere exist in civilised societies. Most of them are passable; many of them are execrable; a few of them are admirable; and here and there, one of them consists of that happy blending of individual characteristics which we all immediately recognise as genius—at least after somebody else has told us so.

The ultimate recipe for genius, then, would appear to be somewhat after this fashion. Take a number of good, strong, powerful stocks, mentally or physically, endowed with something more than the average amount of energy and application. Let them be as varied as possible in characteristics; and, so far as convenient, try to include among them a considerable small-change of races, dispositions, professions, and temperaments. Mix, by marriage, to the proper consistency; educate the offspring, especially by circumstances and environment, as broadly,

freely, and diversely as you can; let them all intermarry again with other similarly produced, but personally unlike, idiosyncrasies; and watch the result to find your genius in the fourth or fifth generation. If the experiment has been properly performed, and all the conditions have been decently favourable, you will get among the resultant five hundred persons a considerable sprinkling of average fools, a fair proportion of modest mediocrities, a small number of able people, and (in case you are exceptionally lucky and have shuffled your cards very carefully) perhaps amongst them all a single genius. But most probably the genius will have died young of scarlet fever, or missed fire through some tiny defect of internal brain structure. Nature herself is trying this experiment unaided every day all around us, and though she makes a great many misses, occasionally she makes a stray hit, and then we get a Shakespeare or a Grimaldi.

‘But you haven’t proved all this: you have only suggested it.’ Does one prove a thesis of deep-reaching importance in a ten-page article? And if one proved it in a big book, with classified examples and detailed genealogies of all the geniuses, would anybody on earth except Mr. Francis Galton ever take the trouble to read it?

RAINBOW GOLD.¹

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK V.—*continued.*

HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD ELUDED TWO ADVENTURERS.

CHAPTER IV.

‘THE game,’ said Armstrong, ‘was intended to be a satire on royalty, and an exposition of the natures and capacities o’ men. Observe the king. There’s no game without him. He’s essential, but he’s useless, and if that’s a contradiction in tairms, Job, ye must blame the man that invented the game, and not me that describe it. The poor big creature’s just able to lift a foot at a time. The common people bleed for him. The Church, in the person of the bishop, runs sideways for him. That’s a keen dig, lad. Do ye mark how the bishop’s course, from his own point o’ view, is straightforward? He sticks to his own straight line, but the man that has the board before ’m sees the crablike course he takes. The knight was oreiginally a casuist, or a lawyer. The castle was the military man, a downright fellow, Job—a straight strong fellow, with no subteelities. Then, the game’s a proclamation of the eternal verity of the gynecocracy.’

‘The what?’ said Job, looking up at him seriously.

‘Gynecocracy,’ repeated Armstrong, stoutly, but with a humorous twinkle in his eye. ‘Petticoat government. The lady rules everything. The game’s republican as well. The humblest pawn has only to go on his straightforward course to be a bishop or a baron, or to become transmogrified into royalty. There’s a sort of idea in it that all the pieces fought their way up once upon a time, which, as you may have noticed, is a pre-historic period. The game of chess,’ pursued the grey man, suddenly growing warm with his theme, ‘is the only mechanical invention the world ever saw for the production of poetry and romance. In every game ye play, ye have intrigue and chivalry

This novel has been dramatised by the author.

and loyal devotion. Now see here, in the game ye just retired from, look how these two Churchmen dominate the board. Ye've got a brace o' burly barons there, but the Church has been too wily for them, and their way's blocked everywhere. The queen's dead, poor lady. Never a thought had she but for that useless, heavy-footed lubber of a consort of hers, and she's flang herself into the vera gulf o' deith to secure him victory. Man, if Walter Scott were here, he'd tell ye a tale out o' that would bring the brine to your cheek.'

'Clem,' said Job, turning to where the hunchback sat in an arm-chair, with one white thin hand on each elbow, 'you'll have to look to your laurels. Here's Mr. Armstrong turning poet on our hands.'

'*Turning* poet?' inquired Clem. 'Do you know your own father-in-law no better than that?'

'Hoots, man!' said Armstrong, half pettish, half abashed; 'hauld your tongue!'

'I won't hold my tongue, sir,' cried Clem. 'And if you take that tone with me, Mr. Armstrong, I'll show Job something I happen to have in my pocket now.'

'As ye like—as ye will,' said Armstrong, with a half-sheepish, half-humorous look. 'But not in my presence. When I'm gone I'll leave my character in your hands, like Sir Peter Teazle. When I was a lad,' he hurried on, with the manifest object of keeping Clem from speaking, 'I'd a bit of a turn for rhyiming, and found out for myself that love and dove would jingle, and in my auld age, I've gone back on the follies of my youth. It's a harmless sort of craze enough.'

'What have you got in your pocket, Clem?' said Job. 'No, don't take it out. Did you know that I was gifted with second sight? See if I can read it?'

Friend o' my youth——

Am I right so far?'

'Right so far,' said Clem.

'You'll excuse the accent, Mr. Armstrong,' said Job, with a droll look at the old man. 'The Ayrshire dialect is not likely to come very trippingly from a Castle Barfield tongue. Let me see if I can read a little further.' He closed his eyes, and began to read or to recite deliberately——

Friend o' my youth, my auldest crony,
My benison be on ye, Johnny,

Your honest pow was black and bonny
 When first we met,
 But noo your lyart cockernony
 Has tint the jet.

‘Clem,’ said Armstrong, almost severely, ‘ye’ve broken your plighted word.’

‘Indeed I haven’t,’ cried Clem; ‘I haven’t shown them to a soul.’

‘There’s no trusting women,’ said Job. ‘You’ve shown the verses to your granddaughter, Mr. Armstrong, and she has repeated them to her father till he knows them by heart. That’s all the mystery.’ Sarah entered the room at this instant. ‘Here’s the criminal herself,’ said Job.

‘Come here, ye traitress,’ cried Armstrong. ‘Come here and apologise.’

‘With pleasure,’ said Sarah. ‘I can apologise as fluently as any girl in Illyria. What have I done?’

‘Ye’ve betrayed my confidence,’ said the old man, pinching her ear. ‘Ye’ve been reciting my rhyming havers to your father, and putting your grandfather to shame.’

‘Oh, these poets, these poets!’ cried the girl merrily. ‘What is it you call yourselves in Latin, Clem? It’s genus something.’

‘Irritable,’ said Clem.

‘That’s it,’ said Sarah. ‘Until Clem told me better, I used to think it meant irritable geniuses. The applause of the world is the breath of your nostrils, and you call a poor girl who tries to spread your fame a traitress.’

‘When do you start for Coventry, lassie?’ asked Armstrong, abruptly.

‘To-morrow,’ Job answered for her. ‘And I’m going to keep house alone, like a hermit. You’ll not stay beyond the three days, Sarah; I can’t spare you longer. Unless, that is, your aunt has any real need of you.’

‘She’s not to say downright ill,’ said Armstrong, ‘but she’s a wee bit feeble, and she has a friend coming to spend awhile with her. So she wrote me to ask if I’d persuade Sarah to go over. She wants to lessen the trouble of having one guest by inviting another.’

‘Aunt isn’t strong enough to go about much,’ said Sarah; ‘and her friend wants to see Stratford and Shottery and Charlecote and Lucy, and I am to take her about. It will be a very pleasant

time if the weather keeps fine, but March is not the nicest month in the year for country sightseeing.'

'It'll be almost the first time ye were ever apart, Job,' said Armstrong.

'The first,' said Job, in answer. 'She's seen a goodish piece of old England, but she's seen it all with me. She's never slept till now except under the same roof with her father.'

'And now, who knows,' said Sarah, 'what dangers I may leave him exposed to?'

She and Clem both laughed at this harmless jest, but Job sat seriously staring at the fire, and Armstrong winced a little, though nobody noticed him.

'Here's Monday,' said Job, rousing himself from his reverie. 'Sarah goes to-morrow, and when I've seen her off, I've a mind to take a trap from the Barfield Arms, if the day's fine, and drive out for a change. I don't like the house without her,' he said, knitting his bushy eyebrows, but smiling underneath the frown. 'Will you come, Clem?'

'Not to-morrow,' said Clem. 'I'll come Wednesday, and bring one of our traps. I'm not much of a Jehu myself, but I'll get one of the men to drive me here, and he can walk back again. What do you say to Wednesday, Job? Will it suit you?'

'Very well,' said Job; 'say Wednesday. I'll potter about in the garden to-morrow; there are lots of things to be done there. For one thing, that cucumber-frame's broken, Sarah, and I must turn glazier.'

'Well,' said Clem, 'Wednesday's a fixture, Job. I must be getting home, or I shall be late.'

'I'll walk a bit of the way with you,' Job said, rising also. 'I shall find you here when I come back again, Mr. Armstrong?'

The old man nodded assent, and Clem having said his good-bye, he and the giant sallied out together—an odd contrast as they always were. The night was clear and starlit, and, for the time of year, wonderfully mild and balmy.

'Clem,' said Job, when they had walked clear of houses, and got between the hedges of the lane, 'I've known you since you could walk, and I think I can trust you.'

'Well, Job,' said Clem, cheerfully, 'I hope you can; I think you can.'

'I'm going to tell you something I've more or less suspected for a year or two, and decisively learned to-day. It mustn't be

breathed to any single creature, you understand. You mustn't feel offended if I exact your solemn promise to keep this thing a secret.'

'Anything you choose to tell me in that manner, Job, and under those conditions, shall be sacred to me.'

'Well, lad,' said the giant in a tranquil voice, 'every man carries his death-warrant with him, signed and sealed. The only difference in my case is I know it, and can tell the thing I shall die of in all human chance.'

'You?' cried Clem, stopping in the road in his amazement and staring at the form that towered above him.

'Yes,' said Job, 'I've got heart disease. That's my secret. Keep it.'

'Job!' cried the hunchback, horror-stricken, 'you can't mean it.'

'It's true enough, Clem, lad,' Job answered. 'Except for that one thing I'm as tough as leather. But the heart's hung on a thread of flax. My mother died of the same thing. Now, Clem . . . I'll tell you why I confide this thing in you. I wouldn't have Sarah know it for the world. She'd break her heart worrying over it, and it'll be bad enough for her to know the truth when the end comes.' To all outward seeming he was as tranquil, as composed, and as solid as ever. 'But knowing now that my life may not be my own at any minute, I take this moment, the only one I may have, don't you see, to ask one thing of you. You love the girl, lad.' He laid his hand on Clem's shoulder, and his ponderous voice was deeper than common. 'Be a brother to her, be a friend to her. God knows! she may stand in need of brotherly friendship. I'm troubled, Clem; I'm in deep waters.' Clem could not answer at that moment, and they walked in silence for a time. 'Watch over her, lad, if I should go,' said Job. 'I know you'd do it without a word from me. But you can tell her, if ever need arises, that you had her father's solemn charge. I may live to be eighty, but I may go at any minute. You'll take the charge I offer you?'

'I'll keep it, Job,' said Clem, in a broken voice, 'if I ever have to keep it—which God forefend. I hope you may live for many a year yet, and see her happy.'

'I may, I may,' Job answered. 'Good-night, lad. Wednesday. Not a word of all this, mind; and not a look. She's as quick as lightning.'

‘It’s like your friendship,’ said Clem, wringing his big hand, ‘to have offered this trust to me. I won’t be unworthy of it.’

They parted with this speech, and went their separate ways, Clem with tears in his eyes, and Job tranquilly himself on the outside, whatever might be going on within.

‘You are soon back, father,’ said Sarah, when he re-entered the cottage. ‘You didn’t go far with Clem? Sit down, and let me fill your pipe for you. I feel as if I were going away for a long, long time, and I must pet you a little before I go.’

‘It’s a good girl, Job,’ said Armstrong smilingly, as Job took his pipe and a lighted spill of paper from his daughter’s fingers.

‘Ay,’ said Job, ‘it’s a good girl.’

‘Gentlemen,’ said the good girl merrily, ‘I am obliged to you. But may I ask why you pass this novel discovery from one to another so very, very gravely? Shall I go and leave you to discuss my merits in peace?’ She made a pretence of leaving the room, but when she had reached the door she turned, and running swiftly to her father’s chair seized him from behind, and putting both her arms about his head hugged it to her breast. Then with sudden demureness she seated herself between her father and Armstrong, and stretched out a hand to each. ‘You are a dear old grandfather,’ she said to Armstrong; ‘and you,’ turning to Job, ‘are the dearest father in the world. And now that we are all contented with each other, what shall we talk about?’

They talked of many things, she brightly and with gaiety, though touching now and then a softer note, and Job with an almost tender seriousness. At length Armstrong rose to go.

‘Well, Job, lad,’ he asked, ‘when shall we three meet again?’

‘When the hurly-burly’s done,’ said Sarah, inconsequently enough, but Armstrong answered her seriously.

‘Ay, lass! When the hurly-burly’s done there’ll be no more partings.’

Somehow, and no one of the three could have told why, a cold sense of solemnity fell upon them all.

‘Why should I have said that?’ asked Sarah. ‘There was no meaning in it. And you capped it with such a sudden seriousness you turned me cold.’

‘I’m an old man, my dear,’ said her grandfather, ‘and if ye live to be old yourself, ye’ll find that any sort of nonsense talked

at hazard will take grave meanings in your mind at whiles. The world's full o' gravities to old people. Good-bye, lass; be good and happy. Good-night, Job.' He went away gravely, and when he had reached the street he stood still for a moment to think, as if there were something he must needs recall. 'What brings this sort o' groping after shadows in my mind?' he asked himself half aloud. 'William Armstrong, ye're getting auld, and doddering in your wits.'

He walked on slowly and thoughtfully, and pausing mechanically at his own side-door, fumbled in his pocket for the key.

'There's too much dash and devil in his play,' said he. 'With greater caution he'd be formidable.'

There were no more cares, visionary or real, for him that night, for he was fairly back on his own enchanted ground again.

Job and Sarah sat up later than usual and talked of the girl's approaching journey. The coach passed the door of Konak Cottage, and was timed to catch the London train. Sarah had written a note to Aaron telling him of her intended journey, and in the pauses of their talk she wondered whether he would come to see her off by the coach, or whether he would be at the Birmingham station to see her off by train, or whether he would even be able to accompany her as far as Coventry. She took this pleasing uncertainty to bed with her, and thought over all the chances of it until she fell asleep. But before she and her father parted for the night he made another relapse into that earliest dialect of his youth which had once before surprised her. When she came somewhat absently to give him her usual good-night kiss, he put a hand on each soft cheek and looked at her with an infinite mournful tenderness.

'Thee knowst I love thee, lass?' he said.

She kissed him vehemently and nestled to him. Oh, yes, yes, yes, she said, she knew it well.

She was only going away for three days, and yet there was a little sadness in the thought of parting. But when morning came all that had vanished. True to time they heard the horn of the coach tootling cheerily, and Job, shouldering the girl's substantial trunk as lightly as if it had been a feather, walked up the garden-path and waited at the side of the horseroad. The coach drew up, and the driver, stooping from his seat to take the trunk so lightly poised in Job's hands, felt himself nearly pulled from his perch by its unexpected weight.

‘I thowt the cussid thing was empty,’ said the driver. ‘Theest got a bit o’ muscle for a little un, gaffer.’

Sarah entered the coach; the door was slammed, the guard leapt nimbly to his place, and a minute later Job was looking after a cloud of March dust of the coach’s raising. He went back and began to work at those garden affairs he had spoken of the night before. Once or twice a neighbour passed the gate, and leaning his arms upon it paused to say what wonderful weather it was for the time of the year, and each having quoted the proverb that a peck of March dust is worth a king’s ransom, went away again. Nobody saw any change in Job Round, who presented the picture of strength, massiveness, and tranquillity with which Castle Barfield had so long been familiar, and not a hair’s-breadth more or less so far as any man who looked on him could tell. The big grey eyes had their old look of wilful strength, the bushy, red-brown eyebrows knitted over them with as resolved a tranquil determination as ever, and even through the silky masses of the great red beard the dogged formation of the chin showed as decisively as it had always done since Job had arrived at man’s estate. And yet there was such a change within the man as it is difficult to tell. The old tempestuous gloom was there no more, to be riven by the old wild lightnings of the soul. There were no more horrors to be fought.

Whether he would or no, his thoughts went back to his earliest boyhood, and he found himself recalling companions who had long been dead or forgotten. He remembered boyish affections, little touches of shamefaced sentiment which had never found expression, tendernesses of friendship which surprised him. He could translate the coarse daub of a portrait of his mother which had always hung in his father’s sitting-room into something which he thought must have been like her forgotten face. It translated itself rather. He caught himself wandering in the summer fields with his young wife, and the fictitious peace of those days grew real with him. Sarah went toddling about the garden with uncertain footsteps, and he feigned to be outrun by her and allowed himself to be caught. He could hear her shrill laugh of infantine delight.

With all this was a great sadness, and a strange sense of dreamy unreality in present things. He worked in this mood all morning, and when his accustomed dinner hour drew near, he walked into the house, washed, arranged the table for himself,

and sat down to dine. Sarah's vacant place seemed to stare at him, and though he was usually but little to be impressed by solitude, he felt it so keenly now that some companionship seemed necessary to him, if it were only that of a book. He cast his eye about the room, and, seeing the family Bible within reach, stretched out his hand for it and laid it open on the table. As he ate, he read here and there a passage. 'Therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.'

'Now,' said Job, 'there's a gusto in that.' He turned the leaves backward: 'As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not,' he read, 'so he that getteth riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days and be a fool.' He read the words over again. 'It's a picture of what ought to be,' he said to himself. He turned the leaves back still further. 'There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.' He closed the book and pushed it away from him thoughtfully. 'Wisdom there, any way. Thou'rt saved from that burthen of my getting, lass. It was better gone. I've been at rest since it was gone. I've been at rest for thy sake. Wisdom. Wisdom,' he murmured. 'It prospered with none of us. Bonaventure left his share in the midst of his days and was a fool for all his cunning. Mr. Thomas Bowling,' serious as he was, a slow smile curled his features as he muttered the name, 'prospered less than any. Fools, fools, all of us.'

He went back into the garden and worked there all the afternoon, and his softened mood never left him for that day. The stormy times of his life refused to be recalled.

Evening came on chill and lowering, after the almost summer-like brightness of the day. He relit his fire, made his own tea, trifled over it for half-an-hour; then cleared away, and having made all snug by drawing the blinds and lighting the lamp, he sat down with his pipe and a volume of Shakespeare. The wind began to howl somewhat wildly, and one or two great drops fell down the chimney and hissed and spattered in the fire.

'It will be rain to-night,' said Job, looking up from the pages of Macbeth. 'Let it come down.' The latch of the garden gate clicked, and he heard a footstep on the gravel. 'Who's this likely to be?' he asked himself. A rap sounded at the door. 'Come

in. Oh, you, is it, Whittaker? It's getting to be a wildish night outside, isn't it?'

'Yes,' said Aaron; 'it's a wildish night, Mr. Round. It's been a fine day, too.' From one cause or another Aaron was pale and out of breath. 'Is Miss Round at home, sir?'

'She went to Coventry this morning,' said Job, scarcely looking at him. 'She wrote to tell you she was going.'

'This morning?' cried Aaron with a surprise which was not very well acted. 'How strange for her to have made such a mistake. She said Wednesday in her note.'

'Hum!' said Job, turning to look at him; 'have you got the note about you?'

'No, sir,' replied Aaron, feeling in his pocket. 'I'm afraid I left it at home.'

'I think you'll find that it's you who've made the mistake, and not Sarah. She read the note to me before she sent it. Look at it again when you get home.'

'I will,' said Aaron; 'I'm sorry to have missed her.'

'Do you hear that?' said Job, as the rain swept against the windows and the wind rumbled in the chimney. 'You'd best sit down and wait until the storm's over. How is the mine getting on?'

'Admirably, sir,' cried Aaron. 'It's what I always thought it would be—the real old-fashioned Staffordshire ten-yard coal.'

'That's all right,' said Job. 'Sit down, man, and make yourself at ease.'

Aaron sat down and rested an elbow on the round table upon which the lamp was placed. Instantly the ground glass lampshade began to clatter against the chimney it surrounded, and Job, looking up, noticed for the first time Aaron's unusual pallor.

'Hillo!' he said, 'there's an odd look about you to-night. You're shaking like a leaf too. What's the matter? Here, let me feel your pulse. I've done a little bit of doctoring in my time.' He took Aaron's wrist and held it for a little time. 'I don't want to frighten you, Whittaker,' he said then, 'but if you're a sensible man, you won't go to bed without having seen a doctor. Let me look at your tongue. That's clean enough. You see a doctor to-night. It strikes me you're sickening for a fever.'

'Do you think so?' said Aaron, who had his own reasons for the emotion which so visibly agitated him.

'I'm pretty sure of it,' returned Job. He had no great affection

for young Mr. Whittaker even now, when the young gentleman for the greater part of a year had been walking with the utmost correctness and circumspection. But Sarah's welfare and happiness seemed bound up in him, and this fact aroused in Job an interest for Aaron which he would otherwise have been very far from feeling. 'Have you caught cold in any way?' he asked.

'I did catch a chill coming out of the mine the other day,' returned Aaron. 'I felt it the minute I touched the surface.' He thought within himself how lucky a thing it was that his agitation should be thus explained.

'You'd better take a glass of grog,' said Job. 'That can do you no harm, anyway.' He rose and walked to a cupboard which cut off one corner of the room, and drew from it a bottle of whisky, a sugar-bowl, spoons and glasses. Aaron's heart was beating like a sledge-hammer, and a fear crept over him that things were going too easily. Circumstance might have a trap for him. Who could have fancied that his own want of courage could have played into his hands in this way?

Job set the kettle on the fire, and taking up his book, again went on reading. By-and-by the kettle began to sing, and he laid down his Shakespeare and arose to mix the glass of grog he had recommended.

'By the way,' said Aaron, 'that reminds me, Mr. Round. I've a sample bottle of Scotch whisky here I—I should like you to taste. I'm told it's remarkably good, and I've had an offer of six gallons very cheap. This was drawn—from the cask this afternoon.' He fumbled at the pocket of his overcoat as he said this, and his face was hidden from Job's observation. When he had done speaking he produced a flat flask containing about half-a-pint.

'All right,' said Job; 'try mine.' He had mixed a glass already. 'I'll try yours.'

It was all terribly easy, Aaron thought. Horribly easy. There was no need even for the little juggling trick he and Mr. Bowling had arranged together—a simple manoeuvre by which he was to have replaced that first bottle by another of the same size, containing a somewhat smaller quantity of liquor, so that it might look as if some had been poured out of it, and therefore match the one from which Job had drunk already.

'This is extremely good,' said Aaron, after taking a liberal sip at the glass Job had set before him. His voice shook still, and

his heart beat so that he wondered if Job heard it. Job mixed for himself from Aaron's bottle, and then resumed his seat.

'So you think,' he said, 'that you're going to make a good thing of the mine, Whittaker?'

'Yes,' replied Aaron, shakily; 'a magnificent thing. I always felt sure that coal was there. I wish now we'd bought up land all round before we proved the estate. It'll go ever so much dearer now. You'll see mines over all that end of the parish in a year or two.' Would he never drink? How much longer would there be to wait? Would he detect a flavour in the grog and guess on a sudden the reason of Aaron's tremor? He said he had been a bit of a doctor in his time. How long would it take him to go to sleep? Was there enough to make him go to sleep? The coward and scoundrel shook from head to foot, and a cold sweat broke out all over him, though the palms of his hands were as hot as fire.

Job was musing and seemed in no haste to drink, but after a time he stretched out his hand sideways, took up his glass and sipped.

'It isn't bad whisky,' he said then, 'but I've made it a thought too sweet.' He added a little more of Aaron's whisky to the mixture and tasted it again. 'Not bad at all,' he said. 'What do they want for it?'

'They want ninety shillings for six gallons,' returned Aaron, who had been too cautious not to prepare his facts beforehand.

'Cheap enough,' said Job. 'Fifteen shillings a gallon. But isn't there a queerish sort of after-taste? A slightly bitter flavour? Eh?' Aaron clutched his glass as Job looked round at him and drank, looking down into the glass as he did so, to hide the guilt and fear he felt in his own eyes.

'No,' he managed to say, a moment later, 'I don't think so. I tasted it myself and noticed nothing of the sort.'

'Mouth's a little out of order perhaps,' said Job. He sipped a third time.

The task the scoundrel had set himself was beyond his powers. It was horrible, horrible, to sit there and wait and fear. He emptied his own glass at a gulp, and rose to his feet with a stagger.

'I think,' he said, with a prodigious effort, 'I'll go and see a doctor now, Mr. Round. I'll come back and tell you what he says. I've a— a pain in the head.'

‘Gad,’ said Job to himself, ‘I’ve frightened the fellow. There’s more funk than fever in his face, and I’ve seen enough of both to be able to tell one from the other.’ He contented himself with a single nod and a ‘very well,’ and taking up his Shakespeare, settled himself anew before the fire.

CHAPTER V.

THE keen March wind and stinging rain did something for Aaron, but his absence from Job Round did more. Yet when he had passed through the gate a hand laid suddenly upon his arm in the darkness sent his heart to his mouth, and he began to shake afresh.

‘Is it done a’ready?’ asked the voice of Mr. Bowling. ‘Got the medal?’

‘No,’ said Aaron, in a trembling whisper. ‘He’s—he’s got the grog. I—I left him drinking it.’

‘Left him a drinking it?’ demanded Mr. Bowling. ‘Why didn’t you stop and see him drink it? Wheer’s the bottle?’

‘On the table,’ returned Aaron faintly. ‘I’m going back again. I couldn’t stand it; I couldn’t stand it any longer.’

‘Hold up,’ said Mr. Bowling, with a terrible anathema; ‘I never seen such a shaking coward. And I never seen a coward that wasn’t a sneak, neither. Don’t you try to sneak with me. Remember, I don’t give the word to General Coninghame afore I’ve got that medal in my hands. If I don’t give him the word, Joby Round’s a free man still. Try to slip me this night, and if there was need for it I’d set him at you.’

‘I shan’t try to slip you,’ replied Aaron. ‘Where would be the use?’

‘Not much,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘I could be out there as soon as you, and it would go hard if me as speaks the language couldn’t get news of you as don’t. Why, I’d rouse the land again you, and split the gold among the villagers for twenty mile around, sooner than I’d be done.’

‘You can trust to me,’ said Aaron; ‘I shan’t try to slip you. Where would be the use?’

‘How long are you going to give him?’ demanded Mr. Bowling. ‘When are you going back again? Suppose somebody calls while we’re a standing here!’ He broke into whispered oaths and execrations, and went stamping about the roadway in a

sudden paroxysm of rage. 'Go back again,' he said hoarsely, laying both hands on Aaron's collar; 'go back, ye shivering lubber.'

'I can't go yet,' panted Aaron; 'he'd guess there was something the matter if I did. I told him I was going to see a doctor.'

'See a doctor!' groaned Mr. Bowling, exasperated almost beyond endurance. 'See a wet nurse!—see a idiot asylum! Cuss *me*,' said Mr. Bowling, letting his hands fall from Aaron's collar with a sudden desperate resignation, 'if I ever *did* see a shiverin', shakin', sneakin', whinin'; limpin', crawlin' pup to come within a hundred mile of him.'

Castle Barfield High Street was deserted. Standing in front of Job's house the two could dimly see the lights of the shops which began a hundred yards away. The jets of the gas leaped and quivered in the street lamps, and the rain-flogged street seemed to crawl in the wind where the gas-light fell upon it. Aaron and his companion cowered in the shelter of the hedge. The clock of the near church struck the half-hour.

'When are you a going in again?' demanded Mr. Bowling.

'Not yet,' said Aaron; 'not till he's asleep.'

'And when d'ye think he'll be asleep, ye—ye—ye mutton-hearted, donkey-headed ——' There was nothing in Mr. Bowling's vocabulary to equal his conception.

'I shall wait here for half-an-hour,' answered Aaron. Mr. Bowling groaned in a new access of rage, and once more went stamping in a circle, taxing memory and invention for expressions equal to the cause.

Meanwhile Job sat within, sipping and smoking tranquilly. Underlying his strange contentment was a wonder at it which was disposed to be both tremulous and tender. His thoughts turned to his daughter, and he blessed her in his heart—not effusively or with any tempestuous movement of affection, but as a common father might, who loved his child and had an ordinary history behind him.

His glass was empty. The rain and the wind were without. Within was peace; deep peace. The noises of the wind and rain fell to a murmur on his heedless ear, and then in some strange fashion seemed to swell to a roll of organ music, and to die slowly, far away. Then it was summer weather, and he was standing in the fields. His dead wife and his living child were together with him, and both were in the springtide of their beauty, as never

child and mother were, outside the land of dreams. Then the dream slipped and faded into the great hollow of unconscious sleep; and he sat with his chin upon his breast and his arms hanging lax by his side.

The clock of the near church struck the hour, and the rain and the wind were still. The latch of the garden gate clicked, and a step sounded on the gravel. Aaron's hair, as he approached the cottage door, was stirring at the roots as if it meant to stand upright by-and-by; his heart seemed to batter at his ribs, his legs failed at the knees. He held on by the trellis work about the door, and tried to listen, but there was such a roaring in his ears that he could make out nothing. At last he summoned a desperate courage and knocked. He could not tell if there were any reply, but he knocked again more loudly. The garden gate clicked again, and Mr. Bowling sped on tiptoe along the gravelled footway.

'Do you want to rouse the neighbourhood?' he demanded, seizing Aaron by the arm. 'If he can't hear that, he can't hear anything. Try the door.' Mr. Bowling's own whispering voice was husky, and his heart beat violently as well as Aaron's, but he was beyond comparison the bolder of the two. Aaron tried the door, but in such a bungling way that the seaman (who found his own fears and suspense so unbearable that he would rather have faced Job Round than endure them any longer), pushed him on one side, turned the handle and peered into the room. 'All right,' he said in a grating whisper, and opening the door a little wider, stole in with Aaron at his heels. Mr. Bowling softly closed the door, and the two conspirators stood staring at each other, haggard-eyed and pale. The same thought was in the mind of each, and at the selfsame instant sent the eyes of both to the sleeping man. What if he had detected the trick, and knew its purpose, and his present silence were but a ruse to lure them on? What if the mighty figure rose, and the masterly eyes they had both dreaded should open on them? Mr. Bowling crept behind the table and laid his hand on a formidable carving-knife that happened to be lying there.

'Jog his elber,' he said to Aaron in a croaking voice. Aaron ventured nearer and extended a timid hand.

'Put that knife down,' he whispered to Mr. Bowling. 'If he wakes I can tell him I'm not well, and you're going to see me up to the hotel. He thought I wasn't well before.'

‘Jog his elber,’ repeated the seaman, and Aaron extended a hand so shaking and indeterminate that Mr. Bowling’s greed and his horror of his own fears so stirred him that he came roughly round the table to the front of the unconscious figure in the arm-chair, and kneeling before it, knife in hand, began to fumble at the buttons of the waistcoat to release the watch-chain. At that instant a boy running home along the High Street, drew a hoop-stick across the bars of the garden gate with a clatter so surprising, so sudden, and so threatening that the two rascals jumped, and Mr. Bowling, rising suddenly to his feet, fell backwards. He stretched out a hand to save himself, and thrust it into the smouldering coals, whereat a roar escaped him, and in his natural hurry to withdraw his hand he caught hold of the nearest object, which happened to be the kettle. Down came the kettle with a crash into the fireplace, the fire-irons followed it—the very voice of doom would have been no more dreadful than these noises were at the moment to the men who heard them; and then everything went silent. The sleeping figure never moved.

Mr. Bowling began to curse and moan over his damaged hand, and to brush from it with great gingerliness the blackened ashes which still clung to it. Suddenly, with an impatient oath, he seized with the uninjured hand the medal which hung at Job Round’s watch-chain, and tugged at it with no other result than to drag the watch violently from the pocket.

‘Unfasten that there watch-chain,’ he said savagely, and Aaron with shaking fingers obeyed him. Bowling snatched the watch from his hand and thrust it into his own trouser pocket with its attached chain and medal. ‘And now come on,’ he said. Aaron moved towards the door. ‘Wait a bit,’ said Mr. Bowling, and to Aaron’s horror he stepped back and took Job Round by the beard. ‘Ah, Joby!’ he said in a jeering voice, ‘you’ve took me by it afore to-day, haven’t you? You’ve had many a gird at me, Joby. You’d sooner see it rot theer an’ rust to powder, would you, than me have one piastre of it? More’n four-and-twenty year you’ve kep me hungry and thirsty and poor and hard labourin’, have you! damn you! And now I’ve got it! got it! got it!’

‘Eh!’ said Aaron, seizing him by the shoulder and dragging at him with both hands; ‘listen!’

They listened, and except for the loud murmur in their own ears there was a death-like silence.

'Come away,' cried Aaron, in a horror and agony of fear; 'come away. Every second's dangerous here.'

Mr. Bowling, shaking his damaged fist at Job and snarling at him with an inarticulate jeer, suffered himself to be drawn into the garden.

'Got a handkicher?' he asked there. 'Let's have something to wrap up this here hand o' mine. That's a odd thing,' continued Mr. Bowling, as he wrapped up his wounded member. 'Ears and 'ears ago, he says to me, Job Round does, "If ever you meddles with me," he says, "you'll burn your fingers, William.' And so I have.'

'I—I thought,' said Aaron, trying to be at least as much at ease as his companion, 'I thought you said your name was Thomas.'

'So it is,' said Mr. Bowling, groaning at his wounds.

'Then why did he call you William?' demanded Aaron.

'Why,' said Mr. Bowling sardonically, 'it was a pet name he had for me. You'll find out the use of having two names afore you're much older. Here, let's get out of this. A pleeceman passed twice while I was a standing outside there, and I don't want to be seen again.'

'Don't let us go through the High Street,' urged Aaron, at the gate.

'Why not?' asked the other.

'We might be seen together.'

Mr. Bowling jeered at the speaker. 'Take which road you like,' he answered. 'I'm a going through the High Street, and I'm a going straight to General Coningham's. When Joby Round wakes up he'll be for following me, but I fancy they won't let him.'

Aaron felt certain that everybody who set eyes on him would know what he had done and whither he was going. Of course he knew very well that this fear was absurd, and yet the profoundest scorn of it which he could summon entirely failed to shake it. Mr. Bowling, who had discarded his smock frock, and was habited in a complete suit of heavy corduroys, rolled along before him, and Aaron followed, afraid to lose sight of him for a moment. He had sworn to keep faith with Mr. Bowling, and Mr. Bowling had sworn to keep faith with him. He thought he could guess, from his own sentiments with regard to the oath, the nature of Mr. Bowling's. He was fully persuaded that his companion would cut

and run at the earliest opportunity, and he was fully determined to forestall any such intentions. As he marched in Mr. Bowling's rear, trembling lest any lonely figure in the ill-lit street should turn out to be a constable who in some supernatural manner should know all about him, and be gifted with extraordinary powers for his arrest and detention, his mind was still free enough to play about the possibilities of circumventing his partner. To have drugged and robbed one man within an hour was surely the most natural way in the world for making ready to drug and rob another. Aaron knew Job Round's story now, and knew that Mr. Bowling expected to receive a hundred pounds for betraying him to his enemy. Without that hundred pounds Mr. Bowling would be unable to move, and with it Aaron might be able to move a little quicker. Extra money would mean extra rapidity of locomotion, and why, the young man asked himself, with a flush of something like surprised indignation, why should he give twenty-five thousand pounds away to Mr. Bowling? The idea was absurd—prodigious. Aaron scouted it, as he would have scouted a serious attempt to demonstrate that two and one make nine. He felt it like an insult to his own intelligence, and he never doubted for a second that Mr. Bowling was as fully animated as himself by the reflection that the whole is greater than a part.

They got through the High Street without exciting any man's notice, and Aaron followed the seaman's lead into the lane which led to the Warren, and then, knowing observation to be much less likely there, he hastened to overtake him.

'You don't think he's likely to keep you waiting for the money, do you?' he asked.

'No,' said Mr. Bowling, in a guarded growl, 'I made him give his solemn oath he'd pay it down when I give him leave to move. I see him last night, and he'd got his evidence all right. He's got two witnesses within six mile at this minute. They'll be at the barracks to-morrow morning to be set in front of Joby Round, Esquire. They'll rub the Squire off of him when they get him there, and rub some new marks into that big back of his'n to keep the others company. I see the others one day, when we was a bathing, nigh on five-and-twenty 'ear ago.'

Aaron fell back a step, and turned a little sick. He did not hate Job Round; he had never hated anybody—much. He thought Mr. Bowling's rejoicing a very unpleasant thing to wit-

ness. He was sorry for Job Round, and was very much relieved to have had nothing to do with his betrayal.

‘Here’s the gate,’ said Mr. Bowling, after a silent tramp of four or five minutes. ‘You wait about here, so as not to be noticed particular if anybody passes. I’ll be out in five minutes.’

‘I say,’ returned Aaron, catching him by his corduroy sleeve, ‘you’d better let me keep the watch!’

‘Had I?’ said Mr. Bowling. ‘What for?’

‘I thought,’ said Aaron, stammering somewhat, ‘you might like to show you trusted me.’

‘No,’ said Mr. Bowling, calmly, ‘I’m in no particular hurry to show you that. When we come to pen and ink and paper, you shall write for yourself whatever there is on this here medal, and then we shall both know all about it. But yet awhile, with your leave and my respects, I’ll keep it where it is, young governor.’ He laid a hand on Aaron’s breast, and thrusting his bearded face forward, continued in another tone: ‘Mind this. No man as plays unfaithful to a pal ’ll ever lay a hand on that there treasure. I’ve sworn to you; you’ve sworn to me. Wherefore let us be contented, and likewise trustful and playfaring. Mind you, that’s a certainty. It’s only playfaring and having faith in one another as’ll ever lay a finger on that there gold. I know it. If it had ha’ been played fair with it might ha’ been spent afore now. Wait there.’

He pushed the gate with his shoulder, and as it yielded and he went backwards with it, nursing his burnt hand, Aaron dimly made out that he nodded once or twice, as if in confirmation of his words. When he had gone rolling up the avenue, crunching the gravel beneath his heavy boots, Aaron slipped within the gate and followed, treading on the grass, and bringing down cold showers of rain from the laurel bushes which bordered the drive. A dog rattled a chain and barked in a deep hoarse voice at no great distance, and Aaron stood still to listen to Bowling’s footsteps. In a very little while they paused, and he heard a bell ringing, and then the opening of a door, which made a path for a broad line of light to fall upon the wet grass, and the bare trees, and a chill fog that hung amidst their branches. This line of light disappeared as suddenly as it came, the dog’s bark died into a growl, and the chain trailed with a hollow sound as the brute re-entered his kennel.

Then time began to drag dolefully, and all the unwelcome

mental guests whom Aaron would fain have held at arm's length for ever began to pay him visits. Sarah in tears, in scorn, in hate. His partners in amazement, in wrath, in pursuit of him. Job Round asleep. Job Round awaking. Seized, tried, flogged, imprisoned. Worse than all, escaped a second time, and making his way to those wild hills to encounter Aaron there.

What if there were still a chance to undo it all? What if he might run back to Konak Cottage, feign to discover Job Round's state, summon a doctor, administer stimulants, tell him of the dangers that menaced him, and escape, thereby, the consequences of the dishonest dealings at the mine? This was all visionary, and no better than mere madness. He knew it, but whilst he thought these things he lived them, and his imagination was dowered for the time with an incredible activity and brilliance and minuteness. If he had ever expected to suffer like this, he would have gone straight. If he had never gone in league with Mr. Bowling he would have had the whole of that fifty thousand pounds, without even the trouble of fetching it, in all likelihood. Even if he had had to fetch it he would have had it all without manœuvring, trouble, or dispute. What a mistake it had been to go wrong! What an ass he had been, to be sure, about that mine! Why not have told the truth about it? It was so hard, he answered, to tell the truth after having bounced and lied as he had done. Then why have bounced and lied?

Who could have guessed that just a little harmless brag could have brought a fellow to this? Castle Barfield would have something to talk and think about for a day or two in his flight and Job's arrest. If he had guessed that any such danger had overhung Sarah's father—well, it was of no use to think of these things. He had been fairly cornered and couldn't help himself, and if people didn't want to be found out, and caught and punished, they shouldn't commit—. An extremely unpleasant reflection.

'Is that fellow going to be all night there?'

No, the fellow was coming at that moment. The door opened, and the wide line of light broke a second time upon the darkness, and showed the wet gray-green turf, and the bare branches with the fog amongst them. Aaron ran on tiptoe to the gate, and waiting there heard Mr. Bowling's returning footsteps crunching on the gravel. By-and-by he made out Mr. Bowling himself, and whispered at him—

'Got the money?'

'Yes,' Mr. Bowling whispered back again. 'Come along. You're game for a five-mile walk, ain't you? We'll be in London afore mornin'.' They tramped for awhile side by side along the darkened lane in silence, and then Mr. Bowling, in a harsh and untuneful voice, began to sing.

'Hush!' said Aaron, 'hush! Somebody may hear you.'

'What's that matter?' cried the other noisily. Then lowering his voice, 'Ain't we safe now, you lubber? If it worn't for this here burned hand o' mine I'd be as happy as a king.

'Thus John the Gener-al despatches:
In vain his name he doffed!
His body's goin' to be under hatches,
And Tom is goin' aloft.'

In the quiet room in Konak Cottage the fire burned out and the figure in the chair sat still. The lamp burned on until six o'clock in the morning, and then went out in smoke and evil odours. The figure in the chair sat still. The dawn broke mild and beautiful after the rain, and the birds began to chirrup in the garden. The light grew broader and broader, until the room was full of it. The voices of children on their way to school, the sounds of leisurely traffic, nodding bells of grave horses, rolling wheels of heavy carts, and the drawling cries of the drivers, sounded from without. The world's business had begun again, but the figure in the chair sat still, before the dead cold ashes of the fire.

Clem Bache, driving along Castle Barfield High Street, noticed an unusual spectacle a hundred yards ahead. Half a dozen scarlet-clad soldiers marched two abreast, and a seventh kept pace a little apart to the rear. Just as he sighted them they paused—in front of Konak Cottage. It struck him with a great surprise when they all entered at the gate.

'Get along,' he said to the man who drove with him; 'let me see what this means.' He alighted at the gate, and saw that two of the men stood outside the cottage door, stiff and upright, as if on guard.

'Can't come in. At present!' said one, and set a cavalry carbine across the doorway. It touched each side of the trellis work of the porch.

'Can't go in?' said Clem, with a vague terror at his heart. 'Why not?'

Before the man could answer, another appeared at the door.

‘Slipped this time for good and all,’ he said. ‘Bevan, you start off and find the nearest doctor. Then send the first police officer you find this way.’

‘What is it?’ cried Clem, the vague terror mounting higher and higher.

‘Are you a friend of the party as lived here?’ asked the third man, who wore three gold-laced V-shaped stripes upon his arm. ‘There’s no objection to your coming in, so far as I know.’

Clem entered, and saw still seated in the chair before the dusty grate, the King of Terrors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE two scoundrels tramped into Birmingham together. Mr. Bowling in the highest possible spirits, and Aaron seeing in each bush an officer. Mr. Bowling’s hand caused him much uneasiness, but nothing could dash just then the sense of triumph and revenge which filled him, and fed his heart with very manna.

‘I ain’t a going to be like sneakin’ Joby,’ he said to Aaron. ‘I ain’t a going to live rooted in the mud like a cabbage. I’m a going to wander wheer I will, I am. I shall go fust-class everywhere. I shall have black togs and a tall hat, like a cap’n when he goes ashore. I shall chew the best tobacco, and drink the best o’ liquor, wines an’ sperits both.’ He cut an ungainly caper at the fancy, and then groaned over his burned and stinging hand. ‘I say,’ he went on a minute later, speaking in a subdued tone, and edging near to Aaron, ‘you’ll have to take a name, you know. Mind you, I ain’t Thomas Bowling now, nor yet William Dean. You think of a name and I’ll think of a name. I’ll have a good un while I’m at it. Sheppard’s a good un, ain’t it?—Jack Sheppard. Might be called Johnny, familiar like, for short. Turpin’s a good un, too; Richard Turpin. Mix ’em, and it comes to Dicky Sheppard. That’ll do for me—Mr. Richard Sheppard. What’s yours?’

Aaron saw as clearly as Mr. Bowling the necessity for the assumption of an alias, but it hurt his sense of dignity to choose a name at Mr. Bowling’s bidding. He began to see that until this adventure was over he had linked himself to an extremely vulgar person, with whom it was highly disagreeable to be bound in any enterprise. This reflection strengthened his resolve to be

rid of Mr. Bowling at the earliest opportunity. He felt that he could not descend to the level of Mr. Bowling's aspect or address, and he had a rather exaggerated idea of his own gentility, so that the inevitable contrast between himself and his travelling companion looked greater than it was.

'I think,' he said, 'that until we get to London it would be better if we didn't seem to know each other. We could travel up by the same carriage,' he added rather hastily, 'but it might look accidental.'

'You trust me, matey,' returned Mr. Bowling, who saw his drift. 'Fairplay's my motter. It's took me a quarter of a century to learn the A B C of this here business, but I've learned it now. That money's left for nobody as don't play fair. Beside which, I've took my solemn oath—so have you. Afore I go to bed to-night I'm going to learn that there medal off by heart. You learn it off by heart likewise. Soak it into your head and nobody can't steal it; soak it into your head, and you can't get your pocket picked of it, nor drop it overboard, nor yet run away and leave it in a house afire, if such a thing should happen. Soak it in, and there you are for ever. I might ha' soaked it in a quarter of a century back, and ha' lived like a fightin' cock from then till now.'

This threatened process of soaking-in the precious knowledge the medal had to offer was unpleasant to Aaron's fancy, and if carried into effect would be likely to upset his plans. He walked on pondering, but every personage they encountered on the way, every vehicle that passed them, set his fancies flying, and his thoughts were so disjointed by his fears that they were useless to him.

'Been a thinking of a name?' inquired Mr. Bowling. 'Ain't you? You're a slow sailer, you are. Here, you're a going to seek your fortune, ain't you? Well, Dick Whittington, he went to seek his fortune—Whittington. It ain't that much unlike your own name, neither. You'd answer to it easy. Then his name was Dick. That won't act; no—that cock *won't* fight. My name's Dick. We can't have two of 'em. We ain't so poverty-struck as that comes to. Who else was there as went to seek his fortune? Why, I'm a going to seek my fortune, too, and I'll make you a present of my baptised name, Robert. There you are, fitted complete Robert Whittington.'

'All right,' said Aaron sulkily. 'Call me what you please.'

but you'd better not be too familiar. I don't want to be looked at any more than I can help.'

'Oh, that's all right,' returned Mr. Bowling, who was not in the least degree disturbed or offended. 'That stands to reason. You'll be Young Governor, as respectful as you please, till I've got my new togs on. I shall set up the new togs to-morrow. There used to be a cove in the Ratcliff Highway as went by the name of Aaron, and did the thing slap-up. Black togs,' said Mr. Bowling, half in soliloquy, 'a tall hat, a yeller hankicher wore loose, and there you are, ready to be took for a bishop or a lord.'

In view of this picture he sank into a charmed silence, and rolled with a more imposingly nautical gait than ever. It was evident, even to Aaron's comprehension, that he was already attired in the new togs in fancy. By fancy's aid, Mr. Bowling was indeed at that moment rolling down the Ratcliff Highway, and was the cynosure of eyes there. His imagination soared so high that a resplendent Jewess winked at him, but he passed on serene.

'There's Joby Round a sleeping in his arm-cheer,' he said by-and-by. 'I wonder what he's a dreaming of. I've got you, this time, Joby, by the Lord! Rather see it rot and rust to powder, would you, Joby? So you would; I know you would; it stands to nature as you would.' He broke into a shout of laughter and waved both hands aloft. Then he began to sing—

'He's got the dibs, has Thomas Bowling,
The darling of our crew;
But Joby hears the tempest howling,
For Time has broached him to.'

'Hold your noise!' cried Aaron. 'Do you want the whole world to hear you?'

'What's it matter if the whole world was to hear me?' retorted Mr. Bowling. 'Do you think I ain't a going to do my heart good now I've got the chance? If you don't like it, walk on the other side o' the road, and look as if you didn't belong to me. I'm in for a sing-song.'

'His form was of the manliest beauty,
His nature was not sawft;
He overturned—as was his duty—
His foe, and went alawft.'

'You've been drinking,' said Aaron; 'you'll get us both into trouble if you don't take care.'

‘Drinking!’ cried Mr. Bowling riotously, ‘I should think I have been a drinking. Theer’s no amount o’ drink ’ud do me harm to-night, not if I swum in the strongest sperits as was ever brewed.’ Aaron groaned aloud, and Mr. Bowling suddenly modulated his tone. ‘Mind you, I can be as stiddy as a rock. I’m as sober now as a parson in his pulpit or a judge upon his bench. It’s a poor heart as never rejoices. I’m forty ’ears younger than I was yesterday. There’s only one thing as disappints me. I’d lay down half the money to see the cat-o’-nine-tails a dusting Joby Round. Swish!

‘Tom Bowling all his foes despatches,
And Joby’s shirt is doffed;
His back the cat-o’-nine-tails scratches,
And——’

I’ve wore that out; it don’t go like it did to begin with. What’s that light ahead? That’s a public-house. Sorrow’s dry, and so am I. Give us some coppers, mister. They might stare to see a man in cords offerin’ a sovereign for a quart o’ beer.’

‘I haven’t any coppers,’ said Aaron.

‘Give us a shilling then,’ returned Mr. Bowling. ‘I’ll pay you back again, fair doos. Go in yourself, go into the parlour like a lord, and look as if I didn’t belong to you.’

Aaron, since his companion would not be dissuaded, entered the house with him, and did his best to look unconcerned, and unconscious of the existence of Mr. Bowling, who drank with irritating slowness, and was so lavish of compliments to a dark-eyed barmaid that he drew upon himself the observation of all the people in the bar. Half in terror and half with a throb of joy, Aaron saw that the seaman’s eyes were bleared and that his swarthy face was flushed. Mr. Bowling, in anticipation of the evening’s work, had been drinking heavily all day. Until now his excitement had fought off the effect of his potations, but excitement was now turning traitor with him, and had begun to help him on the downward road.

They left the house almost together, but nobody supposed they were companions or had anything in common, and they reached the town without meeting any adventure by the way. The London train started at midnight, and there was still an hour and a half to spare. They spent the greater part of this time in roaming about the streets, and Aaron trembled from first to last lest he should encounter some one to whom both he and Mr. Bow-

ling would be known. When at length they made for the station, his dreadful partner insisted upon buying a bottle of rum from the third-class refreshment-buffet. He was drunk enough by this time to produce a handful of sovereigns when he came to pay, and this exciting the suspicions of a railway detective who happened to observe it, Aaron's nerves must needs suffer for his companion's indiscretion.

The detective, after a word or two with Mr. Bowling (who was almost sobered by learning the occupation of the grave and authoritative stranger who accosted him), approached Aaron as he walked moodily upon the platform, and touched him on the shoulder.

'I beg your pardon, sir. Are you Mr. Whittington? A solicitor, of Castle Barfield?'

'Yes,' said Aaron. The answer hung fire a little, but he remembered in time the name his companion had fixed upon for his wearing.

'Oh,' said the detective, 'it's all right then, I dare say. Will you step a yard or two this way, sir?' Aaron obeyed. There was nothing, so far, in the least to be alarmed at, but there was such a tremor in his knees that he could scarcely stand. 'That fellow in the suit of rough cords there has got a handful of sovereigns. I thought he looked a bit suspicious.'

'That's all right,' said Aaron, doing his best to look and speak unconcernedly. 'He came by the money honestly. I know the man.'

'He said you did, sir. I was bound to ask you. I'm a detective on duty here, and it's my business, of course, to look at a thing like that.'

'He's an old sailor,' said Aaron, more at ease. 'He won't have the money long, I fancy, but he seems to think there's no end to it. Perhaps I'd better speak a word to him; he may take notice of me when he wouldn't of a stranger.' He hoped to shake off the detective, and was annoyed when the man followed him into the refreshment-room. 'I say, my man,' he said, touching Mr. Bowling somewhat timidly, 'this gentleman is a detective, and he tells me you've been flourishing your money about here in a very foolish way. Put it up, there's a good fellow. I'll ride in the same carriage with him up to town,' he added, 'and see that nobody meddles with him.'

'Now, that's a gentleman after my own heart, that is,' cried

Mr. Bowling. 'That's Mr. Whittington, that is—the respectablest lawyer in England. You take a drink along of me, Mr. Whittington?'

'No, thank you,' said Aaron; 'and I shouldn't advise you to drink any more.'

'I'm all right,' responded Mr. Bowling. 'I'm in A 1 condition fore and aft.'

When Mr. Whittington opened his purse the detective saw the glitter of gold there, and his keen eye took notice of the fact that one compartment was stuffed fat with bank notes. He had no objection to taking a shilling from Mr. Whittington, and being a good fellow was honestly pleased, when the train came up, to see the sailor bestow himself in the same third-class compartment with the solicitor.

'Any luggage, sir?' he asked, touching his hat.

'No,' said Aaron, 'my luggage is in town already.'

The guard's whistle sounded, the train moved, and when they were once clear of the platform Mr. Bowling leapt to his feet and, digging at Aaron's chest with the rum bottle he carried, cried—

'Hooray for the Bawlkan Hills! Eh, mister?'

In the downright desperation with which Mr. Bowling inspired him, Aaron found courage to rise and thrust him by the shoulders to a seat.

'There are people on both sides of us,' he said. 'Can't you keep quiet? Do you want to tell everybody where we're going?'

'All right, shipmet,' said Mr. Bowling, 'I'll be quiet. Look here, you keep me quiet. You ain't much for pluck, you know, but you're dead nuts on caution. Now, what's the matter with me is, for caution I ain't to be valued alongside of the toss-up of a blind beggar's farden. As for pluck, it's bekknown everywhere that Thomas Bowling—— Look here, governor, what was the name I given myself two or three hour ago? A new name's like boots, it must be wore and wore until it's hardly fit to wear no longer afore it feels easy on you. Have a drink? Then I'll have one myself. What do you say? Don't like rum? What *are* you a going to do with your share of the money when you gets it?'

Mr. Bowling advanced this question with a ludicrous air of drunken astonishment.

‘Now,’ he said, ‘I’m a going to soak this here medal into my head; that’s what I’m a going to do.’ He drew the watch and its appendages from his pocket, and, rising, held up the medal to the wretched oil lamp which burned in the roof of the carriage. Aaron looked at it with greedy eyes and heart. ‘Can’t make it out,’ said Mr. Bowling, staggering in the middle of the jolting compartment; ‘see if you can read it.’ He held it waving and revolving before Aaron’s face.

‘How do you think I can see it if you hold it like that?’ demanded Aaron; ‘lend it me.’

Mr. Bowling winked with a look of cunning and shook his head.

‘Not yet awhile, governor,’ he said. ‘When we come to pen and ink and paper you shall copy it, and then you can soak it in at your convenience.’ He stuffed the watch and chain back into his pocket and resumed his seat. ‘Here’s some of the beans,’ he continued figuratively, as he drew five sovereigns from the same pocket and surveyed them in his great brown palm. ‘Where we’re a going to there’s fifty thousand of them shiners a lying buried. We’ll show ’em daylight—we’ll make ’em fly.’

A jerk of the carriage disturbed his equilibrium at this moment, and he dropped the gold. Aaron fell upon his knees and chased the rolling coins into corners until he had caught them all.

‘Put them up,’ he said savagely, ‘and don’t be a fool. You’ll have neither them nor the others long if you behave in this way.’

‘I’m a going to be rich for life,’ returned Mr. Bowling, pocketing the recovered coins; ‘and now—being as you’re my pardner—I’ll tell you how. For a chum is a chum, though he’s never so chumly.’

‘Look here, governor, I had a pal once by the name of Derrick, Billy Derrick, which inherited a fortune of one thousand pound.’ Aaron bent forward to listen, and pretended to be much interested. Mr. Bowling, breathing rum and tobacco, continued his narrative with drunken gravity. ‘This is how to be rich for life, mister. This Billy Derrick has a fortune left him of a thousand pound. He was a middle-aged man, and when he went to the lawyer’s for to draw it, the lawyer says, “If I was you, Mr. Derrick”—he called him Mr. Derrick, and bespoke him like as if he’d been the master of the finest craft as sails—“if I was you,” says he, “I should sink this money.” “Should you?” says

Billy, ironical; "sink yourself," he says. "I'm going to stick to this, now I've got it." "That's all right," says the lawyer, "but what I mean is, sink it in a 'nuity." Maybe you know what a 'nuity is, governor.'

'Of course I know what an annuity is,' returned Aaron. 'Any child knows that.'

'Any shore-going swab may know shore-going tackle,' said Mr. Bowling, with a lurch. He leaned back sullenly, and discerning the rum bottle, took it by one hand, drew the cork with his teeth and drank. He seemed after this to forget his momentary pique, and leaning forward with the bottle between his knees, continued his narrative. 'Afore they'd give Billy anything on this here 'nuity he had to go afore a doctor, and when he hears this, says Billy to me, "Georgey, my boy," he says. No; ' Mr. Bowling paused and looked introspective. 'I don't think it was Georgey—Henry I think it was. Call it Henry. What's it matter? "Henry," he says, "I'm going to have these money-lending fellows. The less they think I'm going to live, the more they'll give me." That,' explained the narrator thickly, 'is how the 'nuity ropes is pulled. Long life, low pay; high pay, short service.'

'Yes,' said Aaron, nodding, 'I know all about the system. Go on. I think I'll have a drop of rum now if you don't mind.'

Mr. Bowling handed him the bottle, and he sipped. Mr. Bowling, inspired by this example, took a deep pull on receiving the bottle back again, as Aaron had anticipated.

'Well, what does Billy Derrick do? Why, being a sensible fellow, he goes off upon the drink. He keeps upon the drink until he gets the horrors like a lord. Then he goes afore the doctor. The doctor says, "This man won't last three years," he says. Billy Derrick gets the very highest rate of pay, and what's he do? Why he signs a pledge with himself never to get drunk again except upon a Sunday. He's a drawing that there pay now, as a natural consequence, and the very last time I see him, "Joseph," he says—no, "Henry," he says, "go and do likewise if ever you come into money." And likewise,' concluded Mr. Bowling, 'I intend to do.'

'That was a very shrewd fellow,' said Aaron, clumsily trying to seem genial and at ease. 'I say, that's capital rum of yours. I'll have another drop if you don't mind. I'd no idea that rum was half as good.'

‘Eh?’ said Mr. Bowling, with a laugh, ‘you’re a beginning to find out what’s good, are you? You wait till we gets back from the Bawlsan Hills, and I’ll show you what high living’s like. Here—fair doos. Don’t empty the bottle.’

Aaron was making a great show of drinking, but pressed his tongue against the mouth of the bottle, so that none of its contents escaped. Mr. Bowling seized the rum greedily when Aaron surrendered it, and drank as if he slaked an innocent thirst with water.

‘I shan’t drink no more to-night,’ he said then, recorking the bottle and setting it down in one corner. ‘I’ve got to keep my head clear, because I’m going to soak that medal in afore I go to bed. Wheer’s my ticket?’

‘I’ve got both tickets,’ returned Aaron. ‘Don’t talk any more. I’m tired. I want a nap.’

He had never been further from sleep in his lifetime, but he lay back in a corner with closed eyes and folded arms. Just then the train began to slacken pace, and in a little while had drawn up at a platform, where Aaron, to his sudden horror, heard the cry of ‘Coventry—Coventry.’ To the criminal coward the filniest cobweb line that spider ever spun looks like a halter. Sarah was in Coventry. Anything unlikelier than her presence at the railway station an hour after midnight would be hard to fancy, and yet the thing *might* be. He shrunk into his corner as if he would fain have disappeared into the woodwork, and kept his eyes fast closed lest he should see the face he most dreaded in the world. Not the apparition of Job Round himself could have appalled him like the apparition of Job Round’s daughter. That—on reflection—appears to be the first favourable thing which has been set down in these pages concerning Aaron Whittaker.

The train went on again, and Aaron, making his eyes look as languid as he could, half opened them for a glance at Mr. Bowling. No sooner had they touched him than they opened wide and glistened with a light of triumph. Mr. Bowling was fast asleep.

The train sped on, and Aaron watched with a constant eagerness which set his breath labouring and his heart beating. Sometimes Mr. Bowling would move his feet restlessly, and at other moments would grumble in his sleep, and then Aaron’s forward-crouching attitude of attention would be suddenly abandoned, and he would slip back into his corner and lie there with

closed eyes. There was a second pause at Bletchley, and Aaron's head spun with the fear that some passenger, bound thence to London, would enter and spoil the solitude he wanted, but the train went on again, and he and his companion were still alone. When he judged that they were within a few miles of Willesden he began to push Mr. Bowling, at first softly, but more and more heavily, and then to shout at him. 'Hi!—wake up! We're nearly there;' but to his immense relief he could not even elicit so much as a grunt of remonstrance.

He slipped a hand gently, gently, gently into Mr. Bowling's pocket, and the tips of his fingers coming in contact with the watch-chain he drew it gingerly forth, whipped it into his own great-coat pocket, and plunged into his corner seat again. He had scarcely done this when the train began to slacken speed. He had meant to have Mr. Bowling's money too. What was the use of the medal alone, if he left Mr. Bowling the wherewithal to follow him? A mistake—all a mistake. He would slip the watch back again. There was no time; the brake was jarring on the rails already. He would do it when they had once passed the station. He would tell Bowling—'You see how fair I mean to play with you. I could have had the medal to myself whilst you were asleep in the train.' Then he could take another and a better chance, and could strip his partner clean. That would be best done in a foreign city, where the man should have less means of following him. He had meant to escape at Willesden, but he saw now that that was a mere folly.

While these thoughts chased each other through his mind a man came round for tickets.

'This fellow wanted to go to sleep,' said Aaron, pointing to Mr. Bowling. 'This is his ticket.'

The collector took it with a mere glance at the sleeping man, and was just about to close the door when a servant of the company leaped into the carriage and sat down opposite Aaron. There would be no chance to put the watch back now, and when Mr. Bowling awoke it was a hundred to one that his first impulse would be to look for it. If he would but sleep till Euston! Nothing but flight for it now—nothing but flight! Aaron trembled and flushed, and paled and flushed again. His joints were loosened with a shaky horror, and his back-bone felt so useless to him that he could have fallen in folds like an empty sack. Only here and there a man tastes the full nausea of fear, because there is

only here and there a man who has the palate to be touched by all its flavours.

Once more the train stopped, and the noise of the jarring brake seemed fit to awaken the dead, to Aaron's fancy, but Mr. Bowling slumbered on. The company's servant was first at the door, and being sleepy, fumbled somewhat at the handle, unconscious that the man who stood behind him was ready to tear him with his hands. The door was opened at last, the way was clear, and Aaron darted from the carriage with one fearful backward glance at Mr. Bowling, who still lay huddled in his corner with his bandaged hand depending towards the floor.

He did not dare to go too fast, lest he should excite observation and inquiry. He knew little of London, and did not know where to bestow himself at that hour, and so he walked till morning dawned, and the streets grew busy. Then he breakfasted at a somewhat frowsy coffee-house, and, learning that he could have a bed there, determined to snatch a few hours of rest, and retired upstairs with strict injunctions that he should be called at noon. The pale day stared at him through the yellow window-blind and chased sleep from his eyelids for a long time, and his fears pricked at him so that every now and then a groan escaped him. But at last Nature would have her way, and he slept.

Being roused at mid-day he washed and took a second meal, and having discharged his bill, sallied into the streets, where, in spite of the absorbed indifference of the dwellers in great towns, a dozen people noticed his new habit of looking over his shoulder.

He was too unsettled, too frightened, too lonely, and too helpless to make a single inquiry of anybody as yet, and the streets were such a terror to him that he spent most of the day in coffee-houses. In one of these, towards evening, he grew suddenly courageous. An evening paper supplied him with solace and resolve.

Perhaps it was something in his own circumstances which sent him that afternoon to the police intelligence. He read there that at Marylebone Police Court that morning a labouring man, who refused his name and address, had been brought up on a charge of drunkenness. The labouring man had been awakened in a carriage at Euston Station, had professed to discover a robbery, had created a violent disturbance, had been removed with much difficulty by the police, and had repeatedly assaulted them on the way to the station. There it had been discovered that he was

possessed of ninety-nine pounds ten shillings in gold, and seven shillings in silver. This being naturally regarded as a suspicious circumstance, the labouring man, who wore earrings of gold wire, had the air of a sailor, and was disfigured by a great scar, was remanded in order that inquiries might be made concerning him. It appeared further that the prisoner was still under the influence of liquor, and that his bearing in court was that of a madman.

Aaron Whittaker suddenly became at ease. He bought a portmanteau of a largish size, with some necessary things to fill it, and he took a berth in the steam ship *Orinoco*, bound for Marseilles. He bought also a Continental Bradshaw and the best map of Turkey to be had for money. He got aboard the steamer, and in half an hour he was to be away. He went down to his berth, spread the map of Turkey on his bed below the port-hole light, and with the watch and chain and medal in his hand, began a search for the latitude and longitude he wanted. Whilst he was thus absorbed the door opened suddenly, and Aaron thrust the precious medal beneath the pillow and turned with quaking nerves and startled eyes.

His face went ghastly when he saw that his visitor wore the uniform of the police.

‘I must trouble you to come with me if you please,’ said the new-comer with unnecessary politeness.

‘Why,’ began Aaron, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could go no further.

‘You are wanted,’ said the officer, ‘for being concerned in the death of Job Round, of Castle Barfield. You may say anything you like, but it’s my duty to caution you that anything you say will——’

The officer saw that Mr. Whittaker was not likely to say anything just then, and deferred his warning.

The prisoner had fainted.

(To be continued.)

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

NOVEMBER, 1885.

COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO STAGE BOXES.



IT is impossible in words to describe the tumult of excitement, pride, admiration, in Joanna's bosom, as she took her place in the left stage box at the Plymouth Theatre Royal. She had never been in a theatre before. Her highest ambition had been to battle for herself a way to the front in the gallery. She occupied the most luxurious and expensive place in the theatre. She was dressed so beautifully that her head was turned. The pink silk was nothing to the dress she now wore, crimson velvet and cream-coloured silk, the latter exquisitely hand-embroidered. Her neck, her bosom, her head, were profusely adorned with diamonds. It was a marvel to Joanna whence the Jew had got them all. She wore rings

on all her fingers; if the rings were too large, a little silk wound inside enabled her to wear them. She looked with astonishment at the footlights, at the orchestra where the players were tuning, at that great mystery, the curtain. Then she turned to examine the audience. The gallery and the pit were packed; in the dress circle were about twenty persons, and in the stalls perhaps a dozen. A poor house, a house to take the heart out of an actor. Joanna could not understand it. The rich have money, why do they not come? The poor do not grudge their shillings and sixpences.

Joanna attracted the attention of the house. Opera-glasses were directed towards her. She saw those in the stalls put their heads together, and she knew they were asking each other who she was. She was conscious that she was being admired, and to enable the people to see her better she stood up.

Lazarus was in evening dress, sitting back, facing the stage, so that he was invisible; it was hardly likely he would have been recognised. An evening suit had completely transformed him. Besides, those who attended the theatre were not his clients. He did not shrink from being seen; he was indifferent.

‘Sit down, Joanna. How can you behave so strangely?’ he said.

‘No one could see my velvet bag with old Dutch silver clasps and chain and belt unless I stood up,’ she answered.

‘Perhaps you would like to stand up on the breasting of the box, to let folks see your red shoes.’

‘I shouldn’t mind,’ said Joanna.

‘But I do. Sit down and be quiet. The orchestra are going to begin. I did not bring you here to make a fool of yourself.’

‘Very well, master. I’ll fan myself, and then they can see my bracelets.’

Joanna was like a child with a box of new toys. She looked at herself in the little strip of mirror in the box, she played with and admired her jewelry, she took peeps at her feet shod in crimson satin shoes, she pressed back her chin to be able to see the glitter of a diamond brooch on her bosom. One bitter disappointment she had been forced to endure. She had desired to appear in low dress, but on trying one on, it was found that the contrast in colour between her face and one half of her neck and her bosom, and the other half of her neck, was too startling to allow of her thus appearing.

A tap at the door behind, and a gentleman entered the box. Joanna uttered a cry of delight, and took several steps to meet him. The gentleman was Charles Cheek.

‘Why, Joanna!’ he exclaimed, ‘you here, in the royal box, as queen of beauty, wearing all the Crown jewels stolen by Lazarus from the Tower!’

‘I am glad to see you again,’ she said heartily. ‘Here is a chair, sit down beside me and talk till the play begins, and then be mum.’

‘I was in the stalls. I could hardly believe my eyes,’ he said, ‘but I looked and looked through my glasses till I had nearly satisfied myself you were my little friend of the roof-tree, when Lazarus’s nose came round the corner, and a bit of a cheek-bone, and then I was sure.—What has induced you, Father Abraham, to come here dressed like a Christian? Have you brought the girl to show off a set of diamonds you want to sell?’

‘I’ve brought her here,’ answered the Jew, ‘because I am a generous and indulgent master. She saved my house from fire and from burglars, and has deserved a treat for other services she has rendered me, so I have stepped out of my usual course of life to indulge her.’

‘Do you often come to the play?’ asked Joanna.

‘Very often. I would come always if I thought you would be here.’

‘Sit down, and don’t throw foolish speeches at me which you do not mean. I am so glad to see you again. Do you know, I have learned to dance since I saw you last—waltz, and cotillon, and lancers, and quadrille,—these last very imperfectly for want of enough to make up sets; for want of persons we danced with chairs.’

‘Where have you been? Who taught you?’

‘Those are secrets which even you may not know.’

‘Why are you not in the pink silk and pearls I gave you?’

‘I am more splendid now; do look at me well. What do you think of this gown—puffed and slashed at the sleeves? is it not lovely, like a lady in an old painting? Look down at my shoes. They are sweet. Once, do you recollect, you laughed at me, because I was in my stocking-soles, and there were holes in the stockings. Now there is not even a thread wrong in my stockings, and the shoes are simply lovely.’

‘Have you worn out the pink silk?’

‘No. Mr. Lazarus spilt salt water over it, and it is spoiled. He was forced to give me this instead.’

‘I!’ cried the Jew. ‘I have not given you this. Do not believe the girl, it is not true. The gown is hired for the night, at one guinea.’

‘Hold your tongues, both of you!’ said Joanna. ‘The overture has begun.’

The Jew was not particularly pleased at Charles Cheek appearing in the box and remaining there, but he could not tell him to leave. He drew back among the folds of the coloured hangings, with his eyes on the curtain, and looked sulky. Charles Cheek and Joanna entirely disregarded him.

‘I say,’ whispered the girl during the overture, ‘why are there so few persons in the more expensive seats?’

‘Because,’ answered the young man, ‘the better class people despise provincial theatres; it is *chic* to do so. It means that they have seen things so much better done in London that they cannot endure what is inferior.’

‘But they lose great enjoyment by this nonsense.’

‘Of course they do, but——’ He shrugged his shoulders.

‘Hush! Oh, do hush!’ exclaimed Joanna. ‘See! see!’

The curtain rose. Then she had eyes and ears only for the stage. In the third scene Juliet makes her first appearance. Lazarus had been moving uneasily through the two former. He bit his nails, wiped his brow, and became every moment paler. Then he put his hand forward, touched Mr. Cheek, and said somewhat roughly, ‘Excuse me, I want the front chair.’ The young man started, looked surprised, and at once surrendered the seat. ‘I am short-sighted,’ explained the Jew. Mr. Cheek bowed, and withdrew to his place in the stalls.

Joanna was annoyed, not so much at losing her companion as at the disturbance, distracting her attention from the play. She frowned, and tapped her fan impatiently on the cushion.

Lazarus sat beside her, his face turned towards the stage; she saw that it was cadaverous, and that his muscles twitched with nervousness.

Next moment she had forgotten him to observe Juliet. At the appearance of Mdlle. Palma Kaminska, the famous Polish actress from the Imperial Theatre, Warsaw, the gallery burst into applause. The pit took up the applause; the clapping of hands, thumping of heels and umbrella ferrules on the floor for a minute

brought the play to a standstill. The dress circle languidly patted its hands, the stalls remained unmoved.

In recognition of this reception, Mdlle. Palma stepped forward to the footlights and curtseyed; as she did so, she raised her eyes and looked at the boxes for a moment; her eyes remained fixed on the stage box on her right only for a moment, and then she turned her head away without a token of emotion. Lazarus leaned back, his face quivering, his hands clenched. Their eyes had met.

Joanna observed the famous actress with the closest attention. This was Rachel—the beautiful Rachel whom Lazarus had loved, and who had wrecked his life. This was she who had so bewitched the Marquis that he had forgotten honour and right, and had run away with her to Sicily. Joanna was sufficiently near to see the make-up in her face, the paint, the powder, the antimony about the eyes, the rouge in the cheeks. She saw that Rachel was lovely, had been very lovely, but—fatal *but*—she was becoming stout.

Joanna laughed. The consciousness was borne in on her that she was herself more beautiful than this woman who had made two men miserable—who had broken two lives. The applause had just ceased, and a short silence succeeded before the performers resumed their dialogue. On that short interval of silence Joanna's laugh broke, and instantly the beautiful actress looked at her. She looked intently, questioningly; then turned her eyes for a moment, only for a moment, on Lazarus.

None observed this but Joanna, not even Lazarus, who had drawn back and covered his eyes. There was something in the look that startled Joanna. The colour mounted and suffused her face and throat. Her pleasure in the play was gone; she wished she were away. She hid her arms lest the bracelets should be seen; she threw a kerchief round her neck to hide the chains. With a look the actress had revenged the laugh.

Joanna was not able to recover her interest in the play. She looked on, but her thoughts were elsewhere. She was glad that Lazarus had withdrawn and concealed himself in the shadow, leaning against the side of the box.

When the first act was over, she signed with her fan to Charles Cheek, and he came up from the stalls.

'A poor company,' said he, taking the seat she indicated. 'I hold that the educated are quite right in staying away; in the

provinces the star system is reduced to absurdity. What a stiff Lady Capulet! and a nurse without humour. Romeo is a stick. We have not seen yet what La Palma is made of. She is beautiful, but plump. A few years ago, may be, she was irresistible. Hollo, some vis-à-vis, I see.'

The box-keeper was introducing a party of two gentlemen and two ladies into the stage box immediately opposite. Joanna at once recognised the Marquis of Saltcombe, the Rigsbys, and Miss Stokes. Lazarus, leaning back with his face to the curtain, did not notice the arrivals; Joanna glanced over her shoulder at him, and saw that he was too preoccupied with his own thoughts to look about him.

She fixed her eye very attentively on the Marquis. He was serene, polite to Miss Rigsby, contending with the aunt which should hold the niece's scarf of woven blue and crimson silk and gold fibre—an Indian manufacture.

The curtain rose; Romeo proceeded to climb the wall into Capulet's garden. The lights were turned down, and a ray was cast, purporting to be that of the moon, on Juliet's window. There was not sufficient light in the stage box opposite for Joanna to see the face of Lord Saltcombe. The moonbeam was unsteady on Juliet's window, and badly focussed. But when Juliet sighed 'Ah me!' she thought she saw him start. Joanna watched the box opposite throughout the scene far more closely than the stage.

The footlights were turned up for the next scene, that in Friar Laurence's cell, and then Joanna was able to see the face of the Marquis. It was pale as death. Miss Rigsby leaned back in her chair and spoke to him as he was standing behind her, and he stooped and replied. He handed her a playbill, and pointed with his finger to something on it. Perhaps she had asked him who was the Romeo making such hot love to Juliet. Joanna saw that he maintained his composure outwardly. Only his deadly pallor showed how stirred he was within. He had come to the theatre with the Rigsbys, with whom he had dined, in complete ignorance of the fact that the Polish actress from Warsaw was Rachel Lazarus. Joanna turned to her master; she saw at a glance that he had recognised his enemy. His face was convulsed; he drew further back into the shadows, that he might not be seen.

Joanna looked from one man to the other. Here were two men, one at the head of the scale, the other at the foot—both the victims of one beautiful woman. 'What power there is in woman

for good or bad!’ thought Joanna. ‘For my part,’ she added to herself, ‘I would hurt no one—unless he got in my way.’

It amused the girl to notice the slightly foreign intonation in Juliet’s voice as she spoke. Knowing what she did of her origin, she was sure that this was put on to keep up the part of Pole Rachel had assumed. ‘She is clever,’ thought Joanna; ‘clever to control herself under the eyes of the two men she has ruined. But perhaps she has not as yet recognised the Marquis.’ The light was on her face, and he was in darkness. ‘I wonder what she will do when she does see him?’

‘Joanna,’ said the Jew, in a whisper that was hoarse and constrained, ‘I want to go. Get ready.’

She answered, ‘I am not going. I came for one play, and I am in for two.’

‘I am not well.’

‘Then get better. I am not going.’

During the scene in Capulet’s garden between Juliet and the nurse, Joanna watched the actress, but was unable to detect whether she had seen the Marquis or not. Once her eyes travelled in the direction of the stage box on her left, but the glance was quick and passing, and no muscle of her face, no failure of her voice, gave sign that she had perceived her former lover.

The curtain fell on the second act; as it fell, one of the foot-lights flared and snapped the glass chimney that screened it. No one paid particular attention to it; the broken glass was not removed, a fresh chimney not added.

Charles Cheek brought Joanna an ice; he offered one to Lazarus, who refused with a shake of the head.

‘He is not well,’ said Joanna. ‘Leave him alone; he wants to go away, but I will not hear of it till the play is out. Don’t notice him. He will be better presently.’

‘I’ll get you a drop of brandy, Mr. Lazarus.’

The Jew nodded, and the good-natured young man hurried away to fetch a glass of spirits.

‘Do you know who those are opposite us?’ asked Mr. Charles Cheek, on his return. ‘I’ve heard one is the Marquis of Saltcombe, son of the Duke of Kingsbridge, and the other people are called Rigsbys. I don’t know anything about them.’

‘The Marquis is engaged to Miss Rigsby—that pasty young lady in magenta silk, and pink roses in her hair. The person at

her side is her aunt, and the brown man is her father. They are worth a great deal of money.'

'How do you know all this?'

'In the way of business,' answered the girl, with an air of indifference.

'I have heard inquiries on all sides as to who you are. People have been lost in wonder and admiration. What is your name? I must satisfy those who ask. I have been unable to do so out of ignorance.'

'I am Miss Rosevere, an heiress,' answered Joanna.

'An heiress!' echoed Charles Cheek, with a laugh.

'Yes, sole heiress, executrix, and residuary legatee to Mr. Lazarus.' She turned round to her master with a mischievous face. He was in no mood to answer.

'How are you?' asked the young man. 'Better? Has the brandy revived you?'

Lazarus nodded.

'So I may answer to inquiries that you are a Miss Rosevere?'

'Yes. That is my name, though I don't often have it mentioned. You may add—an orphan. Go back to your place in the stalls, and tell those who ask who I am. You need not add—slave to a Jew pawnbroker—pawned for ten shillings. Don't say that, as you value my friendship.' So she dismissed him, then leaned on the red velvet cushion, playing with her fan, looking about her, and watching what went on in the stage box opposite. Mr. Rigsby was in conversation with Lord Saltcombe; his voice was loud and harsh, and Joanna could almost catch what he said. He was talking about an amateur dramatic performance got up by the officers at Colombo. Some delay ensued before the curtain rose. The orchestra performed a selection from 'Il Trovatore.' A smell of oranges pervaded the theatre. The gods were devouring them in great quantities in the gallery, and throwing the peel over into the pit. A bald-headed gentleman was the object they particularly aimed at, and when an urchin succeeded in casting an entire ingeniously removed peel so as to light in a ring on his glossy skull, like a cap, the feat was uproariously applauded.

The noise only ceased when the curtain rose on a public place, and attention was arrested by the fight between Mercutio and Tybalt: those in the gallery were greatly disappointed that the former died off the stage, and only reconciled when Tybalt was killed by Romeo under their eyes.

The scene that followed gave less promise of amusement. Juliet appeared in her room, invoking the approach of night :—

‘Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phœbus’ lodging.’

As she spoke her passionate monologue she came forward, and as she did so, the draught from her skirts made the jet of the broken footlight flare up.

‘There should be a wire net about eighteen inches off the lamps,’ said Mr. Rigsby. ‘I see none here, but in town it is so, is it not, Saltcombe?’

Lord Saltcombe bowed, he could not speak. Rachel’s eyes had met his at the exclamation, ‘Give me my Romeo.’ The nurse entered, bringing the rope-ladder and the news of the death of Tybalt, which she delivers so badly that Juliet for the moment supposes she is told of the loss of her lover. This is the first occasion on which an actress of any power can show passion. Palma rose to it. With a piercing cry that rang through the house she rushed forward, threw up her arms, and was convulsed with agony.

‘O break, my heart!—poor bankrupt, break at once!’

Then dashing her hands over her eyes,—

‘To prison, eyes! ne’er look on liberty.’

Stooping, gathering up the dust, then throwing it down, as into a grave at a funeral,—

‘Vile earth, to earth resign; end motion here :
And thou, and Romeo—’

She did not finish the sentence, the whole theatre rose with a cry of horror. The flame from the exposed jet had caught the white gauze of Juliet’s dress and danced up her skirt.

The agitation was indescribable. Women shrieked, men shouted. The curtain fell, and a smell of fire pervaded the atmosphere lately impregnated with the odour of oranges.

Miss Rigsby looked round.

The Marquis had uttered a cry of agony, and had fallen against the partition, with his hand to his brow. In another moment he dashed from the box and ran behind the scenes.

‘For mercy’s sake,’ he cried, ‘how is she? Where is she?’

The stage-manager brushed past him. The roar of voices mingled with cries beyond the curtain drowned his voice. The

actors were in agitation. The commotion in the house ceased instantly when the manager appeared before the curtain.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, a most unfortunate accident has happened. I believe and trust there is no occasion for alarm.’ A burst of cheers. ‘Mdlle. Palma Kaminska is not as seriously hurt as might have been anticipated.’ Renewed cheers. ‘I have to ask your kind indulgence; the performance must cease.’ He was himself so excited that he could hardly speak. His face was white, and his voice shook.

‘Where is she?’ asked the Marquis as the stage-manager stepped back.

‘She has been conveyed to her lodgings.’

CHAPTER XXX.

PALMA.

PALMA was driven at once to the house in which she had secured lodgings; one of the ladies of the company attended her. She was in great pain. A couple of surgeons were promptly summoned. The rumour of what had occurred spread, and people collected in the streets and about the door. The medical men said the case was grave, and that a nurse must be in constant attendance.

‘Lord bless me!’ said the old woman whose lodgings were taken by Palma. ‘Where am I to get a nurse?’

‘Her relations must be telegraphed for.’

‘Blessings on me! What do I know about her relations?’

‘We will see about a nurse. Perhaps one can be spared from the hospital.’

A rap at the door, and ring of the bell.

The woman opened it and saw a girl standing outside in a plain stuff gown, and a shawl over her head.

‘Who are you?’ she asked. ‘What do you please to want?’

‘I’m come to offer to nurse her,’ was the reply. ‘I’ve been sent; that is, I’ve come from him who stands nighest and yet furthest from her in the world.’

‘Who is that?’

‘Her husband.’

‘If that be the case, come in. You are young. Can you nurse?’

‘I can do what the doctor orders, and I hope I have my wits about me.’

‘What is your name?’

‘Rosevere.’

‘Very well,’ said the lodging-house keeper. ‘I reckon you’ll do as well as another.—Please, sir,’ to the surgeon, ‘give the young woman orders what she is to do.’

When the accident had taken place Joanna had turned home and stripped off her grand dress and donned a plain one; then she came down into the kitchen, where Lazarus was crouching over the fire.

‘It is a judgment,’ said the Jew. ‘Heaven is just, and has cast its thunderbolt at her. I am glad of it. No one hurts me without suffering for it.’

Joanna turned on him. ‘I am going to her,’ she said. ‘I shall nurse her if they will let me. Shall I say you sent me?’

‘No,’ answered the Jew; ‘don’t mention my name.’ He had assumed a hardness which ill concealed his inward emotion. In his breast was a tumult of mingled feeling—old love revived, sorrow, revenge, hate,—so mixed that he did not himself know what he desired.

‘You may go, Joanna,’ he said. ‘If she needs anything—that is, in moderation—let me know, but I will not see her, I will not see her, remember that.’

So Joanna went. The girl was greatly affected. Tears came into her eyes, but she drove them back. She had made up her mind to be with Palma. She went first to the theatre to ascertain where the actress lived; the house was not far distant. She hastened thither. On her way down the street she passed Lord Saltcombe. His face was raised, he was looking at a window whence a yellow light shone through a drawn blind. Shadows passed over the surface of the blind. A gas lamp was near, and the face of Lord Saltcombe was illumined. It was full of agony—it was the face of a man in despair. She walked by, then turned and came back to him; his suffering face filled her with pity. She said in a low tone, ‘Lord Saltcombe, I am going in to nurse her. Ask no questions at the door. I will give you signs at the window: when I hold up my hands, have hope; when I hold them down, her case is very bad; when I hold them out, and you see against the blind the black shadow of a cross—she is dead.’

He nodded. He did not recognise her, he did not look at her.

He did not wonder who she was that knew him by name. He tried to thank her. He could not.

Then she went on. If she had been refused admission she would have thrust herself in. Joanna was not one to take a refusal.

She was conducted to the room where lay the poor woman. Cotton wool and oil covered her wounds. The face was uninjured. She moaned and tossed her head from side to side on the pillow. The paint was on the cheeks, the antimony darkened the eyes, but tears had washed the white powder away in long furrows. Beneath the paint the flame of fever burnt in her cheeks. Joanna took a sponge and washed her face. The cool water soothed the sufferer for a moment, then she began again to moan and turn her head with a mechanical regularity from side to side. She seemed imperfectly conscious. Her fellow-actress was at her side; the honest sympathetic tears had washed her face into a strange mottle. She had hold of Palma's hand, and patted and kissed it, and spoke to her cheering words of promise of health.

'You'll be all right to-morrow. You know you are going to take the world by storm with your Lady of Lyons. There! don't be down. It is only a trifle. You did Juliet regular splendid—first-class to-night.'

'You may go,' said Joanna. 'You are out of place here, and do not understand the management of the sick. Leave her to me. I am sent to her.'

'Are you experienced, girl?' asked the surgeon.

'I know what is what,' answered Joanna, looking him full in the face.

'You have plenty of natural cleverness, I can see,' said the surgeon. 'Now attend to me. I will give you instructions that must be closely followed.'

'Hadn't that lady better go first? she bothers me and Ra—— I mean the sick woman.'

'I agree with you.' The surgeon dismissed the actress.

'Now,' said Joanna, 'say what you will, I will not go from it a hair's breadth.'

After receiving her instructions she said gravely, 'Tell me frankly: is there hope?'

'Where there is life there is hope,' he answered.

She looked at him with her shrewd eyes, and standing between the light and the window, held up *one* arm.

Lord Saltcombe paced the street hour after hour throughout the night. He could not leave it. Rest was impossible. One by one the lights in the houses were extinguished, but the window of Palma's room remained illumined. Within lay the woman—the sole woman—he had ever loved, and he had loved her with all the passion in his nature. Carried away by that passion he had committed a great wrong, a wrong which rankled in his heart. His conscience never acquitted him; it judged and condemned him daily. If he had loved innocently he might have shaken off his passion, or been spared by it to make himself a name, to become great and good among his fellow-men. But this guilty incident had morally maimed him. He had not the energy, the courage, after that, to face his fellow-men. There are some who rise after a fall, stronger than they were before. Their fall has taught them caution, has deepened their character, has inspired them with earnestness. There are others who, when once tripped up, lie prostrate the rest of their days. Such was Lord Saltcombe. He had not the moral vigour to efface the past by active well-doing.

The clock of St. Andrew's Church chimed after the stroke of three, and still the Marquis was in the street. He was cold and tired. An icy perspiration covered his brow. He had seen the sign at the window three or four hours before; it had not given him much hope. A gnawing pain was at his heart. Was this the first manifestation in him of that disease which sapped the life and activity of his father? Had his present great emotion provoked it to warn him of its presence?

The chimes had scarce done playing 'The Last Rose of Summer,' when the blind was drawn aside, and Lord Saltcombe saw the girl beckoning to him. In another moment the house door was opened gently, and she appeared at it. She held her finger to her lips, came outside, and said, 'Rachel is conscious. Come, and see her, but promise to go when I give the word.' He nodded. 'Follow me softly, make no noise. Every one else in the house is asleep.'

He obeyed. He was in his patent-leather boots, in his dress suit, with a light overcoat. He stepped softly after Joanna. If any one heard the steps, that person supposed it was the footfall of the doctor, turned in bed, and slept again. Joanna thrust open the chamber door and let the Marquis in. She did not enter herself, she closed the door and stood on the landing with her hands to her ears that she might not hear what was

said. As Lord Saltcombe passed her into the room she looked in his face: it was older by many years, white, lined, hollow about the eyes, and sunken at the cheeks. Her heart came into her mouth, she put her hands to her white apron, and raising it wiped her eyes, then shook her head defiantly, and clasped her hands over her ears.

Lord Saltcombe stepped up to the bed, looking with his whole soul into the burning face of the poor woman. Then he sobbed, sank on his knees by her side, and hid his face in the bedclothes.

‘Herbert!’ she said in a low tone, and put out her hand for his, ‘I wanted to see you—to say good-bye.’

‘Rachel!’ He could utter no more.

‘It is now seven years since—since Sicily.’

‘Rachel,’ he said, ‘God forgive me. If it were possible in any way to undo the past, if it were within my power to make compensation, to expiate the wrong done, I would do my utmost. Rachel, I ruined your life, and I destroyed the honour and happiness of another man’s home.’

She shook her head. ‘You do not know Lazarus.’

‘It matters nothing who or what he be; I wronged him past undoing, and the knowledge of this has lamed my life. You— you above all——’

‘Do not speak of me,’ she said. ‘I forgive you—but you were not in fault. I had set my heart on the stage, I ran away for the love of art—not for love of you.’

‘Is that true?’

She slightly moved her head. ‘The consciousness of power burned in me, and life with Lazarus and his sordid belongings was unendurable. I ran away; you know I forced myself on you, I asked you to free me. It was not that I cared for you—forgive me that I say so; if I pain you it is for your good—I used you but as a means of escape. I hungered for art; I knew that the stage was my proper sphere; and now—and now—I am consumed in the element I elected.’ Her head began to turn from side to side uneasily.

He did not speak, he watched her in silent remorse and agony. She had shut her eyes. He was not sure whether she were conscious. He held her hand; it was a hand of fire. Presently she stayed the rocking of her head, and opened her eyes. ‘It was I,’ she said—‘it was I who spoiled your life, not you mine. I have nothing to forgive. I must ask pardon of you.’

‘Of me! Oh, Rachel!’

‘I used you but as a means to an end. Who were you with in the stage box to-night—yesterday—when was it?’

He told her.

‘You are not married?’ she asked, and looked at him.

He shook his head.

‘You must marry, and forget me,’ she said. ‘It was I—it was I who was in the wrong.’ Presently she added, ‘Beware of Lazarus; he will never forget, never forgive.’ Then she shut her eyes, and began again to sway her head and moan.

He watched her without speaking; she let go his hand, and held her fingers up as feeling for something in the air.

‘What do you want, Rachel?’

She turned her face and opened her eyes; the light of reason had gone from them. She put her arm out of the bedclothes, and waved it:—

‘Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life.
Nurse! what should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.’

She thought herself on the stage. She tried to rise, and moaned and fell back.

Joanna entered; she did not raise her eyes to the face of Lord Saltcombe. She signed to him to go; he stood a moment longer looking at the poor woman, now unconscious, and stole away.

Then Joanna seated herself by the bed, and watched the sufferer. Her face, generally brimming with intelligence and full of self-assurance, was now kindled with an expression of tenderness and pity such as it had not borne before. She knew the whole story of this dying woman. She had been brought to look upon a heart—a man’s heart—enduring unutterable agony. She put out her finger and touched the bedclothes where moistened; she knew what had moistened them—tears of contrition and humiliation wrung from the heart of an honourable man. She bent her head to the ear of Palma, and whispered, ‘Will you send a message to Emmanuel Lazarus?’

The eyes opened and looked dimly at her, but no answer came.

Lord Saltcombe lingered in the street. He would not leave the neighbourhood of the house. The night was cold, and the wind raw; a fog blew up from the sea, and stole in filmy coils along the

street, drifting past the lamps and forming halos about them. He walked faster, up and down, up and down, turning his eyes ever at the lighted window. The clock struck four—it struck five, and he was still there. Before dawn the cold became keener, eating



into the marrow. Then the chimes of St. Andrew's played 'Home, sweet Home,' and as they played, against the lighted window appeared the shadow of a black cross.

Lord Saltcombe removed his hat, and stood with folded hands looking at the cross; then up, with dim eyes, through the fog above.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SPOKE IN THE WHEEL.

MR. RIGSBY had taken a handsome house for the winter at Stoke, above Devonport, or rather between Devonport and Plymouth. The house commanded a view over the entire harbour, with Maker Point and Mount Edgcumbe. A more beautiful bay is not to be found the world over. The hills are bold, some bare, others richly wooded; the creeks are numerous, the beautiful Hamoaze opening into the bay is like a hand, every finger of which is a lovely blue estuary, and this fair hand is full of vessels. Far away to the head of the water rise the peaks of Dartmoor above rolling woods and hills, studded with white houses and grey church towers. Mr. Rigsby was not easily satisfied; he was determined to have a good house, and he got the best, with large gardens sloping down the hill, lawns, tennis-ground enclosed within yew hedges, and terraces with roses.

He had roughed it in Ceylon in old days; the bungalow in which Dulcina had been brought up was plain, and slenderly furnished. In England Mr. Rigsby was exacting. Dulcina would be a duchess, and he must show the world that he had a fortune that allowed him to live like a prince. He bought carriages and horses, and engaged servants, put the men in the Rigsby livery of buff and blue, made his coachman powder his hair and sit on a hammer-cloth. He sent orders to town for pictures, and had the house put in the hands of a decorative adviser.

‘I know nothing about art furniture,’ he said. ‘So long as I have a chair to sit on, it is all one to me what is the shape, but—one must be in fashion, or risk being thought a boor.’

He had his own rooms plainly furnished—a hard bed, and no carpets on the floors. ‘I like to spit,’ he said, ‘and carpets get in the way of spitting.’ He had his Cingalese man-servant, who understood his wants, and none of the other men were allowed near him. He lived very much to himself, smoking and reading Indian papers in his snuggery, and it was with difficulty that he could be drawn from it to entertain guests in the drawing-room.

He was sitting in his room, with a fire in the grate, and his feet against the marble jambs, when he was told that a visitor was desirous of speaking to him on urgent business.

‘Who is it? a gentleman or a lady? A gentleman! Show him in here. Confound it all, can I not be left an hour in peace? In the drawing-room, is he? Has he not given you his card? No! Deuce take it, I suppose I must go in to him. Here, take off my smoking jacket, and help me into my coat. I can’t go in my slippers. Give me my boots. What a life I lead here! I wish I were back in Ceylon!’

As soon as he was presentable Mr. Rigsby went to the drawing-room. He saw there a stoutly built man with grey black hair, and dark eyes like sloes. There was no mistaking his nationality. Nose and eyes and cheek-bones proclaimed it. He was well dressed. As Mr. Rigsby entered he rose and bowed.

‘I beg your pardon,’ said Mr. Rigsby, with some stiffness, ‘I did not learn your name. Perhaps my man forgot it, perhaps you did not give it. You said you had business with me.’

‘My name is of little importance,’ said the stranger. ‘It is quite true that I have called on business. I have heard, sir, that you are desirous of furnishing this most charming residence with everything that taste and luxury demands. My name, sir, is Lazarus—Emmanuel Lazarus, of the “Golden Balls,” Barbican. I happen to have, sir, a very choice collection of artistic odds and ends, which I offer at a ridiculously low price. I am a collector of objects of art and antiquity, and it is my pleasure to furnish gentlemen of taste and means with the best treasures of the past. I have also some very nice old Spanish lace, which your beautiful young lady might like to see. I got the spoils of several churches at a bargain, the lace is from the altars, and I shall be proud to think that one whom I hear on all sides spoken of as an Oriental star should wear it. Old china, sir! no man can call himself a gentleman, whatever his birth and fortune, or invite friends to his house without a blush, if he has not his cheffoniers and side-table and walls covered with old china. Old silver also, sir, is greatly in request. I happen to have some very choice apostle spoons. No one can hold up his head in society without at least a couple of apostle spoons in Dutch silver sugar basins.’

‘Thank you,’ said Mr. Rigsby; ‘I understand none of these things. I have put myself into the hands of a decorator.’

‘Would you mind telling me, sir, the style in which the decorator is going to do you up? Louis Quatorze, Queen Anne, Chippendale, or Victorian? Are you going to be painted over with cranes and sunflowers? I’ve known a lady dadoed round,

with a skirting of Japanese rush mats, all gilt, and very effective it was. If you'll allow me to suggest you that, sir, you would find it neat and warm. I happen to have a quantity of these rush mats all plaited in different patterns. Or are you going into Chippendale, and have your legs curved, and turned fine, and fluted? I don't hold to having your legs made too spindly. There is a loss of strength. Still, fashion is for it. I have some of the very finest Chippendale ever seen in stock; I can give you legs that are in the first style, and yet are not spindly. Or—if I may make so bold as to ask—are you going to be Rococo?’

Mr. Rigsby stared. ‘I do not understand——’

‘A combination of rock and shell. Are they going to encrust you with rockwork and shellwork, and scoop out curves in you and fill in with flowers, and not leave you a straight line anywhere, and gild you from top to toe? The effect is gorgeous rather than classic. The First Empire is a reaction against that, severe, subdued—nude. Are you going in for that? If so, I have some choice little articles, clocks and side-tables and mirrors.’

Mr. Rigsby stood up. ‘Sir, I am very busy; I leave all this to the decorator. I am incompetent to judge for myself. One thing you may be quite sure of: I will never go in for the nude. The climate don't admit of it. It is different altogether in Ceylon. I wish you good morning.’

‘Stay, stay!’ exclaimed the Jew, alarmed at the prospect of losing his opportunity in his over-eagerness to deal. ‘Might I ask one thing more, sir? I have matter of the utmost importance to communicate. I cannot speak of the matter in this room. I am afraid of being overheard. It is not about Louis Quatorze, or Rococo, or First Empire.’

‘There is no one here. We are quite alone, but I cannot imagine you can have anything to communicate that will interest me. I have put myself into the hands of a decorator, and given him *carte blanche*.’

‘If you wish it. Will you hear me patiently for five minutes?’

Mr. Rigsby looked at the French clock. It had stopped. He took out his watch. ‘I can only spare you three. I am most busy.’

‘I will crush all I have to say into three minutes. Only I entreat you, my dear sir, to have patience with me, and allow me fully to explain the circumstances to you. In your presence, sir,

in the presence, sir, of a man of your colossal fortune, I feel myself so agitated, so unable to gather my thoughts, that——'

'I am ready to listen to you during three minutes. I cannot allow more. My time is of exceeding value, I am pressed with business which may not be postponed. I see by my watch that only two minutes remain.'

'I will make haste, sir, but the presence of a Goliath of wealth overawes me. I have heard, sir, of the immensity of your fortune, and I know that such a fortune could not be accumulated without great genius.'

Mr. Rigsby spread his breast by putting his thumbs through his waistcoat armholes. Peacocks, when vain, spread their tails; men, when proud, their bosoms.

'I admit that I am not a fool, if that satisfies you,' said Mr. Rigsby, 'but please proceed to business.'

'You will excuse me when I say that your fortune, acquired by hard labour and racking of brain, must not be thrown away blindly.'

'Set your mind quite at ease, Mr. Lazarus; my property is safe, and its security in no way concerns you.'

'You must excuse me if I dispute this; I see you on the point of throwing everything away.'

Mr. Rigsby assumed a stare of disgust and indignation.

'You are presuming. One minute more.'

'I understand that you are about to see your most beautiful, talented, and fascinating daughter married to the Marquis of Saltcombe.'

Mr. Rigsby rose. 'Really, Mr. Lazarus, I must decline to have my private affairs discussed by you.'

'I am not discussing them, sir; I am here to warn you.'

'To warn me of what? of sitting on spindle-legged Chippendale? Five seconds more.'

'Of marrying your daughter to a bankrupt profligate!' exclaimed Lazarus, rising.

'What do you mean? The words are insulting.'

'The epithets describe him exactly. Bankrupt he and all his family are; and he is only seeking the hand of your daughter to save himself and his whole house from utter, irretrievable ruin.'

'Good God!' exclaimed the planter. 'What do you mean?'

'I mean what I say. If you want proof, I have it. I have it by me here.'

Mr. Rigsby burst out laughing. 'Preposterous! The Duke has an enormous fortune, to which mine is a fleabite. I have seen how he lives.'

'The Duke is over head and ears in debt. He cannot pay interest on his mortgages. He has borrowed money right and left, and lives from hand to mouth. In a month, I—that is, the creditors—will take steps to foreclose; it is because the Marquis and his family hope to stave off ruin with your money that they stoop to accept your daughter into the family.'

'Stoop! stoop to Dulcina!' exclaimed Mr. Rigsby. 'Come into my smoking-room. This matter must not be discussed here. Miss Rigsby, or Miss Stokes, or one of the flunkeys might be dropping in—visitors calling—Heaven knows what. Follow me into my study. I have plenty of time at my disposal. I have nothing to do, and will hear you patiently. Good Heavens! Bankrupt! Ruined! Dulcina snapped at for her money! Thunder and blazes! Follow me.'

He led the way into his smoking-room, which he called his study, though no books were in it.

'Excuse me,' he said, 'I cannot think in this coat. My ideas won't move in boots. Allow me to put on my smoking jacket and slippers; my time is at your disposal.'

'I have here,' said the Jew, taking a chair by the table—'I have in this little book a *précis* of the income and expenditure and debts of the family. I have got more; I have here a packet of notes of hand, and a couple of mortgages, one on Court Royal manor and estate, which will convince you that I am not exaggerating when I say that the family is on the verge of ruin. Please cast your eye over these accounts; they were extracted by a confidential agent from the books in the steward's office, without his knowledge. In love and war and business, everything is fair.'

Mr. Rigsby sat down. His face became mottled, he could not sit comfortably on his chair; he turned it, then turned it again. 'Good Heavens!' he said, 'who would have thought it? It is impossible.'

'It is true, absolutely true.'

Mr. Rigsby stood up and walked to the window, where he stood for some minutes drumming on the glass with his fingers.

'I was not told this,' he said.

'Of course you were kept in the dark.'

'I shall tie everything up to my daughter's sole use.'

‘Then they will not say “Thank you” for your daughter. They only want her because they expect through her to get at your purse.’

Mr. Rigsby came back to the table, and took up the schedule of debts, bills, and mortgages.

‘Some of these are for enormous sums, of old standing, never redeemed.’

‘Never likely to be redeemed, unless you find the money.’

‘But I cannot find the amount. I should sink everything.’

‘This is the state of affairs; I have felt it my duty to inform you of it. If the young people love each other so dearly that your daughter is ready to make the sacrifice, then I have nothing to say against the marriage; but I think it well that both she and you should be made aware of the character of the man to whom she is about to entrust the happiness of her life. I have shown you that there is reason to believe that the marriage is desired by the family for the sake of your money. You are not perhaps aware why it is that the Marquis has not been married already.’

‘No, I do not know.’

‘I will tell you. Because of a scandal. He ran away with a beautiful woman, the wife of a respectable man of business. The woman is now an actress. You have seen her, Palma Kaminska.’

Mr. Rigsby looked at him with pale face and open mouth.

‘He fell in love with her a few years ago, and carried her away with him to Sicily. After a while they parted, but whether the scandal has stood in the way of a woman of character accepting him as husband, or whether he has never ceased to love her, I cannot say. She disappeared for a while; where she has been living, whether under his protection or not, I do not know. You saw her yesterday. You noticed his agitation when an accident happened to her.’

‘Merciful Heaven!’ exclaimed Mr. Rigsby, putting his hands to his brow, and leaning his elbows on the table. ‘What a wicked world this is! I wish I were back in Ceylon!’

‘He visited the house where she lodged, after the accident. Let us hope it was only to say good-bye for ever, before marrying your daughter.’

‘If this be true he never shall marry my daughter. Oh dear, oh dear! What misery might have ensued had she become his—and this not have come out till after! Poor Dulcina! But—’ he

raised himself on one elbow—‘I cannot understand your motive coming here and telling me this. What is the happiness of Dulcina to you? What concern is it of yours whether I lose my fortune among titled adventurers?’

‘None at all,’ answered the Jew drily.

‘I don’t believe a word about the actress,’ exclaimed the planter desperately. ‘Why should I not use my money, if I



please, to extricate the estate? It will come to my daughter in the end. I shall not lose my money. Whatever I do is for my child. As for this scandalous story, I don’t and I won’t believe it. I will ask Saltcombe the truth about it myself.’

‘Do so; he will not deny what occurred.’

‘I should like to know, sir, what your motive is in coming here and troubling me with these stories. If you hold one or two of the mortgages you ought not to regret the chance of having

them paid off. Why do you seek to set me against the Marquis?’

‘The woman he ran away with was my wife.’ When Lazarus said this he rose. ‘Now you understand why I put a spoke in his wheel! Is he to be happy, released from his cares, and I to be miserable, weighed down with trouble? Is he to have a wife and home, and children on his knees, and I to have a cold and solitary hearth?’ Lazarus stood in the door. ‘I have said my say. Act as you think best for the happiness of your child.’

He bowed and left the room. Mr. Rigsby laid his brow on the table, groaned, and said, ‘I wish I were back in Ceylon!’

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DROP OF COMFORT.

MR. RIGSBY started from his seat, threw on his overcoat, pulled on his boots, took his hat and stick, and sallied forth. He had a vague hope of coming to some decision if he walked. He could come to none seated in his snuggery. At one moment he flared up with anger and resentment, then he grew cold with apprehension. How would his dear Dulcina bear to be parted from the Marquis with whom she was so much in love? It would break her heart, which was as frail as her constitution. It would bring on an attack of jaundice. Strong emotion, a great shock, congested the liver; the breaking off of her engagement would certainly congest her liver. Would it be wise to prepare her for the news with calomel? He would consult a doctor. Podophyllin! since he had come to England he had been told that podophyllin touched the liver, and was milder than calomel. He did not believe in podophyllin. He knew better; as an old Indian he ought to know what the liver is, and what touches it. No podophyllin for him; no, thank you. He had heard of a spectre who, when fired at, opened his hand and showed the bullets that had been innocuously discharged at him. His liver would, so to speak, open its hand and scoffingly roll back the podophyllin pills shot at it. But before calomel its powers would quail, it would shake in its shoes and beat a retreat. Still podophyllin might answer for Dulcina, whose liver was not as enlarged as his own. He would consult a doctor.

So he swung his stick and marched into Plymouth. 'Good heavens!' he muttered. 'The rascal about to take my daughter for her money and then cast her aside, treat her with indifference and insult! I won't have it.'

When he came to the bridge leading to Plymouth, and halted to change a sovereign to pay the halfpenny toll, he was confronted by a gentleman in a light grey suit, with a white hat.

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed the gentleman, 'Rigsby! you here! Let me lend you a halfpenny for old lang syne.'

Rigsby stared. 'What, Captain Ottley! Never! Very glad to see you.'

'A little louder, I am deaf of an ear, this confounded relaxing climate. The bands always find a difficulty with their drums, the parchment becomes limp in the Devonshire damp; it is ditto with the drums of my ears. You must thump to be heard.'

'Come on the Hoe,' said Mr. Rigsby. 'It is a pleasure to meet an old Indian. So well preserved, too! You look as young as ever.'

'Spirits does it,' answered Captain Ottley. 'I mean natural spirits. I have a cheerful disposition, which even the vapour-bath atmosphere of Devon don't damp. Take my arm, old boy. Lord bless me! time flies! It seems only the other day we met, and it must be five years ago. Brown and tanned you are with Oriental suns. Never mind, look at me. Autumn roses come blooming in my cheeks. This Devonshire climate is like a bath in Jordan. You go in sunburnt with all the blazes of India, and your flesh comes out as the flesh of a little child.'

'What are you doing here?' asked Mr. Rigsby.

'Doing! doing nothing. Nobody ever does anything but talk in this enervating Devonshire climate. It relaxes everything, the moral stamina and the tongue. I eat lotus. I have come like Ulysses to the land of the lotus-eaters, where, according to the Laureate, it always seems afternoon. I lounge about on the seats of the Hoe, looking out at the Breakwater; it always seems after dinner here.'

'Do you know many people?' asked the planter.

'Heaps—women mostly. They swarm here. Here in Plymouth there are very few others to know. You see their husbands and brothers are away at sea, or in the army abroad, and the place simply swarms with women.'

'Are you married?'

‘Oh dear me, no! I wouldn’t be so well preserved if I were. I can’t afford it. Besides, the climate is against it. You want more ozone in the air to stimulate the resolution to proposing point.’

‘I should like to know your opinion upon podophyllin.’

‘I beg your pardon.’

‘Podophyllin,’ shouted Rigsby; he had lowered his voice to a confidential tone, forgetful of his friend’s infirmity.

Captain Ottley stood still, put the silver head of his cane to his mouth, which he pursed, contracted his brows, and then shook his head. ‘I don’t think much of it,’ he said. ‘I’ve tried it; but I don’t give my faith to it. Half-measures don’t suit us old Indians. Give me calomel.’

‘Calomel—ah!’ The sun came out on both their faces, they laughed like children. ‘Calomel, old boy!’

‘Blue pill, old fellow, shake hands.’ In their mutual enthusiasm they clasped fists.

‘But it may do for women?’ suggested Rigsby.

‘*Virginibus puerisque*, yes,’ answered Captain Ottley. ‘Let us sit down here. One’s limbs fail one in this damned Devonshire air.’

‘Have you been long here?’

‘Four or five years soaking in this steam, and expanding. It suits us Indians. We come here dry and shrivelled, and swell, taking in moisture at every pore.’

‘Then you know about the country people, the nobility and so on?’

‘Of course I do. I know everything about everybody.’

‘Do you know the Kingsbridge family?’

‘I can’t say I do. I know of them; no one meets them. I have a grievance. There was a superb ball at Court Royal the other day, and a special train full of officers went down. I was not invited. A plague upon them, say I. Why was not I invited? I am on half pay, was that the reason? I hear it was a splendid affair.’

‘I was there,’ said Mr. Rigsby. ‘So was my daughter, Dulcina. Did you not see our names in the paper?’

‘I may have done so, but did not notice them. Mine was not there, and that stirred my bile. Talking of bile, what do you drink, Rigsby?’

‘I have been so long out of England that I cannot satiate myself on bottled ale.’

‘You must not do it. Beer is bilious; fatal in this confounded climate, where the liver simply goes to sleep. You have to goad it to do its work. It is like Pickwick’s fat boy. I don’t approve of claret. Sherry is poison. Whisky and water is what I recommend.’

‘We must talk of something else,’ said the planter.

‘Well, I suppose you are right, but somehow the liver is common ground on which all old Indians meet for a cosy gossip; old asperities are rubbed off, old grudges forgotten. It is a sort of bond, binding us into brotherhood. Tear us away to other scenes and pastures new, sweep us along in the eddy of politics, or any other eddy you like to mention, we always come back to liver, touch ground there, and are thankful. We may differ in politics, religion, in pursuits, we are one in liver.’

‘I should like a word with you in the strictest confidence.’

‘Certainly, no one is here to overhear us. Remember; let whisky and water be your drink—cold, and no sugar.’

Mr. Rigsby looked about him; no one was within earshot. ‘We must not sit longer here,’ he said, ‘it is chilly; let us stroll up and down, and I will speak to you about my affairs, with the understanding that it goes no further.’

‘Good Heavens!’ gasped Captain Ottley. ‘Not money! Don’t say you want to borrow money. My liver will not stand it. Anything but that!’

‘I am abundantly well off,’ said the planter. ‘I am, I may say, in affluent circumstances. It is precisely my wealth which has drawn me into an affair from which I do not see my way out. By some fatality I have been brought into rather intimate relations with the Duke of Kingsbridge and his family.’

‘Does he want to borrow money? I have heard that his head is under water.’

‘I knew his brother, Lord Edward Eveleigh, at college. I happened to be in Somersetshire, at Glastonbury, and I called on him. He and Lady Elizabeth were very kind, they invited me and my daughter to their house, and there we met Lord Saltcombe, the eldest—no, the only son of the Duke. He seemed to take a fancy to my child, and she, poor thing, completely lost her heart to him. Of course I gave my consent. I was proud to think that my Dulcina would be a marchioness, and eventually a duchess. One loves title; it is born in one, I suppose; it is a weakness, but it is a weakness common to the whole human race.’

‘I congratulate you with all my heart. What can a father desire for his daughter better than the eight strawberry leaves?’

‘But—I consented in all simplicity, believing that a ducal coronet was a rock on which sure prosperity could be built, and now I find——’ He sighed, took off his hat, brushed his brow, and said, ‘My dear Ottley, for God’s sake tell me the truth about the family. Give me your advice. I am so perplexed, I do not know what to do.’

‘What am I to tell you? I have not my Peerage with me. I have it at home, and will lend it you, or we will put our heads together over it. The Marquis is here, in Plymouth, at the “Royal.”’

‘I know that. I want to know nothing that the Peerage can tell me. I have learned that by heart. I want to know about their circumstances.’

‘Oh, they are dipped, but so is every respectable old family. Have you ever been at Saint Jean de Luz? There the bathers spend hours in the water, only their heads emerging, and take their meals and their naps bathing. I have seen the whole bay full of heads, and heads only. It is so with all the landed gentry—with most families of distinction—they are all under water, only their heads out, but they do not drown.’

‘The Kingsbridge family are utterly ruined.’

‘I do not believe that. It takes gigantic efforts to ruin a duke. The great nobility stick in the social jaw in spite of ache and decay; they are fast by four or five fangs. As for you or me, we are only one-fang people, out, and our places taken by porcelain imitations, and no one cares. But your four and five-fanged people are different.’

‘You do not think the Duke ruined?’

‘I know nothing about him, more than that he lives quietly, never goes to town, and does good on all sides.’

‘You think that he is not in overwhelming difficulties?’

‘I should not suppose so, but I cannot tell.’

‘There is one thing more. What do you know about the Marquis of Saltcombe, who is engaged to my daughter?’

‘Not much either; of late nothing at all.’

‘Of late? Did you hear much of him formerly?’

‘I heard something.’

‘What was it? I want to know.’

‘Young men will be young men,’ said Captain Ottley. ‘It is not till their livers have grown that they become sedate and

reliable. You may depend upon it, my dear old fellow, the liver is the fly-wheel of the system.'

'My daughter is engaged to the Marquis. I have heard a story about him which has made me very uneasy.'

'Fiddlesticks! I tell you what it is, Rigsby: this cursed depressing Devonshire climate has begun to act on your liver and make it torpid. Why, bless my soul! any man out of Devonshire would be shrieking with delight at the prospect of marrying his daughter to a marquis, and here you are looking as blue over it as a calomel pill.'

'My daughter's happiness is dearer to me than life. Unless I am assured that she will be treated with kindness and respect, be made much of and valued, I shall not consent to the union. What I have heard affects the Marquis's moral character.'

'I heard something about him when first I came to Plymouth. He had been wild and extravagant, and had run away with a Jewess.'

'The wife of another.'

'Yes, I remember that. But all that is past, and he has been sober since; not a scandal about him for many years. Besides, consider the temptations which beset a young man here, and that young man the heir to a dukedom. Unless he had a very old head on young shoulders he would be certain to get into a scrape. You must not make too much of this old scandal. It is with the dead. I dare say there are incidents in your past which you are thankful are buried.'

'I do not know any,' said Mr. Rigsby. 'I have always been steady. You see I have made a fortune. That is the seal of approval Heaven has set on my conduct. Always respectable, always. That is why I have no sympathy with a man who has sown his wild oats. I never sowed anything but coffee.'

'How have you come to hear this now?'

Mr. Rigsby told his friend of the visit of Lazarus.

'Lazarus!' exclaimed Captain Ottley, and pulled a long face. 'Confound the man, he has his fingers in every pie and pocket. He has even dipped into mine.'

'What is to be done?' asked Mr. Rigsby.

'Nothing,' answered Captain Ottley. 'Let matters take their course. Things are never as black as they are painted. The Jew exaggerated the financial condition of the family. He does not want to have the mortgage paid because the investment is too

profitable for him to care to lose it. Do not excite yourself about the Marquis, either. I have always heard that he is a man of honour, and if he did transgress once, it was for the only and the last time.'

The Captain succeeded in calming Rigsby's agitation. The planter began to hope that matters had been presented to him in a worse aspect than they really were. He was resolved to question Lord Saltcombe on them, on both, and to hear the truth from him. The Marquis was expected to dinner that evening. Scarce a day passed without his visiting the house, and driving or walking with his betrothed. This day he did not call, nor did he appear at dinner. Mr. Rigsby became uneasy. He rose early from his wine, lit a cigar, and walked into Plymouth to inquire after the Marquis.

He was told that Lord Saltcombe was at home, but not well, and desired that he might not be disturbed. Mr. Rigsby was dissatisfied with the answer. He sent up his name, and asked if he might see the Marquis for a moment. Then only was he shown to his room. He found him seated in his arm-chair, without a light.

'Shall I bring candles, my lord?' asked the servant.

'Thank you.—Sit down, Mr. Rigsby. I am out of sorts.'

When the candles came in, Rigsby saw that his face was deadly pale, his eyes sunken and bright.

'You desired to see me particularly?' he asked.

'Yes; but you seem hardly well enough for what I wished to discuss.'

'I also wanted to see you. I must speak openly with you,' said the Marquis.

'My dear Saltcombe,' said Mr. Rigsby, 'I am a blunt man, and I ask questions in a blunt way. You must excuse me.'

The Marquis bowed.

'You must understand that what I live for is the happiness of my daughter. I have toiled for her. My fortune is hers, and I am desirous that it should be secured to her, to be inalienably hers. Again, I would not have her marry any one, however high his position in the social scale, unless I were sure that he would love her.'

'Do not distress yourself,' said the Marquis quietly. 'I will spare you the pain of asking questions. You are quite right in desiring to secure the happiness of your daughter. I obeyed the

wishes of my family, and proposed to Miss Rigsby, satisfied in my mind that, having taken on me sacred responsibilities, I should honourably fulfil them. Of this you may be certain: if Miss Rigsby become my wife, never will I show her the slightest want of courtesy and deference.'

'She must have more than that. Do you love her?'

'Mr. Rigsby,' said the Marquis, 'I do not press my pretensions to your daughter's hand. I tell you that I am resolved to do my duty; there is no other living woman who has any share in my affections, always excepting my sister.'

The planter was uneasy. He did not know how to approach the delicate questions he wanted to put. He fumbled with his hat and grew dark red in the face.

'I beg your pardon, Saltcombe,' he said, 'if I touch on subjects that are tender. I am very much shocked—very, so is Dulcina, by the dreadful incident at the theatre. I thought at the time you seemed overcome. I was not then aware of the—of the——'

Lord Saltcombe could hardly become paler than he was before, but the shadows in his face became deeper. He rose from his chair, and said with the greatest composure, 'Mr. Rigsby, I will not require you to continue. If you doubt me, we had better part. I am returning to Court Royal. Pray excuse the abruptness of my departure to Miss Rigsby and Miss Stokes. I offer them the humblest apologies.'

Mr. Rigsby could hardly believe his ears. He was still sitting. He got up without his hat, then stooped, picked it up, let it fall, and picked it up again. Instead of taking his future son-in-law to task, he was being shown the door with cool politeness. The Marquis was proud and dignified; he shook Dulcina off as if she were not worth having. Mr. Rigsby had not intended to quarrel with the Marquis, he had desired the allaying of his own anxieties. A word of regret for past follies, an assurance that the fortunes of the family were not completely wrecked, would have sufficed. He believed that Dulcina was so much in love with Lord Saltcombe that a disappointment would half kill her. He was ready to meet the Marquis halfway, to accept an assurance of repentance, and to pay off one or two of the mortgages at once, and secure the rest of his property to his daughter.

But Lord Saltcombe would make no advance. He took

umbrage at the implied suspicions. Father and daughter must accept him on his own terms, or not at all.

‘Am I to understand,’ said he, ‘that you refuse to give me any explanations as to your conduct with regard to that actress, and to relieve my mind with reference to the embarrassments of the Duke?’

Lord Saltcombe bowed.

‘Then I suppose your engagement to my daughter is at an end?’

‘I allow no liberties to be taken with me,’ said Lord Saltcombe. ‘I have rung for a cab.’

When Mr. Rigsby was out of the hotel, driving home to Stoke, ‘Lord bless me!’ he exclaimed, ‘how testy these aristocrats are! Impracticable people. Time the country were rid of them. I wish I were back in Ceylon!’

(To be continued.)

WITH SOME LIBRETTISTS.

FROM the date of my first acquaintance with opera I loved it with an affection I have never found it in my heart to bestow on any other kind of theatrical entertainment. It is so incongruous; it is so unreal; it is so far removed from every-day life. Yet would it not brighten our more or less dull and monotonous existence were we to throw a little instrumentation and vocalisation into the ordinary social routine? The Roman hero who had deserved well of his country went about the city preceded by his *tibicen* or professional flute player, and was like the old lady of Banbury Cross, for whom music was provided wherever she went. Now the eminent Roman, who must have been occasionally angry with his perpetual accompanist, might have adapted himself to the circumstances, and have indulged in recitative on every possible occasion.

The commonplace phrases of the day would go so well to music if taken as recitative in the good old Italian style, before Wagnerism had done so much to rob opera of its essentially amusing material. The plan of recitative is so simple—short sentences punctuated by chords for commas, semi-colons, and so forth, with two impressive and final chords on the double bass or violoncello to represent the full stop. Now how delightful to carry this out in daily intercourse! say at breakfast-time—

How are you this morning? (*trum*).

I hope I see you well (*trum*).

Thank you (*trum*), but we were late last night (*trum*),

And we will not (*trum*) sit up again so late; no! (*trum, trum*).

Then should follow the air, which may be invented on the spot, or may be a reminiscence of something—no matter what—and to this the singer would put his words, requesting to be helped to tea and coffee, bread and butter, while inspecting the hospitality displayed on the sideboard. Or to a gentle aria he might recount how he slept or how he didn't sleep; only as this will keep him from his breakfast, and will not command a very attentive audience, I should advise him, after the final chords of his recitation, to become practical and get to the business of the day. Such a course of action would ensure variety and keep the operatic idea fresh.

We have the grandest models for this sort of thing in the works of those great masters of libretti who did the English translations of the most celebrated operas years ago, which were always my own particular joy and vast delight. Here out of a dusty cupboard come several small blue books—not parliamentary but operatic—small books in faded blue covers, marked with the Royal arms—an operatic lion facing the audience, and singing its part in a bombastic duet with an absurdly affected unicorn on the other side of the lozenge in the garter with the crown atop, priced at ‘one shilling and sixpence,’ and dated 1850. Here is a book of *La Donna del Lago*, announced as a ‘lyric drama’—not an opera be it observed—‘in two acts, the music by Rossini, as represented at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden,’ and for the *dramatis personæ* there were Signor Mario, M. Zelger, Signor Tamberlik, Madame Grisi, Mdlle. Démeric and Mdlle. Cotti, with Signori Tagliafico, Polonini, Soldi, Luigi-Mei, Massot, and Signor Tamburini as ‘The Principal Bards.’ Good names all of them, but where is now the Italian Opera, Covent Garden? The Italian Opera, as I knew it, seems a thing of the glorious past. Will it ever return? If it ever does, may these libretti be revived, one and all.

The chorus in *La Donna del Lago* consisted of ‘Scotch Shepherds and Shepherdesses, Grandees and Ladies of Scotland, Warriors of Clan Alpine, Hunters, Royal Guards, &c. &c.’—there rarely was a great play of any sort without ‘&c. &c.’ being included in the cast, for it covers so much and is a salve to the manager’s conscience, because in a vague sort of way it is a kind of proof of the good intention on the part of the manager to keep faith with the public by giving them, in ‘&c. &c.,’ all he possibly can for their money.

The scenery was by ‘Grieve and Telbin.’ ‘The Spectacle’ was ‘arranged by Mr. A. Harris,’ father of the present lessee of Drury Lane. Last, but not least, comes ‘composer, director of the music, and conductor, Mr. [not Signor] Costa.’ I shall have some other books to select from, but I begin with this translation to show what our models for libretti ought to be; and from these examples it will also be gathered how vastly inferior the works of modern librettists are to those of the old masters. Ah! there were giants in those days! But the mighty men of valour who did these marvellous libretti were unknown to fame; they never told their names, though I suppose they had names to tell, but re-

mained hidden poets, secret lyric-dramatists, free translators who preferred the preservation of their incognito. Noble, gentle, retiring souls! 'But to our work,' as the villains used to murmur in good old melodramas.

In the first scene of *La Donna* we have—for the written stage directions were carefully translated by the librettist, though they were not much regarded on the stage, as belonging rather to the domain of the inspired poet than of the practical manager—'A troop of hunters, who are on their way to the Wood to pursue their accustomed exercises.' Here is poetry to begin with! hunters off to pursue exercises! What are they going to hunt, and at what time of year are they hunting? We must consult the master: he sings—

To the woods away!
The dreaded beasts of Caledonia
Supply us with fresh triumphs of the chase;
Let us away to our accustomed toils.

By 'toils' I fancy the librettist here means 'nets,' the librettist implying the hunter is making a pleasure of a toil. The chorus continue, all together—

See in what lively green the meadows smile!
Beneath the shadow of the spreading oaks
How do the roses all spontaneous rise!

What a picture of a hunting country! Spreading oaks and spontaneous roses rise. I fancy the librettist intended a question in

How do the roses all spontaneous rise?

But he doesn't answer it. The line is not precisely original, reminding us of

How doth the little busy bee!

But Dr. Watts only started the inquiry for the purpose of affording all the information on the subject within his power; not so our English librettist, who must be considered less as a translator or adapter than as a collaborateur with the original Italian author. Then—as the chorus is getting tired of singing, and as the audience may have by this time had enough of the chorus,—they urge one another forward with

Away! to the woods away! The shaggy race
Supply us with fresh triumphs of the chase.

Here you see our poet, in true Shakespearian fashion, finishes with a couplet, and *exeunt omnes*.

Hubert, seeing Ellen, a recitative commences—I think it must be recitative—in brackets, *i.e. aside*—

[Behold her ! yes, at length
Kind Heaven restores her to my anxious sight !
No ; fame has not belied her ;
Nay, rumour did but tell of half her charms.]

Then their touching duet—

Ellen. Come into my small bark,
And seat yourself beside me.
Hub. Oh, exceeding kindness,
Well worthy a heart like thine !

Then they go together to the home of the Douglas, where ‘*the companions of Ellen enter, with some villagers ; they surround her and sing the following*’—

Oh, fairest of the fair,
For thee with equal flame
For ever still may burn
Roderick the brave !

Then follow rapid asides, sung by Ellen and Hubert in front of the chorus, on opposite sides of the stage, a charming and thoroughly Italian operatic situation—

Hub. [Roderick ! what do I hear ?]
Ellen. [Oh, fatal recollection !]
Hub. [Ye pangs of jealousy,
I feel ye in my breast !]

Anyone accustomed to the genuine Italian operatic style can see at once what Hubert will be doing, to what agony he will be giving vent, as he presses both hands flat down on his breast and stretches himself well forward over the footlights, his face pale and earnest and his mouth wide open,—which description, to the commonplace philistine, would be rather suggestive of the attitude of an unhappy passenger on a rough day between Calais and Dover, than of a knight-errant in love, expecting to meet his deadly foes.

Ellen, also plucking at her dress with similar gestures, sings in brackets—

[Love of my heart
Deny all further hope ?]

Which is a couplet so pregnant with meaning that any attempt of mine to elaborate it, or descant upon it, would be superfluous.

Hub. Ah do but yield to me
That tender heart of thine,
Then will I haste away
My hunter friends to join.

Hubert had probably been to London and fallen into Cockney ways of speech, or he never would have made 'join' rhyme with 'thine'; though, I believe, the librettist has excellent authority for it.

Ellen replies—

And hast thou then forgot
That thou art here my guest?
[*With dignified reserve.*]

Is not this a masterly stage direction? And notice how the 'dignified reserve' is conveyed by Ellen's using 'thou' like a Quakeress. This seems to me to be a fitting reproof of Hubert's Cockneyism.

However, they make it up, and before Hubert leaves, Ellen sings—

O Heavens! what raptures
Thrill my frame,
When memory paints
My heart's dear idol!

There's poetry for you! There's sentiment! There's a libretto! English the collaborating librettist may have been, but he has entered into the Italian feeling thoroughly, as we see from the result above.

When, in the next scene, Malcolm perceives Ellen and the Douglas together, he says aside, 'Can I resist nor die?' Of course I am aware that this 'English as she is spoke' was only a simple translation provided for those to whom Italian was unknown, and that the lines I am quoting were never sung. I regret that they were not, but at the same time these translations seem to have been the models which some English librettists—among them, I fancy, the conscientious translator who was responsible for the great works I am now reviewing—felt subsequently bound to copy, and others—I say it with sorrow—felt equally bound to avoid.

This is fine for Roderick—an aside—

[Ah! let thy bosom's
Griefs be still!
He knows it all;
He threats! he burns!

The rough poetic savagery of this is magnificent. He continues, still in brackets—

Meanwhile this soul,
Oppressed, forlorn,
No aid can find,
No peace has left!]

Then Albina and the chorus—a thoroughly classical chorus—remarking on the events of the lyric drama as they occur, sing aside—

[Suspicions cruel
Haunt their breasts !

This is for the benefit of the audience, in case they should not by this time have quite gathered from the action of the principals what the story is about.

What turns of fate
Their peace annoy !
The heavens appear to lower
With threatening clouds of woe.

This is grand ; but the poet felt that he was flying above the heads of the people, and so descends to ask a plain and simple question—

How will these strange
Events have end ?]

to which there appears to be no immediate answer except to treat it as a conundrum and reply that we ‘give it up.’ This is a valuable stage direction—

[*One of the leaders brings and raises aloft a large shield, which, according to the tradition of the ancient Britons, once belonged to the famous Trecumor.*]

Here is history and antiquarian research with which Sir Walter Scott himself would have been delighted.

Then the bards sing. The first one strikes his harp and begins—

Even now a burst of light
The harbinger of good,
Points to the brightening path
Of glory—of renown !

And all join in the inspiriting chorus—

And happy then,
With heart serene,
The espoused thy friends
Embracing sweet
The laurel wreath
Shall to the olive yield.

A grand burst of inspiration this ; and what a profundity of meaning ! Then we have another conscientious stage direction—

[*A brilliant meteor darts through the heavens—no unusual phenomenon in these regions. General surprise.*]

The explanation about it being ‘no unusual phenomenon’ seems to have been inserted for the benefit of the stage manager,

the prompter, or the property man who had to work the meteor, and who objected to its introduction as being unnatural. But if it was 'not unusual,' why the 'general surprise' of everybody? and why on witnessing this not 'unusual phenomenon' do they all exclaim in chorus—

With unaccustomed light
The heaven is flashing bright !
The faithful harbinger
Of glorious victory ?

How did they know it was a faithful harbinger if they were not accustomed to such phenomena? However, here we are at the end of the first act of *La Donna del Lago*.

As time went on, one of several possibilities occurred: either the Conscientious Poet was so highly appreciated that he was induced to throw aside his disguise and announce himself to the public as Signor Manfredo Maggioni, or he refused to write any more on the same terms, or the proprietors quarrelled with him, or he with the proprietors, the upshot of it being that he withdrew, incognito as he came, and Manfredo took his place. There is a guardedness about the later announcements to the effect that the libretto is 'edited and translated by Manfredo Maggioni,' which looks as if Manfredo had not 'edited' the former ones, or had edited and not translated them, or *vice versâ*. But the whole subject is full of interest to the operatic amateur, and volumes might be written on the probable authorship of early operatic libretti, as they have been on Shakespeare, Homer, and the Book of Job. I have not studied the literature of the subject sufficiently to pronounce on any one theory with absolute certainty, but I am inclined to think that the hand of the Byronic Manfredo is to be traced throughout, and that, when writing incognito, he was

The viewless spirit of a lovely sound ;
A living voice, a breath having
A bodiless enjoyment ;

and that he, and he alone, was the selected librettist who again as Manfredo could say

I should be sole in this sweet solitude,

as no doubt he was, until another name appears on the title-page, and 'An Opera, in three acts,' no longer a 'Lyric Drama, in two acts,' is announced, 'the English Version'—which sounds almost Scriptural—'by J. Pittman.' Then the printers and publishers are changed, the price remains the same, but the cast is very different,

for all the greatest people have vanished. Was J. Pittman the Manfredo Maggioni of the early operatic libretti and the nameless poetic collaborateur in the still earlier ones? The internal evidence, so far as I have gone, is, to my mind, convincing that my surmise is correct.

From the second act of *La Donna* these are a few selected gems—

Malcolm. Merciful powers !
 What causes this palpitation
 Within me ? I tremble to inquire.
 Perhaps thou hast forgot thy pledge.

Scene ii. Enter Douglas, Roderick and Hubert—evidently recitative and chords, which I will supply—

Douglas. Stop (*trum*).

Ellen. Ah ! unhappy me ! (*trum*).

Mal. What a fatal moment ! (*trum*).

Rod. My cruel doubt (*trum*) is now confirmed (*trum*). In vain thou dissemblest (*trum, trum*, but not a finish).

Mal. I hold no speech with thee (*trum*).

Rod. Bold youth ! (*trum*).

Ellen. Oh ! heavens ! restrain their fury (*trum*),
 Listen (*trum*), and then shalt thou find, dear father,
 That I have faithfully obeyed thy commands.

(*Trum, trum*, full stop and commencement of symphony of aria '*Cielo, il mio labbro ispira !*')

After this, strong language is used, and such expressions as 'ungrateful one,' 'wretch,' 'traitor,' 'ah, me !' 'cruel powers !' 'hapless love,' 'blood must be shed,' 'my heart will burst with rage,' 'unhappy Ellen,' 'cruel stars,' 'adverse heaven,' 'relentless fate,' are common, until King James appears and Ellen presents the ring, and after some coquetting with the inevitable for the sake of giving Malcolm and Ellen a few more chances for acting and recitativng 'Ah, how to save him ?' 'Ellen ! O cruel destiny !' and so forth, James throws his chain about the Gràme's neck, and when the chorus have exclaimed, 'O clement King !' Ellen bursts out with—

Ah, sire ! What happiness, what joy is mine !
 Such feelings in one moment start,
 And press around my throbbing heart ;

and here the librettist drops into rhyme, and gives reins to his Pegasus in this powerfully moving finale—

My bosom's boundless happiness
 Vain is all language to express.

Yet in spite of this immense linguistic difficulty the poet has, so to speak, 'a shy at it,' and continues—

Ah! let my silence speak—

(of course 'silence speaks consent' as a rule, but not so here)—

My words confused and weak.
Ah! thou hast bid my sorrow cease,
And this lorn bosom taste of peace.

'Lorn bosom' will remind many of us of Mrs. Gumidge; but what a lorn bosom tasting of peace is like it would be difficult for anyone, except a cannibal or our librettist, to imagine. However, all the chorus join in with—

Ah, yes—thy long, long sorrows cease,
And thy lorn bosom taste of peace.

The chorus are probably pointing towards Ellen, and emphasising their observations as to her lorn bosom. These remarks she seems to resent, for, not wishing to be singular in this respect, she evidently takes her father's and her lover's hands, leads them forward, and sings—

Here amidst my sire and him I love
What rapture does my bosom prove!

Then 'all' unite in shouting out this couplet, with which the lyric drama concludes—

The adverse stars their anger cease,
And every bosom tastes of peace.

Not Ellen's alone, not even the bosoms of her 'sire' and 'him she loves,' but everybody's bosom 'tastes of peace.' This is a gloriously liberal sentiment, though still the expression, as it stands, seems rather to appeal to the palate than to the heart. 'Peace' does sound like 'peas,' and 'bosom' seems somehow to suggest 'bacon.'

The Italian original is

Cessi di stella rea
La fiera avversità.

Which shows that our librettist treated his original author with generous freedom, and was more of the joint author than the mere servile translator.

I select at haphazard—for one is sure to come upon something precious where all are real gems of more or less value—from *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Some of the recitative is here written in prose. 'I hoped,' says Enrico, 'this day would have seen my sister

smiling—this day that lights for thee the sacred torch of Hymen. Why that vacant look and silent?’ This question is artfully contrived in order to draw a ballad from Lucy, and it succeeds. Afterwards, when the well-known quartette of horns is ‘heard without,’ poor Lucy, on being informed that the sound betokens her husband’s arrival, exclaims—

A piercing cold
Has run through all my veins.
I tremble !

The effect of a sudden and severe cold is here graphically described, and were it not in an opera, the sooner the unfortunate heroine could be got to bed and kept warm with hot drinks, the better for her health and happiness.

Here are some delightful ‘asides’ from the same opera :—

Henry. Here is thy husband. [Incautious woman !
Wishest thou my ruin ?]
Lucy. [I go to seal my misery].
Raymond. [Heaven sustain the unfortunate !]
Henry. [I breathe again].
Lucy. [I freeze and burn ! I faint !]

In the third act, Edgar enters, and, in recitative, says, ‘Stormy is the night, as are the waves of my destiny. Heaven, roll on thy thunders ! and ye hurricanes, come forth with all your fury ! Let every element be in confusion—the world destroyed—am I not deceived ? the hoofs I hear of an approaching steed. It stops. Whoever can, amidst the fury of the tempest, come to me ?’

The first part of this speech is quite in the King Lear vein ; then suddenly, hearing the hoofs of an approaching steed, he is recalled to every-day dialogue, and asks himself, ‘Whoever can it be ?’

In the last scene of the same opera, the chorus, deeply sympathising with woes which it can neither avert nor remedy, sings—

O ! forlorn—O great calamity !

Heaven ! what madness has thee seized ?
Ah ! desist—be again thyself !

It would have been just as easy to have written ‘has seized thee,’ but the poet-librettist scorned the usage of ordinary mortals. When Edgar stabs himself this same chorus exclaims, ‘What hast thou done ?’ and, receiving no answer, they utter their last lamentation, ‘Alas ! what dreadful, what sad event !’”

When the name of 'Manfredo Maggioni' appears as 'editor and translator' of the English version of *La Gazza Ladra*, the purely poetic is sacrificed, and the translation has more the character of what schoolboys used to call—and perhaps do now—'a crib'; but there were moments when Manfredo strove to burst his self-imposed fetters, and when, after a short struggle, he freed himself from all trammels and soared into the realms of song. An example is to hand in *Rigoletto*—

(*Duke to Gilda*). The same affection our souls inflames,
No power our love on earth can sever.
By fate united, by mutual sympathy
Our bonds of love will last for ever.

And so on. Then Gilda replies—

Ah ! these indeed are like the words
Which in my dreams I said and heard !

It must have been sadly disappointing to Maggioni the bard, to find that he couldn't make 'heard' a plural, to agree and rhyme with 'words.' But he makes up for it with a quatrain for the pair of lovers singing to one another—

Farewell ! my hope for ever,
My blessing thou shalt be.
Farewell, farewell ! Ah ! never
I'll change my love for thee !

And the stage direction immediately after this is '*The Duke exit, escorted by Gio., and Gilda follows him with her eye.*'

At the end of the second act there is a fine burst of poetic fury when Rigoletto sings—

The hour is not far distant
That will thy ruin strike
Upon thy head ; my fury
Will fall then thunderlike !

'Thunderlike' overcomes me. At this point I stop. But those who like to pursue the subject will derive much profitable amusement from spending a few 'half-hours with some early librettists.'

MY DESERTER.



HE wind and rain came sweeping cruelly down on the little unsheltered platform as my guard and I hurried along the line of first-class carriages. There was little choice of travelling companions for me that night. Three noisy youths playing dummy whist on a cushion; a lady with nurses and babies who greeted me with a warning 'whooping-cough' as I prepared to enter; a portly foreigner, the opening of whose compartment released a fine odour of mingled garlic and patchouli, and who greeted me with an unsanctified leer from the depths of his fur-lined coat; ladies at last, but too

many of them, and not a place to spare for me; then an empty compartment.

'You'll be all right here till we get to Newstead Junction, Miss,' my protector assured me, 'and I'll see after you there.' So hastily stowing in rugs, travelling bags, umbrella, and railway literature, he drew up the window and shut me in, alone with my ill-humour.

I was in an evil mood, a mood of blackest, sourest discontent with things in general, which had begun with the arrival of the first post that morning bringing my summons to return home. A brief, imperative, altogether unreasonable recall, hurrying me away from the very maddest, merriest time of the brightest bit of the season, half my engagements unfulfilled and half my pretty toilettes unworn, back to town in the middle of September.

I had been staying with Connie, my very dearest friend, a pretty young bride, during a sort of appendix to her honeymoon, an extra month at the seaside before her Oscar returned to his

law-books and briefs. They were a very festive young couple, with a large circle of acquaintances and no desire for romantic seclusion. Only to-night we were all to have gone in a large party to the race ball. Oscar's brother was coming from Scotland, breaking all his shooting engagements—and all for nothing! At least I fancied he would think so. Of course, *I* didn't care, only one doesn't like to seem capricious or indifferent; and unless Connie explained to him the reason of my sudden departure—which of course she wouldn't do. Girls are so thoughtless when they have got all they want themselves, and mothers so inconsiderate. What *could* I be wanted at home for? I felt really injured, the more I thought of it. In fact, I was just going to cry, and *did* give one sob, when a sort of echo startled me. Not a sob exactly, either; more like a sneeze, a distinct sneeze. Then another. 'Somebody in the next carriage,' I thought; but it came again, loud and unmistakable, from under the end seat in the far corner opposite; and as I looked I saw a hand, a grimy hand, encircled by a grimier cuff, just visible, resting on the dusty boards beyond the strip of carpet. I didn't scream, but, jumping up, sprang on the seat and seized the communication with the guard.

'Stop!' shouted an imperative voice. I turned and saw the upper half of the proprietor of the grimy paw emerging from concealment, and the shining barrel of a revolver levelled directly at me.

'Pull if you dare. I'm desperate!' spoke the horrid wretch.

'Fire if you like. I'm desperate too!' I said, but I *didn't* pull, only kept my hand on the knob and my eyes firmly fixed on the miscreant's face, which became suddenly irradiated with a fiendish grin.

'Better not. It's fifty pounds if you stop the train for nothing. Besides, I am a dead shot. Also, that thing mostly doesn't work.'

I hesitated, paralysed by these accumulated considerations; seeing which he dived again under the seat, emerging instantly with a small cane.

'Now look here.' He inserted it in the barrel of the revolver, and stretching over to me dropped it gently on the cushion at my feet.

'Take that! Now you have me at your mercy. It's loaded. I'm defenceless. Put the contents of the whole six chambers

into me when and wherever you like, but don't, *don't*, like a good girl, pull that confounded thing just yet.'

'I can't shoot,' I replied honestly, 'but I can pull, and I don't quite see yet why I shouldn't.' I suppose it was foolish to parley in this way, but something in the intruder's face and manner penetrated through the grime and general disreputability of his appearance, and spoke in his favour.

His voice was rough and peremptory, but refined in accent and inflection, and besides he never really did look as if he wanted to kill me either. Still he was a repulsive object, I thought, as I stepped gingerly down and secured the revolver. A soldier, a common soldier in a dingy red jacket stained with mud, one sleeve ripped open to the shoulder, and a red smear that was *not* mud on his cheek-bone. Then he was drenched, saturated, and shining with moisture where he wasn't powdered grey with dust (no wonder he sneezed, poor fellow!)

'I don't inspire confidence, do I?' he asked; 'and I don't deserve it either. I'm a deserter, therefore a thief, making off with this valuable property of Her Majesty's;' he glanced quizzically at his dilapidated vesture. 'That's a good-conduct stripe,' he observed in a casual tone, holding his arm out.

'Only one,' I replied disparagingly.

'Why, how long do you think I've served?' he asked, his merry blue eyes wide with astonishment at my ignorance. 'I only enlisted two years ago, and this is the wickedest deed I've done since. I'm not as black as I look. If you could only see me when I'm washed!'

His white teeth flashed out so merrily in accord with his dancing eyes that I felt my own lips twitching in sympathy.

'Ah! you smile? Then it's all right. Now mayn't I come out of this hole?' He crept forward, keeping with ostentatious care close to the far end of the carriage, but when I beheld the six feet of broad-shouldered humanity that reared itself, I began to quake again at my rashness in trusting him. He had lugged out with him a mysterious bundle, which he deposited on the seat and gazed first on it and then on me with some embarrassment.

'I believe I must ask you to put an immense amount of trust in me for five minutes or so,' he said after pondering for a little, meditatively screwing his small moustache. 'What I am going to do will seem suspicious, I am aware, but I can explain it eventually. Do you mind lending me your rug?'

I threw it to him—anything to keep him amiable and unaggressive till we gained Newstead (not many miles off, I reflected joyfully). In two minutes he had it fastened up to the rack on either side the carriage, entirely screening himself from me, all but his boots and about six inches of red-striped trousers above them. What was he going to do? I kept my eyes on those red-striped legs with anxious curiosity. Two hands appeared next, and the hot-water tin was lifted out of view. Then came a sound of unscrewing, of gurgling, of screwing up again, and then of splashing. ‘He’s washing!’ I thought, suddenly enlightened; ‘and a very good thing too. I’ve got soap in my travelling-bag. I should like to lend it to him; but what is his basin? and oh! what *does* he do for a towel?’ The splashing ceased, and then the red legs disappeared altogether; a limp mass dropped with a flop on the floor, and down came two brown tweed legs in their place, and then I heard a rustle as of clean linen. ‘Good gracious, he’s dressing!’ was my next startled thought; but almost before I had time to think it, down dropped the rug, and there stood my deserter, spruce, clean, tweed-suited, pulling down a pair of unimpeachable wrist-bands, and settling his shoulders into his coat.

‘There!’ he said, pointing to a dingy heap on the floor. ‘There lie the last relics of Joseph Allen, private in H.M.’s Royal Manx Fusiliers, and here they go.’ He lowered the window, and one by one the garments flew out into the night. ‘His boots are all that remain of him,’ he said regretfully; ‘but you’ll overlook those, won’t you, and not give them over to offended justice?’

‘Why not?’ I asked coolly. ‘Every one of your proceedings is more suspicious than the last. How do I know that those clothes are honestly come by?’

‘But they were,’ he protested, ‘sold to me by a friend of mine, one James McToldridge, servant to Captain Carrington, of ours, whose discarded rig-out this is; and a pretty penny I paid for it. The beggar knew my extremity. Oh, I forgot! I meant to give you this.’ This was a copy of the ‘Times,’ which he presented, as he had done the revolver, on the end of his stick.

‘Oblige me by reading the second advertisement in the agony column.’

I did so.

‘Jos, dear Jos, if ever you loved your father, return *at once*.

All must be forgotten and forgiven now. Delay of an hour may be fatal.—Eveline. Fairmeade.'

'I'm Jos—never *dear* Jos that I know of, though. Fairmeade is my home, and my dear old governor the best, kindest old father that ever a scapegrace had, and don't you see that infernal thing is three days old, and she says delay may be fatal?' He turned sharply away for a moment. 'Eveline is my stepmother,' he went on hurriedly, 'miserable little cat, the cause of all trouble. I don't think the dear old governor and I had a word's difference in our lives till she came between us three years ago. It was always settled that I was to go into the army, and she bewitched my father into thinking it a mighty thing for the family when her brother in the City offered to take me into his counting-house. I suppose there are an expensive lot of us, and the pater isn't rich—for a dean. Anyhow it got intolerable at home, so one day I just walked off and enlisted, and not a word of any of them have I heard since, bad or good, till I came across *that* this morning.'

'And couldn't you get away properly without deserting?' I felt obliged to inquire severely.

'Our pay sergeant would have seen me hanged before he would have forwarded a pass for me, and there wasn't time to try him either. I knew I must make a bolt for it if I was to catch this train, and I knew I must get into mufti somehow before we got to Newstead Junction, where there are always non-commissioned officers hanging about (especially as I have to get through without a ticket somehow), so I let the aforesaid McToldridge jew me out of my last coin, and then hooked it with my bundle right across country to Purbrook station, lost my way, got bogged in wet clay fields, impaled on a hedge-stake, scrambled up the embankment just as the train stopped, and in through the first open window I saw on the down side half a minute before you entered by the door on the up.'

'If I had only known!' I exclaimed.

'I'm awfully glad you didn't. Oh, confound it!' he interjected suddenly, 'what's this?' He was examining with a face of dire consternation a fine cambric handkerchief that he had drawn from his coat pocket. Diving again into it he produced a gold fusee box, and lastly a thin leather card-case filled with cards, 'Captain Roderick Carrington, Royal Manx Fusiliers.' 'The scoundrel! He's stolen them. I *am* in a hole now. Why, it's enough

to set half the detectives in the place on the look-out for me. I'd go back and give myself up by the next train if it wasn't for the governor.' He was rummaging wildly in all his pockets as he spoke, his fair face flushed to the roots of his hair with shame and annoyance. All other pockets had, however, been thoroughly cleared out, and he sank back with a look of blank dismay as the train began to slacken speed before entering the Newstead Junction. 'Well, here I go!' he said, suddenly jumping to his feet, 'and uncommonly glad you must be to see the last of me. Good-bye.'

'Had you not better put on your hat? That is if you don't wish to look conspicuous,' I suggested.

'My hat? By Jove! I haven't got one.' And totally overcome by this new and unexpected calamity, he dropped back on the seat, staring helplessly at me and fairly groaning in despair. Was there ever a woman who could resist a chance of rising superior to circumstances, especially if she beholds a poor helpless masculine body crushed and overcome by them? I can't. And then the dear delight of playing with high treason-felony—what was it? Resistance to constituted authority in some form anyhow. The sight of a sergeant's back as we neared the platform decided me. In my pocket lay folded a soft green cloth cap, matching my Newmarket. On my head was a hard felt hat worn to save the trouble of packing it. To whisk it off and the other on, unpin a spotted net veil, snap off the elastic strap close to the brim, and toss it across to my amazed fellow-passenger, was literally the work of a moment.

'It's too small, but better than nothing,' I said to him; 'and here' (for I can't stop halfway in anything—it's my misfortune), 'don't add to your crimes by defrauding the railway company. Here's my one spare sovereign,' and I held it out.

He left the hat on the seat, and made as if he would seize my fingers, sovereign and all, in both his hands, but stopped.

'Why—why—you must be a real little angel, not a girl at all!' he cried. 'To think of your doing this to help me when I've been such a brute to you! I can't take your money. I suppose I must, though,' in a chapfallen tone. 'I know what I'd rather have twenty times though.' Stupid fellow, how he was losing time and the train going slower every second!

'What is it?' I asked impatiently.

'I'm a private, which means a companion of some of the scum

of the earth more or less. I'm a deserter; I'm wearing stolen clothes,' he went on exasperatingly.

'Oh, do be quick. My guard will be here in a moment. What can I do for you?'

'Only say I may write to you and return that money, and—yes, one thing more—do you mind shaking hands with me as if I really were a gentleman?'

I held out the tips of my fingers. 'Good-bye, Mr. a-a-Allen! I hope you may reach home safely and find all well there,' I said, very politely and stiffly. The train stopped, and out he sprang, just escaping my protector, the guard, who bustled up escorting two staid, elderly ladies; most unexceptionable fellow travellers, but who, I secretly rejoiced, had not got in a station earlier.

Two mornings later came a note in a handwriting I instinctively recognised. A post-office order for 1*l.* and 'With thanks from a repentant ruffian, already on the way to deliver himself up to the authorities and satisfy outraged justice.'

I laughed and half cried as I read. Poor fellow! What would they do to him, I wondered? Deserters in books used to be shot, but I didn't think that was the case nowadays. Then those clothes! At the sacrifice of a great deal of my dignity I should like to have written an answer, but dared not. I put the note away, and forgot all about it. It and he belonged to a part of my life which already seemed separated by long ages from the dark, cruel present. A foreshadowing of calamity seemed to seize me directly we parted. It was the outer fringe of the storm-cloud that had already broken over our home. My poor mother! No wonder she wrote briefly and constrainedly. She had no words to tell me in the midst of my pleasure of the ruin that had fallen upon us. A very everyday story; who cares to hear it? Two ignorant women, a speculative trustee, a commercial crisis, that was all. A great gulping wave of misfortune seemed suddenly to rise and sweep over us, leaving us stranded and bare, clutching what scraps we could save from the wreck. Kind friends gathered round us, sympathised, counselled, scraped together more wreckage, put us in the way of beginning life anew. An easy matter for me at nineteen, young, strong, and enterprising; but for mother at nine-and-forty—my gentle, semi-invalid, delicately nurtured mother, whose path through life had been on velvet, to whom the roughnesses and coarsenesses of poor living were as grievous evils, almost minor sins, who had never seen the inside of

an omnibus, brushed her own hair, or looked after her own luggage in her life—our new beginning was as possible as for an exotic taken from its hot-house and given a fresh start in life in a hedge-row. Small marvel that it shrivels and dies. ‘Women’s hearts don’t break for want of a balance at their banker’s,’ Aunt Hesba answered me somewhat harshly when I hinted my misgivings. She was my mother’s step-sister, wealthy, childless, and married to a soap-boiler. She was very kind to us, allowed us 2*l.* a week out of her own privy purse, and looked out decent lodgings for us in Camden Town.

I don’t care to look back on those days much. Heroines in novels manage, when ruin overtakes them, to turn out clever cooks of dainty dishes, to make their simple dresses fit as no Parisian modiste had ever done, and with artistic fingers and no expenditure to convert tawdry lodging-house parlours into graceful boudoirs, keeping all the time their society bloom fresh on them, and losing no grace or charm in the process. *I* couldn’t. After weary apprenticeship I did turn out a fair cook, a good substitute for my mother’s maid, and a clever administrator of our small finances, but I had to give body and mind to the work. My hands grew red and my fore-finger needle-roughened. I kept our home fresh and pretty, and had a satisfactory balance-sheet to present to Aunt Hesba every Saturday, when she used to drive over with a hamper of fruit and flowers and a lecture on domestic economy; but I grew anxious and careworn in the learning. Other visitors besides Aunt Hesba found their way to Camden Town, and many kind invitations were pressed on us; but my mother nervously shrank from a return to the old life, and I felt relieved when one by one acquaintances fell away. The gulf between us was so great and so impassable.

One day, after enduring a meeting and recognition by two pretty girls on horseback, my fellow bridesmaids at Connie’s wedding, I caught sight of my faded, dowdy self in a shop-window, and remembered with a start that it was my twentieth birthday, and that only a year lay between me and the days when life was gay, when *I* danced and rode, and wore pretty dresses, and accepted the attentions of devoted admirers. Only a year, and it all so far away!

‘Minnie, I have a plan for you—a birthday treat,’ Aunt Hesba said ultra-graciously when I arrived at home. ‘What should you say to a fortnight at the seaside?’

A year ago I should have danced and clapped my hands. Now I looked doubtfully at mother, while aunt went on: 'We have taken a house on the Leas at Folkestone for two months. Your Uncle Peter cannot get away till Saturday fortnight; so if you like to have it meanwhile, you may. Mother looked pleased, I thought, so I let myself be glad. Then followed a busy four days. Gowns, relics of last year, too grotesquely incongruous with our present surroundings to wear now, might fitly be produced there. The sight of pretty things seemed to brighten mother's eyes again. Kind Uncle Peter squeezed a bank note into my hand one day, saying, 'There, mind you enjoy yourselves,' and I recklessly resolved, that for one bright fortnight at least, household economies should go to the winds.

Folkestone! Fresh, breezy, bracing, sunshiny, frivolous! Down below, rippling water, brown-sailed fishing boats, white-hooded bathing machines, sandy-legged children, sea-sick arrivals. Up aloft, Bath chairs, pretty girls in fresh toilettes, amiable old gentlemen pottering about with telescopes, officers from Shorncliffe in light suits of bewildering similarity, and bands crashing merrily in the sunshine. How we enjoyed it all! My mother never tired of watching the pretty ever-shifting groups on the Leas, and actually found an old friend or two amongst them.

'Who are those, Minnie?' she asked eagerly one afternoon as I walked beside her Bath chair; 'they seem to know us.'

'Hardly. That is the Dean of Cheltenham and Mrs. Arden, and the handsome old man is General Laurence Noel. I saw their names at the Library,' I answered.

'But I am *sure* they looked as if they recognised us,' mother persisted. 'I thought I heard the lady say "That's Mrs. Helder," as I passed. Mrs. Arden is a sweet pretty thing, rather overdressed for a Dean's wife, I think.'

I had casually noticed her, a childish little creature, with big eyes and a curly fringe, who used to nestle up to the side of the portly Dean like a little kitten, except when she was tripping along surrounded by a guard of the light-suited warriors from Shorncliffe. I did not suppose the interest to be mutual, and was rather surprised to find the cards of her party of three awaiting us on our return. I left my mother deep in speculation on all causes, possible and impossible, of the call, and started to get her some fresh books from the Library.

'Miss Helder, I am sure. Miss *Ermengarde* Helder,' said a

gay little voice unexpectedly, and pretty Mrs. Arden tripped up to me with outstretched hands. 'So sorry not to find you at home. Let me introduce General Noel—Miss Ermengarde Helder.'

My name again! The name that I had not heard for years. Long ago I had thought it over-fantastic, and now in these later days of toil and shabbiness it seemed so ill-fitting, I had abolished its use entirely in favour of the homely Minnie.

'The Livesays told us who you were and where you were staying, and I felt I *must* make friends with you before to-morrow evening,' she went on, piling up the bewilderment. The Livesays were kind old neighbours whom I was glad to have found here on mother's account, but why they should have inspired these strangers with a desire to cultivate us, I could not conceive. 'To-morrow, of course,' beamed the old General, 'you'll keep a dance for *me*, Miss Helder. You can't have given away *all* yet.'

'A dance? Oh, the Subscription Ball! But I am not going,' I replied, puzzled infinitely.

'I think you *are*, dear,' said little Mrs. Arden, with an arch glance. 'Do you know *I* meant to offer to chaperone you. Such a delightful surprise for somebody! (with a little confidential nod and squeeze of my hand). But I find Mrs. Livesay means to take you. Goodbye! I hope we shall see *very* much of you now;' and, with a last arch glance and bewildering little pressure, she led her old General away, after quite a paternal farewell on his part. Arrived at home, I found a committee of three deciding my destiny.

'Of course she must go,' I heard Uncle Peter's voice declare through the open window as I waited on the doorstep for admission. He had run down for a night to see how we were getting on. 'It's very gratifying really, ma'am, *very* gratifying! She is a good girl, and has always done her dooty, and deserves the best of luck.'

'Quite so,' Mrs. Livesay's comfortable deep contralto boomed out, 'but *please* recollect—not a word!' There was a sudden guilty hush as I entered. Mother's eyes were wet, and her lips tremulous with happy excitement. Mrs. Livesay sat gracious and important with ball tickets in her hand, and Uncle Peter nodded and blinked benignantly. He pooh-poohed all considerations of toilette. 'Gowns were to be had for money,' he supposed; 'get one, then,' and anything else I wanted. My faint protests were

instantly silenced. Mrs. Livesay made practical suggestions. A whirl of preparation began on the instant, and continued all next day, till before I had quite done with being astonished I found



myself bedecked, bedizened, and on my way to the ball under Mrs. Livesay's maternal wing.

The rawest *débutante* never went through greater agonies of shyness and self-mistrust than I did that evening. I felt like an owl dragged ruffled and blinking to the sunlight from the friendly gloom of his hiding-place, when, close sticking to Mrs. Livesay's black-velvet elbow, I entered the ball-room. I had forgotten how to wear an evening dress, or carry a fan. Surely people were looking at me and whispering. I flushed pink at the

thought of what they might be saying. Mrs. Arden waltzed past and flung me a sweet little smile, which I was too nervous to return, and, as I shrank down into a seat, General Noel came beaming up.

‘Don’t forget our dance, Miss Helder. Only just come, eh? Not got a programme?’ and off he trotted to supply the want.

I sat wishing heartily that he would never come back again, and wondering how long the evening would last. Mrs. Livesay became absorbed in converse with some one on the other side of her, and I forlornly smoothed the plumage of my big fan, and looked at the tips of my satin toes, till I became aware that some one was standing in front of me, also of a delicious fragrance—tea-rose, stephanotis, and heliotrope—that floated around me. I raised my reluctant glance first to the flowers and then to the bearer. Two laughing blue eyes met mine, and I found myself looking full into the face of my deserter. It was he unmistakably, *plus* an inch extra moustache, an evening suit, and a diamond stud. His face was demure, but his eyes danced with fun as he bent over me.

‘Miss Helder! I *daren’t* get introduced. I’m Joscelyn Arden. I was Thomas Allen, and if you won’t recognise me I’m a doomed man.’

I bowed stiffly enough, with flaming cheeks.

‘It’s very good of you,’ he went on. ‘You perhaps won’t believe me when I tell you I’m in sorer straits now than when you helped me before, and nobody else can save me. Don’t look frightened. I’m not a disreputable character now, only a lieutenant in the 112th. I was gazetted last month.’

‘What can I do for you this time?’ I asked, repressing an inclination to laugh.

‘Will you give me a dance—this one?’

Here General Noel, who had arrived with my programme, gave me a knowing little nod and turned away again, and I rose mechanically as the music began. Joscelyn put the bouquet down carefully in my place, and we floated off together.

I began timidly and stupidly, but after the first few steps all my missing nerve and self-possession seemed suddenly restored; and the sense of ‘doing a beautiful thing beautifully’ thrilled me to the finger-tips. We waltzed and waltzed, not caring to speak, only to sweep gently along together on the wings of the music. All the past year’s sordid cares seemed to slide from me, borne

away on the sweet swaying notes. The waltz crashed to its end at last in some hurried bars and a sharp chord, and I looked for the first time in my partner's face. It had grown suddenly grave and anxious.

'Well, come what may, I've had *that* to the good,' he said with a long breath, 'even if you never speak to me again. Now let me get your flowers.'

'Mine?' I asked. 'Why, *you* brought them.'

'Of course I did—for you. It was a suggestion of my good Uncle Laurie's. You can throw them over the balcony, you know; in fact you most certainly will do so, when you've heard my confession.'

I assumed the bouquet seriously, under protest as it were, and awaited further explanation. We stepped out on the broad moonlighted balcony. Joscelyn found me a seat and stood bolt upright before me, like a small boy saying a lesson. It did not seem to be an easy one. He looked to sea and then to sky, and then into my face, and then burst into an irrepressible laugh.

'I declare it's worse than getting into mufti was that night! I'm too scared to begin. You can't understand it? Don't you see I didn't know you then, and didn't care what you thought of me as long as you were terrified into keeping quiet. *Now* I am cutting my own throat in cold blood, that's all—deliberately throwing away every hope of your good opinion for ever.' He looked ruefully at me, but I gave no sign, so he went on. 'I never expected my people and you would meet,' he began rather shamefacedly; 'and when Eveline said she and Uncle Laurie had heard your name and made a point of calling——'

'Eveline! Do you mean Mrs. Arden?' I broke in, suddenly enlightened; 'and the Dean, is he your father? He isn't dead then. Delay was not fatal?'

'Not a bit of it. Of course I must begin by explaining all that,' he went on, quite briskly, 'or you'll never understand. That was Eveline's bit of humbug to get me back at any price. A nice state of affairs it was at home. Uncle Laurie back from India unexpectedly with all his millions, wanting to make me his heir, and vowing, if I were not produced forthwith, to cut the whole family, here and hereafter. Eveline writing and telegraphing to every commanding officer in the Army List——' He broke off to laugh at the recollection. Fortunately I appeared on the scene in time, and my escapade hit the old boy's fancy exactly.

He swore I was a lad of spirit after his own pattern, and came back with me to barracks next day to see the Colonel and arrange for my discharge. The Colonel was an old chum of his. They squared everything, Carrington included, and brought me home in triumph. I'm a very great person there nowadays, I can tell you. I'm a golden idol, and Eveline the foremost of my worshippers. I'm to stick to my profession though, we are agreed on that. We sail for Bermuda on Saturday.' I smiled approval, but he looked the more downcast.

'Ah! I am shirking the real point of it all—the awful calamity,' he sighed.

'What is it?' I asked encouragingly.

'It's a she, Miss Flora MacBean, my uncle's ward, the loveliest creature, a real Highland chieftainess, with a castle and a moor and a loch of her own, and a piper and a pibroch, and the deuce knows what—also a fine Highland temper. Poor old Laurie! She is shortening his life by her vagaries; and the one hope left him is to get her off his hands into somebody else's. At one time it occurred to him that, in the eternal fitness of things, I ought to be that somebody, and so deliver him from both his responsibilities at one stroke. Please don't laugh. It was very serious earnest, I assure you, and drove me to my wits' end to gain time. I heard that orders for Bermuda were coming, and thought if by *any* means I could stave off the introduction for a month or so—' Here he stopped short, and I waited with an odd feeling of being concerned in what was coming next. 'And—in short,' he broke out desperately, 'I said I was engaged to *you*; and now the murder's out.'

The whole place—the sea, the pier with its black outline against the moonlit water, the whispering couple in the opposite corner—seemed to give a great heave and grow suddenly dim before my sight. When they righted themselves, he was gazing into my face with dismayed eyes.

'Are you *awfully* angry?' he whispered. 'Don't look like that. If you knew what a bad time I have had ever since I got here this afternoon and heard I was to meet you, you would be satisfied. Mayn't I tell you how it came about?'

'I should certainly like to hear that,' I said, my voice sounding hard and uncompromising in my own ears.

'It's all dear old Laurie's doing after all. He is no end good, but the veriest old magpie, always prying and poking into other

people's secrets. First of all he got hold of my note to you and read the address (which, by the way, I saw on your travelling bag). Then he came into my room one day, and I found him chuckling over your hat (with the name in the lining, you know). So he put this and that together, and when I positively and utterly refused to spoil my chance of passing my exam by going off to Scotland with him, and Flora had exasperated him by declining to come to Fairmeade, he broke out, "Tell me honestly, Jos, does Ermengarde stand in the way?" and I jumped at the chance and declared she did. "What is she like?" "The bravest, prettiest, cleverest, most generous of her sex; and the only woman I ever loved in my life."

'How *dare* you?' I gasped indignantly.

'Well, it was *true*—every word. I said we were not engaged, didn't correspond, and, to oblige him, promised I wouldn't. I was ready to wait till I got my company if he liked; and there I thought was the end of the matter, never dreaming that the dear, blundering old donkey would meet you on the Leas, find out all about you from the Livesays, take a mighty fancy to you, and think he was doing us a great thing by giving us this one chance of meeting again. I'll do *anything* to set things straight—anything that you order me. What shall it be first?' He folded his hands submissively and looked up in my face. I should like to have boxed his ears to begin with. I *couldn't* think of anything to say half unpleasant enough.

'We must first undeceive your uncle,' I declared sternly, 'as soon as possible.'

'*Won't* you wait till the end of the week?' pleaded the encroaching youth. 'There's time for the Chieftainess to come down, and I should be absolutely unprotected then. *Can't* you give me till Saturday and then break it off?'

'What! pretend to be in love with you till then?' I began angrily.

'I forgot—I forgot *that* was involved,' he interrupted hastily. 'Till to-morrow, then—as soon as you like to-morrow. Blight my prospects directly after breakfast if you will, but let us have these last hours unspoilt.'

'Now, Miss Helder, it's *my* turn,' said Uncle Laurie's jovial voice at the window. 'I've got a *vis-à-vis*,' and off he carried me without another word from Joscelyn. If I had not heard his explanation, I must have cherished secret doubts of my partner's

sanity. He was charmingly paternal, full of jocose allusions to Joscelyn, and of anecdotes of 'the boy's' brightness and goodness, and evidently bent on establishing confidential relations as soon as possible. I *couldn't* let it go on. I felt the tangle getting thicker with every sentence.

'Did you know I went to St. John's Wood to make your



acquaintance?' he asked. 'I got the address from Jos, but the house was shut up and empty.'

'We live in lodgings in Camden Town now,' I replied boldly. 'We have lost all our fortune, mother and I, and have only what my uncle allows us.'

The old man looked kindly at me. 'Does Jos know that?'

'How should he? We are only chance acquaintances—the *very slightest* of acquaintances,' I said meaningly.

‘Good girl! Proper spirit!’ I heard him mutter; then aloud, ‘Joscelyn is a good fellow. Money wouldn’t matter to *him*, you know; but *I* made him promise not to think of a wife until he had earned her. When he gets his company, he may talk of marriage.’

It was so obviously said for my consolation, that I was exasperated into saying: ‘You seem to think *I* am interested in Mr. Arden’s future arrangements. There is some great mistake——’

‘Stop, stop, my dear! Interested? Why, who else should be? Unless—— No, you’re not thinking of throwing the boy over! God bless my soul, it will be the ruin of the lad—the *ruin*, I tell you! I’ve seen it a dozen times. Don’t, my dear, *don’t!* I dare say you have been annoyed at his not explaining himself, but you see how it has happened.’

‘I don’t *want* him to explain himself,’ I persisted in an agony of impatience; ‘I don’t want to be engaged to him at all.’

‘Is it the long waiting you are afraid of, my dear? I dare say it *is* trying, naturally. Well, don’t fret, and if the boy goes on well something may be settled.’

‘But I don’t want anything settled,’ I protested, almost crying. ‘Do let me tell you how it all arose.’

‘Not now, dear—not now. Sleep on it before you do anything final. To-morrow, to-morrow.’

‘First thing in the morning. Where?’ I persevered.

‘I walk to the end of the Leas every morning with my early cigar. There’s a nice quiet corner and seats there. Is half-past eight too early? No? Then come, and we’ll have a sensible talk. Ah! you young lovers may be glad of an old foggy’s help now and then in your small difficulties.’

‘But we are *not* lovers,’ I was wrathfully declaring, when the aggravating old gentleman bowed and left me. I had plenty of partners and dancing for the rest of the evening, though Joscelyn never came near me again. It came to an end at last, and I got home and to bed, where I lay tossing and trying to invent the most lucid, forcible statement of the case that words could give for the enlightenment of Uncle Laurie to-morrow, dropping off to sleep in the middle of my most telling sentences to dream of Joscelyn, who always knew what I was going to say next and wouldn’t tell. Morning came at last. Joscelyn’s flowers, which I had not had the heart to throw away after all, greeted me with their fresh fragrance from my dressing-table. I could not resist

fastening one creamy bud in my plain brown coat as I dressed for the interview. Mother was safe for another hour, I knew, so I slipped downstairs softly and out into the fresh, sunny, salt-smelling morning. I had the place to myself, I thought for a



moment, till I heard some footsteps behind overtaking mine. I hurried, so did they. I would not look up, and felt provoked to see the two shadows preceding us in such close companionship. The General's sturdy grey figure advanced to meet us, radiant in the sunshine.

‘Well, Master Jos, who said *you* might come?’

‘If a criminal has any right anywhere, it is at his own trial,’ said a demure voice at my elbow. ‘I have come to plead guilty.’

I was glad to have him there after all. He began at once and told the whole story of our meeting so comically that the General nearly choked with laughter, and I began to see the fun of it for the first time. He confessed his dread of the Chieftainess and the straits he had been driven to to avoid her; and I solemnly produced the one letter I had ever received from him, which set the dear old boy off again till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

‘But what are we to do?’ he inquired anxiously, in the midst of his hilarity. ‘I’ve gone and told everybody, in strict confidence, but still they know it.’

‘Tell them I’ve broken it off and behaved atrociously,’ I implored.

‘Couldn’t do it,’ Joscelyn declared. ‘Such a story would be in horrid bad taste coming from *our* side. *You* may say so if you like. Only think of your mother’s feelings if it gets round to her!’

I did think, and was direfully perplexed.

‘Just let things slide,’ he pleaded. ‘Only be civil when we meet in public. Only till Saturday!’

‘*Do*, my dear,’ begged the kind old General; ‘don’t make me look an old fool. You and Jos can give it up, or keep it on by letter afterwards just as you like. *You* shan’t be compromised.’

What could I do? What *am* I to do? Joscelyn and his uncle have kept their promises to the letter, but Mrs. Arden has told my mother that she already loves me as a daughter, and the Dean has taken to calling me ‘Ermengarde, my dear.’ Aunt Hesba has come down and regards me with grim approval, and Uncle Peter and the General have had a long and mysterious consultation, of which the latter only reports that if the General acts as ‘andsome as he promises, he’ll find that others can come down ’andsome on their side too.’

Joscelyn behaves beautifully. He is pleasant and quietly attentive, more to mother than me, in public, and, in the *tête-à-tête* to which people persist in driving us, so touchingly penitent and deferential that I *cannot* succeed in detesting him as I could wish.

‘Only till Saturday!’ he says now and then apologetically.

‘Only till to-morrow,’ it is by this time. If he says that again as he did just now, I shall break down.

'You have nearly got rid of me, Miss Helder. Only a few hours more and I shall have sailed. Then I suppose you'll sit down joyfully and write your letter of dismissal, to go by the first mail.'

'I suppose I shall' (why won't my voice keep steady?)

'But I give you fair warning. Write what you will, I shall not read that letter. This has all been a hideous blunder, and once safely out of it, I shall——'

'What?'

'Come home on leave first chance I get and begin it all over again.'

'Then, Joscelyn——'

'What, my Ermengarde?'

'Perhaps—I had better not write that letter at all.'

And I never shall.

OGBURY BARROWS.

WE went to Ogbury Barrows on an archæological expedition. And as the very name of archæology, owing to a serious misconception incidental to human nature, is enough to deter most people from taking any further interest in our proceedings when once we got there, I may as well begin by explaining, for the benefit of those who have never been to one, the method and manner of an archæological outing.

The first thing you have to do is to catch your secretary. The genuine secretary is born, not made; and therefore you have got to catch him, not to appoint him. Appointing a secretary is pure vanity and vexation of spirit: you must find the right man made ready to your hand; and when you have found him you will soon see that he slips into the onerous duties of the secretariat as if to the manner born, by pure instinct. The perfect secretary is an urbane old gentleman of mature years and portly bearing, a dignified representative of British archæology, with plenty of money and plenty of leisure, possessing a heaven-born genius for organisation, and utterly unhampered by any foolish views of his own about archæological research or any other kindred subject. The secretary who archæologises is lost. His business is not to discourse of early English windows or of palæolithic hatchets, of buried villas or of Plantagenet pedigrees, of Roman tile-work or of dolichocephalic skulls, but to provide abundant brakes, drags, and carriages, to take care that the owners of castles and baronial residences throw them open (with lunch provided) to the ardent student of British antiquities, to see that all the old ladies have somebody to talk to, and all the young ones somebody to flirt with, and generally to superintend the morals, happiness, and personal comfort of some fifty assorted scientific enthusiasts. The secretary who diverges from these his proper and elevated functions into trivial and puerile disquisitions upon the antiquity of man (when he ought rather to be admiring the juvenility of woman), or the precise date of the Anglo-Saxon conquest (when he should by rights be concentrating the whole force of his massive intellect upon the arduous task of arranging for dinner), proves himself at

once unworthy of his high position, and should forthwith be deposited from the secretariat by public acclamation.

Having once entrapped your perfect secretary, you set him busily to work beforehand to make all the arrangements for your expected excursion, the archæologists generally cordially recognising the important principle that he pays all the expenses he incurs out of his own pocket, and drives splendid bargains on their account with hotel-keepers, coachmen, railway companies, and others to feed, lodge, supply, and convey them at fabulously low prices throughout the whole expedition. You also understand that the secretary will call upon everybody in the neighbourhood you propose to visit, induce the rectors to throw open their churches, square the housekeepers of absentee dukes, and beard the owners of Elizabethan mansions in their own dens. These little preliminaries being amicably settled, you get together your archæologists and set out upon your intended tour.

An archæologist, it should be further premised, has no necessary personal connection with archæology in any way. He (or she) is a human being, of assorted origin, age, and sex, known as an archæologist then and there on no other ground than the possession of a ticket (price half-a-guinea) for that particular archæological meeting. Who would not be a man (or woman) of science on such easy and unexacting terms? Most archæologists within my own private experience, indeed, are ladies of various ages, many of them elderly, but many more young and pretty, whose views about the styles of English architecture or the exact distinction between Durotriges and Damnonians are of the vaguest and most shadowy possible description. You all drive in brakes together to the various points of interest in the surrounding country. When you arrive at a point of interest, somebody or other with a bad cold in his head reads a dull paper on its origin and nature, in which there is fortunately no subsequent examination. If you are burning to learn all about it, you put your hand up to your ear, and assume an attitude of profound attention. If you are not burning with the desire for information, you stroll off casually about the grounds and gardens with the prettiest and pleasantest among the archæological sisters, whose acquaintance you have made on the way thither. Sometimes it rains, and then you obtain an admirable chance of offering your neighbour the protection afforded by your brand-new silk umbrella. By-and-by the dull paper gets finished, and somebody who lives in an adjoining

house volunteers to provide you with luncheon. Then you adjourn to the parish church, where an old gentleman of feeble eyesight reads a long and tedious account of all the persons whose monuments are or are not to be found upon the walls of that poky little building. Nobody listens to him; but everybody carries away a vague impression that some one or other, temp. Henry the Second, married Adeliza, daughter and heiress of Sir Ralph de Thingumbob, and had issue thirteen stalwart sons and twenty-seven beautiful daughters, each founders of a noble family with a correspondingly varied pedigree. Finally, you take tea and ices upon somebody's lawn, by special invitation, and drive home, not without much laughter, in the cool of the evening to an excellent table d'hôte dinner at the marvellously cheap hotel, presided over by the ever-smiling and urbane secretary. That is what we mean nowadays by being a member of an archæological association.

It was on just such a pleasant excursion that we all went to Ogbury Barrows. I was overflowing, myself, with bottled-up information on the subject of those two prehistoric tumuli; for Ogbury Barrows have been the hobby of my lifetime: but I didn't read a paper upon their origin and meaning, first, because the secretary very happily forgot to ask me, and secondly, because I was much better employed in psychological research into the habits and manners of an extremely pretty pink-and-white archæologist who stood beside me. Instead, therefore, of boring her and my other companions with all my accumulated store of information about Ogbury Barrows, I locked it up securely in my own bosom, with the fell design of finally venting it all at once in one vast flood upon the present article.

Ogbury Barrows, I would have said (had it not been for the praiseworthy negligence of our esteemed secretary), stand upon the very verge of a great chalk-down, overlooking a broad and fertile belt of valley, whose slopes are terraced in the quaintest fashion with long parallel lines of obviously human and industrial origin. The terracing must have been done a very long time ago indeed, for it is a device for collecting enough soil on a chalky hillside to grow corn in. Now, nobody ever tried to grow corn on open chalk-downs in any civilised period of history until the present century, because the downs are so much more naturally adapted for sheep-walks that the attempt to turn them into waving cornfields would never occur to anybody on earth except a barbarian or an advanced agriculturist. But when Ogbury downs

were originally terraced, I don't doubt that the primitive system of universal tribal warfare still existed everywhere in Britain. This system is aptly summed up in the familiar modern Black Country formula, 'Yon's a stranger. 'Eave 'arf a brick at him.' Each tribe was then perpetually at war with every other tribe on either side of it: a simple plan which rendered foreign tariffs quite unnecessary, and most effectually protected home industries. The consequence was each district had to produce for its own tribe all the necessaries of life, however ill-adapted by nature for their due production: because traffic and barter did not yet exist, and the only form ever assumed by import trade was that of raiding on your neighbours' territories, and bringing back with you whatever you could lay hands on. So the people of the chalky Ogbury valley had perforce to grow corn for themselves, whether nature would or nature wouldn't; and in order to grow it under such very unfavourable circumstances of soil and climate, they terraced off the entire hillside, by catching the silt as it washed slowly down, and keeping it in place by artificial barriers.

On the top of the down, overlooking this curious vale of pre-historic terraces, rise the twin heights of Ogbury Barrows, familiar landmarks to all the country side around for many miles. One of them is a tall circular mound or tumulus surrounded by a deep and well-marked trench: the other, which stands a little on one side, is long and narrow, shaped exactly like a modern grave, but of comparatively gigantic and colossal proportions. Even the little children of Ogbury village have noticed its close resemblance of shape and outline to the grassy hillocks in their own churchyard, and whisper to one another when they play upon its summit that a great giant in golden armour lies buried in a stone vault underneath. But if only they knew the real truth, they would say instead that that big, ungainly, overgrown grave covers the remains of a short, squat, dwarfish chieftain, akin in shape and feature to the Lapps and Finns, and about as much unlike a giant as human nature could easily manage. It may be regarded as a general truth of history that the greatest men don't by any means always get the biggest monument.

The archæologists in becoming prints who went with us to the top of Ogbury Barrows sagaciously surmised (with demonstrative parasol) that 'these mounds must have been made a very long time ago, indeed.' So in fact they were: but though they stand now so close together, and look so much like sisters and

contemporaries, one is ages older than the other, and was already green and grass-grown with immemorial antiquity when the fresh earth of its neighbour tumulus was first thrown up by its side, above the buried urn of some long-forgotten Celtic warrior. Let us begin by considering the oldest first, and then pass on to its younger sister.

Ogbury Long Barrow is a very ancient monument indeed. Not, to be sure, one quarter so ancient as the days of the extremely old master who carved the mammoth on the fragments of his own tusk in the caves of the Dordogne, and concerning whom I indited a discourse in this magazine a few months ago: compared with that very antique personage, our long barrow on Ogbury hill-top may in fact be looked upon as almost modern. Still, when one isn't talking in geological language, ten or twenty thousand years may be fairly considered a very long time as time goes: and I have little doubt that from ten to twenty thousand years have passed since the short, squat chieftain aforesaid was first committed to his final resting-place in Ogbury Long Barrow. Two years since, we local archæologists—*not* in becoming prints this time—opened the barrow to see what was inside it. We found, as we expected, the 'stone vault' of the popular tradition, proving conclusively that some faint memory of the original interment had clung for all those long years around the grassy pile of that ancient tumulus. Its centre, in fact, was occupied by a sepulchral chamber built of big Sarsen stones from the surrounding hillsides; and in the midst of the house of death thus rudely constructed lay the mouldering skeleton of its original possessor—an old prehistoric Mongoloid chieftain. When I stood for the first moment within that primæval palace of the dead, never before entered by living man for a hundred centuries, I felt, I must own, something like a burglar, something like a body-snatcher, something like a resurrection man, but most of all like a happy archæologist.

The big stone hut in which we found ourselves was, in fact, a buried cromlech, covered all over (until we opened it) by the earth of the barrow. Almost every cromlech, wherever found, was once, I believe, the central chamber of just such a long barrow: but in some instances wind and rain have beaten down and washed away the surrounding earth (and then we call it a 'Druidical monument'), while in others the mound still encloses its original deposit (and then we call it merely a prehistoric tumulus). As a

matter of fact, even the Druids themselves are quite modern and common-place personages compared with the short, squat chieftains of the long barrows. For all the indications we found in the long barrow at Ogbury (as in many others we had opened elsewhere) led us at once to the strange conclusion that our new acquaintance the skeleton had once been a living cannibal king of the newer stone age in Britain.

The only weapons or implements we could discover in the barrow were two neatly chipped flint arrowheads, and a very delicate ground greenstone hatchet, or tomahawk. These were the weapons of the dead chief, laid beside him in the stone chamber where we found his skeleton, for his future use in his underground existence. A piece or two of rude hand-made pottery, no doubt containing food and drink for the ghost, had also been placed close to his side: but they had mouldered away with time and damp, till it was quite impossible to recover more than a few broken and shapeless fragments. There was no trace of metal in any way: Whereas if the tribesmen of our friend the skeleton had known at all the art of smelting, we may be sure some bronze axe or spearhead would have taken the place of the flint arrows and the greenstone tomahawk: for savages always bury a man's best property together with his corpse, while civilised men take care to preserve it with pious care in their own possession, and to fight over it strenuously in the court of probate.

The chief's own skeleton lay, or rather squatted, in the most undignified attitude, in the central chamber. His people when they put him there evidently considered that he was to sit at his ease, as he had been accustomed to do in his lifetime, in the ordinary savage squatting position, with his knees tucked up till they reached his chin, and his body resting entirely on the heels and haunches. The skeleton was entire: but just outside and above the stone vault we came upon a number of other bones, which told another and very different story. Some of them were the bones of the old prehistoric short-horned ox: others belonged to wild boars, red deer, and sundry similar animals, for the most part skulls and feet only, the relics of the savage funeral feast. It was clear that as soon as the builders of the barrow had erected the stone chamber of their dead chieftain, and placed within it his honoured remains, they had held a great banquet on the spot, and, after killing oxen and chasing red deer, had eaten all the eatable portions, and thrown the skulls, horns, and hoofs on top of the

tomb, as offerings to the spirit of their departed master. But among these relics of the funeral baked meats there were some that specially attracted our attention—a number of broken human skulls, mingled indiscriminately with the horns of deer and the bones of oxen. It was impossible to look at them for a single moment, and not to recognise that we had here the veritable remains of a cannibal feast, a hundred centuries ago, on Ogbury hill-top.

Each skull was split or fractured, not clean cut, as with a sword or bullet, but hacked and hewn with some blunt implement, presumably either a club or a stone tomahawk. The skull of the great chief inside was entire and his skeleton unmutilated: but we could see at a glance that the remains we found huddled together on the top were those of slaves or prisoners of war, sacrificed beside the dead chieftain's tomb, and eaten with the other products of the chase by his surviving tribesmen. In an inner chamber behind the chieftain's own hut we came upon yet a stranger relic of primitive barbarism. Two complete human skeletons squatted there in the same curious attitude as their lord's, as if in attendance upon him in a neighbouring ante-chamber. They were the skeletons of women—so our professional bone-scanner immediately told us—and each of their skulls had been carefully cleft right down the middle by a single blow from a sharp stone hatchet. But they were not victims intended for the *pièce de résistance* at the funeral banquet. They were clearly the two wives of the deceased chieftain, killed on his tomb by his son and successor, in order to accompany their lord and master in his new life underground as they had hitherto done in his rude wooden palace on the surface of the middle earth.

We covered up the reopened sepulchre of the old cannibal savage king (after abstracting for our local museum the arrow-heads and tomahawk, as well as the skull of the very ancient Briton himself), and when our archæological society, ably led by the esteemed secretary, stood two years later on the desecrated tomb, the grass had grown again as green as ever, and not a sign remained of the sacrilegious act in which one of the party then assembled there had been a prime actor. Looking down from the summit of the long barrow on that bright summer morning, over the gay group of picnicking archæologists, it was a curious contrast to reinstate in fancy the scene at that first installation of the Ogbury monument. In my mind's eye I saw once more the

howling band of naked yellow-faced and yellow-limbed savages surge up the terraced slopes of Ogbury down; I saw them bear aloft, with beating of breasts and loud gesticulations, the bent corpse of their dead chieftain; I saw the terrified and fainting wives haled along by thongs of raw oxhide, and the weeping prisoners driven passively like sheep to the slaughter; I saw the fearful orgy of massacre and rapine around the open tumulus, the wild priest shattering with his gleaming tomahawk the skulls of his victims, the fire of gorse and low brushwood prepared to roast them, the heads and feet flung carelessly on top of the yet uncovered stone chamber, the awful dance of blood-stained cannibals around the mangled remains of men and oxen, and finally the long task of heaping up above the stone hut of the dead king the earthen mound that was never again to be opened to the light of day till, ten thousand years later, we modern Britons invaded with our prying, sacrilegious mattock the sacred privacy of that cannibal ghost. All this passed like a vision before my mind's eye; but I didn't mention anything of it at that particular moment to my fellow-archæologists, because I saw they were all much more interested in the pigeon-pie and the funny story about an exalted personage and a distinguished actress with which the model secretary was just then duly entertaining them.

Five thousand years or so slowly wore away, from the date of the erection of the long barrow, and a new race had come to occupy the soil of England, and had driven away or reduced to slavery the short, squat, yellow-skinned cannibals of the earlier epoch. They were a pastoral and agricultural people, these new comers, acquainted with the use and abuse of bronze, and far more civilised in every way than their darker predecessors. No trace remains behind to tell us now by what fierce onslaught the Celtic invaders—for the bronze-age folk were presumably Celts—swept through the little Ogbury valley, and brained the men of the older race, while they made slaves of the younger women and serviceable children. Nothing now stands to tell us anything of the long years of Celtic domination, except the round barrow on the bare down, just as green and as grass-grown nowadays as its earlier and more primitive neighbour.

We opened the Ogbury round barrow at the same time as the other, and found in it, as we expected, no bones or skeleton of any sort, broken or otherwise, but simply a large cinerary urn. The urn was formed of coarse hand-made earthenware, very

brittle by long burial in the earth, but not by any means so old or porous as the fragments we had discovered in the long barrow. A pretty pattern ran round its edge—a pattern in the simplest and most primitive style of ornamentation; for it consisted merely of the print of the potter's thumb-nail, firmly pressed into the moist clay before baking. Beside the urn lay a second specimen of early pottery, one of those curious perforated jars which antiquaries call by the very question-begging name of incense-cups; and within it we discovered the most precious part of all our 'find,' a beautiful wedge-shaped bronze hatchet, and three thin gold beads. Having no consideration for the feelings of the ashes, we promptly appropriated both hatchet and beads, and took the urn and cup as a peace-offering to the lord of the manor for our desecration of a tomb (with his full consent) on the land of his fathers.

Why did these bronze-age people burn instead of burying their dead? Why did they anticipate the latest fashionable mode of disposal of corpses, and go in for cremation with such thorough conviction? They couldn't have been influenced by those rather unpleasant sanitary considerations which so profoundly agitated the mind of 'Graveyard Walker.' Sanitation was still in a very rudimentary state in the year five thousand B.C.; and the ingenuous Celt, who is still given to 'waking' his neighbours, when they die of small-pox, with a sublime indifference to the chances of infection, must have had some other and more powerful reason for adopting the comparatively unnatural system of cremation in preference to that of simple burial. The change, I believe, was due to a further development of religious ideas on the part of the Celtic tribesmen above that of the primitive stone-age cannibals.

When men began to bury their dead, they did so in the firm belief in another life, which life was regarded as the exact counterpart of this present one. The unsophisticated savage, holding that in that equal sky his faithful dog would bear him company, naturally enough had the dog in question killed and buried with him, in order that it might follow him to the happy hunting-grounds. Clearly, you can't hunt without your arrows and your tomahawk; so the flint weapons and the trusty bow accompanied their owner in his new dwelling-place. The wooden haft, the deer-sinew bow-string, the perishable articles of food and drink have long since decayed within the damp tumulus; but the harder stone and earthenware articles have survived till now, to tell the

story of that crude and simple early faith. Very crude and illogical, indeed, it was, however, for it is quite clear that the actual body of the dead man was thought of as persisting to live a sort of underground life within the barrow. A stone hut was constructed for its use; real weapons and implements were left by its side; and slaves and wives were ruthlessly massacred, as still in Ashantee, in order that their bodies might accompany the corpse of the buried master in his subterranean dwelling. In all this we have clear evidence of a very inconsistent, savage, materialistic belief, not indeed in the immortality of the soul, but in the continued underground life of the dead body.

With the progress of time, however, men's ideas upon these subjects began to grow more definite and more consistent. Instead of the corpse, we get the ghost; instead of the material underground world, we get the idealised and sublimated conception of a shadowy Hades, a world of shades, a realm of incorporeal disembodied spirits. With the growth of the idea in this ghostly nether world, there arises naturally the habit of burning the dead, in order fully to free the liberated spirit from the earthly chains that clog and bind it. It is, indeed, a very noticeable fact that wherever this belief in a world of shades is implicitly accepted, there cremation follows as a matter of course; while wherever (among savage or barbaric races) burial is practised, there a more materialistic creed of bodily survival necessarily accompanies it. To carry out this theory to its full extent, not only must the body itself be burnt, but also all its belongings with it. Ghosts are clothed in ghostly clothing; and the question has often been asked of modern spiritualists by materialistic scoffers, 'Where do the ghosts get their coats and dresses?' The true believer in cremation and the shadowy world has no difficulty at all in answering that crucial inquiry; he would say at once, 'They are the ghosts of the clothes that were burnt with the body.' In the gossiping story of Periander, as veraciously retailed for us by that dear old grandmotherly scandalmonger, Herodotus, the shade of Melissa refuses to communicate with her late husband, by medium or otherwise, on the ground that she found herself naked and shivering with cold, because the garments buried with her had not been burnt, and therefore were of no use to her in the world of shades. So Periander, to put a stop to this sad state of spiritual destitution, requisitioned all the best dresses of the Corinthian ladies, burnt them bodily in a great trench, and received an immediate

answer from the gratified shade, who was thenceforth enabled to walk about in the principal promenades of Hades among the best-dressed ghosts of that populous quarter.

The belief which thus survived among the civilised Greeks of the age of the Despots is shared still by Fijis and Karens, and was derived by all in common from early ancestors of like faith with the founders of Ogbury round barrow. The weapons were broken and the clothes burnt, to liberate their ghosts into the world of spirits, just as now, in Fiji, knives and axes have their spiritual counterparts, which can only be released when the material shape is destroyed or purified by the action of fire. Everything, in such a state, is supposed to possess a soul of its own; and the fire is the chosen mode for setting the soul free from all clogging earthly impurities. So till yesterday, in the rite of suttee, the Hindoo widow immolated herself upon her husband's pyre, in order that her spirit might follow him unhampered to the world of ghosts whither he was bound. Thus the twin barrows on Ogbury hillside bridge over for us two vast epochs of human culture, both now so remote as to merge together mentally to the casual eyes of modern observers, but yet in reality marking in their very shape and disposition an immense, long, and slow advance of human reason. For just as the long barrow answers in form to the buried human corpse and the chambered hut that surrounds and encloses it, so does the round barrow answer in form to the urn containing the calcined ashes of the cremated barbarian. And is it not a suggestive fact that when we turn to the little graveyard by the church below we find the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body, as opposed to the Pagan belief in the immortality of the soul, once more bringing us back to the small oblong mound which is after all but the dwarfed and humbler modern representative of the long barrow? So deep is the connection between that familiar shape and the practice of inhumation that the dwarf long barrow seems everywhere to have come into use again throughout all Europe, after whole centuries of continued cremation, as the natural concomitant and necessary mark of Christian burial.

This is what I would have said, if I had been asked, at Ogbury Barrows. But I wasn't asked; so I devoted myself instead to psychological research, and said nothing.

FISH OUT OF WATER.

STROLLING one day in what is euphemistically termed, in equatorial latitudes, 'the cool of the evening,' along a tangled tropical American field-path, through a low region of lagoons and water-courses, my attention happened to be momentarily attracted from the monotonous pursuit of the nimble mosquito by a small animal scuttling along irregularly before me, as if in a great hurry to get out of my way before I could turn him into an excellent specimen. At first sight I took the little hopper, in the grey dusk, for one of the common, small green lizards, and wasn't much disposed to pay it any distinguished share either of personal or scientific attention. But as I walked on a little further through the dense underbrush, more and more of these shuffling and scurrying little creatures kept crossing the path, hastily, all in one direction, and all, as it were, in a formed body or marching phalanx. Looking closer, to my great surprise I found they were actually fish out of water, going on a walking tour, for change of air, to a new residence. Genuine fish, a couple of inches long each, not eel-shaped or serpentine in outline, but closely resembling a red mullet in miniature, though much more beautifully and delicately coloured, and with fins and tails of the most orthodox spiny and prickly description. They were travelling across country in a bee-line, thousands of them together, not at all like the helpless fish out of water of popular imagination, but as unconcernedly and naturally as if they had been accustomed to the overland route for their whole lifetimes, and were walking now on the king's highway without let or hindrance.

I took one up in my hand and examined it more carefully; though the catching it wasn't by any means so easy as it sounds on paper, for these perambulatory fish are thoroughly inured to the dangers and difficulties of dry land, and can get out of your way when you try to capture them with a rapidity and dexterity which are truly surprising. The little creatures are very pretty, well-formed catfish, with bright intelligent eyes, and a body armed all over, like the armadillo's, with a continuous coat of hard and horny mail. This coat is not formed of scales, as in most fish,

but of toughened skin, as in crocodiles and alligators, arranged in two overlapping rows of imbricated shields, exactly like the round tiles so common on the roofs of Italian cottages. The fish walks, or rather shambles along ungracefully, by the shuffling movement of a pair of stiff spines placed close behind his head, aided by the steering action of his tail, and a constant snake-like wriggling motion of his entire body. Leg spines of somewhat the same sort are found in the common English gurnard, and in this age of Aquariums and Fisheries Exhibitions, most adult persons above the age of twenty-one years must have observed the gurnards themselves crawling along suspiciously by their aid at the bottom of a tank at the Crystal Palace or the polyonymous South Kensington building. But while the European gurnard only uses his substitutes for legs on the bed of the ocean, my itinerant tropical acquaintance (his name, I regret to say, is *Callichthys*) uses them boldly for terrestrial locomotion across the dry lowlands of his native country. And while the gurnard has no less than six of these pro-legs, the American land fish has only a single pair with which to accomplish his arduous journeys. If this be considered as a point of inferiority in the armour-plated American species, we must remember that while beetles and grasshoppers have as many as six legs apiece, man, the head and crown of things, is content to scramble through life ungracefully with no more than two.

There are a great many tropical American pond-fish which share these adventurous gipsy habits of the pretty little *Callichthys*. Though they belong to two distinct groups, otherwise unconnected, the circumstances of the country they inhabit have induced in both families this queer fashion of waddling out courageously on dry land, and going on voyages of exploration in search of fresh ponds and shallows new, somewhere in the neighbourhood of their late residence. One kind in particular, the Brazilian Doras, takes land journeys of such surprising length that he often spends several nights on the way, and the Indians who meet the wandering bands during their migrations fill several baskets full of the prey thus dropped upon them, as it were, from the kindly clouds.

Both Doras and *Callichthys*, too, are well provided with means of defence against the enemies they may chance to meet during their terrestrial excursions; for in both kinds there are the same bony shields along the sides, securing the little travellers, as far

as possible, from attack on the part of hungry piscivorous animals. Doras further utilises its powers of living out of water by going ashore to fetch dry leaves, with which it builds itself a regular nest, like a bird's, at the beginning of the rainy season. In this nest the affectionate parents carefully cover up their eggs, the hope of the race, and watch over them with the utmost attention. Many other fish build nests in the water, of materials naturally found at the bottom; but Doras, I believe, is the only one that builds them on the beach, of materials sought for on the dry land.

Such amphibious habits on the part of certain tropical fish are easy enough to explain by the fashionable clue of 'adaptation to environment.' Ponds are always very likely to dry up, and so the animals that frequent ponds are usually capable of bearing a very long deprivation of water. Indeed, our evolutionists generally hold that land animals have in every case sprung from pond animals which have gradually adapted themselves to do without water altogether. Life, according to this theory, began in the ocean, spread up the estuaries into the greater rivers, thence extended to the brooks and lakes, and finally migrated to the ponds, puddles, swamps and marshes, whence it took at last, by tentative degrees, to the solid shore, the plains, and the mountains. Certainly the tenacity of life shown by pond animals is very remarkable. Our own English carp bury themselves deeply in the mud in winter, and there remain in a dormant condition many months entirely without food. During this long hibernating period, they can be preserved alive for a considerable time out of water, especially if their gills are, from time to time, slightly moistened. They may then be sent to any address by parcels post, packed in wet moss, without serious damage to their constitution; though, according to Dr. Günther, these dissipated products of civilisation prefer to have a piece of bread steeped in brandy put into their mouths to sustain them beforehand. In Holland, where the carp are not so sophisticated, they are often kept the whole winter through, hung up in a net to keep them from freezing. At first they require to be slightly wetted from time to time, just to acclimatise them gradually to so dry an existence; but after a while they adapt themselves cheerfully to their altered circumstances, and feed on an occasional frugal meal of bread and milk with Christian resignation.

Of all land-frequenting fish, however, by far the most famous is

the so-called climbing perch of India, which not only walks bodily out of the water, but even climbs trees by means of special spines, near the head and tail, so arranged as to stick into the bark and enable it to wriggle its way up awkwardly, something after the same fashion as the 'looping' of caterpillars. The tree-climber is a small scaly fish, seldom more than seven inches long; but it has developed a special breathing apparatus to enable it to keep up the stock of oxygen on its terrestrial excursions, which may be regarded as to some extent the exact converse of the means employed by divers to supply themselves with air under water. Just above the gills, which form of course its natural hereditary breathing apparatus, the climbing perch has invented a new and wholly original water chamber, containing within it a frilled bony organ, which enables it to extract oxygen from the stored-up water during the course of its aerial peregrinations. While on shore it picks up small insects, worms, and grubs; but it also has vegetarian tastes of its own, and does not despise fruits and berries. The Indian jugglers tame the climbing perches and carry them about with them as part of their stock in trade; their ability to live for a long time out of water makes them useful confederates in many small tricks which seem very wonderful to people accustomed to believe that fish die almost at once when taken out of their native element.

The Indian snakehead is a closely allied species, common in the shallow ponds and fresh-water tanks of India, where holy Brahmans bathe and drink and die and are buried, and most of which dry up entirely during the dry season. The snakehead, therefore, has similarly accommodated himself to this annual peculiarity in his local habitation by acquiring a special chamber for retaining water to moisten his gills throughout his long deprivation of that prime necessary. He lives composedly in semi-fluid mud, or lies torpid in the hard baked clay at the bottom of the dry tank from which all the water has utterly evaporated in the drought of summer. As long as the mud remains soft enough to allow the fish to rise slowly through it, they come to the surface every now and then to take in a good hearty gulp of air, exactly as gold fish do in England when confined with thoughtless or ignorant cruelty in a glass globe too small to provide sufficient oxygen for their respiration. But when the mud hardens entirely they hibernate, or rather æstivate, in a dormant condition until the bursting of the monsoon fills the ponds once more with the welcome

water. Even in the perfectly dry state, however, they probably manage to get a little air every now and again through the numerous chinks and fissures in the sun-baked mud. Our Aryan brother then goes a-fishing playfully with a spade and bucket, and digs the snakehead in this mean fashion out of his comfortable lair with an ultimate view to the manufacture of pillau. In Burmah, indeed, while the mud is still soft the ingenious Burmese catch the helpless creatures by a still meaner and more unsportsmanlike device. They spread a large cloth over the slimy ooze where the snakeheads lie buried, and so cut off entirely for the moment their supply of oxygen. The poor fish, half-asphyxiated by this unkind treatment, come up gasping to the surface under the cloth in search of fresh air, and are then easily caught with the hand and tossed into baskets by the degenerate Buddhists.

Old Anglo-Indians even say that some of these mud-haunting Oriental fish will survive for many years in a state of suspended animation, and that when ponds or jhils which are known to have been dry for several successive seasons are suddenly filled by heavy rains, they are found to be swarming at once with full-grown snakeheads, released in a moment from what I may venture to call their living tomb in the hardened bottom. Whether such statements are absolutely true or not the present deponent would be loth to decide dogmatically; but, if we were implicitly to swallow everything that the old Anglo-Indian in his simplicity assures us he has seen—well, the clergy would have no further cause any longer to deplore the growing scepticism and unbelief of these latter unfaithful ages.

This habit of lying in the mud and there becoming torpid may be looked upon as a natural alternative to the habit of migrating across country, when your pond dries up, in search of larger and more permanent sheets of water. Some fish solve the problem how to get through the dry season in one of these two alternative fashions, and some in the other. In flat countries where small ponds and tanks alone exist, the burying plan is almost universal; in plains traversed by large rivers or containing considerable scattered lakes, the migratory system finds greater favour with the piscine population.

One tropical species which adopts the tactics of hiding itself in the hard clay, the African mud-fish, is specially interesting to us human beings on two accounts—first, because, unlike almost all other kinds of fish, it possesses lungs as well as gills; and, secondly,

because it forms an intermediate link between the true fish and the frogs or amphibians, and therefore stands in all probability in the direct line of human descent, being the living representative of one among our own remote and early ancestors. Scientific interest and filial piety ought alike to secure our attention for the African mud-fish. It lives its amphibious life among the rice-fields on the Nile, the Zambesi, and the Gambia, and is so greatly given to a terrestrial existence that its swim-bladder has become porous and cellular, so as to be modified into a pair of true and serviceable lungs. In fact, the lungs themselves in all the higher animals are merely the swim-bladders of fish, slightly altered so as to perform a new but closely allied office. The mud-fish is common enough in all the larger English aquariums, owing to a convenient habit in which it indulges, and which permits it to be readily conveyed to all parts of the globe on the same principle as the vans for furniture. When the dry season comes on and the rice-fields are reduced to banks of baking mud, the mud-fish retire to the bottom of their pools, where they form for themselves a sort of cocoon of hardened clay, lined with mucus, and with a hole at each end to admit the air; and in this snug retreat they remain torpid till the return of wet weather. As the fish usually reach a length of three or four feet, the cocoons are of course by no means easy to transport entire. Nevertheless the natives manage to dig them up whole, fish and all; and if the capsules are not broken, the unconscious inmates can be sent across by steamer to Europe with perfect safety. Their astonishment when they finally wake up after their long slumber, and find themselves inspecting the British public, as introduced to them by Mr. Farini, through a sheet of plate-glass, must be profound and interesting.

In England itself, on the other hand, we have at least one kind of fish which exemplifies the opposite or migratory solution of the dry pond problem, and that is our familiar friend the common eel. The ways of eels are indeed mysterious, for nobody has ever yet succeeded in discovering where, when, or how they manage to spawn; nobody has ever yet seen an eel's egg, or caught a female eel in the spawning condition, or even observed a really adult male or female specimen of perfect development. All the eels ever found in fresh water are immature and undeveloped creatures. But eels do certainly spawn somewhere or other in the deep sea, and every year, in the course of the summer,

flocks of young ones, known as elvers, ascend the rivers in enormous quantities, like a vast army under numberless leaders. At each tributary or affluent, be it river, brook, stream, or ditch, a proportionate detachment of the main body is given off to explore the various branches, while the central force wriggles its way up the chief channel, regardless of obstacles, with undiminished vigour. When the young elvers come to a weir, a wall, a flood-gate, or a lasher, they simply squirm their way up the perpendicular barrier with indescribable wriggings, as if they were wholly unacquainted, physically as well as mentally, with Newton's magnificent discovery of gravitation. Nothing stops them; they go wherever water is to be found; and though millions perish hopelessly in the attempt, millions more survive in the end to attain their goal in the upper reaches. They even seem to scent ponds or lakes mysteriously, at a distance, and will strike boldly straight across country, to sheets of water wholly cut off from communication with the river which forms their chief highway.

The full-grown eels are also given to journeying across country in a more sober, sedate, and dignified manner, as becomes fish which have fully arrived at years, or rather months, of discretion. When the ponds in which they live dry up in summer, they make in a bee-line for the nearest sheet of fresh water, whose direction and distance they appear to know intuitively, through some strange instinctive geographical faculty. On their way across country, they do not despise the succulent rat, whom they swallow whole when caught with great gusto. To keep their gills wet during these excursions, eels have the power of distending the skin on each side of the neck, just below the head, so as to form a big pouch or swelling. This pouch they fill with water, to carry a good supply along with them, until they reach the ponds for which they are making. It is the pouch alone that enables eels to live so long out of water under all circumstances, and so incidentally exposes them to the disagreeable experience of getting skinned alive, which it is to be feared still forms the fate of most of those that fall into the clutches of the human species.

A far more singular walking fish than any of these is the odd creature that rejoices (unfortunately) in the very classical surname of *Periophthalmus*, which is, being interpreted, Stare-about. (If he had a recognised English name of his own, I would gladly give it; but as he hasn't, and as it is clearly necessary to call him

something, I fear we must stick to the somewhat alarming scientific nomenclature.) *Periophthalmus*, then, is an odd fish of the tropical Pacific shores, with a pair of very distinct forelegs (theoretically described as modified pectoral fins), and with two goggle eyes, which he can protrude at pleasure right outside the sockets, so as to look in whatever direction he chooses, without even taking the trouble to turn his head to left or right, backward or forward. At ebb tide this singular peripatetic goby literally walks straight out of the water, and promenades the bare beach erect on two legs, in search of small crabs and other stray marine animals left behind by the receding waters. If you try to catch him, he hops away briskly much like a frog, and stares back at you grimly over his left shoulder, with his squinting optics. So completely adapted is he for this amphibious long-shore existence, that his big eyes, unlike those of most other fish, are formed for seeing in the air as well as in the water. Nothing can be more ludicrous than to watch him suddenly thrusting these very moveable orbs right out of their sockets like a pair of telescopes, and twisting them round in all directions so as to see in front, behind, on top, and below, in one delightful circular sweep.

There is also a certain curious tropical American carp which, though it hardly deserves to be considered in the strictest sense as a fish out of water, yet manages to fall nearly half-way under that peculiar category, for it always swims with its head partly above the surface and partly below. But the funniest thing in this queer arrangement is the fact that one half of each eye is out in the air and the other half is beneath in the water. Accordingly, the eye is divided horizontally by a dark strip into two distinct and unlike portions, the upper one of which has a pupil adapted to vision in the air alone, while the lower is adapted to seeing in the water only. The fish, in fact, always swims with its eye half out of the water, and it can see as well on dry land as in its native ocean. Its name is *Anableps*, but in all probability it does not wish the fact to be generally known.

The flying fish are fish out of water in a somewhat different and more transitory sense. Their aerial excursions are brief and rapid; they can only fly a very little way, and have soon to take once more for safety to their own more natural and permanent element. More than forty kinds of the family are known, in appearance very much like English herrings, but with the front

fins expanded and modified into veritable wings. It is fashionable nowadays among naturalists to assert that the flying fish don't fly; that they merely jump horizontally out of the water with a powerful impulse, and fall again as soon as the force of the first impetus is entirely spent. When men endeavour to persuade you to such folly, believe them not. For my own part, I have *seen* the flying fish fly—deliberately fly, and flutter, and rise again, and change the direction of their flight in mid-air, exactly after the fashion of a big dragonfly. If the other people who have watched them haven't succeeded in seeing them fly, that is their own fault, or at least their own misfortune; perhaps their eyes weren't quick enough to catch the rapid, though to me perfectly recognisable, hovering and fluttering of the gauze-like wings; but I have seen them myself, and I maintain that on such a question one piece of positive evidence is a great deal better than a hundred negative. The testimony of all the witnesses who didn't see the murder committed is as nothing compared with the single testimony of the one man who really did see it. And in this case I have met with many other quick observers who fully agreed with me against the weight of scientific opinion, that they have seen the flying fish really fly with their own eyes, and no mistake about it. The German professors, indeed, all think otherwise; but then the German professors all wear green spectacles, which are the outward and visible sign of 'blinded eyesight poring over miserable books.' The unsophisticated vision of the noble British seaman is unanimously with me on the matter of the reality of the fishes' flight.

Another group of very interesting fish out of water are the flying gurnards, common enough in the Mediterranean and the tropical Atlantic. They are much heavier and bigger creatures than the true flying fish of the herring type, being often a foot and a half long, and their wings are much larger in proportion, though not, I think, really so powerful as those of their pretty little silvery rivals. All flying fish fly only of necessity, not from choice. They leave the water when pursued by their enemies, or when frightened by the rapid approach of a big steamer. So swiftly do they fly, however, that they can far outstrip a ship going at the rate of ten knots an hour; and I have often watched one keep ahead of a great Pacific liner under full steam for many minutes together in quick successive flights of three or four hundred feet each. Oddly enough, they can fly further against

the wind than before it—a fact acknowledged even by the spectacled Germans themselves, and very hard indeed to reconcile with the orthodox belief that they are not flying at all, but only jumping. I don't know whether the flying gurnards are good eating or not; but the silvery flying fish are caught for market (sad desecration of the poetry of nature!) in the Windward Islands, and when nicely fried in egg and bread-crumbs are really quite as good for practical purposes as smelts or whiting or any other prosaic European substitute.

On the whole, it will be clear, I think, to the impartial reader from this rapid survey that the helplessness and awkwardness of a fish out of water has been much exaggerated by the thoughtless generalisation of unscientific humanity. Granting, for argument's sake, that most fish prefer the water, as a matter of abstract predilection, to the dry land, it must be admitted *per contra* that many fish cut a much better figure on terra firma than most of their critics themselves would cut in mid-ocean. There are fish that wriggle across country intrepidly with the dexterity and agility of the most accomplished snakes; there are fish that walk about on open sand-banks, semi-erect on two legs, as easily as lizards; there are fish that hop and skip on tail and fins in a manner that the celebrated jumping frog himself might have observed with envy; and there are fish that fly through the air of heaven with a grace and swiftness that would put to shame innumerable species among their feathered competitors. Nay, there are even fish, like some kinds of eels and the African mud-fish, that scarcely live in the water at all, but merely frequent wet and marshy places, where they lie snugly in the soft ooze and damp earth that line the bottom. If I have only succeeded, therefore, in relieving the mind of one sensitive and retiring fish from the absurd obloquy cast upon its appearance when it ventures away for awhile from its proper element, then, in the pathetic and prophetic words borrowed from a thousand uncut prefaces, this work will not, I trust, have been written in vain.

*RAINBOW GOLD.*¹

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK VI.

HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD GREW REAL.

CHAPTER I.

A DINGY room, with a low discoloured ceiling, a rusty grate, a carpetless floor, and a vulgar paper rotting from the walls. A room twelve feet by ten, or thereabouts, having for sole furniture a bed with a dirty counterpane, a burly kitchen chair, a spidery miniature washing-stand, a chest of drawers, with half a brick under one corner in lieu of a foot, and a triangular piece of broken mirror fastened by a cunning arrangement of tintacks to the wall beside the curtainless window. Hanging about the walls half a dozen unframed oil-paintings, no one of them quite finished. Seated on the bed, and staring into the rusty grate with a far-away smile, Clem Bache.

The room bespoke poverty, and Clem's figure was in accord with it. He was greatly aged; there were gray hairs on his temples, and his crown was tonsured. His forehead was lined, his eyes were larger and brighter than they should have been, the temples were hollowed and showed the modelling of the skull.

From the window stretched far and far away a vast desert of house-tops, and on its furthest border rose a dome, surmounted by a ball and a cross. The sky was of a faint smoky blue, the sun was at the zenith, and the heat was sweltering. Through the open window rose a constant surge of sound which made much the same accompaniment to thought as the roar of a sea heard inland, and bore the same indistinct melodies and fancies with it.

Clem sat smiling at the rusty grate, twirling a letter in his thin fingers. A faint perfume of roses exhaled from the letter, and half a dozen dead rose-leaves lay on the boarded floor between his feet. In the stifling heat there was a hint of mournfulness in

¹ This novel has been dramatised by the author.

the odour of the dead leaves, and there was more than a hint of mournfulness in Clem's far-off smile.

Footsteps sounded on the uncarpeted stairs without, and Clem looked up and listened, while the absent smile faded slowly. The steps came higher and paused upon the landing. He leaned forward from his seat upon the bed, and opened the door.

'Ah, Mr. Armstrong,' he said cheerfully. 'Come in, sir, come in. You here as well, David? Come in.'

'Ay,' said Armstrong; 'David's come to have a look at ye, Clem. And this,' looking about him with eyebrows mildly raised, 'is your new doemiceel. I'll not say I think much of it.'

David, a big-nosed man, with a face of cheerful simplicity and good nature, entered the room and shook hands with Clem. He was dressed in precise black; his boots, his hat, his coat, his gloves were all black and glossy. The day was hot, but he was cool and rosy; the day was dusty, but his garments were speckless. His mild blue eyes were the eyes of William Armstrong purged of dreams—they were as mild as his father's, but they had no suggestion of the father's humour, and none of his absence of mind. He looked about the room and confirmed his father's judgment of it.

'I can't say that I think much of it either,' he said.

'I don't think much of it myself,' returned Clem, with a humorous grimace. 'I find it better not to think much of it. I think of it as little as I can. It serves, and has to serve.'

'Now, there's the point, Clem,' said Armstrong. 'It serves in a way, but not because it has to serve.'

'Yes,' said Clem, with an air of obstinacy which was not common with him; 'it serves, and has to serve.'

'Now, Clem, be a good lad, and listen to reason. I'll not ask you to come and live with us without paying us, but we'll give you a room that shall have the merit of being clean if it has no other, and it shall be just a wee bit better furnished than this one, and we'll charge ye the rent ye pay here. And, in addition to that, we'll thank ye for coming. What do you say, David?'

'I say,' replied David, 'that if his head is only half screwed on, he'll come. This place is like a pigsty.'

'There's David's wife's a Castle Barfield woman,' said Armstrong, 'and we'd all be old friends together. The shop's doing far better than it used to do in the old place, though I'm a burthen on it, and like to be. But David's wife is just invahlyable. We've a room to spare in the house, and we've had it furnished expressly

for you. Now come away, lad, and let us have no more trouble with you.'

'It's kind of you,' Clem answered, 'and it's like you, but I can't come, Mr. Armstrong. I can't be a burthen on my friends.'

'Listen to him,' cried Armstrong. 'Man alive, we'll allow ye to pay your way.'

'I couldn't pay my way,' said Clem, with a sort of resolved gentleness. 'I couldn't pay what I should cost you. If you and David could afford it, it would be another matter, but you can't. You have weights enough already, and I won't consent to be another. Don't ask me. If you could afford to keep me, you should have your way. Don't think I stay away from any sense of pride or any want of friendship. The plain truth of the matter is, and you both know it, you are as poor as I am.'

'Talk to him, David,' said Armstrong. 'Just tell him what I'd tell him if the house were mine.'

'Look here, Clem,' said David in obedience to this appeal. 'I shall begin to think that your head isn't screwed on properly if you go on in this way. It's ridiculous to be proud with us, you know. I'm making thirty-five shillings a week. The shop profits average nine shillings. David, the second, earns seven-and-sixpence. There's my father, my wife, myself and four children. Seven people, you see. Sevens into fifty-one and sixpence is seven and fourpence and a fraction over of two-sevenths of a penny. Anybody that can afford to join us and put seven and fourpence half-penny a week into the stock is a benefactor to the house, and raises the available average by a fraction.'

'That's an amazing head for figures,' said Armstrong admiringly. 'I suppose ye got that from your poor old mother, lad, for it's certain ye never got it from me. I've a general notion that there's a great potential bundle o' halfpence packed away in a five-pound note, but I'd have to spend an hour in finding out how many.'

'Two thousand four hundred,' said David with a snap.

'That's a vary remarkable faculty,' Armstrong said. 'You're sure you're right, David?' David nodded. 'No mere guess work?' David shook his head. 'It's a remarkable and striking sign, Clem lad, of the over-crowded state of the labour market in this town o' London, that an aptitude for mental arethmetic—a cultivated aptitude that's reached a growth like this—can command no more than five an' thirty shillings a week.'

'Pooh!' said David. 'There's nothing remarkable in that. How many halfpence in a five-pound note? office boy will tell you that if his head's screwed on properly.'

'I'd never the slightest little bit of a head for figures,' Armstrong said, musingly. 'A date would slip through my head like an empty needle through a piece o' calico. A story, or a vairste, or a game o' chess, or any useless toy o' that kind, would always stick.'

'Stories and verses won't stick in my head,' said David. 'If I counted the words in a story-book I could tell you a fortnight after how many there were, but if I read the book I should know nothing about it in a week.'

'Nonsense!' cried Clem, who was greatly relieved to find the theme thus changed. 'When I was a little fellow—when I was less than I am now, I mean—you used to tell me stories. You were better than your father's bookshelves.'

'When I was a child,' returned David with great gravity, 'I thought as a child, and spoke as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things. I have to concern myself with facts, Clem.'

'Ay!' said Armstrong. 'Seven mouths to get fed every day. Four quarter days when rent's to pay. I've had to concern myself with the like facts in my time, David; chieftains that winna gang, and downa be disputed. Is the letter from any o' the Castle Barfield folk, Clem?' he asked with odd abruptness.

'It's from Sarah,' returned Clem, who still twisted the envelope in his thin fingers.

'I guessed it from the rose-leaves,' the old man said pointing to the floor, where the dead leaves lay between Clem's feet. 'That'll be from Clem's rose-bush?' Clem nodded with a faint smile. Clem's rose-bush had been planted on Sarah's tenth birthday at the back of Konak Cottage, and still flourished there. 'All's well with her?'

'Yes,' said Clem, 'she says so. But poor old Round is breaking up, and now that the great case is over, he hasn't anything left to live for. He has lost everything—the last penny.'

'It isn't that would break him,' said Armstrong, 'but the mastiff heart of him couldn't bear to be beaten.'

'My father died of it,' said Clem, rising from his seat on the bed and walking to the open window.

'Twas a vary pretty work of Mr. Whittaker's altogether,'

began Armstrong after a pause. 'He broke the heart of his old mother, he well-nigh killed the sweetest girl in the parish, he killed her father outright, and he ruined two honest men who had no more to do with his rascalities than I had.'

'Ah!' said David, 'it was a great mistake on your father's part, Clem, and on old Round's, to fight the case at all. The damages claimed were excessive, but an arbitrator would have squared that in a week. As partners they were legally responsible for all young Whittaker's doings, and if their heads had been screwed on properly, they'd have recognised the fact.'

'First and last,' Clem answered, 'the law costs were fifteen thousand pounds. We paid both sides, of course.'

'The blackguard's out there still, I suppose,' said Armstrong. 'If there are many of his equals in New South Wales, New South Wales is no nice place to live in, I'm thinking. What in the name of wonder did he do it for, Clem?'

'God knows!' said Clem. 'I suppose he wanted poor Job out of the way.'

'Ye think he fancied that Sarah would condone that affair about the mine?'

'Yes. I always thought that his only motive. The man was fool as well as villain.'

'Was he fool enough for that?' asked Armstrong. 'There was always a mystery in that matter, Clem, and none of us ever bottomed it. Nobody had a right to pay much heed to what *he* said, but he stuck out that he meant no more than to send him to sleep. Now, he could never be brought to say *why* he wanted to send him to sleep, and yet it's as clear as daylight that the dose he gave would never have been fatal, but for that weak heart of poor Job's which nobody knew of but yourself. Who'd have thought of that great giant having a weakness of the heart? Eh, man! I lost the lad I loved best in the world when I lost poor Job.'

'There was nobody but you and me who really knew him,' said Clem. 'And Sarah.'

'My heart's been lifted up in solemn thanksgiving for him, many and many a time,' said Armstrong. 'He died at the fittest hour; and though he died foully he could have done no better. Just when the judgment on his hot youth pounced down at his gates he was flown out o' reach.'

'I'll never grieve for a friend's death any more,' Clem said,

quietly but sorrowfully. 'One more tired head on the pillow! Why should we cry for that?'

'Clem!' Clem turned round from the window at Armstrong's change of tone. 'Did y'ever associate that sailor fellow with Job's death in any way? That Bowling as he called himself.'

'No,' said Clem, in some amazement. 'Why should I?'

'It's a wild fancy o' mine, maybe,' answered the grey Scot, 'and I've nothing substantial to base it on. I've hunted a motive for that crime until my head's spun, and I can light on nothing. There's Coleridge has some wild talk about "motiveless malignance" in a certain kind o' nature, but he's hovering, in his customary fog, about Iago, who had a motive as plain as the nose on David's face. Look at the facts, Clem. To run away wasn't the fashion to bring Sarah back to him, if that was his hope. He was going to Marseilles. Why Marseilles? And they found him with a map of Turkey spread out before him. Why Turkey? Now Clem, don't set me down for a madman, but where was Bowling's treasure buried? In Turkey. In the Balkan Hills. I make nothing of it. It's just a Pudding Bag Street that leads to nowhere.'

'You think that Job might have had the secret,' said Clem absently, and almost uninterestedly. 'And they poisoned him to get it?'

'Man!' cried Armstrong in a voice which made his hearers start. 'Ye've hit it.' They both stared at him in surprise, and he, looking from one to the other, lost something of the look of light and certainty which had flashed into his eyes. 'Anyway,' he said, 'there'd be an intelligible motive. And that's a thing I've never happened on in my wildest dreams till this minute.'

'What a fool the fellow was,' said David. 'I read a case in the papers last week that reminded me of him. A man buys a packet of stuff to kill rats. Next day his wife dies of poison. They find the rat-killing stuff locked up in a box and the key of the box in his pocket. Three weeks before he had persuaded his wife to insure her life, and had paid the first premium. Man's head wasn't half screwed on,' concluded David. 'I could have made a better murderer myself.'

'They're stupid,' said his father. 'Whittaker buys salts o' morphine the very day Job Round dies of that same drug. The very night he administers it he buys a little flask of whiskey at the Barfield Arms. He leaves the flask with the salts of morphine

mixed with the whiskey, behind him on the table to tell everybody how the thing was done. That fatality o' folly is the thing, Clem, lad, that brings half the fools to the gallows.'

'Let us get away from this theme,' said Clem. 'Let us talk of something else.'

'As ye will,' responded Armstrong. 'But I'll have a look at that in the new light ye've thrown on it. We'll go back from a disagreeable toepic to a pleasant one. How long 'll it take you to pack up your bit duds, lad, and be ready to sail away to David's house?'

'You must change the theme again,' said Clem. 'That's done with.'

'It's not done with, yet awhile,' Armstrong answered, 'and it never will be done with till we find ye settled there.' Clem shook his head, with a mournful resoluteness. 'Silly lad!' cried the old man pettishly. 'What'll ye do here?'

'I shall get on very well,' said Clem. 'I have sold some wax flowers. Perhaps I can sell some more, and I have what's left out of the wreck.'

'Eight bob a week,' said David; 'twenty pounds sixteen shillings per annum.'

'What's that to live on by your lane, man?' cried Armstrong. 'Come and throw it into our little store and ye rob nobody, but treble the value of your own income.'

But Clem was deaf to entreaty and persuasion, and would stay where he was.

'Must you have the plain truth?' he said at length. 'Well, you shall have it. I can tell it to the oldest friends I have. I am only fit to live alone. I have dark times. Leave me where I am. I must have quiet now and then. I am better here.' He spoke these disjointed sentences with difficulty and evident reluctance.

'What are the dark times, lad?' asked Armstrong gently. 'David, get away and walk in the street awhile.'

'I'll be back in ten minutes,' said David, quietly obeying his father's injunction.

'What are the dark times, lad?' Armstrong asked again. 'I'm ashamed for you, Clem. I've felt like a father till ye this thirty year. And between man an' man that love each other, there's a mighty healing in communion. What are they?'

'They're times,' said Clem, 'when my own mind plays the part of the patient man's wife to me.'

'The patient man's wife asked a question,' said Armstrong. 'D'ye mind it, lad? "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" says she.'

'I'm bitter,' said poor Clem, leaning with folded arms on the chest of drawers, and averting his face from his companion. 'I'm bitter. You shouldn't have asked me. You should have left me to myself.'

'Ay, lad,' answered Armstrong, laying a hand on his shoulder. 'Ay, ay, ay.'

'Oh,' said Clem in a tone of self-mockery, 'don't pity me, for Heaven's sake! It's wicked to rebel, no doubt, and a man should bear the hand of Providence patiently. A creature such as I am serves as a reminder to careless nurses. He gives wholesome people a comforting sense of contrast; and the Lord loveth whom He chasteneth. These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, serve to edify the observer.'

'Clem, I'm sorry for ye in my heart; I'm sorry, Clem. But don't think these things, lad; don't think them. There's a deep beyond the lowest.'

'Oh!' said Clem, 'there's real comfort. I meet some poor wretch worse off than I am. There's a source from which one can draw peace of mind in plenty. Here's a man whose body's more twisted and tortured, who is hungry oftener than I am. There's a plaster for a sore. He fell out of a gayer paradise than mine into a hotter purgatory. Comfort! Comfort!'

'Clem, lad, come and live with us, dark days and all. Come to a little bit of love and human nature, lad, and warm your heart at it.'

Clem said nothing to this. He had left his real griefs unspoken, and found them now, as he had always found them, quite unspeakable. Sarah's life was spoiled, and there was no more joy for her, and there lay his sorrow; for it does happen now and again that a man loves a woman well enough to bind up all his happiness in hers. That she should be poor was much for Clem to bear, much more than his own poverty. But that her life should be emptied of gladness, that her heart should have been broken by so worthless a rascal, and that all the long days of life should show her the same monotony of hopeless grey his own weary years spread before him, was a grief beside which his

personal troubles were small indeed. He suffered because she suffered, and if she could have been happy he would have been at peace. There are people who accept this kind of love when they encounter it in fiction complacently enough, who would have no shadow of belief to give it in real life. And yet it is a real thing, though a rare one. And Clem's heart was too full of Sarah's troubles to have much room for the remembrance of his own; only after his own manner he chose to seem bitter over sorrows he despised, rather than show a secret which looked so sacred to him.

'I'd think it a hard thing if ye doubted the welcome ye'd get,' said Armstrong after a pause; 'and there's nothing else to keep you here.' To this Clem replied in effect that there was much else, and that he had never doubted the welcome. 'Will ye promise me one thing, Clem?' Armstrong at last was forced to ask him. 'Will ye come in case employment of any kind should put a little money in your pouch?'

'Why then,' said Clem with a sad smile, 'there would be no need to come; but if I could live with you and honestly feel that I should be no burden to you I would be very, very glad to do it. Don't think too ill of me for the things I said just now. The fit's over for the time. Here's David back again.' He opened the door, and waited for the steps which sounded on the stair.

'That's not David's footsteps,' said Armstrong, but Clem, standing with one hand on the edge of the door, and looking towards the landing, did not appear to hear him.

It was not David, as the present appearance of a tarpaulin hat at the head of the stairs made manifest. Clem turned away, and the wearer of the tarpaulin hat came heavily up on to the landing and crossed it. As he passed the open door he turned his head and gave a casual look into the room. He and Clem and Armstrong started and stared at the same instant. A second later the man had turned away, and flinging open the door of the opposite room he entered the chamber, turned and stared again, and closed the door.

'Man alive!' said Armstrong in a whisper. 'Did ye see who that was?'

'Yes,' returned Clem. 'It was that fellow Bowling.'

CHAPTER II.

CLEM'S sense of fun had been tickled by that fellow Bowling half-a-dozen years ago. Apart from the facts that Mr. Bowling was a persistent romancer, and that towards the close of his career at the farm he had fallen into a habit of excessive drinking, Clem knew of nothing to his disadvantage. An occasional bout of drinking was not so uncommon a thing amongst the farm labourers of Castle Barfield that a farmer's son was likely to have any very urgent call to be indignant or disgusted at it. We take these things pretty much as we find them, unless we are animated by a spirit of social reform, in which case we leave them pretty much as we find them. Mr. Bowling had not been much worse than his brethren, and he had one redeeming feature in Clem's eye. He was a decided oddity, and if there had remained a possibility of laughing at anything in these mournful days the crooked little poet would have welcomed Mr. Bowling's presence on the scene with actual heartiness.

But Clem began to form new opinions with respect to Mr. Bowling, opinions so flattering to that gentleman's tenderness of heart and general goodness of nature, that if anybody had expressed them in old days he would most certainly have laughed at them outright. Of course Clem was willing to believe in human goodness everywhere, but he was not prepared to encounter a blushing delicacy of generous sentiment in Mr. Bowling. Yet it was precisely this unexpected characteristic which began to declare itself.

The heat of the summer day had parched and baked all London, but towards evening a little breeze arose in the north-west and fanned the street with a faint sense of refreshment and returning coolness. As Clem sat at his open window, looking dreamily and sadly over the desert of house tops to where the great dome lay in a pale purple on the smoky amber of the evening sky, this breeze visited him with stray odours of the country, hinting of green trees and trodden grasses, and field and garden flowers. He fell into a day dream, and his spirit wandered back into old Staffordshire. He heard no more the rolling of London's tide, but the rooks were cawing and the bells were ringing after church, as was their wont on summer Sunday evenings, and deep peace was settling down on the hills that lay above Jacob's Ladder, and on all the wide-spread landscape visible from the highest of their

gentle eminences. Job was alive again, Sarah was in the full bloom of youth and happiness, and Clem himself had got back to the days of peace and plenty and content of heart. There was not even for the moment that underlying sense of the present which, for the most part, informs such day dreams with a spirit of sadness. He had forgotten so completely that he could completely remember, and altogether to remember is to live over again.

A knock at the door recalled him to the sordid room he sat in. Mr. Bowling's head and shoulders came round the edge of the door, and Mr. Bowling touched the forelock of old Father Time with a respectful forefinger.

'My respectful service to *you*, young governor,' said the intruder, sliding into the room. 'If you happen to be a smoker, cap'n, here's a handful of chice cigars as I happened to have come across of at the docks, as ain't no use to me, being a man as finds a pipe agreeable, and likewise a chew, but the fire too hot and the smoke too mild in a chice cigar for a man like me.'

Mr. Bowling's beard had grown quite grey, and his head, except for the Father Time forelock and the merest fringe of hair above the ears and the nape of the neck, was glossy bald. These changes made the coffee-brown of his skin look darker than ever, by force of contrast. As he spoke he came creaking on tiptoe into the room and held out a handful of tough-looking, dark-coloured cigars towards Clem.

'I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure,' Clem answered. 'It's very kind of you to offer them, but I don't smoke. I suppose you remember me?'

'Surely,' said Mr. Bowling. 'Ah!' He sighed and looked about him. 'The shillings for odd jobs he given me.' The sigh and the glance bespoke a recognition of the difference between this and former times.

'Are you living in London?' Clem inquired.

'Yes, young governor,' responded Mr. Bowling, touching his forelock. 'I am a-working at the docks, nigh by here, and a doing pretty well with my respectful service, being elevated for to be a ganger.'

'I'm glad to hear it,' said Clem. 'Have you been living long in this house?'

'No, cap'n,' replied Mr. Bowling. 'I can't say as I have. In p'int of fact I came here yesterday. It's handy for my work.'

'Have you been here ever since you left Castle Barfield?'

asked Clem. Not that he wanted to know, but the man seemed to mean kindly, and he could not be too cool with him.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Bowling. ‘I’ve been here, by which I mean to say I’ve been in London, ever since. I’m a-doing well, cap’n, but I could find it in my heart to be sorry for leavin’ Castle Barfield. I took a fancy, as a man might say, for rural ockipation, so to speak, cap’n, and I’m sorry as I so behaved as to give occasion for to be throwed over. Might I make so bold as to ask how the old governor is?’

‘My father?’ asked Clem, and Mr. Bowling nodded. ‘My father died a year ago.’

‘Ale and stout he looked,’ said Mr. Bowling almost with an air of sentiment, ‘as if he might ha’ lived to be a hundred. And the other gentleman, young governor, as you used to be about with a good deal; the gentleman as I used to earn a shilling now and then by carrying of a letter as you would send to him?’ He set his head on one side, opened his mouth and scratched his chin as if in a half pensive effort of memory. ‘Job Round, Esquire, cap’n, was the gentleman’s name if I am not mistook. A lofty figure of a gentleman, with a kind of chaffing way with him.’

‘Mr. Round is dead also,’ said Clem, who began to find Mr. Bowling’s intrusion painful, and yet in the native tenderness of his heart could find (or hardly wish to find) any means of letting him see as much.

‘What?’ cried the other in a loud voice of surprise. Clem looked up at him, and his manner changed. ‘Dead?’ he said in a sort of half inward whisper. ‘That hearty gentleman. Dead? Excuse me, young governor, what did he die of?’

‘He was poisoned,’ said Clem, rising agitatedly. ‘You must not talk to me of these things. You had better go.’

‘Pisoned?’ cried Mr. Bowling. ‘Why no amount of pison would ha’ killed him. I mean—he looked like that. Who pisoned him?’

‘I really can’t talk about these things to you,’ Clem answered, waving his thin hands nervously against him. Armstrong’s strange suspicion came into his mind, and though he had thought it wild enough at first, and had no reason for thinking it better founded now, it hurt him.

‘Pisoned!’ said Mr. Bowling. ‘Who pisoned him? What for? Did he pison himself?’

‘No,’ said Clem, ‘he was poisoned by a man named Whittaker.’

‘The Lord!’ cried Mr. Bowling, falling back a pace and glaring at Clem. ‘Whittaker? Young Whittaker?’

‘Yes,’ said Clem. ‘Go away, there’s a good fellow. I can’t talk of these things. They—they hurt me. Go away.’ He laid a hand on the seaman’s arm and urged him from the room. ‘Come again another time. I can’t talk of these things. Go away.’

Bowling, staring wildly at him, suffered himself to be pushed from the room, but retreated slowly step by step, and was still staring open-eyed, with a visible horror in his face, when Clem closed the door between them. It was some time before the nervous agitation which had impelled him to drive Bowling from the room had so far subsided that he could even begin to ask why he had been so shaken. The story was an old one now, and had been spoken of, in his hearing, a thousand times. Only that afternoon he had spoken of it; but he had spoken with old friends who knew his grief and partly shared it, and not with a rough stranger who laid a hard hand upon his wound out of mere curiosity. But by-and-by Mr. Bowling’s face, as he had stood glaring in the half light beyond the doorway, came back to him with an active horror in it, and Armstrong’s wild fancy returned with it. It was altogether mad and fantastical, and he knew it; but the madness and fantasy made it none the less exigent in his mind. He dismissed it, and it came again. He had not the remotest disposition to a real faith in it, and in spite of incredulity it insisted on being looked at. He did dismiss it at last as groundless and absurd—a thing that only needed to be looked at to declare itself as groundless and absurd. He wondered at Armstrong for giving voice to so mad an imagination—a thought without one reasonable fact to back it—and he wondered at himself for having given it a feather’s weight in his own mind for a second.

As for Mr. Bowling’s looks, they were probably a reflection of his own. He went to bed and dreamed of Mr. Bowling, who, with Aaron Whittaker looking on, poured a poisoned draught into something intended for Job Round to drink; and did it all night long. With returning day he was able to dispel these fancies, and with a meagre breakfast, consisting of a penny-worth of London milk in a cracked tea-cup, and a stale roll bought at half price because unsaleable except to the poor, he drew from one of the drawers in the chest with the broken foot a packet of water-colour drawings of his own, and selecting half-a-dozen of the best, set

out to see if he could find a customer. Often enough he paused to turn back again, for this was his first enterprise in this way, and he was not only more doubtful and diffident of his powers as an artist than he need have been, but he felt a sense of almost overpowering reluctance and shame. He walked far, and paused at the windows of many print shops with his little brown-paper parcel under his arm, but found courage to enter no one of them, and came home in the afternoon faint and weary. He punished himself for his cowardice, confining his second meal that day to bread and water, and lying on the bed to rest awhile, fell asleep. His night's rest had been broken by his dreams, and he was more fatigued than he knew perhaps, for he slept until twilight came, and was surprised to see lights gleaming in the windows of houses opposite when he awoke, and to find his own chamber filled with dusky shadows. The room faced the setting sun, but the evening was dark and gloomy. The cold wind and the gathering clouds alike threatened rain.

He closed the window and sat down behind it to look out vacantly at the darkening sky and the lights that twinkled more and more brightly here and there. Again, as on the previous evening, Mr. Bowling tapped at his door and slid his head and shoulders into the room in advance of the rest of his person.

'My respectful service, cap'n,' said Mr. Bowling. 'If you'll excuse me a making so bold; here's a bottle of sherry wine as happened to be made a present of to me to-day, and what's the good of throwin' away a cultivated article like that upon a man like me? So I'll make so free as to leave it, cap'n, with my respectful service.'

He had advanced into the room, and now, setting the bottle on the chest of drawers, he made as if to retire, but Clem rose to intercept him. The man seemed to mean kindly still, but Clem could not have his poverty pitied in this way, and could bear still less that Mr. Bowling should attempt to relieve it, under any subterfuge, however delicate.

'You are very kind,' he said, 'but I—I don't drink wine.' For the last year or two this had been perfectly true, but he felt disingenuous, notwithstanding. 'No.' He had seized the bottle and was forcing it back on Mr. Bowling. 'I can't take it. Really I cannot take it. I appreciate your kindness, but really you must not bring these things to me. I am not in want of them.'

'You ain't got a light, young governor,' returned Mr. Bowling, for sole answer, 'I'll go and fetch one.'

'No,' cried Clem, 'I am not in want of a light, thank you.'

'Young governor,' said Mr. Bowling, touching him lightly with the bottle, 'I'll fetch a light, and if you ain't too proud to drink a glass along of a old servant I should take it as a kindness. I'm a lonely cove, young governor, and you likewise are a lonely —personage.' He substituted this word for the other in haste, and was evidently so anxious to conciliate that Clem had not the heart to refuse him. What if the man bored him for half an hour? It was not so late that he could not feign business and go out to avoid him. Mr. Bowling meeting with no further opposition, set the bottle on the chest of drawers and retired, returning a moment later with a candle in a ginger-beer bottle, which he set upon the mantelpiece.

He brought a tumbler with him, and having wiped it with great care with the end of his neckerchief, he set it down beside the sherry bottle, and produced a pocket knife, with a blade of which he dexterously drew the cork. When he had filled the tumbler he proffered it to Clem, who declined it as politely as he could, but firmly. Mr. Bowling thereupon emptied it himself, and took an uninvited seat upon the edge of the bed.

'Young governor,' he said then, 'if agreeable to you, I should like to ask you a question; maybe two.'

'Yes,' said Clem. 'What are they?'

'If young Mr. Whittaker pisoned Joby Round, Esquire, was it known what he pisoned him with, and wheerfor?'

'I won't answer any idle questions on that subject,' Clem answered. 'If you have any real reason for asking I will tell you.' Armstrong's odd fancy was back again in Clem's mind.

'I have a reason for asking. If I can't find out what I want without telling you, maybe I'll tell you what the reason is. Meaning no offence, young governor, but having a reason, though a rough cove, and never educated to your pitch and standpoint. Was it known what he pisoned him with and wheerfor?'

'It was known with what he poisoned him, but why he did it was never known.'

'What did he pison him with?'

'He used a drug called salts of morphine, and he administered it to Mr. Round in a glass of whiskey.'

'Salts in a glass o' whiskey,' said Mr. Bowling, reflectively.

‘Is them there salts used for anything, young governor? To put a cove to sleep, for instance?’

‘They are used to procure sleep,’ said Clem. Mr. Bowling, leaning forward, rested his chin upon his hand, his elbow on his knee, and looked thoughtfully at the floor.

‘And he given him so much,’ he said slowly, ‘he never waked up again. Was that it?’

‘That was it,’ Clem answered. What was to come of this he could not guess, but Mr. Bowling’s manner, which was serious and almost judicial, argued an object. He waited nervously to know what it might be.

‘Was he caught?’ was the man’s next question. Clem nodded only. ‘Tried?’ Clem nodded again. ‘Found guilty?’ pursued Mr. Bowling leaning forward with sparkling eyes. A third time Clem answered with a nod. ‘Hanged?’ cried Mr. Bowling half rising from his seat.

‘No,’ said Clem. Mr. Bowling fell back into his seat, sighed through his closed teeth, with the lips drawn back a little, and resumed his former posture. ‘He was sent into penal servitude for fourteen years.’

‘And was it never guessed what he done it for?’ asked the seaman, looking up at Clem, warily, from beneath his eyebrows. ‘Never? Not by nobody? Not a shadder of a guess as to why he done it?’ Clem shook his head in answer to each of these questions, which followed one another swiftly, and then answered,

‘Nobody could ever give a reason for the act.’

‘Nobody could never give a reason for the act. And was anything missed?’ Once more Clem answered by a silent negative. ‘Nothing? Come, there *was* a something missed, now? Come, tax your mind, young governor.’

‘There was nothing missed so far as I know,’ Clem responded.

‘Not a—Wait a bit. How long after Joby Round, Esquire, was dead was young Whittaker caught?’

‘Three or four days.’

‘Where was he?’

‘Aboard a steam-boat bound for Marseilles.’

‘Aboard a steam-boat bound for Marseilles?’ repeated Mr. Bowling. ‘Marseilles? You’re sure it was Marseilles, young governor, not Constantinople? Nor yet Varna? Nor yet Taganrog? Marseilles?’

‘Marseilles,’ said Clem. He felt like a man in a dream.

‘He may have been going to any one of the places you speak of, for when he was arrested he was studying a map of Turkey.’

‘A-studying of a map of Turkey, was he?’ Mr. Bowling smiled, darkly, as he looked at the floor. ‘And still you’re sure as there was nothing missed, young governor?’

‘There was nothing missed, so far as I know,’ Clem answered. He would not ask as yet what the man knew of the tragedy of five years back, though it was obvious he knew much of it. If his knowledge were a guilty one, Clem thought, he would hardly hover round the theme in this way, would hardly dare indeed to make allusion to it.

‘Not a watch?’ asked Mr. Bowling, suddenly, looking up and meeting Clem’s eyes bent full upon him in wondering inquiry. ‘Wasn’t Joby Round’s watch a-missing when they found him? Who found him?’

‘I was the first who saw him after his death,’ said Clem. ‘No. The soldiers,’ he muttered to himself. ‘The watch was gone,’ he said aloud, ‘I remember now. The watch was gone. I thought,’ he murmured to himself again,—‘I remember thinking at the time that one of the soldiers might have stolen it.’ What was the mystery, and what did this man know of it?

‘The watch *was* gone, was it?’ The voice of Mr. Bowling recalled him to himself. ‘And when the thief as pisoned Joby Round was caught where did the watch go to?’

‘It was never known he had it,’ Clem responded. ‘I suppose it would remain in the hands of the police.’

‘That’s what it would do,’ returned Mr. Bowling. . . . ‘Young governor. One more question. When Joby Round died he had a daughter. Did she come into any sum o’ money?’

‘No,’ said Clem, with the dreamlike feeling deepening upon him. ‘She was left poor, and is still poor.’

‘Then,’ cried Mr. Bowling, rising suddenly to his feet and casting his hands aloft with a great oath, ‘it lies theer yet.’ He suffered both hands to fall resoundingly upon his thighs.

It was all a mystery still, but the key to it lay in that mad guess of Armstrong’s. Clem sprang to his feet in turn and seized Mr. Bowling by the clothes above his breast.

‘What do you know of Job Round’s death?’ he panted. ‘What hand had you in it?’ Mr. Bowling stared at him in surprise, and Clem wound his thin fingers more closely in the fellow’s garment. ‘Tell me,’ he said fiercely, ‘tell me.’

‘Well,’ said Mr. Bowling, with open eyes, ‘you’re a good plucked un, you are. That I *will* say.’ Clem dropped his hands, but still stood white and panting and ready to spring anew. ‘I don’t like you none the worse for that, mind you, young governor. You keep still,’ he said ponderously, and laid a forefinger on Clem’s chest. ‘You keep still, and perhaps I may tell you something as will make a difference to you. Let me think.’ He stood glowering in the candle light, and what with his scowling look of thought, and the scar he bore, he looked to Clem’s eyes almost terrible. ‘I do not know,’ he said, slowly turning his eyes on his companion, ‘as I could have a better pardner. If you was to go to the police, where all the things as belongs to prisoners is kept, do you think they’d let you look at Joby Round’s watch, young governor?’

‘Why do you ask me that?’

‘Never you mind just yet awhile. Could you get to see it? Yes or No.’

‘I suppose I could if I could give a reason for wishing to see it.’

‘Very well. You wait here a minute. I’m a-coming back again, and I’m a-going to tell you something as will make a difference to you. I’m a-going to show you the way to five-an’-twenty thousand golden pounds. Why? What am I a-going to be that kind to you for? I’m a-going to be that kind to you, because I’m a-going to do the same thing for myself, young governor, and it can’t be done without a pardner. I’m a-going to take you for a pardner, because I think as you’ll play fairplay and do fair doos. But first I am a-going to swear you in.’

Clem fell back into his seat by the window as Mr. Bowling strode heavily from the room. For aught he could tell the man was mad: for aught he could tell just then, he himself was mad—or dreaming. Mr. Bowling was back again with a dirty and misshapen volume in his hand. He offered to Clem an oath almost identical in terms to that he had offered to Aaron Whitaker, and Clem accepted it, and more to deal fairly with William Dean, otherwise known as Thomas Bowling. Mr. Bowling, in order to be precise and legal, mentioned another *alias* or two, but Clem was too amazed already to find room for any sentiment of surprise at this.

Then Mr. Bowling, who had already closed the door, drew down the dingy blind, and in a growling murmur poured into Clem’s

ear the story he had told in the garden of Konak Cottage ; with one addition, to the effect that Job Round was the lieutenant of the party Bonaventure commanded. Then he told the story of such a part of his connection with Aaron Whittaker as it suited him to have known, and expressed a casual regret for Job Round's decease. He declared stoutly that he had never known or guessed that any dangerous means were to be employed, and he swore that Whittaker had undertaken to offer Job a night's lodging at his own house and to attempt whilst he slept to transcribe the inscription on the medal.

Finally he laid his hand flat on Clem's breast, and said,

'I own up, young governor, to this. I wanted more than my fair doos with Joby Round, and I got this for my pains, and I lost everything.' He touched the scar with the forefinger of his right hand, still keeping the left on his companion's breast. 'Then, young Whittaker, he wanted more than his fair doos with me, and you know what he comes to. This is the third time now, as pays for all. Nothing but what is on the square will ever see one penny of that golden money. Nothing but fair doos and play-fairing conduct on both sides. Wheerfor, I shall relay my confidence on you, and shall look forward to be likewise treated.'

The man was a scoundrel by his own confession, and, consciously or no, had had a hand in the death of Clem's dearest friend and the father of the woman for whom Clem would have laid down his weary life at any hour. A compact with such a man to share a treasure so dubiously gained, and thick, to Clem's fancy, with the blood of many scoundrels (if no more than the tale he had just heard were true), was in need of some sweetening and sanctification. And the sweetening and the sanctification both came at Love's great bidding. He would go in search of this treasure, and if Heaven so willed it, would find it for Sarah's sake, and would place it in her hands. The very warmth and light of life lay buried for her in those far-off hills. Weak as he was, he would have travelled there alone, and have plucked from the mountains the golden heart of the mystery they had guarded all these years.

CHAPTER III.

CLEM and Mr. Bowling sate far into the night discussing ways and means. It was easy to say that they were worth fifty

thousand pounds if they did but once know the inscription on the medal, but the treasure was far away, and for the time being they had not thirty shillings between them. The last remnant of Clem's property yielded him eight shillings a week, and its probable value, therefore, was at least four hundred pounds. Hastily realised it might bring half that amount, but what was a mere two hundred pounds to sacrifice for such a sum as he looked forward to?

Perhaps Mr. Bowling's blood was cooled with age, or perhaps his hopes were less certain than they had been. He accepted the new possibilities of fortune with none of the wild outbursts of joy which had signalised the successful robbery of Job Round. Once he drank with much solemnity to good fortune, but after that he corked the bottle resolutely.

'I've lived to learn as ther is slips, young governor,' said Mr. Bowling, 'betwixt cups and lips. Once I had that there golden money in my hands, or if I was to speak more true, I had my hands in that there golden money. I could ha' bathed in it, I could ha' crep' in among it, I could ha' rolled in it, I could ha' chewed the pieces. Ther's nobody knows afore they see it what the sight of that much golden money is.'

Clem looked at him and saw the lust of money burning in his eyes. He saw it, and he had the completest recognition of it, and even such sympathy as the higher nature has for the lower in such cases—the sympathy of understanding. But though he burned within to claim a share of the treasure for his own, he was as far from Mr. Bowling's state as man can be from man. The thought of his own chance of riches never so much as touched him. The money was Sarah's. Hope's blossoms were blossoms of fire, but the pure heart enfolded them unharmed, and their heat was a new life to them. Whatever her soul longed for she should have. The free hand that loved to reach out generously to the poor should no longer be withheld because of emptiness. She had longed to travel and to see the wonders of the fair world. She loved music, pictures, books. She should have them all. Her life should be bright again. His spirit brooded over her like a brooding bird. He blessed her in his heart.

'Young governor,' said Mr. Bowling, 'I never did fair doos to Joby Round. He was a gentleman as would have done fair doos with any man if he'd ha' let him be. I used to say, but I

never knowed so little as think it, as Joby Round had left that treasure theer because he hadn't got the pluck to go for it.'

There was a thing to turn the fire of hope to frost and ashes in Clem's heart. Not to have thought of that before! It was sheer madness to think that if the treasure had lain there to Job's knowledge all these years he would have let it lie. The thing was all a dream.

'Are you out o' sorts, young governor?' asked Mr. Bowling, seeing these thoughts written on Clem's face, but not being able to read them. 'Take a drop o' sherry.' He filled the tumbler and held it to Clem's white lips. 'Take a heartier sip than that, young governor. It's the right sort. It's nigh as strong as brandy.'

'The treasure can't be there,' said Clem. 'I was mad not to think of that before. If he had known of its existence he would have brought it home. The whole thing's a dream.'

'Was that what curled you up like that, young governor?' demanded Mr. Bowling calmly as he recorked the bottle. 'That's what I was a-coming to. The treasure's there—somewhere within two mile of a little place called Strigli in the Bawlskan Hills. You'll find it marked on any good-sized chart. Strigli. Not the treasure. I'll tell you why Joby Round didn't go out to get it. How old is his gell?—his daughter?'

'She is twenty-five,' said Clem.

'Very well then,' returned Mr. Bowling, 'reckoning as she was born a year after the weddin', it's like enough he courted for at least six months afore he married. That makes six-and-twenty and half a year. It's thirty year and a half sence the thing was done.'

'Since what was done?' asked Clem.

'That is a wrong manner of speaking of it,' replied Mr. Bowling in momentary discomfiture. 'Sence the buried treasure was found, and we was obliged to hide, because of the murderin' thieves as followed us. We lived on them mountains like wild beasts, did me and Joby Round. The whole country was alive agen us, but we both got away.'

'Why was the country alive against you?'

'Why? Why they'd ha' pulled the hearts out of your bodies to know where the gold was, wouldn't they? It stands to natur' as they would.'

'They would go and look for it,' said Clem, 'and find it.'

Mr. Bowling laughed.

‘Let ’em dig,’ he said. ‘How many hundreds o’ thousands of ’ears do you think it ’d take ’em to look through all them hills? Oh! Let ’em look. By all manner o’ means, young governor, let ’em!’

‘You were speaking of Mr. Round.’

‘Why he didn’t go out there himself? I was just a-going to tell you. The gell is five-and-twenty. Do you know how long he was back home afore he married? No? Don’t remember, eh? Put it down at six months only. Twenty-six year and a half out of thirty year and a half. Four year. It would have been next to certain death to go back within that four year. He’d ha’ been seen and knowed again. He’d ha’ been follered and shot for that there treasure like a rat. Very well then. He gets married. Very well again. He finds himself in clover. A uncle dies an’ leaves him a bit o’ money. He thinks he’ll lie by an’ wait till everything’s grown quiet. Then he has a little gell. It stands to reason he gets fond o’ the gell. I never heard a word of Joby Round whilst I was a-working at your father’s farm, young governor, but somebody ups and says “He’s hard,” they says, “as nails, but he loves that gell like the apple of his eye.” Well, he’s got enough to live on, the little gell’s mother dies, he stops to take care of the gell, and says he, “One of these days when I can spare the time I’ll go and dig up that there golden money. When the gell’s growed up and has got a husband to take care of her.” Because, mind you, young governor, I never did fair doos to Joby Round. Joby Round was a man as joined in hunting this here treasure for a spree. He wasn’t what you’d call a fool, but he had no more care for money than that there jug. I never did fair doos to Joby, not till last night when you said as he was dead. That squares things, that does. I’ve had sence then to overhaul it, and I do fair doos to Joby Round.’

‘But how do you know that Mr. Round never went back for the money himself?’ asked Clem. ‘He might have gone back for it, have secured it, and have lost it in any one of a thousand ways.’

‘I know because he told me,’ returned Mr. Bowling. ‘“It lies theer yet,” he says; “I’ve never had the spending of it. Wouldn’t you like to know the latitude and longitude?” says he, “and take a pick and a shuffle and go and dig it up?” It’s there all right, young governor, never fear. You get a look at that there watch to-morrow, and we’ll see whether it’s theer or no.’

Mr. Bowling's confidence had a great effect on Clem, so great an effect that he began to build castles with as much ardour as before. But whatsoever castles he built he lived in none of them. They were all for the woman he loved, all for the best, the loveliest, the sweetest, saddest creature in the world, who had suffered so cruelly, and should at last be glad again. For though the money could never have rejoiced him at all except in the joy it would have given him to dower her with it, it was going to bring all imaginary blessings to her. Clem's one great thought was—she could refill her emptied heart with charities—she would go about doing good. Through whatsoever crime-stained ways the money had travelled to its present dark resting-place, her hands would purify it, and the uses to which she would put it would be a sanctification.

He dreamed awake when he was left alone, and because the rain was on his roof in London, the rain was on the lonely hills. He saw them vast and dark and silent in the night, and he pierced their mystery and knew where the buried gold lay darkling underground. He dreamed awake, and Sarah's face was sweet and bright again, as he had known it years ago. He dreamed asleep, and on the background of the rainy hills her face shone before him by its own effulgence like the face of some mild angel.

'I shall go to work,' said Mr. Bowling, who looked in upon him in the morning. 'I shall go to work as if nothing had happened or was a-going to happen, cause if I didn't I should most likely go off my head. I shall trust you solemn. I shan't go with you and wait about outside, because I shall trust you. I shall be back here in the dinner hour between one and two, in case you may be back again. If you finds anything, young governor, for the Lord's sake, send a telegraph. Say "All right." And here's the bob to pay for it. We ain't a-going to be to a shilling now. Remember what you've swore. But I'll trust you, full and solemn.'

'You may trust me,' said Clem, simply. 'I will deal honestly with you.'

Mr. Bowling left for work before six o'clock, and since it would have been absurd to start upon his expedition at such an hour, Clem stayed behind in a state of nervous impatience and fluttering hope until eight. Then he set out to walk to Scotland Yard, a distance as he counted it of half a dozen miles. He was not a fast walker, but when he was in tolerable health he could bear to

be afoot all day, and was stronger than a stranger looking at his dwarfed and twisted figure would have been likely to think him. The shabby little figure made its way through the streets, and no man regarded or took the trouble to have a thought about it. Nobody was in the least likely to guess it, but the shabby figure carried such a heart of hope within it that day as no other man bore in all London. The hungry little poet dreamed of wealth, but with such an unselfish passion in his dream as surely never poet felt before. Sometimes a doubt shook him, but not often, though many a time his heart of hope so trembled within him that his breath came short and he was fain to rest awhile looking in at shop windows which showed him nothing.

He reached Scotland Yard at last, and found all the questions he had to put answered with an unexpected civility and patience. But the official whom he consulted could do no more than put him on the track.

‘A medal attached to the stolen watch,’ said Clem, ‘bore an inscription, and that inscription was the only indication of the whereabouts of a large sum of money, of which the owner is now known to have been possessed.’

‘Well,’ said the official, ‘we hear of stranger things than that at times. Where was the prisoner arrested?’ Clem told him. ‘Then the chances are, he would be taken at once to the nearest police court to be examined and remanded. They will have there a complete list of everything taken from him, and they will be able to tell you their present whereabouts. The man was tried at Stafford? They may have to refer you there.’

Clem took the address the official gave him, and set off upon his homeward way. The police station was almost at his own doors, and he had had his walk for little. Noon had gone by before he had finished the return journey, and he was hot and tired.

An officer sate at a small raised desk behind a sort of counter in a shaded room. In one corner of the room was a railed cage like a wild beast’s den, and in the den a wild beast, in the form of a drunken sailor, who howled a song and danced lumberingly.

‘Well,’ said the officer, beholding Clem, ‘what can we do for you? Keep that fellow quiet, one of you. I can’t hear my own ears.’

Clem told his story, and the officer listened with no great show of interest until the mention of a watch with a medal and an

inscription. Then he smiled, and taking up a speaking-tube, whistled, applied his ear, and then murmured into the mouthpiece.

'Go on,' he said, still smiling to himself. Clem went on, and had come to the end of his story when a red-whiskered constable entered behind the counter.

'You sent for me, sir?' said the constable.

'Yes,' said the official, smiling still. 'Did you ever happen to hear of a watch with a Turkish coin attached to it?' Then the constable began to smile, and Clem looking from one to the other saw the smile broader on each face until both the inspector and his subordinate were laughing. 'Very well,' said the inspector, wiping his eyes—he was a fat man with a face expressive of a love for a jest and a good dinner—'tell this gentleman what you know about it.'

'About the man that tried to hang himself in Number Five, sir?' asked the constable. The inspector nodded, and leaned forward on his elbows with a renewed look of humour, glancing now at the constable and now at Clem as if with an assurance that the inquirer would see where the joke lay by-and-by. 'Well,' began the subordinate, scratching at one red whisker, 'it's a matter of five or six, or maybe seven years ago, and I shouldn't have any call to remember it if it hadn't passed into a sort of a joke among us. I got information as the man had taken passage in the "Orinoco"—I remember that well enough—and I had instructions to take him. I went aboard, and I see my gentleman in his berth with a map spread out before him.'

'Was the map a map of Turkey?' asked Clem.

'Why, yes, it was,' said the man, 'now I come to think of it. Yes. A map of Turkey. Well, he fainted stone-dead away. He was a chicken-hearted sort of fellow, and he fainted away, stone-dead.'

'Tell us that again,' said the inspector. 'By-and-by it may begin to get interesting.'

'Well, to tell the truth,' renewed the constable. 'I always had a notion that he shoved his hand into the bed just as I opened the door, but his fainting and the boat being just about to start put it out of my head I suppose, and I forgot to look for anything. But when we got him here and he came to, there was such a hullabaloo and such a racket about a watch and a medal as I never *do* remember hearing about anything. He went stark staring mad. It was a charge of manslaughter if I remember, but he didn't

seem to valley the charge a button against that watch and medal. He went that off the handle, it's passed into a sort of a proverb here.' The constable grinned broadly. 'There's hardly a day goes by, but somebody says, "You might ha' lost a medal, you might." Why there's men as never heard the beginning of the story as uses that expression. It's known throughout the force, that saying is, and whenever a man goes off the handle at a trifle, *that* comes in.'

'And the watch was never found?' Clem asked.

'Never found nor heard of,' said the constable. Clem held on by the counter for a moment, and was sick and dizzy. All the dreams to have been dreamed in vain!

He saw that the inspector and his subordinate were staring at him curiously, and he steadied himself as well as he might and turned away. His heart felt dead. No misfortune which could by any chance have fallen on himself could have so bereaved him.

'Hi!' said the inspector. 'Might I ask what made that watch and medal so particularly valuable?'

'There was an inscription on the medal,' Clem made shift to answer. 'It related to a sum of money. It was the only memorandum.'

'A large sum of money?' asked the inspector.

'Yes,' said Clem. 'Fifty thousand pounds.'

The inspector and the constable both whistled, and looked at each other, with uplifted eyebrows and shoulders. Clem walked slowly away, and slowly home, if the place in which he lived were worth calling home. Bowling was there awaiting him, and when he heard the story of the failure he broke into such horrible execrations against Whittaker that Clem put his hands over both ears and ran out upon the landing.

Life had been savourless before, but after this taste of hope it seemed flatter than ever. The days went by, saltless, lifeless. Armstrong came to him once a week at least, and found him sunk deeper and deeper into a dejection out of which he had no heart to struggle. He went on with his painting and his modelling, and his making of flowers in wax and leather, and he found some poor sort of market for his work, and lived, and that was all. His dream had lasted less than a day, and yet after it his spoiled life was lower than ever. To have made life smooth for the one creature he had loved had seemed so possible, and so sweet a

thing—and now that hope had flashed upon his darkness and gone out again he saw nothing.

Bowling would come in at times to talk of the buried treasure, and would talk of nothing else. Clem scarcely heard him, and had—as may be easily fancied—but little value for his companionship. Yet he felt a little lonelier than ever when the man came in one night, and announced his approaching departure.

‘I’m sick of this village, I am,’ said Mr. Bowling, with a face of deep disgust. ‘I never could abide to live among a lot of bricks. Fields I can stand, and the rolling winds and waves I can endure, but these here houses gets into my lungs and chokes me. And into that I’ve got the sack. I’m off to sea again. I’m a old un, but I’m a stiff un, and I can hang pulley-hauley on a rope as well as the youngest on ’em. Apart from which blue water is my natural home, and I’ve been off of it now nine year.

‘So it’s good-bye Jack, let John sit down,
For I know you’re outward bound, oh!’

I’ve got a berth a’ ready aboard, a cap’n as knows a seaman from a long shore shoulder-rubber, as is good for nothing but to growl at his vittles and draw his pay. I’m off in the mornin’ at six o’clock young governor, and I’m off now to rummage a bit of a kit together. So it’s good-bye now, and this is the last of Thomas Bowling.’

Clem shook hands with him, and he rolled away with a more nautical gait than ever. In a minute or two Clem heard him singing in his growling bass—

‘He’s off to sea, is old Tom Bowling
The darling of the crew,
And all the pretty gals is howling,
And all their hearts is true.’

Then he heard his step upon the stair, and Mr. Bowling had gone out of his scheme of things for good and all.

Clem never spoke a word of his disappointment to anybody. Why should he? What end could it have served to speak? Even the going of Mr. Bowling left him a little drearier, a little less inclined to life.

The summer spent itself, the autumn rolled wearily towards its close, and at last upon a day Clement Bache rose to life once more, because he had learned once more what it was to have a purpose.

He drew that poor eight weekly shillings which formed the

staple of his means, for convenience' sake, four weekly doles at once. Every fourth Saturday he called at an office in Shoe Lane and drew his thirty-two shillings from a solicitor there, who had charge of this last little remnant of his father's old estate. He called one day at the customary hour of four.

'Mr. Knight's engaged just now,' said the lanky clerk. 'You must call again at five past seven. It happens he'll be here late to-night, or you'd have to come again on Monday.' Clem lingered a little, uncertain whether he should go. 'It's not a bit of use of your waiting, Bache,' said the lanky clerk. 'I've done and I'm off, and you can't wait here, you know.'

Clem walked away submissively and wandered into Fleet Street. He was tired and hungry, and for the moment he was penniless. He wandered vacantly—nothing mattered much—he was tired. It began to rain, and he drew his seedy paletot a little closer. His mind and his heart seemed numbed, and he had no thoughts worth thinking, and no sensations. It grew dark and he was still wandering in Fleet Street. The raw stealthy wind nipped him at the toes, the nose, the fingers; passers-by hustled him; the rain fell in a persistent drizzle.

The clocks struck six, and he was a little hungrier and more fatigued, and if possible a little emptier in mind. The shops were all alight by now, and he stopped here and there to look at them. The minutes crawled by, shod with lead, and the quarter, the half-hour, and the three-quarters all sounded in their turn. It began to rain in earnest, and he walked with his head bent against the wind and the wet, and drew his cloak a little closer.

'It can but want a minute or two,' he said to himself, and stood still before a shop window, to wait until the clock should strike. The shop window was a pawnbroker's, and he looked at the various articles displayed in it, and thought (as if somebody else was thinking, he was so little interested) of his own downward march to poverty.

But suddenly he clasped his hands beneath his cloak, and his heart gave one great leap, and then seemed to stand still. For there, within a foot of his eyes, hung Job Round's medal, labelled '*Eastern Curio—Guinea Gold. With inscription. Only 2l. 5s.*'

(To be concluded.)

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER, 1885.

COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BROKEN OFF.



ON reaching home, Mr. Rigsby told his man to ask Miss Stokes to do him the civility of speaking with him in the study.

Miss Stokes came sailing in with great dignity, wondering what Mr. Rigsby could want to say to her at that time of the evening in private. Sisters-in-law cannot be kept for ever in the cold, she argued with herself.

'Would you mind shutting the door behind you?' asked Mr. Rigsby, as Miss Stokes had left it modestly ajar, and stood near it herself.

'Please come nearer. I have something I want very particularly to say to you.'

'I am at your service, James,'

said Miss Stokes, shutting the door and advancing one step.

‘My dear Eliza,’ began the planter, standing on the hearth with his back to the fire, ‘the matter I wish to speak to you upon is a delicate one; between you and me, a very delicate one.’

‘Indeed, James!’

‘I have been a widower for some years.’

‘Oh, James, you have, you have!’

‘And I have had only my daughter to solace me in my loneliness. And now that daughter——’

‘Is about to be translated to a loftier sphere.’

‘In matters of the heart, Eliza—in matters of the heart—I mean—I am confused. I have had much to think of. I did not intend to speak now, but I thought it best to do so to-night instead of delaying longer.’ Miss Stokes looked down. ‘Won’t you take a chair, my dear Eliza?’ She gracefully sank into one near the table. ‘You have been so good and devoted to Dulcina, my dear Eliza, that I have considered I could not do better than take you—ahem!—take you——’

‘Oh, James! I never, never dreamed of the happiness.’

‘Take you into confidence before breaking the news to Dulcina. How she will bear it I tremble to think.’

‘Do not tremble, dear James. She is cordially attached to me, I may say she regards me—she has regarded me, though our respective ages hardly admit it, as a second mother.’

‘Then I can trust you to break the painful news to her, can I not?’

‘Not painful—do not say painful, James.’

‘Indeed I hope and trust it will not be painful, but I greatly fear. Such deception, such heartlessness.’

‘What deception? What heartlessness, James? Not on my side; I have been all frankness—too much heart.’

‘I have been horribly deceived. It is all up with the engagement.’

‘Up? which engagement?’

‘Which? There has been only one. Dulcina must forget Lord Saltcombe.’

‘What—what?’ exclaimed Miss Stokes, pushing her chair back and looking blank. ‘I thought, James—but never mind what I thought.’

‘If you thought anything else you thought wrong,’ said he. ‘It is all up with the engagement. We have been grossly imposed upon. The Marquis was hunting Dulcina for her money; the

family of the Duke are in desperate straits, and at any moment the creditors may be down on them, turn them out of Court Royal, and sell house and lands.'

Miss Stokes stared.

'They were reckoning on paying their debts with my money—a pack of coroneted beggars! Lord Saltcombe does not care a snap of the fingers for Dulcina—he wanted only her money, and then when he had got that he would have deserted her. Bless my soul! Did I plant coffee, and slave for all these years away from my native land, sacrificing my life and disorganising my liver, to find money for a parcel of needy noblemen? Am I to send my dear Dulcina among wolves, who will tear from her the flesh and leave only the bones?'

'This is not possible, James.'

'It not only is possible, but it is so. I charged Lord Saltcombe with the beggarly trick to his face, and he was unable to answer me. He slunk from my presence like a whipped dog. Now, Eliza, how do you think my darling will bear the disappointment?'

'My dear James, you need not fear. That sweet Dulcina possesses so sound a judgment and so cool a head that I am sure, when all the circumstances have been placed before her, she will bear the loss like a martyr.'

'My poor dear! like a martyr. O my child! my child!'

'Do not be uneasy, James. I exercise great influence over Dulcina. I will break to her the news you have so graciously favoured me with. Perhaps you will talk to her yourself about it to-morrow, after breakfast.'

'I fear it will be a cruel disappointment.'

'Disappointments meet us poor women wherever we tread,' said Miss Stokes, with a sigh.

Next day at breakfast Mr. Rigshy was uncomfortable. He had not slept much, troubled with the thought of the distressing duty awaiting execution. At breakfast he crumbled his toast, upset his egg, and dawdled over his coffee. Dulcina looked limp and lachrymose.

When breakfast was over Miss Stokes went into the conservatory, so as to be out of hearing, yet near at hand. The time had arrived for the dreaded disclosure. How much had Miss Stokes already told Dulcina? The father wished he knew.

'Come and sit by me on the sofa, darling child,' he said.

‘You are not looking well, I am sure you have been suffering. And now I have to increase your trouble by speaking on a most unsatisfactory subject.’ He looked round at his daughter. Her face expressed no emotion. ‘I am not a father who would stand in the way if his child desired something very much; the happiness of you, Dulcina, is paramount to every consideration. I do not know to what extent your affections have been engaged, whether your heart would break should Lord Saltcombe not—not—excuse the expression—come to the scratch. I have favoured your acquaintance with him because I have believed him an admirable match. But, my dear, all is not gold that glitters. It is, as the Latin grammar tells us, human to err. I have learned circumstances which have altered my view of Lord Saltcombe’s character, and made me doubt whether the engagement is to your advantage. I am a plain business man, and I look to the business side of everything. I have made inquiries, and my inquiries have dissatisfied me. The connection with the Kingsbridge family, the title, the position, that seemed so splendid that I was dazzled. But there are spots in the sun, craters in the moon, blots on ducal escutcheons.’

Miss Rigsby became uneasy, she looked at her father, then at the breakfast-table, then on the floor.

‘I have learned, to my surprise, that the Kingsbridge family are bankrupt; they are living on the very verge of ruin. Only the hesitation of their creditors saves from a fall which will be a scandal throughout England.’

‘Papa! I cannot think it.’

‘I assure you, my darling, it is true. I have seen the list of mortgages. I know precisely the condition of their affairs. They are in the hands of the Jews. You saw the splendour in which they live. That is all paid for out of other people’s money. They put on a glittering mask to cover ruin. The Marquis is penniless. If you marry him he will look to you for his pocket-money, for cigars, and tailor’s bill—go to you whenever he wants a new pair of boots or a handkerchief. It is true you will receive his title, but in return you will maintain him like a poor relation.’

Mr. Rigsby kept his eyes fixed on his daughter whilst he spoke. He was afraid of her fainting, and he was ready to call Miss Stokes to his aid. But Dulcina listened to him with composure; she bit her lip and frowned, and ripped the binding off a cushion on the sofa, but said nothing.

‘A handsome sum which I was prepared to pay over on your marriage would have gone at once to the Jews, to stop their greedy jaws and stave off the fall of the house. The Duke, the Marquis, Lord Ronald, and Lord Edward are calculating on my death, when they may use up the whole of my—that is, your fortune in washing clean the family estates. What those estates are likely to be worth in a few years, with bad seasons, and American corn and frozen meat coming in on all sides, I cannot say. I suppose about two per cent. You have now five or six on your capital. If your money goes into the land you are likely to lose half your income.’

He was silent. Presently Miss Rigsby said, ‘Did they tell you this?’

‘Bless my soul, no! The fine thing is that they are all so cavalier in their aristocratic ideas, that they regard the marriage of Saltcombe with you as a great condescension on their part. They will pocket your money and tolerate you.’

‘Then they wanted to swindle us?’ said Dulcina.

‘I wouldn’t call it exactly a swindle. I believe they are far too grand to go into accounts. I dare say they do not know their desperate situation, but have a vague idea that they must have money to make them comfortable, and as you have money they will take you for the sake of your gold.’

Dulcina’s lips became pasty. She drew them together, and her hard eyes glittered like steel beads in the sun.

‘Lord Saltcombe has never shown me much love. He has been civil, that is all. But Aunt Eliza said that in high society great people loved stiffly. It was against etiquette to be ardent.’

‘Lord Saltcombe has not loved you. I asked him point-blank if he did, only last night, and he could not say he did.’

‘Lord Saltcombe has not loved me!’ exclaimed Dulcina, with a vicious flash in her face. ‘Do you mean to tell me he has not cared for *me*—that he has not admired *me*—that he has not courted *me*—that he has been peering into my pocket instead of my face all this while, thinking of my money, not of myself?’

‘It is so.’

‘Then I will have nothing to do with him.’ Instead of Dulcina fainting the tears sprang to her eyes, tears of offended vanity, not of pain. ‘I’ll have it out with Aunt Eliza, I will; she vowed he was frantic with love, and hardly knew how to control his passion. Oh, what a liar she is!’

CHAPTER XXXIV.

INCURABLES.

AT Court Royal everything had settled down to the ordinary routine after the Rigsbys had gone. The Duke was glad that the stir was over, he liked to be quiet. Lord Edward had returned to his living in Somersetshire, to relieve the exemplary curate in the labour of blowing bubbles, and insisting on the *via media* as the way of salvation. Lord Ronald resumed his early walks and his simple amusements. He had a turning lathe at which he took exercise on rainy days, and turned out hideous wooden candlesticks and boxes covered with spirals. Of late he had taken to turning flower-pot stands for all his friends, stands that started and split and had to be thrown away after having been in use a week. His grandest achievement was hat-stands, frightful objects that stood six feet high, and bristled with sticks ending in knobs. These hat-stands were to be seen and were sold at all bazaars in the neighbourhood, and were bought by people out of consideration for the General—it would hurt his feelings, it was thought, if his hat-stands remained undisposed of. Every door leading to the open air in Court Royal, every bedroom, was provided with one of these erections. In the rooms they were serviceable, he argued, for ladies to hang their gowns on, for gentlemen to suspend their coats.

Lady Grace had one, of course, in her room, and used it with great conscientiousness. ‘It is not pretty,’ she said to Lucy, ‘but it is well-intentioned. It must be good—dear uncle Roland made it. Things get rather dusty on it, though.’

‘Do you not think, dear, that if chintz were hung round it like a tent, the ugliness might be disguised, and the dust kept off?’

Acting on Lucy’s suggestion the hat-stand was enclosed in a structure designed and executed for it by the General himself, who turned the head and turned the foot, and tacked the chintz on it himself. Then Lady Grace took his grey head between her hands and kissed both his cheeks.

‘That,’ said Lord Ronald, ‘is over-payment.’

Lord Ronald was vigorously engaged at his lathe turning two such hat and cloak stands out of rosewood, as a present for his nephew on his marriage. Each required twelve knobs for the

bristles and four knobs for the feet, and a big knob for the top, seventeen knobs in all; two stands, therefore, demanded thirty-four knobs. Lord Ronald had turned nineteen, which were ranged on the floor in strict order like cannon balls; he was engaged on knob number twenty when he heard a tap at the door, and, before he could answer, in came Mr. Worthivale, hot and frightened looking.

‘What is the matter, Worthivale? Is Court Royal a-fire?’

‘Oh, my lord, what is to be done? We are in a worse predicament than ever.’

‘It would be difficult to reach that.’

‘Really,’ exclaimed the excited steward, ‘I am driven wild. Has any news come from the Marquis? When will the marriage take place?’

‘I do not think the day is fixed.’

‘Has he written?’

‘He wrote once after reaching Plymouth. I have not seen the Duke this morning, so I cannot say whether his Grace has received a letter to-day. It is all right, don’t alarm yourself. The wedding must not be pressed on too hastily. My niece has had a note or two from Miss Rigsby, but they contained no news.’

‘I wish the wedding were to take place at once. I do not see how we are to hold on much longer without it.’

‘What is the matter now?’

‘The creditors and mortgagees are unreasonable. The Court Royal and Kingsbridge mortgages held by Mr. Emmanuel are called in. He will file a bill against us. We cannot possibly meet the call. It is as much as we can do to meet current expenses. Where are we to raise a penny? Bless my heart,’ said the steward, throwing himself into a chair, ‘here we were so happy and content, with the prospect before us of getting everything squared at our leisure, the Marquis marrying, and the more pressing calls stilled, when down on our heads comes this thunderbolt. File a bill against us in Chancery! Merciful heavens! What is the world coming to, with Radicalism, and democracy, and socialism, and American competition, cutting the throats of our farmers, and Fenian plots, and Nihilist desperadoes—and actually a request from Farmer Thomas to build him a silo that will contain sixty tons of ensilage. Why, my lord, it can’t be done under three to four hundred pounds, even if we use galvanised iron for the roof. Where are the four hundred pounds to come from at the present

moment, I should like to know? I have said we will think of it after the Marquis is married.'

'Who has threatened a bill in Chancery?'

'Crudge—Crudge, solicitor. He acts, apparently, for all those holding our mortgages. It is a plot, a wicked plot as desperate as any devised by Fenians.'

'Do not alarm yourself, Worthivale. The people have heard that Saltcombe is going to be married, and they are putting in their claims so as to be sure of their money.'

'But we must pay. The time is limited—three months—six months. Before a certain day the money must be forthcoming.'

'Well, Saltcombe will be married before that, and then he can easily get help from old Rigsby. There is no occasion for alarm. For Heaven's sake don't rush in on the Duke in the way you tumbled in upon me. Don't frighten him. He has no idea of the state of affairs. He is under the impression that a great deal of money has been saved by the quiet life we have been leading here for the last seven or eight years.'

'No money whatever has been saved. Before that the family was in a galloping consumption, now it is suffering from slow paralysis. When the Duke went to town every year the outlay was enormous, and debts accumulated annually at a rate that makes my head spin. Now we live up to our income—that is, to an income unburdened on every shoulder and joint of the spine. There is nothing saved. You cannot save on a deficit.'

'Well, whatever you do, take care not to trouble his Grace. He cannot bear it.'

'But, my lord, what am I to do?'

'Nothing; wait, and keep your counsel. Let the marriage take place, and all will be right. I'll manage matters with Mr. Rigsby.'

'But,' said the steward—'you will excuse the question—does Mr. Rigsby know the state of affairs?'

'I believe a word was said about some money being forthcoming at the marriage. I can't say that he was told everything. I did not have much talk with him. He saw a good deal of the Duke, but then the Duke knows nothing about this unfortunate matter. Leave the affair to arrange itself. If you like I will write to Saltcombe to press on the marriage.'

The confidence of the General partly reassured Mr. Worthivale.

‘You think, then, that we need not be anxious?’

‘Not in the least. I will manage matters with Rigsby. The old fellow will be flattered and proud to let us have the money. What are the mortgages called in?’

‘All—all without exception. What can have taken the people I cannot conceive; what can they all want their money for simultaneously? It looks like a plot. If only two or three had given notice I should not have minded, but all—and all together! I cannot get over it. And Crudge acting for the lot—that is strange, is it not?’

‘Well, never mind,’ answered the General; ‘we know the worst. It is best to swallow a pill whole, not to take it in bits.’

‘But what is the sum to be paid over with Miss Rigsby? Will it suffice?’

‘No matter if it does not. It will stop a gap. I tell you the old fellow will be pleased to be asked to let us have the money we want. Those sort of people are flattered by having favours asked of them. Besides, it will be for his own daughter. He cannot refuse. I will make all right with him.’

‘If I may offer a suggestion, my lord, I would propose that you should see Mr. Rigsby at once. It is true we have been remiss about the payment of interest on the mortgages, and that may have frightened the holders. If we could pay off one or two at once it might allay the alarm of the rest, and they could be brought to withdraw their demands.’

‘There is three months’ grace,’ said Lord Ronald—‘plenty of time. Put the matter in the hands of our solicitor, let him write to this Crudge.’

‘No solicitor in the world can save us. We must have money.’

‘It really is too bad!’ exclaimed Lord Ronald, losing his temper. ‘It is your fault, Worthivale. You should not have allowed things to come to this pass. You have had the management of the estates; they are extensive. You should have drawn the purse-strings tighter.’

‘My lord,’ said the steward, hurt, ‘I beg you to remember that I have preached retrenchment to deaf ears.’

‘We have retrenched. We no longer go to town.’

‘That was not enough.’

‘Good Heaven! What would you have had us do, then?’

‘Could not his Grace have gone abroad and shut up the Court?’

‘Gone abroad!—to Boulogne, and herded with all the clipped and pinched wretches who hover there, like the spirits on the banks of Lethe, unable to come over because short of an obolus. No, thank you. There are limits below which we cannot descend.’

‘What is to be done? Nothing can be done now. It is too late. Some years ago—perhaps. Now all is hopeless.’

‘This is rank nonsense. Mr. Rigsby is rolling in money.’

‘But can we be sure of getting him to apply it to our necessity?’

‘Of course we can. I know we can.’

‘What is he worth? We want a very large sum.’

‘I do not know his income. Be at ease. He has plenty.’

Mr. Worthivale put his hands to his head. ‘If it were not wicked and cowardly,’ he said, ‘I would blow out my brains.’

‘If there is immediate pressure,’ said the General, ‘I will write to Edward—to Lord Edward; he is canon and archdeacon, and proctor in Convocation, and enjoys a fat rectory. I have no doubt he will help.’

‘He has helped us already.’

‘When? How?’

‘Over and over again, but he wished me not to mention it to any of the family.’

‘Bless my soul!’ exclaimed Lord Ronald, ‘I had no idea of that. Can I sell my interest in anything—my annuity?’

‘If you sell your annuity, my lord, it must be paid, and now it is not.’

‘I can sell my half-pay of general.’

‘A drop into a bottomless gulf.’

‘Then we must wait in patience for the marriage-bells. Now—not another word. I am going to the Duke.’

The steward sighed and withdrew.

‘Stay a moment,’ called the General as he was passing through the door. ‘I hope, I trust, not a word of this has reached the ears of Lady Grace. I do suppose that you have not spoken of these painful matters to Lucy.’

‘She does know something,’ said Mr. Worthivale.

‘Who? Lucy or Grace?’

‘Lucy has been told that no unnecessary expense must be incurred. Remember she manages the housekeeping, and has the accounts in her charge. But, as she says, it is impossible to keep down the enormous outlay. The servants think it their duty to

blaze abroad the splendour of the house by lavish waste. The requirements of the establishment are very great.'

'I do hope Lucy will not by hint even let Grace suppose that there is trouble in the air.'

'Rely on her.'

'Then no one need know of this confounded worry except myself and Saltcombe. There, there, be of good cheer, the cloud is passing.'

Lord Ronald went to the Duke's apartments. He found his brother disturbed, his face was wanting in its wonted serenity.

'Ronald,' said the Duke, 'no letter again this morning from that provoking boy. I cannot understand it. In my day no son would have dreamed of leaving his father without notice of his proceedings. Can it be that love has turned his head? If so, the sooner he is married and brought to a sober mind and sense of his obligations, the better.'

'You see, brother,' said the General, 'ladies are exacting. No doubt Miss Dulcina is not happy without Herbert about her, and love-making is one of the labours of Hercules. When he comes home he is fagged, and fain to throw himself in a chair and go to sleep. Take my word for it—that is it. Miss Rigsby has only written twice to Grace, once a line of thanks for her reception here, the other a mere half-page of nothing, that took her one minute by the clock to write.'

'Nothing can excuse neglect of duty to a parent,' said the Duke. 'When I was young I was taught to discharge duty first, and take pleasure after. The spirit of this age is other; duties are blown away as feathered seeds, and only pleasure is regarded. I thought better of Herbert.'

'My dear Duke, you must excuse him. Love-making demoralises a man. It is like an election, it upsets everything. No doubt, now that Saltcombe has emerged from his chrysalis, he is flying about.'

'It would not take him ten minutes to write me a line. I am not exacting. I do not require four sides crossed, but I expect the recognition of what is due from a son to a father. I am put out.'

Lord Ronald had nothing to say to this.

'Hitherto,' continued the Duke, 'I have had no reason to complain of Herbert; he has been a respectful, obedient son. He was extravagant some years ago, and I have no doubt spent more money than was judicious, but it runs in the family. I was ex-

travagant at one time ; my father—as you may remember, Ronald—never stopped to consider what a thing cost if it took his fancy ; and my grandfather went to extremes in munificence. I should have been pained to see a mean, calculating spirit in Herbert. A gentleman must be open-handed.’

‘He has lived too quietly for some years. I am glad to see our comet run into sunlight again.’

‘Yes. Because I am too poorly to take my proper place in society, that is no reason why Saltcombe should live as a hermit. I shall insist, when he is married, on his being in town for the season.’

‘His wife will take care of that.’

‘I trust she will. I have been considering that he must have a residence of his own.’

‘Will he not live here ?’

‘Certainly not. I should like it, but it would hardly do. The Marquis and Marchioness must have their own country house, with no divided authority in it. I would not have Grace the guest of my daughter-in-law, nor my daughter-in-law the guest of Grace in Court Royal. No, Ronald, I have been thinking of Fowelscombe. The house is out of repair, but it is a fine place. The grounds are delightful, that glorious drive down through an avenue of beeches for over a mile, and then the charming old house below, nestling among trees—what can be more suitable for the young couple ? The house has been uninhabited for so long, and the grounds so neglected, that it will want a great deal doing to it. Still, some ten thousand pounds spent judiciously would make it comfortable.’

‘I am sure that Saltcombe would not wish it.’

‘Ronald,’ said the Duke, with some indignation, ‘unless the poisonous spirit of the age has infected Saltcombe more deeply than I anticipate, he will approve of whatever I ordain. I have written to an architect to examine and report on the condition of Fowelscombe, and I have requested a distinguished landscape gardener to look over the grounds and suggest improvements.’

‘But—my dear Duke.’

‘There is no *but* in the case—that is, no but is admissible. I wish it. That suffices.’

Lord Ronald looked down at his boots.

‘There is another thing,’ continued the Duke, ‘I wished to consult you about. I hear that the Revelstoke estates of the

Stretchleighs are to be sold. Our great-grandmother was a Stretchleigh, and it is unendurable to me to think that some brewer, or builder, or successful army tailor should come down and buy the property, and inhabit the house once the home of gentlemen. I am thinking of buying it.'

'Merciful powers!' exclaimed Lord Ronald.

'Why do you exclaim in this way? Is there anything exaggerated in this sentiment of respect for the home of our ancestors on the female side? Surely, Ronald, you are not touched with the utilitarian spirit of the age?'

'But—where is the money to come from?'

'Money can always be found for what is needful.'

'But this is hardly a necessity, brother.'

'Not a necessity, exactly, but almost a duty. All the country is invaded by rich tradesmen, and engineers who have been knighted for building bridges, and manufacturers out of the north. Our old country gentry are becoming extinct. I do my best to keep our neighbourhood select. There is no knowing what mischief a new man might do coming into our proximity. He would flood the country with nineteenth-century ideas, and subvert our tenants.'

'Have you spoken to Worthivale about this?'

'Not yet. I saw no need. He would combat it, of course. He is a good man, but narrow; pettifogging in his ideas, no breadth of view, always after reduction of outlay; never disposed to deal liberally with the tenants.'

'You have taken no step in the matter, I trust.'

'I cannot say that I have taken *no* step, but I have not yet bought the property. I have opened negotiations.'

'Do nothing, I entreat you—do nothing till after the marriage.'

'It may then be too late. The property may have passed into most objectionable hands.'

'Consult Saltcombe. Consult Edward. For Heaven's sake move no further without consideration.'

'I have considered. You are very strange this morning, Ronald. I do not understand your manner or your mood.'

'I am out of sorts. I am bewildered. Spend ten thousand on Fowelscombe and buy Revelstoke. Lord bless me!' He recovered his composure. 'Excuse me, Duke, you take me by surprise. Do nothing till I have had another talk with you about it.'

‘My dear Ronald, what does it concern you whether I buy Revelstoke or not? I am buying to suit my own notions, and, though I value your opinions, I am not bound to submit to them. Now I really must attack my letters. I will detain you no longer. My conscience reproaches me for having taken up so much of your precious time; pray return to your turning of knobs.’

CHAPTER XXXV.

A CARD CASTLE.

LORD RONALD returned to his room and spent the rest of the day in turning. The days were short, and he made the most of the little light. His hand wanted its usual steadiness, or his mind wandered to other matters; for he spoiled several of the knobs he worked at that afternoon.

He was engaged on the twenty-sixth in the gathering dusk when he heard a step behind him, and looked round. ‘Mercy on me!’ he exclaimed, and cut into and spoiled the twenty-sixth knob. ‘What is the meaning of this?’

He saw the Marquis before him, worn, white, hollow-eyed. ‘Good heavens, Saltcombe! How come you here? What has happened? What is the matter with you? Have you been ill?’

‘Do not overwhelm me with questions, uncle,’ answered Lord Saltcombe. ‘I can answer but one at a time.’

‘But this is amazing. Why have you not written? What do you mean by dropping on one from the sky without warning?’

‘There, uncle, leave the lathe. I want a word with you. I have matters of importance to communicate. Come out of your workshop into the other room.’

‘I am at your service. Merciful powers! what a pack of troubles and bewilderments come upon one all at once! First, Worthivale bursts in on me, then the Duke drops down on me, and now you spring on me like a ghost—my senses are stupefied or scared away. No bad news, I hope? Take that chair by the fire. How pale, how ill you look! Tell me the truth, Herbert, have you been sick?’

Lord Saltcombe shook his head.

‘Your father is put out at your not writing. I thought that sickness might account for the neglect.’

‘I have not been ill.’

‘Then why have you not written? I found the Duke this morning in a tantrum about it. He will call you sharply to task. What have you been doing with yourself?’

‘I am sorry if I have given my father pain. I would spare him every annoyance. What I have to communicate now is likely to disturb him. Miss Rigsby and I have not succeeded in liking each other more, the more we have seen of each other.’

‘What? How? You don’t mean to say—you!—you surely are not going to tell me——’

‘That the engagement is at an end.’

Lord Ronald started. ‘At an end! Herbert, you are out of your senses, or I am dreaming.’

‘It is true. The engagement has been broken off. Mr. Rigsby must have picked up exaggerated reports of the state of our pecuniary affairs, and he began impertinently to catechise me about them. I could do no other than refuse to answer his questions.’

The General clasped his hands on his knees, wrung them, and groaned. ‘Saltcombe! do you know that we have been building on your marriage? Do you know that without it we are hopelessly lost? Your marriage was the one cord to which we clung. That gone, we sink. There is no salvation anywhere.’

‘I know it,’ answered the Marquis, gloomily. ‘I know more than that. We drag others who have trusted us into ruin along with us. But it cannot be helped. I have done my utmost. I am not to blame—not in this matter, at least. I did what was required of me. I constrained myself to be civil and play the lover to a girl I could not like, to one with whom I could not associate with any pleasure. I proposed to her. I never betrayed my feelings by a look, a gesture, or a word. I was prepared to make her my wife, and when she was my wife you may rely on me I would have failed in no duty towards her. But I could not endure to be treated with impertinence—not by such as Rigsby.’

‘Rigsby treat you with impertinence! It is inconceivable, you have misunderstood him. I will go post-haste to Plymouth and explain matters, and effect a reconciliation. You must marry the girl, you must.’

‘I cannot do so. Mr. Rigsby does not wish it. He has been frightened by gossip about our difficulties, and he thinks we will involve him and throw away his daughter’s fortune.’

‘But he ought to be proud, happy to contribute——’

‘Perhaps he ought, but he is not. On the contrary, he declines the honour.’

‘Heaven help us, we are lost! Do you know, Saltcombe, that some of the mortgages are called up, and unless we find the money we shall be compelled to sell? It is too dreadful!’

‘I have done what I could. To bear to be taken to task by that Mr. Rigsby exceeded my endurance.’

‘Did you break with him, or he with you?’

‘He came to me, as I believe, with the express purpose of bringing about a rupture. He charged us with being ruined, and wanting to stave off ruin with his money.’

‘That is true.’

‘It may be true, but it is impertinence to say it.’

‘So you flared up and upset the salt?’

‘I declined to be cross-questioned.’

‘What is to be done about conveying this news to the Duke?’

‘It must be done gently, lest it excite him and affect his heart.’

‘If you think best, uncle, that I should take all the blame on myself, I will do so. Let my father suppose me capricious, he will be annoyed, but it will pass. He did not look cordially on this engagement. He did not care for the connection. If he thinks that the planter broke it off his pride will be hurt, he will feel it as an insult, and that will agitate him profoundly. No; best let me bear the blame.’

Lord Ronald put his hand to his head. He was too bewildered to think; he looked at the Marquis, then at the fire, almost stupidly. Both were silent for some time.

‘I came in quietly, without being observed,’ said Lord Saltcombe. ‘I wished to have a word with you before I saw any one else. I had rather not meet Grace to-night.’

‘The Duke must be prepared for this. You have shaken me. I cannot collect my thoughts. We must telegraph for the Archdeacon. We shall want his advice. What a card castle we have been erecting, Saltcombe! and now with a puff it is down in ruins.’

‘I will go and sleep at the lodge. Beavis will give me a shakedown. I do not wish to meet Grace till I am more composed, and I do not want the news of my return to be carried to my father till you have prepared him.’

‘What am I to say? What can I say?’

‘Tell him that you have heard unpleasant tidings from Plymouth, and that you expect me to be back to-morrow.’

‘I will do so. Good heavens, Saltcombe! will you believe it? the Duke, in sublime unconsciousness, is planning the outlay of ten thousand pounds on Fowelscombe and the purchase of Revelstoke. The only possible good I see in your return is that it will render the outlay on Fowelscombe unnecessary, and you must dissuade him from buying an acre at Revelstoke. There is no money—not one penny; and the mortgages on Court Royal and Kingsbridge are called up. What are we to do? Now go quietly and get Beavis to telegraph to the Archdeacon. My head is not clear enough in this whirl. He is a business man, and always knows what should be done.’

He paced the room. ‘There is the first bell,’ he said; ‘I must dress for dinner. I will do what I can to prepare the Duke. Merciful powers! how much is demanded of me! I would rather command in an engagement with Afghans.’

When Lord Saltcombe had gone he dressed hastily, but was late when he came down. The second bell had rung. The Duke disliked unpunctuality. The General had never failed in this particular before.

‘Why, Ronald,’ he said, ‘is the weather going to change? Are the heavens about to fall, that you come lagging after the time? Will you give your arm to Grace? I take in my little friend Lucy. What a small party we are! How is it the vicar and Mrs. Townley have not been invited, or Beavis, or the Sheepwashes, or some one? I dislike an empty table. Now Saltcombe is away the party is reduced so low that conversation flags. With the best intentions and the most brilliant wits we must suffer from exhaustion of topics. Grace, have you heard from that tiresome brother of yours who is too enamoured to write?’

The brilliantly lighted dining-room, the fire of oak on the hearth burning merrily, the glittering silver and glass on the table, the flowers that adorned it, yellow alamandas and maiden-hair fern laid on the white cloth; the buff and scarlet footmen—the general brightness, comfort, beauty, struck the General as it had never struck him before, conscious as he was of the desperate situation of affairs. He was out of spirits. He had not dressed with his usual care, his tie was twisted, one of his cuffs was *minus* a stud, and slipped over his hand. The Duke observed his troubled looks, but said nothing. He thought he had been too short with his brother in the forenoon, and regretted it. This, no doubt, was distressing Lord Ronald. Lady Grace was always quiet; she

could talk pleasantly, but lacked the power of originating and keeping up a conversation. Lucy threw herself into the gap; she was skilful to maintain a conversation, and give it a fillip when it flagged. An invaluable person at table when spirits were low.

‘You good little maid,’ said the Duke, ‘you are to me an un-failing source of admiration. Always lively, with your dark eyes sparkling, and your fresh cheek blooming, and your tongue never lacking a happy speech.’

‘It could not be otherwise, your Grace, when you are always flattering,’ said Lucy.

When Lady Grace and Miss Worthivale retired the Duke passed the port to his brother. ‘You never touch claret, I think?’ Then, noticing that Lord Ronald’s hand shook as he filled his glass, he asked, ‘What ails you, Ronald, to-day? You look out of sorts.’

‘I have received unpleasant news from Plymouth.’

‘From Plymouth!’ repeated the Duke. ‘Not a letter from Saltcombe, surely?’

‘No, Saltcombe has not written to me, but I have heard something affecting him which I do not like.’

‘What do you mean? Is he ill?’

‘No, not that.’

‘What is it, then?’

‘I don’t fancy his love-making is proceeding smoothly.’

‘The course of true love never did run smooth,’ said the Duke. ‘Lovers always fall out, and make up their quarrels next day. That is a commonplace in Cupid’s maxims.’

‘I don’t mean that,’ said the General. He was uneasy: strict in his ideas of right and wrong, he was unskilled to act a part and speak half the truth. He turned hot, then cold.

‘What is it, then?’

‘I believe Dulcina Rigsby dresses very badly.’

‘I did not like her taste here, but that is a matter for ladies to consider, not men. For my part, I think the modern fashions detestable.’

‘I hear she makes herself ridiculous by her outrageous style.’

The Duke frowned.

‘Of course Saltcombe does not like his future wife to become the laughing-stock of Plymouth.’

The Duke pushed his glass from him. ‘Ronald,’ he said, ‘this is intolerable. A future Marchioness of Saltcombe the—the laughing-stock—do you know what you are saying?’

The General crossed his legs, then uncrossed them, leaned back in his chair, filled his glass again, took some candied angelica, and said, looking uncomfortable and nervous, 'Saltcombe is sensitive. He cannot stand that sort of thing. I hear he will be home to-morrow.'

'Saltcombe—here! Do you mean to hint that the engagement is off?'

'I know nothing definitely. I can't say absolutely off, past all patching up. You can understand that if Miss Dulcina Rigby gives herself airs unbecoming a lady, Saltcombe will feel it. The old father, too, the coffee-planter, is a rough stick, and perhaps does not know how far liberties are allowed on the footing on which he stands.'

The Duke looked grave. He picked some grapes and ate them. Then he said, 'Saltcombe knows what befits his position. She who is to be Duchess of Kingsbridge when I am gone must not be an object of ridicule. If she were a princess of blood royal, and failed in tact, she would be unworthy to wear our strawberries. Not for the world would I do what is wrong, not for ten thousand worlds would I excite a jeer.' He paused. 'You think Herbert will return. Very well. He will do what is right. I shall be glad to see him. You think the match is broken off. I am content. The house of Kingsbridge does not want Rigbys to prop it up. Let us rejoin the ladies.'

In the meantime Lady Grace and Lucy were sitting side by side on the sofa in the drawing-room. Grace had her arm round Lucy's waist, and Lucy held a screen to cut off the red firelight from her friend's face.

'How lively you are to-day, Lucy!' said Lady Grace. 'I do not know what it was at dinner that put my father and uncle out of spirits, and observing them I lost the desire to talk; but you flew to the rescue, and rattled on, and forced us all to laugh; and now I feel your heart; you are quivering with animation. What is it, Lucy? I have not found you in such buoyant humour for many a day.'

'Shall I tell you a secret?'

'If pleasant.'

'It is excellent. I am sure it will rejoice you.'

'Then do tell me.'

'What will you pay me for it?'

'I will give you a kiss.'

‘I will pour out my whole heart’s contents for that.’

‘Then do not tantalise me. What is it?’

‘What do you wish best of all?’

Lady Grace slightly coloured.

‘You do not like Miss Rigsby, do you?’ asked Lucy.



‘Oh, Lucy! don’t ask such a question.’

‘I do not. I detest her, a nasty, spoiled, conceited piece of goods, without fresh feeling, without good taste, without healthy brains.’

‘You must not say that,’ said Lady Grace.

‘I must and I will. I could not do so before. I can now.’ Her eyes danced, the dimples came in her pretty rosy cheeks, and

her lips quivered. 'Only think! Lord Saltcombe is home. It is all off.'

'Herbert home!' exclaimed Lady Grace. 'What is off?'

'The engagement. Broken off, and a good thing too. I am heartily glad, and could dance for joy. So could you. You never liked her. You never thought her worthy of Lord Saltcombe.'

'Oh, Lucy!' Lady Grace stood up. She was nervous with excitement. 'Oh, dear Lucy, is this so? How do you know it?'

'It is quite true. Are you not glad?'

Lady Grace hesitated and looked into the fire. 'I do not know what to say. I hope he has not behaved badly. I cannot think that he has. Yet the breaking off of the engagement can hardly come from her. She seemed very fond of him.'

'You may be quite sure Lord Saltcombe would not do what is wrong. I know nothing about how it came about, I only know that it is so. You never liked her, did you?'

'No. I did my utmost to become attached to her, but I could not. How did you hear of this?'

'Through my father.'

'Did Lord Saltcombe write to him? Herbert has not deigned to send me a line since he left.'

'Lord Saltcombe is at our house.'

'Oh, Lucy!'

'He did not like to appear here till Lord Ronald had prepared the Duke's mind.'

'Oh, Lucy! I wonder how he bears it. Do you think he was fond of her?'

'I cannot believe it.'

'Lucy! Nor do I. What is the meaning of this? I am like a deaf person at a play, or as one who comes in at the second act and sees much movement, but is unable to lay hold of the threads of the plot. Uncle Edward, Aunt Elizabeth, Uncle Ronald, all seemed to me bent on this marriage. Beavis advised it. What made it so desirable? I asked Beavis at the ball, but he would tell me nothing. I am afraid this rupture will disappoint them. Uncle Ronald's face and cuff at dinner showed me he was disturbed. Why is he disturbed? What is there so attractive in Dulcinea Rigsby?'

Instead of answering these questions Lucy said, 'My father says that Lord Saltcombe is looking wretchedly ill, so white, and hollow under the eyes.'

‘Lucy! I must see him. Amuse the Duke whilst I run to the lodge. I cannot bear that my brother should be there unhappy and unwell, and I not see him and know the reason of his distress and sickness. I shall not be gone long. Make some excuse for my absence.’

In a very few minutes Lady Grace was in the park. She was in pale blue silk evening dress; she had thrown a cloak over her shoulders, and a light knitted woollen shawl over her head. The deer started as she passed, but when they heard her voice they came after her, thrusting their noses against her hand. She walked quickly, and when she reached the steward’s lodge a little colour was in her delicate cheeks.

‘Emily,’ she said to the maid who opened the door, ‘is Lord Saltcombe here?’

‘Yes, my lady. He is in the study with Mr. Beavis.’

‘They will excuse my interrupting them,’ she said, passed down the passage, lightly tapped at the door, and in another moment was in her brother’s arms. Beavis withdrew, but not before Lady Grace, who never forgot what was due to every one, had put her hand into his and thanked him with her eyes. Her heart was too full to speak. The fine lips were quivering, and tears were trembling in her eyes like dew in the calyx of a flower.

She made her brother stand away from her at arm’s length and looked at him.

‘Oh, Herbert!’ she said, in a low plaintive voice, ‘you have suffered. Oh, my dear, dear brother, I must know all. You cannot conceive the pain it is to me to be shut out from all the mysteries that surround you. You have no one but me, I none but you, who can perfectly understand and feel for each other. Tell me everything. You have not been ill in body. You have been ill in mind. Lucy will not be candid with me, and she knows more than I. Beavis only bids me trust him. My uncle Roland is unapproachable. I must come to you. I cannot bear it. I cannot. Dear Herbert! as you love me, tell me everything.’

‘Sit down, Grace.’

‘No, I cannot; I must not stay. I can rest neither here nor anywhere, not on my bed, till the key is put in my hands. I lie awake thinking and puzzling till I fear I shall go mad. Anything is better than this uncertainty. Why are you unhappy? Why have you all made such a point of this marriage? Why is

Uncle Roland so upset because it is broken off? What did Beavis see in her to urge you to make her your wife?’

‘I cannot tell you, Grace.’

‘You must, Herbert. I will no longer be left in doubt.’

‘Even the Duke does not know.’

‘So I perceive. He alone has been indifferent.’

‘You must be spared what would give you pain.’

‘I do not ask to be spared. If you have a cross laid on your shoulder which is weighing you down, shift one arm to my shoulder and give me your hand, we will carry it together. I am brave, Herbert. I can bear anything. Only one thing at a time, Herbert: first tell me—did you love Dulcina?’

‘I was determined to do so; I did my best, but I could not. Love will not be forced.’

‘I am glad to hear you say that. Your conduct is made doubly inexplicable now. Why did you propose to her?’

Lord Saltcombe hesitated. After a while, during which she waited with patience, he said, looking down, ‘Very well, Grace, know all. We are ruined. The marriage was arranged in the hopes of saving us from going to pieces. The Rigsbys are very rich.’

‘Is that all?’ asked Lady Grace, with a sigh of relief.

‘All!’ echoed Lord Saltcombe. ‘Ruin—our ruin proclaimed by every newspaper throughout England, the loss of our property, the sale of Court Royal.’

‘It will kill papa.’

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE COUNCIL OF COURT ROYAL.

THE first council of which we have given the acts was of a private nature. It had no pretensions to œcumenicity. It was a synod, not a council. It had been convoked in the interests of the Kingsbridge House, but had been attended by the Worthivale family only.

The aspect of affairs was now so desperate that a council was summoned to meet as soon as Lord Edward arrived from Sleepy Hollow.

The steward had called his son to his aid, and Beavis had

gone carefully through the accounts—not an easy task, for his father was unsystematic.

‘What we want,’ said Mr. Worthivale, ‘is to gain time. Give us a little space in which to look about, and we will find another wealthy heiress for Lord Saltcombe. There are as good fish in the sea as they that come out of it.’ He clung to this forlorn hope.

Beavis spent several days over the accounts. He examined all the mortgages, the notes of hand; he investigated the expenditure in its several branches, and brought all into form. His time in a lawyer’s office stood him in good stead. He had acquired system, and a power of analysis lacking in his father.

Lord Edward arrived. To her great regret, Lady Elizabeth was unable to accompany him. Lent was approaching, and she had to arrange the services and appoint the preachers. Moreover, it was thought unadvisable for her to be away just then. A faint and hectic tinge of opinion had manifested itself in the pellucid brain of the excellent curate.

Whilst Beavis was at work his father continually interrupted him with explanations that were unnecessary, apologies for his own conduct that were uncalled for, and proposals that were inadmissible.

‘Lord Ronald spoke rather sharply to me the other day,’ he said. ‘He almost laid the blame on me for having got the family into such a condition.’

‘You have no occasion for self-reproach,’ said Beavis. ‘If it had been possible to effect anything, you would have done it. You have, indeed, done for them more than you should. Lucy’s money——’

‘Now, no more on that point,’ interrupted his father. ‘We shall have it again, certainly.’

‘The only thing that could have saved the family was a plain and bald statement of its difficulties and desperate condition, and that they would have refused to listen to. They buoy themselves up on hopes that are fallacious, and trust to a Providence to save them that expects every man to take the first steps towards saving himself.’

‘Heaven knows I have preached retrenchment, but my words have been unheeded. Now take the books under your arm and come with me. They will be assembled by this time.’

Father and son walked through the park to Court Royal.

Neither spoke ; their thoughts depressed them. They entered the General's private sitting-room, and saw there Lord Edward, Lord Ronald, and the Marquis. At the door was Lady Grace. She put up her hand to stay Beavis. 'Please let me in also. Saltcombe has told me a little, I want now to know all.'

He hesitated, but without waiting for a refusal she passed in.

'Grace!' exclaimed Lord Ronald, 'this may not be. It is rude to show a lady the door, but I cannot help myself when business is in consideration.'

'I know what the business is,' she answered, 'and I am interested in it as well as you.' She ran to the Archdeacon, and nestled on a stool at his side, took his right arm and put it over her shoulder. 'Uncle Edward, speak a word for me.'

'Let her stay,' said the Archdeacon. 'A woman's wit is sometimes worth more than a man's wisdom.'

'Thank you, uncle!' She pressed his hand.

The General occupied a hard chair with a straight back. He had crossed his legs and folded his arms. His face was grave and set. The Archdeacon sat in a lounging chair and kept his arm round his niece, sometimes raising his wrinkled hand to stroke her smooth hair. Lord Saltcombe stood in the window looking out. The steward opened proceedings by describing the condition of the finances. Two mortgages had been already called up, and another he feared every day would be so. Those already noted were on Court Royal and Kingsbridge. Rumour had no doubt been busy with their name, for bills had poured in from all quarters, tradesmen's bills pressing for immediate payment. Probably the bad times, the fall in the value of land, and threatened legislation menacing land, had alarmed the mortgagees. As he went on he became confused, repeated himself, appealed to figures and read them wrong, and involved the case to such an extent that when he sat down none who had heard him were wiser than when he stood up.

Beavis had his chair near his father. He was distressed at the old man's inability to put clearly what he had to say, due to his inability to think clearly. He listened with patience, and when he had done he said, 'I have gone most carefully through all the accounts, have drawn up a table of debts, and a list of the mortgages and bills. I know exactly what the expenditure has been in every department during the last three years, also what the assets have been. Everything is here, *en précis*, on the table,

in so simple a form that a child can understand it. The situation is one from which extrication is only possible by having recourse to heroic methods. If the family difficulties had been considered in time, salvation might not have been so difficult as it is now.

‘Come, come!’ said the Archdeacon, sharply, ‘don’t exaggerate.’

‘I am not exaggerating, my lord. May I pass these papers to you? You can convince yourself that I am speaking within the mark.’

‘What is the amount absolutely necessary?’ asked Lady Grace in a calm, low tone.

‘Oh, Lady Grace,’ said Beavis, hastily, ‘you ought not to be here. You unnerve me.’

‘Let my presence rather brace you to declare the whole truth. Deal plainly with us. The surgeon’s hand must not tremble when he touches the wound.’

‘I need not enumerate all the mortgages,’ continued Beavis. ‘The heaviest is that of four hundred thousand on the Loddiswell property, the annual interest on which is sixteen thousand. That is just six thousand above what we are now drawing from the estates thus charged. This is in the hands of an Insurance Company, and is not called in. Seventy thousand was raised for the building of Court Royal. We have a little mortgage on Charlecombe. Neither of these is notified.’

‘Of course not,’ interrupted the steward.

‘There is a smaller, much smaller mortgage on the manor of Kingsbridge of four thousand five hundred. As you may know, though his Grace is Lord of the Manor of Kingsbridge, he has very little property in the place itself. A higher mortgage could not be got on that. This is at four and three quarters. So is that for forty-six thousand pounds on Court Royal itself. These two are in the hands of a Mr. Emmanuel, and he has given notice that they must be paid within three months. There is another, on Alvington, which we fear will also have to be met. It is not in the same hands, but in those of another Jew.’

‘Well,’ said Lord Ronald, ‘fifty-five thousand pounds is not so prodigious a sum. I suppose these two mortgages can be transferred.’

‘I do not think it. Remember that Court Royal is nearly all park—park and pleasure-ground bring in no rents.’

‘Then some other mortgages must be imposed. If Court Royal and Kingsbridge be relieved, what matter?’

‘We cannot afford to do that; besides, investments of this sort are looked shyly at now.’

‘What is the total of the annual charges on the property?’ asked the Archdeacon.

‘Twenty-four to twenty-five thousand.’

‘And the income?’

‘At present under thirty-five thousand.’

‘Then—living on ten thousand.’

‘No—dying on it, my lord.’

A dead silence ensued. Lady Grace’s eyes were fixed on Beavis. Lord Saltcombe looked through the glass into the park, where the rooks were wheeling and dancing round their nests, which they were repairing with twigs, and stopping with tufts of pine shoots.

‘I have not deducted the annual cost of the property, the rates, taxes—nor the Duke’s thousand.’

‘It is the deuce of a mischief that the marriage has fallen through,’ said the General. ‘That would have set us on our feet again.’

Lord Saltcombe still said nothing.

‘If no one has a suggestion to make,’ said Beavis, ‘I will venture to make one. No one can doubt that I am heart and soul devoted to the cause of your illustrious house. I beg you to listen to me with patience if I am forced to say what is unpleasant. I know the pride, the legitimate pride, of the family. It is this pride which has allowed it to slip into such straits. With a little more readiness to look at facts, and accommodate itself to circumstances, the financial position of the family would have been convalescent, and we should not now be wondering whether life or death is heavier in the scale of fate. Love of splendour, reckless improvidence, have made the deficit grow in geometrical proportions. Firmness—excuse my saying it—courage to grapple with the evil, have been wanting, and the evil has grown to such a head that it is almost past grappling with.’

‘Really, Mr. Beavis Worthivale,’ said the General, testily, ‘you forget our grey hairs. You are a young man, and you are lecturing men old enough to be your grandfathers.’

‘I think, Mr. Beavis, you are too strong in your expressions,’ said the Archdeacon.

His father, shocked beyond power of speech, seized him by the arms, and held up his hand in warning to be cautious.

‘He is right,’ said Lady Grace. ‘Uncle Ronald, do not be angry. He speaks the truth because he is too true a friend to withhold it from us.’

Beavis slightly bowed to her, and went on, ‘Safety may yet be had, but at a price. The only possible way out of the labyrinth of debt is for the Duke and the Marquis to resolve on the sale of some of the estates. Unfortunately, a worse time for the sale of land could not have befallen us. I believe that good properties do not now fetch five-and-twenty years’ purchase, and some are put up to auction and find no buyers. Still, let us hope for the best. Fowelscombe is worth two thousand a year; at thirty years’ purchase that would be sixty thousand; add another ten thousand for the house and timber and exceptionally beautiful situation, that makes seventy thousand. With that you can pay off Mr. Emmanuel and one of the other smaller mortgages. I should advise, sell also the manorial rights in Kingsbridge. The town will buy those, and give a good price for them.’

‘Really! really!’ exclaimed the General, ‘I cannot endure this. Sell the manor from which the Duke takes his title! What next?’

‘Expenses will have to be cut down at least a half, the number of servants reduced, and the Marquis must make up his mind to continue living in the country, and keeping Kingsbridge House, Piccadilly, closed.’

‘Put a bill in the window, “To be let furnished,” and so make a few guineas,’ gasped the General.

Lady Grace got up from her stool and put her arm through that of Lord Ronald, and remained at his side, holding his hand. Her touch soothed him and allayed his irritation.

‘The Duke will never consent to this,’ said Lord Edward.

‘It will not do even to suggest it to him. So much of the family property has been thrown away by our ancestors, that he is particularly tenacious on this point. Nothing will induce him to part with an acre.’

‘He is talking of buying Revelstoke, not of selling,’ said Lord Ronald.

‘Remember,’ said Beavis, ‘if he will not voluntarily part with Fowelscombe, he will have Court Royal taken from under his feet and over his head. There is a power of sale in all mortgages.’

‘They will not dare to do it,’ exclaimed the General: ‘the whole country would rise up and cry shame.’

‘What do a parcel of Jew money-lenders care about the feelings of the country?’ said Beavis. ‘Besides, you mistake. The country would approve. It would cry shame on the house of Eveleigh for not making a voluntary effort to pay its debts.’

Lord Ronald’s fingers nipped the hand of Lady Grace convulsively, and so sharply as to cause her pain. His face quivered,



and he prepared to say an angry word, when she laid her other hand on his lips.

‘Mr. Beavis is quite right,’ she said; ‘I feel that he is. We should do everything in our power to pay our debts, and not lie, curled up in our pride like hedgehogs, for the dogs to worry.’

The General turned to his brother. ‘Edward,’ he said, ‘we look to you for advice. These hot-headed, rash young folk would fire the stack to expel the mice. You are a man of experience, with a business head. What do you propose?’

‘There is nothing like moderation,’ said the Archdeacon. ‘I object to all extremes, doctrinal or practical. Let us be *via media* in all we do and propose. I agree with you, Mr. Beavis, that something must be done. I think with you, Ronald, that his proposal is too drastic. My suggestion is quite other. Let Mr. Worthivale write to the mortgagees or their agents—I mean those who are pressing, and those likely to be troublesome—and ask for delay. It would not be wise to sell land just now. Mr. Beavis said as much. The present depression cannot last. The wheat-producing area in America is rapidly being taken up, and the soil is becoming exhausted, at the same time that the population of America is increasing, and therefore the home consumption is greater. We want nothing but delay. Invite the two or three disagreeable mortgagees to a meeting at the lodge, and we shall see what will be the result. I shall make a point of being there.’

Beavis gathered the papers together. His cheeks were flushed.

‘Saltcombe has not spoken,’ exclaimed Lord Ronald, ‘yet he is the one most concerned.’

‘I bow to the superior wisdom of my uncles,’ answered the Marquis, ‘though I agree with Beavis. I do not, however, see any chance of persuading the Duke to a sale.’

‘I think with you, Herbert, in this as in all things,’ said Lady Grace. ‘Let us have amputation before mortification sets in.’

At that moment a tap at the door, and the Duke’s valet entered hastily, looking frightened.

‘My lords,’ he said, ‘his Grace is not well! Something has happened!’

(*To be continued.*)

THE NEW STAR IN ANDROMEDA.

Two hundred years ago the appearance of a new star would have caused widespread consternation and forebodings of the end of the world, or of some great and universal calamity. Two thousand years ago it would have been but the deification of another hero. To-day, however, the appearance of a new star only excites the curiosity of a few scientific men, while the bulk of the 30,000,000 folk, 'mostly fools,' as Carlyle says, are hardly aware of its existence.

The first intimation of the discovery is conveyed in the Dun Echt circular No. 97, where it is stated that Prof. Krueger telegraphed from Kiel, midnight, August 31, 'Variation in Andromeda nebula found by Dr. Hartwig of Dorpat: starlike nucleus.'

This undoubtedly was the announcement which first called general attention to the star, though it seems that Mr. I. Ward reports having seen it as early as August 19. Other observers also saw it independently about August 30. Fortunately there is no doubt that this is a new star, for none of the maps show any star in that part of the nebula. Also we are fortunate in having a photograph of the nebula taken a year ago by Mr. A. Common, in which there is no trace of a star where the one in question now appears, though other far fainter stars are clearly shown elsewhere in the nebula. It may then be taken as proved that this is a *bonâ fide* new star, or at any rate has become visible now for the first time.

And now there comes the question, Whence is it and what has caused it? Has the Great Spirit of the Universe made another sun from nothing? Has the command again gone forth, 'Let there be light,' with the same result as Moses saw, or whence is this strange new light? A hundred years ago the idea of a sudden creation of a new world from nothing would have been a satisfactory explanation, and a proof that the Deity was still working out the architecture of heaven. And so He may be: but science now steps in; and, not content with the bare statement, 'God made it,' would fain know how it was made, what were the foundations, what the material, and what the forces at work. Let us then see

first the facts as observed up to the present, and then what explanation, if any, science can offer.

As already stated, the new star was first announced on August 31. As early as July last, however, several observers had noticed a very perceptible brightening of the old nucleus of the nebula, so much, says Mr. Tarrant, as to suggest a faint star shining through. The Dun Echt observers located the new star 1.6 s. preceding and 5'' south of this nucleus. Several observers think the nebula on the side preceding the new star is less bright, while on the following side is a 'knot of light,' or a 'faint brush of light,' as it is variously described. It is agreed that the new star has varied in appearance since first discovered, for on September 3 it was clear and distinct, on September 4 hazy, and since then distinct again. It has also decreased in magnitude since September 3. Knobel says on September 4 it was $\frac{4}{10}$ of a magnitude less bright than September 3, and by September 9 it had decreased by another $\frac{5}{10}$ of a magnitude. He places it 20'' from the real nucleus of the nebula. At first all agreed in describing its spectrum as exactly like that of the nebula—namely, quite continuous with a sudden degradation of light at the red end. Later, however, Lord Rosse and others think they have seen a bright line in the spectrum on the more refrangible side of the D line.

Perhaps the first question that deserves attention is one on which considerable difference of opinion prevails—namely, is the new star really or only apparently within the Andromeda nebula? On previous occasions when new stars have appeared, two out of three have been connected with nebulae—namely, η Argus in the keyhole nebula, and the new star of 1876 in a nebula in Cygnus, which makes it rather probable that for some reason new stars generally belong to nebulae. But the continuous spectrum of the Andromeda nebula shows conclusively that it is not a true gaseous nebula, and up to now it has been tacitly assumed to be a galaxy of suns innumerable, so distant that the most powerful telescope fails to distinguish them as separate stars; another universe, so to speak, almost infinitely removed from our universe, and appearing like a small faint cloud-light. But the new star was of the 7th magnitude,¹ and, if it be in such a distant universe, must be 30,000 million times as large as our sun, which is almost inconceivable; moreover, the energy expended on the star during the last month must be equal to all the energy expended on our

¹ At the end of October it had decreased to about the 10th magnitude.

sun for hundreds of thousands of years. No wonder, then, that astronomers stand aghast at the idea, and begin to doubt whether the star is really in the nebula. May it not be much nearer to us than the nebula, and only by a mere accident in the same line of vision? The spectroscope answers, almost without hesitation, 'No,' the star and the nebula are physically connected. The spectra of the nebula and the star are both continuous and peculiar for a sudden cutting-off of the red rays. Such a spectrum is unique, and it is highly improbable that so unusual a spectrum could be shown by two bodies unless they were intimately connected. It may then be concluded that the new star is actually in the nebula. Two alternatives then present themselves. Must we still suppose the nebula to be a galaxy quite separate from ours, and therefore the new star to be of such a size as to surpass all else we know of in the heavens, or is it not more likely that the nebula is within our own galaxy after all, and therefore much nearer than has been hitherto supposed? If the latter be the case, as seems more probable, then the new star need not be so inconceivably vast, and, moreover, the idea of other galaxies than ours will have been considerably shaken.

Having seen, then, that the new star is actually within the nebula of Andromeda, and that the nebula is much nearer in all probability than hitherto supposed, let us see what reasons can be assigned for the sudden appearance of this new star.

First, then, distinction must be drawn between really new stars—that is, freshly created stars and variable stars. What we call new stars may be, and in many cases are, undoubtedly only extreme cases of variables. Is, then, the Nova of Andromeda a newly-born sun, or is it in middle-life; and, if in middle life, why has it *only now* become visible to us?

Of the birth of suns one theory alone presents itself—the nebular theory. Briefly it is this: that there exist in space huge masses of luminous gaseous matter, true nebulae, which, while radiating heat, are under the force of gravity slowly contracting and becoming in the course of millions of years luminous solids, and then gradually cooling down till they become cold, dark, and dead like our moon. The wonderful spiral nebula in Canes Venatici is pointed to as an instance showing the condensation of nebulous matter into distinct foci. Can this theory, then, account for the new star in Andromeda? Unhesitatingly we answer 'No, and for three reasons: first, the theory states the condensation to be

slow and gradual, whereas the new star attained its present brightness in the course of certainly less than a year, and probably in less than a month; and even if we take into account the critical point where the condensation of gases is suddenly accelerated, certainly this short time would not satisfy the demands of the theory. Secondly, the continuous spectrum of the Andromeda nebula does not give evidence of gaseous matter sufficient to form a huge sun like the new star must be, however near we suppose it to be. And thirdly, the spectrum of the star being the same as that of the nebula seems to argue that both the nebula and the star are in nearly the same stage of their existence. Nay, rather, seeing that the Andromeda nebula in all probability is a vast collection of luminous meteoric bodies, it might be urged that the new star must be much older than these meteoric bodies for it to give the same spectrum, because large masses of gas take longer to cool down to solid or liquid form than small masses.

Thus, then, the nebular theory affords no explanation of the sudden appearance of this star.

It may be suggested that it is the result of the collision of two large bodies of matter, moving in space cold and dark, but suddenly rendered hot and luminous by the force of collision; two dead worlds perhaps clashing together and suddenly uniting to form one blazing sun. Such is indeed a tremendous possibility, though no instance can be certainly named. Here, again, the similarity of the new star's spectrum to that of the nebula precludes this.

So far, then, we have seen there are two ways in which stars may be made, neither of which will account for the new star in Andromeda. Therefore, unless there be some other method of creation unknown to us, we are forced to conclude that the Nova is not in reality a new star, but only a variable star, hitherto too faint to be seen, and we may well ask the question, What is the cause of its sudden brightness? Numerous theories are offered to account for the variability of certain stars, some of which will be mentioned to see if they will account for this special star's appearance.

First, then, if a star in its course passes through a region where meteoric matter abounds, it is possible that such matter may fall on it in such quantities and with such impetus as very greatly to increase the star's light and heat; so that a star previously invisible to us may become bright enough to be seen. If such region of meteoric matter be isolated, the increased brightness of the star, besides being temporary, may never occur again.

But if there be a regular zone of meteors crossing the star's orbit, like that through which the earth passes in November, but on a larger scale, then there will be a periodical waxing and waning of the star's light. Such may be the partial cause of η Argûs changing every 46 years from 4th to 1st magnitude, and of R Cephei changing every 73 years from 11th to 5th magnitude. In the case of the temporary star in Cassiopeia in 1572, which suddenly became so bright as to be visible at noon, it is possible we have a variable star of long period; for a similar star appeared in 945, and again in 1264, in the same part of the sky. If so, we may expect its reappearance soon. If this were the cause of the new star of 1876 in the Swan, the fall of meteoric matter must have been immense, for the star was actually reduced to the gaseous state, and faded into a nebulous form, showing in its spectrum the lines of hydrogen, nitrogen, and another unknown gas. The new star in Andromeda also may possibly have derived its increased light from immense falls of meteoric matter; it may be a variable of long period, or its brightness may never occur again.

Further, in some cases the periodical waning of stars may be owing to dark bodies, such as huge planets, coming between and partially intercepting the light; or the variable may be in reality a double star, each member of it revolving round some common centre. Then, when they are in a straight line with the earth, we shall only see the light of the nearest; but when they form with the earth a triangle, we shall get the light of both, though their angular distance may be too small to be appreciable, owing to their remoteness from the earth.

Another cause of variability has been suggested by Professor Stewart. He says in his researches on our sun, which is without doubt a variable star, that 'we are entitled to conclude that in our own system the approach of a planet to the sun is favourable to increased brightness, especially in that part of the sun nearest the planet.' The increase of brightness, however, seems to be small, and would hardly be noticeable in a star so remote as that in the Andromeda nebula.

Again, in many cases the cause of variation is beyond a doubt internal; tremendous volcanoes (if we may compare small things with great) burst out from the interior of the star itself. In the spectrum of the new star in the Northern Crown in 1866 there were found one bright line in the red, and three bright lines in

the blue, which included the lines of hydrogen. This star still exists, though only faint, and Dr. Huggins thought that its sudden flare up in 1866 was due to immense volumes of incandescent hydrogen bursting out from the interior—rather suggestive of our own solar protuberances and red flames. As to the cause of these eruptions, we can no more explain them than we can explain terrestrial earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Now, it happens that Lord Rosse and others think they can detect bright lines in the spectrum of the new star of Andromeda, and, if this be so, it evidences the existence of huge masses of incandescent gases.

An old idea was that certain parts of the sun and other stars were brighter than others, and thus as they revolved we should see their brightness increase and decrease. To some extent this is of course true, as the sun-spots show, and it may account for some cases of variability.

Such, then, are some of the theories as to the causes of variable stars. Probably there is truth in all, and in some cases we may have one or more of these causes acting at once, as we venture to suggest is the case in Andromeda. Even supposing that the nebula is not an outside galaxy, but is within our own galaxy, and so not so remote as has been hitherto thought, yet it must be immensely removed from us, so far that its light may have taken hundreds or thousands of years to reach us. At that distance, then, nothing but the most mighty causes will account for the changes that have made the new star visible. The nebular theory we have seen cannot apply here; no near approach of planets could increase the brightness so much; neither can we suppose that different portions of the star vary so much in brightness; and as yet no positive evidence of the existence of incandescent gases is found, though Lord Rosse and others suspect it. Two methods, then, remain to account for the sudden brightness, and we venture to think they offer an all-sufficient reason, though of course they are mere conjectures, and not definitely proved facts. In the first place, the spectrum of the nebula shows that it consists of luminous solid or liquid bodies, surrounded by some gases which absorb the red rays; a collection of innumerable meteoric bodies in the middle stage of their existence, still retaining their heat and light: suns, in fact, but possibly so small as hardly to deserve the name, and certainly too small to be separately distinguished by our telescopes—as Mr. Proctor calls it, a

vast collection of cosmical dust kept at intense heat *by some unknown means*, but surrounded by other cloud-like matter which intercepts the red rays. Now, for some months past considerable movement has been suspected in the nebula, a mighty rush, as it were, of these bodies to a focus situated 20'' from the place where the new star has appeared. Now, suppose the star has existed an indefinite time in the heart of the nebula, but invisible to us because hidden by innumerable small bodies which go to form the nebula. Then, as soon as the rush of these bodies to the focus had proceeded a while, the number of them intercepting the light of the star from us would be considerably lessened. Also, if, as we imagine must be the case, the new star is itself of considerable size, while not being sensibly attracted towards the focus itself, many of the smaller bodies would fall on it as meteors, and its own light and heat would be thereby much increased. Thus, while the star itself would actually gain in light and heat, the number of meteoric bodies between it and the earth would be lessened, and the effect would thus be doubled, the result being that the star, before invisible to us, would become visible. But, further, we can imagine that sufficient meteoric matter might fall on the star as to even partially gasify it, or, at any rate, so to disturb its outer parts as to liberate gases confined in its interior, and thus after a while we should see bright lines in its spectrum, as is already suspected. Indeed, it may be that the action will become so great as to completely gasify the whole star, as was the case with the new star in the Swan in 1876.

Such, then, are some of the methods which astronomers give of the birth of worlds and changes of variable stars. Of course, in most cases they are content to find out secondary causes—primary causes are beyond our ken. That there are other forces which we know nothing of is certain, and time may put our theories out of joint. It may be that we have seen the birth of a new sun; we may be looking on a world in flames; but certainly the most probable explanation is the one we have adopted—that we have witnessed merely the accidental or perhaps periodic blazing forth with renewed vigour of a star long existent, but hitherto too faint to be visible.

RUSTICUS IN URBE.

I HAD just returned from a hasty journey of some 12,000 miles when I called on an old peasant who had been sick when I left England. He was much the same, sitting in the same chair, leaning on the same stick, saying the same words.

But he added some more. He asked whether I had not been far away. I said 'Yes,' but hopelessly failed (indeed I did not seriously try) to convey any idea of what the 'far' implied in this case. I did not describe my journey to him. But I tried whether *he* had been journeying at any time. 'Well, yes.' Then I pursued my inquiry into details, and found that he had been to Bury—the next parish. Also 'was at Stowmarket' (about fourteen miles off) 'once or twice.' He went 'in a waggon—you know.' I then asked about London. Had he ever been to London? 'NO.' This was emphatic and final. No; he hadn't 'been no further than Stowmarket.' But he was pleased at the memory of that visit. He chewed its cud. It was a sort of ride to Khiva which he had taken. In a waggon. Fourteen miles.

Thereupon I set myself to inquire about the wanderings of others in my flock, and found that several men of middle age, intelligent superior workmen, had never seen the great city. Thus, presently, I asked about a score to go with me to London. I was touched with the readiness of the affirmative response. A few had been there, one or two more than once, but several never; though we are (in a straight line) only sixty miles off the Monument, and there are some half-dozen daily trains to town.

Those who were pleased to accept my invitation were the men of our choir, our ringers, and the committee of the village club and reading-room.

Having to run up to town that week, I made some inquiries and arrangements about the matter, and on my return some of us had tea at the Vicarage, when we talked late over the preliminary letters which had to be written to presumably hospitable relations in town. I then explained that I desired to visit no sights, but to show as much of London itself as could be seen in a long drive from the top of a private omnibus of which I had secured the hire. It was fresh varnished, and had red wheels. With

this I secretly flattered myself we should fill a place in the Ring during part of our round. My friends would see something worth looking at there, at least in the shape of horseflesh, of which they knew not a little. But the unexpected difficulty was how to find fit lodgings for such of our party as had no friends to go to, and were visiting London for the first time in their lives. Innumerable houses seemed hardly to provide a reasonable room. The so-called 'coffee-house' is frequently an abomination. I was shown what was considered a model lodging establishment by a kind friend; but—No. There seemed to be nothing in the way of a bed between threepence (respectability guaranteed, but forty in a room) and half-a-crown, with extras. However, at length this matter got itself settled, and the last touches were given to the preparations for our trip. The conspicuousness of it we felt to be promising, since the clerk, choir, and ringers were all to be absent from their posts at Barton on a Sunday. This was well. Nothing is more wholesome than an occasional holiday wherein others are put to inconvenience. It is most mortifying not to be missed, and the man who makes such careful provision for the discharge of his duties during his absence as to have them perfectly attended to deserves to find his place filled up for good when he returns. It is possible to be too considerate. 'Who will chime?' said the authorities, adding, 'We never yet let a Sunday be without ringing the bells.' 'Let it be now, then,' I prayed. Routine may be divine, but it is a good thing to break its neck every now and then, even in a small way. No doubt, to magnificent people, the course of this world in a country village is very small. Yet the life of many rural nooks helps to make that of the country; and if there are no drops, where is the ocean?

Well, we accomplished our round, and were most hospitably treated, having a sumptuous tea-supper provided for us one day at Toynbee Hall (where Oxford now touches Whitechapel—presently, I hope, to be joined by Cambridge in the contact), and on the next a dinner at the Charterhouse in the (high table) dining-room of that hospitable place.

Now I feel that I have come to a thin place in the ice of my simple narrative, since what I write is pretty sure to be read by some of my guests, and I should be sorry to offend. If there should be such a reader I hope he will forgive me for saying (inasmuch as I wish the thing to be said) that though divers of my

guests came fresh from the plough, being what some people call only 'common labourers,' and had never set foot in London before, the way in which they dropped into Japanese lounges in the large decorated drawing-room at Toynbee Hall, and fell into easy conversation with those members of the University who were resident there, was a protest against a too common mode of entertaining 'poor' persons. Most people, as a rule, take the tone of their surroundings. Association is the best teacher. If you choose to ask a hungry man (fresh from filling a 'muck-cart') to dinner, and, seating him in an outhouse (with sufficient elbow-room), put a pound or so of hot mutton with a dozen potatoes before him, he will probably give you a new view of what can be done in ten minutes. No great harm either, you will say. But society exists for (among other things) the interchange of courtesies which are hardly recognised in 'doing ample justice' to a coarse abundant meal. Those who have anyway fine perceptions of life are surely called to show their value of them in at least such hazardous performances as eating and drinking, which test 'manners.' There is nothing which more justly offends (or should offend) a 'working-man' than the mere filling or stoking of him, as if he were an engine. The fulness may probably be accepted without overt complaint, but man does not live by mutton alone, nor is he rightly led to suppose that the accessories of a feast are to be summed up in gravy, however rich.

Now Toynbee Hall exists partly in order to bring together (under fair sumptuary conditions) such supposed extremes of society as are represented by Balliol and Bethnal Green. And when we were guests there it realised another feature of its purpose, not merely in throwing its doors open to a party of thorough peasants who mostly came straight from the clods of the field, but in the easy courteousness with which the feast was made. We rustics all fell into the ranks of academical refinement at once. This was owing not merely to the frank greetings of our hosts, but to the reception of us without any fuss or display of social tact. I do not know which is most tiresome, entertaining or being entertained. A man who strains himself to be polite and agreeable is obviously repulsive. And this rule holds throughout all the manifold strata of entertainments. I do not mean that no addition should be made to the usual fare, and no special decoration be allowed, under any circumstances, but a visible departure from the routine of the household brings in some flavour

of constraint, and hinders the sense of ease with which the guests should be received.

But to return to our outing. I think the Albert Memorial made the most vivid impression, and the first steps within St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey the deepest. On the former one of our party remarked quietly, 'I never thought there could have been anything like it in the world.' The latter were entered in befitting silence. Not a word was said. Indeed, we betrayed no vulgar astonishment anywhere, though every pore was obviously open to new influences. I was delighted to feel that we were untainted by the sheer gaping sight-seeing spirit, though such questions and comments as found utterance were to the point. But they were very few. The least experienced, indeed, of our party eschewed surprise with the steadiness of Orientals. We saw more of London than many who have lived in it for years, since we went through the London Docks, measured a big ship, visited a large Board School, and drove from Ratcliff Highway to Kensington Gardens and back, by different routes, stopping on our way at several notable spots.

The crowd in the street is, however, the 'sight' of London to one who has never visited a large city; and it was so, plainly, to such of our party as had never seen the metropolis. And this sight is realised best, or even, I might say, only, by a continuous drive from one end of the town to the other. To move straight on through miles of streets, and know that you are not 'fetching a compass' or harking back upon your track, gives the best idea of size. And the unbroken procession on either side of the way suggests an innumerable multitude far more than a large assemblage does. There is an edge to the biggest mob, but there is no beginning nor end to the crowd which marches along the streets. It represents an incalculable population; and the wonder to the countryman is that they are all strangers. At home, with us, if we meet a man in the road whom we don't know, we mostly ask 'Who is that?' and if no one can tell us we stop and look at him as a phenomenon and wonder who he can be. But what an utter upsetting of this mood, what a hopeless baffling of curiosity, comes when we traverse five miles of streets in a straight line and meet nameless thousands on the right hand and on the left!

It is a good thing for countrymen to visit cities; not to attend meetings or see 'sights,' but to realise, if possible, the existence of myriads of whom he knows nothing, except that he

sees them troop along the streets in endless line. There is, no doubt, much to be said for rustic seclusion, for local pride, for parochial individuality. It is well for a peasant to think highly of his surroundings. The village authority must not be rudely challenged by pert quotations of town utterance, nor drowned in the sea of city life. The town may learn very much from the country, and yet certainly there is something for the rustic to learn from the town. His estimate of, if not respect for, local magnates is likely to be exaggerated beyond all reason, and that dogged stubbornness which invests parochial custom with the sacredness of ancient law is sometimes intolerably stiff and blind. Then it is not amiss for the countryman to encounter endless unsympathetic crowds, and to feel that the world roars on without caring twopence about Deep Slough-cum-Little Puddle. Village crust is sometimes very thick, and an admixture of fresh sentiment makes it not merely lighter but much more wholesome.

The extent to which regard for parochial boundaries, customs, and traditions is sometimes carried can be realised only by residence in a village. People intermarry within its limits till a couple of adjoining parishes may be found, each with its own distinct set of names. The spire of one may be visible from the churchyard of the other, but there may be hardly any interchange or social intercourse between the two. The old village sentiment of England survives with intensity, though its political value has (worse luck) been deeply impaired, if not extinguished. It is originally natural and admirable, but now is shown chiefly by intermarriage, till three-fourths of the inhabitants are blood relations to one another. It is difficult to forecast any influence likely to correct the mischief which must accompany such a state of things, for, though not so ancient as some fancy, their growth is too deeply rooted to be easily moved. It has descended from a comparatively recent and limited period in which travelling was very rare. In older days the intercommunication caused to a great extent by pilgrimages was great, not merely over and beyond Europe (the Wife of Bath visited Jerusalem thrice), but within this island. The number of cross-country roads which traverse a county bear witness to more popular movement than is made now. They are often almost disused, but were created by traffic. When pilgrimages ceased after the Reformation, much extended social intercourse came to a stop. Villages settled on their lees. Poor-laws bound them still closer together. The

result is to be perceived in that parochial exclusiveness which now often exists, and which has its unhealthy as well as wholesome side. No doubt this may be seen along with some of that ingrained English disposition to rove which brought our ancestors here, and creates emigrants. There are spots intensely local, which nevertheless have sent many settlers beyond the ocean. But these depart and remain away. They go for good. They settle abroad. They add nothing by their experience to the store or variety of conversation in their old homes. The occasional visit of a villager to some city, notably London, is on the other hand likely to start a hare of fresh talk which, to some extent, corrects the intense exclusiveness of parochial conversation. It wholesomely interrupts that necessarily limited though continuous interchange of opinion about the same neighbours and the same fields which exercises rustic society.

It may of course be urged, and not without some sense, that this is the safest discourse for Hodge. Better that he should boast of the apples in his garden as the best in the world than believe the streets of London to be sprinkled with gold. But it is really ignorance of these last which helps to encourage a mischievous delusive appetite for town life. The rustic who knows least about the city is perhaps likely to have the highest estimate of its resources. The more he is enabled to learn the truth about them the better. Now though an occasional visit may not do much, it does something to suggest that there are plenty of people already in town, and that some of them look anything but thriving. What we really want is a freer interchange or mixture of town and country. London is a heap of sand without any social coherence. A village community is sometimes tightly pressed or bound together like a clod. Bits get broken off occasionally and go to swell the sand heap; but the two conditions of life are as widely diverse as ever. It is indeed the marked social contrast which draws the fragment from the village even more than the prospect of better pay. At home, in the rural nook, all life is lived under minute inspection of neighbours, and perhaps the unavoidable supervision of parson and squire. No fierce light that beats upon the throne is clearer than that which exhibits young Hodge sowing his wild oats. He sins under a microscope. Or possibly a peasant offends a capricious employer, and has to leave his house and garden with a keen sense of being treated unfairly. Of course the farmer desires to have the cottages on

his land tenanted by his own workmen, and if a man leaves his employment he must needs generally leave his house. Master and man both understand that. But occasionally a rustic eviction turns the eyes of the dispossessed to a city where no questions are asked by the landlord as long as the rent is paid, and where change of employment does not by any means necessarily involve change of dwelling. It is thus that some bits are broken off the village mass and added to the loose London heap. The village remains as tightly compressed as ever. Meanwhile, corrective social bonds (which do us all good) grow looser and looser in towns as their population increases. How shall the tightness of the one and the dislocation of the other be corrected? Can they be anywise fused? Attempts, at least proposals, have, we know, been made to create 'industrial villages' where security of tenure shall be provided, and crafts pursued under healthy conditions. These projects are no mere dreams, but capable of being realised and subjected to proof. Even if they should be tried and found wanting (possibly at first through some unforeseen social difficulties which lie hid in the long-drawn history and habits of our people), still the mere fact of their having been suggested and seriously tried would be a notable protest against that spirit of separation which now divides the town from the country. No one who knows anything of human nature will suppose that a mixture of town and country mice would do much to cure or contaminate either, for immorality may be found in the shady lane as well as in the glaring street, but much that is wanting to the bodily health of the townsman and the social perceptions or experience of the rustic might be supplied by their meeting half-way in some industrial community.

As it is, the town is often looked upon by the country, and the country by the town, as a place merely to see or spend a holiday in. Their respective inhabitants judge the others as filling widely divided conditions of life. When rude, they call one another 'chawbacons' or 'cockneys,' with opprobrious insinuations of ignorance about the commonest matters. But a chief want in all society is that people may know one another a little better; and even a flying visit does something towards a perception that, though man is much the same all the world over, there is always a lesson to be learnt from seeing people in other conditions of life. This is sure to be useful either in adding to our store of information, or in lessening our conceit at particular belongings. I have hinted that many Londoners are very ill

informed. The stock of commonplace knowledge possessed by town children, indeed, appears unexpectedly limited to teachers who are familiar with the country. The urchins may be bright and sharp, but their ignorance is pathetic. The country, 'nature,' provides the chief bulk of ordinary information used as facts, illustrations, or examples; and we can hardly realise the truth that with many the knowledge of these facts is drawn, not from actual observation and experience, but from books and pictures. This defect in the education of town children has indeed been largely corrected of late years by the good and growing practice of sending poor children into the fields for a few weeks rather than hours. The 'day in the country' which a list of published appeals pleads for every summer is obviously in many if not most instances too hot, crowded, and noisy an affair (however delightful) to give anything like a true feeling of country sentiment. But a fortnight in a 'truly rural' cottage sends the little cockney back with the surprising perception that rustic knowledge confers social distinction, and that small 'chawbacons' have been dieted with unexpected success. It is, however, perhaps of most importance that the countryman should be able to realise better than he now does what the town fails in giving, however superior its money wages may be. An occasional dip into the moving city crowd is wholesome for him as a corrective of exclusiveness, but the gilt is taken off his city earnings when, *e.g.*, he has to pay sixpence for a bundle of carrots (say a dozen), and reflects that a bushel holding about seven times as many (I am speaking of ascertained facts) is sold for the same money in his own old village. The city dweller is no doubt seriously fleeced by greedy 'rings' in the matter of vegetables as well as fish, but, whatever the cause, the cost of London living ought to be better apprehended by the ambitious countryman. It is not impossible, however, that the possession of the franchise by the agricultural labourer may lead him to expect, and find, a better stake in the 'provinces' than he now has, and that he may take such fresh stock of his position and possibilities there that the land will be less drained of its life into city streets. Hitherto the political ignoring of the peasant has no doubt led some to flit for the sheer pleasure of recording a vote; and when they can go to their own ballot-boxes, another weight will be dropped into the country side of the scale, and the importance of the townsman grow less. But, all the same, it will ever be well for the rustic to have a social bath now and then in the Strand.

DOLLY'S DREAM.

Chester Street, S.W., Monday, Nov. 7, 1881.

MY DEAREST DOLLY,—I was so glad to get your letter, and to hear how much you are enjoying yourself. The Chestertons are always such kind people, and their house is a thoroughly nice one to stay at. I trust your gowns are *holding out*? I was almost sorry to hear of the ball you are to have in the house; I am afraid your best white frock will look by this time crushed, and altogether the worse for wear. Yes, dear child, it is certainly getting high time for you to think of coming home—and on more accounts than one. I have got on pretty well without you on the whole, though of course I have often missed my dear Dolly. But it is not from any selfish feeling that I wish you to leave Cudworth, and return to me as soon as possible. To be plain with you, my child, I am uneasy about you—not from what you say, but from what you *don't* say. I know Mr. John Fortescue has been staying for some time at Cudworth, and I do not like your silence about him. If all were as it *should be*, you would surely mention him in your letters to me, as you do most of the other guests. But, beyond telling me that he was there, and had had five shots in his leggings one day out rabbiting, you never speak of him, and I confess I feel anxious.

Surely, my darling, you are not so silly as to revive that old, foolish flirtation? You remember our little conversation about him a year ago, and how brave and good you were, and agreed entirely with me, that, under the circumstances, it was out of the question that you should think of marrying him? Of course he is very *nice* and all that; still one must remember that a man, in these days, with a small Irish estate is no better than a pauper!

Lady Geraldine told me the other day that a friend of hers in Mayo was positively brought so low that she can only write to her friends on post-cards, she cannot now afford notepaper and stamps! She has not had a new gown for more than a year, and her friends are going to subscribe to get her a mangle, or a knitting machine, or some incubators—I forget which—to enable

her to support herself. And she used to be considered (for Ireland) quite an heiress—had a property of six or seven hundred a year. Think, dearest Dolly, of all this, and be very careful and prudent. How much I now wish I were with you! But the next best thing will be to have you safe at home again.

With much love, I am, ever your fond mother,

DOROTHEA C. TREMAINE.

It was perhaps a shocking and unfilial thought, but Dolly, as she re-read this letter, felt strongly inclined to wish that her mother had, like the unfortunate lady of Mayo, been obliged to confine herself to the small and humble post-card. A very decided frown darkened Miss Tremaine's face, her cheek flushed, and her blue eyes had an angry sparkle in them.

It was very hard for her, she felt, to be thus lectured and cautioned; she did think mamma might have trusted her. And then, being a true woman, there leaped up in her a mighty desire to avenge herself on the person who had thus innocently brought down upon her all these disagreeable cautions and warnings. To-night mamma should see, if she were here, that she need have no cause for anxiety, she said to herself bitterly.

Then she got up quickly from the low chair where she had been sitting by her bedroom fire, and rang for her maid.

Dolly Tremaine was certainly a very pretty girl. She was tall and slender, with the long, shapely limbs and short waist that one sees so rarely in the ordinary Englishwoman. The Keltic blood in her showed in the union of pale blue eyes with intensely black hair and lashes. Her complexion was dark, with a glow on her cheeks *through* the skin, as if a deep-red carnation were buried there.

Dinner was early that evening at Cudworth Hall, on account of the ball which was to follow—a fact which Lady Chesterton had duly announced, and duly apologised for, to her guests.

'I put ten o'clock on the cards,' she said, with the plaintive manner that was habitual to her, only a little more pronounced, 'but our good neighbours here are so very punctual that one has to be ready almost to the moment. I remember at the first ball we gave here after we were married, I had not even begun to dress when the first carriage drove up, and, though I made all the haste I could, there were nearly forty people in the room by the time I got down, and no one to receive them. They were very much

offended, and nearly all the young ladies caught violent colds, and no wonder, sitting shivering in an ice-cold ball-room for three-quarters of an hour. Old Mr. Payne-Smith, the great brewer here, was *so* angry; he always declared the chill of the room brought out his gout, and when Lord Chesterton stood at the next election he went over to the Radicals, and we lost ever so many votes by him.'

It was a great aggravation to Miss Tremaine in her present mood to find that it was with Mr. Fortescue that Fate, in the shape of Lady Chesterton, had linked her for dinner.

'How lucky this is!' said he, as they stood together, waiting for the more honourable guests to pass out of the doorway first. 'I want so much to talk to you about something—something that I have only heard of this afternoon, a piece of bad luck that has happened to me.'

'Is it very interesting?' said Dolly, in a languid voice, as they seated themselves at the dinner table. 'Pray, if it is not, kindly keep it to yourself, for I don't feel the least in a mood this evening to weep with those who weep. If you are going to turn into a modern Job, I am in far too good spirits to act the part of a comforter. I should laugh, I know, quite in the wrong place, and be even more disagreeable than the originals were.'

'I don't know,' said Jack, a little sadly, 'if it will interest you at all. Perhaps it is foolish of me to bore you with such a small matter as my coming or going. However, I have just had a telegram from my agent Macarthy at Moyarget saying that he cannot stay there for another day. He has been boycotted for two months, and has stood *that*, and got no end of threatening letters, and had absurd little two-inch-deep graves dug in front of his door during the night, and has stood that too. But now that it has come to shots being fired into his bedroom about twelve o'clock at night, one of which has slightly wounded his wife, he is evidently quite unnerved, and no wonder, and implores me to let him leave the place at once. So my course is plain. I shall have to go over to Ireland to-morrow, and see if anything can be done towards discovering the ruffians who committed this outrage, and be my own agent for some time to come. So you see, Miss Tremaine,' continued Jack, with a sadness very foreign to his usual cheery, pleasant tones, 'I feel rather down and stupid to-night, what with thinking of poor Macarthy, and of having to go away so suddenly from Cudworth and—and *you*.'

A mist came for an instant before Dolly's eyes, and a pang passed through her. Then she hardened her heart, and determined not to relent.

'What a horrible story!' she said, shuddering slightly; 'surely it is rather dangerous for you to go amongst such bloodthirsty people; they must be ready for any crime. Won't you think better of it and not go? Do. I am sure,' graciously, 'they would all miss you here.'

'No,' Jack said, 'I must go. I should be a mean-spirited cur if I did not. Besides, I think when I am there things may be better. I have done a good deal one way and another for most of the people. They were always fond of me as a boy, on my mother's account I suppose, and they quite idolize her memory still. She liked the place and the people, and got on well with the priest even. To this day they call the last patch of snow on one of the hill-tops "Lady Mary's Apron." And then there has never been a single rent raised since Griffith's valuation. They cannot, I think, forget all the easy, pleasant past. They have perhaps been stirred up now by some wandering Land League ruffians, and perhaps Macarthy has somehow irritated them. When I go among them, and hear all they have to say, it will be different.'

Alas! poor Jack, little did he know how soon and how completely these modest hopes were to be dashed. He was like a man thinking he could moor a boat by a silken thread in the midst of a raging stream. The memories of past kindnesses, past benefits, past love and respect between landlord and tenant were all gone—swept away by the whirlwind of faction, and nothing but a passionate greed and hatred were left in their place.

Jack found the dinner that night rather a dull one. He felt, as he himself expressed it, 'awfully down,' and then Dolly was not as she had been during the past delicious week, when he had ridden with Dolly, walked with Dolly, acted Dumb Crambo with Dolly, and never before to-night had she put on this cold, snubbing manner.

Miss Tremaine seemed to find a great deal to say to her other neighbour, a Mr. Mainwaring, who talked in a gentle, dribbling way which made Jack lay back his ears and long to kick him. He said something between his teeth to himself, and then felt rather better, especially when Miss Tremaine, who was in truth

getting considerably bored, suddenly turned to him and applied herself to the easy and dangerous task of soothing him down, and making him fatuously happy once more. 'Poor Jack!' she thought to herself, 'I mean to be most careful and prudent all night, so I may venture to be a little bit kind to him just for the present. He does look so handsome and so manly—such a difference to this wretched creature who has been wearying me to death. I feel I have fatally injured the action of my heart by restraining so many yawns. If I were to die to-night my blood would be upon his head. Yet all he would do would be to write a "Ballade" upon me, and speak of me as a "dead ladye," comparing me to "Alys" or "Bertha Broadfoot," or some other unknown, disreputable creature, who lived—or didn't live—hundreds of years ago.'

'I shall wait for you at the bottom of the stairs so as to arrange our dances comfortably.'

Jack whispered these words in Dolly's ear, under cover of the general rustle and buzz that always accompany the setting sail of the fair 'Outward Bound' from a dining-room.

A little smile crossed Dolly's face. Then, in company with her fellows, she went upstairs to begin for the ball.

She sat so long musing by the fire that her maid at last knocked, pretending that she thought she had been rung for. 'Mrs. Smith says, miss, that her ladyship is very anxious that all the house party should be in the ball-room as near ten o'clock as possible. It is almost half-past nine now. I have done the best I could for your dress, and I don't think it will look at all bad.'

'Very well, Turner,' said Miss Tremaine, slowly rising. 'I suppose I may as well begin.'

But for some reason she seemed indisposed to hurry herself. Ten o'clock struck, and a few moments after the first carriage drove up. Dolly wondered to herself if it contained the gouty and irascible Mr. Payne-Smith, prepared to brave another chill and to return, if all were well, to the Conservative fold! More soon followed. Evidently the worthy Sussex people considered that punctuality is the truest politeness, and that ten o'clock on invitation cards means ten o'clock, or as near that hour as long distances and heavy roads, plentifully laid down with unyielding flints, will allow.

Dolly heard the music of the first dance, an extra, begin; then

a pause, then another—this time 'La Berceuse,' her favourite waltz. It seemed to come sighing up to her, and a thrill ran through her as its soft melody sang itself on to the end and then died away. It was Jack's favourite waltz, too. How often they had swung round to its dreamy measure, a pair of waltzers it was a pleasure to look at, perfect in grace and unison, the result possibly of long and arduous practice—together!

Still Dolly loitered and lingered till Turner grew impatient. She wished her young lady would go down and leave her at liberty to watch the new arrivals, and to take stock, with the searching gaze a lady's-maid only can attain to, of all the dresses, with their various makes, shapes, and fits, the trimmings and flounces and purtenances thereof.

At last Dolly pronounced herself ready, and set out on her long journey to the distant ball-room. She went cautiously down the wide, polished oak stairs, holding on anxiously to the banisters. There was a great painted window half-way down where the stairs turned. She stopped for a moment to see if there were light enough for her to make out the text inscribed there in old English letters, which every day as she passed up and down struck her anew with a sense of its admirable fitness as a warning to any rash traveller down those slippery stairs:—

Let him that thinketh hee standeth take heed lest he fall.

Then she lingered to look at the moonlight lying in a great pool outside in the courtyard. The age, by the way, of

The orbéd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,

was always carefully ascertained by the considerate Lady Chesteron ere fixing the date for her ball. She *engaged*, as it were, that luminary to be in attendance, as she did Gates's band from Brighton, and additional men to wait at supper.

Dolly truly made a pretty picture as she came click, clicking downstairs in her little high-heeled shoes. Her gown was white and satiny-looking, with the upper part of some sparkling stuff which made her look as if she were wet and gleaming with water-drops. Mr. Mainwaring told her in a murmuring voice, later on in the evening, that she reminded him of

Idalian Aphrodite, beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new bathed in Paphian wells.

After all, she found her delaying had been of no avail. There,

at the bottom of the stairs, stood Mr. Fortescue, looking impatiently upwards, evidently waiting for her. Dolly's heart gave a throb of gratified vanity. It charmed her to feel that she had the power to cause him thus to stand, cooling his heels and waiting till it was her pleasure to appear. But only for an instant did she allow herself to feel pleased. Then she hardened her heart anew, and determined to act on her recent resolutions of being very good and prudent, and all that mamma could desire her to be. Jack came up to her, too, with an air of almost appropriation that irritated her.

'How late you are!' he said impatiently. 'I began to think you were never coming. I have been waiting here for ages. But let's get to work now. How many? They're just finishing No. 3.'

'How many?' echoed Dolly coldly. 'I'm afraid I can only give you—let me think—yes, No. 13, or one somewhere about there. Perhaps'—innocently—'you would, however, prefer one lower down. Should we say 21?'

Jack looked up, feeling the foundations of the earth were getting unsteady below him. This from Dolly—Dolly, the list of whose waltzes at a ball might generally be described as consisting of 'The first with Mr. Fortescue, and so on to the end!'

He stood silent for a moment, then gave a formal bow of acquiescence, as he might have done to a stranger to whom he had just been introduced, and without another word offered his arm to Miss Tremaine.

'May I take you,' he said gravely, 'to the drawing-room? Lady Chesterton is there.'

Dolly had determined thoroughly to play her part of being cold and distant, but she had not reckoned on this ready assistance in it from her fellow-actor. It disconcerted her dreadfully. However altered and disagreeable *she* might be, Jack was never to change. He was always to be ready to hold his cheek to the smiter, and she was to smite as hard and as often as she pleased.

He placed her under Lady Chesterton's wing in the drawing-room, and then left her at once.

'What a delightful ball! Everything so well-arranged and the dancing kept up with such spirit!'

So every one said, and so Dolly fibbingly assented. But in her heart of hearts she thought it the dullest ball she had ever been at. Yet it ought to have been a night of triumph for her. She was the prettiest girl present, and she very soon knew it. The

men went for her with one accord, and scrambled and jostled for a dance. Dolly began to look forward to No. 13 with a sort of longing which was altogether unjustifiable and ridiculous, as she told herself sternly. The dance before was to be devoted—or sacrificed—to Mr. Mainwaring. That one over, then for a little pleasure, she thought. She wished very fervently it were over, for her heart misgave her as her partner limply passed an arm round her and prepared hurriedly, but feebly, to dash into the thickest of the fray, where the good Sussex people were hopping and turning and rushing, no thought of rhythmic dancing, or steering even, troubling their worthy brains. Couple dashed against couple. There were as many falls as generally take place during a moderately fast run. Blood was drawn freely from bare arms by the simple process of rasping bracelets firmly down them. A very few minutes of this species of warfare, with an utterly incapable partner, were enough for Dolly. Battered, bruised, her toes tramped on by friend and foe alike—for Mr. Mainwaring had not been guiltless in this particular—breathless, and feeling as if she had been *at least* knocked down and run over by a coach and four, she indignantly withdrew from the circle of happy dancers and cast herself on a seat, whence no persuasions of Mr. Mainwaring's could draw her. He, after the usual manner of bad dancers, longed to be up and at it again. He generally contrived to ward off the worst of the blows by using his partner as a buffer, so on the whole he did not himself suffer much.

At last the music stopped. People sauntered out and in. The band disposed themselves in easy attitudes on their chairs. The man who played the cornet gave a huge yawn. Another looked at the open window near and shivered. Surely, this was an unusually long interval! At length the conductor took down, in a leisurely sort of way, No. 12 and stuck up No. 13. Then he rapped his *bâton* sharply, and then at last, at last—oh, happiness!—the waltz began.

All Sussex as usual came crowding in at once, every one struck afresh by the same brilliant thought. 'If *we* go now, *we* shall find the room almost empty.'

The music flowed on, time was passing, but no Jack appeared to claim 'the poor maiden all forlorn.' Where could he be?

Had he cut her for it, and was she not to have the one dance she had been *living for*? she asked herself in a sudden access of passion. At last she saw Mr. Fortescue's tall form come in at one

of the doors some way off. She could see him look round and round the room. She was sitting on a form placed against the wall, and at that very instant a fat country gentleman, with his equally fat partner, stepped in front of her, completely hiding her from view. When they moved Jack had disappeared. The waltz was half over by this time. She felt as if each bar played robbed her of something precious.

‘What a fool I have been!’ she thought angrily to herself. ‘I never, never will try to be good again.’

Once more Jack appeared, entering this time by a different door. Dolly was plainly visible now, the bovine-like blotchers-out of her existence having moved. She saw him run his eye over blue girls, pink girls, red girls, yellow girls, wasting his time, manlike, through an imperfect recognition and remembrance of colour. At last it fell upon a certain white girl, and in an instant Dolly saw his face brighten, and he was beside her.

‘I have been looking for you everywhere,’ he said, ‘and was just going to give the search up in despair, concluding you did not wish to dance this—with *me*. Are you inclined for a turn now?’

‘Of course I am,’ said Dolly gaily. ‘I want something to wash the taste of the last one out of my mouth. Oh, I had a terrible experience, so terrible that I feel a little nervous about entering the fray again—even with *you*!’

The last three softly spoken words were the fruit of that good resolution of Miss Tremaine’s, to abstain for the future from the paths of virtue, *in re* John Arnold Westenra Fortescue, Esquire. Was this the same floor? Were the dancers on it the same vigorous blow-dealing ones whom she had met and suffered from before? Was it the same band playing, or another just imported from Paradise? Obstacles seemed to melt away, collisions were warded off, deadly imminent knocks and blows passed harmlessly by.

‘That was something like,’ Dolly murmured, as the too short remainder of the waltz finished up in a great *fortissimo* crash, and they turned to leave the ball-room.

‘You did not appear to be having an exactly happy time of it in the last,’ said Mr. Fortescue grimly, but with the suspicion of an amused smile lurking in the corners of his mouth. ‘You seemed to get away to a bad start, and never were on terms with the music the whole way through. See,’ he continued, ‘there are

two chairs I marked down as I was cruising about looking for you. Shall we sit down? I fancy we shan't be bothered by people here, and I want to speak to you for a moment.'

Dolly sat down obediently, with a delightful air of unconcern and gaiety. But her heart beat very fast, disagreeably so, and the lovely carnations on her cheeks deepened and then paled with each hurried throb.

Dr. Richardson has told us of various interesting ways of calculating the work done by that patient pump. In one hour it has toiled enough to have lifted itself to the height of 13,860 feet or so. Dolly felt as if hers were, at this moment, tearing up Mont Blanc, say, with barely half an hour to do the task in.

'I want to know,' began Jack, without the slightest attempt at any elegant preamble,—'I want to know how I have offended you; for I know I have somehow, but what I have done I can't think. I have been racking my brains all the evening to try and find out. So please tell me, straight, how I have contrived to vex you. I am so awfully sorry, but I can't apologise properly till I know what I have done. Of course you can't think that, whatever it is, I have done it wittingly. Ah, Dolly, you must know that I am just the same as I was last year about you, when your mother came between us, and you refused to hear me any more—that I would give you the heart out of my breast if it would do you any good, and that I will never stop loving you till the end of the chapter. So speak to me, Dolly; tell me what I have done, and for Heaven's sake give me the chance of repairing my fault, whatever it may be!'

Jack's pleading voice sank very low, and there was a little tremble in it. Dolly sat still, her eyes cast down, her hands nervously playing with a bit of her dress. But she said not a word.

'Dolly, won't you speak to me even? Are you really so angry with me? Dolly, Dolly, look at me: tell me it's all some foolish mistake.'

He rose to his feet as he spoke, and stood right in front of her, so close that she could feel him touching her as she sat in her low chair before him. Suddenly he stooped, and, putting a hand on each arm of her chair, he looked straight into her face. She could feel his breath move the little loose hairs on her forehead. Oh, that heart of hers! It was certainly doing its mountaineering work very rapidly now. Surely the summit of Mont Blanc was

almost attained. Her lips trembled, then a little smile came. She made a great effort, lifted her eyes, and 'lookit full on him.'

'I wish,' she began, but what she wished Jack never knew, for at that moment the sound of a near footstep smote on their ears. Jack drew himself up into a decorous position. Dolly started violently, and a voice said joyously—

'Oh, Miss Tremaine, here you are at last! This is our dance, and I have been looking for you here, there, and everywhere.'

One single hearty Saxon word rose in Jack's throat, and was crushed down there. Certainly it was very hard for him to be thus interrupted.

Matters were beginning to be right with him, he felt. The old Dolly was coming back under the influence of his pleading words. His greedy eyes, fastened on her face, had seen the hard, cold look go, and had watched the sweet lovelight spring up there instead.

Dolly rose at once. 'Oh, dear!' she said to herself, as she walked away to the ball-room with her partner, 'I felt desperately near yielding then. This will never do. I must be more careful. I feel I have been saved, though as by fire, as mamma would say.' She could hardly keep from laughing outright as she thought of the look on Jack's face as she left him, and how he had glared at the unfortunate youth, who had evidently conducted his search for her with great energy and skill, heavily handicapped, too, as he was by being extremely shortsighted. He was a thin, dark young man, with a fine turn for conversation, as Dolly soon found out.

'I was very lucky,' he said complacently; 'I went about looking for you everywhere, and just by accident, at the end of that long passage, I thought I saw something shine. So I put up my eyeglass to see what it could be, and there it was *you*. Isn't this a splendid ball?' continued he. 'Down here we always think it the best in the whole year. The Chestertons do things so well. One always knows the supper will be A 1 and the champagne safe. And then one is sure to meet everybody one knows. Altogether it is always an awfully jolly ball, and we look forward to it like—like—*mad*,' said Mr. Goring, at a loss to blend elegance of metaphor with force of expression.

'I suppose,' said Dolly, smiling, 'you look forward to it for six months, and back on it for the other six. It is a case of "remembered half the year and hoped the rest."'

'Yes,' said her partner, 'that's something like it. However, you mustn't think, Miss Tremaine,' he went on after a short pause, 'that this is our only good ball. Oh! no, we are very lucky on this side of the county. We have the Hunt ball, and the County ball, and the Lunatics' ball—the County Asylum you know I mean—and some people go to the Trillingshurst ball as well. But that is a long way off, and is not always a success, for unless it is known beforehand that Lady Chesterton will go and take a large party, and the Lee-Wellers from Lee Park do the same, people won't go. The entries don't fill, do you see? and it is very melancholy to look at about eighty people dancing in a big room which would comfortably hold two or three hundred. Yes, quite three hundred,' Mr. Goring went on decisively, 'for they hold all the Dog and Poultry Shows in it, and travelling pantomimes and things. I think it is rather a pity they do use it so much in that way, for I remember at one ball held there, two days after the Dog Show, I was awfully bitten—oh! no, not by any *dogs*! The ball there last year was really very unfortunate. Hardly any one took tickets, and the committee found they could only run to two-and-twopence-farthing a head for drinks, and even Whiteley, you know, couldn't do much at that price. Anyhow every one was very ill next day, except the stewards, who, I remembered afterwards, drank nothing but water the whole evening. That ought in itself to have aroused suspicion, for none of them had ever been known before to touch a drop of water neat. But, on the whole, I do think our Sussex balls *capital*! We all know each other, and there is no stiffness or slackness about us. Then they all come close together. One gets to know all the ladies' dresses almost, one meets them out so often running. The Miss Wigginses, those large fat girls sitting opposite us on the bench, had red ones, dabbed about with little green beetles, all last winter, so one could spot them at any distance. Some stranger at one of the balls asked who those red girls were, and said he thought they were meant to represent our native Sussex cattle. So they have always been called since "The Fatted Beasts," which is a very good joke I think,' said Mr. Goring, giving a roar of sudden laughter right into Dolly's ear. 'It makes us all laugh still whenever the Wigginses appear.'

Dolly smiled faintly. She was not listening much to her partner's ceaseless flow of talk. Her thoughts were straying to

that dark corner down the passage, and the words which had been so suddenly broken off there. She had promised to give Jack another dance. Dare she keep her word? Was she strong enough to do so? She determined, at any rate, to run the risk—if risk there were.

‘I shall carefully eschew secluded seats,’ she said to herself, ‘and only sit out with him in the broad, safe glare of lamps and Chinese lanterns. I shall be *most* careful, and he shall have no chance of making me forget what my horrible duty is in that state of life to which it has pleased mamma to call me—which is to marry well, and never, oh! never, to think twice of any man who is poor.’

‘Was that poetry you said about remembering for half a year?’ broke in Mr. Goring’s loud, cheerful voice. ‘I think it sounded like it, but I never know any poetry, and, to tell the truth, I don’t care much with it. I shall never forget how disappointed I was with Matthew Arnold. I met him at dinner one night at my uncle’s, and found him so jolly, and like other people. We got together and talked so comfortably of Stilton cheese, and he was as sensible as any one. Then I heard about his being a poet, and I thought—well! at any rate, *his* poetry may be worth reading, and I bought two little books in green binding and set to work. But, oh, there *was* a difference! He went raving and ranting on, as they all do. I couldn’t make head or tail of any of the poems, and I shut up the books in disgust. I could hardly believe a man, who had talked to me so sensibly about cheese, and the length of time the different kinds ought to be kept, could change so for the worse when he took to writing poetry. Then about Shakespeare, too, don’t you think him awfully over-rated? I never could endure reading his plays, they are so stupid and so improbable. However, really at the Lyceum it is wonderful how they manage to polish him up. I don’t care much for Irving, and the way he goes on, but Ellen Terry is lovely; and then the scenery is so jolly, one hardly recognises that it is only one of Shakespeare’s plays one is looking at, it is all so improved.’

Dance after dance was played, got through, finished, and at last Jack’s number, so to speak, went up. He came up to Dolly at once, with, however, a very decided look of shyness—almost sheepishness—on his handsome face. It is certainly hard for a man to look and feel quite at his ease and unembarrassed on again meeting

the lady to whom he was, a short hour ago, just beginning a passionate declaration of love, which had been ruthlessly broken up *in transitu*, and has never therefore got delivered. A glance too at Dolly's face told him that all the tenderness had gone out of it. Once more a citadel, ready to fall, had been saved by the cackle of a goose.

Truly the far off, prone-in-slumber, Mrs. Tremaine had much reason, had she but known it, to invoke blessings on Mr. Goring's unconscious head. The dance finished, the billow of humanity broke quickly, and fell back from the shore of the ball room, scattering in various directions.

'The conservatory for me,' thought Dolly, as she and her partner joined in the ebb of the tide. 'Lots of *lights* there, and lots of people. No danger of Jack being able to be foolish,—nor of me either. It is a place I feel my honoured mother would approve of under the circumstances.'

The conservatory at Cudworth was one of the old-fashioned, badly built kind, very high, very damp, with broad stone passages running generously in between the flower stands. Everything grew immensely tall, and produced very few flowers. Still it was a delightful place to go into, there was so much room in which to move about. No terrific crash of falling pots followed on a rash movement. Flowers were kept in their proper places—that is to say, quite subordinated to the comfort of the human occupants of the place. There were a great many people in the conservatory when they entered, and only two seats were to be had, quite at the other end, in a little damp recess, overshadowed by a large camellia tree, with a low shelf running along part of the wall, on which, 'ranged in a valiant row,' stood a company of cactuses, stretching down long, uncanny-looking arms as if in quest of prey.

Dolly talked away bravely, allowing no dangerous silences to set in. It was well she had so much to say on such a number of interesting topics, as her companion hardly spoke at all. He sat very quiet, taking advantage of the half shade in which they were, to have a long, good stare at Dolly sitting beside him, looking so bright, so unruffled, and so extremely unconscious. He seemed to take in her beauty to-night as he had never done before, with a keenness that was like a sharp pain.

'I wonder,' said Dolly, suddenly turning her head a little towards him, and giving him the chance of admiring, as he had

often done before, the delicious tangle into which the lashes of her upper and lower lids got themselves at the corners of her eyes—a tangle so great and of so long a standing that it was evident no divorce could ever take place between them now—‘I wonder when the Menzieses will come to town? Have you heard anything of their possible doings?’

‘No,’ said Jack, ‘I haven’t. They did talk though—do you remember?—of not coming this year till March. I am sure I should stay on at Monzievaird, if I were they, as long as possible. What a jolly old place it is! The very nicest, I should think, in Perthshire. What a fine time we had there!—do you recollect, last autumn? I never saw anything like the colours the hills put on from day to day, and the air *rushed* at you with a sort of nip on it that made you feel so jolly and fresh. And the capercaillies in that bit of wood were great fun. How they used to thunder out of the young pine trees, as if they meant to knock you over!’

‘Yes,’ said Dolly, ‘Monzievaird was a nice place. I did enjoy my stay there immensely. But then I always think there is nowhere in the world like Scotland in the autumn.’

‘What a Sunday that was,’ said Jack, eagerly, ‘when we set off to see the Rocking-stone in Glen Tarken, and you and I got separated from the others, and missed the right place to cross the burn coming back. And you would insist on trying to jump it, instead of letting me carry you across lower down—and then you slipped and half fell into a big pool, and thought you were going to be drowned, and were very frightened.’

The remembrance of Miss Tremaine’s undignified plight here won a very decided smile from Jack. But it changed into a sigh as he added in a lower tone, half to himself, ‘Yes, it was a *very* good day. I often think of it now, and wish to Heaven it would all come over again.’

‘Do you?’ said Dolly. ‘I am sure *I* don’t, and I can’t think why you should. I can’t see what particular pleasure it could have been for you to get yourself wet through, fishing me out, then have to “take hands” like children, and make me run till I was almost dead, for fear of catching cold.’

‘Can you really wonder at my pleasure in it, Dolly?’ said Jack, softly. ‘Don’t you think it was something for me to hold you for a moment, as I did, in my arms, and to hear your dear little voice crying out, as you felt yourself slipping back into that pool,

"Oh! Jack, save me!"—and to feel you clinging to me in your fright? Oh! Dolly, to have all that come back again I would willingly forfeit ten years of my life.'

The conservatory was empty now. A new dance had begun and they were alone. The situation, Dolly felt, was fraught with danger; she must put an end to it. 'Come,' she said abruptly, rising as she spoke, 'we must go. It is cold here, and I am engaged for this dance.'

From early childhood have we not all been taught that 'the more haste the worse speed?' So Miss Tremaine found in this instance, for as she got up hastily she forgot the overhanging shelf behind, and knocked her head rather sharply against it and its bristly freight. In revenge, apparently, one of the thorny cactus arms promptly buried itself in the coils of her hair. An impatient movement of her head only caused the intruder to dig himself a deeper grave there and to hold on more firmly. Jack came to the rescue, but he was certainly very slow and clumsy. Could those really be the same fingers which had so often deftly made and tied 'Jock Scots' to the destruction of many unwary members of the salmon tribe? They seemed very awkward now. Dolly endured the fumbling for an instant, then, hoping to make things easier for her would-be deliverer, and give him a better hold on his prickly adversary, she moved her head a little bit, turning the chin upwards. The two faces were very near now. A sudden light came into Jack's eyes, and then, abandoning the cactus, which, jerked off its shelf, fell with a loud crash into the abyss beneath, he bent forward—and then the world was changed to them both for ever, for between them was the troth-plight of a kiss.

'Jack!'

'Dolly!'

'Jack, if I become prematurely bald where you and that torturing cactus wrought your will, will you *promise* to buy me a "weightless wig" or "a natural crop toupee" at M. Lichtenfels to hide the gashly wound? And Jack, Jack, *don't* go to Ireland.'

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The winter afternoon was closing in very dark and dreary in London about three weeks after the date of the memorable Cudworth ball. So Dolly seemed to find it, as she sat alone by her bedroom fire looking absently at the bright flame. Evidently her eyes were with her heart, and that was far away. An open

letter lay in her lap. Poor Dolly! her life had not been of the happiest lately. She had had to return alone to face her mother's wrath, and, what was even more trying, her mother's grief and tears. Jack was still in Ireland, and seemed each day to be more firmly tied there. His letters were getting more and more dispirited. Every one seemed to have turned against him. He had fallen under the ban. His Irish servants and labourers had, with one exception, deserted him in a body; one old English servant, too, with his wife and daughters, stuck to him. The blacksmith would not shoe his horses, the grocer refused to lighten his darkness with a pound of candles, the dealers would not buy his beasts, the baker drove past and left him loafless. Every one shunned him as if he had the plague. No wonder his heart was sore, and that his letters to Dolly, though in them he tried to make as light of his difficulties as possible, showed pretty clearly the indignation and annoyance that he so keenly felt. In the letter which was lying on Dolly's knee he said:—

‘You ask me to tell you truly and seriously all about my life here, and what I do, now that I am boycotted in good earnest. I told you how all the labourers have been frightened from me; if they had had the pluck to stick to me, they were strong enough to have beaten the farmers in the district if they had but held together. Since last Monday I have been going in for a regular Swiss Family Robinson sort of life. I feed the sheep, and old Mrs. Pescud and her daughters milk the cows before breakfast. Then the cows have to be fed and turned out to grass. The sheeps' pen has to be moved—not made of nice light wattles such as you are familiar with, but of stout wooden bars. No wonder at first every muscle in my body ached with hauling these things about. Then hay has to be brought down for the beasts. Altogether I, with old Jonathan Pescud and the one labourer who has stuck to me, are hard at work till dark, usually under the watchful eyes of a couple of policemen, who are in the house for fear of an attack. I don't myself think there is the slightest chance of my being molested, but as the policemen are there they may as well show themselves, striking terror into evil-doers, and being very useful, too, in giving a hand quietly, though of course they are supposed to do nothing but guard us. More police are to come (I think in a day or two we shall have ten about the place and farm), and I believe some troops are expected soon in the village, three miles off. I am trying hard to get some men

to help with the farm, but have not succeeded as yet. The farm is, as you know, the serious question with me. How I wish I could get over to see you, if only for ten minutes, but I don't see the least chance of doing so for some time to come. If only Government would do something to restore peace and order one would get on well enough. Forster, however, is certainly very civil, and has sent a telegram once or twice to tell me I can have more protection if I want it. I generally go about with my revolver, but I don't the least apprehend any violence. The scoundrels, I fancy, do not mean to kill me, only to starve me out, and in that case I ought, I think, to beat them. If it weren't for you, my darling, and the longing I have to see you, which comes on me sometimes with such awful intensity, I should not be much to be pitied after all. There is a sort of grim satisfaction in fighting the fellows, especially as I am very hopeful of eventually beating them. But, oh, Dolly! it *is* hard to be so cut off from you—just now, too. Sometimes I declare I feel inclined to give up the fight, cut the whole concern, and fly over to you on the spot. But I know this would be stupid, and bad for us both in the future. For being married won't enable us to live on air and dispense with bread and cheese, and my little all is in this place. So there is nothing for it but to hold on and endure, and hope for brighter days.'

A shiver had passed through Miss Tremaine as she finished reading this letter. Throughout the day she had been haunted by a strange and dreadful feeling, as if some hidden terror hung over her, which, strive as she might, she could not shake off.

In the late afternoon she went sadly up to her own room, longing to be alone, to fling herself down and to think of Jack and nothing else, to read his letter over for the twentieth time, and to cry over it as much as she pleased.

It was no wonder that, tired and dispirited, after some time spent in this eye-reddening, headache-producing employment, the heavy lashes closed, the corners of the sad little mouth ceased to tremble, and she lay motionless in her chair, in her white dressing gown, having sobbed herself to sleep like a piteous little child.

And then Dolly dreamed this dream.

At first only broken ideas and images rambled confusedly through her brain. She was riding with Jack, she was dancing with him to the music of 'La Berceuse,' and it stopped all at once, and the room became quite dark. She seemed to see herself

as if it were some one else, and this feeling that she was looking on at herself, and was separate, for the time, from that self, never left her throughout the whole of the dream. Always, too, she was troubled with a sense that Jack was in peril and needed her help.

Then, quite suddenly, these confused scenes passed away, and she saw clearly before her the long avenue at Moyarget, of which Jack had often told her, bordered on each side by young trees, most of them planted in his mother's lifetime, Moyarget being very poorly timbered, as is so often the case with small Irish estates. She could see the big, white house at the end of the drive, with its square, unbroken outline. It was getting dark, and the shade of the trees in the avenue made it specially so there. Once an owl flew out, with a hideous screech, and then blundered off out of sight into the twilight gloom. There was a slight movement behind a large bush, such as a rabbit might make in scuttling out of his hole. But in another instant Dolly seemed to see two men crouching there close together, their heads turned the same way, looking intently down the drive.

She saw the blackened, hideous faces, and the wolfish, eager look each wore. She saw, above all, the gun which one of them held, and which seemed to strike her even then as of a queer old make and shape. She heard their very breathing—they seemed near enough for her to *touch*.

'It must be done this evenin'—she heard the low mutter of their speech. 'To-morrow there would be no chaynce at all, for the sogers is comin' and a lot more of thim d—d police; so he will be tuk care of at ivery turn. To-night's the time, or niver. Sure he won't fail to come this way after all the watchin' and waitin' for him that we're done.'

Oh, the supreme anguish of that moment! The breath hardly forced itself from between the sleeper's pale lips; her forehead was bathed in dew; the long lashes lay motionless on cheeks from which every vestige of colour had fled. Was, then, hate mightier than love—than her love, at any rate? Was she able to see and hear and feel everything, and yet *do* nothing to save the man she loved from death? Silence still in the long avenue, becoming momentarily darker. Then a sound—a cheerful human sound of some one whistling—broke the silence. She could distinguish the tune: it was 'La Berceuse.' Then a man's figure appeared in the distance—Jack's, of course.

He was coming rather slowly up the drive, his hands crossed negligently behind his back. There was something dejected and careworn about his whole appearance. He looked very different from the Jack who had left her such a short time ago.

Ah, Jack! little as you know it, you are nearer death now than you have ever been, or will be till the dawn of your day of doom breaks.

A few seconds speed by. Jack has taken some more steps nearer destruction.

'Give him toime, and be asy till you can cover him widout any fear of a miss. Remimber, 'tis but wan bar'l o' the owld gun that ull go aff. Iverything depinds on his bein' alone and you takin' a fair, straight aim at him. But, Larry, what ails ye?'

'Holy Mother of God! we're done. He's *not* alone! Don't ye see there's some wan walkin' beside him that he doesn't seem to know of—that kapes on this side betwixt us and him? 'Tis o' no use to try a shot; we have but the wan, *and he's guarded as he walks by the woman in white!*'

Then all sounds ceased in the dark avenue. The two black figures stole away, and the man they had doomed to die, unknowing of the danger that had been so near, passed quietly on. An intensity of darkness seemed to fall on Dolly's soul, and to wrap it round—then suddenly, with a shiver and a cry, she woke, and shrieking 'He is safe!' she rose to her feet. But only for a moment; a hand seemed to snatch her down into black unknown depths, and she fell forward, still with that cry upon her lips, fainting on the floor.

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'Well, Dolly, here I am, come as quick as steam would bring me, after getting your mysterious telegram the night before last. Come, give me a proper welcome back to the heavenly atmosphere of London, which I feel now I have never before properly appreciated. Oh, the rapture the first smut on my nose gave me! I quite longed to catch and preserve it, for then I knew that at last, at last, I was really in London, out of that wretched, heart-breaking "sister-isle," and once more near you. But why do you look so pale and tremble so, now that I am here beside you? Why, Dolly, this is not like you! What is it, my sweet?'

But she could only cling to him in a tempest of tears, crying 'Jack, Jack!'

SUPERFINE ENGLISH.

It is the Nemesis of pedantry to be always wrong. Your true prig of a pedant goes immensely out of his way to be vastly more correct than other people, and succeeds in the end in being vastly more ungrammatical, or vastly more illogical, or both at once. The common pronunciation, the common idiom, the common meaning attached to a word, are not nearly good enough or fine enough for him; he must try to get at the original sound, at the strict construction, at the true sense—and he always manages to blunder upon something far worse than the slight error, if error it be, which he attempts to avoid in his superfine correctness. There are people so fastidious that instead of saying ‘camelia,’ the form practically sanctified by usage and by Dumas Fils (for even Dumas Fils can sanctify), they must needs say ‘camella,’ a monstrous hybrid, the true but now somewhat pedantic ‘Latin’ name being really ‘camellia.’ There are people so learned that instead of talking about Alfred the Great, like all the rest of us, they must needs talk about Ælfred, and then pronounce the word as though the first half of it had something or other to do with eels, whereas the true Anglo-Saxon sound thus clumsily expressed is simply and solely the common Alfred. There are people so grammatical that they must needs dispute ‘against’ their opponent instead of disputing with him, in complete ignorance of the fact that the word ‘with’ itself means ‘against’ in the early forms of the English language, and still retains that meaning even now in ‘withstand,’ ‘withhold,’ ‘withdraw,’ and half-a-dozen other familiar expressions. To such good people one is tempted to answer, in the immortal words of Dr. Parr to the inquirer who asked that great scholar whether the right pronunciation was Samaria or Samareia, ‘You may thay Thamareia if you like, but Thamaria ith quite good enough for me.’

The fact is, your genuine pedant falls perpetually into the immense mistake of supposing that one man’s individual reason is going to lead him far more right than the sound instinct of a whole nation. Half-educated people like national schoolmasters and printer’s readers are especially liable to become the victims of this supreme delusion. They have their views on propriety of

speech. They are always correcting other people's good sound idiomatic English into conformity with their own half-educated idea of extreme accuracy. A complete collection of the queries and alterations made in manuscript or proof by the printer's readers would form a beautiful and unique museum of blankly mistaken superfine English. 'Under the circumstances' is never good enough for the printers' reader: he wants to turn it into 'in the circumstances'—a pallid, flabby, meaningless platitude, which emasculates that sound and sensible popular idiom of all its original force and virility. To do a thing 'in the circumstances' is simply to do it: you couldn't possibly do it out of the circumstances; the phrase becomes absurdly pleonastic—a base tag of feeble and utterly insignificant verbiage, like Eliza Jane's 'of course,' and 'in the manner of speaking.' To do a thing 'under the circumstances' is to do it under stress of certain conditions; to do it in view of all the related facts; in short, to act as the circumstances compel you. 'Under' in this sense has a genuine idiomatic meaning, either in English or Latin; it implies that your action is subject to the circumstances, exactly as when we say 'under pain of death,' 'under stress of weather,' 'under these conditions.' The common sense of the English people has hit instinctively upon the right and expressive idiom; the individual genius of the printer's reader, fired with the proud ambition of setting right fifty generations of erring Englishmen, blunders straightway into a foolish and pedantic grammatical nicety, which just deprives the whole phrase of its neat and idiomatic underlying meaning.

Take once more the famous *crux* of the Two First Chapters, over which whole holocausts (I say whole holocausts advisedly) of superfine critics have long immolated themselves all in vain. The English people, with solid sense, will still go on talking correctly about the two first chapters till the final advent of Macaulay's New Zealander. For they don't mean the First Two, as opposed to the Second Two, and the Third Two, and so forth *ad infinitum*, as the superfine critic would make us believe; they haven't mentally divided all the chapters of the book and all the objects of the universe into regular pairs, two by two, like the unclean animals when they went into the Ark; they mean merely to distinguish the Two First from the Third, and Fourth, and Fifth, and all subsequent chapters whatsoever. In the crucial instance of the Two First Norman kings, we get the full absurdity of the

superfine principle well displayed. There were altogether only three Norman kings (no, dear critic, I have *not* forgotten Stephen), therefore the First Two cannot possibly be contrasted with the Second Two; they can be contrasted with the Third alone. 'But,' says the prying pedant, 'there couldn't conceivably be two firsts; there was one first and one second.' Nonsense! We can have fifty firsts, if the sovereign people so wills it. There were two who came first, and a third who came after them. The genius of the language has settled the question for us long ago, and has settled it a great deal more accurately, too, than the genius of the national schoolmaster could ever hope to do.

But it is not only national schoolmasters who want to impose upon the free and untrammelled English language these petty home-made cobbler emendations. Great scholars themselves often descend to the level of Smelfungus and Martinus Scriblerus; they try to force the infinite energies of a living and active tongue through their own special half-inch ring, like the stones employed for macadamising the highways. A modern historian—the most phenomenally bad writer among great authors of the present generation—has lately given us some strange examples of this superfine critical tendency. He objects, for example, to the phrase 'to decimate,' as applied to the ravages of disease or warfare. As every English writer and speaker uses this phrase, it means simply and solely exactly what it says—to reduce by killing on the average about every tenth man. Nobody, probably, except this good historian, ever employed a word of such transparent etymology in any other than this purely etymological sense. From the very first, it meant that and nothing else. In its ordinary military signification, it was applied to the system of selecting every tenth man for punishment after a general mutiny. But it may just as well mean taking every tenth man in any other way, as by fever or rifle-shot; and it does mean that in ordinary English. Yet about such a very simple and transparent meaning there must needs be haggling and mystification: 'This misuse of the word "decimate," though it has sometimes made its way into the pages of really good writers, is one of the very worst cases of the abuse of language.' Who has abused or misused the word? Nobody, so far as I know, except the critic. This is worse than Jedburgh justice. Our superfine author first imputes to people that 'they don't mean what they plainly say, and then finds fault with them for saying what they did without meaning it. Especially

does his righteous wrath burn bright against the collocation, 'literally decimated.' I plead guilty myself to having frequently applied this peccant phrase, in newspaper leaders, to armies in action, and I am perfectly certain that I always meant by it just what I said, that the bullets selected for punishment on the average one-tenth of the entire body. It never occurred to me that even a microscopic critic could misunderstand so plain an expression.

Yet even when one uses 'to decimate' metaphorically, in the rough sense of to punish severely, or to destroy a very large proportion, there is surely nothing very wrong or out-of-the-way in the usage. Slight exaggeration and slight metonymy are familiar factors in the genesis of vocabulary.

And this leads us on to a second habit of the microscopic critic, which I venture to describe as the Etymological Fallacy. Your critic happens to know well some one particular language, let us say Greek or Latin; and so far as the words derived from that language are concerned (and so far only) he insists upon every word being rigidly applied in its strict original etymological meaning. He makes no allowance for the natural and beautiful growth of metaphor, and the transference of signification, which must necessarily affect the usage of all words in the course of time; he is aware that the root of 'mutual' in Latin implies reciprocal action, and so he objects to the harmless English colloquial expression 'Our Mutual Friend,' which the genius of Dickens has stamped so indelibly upon the English language that all the ink of all the pedants will never suffice to wash out the hall-mark. I use the mixed metaphor quite intentionally, because it exactly expresses the utter hopelessness of the efforts of banded pedantry.

Just above, for example, I happened to remark that the historian I have in my mind was the most phenomenally bad writer among great authors of the present generation. If his eye should ever chance to light upon these humble and deferential strictures, I rejoice to figure to myself the gleam of Homeric battle-joy with which it will pounce down in mingled delight and fury upon that hazardous adverb. A phenomenon, our *ensor morum et verborum* will cry passionately, is an appearance, an object presented to the senses, a thing visible, the opposite of a noumenon, and so forth, and so forth, with his usual lucid amplification. Exactly; that is its restricted technical and philosophical sense; and when we are writing about Greek philosophy or about

the theory of perception we ought, of course, so to employ it. But even this is a slight deviation from the original meaning of the word phenomenon; the verb from which it is derived applies strictly speaking to the sense of sight only, whereas the philosophic phenomenon is the object as such, by whatever sense cognised, even in the crucial instance of a blind man. In modern colloquial English, however, the word phenomenon has had its meaning further altered to imply a strange, remarkable, or unusual phenomenon; of course because at first those adjectives were habitually prefixed to it in newspaper paragraphs about the big gooseberry, the meteoric stone, the great sea-serpent, or the calf with five legs, until at last to the popular intelligence the strangeness and the phenomenon became indissolubly linked together by association in a single idea. Very well then; nowadays, whether we approve of it or whether we don't, the word phenomenon means in plain English a remarkable event or appearance—in short, a regular phenomenon—and the adjective phenomenal, derived from it in this sense, means passing strange or out of the ordinary course of nature. The Infant Phenomenon has made its mark on the literature of the country. If you don't like the word, you have always the usual alternative of lumping it; but that, as a matter of fact, is the sense that phenomenon actually bears in our modern language.

Of course, the word in question didn't originally mean anything of the sort. No, but all words in time change their meanings by just such slight gradations of usage, and one has only got to look in any dictionary to find ten thousand words now in use whose present sense is quite as remote from their etymological signification. And when a certain point of currency has once been attained by any word in any sense, it becomes rank pedantry to protest any longer against the common usage. Did not our good friend Horace long ago tell us that custom is the sole guide to correct speaking? For an excellent example of such pedantry pushed to an extreme, look at the dogmatic objection which some people feel towards speaking of London as the metropolis, or even towards using the ordinary phrases 'Metropolitan Police,' 'Metropolitan Board of Works,' and so forth. According to these double extra-refined purists, Canterbury is really the metropolis of Southern England. And why? Because in later ecclesiastical Latin the Greek word metropolis meant the mother-city from whose bishopric other bishoprics derived their origin. But if we are

going to be so very classical and Hellenic as this, we might respond that by a still older Greek usage *metropolis* means the mother-state of a colony, and so that neither Canterbury nor London but Sleswick-Holstein is the original and only genuine *metropolis* of England. Is not this the very midsummer madness of purist affectation? The English language is the English language; and in that language *metropolis* by long prescription means the chief city or capital of a country. *Metropolitan*, by Act of Parliament, has a certain definite relation to the London district; and as Pym well said, 'There have none gone about to break Parliaments, but in the end Parliaments have broken them.' Even so, the people are stronger than any person.

For the truth is, it is quite useless for any one man to set himself up single-handed against the irresistible march of nations. Languages grow and are not made; they are the outcome of deep-seated popular forces, and the meanings which the people impose upon words are the meanings they have got to bear in the long-run, whether the pedants like it or no. (The microscopic critic corrects, 'or not.' He hasn't the soul of grammar within him to tell him that the other is far the more graphic and vivid expression of the two.) Professor This and Professor That may protest as long as they like against the phrases which all the well-bred and well-educated people of their time habitually use; but the protest will surely die with them, and in the next generation the abomination against which they raised their hands in horror will be included by Professor Epigonus, their accredited successor, in his new great etymological dictionary of the English language. Did not Swift consider *mob* slangy and vulgar, and did not Samuel Rogers stoutly declare that while *cóntemplete* was bad enough, *bálcóny* fairly made him sick? The poor gentleman was himself accustomed to *contémpulate* nature with the accent on the second syllable, and to employ *balcóny* as a rhyme to *poney* in his familiar verse. And that was only thirty years ago! *Abdiel* of 'correct' pronunciation, if he had lived to the present day he might have been stared at for talking still of his *balcóny*, as people are now for being greatly obleeged or for possessing very remarkable trays of character.

'But there are some popular misuses of words which are really and truly dependent upon pure blundering.' Yes, of course, and if possible it may perhaps be worth while to nip these in the bud before they have expanded into full-blown flowers of English

rhetoric. For example, there is the poor much-abused verb ‘to predicate.’ In its logical use, to predicate bears a very distinct and definite meaning, to which it would be highly desirable universally to confine it—if it were feasible. But, unfortunately, these matters lie outside the power of either the pedant or the scholar; they fall within the province of the people alone. Now the people, as represented by the newspaper leader-writer—in nine cases out of ten a University man—have decided that to predicate and to predict mean pretty much the same thing, and have determined accordingly, with utter recklessness of etymological correctness, to predicate a British victory in Africa, or a fine day for the races on Wednesday. I won’t deny that to the classical and logical ear this is trying; and for my own part, as long as there is anybody left who cares to fight for the old sense in this matter, I enroll myself fearlessly under the conservative banner. But I don’t believe we shall do much good by it in the end; at best, we shall only prolong the life of ‘to predicate’ (in the logical sense) for a single generation. We are nursing a hopeless patient. Our children will be brought up predicating all sorts of woes or joys for the future in the most reckless fashion, and will laugh at us for old fogeys when we venture to express our moribund disapprobation. It is no use putting ourselves straight in the path of a revolution. The revolution will roll calmly over us, and leave us crushed as flat behind it as the mild Hindoo beneath the car of Juggernaut. ‘So much the worse for the coo.’ Mrs. Partington was a very noble-minded woman, but she didn’t succeed in expelling the Atlantic. It was grand of Ajax to defy the lightning, but the lightning probably took the defiance out of him with great promptitude.

The car of Juggernaut reminds one of another form of superfine nicety, which consists in transliterating very outlandish foreign names in English with a grotesque affectation of Puritan precision. In our newspapers nowadays the great idol of Orissa just alluded to is called Jaganáth. The Orientalists are indeed the worst of offenders in this direction—and verily they have their reward. The moment we see in an article in the *Athenæum*, or the *Saturday*, the mysterious forms of A’ali ben Sa’adi, or Sanskrit texts, or Muhámmadan law, or other pretty words where the full stops go on top of the letters or underneath them, instead of at the side, and the commas are playfully interspersed among the meandering syllables, we know at once that that is an article intended to be

skipped, and we skip it accordingly with great unanimity. Dr. W. W. Hunter, the *bête noire* of the old Indian civilian, is a mighty reformer in this respect. He would have us spell Meerut, Míráth, and Kurrachee, Karáchi. Now, this sort of purism is all very well in technical literature and in the Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society: nobody (except the experts) ever reads them, and so the barbarous jargon of the superfine pedants does nobody any serious harm there. But when it comes to poisoning the mind of youth with Kwong-fu-tzi instead of the familiar Confucius, turning the Great Mogul of our innocent boyhood into an unpronounceable Mughal, and disfiguring the delightful adventures of Haroun al Rashid by a pedantic peppering of his name with assorted dots, commas, and accents, we all feel that accuracy itself, precious as it doubtless is, may yet be purchased at too great a cost. What possible good can it do to sprinkle the Arabian Nights with somebody's impracticable system of transliterating Arabic, with the sole result that ingenuous youth will be deterred at first sight by the unfamiliar appearance of the One-eyed Calender in his new dress, and give to the hideous hash of consonants and vowels some sound far more unlike the original Arabic than even the first crude attempt of the early translators?

The fact which all these good people seem to forget is simply this, that English is a distinct and separate language, and that no Englishman—not even a pedant—can be impartially versed in Greek and Sanskrit, Cree and Ohjibway, Hittite and Assyrian, Chinese and Hottentot, Welsh and Gaelic, all together. Life is short, and Cardinal Mezzofanti left no issue. Greek and Latin, French and German, are quite as much as most of us find time to cram into the threescore years and ten of human existence according to the Psalmist. And indeed, we have all seen how this modern transliterating craze first set in from small beginnings. It was the Hellenists who started it; they thought it fine to talk about Thukydidés. This was such a brilliant success for the man who originated the mania that somebody else bethought him of capping it by writing Thukydidés. Once the ball was thus set rolling, we went rapidly through all the variations of Thoukydidés and Thoukudidés, of Æschylus, Aischylus, Aischulus, and Aischulos, which latter monstrosity I have actually seen in printer's ink, staining the virgin purity of good white paper.

The Hellenists having thus achieved a noble revolution, the Anglo-Saxons next prepared to have an innings. They discarded

the beautiful and immoral Elfrida of our unvexed schooldays in favour of a colourless and unpronounceable Ælfthryth; they 'threw back' (as the Darwinians say) from Lady Godiva to the terrific Godgifu; and they reverted from Awdrey, short for Etheldreda, to the primitive barbarism of an East Anglian Æthelthryth. I don't deny that our early English ancestors themselves were bold enough and linguists enough to use undismayed these fearsome compounds of discordant consonants: and what is more, after paying due heed to the minute instructions of Mr. Ellis and Mr. Sweet—*arcades ambo*—I even know how to pronounce them myself with tolerable correctness, because I happen to be personally interested in Athels and Ethels. But I don't expect other people to share my hobby; and I do maintain that the proper place for such strange and un-English-looking words is in technical literature, that they are of use to the Anglo-Saxon scholar alone, and that they merely tend to deter, dismay, mislead, and disgust the average modern English reader. And when it comes to Pali and Coptic, to cuneiform inscriptions and Egyptian hieroglyphics, the attempt thus to force down our throats, like a nasty bolus, the results of an alien and specialist research can have no effect save that of checking and preventing the diffusion of knowledge. If you want to make any subject popularly comprehensible and popularly interesting, you must divest it of all that is harsh, crude, technical, and dull; you must translate it freely from the jargon of the specialist into the pure, simple, idiomatic English of everyday conversation.

One word as to the general underlying principle which pervades all these manifestations of superfine English. They are all alike the result of taking too much trouble about mere expression. Just as self-consciousness in manner produces the affected airs and graces, the poses and attitudes, the laughs and giggles, of Miss Jemima, so self-consciousness in modes of expression produces the absurd over-particular nicety of the national schoolmaster and the educated pedant. Always inquiring anxiously whether this, that, or the other word or phrase is absolutely correct, according to their own lights, such people go wrong through the very force of their desire to go right, often coupled with an inadequate sense of the deepest and inmost underlying grammatical and etymological meaning. In all these matters, first thoughts are best. Very young ladies in their letters are always falling into ingenuous errors, due to the bad habit of

thinking before they speak; they write first, 'His health was drunk,' and then, alarmed at the apparent inebriety of that harmless past participle, alter it incontinently to 'His health was drank.' They correct 'Between you and me' into 'Between you and I,' and substitute 'elder' for 'older,' or 'less' for 'smaller,' on the strength of obsolete rules imperfectly understood from Lindley Murray. It is just the same with older and more learned pedants. Instead of 'These sort of people go anywhere,' they write 'This sort of people goes anywhere'—an impossible idiom in speaking—not perceiving that popular instinct has rightly caught at the implied necessity for a plural subject to the really and essentially plural verb. They insist upon replacing sound and sensible current phrases by stiff and awkward hothouse idioms. They object to our talking about the vandalism of railway contractors, apparently on the somewhat grotesque ground that the historical Vandals never in their lives constructed a railway. But if we are invariably to use words in none but their primitive and naked etymological sense—if we are to give up all the wealth of metaphor and allusiveness which gradually encrusts and enriches every simple phrase—if we are to discard 'worsted' because it is no longer spun at Worstead in Norfolk, and eschew 'Gothic' because a distinguished scholar considers the Goths were not really such goths after all—why, all our writing in future will tend to become as dull as ditchwater.

*RAINBOW GOLD.*¹

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK VI.—*continued.*

HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD GREW REAL.

CHAPTER IV.

EZEKIEL ROUND sat in an arm-chair by the fireside at Konak Cottage, in the same room and the same arm-chair in which Job Round had died. Ezekiel was thinking of nothing and looking at nothing, and smoking. His eyes were dull and fishlike, his head was pushed a little forward with a look which betokened readiness to contradict anything, his legs and shoulders were as self-willed as ever, and his red fists lay one on each thigh, as if in expectation of immediate conflict.

Sarah sat sewing at a window in the same room, but sometimes her needle and the work at which she plied it would lie together in her lap whilst she looked with unseeing eyes at the rain-beaten garden and the dim fields beyond. It was one of those days in late summer when rain can seem more desolate than at any other time, and the atmosphere was soaked with water like a sponge. The weather was cold, and a cheerful little fire burned upon the hearth. Except for the ticking of a clock the house was so still that the patter of the rain and the rustle of the wind-tormented trees were as loud as if it had been night-time.

Whatever change had taken place in Sarah's aspect had but ripened and sweetened her unusual beauty. The arch brightness which had once distinguished her was gone, of course. The happiest marriage and motherhood—and marriage and motherhood are a woman's best felicities—would have seen that innocent bright archness fade. That had belonged to youth and youth's high spirits. Now her face was grave and thoughtful, and any one who knew her well and loved her would have seen a pitiful brave sadness in it.

¹ This novel has been dramatised by the author.

‘My pipe’s gone out,’ said Ezekiel, suddenly. His voice had gone shrill with age, but it betokened a dogged humour even yet.

‘Shall I light it for you, grandfather?’ she asked. ‘It wants filling again; shall I fill it?’ He clung to it at first, but her supple persuasive fingers gradually released it from his hand. She filled it for him and gave it back to him with a lighted spill, and he began to puff away with a sulky gravity. With his clean-shaven red face and his bald head he looked like a big baby, who had come into the world resolved to be satisfied with nothing.

‘I say,’ he said, looking at his granddaughter with lack-lustre eyes, ‘dost thee remember my son Job? He was a king among men was my son Job. He growed after he was two-an’-twenty, and he stood six foot four. Like Saul, head and shoulders higher than his brethren. I acted very bad to my son Job. I cussed him out of house an’ home, and now I do’t think he’ll iver come back again. He wanted to marry Armstrong’s gell—the printer in the High Street. That’s what I cussed him out of house an’ home for. I knowed he’d never come back no more, and I knowed I was a fewl. I’ve allays been a fewl, or else I should niver ha’ trusted my money with young Whittaker. Didst thee know young Whittaker? There’s none o’ th’ ode folks left i’ Castle Barfield i’ these daysen. Things was a deal gayer when I was a lad than they be now. Cudgil playin’s gone clean out. So’s pidgin flyin’. The young lads ud meet once or twice a week of summer evenin’s when I was young, an’ have a stand-up fight i’ the Warrin Lezzurs for a match. Four ud fight wi’ four, an’ then two ud fight wi’ two, an’ them two ud fight together, and the mon as won was champion. Ah! they’d come from miles around. There’s no sperrit of enj’ment left. My pipe’s gone out.’

Sarah was too accustomed to the old man’s wanderings to pay much heed to them, or to be greatly wounded by them, even when they touched the sorest places in her heart. She arose again patiently and gave the old boy a light, and then went back to her sewing and her own thoughts.

‘He stuck out like a mon,’ said Ezekiel, ‘and I liked him none the wuss for it, I can tell thee. But I wouldn’t ha’ let on as I admired him, mind thee, for a million o’ money. I used to see him a walkin’ along Castle Barfield high road, six foot four of him, and as broad as a barn door, an’ ne’er a bit o’ waste from crown to sole; the strongest man in England I reckon he was. He’d walk by me without a word, just a friendlike soort of a nod

he'd gi'e me, but that was all; and "Damn thy eyes," I used to say, "I love thee for it." A strikin' handsome lad was my son Job.'

Then he complained once more that his pipe was out, and, Sarah having again supplied him with a light, he fell into a sort of coma, and sat smoking and seeing nothing and thinking of nothing.

There were two windows to the room, one looking on the fields and another on the garden path and the gate which stood at the end of it. The side window was overshadowed by a tree, and on this dim day the light was somewhat dull there. Sarah gathered up her sewing and set it down on the sofa below the brighter window. Then seating herself beside it she began to sew in earnest. Grandfather Round wanted luxuries now and again, and Sarah had sacrificed some part of her own small property to save the family name from the disgrace of actual bankruptcy, so that she was somewhat put to it at times to make both ends meet, and had recourse to her needle to supply deficiencies which might otherwise have grown serious. She was a skilful fine needlewoman, and the work of her hands did more to keep herself and the broken old grandfather than anybody knew.

She was sunk deep in thought, but busy all the while. Clem was repeating his own verses in the smiling summer field above the Jacob's Ladder, and her father was lying below the hedge, as yet unseen, in the lane at the end of the field. She was coming to him in her thoughts, and Clem's voice was in her ears.

Green fields and falling waters, and, afar,
—Faint as the echo of his watery war,
Old Ocean leaves within the twisted shell—
The peaceful chiming of the convent bell.

Just then she heard the click of the latch gate. It sounded more seldom now than in old days. She looked up and started with a little cry, for there, buffeted and blown by the rain and wind, was none other than Grandfather Armstrong, whom she had fancied a hundred miles away. She arose and opened the door to welcome him.

'Grandfather Armstrong!' she cried. 'What good wind has blown you here?' She drew him within-doors, and kissed him heartily. The grey man took both her hands and held them wide apart, and began to dandle each hand gaily in his own. He was flushed with the rain and the wind, and was a trifle out of breath.

'I'm thinking it's a good wind, my dear,' he said. 'I'm

thinking it's a good wind, but I can't be altogether sure yet. How's Mr. Round?' he asked, dropping his granddaughter's hands and advancing to Ezekiel. 'How do you find yourself? D'ye know me, man? Losh! I don't believe the puir man knows me, Sarah.'

'He will know you by-and-by,' she said. 'He sleeps with his eyes open, I think—poor old Grandfather Round. Let me take off your wet coat and put it at the kitchen fire to dry. Where have you come from?'

'I was in London this morning,' returned Armstrong. 'I came down straight to see you.'

'On purpose to see me,' she asked, standing with the wet garment in her hand. 'You came on purpose to see me?'

'Ay, lass! Put away the coat and we'll begin to have a talk together. I'm thinking 'twas a good wind that blew me here, my dawtie. Put awa' the co't,' he said, relapsing for an instant into his broadest accent, 'an' we'll hae a crack.'

She obeyed him, and returned with a face of expectation.

'My son Job,' said Ezekiel as she entered, 'was the strikingest handsome man i' Castle Barfield. He was a traveller in his day, and could talk the foreign tongues, whether to the Frenchies or the Germanies, or them trapesing gipsy chaps.'

'He rarely speaks of anything but father,' Sarah said, in answer to Armstrong's eyes. 'He is breaking fast.'

'He's no complaint, has he?' Armstrong asked, speaking unconsciously in a half-whisper.

'No,' she said. 'The doctor comes to see him now and then, but more for old acquaintance' sake than anything. He says he will not last long, but he has no illness and no pain. Senile decay, he calls it.'

'Ay,' responded Armstrong; 'he'll be nigh on eighty-five years of age. Poor auld lad! Eh, eh! his worldly troubles are well nigh at an end, and I doubt he'll have no mind to be brightened at the last. Sit down, lass; I've something of the utmost importance to say to ye.'

Sarah sat down upon the sofa by the rain-bleared window, and her grandfather, seating himself beside her, took both her hands in his. He looked bright and elated, and wide as she might send her guesses she could find no reason for his visit and his obvious gladness and excitement.

'You must know, to begin with,' he said, holding both her

hands, and now and then lifting them and waving them airily—‘you must know, to begin with, that David is a clerk in the office of a stock and share broker in a street in London that goes by the name of Cophthall Street. A while ago a gentleman makes application to this stockbroker to know whether some nine or ten years ago his uncle did or did not buy through his hands a certain number of shares—Government annuities, or what not. I’m no man for these affairs, and ye mustn’t expect me to talk like a banker, but I’ll make you as wise as I am myself. The object of the gentleman’s inquiry was to get at a certain sum o’ money in the Bank of England, as I understand, believing that the sum had been lent to the Government of the country afore-time by his uncle. Am I making things clear to ye, dawtie, or am I befogging a fog? It’s a bit of a fog to me when I come to the details, but I’m feeling clear till now.’

‘I think I understand,’ said Sarah, not quite knowing what to make of this exordium. ‘I am sure I understand.’

‘Very well. There are rocks ahead, maybe,’ said Armstrong gaily, ‘but we’re in smooth water for the meantime. The gentleman was his uncle’s sole heir, and had reason, from some memoranda in the old man’s writing, to believe that he had thus disposed of a sum of money. He applies to David’s master to ascertain the facts. David is set at work to search through a set of books which detail all his employer’s business for the period, and he lights upon the entry. It relates to a matter of some five thousand pounds, and the gentleman’s in the fairest possible way to get the money. Now I’m sure a girl with your good heart will be glad o’ that.’

He laughed then, and swung her hands so gaily that she could scarce do less than give him an answering smile.

‘I am sure,’ she said, ‘I hope the gentleman may have his own and live long to enjoy it. But why are you so pleased? It isn’t you?—you have no uncle. Is it David?—no, he has no uncle either, and besides he only searched the books. Oh, grandfather, is it Clem—is it poor Clem? Oh, if it were Clem I should be glad indeed.’

‘No,’ returned Armstrong, ‘it’s a man whose name I never hard before. A pairfect stranger, my dear, but we’ll just be glad he has a fair chance of getting his own, for that’s no more than everyday human good-nature; eh, lass!’

‘Certainly,’ she said, looking at him with some bewilderment.

His blue eyes twinkled with an innocent mirth and mischief, but all on a sudden he became serious and tender.

‘In looking through those books, Sarah, David found another name, only a page or two away from the one I’ve been speaking of. My lass, I’m thinking ye’re going to be a vary walthy woman.’

‘I?’ said Sarah.

‘You,’ replied Armstrong. ‘The name that David found was your poor father’s, lass. Job Round, of Konak Cottage, Castle Barfield, gentleman. And there in plain black and white was the record of a transfer out of foreign stocks—I’m not in the least understanding what I’m telling you, but this is the gist of David’s statement, I’m pretty certain—a transfer out of foreign stocks into the new three per cent. annuities. That is to say, for I’ll be as clear as I can, that he had sold something and bought something else. Now the actual murder’s out. It’s not settled yet—ye can’t go up and lay hands upon the money at once, but there’s little doubt ye’ll get it. You’re not upset in any way, or feeling faint, are ye?’

‘No,’ said Sarah, looking at him in grave wonderment. ‘Why should I?’

‘Ay, ay!’ returned Armstrong, ‘why should ye? But there’s a pretty big handful of people in the warld that would. It just made my auld head spin for wonderment and pleasure when I hard it. But ye’re not a warldly minded lass, and never were. Ye don’t even ask how much it is?’

‘Is it much?’ she asked. Her mind was busy with other things; Clem and Grandfather Armstrong need be poor no longer. She had been told already that she was going to be a wealthy woman.

‘I’ll tell ye how much it is,’ he said, releasing her hands to grope in the pocket of his shrunken grey coat. ‘Here’s David’s figures. The sum transferred was ninety-seven thousand five hundred and sixty-seven pounds. The compound interest since then has been, so David says, nineteen thousand five hundred and sixty-three pounds. Altogether a hundred and seventeen thousand one hundred and thirty pounds, yielding an annual income of three thousand five hundred and thirteen pounds eighteen shillings. Upon my word, it’s just a glory to pronounce the words. I’ve felt like a deputy Rothschild all the way down from London with the figures in my pocket. Give your auld granddad a kiss, lass. God bless ye!’

And then, quite suddenly, the little grey old man leapt to his feet and began to foot it heel and toe, with one hand aloft and the other set jauntily on his hip, and more suddenly still fell back upon the sofa, and hid his grey old face in his hands and sobbed for joy.

‘Lass,’ he said, ‘I’m glad at heart for your sake. I’m glad at heart.’

‘But how,’ she asked him with wondering eyes, ‘did father ever become possessed of such a sum of money? And how was it that having it he never used it and never spoke of it?’

‘That’s more than I can say, lass,’ said Armstrong, ‘and more than man will ever know. But since it was Job Round’s money there’s one certain thing—it was honestly come by——’

‘Grandfather!’

‘Ay, ay, lass! we’re just o’ the same mind about that. David tells me that money kept at interest doubles in twenty-one years. It’s seven-and-twenty since your father came home from foreign parts, and in all probability brought the nucleus of this fortune with him. And it may have been multiplied in trade.’

‘Have you told Clem?’

‘Not a word. And won’t till everything is fixed and certain. There’s a lot to do yet, but everything’s fairly certain. Safe, I should say, in the end. But here’s the modus operandi, as David sets it down. First ye go to a lawyer, and ye give him dates and names and figures. Then the stock has to be traced in the bank books. Then they’ll want evidence of your title, and ye’ll have to produce—I’ve got it down here somewhere on the inside of an auld envelope—ye’ll have to produce letters of administration of the personal effects and estate of your poor father. That ye’ll get from the Probate Court, after the requisite formalities of oaths and the payment of court fees and duty. Then this grant of administration is to be lodged at the bank with evidence of identity. Then when the folk at the bank are quite sure ye’re the right person, they’ll make y’ advertise in the papers for the whole warld to know, so that any other claimant may turn up, and they’ll set a limit of time beyond which they’ll wait for nobody else, and at the end of that limit ye get the fortune. I’ve been a grandfather till ye from the day of your birth, and now I’m as good as a lawyer till ye.’

‘And how long will it take to do all this?’ asked Sarah. ‘If they would make me rich enough to help poor Clem!’

'They'll make ye rich enough to help poor Clem,' said her grandfather, 'but I'm sore afraid poor Clem won't take your help.'

This was the greatest surprise which had yet befallen her, and she looked at Armstrong in bewilderment.

'Not take my help? Clem not take my help? What *can* you mean?'

'My pipe's out,' said Ezekiel, waking from his state of half-unconsciousness. Sarah arose to attend to him, still looking backward in inquiry at Armstrong. 'Hello!' cried Ezekiel, 'who's that? That thee, Armstrong? Been a playin' at chess along wi' Job? Sarah, my gell, get me my boots.'

'Let me fill your pipe again, grandfather,' said Sarah.

'I don't want the pipe filled again,' replied Ezekiel; 'get me my boots, my gell.'

'You don't want your boots, grandfather,' she answered. 'It's raining fast. You couldn't go out if you had them.'

'Maybe I couldn't and maybe I could,' said the old man with all his ancient doggedness. 'Thee get me my boots.' He began to chuckle. 'Armstrong,' he said, still weakly wagging his head and shaking his sides with laughter, 'dost thee remember Bill Hines, the blind fiddler?'

'No,' said Armstrong; 'I've heard tell of the man, but he died before I came to Barfield.'

'Let me see,' mumbled Ezekiel wheezily. 'How ode am I? Eighty-five. Then it's over sixty 'ear ago. I was a bit larkish when I was a young un', an' full o' fun an' invention an' all sorts o' divilry. So one day I ties a bit of a ode tin kettle to Bill Hines' dog's tail. To see the dog a runnin', and poor Bill a hodin' on, you'd ha' died o' loffin. I gi'en him a sixpence after it, but he could niver be browt to think well on me again. Whenever he heerd my voice a speakin' after that, he'd sing out "Zekiel Round, thee'st die in thy boots." Me and ode Bill 'll have a bit of a snigger at that when I come to tell him. Get me my boots, Sarah, there's a good wench. I'll mek ode Bill's words come true.'

'Grandfather,' said Sarah, 'you mustn't talk in that way. Here's your pipe; now you must be good, and take it.'

'I want my boots,' returned Ezekiel, 'and I'll ha' my boots or else I'll know who's master i' this house!'

'Give him his boots, lass,' said Armstrong. 'It'll do him no harm to have them.'

So Ezekiel got his boots, and insisted on having them pulled on and laced. The operation seemed to be strangely fatiguing to him, but he laughed when it was over, and was heard to mutter once or twice—

‘I’ll tell ode Bill of this to-night. We’ll have a bit of a snigger about this, me an’ ode Bill wool.’

‘He’s very strange, Sarah,’ said Armstrong. ‘I’m a little alarmed for him by this wild talk of his.’

‘He has not been himself for many weeks,’ she answered. ‘He wanders often, and says so many strange things that I have grown used to him. He is falling asleep, I think. What was the meaning of the extraordinary thing you said of Clem?’

‘I’d have been wiser not to say it,’ he said; ‘but I think ye’ll find it true.’

‘But why should I find it true, grandfather? Clem has not begun—’ she paused a little, and her beautiful bosom heaved—‘to dislike me?’ Her face clouded and paled. ‘If I couldn’t help Clem and you, where would be the use of having money? Why should Clem refuse me if I had it to offer him?’

‘Ye must leave me to deal with Clem, my dear—that’s all. I’ll say no more.’

‘But you must say more, grandfather—indeed you must. What have I done to Clem?’

‘Nothing—nothing, my dear. Just nothing in the wide wide warld. The pair lad’s just as friendly and as kindly disposed as ever. Now don’t think anything more about it. It’s not the least little affeer o’ mine, and I’m an auld fool for my pains. Now, now, now, ma dear girl, not a ward.’

But Sarah was not to be thus silenced, and, sweet as she was, she had her share of feminine obstinacy. To be told that if she were rich Clem would take nothing at her hands to relieve the bitterness of his own poverty so wounded her that it brought the tears to her patient eyes. She had loved Clem always since she could remember—dearly.

‘Grandfather, you must tell me.’ The old man saw the tears in her eyes and began to move uneasily. ‘Tell me,’ she said pleadingly, and set a hand on his shoulder—‘tell me.’

‘Eh!’ said Armstrong, rising and rumpling his grey hair, ‘what a hell o’ witchcraft lies in the small oarb o’ one particular tear! Shakespeare, ma friend, ye’d learn that or ever ye quitted the banks of Avon. What’ll I tell ye, my child?’

‘Tell me why Clem should refuse to take help from me if it should come into my power to offer it.’

‘The lass that will to Cupar maun to Cupar,’ said the old man with a sigh of desperation. ‘It’s just this then. He’ll take your money and you together if you’re flang straight at him, but ye’ll never get *that* lad out of all the lads ye know to take a penny out o’ charity from the girl he loves. That I know, anyway.’

To say that this came as a surprise to Sarah seems to say but little. Both hands went swiftly to her face, and she blushed scarlet. And yet surely it was nothing of a surprise that Clem loved her. The impulse which had led her to hide her face had come too swiftly to be repelled or considered, but she recovered from it in an instant.

‘Grandfather, what do you mean by putting such foolish ideas in a woman’s head?’

‘I’m not the sagest o’ mankind, lass, but I’ve just sense enough to be able to smell what’s under my nose. It’s eight or nine years old with him. And the talk runs in half the books ever I read that ye may trust a woman to know a thing o’ that sort. I suppose ye may, if the man tells her. Ye’ll help Clem, my dear, for that’s only natural and on the obvious face of things. But ye’ll have to find a way of doing it, for I know the heart of the lad, and its pride and its soreness, and not a pennypiece will he take that looks like charity from you, of all the women that live to plague the souls o’ men.’

‘Clem has no right to be proud with me,’ she said, almost in anger. ‘And unless Clem would share the money with me I would tell him that I would never touch a penny of it. I would ask him how he dare keep me out of my rights in that way, for if he would not touch it I would not touch it, and I would see if he would rob me by his obstinacy.’

She was half laughing through her blushes before she had come to the end of this irresistible piece of womanly logic, and Armstrong was twinkling at her between his spectacles and his eyebrows with a look of humour which can only be described by one word, to find which we must fly to his own native language. The look and the sense of fun that created it were purely Scottish, as the word is, and the sense of fun and the look were ‘pawky.’ You may search the vocabularies of the world in vain; there exists no translation.

‘Well, well,’ he said, ‘ye’ll settle that between yourselves, I make no manner of a doubt. The coneys are but a feeble folk, says the Wise Man, yet they make their dwellings in the rocks.’

‘And that means——?’

‘That a woman’s more cunning than a coney, lass. I’m fit to talk any sort o’ nonsense. But ye *can* burrow your way through that difficulty if ye care to; the coming year’s Bissextile.’

Sarah laughed again, but she was still blushing.

‘How old are you, grandfather?’ she asked.

‘Ah,’ said he, ‘that’s as much as to say “when does a man arrive at years o’ discretion?” Maybe the days of my discretion are over, but I’ve told you no more than the serious truth, lass, and ye must just turn it over and look at it. A straight back’s a fine thing, but a pure heart’s a finer. The lad’s a lion, though he roars, after Bottom’s fashion, like a sucking dove. A brave spirit; as gentle a nature as ever was informed with life. Turn it over, and luik at all sides of it. Here’s this poor old heart,’ indicating Ezekiel, ‘fast growing cold, and not much longer to need the warmth of yours. Ye’ll be lonely when ye have nobody to fret for, and ye’re not the sort of woman that can waste the treasures of her soul upon a lap-dog, or a parrot that can say “Scratch Polly.” . . . But meantime here’s serious business on hand. Will ye give me leave to go out and see a lawyer in your name? Best get the best man here, where ye’re known, and where ye’ll be able now and then to jog his mind about affairs. It’s not worth while to waste a day, for the sooner the thing’s begun the earlier ’twill be over.’

‘Shall I not be wanted?’ she asked.

‘I fancy not, at first,’ he answered. ‘And ye wouldn’t like to leave the old man lonely. I’ll be away an hour at the utmost, and when I come back again ye’ll give me a cup of tea.’

He struggled anew into his overcoat, borrowed an umbrella, and set out. Sarah took up her sewing, and after a stitch or two suffered it to fall into her lap. The day had brought strange news.

‘A heart like Clem’s,’ she thought, ‘would be a better treasure than gold to a woman who loved him.’

She had loved him always, dearly. That was a matter which admitted of no doubt whatever. But to marry him was another thing.

Yet if Clem would only consent to be wealthy on that condition? If he would not even consent to part with poverty on

any other condition? Grandfather Round was asleep, and she did not even breathe these thoughts to herself. Yet as they passed through her mind she blushed, and a second time she hid her face between her hands.

CHAPTER V.

THE medal hung with its edge to the window, and Clem could see each side of it. He polished the bleared window with his sleeve and tried to make out the inscription, but the surface was aslant to the light, and glittered so that he could see nothing of it but the one word 'Rocher' and a line with these signs at the beginning of it—'42° 49'.' But there was no mistaking it. He had been suffered to handle it when he was yet a mere child, when Job came home again and would take him between his knees and tell him stories. He had found years and years ago a quaint face in the Sultan's twisted monogram, and he could see it now. But whatever aids to memory he found were altogether unconscious, and he had no need to examine them. He knew the medal again as one knows the face of a friend.

He was a man transformed. Dingy Fleet Street vanished, and the city clerk might as well have hustled Vesuvius as this shabby little figure. For one moment the poor thing's soul went back to youth and Castle Barfield, and the sun was on the fields, and the lowing of far-off oxen was clearer in his ears than the growl of cab and omnibus wheels, and a face divinely sweet was close to his. The supremest miracle of emotion Nature chose to work that hour had his heart for its field. He sprang at a bound from the lowest night of despair to the very mountain top of morning hope.

No man can paint a hurricane, and a storm is but a poor symbol, after all, of tumult in the soul. But when the first great throes of joy were over, calm came to him and the quiet of a settled purpose. He had memories which he would not have bartered for any possible delights, and there was no thought or shadow of a thought of any benefit to himself which might arise from this astounding accident. The memory of Sarah filled his heart. He saw her ways made smooth, and he seemed to see her, like the sun, making life bright for the poor, cheering cold hearts and gladdening her own.

The first thought that recalled him to himself touched him with an almost aguish fear. There was not a millionaire in London, knowing what he knew, who would not give twenty thousand pounds for that medal, and here it hung in a window in the very middle of London's traffic, ready for the first man who paused to buy it out of curiosity or to recognise its value as he had done. He had to tear himself away and leave it, if only for the briefest time, whilst he secured at any sacrifice enough to make it his own. As he thought thus the clock struck seven. He heard it, but still lingered. Unreasonable as the fear might seem, it tugged at his heart as he forced himself from the place and hurried to the solicitor's office in Shoe Lane.

He was panting and trembling when he reached the door, and had hard work to control himself.

'I might have left your money with the clerk,' said the solicitor, 'but I wanted to see you personally. The lawyers on the other side—what's their name? Hodson, Son, and Cave, of Castle Barfield—write me that their clients are ready to pay off the mortgage.'

'Very well,' said Clem, holding the back of a chair to steady himself. 'That is what I could have wished for. I want to ask you to let me have two pounds ten shillings to-night. If you will buy the mortgage yourself you shall have it at fifty pounds less than its value, provided you can give me an open cheque on Monday. I am going abroad. I have pressing and urgent business which cannot bear to be delayed a day.'

'Hum,' said the lawyer, 'you must give me a little time to think about that.'

'You don't make fifty pounds every day of your life,' Clem answered. 'Draw up a deed transferring the thing from me to you, and you shall have it for fifty pounds less than its actual value. I will be here on Monday to sign it. I would start to-morrow if I could.'

'Haven't been robbing a bank, have you, Bache?' asked the solicitor.

'I have urgent business abroad,' said Clem. 'Will you buy the mortgage and take the terms I offer, or must I go elsewhere?'

'You pay the expenses of the transfer. Very well, I'll take it.'

'When must I be here? At ten on Monday morning? Let

me have five pounds now in place of the two pounds ten I asked for. I have some debts to pay, and I can afford to waste no time on Monday.'

'You're strangely excited,' said the lawyer. 'What is it all about? Have you come in for a fortune?'

'I am going abroad,' said Clem, with an almost hysteric break in his voice, 'to take possession of fifty thousand pounds.' The lawyer stared at him. 'Pray don't keep me waiting,' Clem besought him; 'I am pressed for time. Let me have five pounds.'

'It's all very odd, you know,' returned the man of law. 'Give me your I O U and you can have it. I have security.'

Clem gave the required I O U, received the money, and was gone, with a devouring fear that the medal had disappeared. It hung there still, and by-and-by was in his hands—his own. He hugged it to his breast with both hands, and his heart gloated over it. He walked homeward through the dismal rain as an enfranchised spirit might walk through the fields of heaven. The rain came down, and the yellow gaslights bleared through it like drunkard's eyes, and the crowd jostled him about the slippery pavement. But there were warmth and sunshine within him and widespread peace, and an unselfish sacred Hope with music in the murmur of her wings.

When he had reached his own sordid room, he lit his candle and sat down to look at the medal. He kissed it and wept over it, and knelt to thank God for it for Sarah's sake. He examined it over and over again until every word and every line imprinted itself upon his memory.

Latitude 42° 49'; longitude 21° 32½. A deep-cut sketch of a rock of peculiar form with the word 'Rocher' over it. An irregularly shaped figure with the word 'mare' within it, and a smaller sketch of the rock engraved upon its right-hand side. Then in the centre of the medal another irregular figure with these words below it—'Baba Konak Montagne. Mare au pied. Sud.' Then, below this, 'Entre mare et rocher. Ligne directe.'

He went out into the streets again, bearing his treasure with him. He hugged it in the pocket in which he carried it, and his excited mind made pictures of a thousand dreadful chances by which he might lose it. Yet all this was no more than the play of waters upon the surface when the depths lie still; and in his inmost heart he was certain that heaven had made him the

messenger and the worker of Sarah's happiness. He bought ink and paper and went back home again, and then sat down to write.

He set down his wonderful discovery and all his knowledge of the story which went before it. He knew nothing, and could therefore tell nothing, of the means by which the money had at first been gained, for Mr. Bowling, in deference to an instinct of his own, had suppressed his knowledge of the great Del Oro swindle. It had occurred to him that a man of scrupulous honesty might want to trace the original owners of the money, and he had not cared to be disturbed by any conscientious weakness of that sort. So Clem had no more to tell than that a party of adventurers had buried this money many years ago; that they had been pursued by a party more desperate than themselves and dispossessed of their fortune in the very act of concealing it, and that in turn they had been compelled to fly from justice and to leave the treasure still buried. Then he set down that a new party, years later, of whom Job Round was one, had learned the secret, but how he could not say; that two of them also had been compelled to abandon their share of the spoil, and that it lay there still. He transcribed the details of the medal, and went on to say that he did this in case his own enterprise should fail, for he was weak and might break down, though he believed that Heaven was on his side and would guide and guard him to the end.

When he came to the close of this statement, which, though briefly and barely summarised here, took three or four hours in writing, he set down these words:—

‘If I should fail, Sarah will find stronger and abler hands to carry out the purpose which has been too great a weight for me. But I beg you, by all the force of our old friendship, not to disquiet her by a single word with regard to this until I give you leave or until three months have gone by. You can tell her when you write that your last news of me was prosperous, and that I am gone abroad upon an enterprise which bids fair to be a happy one. But if I should come back no more—and, though I have no forebodings of evil, that is possible enough—I should like her to know that I did what I could for her, and that I thought my life well spent in her service. If I can do this thing I shall be supremely happy, and if I fail it will be only because I have no longer the power to serve her.’

He sealed this with great care, addressed it to Armstrong, and locked it in the one drawer in the rickety chest which could be so secured; and then, stripping off his waistcoat, he opened the lining and sewed the medal within it round and round. Since his sojourn in London had begun he had done with his own hands whatever trimming and mending his clothes had required, and his lean fingers had grown as expert with the needle as they were with everything else to which he set them.

He set the waistcoat under his pillow, and laid down his head over the precious talisman it held. His heart was at rest, for, to his own mind, he had already fulfilled his mission. He had spoken of the possibility of failure because, theoretically, it lay as a possibility in the future, but every nerve and fibre denied the chances of disease and death, and he triumphed already. Since Job's death and the flight of Aaron Whittaker had come to heap undeserved miseries upon him, he had never slept so sweetly.

The morning weather was bright like his hopes, and it seemed natural that when Armstrong came to pay his usual Sunday visit that the old man should be radiant.

'Clem, my man,' said Armstrong, noting the new look of resolution and joy which shone in the hunchback's face, 'ye're changed.'

'Yes,' said Clem, 'I am changed.' He looked at the old Scotchman's friendly eyes, and, stretching out both hands to him, he went on with a tender seriousness, 'I have been led in a way I did not know; there are no more dark days in store. God has been good to me.' Armstrong, holding Clem's hands, dropped his head.

'Good to all of us, lad—good to all of us. There are providences that shine in this naughty world like sunlight falling on dark places. I'll have something to tell ye in a week or two, or may be less, will make your heart to sing. Ye mustn't ask me now, I'm bound down by promises, but I've had it in my mind to throw my sacred word of honour to the wind this two months past, and make you as glad as I am myself and as glad as David is. But I mustn't, though I feel as if I were swollen unto the dimensions of a balloon and fit to burst.'

'You have no news so happy or so amazing as mine,' said Clem, 'but I won't ask yours or tell my own until the time comes.'

'I'll bet you,' cried Armstrong, 'I'll bet you—what'll I bet you? I'll bet you the vary finest set o' Staunton pieces and the vary finest imahginable boord that ever the noble game o' chess was played on, that when we come to compare notes ye'll admit that whatsoever news ye've got is no more to be compared to mine than an ant to an elephant. It's just the most majestic and astounding and—— For the Lord's sake, lad, talk o' something else. I've a gaseous accumulation within me will carry me else out o' window, and I'll be coming to wreck against the house-tops.'

'I am glad to hear your news is so good,' Clem answered. He could smile again, it seemed. He could but think—If Armstrong had known, how trivial any piece of good fortune which had befallen him would seem beside the amazing incident of last night. But he kept his own counsel, and they talked of other things.

The talk was serenely happy, except when here and there the older man, who might have been thought likely to be the more sober of the two, broke into some conversational gallop, like a young colt of a fellow whose high spirits set him to race and frolic in the fields of fancy. When the time came for him to go, he shook hands with unusual gravity, and Clem, having his own farewell in mind, would fain have set his arms around the old man's neck and kissed him. They might meet no more; who knew?

He bore the solitude that remained for him, and the time of waiting which remained, tranquilly, and was at perfect peace within. He slept calmly that night, and when morning came he paid his small debts, packed his few belongings, summoned a four-wheeled cab and drove away, carrying the letter to Armstrong with him. He would post that when fairly on his journey, but not before.

The solicitor awaited him with the deed, and he drove to the bank with the cheque he received in exchange for his signature. He bought the best map of the Balkans he could procure, and supplied himself with a revolver, a pocket compass, and a Turkish vocabulary. Theoretically he knew as much about the country as he was likely to want to know, for Mr. Bowling had known in his own way a great deal, and had told all he knew; as, how far up country the railway ran, on what roads carriages could travel, and

at what season the hills were supposed to become inaccessible to travel.

With some sparse provision in the way of winter clothing he started upon his journey. He had never before been out of England, and when he found himself in Calais with some spare hours upon his hands, he strayed about with a strange sense that this first of foreign towns was less foreign than it should have been. He posted his letter to Armstrong here, and as he walked the streets the quaint thin chimes sang to him of the treasure, and when he stood upon the shore the tumbling waves of the Channel had a like burden. He pursued his journey, and the calm which had so far accompanied him began to be clouded by a haze through which he saw nothing with distinctness. The buried gold in those far hills began to seem the only real thing in the world to him. Cologne was a shadow, and Frankfort a shadow, and Vienna was a dream city and no more. The Rhine which had been a lifelong dream to him was still no more than a dream, though he saw it at last in all the splendour of its latest autumn beauty. The constant clank and roll of the carriage and its wheels made themselves into words and called continually 'Gold is buried. In the mountains. Hurry forward. Hurry forward. Gold is buried in the mountains.' It seemed at last that others might hear that exigent monotone as well as he. As the time sped on it sounded more and more plainly in his heart and ears, whether he woke or slept. The sound of traffic in that dream Vienna took up the burden. The steamer that took him down the Danube to Nicopolis whirled its paddles to the same urgent chorus, and beat out upon the rolling waters 'Gold is buried. In the mountains. Hurry forward. You will find it. You will find it. You will find it. Gold is buried in the mountains.' Sea and town and rail and river sang to that measured refrain. The wheels of the rough and springless araba which bore him down to Plevna sang the song in their slow jolt and creak. His horse's lonely footfall as he rode from Plevna southward awoke that maddening, hurrying refrain.

He found everywhere a rough but generous hospitality, and the parting salutation 'Be with God' was always gentle if not always gently spoken. It was the rainy season then, and the roads along the plain were lines of bog running through a quagmire. He had bought a sheepskin coat and cap to protect him from the weather, and so until his speech betrayed him he passed unnoticed. His little knowledge of the language served him well, for it saved

him from questioning and replies. But he learned enough to know that dangers lay before him, and the warnings came thicker and thicker every day. The land was smouldering with insurrection, and every here and there was breaking into flame. And the Government was heaping fire on flame, and now and then experimenting on the possibility of saving a burning town by throwing gunpowder into the midst of it.

But neither this nor his own fast-increasing weakness served to turn him by one hair's-breadth from his purpose. The power of love was on him, and it was no mere treasure of buried gold that lay before him waiting for its resurrection at his hand. It was her soul whom his soul loved. The gold was hers, and her heart should be glad of it. It should bring her a new birth and a new being. All she had loved and longed for in her girlhood—art, music, books, the power to help the poor—waited for her at his coming. It was the thought of her which made his weakness strong, and the hand of love which drew his natural heart of trembling from his breast and set the spirit of a hero there.

He rode on southward, day by day, until the rain ceased, and the clear skies shone out again, precursors of the ice and snow, and still he rode on day by day, scarce conscious of the change. At last he came to Orkhaniè, and knew that he was near the Mecca of his pilgrimage. The tin roof of the village church glittered side by side with the white minaret of the mosque, and the muezzin was sweet with distance. The great hills towered beyond, already touched with the splendours of the sinking sun. He rested at the little khan in the straggling village street, and in the morning he mounted anew and betook him to the hills with a rough pick and a spade strapped before him to his saddle. The pass which leads to Tashkesen wound upward before him, and as he rode on the hills grew sterner and more sombre. A leaden-coloured sky and a piercing wind betokened snow.

When he had travelled some five or six miles along the pass, the winding road, ever rising higher before him, swerved broadly westward, and he knew that he had reached the spot at which he must quit the highway and betake himself to the hills. To the left, winding along the face of the mountain, ran a bridle path. He dismounted and led his horse by this narrow and difficult way. An eager hurry filled his heart and stirred his veins, but he had to pause many times for breath, and it was not until after nearly an hour's climbing that he reached the summit of the mountain,

and could look about him on a scene of savage and desolate grandeur. In spite of the intensesness of his purpose, or perhaps in part because of it, since it was that which strung him to so high a pitch, he paused here, blown through and through with a wild sense of domination, and thrilled by the stern magnificence of the scene. Even here he saw with love's eyes and seemed rather to feel with Sarah's heart than with his own. In some day not far distant these scenes should be open to her, and in them her soul, hitherto imprisoned, should find space to seek what joys she would.

Far below him in the valley gleamed a sulky pool. No other water lay in sight, though he could survey the scene for miles. Already he could distinguish the form of the Baba Konak, and he could see the huge rock that lay beyond the pool. He reached the spot and found the immense moss-grown fragment of rock answer to the outline graved upon the medal. There was little verdure and no underwood about it. He tethered the horse to a dwarf oak at some little distance, and came back to the place bearing the pick and spade with him. The song of the clown in *Hamlet* came into his mind—

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade
For and a winding sheet
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

He could think of nothing else but this, yet the words had no clear meaning to him.

The edge of the pool shelved suddenly, and the water lay thirty or forty feet below the top of the bank. The body of the rock was not eight feet from this edge, and it sent out a spur at its centre which reduced the space by two feet further, and seemed to point like a stony finger to the place where the treasure lay buried.

He began to dig, and though his weak strokes made but a slow impression on the soil he laboured as men work when only labour stands between life and death. Suddenly the point of his pick caught something and dragged him forward into the hole. He scrambled to his feet and found that the pick's point was embedded in a broad piece of leather. Seizing the spade he cleared the earth away from this right and left, until it revealed itself as a broad strap connecting two cases of leather. He worked now like a madman, though the force of his strokes grew weaker every

moment. One of the cases at last was cleared, and, seizing the strap, he dragged it up from the place in which it had rested for so many years. When his hold relaxed, as it did from his sheer weakness and excitement, the case fell and toppled open. Within it he could see nothing but mould. He fell upon his knees and explored it with his hands. Earth, and nothing but earth. With failing limbs and a heart that cried aloud of failure he laboured to release the second case. The same failure greeted him, but in dragging out the case he laid bare another leathern band, and his hopes revived and lent him new strength. The second band was connected, in like manner with the first, with two cases of thick leather, and these, like the first, were empty of all but mould. No! What was this? A single English guinea glimmered on the soil.

Clem sat down upon the edge of this grave of his hopes, and his heart died within him. His face drooped down and his hands covered it. The air grew white with falling snow-flakes. The horse broke from his tether and wandered down the valley, cropping here and there. Clem did not know it, and would not have heeded had he known.

He sat upon the edge of the grave his hands had made, and it held no treasure save that of his own soul despoiled and broken. The snow and the night fell together. The flakes grew larger and fell closer. The bleak wind pushed them by and they fled at its rude touch, and whirled helplessly in fantastic circles. But they closed again in a phalanx dense though frail, and fell upon the drooping figure gently, as though they fain would build a cairn to mark the place where so much tenderness and valour lay.

CHAPTER VI.

THE dirty Greek who kept the dirtier khan at Orkhaniè stood at his door with his hands tucked into the sleeves of his disreputable sheepskin coat, worn wool inside, and looked at the weather.

‘Athanas,’ he said to his factotum, ‘we shall have snow.’

‘We shall have snow,’ said Athanas in answer, ‘and the pass will be blocked. There is enough snow in the skies to fill up all the chinks in the hills and make a flat level with the top of the Buyuk Balkan.’

A Greek of the lower classes always lies when he can. When

he cannot lie he exaggerates vilely. But beyond a doubt the coming snowstorm would be heavy.

'Who comes here? Three horses,' said the khanjee. 'Hurry in, Athanas. Stir the fire—put on more wood. Light a mangal and set it in the front room. Sheitan git, giaour! Thou art slow as a worm.'

The foreigners in interior Turkey call each other foreigner by way of contempt, after the manner of the dwellers in the land wherein they sojourn.

A carriage with three horses came dashing wildly into the street ricocheting and rocketing from the broken pavement in an alarming manner. The driver was a turbaned Turk, with a swagging belly-band crammed full of pistols and daggers with curiously ornamented hilts of ancient silver. Seated within the carriage were three people, two men and a woman. One of the men was fat and round and young. The other was shrivelled and old and grey. The woman was young and lovely, and wore an aspect of simple and unconscious majesty.

'Ask if he has passed,' said the grey man in English.

'Stop!' cried the fat man in Turkish, and the driver dragged the horses on to their haunches before the door of the khan. Then in Greek, reading the khanjee's nationality at a glance, he said, 'Has an Englishman passed through the village to-day? A little crook-backed man dressed in a sheepskin cap and cloak?'

'He left on horseback this morning,' said the khanjee, standing bareheaded. 'He took the pass for Tashkesen. He will be there by now.'

The fat man put this rapidly into English. The grey man and his female companion looked at each other.

'Thank God!' she said. 'We are in time.'

'Ask him if he knows the Baba Konak,' said the male traveller. Yes, the Greek knew it well, and pointed to the hills. 'Ask him if he knows the pool at the south of it.' Yes, he knew the pool. 'Ask him how far it is.'

'Eight miles,' was the interpreter's answer, 'but four hours' hard travelling.'

'We must go on at once,' said the grey man's companion. 'There will be a snowstorm. He may be lost upon the hills.'

'Will you guide us?' asked the interpreter. 'Now? At once?'

'No,' said the khanjee, 'there will be snow. See, it is falling already. It will be night in two hours' time.' The interpreter translated this response.

'Sarah, my lass,' said the grey man, 'we must go on. It's growing into a mere matter o' life an' death to the lad.'

'Yes,' she said, 'we must go on. Surely there are some men here who will venture to the hills.'

'A hundred,' said the dragoman; 'but not Christians, and, very assuredly, not Greeks.'

'Get men,' she said appealingly. 'Get torches and lanterns. Let us carry wood in the carriage to make a fire. How far can we go in the carriage?'

The dragoman demanded—'How far on the road to the pool at the foot of the Baba Konak can we go with the carriage?'

'An hour and a half,' said the Greek sulkily. He had expected customers, and was getting nothing but questions.

'Is the road good?'

'Good enough.'

'Tell him,' said the grey man, 'to find half a dozen strong lads who are willing to go into the hills. Promise them a golden lira apiece. Tell him if we can start in twenty minutes he shall have one for himself.'

The dragoman transferred this to the Greek, but turned the lira into a beshlek, which is a quarter of its value. The Greek sped away as hard as he could go.

'You will stay here and wait for us, grandfather,' said Sarah. 'We shall find him. But,' the tears sprang to her lovely grey eyes, 'he will have broken his heart before we reach him.'

'I'll not stop here and wait for ye,' said Armstrong, 'but I'll go with ye. Do ye think I'm that auld an' donnert I can't bear an hour or two's cold in a cause like this?'

'Grandfather! you would be mad to go.'

'Mad or not,' said Armstrong, 'I'll go, and when I can go no further I'll e'en stop where I find myself, but I'll never stop while I can lift a foot till we find him live or dead.'

'What kind of road is it from here to the pool at the south foot of the Baba Konak?' asked the dragoman of Athanas.

'Up the wall of a house a mile high,' said Athanas, 'and down a wall a mile high.'

'He says,' translated the dragoman, 'that it is not a good road. Is there a path?' he asked. Athanas not seeing his way

either to lie or to magnify, contented himself with a nod. 'Have you travelled by it?'

'Twenty thousand times,' said Athanas.

'Can a woman do it?' Athanas nodded his head once more.

'The road is not good,' said the interpreter, 'but he says he has travelled by it once or twice himself, and a lady will not find it too hard.'

'No woman will do it to-night,' said Athanas, 'and no woman will do it again until after the spring rains. The snow will be yards deep in an hour.'

To this the dragoman made no response, but descending demanded a glass of mastica, and warmed his hands and feet at the stove.

'I was sore afraid,' said Armstrong, 'that we should never get near him. That heart-breaking four days it cost us to borrow the money! One would have thought that when that advertisement had been issued in the *Times* day after day for a week, and when already ye'd spent nigh every penny of your substance, ye'd have shown bona fides enough. And there's no other claimant to come for the money. How can there be when you're your father's only child, and he left ye every farthing he had in the world? I think the folk that have money value it more than those that haven't, though a man might fancy the contrary to be the fact. By the time we win back, lass, ye'll be a great lady and have a great fortune. Never harden your heart to the prayers o' the poor. When ye can lend in a good cause don't want to be too sure o' being paid back again.'

He had other things to think of, but he preferred to talk of anything rather than suffer his thoughts to rest upon the horror which waited persistently at their centre.

'That lonely lake,' he had said to himself a hundred times, 'would tempt a broken heart in solitude.' He expelled that thought again and again, but it refused to be banished. 'The dark days he talked of,' thought Armstrong, with a terror-stricken spirit, 'when his own mind played the part of the patient man's wife to him. "Curse God and die," said the wife of the patient man.'

What could he do in such a case but lift a heart of trembling trust to Heaven?

'Monsieur Bruyksdaal,' cried Sarah to the dragoman, 'the men are coming. Can we get firewood? There will be dry brush-

wood on the hills. Perhaps if we could make a great fire the horses might be able to wait near it; they would die in the cold. And can you get blankets? They may be needed.'

'Madame,' said the dragoman, 'whatever you wish shall be done.'

The khanjee came down the street with half a dozen gesticulating Turks about him. One bore a lighted torch, though as yet it was but dusk, and all the rest carried torches in readiness. The final preparations were made, the dragoman climbed back to the carriage, and the party set out. The snow fell like a veil, and in an hour the road was so carpeted that only the jangling bells of the horses told the ear that the carriage moved. Half an hour later it was dark, and the torch shone wild on the wild figures, the circle of dazzling snowflakes, and the ringed wall of darkness.

They reached at last the bridle-path by which Clem had ascended eight hours earlier.

'You will be away five hours,' said the driver. 'It would be death to the horses to stay here. I will return to Orkhaniè, but if I can come back I will. If I cannot get back to you I could not descend from here, and I should be useless whether I stayed or no. And if I stayed the horses would die.'

The dragoman translated, and Armstrong and Sarah were compelled to see the truth of the statement.

'You must go back, grandfather,' she said. 'I am young and strong, and with these men I am not afraid. They are brave men. I can see it in their eyes. They know the hills.'

'I'll go where you go,' said Armstrong, doggedly, but the dragoman intervened.

'This poor old man,' he said in Turkish, 'is as brave as a lion, but he cannot climb the hills; yet he vows he will go. The woman is as fit as any of you to go anywhere. Look at her. And she will go. But you must stop the old man. Tell him he will delay you and that you will not take him.'

Straightway the whole body of Turks declared that they would not budge upon the mountain road with Armstrong, and the interpreter turned into English the reasons with which he himself had inspired them.

'Then go in God's name,' said the old man, 'and leave me here. Start away. Tell this black-avised scoon'rel here wi' the knives and firearms to make a fire, and here I stay. I'll not go back again. I'll just wait here an' say my prayers till ye return.'

Ye can leave a heathen with me if ye see fit, but here I stay . . . I'll take no harm at all.'

Since he would consent to nothing less than this, and it was undoubtedly a better thing to stay at once than to exhaust himself and give the men who were with him another burden, Sarah consented. A man was told off to keep watch with him, and he and the arabajee set to work to make a great fire, beside which the old man, buried in rugs and sheepskins, sat him down. Whilst the fire was making he watched the torch until the glistening veil of snow had hidden it from his sight. Then, the fire being built, the arabajee drove away, and the horses' bells went tinkling into the darkness and the snow, until they too seemed swallowed up in night and silence.

'It is very good of you to come with me, Monsieur Bruyksdaal,' said Sarah, as she and the dragoman climbed the hill together.

'Pardon me, madame,' he said, 'if I say that I am delighted. I have never seen a lady so brave and so devoted. I am happy in serving you.'

'Will they find the way?' she asked him. 'I can see nothing.' He laughed.

'I would find the way myself if I had travelled it but once,' he said. 'These men are not mountaineers, but that is only because they have no mountains in this land. I was born in sight of the Matterhorn, and these Balkans are no more than a set of molehills after the Alps. Follow my steps, madame. Before I came to Vienna to be a courier I was a mountain guide at home. I grew too fat upon it, but I am equal to the passage of the Balkans. You know your way?' he asked in Turkish of the nearest man.

'He who does not know his way,' said the Turk, 'had better hang himself before starting to find Baba Konak on a night like this.'

How they found their way was a wonder to any less accustomed than themselves. There were three torches alight by this time, hissing and flaring in the falling snow, but the darkness gathered round so close that they could scarce see a yard on either side, and the snowflakes, in their swift transition from dark to light, so dazzled on the eyes that Sarah often found her feet invisible and the pathway a mere hollow blank of darkness.

'You are tired, madame?' asked the dragoman. 'Shall we rest a little while?'

'No,' she answered, 'go on. I am not tired.' She said within herself, 'I shall not be tired until we find you, Clem. I shall never weary till we find you.'

'We have reached the top?' he asked one of their companions in a while.

'Yes.'

'The descent is easier?'

'A plain road.'

They ploughed on through the falling snow, for how long she knew not. All her senses were dazzled, like her eyes. Her wet garments clung heavily about her, yet she felt no fatigue or discomfort. There was no tumult of doubt in her mind—no hope and no fear. She walked as if in a dream in the dancing torch-light and the pitch dark and the dazzling snow, with the wild figures before and behind and on either side.

'We are near?' asked the dragoman.

'Very near,' one answered him.

'Between the pool and the rock,' he said; and then they plodded on again in silence. All at once they paused, and one sent forth a wild cry.

'This is fresh earth,' said the man who had called aloud, kicking aside the snow, and holding his torch to the ground. He called aloud a second time, but at that instant Sarah shrieked, and leapt into the grave Clem's hands had made, and, kneeling by a fallen figure there obscured with snow, set her strong arms about it and lifted it.

'Clem!' she cried; 'Clem!'

The half-melted snow lay in patches on his hair and face. She clutched his hands and they were cold, but not with the chill of death. She took him to her bosom and rocked him there, and wept over him, crying again and again upon his name. 'Clem! dear Clem! To have loved me so—to have broken your heart for this. So weak—so brave—so strong at heart. And to have loved me so!'

They drew him from her and bared his breast and arms, and rubbed him with snow until his frozen skin grew hot beneath the constant friction. The dragoman slipped a flask of brandy into Sarah's hands.

'You would like to be doing something,' he said. 'A little—a very little at a time.'

She knelt down in the snow at his head and poured a few

drops of brandy at brief intervals between his lips, and by-and-by the blood began to mantle in his face, and his lips to breathe faint sighs. Then they moved and she bent her ear.

‘Rainbow Gold,’ he sighed.

‘No,’ she said, and took him to her breast again as if he had been a child. ‘You brought a greater treasure here than ever you could hope to find.’

What raptures caught him when he opened his eyes and saw her face so near to his, and felt her warm kisses and her warmer tears upon his cheek and brow, were told thereafter, but to one ear and heart alone.

The bearded brown-faced man who waited with Armstrong in the pass fed the fire often, and in the intervals kept himself warm either by cutting brushwood or by walking up and down. The flames leaped and curled and the snow fell hissing into them minute after minute, hour after hour, until the time of waiting seemed longer to the grey old man than all the years of his life. But at last, when it seemed as if the very end of the world had grown near, his fellow-watcher touched him on the shoulder and pointed down the pass. He listened and could hear the sound of bells. Again his fellow-watcher touched him and pointed to the mountain path.

‘Voices!’ he said; ‘they are coming.’ Armstrong understood the tone and gesture and rose to his feet. A minute later the dragoman’s voice broke on the silence, and he came dancing down the path at the imminent risk of his neck and jodeling with all his might.

‘Found!’ he roared, when he saw the fire. ‘Alive, and safe!’

The backward drive through the night and the snow, with Clem’s packed figure lying in the carriage and Sarah’s arm about it, was a thing to be remembered for a lifetime. All hearts were too full for many words, and such as were spoken were passionate and incoherent.

‘I have died already,’ Clem’s cold lips made shift to murmur, ‘and I have waked in Heaven!’

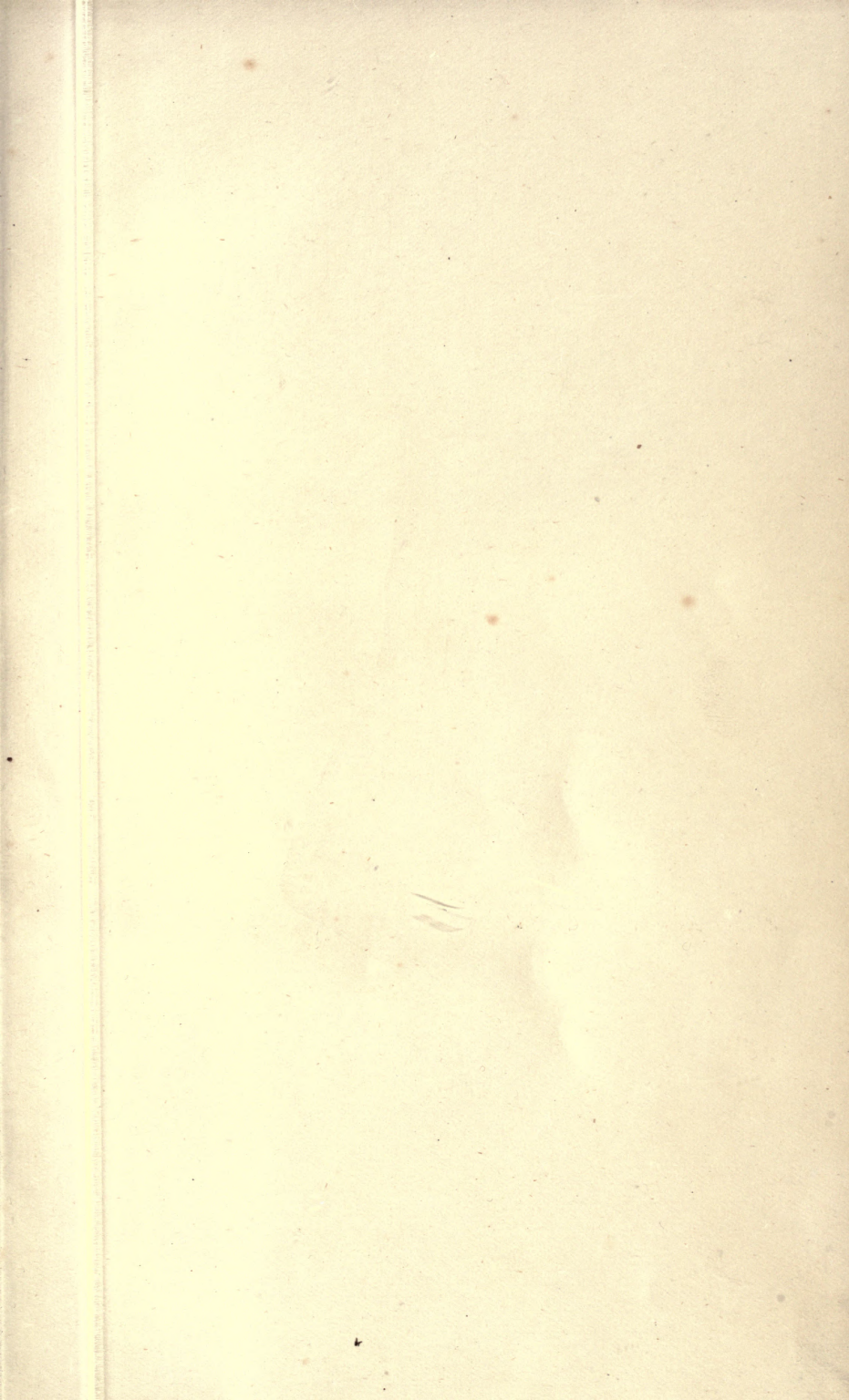
It snowed for many days, and an English heiress and her lover were weatherbound in a comfortless caravanserai in Bulgaria. But to be free in Elysian fields could have made them no happier.

People said at home, when the two returned and were married, that a beauty with a hundred thousand pounds to her fortune

might have run a less distance and brought home a better husband, but said Armstrong—

‘There’s a deal of vowing and sighing recorded in the poets that makes pleasant reading even for a foolish auld fellow like me, that ought, no doubt, to be thinking o’ wiser things. They’re pretty ready to die for the damsel as a general rule, but here’s a man that never breathed a word o’ courtship in his life, but just went straight away and died for the lass he loved. And a lad that’ll do that—if ye can but get him into a marriageable state again, which I allow to be a problem—is a lad that’s worth any lass’s marrying.’

THE END.





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