THE JESSAMY BRIDE

BY

F. FRANKFORT MOORE

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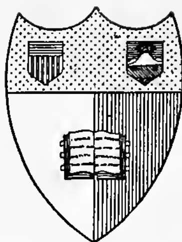

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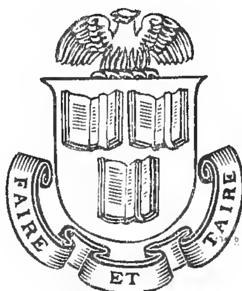
By

F. FRANKFORT MOORE

AUTHOR OF "THE IMPUDENT COMEDIAN," ETC.



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TWELFTH THOUSAND

THE JESSAMY BRIDE

CHAPTER I.

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "we have eaten an excellent dinner, we are a company of intelligent men — although I allow that we should have difficulty in proving that we are so if it became known that we sat down with a Scotchman — and now pray do not mar the self-satisfaction which intelligent men experience after dining, by making assertions based on ignorance and maintained by sophistry."

"Why, sir," cried Goldsmith, "I doubt if the self-satisfaction of even the most intelligent of men — whom I take to be myself — is interfered with by any demonstration of an inferior intellect on the part of another."

Edmund Burke laughed, understanding the meaning of the twinkle in Goldsmith's eye. Sir Joshua Reynolds, having reproduced — with some care — that twinkle, turned the bell of his ear-trumpet with a smile in the direction of Johnson; but Bos-

well and Garrick sat with solemn faces. The former showed that he was more impressed than ever with the conviction that Goldsmith was the most blatantly conceited of mankind, and the latter — as Burke perceived in a moment — was solemn in mimicry of Boswell's solemnity. When Johnson had given a roll or two on his chair and had pursed out his lips in the act of speaking, Boswell turned an eager face towards him, putting his left hand behind his ear so that he might not lose a word that might fall from his oracle. Upon Garrick's face was precisely the same expression, but it was his right hand that he put behind his ear.

Goldsmith and Burke laughed together at the marvellous imitation of the Scotchman by the actor, and at exactly the same instant the conscious and unconscious comedians on the other side of the table turned their heads in the direction first of Goldsmith, then of Burke. Both faces were identical as regards expression. It was the expression of a man who is greatly grieved. Then, with the exactitude of two automatic figures worked by the same machinery, they turned their heads again toward Johnson.

"Sir," said Johnson, "your endeavour to evade the consequences of maintaining

a silly argument by thrusting forward a question touching upon mankind in general, suggests au assumption on your part that my intelligence is of an inferior order to your own, and that, sir, I cannot permit to pass unrebuked."

"Nay, sir," cried Boswell, eagerly, "I cannot believe that Dr. Goldsmith's intention was so monstrous."

"And the very fact of your believing that, sir, amounts almost to a positive proof that the contrary is the case," roared Johnson.

"Pray, sir, do not condemn me on such evidence," said Goldsmith.

"Men have been hanged on less," remarked Burke. "But, to return to the original matter, I should like to know upon what facts ——"

"Ah, sir, to introduce facts into any controversy on a point of art would indeed be a departure," said Goldsmith solemnly. "I cannot countenance a proceeding which threatens to strangle the imagination."

"And you require yours to be particularly healthy just now, Doctor. Did you not tell us that you were about to write a Natural History?" said Garrick.

"Well, I remarked that I had got paid

for doing so — that 's not just the same thing," laughed Goldsmith.

"Ah, the money is in hand; the Natural History is left to the imagination," said Reynolds. "That is the most satisfactory arrangement."

"Yes, for the author," said Burke. "Some time ago it was the book which was in hand, and the payment was left to the imagination."

"These sallies are all very well in their way," said Garrick, "but their brilliance tends to blind us to the real issue of the question that Dr. Goldsmith introduced, which I take it was, Why should not acting be included among the arts? As a matter of course, the question possesses no more than a casual interest to any of the gentlemen present, with the exception of Mr. Burke and myself. I am an actor and Mr. Burke is a statesman — another branch of the same profession—and therefore we are vitally concerned in the settlement of the question."

"The matter never rose to the dignity of being a question, sir," said Johnson. "It must be apparent to the humblest intelligence — nay, even to Boswell's — that acting is a trick, not a profession — a diversion, not an art. I am ashamed of Dr.

Goldsmith for having contended to the contrary."

"It must only have been in sport, sir," said Boswell mildly.

"Sir, Dr. Goldsmith may have earned reprobation," cried Johnson, "but he has been guilty of nothing so heinous as to deserve the punishment of having you as his advocate."

"Oh, sir, surely Mr. Boswell is the best one in the world to pronounce an opinion as to what was said in sport, and what in earnest," said Goldsmith. "His fine sense of humour ——"

"Sir, have you seen the picture which he got painted of himself on his return from Corsica?" shouted Johnson.

"Gentlemen, these diversions may be well enough for you," said Garrick, "but in my ears they sound as the jests of the crowd must in the ears of a wretch on his way to Tyburn. Think, sirs, of the position occupied by Mr. Burke and myself at the present moment. Are we to be branded as outcasts because we happen to be actors?"

"Undoubtedly you at least are, Davy," cried Johnson. "And good enough for you too, you rascal!"

"And, for my part, I would rather be an outcast with David Garrick than become

chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury," said Goldsmith.

"Dr. Goldsmith, let me tell you that it is unbecoming in you, who have relations in the church, to make such an assertion," said Johnson sternly. "What, sir, does friendship occupy a place before religion in your estimation?"

"The Archbishop could easily get another chaplain, sir, but whither could the stage look for another Garrick?" said Goldsmith.

"Psha! Sir, the puppets which we saw last week in Panton street delighted the town more than ever Mr. Garrick did," cried Johnson; and when he perceived that Garrick coloured at this sally of his, he lay back in his chair and roared with laughter.

Reynolds took snuff.

"Dr. Goldsmith said he could act as adroitly as the best of the puppets—I heard him myself," said Boswell.

"That was only his vain boasting which you have so frequently noted with that acuteness of observation that makes you the envy of our circle," said Burke. "You understand the Irish temperament perfectly, Mr. Boswell. But to resort to the original point raised by Goldsmith; surely, Dr. Johnson, you will allow that an actor of

genius is at least on a level with a musician of genius."

"Sir, I will allow that he is on a level with a fiddler, if that will satisfy you," replied Johnson.

"Surely, sir, you must allow that Mr. Garrick's art is superior to that of Signor Piozzi, whom we heard play at Dr. Burney's," said Burke.

"Yes, sir; David Garrick has the good luck to be an Englishman, and Piozzi the ill luck to be an Italian," replied Johnson. "Sir, 't is no use affecting to maintain that you regard acting as on a level with the arts. I will not put an affront upon your intelligence by supposing that you actually believe what your words would imply."

"You can take your choice, Mr. Burke," said Goldsmith: "whether you will have the affront put upon your intelligence or your sincerity."

"I am sorry that I am compelled to leave the company for a space, just as there seems to be some chance of the argument becoming really interesting to me personally," said Garrick, rising; "but the fact is that I rashly made an engagement for this hour. I shall be gone for perhaps twenty minutes, and meantime you may be able to come to some agreement on a matter which, I repeat,

is one of vital importance to Mr. Burke and myself; and so, sirs, farewell for the present."

He gave one of those bows of his, to witness which was a liberal education in the days when grace was an art, and left the room.

"If Mr. Garrick's bow does not prove my point, no argument that I can bring forward will produce any impression upon you, sir," said Goldsmith.

"The dog is well enough," said Johnson; "but he has need to be kept in his place, and I believe that there is no one whose attempts to keep him in his place he will tolerate as he does mine."

"And what do you suppose is Mr. Garrick's place, sir?" asked Goldsmith. "Do you believe that if we were all to stand on one another's shoulders, as certain acrobats do, with Garrick on the shoulder of the topmost man, we should succeed in keeping him in his proper place?"

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "your question is as ridiculous as anything you have said to-night, and to say so much, sir, is, let me tell you, to say a good deal."

"What a pity it is that honest Goldsmith is so persistent in his attempts to shine," whispered Boswell to Burke.

"'Tis a great pity, truly, that a lark should try to make its voice heard in the neighbourhood of a Niagara," said Burke.

"Pray, sir, what is a Niagara?" asked Boswell.

"A Niagara?" said Burke. "Better ask Dr. Goldsmith; he alluded to it in his latest poem. Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Boswell wishes to know what a Niagara is."

"Sir," said Goldsmith, who had caught every word of the conversation in undertone. "Sir, Niagara is the Dr. Johnson of the New World."

CHAPTER II.

The conversation took place in the Crown and Anchor tavern in the Strand, where the party had just dined. Dr. Johnson had been quite as good company as usual. There was a general feeling that he had rarely insulted Boswell so frequently in the course of a single evening — but then, Boswell had rarely so laid himself open to insult as he had upon this evening — and when he had finished with the Scotchman, he turned his attention to Garrick, the opportunity being afforded him by Oliver Goldsmith, who had been unguarded enough to say a word or two regarding that which he termed "the art of acting."

"Dr. Goldsmith, I am ashamed of you, sir," cried the great dictator. "Who gave you the authority to add to the number of the arts 'the art of acting'? We shall hear of the art of dancing next, and every tumbler who kicks up the sawdust will have the right to call himself an artist. Madame Violante, who gave Peggy Woffington her first lesson on the tight rope, will rank with

Miss Kauffman, the painter — nay, every poodle that dances on its hind legs in public will be an artist."

It was in vain that Goldsmith endeavoured to show that the admission of acting to the list of arts scarcely entailed such consequences as Johnson asserted would be inevitable, if that admission were once made; it was in vain that Garrick asked if the fact that painting was included among the arts, caused sign painters to claim for themselves the standing of artists; and, if not, why there was any reason to suppose that the tumblers to whom Johnson had alluded would advance their claims to be on a level with the highest interpreters of the emotions of humanity. Dr. Johnson roared down every suggestion that was offered to him most courteously by his friends.

Then, in the exuberance of his spirits, he insulted Boswell and told Burke he did not know what he was talking about. In short, he was thoroughly Johnsonian, and considered himself the best of company, and eminently capable of pronouncing an opinion as to what were the elements of a clubable man.

He had succeeded in driving one of his best friends out of the room, and in reduc-

ing the others of the party to silence — all except Boswell, who, as usual, tried to start him upon a discussion of some subtle point of theology. Boswell seemed invariably to have adopted this course after he had been thoroughly insulted, and to have been, as a rule, very successful in its practice: it usually led to his attaining to the distinction of another rebuke for him to gloat over.

He now thought that the exact moment had come for him to find out what Dr. Johnson thought on the subject of the immortality of the soul.

"Pray, sir," said he, shifting his chair so as to get between Reynolds' ear-trumpet and his oracle—his jealousy of Sir Joshua's ear-trumpet was as great as his jealousy of Goldsmith. "Pray, sir, is there any evidence among the ancient Egyptians that they believed that the soul of man was imperishable?"

"Sir," said Johnson, after a huge roll or two, "there is evidence that the ancient Egyptians were in the habit of introducing a *memento mori* at a feast, lest the partakers of the banquet should become too merry."

"Well, sir?" said Boswell eagerly, as Johnson made a pause.

"Well, sir, we have no need to go to the

trouble of introducing such an object, since Scotchmen are so plentiful in London, and so ready to accept the offer of a dinner," said Johnson, quite in his pleasantest manner.

Boswell was more elated than the others of the company at this sally. He felt that he, and he only, could succeed in drawing his best from Johnson.

"Nay, Dr. Johnson, you are too hard on the Scotch," he murmured, but in no deprecatory tone. He seemed to be under the impression that every one present was envying him, and he smiled as if he felt that it was necessary for him to accept with meekness the distinction of which he was the recipient.

"Come, Goldy," cried Johnson, turning his back upon Boswell, "you must not be silent, or I will think that you feel aggrieved because I got the better of you in the argument."

"Argument, sir?" said Goldsmith. "I protest that I was not aware that any argument was under consideration. You make short work of another's argument, Doctor."

"'T is due to the logical faculty which I have in common with Mr. Boswell, sir," said Johnson, with a twinkle.

"The logical faculty of the elephant

when it lies down on its tormentor, the wolf," muttered Goldsmith, who had just acquired some curious facts for his Animated Nature.

At that moment one of the tavern waiters entered the room with a message to Goldsmith that his cousin, the Dean, had just arrived and was anxious to obtain permission to join the party.

"My cousin, the Dean! What Dean? What does the man mean?" said Goldsmith, who appeared to be both surprised and confused.

"Why, sir," said Boswell, "you have told us more than once that you had a cousin who was a dignitary of the church."

"Have I, indeed?" said Goldsmith. "Then I suppose, if I said so, this must be the very man. A Dean, is he?"

"Sir, it is ill-mannered to keep even a curate waiting in the common room of a tavern," said Johnson, who was not the man to shrink from any sudden addition to his audience of an evening. "If your relation were an Archbishop, sir, this company would be worthy to receive him. Pray give the order to show him into this room."

Goldsmith seemed lost in thought. He gave a start when Johnson had spoken, and in no very certain tone told the waiter to

lead the clergyman up to the room. Oliver's face undoubtedly wore an expression of greater curiosity than that of any of his friends, before the waiter returned, followed by an elderly and somewhat undersized clergyman wearing a full bottomed wig and the bands and apron of a dignitary of the church. He walked stiffly, with an erect carriage that gave a certain dignity to his short figure. His face was white, but his eyebrows were extremely bushy. He had a slight squint in one eye.

The bow which he gave on entering the room was profuse but awkward. It contrasted with the farewell salute of Garrick on leaving the table twenty minutes before. Every one present, with the exception of Oliver, perceived in a moment a family resemblance in the clergyman's bow to that with which Goldsmith was accustomed to receive his friends. A little jerk which the visitor gave in raising his head was laughably like a motion made by Goldsmith, supplemental to his usual bow.

"Gentlemen," said the visitor, with a wave of his hand, "I entreat of you to be seated." His voice and accent more than suggested Goldsmith's, although he had only a suspicion of an Irish brogue. If Oliver had made an attempt to disown his

relationship, no one in the room would have regarded him as sincere. "Nay, gentlemen, I insist," continued the stranger; "you embarrass me with your courtesy."

"Sir," said Johnson, "you will not find that any company over which I have the honour to preside is found lacking in its duty to the church."

"I am the humblest of its ministers, sir," said the stranger, with a deprecatory bow. Then he glanced round the room, and with an exclamation of pleasure went towards Goldsmith. "Ah! I do not need to ask which of this distinguished company is my cousin Nolly — I beg your pardon, Oliver — ah, old times — old times!" He had caught Goldsmith's hands in both his own and was looking into his face with a pathetic air. Goldsmith seemed a little embarrassed. His smile was but the shadow of a smile. The rest of the party averted their heads, for in the long silence that followed the exclamation of the visitor, there was an element of pathos.

Curiously enough, a sudden laugh came from Sir Joshua Reynolds, causing all faces to be turned in his direction. An aspect of stern rebuke was now worn by Dr. Johnson. The painter hastened to apologise.

"I ask your pardon, sir," he said, grave-

ly, "but — sir, I am a painter — my name is Reynolds — and — well, sir, the family resemblance between you and our dear friend Dr. Goldsmith — a resemblance that perhaps only a painter's eye could detect— seemed to me so extraordinary as you stood together, that —— "

"Not another word, sir, I entreat of you," cried the visitor. "My cousin Oliver and I have not met for—how many years is it, Nolly? Not eleven — no, it cannot be eleven — and yet —— "

"Ah, sir," said Oliver, "time is fugitive — very fugitive."

He shook his head sadly.

"I am pleased to hear that you have acquired this knowledge, which the wisdom of the ancients has crystallised in a phrase," said the stranger. "But you must present me to your friends, Noll — Oliver, I mean. You, sir"—he turned to Reynolds— "have told me your name. Am I fortunate enough to be face to face with Sir Joshua Reynolds? Oh, there can be no doubt about it. Oliver dedicated his last poem to you. Sir, I am your servant. And you, sir" — he turned to Burke — "I seem to have seen your face somewhere — it is strangely familiar —— "

"That gentleman is Mr. Burke, sir,"

said Goldsmith. He was rapidly recovering his embarrassment, and spoke with something of an air of pride, as he made a gesture with his right hand towards Burke. The clergyman made precisely the same gesture with his left hand, crying ——

" What, Mr. Edmund Burke, the friend of liberty — the friend of the people ? "

" The same, sir," said Oliver. " He is, besides, the friend of Oliver Goldsmith."

"Then he is my friend also," said the clergyman. "Sir, to be in a position to shake you by the hand is the greatest privilege of my life."

"You do me great honor, sir," said Burke.

Goldsmith was burning to draw the attention of his relative to Dr. Johnson, who on his side was looking anything but pleased at being so far neglected.

" Mr. Burke, you are our countryman — Oliver's and mine — and I know you are sound on the Royal Marriage Act. I should dearly like to have a talk with you on that iniquitous measure. You opposed it, sir?"

" With all my power, sir," said Burke.

"Give me your hand again, sir. Mrs. Luttrel was an honour to her sex, and it is she who confers an honour upon the Duke of Cumberland, not the other way about.

You are with me, Mr. Burke? Eh, what is the matter, Cousin Noll? Why do you work with your arm that way?"

"There are other gentlemen in the room, Mr. Dean," said Oliver.

"They can wait," cried Mr. Dean. "They are certain to be inferior to Mr. Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds. If I should be wrong, they will not feel mortified at what I have said."

"This is Mr. Boswell, sir," said Goldsmith.

"Mr. Boswell — of where, sir?"

"Mr. Boswell, of — of Scotland, sir."

"Scotland, the land where the clergymen write plays for the theatre. Your clergymen might be better employed, Mr. — Mr. ——"

"Boswell, sir."

"Mr. Boswell. Yes, I hope you will look into this matter should you ever visit your country again — a remote possibility, from all that I can learn of your countrymen."

"Why, sir, since Mr. Home wrote his tragedy of 'Douglas'——" began Boswell, but he was interrupted by the stranger.

"What, you would condone his offence?" he cried. "The fact of your having a mind to do so shows that the clergy of your

country are still sadly lax in their duty, sir. They should have taught you better."

"And this is Dr. Johnson, sir," said Goldsmith in tones of triumph.

His relation sprang from his seat and advanced to the head of the table, bowing profoundly.

"Dr. Johnson," he cried, "I have long desired to meet you, sir."

"I am your servant, Mr. Dean," said Johnson, towering above him as he got—somewhat awkwardly—upon his feet. "No gentleman of your cloth, sir—leaving aside for the moment all consideration of the eminence in the church to which you have attained—fails to obtain my respect."

"I am glad of that, sir," said the Dean. "It shows that you, though a Non-conformist preacher, and, as I understand, abounding in zeal on behalf of the cause of which you are so able an advocate, are not disposed to relinquish the example of the great Wesley in his admiration for the church."

"Sir," said Johnson, with great dignity, but with a scowl upon his face. "Sir, you are the victim of an error as gross as it is unaccountable. I am not a Non-conformist—on the contrary, I would give the rogues no quarter."

"Sir," said the clergyman, with the air of one administering a rebuke to a subordinate. "Sir, such intoleration is unworthy of an enlightened country and an age of some culture. But I ask your pardon; finding you in the company of distinguished gentlemen, I was led to believe that you were the great Dr. Johnson, the champion of the rights of conscience. I regret that I was mistaken."

"Sir!" cried Goldsmith, in great consternation — for Johnson was rendered speechless through being placed in the position of the rebuked, instead of occupying his accustomed place as the rebuker. "Sir, this is the great Dr. Johnson — nay, there is no Dr. Johnson but one."

"'T is so like your good nature, Cousin Oliver, to take the side of the weak," said the clergyman, smiling. "Well, well, we will take the honest gentleman's greatness for granted; and, indeed, he is great in one sense: he is large enough to outweigh you and me put together in one scale. To such greatness we would do well to bow."

"Heavens, sir!" said Boswell in a whisper that had something of awe in it. "Is it possible that you have never heard of Dr. Samuel Johnson?"

"Alas! sir," said the stranger, "I am

but a country parson. I cannot be expected to know all the men who are called great in London. Of course, Mr. Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds have a European reputation; but you, Mr.—Mr.—ah! you see I have e'en forgot your worthy name, sir, though I doubt not you are one of London's greatest. Pray, sir, what have you written that entitles you to speak with such freedom in the presence of such gentlemen as Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and—I add with pride—Oliver Goldsmith?"

"I am the friend of Dr. Johnson, sir," muttered Boswell.

"And he has doubtless greatness enough—avoirdupois—to serve for both! Pray, Oliver, as the gentleman from Scotland is too modest to speak for himself, tell me what he has written."

"He has written many excellent works, sir, including an account of Corsica," said Goldsmith, with some stammering.

"And his friend, Dr. Johnson, has he attained to an equally dizzy altitude in literature?"

"You are surely jesting, sir," said Goldsmith. "The world is familiar with Dr. Johnson's Dictionary."

"Alas, I am but a country parson, as you know, Oliver, and I have no need for a

dictionary, having been moderately well educated. Has the work appeared recently, Dr. Johnson?"

But Dr. Johnson had turned his back upon the stranger, and had picked up a volume which Tom Davies, the bookseller, had sent to him at the Crown and Anchor, and had buried his face in its pages, bending it, as was his wont, until the stitching had cracked, and the back was already loose.

"Your great friend, Noll, is no lover of books, or he would treat them with greater tenderness," said the clergyman. "I would fain hope that the purchasers of his dictionary treat it more fairly than he does the work of others. When did he bring out his dictionary?"

"Eighteen years ago," said Oliver.

"And what books has he written within the intervening years?"

"He has been a constant writer, sir, and is the most highly esteemed of our authors."

"Nay, sir, but give me a list of his books published within the past eighteen years, so that I may repair my deplorable ignorance. You, cousin, have written many works that the world would not willingly be without; and I hear that you are about

to add to that already honourable list; but your friend—oh, you have deceived me, Oliver!—he is no true worker in literature, or he would—nay, he could not, have remained idle all these years. How does he obtain his means of living if he will not use his pen?"

"He has a pension from the King, sir," stuttered Oliver. "I tell you, sir, he is the most learned man in Europe."

"His is a sad case," said the clergyman. "To refrain from administering to him the rebuke which he deserves would be to neglect an obvious duty." He took a few steps towards Johnson and raised his head. Goldsmith fell into a chair and buried his face in his hands; Boswell's jaw fell; Burke and Reynolds looked by turns grave and amused. "Dr. Johnson," said the stranger, "I feel that it is my duty as a clergyman to urge upon you to amend your way of life."

"Sir," shouted Johnson, "if you were not a clergyman I would say that you were a very impertinent fellow!"

"Your way of receiving a rebuke which your conscience—if you have one—tells you that you have earned, supplements in no small measure the knowledge of your character which I have obtained since entering this room, sir. You may be a

man of some parts, Dr. Johnson, but you have acknowledged yourself to be as intolerant in matters of religion as you have proved yourself to be intolerant of rebuke, offered to you in a friendly spirit. It seems to me that your habit is to browbeat your friends into acquiescence with every dictum that comes from your lips, though they are workers — not without honour—at that profession of letters which you despise — nay, sir, do not interrupt me. If you did not despise letters, you would not have allowed eighteen years of your life to pass without printing at least as many books. Think you, sir, that a pension was granted to you by the state to enable you to eat the bread of idleness while your betters are starving in their garrets? Dr. Johnson, if your name should go down to posterity, how do you think you will be regarded by all discriminating men? Do you think that those tavern dinners at which you sit at the head of the table and shout down all who differ from you, will be placed to your credit to balance your love of idleness and your intolerance? That is the question which I leave with you; I pray you to consider it well; and so, sir, I take my leave of you. Gentlemen, Cousin Oliver, farewell, sirs. I trust I have not spoken in vain."

He made a general bow — an awkward bow — and walked with some dignity to the door. Then he turned and bowed again before leaving the room.

CHAPTER III.

When he had disappeared, the room was very silent.

Suddenly Goldsmith, who had remained sitting at the table with his face buried in his hands, started up, crying out, "'Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia'! How could I be so great a fool as to forget that he published 'Rasselas' since the Dictionary?" He ran to the door and opened it, calling downstairs: "'Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia'! 'Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia'!"

"Sir!" came the roar of Dr. Johnson. "Close that door and return to your chair, if you desire to retain even the smallest amount of the respect which your friends once had for you. Cease your bawling, sir, and behave decently."

Goldsmith shut the door.

"I did you a gross injustice, sir," said he, returning slowly to the table. "I allowed that man to assume that you had published no book since your Dictionary. The fact is, that I was so disturbed at the moment I forgot your 'Rasselas.'"

"If you had mentioned that book, you would but have added to the force of your relation's contention, Dr. Goldsmith," said Johnson. "If I am suspected of being an idle dog, the fact that I have printed a small volume of no particular merit will not convince my accuser of my industry."

"Those who know you, sir," cried Goldsmith, "do not need any evidence of your industry. As for that man ——"

"Let the man alone, sir," thundered Johnson.

"Pray, why should he let the man alone, sir?" said Boswell.

"Because, in the first place, sir, the man is a clergyman, in rank next to a Bishop; in the second place, he is a relative of Dr. Goldsmith's; and, in the third place, he was justified in his remarks."

"Oh, no, sir," said Boswell. "We deny your generous plea of justification. Idle! Think of the dedications which you have written even within the year."

"Psha! Sir, the more I think of them the — well, the less I think of them, if you will allow me the paradox," said Johnson. "Sir, the man is right, and there 's an end on 't. Dr. Goldsmith, you will convey my compliments to your cousin, and assure him of my good will. I can forgive him for

everything, sir, except his ignorance respecting my Dictionary. Pray what is his name, sir?"

"His name, sir, his name?" faltered Goldsmith.

"Yes, sir, his name. Surely the man has a name," said Johnson.

"His name, sir, is — is — God help me, sir, I know not what is his name."

"Nonsense, Dr. Goldsmith! He is your cousin and a Dean. Mr. Boswell tells me that he has heard you refer to him in conversation; if you did so in a spirit of boasting, you erred."

For some moments Goldsmith was silent. Then, without looking up, he said in a low tone:

"The man is no cousin of mine; I have no relative who is a Dean."

"Nay, Dr. Goldsmith, you need not deny it," cried Boswell. "You boasted of him quite recently, and in the presence of Mr. Garrick, too."

"Mr. Boswell's ear is acute, Goldsmith," said Burke with a smile.

"His ears are so long, sir, one is not surprised to find the unities of nature are maintained when one hears his voice," remarked Goldsmith in a low tone.

"Here comes Mr. Garrick himself," said

Reynolds as the door was opened and Garrick returned, bowing in his usual pleasant manner as he advanced to the chair which he had vacated not more than half an hour before. "Mr. Garrick is an impartial witness on this point."

"Whatever he may be on some other poiuts," remarked Burke.

"Gentlemen," said Garrick, "you seem to be somewhat less harmonious than you were when I was compelled to hurry away to keep my appointment. May I inquire the reason of the difference?"

"You may not, sir!" shouted Johnson, seeing that Boswell was burning to acquaint Garrick with what had occurred. Johnson quickly perceived that it would be well to keep the visit of the clergyman a secret, and he knew that it would have no chance of remaining one for long if Garrick were to hear of it. He could imagine Garrick burlesquing the whole scene for the entertainment of the Burney girls or the Horneck family. He had heard more than once of the diversion which his old pupil at Lichfield had created by his mimicry of certain scenes in which he, Johnson, played an important part. He had been congratulating himself upon the fortunate absence of the actor during the visit of the clergyman.

"You may tell Mr. Garrick nothing, sir," he repeated, as Garrick looked with a blank expression of interrogation around the company.

"Sir," said Boswell, "my veracity is called in question."

"What is a question of your veracity, sir, in comparison with the issues that have been in the balance during the past half-hour?" cried Johnson.

"Nay, sir, one question," said Burke, seeing that Boswell had collapsed. "Mr. Garrick—have you heard Dr. Goldsmith boast of having a Dean for a relative?"

"Why, no, sir," replied Garrick; "but I heard him say that he had a brother who deserved to be a Dean."

"And so I had," cried Goldsmith. "Alas! I cannot say that I have now. My poor brother died a country clergyman a few years ago."

"I am a blind man so far as evidence bearing upon things seen is concerned," said Johnson; "but it seemed to me that some of the man's gestures—nay, some of the tones of his voice as well—resembled those of Dr. Goldsmith. I should like to know if any one at the table noticed the similarity to which I allude."

"I certainly noticed it," cried Boswell eagerly.

"Your evidence is not admissible, sir," said Johnson. "What does Sir Joshua Reynolds say?"

"Why, sir," said Reynolds with a laugh, and a glance towards Garrick, "I confess that I noticed the resemblance and was struck by it, both as regards the man's gestures and his voice. But I am as convinced that he was no relation of Dr. Goldsmith's as I am of my own existence."

"But if not, sir, how can you account for ——"

Boswell's inquiry was promptly checked by Johnson.

"Be silent, sir," he thundered. "If you have left your manners in Scotland in an impulse of generosity, you have done a foolish thing, for the gift was meagre out of all proportion to the needs of your country in that respect. Sir, let me tell you that the last word has been spoken touching this incident. I will consider any further reference to it in the light of a personal affront."

After a rather awkward pause, Garrick said:

"I begin to suspect that I have been

more highly diverted during the past half-hour than any of this company."

"Well, Davy," said Johnson, "the accuracy of your suspicion is wholly dependent on your disposition to be entertained. Where have you been, sir, and of what nature was your diversion?"

"Sir," said Garrick, "I have been with a poet."

"So have we, sir—with the greatest poet alive—the author of 'The Deserted Village'—and yet you enter to find us immoderately glum," said Johnson. He was anxious to show his friend Goldsmith that he did not regard him as accountable for the visit of the clergyman whom he quite believed to be Oliver's cousin, in spite of the repudiation of the relationship by Goldsmith himself, and the asseveration of Reynolds.

"Ah, sir, mine was not a poet such as Dr. Goldsmith," said Garrick. "Mine was only a sort of poet."

"And pray, sir, what is a sort of poet?" asked Boswell.

"A sort of poet, sir, is one who writes a sort of poetry," replied Garrick.

He then began a circumstantial account of how he had made an appointment for the hour at which he had left his friends, with

a gentleman who was anxious to read to him some portions of a play which he had just written. The meeting was to take place in a neighbouring coffee-house in the Strand; but even though the distance which he had to traverse was short, it had been the scene of more than one adventure, which, narrated by Garrick, proved comical to an extraordinary degree.

"A few yards away I almost ran into the arms of a clergyman—he wore the bands and apron of a Dean," he continued, not seeming to notice the little start which his announcement caused in some directions. The man grasped me by the arm," he continued, "doubtless recognising me from my portraits—for he said he had never seen me act—and then began an harangue on the text of neglected opportunities. It seemed, however, that he had no more apparent example of my sins in this direction than my neglect to produce Dr. Goldsmith's 'Good-Natured Man.' Faith, gentlemen, he took it quite as a family grievance." Suddenly he paused, and looked around the party; only Reynolds was laughing, all the rest were grave. A thought seemed to strike the narrator. "What!" he cried, "it is not possible that this was, after all, Dr. Goldsmith's cousin, the Dean,

regarding whom you interrogated me just now? If so, 't is an extraordinary coincidence that I should have encountered him — unless — good heavens, gentlemen! is it the case that he came here when I had thrown him off?"

"Sir," cried Oliver, "I affirm that no relation of mine, Dean or no Dean, entered this room!"

"Then, sir, you may look to find him at your chambers in Brick Court on your return," said Garrick. "Oh, yes, Doctor!— a small man with the family bow of the Goldsmiths — something like this." He gave a comical reproduction of the salutation of the clergyman.

"I tell you, sir, once and for all, that the man is no relation of mine," protested Goldsmith.

"And let that be the end of the matter," declared Johnson, with no lack of decisiveness in his voice.

"Oh, sir, I assure you I have no desire to meet the gentleman again," laughed Garrick. "I got rid of him by a feint, just as he was endeavouring to force me to promise a production of a dramatic version of 'The Deserted Village'—he said he had the version at his lodging, and meant to read it to

his cousin—I ask your pardon, sir, but he said 'cousin.'"

"Sir, let us have no more of this—cousin or no cousin," roared Johnson.

"That is my prayer, sir—I utter it with all my heart and soul," said Garrick. "It was about my poet I meant to speak—my poet and his play. What think you of the South Seas and the visit of Lieutenant Cook as the subject of a tragedy in blank verse, Dr. Johnson?"

"I think, Davy, that the subject represents so magnificent a scheme of theatrical bankruptcy you would do well to hand it over to that scoundrel Foote," said Johnson pleasantly. He was by this time quite himself again, and ready to pronounce an opinion on any question with that finality which carried conviction with it—yes, to James Boswell.

For the next half-hour Garrick entertained his friends with the details of his interview with the poet who—according to his account—had designed the drama of "Otaheite" in order to afford Garrick an opportunity of playing the part of a cannibal king, dressed mainly in feathers, and beating time alternately with a club and a tomahawk, while he delivered a series of

blank verse soliloquies and apostrophes to Mars, Vulcan and Diana.

"The monarch was especially devoted to Diana," said Garrick. "My poet explained that, being a hunter, he would naturally find it greatly to his advantage to say a good word now and again for the chaste goddess; and when I inquired how it was possible that his Majesty of Otaheite could know anything about Diana, he said the Romans and the South Sea Islanders were equally Pagans, and that, as such, they had equal rights in the Pagan mythology; it would be monstrously unjust to assume that the Romans should claim a monopoly of Diana."

Boswell interrupted him to express the opinion that the poet's contention was quite untenable, and Garrick said it was a great relief to his mind to have so erudite a scholar as Boswell on his side in the argument, though he admitted that he thought there was a good deal in the poet's argument.

He adroitly led on his victim to enter into a serious argument on the question of the possibility of the Otaheitans having any definite notion of the character and responsibilities assigned to Diana in the Roman mythology; and after keeping the party in

roars of laughter for half an hour, he delighted Boswell by assuring him that his eloquence and the force of his arguments had removed whatever misgivings he, Garrick, originally had, that he was doing the poet an injustice in declining his tragedy.

When the party were about to separate, Goldsmith drew Johnson apart — greatly to the pique of Boswell — and said —

"Dr. Johnson, I have a great favour to ask of you, sir, and I hope you will see your way to grant it, though I do not deserve any favour from you."

"You deserve no favour, Goldy," said Johnson, laying his hand on the little man's shoulder, "and therefore, sir, you make a man who grants you one so well satisfied with himself he should regard himself your debtor. Pray, sir, make me your debtor by giving me a chance of granting you a favour."

"You say everything better than any living man, sir," cried Goldsmith. "How long would it take me to compose so graceful a sentence, do you suppose? You are the man whom I most highly respect, sir, and I am anxious to obtain your permission to dedicate to you the comedy which I have written and Mr. Colman is about to produce."

"Dr. Goldsmith," said Johnson, "we have been good friends for several years now."

"Long before Mr. Boswell came to town, sir."

"Undoubtedly, sir — long before you became recognised as the most melodious of our poets — the most diverting of our play-writers. I wrote the prologue to your first play, Goldy, and I 'll stand sponsor for your second — nay, sir, not only so, but I 'll also go to see it, and if it be damned, I 'll drink punch with you all night and talk of my tragedy of 'Irene,' which was also damned; there 's my hand on it, Dr. Goldsmith."

Goldsmith pressed the great hand with both of his own, and tears were in his eyes and his voice as he said —

"Your generosity overpowers me, sir."

CHAPTER IV.

Boswell, who was standing to one side watching — his eyes full of curiosity and his ears strained to catch by chance a word — the little scene that was being enacted in a corner of the room, took good care that Johnson should be in his charge going home. This walk to Johnson's house necessitated a walk back to his own lodgings in Piccadilly; but this was nothing to Boswell, who had every confidence in his own capability to extract from his great patron some account of the secrets which had been exchanged in the corner.

For once, however, he found himself unable to effect his object — nay, when he began his operations with his accustomed lightness of touch, Johnson turned upon him, saying —

"Sir, I observe what is your aim, and I take this opportunity to tell you that if you make any further references, direct or indirect, to man, woman or child, to the occurrences of this evening, you will cease to be a friend of mine. I have been humil-

iated sufficiently by a stranger, who had every right to speak as he did, but I refuse to be humiliated by you, sir."

Boswell expressed himself willing to give the amplest security for his good behaviour. He had great hope of conferring upon his patron a month of inconvenience in making a tour of the west coast of Scotland during the summer.

The others of the party went northward by one of the streets off the Strand into Coventry street, and thence toward Sir Joshua's house in Leicester Square, Burke walking in front with his arm through Goldsmith's, and Garrick some way behind with Reynolds. Goldsmith was very eloquent in his references to the magnanimity of Johnson, who, he said, in spite of the fact that he had been grossly insulted by an impostor calling himself his, Goldsmith's, cousin, had consented to receive the dedication of the new comedy. Burke, who understood the temperament of his countryman, felt that he himself might surpass in eloquence even Oliver Goldsmith if he took for his text the magnanimity of the author of "The Good Natured Man." He, however, refrained from the attempt to prove to his companion that there were other ways by which a man

could gain a reputation for generosity than by permitting the most distinguished writer of the age to dedicate a comedy to him.

Of the other couple Garrick was rattling away in the highest spirits, quite regardless of the position of Reynolds's ear-trumpet. Reynolds was as silent as Burke for a considerable time; but then, stopping at a corner so as to allow Goldsmith and his companion to get out of ear-shot, he laid his hand on Garrick's arm, laughing heartily as he said —

"You are a pretty rascal, David, to play such a trick upon your best friends. You are a pretty rascal, and a great genius, Davy — the greatest genius alive. There never has been such an actor as you, Davy, and there never will be another such."

"Sir," said Garrick, with an overdone expression of embarrassment upon his face, every gesture that he made corresponding. "Sir, I protest that you are speaking in parables. I admit the genius, if you insist upon it, but as for the rascality — well, it is possible, I suppose, to be both a great genius and a great rascal; there was our friend Benvenuto, for example, but ——"

"Only a combination of genius and rascality could have hit upon such a device as

that bow which you made, Davy," said Reynolds. "It presented before my eyes a long vista of Goldsmiths — all made in the same fashion as our friend on in front, and all striving — and not unsuccessfully, either — to maintain the family tradition of the Goldsmith bow. And then your imitation of your imitation of the same movement — how did we contain ourselves — Burke and I?"

"You fancy that Burke saw through the Dean, also?" said Garrick.

"I 'm convinced that he did."

"But he will not tell Johnson, I would fain hope."

"You are very anxious that Johnson should not know how it was he was tricked. But you do not mind how you pain a much more generous man."

"You mean Goldsmith? Faith, sir, I do mind it greatly. If I were not certain that he would forthwith hasten to tell Johnson, I would go to him and confess all, asking his forgiveness. But he would tell Johnson and never forgive me, so I 'll e'en hold my tongue."

"You will not lose a night's rest through brooding on Goldsmith's pain, David."

"It was an impulse of the moment that caused me to adopt that device, my friend.

Johnson is past all argument, sir. That sickening sycophant, Boswell, may find happiness in being insulted by him, but there are others who think that the Doctor has no more right than any ordinary man to offer an affront to those whom the rest of the world respects."

"He will allow no one but himself to attack you, Davy."

"And by my soul, sir, I would rather that he allowed every one else to attack me if he refrained from it himself. Where is the generosity of a man who, with the force and influence of a dozen men, will not allow a bad word to be said about you, but says himself more than the whole dozen could say in as many years? Sir, do the pheasants, which our friend Mr. Bunbury breeds so successfully, regard him as a pattern of generosity because he won't let a dozen of his farmers have a shot at them, but preserves them for his own unerring gun? By the Lord Harry, I would rather, if I were a pheasant, be shot at by the blunderbusses of a dozen yokels than by the fowling-piece of one good marksman, such as Bunbury. On the same principle, I have no particular liking to be preserved to make sport for the heavy broadsides that come from that literary three-decker, Johnson."

"I have sympathy with your contentions, David; but we all allow your old schoolmaster a license which would be permitted to no one else."

"That license is not a game license, Sir Joshua; and so I have made up my mind that if he says anything more about the profession of an actor being a degrading one—about an actor being on the level with a fiddler—nay, one of the puppets of Panton street, I will teach my old schoolmaster a more useful lesson than he ever taught to me. I think it is probable that he is at this very moment pondering upon those plain truths which were told to him by the Dean."

"And poor Goldsmith has been talking so incessantly and so earnestly to Burke, I am convinced that he feels greatly pained as well as puzzled by that inopportune visit of the clergyman who exhibited such striking characteristics of the Goldsmith family."

"Nay, did I not bear testimony in his favour — declaring that he had never alluded to a relation who was a Dean?"

"Oh, yes; you did your best to place us all at our ease, sir. You were magnanimous, David — as magnanimous as the surgeon who cuts off an arm, plunges the stump into boiling pitch, and then gives the patient

a grain or two of opium to make him sleep. But I should not say a word: I have seen you in your best part, Mr. Garrick, and I can give the heartiest commendation to your powers as a comedian, while condemning with equal force the immorality of the whole proceeding."

They had now arrived at Reynolds's house in Leicester Square, Goldsmith and Burke — the former still talking eagerly — having waited for them to come up.

"Gentlemen," said Reynolds, "you have all gone out of your accustomed way to leave me at my own door. I insist on your entering to have some refreshment. Mr. Burke, you will not refuse to enter and pronounce an opinion as to the portrait at which I am engaged of the charming Lady Betty Hamilton."

"*O matre pulchra filia pulchrior*," said Goldsmith; but there was not much aptness in the quotation, the mother of Lady Betty having been the loveliest of the sisters Gunning, who had married first the Duke of Hamilton, and, later, the Duke of Argyll.

Before they had rung the bell the hall door was opened by Sir Joshua's servant, Ralph, and a young man, very elegantly dressed, was shown out by the servant.

He at once recognised Sir Joshua and then Garrick.

"Ah, my dear Sir Joshua," he cried, "I have to entreat your forgiveness for having taken the liberty of going into your painting-room in your absence."

"Your Lordship has every claim upon my consideration," said Sir Joshua. "I cannot doubt which of my poor efforts drew you thither."

"The fact is, Sir Joshua, I promised her Grace three days ago to see the picture, and as I think it likely that I shall meet her to-night, I made a point of coming hither. The Duchess of Argyll is not easily put aside when she commences to catechise a poor man, sir."

"I cannot hope, my Lord, that the picture of Lady Betty commended itself to your Lordship's eye," said Sir Joshua.

"The picture is a beauty, my dear Sir Joshua," said the young man, but with no great show of ardour. "It pleases me greatly. Your macaw is also a beauty. A capital notion of painting a macaw on a pedestal by the side of the lady, is it not, Mr. Garrick—two birds with the one stone, you know?"

"True, sir," said Garrick. "Lady Betty is a bird of Paradise."

"That's as neatly said as if it were part of a play," said the young man. "Talking of plays, there is going to be a pretty comedy enacted at the Pantheon to-night."

"Is it not a mask?" said Garrick.

"Nay, finer sport even than that," laughed the youth. "We are going to do more for the drama in an hour, Mr. Garrick, than you have done in twenty years, sir."

"At the Pantheon, Lord Stanley?" inquired Garrick.

"Come to the Pantheon and you shall see all that there is to be seen," cried Lord Stanley. "Who are your friends? Have I had the honour to be acquainted with them?"

"Your Lordship must have met Mr. Burke and Dr. Goldsmith," said Garrick.

"I have often longed for that privilege," said Lord Stanley, bowing in reply to the salutation of the others. "Mr. Burke's speech on the Marriage Bill was a fine effort, and Mr. Goldsmith's comedy has always been my favourite. I hear that you are at present engaged upon another, Dr. Goldsmith. That is good news, sir. Oh, 't were a great pity if so distinguished a party missed the sport which is on foot to-night! Let me invite you all to the Pan-

theon—here are tickets to the show. You will give me a box at your theatre, Garrick, in exchange, on the night when Mr. Goldsmith's new play is produced."

"Alas, my Lord," said Garrick, "that privilege will be in the hands of Mr. Colman."

"What, at t' other house? Mr. Garrick, I 'm ashamed of you. Nevertheless, you will come to the comedy at the Pantheon to-night. I must hasten to act my part. But we shall meet there, I trust."

He bowed with his hat in his hand to the group, and hastened away with an air of mystery.

"What does he mean?" asked Reynolds.

"That is what I have been asking myself," replied Garrick. "By heavens, I have it!" he cried after a pause of a few moments. "I have heard rumours of what some of our young bloods swore to do, since the managers of the Pantheon, in an outburst of virtuous indignation at the orgies of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, issued their sheet of regulations prohibiting the entrance of actresses to their rotunda. Lord Conway, I heard, was the leader of the scheme, and it seems that this young Stanley is also one of the plot. Let us hasten to

witness the sport. I would not miss being present for the world."

"I am not so eager," said Sir Joshua. "I have my work to engage me early in the morning, and I have lost all interest in such follies as seem to be on foot."

"I have not, thank heaven!" cried Garrick; "nor has Dr. Goldsmith, I'll swear. As for Burke — well, being a member of Parliament, he is a seasoned rascal; and so good-night to you, good Mr. President."

"We need a frolic," cried Goldsmith. "God knows we had a dull enough dinner at the Crown and Anchor."

"An Irishman and a frolic are like — well, let us say like Lady Betty and your macaw, Sir Joshua," said Burke. "They go together very naturally."

CHAPTER V.

Sir Joshua entered his house, and the others hastened northward to the Oxford road, where the Pantheon had scarcely been opened more than a year for the entertainment of the fashionable world — a more fashionable world, it was hoped, than was in the habit of appearing at Ranelagh and Vauxhall. From a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago, rank and fashion sought their entertainment almost exclusively at the Assembly Rooms when the weather failed to allow of their meeting at the two great public gardens. But as the government of the majority of these places invariably became lax — there was only one Beau Nash who had the cleverness to perceive that an autocracy was the only possible form of government for such assemblies — the committee of the Pantheon determined to frame so strict a code of rules, bearing upon the admission of visitors, as should, they believed, prevent the place from falling to the low level of the gardens.

In addition to the charge of half-a-guinea

for admission to the rotunda, there were rules which gave the committee the option of practically excluding any person whose presence they might regard as not tending to maintain the high character of the Pantheon; and it was announced in the most decisive way that upon no consideration would actresses be allowed to enter.

The announcements made to this effect were regarded in some directions as eminently salutary. They were applauded by all persons who were sufficiently strict to prevent their wives or daughters from going to those entertainments that possessed little or no supervision. Such persons understood the world and the period so indifferently as to be optimists in regard to the question of the possibility of combining Puritanism and promiscuous entertainments terminating long after midnight. They hailed the arrival of the time when innocent recreation would not be incompatible with the display of the richest dresses or the most sumptuous figures.

But there was another, and a more numerous set, who were very cynical on the subject of the regulation of beauty and fashion at the Pantheon. The best of this set shrugged their shoulders, and expressed the belief that the supervised

entertainments would be vastly dull. The worst of them published verses full of cheap sarcasm, and proper names with asterisks artfully introduced in place of vowels, so as to evade the possibility of actions for libel when their allusions were more than usually scandalous.

While the ladies of the committee were applauding one another and declaring that neither threats nor sarcasms would prevail against their resolution, an informal meeting was held at White's of the persons who affirmed that they were more affected than any others by the carrying out of the new regulations; and at the meeting they resolved to make the management aware of the mistake into which they had fallen in endeavouring to discriminate between the classes of their patrons.

When Garrick and his friends reached the Oxford road, as the thoroughfare was then called, the result of this meeting was making itself felt. The road was crowded with people who seemed waiting for something unusual to occur, though of what form it was to assume no one seemed to be aware. The crowd were at any rate good-humoured. They cheered heartily every coach that rolled by bearing splendidly dressed ladies to the Pantheon and to other

and less public entertainments. They waved their hats over the chairs which, similarly burdened, went swinging along between the bearers, footmen walking on each side and link-boys running in advance, the glare of their torches giving additional redness to the faces of the hot fellows who had the chair-straps over their shoulders. Every now and again an officer of the Guards would come in for the cheers of the people, and occasionally a jostling match took place between some supercilious young beau and the apprentices, through the midst of whom he attempted to force his way. More than once swords flashed beneath the sickly illumination of the lamps, but the drawers of the weapons regretted their impetuosity the next minute, for they were quickly disarmed, either by the crowd closing with them or jolting them into the kennel, which at no time was savoury. Once, however, a tall young fellow, who had been struck by a stick, drew his sword and stood against a lamp-post preparatory to charging the crowd. It looked as if those who interfered with him would suffer, and a space was soon cleared in front of him. At that instant, however, he was thrown to the ground by the assault of a previously unseen foe: a boy dropped

upon him from the lamp-post and sent his sword flying, while the crowd cheered and jeered in turn.

At intervals a roar would arise, and the people would part before the frantic flight of a pickpocket, pursued and belaboured in his rush by a dozen apprentices, who carried sticks and straps, and were well able to use both.

But a few minutes after Garrick, Goldsmith and Burke reached the road, all the energies of the crowds seemed to be directed upon one object, and there was a cry of, "Here they come—here she comes—a cheer for Mrs. Baddeley!"

"O Lord," cried Garrick, "they have gone so far as to choose Sophia Baddeley for their experiment!"

"Their notion clearly is not to do things by degrees," said Goldsmith. "They might have begun with a less conspicuous person than Mrs. Baddeley. There are many gradations in colour between black and white."

"But not between black and White's," said Burke. "This notion is well worthy of the wit of White's."

"Sophia is not among the gradations that Goldsmith speaks of," said Garrick. "But whatever be the result of this jerk

into prominence, it cannot fail to increase her popularity at the playhouse."

"That's the standpoint from which a good manager regards such a scene as this," said Burke. "Sophia will claim an extra twenty guineas a week after to-night."

"By my soul!" cried Goldsmith, "she looks as if she would give double that sum to be safe at home in bed."

The cheers of the crowd increased as the chair containing Mrs. Baddeley, the actress, was borne along, the lady smiling in a half-hearted way through her paint. On each side of the chair, but some short distance in front, were four link-boys in various liveries, shining with gold and silver lace. In place of footmen, however, there walked two rows of gentlemen on each side of the chair. They were all splendidly dressed, and they carried their swords drawn. At the head of the escort on one side was the well known young Lord Conway, and at the other side Mr. Hanger, equally well known as a leader of fashion. Lord Stanley was immediately behind his friend Conway, and almost every other member of the lady's escort was a young nobleman or the heir to a peerage.

The lines extended to a second chair, in which Mrs. Abington was seated, smiling

—— "Very much more naturally than Mrs. Baddeley," Burke remarked.

"Oh, yes," cried Goldsmith, "she was always the better actress. I am fortunate in having her in my new comedy."

"The Duchesses have become jealous of the sway of Mrs. Abington," said Garrick, alluding to the fact that the fashions in dress had been for several years controlled by that lovely and accomplished actress.

"And young Lord Conway and his friends have become tired of the sway of the Duchesses," said Burke.

"My Lord Stanley looked as if he were pretty nigh weary of his Duchess's sway," said Garrick. "I wonder if he fancies that his joining that band will emancipate him."

"If so he is in error," said Burke. "The Duchess of Argyll will never let him out of her clutches till he is safely married to the Lady Betty."

"Till then, do you say?" said Goldsmith. "Faith, sir, if he fancies he will escape from her clutches by marrying her daughter he must have had a very limited experience of life. Still, I think the lovely young lady is most to be pitied. You heard the cold way he talked of her picture to Reynolds."

The engagement of Lord Stanley, the

heir to the earldom of Derby, to Lady Betty Hamilton, though not formally announced, was understood to be a *fait accompli*; but there were rumours that the young man had of late been making an effort to release himself — that it was only with difficulty the Duchess managed to secure his attendance in public upon her daughter, whose portrait was being painted by Reynolds.

The picturesque procession went slowly along amid the cheers of the crowds, and certainly not without many expressions of familiarity and friendliness toward the two ladies whose beauty of countenance and of dress was made apparent by the flambeaux of the link-boys, which also gleamed upon the thin blades of the ladies' escort. The actresses were plainly more popular than the committee of the Pantheon.

It was only when the crowds were closing in on the end of the procession that a voice cried —

"Woe unto them! Woe unto Aholah and Aholibah! Woe unto ye who follow them to your own destruction! Turn back ere it be too late!" The discordant note came from a Methodist preacher who considered the moment a seasonable one for an admonition against the frivolities of the town.

The people did not seem to agree with him in this matter. They sent up a shout of laughter, and half a dozen youths began a travesty of a Methodist service, introducing all the hysterical cries and moans with which the early followers of Wesley punctuated their prayers. In another direction a ribald parody of a Methodist hymn was sung by women as well as men; but above all the mockery the stern, strident voice of the preacher was heard.

"By my soul," said Garrick, "that effect is strikingly dramatic. I should like to find some one who would give me a play with such a scene."

A good-looking young officer in the uniform of the Guards, who was in the act of hurrying past where Garrick and his friends stood, turned suddenly round.

"I 'll take your order, sir," he cried. "Only you will have to pay me handsomely."

"What, Captain Horneck? Is 't possible that you are a straggler from the escort of the two ladies who are being fêted to-night?" said Garrick.

"Hush, man, for Heaven's sake," cried Captain Horneck — Goldsmith's "Captain in lace." "If Mr. Burke had a suspicion that I was associated with such a rout he would, as the guardian of my purse if not

of my person, give notice to my Lord Albemarle's trustees, and then the Lord only knows what would happen." Then he turned to Goldsmith. "Come along, Nolly, my friend," he cried, putting his arm through Oliver's; "if you want a scene for your new comedy you will find it in the Pantheon to-night. You are not wearing the peach-bloom coat, to be sure, but, Lord, sir! you are not to be resisted, whatever you wear."

"You, at any rate, are not to be resisted, my gallant Captain," said Goldsmith. "I have half a mind to see the sport when the ladies' chairs stop at the porch of the Pantheon."

"As a matter of course you will come," said young Horneck. "Let us hasten out of range of that howling. What a time for a fellow to begin to preach!"

He hurried Oliver away, taking charge of him through the crowd with his arm across his shoulder. Garrick and Burke followed as rapidly as they could, and Charles Horneck explained to them, as well as to his companion, that he would have been in the escort of the actress, but for the fact that he was about to marry the orphan daughter of Lord Albemarle, and that his mother had entreated him not to

do anything that might jeopardise the match.

"You are more discreet than Lord Stanley," said Garrick.

"Nay," said Goldsmith. "'T is not a question of discretion, but of the means to an end. Our Captain in lace fears that his joining the escort would offend his charming bride, but Lord Stanley is only afraid that his act in the same direction will not offend his Duchess."

"You have hit the nail on the head, as usual, Nolly," said the Captain. "Poor Stanley is anxious to fly from his charmer through any loop-hole. But he 'll not succeed. Why, sir, I 'll wager that if her daughter Betty and the Duke were to die, her Grace would marry him herself."

"Ay, assuming that a third Duke was not forthcoming," said Burke.

CHAPTER VI.

The party found, on approaching the Pantheon, the advantage of being under the guidance of Captain Horneck. Without his aid they would have had considerable difficulty getting near the porch of the building, where the crowds were most dense. The young guardsman, however, pushed his way quite good-humouredly, but not the less effectively, through the people, and was followed by Goldsmith, Garrick and Burke being a little way behind. But as soon as the latter couple came within the light of the hundred lamps which hung around the porch, they were recognised and cheered by the crowd, who made a passage for them to the entrance just as Mrs. Baddeley's chair was set down.

The doors had been hastily closed and half-a-dozen constables stationed in front with their staves. The gentlemen of the escort formed in a line on each side of her chair to the doors, and when the lady stepped out — she could not be persuaded

to do so for some time—and walked between the ranks of her admirers, they took off their hats and lowered the points of their swords, bowing to the ground with greater courtesy than they would have shown to either of the royal Duchesses, who just at that period were doing their best to obtain some recognition.

Mrs. Baddeley had rehearsed the "business" of the part which she had to play, but she was so nervous that she forgot her words on finding herself confronted by the constables. She caught sight of Garrick standing at one side of the door with his hat swept behind him as he bowed with exquisite irony as she stopped short, and the force of habit was too much for her. Forgetting that she was playing the part of a *grande dame*, she turned in an agony of fright to Garrick, raising her hands—one holding a lace handkerchief, the other a fan—crying—

"La! Mr. Garrick, I'm so fluttered that I've forgot my words. Where's the prompter, sir? Pray, what am I to say now?"

"Nay, madam, I am not responsible for this production," said Garrick gravely, and there was a roar of laughter from the people around the porch.

The young gentlemen who had their swords drawn were, however, extremely serious. They began to perceive the possibility of their heroic plan collapsing into a merry burlesque, and so young Mr. Hanger sprang to the side of the lady.

"Madam," he cried, "honour me by accepting my escort into the Pantheon. What do you mean, sirrah, by shutting that door in the face of a lady visitor?" he shouted to the liveried porter.

"Sir, we have orders from the management to permit no players to enter," replied the man.

"Nevertheless, you will permit this lady to enter," said the young gentleman. "Come, sir, open the doors without a moment's delay."

"I cannot act contrary to my orders, sir," replied the man.

"Nay, Mr. Hanger," replied the frightened actress, "I wish not to be the cause of a disturbance. Pray, sir, let me return to my chair."

"Gentlemen," cried Mr. Hanger to his friends, "I know that it is not your will that we should come in active contest with the representatives of authority; but am I right in assuming that it is your desire that our honoured friend, Mrs. Baddeley, should

enter the Pantheon?" When the cries of assent came to an end he continued, "Then, sirs, the responsibility for bloodshed rests with those who oppose us. Swords to the front! You will touch no man with a point unless he oppose you. Should a constable assault any of this company you will run him through without mercy. Now, gentlemen."

In an instant thirty sword-blades were radiating from the lady, and in that fashion an advance was made upon the constables, who for a few moments stood irresolute, but then — the points of a dozen swords were within a yard of their breasts — lowered their staves and slipped quietly aside. The porter, finding himself thus deserted, made no attempt to withstand single-handed an attack converging upon the doors; he hastily went through the porch, leaving the doors wide apart.

To the sound of roars of laughter and shouts of congratulation from the thousands who blocked the road, Mrs. Baddeley and her escort walked through the porch and on to the rotunda beyond, the swords being sheathed at the entrance.

It seemed as if all the rank and fashion of the town had come to the rotunda this night. Peeresses were on the raised daïs

by the score, some of them laughing, others shaking their heads and doing their best to look scandalised. Only one matron, however, felt it imperative to leave the assembly and to take her daughters with her. She was a lady whose first husband had divorced her, and her daughters were excessively plain, in spite of their masks of paint and powder.

The Duchess of Argyll stood in the centre of the daïs by the side of her daughter, Lady Betty Hamilton, her figure as graceful as it had been twenty years before, when she and her sister Maria, who became Countess of Coventry, could not walk down the Mall unless under the protection of a body of soldiers, so closely were they pressed by the fashionable mob anxious to catch a glimpse of the beautiful Miss Gunnings. She had no touch of carmine or powder to obscure the transparency of her complexion, and her wonderful long eyelashes needed no darkening to add to their silken effect. Her neck and shoulders were white, not with the cold whiteness of snow, but with the pearl-like charm of the white rose. The solid roundness of her arms, and the grace of every movement that she made with them, added to the de-

light of those who looked upon that lovely woman.

Her daughter had only a measure of her mother's charm. Her features were small, and though her figure was pleasing, she suggested nothing of the Duchess's elegance and distinction.

Both mother and daughter looked at first with scorn in their eyes at the lady who stood at one of the doors of the rotunda, surrounded by her body guard; but when they perceived that Lord Stanley was next to her, they exchanged a few words, and the scorn left their eyes. The Duchess even smiled at Lady Ancaster, who stood near her, and Lady Ancaster shrugged her shoulders almost as naturally as if she had been a Frenchwoman.

Cynical people who had been watching the Duchess's change of countenance also shrugged their shoulders (indifferently), saying —

"Her Grace will not be inexorable; the son-in-law upon whom she has set her heart, and tried to set her daughter's heart as well, must not be frightened away."

Captain Horneck had gone up to his *fiancée*.

"You were not in that creature's train, I hope," said the lady.

"I? Dear child, for what do you take me?" he said. "No, I certainly was not in her train. I was with my friend Dr. Goldsmith."

"If you had been among that woman's escort, I should never have forgiven you the impropriety," said she.

(She was inflexible as a girl, but before she had been married more than a year she had run away with her husband's friend, Mr. Scawen.)

By this time Lord Conway had had an interview with the management, and now returned with two of the gentlemen who comprised that body to where Mrs. Baddeley was standing simpering among her admirers.

"Madam," said Lord Conway, "these gentlemen are anxious to offer you their sincere apologies for the conduct of their servants to-night, and to express the hope that you and your friends will frequently honour them by your patronage."

And those were the very words uttered by the spokesman of the management, with many humble bows, in the presence of the smiling actress.

"And now you can send for Mrs. Abington," said Lord Stanley. "She agreed to

wait in her chair until this matter was settled."

"She can take very good care of herself," said Mrs. Baddeley somewhat curtly. Her fright had now vanished, and she was not disposed to underrate the importance of her victory. She had no particular wish to divide the honours attached to her position with another woman, much less with one who was usually regarded as better-looking than herself. "Mrs. Abington is a little timid, my Lord," she continued; "she may not find herself quite at home in this assembly. 'Tis a monstrous fine place, to be sure; but for my part, I think Vauxhall is richer and in better taste."

But in spite of the indifference of Mrs. Baddeley, a message was conveyed to Mrs. Abington, who had not left her chair, informing her of the honours which were being done to the lady who had entered the room, and when this news reached her she lost not a moment in hurrying through the porch to the side of her sister actress.

And then a remarkable incident occurred, for the Duchess of Argyll and Lady Ancaster stepped down from their daïs and went to the two actresses, offering them hands, and expressing the desire to see

them frequently at the assemblies in the rotunda.

The actresses made stage courtesies and returned thanks for the condescension of the great ladies. The cynical ones laughed and shrugged their shoulders once more.

Only Lord Stanley looked chagrined. He perceived that the Duchess was disposed to regard his freak in the most liberal spirit, and he knew that the point of view of the Duchess was the point of view of the Duchess's daughter. He felt rather sad as he reflected upon the laxity of mothers with daughters yet unmarried. Could it be that eligible suitors were growing scarce?

Garrick was highly amused at the little scene that was being played under his eyes; he considered himself a pretty fair judge of comedy, and he was compelled to acknowledge that he had never witnessed any more highly finished exhibition of this form of art.

His friend Goldsmith had not waited at the door for the arrival of Mrs. Abington. He was not wearing any of the gorgeous costumes in which he liked to appear at places of amusement, and so he did not intend to remain in the rotunda for longer than a few minutes; he was only curious to see what would be the result of the bold

action of Lord Conway and his friends. But when he was watching the act of condescension on the part of the Duchess and the Countess, and had had his laugh with Burke, he heard a merry voice behind him saying —

"Is Dr. Goldsmith a modern Marius, weeping over the ruin of the Pantheon?"

"Nay," cried another voice, "Dr. Goldsmith is contemplating the writing of a history of the attempted reformation of society in the eighteenth century, through the agency of a Greek temple known as the Pantheon on the Oxford road."

He turned and stood face to face with two lovely laughing girls and a handsome elder lady, who was pretending to look scandalised.

"Ah, my dear Jessamy Bride — and my sweet Little Comedy!" he cried, as the girls caught each a hand of his. He had dropped his hat in the act of making his bow to Mrs. Horneck, the mother of the two girls, Mary and Katherine — the latter the wife of Mr. Bunbury. "Mrs. Horneck, madam, I am your servant — and don't I look your servant, too," he added, remembering that he was not wearing his usual gala dress.

"You look always the same good friend," said the lady.

"Nay," laughed Mrs. Bunbury, "if he were your servant he would take care, for the honour of the house, that he was splendidly dressed; it is not that snuff-coloured suit we should have on him, but something gorgeous. What would you say to a peach-bloom coat, Dr. Goldsmith?"

(His coat of this tint had become a family joke among the Hornecks and Bunburys.)

"Well, if the bloom remain on the peach it would be well enough in your company, madam," said Goldsmith, with a face of humorous gravity. "But a peach with the bloom off would be more congenial to the Pantheon after to-night." He gave a glance in the direction of the group of actresses and their admirers.

Mrs. Horneck looked serious, her two daughters looked demurely down.

"The air is tainted," said Goldsmith, solemnly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Bunbury, with a charming mock demureness. "'T is as you say: the Pantheon will soon become as amusing as Ranelagh."

"I said not so, madam," cried Gold-

smith, shaking his head. "As amusing—amusing——"

"As Ranelagh. Those were your exact words, Doctor, I assure you," protested Little Comedy. "Were they not, Mary?"

"Oh, undoubtedly those were his words—only he did not utter them," replied the Jessamy Bride.

"There, now, you will not surely deny your words in the face of two such witnesses!" said Mrs. Bunbury.

"I could deny nothing to two such faces," said Goldsmith, "even though one of the faces is that of a little dunce who could talk of Marius weeping over the Pantheon."

"And why should not he weep over the Pantheon if he saw good cause for it?" she inquired, with her chin in the air.

"Ah, why not indeed? Only he was never within reach of it, my dear," said Goldsmith.

"Psha! I daresay Marius was no better than he need be," cried the young lady.

"Few men are even so good as it is necessary for them to be," said Oliver.

"That depends upon their own views as to the need of being good," remarked Mary.

"And so I say that Marius most likely made many excursions to the Pantheon without the knowledge of his biographer,"

cried her sister, with an air of worldly wisdom of which a recent bride was so well qualified to be an exponent.

"'Twere vain to attempt to contend against such wisdom," said Goldsmith.

"Nay, all things are possible, with a Professor of Ancient History to the Royal Academy of Arts," said a lady who had come up with Burke at that moment — a small but very elegant lady with distinction in every movement, and withal having eyes sparkling with humour.

Goldsmith bowed low — again over his fallen hat, on the crown of which Little Comedy set a very dainty foot with an aspect of the sweetest unconsciousness. She was a tom-boy down to the sole of that dainty foot.

"In the presence of Mrs. Thrale," Goldsmith began, but seeing the ill-treatment to which his hat was subjected, he became confused, and the compliment which he had been elaborating dwindled away in a murmur.

"Is it not the business of a professor to contend with wisdom, Dr. Goldsmith?" said Mrs. Thrale.

"Madam, if you say that it is so, I will prove that you are wrong by declining to

argue out the matter with you," said the Professor of Ancient History.

Miss Horneck's face shone with appreciation of her dear friend's quickness; but the lively Mrs. Thrale was, as usual, too much engrossed in her own efforts to be brilliant to be able to pay any attention to the words of so clumsy a person as Oliver Goldsmith, and one who, moreover, declined to join with so many other distinguished persons in accepting her patronage.

She found it to her advantage to launch into a series of sarcasms — most of which had been said at least once before — at the expense of the Duchess of Argyll and Lady Ancaster, and finding that Goldsmith was more busily engaged in listening to Mrs. Bunbury's mock apologies for the injury she had done to his hat than in attending to her *jeux d'esprit*, she turned her back upon him, and gave Burke and Mrs. Horneck the benefit of her remarks.

Goldsmith continued taking part in the fun made by Little Comedy, pointing out to her the details of his hat's disfigurement, when, suddenly turning in the direction of Mary Horneck, who was standing behind her mother, the jocular remark died on his lips. He saw the expression of dismay — worse than dismay — which was on the girl's face as she gazed across the rotunda.

CHAPTER VII.

Goldsmith followed the direction of her eyes and saw that their object was a man in the uniform of an officer, who was chatting with Mrs. Abington. He was a showily handsome man, though his face bore evidence of some dissipated years, and there was an undoubted swagger in his bearing.

Meanwhile Goldsmith watched him. The man caught sight of Miss Horneck and gave a slight start, his jaw falling for an instant—only for an instant, however; then he recovered himself and made an elaborate bow to the girl across the room.

Goldsmith turned to Miss Horneck and perceived that her face had become white; she returned very coldly the man's recognition, and only after the lapse of some seconds. Goldsmith possessed naturally both delicacy of feeling and tact. He did not allow the girl to see that he had been a witness of a *rencontre* which evidently was painful to her; but he spoke to her sister, who was amusing her husband by a scarcely

noticeable imitation of a certain great lady known to both of them; and, professing himself woefully ignorant as to the *personnel* of the majority of the people who were present, inquired first what was the name of a gentleman wearing a star and talking to a group of apparently interested ladies, and then of the officer whom he had seen make that elaborate bow.

Mrs. Bunbury was able to tell him who was the gentleman with the star, but after glancing casually at the other man, she shook her head.

"I have never seen him before," she said. "I don't think he can be any one in particular. The people whom we don't know are usually nobodies — until we come to know them."

"That is quite reasonable," said he. "It is a distinction to become your friend. It will be remembered in my favour when my efforts as Professor at the Academy are forgotten."

His last sentence was unheard, for Mrs. Bunbury was giving all her attention to her sister, of whose face she had just caught a glimpse.

"Heavens, child!" she whispered to her, "what is the matter with you?"

"What should be the matter with me?"

said Mary. "What, except — oh, this place is stifling! And the managers boasted that it would be cool and well ventilated at all times!"

"My dear girl, you 'll be quite right when I take you into the air," said Bunbury.

"No, no; I do not need to leave the rotunda; I shall be myself in a moment," said the girl somewhat huskily and spasmodically. "For heaven's sake don't stare so, child," she added to her sister, making a pitiful attempt to laugh.

"But, my dear ——" began Mrs. Bunbury; she was interrupted by Mary.

"Nay," she cried, "I will not have our mother alarmed, and — well, every one knows what a tongue Mrs. Thrale has. Oh, no; already the faintness has passed away. What should one fear with a doctor in one's company? Come, Dr. Goldsmith, you are a sensible person. You do not make a fuss. Lend me your arm, if you please."

"With all pleasure in life," cried Oliver.

He offered her his arm, and she laid her hand upon it. He could feel how greatly she was trembling.

When they had taken a few steps away Mary looked back at her sister and Bunbury and smiled reassuringly at them. Her companion saw that, immediately after-

wards, her glance went in the direction of the officer who had bowed to her.

"Take me up to one of the galleries, my dear friend," she said. "Take me somewhere — some place away from here — any place away from here."

He brought her to an alcove off one of the galleries where only one sconce with wax candles was alight.

"Why should you tremble, my dear girl?" said he. "What is there to be afraid of? I am your friend — you know that I would die to save you from the least trouble."

"Trouble? Who said anything about trouble?" she cried. "I am in no trouble — only for the trouble I am giving you, dear Goldsmith. And you did not come in the bloom-tinted coat after all."

He made no reply to her spasmodic utterances. The long silence was broken only by the playing of the band, following Madame Agujari's song — the hum of voices and laughter from the well-dressed mob in the rotunda and around the galleries.

At last the girl put her hand again upon his arm, saying —

"I wonder what you think of this business, my dear friend — I wonder what you think of your Jessamy Bride."

"I think nothing but what is good of you, my dear," said he tenderly. "But if you can tell me of the matter that troubles you, I think I may be able to make you see that it should not be a trouble to you for a moment. Why, what can possibly have happened since we were all so merry in France together?"

"Nothing — nothing has happened — I give you my word upon it," she said. "Oh, I feel that you are altogether right. I have no cause to be frightened — no cause to be troubled. Why, if it came to fighting, have not I a brother? Ah, I had much better say nothing more. You could not understand — psha! there is nothing to be understood, dear Dr. Goldsmith; girls are foolish creatures."

"Is it nothing to you that we have been friends so long, dear child?" said he. "Is it not possible for you to let me have your confidence? Think if it be possible, Mary. I am not a wise man where my own affairs are concerned, but I feel that for others — for you, my dear — ah, child, don't you know that if you share a secret trouble with another its poignancy is blunted?"

"I have never had consolation except from you," said the girl. "But this — this — oh, my friend, by what means did you

look into a woman's soul to enable you to write those lines —

> 'When lovely woman stoops to folly,
> And finds too late . . . '?"

There was a long pause before he started up, with his hand pressed to his forehead. He looked at her strangely for a moment, and then walked slowly away from her with his head bent. Before he had taken more than a dozen steps, however, he stopped, and, after another moment of indecision, hastened back to her and offered her his hand, saying —

"I am but a man; I can think nothing of you but what is good."

"Yes," she said; "it is only a woman who can think everything that is evil about a woman. It is not by men that women are deceived to their own destruction, but by women."

She sprang to her feet and laid her hand upon his arm once again.

"Let us go away," she said. "I am sick of this place. There is no corner of it that is not penetrated by the Agujari's singing. Was there ever any singing so detestable? And they pay her fifty guineas a song! I would pay fifty guineas to get out of earshot of the best of her efforts."

Her laugh had a shrill note that caused

it to sound very pitiful to the man who heard it.

He spoke no word, but led her tenderly back to where her mother was standing with Burke and her son.

"I do hope that you have not missed Agujari's last song," said Mrs. Horneck. "We have been entranced with its melody."

"Oh, no; I have missed no note of it—no note. Was there ever anything so delicious—so liquid-sweet? Is it not time that we went homeward, mother? I do feel a little tired, in spite of the Agujari."

"At what an admirable period we have arrived in the world's history!" said Burke. "It is the young miss in these days who insists on her mother's keeping good hours. How wise we are all growing!"

"Mary was always a wise little person," said Mrs. Horneck.

"Wise? Oh, let us go home!" said the girl wearily.

"Dr. Goldsmith will, I am sure, direct our coach to be called," said her mother.

Goldsmith bowed and pressed his way to the door, where he told the janitor to call for Mrs. Horneck's coach.

He led Mary out of the rotunda, Burke having gone before with the elder lady. Goldsmith did not fail to notice the look of

apprehension on the girl's face as her eyes wandered around the crowd in the porch. He could hear the little sigh of relief that she gave after her scrutiny.

The coach had drawn up at the entrance, and the little party went out into the region of flaring links and pitch-scented smoke. While Goldsmith was in the act of helping Mary Horneck up the steps, he was furtively glancing around, and before she had got into a position for seating herself by the side of her mother, he dropped her hand in so clumsy a way that several of the onlookers laughed. Then he retreated, bowing awkwardly, and, to crown his stupidity, he turned round so rapidly and unexpectedly that he ran violently full-tilt against a gentleman in uniform, who was hurrying to the side of the chariot as if to take leave of the ladies.

The crowd roared as the officer lost his footing for a moment and staggered among the loiterers in the porch, not recovering himself until the vehicle had driven away. Even then Goldsmith, with disordered wig, was barring the way to the coach, profusely apologising for his awkwardness.

"Curse you for a lout!" cried the officer.

Goldsmith put his hat on his head.

"Look you, sir!" he said. "I have

offered you my humblest apologies for the accident. If you do not choose to accept them, you have but got to say as much and I am at your service. My name is Goldsmith, sir — Oliver Goldsmith — and my friend is Mr. Edmund Burke. I flatter myself that we are both as well known and of as high repute as yourself, whoever you may be."

The onlookers in the porch laughed, those outside gave an encouraging cheer, while the chairmen and linkmen, who were nearly all Irish, shouted "Well done, your Honour! The little Doctor and Mr. Burke forever!" For both Goldsmith and Burke were as popular with the mob as they were in society.

While Goldsmith stood facing the scowling officer, an elderly gentleman, in the uniform of a general and with his breast covered with orders, stepped out from the side of the porch and shook Oliver by the hand. Then he turned to his opponent, saying —

"Dr. Goldsmith is my friend, sir. If you have any quarrel with him you can let me hear from you. I am General Oglethorpe."

"Or if it suits you better, sir," said another gentleman coming to Goldsmith's

side, "you can send your friend to my house. My name is Lord Clare."

"My Lord," cried the man, bowing with a little swagger, "I have no quarrel with Dr. Goldsmith. He has no warmer admirer than myself. If in the heat of the moment I made use of any expression that one gentleman might not make use of toward another, I ask Dr. Goldsmith's pardon. I have the honour to wish your Lordship good-night."

He bowed and made his exit.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Goldsmith reached his chambers in Brick Court, he found awaiting him a letter from Colman, the lessee of Covent Garden Theatre, to let him know that Woodward and Mrs. Abington had resigned their parts in his comedy which had been in rehearsal for a week, and that he, Colman, felt they were right in doing so, as the failure of the piece was so inevitable. He hoped that Dr. Goldsmith would be discreet enough to sanction its withdrawal while its withdrawal was still possible.

He read this letter — one of several which he had received from Colman during the week prophesying disaster — without impatience, and threw it aside without a further thought. He had no thought for anything save the expression that had been on the face of Mary Horneck as she had spoken his lines —

> "When lovely woman stoops to folly,
> And finds too late . . . ."

"Too late ——" She had not got beyond those words. Her voice had broken, as he

had often believed that his beloved Olivia's voice had broken, when trying to sing her song in which a woman's despair is enshrined for all ages. Her voice had broken, though not with the stress of tears. It would not have been so full of despair if tears had been in her eyes. Where there are tears there is hope. But her voice. . .

What was he to believe? What was he to think regarding that sweet girl who had, since the first day he had known her, treated him as no other human being had ever treated him? The whole family of the Hornecks had shown themselves to be his best friends. They insisted on his placing himself on the most familiar footing in regard to their house, and when Little Comedy married she maintained the pleasant intimacy with him which had begun at Sir Joshua Reynolds's dinner-table. The days that he spent at the Bunburys' house at Barton were among the pleasantest of his life.

But, fond though he was of Mrs. Bunbury, her sister Mary, his "Jessamy Bride," drew him to her by a deeper and warmer affection. He had felt from the first hour of meeting her that she understood his nature — that in her he had at last found some one who could give him the sympathy

which he sought. More than once she had proved to him that she recognised the greatness of his nature — his simplicity, his generosity, the tenderness of his heart for all things that suffered, his trustfulness, that caused him to be so frequently imposed upon, his intolerance of hypocrisy and false sentiment, though false sentiment was the note of the most successful productions of the day. Above all, he felt that she recognised his true attitude in relation to English literature. If he was compelled to work in uncongenial channels in order to earn his daily bread, he himself never forgot what he owed to English literature. How nobly he discharged this debt his "Traveller," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "The Deserted Village," and "The Good Natured Man" testified at intervals. He felt that he was the truest poet, the sincerest dramatist, of the period, and he never allowed the work which he was compelled to do for the booksellers to turn him aside from his high aims.

It was because Mary Horneck proved to him daily that she understood what his aims were he regarded her as different from all the rest of the world. She did not talk to him of sympathising with him, but

she understood him and sympathised with him.

As he lay back in his chair now asking himself what he should think of her, he recalled every day that he had passed in her company, from the time of their first meeting at Reynolds's house until he had accompanied her and her mother and sister on the tour through France. He remembered how, the previous year, she had stirred his heart on returning from a long visit to her native Devonshire by a clasp of the hand and a look of gratitude, as she spoke the name of the book which he had sent to her with a letter. "The Vicar of Wakefield" was the book, and she had said —

"You can never, never know what it has been to me — what it has done for me."

Her eyes had at that time been full of tears of gratitude — of affection, and the sound of her voice and the sight of her liquid eyes had overcome him. He knew there was a bond between them that would not be easily severed.

But there were no tears in her eyes as she spoke the words of Olivia's song.

What was he to think of her?

One moment she had been overflowing with girlish merriment, and then, on glancing across the hall, her face had become

pale and her mood had changed from one of merriment to one of despair — the despair of a bird that finds itself in the net of the fowler.

What was he to think of her?

He would not wrong her by a single thought. He thought no longer of her, but of the man whose sudden appearance before her eyes had, he felt certain, brought about her change of mood.

It was his certainty of feeling on this matter that had caused him to guard her jealously from the approach of that man, and, when he saw him going toward the coach, to prevent his further advance by the readiest means in his power. He had had no time to elaborate any scheme to keep the man away from Mary Horneck, and he had been forced to adopt the most rudimentary scheme to carry out his purpose.

Well, he reflected upon the fact that if the scheme was rudimentary it had proved extremely effective. He had kept the man apart from the girls, and he only regretted that the man had been so easily led to regard the occurrence as an accident. He would have dearly liked to run the man through some vital part.

What was that man to Mary Horneck that she should be in terror at the very

sight of him? That was the question which presented itself to him, and his too vivid imagination had no difficulty in suggesting a number of answers to it, but through all he kept his word to her: he thought no ill of her. He could not entertain a thought of her that was not wholly good. He felt that her concern was on account of some one else who might be in the power of that man. He knew how generous she was — how sympathetic. He had told her some of his own troubles, and though he did so lightly, as was his custom, she had been deeply affected on hearing of them. Might it not then be that the trouble which affected her was not her own, but another's?

Before he went to bed he had brought himself to take this view of the incident of the evening, and he felt much easier in his mind.

Only he felt a twinge of regret when he reflected that the fellow whose appearance had deprived Mary Horneck of an evening's pleasure had escaped with no greater inconvenience than would be the result of an ordinary shaking. His contempt for the man increased as he recalled how he had declined to prolong the quarrel. If he had been anything of a man he would have per-

ceived that he was insulted, not by accident but design, and would have been ready to fight.

Whatever might be the nature of Mary Horneck's trouble, the killing of the man would be a step in the right direction.

It was not until his servant, John Eyles, had awakened him in the morning that he recollected receiving a letter from Colman which contained some unpleasant news. He could not at first remember the details of the news, but he was certain that on receiving it he had a definite idea that it was unpleasant. When he now read Colman's letter for the second time he found that his recollection of his first impression was not at fault. It was just his luck: no man was in the habit of writing more joyous letters or receiving more depressing than Goldsmith.

He hurried off to the theatre and found Colman in his most disagreeable mood. The actor and actress who had resigned their parts were just those to whom he was looking, Colman declared, to pull the play through. He could not, however, blame them, he frankly admitted. They were, he said, dependent for a livelihood upon their association with success on the stage, and it could not be otherwise than prejudicial to

their best interests to be connected with a failure.

This was too much, even for the long-suffering Goldsmith.

"Is it not somewhat premature to talk of the failure of a play that has not yet been produced, Mr. Colman?" he said.

"It might be in respect to most plays, sir," replied Colman; "but in regard to this particular play, I don't think that one need be afraid to anticipate by a week or two the verdict of the playgoers. Two things in this world are inevitable, sir: death and the damning of your comedy."

"I shall try to bear both with fortitude," said Goldsmith quietly, though he was inwardly very indignant with the manager for his gratuitous predictions of failure — predictions which from the first his attitude in regard to the play had contributed to realise. "I should like to have a talk with Mrs. Abington and Woodward," he added.

"They are in the green room," said the manager. "I must say that I was in hope, Dr. Goldsmith, that your critical judgment of your own work would enable you to see your way to withdraw it."

"I decline to withdraw it, sir," said Goldsmith.

"I have been a manager now for some years," said Colman, "and, speaking from the experience which I have gained at this theatre, I say without hesitation that I never had a piece offered to me which promised so complete a disaster as this, sir. Why, 't is like no other comedy that was ever wrote."

"That is a feature which I think the playgoers will not be slow to appreciate," said Goldsmith. "Good Lord! Mr. Colman, cannot you see that what the people want nowadays is a novelty?"

"Ay, sir; but there are novelties and novelties, and this novelty of yours is not to their taste. 'T is not a comedy of the pothouse that 's the novelty genteel people want in these days; and mark my words, sir, the bringing on of that vulgar young boor — what's the fellow's name?— Lumpkin, in his pothouse, and the unworthy sneers against the refinement and sensibility of the period — the fellow who talks of his bear only dancing to the genteelest of tunes — all this, Dr. Goldsmith, I pledge you my word and reputation as a manager, will bring about an early fall of the curtain."

"An early fall of the curtain?"

"Even so, sir; for the people in the

house will not permit another scene beyond that of your pothouse to be set."

"Let me tell you, Mr. Colman, that the Three Pigeons is an hostelry, not a pot-house."

"The playgoers will damn it if it were e'en a Bishop's palace."

"Which you think most secure against such a fate. Nay, sir, let us not apply the doctrine of predestination to a comedy. Men have gone mad through believing that they had no chance of being saved from the Pit. Pray let not us take so gloomy a view of the hereafter of our play."

"Of *your* play, sir, by your leave. I have no mind to accept even a share of its paternity, though I know that I cannot escape blame for having anything to do with its production."

"If you are so anxious to decline the responsibilities of a father in respect to it. sir, I must beg that you will not feel called upon to act with the cruelty of a step-father towards it."

Goldsmith bowed in his pleasantest manner as he left the manager's office and went to the green room.

CHAPTER IX.

The attitude of Colman in regard to the comedy was quite in keeping with the traditions of the stage of the eighteenth century, nor was it so contrary to the traditions of the nineteenth century. Colman, like the rest of his profession — not even excepting Garrick — possessed only a small amount of knowledge as to what playgoers desired to have presented to them. Whatever successes he achieved were certainly not due to his own acumen. He had no idea that audiences had grown tired of stilted blank verse tragedies and comedies constructed on the most conventional lines, with plentiful allusions to heathen deities, but a plentiful lack of human nature. Such plays had succeeded in his hands previously, and he could see no reason why he should substitute for them anything more natural. He had no idea that playgoers were ready to hail with pleasure a comedy founded upon scenes of everyday life, not upon the spurious sentimentality of an artificial age.

He had produced "The Good Natured Man" some years before, and had made money by the transaction. But the shrieks of the shallow critics who had condemned the introduction of the low-life personages into that play were still ringing in his ears; so, when he found that the leading characteristics of these personages were not only introduced but actually intensified in the new comedy, which the author had named provisionally "The Mistakes of a Night," he at first declined to have anything to do with it. But, fortunately, Goldsmith had influential friends — friends who, like Dr. Johnson and Bishop Percy, had recognised his genius when he was living in a garret and before he had written anything beyond a few desultory essays — and they brought all their influence to bear upon the Covent Garden manager. He accepted the comedy, but laid it aside for several months, and only grudgingly, at last, consented to put it in rehearsal.

Daily, when Goldsmith attended the rehearsals, the manager did his best to depreciate the piece, shaking his head over some scenes, shrugging his shoulders over others, and asking the author if he actually meant to allow certain portions of the dialogue to be spoken as he had written them.

This attitude would have discouraged a man less certain of his position than Goldsmith. It did not discourage him, however, but its effect was soon perceptible upon the members of the company. They rehearsed in a half-hearted way, and accepted Goldsmith's suggestions with demur.

At the end of a week Gentleman Smith, who had been cast for Young Marlow, threw up the part, and Colman inquired of Goldsmith if he was serious in his intention to continue rehearsing the piece. In a moment Goldsmith assured him that he meant to perform his part of the contract with the manager, and that he would tolerate no backing out of that same contract by the manager. At his friend Shuter's suggestion, the part was handed over to Lee Lewes.

After this, it might at least have been expected that Colman would make the best of what he believed to be a bad matter, and give the play every chance of success. On the contrary, however, he was stupid even for the manager of a theatre, and was at the pains to decry the play upon every possible occasion. Having predicted failure for it, he seemed determined to do his best to cause his prophecies to be realized. At

rehearsal he provoked Goldsmith almost beyond endurance by his sneers, and actually encouraged the members of his own company in their frivolous complaints regarding their dialogue. He spoke the truth to Goldsmith when he said he was not surprised that Woodward and Mrs. Abington had thrown up their parts: he would have been greatly surprised if they had continued rehearsing.

When the unfortunate author now entered the green room, the buzz of conversation which had been audible outside ceased in an instant. He knew that he had formed the subject of the conversation, and he could not doubt what was its nature. For a moment he was tempted to turn round and go back to Colman in order to tell him that he would withdraw the play. The temptation lasted but a moment, however: the spirit of determination which had carried him through many difficulties — that spirit which Reynolds appreciated and had embodied in his portrait — came to his aid. He walked boldly into the green room and shook hands with both Woodward and Mrs. Abington.

"I am greatly mortified at the news which I have just had from Mr. Colman," he said; "but I am sure that you have not

taken this serious step without due consideration, so I need say no more about it. Mr. Colman will be unable to attend this rehearsal, but he is under an agreement with me to produce my comedy within a certain period, and he will therefore sanction any step I may take on his behalf. Mr. Quick will, I hope, honour me by reading the part of Tony Lumpkin and Mrs. Bulkley that of Miss Hardcastle, so that there need be no delay in the rehearsal."

The members of the company were somewhat startled by the tone adopted by the man who had previously been anything but fluent in his speech, and who had submitted with patience to the sneers of the manager. They now began to perceive something of the character of the man whose life had been a fierce struggle with adversity, but who even in his wretched garret knew what was due to himself and to his art, and did not hesitate to kick downstairs the emissary from the government that offered him employment as a libeller.

"Sir," cried the impulsive Mrs. Bulkley, putting out her hand to him — "Sir, you are not only a genius, you are a man as well, and it will not be my fault if this comedy of yours does not turn out a success.

You have been badly treated, Dr. Goldsmith, and you have borne your ill-treatment nobly. For myself, sir, I say that I shall be proud to appear in your piece."

"Madam," said Goldsmith, "you overwhelm me with your kindness. As for ill-treatment, I have nothing to complain of so far as the ladies and gentlemen of the company are concerned, and any one who ventures to assert that I bear ill-will toward Mr. Woodward and Mrs. Abington I shall regard as having put an affront upon me. Before a fortnight has passed I know that they will be overcome by chagrin at their rejection of the opportunity that was offered them of being associated with the success of this play, for it will be a success, in spite of the untoward circumstances incidental to its birth."

He bowed several times around the company, and he did it so awkwardly that he immediately gained the sympathy and good-will of all the actors: they reflected how much better they could do it, and that, of course, caused them to feel well disposed towards Goldsmith.

"You mean to give the comedy another name, sir, I think," said Shuter, who was cast for the part of Old Hardcastle.

"You may be sure that a name will be

forthcoming," said Goldsmith. "Lord, sir, I am too good a Christian not to know that if an accident was to happen to my bantling before it is christened it would be damned to a certainty."

The rehearsal this day was the most promising that had yet taken place. Colman did not put in an appearance, consequently the disheartening influence of his presence was not felt. The broadly comical scenes were acted with some spirit, and though it was quite apparent to Goldsmith that none of the company believed that the play would be a success, yet the members did not work, as they had worked hitherto, on the assumption that its failure was inevitable.

On the whole, he left the theatre with a lighter heart than he had had since the first rehearsal. It was not until he returned to his chambers to dress for the evening that he recollected he had not yet arrived at a wholly satisfactory solution of the question which had kept him awake during the greater part of the night.

The words that Mary Horneck had spoken and the look there was in her eyes at the same moment had yet to be explained.

He seated himself at his desk with his hand to his head, his elbow resting on a

sheet of paper placed ready for his pen. After half-an-hour's thought his hand went mechanically to his tray of pens. Picking one up with a sigh, he began to write.

Verse after verse appeared upon the paper — the love-song of a man who feels that love is shut out from his life for evermore, but whose only consolation in life is love.

After an hour's fluent writing he laid down the pen and once again rested his head on his hand. He had not the courage to read what he had written. His desk was full of such verses, written with unaffected sincerity when every one around him was engaged in composing verses which were regarded worthy of admiration only in proportion as they were artificial.

He wondered, as he sat there, what would be the result of his sending to Mary Horneck one of those poems which his heart had sung to her. Would she be shocked at his presumption in venturing to love her? Would his delightful relations with her and her family be changed when it became known that he had not been satisfied with the friendship which he had enjoyed for some years, but had hoped for a response to his deeper feeling?

His heart sank as he asked himself the question.

"How is it that I seem ridiculous as a lover even to myself?" he muttered. "Why has God laid upon me the curse of being a poet? A poet is the chronicler of the loves of others, but it is thought madness should he himself look for the consolation of love. It is the irony of life that the man who is most capable of deep feeling should be forced to live in loneliness. How the world would pity a great painter who was struck blind—a great orator struck dumb! But the poet shut out from love receives no pity—no pity on earth—no pity in heaven."

He bowed his head down to his hands, and remained in that attitude for an hour. Then he suddenly sprang to his feet. He caught up the paper which he had just covered with verses, and was in the act of tearing it. He did not tear the sheet quite across, however; it fell from his hand to the desk and lay there, a slight current of air from a window making the torn edge rise and fall as though it lay upon the beating heart of a woman whose lover was beside her—that was what the quivering motion suggested to the poet who watched it.

"And I would have torn it in pieces and made a ruin of it!" he said. "Alas! alas! for the poor torn, fluttering heart!"

He dressed himself and went out, but to none of his accustomed haunts, where he would have been certain to meet with some of the distinguished men who were rejoiced to be regarded as his friends. In his mood he knew that friendship could afford him no solace.

He knew that to offer a man friendship when love is in his heart is like giving a loaf of bread to one who is dying of thirst.

CHAPTER X.

For the next two days Goldsmith was fully occupied making such changes in his play as were suggested to him in the course of the rehearsals. The alterations were not radical, but he felt that they would be improvements, and his judgment was rarely at fault. Moreover, he was quick to perceive in what direction the strong points and the weak points of the various members of the company lay, and he had no hesitation in altering the dialogue so as to give them a better chance of displaying their gifts. But not a line of what Colman called the "pot-house scene" would he change, not a word of the scene where the farm servants are being trained to wait at table would he allow to be omitted.

Colman declined to appear upon the stage during the rehearsals. He seems to have spent all his spare time walking from coffee house to coffee house talking about the play, its vulgarity, and the certainty of the fate that was in store for it. It would have been impossible, had he not adopted

this remarkable course, for the people of the town to become aware, as they certainly did, what were his ideas regarding the comedy. When it was produced with extraordinary success, the papers held the manager up to ridicule daily for his false predictions, and every day a new set of lampoons came from the coffee-house wits on the same subject.

But though the members of the company rehearsed the play loyally, some of them were doubtful about the scene at the Three Pigeons, and did not hesitate to express their fears to Goldsmith. They wondered if he might not see his way to substitute for that scene one which could not possibly be thought offensive by any section of playgoers. Was it not a pity, one of them asked him, to run a chance of failure when it might be so easily avoided?

To all of these remonstrances he had but one answer: the play must stand or fall by the scenes which were regarded as ungenteel. He had written it, he said, for the sake of expressing his convictions through the medium of these particular scenes, and he was content to accept the verdict of the playgoers on the point in question. Why he had brought on those scenes so early in the play was that the

playgoers might know not to expect a sentimental piece, but one that was meant to introduce a natural school of comedy, with no pretence to be anything but a copy of the manners of the day, with no fine writing in the dialogue, but only the broadest and heartiest fun.

"If the scenes are ungenteel," said he, "it is because nature is made up of ungenteel things. Your modern gentleman is, to my mind, much less interesting than your ungenteel person; and I believe that Tony Lumpkin when admirably represented, as he will be by Mr. Quick, will be a greater favourite with all who come to the playhouse than the finest gentleman who ever uttered an artificial sentiment to fall exquisitely on the ear of a boarding-school miss. So, by my faith! I'll not interfere with his romping."

He was fluent and decisive on this point, as he was on every other point on which he had made up his mind. He only stammered and stuttered when he did not know what he was about to say, and this frequently arose from his over-sensitiveness in regard to the feelings of others—a disability which could never be laid to the charge of Dr. Johnson, who was, in consequence, delightfully fluent.

On the evening of the third rehearsal of the play with the amended cast, he went to Reynolds's house in Leicester Square to dine. He knew that the Horneck family would be there, and he looked forward with some degree of apprehension to his meeting with Mary. He felt that she might think he looked for some explanation of her strange words spoken when he was by her side at the Pantheon. But he wanted no explanation from her. The words still lay as a burden upon his heart, but he felt that it would pain her to attempt an explanation of them, and he was quite content that matters should remain as they were. Whatever the words might have meant, it was impossible that they could mean anything that might cause him to think of her with less reverence and affection.

He arrived early at Reynolds's house, but it did not take him long to find out that he was not the first arrival. From the large drawing-room there came to his ears the sound of laughter—such laughter as caused him to remark to the servant—

"I perceive that Mr. Garrick is already in the house, Ralph."

"Mr. Garrick has been here with the young ladies for the past half-hour, sir," replied Ralph.

"I shouldn't wonder if, on inquiry, it were found that he has been entertaining them," said Goldsmith.

Ralph, who knew perfectly well what was the exact form that the entertainment assumed, busied himself hanging up the visitor's hat.

The fact was that, for the previous quarter of an hour, Garrick had been keeping Mary Horneck and her sister, and even Miss Reynolds, in fits of laughter by his burlesque account of Goldsmith's interview with an amanuensis who had been recommended to him with a view of saving him much manual labour. Goldsmith had told him the story originally, and the imagination of Garrick was quite equal to the duty of supplying all the details necessary for the burlesque. He pretended to be the amanuensis entering the room in which Goldsmith was supposed to be seated working laboriously at his "Animated Nature." "Good morning, sir, good morning," he cried, pretending to take off his gloves and shake the dust off them with the most perfect self-possession, previous to laying them in his hat on a chair. "Now mind you don't sit there, Dr. Goldsmith," he continued, raising a warning finger. A little motion of his body, and the pert amanuensis, with

his mincing ways, was transformed into the awkward Goldsmith, shy and self-conscious in the presence of a stranger, hastening with clumsy politeness to get him a chair, and, of course, dragging forward the very one on which the man had placed his hat. "Now, now, now, what are you about?" —once more Garrick was the amanuensis. "Did not I warn you to be careful about that chair, sir? Eh? I only told you not to sit in it? Sir, that excuse is a mere quibble—a mere quibble. This must not occur again, or I shall be forced to dismiss you, and where will you be then, my good sir? Now to business, Doctor; but first you will tell your man to make me a cup of chocolate—with milk, sir—plenty of milk, and two lumps of sugar—plantation sugar, sir; I flatter myself that I am a patriot—none of your foreign manufactures for me. And now that I think on 't, your laundress would do well to wash and iron my ruffles for me; and mind you tell her to be careful of the one with the tear in it"—this shouted half-way out of the door through which he had shown Goldsmith hurrying with the ruffles and the order for the chocolate.

Then came the monologue of the amanuensis strolling about the room, passing his sneering remarks at the furniture—open-

ing a letter which had just come by post, and reading it *sotto voce*. It was supposed to be from Filby, the tailor, and to state that the field-marshal's uniform in which Dr. Goldsmith meant to appear at the next masked ball at the Haymarket would be ready in a few days, and to inquire if Dr. Goldsmith had made up his mind as to the exact orders which he meant to wear, ending with a compliment upon Dr. Goldsmith's good taste and discrimination in choosing a costume which was so well adapted to his physique, and a humble suggestion that it should be worn upon the occasion of the first performance of the new comedy, when the writer hoped no objection would be raised to the hanging of a board in front of the author's box with "Made by Filby" printed on it.

Garrick's reading of the imaginary letter, stumbling over certain words — giving an odd turn and a ludicrous misreading to a phrase here and there, and finally his turning over the letter and mumbling a postscript alluding to the length of time that had passed since the writer had received a payment on account, could not have been surpassed. The effect of the comedy upon the people in the room was immeasurably heightened by the entrance of Goldsmith in

the flesh, when Garrick, as the amanuensis, immediately walked to him gravely with the scrap of paper which had done duty as the letter, in his hand, asking him if what was written there in black and white about the field-marshal's uniform was correct, and if he meant to agree to Filby's request to wear it on the first night of the comedy.

Goldsmith perceived that Garrick was giving an example of the impromptu entertainment in which he delighted, and at once entered into the spirit of the scene, saying—

"Why, yes, sir; I have come to the conclusion that more credit should be given to a man who has brought to a successful issue a campaign against the prejudices and stupidities of the manager of a playhouse than to the generalissimo of an army in the field, so why should not I wear a field-marshal's uniform, sir?"

The laugh was against Garrick, which pleased him greatly, for he knew that Goldsmith would feel that he was sharing in the entertainment, and would not regard it as a burlesque upon himself personally. In an instant, however, the actor had ceased to be the supercilious amanuensis, and became David Garrick, crying—

"Nay, sir, you are out of the play altogether. You are presuming to reply to

the amanuensis, which, I need scarcely tell a gentleman of your experience, is a preposterous idea, and out of all consistency with nature."

Goldsmith had shaken hands with all his friends, and being quite elated at the success of his reply to the brilliant Garrick, did not mind much what might follow.

At what did actually follow Goldsmith laughed as heartily as any one in the room.

"Come, sir," said the amanuensis, "we have no time to waste over empty civilities. We have our 'Animated Nature' to proceed with; we cannot keep the world waiting any longer; it matters not about the booksellers, 't is the world we think of. What is this?"—picking up an imaginary paper—"'The derivation of the name of the elephant has taxed the ingeniousness of many able writers, but there can be no doubt in the mind of any one who has seen that noble creature, as I have, in its native woods, careering nimbly from branch to branch of the largest trees in search of the butterflies, which form its sole food, that the name elephant is but a corruption of elegant, the movements of the animal being as singularly graceful as its shape is in accordance with all accepted ideas of symmetry.' Sir, this is mighty fine, but your

style lacks animation. A writer on 'Animated Nature' should be himself both animated and natural, as one who translates Buffon should himself be a buffoon."

In this strain of nonsense Garrick went on for the next ten minutes, leading up to a simulated dispute between Goldsmith and his amanuensis as to whether a dog lived on land or water. The dispute waxed warmer and warmer, until at last blows were exchanged and the amanuensis kicked Goldsmith through the door and down the stairs. The bumping of the imaginary man from step to step was heard in the drawing-room, and then the amanuensis entered, smiling and rubbing his hands as he remarked —

"The impertinent fellow! To presume to dictate to his amanuensis! Lord! what 's the world coming to when a common literary man presumes to dictate to his amanuensis?"

Such buffoonery was what Garrick loved. At Dr. Burney's new house, around the corner in St. Martin's street, he used to keep the household in roars of laughter — as one delightful member of the household has recorded — over his burlesque auctions of books, and his imitations of Dr. Johnson.

"And all this," said Goldsmith, "came out of the paltry story which I told him of

how I hired an amanuensis, but found myself dumb the moment he sat down to work, so that, after making a number of excuses which I knew he saw through, I found it to my advantage to give the man a guinea and send him away."

CHAPTER XI.

Goldsmith was delighted to find that the Jessamy Bride seemed free from care. He had gone to Reynolds' in fear and trembling lest he should hear that she was unable to join the party; but now he found her in as merry a mood as he had ever known her to be in. He was seated by her side at dinner, and he was glad to find that there was upon her no trace of the mysterious mood that had spoiled his pleasure at the Pantheon.

She had, of course, heard of the troubles at the playhouse, and she told him that nothing would induce her ever to speak to Colman, though she said that she and Little Comedy, when they had first heard of the intention of the manager to withdraw the piece, had resolved to go together to the theatre and demand its immediate production on the finest scale possible.

"There 's still great need for some one who will be able to influence Colman in that respect," said Goldsmith. "Only to-day, when I ventured to talk of a fresh scene

being painted, he told me that it was not his intention to proceed to such expense for a piece that would not be played for longer than a small portion of one evening."

"The monster!" cried the girl. I should like to talk to him as I feel about this. What, is he mad enough to expect that playgoers will tolerate his wretched old scenery in a new comedy? Oh, clearly he needs some one to be near him who will speak plainly to him and tell him how contemptible he is. Your friend Dr. Johnson should go to him. The occasion is one that demands the powers of a man who has a whole dictionary at his back — yes, Dr. Johnson should go to him and threaten that if he does not behave handsomely he will, in his next edition of the Dictionary, define a scoundrel as a playhouse manager who keeps an author in suspense for months, and then produces his comedy so ungenerously as to make its failure a certainty. But, no, your play will be the greater success on account of its having to overcome all the obstacles which Mr. Colman has placed in its way."

"I know, dear child, that if it depended on your good will it would be the greatest success of the century," said he.

"And so it will be — oh, it must be!

Little Comedy and I will — oh, we shall insist on the playgoers liking it! We will sit in front of a box and lead all the applause, and we will, besides, keep stern eyes fixed upon any one who may have the bad taste to decline to follow us."

"You are kindness itself, my dear; and meanwhile, if you would come to the remaining rehearsals, and spend all your spare time thinking out a suitable name for the play you would be conferring an additional favour upon an ill-treated author."

"I will do both, and it will be strange if I do not succeed in at least one of the two enterprises — the first being the changing of the mistakes of a manager into the success of a night, and the second the changing of the 'Mistakes of a Night' into the success of a manager — ay, and of an author as well."

"Admirably spoke!" cried the author. "I have a mind to let the name 'The Mistakes of a Night' stand, you have made such a pretty play upon it."

"No, no; that is not the kind of play to fill the theatre," said she. "Oh, do not be afraid; it will be very strange if between us we cannot hit upon a title that will deserve, if not a coronet, at least a wreath of laurel."

Sir Joshua, who was sitting at the head

of the table, not far away, had put up his ear-trumpet between the courses, and caught a word or two of the girl's sentence.

"I presume that you are still discussing the great title question," said he. "You need not do so. Have I not given you my assurance that 'The Belle's Stratagem' is the best name that the play could receive?"

"Nay, that title Dr. Goldsmith holds to be one of the 'mistakes of a Knight!'" said Mr. Bunbury in a low tone. He delighted in a pun, but did not like too many people to hear him make one.

"'The Belle's Stratagem' I hold to be a good enough title until we get a better," said Goldsmith. "I have confidence in the ingenuity of Miss Horneck to discover the better one."

"Nay, I protest if you do not take my title I shall go to the playhouse and damn the play," said Reynolds. "I have given it its proper name, and if it appears in public under any other it will have earned the reprobation of all honest folk who detest an *alias*."

"Then that name shall stand," said Goldsmith. "I give you my word, Sir Joshua, I would rather see my play succeed under your title than have it damned under

a title given to it by the next best man to you in England."

"That is very well said, indeed," remarked Sir Joshua. "It gives evidence of a certain generosity of feeling on your part which all should respect."

Miss Kauffman, who sat at Sir Joshua's right, smiled a trifle vaguely, for she had not quite understood the drift of Goldsmith's phrase, but from the other end of the table there came quite an outburst of laughter. Garrick sat there with Mrs. Bunbury and Baretti, to whom he was telling an imaginary story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room.

Dr. Burney, who sat at the other side of the table, had ventured to question the likelihood of an audience's apprehending the humour of the story at which Diggory had only hinted. He wondered if the story should not be told for the benefit of the playgoers.

A gentleman whom Bunbury had brought to dinner — his name was Colonel Gwyn, and it was known that he was a great admirer of Mary Horneck — took up the question quite seriously.

"For my part," he said, "I admit frankly that I have never heard the story of Grouse in the gun-room."

"Is it possible, sir?" cried Garrick. "What, you mean to say that you are not familiar with the reply of Ould Grouse to the young woman who asked him how he found his way into the gun-room when the door was locked — that about every gun having a lock, and so forth?"

"No, sir," cried Colonel Gwyn. "I had no idea that the story was a familiar one. It seems interesting, too."

"Oh, 't is amazingly interesting," said Garrick. "But you are an army man, Colonel Gwyn; you have heard it frequently told over the mess-table."

"I protest, sir," said Colonel Gwyn, "I know so little about it that I fancied Ould Grouse was the name of a dog — I have myself known of sporting dogs called Grouse."

"Oh, Colonel, you surprise me," cried Garrick. "Ould Grouse a dog! Pray do not hint so much to Dr. Goldsmith. He is a very sensitive man, and would feel greatly hurt by such a suggestion. I believe that Dr. Goldsmith was an intimate friend of Ould Grouse and felt his death severely."

"Then he is dead?" said Gwyn. "That, sir, gives a melancholy interest to the narrative."

"A particularly pathetic interest, sir,"

said Garrick, shaking his head. "I was not among his intimates, Colonel Gwyn, but when I reflect that that dear simple-minded old soul is gone from us — that the gun-room door is now open, but that within there is silence — no sound of the dear old feet that were wont to patter and potter — you will pardon my emotion, madam" — He turned with streaming eyes to Miss Reynolds, who forthwith became sympathetically affected, her voice breaking as she endeavoured to assure Garrick that his emotion, so far from requiring an apology, did him honour. Bunbury, who was ready to roar, could not do so now without seeming to laugh at the feeling of his hostess, and his wife had too high an appreciation of comedy not to be able to keep her face perfectly grave, while a sob or two that he seemed quite unable to suppress came from the napkin which Garrick held up to his face. Baretti said something in Italian to Dr. Burney across the table, about the melancholy nature of the party, and then Garrick dropped his napkin, saying —

"'T is selfish to repine, and he himself — dear old soul! — would be the last to countenance a show of melancholy; for, as his remarks in the gun-room testify, Colonel Gwyn, he had a fine sense of humour. I

fancy I see him, the broad smile lighting up his homely features, as he delivered that sly thrust at his questioner, for it is perfectly well known, Colonel, that so far as poaching was concerned the other man had no particular character in the neighbourhood."

"Oh, Grouse was a poacher, then," said the Colonel.

"Well, if the truth must be told—but no, the man is dead and gone now," cried Garrick, "and it is more generous only to remember, as we all do, the nimbleness of his wit—the genial mirth which ran through the gun-room after that famous sally of his. It seems that honest homely fun is dying out in England; the country stands in need of an Ould Grouse or two just now, and let us hope that when the story of that quiet, yet thoroughly jovial, remark of his in the gun-room comes to be told in the comedy, there will be a revival of the good old days when men were not afraid to joke, sir, and——"

"But so far as I can gather from what Mrs. Bunbury, who heard the comedy read, has told me, the story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room is never actually narrated, but only hinted at," said Gwyn.

"That makes little matter, sir," said

Garrick. "The untold story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room will be more heartily laughed at during the next year or two than the best story of which every detail is given."

"At any rate, Colonel Gwyn," said Mrs. Bunbury, "after the pains which Mr. Garrick has taken to acquaint you with the amplest particulars of the story you cannot in future profess to be unacquainted with it."

Colonel Gwyn looked puzzled.

"I protest, madam," said he, "that up to the present—ah! I fear that the very familiarity of Mr. Garrick with the story has caused him to be led to take too much for granted. I do not question the humour, mind you—I fancy that I am as quick as most men to see a joke, but——"

This was too much for Bunbury and Burney. They both roared with laughter, which increased in volume as the puzzled look upon Colonel Gwyn's face was taken up by Garrick, as he glanced first at Burney and then at Little Comedy's husband. Poor Miss Reynolds, who could never quite make out what was going on around her in that strange household where she had been thrown by an ironical fate, looked gravely at the ultra-grave Garrick, and then smiled artificially at Dr. Burney with a view of

assuring him that she understood perfectly how he came to be merry.

"Colonel Gwyn," said Garrick, "these gentlemen seem to have their own reasons for merriment, but I think you and I can better discriminate when to laugh and when to refrain from laughter. And yet—ah, I perceive they are recalling the story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room, and that, sure enough, would convulse an Egyptian mummy or a statue of Nestor; and the funny part of the business is yet to come, for up to the present I don't believe that I told you that the man had actually been married for some years."

He laughed so heartily that Colonel Gwyn could not refrain from joining in, though his laughter was a good deal less hearty than that of any of the others who had enjoyed Garrick's whimsical fun.

When the men were left alone at the table, there was some little embarrassment owing to the deficiency of glass, for Sir Joshua, who was hospitable to a fault, keeping an open house and dining his friends every evening, could never be persuaded to replace the glass which chanced to be broken. Garrick made an excuse of the shortness of port-glasses at his end of the table to move up beside Goldsmith, whom

he cheered by telling him that he had already given a lesson to Woodward regarding the speaking of the prologue which he, Garrick, had written for the comedy. He said he believed Woodward would repeat the lines very effectively. When Goldsmith mentioned that Colman declined to have a single scene painted for the production, both Sir Joshua and Garrick were indignant.

"You would have done well to leave the piece in my hands, Noll," said the latter, alluding to the circumstance of Goldsmith's having sent the play to him on Colman's first refusal to produce it.

"Ah, Davy, my friend," Goldsmith replied, "I feel more at my ease in reflecting that in another week I shall know the worst —or the best. If the play had remained with you I should feel like a condemned criminal for the next year or two."

In the drawing-room that evening Garrick and Goldsmith got up the entertainment, which was possibly the most diverting one ever seen in a room.

Goldsmith sat on Garrick's knees with a table-cloth drawn over his head and body, leaving his arms only exposed. Garrick then began reciting long sentimental soliloquies from certain plays, which Goldsmith

was supposed to illustrate by his gestures. The form of the entertainment has survived, and sometimes by chance it becomes humourous. But with Garrick repeating the lines and thrilling his audience by his marvellous change of expression as no audience has since been thrilled, and with Goldsmith burlesquing with inappropriately extravagant and wholly amusing gestures the passionate deliverances, it can easily be believed that Sir Joshua's guests were convulsed.

After some time of this division of labour, the position of the two playmates was reversed. It was Garrick who sat on Goldsmith's knees and did the gesticulating, while the poet attempted to deliver his lines after the manner of the player. The effect was even more ludicrous than that of the previous combination; and then, in the middle of an affecting passage from Addison's "Cato," Goldsmith began to sing the song which he had been compelled to omit from the part of Miss Hardcastle, owing to Mrs. Bulkley's not being a singer. Of course Garrick's gestures during the delivery of the song were marvellously ingenious, and an additional element of attraction was introduced by Dr. Burney, who hastily seated himself at the piano-

forte and interwove a medley accompaniment, introducing all the airs then popular, but without prejudice to the harmonies of the accompaniment.

Reynolds stood by the side of his friend, Miss Kauffman, and when this marvellous fooling had come to an end, except for the extra diversion caused by Garrick's declining to leave Goldsmith's knees—he begged the lady to favour the company with an Italian song which she was accustomed to sing to the accompaniment of a guitar. But Miss Angelica shook her head.

"Pray add your entreaties to mine, Miss Horneck," said Sir Joshua to the Jessamy Bride. "Entreat our Angel of Art to give us the pleasure of hearing her sing."

Miss Horneck rose, and made an elaborate curtsey before the smiling Angelica.

"Oh, Madame Angel, live forever!" she cried. "Will your Majesty condescend to let us hear your angelic voice? You have already deigned to captivate our souls by the exercise of one art; will you now stoop to conquer our savage hearts by the exercise of another?"

A sudden cry startled the company, and at the same instant Garrick was thrown on

his hands and knees on the floor by the act of Goldsmith's springing to his feet.

"By the Lord, I've got it!" shouted Goldsmith. "The Jessamy Bride has given it to me, as I knew she would — the title of my comedy — she has just said it: 'She Stoops to Conquer.'"

CHAPTER XII.

As a matter of course, Colman objected to the new title when Goldsmith communicated it to him the next day; but the latter was firm on this particular point. He had given the play its name, he said, and he would not alter it now on any consideration.

Colman once again shrugged his shoulders. The production of the play gave him so much practice at shrugging, Goldsmith expressed his regret at not being able to introduce the part of a Frenchman, which he said he believed the manager would play to perfection.

But when Johnson, who attended the rehearsal with Miss Reynolds, the whole Horneck family, Cradock and Murphy, asserted, as he did with his customary emphasis, that no better title than "She Stoops to Conquer" could be found for the comedy, Colman made no further objections, and the rehearsal was proceeded with.

"Nay, sir," cried Johnson, when Goldsmith was leaving his party in a box in order to go upon the stage, "Nay, sir, you shall

not desert us. You must stay by us to let us know when the jests are spoken, so that we may be fully qualified to laugh at the right moments when the theatre is filled. Why, Goldy, you would not leave us to our own resources?"

"I will be the Lieutenant Cook of the comedy, Dr. Johnson," said Miss Horneck — Lieutenant Cook and his discoveries constituted the chief topics of the hour. "I believe that I know so much of the dialogue as will enable me to pilot you, not merely to the Otaheite of a jest, but to a whole archipelago of wit."

"Otaheite is a name of good omen," said Cradock. "It is suggestive of palms, and '*palmam qui meruit ferat.*'"

"Sir," said Johnson," "you should know better than to quote Latin in the presence of ladies. Though your remark is not quite so bad as I expected it would be, yet let me tell you, sir, that unless the wit in the comedy is a good deal livelier than yours, it will have a poor chance with the playgoers."

"Oh, sir, Dr. Goldsmith's wit is greatly superior to mine," laughed Cradock. "Otherwise it would be my comedy that would be in rehearsal, and Dr. Goldsmith would be merely on a level with us who constitute his critics."

Goldsmith had gone on the stage and the rehearsal had begun, so that Johnson was enabled, by pretending to give all his attention to the opening dialogue, to hide his lack of an effective reply to Cradock for his insolence in suggesting that they were both on the same level as critics.

Before Shuter, as Old Hardcastle, had more than begun to drill his servants, the mighty laughter of Dr. Johnson was shaking the box. Every outburst was like the exploding of a bomb, or, as Cradock put it, the broadside coming from the carronade of a three-decker. He had laughed and applauded during the scene at the Three Pigeons — especially the satirical sallies directed against the sentimentalists — but it was the drilling of the servants that excited him most, and he inquired of Miss Horneck —

"Pray what is the story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room, my dear?"

When the members of the company learned that it was the great Dr. Samuel Johnson who was roaring with laughter in the box, they were as much amazed as they were encouraged. Colman, who had come upon the stage out of compliment to Johnson, feeling that his position as an authority regarding the elements of diversion in a

play was being undermined in the estimation of his company, remarked —

"Your friend Dr. Johnson will be a friend indeed if he comes in as generous a mood to the first representation. I only hope that the playgoers will not resent his attempt to instruct them on the subject of your wit."

"I don't think that there is any one alive who will venture to resent the instruction of Dr. Johnson," said Goldsmith quietly.

The result of this rehearsal and of the three rehearsals that followed it during the week, was more than encouraging to the actors, and it became understood that Woodward and Gentleman Smith were ready to admit their regret at having relinquished the parts for which they had been originally cast. The former had asked to be permitted to speak the prologue, which Garrick had written, and, upon which, as he had told Goldsmith, he had already given a hint or two to Woodward.

The difficulty of the epilogue, however, still remained. The one which Murphy had written for Mrs. Bulkley was objected to by Miss Catley, who threatened to leave the company if Mrs. Bulkley, who had been merely thrust forward to take Mrs. Abington's place, were entrusted with the epi-

logue; and, when Cradock wrote another for Miss Catley, Mrs. Bulkley declared that if Miss Catley were allowed the distinction which she herself had a right to claim, she would leave the theatre. Goldsmith's ingenuity suggested the writing of an epilogue in which both the ladies were presented in their true characters as quarreling on the subject; but Colman placed his veto upon this idea and also upon another simple epilogue which the author had written. Only on the day preceding the first performance did Goldsmith produce the epilogue which was eventually spoken by Mrs. Bulkley.

"It seems to me to be a pity to waste so much time discussing an epilogue which will never be spoke," sneered Colman when the last difficulties had been smoothed over.

Goldsmith walked away without another word, and joined his party, consisting of Johnson, Reynolds, Miss Reynolds, the Bunburys and Mary Horneck. Now that he had done all his work connected with the production of the play—when he had not allowed himself to be overcome by the niggardly behaviour of the manager in declining to spend a single penny either upon the dresses or the scenery, that parting sneer of Colman's almost caused him to break down.

Mary Horneck perceived this, and hastened to say something kind to him. She knew so well what would be truly encouraging to him that she did not hesitate for a moment.

"I am glad I am not going to the theatre to-night," she said; "my dress would be ruined."

He tried to smile as he asked her for an explanation.

"Why, surely you heard the way the cleaners were laughing at the humour of the play," she cried. "Oh, yes, all the cleaners dropped their dusters, and stood around the boxes in fits of laughter. I overheard one of the candle-snuffers say that no play he had seen rehearsed for years contained such wit as yours. I also overheard another man cursing Mr. Colman for a curmudgeon."

"You did? Thank God for that; 't is a great responsibility off my mind," said Goldsmith. "Oh, my dear Jessamy Bride, I know how kind you are, and I only hope that your god-child will turn out a credit to me."

"It is not merely your credit that is involved in the success of this play, sir," said Johnson. "The credit of your friends,

who insisted on Colman's taking the play, is also at stake."

"And above all," said Reynolds pleasantly, "the play must be a success in order to put Colman in the wrong."

"That is the best reason that could be advanced why its success is important to us all," said Mary. "It would never do for Colman to be in the right. Oh, we need live in no trepidation; all our credits will be saved by Monday night."

"I wonder if any unworthy man ever had so many worthy friends," said Goldsmith. "I am overcome by their kindness, and overwhelmed with a sense of my own unworthiness."

"You will have another thousand friends by Monday night, sir," cried Johnson. "Your true friend, sir, is the friend who pays for his seat to hear your play."

"I always held that the best definition of a true friend is the man who, when you are in the hands of bailiffs, comes to see you, but takes care to send a guinea in advance," said Goldsmith, and every one present knew that he alluded to the occasion upon which he had been befriended by Johnson on the day that "The Vicar of Wakefield" was sold.

"And now," said Reynolds, "I have to

prove how certain we are of the future of your piece by asking you to join us at dinner on Monday previous to the performance."

"Commonplace people would invite you to supper, sir, to celebrate the success of the play," said Johnson. "To proffer such an invitation would be to admit that we were only convinced of your worth after the public had attested to it in the most practical way. But we, Dr. Goldsmith, who know your worth, and have known it all these years, wish to show that our esteem remains independent of the verdict of the public. On Monday night, sir, you will find a thousand people who will esteem it an honour to have you to sup with them; but on Monday afternoon you will dine with us."

"You not only mean better than any other man, sir, you express what you mean better," said Goldsmith. "A compliment is doubly a compliment coming from Dr. Johnson."

He was quite overcome, and, observing this, Reynolds and Mary Horneck walked away together, leaving him to compose himself under the shelter of a somewhat protracted analysis by Dr. Johnson of the character of Young Marlow. In the course of a quarter of an hour Goldsmith had suffi-

ciently recovered to be able to perceive for the first time how remarkable a character he had created.

On Monday George Steevens called for Goldsmith to accompany him to the St. James's coffee-house, where the dinner was to take place. He found the author giving the finishing touches to his toilet, his coat being a salmon-pink in tint, and his waistcoat a pale yellow, embroidered with silver. Filby's bills (unpaid, alas!) prevent one from making any mistake on this point.

"Heavens!" cried the visitor. "Have you forgot that you cannot wear colours?"

"Why not?" asked Goldsmith. "Because Woodward is to appear in mourning to speak the prologue, is that any reason why the author of the comedy should also be in black?"

"Nay," said Steevens, "that is not the reason. How is it possible that you forget the Court is in mourning for the King of Sardinia? That coat of yours is a splendid one, I allow, but if you were to appear in it in front of your box a very bad impression would be produced. I suppose you hope that the King will command a performance."

Goldsmith's face fell. He looked at the reflection of the gorgeous garments in a

mirror and sighed. He had a great weakness for colour in dress. At last he took off the coat and gave another fond look at it before throwing it over the back of a chair.

"It was an inspiration on your part to come for me, my dear friend," said he. "I would not for a good deal have made such a mistake."

He reappeared in a few moments in a suit of sober grey, and drove with his friend to the coffee-house, where the party, consisting of Johnson, Reynolds, Edmund and Richard Burke, and Caleb Whitefoord, had already assembled.

It soon became plain that Goldsmith was extremely nervous. He shook hands twice with Richard Burke and asked him if he had heard that the King of Sardinia was dead, adding that it was a constant matter for regret with him that he had not visited Sardinia when on his travels. He expressed a hope that the death of the King of Sardinia would not have so depressing an effect upon playgoers generally as to prejudice their enjoyment of his comedy.

Edmund Burke, understanding his mood, assured him gravely that he did not think one should be apprehensive on this score, adding that it would be quite possible to overestimate the poignancy of the

grief which the frequenters of the pit were likely to feel at so melancholy but, after all, so inevitable an occurrence as the decease of a potentate whose name they had probably never heard.

Goldsmith shook his head doubtfully, and said he would try and hope for the best, but still . . .

Then he hastened to Steevens, who was laughing heartily at a pun of Whitefoord's, and said he was certain that neither of them could have heard that the King of Sardinia was dead, or they would moderate their merriment.

The dinner was a dismal failure, so far as the guest of the party was concerned. He was unable to swallow a morsel, so parched had his throat become through sheer nervousness, and he could not be induced to partake of more than a single glass of wine. He was evermore glancing at the clock and expressing a hope that the dinner would be over in good time to allow of their driving comfortably to the theatre.

Dr. Johnson was at first greatly concerned on learning from Reynolds that Goldsmith was eating nothing; but when Goldsmith, in his nervousness, began to boast of the fine dinners of which he had partaken at Lord Clare's house, and of the

splendour of the banquets which took place daily in the common hall of Trinity College, Dublin, Johnson gave all his attention to his own plate, and addressed no further word to him — not even to remind him, as he described the glories of Trinity College to his friend Burke, that Burke had been at the college with him.

While there was still plenty of time to spare even for walking to the theatre, Goldsmith left the room hastily, explaining elaborately that he had forgotten to brush his hat before leaving his chambers, and he meant to have the omission repaired without delay.

He never returned.

CHAPTER XIII.

The party remained in the room for some time, and when at last a waiter from the bar was sent for and requested to tell Dr. Goldsmith, who was having his hat brushed, that his party were ready to leave the house, the man stated that Dr. Goldsmith had left some time ago, hurrying in the direction of Pall Mall.

"Psha! sir," said Johnson to Burke, "Dr. Goldsmith is little better than a fool." Johnson did not know what such nervousness as Goldsmith's was.

"Yes," said Burke, "Dr. Goldsmith is, I suppose, the greatest fool that ever wrote the best poem of a century, the best novel of a century, and let us hope that, after the lapse of a few hours, I may be able to say the best comedy of a century."

"I suppose we may take it for granted that he has gone to the playhouse?" said Richard Burke.

"It is not wise to take anything for granted so far as Goldsmith is concerned," said Steevens. "I think that the best

course we can adopt is for some of us to go to the playhouse without delay. The play must be looked after; but for myself I mean to look after the author. Gentlemen, Oliver Goldsmith needs to be looked after carefully. No one knows what a burden he has been forced to bear during the past month."

"You think it is actually possible that he has not preceded us to the playhouse, sir," said Johnson.

"If I know anything of him, sir," said Steevens, "the playhouse is just the place which he would most persistently avoid."

There was a long pause before Johnson said in his weightiest manner:

"Sir, we are all his friends; we hold you responsible for his safety."

"That is very kind of you, sir," replied Steevens. "But you may rest assured that I will do my best to find him, wherever he may be."

While the rest of the party set out for Covent Garden Theatre, Steevens hurried off in the opposite direction. He felt that he understood Goldsmith's mood. He believed that he would come upon him sitting alone in some little-frequented coffee house brooding over the probable failure of his play. The cheerful optimism of the man, which enabled him to hold out against

Colman and his sneers, would, he was convinced, suffer a relapse when there was no urgent reason for its exercise, and his naturally sanguine temperament would at this critical hour of his life give place to a brooding melancholy, making it impossible for him to put in an appearance at the theatre, and driving him far from his friends. Steevens actually made up his mind that if he failed to find Goldsmith during the next hour or two, he would seek him at his cottage on the Edgware road.

He went on foot from coffee house to coffee house—from Jack's, in Dean street, to the Old Bell, in Westminster — but he failed to discover his friend in one of them. An hour and a half he spent in this way; and all this time roars of laughter from every part of the playhouse—except the one box that held Cumberland and his friends—were greeting the brilliant dialogue, the natural characterisation, and the admirably contrived situations in the best comedy that a century of brilliant authors had witnessed.

The scene comes before one with all the vividness that many able pens have imparted to a description of its details. We see the enormous figure of Dr. Johnson leaning far out of the box nearest the stage, with a

hand behind his ear, so as to lose no word spoken on the stage; and as phrase after phrase, sparkling with wit, quivering with humour and vivified with numbers of allusions to the events of the hour, is spoken, he seems to shake the theatre with his laughter.

Reynolds is in the opposite corner, his ear-trumpet resting on the ledge of the box, his face smiling thoughtfully; and between these two notable figures Miss Reynolds is seated bolt upright, and looking rather frightened as the people in the pit look up now and again at the box.

Baretti is in the next box with Angelica Kauffman, Dr. Burney and little Miss Fanny Burney, destined in a year or two to become for a time the most notable woman in England. On the other side of the house Lord Clare occupies a box with his charming tom-boy daughter, who is convulsed with laughter as she hears reference made in the dialogue to the trick which she once played upon the wig of her dear friend the author. General Oglethorpe, who is beside her, holds up his finger in mock reproof, and Lord Camden, standing behind his chair, looks as if he regretted having lost the opportunity of continuing his acquaint-

ance with an author whom every one is so highly honouring at the moment.

Cumberland and his friends are in a lower box, "looking glum," as one witness asserts, though a good many years later Cumberland boasted of having contributed in so marked a way to the applause as to call forth the resentment of the pit.

In the next box Hugh Kelly, whose most noted success at Drury Lane a few years previously eclipsed Goldsmith's "Good-Natured Man" at "the other house," sits by the side of Macpherson, the rhapsodist who invented "Ossian." He glares at Dr. Johnson, who had no hesitation in calling him an impostor.

The Burkes, Edmund and Richard, are in a box with Mrs. Horneck and her younger daughter, who follows breathlessly the words with which she has for long been familiar, and at every shout of laughter that comes from the pit she is moved almost to tears. She is quite unaware of the fact that Colonel Gwyn, sitting alone in another part of the house, has his eyes fixed upon her — earnestly, affectionately. Her brother and his *fiancée* are in a box with the Bunburys; and in the most important box in the house Mrs. Thrale sits well forward, so that all eyes may be gratified by

beholding her. It does not so much matter about her husband, who once thought that the fact of his being the proprietor of a concern whose operations represented the potentialities of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice entitled him to play upon the mother of the Gunnings when she first came to London the most contemptible hoax ever recorded to the eternal discredit of a man. The Duchess of Argyll, mindful of that trick which the cleverness of her mother turned to so good account, does not condescend to notice from her box, where she sits with Lady Betty Hamilton, either the brewer or his pushing wife, though she is acquainted with old General Paoli, whom the latter is patronising between the acts.

What a play! What spectators!

We listen to the one year by year with the same delight that it brought to those who heard it this night for the first time; and we look with delight at the faces of the notable spectators which the brush of the little man with the ear-trumpet in Johnson's box has made immortal.

Those two men in that box were the means of conferring immortality upon their century. Incomparable Johnson, who chose Boswell to be his biographer! Incomparable Reynolds, who, on innumerable can-

vases, handed down to the next century all the grace and distinction of his own!

And all this time Oliver Goldsmith is pacing with bent head and hands nervously clasped behind him, backward and forward, the broad walk in St. James's Park.

Steevens came upon him there after spending nearly two hours searching for him.

"Don't speak, man, for God's sake," cried Oliver. "'Tis not so dark but that I can see disaster imprinted on your face. You come to tell me that the comedy is ended — that the curtain was obliged to be rung down in the middle of an act. You come to tell me that my comedy of life is ended."

"Not I," said Steevens. "I have not been at the playhouse yet. Why, man, what can be the matter with you? Why did you leave us in the lurch at the coffee house?"

"I don't know what you speak of," said Goldsmith. "But I beg of you to hasten to the playhouse and carry me the news of the play — don't fear to tell me the worst; I have been in the world of letters for nearly twenty years; I am not easily dismayed."

"My dear friend," said Steevens, "I have no intention of going to the playhouse unless you are in my company—I promised so much to Dr. Johnson. What, man, have you no consideration for your friends, leaving yourself out of the question? Have you no consideration for your art, sir?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that perhaps while you are walking here some question may arise on the stage that you, and you only, can decide—are you willing to allow the future of your comedy to depend upon the decision of Colman, who is not the man to let pass a chance of proving himself to be a true prophet? Come, sir, you have shown yourself to be a man, and a great man, too, before to-night. Why should your courage fail you now when I am convinced you are on the eve of achieving a splendid success?"

"It shall not—it shall not!" cried Goldsmith after a short pause. "I'll not give in should the worst come to the worst. I feel that I have something of a man in me still. The years that I have spent in this battle have not crushed me into the earth. I'll go with you, my friend—I'll go with you. Heaven grant that I may yet be in time to avert disaster."

They hurried together to Charing Cross, where a hackney coach was obtainable. All the time it was lumbering along the uneven streets to Covent Garden, Goldsmith was talking excitedly about the likelihood of the play being wrecked through Colman's taking advantage of his absence to insist on a scene being omitted — or, perhaps, a whole act; and nothing that Steevens could say to comfort him had any effect.

When the vehicle turned the corner into Covent Garden he craned his head out of the window and declared that the people were leaving the playhouse — that his worst fears were realized.

"Nonsense!" cried Steevens, who had put his head out of the other window. "The people you see are only the footmen and linkmen incidental to any performance. What, man, would the coachmen beside us be dozing on their boxes if they were waiting to be called? No, my friend, the comedy has yet to be damned."

When they got out of the coach Goldsmith hastened round to the stage door, looking into the faces of the people who were lounging around, as if to see in each of them the fate of his play written. He reached the back of the stage and made for

where Colman was standing, just as Quick, in the part of Tony Lumpkin, was telling Mrs. Hardcastle that he had driven her forty miles from her own house, when all the time she was within twenty yards of it. In a moment he perceived that the lights were far too strong; unless Mrs. Hardcastle was blind she could not have failed to recognise the familiar features of the scene. The next moment there came a hiss — a solitary hiss from the boxes.

"What 's that, Mr. Colman?" whispered the excited author.

"Psha! sir," said Colman brutally. "Why trouble yourself about a squib when we have all been sitting on a barrel of gunpowder these two hours?"

"That 's a lie," said Shuter, who was in the act of going on the stage as Mr. Hardcastle. "'Tis a lie, Dr. Goldsmith. The success of your play was assured from the first."

"By God! Mr. Colman, if it is a lie I 'll never look on you as a friend while I live!" said Goldsmith.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was a lie, and surely the most cruel and most objectless lie ever uttered. Goldsmith was soon made aware of this. The laughter that followed Tony Lumpkin's pretending to his mother that Mr. Hardcastle was a highwayman was not the laugh of playgoers who have endured four acts of a dull play; it was the laugh of people who have been in a good humour for over two hours, and Goldsmith knew it. He perceived from their laughter that the people in every part of the house were following the comedy with extraordinary interest. Every point in the dialogue was effective—the exquisite complications, the broad fun, the innumerable touches of nature, all were appreciated by an audience whose expression of gratification fell little short of rapture.

When the scene was being shifted Colman left the stage and did not return to it until it was his duty to come forward after the epilogue was spoken by Mrs. Bulkley and announce the date of the author's night.

As soon as the manager had disappeared Goldsmith had a chance of speaking to several of the actors at intervals as they made their exits, and from them he learned the whole truth regarding the play: from the first scene to the one which was being represented, the performance had been a succession of triumphs, not only for the author, but for every member of the company concerned in the production. With old dresses and scenery familiar to all frequenters of the playhouse, the extraordinary success of the comedy was beyond all question. The allusion to the offensive terms of the Royal Marriage Act was especially relished by the audience, several of the occupants of the pit rising to their feet and cheering for some time—so much Goldsmith learned little by little at intervals from the actors.

"I swore never to look on Colman as my friend again, and I'll keep my word; he has trated me cruelly—more cruelly than he has any idea of," said Goldsmith to Lee Lewes. "But as for you, Mr. Lewes, I'll do anything that is in my power for you in the future. My poor play owes much to you, sir."

"Faith then, sir," cried Lewes, "I'll keep you to your word. My benefit will

take place in a short time; I 'll ask you for a prologue, Dr. Goldsmith."

"You shall have the best prologue I ever wrote," said Goldsmith.

And so he had.

When the house was still cheering at the conclusion of the epilogue, Goldsmith, overcome with emotion, hurried into the green room. Mrs. Abington was the first person whom he met. She held down her head, and affected a guilty look as she glanced at him sideways through half-closed eyes.

"Dr. Goldsmith," she said in a tone modulated to a point of humility, "I hope in your hour of triumph you will be generous to those who were foolish enough to doubt the greatness of your work. Oh, sir, I pray of you not to increase by your taunts the humiliation which I feel at having resigned my part in your comedy. Believe me, I have been punished sufficiently during the past two hours by hearing the words, which I might have spoken, applauded so rapturously coming from another."

"Taunts, my dear madam; who speaks of taunts?" said he. "Nay, I have a part in my mind for you already — that is, if you will be good enough to accept it."

"Oh, sir, you are generosity itself!" cried the actress, offering him both her

hands. "I shall not fail to remind you of your promise, Dr. Goldsmith."

And now the green room was being crowded by the members of the company and the distinguished friends of the author, who were desirous of congratulating him. Dr. Johnson's voice filled the room as his laughter had filled the theatre.

"We perceived the reason of your extraordinary and unusual modesty, Dr. Goldsmith, before your play was many minutes on the stage," said he. "You dog, you took as your example the Italians who, on the eve of Lent, indulge in a carnival, celebrating their farewell to flesh by a feast. On the same analogy you had a glut of modesty previous to bidding modesty good-bye forever; for to-night's performance will surely make you a coxcomb."

"Oh, I hope not, sir," said Goldsmith.

"No, you don't hope it, sir," cried Johnson. "You are thinking at this moment how much better you are than your betters —I see it on your face, you rascal."

"And he has a right to think so," said Mrs. Bunbury. "Come, Dr. Goldsmith, speak up, say something insulting to your betters."

"Certainly, madam," said Goldsmith. "Where are they?"

"Well said!" cried Edmund Burke.

"Nay, sir," said Johnson. "Dr. Goldsmith's satire is not strong enough. We expected something more violent. 'Tis like landing one in one's back garden when one has looked for Crackskull Common."

His mighty laughter echoed through the room and made the pictures shake on the walls.

Mary Horneck had not spoken. She had merely given her friend her hand. She knew that he would understand her unuttered congratulations, and she was not mistaken.

For the next quarter of an hour there was an exchange of graceful wit and gracious compliment between the various persons of distinction in the green room. Mrs. Thrale, with her usual discrimination, conceived the moment to be an opportune one for putting on what she fondly imagined was an Irish brogue, in rallying Goldsmith upon some of the points in his comedy. Miss Kauffman and Signor Baretti spoke Italian into Reynolds's ear-trumpet, and Edmund Burke talked wittily in the background with the Bunburys.

So crowded the room was, no one seemed to notice how an officer in uniform had stolen up to the side of Mary Horneck

where she stood behind Mr. Thrale and General Oglethorpe, and had withdrawn her into a corner, saying a whispered word to her. No one seemed to observe the action, though it was noticed by Goldsmith. He kept his eyes fixed upon the girl, and perceived that, while the man was speaking to her, her eyes were turned upon the floor and her left hand was pressed against her heart.

He kept looking at her all the time that Mrs. Thrale was rattling out her inanities, too anxious to see what effect she was producing upon the people within ear-shot to notice that the man whom she was addressing was paying no attention to her.

When the others as well ceased to pay any attention to her, she thought it advisable to bring her prattle to a close.

"Psha! Dr. Goldsmith," she cried. "We have given you our ears for more than two hours, and yet you refuse to listen to us for as many minutes."

"I protest, madam, that I have been absorbed," said Goldsmith. "Yes, you were remarking that——"

"That an Irishman, when he achieves a sudden success, can only be compared to a boy who has robbed an orchard," said the lady.

"True — very true, madam," said he. He saw Mary Horneck's hands clasp involuntarily for a moment as she spoke to the man who stood smiling beside her. She was not smiling.

"Yes, 'tis true; but why?" cried Mrs. Thrale, taking care that her voice did not appeal to Goldsmith only.

"Ah, yes; that's just it — why?" said he. Mary Horneck had turned away from the officer, and was coming slowly back to where her sister and Henry Bunbury were standing.

"Why?" said Mrs. Thrale shrilly. "Why? Why is an Irishman who has become suddenly successful like a boy who has robbed an orchard? Why, because his booty so distends his body that any one can perceive he has got in his pockets what he is not entitled to."

She looked around for appreciation, but failed to find it. She certainly did not perceive any appreciation of her pleasantry on the face of the successful Irishman before her. He was not watching Mary now. All his attention was given to the man to whom she had been talking, and who had gone to the side of Mrs. Abington, where he remained chatting with even more animation

than was usual for one to assume in the green room.

"You will join us at supper, Dr. Goldsmith?" said Mr. Thrale.

"Nay, sir!" cried Bunbury; "mine is a prior claim. Dr. Goldsmith agreed some days ago to honour my wife with his company to-night."

"What did I say, Goldy?" cried Johnson. "Was it not that, after the presentation of the comedy, you would receive a hundred invitations?"

"Well, sir, I have only received two since my play was produced, and one of them I accepted some days ago," said the Irishman, and Mrs. Thrale hoped she would be able to remember the bull in order to record it as conclusive evidence of Goldsmith's awkwardness of speech.

But Burke, who knew the exact nature of the Irish bull, only smiled. He laughed, however, when Goldsmith, assuming the puzzled expression of the Irishman who adds to the humour of his bull by pretending that it is involuntary, stumbled carefully in his words, simulating a man anxious to explain away a mistake that he has made. Goldsmith excelled at this form of humour but too well; hence, while the pages of every book that refers to him are

crowded with his brilliant sayings, the writers quote Garrick's lines in proof — proof positive, mind — that he "talked like poor Poll." He is the first man on record who has been condemned solely because of the exigencies of rhyme, and that, too, in the doggerel couplet of the most unscrupulous jester of the century.

Mary Horneck seems to have been the only one who understood him thoroughly. She has left her appreciation of his humour on record. The expression which she perceived upon his face immediately after he had given utterance to some delightful witticism — which the recording demons around him delighted to turn against himself — was the expression which makes itself apparent in Reynolds's portrait of him. The man who "talked like poor Poll" was the man who, even before he had done anything in literature except a few insignificant essays, was visited by Bishop Percy, though every visit entailed a climb up a rickety staircase and a seat on a rickety stool in a garret. Perhaps, however, the fastidious Percy was interested in ornithology and was ready to put himself to great inconvenience in order to hear parrot-talk.

While he was preparing to go with the Bunburys, Goldsmith noticed that the man who, after talking with Mary Horneck, had chatted with Mrs. Abington, had disappeared; and when the party whom he was accompanying to supper had left the room he remained for a few moments to make his adieux to the players. He shook hands with Mrs. Abington, saying—

"Have no fear that I shall forget my promise, madam."

"I shall take good care that you don't, sir," said she.

"Do not fancy that I shall neglect my own interests!" he cried, bowing as he took a step away from her. When he had taken another step he suddenly returned to her as if a sudden thought had struck him. "Why, if I wasn't going away without asking you what is the name of the gentleman in uniform who was speaking with you just now," said he. "I fancy I have met him somewhere, and one doesn't want to be rude."

"His name is Jackson," she replied. "Yes, Captain Jackson, though the Lord only knows what he is captain of."

"I have been mistaken; I know no one of that name," said Goldsmith. "'Tis as well I made sure; one may affront a gentle-

man as easily by professing to have met him as by forgetting that one has done so."

When he got outside, he found that Mary Horneck has been so greatly affected by the heat of the playhouse and the excitement of the occasion, she had thought it prudent to go away with the Reynoldses in their coach — her mother had preceded her by nearly half an hour.

The Bunburys found that apparently the excitement of the evening had produced a similar effect upon their guest. Although he admitted having eaten no dinner — Johnson and his friends had been by no means reticent on the subject of the dinner — he was without an appetite for the delightful little supper which awaited him at Mrs. Bunbury's. It was in vain too that his hostess showed herself to be in high spirits, and endeavoured to rally him after her own delightful fashion. He remained almost speechless the whole evening.

"Ah," said she, "I perceive clearly that your Little Comedy has been quite obscured by your great comedy. But wait until we get you down with us at Barton; you will find the first time we play loo together that a little comedy may become a great tragedy."

Bunbury declared that he was as poor company during the supper as if his play had been a mortifying failure instead of a triumphant success, and Goldsmith admitted that this was true, taking his departure as soon as he could without being rude.

He walked slowly through the empty streets to his chambers in Brick Court. But it was almost daylight before he went to bed.

All his life he had been looking forward to this night — the night that should put the seal upon his reputation, that should give him an incontestable place at the head of the imaginative writers of his period. And yet, now that the fame for which he had struggled with destiny was within his grasp, he felt more miserable than he had ever felt in his garret.

CHAPTER XV.

What did it all mean?

That was the question which was on his mind when he awoke. It did not refer to the reception given to "She Stoops to Conquer," which had placed him in the position he had longed for; it had reference solely to the strange incident which had occurred in the green room.

The way Mrs. Abington had referred to the man with whom Mary had been speaking was sufficient to let him know that he was not a man of reputation — he certainly had not seemed to Goldsmith to be a man of reputation either when he had seen him at the Pantheon or in the green room. He had worn an impudent and forward manner which, in spite of his glaring good looks that might possibly make him acceptable in the eyes of such generous ladies as Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Bulkley or Mrs. Woffington, showed that he was a person of no position in society. This conclusion to which Goldsmith had come was confirmed by the fact that no persons of any distinc-

tion who had been present at the Pantheon or the playhouse had shown that they were acquainted with him — no one person save only Mary Horneck.

Mary Horneck had by her act bracketed herself with Mrs. Abington and Mrs. Bulkley.

This he felt to be a very terrible thing. A month ago it would have been incredible to him that such a thing could be. Mary Horneck had invariably shunned in society those persons — women as well as men — who had shown themselves to be wanting in modesty. She had always detested the man — he was popular enough at that period — who had allowed innuendoes to do duty for wit; and she had also detested the woman — she is popular enough now — who had laughed at and made light of the innuendoes, bordering upon impropriety, of such a man.

And yet she had by her own act placed herself on a level with the least fastidious of the persons for whom she had always professed a contempt. The Duchess of Argyll and Lady Ancaster had, to be sure, shaken hands with the two actresses; but the first named at least had done so for her own ends, and had got pretty well sneered at in consequence. Mary Horneck stood

in a very different position from that occupied by the Duchess. While not deficient in charity, she had declined to follow the lead of any leader of fashion in this matter, and had held aloof from the actresses.

And yet he had seen her in secret conversation with a man at whom one of these same actresses had not hesitated to sneer as an impostor—a man who was clearly unacquainted with any other member of her family.

What could this curious incident mean?

The letters which had come from various friends congratulating him upon the success of the comedy lay unheeded by him by the side of those which had arrived—not a post had been missed—from persons who professed the most disinterested friendship for him, and were anxious to borrow from him a trifle until they also had made their success. Men whom he had rescued from starvation, from despair, from suicide, and who had, consequently, been living on him ever since, begged that he would continue his contributions on a more liberal scale now that he had in so marked a way improved his own position. But, for the first time, their letters lay unread and unanswered. (Three days actually passed before he sent his guineas flying to the

deserving and the undeserving alike. That was how he contrived to get rid of the thousands of pounds which he had earned since leaving his garret.)

His man servant had never before seen him so depressed as he was when he left his chambers.

He had made up his mind to go to Mary and tell her that he had seen what no one else either in the Pantheon or in the green room had seemed to notice in regard to that man whose name he had learned was Captain Jackson—he would tell her and leave it to her to explain what appeared to him more than mysterious. If any one had told him in respect to another girl all that he had noticed, he would have said that such a matter required no explanation; he had heard of the intrigues of young girls with men of the stamp of that Captain Jackson. With Mary Horneck, however, the matter was not so easily explained. The shrug and the raising of the eyebrows were singularly inappropriate to any consideration of an incident in which she was concerned.

He found before he had gone far from his chambers that the news of the success of the comedy had reached his neighbours. He was met by several of the students of

the Temple, with whom he had placed himself on terms of the pleasantest familiarity, and they all greeted him with a cordiality, the sincerity of which was apparent on their beaming faces. Among them was one youth named Grattan, who, being an Irishman, had early found a friend in Goldsmith. He talked years afterward of this early friendship of his.

Then the head porter, Ginger, for whom Goldsmith had always a pleasant word, and whose wife was his laundress—not wholly above suspicion as regards her honesty—stammered his congratulations, and received the crown which he knew was certain; and Goldsmith began to feel what he had always suspected—that there was a great deal of friendliness in the world for men who have become successful.

Long before he had arrived at the house of the Hornecks he was feeling that he would be the happiest man in London or the most miserable before another hour would pass.

He was fortunate enough to find, on arriving at the house, that Mary was alone. Mrs. Horneck and her son had gone out together in the coach some time before, the servant said, admitting him, for he was on terms of such intimacy with the family the

man did not think it necessary to inquire if Miss Horneck would see him. The man was grinning from ear to ear as he admitted the visitor.

"I hope, Doctor, that I know my business better than Diggory," he said, his grin expanding genially.

"Ah! so you were one of the gentlemen in the gallery?" said Goldsmith. "You had my destiny in your keeping for two hours?"

"I thought I'd ha' dropped, sir, when it came to Diggory at the table—and Mr. Marlow's man, sir—as drunk as a lord. 'I don't know what more you want unless you'd have had him soused in a beer barrel,' says he quite cool-like and satisfied—and it's the gentleman's own private house, after all. Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Didn't Sir Joshua's Ralph laugh till he thought our neighbours would think it undignified-like, and then sent us off worse than ever by trying to look solemn. Only some fools about us said the drunk servant was ungenteel; but young Mr. Northcote—Sir Joshua's young man, sir—he up and says that nature isn't always genteel, and that nature was above gentility, and so forth—I beg your pardon, Doctor, what was I thinking of? Why, sir, Diggory himself couldn't

ha' done worse than me—talking so familiar-like, instead of showing you up."

"Nay, sir," said Goldsmith, "the patron has the privilege of addressing his humble servant at what length he please. You are one of my patrons, George; but strike me dumb, sir, I'll be patronised by you no longer; and, to put a stop to your airs, I'll give you half a dozen tickets for my benefit, and that will turn the tables on you, my fine fellow."

"Oh, Doctor, you are too kind, sir," whispered the man, for he had led the way to the drawing-room door. "I hope I've not been too bold, sir. If I told them in the kitchen about forgetting myself they'd dub me Diggory without more ado. There'll be Diggorys enough in the servants' halls this year, sir."

In another moment Goldsmith was in the presence of Mary Horneck.

She was seated on a low chair at the window. He could not fail to notice that she looked ill, though it was not until she had risen, trying to smile, that he saw how very ill she was. Her face, which he had scarcely ever seen otherwise than bright, had a worn appearance, her eyes were sunken through much weeping, and there was a frightened look in them that touched him deeply.

"You will believe me when I say how sorry I was not to be able to do honour last night to the one whom I honour most of all men," she said, giving him her hand. "But it was impossible—oh, quite impossible, for me to sup even with my sister and you. Ah, it was pitiful! considering how I had been looking forward to your night of triumph, my dear friend."

"It was pitiful, indeed, dear child," said he. "I was looking forward to that night also—I don't know for how many years—all my life, it seems to me."

"Never mind!" she cried, with a feeble attempt at brightness. "Never mind! your night of triumph came, and no one can take it away from you now; every one in the town is talking of your comedy and its success."

"There is no one to whom success is sweeter than it is to me," said Goldsmith. "But you know me too well, my Jessamy Bride, to think for a single moment that I could enjoy my success when my dearest friend was miserable."

"I know it," she said, giving him her hand once more. "I know it, and knowing it last night only made me feel more miserable."

"What is the matter, Mary?" he asked her after a pause. "Once before I begged

of you to tell me if you could. I say again that perhaps I may be able to help you out of your trouble, though I know that I am not a man of many resources."

"I cannot tell you," she said slowly, but with great emphasis. "There are some sorrows that a woman must bear alone. It is Heaven's decree that a woman's sorrow is only doubled when she tries to share it with another — either with a sister or with a brother — even so good a friend as Oliver Goldsmith."

"That such should be your thought shows how deep is your misery," said he. "I cannot believe that it could be increased by your confiding its origin to me."

"Ah, I see everything but too plainly," she cried, throwing herself down on her chair once more and burying her face in her hands. "Why, all my misery arises from the possibility of some one knowing whence it arises. Oh, I have said too much," she cried piteously. She had sprung to her feet and was standing looking with eager eyes into his. "Pray forget what I have said, my friend. The truth is that I do not know what I say; oh, pray go away — go away and leave me alone with my sorrow — it is my own — no one has a right to it but myself."

There was actually a note of jealousy in her voice, and there came a little flash from her eyes as she spoke.

"No, I will not go away from you, my poor child," said he. "You shall tell me first what that man to whom I saw you speak in the green room last night has to do with your sorrow."

She did not give any visible start when he had spoken. There was a curious look of cunning in her eyes — a look that made him shudder, so foreign was it to her nature, which was ingenuous to a fault.

"A man? Did I speak to a man?" she said slowly, affecting an endeavour to recall a half-forgotten incident of no importance. "Oh, yes, I suppose I spoke to quite a number of men in the green room. How crowded it was! And it became so heated! Ah, how terrible the actresses looked in their paint! — almost as terrible as a lady of quality!"

"Poor child!" said he. "My heart bleeds for you. In striving to hide everything from me you have told me all — all except — listen to me, Mary. Nothing that I can hear — nothing that you can tell me — will cause me to think the least that is ill of you; but I have seen enough to make

me aware that that man — Captain Jackson, he calls himself —— "

"How did you find out his name?" she said in a whisper. "I did not tell you his name even at the Pantheon."

"No, you did not; but yet I had no difficulty in finding it out. Tell me why it is that you should be afraid of that man. Do you not know as well as I do that he is a rascal? Good heavens! Mary, could you fail to see rascal written on his countenance for all men and women to read?"

"He is worse than you or any one can imagine, and yet —— "

"How has he got you in his power — that is what you are going to tell me."

"No, no; that is impossible. You do not know what you ask. You do not know me, or you would not ask me to tell you."

"What would you have me think, child?"

"Think the worst—the worst that your kind heart can think—only leave me—leave me. God may prove less unkind than He seems to me. I may soon die. 'The only way her guilt to cover.'"

"I cannot leave you, and I say again that I refuse to believe anything ill of you. Do you really think that it is possible for me to have written so much as I have written about men and women without being able

to know when a woman is altogether good —a man altogether bad? I know you, my dear, and I have seen him. Why should you be afraid of him? Think of the friends you have."

"It is the thought of them that frightens me. I have friends now, but if they knew all that that man can tell, they would fly from me with loathing. Oh! when I think of it all, I abhor myself. Oh, fool, fool, fool! Was ever woman such a fool before?"

"For God's sake, child, don't talk in that strain."

"It is the only strain in which I can talk. It is the cry of a wretch who stands on the brink of a precipice and knows that hands are being thrust out behind to push her over."

She tottered forward with wild eyes, under the influence of her own thought. He caught her and supported her in his arms.

"That shows you, my poor girl, that if there are unkind hands behind you, there are still some hands that are ready to keep your feet from slipping. There are hands that will hold you back from that precipice, or else those who hold them out to you will go over the brink with you. Ah, my dear, dear girl, nothing can happen to make you

despair. In another year — perhaps in another month — you will wonder how you could ever have taken so gloomy a view of the present hour."

A gleam of hope came into her eyes. Only for an instant it remained there, however. Then she shook her head, saying —

"Alas! Alas!"

She seated herself once more, but he retained her hand in one of his own, laying his other caressingly on her head.

"You are surely the sweetest girl that ever lived," said he. "You fill with your sweetness the world through which I walk. I do not say that it would be a happiness for me to die for you, for you know that if my dying could save you from your trouble I would not shrink from it. What I do say is that I should like to live for you — to live to see happiness once again brought to you. And yet you will tell me nothing — you will not give me a chance of helping you."

She shook her head sadly.

"I dare not — I dare not," she said. "I dare not run the chance of forfeiting your regard forever."

"Good-bye," he said after a pause.

He felt her fingers press his own for a moment; then he dropped her hand and

walked toward the door. Suddenly, however, he returned to her.

"Mary," he said, "I will seek no more to learn your secret; I will only beg of you to promise me that you will not meet that man again—that you will hold no communication with him. If you were to be seen in the company of such a man—talking to him as I saw you last night—what would people think? The world is always ready to put the worst possible construction upon anything unusual that it sees. You will promise me, my dear?"

"Alas! alas!" she cried piteously. "I cannot make you such a promise. You will not do me the injustice to believe that I spoke to him of my own free will?"

"What, you would have me believe that he possesses sufficient power over you to make you do his bidding? Great God! that can never be!"

"That is what I have said to myself day by day; he cannot possess that power over me—he cannot be such a monster as to . . . oh, I cannot speak to you more! Leave me—leave me! I have been a fool and I must pay the penalty of my folly."

Before he could make a reply, the door was opened and Mrs. Bunbury danced into

the room, her mother following more sedately and with a word of remonstrance.

"Nonsense, dear Mamma," cried Little Comedy. "What Mary needs is some one who will raise her spirits — Dr. Goldsmith, for instance. He has, I am sure, laughed her out of her whimsies. Have you succeeded, Doctor? Nay, you don't look like it, nor does she, poor thing! I felt certain that you would be in the act of reading a new comedy to her, but I protest it would seem as if it was a tragedy that engrossed your attention. He doesn't look particularly like our agreeable Rattle at the present moment, does he, Mamma? And it was the same at supper last night. It might have been fancied that he was celebrating a great failure instead of a huge success."

For the next quarter of an hour the lively girl chatted away, imitating the various actors who had taken part in the comedy, and giving the author some account of what the friends whom she had met that day said of the piece. He had never before felt the wearisomeness of a perpetually sparkling nature. Her laughter grated upon his ears; her gaiety was out of tune with his mood. He took leave of the family at the first breathing space that the girl permitted him.

CHAPTER XVI.

He felt that the result of his interview with Mary was to render more mysterious than ever the question which he had hoped to solve.

He wondered if he was more clumsy of apprehension than other men, as he had come away from her without learning her secret. He was shrewd enough to know that the majority of men to whom he might give a detailed account of his interview with the girl — a detailed account of his observation of her upon the appearance of Captain Jackson first at the Pantheon, then in the green room of Covent Garden — would have no trouble whatever in accounting for her behaviour upon both occasions. He could see the shrugs of the cynical, the head-shakings of those who professed to be vastly grieved.

Ah, they did not know this one girl. They were ready to lump all womankind together and to suppose that it would be impossible for one woman to be swayed

by other impulses than were common to womankind generally,

But he knew this girl, and he felt that it was impossible to believe that she was otherwise than good. Nothing would force him to think anything evil regarding her.

"She is not as others," was the phrase that was in his mind — the thought that was in his heart.

He did not pause to reflect upon the strangeness of the circumstance that when a man wishes to think the best of a woman he says she is not as other women are.

He did not know enough of men and women to be aware of the fact that when a man makes up his mind that a woman is altogether different from other women, he loves that woman.

He felt greatly grieved to think that he had been unable to search out the heart of her mystery; but the more he recalled of the incidents that had occurred upon the two occasions when that man Jackson had been in the same apartment as Mary Horneck, the more convinced he became that the killing of that man would tend to a happy solution of the question which was puzzling him.

After giving this subject all his thought for the next day or two, he went to his

friend Baretti, and presented him with tickets for one of the author's nights for "She Stoops to Conquer." Baretti was a well known personage in the best literary society in London, having consolidated his reputation by the publication of his English and Italian dictionary. He had been Johnson's friend since his first exile from Italy, and it was through his influence Baretti, on the formation of the Royal Academy, had been appointed Secretary for Foreign Correspondence. To Johnson also he owed the more remunerative appointment of Italian tutor at the Thrales'. He had frequently dined with Goldsmith at his chambers.

Baretti expressed himself grateful for the tickets, and complimented the author of the play upon his success.

"If one may measure the success of a play by the amount of envy it creates in the breasts of others, yours is a huge triumph," said the Italian.

"Yes," said Goldsmith quickly, "that is just what I wish to have a word with you about. The fact is, Baretti, I am not so good a swordsman as I should be."

"What," cried Baretti, smiling as he looked at the man before him, who had certainly not the physique of the ideal swords-

man. "What, do you mean to fight your detractors? Take my advice, my friend, let the pen be your weapon if such is your intention. If you are attacked with the pen you should reply with the same weapon, and with it you may be pretty certain of victory."

"Ah, yes; but there are cases — well, one never knows what may happen, and a man in my position should be prepared for any emergency. I can do a little sword play — enough to enable me to face a moderately good antagonist. A pair of coxcombs insulted me a few days ago and I retorted in a way that I fancy might be thought effective by some people."

"How did you retort?"

"Well, I warned the passers-by that the pair were pickpockets disguised as gentlemen."

"Bacchus! An effective retort! And then ——"

"Then I turned down a side street and half drew my sword; but, after making a feint of following me, they gave themselves over to a bout of swearing and went on. What I wish is to be directed by you to any compatriot of yours who would give me lessons in fencing. Do you know of any first-rate master of the art in London?"

The Italian could not avoid laughing, Goldsmith spoke so seriously.

"You would like to find a maestro who would be capable of turning you into a first-rate swordsman within the space of a week?"

"Nay, sir, I am not unreasonable; I would give him a fortnight.'

"Better make it five years."

"Five years?"

"My dear friend, I pray of you not to make me your first victim if I express to you my opinion that you are not the sort of man who can be made a good swordsman. You were born, not made, a poet, and let me tell you that a man must be a born swordsman if he is to take a front place among swordsmen. I am in the same situation as yourself: I am so short-sighted I could make no stand against an antagonist. No, sir, I shall never kill a man."

He laughed as men laugh who do not understand what fate has in store for them.

"I have made up my mind to have some lessons," said Goldsmith, "and I know there are no better teachers than your countrymen, Baretti."

"Psha!" said Baretti. "There are clever fencers in Italy, just as there are in England. But if you have made up your

mind to have an Italian teacher, I shall find out one for you and send him to your chambers. If you are wise, however, you will stick to your pen, which you wield with such dexterity, and leave the more harmless weapon to others of coarser fiber than yourself."

"There are times when it is necessary for the most pacific of men — nay, even an Irishman — to show himself adroit with a sword," said Goldsmith; "and so I shall be forever grateful to you for your services towards this end."

He was about to walk away when a thought seemed to strike him.

"You will add to my debt to you if you allow this matter to go no further than ourselves. You can understand that I have no particular wish to place myself at the mercy of Dr. Johnson or Garrick," said he. "I fancy I can see Garrick's mimicry of a meeting between me and a fencing master."

"I shall keep it a secret," laughed Baretti; "but mind, sir, when you run your first man through the vitals you need not ask me to attend the court as a witness as to your pacific character."

(When the two did appear in court it was Goldsmith who had been called as a witness on behalf of Baretti, who stood in

the dock charged with the murder of a man.)

He felt very much better after leaving Baretti. He felt that he had taken at least one step on behalf of Mary Horneck. He knew his own nature so imperfectly that he thought if he were to engage in a duel with Captain Jackson and disarm him he would not hesitate to run him through a vital part.

He returned to his chambers and found awaiting him a number of papers containing some flattering notices of his comedy, and lampoons upon Colman for his persistent ill treatment of the play. In fact, the topic of the town was Colman's want of judgment in regard to this matter, and so strongly did the critics and lampooners, malicious as well as genial, express themselves, that the manager found life in London unbearable. He posted off to Bath, but only to find that his tormentors had taken good care that his reputation should precede him thither. His chastisement with whips in London was mild in comparison with his chastisement with scorpions at Bath; and now Goldsmith found waiting for him a letter from the unfortunate man imploring the poet to intercede for him, and get the lampooners to refrain from molesting him further.

If Goldsmith had been in a mood to appreciate a triumph he would have enjoyed reading this letter from the man who had given him so many months of pain. He was not, however, in such a mood. He looked for his triumph in another direction.

After dressing he went to the Mitre for dinner, and found in the tavern several of his friends. Cradock had run up from the country, and with him were Whitefoord and Richard Burke.

He was rather chilled at his reception by the party. They were all clearly ill at ease in his presence for some reason of which he was unaware; and when he began to talk of the criticisms which his play had received, the uneasiness of his friends became more apparent.

He could stand this unaccountable behaviour no longer, and inquired what was the reason of their treating him so coldly.

"You were talking about me just before I entered," said he: "I always know on entering a room if my friends have been talking about me. Now, may I ask what this admirable party were saying regarding me? Tell it to me in your own way. I don't charge you to be frank with me. Frankness I hold to be an excellent cloak for one's real opinion. Tell me all that you can tell — as

simply as you can — without prejudice to your own reputation for oratory, Richard. What is the matter, sir?"

Richard Burke usually was the merriest of the company, and the most fluent. But now he looked down, and the tone was far from persuasive in which he said —

"You may trust — whatever may be spoken, or written, about you, Goldsmith — we are your unalterable friends."

"Psha, sir!" cried Goldsmith, "don't I know that already? Were you not all my friends in my day of adversity, and do you expect me suddenly to overthrow all my ideas of friendship by assuming that now that I have bettered my position in the world my friends will be less friendly?"

"Goldsmith," said Steevens, "we received a copy of the *London Packet* half an hour before you entered. We were discussing the most infamous attack that has ever been made upon a distinguished man of letters."

"At the risk of being thought a conceited puppy, sir, I suppose I may assume that the distinguished man of letters which the article refers to is none other than myself," said Goldsmith.

"It is a foul and scurrilous slander upon you, sir," said Steevens. "It is the most

contemptible thing ever penned by that scoundrel Kenrick."

"Do not annoy yourselves on my account, gentlemen," said Goldsmith. "You know how little I think of anything that Kenrick may write of me. Once I made him eat his words, and the fit of indigestion that that operation caused him is still manifest in all he writes about me. I tell you that it is out of the power of that cur to cause me any inconvenience. Where is the *Packet?*"

"There is no gain in reading such contemptible stuff," said Cradock. "Take my advice, Goldsmith, do not seek to become aware of the precise nature of that scoundrel's slanders."

"Nay, to shirk them would be to suggest that they have the power to sting me," replied Goldsmith. "And so, sir, let me have the *Packet*, and you shall see me read the article without blenching. I tell you, Mr. Cradock, no man of letters is deserving of an eulogy who is scared by a detraction."

"Nay, Goldsmith, but one does not examine under a magnifying glass the garbage that a creature of the kennel flings at one," said Steevens.

"Come, sirs, I insist," cried Goldsmith. "Why do I waste time with you?" he added, turning round and going to the door of the

room. "I waste time here when I can read the *Packet* in the bar."

"Hold, sir," said Burke. "Here is the thing. If you will read it, you would do well to read it where you will find a dozen hands stretched forth to you in affection and sympathy. Oliver Goldsmith, this is the paper and here are our hands. We look on you as the greatest of English writers—the truest of English poets—the best of Englishmen."

"You overwhelm me, sir. After this, what does it matter if Kenrick flings himself upon me?"

He took the *Packet*. It opened automatically, where an imaginary letter to himself, signed "Tom Tickle," appeared.

He held it up to the light; a smile was at first on his features; he had nerved himself to the ordeal. His friends would not find that he shrank from it—he even smiled, after a manner, as he read the thing—but suddenly his jaw fell, his face became pale. In another second he had crushed the paper between his hands. He crushed it and tore it, and then flung it on the floor and trampled on it. He walked to and fro in the room with bent head. Then he did a strange thing: he removed his sword and placed it in a corner, as if he were going to dine, and,

without a word to any of his friends, left the room, carrying with him his cane only.

CHAPTER XVII.

Kenrick's article in the *London Packet* remains to this day as the vilest example of scurrility published under the form of criticism. All the venom that can be engendered by envy and malice appears in every line of it. It contains no suggestion of literary criticism; it contains no clever phrase. It is the shriek of a vulgar wretch dominated by the demon of jealousy. The note of the Gadarene herd sounds through it, strident and strenuous. It exists as the worst outcome of the period when every garret scribbler emulated "Junius," both as regards style and method, but only succeeded in producing the shriek of a wildcat, instead of the thunder of the unknown master of vituperation.

Goldsmith read the first part of the scurrility without feeling hurt; but when he came to that vile passage—"For hours the *great* Goldsmith will stand arranging his grotesque orang-outang figure before a pier-glass. Was but the lovely H——k as much enamoured, you would not sigh, my

gentle swain"—his hands tore the paper in fury.

He had received abuse in the past without being affected by it. He did not know much about natural history, but he knew enough to make him aware of the fact that the skunk tribe cannot change their nature. He did not mind any attack that might be made upon himself; but to have the name that he most cherished of all names associated with his in an insult that seemed to him diabolical in the manner of its delivery, was more than he could bear. He felt as if a foul creature had crept behind him and had struck from thence the one who had been kindest to him of all the people in the world.

There was the horrible thing printed for all eyes in the town to read. There was the thing that had in a moment raised a barrier between him and the girl who was all in all to him. How could he look Mary Horneck in the face again? How could he ever meet any member of the family to whom he had been the means of causing so much pain as the Hornecks would undoubtedly feel when they read that vile thing? He felt that he himself was to blame for the appearance of that insult upon the girl. He felt that if the attack had not been made upon him she

would certainly have escaped. Yes, that blow had been struck by a hand that stretched over him to her.

His first impulse had sent his hand to his sword. He had shown himself upon several occasions to be a brave man; but instead of drawing his sword he had taken it off and had placed it out of the reach of his hands.

And this was the man who, a few hours earlier in the day, had been assuming that if a certain man were in his power he would not shrink from running him through the body with his sword.

On leaving the Mitre he did not seek any one with whom he might take counsel as to what course it would be wise for him to pursue. He knew that he had adopted a wise course when he had placed his sword in a corner; he felt he did not require any further counsel. His mind was made up as to what he should do, and all that he now feared was that some circumstance might prevent his realising his intention.

He grasped his cane firmly, and walked excitedly to the shop of Evans, the publisher of the *London Packet*. He arrived almost breathless at the place — it was in Little Queen street — and entered the shop demanding to see Kenrick, who, he knew

was employed on the premises. Evans, the publisher, being in a room the door of which was open, and hearing a stranger's voice speaking in a high tone, came out to the shop. Goldsmith met him, asking to see Kenrick; and Evans denied that he was in the house.

"I require you to tell me if Kenrick is the writer of that article upon me which appeared in the *Packet* of to-day. My name is Goldsmith!" said the visitor.

The shopkeeper smiled.

"Does anything appear about you in the *Packet*, sir?" he said, over-emphasising the tone of complete ignorance and inquiry.

"You are the publisher of the foul thing, you rascal!" cried Goldsmith, stung by the supercilious smile of the man; "you are the publisher of this gross outrage upon an innocent lady, and, as the ruffian who wrote it struck at her through me, so I strike at him through you."

He rushed at the man, seized him by the throat, and struck at him with his cane. The bookseller shouted for help while he struggled with his opponent, and Kenrick himself, who had been within the shelter of a small wooden-partitioned office from the moment of Goldsmith's entrance, and had,

consequently, overheard every word of the recrimination and all the noise of the scuffle that followed, ran to the help of his paymaster. It was quite in keeping with his cowardly nature to hold back from the cane of Evans's assailant. He did so, and, looking round for a missile to fling at Goldsmith, he caught up a heavy lamp that stood on a table and hurled it at his enemy's head. Missing this mark, however, it struck Evans on the chest and knocked him down, Goldsmith falling over him. This Kenrick perceived to be his chance. He lifted one of the small shop chairs and rushed forward to brain the man whom he had libelled; but, before he could carry out his purpose, a man ran into the shop from the street, and, flinging him and the chair into a corner, caught Goldsmith, who had risen, by the shoulder and hurried him into a hackney-coach, which drove away.

The man was Captain Higgins. When Goldsmith had failed to return to the room in the Mitre where he had left his sword, his friends became uneasy regarding him, and Higgins, suspecting his purpose in leaving the tavern, had hastened to Evans's, hoping to be in time to prevent the assault

which he felt certain Goldsmith intended to commit upon the person of Kenrick.

He ordered the coachman to drive to the Temple, and took advantage of the occasion to lecture the excited man upon the impropriety of his conduct. A lecture on the disgrace attached to a public fight, when delivered in a broad Irish brogue, can rarely be effective, and Captain Higgins's counsel of peace only called for Goldsmith's ridicule.

"Don't tell me what I ought to have done or what I ought to have abstained from doing," cried the still breathless man. "I did what my manhood prompted me to do, and that is just what you would have done yourself, my friend. God knows I didn't mean to harm Evans—it was that reptile Kenrick whom I meant to flail; but when Evans undertook to shelter him, what was left to me, I ask you, sir?"

"You were a fool, Oliver," said his countryman; "you made a great mistake. Can't you see that you should never go about such things single-handed? You should have brought with you a full-sized friend who would not hesitate to use his fists in the interests of fair play. Why the devil, sir, didn't you give me a hint of

what was on your mind when you left the tavern?"

"Because I didn't know myself what was on my mind," replied Goldsmith. "And, besides," he added, "I 'm not the man to carry bruisers about with me to engage in my quarrels. I don't regret what I have done to-day. I have taught the reptiles a lesson, even though I have to pay for it. Kenrick won't attack me again so long as I am alive."

He was right. It was when he was lying in his coffin, yet unburied, that Kenrick made his next attack upon him in that scurrility of phrase of which he was a master.

When this curious exponent of the advantages of peace had left him at Brick Court, and his few incidental bruises were attended to by John Eyles, poor Oliver's despondency returned to him. He did not feel very like one who has got the better of another in a quarrel, though he knew that he had done all that he said he had done: he had taught his enemies a lesson.

But then he began to think about Mary Horneck, who had been so grossly insulted simply because of her kindness to him. He felt that if she had been less gracious to him — if she had treated him as Mrs.

Thrale, for example, had been accustomed to treat him — regarding him and his defects merely as excuses for displaying her own wit, she would have escaped all mention by Kenrick. Yes, he still felt that he was the cause of her being insulted, and he would never forgive himself for it.

But what did it matter whether he forgave himself or not? It was the forgiveness of Mary Horneck and her friends that he had good reason to think about.

The longer he considered this point the more convinced he became that he had forfeited forever the friendship which he had enjoyed for several years, and which had been a dear consolation to him in his hours of despondency. A barrier had been raised between himself and the Hornecks that could not be surmounted.

He sat down at his desk and wrote a letter to Mary, asking her forgiveness for the insult for which he said he felt himself to be responsible. He could not, he added, expect that in the future it would be allowed to him to remain on the same terms of intimacy with her and her family as had been permitted to him in the past.

Suddenly he recollected the unknown trouble which had been upon the girl when he had last seen her. She was not yet free

from that secret sorrow which he had hoped it might be in his power to dispel. He and he only had seen Captain Jackson speaking to her in the green room at Covent Garden, and he only had good reason to believe that her sorrow had originated with that man. Under these circumstances he asked himself if he was justified in leaving her to fight her battle alone. She had not asked him to be her champion, and he felt that if she had done so, it was a very poor champion that he would have made; but still he knew more of her grief than any one else, and he believed he might be able to help her.

He tore up the letter which he had written to her.

"I will not leave her," he cried. "Whatever may happen — whatever blame people who do not understand may say I have earned, I will not leave her until she has been freed from whatever distress she is in."

He had scarcely seated himself when his servant announced Captain Horneck.

For an instant Goldsmith was in trepidation. Mary Horneck's brother had no reason to visit him except as he himself had visited Evans and Kenrick. But with

the sound of Captain Horneck's voice his trepidation passed away.

"Ha, my little hero!" Horneck cried before he had quite crossed the threshold. "What is this that is the talk of the town? Good Lord! what are things coming to when the men of letters have taken to beating the booksellers?"

"You have heard of it?" said Oliver. "You have heard of the quarrel, but you cannot have heard of the reason for it!"

"What, there is something behind the *London Packet*, after all?" cried Captain Horneck.

"Something behind it—something behind that slander—the mention of your sister's name, sir? What should be behind it, sir?"

"My dear old Nolly, do you fancy that the friendship which exists between my family and you is too weak to withstand such a strain as this—a strain put upon it by a vulgar scoundrel, whose malice so far as you are concerned is as well known as his envy of your success?"

Goldsmith stared at him for some moments and then at the hand which he was holding out. He seemed to be making an effort to speak, but the words never came. Suddenly he caught Captain Horneck's

hand in both of his own, and held it for a moment; but then, quite overcome, he dropped it, and burying his face in his hands he burst into tears.

Horneck watched him for some time, and was himself almost equally affected.

"Come, come, old friend," he said at last, placing his hand affectionately on Goldsmith's shoulder. "Come, come; this will not do. There is nothing to be so concerned about. What, man! are you so little aware of your own position in the world as to fancy that the Horneck family regard your friendship for them otherwise than an honour? Good heavens, Dr. Goldsmith, don't you perceive that we are making a bold bid for immortality through our names being associated with yours? Who in a hundred years — in fifty years — would know anything of the Horneck family if it were not for their association with you? The name of Oliver Goldsmith will live so long as there is life in English letters, and when your name is spoken the name of your friends the Hornecks will not be forgotten."

He tried to comfort his unhappy friend, but though he remained at his chambers for half an hour, he got no word from Oliver Goldsmith.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The next day the news of the prompt and vigorous action taken by Goldsmith in respect of the scurrility of Kenrick had spread round the literary circle of which Johnson was the centre, and the general feeling was one of regret that Kenrick had not received the beating instead of Evans. Of course, Johnson, who had threatened two writers with an oak stick, shook his head — and his body as well — in grave disapproval of Goldsmith's use of his cane; but Reynolds, Garrick and the two Burkes were of the opinion that a cane had never been more appropriately used.

What Colman's attitude was in regard to the man who had put thousands of pounds into his pocket may be gathered from the fact that, shortly afterwards, he accepted and produced a play of Kenrick's at his theatre, which was more decisively damned than any play ever produced under Colman's management.

Of course, the act of an author in resenting the scurrility of a man who had de-

livered his stab under the cloak of criticism, called for a howl of indignation from the scores of hacks who existed at that period — some in the pay of the government others of the opposition — solely by stabbing men of reputation; for the literary cut-throat, in the person of the professional libeller-critic, and the literary cut-purse, in the form of the professional blackmailer, followed as well as preceded Junius.

The howl went up that the liberty of the press was in danger, and the public, who took then, as they do now, but the most languid interest in the quarrels of literature, were forced to become the unwilling audience. When, however, Goldsmith published his letter in the *Daily Advertiser* — surely the manliest manifesto ever printed — the howls became attenuated, and shortly afterwards died away. It was admitted, even by Dr. Johnson — and so emphatically, too, that his biographer could not avoid recording his judgment — that Goldsmith had increased his reputation by the incident.

(Boswell paid Goldsmith the highest compliment in his power on account of this letter, for he fancied that it had been written by Johnson, and received another rebuke from the latter to gloat over.)

For some days Goldsmith had many visitors at his chambers, including Baretti, who remarked that he took it for granted that he need not now search for the fencing-master, as his quarrel was over. Goldsmith allowed him to go away under the impression that he had foreseen the quarrel when he had consulted him regarding the fencing-master.

But at the end of a week, when Evans had been conciliated by the friends of his assailant, Goldsmith, on returning to his chambers one afternoon, found Johnson gravely awaiting his arrival. His hearty welcome was not responded to quite so heartily by his visitor.

"Dr. Goldsmith," said Johnson, after he had made some of those grotesque movements with which his judicial utterances were invariably accompanied — "Dr. Goldsmith, we have been friends for a good many years, sir."

"That fact constitutes one of my pleasantest reflections, sir," said Goldsmith. He spoke with some measure of hesitancy, for he had a feeling that his friend had come to him with a reproof. He had expected him to come rather sooner.

"If our friendship was not such as it is, I would not have come to you to-day, sir, to

tell you that you have been a fool," said Johnson.

"Yes, sir," said Goldsmith, "you were right in assuming that you could say nothing to me that would offend me; I know that I have been a fool — at many times — in many ways."

"I suspected that you were a fool before I set out to come hither, sir, and since I entered this room I have convinced myself of the accuracy of my suspicion."

"If a man suspects that I am a fool before seeing me, sir, what will he do after having seen me?" said Goldsmith.

"Dr. Goldsmith," resumed Johnson, "it was, believe me, sir, a great pain to me to find, as I did in this room — on that desk — such evidence of your folly as left no doubt on my mind in this matter."

"What do you mean, sir? My folly — evidence — on that desk? Ah, I know now what you mean. Yes, poor Filby's bill for my last coats and I suppose for a few others that have long ago been worn threadbare. Alas, sir, who could resist Filby's flatteries?"

"Sir," said Johnson, "you gave me permission several years ago to read any manuscript of yours in prose or verse at which you were engaged."

"And the result of your so honouring me, Dr. Johnson, has invariably been advantageous to my work. What, sir, have I ever failed in respect for your criticisms? Have I ever failed to make a change that you suggested?"

"It was in consideration of that permission, Dr. Goldsmith, that while waiting for you here to-day, I read several pages in your handwriting," said Johnson sternly.

Goldsmith glanced at his desk.

"I forget now what work was last under my hand," said he; "but whatever it was, sir ——"

"I have it here, sir," said Johnson, and Goldsmith for the first time noticed that he held in one of his hands a roll of manuscript. Johnson laid it solemnly on the table, and in a moment Goldsmith perceived that it consisted of a number of the poems which he had written to the Jessamy Bride, but which he had not dared to send to her. He had had them before him on the desk that day while he asked himself what would be the result of sending them to her.

He was considerably disturbed when he discovered what it was that his friend had been reading in his absence, and his attempt to treat the matter lightly only made his confusion appear the greater.

"Oh, those verses, sir," he stammered; "they are poor things. You will, I fear, find them too obviously defective to merit criticism; they resemble my oldest coat, sir, which I designed to have repaired for my man, but Filby returned it with the remark that it was not worth the cost of repairing. If you were to become a critic of those trifles——"

"They are trifles, Goldsmith, for they represent the trifling of a man of determination with his own future—with his own happiness and the happiness of others."

"I protest, sir, I scarcely understand——"

"Your confusion, sir, shows that you do understand."

"Nay, sir, you do not suppose that the lines which a poet writes in the character of a lover should be accepted as damning evidence that his own heart speaks."

"Goldsmith, I am not the man to be deceived by any literary work that may come under my notice. I have read those verses of yours; sir, your heart throbs in every line."

"Nay, sir, you would make me believe that my poor attempts to realise the feelings of one who has experienced the tender passion are more happy than I fancied."

"Sir, this dissimulation is unworthy of you."

"Sir, I protest that I — that is — no, I shall protest nothing. You have spoken the truth, sir; any dissimulation is unworthy of me. I wrote those verses out of my own heart — God knows if they are the first that came from my heart — I own it, sir. Why should I be ashamed to own it?"

"My poor friend, you have been Fortune's plaything all your life; but I did not think that she was reserving such a blow as this for you."

"A blow, sir? Nay, I cannot regard as a blow that which has been the sweetest — the only consolation of a life that has known but few consolations."

"Sir, this will not do. A man has the right to make himself as miserable as he pleases, but he has no right to make others miserable. Dr. Goldsmith, you have ill-repaid the friendship which Miss Horneck and her family have extended to you."

"I have done nothing for which my conscience reproaches me, Dr. Johnson. What, sir, if I have ventured to love that lady whose name had better remain unspoken by either of us — what if I do love her? Where is the indignity that I do either to her or to the sentiment of friendship?

Does one offer an indignity to friendship by loving?"

"My poor friend, you are laying up a future of misery for yourself—yes, and for her too; for she has a kind heart, and if she should come to know—and, indeed, I think she must—that she has been the cause, even though the unwilling cause, of suffering on the part of another, she will not be free from unhappiness."

"She need not know, she need not know. I have been a bearer of burdens all my life. I will assume without repining this new burden."

"Nay, sir, if I know your character—and I believe I have known it for some years—you will cast that burden away from you. Life, my dear friend, you and I have found to be not a meadow wherein to sport, but a battle field. We have been in the struggle, you and I, and we have not come out of it unscathed. Come, sir, face boldly this new enemy, and put it to flight before it prove your ruin."

"Enemy, you call it, sir? You call that which gives everything there is of beauty—everything there is of sweetness—in the life of man—you call it our enemy?"

"I call it *your* enemy, Goldsmith."

"Why mine only? What is there about me that makes me different from other men? Why should a poet be looked upon as one who is shut out for evermore from all the tenderness, all the grace of life, when he has proved to the world that he is most capable of all mankind of appreciating tenderness and grace? What trick of nature is this? What paradox for men to vex their souls over? Is the poet to stand aloof from men, evermore looking on happiness through another man's eyes? If you answer 'yes,' then I say that men who are not poets should go down on their knees and thank Heaven that they are not poets. Happy it is for mankind that Heaven has laid on few men the curse of being poets. For myself, I feel that I would rather be a man for an hour than a poet for all time."

"Come, sir, let us not waste our time railing against Heaven. Let us look at this matter as it stands at present. You have been unfortunate enough to conceive a passion for a lady whose family could never be brought to think of you seriously as a lover. You have been foolish enough to regard their kindness to you — their acceptance of you as a friend — as encouragement in your mad aspirations."

"You have no right to speak so authoritatively, sir."

"I have the right as your oldest friend, Goldsmith; and you know I speak only what is true. Does your own conscience, your own intelligence, sir, not tell you that the lady's family would regard her acceptance of you as a lover in the light of the greatest misfortune possible to happen to her? Answer me that question, sir."

But Goldsmith made no attempt to speak. He only buried his face in his hands, resting his elbows on the table at which he sat.

"You cannot deny what you know to be a fact, sir," resumed Johnson. "I will not humiliate you by suggesting that the young lady herself would only be moved to laughter were you to make serious advances to her; but I ask you if you think her family would not regard such an attitude on your side as ridiculous—nay, worse—a gross affront."

Still Goldsmith remained silent, and after a short pause his visitor resumed his discourse.

"The question that remains for you to answer is this, sir: Are you desirous of humiliating yourself in the eyes of your best friends, and of forfeiting their friend-

ship for you, by persisting in your infatuation?"

Goldsmith started up.

"Say no more, sir; for God's sake, say no more," he cried almost piteously. "Am I, do you fancy, as great a fool as Pope, who did not hesitate to declare himself to Lady Mary? Sir, I have done nothing that the most honourable of men would shrink from doing. There are the verses which I wrote—I could not help writing them—but she does not know that they were ever written. Dr. Johnson, she shall never hear it from me. My history, sir, shall be that of the hopeless lover—a blank—a blank."

"My poor friend," said Johnson after a pause—he had laid his hand upon the shoulder of his friend as he seated himself once more at the table—"My poor friend, Providence puts into our hands many cups which are bitter to the taste, but cannot be turned away from. You and I have drank of bitter cups before now, and perhaps we may have to drink of others before we die. To be a man is to suffer; to be a poet means to have double the capacity of men to suffer. You have shown yourself before now worthy of the admiration of all good men by the way you have faced life, by your independence of the patronage of the great. You dedi-

cated 'The Traveller' to your brother, and your last comedy to me. You did not hesitate to turn away from your door the man who came to offer you money for the prostitution of the talents which God has given you. Dr. Goldsmith, you have my respect —you have the respect of every good man. I came to you to-day that you may disappoint those of your detractors who are waiting for you to be guilty of an act that would give them an opportunity of pointing a finger of malice at you. You will not do anything but that which will reflect honour upon yourself, and show all those who are your friends that their friendship for you is well founded. I am assured that I can trust you, sir."

Goldsmith took the hand that he offered, but said no word.

CHAPTER XIX.

When his visitor had gone Goldsmith seated himself in his chair and gave way to the bitter reflections of the hour.

He knew that the end of his dream had come. The straightforward words which Johnson had spoken had put an end to his self-deception — to his hoping against his better judgment that by some miracle his devotion might be rewarded. If any man was calculated to be a disperser of vain dreams that man was Johnson. In the very brutality of his straightforwardness there was, however, a suspicion of kindliness that made any appeal from his judgment hopeless. There was no timidity in the utterances of his phrases when forcing his contentions upon any audience; but Goldsmith knew that he only spoke strongly because he felt strongly.

Times without number he had said to himself precisely what Dr. Johnson had said to him. If Mary Horneck herself ever went so far as to mistake the sympathy which she had for him for that affection

which alone would content him, how could he approach her family? Her sister had married Bunbury, a man of position and wealth, with a country house and a town house — a man of her own age, and with the possibility of inheriting his father's baronetcy. Her brother was about to marry a daughter of Lord Albemarle's. What would these people say if he, Oliver Goldsmith, were to present himself as a suitor for the hand of Mary Horneck?

It did not require Dr. Johnson to speak such forcible words in his hearing to enable him to perceive how ridiculous were his pretensions. The tragedy of the poet's life among men and women eager to better their prospects in the world was fully appreciated by him. It was surely, he felt, the most cruel of all the cruelties of destiny, that the men who make music of the passions of men — who have surrounded the passion of love with a glorifying halo — should be doomed to spend their lives looking on at the success of ordinary men in their loves by the aid of the music which the poets have created. That is the poet's tragedy of life, and Goldsmith had often found himself face to face with it, feeling himself to be one of those with whom destiny is only on jesting terms.

Because he was a poet he could not love any less beautiful creature than Mary Horneck, any less gracious, less sweet, less pure, and yet he knew that if he were to go to her with those poems in his hand which he only of all living men could write, telling her that they might plead his cause, he would be regarded — and rightly, too — as both presumptuous and ridiculous.

He thought of the loneliness of his life. Was it the lot of the man of letters to remain in loneliness while the people around him were taking to themselves wives and begetting sons and daughters? Had he nothing to look forward to but the laurel wreath? Was it taken for granted that a contemplation of its shrivelling leaves would more than compensate the poet for the loss of home — the grateful companionship of a wife — the babble of children — all that his fellow-men associated with the gladness and glory of life?

He knew that he had reached a position in the world of letters that was surpassed by no living man in England. He had often dreamed of reaching such a place, and to reach it he had undergone privation — he had sacrificed the best years of his life. And what did his consciousness of having attained his end bring with it? It brought

to him the snarl of envy, the howl of hatred, the mock of malice. The air was full of these sounds; they dinned in his ears and overcame the sounds of the approval of his friends.

And it was for this he had sacrificed so much? So much? Everything. He had sacrificed his life. The one joy that had consoled him for all his ills during the past few years had departed from him. He would never see Mary Horneck again. To see her again would only be to increase the burden of his humiliation. His resolution was formed and he would abide by it.

He rose to his feet and picked up the roll of poems. In sign of his resolution he would burn them. He would, with them, reduce to ashes the one consolation of his life.

In the small grate the remains of a fire were still glowing. He knelt down and blew the spark into a blaze. He was about to thrust the manuscript into it between the bars when the light that it made fell upon one of the lines. He had not the heart to burn the leaf until he had read the remaining lines of the couplet; and when at last, with a sigh, he hastily thrust the roll of papers between the bars, the little blaze had fallen again to a mere smoulder-

ing spark. Before he could raise it by a breath or two, his servant entered the room. He started to his feet.

"A letter for you, sir," said John Eyles. "It came by a messenger lad."

"Fetch a candle, John," said Goldsmith, taking the letter. It was too dark for him to see the handwriting, but he put the tip of his finger on the seal and became aware that it was Mary Horneck's.

By the light of the candle he broke the seal, and read the few lines that the letter contained —

Come to me, my dear friend, without delay, for heaven's sake. Your ear only can hear what I have to tell. You may be able to help me, but if not, then . . . Oh, come to me to-night. Your unhappy JESSAMY BRIDE.

He did not delay an instant. He caught up his hat and left his chambers. He did not even think of the resolution to which he had just come, never to see Mary Horneck again. All his thoughts were lost in the one thought that he was about to stand face to face with her.

He stood face to face with her in less than half an hour. She was in the small drawing-room where he had seen her on the day after the production of "She Stoops to Conquer." Only a few wax candles

were lighted in the cut-glass sconces that were placed in the centre of the panels of the walls. Their light was, however, sufficient to make visible the contrast between the laughing face of the girl in Reynolds's picture of her and her sister which hung on the wall, and the sad face of the girl who put her hand into his as he was shown in by the servant.

"I knew you would come," she said. "I knew that I could trust you."

"You may trust me, indeed," he said. He held her hand in his own, looking into her pale face and sunken eyes. "I knew the time would come when you would tell me all that there is to be told," he continued. "Whether I can help you or not, you will find yourself better for having told me."

She seated herself on the sofa, and he took his place beside her. There was a silence of a minute or two, before she suddenly started up, and, after walking up and down the room nervously, stopped at the mantelpiece, leaning her head against the high slab, and looking into the smouldering fire in the grate.

He watched her, but did not attempt to express the pity that filled his heart.

"What am I to tell you—what am I to tell you?" she cried at last, resuming her pacing of the floor.

He made no reply, but sat there following her movements with his eyes. She went beside him, and stood, with nervously clasped hands, looking with vacant eyes at the group of wax candles that burned in one of the sconces. Once again she turned away with a little cry, but then with a great effort she controlled herself, and her voice was almost tranquil when she spoke, seating herself.

"You were with me at the Pantheon, and saw me when I caught sight of that man," she said. "You alone were observant. Did you also see him call me to his side in the green room at the playhouse?"

"I saw you in the act of speaking to him there—he calls himself Jackson—Captain Jackson," said Goldsmith.

"You saved me from him once!" she cried. "You saved me from becoming his—body and soul."

"No," he said; "I have not yet saved you, but God is good; He may enable me to do so."

"I tell you if it had not been for you—for the book which you wrote, I should be to-day a miserable castaway."

He looked puzzled.

"I cannot quite understand," said he. "I gave you a copy of 'The Vicar of Wakefield' when you were going to Devonshire a year ago. You were complaining that your sister had taken away with her the copy which I had presented to your mother, so that you had not an opportunity of reading it."

"It was that which saved me," she cried. "Oh, what fools girls are! They are carried away by such devices as should not impose upon the merest child! Why are we not taught from our childhood of the baseness of men — some men — so that we can be on our guard when we are on the verge of womanhood? If we are to live in the world why should we not be told all that we should guard against?"

She laid her head down on the arm of the sofa, sobbing.

He put his hand gently upon her hair, saying —

"I cannot believe anything but what is good regarding you, my sweet Jessamy Bride."

She raised her head quickly and looked at him through her tears.

"Then you will err," she said. "You will have to think ill of me. Thank God

you saved me from the worst, but it was not in your power to save me from all — to save me from myself. Listen to me, my best friend. When I was in Devonshire last year I met that man. He was staying in the village, pretending that he was recovering from a wound which he had received in our colonies in America. He was looked on as a hero and fêted in all directions. Every girl for miles around was in love with him, and I — innocent fool that I was — considered myself the most favoured creature in the world because he made love to me. Any day we failed to meet I wrote him a letter — a foolish letter such as a school miss might write — full of protestations of undying affection. I sometimes wrote two of these letters in the day. More than a month passed in this foolishness, and then it came to my uncle's ears that we had meetings. He forbade my continuing to see a man of whom no one knew anything definite, but about whom he was having strict inquiries made. I wrote to the man to this effect, and I received a reply persuading me to have one more meeting with him. I was so infatuated that I met him secretly, and then in impassioned strains he implored me to make a runaway match with him. He said he

had enemies. When he had been fighting the King's battles against the rebels these enemies had been active, and he feared that their malice would come between us, and he should lose me. I was so carried away by his pleading that I consented to leave my uncle's house by his side."

"But you cannot have done so."

"You saved me," she cried. "I had been reading your book, and, by God's mercy, on the very day before that on which I had promised to go to him I came to the story of poor Olivia's flight and its consequences. With the suddenness of a revelation from heaven I perceived the truth. The scales fell from my eyes as they fell from St. Paul's on the way to Damascus, only where he perceived the heaven I saw the hell that awaited me. I knew that that man was endeavouring to encompass my ruin, and in a single hour — thanks to the genius that wrote that book — my love for that man, or what I fancied was love, was turned to loathing. I did not meet him. I returned to him, without a word of comment, a letter he wrote to me reproaching me for disappointing him; and the very next day my uncle's suspicions regarding him were confirmed. His inquiries resulted in proof positive of the

ruffianism of the fellow who called himself Captain Jackson, He had left the army in America with a stain on his character, and it was known that since his return to England at least two young women had been led into the trap which he laid for me."

"Thank God you were saved, my child," said Goldsmith, as she paused, overcome with emotion. "But being saved, my dear, you have no further reason to fear that man."

"That was my belief, too," said she. "But alas! it was a delusion. So soon as he found out that I had escaped from him, he showed himself in his true colours. He wrote threatening to send the letters which I had been foolish enough to write to him, to my friends—he was even scoundrel enough to point out that I had in my innocence written certain passages which were susceptible of being interpreted as evidence of guilt—nay, his letter in which he did so took it for granted that I had been guilty, so that I could not show it as evidence of his falsehood. What was left for me to do? I wrote to him imploring him to return to me those letters. I asked him how he could think it consistent with his honour to retain them and to hold such an infamous threat over my head. Alas! he soon gave me to

understand that I had but placed myself more deeply in his power."

"The scoundrel!"

"Oh! scoundrel! I made an excuse for coming back to London, though I had meant to stay in Devonshire until the end of the year."

"And 'twas then you thanked me for the book."

"I had good reason to do so. For some months I was happy, believing that I had escaped from my persecutor. How happy we were when in France together! But then—ah! you know the rest. My distress is killing me—I cannot sleep at night. I start a dozen times a day; every time the bell rings I am in trepidation."

"Great Heaven! Is 't possible that you are miserable solely on this account?" cried Goldsmith.

"Is there not sufficient reason for my misery?" she asked. "What did he say to me that night in the green room? He told me that he would give me a fortnight to accede to his demands; if I failed he swore to print my letters in full, introducing my name so that every one should know who had written them."

"And his terms?" asked Goldsmith in a whisper.

"His terms? I cannot tell you—I cannot tell you. The very thought that I placed myself in such a position as made it possible for me to have such an insult offered to me makes me long for death."

"By God! 'tis he who need to prepare for death!" cried Goldsmith, "for I shall kill him, even though the act be called murder."

"No—no!" she said, laying a hand upon his arm. "No friend of mine must suffer for my folly. I dare not speak a word of this to my brother for fear of the consequences. That wretch boasted to me of having laid his plans so carefully that, if any harm were to come to him, the letters would still be printed. He said he had heard of my friends, and declared that if he were approached by any of them nothing should save me from being made the talk of the town. I was terrified by the threat, but I determined to-day to tell you my pitiful story in the hope—the forlorn hope—that you might be able to help me. Tell me—tell me, my dear friend, if you can see any chance of escape for me except that of which poor Olivia sang: 'The only way her guilt to cover.'"

"Guilt? Who talks of guilt?" said he. "Oh, my poor innocent child, I knew that

whatever your grief might be there was nothing to be thought of you except what was good. I am not one to say even that you acted foolishly; you only acted innocently. You, in the guilelessness of your own pure heart could not believe that a man could be worse than any monster. Dear child, I pray of you to bear up for a short time against this stroke of fate, and I promise you that I shall discover a way of escape for you."

"Ah, it is easy to say those words 'bear up.' I have said them to myself a score of times within the week. You cannot now perceive in what direction lies my hope of escape?"

He shook his head, but not without a smile on his face, as he said —

"'Tis easy enough for one who has composed so much fiction as I have to invent a plan for the rescue of a tortured heroine; but, unhappily, it is the case that in real life one cannot control circumstances as one can in a work of the imagination. That is one of the weaknesses of real life, my dear; things will go on happening in defiance of all the arts of fiction. But of this I feel certain: Providence does not do things by halves. He will not make me the means of averting a great disaster from you and then

permit me to stand idly by while you suffer such a calamity as that which you apprehend just now. Nay, my dear, I feel that as Heaven directed my pen to write that book in order that you might be saved from the fate of my poor Livy, I shall be permitted to help you out of your present difficulty."

"You give me hope," she said. "Yes—a little hope. But you must promise me that you will not be tempted to do anything that is rash. I know how brave you are—my brother told me what prompt action you took yesterday when that vile slander appeared. But were you not foolish to place yourself in jeopardy? To strike at a serpent that hisses may only cause it to spring."

"I feel now that I was foolish," said he humbly; "I ran the chance of forfeiting your friendship."

"Oh, no, it was not so bad as that," she said. "But in this matter of mine I perceive clearly that craft and not bravery will prevail to save me, if I am to be saved. I saw that you provoked a quarrel with that man on the night when we were leaving the Pantheon; think of it, think what my feelings would have been if he had killed you! And think also that if you had killed him I should certainly be lost, for he had made

his arrangements to print the letters by which I should be judged."

"You have spoken truly," said he. "You are wiser than I have ever been. But for your sake, my sweet Jessamy Bride, I promise to do nothing that shall jeopardise your safety. Have no fear, dear one, you shall be saved, whatever may happen."

He took her hand and kissed it fondly.

"You shall be saved," he repeated.

"If not——" said she in a low tone, looking beyond him.

"No—no," he whispered. "I have given you my promise. You must give me yours. You will do nothing impious."

She gave a wan smile.

"I am a girl," she said. "My courage is as water. I promise you I will trust you, with all my heart—all my heart."

"I shall not fail you—Heaven shall not fail you," said he, going to the door.

He looked back at her. What a lovely picture she made, standing in her white loose gown with its lace collar that seemed to make her face the more pallid!

He bowed at the door.

CHAPTER XX.

He went for supper to a tavern which he knew would be visited by none of his friends. He had no wish to share in the drolleries of Garrick as the latter turned Boswell into ridicule to make sport for the company. He knew that Garrick would be at the club in Gerrard street, to which he had been elected only a few days before the production of "She Stoops to Conquer," and it was not at all unlikely that on this account the club would be a good deal livelier than it usually was even when Richard Burke was wittiest.

While awaiting the modest fare which he had ordered he picked up one of the papers published that evening, and found that it contained a fierce assault upon him for having dared to take the law into his own hands in attempting to punish the scoundrel who had introduced the name of Miss Horneck into his libel upon the author of the comedy about which all the town were talking.

The scurrility of his new assailant produced no impression upon him. He smiled as he read the ungrammatical expression of the indignation which the writer purported to feel at so gross an infringement of the liberty of the press as that of which — according to the writer — the ingenious Dr. Goldsmith was guilty. He did not even fling the paper across the room. He was not dwelling upon his own grievances. In his mind, the worst that could happen to him was not worth a moment's thought compared with the position of the girl whose presence he had just left.

He knew perfectly well — had he not good reason to know? — that the man who had threatened her would keep his threat. He knew of the gross nature of the libels which were published daily upon not merely the most notable persons in society, but also upon ordinary private individuals; and he had a sufficient knowledge of men and women to be aware of the fact that the grossest scandal upon the most innocent person was more eagerly read than any of the other contents of the prints of the day. That was one of the results of the publication of the scurrilities of Junius: the appetite of the people for such piquant fare was whetted, and there was no lack of literary

cooks to prepare it. Slander was all that the public demanded. They did not make the brilliancy of Junius one of the coudi-tions of their acceptance of such composi-tions — all they required was that the libel should have a certain amount of piquancy.

No one was better aware of this fact than Oliver Goldsmith. He knew that Kenrick, who had so frequently libelled him, would pay all the money that he could raise to obtain the letters which the man who called himself Captain Jackson had in his possession; he also knew that there would be no difficulty in finding a publisher for them; and as people were always much more ready to believe evil than good re-garding any one — especially a young girl against whom no suspicion had ever been breathed — the result of the publication of the letters would mean practically ruin to the girl who had been innocent enough to write them.

Of course, a man of the world, with money at his hand, would have smiled at the possibility of a question arising as to the attitude to assume in regard to such a scoundrel as Jackson. He would merely inquire what sum the fellow required in exchange for the letters. But Goldsmith was in such matters as innocent as the girl

herself. He believed, as she did, that because the man did not make any monetary claim upon her, he was not sordid. He was the more inclined to disregard the question of the possibility of buying the man off, knowing as he did that he should find it impossible to raise a sufficient sum for the purpose; and he believed, with Mary Horneck, that to tell her friends how she was situated would be to forfeit their respect forever.

She had told him that only cunning could prevail against her enemy, and he felt certain that she was right. He would try and be cunning for her sake.

He found great difficulty in making a beginning. He remembered how often in his life, and how easily, he had been imposed upon — how often his friends had entreated him to acquire this talent, since he had certainly not been endowed with it by nature. He remembered how upon some occasions he had endeavoured to take their advice; and he also remembered how, when he thought he had been extremely shrewd, it turned out that he had never been more clearly imposed upon.

He wondered if it was too late to begin again on a more approved system.

He brought his skill as a writer of fiction to bear upon the question (which may be taken as evidence that he had not yet begun his career of shrewdness).

How, for instance, would he, if the exigencies of his story required it, cause Moses Primrose to develop into a man of resources in worldly wisdom? By what means would he turn Honeywood into a cynical man of the world?

He considered these questions at considerable length, and only when he reached the Temple, returning to his chambers, did he find out that the waiter at the tavern had given him change for a guinea two shillings short, and that half-a-crown of the change was made of pewter. He could not help being amused at his first step towards cunning. He certainly felt no vexation at being made so easy a victim of—he was accustomed to that position.

When he found that the roll of manuscript which he had thrust between the bars of the grate remained as he had left it, only slightly charred at the end which had been the nearer to the hot, though not burning, coals, all thoughts of guile—all his prospects of shrewdness were cast aside. He unfolded the pages and read the verses once more. After all, he had no

right to burn them. He felt that they were no longer his property. They either belonged to the world of literature or to Mary Horneck, as—as what? As a token of affection which he bore her? But he had promised Johnson to root out of his heart whatever might remain of that which he had admitted to be foolishness.

Alas! alas! He sat up for hours in his cold rooms thinking, hoping, dreaming his old dream that a day was coming when he might without reproach put those verses into the girl's hand — when, learning the truth, she would understand.

And that time did come.

In the morning he found himself ready to face the question of how to get possession of the letters. No man of his imagination could give his attention to such a matter without having suggested to him many schemes for the attainment of his object. But in the end he was painfully aware that he had contrived nothing that did not involve the risk of a criminal prosecution against himself, and, as a consequence, the discovery of all that Mary Horneck was anxious to hide.

It was not until the afternoon that he came to the conclusion that it would be unwise for him to trust to his own resources

in this particular affair. After all, he was but a man; it required the craft of a woman to defeat the wiles of such a demon as he had to deal with.

That he knew to be a wise conclusion to come to. But where was the woman to whom he could go for help? He wanted to find a woman who was accustomed to the wiles of the devil, and he believed that he should have considerable difficulty in finding her.

He was, of course, wrong. He had not been considering this aspect of the question for long before he thought of Mrs. Abington, and in a moment he knew that he had found a woman who could help him if she had a mind to do so. Her acquaintance with wiles he knew to be large and varied, and he liked her.

He liked her so well that he felt sure she would help him—if he made it worth her while; and he thought he saw his way to make it worth her while.

He was so convinced he was on the way to success that he became impatient at the reflection that he could not possibly see Mrs. Abington until the evening. But while he was in this state his servant announced a visitor—one with whom he was

not familiar, but who gave his name as Colonel Gwyn.

Full of surprise, he ordered Colonel Gwyn to be shown into the room. He recollected having met him at a dinner at the Reynolds's, and once at the Hornecks' house in Westminster; but why he should pay a visit to Brick Court Goldsmith was at a loss to know. He, however, greeted Colonel Gwyn as if he considered it to be one of the most natural occurrences in the world for him to appear at that particular moment.

"Dr. Goldsmith," said the visitor when he had seated himself, "you have no doubt every reason to be surprised at my taking the liberty of calling upon you without first communicating with you."

"Not at all, sir," said Goldsmith. "'Tis a great compliment you offer to me. Bear in mind that I am sensible of it, sir."

"You are very kind, sir. Those who have a right to speak on the subject have frequently referred to you as the most generous of men."

"Oh, sir, I perceive that you have been talking with some persons whose generosity was more noteworthy than their judgment."

And once again he gave an example of the Goldsmith bow which Garrick had so successfully caricatured.

"Nay, Dr. Goldsmith, if I thought so I would not be here to-day. The fact is, sir, that I—I—i' faith, sir, I scarce know how to tell you how it is I appear before you in this fashion."

"You do not need to have an excuse, I do assure you, Colonel Gwyn. You are a friend of my best friend—Sir Joshua Reynolds."

"Yes, sir, and of other friends, too, I would fain hope. In short, Dr. Goldsmith, I am here because I know how highly you stand in the esteem of—of—well, of all the members of the Horneck family."

It was now Goldsmith's turn to stammer. He was so surprised by the way his visitor introduced the name of the Hornecks he scarcely knew what reply to make to him.

"I perceive that you are surprised, sir." said Gwyn.

"No, no—not at all—that is—no, not greatly surprised—only—well, sir, why should you not be a friend of Mrs. Horneck? Her son is like yourself, a soldier," stammered Goldsmith.

"I have taken the liberty of calling more than once during the past week or two upon the Hornecks, Dr. Goldsmith," said Gwyn; "but upon no occasion have I been fortunate enough to see Miss Horneck. They told me she was by no means well."

"And they told you the truth, sir," said Goldsmith somewhat brusquely.

"You know it then? Miss Horneck is really indisposed? Ah! I feared that they were merely excusing her presence on the ground of illness. I must confess a headache was not specified."

"Nay, sir, Miss Horneck's relations are not destitute of imagination. But why should you fancy that you were being deceived by them, Colonel Gwyn?"

Colonel Gwyn laughed slightly, not freely.

"I thought that the lady herself might think, perhaps, that I was taking a liberty," he said somewhat awkwardly.

"Why should she think that, Colonel Gwyn?" asked Goldsmith.

"Well, Dr. Goldsmith, you see — sir, you are, I know, a favoured friend of the lady's — I perceived long ago — nay, it is well known that she regards you with great affection as a — no, not as a father —

no, as — as an elder brother, that is it — yes, as an elder brother; and therefore I thought that I would venture to intrude upon you to-day. Sir, to be quite frank with you, I love Miss Horneck, but I hesitate — as I am sure you could understand that any man must — before declaring myself to her. Now, it occurred to me, Dr. Goldsmith, that you might not conceive it to be a gross impertinence on my part if I were to ask you if you knew of the lady's affections being already engaged. I hope you will be frank with me, sir."

Goldsmith looked with curious eyes at the man before him. Colonel Gwyn was a well built man of perhaps a year or two over thirty. He sat upright on his chair — a trifle stiffly, it might be thought by some people, but that was pardonable in a military man. He was also somewhat inclined to be pompous in his manners; but any one could perceive that they were the manners of a gentleman.

Goldsmith looked earnestly at him. Was that the man who was to take Mary Horneck away from him? he asked himself.

He could not speak for some time after his visitor had spoken. At last he gave a little start.

"You should not have come to me, sir," he said slowly.

"I felt that I was taking a great liberty, sir," said Gwyn.

"On the contrary, sir, I feel that you have honoured me with your confidence. But—ah, sir, do you fancy that I am the sort of man a lady would seek for a confidant in any matter concerning her heart?"

"I thought it possible that she—Miss Horneck—might have let you know. You are not as other men, Dr. Goldsmith; you are a poet, and so she might naturally feel that you would be interested in a love affair. Poets, all the world knows, sir, have a sort of—well, a sort of vested interest in the love affairs of humanity, so to speak."

"Yes, sir, that is the decree of Heaven, I suppose, to compensate them for the emptiness in their own hearts to which they must become accustomed. I have heard of childless women becoming the nurses to the children of their happier sisters, and growing as fond of them as if they were their own offspring. It is on the same principle, I suppose, that poets become sympathetically interested in the world of lovers, which is quite apart from the world of letters."

Goldsmith spoke slowly, looking his visitor in the face. He had no difficulty in perceiving that Colonel Gwyn failed to understand the exact appropriateness of what he had said. Colonel Gwyn himself admitted as much.

"I protest, sir, I scarcely take your meaning," he said. "But for that matter, I fear that I was scarcely fortunate enough to make myself quite plain to you."

"Oh, yes," said Goldsmith, "I think I gathered from your words all that you came hither to learn. Briefly, Colonel Gwyn, you are reluctant to subject yourself to the humiliation of having your suit rejected by the lady, and so you have come hither to try and learn from me what are your chances of success."

"How admirably you put the matter!" said Gwyn. "And I fancied you did not apprehend the purport of my visit. Well, sir, what chance have I?"

"I cannot tell," said Goldsmith. "Miss Horneck has never told me that she loved any man."

"Then I have still a chance?"

"Nay, sir; girls do not usually confide the story of their attachments to their fathers—no, nor to their elder brothers. But if you wish to consider your chances

with any lady, Colonel Gwyn, I would venture to advise you to go and stand in front of a looking-glass and ask yourself if you are the manner of man to whom a young lady would be likely to become attached. Add to the effect of your personality—which I think is great, sir—the glamour that surrounds the profession in which you have won distinction, and you will be able to judge for yourself whether your suit would be likely to be refused by the majority of young ladies."

"You flatter me, Dr. Goldsmith. But, assuming for a moment that there is some force in your words, I protest that they do not reassure me. Miss Horneck, sir, is not the lady to be carried away by the considerations that would prevail in the eyes of others of her sex."

"You have learned something of Miss Horneck, at any rate, Colonel Gwyn."

"I think I have, sir. When I think of her, I feel despondent. Does the man exist who would be worthy of her love?"

"He does not, Colonel Gwyn. But that is no reason why she may not love some man. Does a woman only give her love to one who is worthy of it? It is fortunate for men that that is not the way with women."

"It is fortunate; and in that reflection, sir, I find my greatest consolation at the present moment. I am not a bad man, Dr. Goldsmith—not as men go—there is in my lifetime nothing that I have cause to be ashamed of; but, I repeat, when I think of her sweetness, her purity, her tenderness, I am overcome with a sense of my own presumption in aspiring to win her. You think me presumptuous in this matter, I am convinced, sir."

"I do—I do. I know Mary Horneck."

"I give you my word that I am better satisfied with your agreement with me in this respect than I should be if you were to flatter me. Allow me to thank you for your great courtesy to me, sir. You have not sent me away without hope, and I trust that I may assume, Dr. Goldsmith, that I have your good wishes in this matter, which I hold to be vital to my happiness."

"Colonel Gwyn, my wishes—my prayers to Heaven are that Mary Horneck may be happy."

"And I ask for nothing more, sir. There is my hand on it."

Oliver Goldsmith took the hand that he but dimly saw stretched out to him.

CHAPTER XXI.

Never for a moment had Goldsmith felt jealous of the younger men who were understood to be admirers of the Jessamy Bride. He had made humourous verses on some of them, Henry Bunbury had supplied comic illustrations, and Mary and her sister had had their laugh. He could not even now feel jealous of Colonel Gwyn, though he knew that he was a more eligible suitor than the majority whom he had met from time to time at the Hornecks' house. He knew that since Colonel Gwyn had appeared the girl had no thoughts to give to love and suitors. If Gwyn were to go to her immediately and offer himself as a suitor he would meet with a disappointment.

Yes; at the moment he had no reason to feel jealous of the man who had just left him. On the contrary, he felt that he had a right to be exultant at the thought that it was he — he — Oliver Goldsmith — who had been entrusted by Mary Horneck with her secret — with the duty of saving her from the scoundrel who was persecuting her.

Colonel Gwyn was a soldier, and yet it was to him that this knight's enterprise had fallen.

He felt that he had every reason to be proud. He had been placed in a position which was certainly quite new to him. He was to compass the rescue of the maiden in distress; and had he not heard of innumerable instances in which the reward of success in such an undertaking was the hand of the maiden?

For half an hour he felt exultant. He had boldly faced an adverse fate all his life; he had grappled with a cruel destiny; and, though the struggle had lasted all his life, he had come out the conqueror. He had become the most distinguished man of letters in England. As Professor at the Royal Academy his superiority had been acknowledged by the most eminent men of the period. And then, although he was plain of face and awkward in manner — nearly as awkward, if far from being so offensive, as Johnson — he had been appointed her own knight by the loveliest girl in England. He felt that he had reason to exult.

But then the reaction came. He thought of himself as compared with Colonel Gwyn — he thought of himself as a suitor by the

side of Colonel Gwyn. What would the world say of a girl who would choose him in preference to Colonel Gwyn? He had told Gwyn to survey himself in a mirror in order to learn what chance he would have of being accepted as the lover of a lovely girl. Was he willing to apply the same test to himself?

He had not the courage to glance toward even the small glass which he had — a glass which could reflect only a small portion of his plainness.

He remained seated in his chair for a long time, being saved from complete despair only by the reflection that it was he who was entrusted with the task of freeing Mary Horneck from the enemy who had planned her destruction. This was his one agreeable reflection, and after a time it, too, became tempered by the thought that all his task was still before him: he had taken no step toward saving her.

He started up, called for a lamp, and proceeded to dress himself for the evening. He would dine at a coffee house in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden Theatre, and visit Mrs. Abington in the green room while his play — in which she did not appear — was being acted on the stage.

He was unfortunate enough to meet Boswell in the coffee house, so that his design of thinking out, while at dinner, the course which he should pursue in regard to the actress — how far he would be safe in confiding in her — was frustrated.

The little Scotchman was in great grief: Johnson had actually quarrelled with him — well, not exactly quarrelled, for it required two to make a quarel, and Boswell had steadily refused to contribute to such a disaster. Johnson, however, was so overwhelming a personality in Boswell's eyes he could almost make a quarrel without the assistance of a second person.

"Psha! Sir," said Goldsmith, "you know as little of Dr. Johnson as you do of the Irish nation and their characteristics."

"Perhaps that is so, but I felt that I was getting to know him," said Boswell. "But now all is over; he will never see me again."

"Nay, man, cannot you perceive that he is only assuming this attitude in order to give you a chance of knowing him better?" said Goldsmith.

"For the life of me I cannot see how that could be," cried Boswell after a contemplative pause.

"Why, sir, you must perceive that he wishes to impress you with a consciousness of his generosity."

"What, by quarrelling with me and declaring that he would never see me again?"

"No, not in that way, though I believe there are some people who would feel that it was an act of generosity on Dr. Johnson's part to remain secluded for a space in order to give the rest of the world a chance of talking together."

"What does it matter about the rest of the world, sir?"

"Not much, I suppose I should say, since he means me to be his biographer."

Boswell, of course, utterly failed to appreciate the sly tone in which the Irishman spoke, and took him up quite seriously.

"Is it possible that he has been in communication with you, Dr. Goldsmith?" he cried anxiously.

"I will not divulge Dr. Johnson's secrets, sir," replied Goldsmith, with an affectation of the manner of the man who a short time before had said that Shakespeare was pompous.

"Now you are imitating him," said Boswell. "But I perceive that he has told you of our quarrel — our misunderstanding. It arose through you, sir."

"Through me, sir?"

"Through the visit of your relative, the Dean, after we had dined at the Crown and Anchor. You see, he bound me down to promise him to tell no one of that unhappy occurrence, sir; and yet he heard that Garrick has lately been mimicking the Dean — yes, down to his very words, at the Reynolds's, and so he came to the conclusion that Garrick was made acquainted with the whole story by me. He sent for me yesterday, and upbraided me for half an hour."

"To whom did you give an account of the affair, sir?"

"To no human being, sir."

"Oh, come now, you must have given it to some one."

"To no one, sir — that is, no one from whom Garrick could possibly have had the story."

"Ah, I knew, and so did Johnson, that it would be out of the question to expect that you would hold your tongue on so interesting a secret. Well, perhaps this will be a lesson to you in the future. I must not fail to make an entire chapter of this in my biography of our great friend. Perhaps you would do me the favour to write down a clear and as nearly accurate an account as your pride will allow of your

quarrel with the Doctor, sir. Such an account would be an amazing assistance to posterity in forming an estimate of the character of Johnson."

"Ah, sir, am I not sufficiently humiliated by the reflection that my friendly relations with the man whom I revere more than any living human being are irretrievably ruptured? You will not add to the poignancy of that reflection by asking me to write down an account of our quarrel in order to perpetuate so deplorable an incident?"

"Sir, I perceive that you are as yet ignorant of the duties of the true biographer. You seem to think that a biographer has a right to pick and choose the incidents with which he has to deal—that he may, if he please, omit the mention of any occurrence that may tend to show his hero or his hero's friends in an unfavourable light. Sir, I tell you frankly that your notions of biography are as erroneous as they are mischievous. Mr. Boswell, I am a more conscientious man, and so, sir, I insist on your writing down while they are still fresh in your mind the very words that passed between you and Dr. Johnson on this matter, and you will also furnish me with a list of the persons—if you have

not sufficient paper at your lodgings for the purpose, you can order a ream at the stationer's at the corner — to whom you gave an account of the humiliation of Dr. Johnson by the clergyman who claimed relationship with me, but who was an impostor. Come, Mr. Boswell, be a man, sir; do not seek to avoid so obvious a duty."

Boswell looked at him, but, as usual, failed to detect the least gleam of a smile on his face.

He rose from the table and walked out of the coffee house without a word.

"Thank heaven I have got rid of that Peeping Tom," muttered Goldsmith. "If I had acted otherwise in regard to him I should not have been out of hearing of his rasping tongue until midnight.

(The very next morning a letter from Boswell was brought to him. It told him that he had sought Johnson the previous evening, and had obtained his forgiveness. "You were right, sir," the letter concluded. "Dr. Johnson has still further impressed me with a sense of his generosity.")

But as soon as Boswell had been got rid of Goldsmith hastened to the playhouse in order to consult with the lady who — through long practice — was, he believed,

the most ably qualified of her sex to give him advice as to the best way of getting the better of a scoundrel. It was only when he was entering the green room that he recollected he had not yet made up his mind as to the exact limitations he should put upon his confidence with Mrs. Abington.

The beautiful actress was standing in one of those picturesque attitudes which she loved to assume, at one end of the long room. The second act only of "She Stoops to Conquer" had been reached, and as she did not appear in the comedy, she had no need to begin dressing for the next piece. She wore a favourite dress of hers — one which had taken the town by storm a few months before, and which had been imitated by every lady of quality who had more respect for fashion than for herself. It was a negligently flowing gown of some soft but heavy fabric, very low and loose about the neck and shoulders.

"Ha, my little hero," cried the lady when Goldsmith approached and made his bow, first to a group of players who stood near the door, and then to Mrs. Abington. "Ha, my little hero, whom have you been drubbing last? Oh, lud! to think of your beating a critic! Your courage sets us all a-dying of envy. How we should love to

pommel some of our critics! There was a rumour last night that the man had died, Dr. Goldsmith."

"The fellow would not pay such a tribute to my powers, depend on't, madam," said Goldsmith.

"Not if he could avoid it, I am certain," said she. "Faith, sir, you gave him a pretty fair drubbing, anyhow. 'Twas the talk of the playhouse, I give you my word. Some vastly pretty things were said about you, Dr. Goldsmith. It would turn your head if I were to repeat them all. For instance, a gentleman in this very room last night said that it was the first case that had come under his notice of a doctor's making an attempt upon a man's life, except through the legitimate professional channel."

"If all the pretty things that were spoken were no prettier than that, Mrs. Abington, you will not turn my head," said Goldsmith. "Though, for that matter, I vow that to effect such a purpose you only need to stand before me in that dress — ay, or any other."

"Oh, sir, I protest that I cannot stand before such a fusillade of compliment — I sink under it, sir — thus," and she made an exquisite courtesy. "Talk of turning

heads! do you fancy that actresses' heads are as immovable as their hearts, Dr. Goldsmith?"

"I trust that their hearts are less so, madam, for just now I am extremely anxious that the heart of the most beautiful and most accomplished should be moved," said Goldsmith.

"You have only to give me your word that you have written as good a comedy as 'She Stoops to Conquer,' with a better part for me in it than that of Miss Hardcastle."

"I have the design of one in my head, madam."

"Then, faith, sir, 'tis lucky that I did not say anything to turn your head. Dr. Goldsmith, my heart is moved already. See how easy it is for a great author to effect his object where a poor actress is concerned. And you have begun the comedy, sir?"

"I cannot begin it until I get rid of a certain tragedy that is in the air. I want your assistance in that direction."

"What! Do you mistake the farce of drubbing a critic for a tragedy, Dr. Goldsmith?"

"Psha, madam! What do you take me for? Even if I were as poor a critic as Kenrick I could still discriminate between

one and t' other. Can you give me half an hour of your time, Mrs. Abington?"

"With all pleasure, sir. We shall sit down. You wear a tragedy face, Dr. Goldsmith."

"I need to do so, madam, as I think you will allow when you hear all I have to tell you."

"Oh, lud! You frighten me. Pray begin, sir."

"How shall I begin? Have you ever had to encounter the devil, madam?"

"Frequently, sir. Alas! I fear that I have not always prevailed against him as successfully as you did in your encounter with one of his family — a critic. Your story promises to be more interesting than your face suggested."

"I have to encounter a devil, Mrs. Abington, and I come to you for help."

"Then you must tell me if your devil is male or female. If the former I think I can promise you my help; if the latter, do not count on me. When the foul fiend assumes the form of an angel of light — which I take to be the way St. Paul meant to convey the idea of a woman — he is too powerful for me, I frankly confess."

"Mine is a male fiend."

"Not the manager of a theatre—another form of the same hue?"

"Nay, dear madam, there are degrees of blackness."

"Ah, yes; positive bad, comparative Baddeley, superlative Colman."

"If I could compose a phrase like that, Mrs. Abington, I should be the greatest wit in London, and ruin my life going from coffee house to coffee house repeating it."

"Pray do not tell Mrs. Baddeley that I made it, sir."

"How could I, madam, when you have just told me that a she-devil was more than you could cope with?"

CHAPTER XXII.

"And now, sir, to face the particulars — to proceed from the fancy embroidery of wit to the solid fabric of fact — who or what is the aggressive demon that you want exorcised?"

"His name is Jackson—he calls himself Captain Jackson," replied Oliver. He had not made up his mind how much he should tell of Mary Horneck's story. He blamed Boswell for interrupting his consideration of this point after he had dined; though it is doubtful if he would have made any substantial advance in that direction even if the unhappy Scotchman had not thrust himself and his grievance upon him.

"Jackson—Captain Jackson!" cried the actress. "Why, Dr. Goldsmith, this is a very little fiend that you ask me to help you to destroy. Surely, sir, he can be crushed without my assistance. One does not ask for a battering-ram to overturn a house of cards — one does not requisition a park of artillery to demolish a sparrow."

"Nay, but if a blunderbuss be not handy, one should avail oneself of the power of a piece of ordnance," said Goldsmith. "The truth is, madam, that in this matter I represent only the blunder of the blunderbuss."

"If you drift into wit, sir, we shall never get on. I know 'tis hard for you to avoid it; but time is flying. What has this Captain Jackson been doing that he must be sacrificed? You must be straight with me."

"I 'm afraid it has actually come to that. Well, Mrs. Abington, in brief, there is a lady in the question."

"Oh! you need scarce dwell on so inevitable an incident as that; I was waiting for the lady."

"She is the most charming of her sex, madam."

"I never knew one that wasn't. Don't waste time over anything that may be taken for granted."

"Unhappily she was all unacquainted with the wickedness of men."

"I wonder in what part of the world she lived—certainly not in London."

"Staying with a relation in the country this fellow Jackson appeared upon the scene——"

"Ah! the most ancient story that the world knows: Innocence, the garden, the

serpent. Alas! sir, there is no return to the Garden of Innocence, even though the serpent be slaughtered."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Abington"—Goldsmith spoke slowly and gravely—"pardon me. This real story is not so commonplace as that of my Olivia. Destiny has more resources than the most imaginative composer of fiction."

In as direct a fashion as possible he told the actress the pitiful story of how Mary Horneck was imposed upon by the glamour of the man who let it be understood that he was a hero, only incapacitated by a wound from taking any further part in the campaign against the rebels in America; and how he refused to return her the letters which she had written to him, but had threatened to print them in such a way as would give them the appearance of having been written by a guilty woman.

"The lady is prostrated with grief," he said, concluding his story. "The very contemplation of the possibility of her letters being printed is killing her, and I am convinced that she would not survive the shame of knowing that the scoundrel had carried out his infamous threat."

"'Tis a sad story indeed," said Mrs. Abington. "The man is as bad as bad can

be. He claimed acquaintance with me on that famous night at the Pantheon, though I must confess that I had only a vague recollection of meeting him before his regiment was ordered across the Atlantic to quell the rebellion in the plantations. Only two days ago I heard that he had been drummed out of the army, and that he had sunk to the lowest point possible for a man to fall to in this world. But surely you know that all the fellow wants is to levy what was termed on the border of Scotland 'blackmail' upon the unhappy girl. 'Tis merely a question of guineas, Dr. Goldsmith. You perceive that? You are a man?"

"That was indeed my first belief; but, on consideration, I have come to think that he is fiend enough to aim only at the ruin of the girl," said Goldsmith.

"Psha! sir, I believe not in this high standard of crime. I believe not in the self-sacrifice of such fellows for the sake of their principles," cried the lady. "Go to the fellow with your guineas and shake them in a bag under his nose, and you shall quickly see how soon he will forego the dramatic elements in his attitude, and make an ignoble grab at the coins."

"You may be right," said he. "But whence are the guineas to come, pray?"

"Surely the lady's friends will not see her lost for the sake of a couple of hundred pounds."

"Nay; but her aim is to keep the matter from the ears of her friends! She would be overcome with shame were it to reach their ears that she had written letters of affection to such a man."

"She must be a singularly unpractical young lady, Dr. Goldsmith."

"If she had not been more than innocent would she, think you, have allowed herself to be imposed on by a stranger?"

"Alas, sir, if there were no ladies like her in the world, you gentlemen who delight us with your works of fiction would have to rely solely on your imagination; and that means going to another world. But to return to the matter before us; you wish to obtain possession of the letters? How do you suggest that I can help you to accomplish that purpose?"

"Why, madam, it is you to whom I come for suggestions. I saw the man in conversation with you first at the Pantheon, and then in this very room. It occurred to me that perhaps—it might be possible—in short, Mrs. Abington, that you might know of some way by which the scoundrel could be entrapped."

"You compliment me, sir. You think that the entrapping of unwary men—and of wary—is what nature and art have fitted me for—nature and practice?"

"I cannot conceive a higher compliment being paid to a woman, dear madam. But, in truth, I came to you because you are the only lady with whom I am acquainted who with a kind heart combines the highest intelligence. That is why you are our greatest actress. The highest intelligence is valueless on the stage unless it is associated with a heart that beats in sympathy with the sorrow and becomes exultant with the joy of others. That is why I regard myself as more than fortunate in having your promise to accept a part in my next comedy."

Mrs. Abington smiled as she saw through the very transparent art of the author, reminding her that she would have her reward if she helped him out of his difficulty.

"I can understand how ladies look on you with great favour, sir," said the actress. "Yes, in spite of your being—being—ah—innocent—a poet, and of possessing other disqualifications, you are a delightful man, Dr. Goldsmith; and by heaven, sir, I shall do what I can to—to—well, shall we

say to put you in a position of earning the lady's gratitude?"

"That is the position I long for, dear madam."

"Yes, but only to have the privilege of foregoing your claim. I know you, Dr. Goldsmith. Well, supposing you come to see me here in a day or two — that will give both of us a chance of still further considering the possibility of successfully entrapping our friend the Captain. I believe it was the lady who suggested the trap to you; you, being a man, were doubtless for running your enemy through the vitals or for cutting his throat without the delay of a moment."

"Your judgment is unerring, Mrs. Abington."

"Ah, you see, it is the birds that have been in the trap who know most about it. Besides, does not our dear dead friend Will Shakespeare say, 'Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps'?"

"Those are his words, madam, though at this moment I cannot quite perceive their bearing."

"Oh, lud! Why, dear sir, Cupid's mother's daughters resemble their little step-brother in being fond of a change of weapons, and you, sir, I perceive, have

been the victim of a dart. Now, I must hasten to dress for my part or there will be what Mr. Daly of Smock Alley, Dublin, used to term 'ructions.'"

She gave him her hand with a delightful smile and hurried off, but not before he had bowed over her hand, imprinting on it a clumsy but very effective kiss.

He remained in the theatre until the close of the performance; for he was not so utterly devoid of guile as not to know that if he had departed without witnessing Mrs. Abington in the second piece she would have regarded him as far from civil. Seeing him in a side box, however, that clever lady perceived that he had taste as well as tact. She felt that it was a pleasure to do anything for such a man — especially as he was a writer of plays. It would be an additional pleasure to her if she could so interpret a character in a play of his that the play should be the most notable success of the season.

As Goldsmith strolled back to his chambers he felt that he had made some progress in the enterprise with which he had been entrusted. He did not feel elated, but only tranquilly confident that his judgment had not been at fault when it suggested to him the propriety of consulting

with Mrs. Abington. This was the first time that propriety and Mrs. Abington were associated.

The next day he got a message that the success of his play was consolidated by a "command" performance at which the whole of his Majesty's Court would attend. This news elated him, not only because it meant the complete success of the play and the overthrow of the sentimentalists who were still harping upon the "low" elements of certain scenes, but also because he accepted it as an incident of good augury. He felt certain that Mrs. Abington would have discovered a plan by which he should be able to get possession of the letters.

When he went to her after the lapse of a few days, he found that she had not been unmindful of his interests.

"The fellow had the effrontery to stand beside my chair in the Mall yesterday," said she, "but I tolerated him — nay, I encouraged him — not for your sake, mind; I do not want you to fancy that you interest me, but for the sake of the unhappy girl who was so nearly making a shocking fool of herself. Only one girl interests me more than she who nearly makes a fool of herself, and that is she who actually makes the fool of herself."

"Alas! alas! the latter is more widely represented in this evil world, Mrs. Abington," said Oliver, so gravely that the actress roared with laughter.

"You have too fine a comedy face to be sentimental, Dr. Goldsmith," she said. "But to business. I tell you I even smiled upon the gentleman, for I have found that the traps which are netted with silk are invariably the most effective."

"You have found that by your experience of traps?" said Goldsmith. "The smile is the silken net?"

"Even so," said she, giving an excellent example of the fatal mesh. "Ah, Dr. Goldsmith, you would do well to avoid the woman who smiles on you."

"Alas! madam, the caution is thrown away upon me; she smiles not on me, but at me."

"Thank heaven for that, sir. No harm will come to you through being smiled at. How I stray from my text! Well, sir, the wretch, in response to the encouragement of my smile, had the effrontery to ask me for my private address, upon which I smiled again. Ah, sir, 'tis diverting when the fly begins to lure on the spider."

"'Tis vastly diverting, madam, I doubt not — to the fly."

"Ay, and to the friends of the spider. But we shall let that pass. Sir, to be brief, I did not let the gentleman know that I had a private address, but I invited him to partake of supper with me on the next Thursday night."

"Heavens! madam, you do not mean to tell me that your interest on my behalf——"

"Is sufficiently great to lead me to sup with a spider? Sir, I say that I am only interested in my sister-fly — would she be angry if she were to hear that such a woman as I even thought of her as a sister?"

There was a note of pathos in the question, which did not fall unnoticed upon Goldsmith's ear.

"Madam," said he, "she is a Christian woman."

"Ah, Dr. Goldsmith," said the actress, "a very small amount of Christian charity is thought sufficient for the equipment of a Christian woman. Let that pass, however; what I want of you is to join us at supper on Thursday night. It is to take place in the Shakespeare tavern round the corner, and, of course, in a private room; but I do not want you to appear boldly, as if I had invited you beforehand to partake of my hospitality. You must come into the room when we have begun, carrying with you a

roll of manuscript, which you must tell me contains a scene of your new comedy, upon which we are daily in consultation, mind you."

"I shall not fail to recollect," said Goldsmith. "Why, 'tis like the argument of a comedy, Mrs. Abington; I protest I never invented one more elaborate. I rather fear to enter upon it."

"Nay, you must be in no trepidation, sir," said the lady. "I think I know the powers of the various members of the cast of this little drama of mine, so you need not think that you will be put into a part which you will not be able to play to perfection."

"You are giving me a lesson in playwriting. Pray continue the argument. When I enter with the imaginary scene of my new piece, you will, I trust, ask me to remain to supper; you see I grudge the gentleman the pleasure of your society for even an hour."

"I will ask you to join us at the table, and then—well, then I have a notion that between us we should have no great difficulty making our friend drink a sufficient quantity of wine to cause him to make known all his secrets to us, even as to where he keeps those precious letters of his."

Oliver's face did not exhibit any expression that the actress could possibly interpret as a flattering tribute to her ingenuity — the fact being that he was greatly disappointed at the result of her contriving. Her design was on a level of ingenuity with that which might occur to a romantic school miss. Of course the idea upon which it was founded had formed the basis of more than one comedy — he had a notion that if these comedies had not been written Mrs. Abington's scheme would not have been so clearly defined.

She perceived the expression on his face and rightly interpeted it.

"What, sir!" she cried. "Do you fail to perceive the singular ingenuity of my scheme? Nay, you must remember that 'tis my first attempt — not at scheming, to be sure, but at inventing a design for a play."

"I would not shrink from making use of your design if I were writing a play, dear lady," said he. "But then, you see, it would be in my power to make my villain speak at the right moments and hold his peace at the right moments. It would also be in my power to make him confess all that was necessary for the situation. But alas! madam, it makes me sometimes quite

hopeless of Nature to find how frequently she disregards the most ordinary precepts of art."

"Psha! sir," said the actress. "Nothing in this world is certain. I am a poor moralist, but I recognise the fact, and make it the guide of my life. At the same time I have noticed that, although one's carefully arranged plans are daily thrown into terrible disorder by the slovenliness of the actors to whom we assign certain parts and certain dialogue, yet in the end nature makes even a more satisfactory drama out of the ruins of our schemes than we originally designed. So, in this case, sir, I am not without hope that even though our gentleman's lips remain sealed — nay, even though our gentleman remain sober — a great calamity — we may still be able to accomplish our purpose. You will keep your ears open and I shall keep my eyes open, and it will be strange if between us we cannot get the better of so commonplace a scoundrel."

"I place myself unreservedly in your hands, madam," said Oliver; "and I can only repeat what you have said so well — namely, that even the most clumsy of our schemes — which this one of yours certainly is not — may become the basis of a

most ingenious drama, designed and carried out by that singularly adroit playwright, Destiny. And so I shall not fail you on Thursday evening."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Goldsmith for the next few days felt very ill at ease. He had a consciousness of having wasted a good deal of valuable time waiting upon Mrs. Abington and discussing with her the possibility of accomplishing the purpose which he had at heart; for he could not but perceive how shallow was the scheme which she had devised for the undoing of Mary Horneck's enemy. He felt that it would, after all, have been better for him to place himself in the hands of the fencing-master whom Baretti had promised to find out for him, and to do his best to run the scoundrel through the body, than to waste his time listening to the crude scheme concocted by Mrs. Abington, in close imitation of some third-class playwright.

He felt, however, that he had committed himself to the actress and her scheme. It would be impossible for him to draw back after agreeing to join her at supper on the Thursday night. But this fact did not prevent his exercising his imagination with a view to find out some new plan for obtain-

ing possession of the letters. Thursday came, however, without seeing him any further advanced in this direction than he had been when he had first gone to the actress, and he began to feel that hopelessness which takes the form of hoping for the intervention of some accident to effect what ingenuity has failed to accomplish. Mrs. Abington had suggested the possibility of such an accident taking place — in fact, she seemed to rely rather upon the possibility of such an occurrence than upon the ingenuity of her own scheme; and Oliver could not but think that she was right in this respect. He had a considerable experience of life and its vicissitudes, and he knew that when destiny was in a jesting mood the most judicious and cunningly devised scheme may be overturned by an accident apparently no less trivial than the raising of a hand, the fluttering of a piece of lace, or the cry of a baby.

He had known of a horse's casting a shoe preventing a runaway match and a vast amount of consequent misery, and he had heard of a shower of rain causing a confirmed woman hater to take shelter in a doorway, where he met a young woman who changed — for a time — all his ideas of the sex. As he recalled these and other

freaks of fate, he could not but feel that Mrs. Abington was fully justified in her confidence in accident as a factor in all human problems. But he was quite aware that hoping for an accident is only another form of despair.

In the course of the day appointed by Mrs. Abington for her supper he met Baretti, and reminded him of the promise he had made to find an Italian fencing-master and send him to Brick Court.

"What!" cried Baretti. "Have you another affair on your hands in addition to that in which you have already been engaged? Psha! sir. You do not need to be a swordsman in order to flog a bookseller."

"I do not look forward to fighting booksellers," said Goldsmith. "They have stepped between me and starvation more than once."

"Would any one of them have taken that step unless he was pretty certain to make money by his philanthropy?" asked Baretti in his usual cynical way.

"I cannot say," replied Goldsmith. "I don't think that I can lay claim to the mortifying reflection that I have enriched any bookseller. At any rate, I do not mean ever to beat another."

"'Tis, then, a critic whom you mean to attack? If you have made up your mind to kill a critic, I shall make it a point to find you the best swordsman in Europe," said Baretti.

"Do so, my friend," said Goldsmith; and when I succeed in killing a critic, you shall have the first and second fingers of his right hand as a memento."

"I shall look for them—yes, in five years, for it will certainly take that time to make you expert with a sword," said the Italian. "And, meantime, you may yourself be cut to pieces by even so indifferent a fighter as Kenrick."

"In such a case I promise to bequeath to you whatever bones of mine you may take a fancy to have."

"And I shall regard them with great veneration, being the relics of a martyr—a man who did not fear to fight with dragons and other unclean beasts. You may look for a visit from a skilful countryman of mine within a week; only let me pray of you to be guided by his advice. If he should say that it is wiser for you to beware the entrance to a quarrel, as your poet has it, you will do well to accept his advice. I do not want a poet's bones for my reliquary, though from all that I can hear one of our

friends would have no objection to a limb or two."

"And who may that friend be?"

"You should be able to guess, sir. What! have you not been negotiating with the booksellers for a life of Dr. Johnson?"

"Not I, sir. But, if I have been doing so, what then?"

"What then? Why, then you may count upon the eternal enmity of the little Scotchman whom you once described not as a cur but only a bur. Sir, Boswell robbed of his Johnson would be worse than—than——"

"A lioness robbed of her whelps?"

"Well, better say a she-bear robbed of her cubs, only that Johnson is the bear and Boswell the cub. Boswell has been going about saying that you had boasted to him of your intention to become Johnson's biographer; and the best of the matter is that Johnson has entered with great spirit into the jest and has kept his poor Bossy on thistles—reminiscent of his native land—ever since."

Goldsmith laughed, and told Baretti how he had occasion to get rid of Boswell, and had done so by pretending that he meant to write a life of Johnson. Baretti laughed and went on to describe how, on the previous evening, Garrick had drawn on

Boswell until the latter had imitated all the animals in the farmyard, while narrating, for the thousandth time, his first appearance in the pit of Drury Lane. Boswell had felt quite flattered, Baretti said, when Garrick, making a judicial speech, which every one present except Boswell perceived to be a fine piece of comedy, said he felt constrained to reverse the judgment of the man in the pit who had shouted: "Stick to the coo, mon!" On the whole, Garrick said, he thought that, while Boswell's imitation of the cow was most admirable in many respects, yet for naturalness it was his opinion—whatever it might be worth—that the voice of the ass was that which Boswell was most successful in attempting.

Goldsmith knew that even Garrick's broadest buffoonery was on occasions accepted by Boswell with all seriousness, and he had no hesitation in believing Baretti's account of the party on the previous evening.

He went to Mrs. Abington's room at the theatre early in the night to inquire if she had made any change in her plans respecting the supper, and he found that the lady had come to think as poorly of the scheme which she had invented as he did. She had even abandoned her idea of inducing the

man to confess, when in a state of intoxication, where he was in the habit of keeping the letters.

"These fellows are sometimes desperately suspicious when in their cups," said she; "and I fear that at the first hint of our purpose he may become dumb, no matter how boldly he may have been talking previously. If he suspects that you have a desire to obtain the letters, you may say farewell to the chance of worming anything out of him regarding them."

"What then is to be gained by our supping with him?" said Goldsmith.

"Why, you are brought into contact with him," she replied. "You will then be in a position, if you cultivate a friendship with him, to take him unawares upon some occasion, and so effect your purpose. Great heavens, sir! one cannot expect to take a man by storm, so to speak—one cannot hope to meet a clever scoundrel for half an hour in the evening, and then walk away with all his secrets. You may have to be with this fellow every day for a month or two before you get a chance of putting the letters into your pocket."

"I'll hope for better luck than that," said Oliver.

"Oh, with good luck one can accomplish anything," said she. "But good luck is just one of the things that cannot be arranged for even by the cleverest people."

"That is where men are at a disadvantage in striving with destiny," said Goldsmith. "But I think that any man who succeeds in having Mrs. Abington as his ally must be regarded as the most fortunate of his sex."

"Ah, sir, wait for another month before you compliment me," said she.

"Madam," said he, "I am not complimenting you, but myself. I will take your advice and reserve my compliments to you for — well, no, not a month; if I can put them off for a week I shall feel that I have done very well."

As he made his bow and left her, he could not help feeling more strongly that he had greatly overrated the advantages to be derived from an alliance with Mrs. Abington when his object was to get the better of an adroit scoundrel. He had heard — nay, he had written — of the wiles of women, and yet the first time that he had an opportunity of testing a woman's wiles he found that he had been far too generous in his estimate of their value.

It was with no little trepidation that he went to the Shakespeare tavern at supper time and inquired for Mrs. Abington. He had a roll of manuscript in his hand, according to agreement, and he desired the waiter to inform the lady that he would not keep her for long. He was very fluent up to this point; but he was uncertain how he would behave when he found himself face to face with the man who had made the life of Mary Horneck miserable. He wondered if he would be able to restrain his impulse to fly at the scoundrel's throat.

When, however, the waiter returned with a message from Mrs. Abington that she would see Dr. Goldsmith in the supper room, and he ascended the stairs to that apartment, he felt quite at his ease. He had nerved himself to play a part, and he was convinced that the rôle was not beyond his powers.

Mrs. Abington, at the moment of his entrance, was lying back in her chair laughing, apparently at a story which was being told to her by her *vis-à-vis*, for he was leaning across the table, with his elbow resting upon it and one expressive finger upraised to give emphasis to the points of his narrative.

When Goldsmith appeared, the actress nodded to him familiarly, pleasantly, but did not allow her attention to be diverted from the story which Captain Jackson was telling to her. Goldsmith paused with his fingers still on the handle of the door. He knew that the most inopportune entrance that a man can make upon another is when the other is in the act of telling a story to an appreciative audience — say, a beautiful actress in a gown that allows her neck and shoulders to be seen to the greatest advantage and does not interfere with the ebb and flow of that roseate tide, with its gracious ripples and delicate wimplings, rising and falling between the porcelain of her throat and the curve of the ivory of her shoulders.

The man did not think it worth his while to turn around in recognition of Goldsmith's entrance; he finished his story and received Mrs. Abington's tribute of a laugh as a matter of course. Then he turned his head round as the visitor ventured to take a step or two toward the table, bowing profusely — rather too profusely for the part he was playing, the artistic perception of the actress told her.

"Ha, my little author!" cried the man at the table with the swagger of a patron,

"You are true to the tradition of the craft of scribblers — the best time for putting in an appearance is when supper has just been served."

"Ah, sir," said Goldsmith, "we poor devils are forced to wait upon the convenience of our betters."

"Strike me dumb, sir, if 'tis not a pity you do not await their convenience in an ante-room — ay, or the kitchen. I have heard that the scribe and the cook usually become the best of friends. You poets write best of broken hearts when you are sustained by broken victuals."

"For shame, Captain!" cried Mrs Abington. "Dr. Goldsmith is a man as well as a poet. He has broken heads before now."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Captain Jackson laughed heartily at so quaint an idea, throwing himself back in his chair and pointing a contemptuous thumb at Oliver, who had advanced to the side of the actress, assuming the deprecatory smile of the bookseller's hack. He played the part very indifferently, the lady perceived.

"Faith, my dear," laughed the Captain, "I would fain believe that he is a terrible person for a poet, for, by the Lord, he nearly had his head broke by me on the first night that you went to the Pantheon; and I swear that I never crack a skull unless it be that of a person who is accustomed to spread terror around."

"Some poets' skulls, sir, are not so easily cracked," said Mrs. Abington.

"Nay, my dear madam," cried her *vis-à-vis*, "you must pardon me for saying that I do not think you express your meaning with any great exactness. I take it that you mean, madam, that on the well known kitchen principle that cracked objects last

longer than others, a poet's pate, being cracked originally, survives the assaults that would overcome a sound head."

"I meant nothing like that, Captain," said Mrs. Abington. Then she turned to Goldsmith, who stood by, fingering his roll of manuscript. "Come, Dr. Goldsmith," she cried, "seat yourself by me, and partake of supper. I vow that I will not even glance at that act of your new play which I perceive you have brought to me, until we have supped."

"Nay, madam," stuttered Goldsmith; "I have already had my humble meal; still —— "

He glanced from the dishes on the table to Captain Jackson, who gave a hoarse laugh, crying —

"Ha, I wondered if the traditions of the trade were about to be violated by our most admirable Doctor. I thought it likely that he would allow himself to be persuaded. But I swear that he has no regard for the romance which he preaches, or else he would not form the third at a party. Has he never heard that the third in a party is the inevitable kill-joy?"

"You wrong my friend Dr. Goldsmith, Captain," said the actress in smiling remonstrance that seemed to beg of him to

take an indulgent view of the poet's weakness. "You wrong him, sir. Dr. Goldsmith is a man of parts. He is a wit as well as a poet, and he will not stay very long; will you, Dr. Goldsmith?"

She acted the part so well that but for the side glance which she cast at him, Goldsmith might have believed her to be in earnest. For his own part he was acting to perfection the rôle of the hack author who was patronised till he found himself in the gutter. He could only smile in a sickly way as he laid down his hat beside a chair over which Jackson's cloak was flung, and placed in it the roll of manuscript, preparatory to seating himself.

"Madam, I am your servant," he murmured; "Sir, I am your most obedient to command. I feel the honour of being permitted to sup in such distinguished company."

"And so you should, sir," cried Captain Jackson as the waiter bustled about, laying a fresh plate and glass, "so you should. Your grand patrons, my little friend, though they may make a pretence of saving you from slaughter by taking your quarrel on their shoulders, are not likely to feed you at their own table. Lord, how that piece of antiquity, General Oglethorpe, swag-

gered across the porch at the Pantheon when I had half a mind to chastise you for your clumsiness in almost knocking me over! May I die, sir, if I wasn't at the brink of teaching the General a lesson which he would have remembered to his dying hour —his dying hour—that is to say, for exactly four minutes after I had drawn upon him."

"Ah, Dr. Goldsmith is fortunate in his friends," said Mrs. Abington. "But I hope that in future, Captain, he may reckon on your sword being drawn on his behalf, and not turned against him and his friends."

"If you are his friend, my dear Mrs. Abington, he may count upon me, I swear," cried the Captain bowing over the table."

"Good," she said. "And so I call upon you to drink to his health—a bumper, sir, a bumper!"

The Captain showed no reluctance to pay the suggested compliment. With an air of joviality he filled his large glass up to the brim and drained it with a good-humoured, half-patronising motion in the direction of Goldsmith.

"Hang him!" he cried, when he had wiped his lips, "I bear Goldsmith no malice for his clumsiness in the porch of the Pantheon. "'Sdeath, madam, shall the man who led a company of his Majesty's regulars

in charge after charge upon the American rebels, refuse to drink to the health of a little man who tinkles out his rhymes as the man at the raree show does his bells? Strike me blind, deaf and dumb, if I am not magnanimous to my heart's core. I 'll drink his health again if you challenge me."

"Nay, Captain," said the lady, "I 'll be magnanimous, too, and refrain from challenging you. I sadly fear that you have been drinking too many healths during the day, sir."

"What mean you by that, madam?" he cried. "Do you suggest that I cannot carry my liquor with the best men at White's? If you were a man, and you gave a hint in that direction, by the Lord, it would be the last that you would have a chance of offering."

"Nay, nay, sir! I meant not that," said the actress hastily. "I will prove to you that I meant it not by challenging you to drink to Dr. Goldsmith's new comedy."

"Now you are very much my dear," said Jackson, half-emptying the brandy decanter into his glass and adding only a thimbleful of water. "Yes, your confidence in me wipes out the previous affront. 'Sblood, madam, shall it be said that Dick Jackson, whose name made the American

rebels — curse 'em! — turn as green as their own coats — shall it be said that Dick Jackson, of whom the rebel Colonel — Washington his name is — George Washington" — he had considerable difficulty over the name — "is accustomed to say to this day, 'Give me a hundred men — not men, but lions, like that devil Dick Jackson, and I 'll sweep his Majesty's forces into the Potomac' — shall it be said that — that — what the devil was I about to say — shall it be said? — never mind — here 's to the health of Colonel Washington!"

"Nay, sir, we cannot drink to one of the King's enemies," said Mrs. Abington, rising. "'Twere scandalous, indeed, to do so in this place; and, sir, you still wear the King's uniform."

"The devil take the King's uniform!" shouted the man. "The devils of rebels are taking a good many coats of that uniform, and let me tell you, madam, that — nay, you must not leave the table until the toast is drank ——" Mrs. Abington having risen, had walked across the room and seated herself on the chair over which Captain Jackson had flung his cloak.

"Hold, sir," cried Goldsmith, dropping his knife and fork with a clatter upon his plate that made the other man give a little

jump. "Hold, sir, I perceive that you are on the side of freedom, and I would feel honoured by your permission to drink the toast that you propose. Here's success to the cause that will triumph in America."

Jackson, who was standing at the table with his glass in his hand, stared at him with the smile of a half-intoxicated man. He had just enough intelligence remaining to make him aware that there was something ambiguous in Goldsmith's toast.

"It sounds all right," he muttered as if he were trying to convince himself that his suspicions of ambiguity were groundless. "It sounds all right, and yet, strike me dizzy! if it wouldn't work both ways! Ha, my little poet," he continued. "I 'm glad to see that you are a man. Drink, sir — drink to the success of the cause in America."

Goldsmith got upon his feet and raised his glass — it contained only a light wine.

"Success to it!" he cried, and he watched Captain Jackson drain his third tumbler of brandy.

"Hark ye, my little poet!" whispered the latter very huskily, lurching across the table, and failing to notice that his hostess had not returned to her place. "Hark ye, sir! Cornwallis thought himself a general of generals. He thought when he court-

martialled me and turned me out of the regiment, sending me back to England in a foul hulk from Boston port, that he had got rid of me. He 'll find out that he was mistaken, sir, and that one of these days —— Mum 's the word, mind you! If you open your lips to any human being about this, I 'll cut you to pieces. I 'll flay you alive! Washington is no better than Cornwallis, let me tell you. What message did he send me when he heard that I was ready to blow Cornwallis's brains out and march my company across the Potomac? I ask you, sir, man to man — though a poet isn't quite a man — but that 's my generosity. Said Washy — Washy — Wishy — Washy — Washington: 'Cornwallis's brains have been such valuable allies to the colonists, Colonel Washington would regard as his enemy any man who would make the attempt to curtail their capacity for blundering.' That 's the message I got from Washington, curse him! But the Colonel isn't everybody. Mark me, my friend — whatever your name is — I 've got letters — letters ——"

"Yes, yes, you have letters — where?" cried Goldsmith, in the confidential whisper that the other had assumed.

The man who was leaning across the table stared at him hazily, and then across

his face there came the cunning look of the more than half-intoxicated. He straightened himself as well as he could in his chair, and then swayed limply backward and forward, laughing.

"Letters — oh, yes — plenty of letters — but where? — where? — that 's my own matter — a secret," he murmured in vague tones. "The government would give a guinea or two for my letters — one of them came from Mount Vernon itself, Mr. — whatever your name may be — and if you went to Mr. Secretary and said to him, 'Mr. Secretary' " — he pronounced the word "Secrary" — " 'I know that Dick Jackson is a rebel,' and Mr. Secretary says, 'Where are the letters to prove it?' where would you be, my clever friend? No, sir, my brains are not like Cornwallis's, drunk or sober. Hallo, where 's the lady?"

He seemed suddenly to recollect where he was. He straightened himself as well as he could, and looked sleepily across the room.

"I am here," cried Mrs. Abington, leaving the chair, across the back of which Jackson's coat was thrown. "I am here, sir; but I protest I shall not take my place at the table again while treason is in the air."

"Treason, madam? Who talks of treason?" cried the man with a lurch forward and a wave of the hand. "Madam, I'm shocked — quite shocked! I wear the King's coat, though that cloak is my own — my own, and all that it contains — all that ——"

His voice died away in a drunken fashion as he stared across the room at his cloak. Goldsmith saw an expression of suspicion come over his face; he saw him straighten himself and walk with an affectation of steadiness that only emphasised his intoxicated lurches, to the chair where the cloak lay. He saw him lift up the cloak and run his hand down the lining until he came to a pocket. With eager eyes he saw him extract from the pocket a leathern wallet, and with a sigh of relief slip it furtively into the bosom of his long waistcoat, where, apparently, there was another packet.

Goldsmith glanced toward Mrs. Abington. She was sitting leaning over her chair with a finger on her lips, and the same look of mischief that Sir Joshua Reynolds transferred to his picture of her as "Miss Prue." She gave a glance of smiling intelligence at Oliver, as Jackson laughed coarsely, saying huskily —

"A handkerchief—I thought I had left my handkerchief in the pocket of my cloak, and 'tis as well to make sure—that's my motto. And now, my charmer, you will see that I'm not a man to dally with treason, for I'll challenge you in a bumper to the King's most excellent Majesty. Fill up your glass, madam; fill up yours, too, Mr. — Mr. Killjoy, we'll call you, for what the devil made you show your ugly face here the fiend only knows. Mrs. Baddeley and I are the best of good friends. Isn't that the truth, sweet Mrs. Baddeley? Come, drink to my toast—whatever it may be—or, by the Lord, I'll run you through the vitals!"

Goldsmith hastened to pass the man the decanter with whatever brandy remained in it, and in another instant the decanter was empty and the man's glass was full. Goldsmith was on his feet with uplifted glass before Jackson had managed to raise himself, by the aid of a heavy hand on the table, into a standing attitude, murmuring—

"Drink, sir! drink to my lovely friend there, the voluptuous Mrs. Baddeley. My dear Mrs. Baddeley, I have the honour to welcome you to my table, and to drink to your health, dear madam."

He swallowed the contents of the tumbler — his fourth since he had entered the room — and the next instant he had fallen in a heap into his chair, drenched by the contents of Mrs. Abington's glass.

"That is how I accept your toast of Mrs. Baddeley, sir," she cried, standing at the head of the table with the dripping glass still in her hand. "You drunken sot! not to be able to distinguish between me and Sophia Baddeley! I can stand the insult no longer. Take yourself out of my room, sir!"

She gave the broad ribbon of the bell such a pull as nearly brought it down. Goldsmith having started up, stood with amazement on his face watching her, while the other man also stared at her through his drunken stupour, his jaw fallen.

Not a word was spoken until the waiter entered the room.

"Call a hackney coach immediately for that gentleman," said the actress, pointing to the man who alone remained — for the best of reasons — seated.

"A coach? Certainly, madam," said the waiter, withdrawing with a bow.

"Dr. Goldsmith," resumed Mrs. Abington, "may I beg of you to have the goodness to see that person to his lodgings and

to pay the cost of the hackney-coach? He is not entitled to that consideration, but I have a wish to treat him more generously than he deserves. His address is Whetstone Park, I think we may assume; and so I leave you, sir."

She walked from the room with her chin in the air, both of the men watching her with such surprise as prevented either of them from uttering a word. It was only when she had gone that it occurred to Goldsmith that she was acting her part admirably — that she had set herself to give him an opportunity of obtaining possession of the wallet which she, as well as he, had seen Jackson transfer from the pocket of his cloak to that of his waistcoat. Surely he should have no great difficulty in extracting the bundle from the man's pocket when in the coach.

"They 're full of their whimsies, these wenches," were the first words spoken, with a free wave of an arm, by the man who had failed in his repeated attempts to lift himself out of his chair. "What did I say? — what did I do to cause that spitfire to behave like that? I feel hurt, sir, more deeply hurt than I can express, at her behaviour. What 's her name—I 'm not sure if she was Mrs. Abington or Mrs. Badde-

ley? Anyhow, she insulted me grossly — me, sir — me, an officer who has charged his Majesty's rebels in the plantations of Virginia, where the Potomac flows down to the sea. But they 're all alike. I could tell you a few stories about them, sir, that would open your eyes, for I have been their darling always." Here he began to sing a tavern song in a loud but husky tone, for the brandy had done its work very effectively, and he had now reached what might be called — somewhat paradoxically — the high-water mark of intoxication. He was still singing when the waiter re-entered the room to announce that a hackney carriage was waiting at the door of the tavern.

At the announcement the drunken man made a grab for a decanter and flung it at the waiter's head. It missed that mark, however, and crashed among the plates which were still on the table, and in a moment the landlord and a couple of his barmen were in the room and on each side of Jackson. He made a poor show of resistance when they pinioned his arms and pushed him down the stairs and lifted him into the hackney-coach. The landlord and his assistants were accustomed to deal with promptitude with such persons, and

they had shut the door of the coach before Goldsmith reached the street.

"Hold on, sir," he cried, "I am accompanying that gentleman to his lodging."

"Nay, Doctor," whispered the landlord, who was a friend of his, "the fellow is a brawler — he will involve you in a quarrel before you reach the Strand."

"Nevertheless, I will go, my friend," said Oliver. "The lady has laid it upon me as a duty, and I must obey her at all hazards."

He got into the coach, and shouted out the address to the driver.

CHAPTER XXV.

The instant he had seated himself he found to his amazement that the man beside him was fast asleep. To look at him lying in a heap on the cushions one might have fancied that he had been sleeping for hours rather than minutes, so composed was he. Even the jolting of the starting coach made no impression upon him.

Goldsmith perceived that the moment for which he had been longing had arrived. He felt that if he meant to get the letters into his possession he must act at once.

He passed his hand over the man's waistcoat, and had no difficulty in detecting the exact whereabouts of the packet which he coveted. All he had to do was to unbutton the waistcoat, thrust his hand into the pocket, and then leave the coach while it was still in motion.

The moment that he touched the first button, however, the man shifted his position, and awoke, putting his hand, as if mechanically, to his breast to feel that the wallet was still there. Then he straight-

ened himself in some measure and began to mumble, apparently being quite unaware of the fact that some one was seated beside him.

"Dear madam, you do me great honour," he said, and then gave a little hiccupping laugh. "Great honour, I swear; but if you were to offer me all the guineas in the treasure chest of the regiment I would not give you the plan of the fort. No, madam, I am a man of honour, and I hold the documents for Colonel Washington. Oh, the fools that girls are to put pen to paper! But if she was a fool she did not write the letters to a fool. Oh, no, no! I would accept no price for them — no price whatever except your own fair self. Come to me, my charmer, at sunset, and they shall be yours; yes, with a hundred guineas, or I print them. Oh, Ned, my lad, there 's no honester way of living than by selling a wench her own letters. No, no; Ned, I 'll not leave 'em behind me in the drawer, in case of accidents. I 'll carry 'em about with me in case of accidents, for I know how sharp you are, dear Ned; and so when I had 'em in the pocket of my cloak I thought it as well to transfer 'em — in case of accidents, Ned — to my waistcoat, sir. Ay, they 're here! here, my friend! and here they 'll stay till

Colonel Washington hands me over his dollars for them."

Then he slapped his breast, and laughed the horrible laugh of a drunken man whose hallucination is that he is the shrewdest fellow alive.

Goldsmith caught every word of his mumblings, and from the way he referred to the letters, came to the conclusion that the scoundrel had not only tried to levy blackmail on Mary Horneck, but had been endeavouring to sell the secrets of the King's forces to the American rebels. Goldsmith had, however, no doubt that the letters which he was desirous of getting into his hands were those which the man had within his waistcoat. His belief in this direction did not, however, assist him to devise a plan for transferring the letters from the place where they reposed to his own pocket.

The coach jolted over the uneven roads on its way to the notorious Whetstone Park, but all the jolting failed to prevent the operation of the brandy which the man had drank, for once again he fell asleep, his fingers remaining between the buttons of his waistcoat, so that it would be quite impossible for even the most adroit pick-

pocket, which Goldsmith could not claim to be, to open the garment.

He felt the vexation of the moment very keenly. The thought that the packet which he coveted was only a few inches from his hand, and yet that it was as unattainable as though it were at the summit of Mont Blanc, was maddening; but he felt that he would be foolish to make any more attempts to effect his purpose. The man would be certain to awake, and Goldsmith knew that, intoxicated though he was, he was strong enough to cope with three men of his (Goldsmith's) physique.

Gregory's Court, which led into Whetstone Park, was too narrow to admit so broad a vehicle as a hackney-coach, so the driver pulled up at the entrance in Holborn near the New Turnstile, just under an ale-house lamp. Goldsmith was wondering if his obligation to Mrs. Abington's guest did not end here, when the light of the lamp showed the man to be wide awake, and he really seemed comparatively sober. It was only when he spoke that he showed himself, by the huskiness of his voice, to be very far from sober.

"Good Lord!" he cried, "how do I come to be here? Who the devil may you be, sirrah? Oh, I remember! You 're the

poet. She insulted me — grossly insulted me — turned me out of the tavern. And you insulted me, too, you rascal, coming with me in my coach, as if I was drunk, and needed you to look after me. Get out, you scoundrel, or I 'll crack your skull for you. Can't you see that this is Gregory's Court?"

Goldsmith eyed the ruffian for a moment. He was debating if it might not be better to spring upon him, and make at least a straightforward attempt to obtain the wallet. The result of his moment's consideration of the question was to cause him to turn away from the fellow and open the door. He was in the act of telling the driver that he would take the coach on to the Temple, when Jackson stepped out, shaking the vehicle on its leathern straps, and staggered a few yards in the direction of the turnstile. At the same instant a man hastily emerged from the entrance to the court, almost coming in collision with Jackson.

"You cursed, clumsy lout!" shouted the latter, swinging half-way round as the man passed. In a second the stranger stopped, and faced the other.

"You low ruffian!" he said. "You cheated me last night, and left me to sleep in the fields; but my money came to me

to-day, and I 've been waiting for you. Take that, you scoundrel — and that — and that ——"

He struck Jackson a blow to right and left, and then one straight on the forehead, which felled him to the ground. He gave the man a kick when he fell, and then turned about and ran, for the watchman was coming up the street, and half a dozen of the passers-by gave an alarm.

Goldsmith shouted out, "Follow him — follow the murderer!" pointing wildly in the direction taken by the stranger.

In another instant he was leaning over the prostrate man, and making a pretence to feel his heart. He tore open his waistcoat. Putting in his hand, he quickly abstracted the wallet, and bending right over the body in order to put his hand to the man's chest, he, with much more adroitness than was necessary — for outside the sickly gleam of the lamp all the street was in darkness — slipped the wallet into his other hand and then under his coat.

A few people had by this time been drawn to the spot by the alarm which had been given, and some inquired if the man were dead, and if he had been run through with a sword.

"It was a knock-down blow," said Goldsmith, still leaning over the prostrate man; "and being a doctor, I can honestly say that no great harm has been done. The fellow is as drunk as if he had been soused in a beer barrel. A dash of water in his face will go far to bring about his recovery. Ah, he is recovering already."

He had scarcely spoken before he felt himself thrown violently back, almost knocking down two of the bystanders, for the man had risen to a sitting posture, asking him, with an oath, as he flung him back, what he meant by choking him.

A roar of laughter came from the people in the street as Goldsmith picked up his hat and straightened his sword, saying —

"Gentlemen, I think that a man who is strong enough to treat his physician in that way has small need of his services. I thought the fellow might be seriously hurt, but I have changed my mind on that point recently; and so good-night. Souse him copiously with water should he relapse. By a casual savour of him I should say that he is not used to water."

He re-entered the coach and told the driver to proceed to the Temple, and as rapidly as possible, for he was afraid that the man, on completely recovering from

the effects of the blow that had stunned him, would miss his wallet and endeavour to overtake the coach. He was greatly relieved when he reached the lodge of his friend Ginger, the head porter, and he paid the driver with a liberality that called down upon him a torrent of thanks.

As he went up the stairs to his chambers he could scarcely refrain from cheering. In his hand he carried the leathern wallet, and he had no doubt that it contained the letters which he hoped to place in the hands of his dear Jessamy Bride, who, he felt, had alone understood him — had alone trusted him with the discharge of a knightly task.

He closed his oaken outer door and forced up the wick of the lamp in his room. With trembling fingers by the light of its rays he unclasped the wallet and extracted its contents. He devoured the pages with his eyes, and then both wallet and papers fell from his hands. He dropped into a chair with an exclamation of wonder and dismay. The papers which he had taken from the wallet were those which, following the instructions of Mrs. Abington, he had brought with him to the tavern, pretending that they were the act of the comedy which he had to read to the actress!

He remained for a long time in the chair into which he had fallen. He was utterly stupefied. Apart from the shock of his disappointment, the occurrence was so mysterious as to deprive him of the power of thought. He could only gaze blankly down at the empty wallet and the papers, covered with his own handwriting, which he had picked up from his own desk before starting for the tavern.

What did it all mean? How on earth had those papers found their way into the wallet?

Those were the questions which he had to face, but for which, after an hour's consideration, he failed to find an answer.

He recollected distinctly having seen the expression of suspicion come over the man's face when he saw Mrs. Abington sitting on the chair over which his cloak was hanging; and when she had returned to the table, Jackson had staggered to the cloak, and running his hand down the lining until he had found the pocket, furtively took from it the wallet, which he transferred to the pocket on the inner side of his waistcoat. He had had no time—at least, so Goldsmith thought—to put the sham act of the play into the wallet; and yet he felt that the man must have done so unseen by

the others in the room, or how could the papers ever have been in the wallet?

Great heavens! The man must only have been shamming intoxication the greater part of the night! He must have had so wide an experience of the craft of men and the wiles of women as caused him to live in a condition of constant suspicion of both men and women. He had clearly suspected Mrs. Abington's invitation to supper, and had amused himself at the expense of the actress and her other guest. He had led them both on, and had fooled them to the top of his bent, just when they were fancying that they were entrapping him.

Goldsmith felt that, indeed, he at least had been a fool, and, as usual, he had attained the summit of his foolishness just when he fancied he was showing himself to be especially astute. He had chuckled over his shrewdness in placing himself in the hands of a woman to the intent that he might defeat the ends of the scoundrel who threatened Mary Horneck's happiness, but now it was Jackson who was chuckling—Jackson, who had doubtless been watching with amused interest the childish attempts made by Mrs. Abington to entrap him.

How glibly she had talked of entrapping him! She had even gone the length of

quoting Shakespeare; she was one of those people who fancy that when they have quoted Shakespeare they have said the last word on any subject. But when the time came for her to cease talking and begin to act, she had failed. She had proved to him that he had been a fool to place himself in her hands, hoping she would be able to help him.

He laughed bitterly at his own folly. The consciousness of having failed would have been bitter enough by itself, but now to it was added the consciousness of having been laughed at by the man of whom he was trying to get the better.

What was there now left for him to do? Nothing except to go to Mary, and tell her that she had been wrong in entrusting her cause to him. She should have entrusted it to Colonel Gwyn, or some man who would have been ready to help her and capable of helping her — some man with a knowledge of men — some man of resource, not one who was a mere weaver of fictions, who was incapable of dealing with men except on paper. Nothing was left for him but to tell her this, and to see Colonel Gwyn achieve success where he had achieved only the most miserable of failures.

He felt that he was as foolish as a man who had built for himself a house of cards, and had hoped to dwell in it happily for the rest of his life, whereas the fabric had not survived the breath of the first breeze that had swept down upon it.

He felt that, after the example which he had just had of the diabolical cunning of the man with whom he had been contesting, it would be worse than useless for him to hope to be of any help to Mary Horneck. He had already wasted more than a week of valuable time. He could, at least, prevent any more being wasted by going to Mary and telling her how great a mistake she had made in being over-generous to him. She should never have made such a friend of him. Dr. Johnson had been right when he said that he, Oliver Goldsmith, had taken advantage of the gracious generosity of the girl and her family. He felt that it was his vanity that had led him to undertake on Mary's behalf a task for which he was utterly unsuited; and only the smallest consolation was allowed to him in the reflection that his awakening had come before it was too late. He had not been led away to confess to Mary all that was in his heart. She had been saved the unhappiness which that confession would bring to a nature so full

of feeling as hers. And he had been saved the mortification of the thought that he had caused her pain.

The dawn was embroidering with its floss the early foliage of the trees of the Temple before he went to his bed-room, and another hour had passed before he fell asleep.

He did not awake until the clock had chimed the hour of ten, and he found that his man had already brought to the table at his bedside the letters which had come for him in the morning. He turned them over with but a languid amount of interest. There was a letter from Griffiths, the bookseller; another from Garrick, relative to the play which Goldsmith had promised him; a third, a fourth and a fifth were from men who begged the loan of varying sums for varying periods. The sixth was apparently, from its shape and bulk, a manuscript — one of the many which were submitted to him by men who called him their brother-poet. He turned it over, and perceived that it had not come through the post. That fact convinced him that it was a manuscript, most probably an epic poem, or perhaps a tragedy in verse, which the writer might think he could get accepted at Drury Lane by reason of his friendship with Garrick.

He let this parcel lie on the table until he had dressed, and only when at the point of sitting down to breakfast did he break the seals. The instant he had done so he gave a cry of surprise, for he found that the parcel contained a number of letters addressed in Mary Horneck's handwriting to a certain Captain Jackson at a house in the Devonshire village where she had been staying the previous summer.

On the topmost letter there was a scrap of paper, bearing a scrawl from Mrs. Abington — the spelling as well as the writing was hers —

"'Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.' These are a few feathers pluckt from our hawke, hoping that they will be a feather in the capp of dear Dr. Goldsmith."

CHAPTER XXVI.

He was so greatly amazed he could only sit looking mutely at the scattered letters on the table in front of him. He was even more amazed at finding them there than he had been the night before at not finding them in the wallet which he had taken from Jackson's waistcoat. He thought he had arrived at a satisfactory explanation as to how he had come to find within the wallet the sheets of manuscript which he had had in his hand on entering the supper room; but how was he to account for the appearance of the letters in this parcel which he had received from Mrs. Abington?

So perplexed was he that he failed for some time to grasp the truth — to appreciate what was meant by the appearance of those letters on his table. But so soon as it dawned upon him that they meant safety and happiness to Mary, he sprang from his seat and almost shouted for joy. She was saved. He had checkmated the villain who had sought her ruin and who had the means to accomplish it, too. It was his astute-

ness that had caused him to go to Mrs. Abington and ask for her help in accomplishing the task with which he had been entrusted. He had, after all, not been mistaken in applying to a woman to help him to defeat the devilish scheme of a pitiless ruffian, and Mary Horneck had not been mistaken when she had singled him out to be her champion, though all men and most women would have ridiculed the idea of his assuming the rôle of a knight-errant.

His elation at that moment was in proportion to his depression, his despair, his humiliation when he had last been in his room. His nature knew nothing but extremes. Before retiring to his chamber in the early morning, he had felt that life contained nothing but misery for him; but now he felt that a future of happiness was in store for him — his imagination failed to set any limits to the possibility of his future happiness. He laughed at the thought of how he had resolved to go to Mary and advise her to intrust her cause to Colonel Gwyn. The thought of Colonel Gwyn convulsed him just now. With all his means, could Colonel Gwyn have accomplished all that he, Oliver Goldsmith, had accomplished ?

He doubted it. Colonel Gwyn might be a good sort of fellow in spite of his formal manner, his army training, and his incapacity to see a jest, but it was doubtful if he could have brought to a successful conclusion so delicate an enterprise as that which he — Goldsmith — had accomplished. Gwyn would most likely have scorned to apply to Mrs. Abington to help him, and that was just where he would have made a huge mistake. Any man who thought to get the better of the devil without the aid of a woman was a fool. He felt more strongly convinced of the truth of this as he stood with his back to the fire in his grate than he had been when he had found the wallet containing only his own manuscript. The previous half-hour had naturally changed his views of man and woman and Providence and the world.

When he had picked up the letters and locked them in his desk, he ate some breakfast, wondering all the while by what means Mrs. Abington had obtained those precious writings; and after giving the matter an hour's thought, he came to the conclusion that she must have felt the wallet in the pocket of the man's cloak when she had left the table pretending to be shocked at the disloyal expressions of her

guest — she must have felt the wallet and have contrived to extract the letters from it, substituting for them the sham act of the play which excused his entrance to the supper-room.

The more he thought over the matter, the more convinced he became that the wily lady had effected her purpose in the way he conjectured. He recollected that she had been for a considerable time on the chair with the cloak — much longer than was necessary for Jackson to drink the treasonable toast; and when she returned to the table, it was only to turn him out of the room upon a very shallow pretext. What a fool he had been to fancy that she was in a genuine passion when she had flung her glass of wine in the face of her guest because he had addressed her as Mrs. Baddeley!

He had been amazed at the anger displayed by her in regard to that particular incident, but later he had thought it possible that she had acted the part of a jealous woman to give him a better chance of getting the wallet out of the man's waistcoat pocket. Now, however, he clearly perceived that her anxiety was to get out of the room in order to place the letters beyond the man's hands.

Once again he laughed, saying out loud—

"Ah, I was right—a woman's wiles only are superior to the strategy of a devil!"

Then he became more contemplative. The most joyful hour of his life was at hand. He asked himself how his dear Jessamy Bride would receive the letters which he was about to take to her. He did not think of himself in connection with her gratitude. He left himself altogether out of consideration in this matter. He only thought of how the girl's face would lighten—how the white roses which he had last seen on her cheeks would change to red when he put the letters into her hand, and she felt that she was safe.

That was the reward for which he looked. He knew that he would feel bitterly disappointed if he failed to see the change of the roses on her face—if he failed to hear her fill the air with the music of her laughter. And then—then she would be happy for evermore, and he would be happy through witnessing her happiness.

He finished dressing, and was in the act of going to his desk for the letters, which he hoped she would soon hold in her hand, when his servant announced two visitors.

Signor Baretti, accompanied by a tall and very thin man, entered. The former greeted Goldsmith, and introduced his friend, who was a compatriot of his own, named Nicolo.

"I have not forgotten the matter which you honoured me by placing in my hands," said Baretti. "My friend Nicolo is a master of the art of fencing as practised in Italy in the present day. He is under the impression, singular though it may seem, that he spoke to you more than once during your wanderings in Tuscany."

"And now I am sure of it," said Nicolo in French. He explained that he spoke French rather better than English. "Yes, I was a student at Pisa when Dr. Goldsmith visited that city. I have no difficulty in recognising him."

"And I, for my part, have a conviction that I have seen your face, sir," said Goldsmith, also speaking in French; "I cannot, however, recall the circumstances of our first meeting. Can you supply the deficiency in my memory, sir?"

"There was a students' society that met at the Boccaleone," said Signor Nicolo.

"I recollect it distinctly; Figli della Torre, you called yourselves," said Goldsmith quickly. "You were one of the

orators — quite reckless, if you will permit me to say so much."

The man smiled somewhat grimly.

"If he had not been utterly reckless he would not be in England to-day," said Baretti. "Like myself, he is compelled to face your detestable climate on account of some indiscreet references to the Italian government, which he would certainly repeat to-morrow were he back again."

"It brings me back to Tuscany once more, to see your face, Signor Nicolo," said Goldsmith. "Yes, though your Excellency had not so much of a beard and mustacio when I saw you some years ago."

"Nay, sir, nor was your Lordship's coat quite so admirable then as it is now, if I am not too bold to make so free a comment, sir," said the man with another grim smile.

"You are not quite right, my friend," laughed Goldsmith; "for if my memory serves me — and it does so usually on the matter of dress — I had no coat whatsoever to my back — that was of no importance in Pisa, where the air was full of patriotism."

"The most dangerous epidemic that could occur in any country," said Baretti. "There is no Black Death that has claimed so many victims. We are examples —

Nicolo and I. I am compelled to teach Italian to a brewer's daughter, and Nicolo is willing to transform the most clumsy Englishman—and there are a good number of them, too—into an expert swordsman in twelve lessons—yes, if the pupil will but practise sufficiently afterwards."

"We need not talk of business just now," said Goldsmith. "I insist on my old friends sharing a bottle of wine with me. I shall drink to 'patriotism,' since it is the means of sending to my poor room two such excellent friends as the Signori Baretti and Nicolo."

He rang the bell, and gave his servant directions to fetch a couple of bottles of the old Madeira which Lord Clare had recently sent to him—very recently, otherwise three bottles out of the dozen would not have remained.

The wine had scarcely been uncorked when the sound of a man's step was heard upon the stairs, and in a moment Captain Jackson burst into the room.

"I have found you, you rascal!" he shouted, swaggering across the room to where Goldsmith was seated. "Now, my good fellow, I give you just one minute to restore to me those letters which you abstracted from my pocket last night."

"And I give you just one minute to leave my room, you drunken blackguard," said Goldsmith, laying a hand on the arm of Signor Nicolo, who was in the act of rising. "Come, sir," he continued, "I submitted to your insults last night because I had a purpose to carry out; but I promise you that I give you no such license in my own house. Take your carcase away, sir; my friends have fastidious nostrils."

Jackson's face became purple and then white. His lips receded from his gums until his teeth were seen as the teeth of a wolf when it is too cowardly to attack.

"You cur!" he said through his set teeth. "I don't know what prevents me from running you through the body."

"Do you not? I do," said Goldsmith. He had taken the second bottle of wine off the table, and was toying with it in his hands.

"Come, sir," said the bully after a pause; "I don't wish to go to Sir John Fielding for a warrant for your arrest for stealing my property, but, by the Lord, if you don't hand over those letters to me now I will not spare you. I shall have you taken into custody as a thief before an hour has passed."

"Go to Sir John, my friend, and tell him that Dick Jackson, American spy, is anxious to hang himself, and mention that one Oliver Goldsmith has at hand the rope that will rid the world of one of its greatest scoundrels," said Goldsmith.

Jackson took a step or two back, and put his hand to his sword. In a second both Baretti and Nicolo had touched the hilts of their weapons. The bully looked from the one to the other, and then laughed harshly.

"My little poet," he said in a mocking voice, "you fancy that because you have got a letter or two you have drawn my teeth. Let me tell you for your information that I have something in my possession that I can use as I meant to use the letters."

"And I tell you that if you use it, whatever it is, by God I shall kill you, were you thrice the scoundrel that you are!" cried Goldsmith, leaping up.

There was scarcely a pause before the whistle of the man's sword through the air was heard; but Baretti gave Goldsmith a push that sent him behind a chair, and then quietly interposed between him and Jackson.

"Pardon me, sir," said he, bowing to Jackson, "but we cannot permit you to stick an unarmed man. Your attempt to

do so in our presence my friend and I regard as a grave affront to us."

"Then let one of you draw!" shouted the man. "I see that you are Frenchmen, and I have cut the throat of a good many of your race. Draw, sir, and I shall add you to the Frenchies that I have sent to hell."

"Nay, sir, I wear spectacles, as you doubtless perceive," said Baretti. "I do not wish my glasses to be smashed; but my friend here, though a weaker man, may possibly not decline to fight with so contemptible a ruffian as you undoubtedly are."

He spoke a few words to Nicolo in Italian, and in a second the latter had whisked out his sword and had stepped between Jackson and Baretti, putting quietly aside the fierce lunge which the former made when Baretti had turned partly round.

"Briccone! assassin!" hissed Baretti. "You saw that he meant to kill me, Nicolo," he said addressing his friend in their own tongue.

"He shall pay for it," whispered Nicolo, pushing back a chair with his foot until Goldsmith lifted it and several other pieces of furniture out of the way, so as to make a clear space in the room.

"Don't kill him, friend Nicolo," he cried. "We used to enjoy a sausage or two in the

old days at Pisa. You can make sausage-meat of a carcase without absolutely killing the beast."

The fencing-master smiled grimly, but spoke no word.

Jackson seemed puzzled for a few moments, and Baretti roared with laughter, watching him hang back. The laugh of the Italian — it was not melodious — acted as a goad upon him. He rushed upon Nicolo, trying to beat down his guard, but his antagonist did not yield a single inch. He did not even cease to smile as he parried the attack. His expression resembled that of an indulgent chess player when a lad who has airily offered to play with him opens the game.

After a few minutes' fencing, during which the Italian declined to attack, Jackson drew back and lowered the point of his sword.

"Take a chair, sir," said Baretti, grinning. "You will have need of one before my friend has finished with you."

Goldsmith said nothing. The man had grossly insulted him the evening before, and he had made Mary Horneck wretched; but he could not taunt him now that he was at the mercy of a master-swordsman. He watched the man breathing hard, and then

nerving himself for another attack upon the Italian.

Jackson's second attempt to get Nicolo within the range of his sword was no more successful than his first. He was no despicable fencer, but his antagonist could afford to play with him. The sound of his hard breathing was a contrast to the only other sound in the room — the grating of steel against steel.

Then the smile upon the sallow face of the fencing-master seemed gradually to vanish. He became more than serious — surely his expression was one of apprehension. Goldsmith became somewhat excited. He grasped Baretti by the arm, as one of Jackson's thrusts passed within half an inch of his antagonist's shoulder, and for the first time Nicolo took a hasty step back, and in doing so barely succeeded in protecting himself against a fierce lunge of the other man.

It was now Jackson's turn to laugh. He gave a contemptuous chuckle as he pressed forward to follow up his advantage. He did not succeed in touching Nicolo, though he went very close to him more than once, and now it was plain that the Italian was greatly exhausted. He was breathing hard, and the look of apprehension on his face had in-

creased until it had actually become one of terror. Jackson did not fail to perceive this, and malignant triumph was in every feature of his face. Any one could see that he felt confident of tiring out the visibly fatigued Italian, and Goldsmith, with staring eyes, once again clutched Baretti.

Baretti's yellow skin became wrinkled up to the meeting place of his wig and forehead in smiles.

"I should like the third button of his coat for a memento, Sandrino," said he.

In an instant there was a quivering flash through the air, and the third paste button off Jackson's coat indented the wall just above Baretti's head and fell at his feet, a scrap of the satin of the coat flying behind it like the little pennon on a lance.

"Heavens!" whispered Goldsmith.

"Ah, friend Nicolo was always a great humourist," said Baretti. "For God's sake, Sandrino, throw them high into the air. The rush of that last was like a bullet."

Up to the ceiling flashed another button, and fell back upon the coat from which it was torn.

And still Nicolo fenced away with that look of apprehension still on his face.

"That is his fun," said Baretti. "Oh, body of Bacchus! A great humourist!"

The next button that Nicolo cut off with the point of his sword he caught in his left hand and threw to Goldsmith, who also caught it.

The look of triumph vanished from Jackson's face. He drew back, but his antagonist would not allow him to lower his sword, but followed him round the room untiringly. He had ceased his pretence of breathing heavily, but apparently his right arm was tired, for he had thrown his sword into his left hand, and was now fencing from that side.

Suddenly the air became filled with floating scraps of silk and satin. They quivered to right and left, like butterflies settling down upon a meadow; they fluttered about by the hundred, making a pretty spectacle. Jackson's coat and waistcoat were in tatters, yet with such consummate dexterity did the fencing-master cut the pieces out of both garments that Goldsmith utterly failed to see the swordplay that produced so amazing a result. Nicolo seemed to be fencing pretty much as usual.

And then a curious incident occurred, for the front part of one of the man's pock-

ets being cut away, a packet of letters, held against the lining by a few threads of silk, became visible, and in another moment Nicolo had spitted them on his sword, and laid them on the table in a single flash. Goldsmith knew by the look that Jackson cast at them that they were the batch of letters which he had received in the course of his traffic with the American rebels.

"Come, Sandrino," said Baretti, affecting to yawn. "Finish the rascal off, and let us go to that excellent bottle of Madeira which awaits us. Come, sir, the carrion is not worth more than you have given him; he has kept us from our wine too long already."

With a curiously tricky turn of the wrist, the master cut off the right sleeve of the man's coat close to his shoulder, and drew it in a flash over his sword. The disclosing of the man's naked arm and the hiding of the greater part of his weapon were comical in the extreme; and with an oath Jackson dropped his sword and fell in a heap upon the floor, thoroughly exhausted.

Baretti picked up the sword, broke the blade across his knee, and flung the pieces into a corner, the tattered sleeve still entangled in the guard.

"John," shouted Goldsmith to his servant, who was not far off. (He had witnessed the duel through the keyhole of the door until it became too exciting, and then he had put his head into the room.) "John, give that man your oldest coat. It shall never be said that I turned a man naked out of my house." When John Eyles had left the room, Oliver turned to the half-naked panting man. "You are possibly the most contemptible bully and coward alive," said he. "You did not hesitate to try and accomplish the ruin of the sweetest girl in the world, and you came here with intent to murder me because I succeeded in saving her from your clutches. If I let you go now, it is because I know that in these letters, which I mean to keep, I have such evidence against you as will hang you whenever I see fit to use it, and I promise you to use it if you are in this country at the end of two days. Now, leave this house, and thank my servant for giving you his coat, and this gentleman"—he pointed to Nicolo—"for such a lesson in fencing as, I suppose, you never before received."

The man rose, painfully and laboriously, and took the coat with which John Eyles returned. He looked at Goldsmith from head to foot.

"You contemptible cur!" he said, "I have not yet done with you. You have now stolen the second packet of letters; but, by the Lord, if one of them passes out of your hands it will be avenged. I have friends in pretty high places, let me tell you."

"I do not doubt it, said Baretti. "The gallows is a high enough place for you and your friends."

The ruffian turned upon him in a fury.

"Look to yourself, you foreign hound!" he said, his face becoming livid, and his lips receding from his mouth so as to leave his wolf-fangs bare as before. "Look to yourself. You broke my sword after luring me on to be made a fool of for your sport. Look to yourself!"

"Turn that rascal into the street, John," cried Goldsmith, and John bustled forward. There was fighting in the air. If it came to blows he flattered himself that he could give an interesting exhibition of his powers —not quite so showy, perhaps, as that given by the Italian, but one which he was certain was more English in its style.

"No one shall lay a hand on me," said Jackson. "Do you fancy that I am anxious to remain in such a company?"

"Come, sir; you are in my charge, now," said John, hustling him to the door. "Come —out with you—sharp!"

In the room they heard the sound of the man descending the stairs slowly and painfully. They became aware of his pause in the lobby below to put on the coat which John had given to him, and a moment later they saw him walk in the direction of the Temple lodge.

Then Goldsmith turned to Signor Nicolo, who was examining one of the prints that Hogarth had presented to his early friend, who had hung them on his wall.

"You came at an opportune moment, my friend," said he. "You have not only saved my life, you have afforded me such entertainment as I never have known before. Sir, you are certainly the greatest living master of your art."

"The best swordsman is the best patriot," said Baretti.

"That is why so many of your countrymen live in England," said Goldsmith.

"Alas! yes," said Nicolo. "Happily you Englishmen are not good patriots, or you would not be able to live in England."

"I am not an Englishman," said Goldsmith. "I am an Irish patriot, and there-

fore I find it more convenient to live out of Ireland. Perhaps it is not good patriotism to say, as I do, 'Better to live in England than to starve in Ireland.' And talking of starving, sirs, reminds me that my dinner hour is nigh. What say you, Signor Nicolo? What say you, Baretti? Will you honour me with your company to dinner at the Crown and Anchor an hour hence? We shall chat over the old days at Pisa and the prospects of the Figli della Torre, Signor Nicolo. We cannot stay here, for it will take my servant and Mrs. Ginger a good two hours to sweep up the fragments of that rascal's garments. Lord! what a patchwork quilt Dr. Johnson's friend Mrs. Williams could make if she were nigh."

"Patchwork should not only be made, it should be used by the blind," said Baretti. "Touching the dinner you so hospitably propose, I have no engagement for to-day. and I dare swear that Nicolo has none either."

"He has taken part in one engagement, at least," said Goldsmith,

"And I am now at your service," said the fencing-master.

They went out together, Goldsmith with the precious letters in his pocket — the sec-

ond batch he put in the place of Mary Hor-
neck's in his desk—and, parting at Fleet
street, they agreed to meet at the Crown
and Anchor in an hour.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was with a feeling of deep satisfaction, such as he had never before known, that Goldsmith walked westward to Mrs. Horneck's house. All the exhilaration that he had experienced by watching the extraordinary exhibition of adroitness on the part of the fencing-master remained with him. The exhibition had, of course, been a trifle *bizarre*. It had more than a suspicion of the art of the mountebank about it. For instance, Nicolo's pretence of being overmatched early in the contest — breathing hard and assuming a terrified expression — yielding his ground and allowing his opponent almost to run him through — could only be regarded as theatrical; while his tricks with the buttons and the letters, though amazing, were akin to the devices of a rope-dancer. But this fact did not prevent the whole scene from having an exhilarating effect upon Goldsmith, more especially as it represented his repayment of the debt which he owed to Jackson.

And now to this feeling was added that of the greatest joy of his life in having it in his power to remove from the sweetest girl in the world the terror which she believed to be hanging over her head. He felt that every step which he was taking westward was bringing him nearer to the realisation of his longing—his longing to see the white roses on Mary's cheeks change to red once more.

It was a disappointment to him to learn that Mary had gone down to Barton with the Bunburys. Her mother, who met him in the hall, told him this with a grave face as she brought him into a parlour.

"I think she expected you to call during the past ten days, Dr. Goldsmith," said the lady. "I believe that she was more than a little disappointed that you could not find time to come to her."

"Was she, indeed? Did she really expect me to call?" he asked. This fresh proof of the confidence which the Jessamy Bride reposed in him was very dear to him. She had not merely entrusted him with her enterprise on the chance of his being able to save her; she had had confidence in his ability to save her, and had looked for his coming to tell her of his success.

"She seemed very anxious to see you," said Mrs. Horneck. "I fear, dear Dr. Goldsmith, that my poor child has something on her mind. That is her sister's idea also. And yet it is impossible that she should have any secret trouble; she has not been out of our sight since her visit to Devonshire last year. At that time she had, I believe, some silly, girlish fancy,—my brother wrote to me that there had been in his neighbourhood a certain attractive man, an officer who had returned home with a wound received in the war with the American rebels. But surely she has got over that foolishness!"

"Ah, yes. You may take my word for it, madam, she has got over that foolishness," said Goldsmith. "You may take my word for it that when she sees me the roses will return to her cheeks."

"I do hope so," said Mrs. Horneck. "Yes, you could always contrive to make her merry, Dr. Goldsmith. We have all missed you lately; we feared that that disgraceful letter in the *Packet* had affected you. That was why my son called upon you at your rooms. I hope he assured you that nothing it contained would interfere with our friendship."

"That was very kind of you, my dear madam," said he; "but I have seen Mary since that thing appeared."

"To be sure you have. Did you not think that she looked very ill?"

"Very ill indeed, madam; but I am ready to give you my assurance that when I have been half an hour with her she will be on the way to recovery. You have not, I fear, much confidence in my skill as a doctor of medicine, and, to tell you the truth, whatever your confidence in this direction may amount to, it is a great deal more than what I myself have. Still, I think you will say something in my favour when you see Mary's condition begin to improve from the moment we have a little chat together."

"That is wherein I have the amplest confidence in you, dear Dr. Goldsmith. Your chat with her will do more for her than all the medicine the most skilful of physicians could prescribe. It was a very inopportune time for her to fall sick."

"I think that all sicknesses are inopportune. But why Mary's?"

"Well, I have good reason to believe, Dr. Goldsmith, that had she not steadfastly refused to see a certain gentleman who has

been greatly attracted by her, I might now have some happy news to convey to you."

"The gentleman's name is Colonel Gwyn, I think."

He spoke in a low voice and after a long pause.

"Ah, you have guessed it, then? You have perceived that the gentleman was drawn toward her?" said the lady smiling.

"I have every reason to believe in his sincerity," said Goldsmith. "And you think that if Mary had been as well as she usually has been, she would have listened to his proposals, madam?"

"Why should she not have done so, sir?" said Mrs. Horneck.

"Why not, indeed?"

"Colonel Gwyn would be a very suitable match for her," said she. "He is, to be sure, several years her senior; that, however, is nothing."

"You think so—you think that a disparity in age should mean nothing in such a case?" said Oliver, rather eagerly.

"How could any one be so narrow-minded as to think otherwise?" cried Mrs. Horneck. "Whoever may think otherwise, sir, I certainly do not. I hope I am too good a mother, Dr. Goldsmith. Nay, sir, I could not stand between my daughter and

happiness on such a pretext as a difference in years. After all, Colonel Gwyn is but a year or two over thirty — thirty-seven, I believe — but he does not look more than thirty-five."

"No one more cordially agrees with you than myself on the point to which you give emphasis, madam," said Goldsmith. "And you think that Mary will see Colonel Gwyn when she returns?"

"I hope so; and therefore I hope, dear sir, that you will exert yourself so that the bloom will be brought back to her cheeks," said the lady. "That is your duty, Doctor; remember that, I pray. You are to bring back the bloom to her cheeks in order that Colonel Gwyn may be doubly attracted to her."

"I understand — I understand."

He spoke slowly, gravely.

"I knew you would help us," said Mrs. Horneck, "and so I hope that you will lose no time in coming to us after Mary's return to-morrow. Your Jessamy Bride will, I trust, be a real bride before many days have passed."

Yes, that was his duty: to help Mary to happiness. Not for him, not for him was the bloom to be brought again to her cheeks — not for him, but for another man. For

him were the sleepless nights, the anxious days, the hours of thought — all the anxiety and all the danger resulting from facing an unscrupulous scoundrel. For another man was the joy of putting his lips upon the delicate bloom of her cheeks, the joy of taking her sweet form into his arms, of dwelling daily in her smiles, of being for evermore beside her, of feeling hourly the pride of so priceless a possession as her love.

That was his thought as he walked along the Strand with bent head; and yet, before he had reached the Crown and Anchor, he said —

"Even so; I am satisfied — I am satisfied."

It chanced that Dr. Johnson was in the tavern with Steevens, and Goldsmith persuaded both to join his party. He was glad that he succeeded in doing so, for he had felt it was quite possible that Baretti might inquire of him respecting the object of Jackson's visit to Brick Court, and he could not well explain to the Italian the nature of the enterprise which he had so successfully carried out by the aid of Mrs. Abington. It was one thing to take Mrs. Abington into his confidence, and quite another to confide in Baretti. He was dis-

criminating enough to be well aware of the fact that, while the secret was perfectly safe in the keeping of the actress, it would be by no means equally so if confided to Baretti, although some people might laugh at him for entertaining an opinion so contrary to that which was generally accepted by the world, Mrs. Abington being a woman and Baretti a man.

He had perceived long ago that Baretti was extremely anxious to learn all about Jackson — that he was wondering how he, Goldsmith, should have become mixed up in a matter which was apparently of imperial importance, for at the mention of the American rebels Baretti had opened his eyes. He was, therefore, glad that the talk at the table was so general as to prevent any allusion being made to the incidents of the day.

Dr. Johnson made Signor Nicolo acquainted with a few important facts regarding the use of the sword and the limitations of that weapon, which the Italian accepted with wonderful gravity; and when Goldsmith, on the conversation drifting into the question of patriotism and its trials, declared that a successful patriot was susceptible of being defined as a man who loved

his country for the benefit of himself, Dr. Johnson roared out —

"Sir, that is very good. If Mr. Boswell were here — and indeed, sir, I am glad that he is not — he would say that your definition was so good as to make him certain you had stolen it from me."

"Nay, sir, 'tis not so good as to have been stolen from you," said Goldsmith.

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "I did not say that it was good enough to have been stolen from me. I only said that it was good enough to make a very foolish person suppose that it was stolen from me. No sensible person, Dr. Goldsmith, would believe, first, that you would steal; secondly, that you would steal from me; thirdly, that I would give you a chance of stealing from me; and fourthly, that I would compose an apophthegm which when it comes to be closely examined is not so good after all. Now, sir, are you satisfied with the extent of my agreement with you?"

"Sir, I am more than satisfied," said Goldsmith, while Nicolo, the cunning master of fence, sat by with a puzzled look on his saffron face. This was a kind of fencing of which he had had no previous experience.

After dining Goldsmith made the excuse of being required at the theatre, to leave his friends. He was anxious to return thanks to Mrs. Abington for managing so adroitly to accomplish in a moment all that he had hoped to do.

He found the lady not in the green room, but in her dressing room; her costume was not, however, the less fascinating, nor was her smile the less subtle as she gave him her hand to kiss. He knelt on one knee, holding her hand to his lips; he was too much overcome to be able to speak, and she knew it. She did not mind how long he held her hand; she was quite accustomed to such demonstrations, though few, she well knew, were of equal sincerity to those of Oliver Goldsmith's.

"Well, my poet," she said at last, "have you need of my services to banish any more demons from the neighbourhood of your friends?"

"I was right," he managed to say after another pause, "yes, I knew I was not mistaken in you, my dear lady."

"Yes; you knew that I was equal to combat the wiles of the craftiest demon that ever undertook the slandering of a fair damsel," said she. "Well, sir, you paid me a doubtful compliment—a more doubtful

compliment than the fair damsel paid to you in asking you to be her champion. But you have not told me of your adventurous journey with our friend in the hackney coach."

"Nay," he cried, "it is you who have not yet told me by what means you became possessed of the letters which I wanted — by what magic you substituted for them the mock act of the comedy which I carried with me into the supper room."

"Psha, sir!" said she, "'twas a simple matter, after all. I gathered from a remark the fellow made when laying his cloak across the chair, that he had the letters in one of the pockets of that same cloak. He gave me a hint that a certain Ned Cripps, who shares his lodging, is not to be trusted, so that he was obliged to carry about with him every document on which he places a value. Well, sir, my well known loyalty naturally received a great shock when he offered to drink to the American rebels, and you saw that I left the table hastily. A minute or so sufficed me to discover the wallet with the letters; but then I was at my wits' end to find something to occupy their place in the receptacle. Happily my eye caught the roll of your manuscript, which lay in your hat on the floor

beneath the chair, and heigh! presto! the trick was played. I had a sufficient appreciation of dramatic incident to keep me hoping all the night that you would be able to get possession of the wallet, believing it contained the letters for which you were in search. Lord, sir! I tried to picture your face when you drew out your own papers."

The actress lay back on her couch and roared with laughter, Goldsmith joining in quite pleasantly.

"Ah!" he said; "I can fancy that I see at this moment the expression which my face wore at the time. But the sequel to the story is the most humourous. I succeeded last night in picking the fellow's pocket, but he paid me a visit this afternoon with the intent of recovering what he termed his property."

"Oh, lud! Call you that humourous? How did you rid yourself of him?"

At the story of the fight which had taken place in Brick Court, Mrs. Abington laughed heartily after a few breathless moments.

"By my faith, sir!" she cried; "I would give ten guineas to have been there. But believe me, Dr. Goldsmith," she added a moment afterwards, "you will live in great

jeopardy so long as that fellow remains in the town."

"Nay, my dear," said he. "It was Baretti whom he threatened as he left my room — not I. He knows that I have now in my possession such documents as would hang him."

"Why, is not that the very reason why he should make an attempt upon your life?" cried the actress. "He may try to kill Baretti on a point of sentiment, but assuredly he will do his best to slaughter you as a matter of business."

"Faith, madam, since you put it that way I do believe that there is something in what you say," said Goldsmith. "So I will e'en take a hackney-coach to the Temple and get the stalwart Ginger to escort me to the very door of my chambers."

"Do so, sir. I am awaiting with great interest the part which you have yet to write for me in a comedy."

"I swear to you that it will be the best part ever written by me, my dear friend. You have earned my everlasting gratitude."

"Ah! was the lady so grateful as all that?" cried the actress, looking at him with one of those arch smiles of hers which even Sir Joshua Reynolds could not quite translate to show the next century what

manner of woman was the first Lady Teazle, for the part of the capricious young wife of the elderly Sir Peter was woven around the fascinating country girl's smile of Mrs. Abington.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Goldsmith kept his word. He took a hackney-coach to the Temple, and was alert all the time he was driving lest Jackson and his friends might be waiting to make an attack upon him. He reached his chambers without any adventure, however, and on locking his doors, took out the second parcel of letters and set himself to peruse their contents.

He had no need to read them all—the first that came to his hand was sufficient to make him aware of the nature of the correspondence. It was perfectly plain that the man had been endeavouring to traffic with the rebels, and it was equally certain that the rebel leaders had shown themselves to be too honourable to take advantage of the offers which he had made to them. If this correspondence had come into the hands of Cornwallis he would have hanged the fellow on the nearest tree instead of merely turning him out of his regiment and shipping him back to England as a suspected traitor.

As he locked the letters once again in his desk he felt that there was indeed every reason to fear that Jackson would not rest until he had obtained possession of such damning evidence of his guilt. He would certainly either make the attempt to get back the letters, or leave the country, in order to avoid the irretrievable ruin which would fall upon him if any one of the packet went into the hands of a magistrate; and Goldsmith was strongly of the belief that the man would adopt the former course.

Only for an instant, as he laid down the compromising document, did he ask himself how it was possible that Mary Horneck should ever have been so blind as to be attracted to such a man, and to believe in his honesty.

He knew enough of the nature of womankind to be aware of the glamour which attaches to a soldier who has been wounded in fighting the enemies of his country. If Mary had been less womanly than she showed herself to be, he would not have loved her so well as he did. Her womanly weaknesses were dear to him, and the painful evidence that he had of the tenderness of her heart only made him feel that she was all the more a woman, and therefore all the more to be loved.

It was the afternoon of the next day before he set out once more for the Hornecks'. He meant to see Mary, and then go on to Sir Joshua Reynolds's to dine. There was to be that night a meeting of the Royal Academy, which he would attend with the president, after Sir Joshua's usual five o'clock dinner. It occurred to him that, as Baretti would also most probably be at the meeting, he would do well to make him acquainted with the dangerous character of Jackson, so that Baretti might take due precautions against any attack that the desperate man might be induced to make upon him. No doubt Baretti would make a good point in conversation with his friends of the notion of Oliver Goldsmith's counselling caution to any one; but the latter was determined to give the Italian his advice on this matter, whatever the consequences might be.

It so happened, however, that he was unable to carry out his intention in full, for on visiting Mrs. Horneck, he learned that Mary would not return from Barton until late that night, and at the meeting of the Academy Baretti failed to put in an appearance.

He mentioned to Sir Joshua that he had something of importance to communicate

to the Italian, and that he was somewhat uneasy at not having a chance of carrying out his intention in this respect.

"You would do well, then, to come to my house for supper," said Reynolds. "I think it is very probable that Baretti will look in, if only to apologise for his absence from the meeting. Miss Kauffman has promised to come, and I have secured Johnson as well."

Goldsmith agreed, and while Johnson and Angelica Kauffman walked in front, he followed with Reynolds some distance behind — not so far, however, as to be out of the range of Johnson's voice. Johnson was engaged in a discourse with his sweet companion — he was particularly fond of such companionship — on the dignity inseparable from a classic style in painting, and the enormity of painting men and women in the habiliments of their period and country. Angelica Kauffman was not a painter who required any considerable amount of remonstrance from her preceptors to keep her feet from straying in regard to classical traditions. The artist who gave the purest Greek features and the Roman toga alike to the Prodigal Son and King Edward III could not be said to be capable of greatly erring from Dr. Johnson's precepts.

All through supper the sage continued his discourse at intervals of eating, giving his hearty commendation to Sir Joshua's conscientious adherence to classical traditions, and shouting down Goldsmith's mild suggestion that it might be possible to adhere to these traditions so faithfully as to inculcate a certain artificiality of style which might eventually prove detrimental to the best interests of art.

"What, sir!" cried Johnson, rolling like a three-decker swinging at anchor, and pursing out his lips, "would you contend that a member of Parliament should be painted for posterity in his every-day clothes — that the King should be depicted as an ordinary gentleman?"

'Why, yes, sir, if the King were an ordinary gentleman," replied Goldsmith.

Whitefoord, who never could resist the chance of making a pun, whispered to Oliver that in respect of some Kings there was more of the ordinary than the gentleman about them, and when Miss Reynolds insisted on his phrase being repeated to her, Johnson became grave.

"Sir," he cried, turning once more to Goldsmith, "there is a very flagrant example of what you would bring about. When a monarch, even depicted in his

robes and with the awe-inspiring insignia of his exalted position, is not held to be beyond the violation of a punster, what would he be if shown in ordinary garb? But you, sir, in your aims after what you call the natural, would, I believe, consider seriously the advisability of the epitaphs in Westminster Abbey being written in English."

"And why not, sir?" said Goldsmith; then, with a twinkle, he added, "For my own part, sir, I hope that I may live to read my own epitaph in Westminster Abbey written in English."

Every one laughed, including—when the bull had been explained to her—Angelica Kauffman.

After supper Sir Joshua put his fair guest into her chair, shutting its door with his own hands, and shortly afterwards Johnson and Whitefoord went off together. But still Goldsmith, at the suggestion of Reynolds, lingered in the hope that Baretti would call. He had probably been detained at the house of a friend, Reynolds said, and if he should pass Leicester Square on his way home, he would certainly call to explain the reason of his absence from the meeting.

When another half-hour had passed, however, Goldsmith rose and said that as Sir Joshua's bed-time was at hand, it would be outrageous for him to wait any longer. His host accompanied him to the hall, and Ralph helped him on with his cloak. He was in the act of receiving his hat from the hand of the servant when the hall-bell was rung with starling violence. The ring was repeated before Ralph could take the few steps to the door.

"If that is Baretti who rings, his business must be indeed urgent," said Goldsmith.

In another moment the door was opened, and the light of the lamp showed the figure of Steevens in the porch. He hurried past Ralph, crying out so as to reach the ear of Reynolds.

"A dreadful thing has happened to-night, sir! Baretti was attacked by two men in the Haymarket, and he killed one of them with his knife. He has been arrested, and will be charged with murder before Sir John Fielding in the morning. I heard of the terrible business just now, and lost no time coming to you."

"Merciful heaven!" cried Goldsmith. "I was waiting for Baretti in order to warn him."

"You could not have any reason for warning him against such an attack as was made upon him," said Steevens. "It seems that the fellow whom Baretti was unfortunate enough to kill was one of a very disreputable gang well known to the constables. It was a Bow street runner who stated what his name was."

"And what was his name?" asked Reynolds.

"Richard Jackson," replied Steevens. "Of course we never heard the name before. The attack upon Baretti was the worst that could be imagined."

"The world is undoubtedly rid of a great rascal," said Goldsmith.

"Undoubtedly; but that fact will not save our friend from being hanged, should a jury find him guilty," said Steevens. "We must make an effort to avert so terrible a thing. That is why I came here now; I tried to speak to Baretti, but the constables would not give me permission. They carried my name to him, however, and he sent out a message asking me to go without delay to Sir Joshua and you, as well as Dr. Johnson and Mr. Garrick. He hopes you may find it convenient to attend before Sir John Fielding at Bow street in the morning."

"That we shall," said Sir Joshua. "He shall have the best legal advice available in England; and, meantime, we shall go to him and tell him that he may depend on our help, such as it is."

The coach in which Steevens had come to Leicester Square was still waiting, and in it they all drove to where Baretti was detained in custody. The constables would not allow them to see the prisoner, but they offered to convey to him any message which his friends might have, and also to carry back to them his reply.

Goldsmith was extremely anxious to get from Baretti's own lips an account of the assault which had been made upon him; but he could not induce the constables to allow him to go into his presence. They, however, bore in his message to the effect that he might depend on the help of all his friends in his emergency.

Sir Joshua sent for the watchmen by whom the arrest had been effected, and they stated that Baretti had been seized by the crowd — a far from reputable crowd — so soon as it was known that a man had been stabbed, and he had been handed over to the constables, while a surgeon examined the man's wound, but was able to do noth-

ing for him; he had expired in the surgeon's hands.

Baretti's statement made to the watch was that he was on his way to the meeting of the Academy, and being very late, he was hurrying through the Haymarket when a woman jostled him, and at the same instant two men rushed out from the entrance to Jermyn street and attacked him with heavy sticks. One of the men closed with him to prevent his drawing his sword, but he succeeded in freeing one arm, and in defending himself with the small fruit knife which he invariably carried about with him, as was the custom in France and Italy, where fruit is the chief article of diet, he had undoubtedly stabbed his assailant, and by a great mischance he must have severed an artery.

The Bow street runner who had seen the dead body told Reynolds and his friends that he recognised the man as one Jackson, who had formerly held a commission in the army, and had been serving in America, when, being tried by court-martial for some irregularities, he had been sent to England by Cornwallis. He had been living by his wits for some months, and had recently joined a very disreputable gang, who occupied a house in Whetstone Park.

"So far from our friend having been guilty of a criminal offence, it seems to me that he has rid the country of a vile rogue," said Goldsmith.

"If the jury take that view of the business they 'll acquit the gentleman,". said the Bow street runner. "But I fancy the judge will tell them that it 's the business of the hangman only to rid the country of its rogues."

Goldsmith could not but perceive that the man had accurately defined the view which the law was supposed to take of the question of getting rid of the rogues, and his reflections as he drove to his chambers, having parted from Sir Joshua Reynolds and Steevens, made him very unhappy. He could not help feeling that Baretti was the victim of his—Goldsmith's—want of consideration. What right had he, he asked himself, to drag Baretti into a matter in which the Italian had no concern? He felt that a man of the world would certainly have acted with more discretion, and if anything happened to Baretti he would never forgive himself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

After a very restless night he hastened to Johnson, but found that Johnson had already gone to Garrick's house, and at Garrick's house Goldsmith learned that Johnson and Garrick had driven to Edmund Burke's; so it was plain that Baretti's friends were losing no time in setting about helping him. They all met in the Bow Street Police Court, and Goldsmith found that Burke had already instructed a lawyer on behalf of Baretti. His tender heart was greatly moved at the sight of Baretti when the latter was brought into court, and placed in the dock, with a constable on each side. But the prisoner himself appeared to be quite collected, and seemed proud of the group of notable persons who had come to show their friendship for him. He smiled at Reynolds and Goldsmith, and, when the witnesses were being examined, polished the glasses of his spectacles with the greatest composure. He appeared to be confident that Sir John Fielding would allow him to go free when evidence was given that

Jackson had been a man of notoriously bad character, and he seemed greatly surprised when the magistrate announced that he was returning him for trial at the next sessions.

Goldsmith asked Sir John Fielding for permission to accompany the prisoner in the coach that was taking him to Newgate, and his request was granted.

He clasped Baretti's hand with tears in his eyes when they set out on this melancholy drive, saying—

"My dear friend, I shall never forgive myself for having brought you to this."

"Psha, sir!" said Baretti. "'Tis not you, but the foolish laws of this country that must be held accountable for the situation of the moment. In what country except this could a thing so ridiculous occur? A gross ruffian attacks me, and in the absence of any civil force for the protection of the people, I am compelled to protect myself from his violence. It so happens that instead of the fellow killing me, I by accident kill him, and lo! a pig-headed magistrate sends me to be tried for my life! Mother of God! that is what is called the course of justice in this country! The course of idiocy it had much better be called!"

"Do not be alarmed," said Goldsmith. "When you appear before a judge and jury you will most certainly be acquitted. But can you forgive me for being the cause of this great inconvenience to you?"

"I can easily forgive you, having no reason to hold you in any way responsible for this *contretemps*," said Baretti. "But I cannot forgive that very foolish person who sat on the Bench at Bow street and failed to perceive that my act had saved his constables and his hangman a considerable amount of trouble! Heavens! that such carrion as the fellow whom I killed should be regarded sacred—as sacred as though he were an Archbishop! Body of Bacchus! was there ever a contention so ridiculous?"

"You will only be inconvenienced for a week or two, my dear friend," said Goldsmith. "It is quite impossible that you could be convicted—oh, quite impossible. You shall have the best counsel available, and Reynolds and Johnson and Beauclerk will speak for you."

But Baretti declined to be pacified by such assurances. He continued railing against England and English laws until the coach arrived at Newgate.

It was with a very sad heart that Goldsmith, when he was left alone in the coach,

gave directions to be driven to the Hornecks' house in Westminster. On leaving his chambers in the morning, he had been uncertain whether it was right for him to go at once to Bow street or to see Mary Horneck. He felt that he should relieve Mary from the distress of mind from which she had suffered for so long, but he came to the conclusion that he should let nothing come between him and his duty in respect of the man who was suffering by reason of his friendship for him, Goldsmith. Now, however, that he had discharged his duty so far as he could in regard to Baretti, he lost no time in going to the Jessamy Bride.

Mrs. Horneck again met him in the hall. Her face was very grave, and the signs of recent tears were visible on it.

"Dear Dr. Goldsmith," she said, "I am in deep distress about Mary."

"How so, madam?" he gasped, for a dreadful thought had suddenly come to him. Had he arrived at this house only to hear that the girl was at the point of death?

"She returned from Barton last night, seeming even more depressed than when she left town," said Mrs. Horneck. "But who could fancy that her condition was so low as to be liable to such complete pros-

tration as was brought about by my son's announcement of this news about Signor Baretti?"

"It prostrated her?"

"Why, when Charles read out an account of the unhappy affair which is printed in one of the papers, Mary listened breathlessly, and when he read out the name of the man who was killed, she sank from her chair to the floor in a swoon, just as though the man had been one of her friends, instead of one whom none of us could ever possibly have met."

"And now?"

"Now she is lying on the sofa in the drawing-room awaiting your coming with strange impatience — I told her that you had been here yesterday and also the day before. She has been talking very strangely since she awoke from her faint — accusing herself of bringing her friends into trouble, but evermore crying out, 'Why does he not come — why does he not come to tell me all that there is to be told?' She meant you, dear Dr. Goldsmith. She has somehow come to think of you as able to soothe her in this curious imaginary distress, from which she is suffering quite as acutely as if it were a real sorrow. Oh, I was quite overcome when I saw the poor

child lying as if she were dead before my eyes! Her condition is the more sad, as I have reason to believe that Colonel Gwyn means to call to-day."

"Never mind Colonel Gwyn for the present, madam," said Goldsmith, "Will you have the goodness to lead me to her room? Have I not told you that I am confident that I can restore her to health?"

"Ah, Dr. Goldsmith, if you could!—ah, if you only could! But alas, alas!"

He followed her upstairs to the drawing-room where he had had his last interview with Mary. Even before the door was opened the sound of sobbing within the room came to his ears.

"Now, my dear child," said her mother with an affectation of cheerfulness, "you see that Dr. Goldsmith has kept his word. He has come to his Jessamy Bride."

The girl started up, but the struggle she had to do so showed him most pathetically how weak she was.

"Ah, he is come—he is come!" she cried. "Leave him with me, mother; he has much to tell me."

"Yes." said he; "I have much."

Mrs. Horneck left the room after kissing the girl's forehead.

She had hardly closed the door before Mary caught Goldsmith's hand spasmodically in both her own — he felt how they were trembling — as she cried —

"The terrible thing that has happened! He is dead — you know it, of course? Oh, it is terrible — terrible! But the letters! — they will be found upon him or at the place where he lived, and it will be impossible to keep my secret longer. Will his friends — he had evil friends, I know — will they print them, do you think? Ah, I see by your face that you believe they will print the letters, and I shall be undone — undone."

"My dear," he said, "you might be able to bear the worst news that I could bring you; but will you be able to bear the best?"

"The best! Ah, what is the best?"

"It is more difficult to prepare for the best than for the worst, my child. You are very weak, but you must not give way to your weakness."

She stared at him with wistful, expectant eyes. Her hands were clasped more tightly than ever upon his own. He saw that she was trying to speak, but failing to utter a single word.

He waited for a few moments and then drew out of his pocket the packet of her letters, and gave it to her. She looked at it

strangely for certainly a minute. She could not realise the truth. She could only gaze mutely at the packet. He perceived that that gradual dawning of the truth upon her meant the saving of her life. He knew that she would not now be overwhelmed with the joy of being saved.

Then she gave a sudden cry. The letters dropped from her hand. She flung her arms around his neck and kissed him again and again on the cheeks. Quite as suddenly she ceased kissing him and laughed — not hysterically, but joyously, as she sprang to her feet with scarcely an effort and walked across the room to the window that looked upon the street. He followed her with his eyes and saw her gazing out. Then she turned round with another laugh that rippled through the room. How long was it since he had heard her laugh in that way?

She came toward him, and then he knew that he had had his reward, for her cheeks that had been white were now glowing with the roses of June, and her eyes that had been dim were sparkling with gladness.

"Ah," she cried, putting out both her hands to him. "Ah, I knew that I was right in telling you my secret, and in asking you to help me. I knew that you would not fail

me in my hour of need, and you shall be dear to me for evermore for having helped me. There is no one in the world like you, dear Oliver Goldsmith. I have always felt that — so good, so true, so full of tenderness and that sweet simplicity which has made the greatest and best people in the world love you, as I love you, dear, dear friend! O, you are a friend to be trusted — a friend who would be ready to die for his friend. Gratitude — you do not want gratitude. It is well that you do not want gratitude, for what could gratitude say to you for what you have done? You have saved me from death — from worse than death — and I know that the thought that you have done so will be your greatest reward. I will always be near you, that you may see me and feel that I live only because you stretched out your kind hand and drew me out of the deep waters — the waters that had well-nigh closed over my head."

He sat before her, looking up to the sweet face that looked down upon him. His eyes were full of tears. The world had dealt hardly with him; but he felt that his life had not been wholly barren of gladness, since he had lived to see — even through the dimness of tears — so sweet a face looking into his own with eyes full of the light

of — was it the gratitude of a girl? Was it the love of a woman?

He could not speak. He could not even return the pressure of the small hands that clasped his own with all the gracious pressure of the tendrils of a climbing flower.

"Have you nothing to say to me—no word to give me at this moment?" she asked in a whisper, and her head was bent closer to his, and her fingers seemed to him to tighten somewhat around his own.

"What word?" said he. "Ah, my child, what word should come from such a man as I to such a woman as you? No, I have no word. Such complete happiness as is mine at this moment does not seek to find expression in words. You have given me such happiness as I never hoped for in my life. You have understood me—you alone, and that to such as I means happiness."

She dropped his hands so suddenly as almost to suggest that she had flung them away from her. She took an impatient step or two in the direction of the window.

"You talk of my understanding you," she said in a voice that had a sob in it. "Yes, but have you no thought of understanding me? Is it only a man's nature

that is worth trying to understand? Is a woman's not worthy of a thought?"

He started up and seemed about to stretch his arms out to her, but with a sudden drawing in of his breath he put his hands behind his back and locked the fingers of both together.

Thus he stood looking at her while she had her face averted, not knowing the struggle that was going on between the two powers that are ever in the throes of conflict within the heart of a man who loves a woman well enough to have no thought of himself—no thought except for her happiness.

"No," he said at last. "No, my dear, dear child; I have no word to say to you! I fear to speak a word. The happiness that a man builds up for himself may be destroyed by the utterance of one word. I wish to remain happy—watching your happiness—in silence. Perhaps I may understand you—I may understand something of the thought which gratitude suggests to you."

"Ah, gratitude!" said she in a tone that was sad even in its scornfulness. She had not turned her head toward him.

"Yes, I may understand something of your nature—the sweetest, the tenderest

that ever made a woman blessed; but I understand myself better, and I know in what direction lies my happiness—in what direction lies your happiness."

"Ah! are you sure that they are two—that they are separate?" said she. And now she moved her head slowly so that she was looking into his face.

There was a long pause. She could not see the movement of his hands. He still held them behind him. At last he said slowly—

"I am sure, my dear one. Ah, I am but too sure. Would to God there were a chance of my being mistaken! Ah, dear, dear child, it is my lot to look on happiness through another man's eyes. And, believe me, there is more happiness in doing so than the world knows of. No, no! Do not speak—for God's sake, do not speak to me! Do not say those words which are trembling on your lips, for they mean unhappiness to both of us."

She continued looking at him; then suddenly, with a little cry, she turned away, and throwing herself down on the sofa, burst into tears, with her face upon one of the arms, which her hands held tightly.

After a time he went to her side and laid a hand upon her hair.

She raised her head and looked up to him with streaming eyes. She put a hand out to him, saying in a low but clear voice—

"You are right. Oh, I know you are right. I will not speak that word; but I can never—never cease to think of you as the best—the noblest—the truest of men. You have been my best friend—my only friend—and there is no dearer name that a man can be called by a woman."

He bent his head and kissed her on the forehead, but spoke no word.

A moment afterwards Mrs. Horneck entered the room.

"Oh, mother, mother!" cried the girl, starting up, "I knew that I was right—I knew that Dr. Goldsmith would be able to help me. Ah, I am a new girl since he came to see me. I feel that I am well once more—that I shall never be ill again! Oh, he is the best doctor in the world!"

"Why, what a transformation there is already!" said her mother. "Ah, Dr. Goldsmith was always my dear girl's friend!"

"Friend—friend!" she said slowly, almost gravely. "Yes, he was always my friend, and he will be so forever—my friend—our friend."

"Always, always," said Mrs. Horneck. "I am doubly glad to find that you have cast away your fit of melancholy, my dear, because Colonel Gwyn has just called and expresses the deepest anxiety regarding your condition. May I not ask him to come up in order that his mind may be relieved by seeing you?"

"No, no! I will not see Colonel Gwyn to-day," cried the girl. "Send him away — send him away. I do not want to see him. I want to see no one but our good friend Oliver Goldsmith. Ah, what did Colonel Gwyn ever do for me that I should wish to see him?"

"My dear Mary ——"

"Send him away, dear mother. I tell you that indeed I am not yet sufficiently recovered to be able to have a visitor. Dr. Goldsmith has not yet given me a good laugh, and till you come and find us laughing together as we used to laugh in the old days, you cannot say that I am myself again."

"I will not do anything against your inclinations, child," said Mrs. Horneck. "I will tell Colonel Gwyn to renew his visit to you next week."

"Do, dear mother," cried the girl, laughing. "Say next week, or next year,

sweetest of mothers, or — best of all — say that he had better come by and by, and then add, in the true style of Mr. Garrick, that 'by and by is easily said.' "

CHAPTER XXX.

As he went to his chambers to dress before going to dine with the Dillys in the Poultry, Goldsmith was happier than he had been for years. He had seen the light return to the face that he loved more than all the faces in the world, and he had been strong enough to put aside the temptation to hear her confess that she returned the love which he bore her, but which he had never confessed to her. He felt happy to know that the friendship which had been so great a consolation to him for several years—the friendship for the family who had been so good and so considerate to him—was the same now as it had always been. He felt happy in the reflection that he had spoken no word that would tend to jeopardise that friendship. He had seen enough of the world to be made aware of the fact that there is no more potent destroyer of friendship than love. He had put aside the temptation to speak a word of love; nay, he had prevented her from speaking what he believed would be a word

of love, although the speaking of that word would have been the sweetest sound that had ever fallen upon his ears.

And that was how he came to feel happy.

And yet, that same night, when he was sitting alone in his room, he found a delight in adding to that bundle of manuscripts which he had dedicated to her and which some weeks before he had designed to destroy. He added poem after poem to the verses which Johnson had rightly interpreted — verses pulsating with the love that was in his heart—verses which Mary Horneck could not fail to interpret aright should they ever come before her eyes.

"But they shall never come before her eyes," he said. "Ah, never — never! It is in my power to avert at least that unhappiness from her life."

And yet before he went to sleep he had a thought that perhaps one day she might read those verses of his — yes, perhaps one day. He wondered if that day was far off or nigh.

When he had been by her side, after Colonel Gwyn had left the house, he had told her the story of the recovery of her letters; he did not, however, think it necessary to tell her how the man had come to entertain his animosity to Baretti; and she

thus regarded the latter's killing of Jackson as an accident.

After the lapse of a day or two he began to think if it might not be well for him to consult with Edmund Burke as to whether it would be to the advantage of Baretti or otherwise to submit evidence as to the threats made use of by Jackson in regard to Baretti. He thought that it might be possible to do so without introducing the name of Mary Horneck. But Burke, after hearing the story — no mention of the name of Mary Horneck being made by Goldsmith —came to the conclusion that it would be unwise to introduce at the trial any question of animosity on the part of the man who had been killed, lest the jury might be led to infer — as, indeed, they might have some sort of reason for doing — that the animosity on Jackson's part meant animosity on Baretti's part. Burke considered that a defence founded upon the plea of accident was the one which was most likely to succeed in obtaining from a jury a verdict of acquittal. If it could be shown that the man had attacked Baretti as impudently as some of the witnesses for the Crown were ready to admit that he did, Burke and his legal advisers thought that

the prisoner had a good chance of obtaining a verdict.

The fact that neither Burke nor any one else spoke with confidence of the acquittal had, however, a deep effect upon Goldsmith. His sanguine nature had caused him from the first to feel certain of Baretti's safety, and any one who reads nowadays an account of the celebrated trial would undoubtedly be inclined to think that his feeling in this matter was fully justified. That there should have been any suggestion of premeditation in the unfortunate act of self-defence on the part of Baretti seems amazing to a modern reader of the case as stated by the Crown. But as Edmund Burke stated about that time in the House of Commons, England was a gigantic shambles. The barest evidence against a prisoner was considered sufficient to bring him to the gallows for an offence which nowadays, if proved against him on unmistakable testimony, would only entail his incarceration for a week. Women were hanged for stealing bread to keep their children from that starvation which was the result of the kidnapping of their husbands to serve in the navy; and yet Burke's was the only influential voice that was lifted up against a system in comparison with which

slavery was not only tolerable, but commendable.

Baretti was indeed the only one of that famous circle of which Johnson was the centre, who felt confident that he would be acquitted. For all his railing against the detestable laws of the detestable country — which, however, he found preferable to his own — he ridiculed the possibility of his being found guilty. It was Johnson who considered it within the bounds of his duty to make the Italian understand that, however absurd was the notion of his being carted to the gallows, the likelihood was that he would experience the feelings incidental to such an excursion.

He went full of this intention with Reynolds to visit the prisoner at Newgate, and it may be taken for granted that he discharged his duty with his usual emphasis. It is recorded, however, on the excellent authority of Boswell, that Baretti was quite unmoved by the admonition of the sage.

It is also on authority of Boswell that we learn that Johnson was guilty of what appears to us nowadays as a very gross breach of good taste as well as of good feeling, when, on the question of the likelihood of Baretti's failing to obtain a verdict being

discussed, he declared that if one of his friends were fairly hanged he should not suffer, but eat his dinner just the same as usual. It is fortunate, however, that we know something of the systems adopted by Johnson when pestered by the idiotic insistence of certain trivial matters by Boswell, and the record of Johnson's pretence to appear a callous man of the world probably deceived no one in the world except the one man whom it was meant to silence.

But, however callous Dr. Johnson may have pretended to be — however insincere Tom Davis the bookseller may — according to Johnson — have been, there can be no doubt that poor Goldsmith was in great trepidation until the trial was over. He gave evidence in favour of Baretti, though Boswell, true to his detestation of the man against whom he entertained an envy that showed itself every time he mentioned his name, declined to mention this fact, taking care, however, that Johnson got full credit for appearing in the witness-box with Burke, Garrick and Beauclerk.

Baretti was acquitted, the jury being satisfied that, as the fruit-knife was a weapon which was constantly carried by Frenchmen and Italians, they might possibly go so far as to assume that it had not

been bought by the prisoner solely with the intention of murdering the man who had attacked him in the Haymarket. The carrying of the fruit-knife seems rather a strange turning-point of a case heard at a period when the law permitted men to carry swords presumably for their own protection.

Goldsmith's mind was set at ease by the acquittal of Baretti, and he joined in the many attempts that were made to show the sympathy which was felt — or, as Boswell would have us believe Johnson thought, was simulated — by his friends for Baretti. He gave a dinner in honour of the acquittal, inviting Johnson, Burke, Garrick, and a few others of the circle, and he proposed the health of their guest, which, he said, had not been so robust of late as to give all his friends an assurance that he would live to a ripe old age. He also toasted the jury and the counsel, as well as the turnkeys of Newgate and the usher of the Old Bailey.

When the trial was over, however, he showed that the strain to which he had been subjected was too great for him. His health broke down, and he was compelled to leave his chambers and hurry off to his cottage on the Edgware Road, hoping to be

benefitted by the change to the country, and trusting also to be able to make some progress with the many works which he had engaged himself to complete for the booksellers. He had, in addition, his comedy to write for Garrick, and he was not unmindful of his promise to give Mrs. Abington a part worthy of her acceptance.

He returned at rare intervals to town, and never failed at such times to see his Jessamy Bride, with whom he had resumed his old relations of friendship. When she visited her sister at Barton she wrote to him in her usual high spirits. Little Comedy also sent him letters full of the fun in which she delighted to indulge with him, and he was never too busy to reply in the same strain. The pleasant circle at Bunbury's country house wished to have him once again in their midst, to join in their pranks, and to submit, as he did with such good will, to their practical jests.

He did not go to Barton. He had made up his mind that that was one of the pleasures of life which he should forego. At Barton he knew that he would see Mary day by day, and he could not trust himself to be near her constantly and yet refrain from saying the words which would make both of them miserable. He had conquered him-

self once, but he was not sure that he would be as strong a second time.

This perpetual struggle in which he was engaged — this constant endeavour to crush out of his life the passion which alone made life endurable to him, left him worn and weak, so it was not surprising that, when a coach drove up to his cottage one day, after many months had passed, and Mrs. Horneck stepped out, she was greatly shocked at the change which was apparent in his appearance.

"Good heaven, Dr. Goldsmith!" she cried when she entered his little parlour, "you are killing yourself by your hard work. Sir Joshua said he was extremely apprehensive in regard to your health the last time he saw you, but were he to see you now, he would be not merely apprehensive but despairing."

"Nay, my dear madam," he said. "I am only suffering from a slight attack of an old enemy of mine. I am not so strong as I used to be; but let me assure you that I feel much better since you have been good enough to give me an opportunity of seeing you at my humble home. When I caught sight of you stepping out of the coach I received a great shock for a moment; I

feared that—ah, I cannot tell you all that I feared."

"However shocked you were, dear Dr. Goldsmith, you were not so shocked as I was when you appeared before me," said the lady. "Why, dear sir, you are killing yourself. Oh, we must change all this. You have no one here to give you the attention which your condition requires."

"What, madam! Am not I a physician myself?" said the Doctor, making a pitiful attempt to assume his old manner.

"Ah, sir! every moment I am more shocked," said she. "I will take you in hand. I came here to beg of you to go to Barton in my interests, but now I will beg of you to go thither in your own."

"To Barton? Oh, my dear madam——"

"Nay, sir, I insist! Ah! I might have known you better than to fancy I should easier prevail upon you by asking you to go to advance your own interests rather than mine. You were always more ready to help others than to help yourself."

"How is it possible, dear lady, that you need my poor help?"

"Ah! I knew the best way to interest you. Dear friend, I know of no one who could be of the same help to us as you."

"There is no one who would be more willing, madam."

"You have proved it long ago, Dr. Goldsmith. When Mary had that mysterious indisposition, was not her recovery due to you? She announced that it was you, and you only, who had brought her back to life."

"Ah! my dear Jessamy Bride was always generous. Surely she is not again in need of my help."

"It is for her sake I come to you to-day, Dr. Goldsmith. I am sure that you are interested in her future—in the happiness which we all are anxious to secure for her."

"Happiness? What happiness, dear madam?"

"I will tell you, sir. I look on you as one of our family—nay, I can talk with you more confidentially than I can with my own son."

"You have ever been indulgent to me, Mrs. Horneck."

"And you have ever been generous, sir; that is why I am here to-day. I know that Mary writes to you. I wonder if she has yet told you that Colonel Gwyn made her an offer with my consent."

"No; she has not told me that."

He spoke slowly, rising from his chair, but endeavoring to restrain the emotion which he felt.

"It is not unlike Mary to treat the matter as if it were finally settled, and so not worthy of another thought," said Mrs. Horneck.

"Finally settled?" repeated Goldsmith. "Then she has accepted Colonel Gwyn's proposal?"

"On the contrary, sir, she rejected it," said the mother.

He resumed his seat. Was the emotion which he experienced at that moment one of gladness?

"Yes, she rejected a suitor whom we all considered most eligible," said the lady. "Colonel Gwyn is a man of good family, and his own character is irreproachable. He is in every respect a most admirable man, and I am convinced that my dear child's happiness would be assured with him—and yet she sends him away from her."

"That is possibly because she knows her own mind—her own heart, I should rather say; and that heart the purest in the world."

"Alas! she is but a girl."

"Nay, to my mind, she is something

more than a girl. No man that lives is worthy of her."

"That may be true, dear friend; but no girl would thank you to act too rigidly on that assumption—an assumption which would condemn her to live and die an old maid. Now, my dear Dr. Goldsmith, I want you to take a practical and not a poetical view of a matter which so closely concerns the future of one who is dear to me, and in whom I am sure you take a great interest."

"I would do anything for her happiness."

"I know it. Well you have long been aware, I am sure, that she regards you with the greatest respect and esteem—nay, if I may say it, with affection as well."

"Ah! affection—affection for me?"

"You know it. If you were her brother she could not have a warmer regard for you. And that is why I have come to you to-day to beg of you to yield to the entreaties of your friends at Barton and pay them a visit. Mary is there, and I hope you will see your way to use your influence with her on behalf of Colonel Gwyn."

"What! I, madam?"

"Has my suggestion startled you? It should not have done so. I tell you, my friend, there is no one to whom I could go

in this way, saving yourself. Indeed, there is no one else who would be worth going to, for no one possesses the influence over her that you have always had. I am convinced, Dr. Goldsmith, that she would listen to your persuasion while turning a deaf ear to that of any one else. You will lend us your influence, will you not, dear friend?"

"I must have time to think—to think. How can I answer you at once in this matter? Ah, you cannot know what my decision means to me."

He had left his chair once more and was standing against the fireplace looking into the empty grate.

"You are wrong," she said in a low tone. "You are wrong; I know what is in your thoughts—in your heart. You fear that if Mary were married she would stand on a different footing in respect to you."

"Ah! a different footing!"

"I think that you are in error in that respect," said the lady. "Marriage is not such a change as some people seem to fancy it is. Is not Katherine the same to you now as she was before she married Charles Bunbury?"

He looked at her with a little smile upon his face. How little she knew of what was in his heart!

"Ah, yes, my dear Little Comedy is unchanged," said he.

"And your Jessamy Bride would be equally unchanged," said Mrs. Horneck.

"But where lies the need for her to marry at once?" he inquired. "If she were in love with Colonel Gwyn there would be no reason why they should not marry at once; but if she does not love him ——"

"Who can say that she does not love him?" cried the lady. "Oh, my dear Dr. Goldsmith, a young woman is herself the worst judge in all the world of whether or not she loves one particular man. I give you my word, sir, I was married for five years before I knew that I loved my husband. When I married him I know that I was under the impression that I actually disliked him. Marriages are made in heaven, they say, and very properly, for heaven only knows whether a woman really loves a man, and a man a woman. Neither of the persons in the contract is capable of pronouncing a just opinion on the subject."

"I think that Mary should know what is in her own heart."

"Alas! alas! I fear for her. It is because I fear for her I am desirous of seeing her married to a good man — a man with

whom her future happiness would be assured. You have talked of her heart, my friend; alas! that is just why I fear for her. I know how her heart dominates her life and prevents her from exercising her judgment. A girl who is ruled by her heart is in a perilous way. I wonder if she told you what her uncle, with whom she was sojourning in Devonshire, told me about her meeting a certain man there — my brother did not make me acquainted with his name — and being so carried away with some plausible story he told that she actually fancied herself in love with him — actually, until my brother, learning that the man was a disreputable fellow, put a stop to an affair that could only have had a disastrous ending. Ah! her heart ——"

"Yes, she told me all that. Undoubtedly she is dominated by her heart."

"That is, I repeat, why I tremble for her future. If she were to meet at some time, when perhaps I might not be near her, another adventurer like the fellow whom she met in Devonshire, who can say that she would not fancy she loved him? What disaster might result! Dear friend, would you desire to save her from the fate of your Olivia?"

There was a long pause before he said—

"Madam, I will do as you ask me. I will go to Mary and endeavour to point out to her that it is her duty to marry Colonel Gwyn."

"I knew you would grant my request, my dear, dear friend," cried the mother, catching his hand and pressing it. "But I would ask of you not to put the proposal to her quite in that way. To suggest that a girl with a heart should marry a particular man because her duty lies in that direction would be foolishness itself. Duty? The word is abhorrent to the ear of a young woman whose heart is ripe for love."

"You are a woman."

"I am one indeed; I know what are a woman's thoughts — her longings — her hopes — and alas! her self-deceptions. A woman's heart — ah, Dr. Goldsmith, you once put into a few lines the whole tragedy of a woman's life. What experience was it urged you to write those lines? —

'When lovely woman stoops to folly.
And finds too late . . .'

To think that one day, perhaps a child of mine should sing that song of poor Olivia!"

He did not tell her that Mary had already quoted the lines in his hearing. He bowed his head, saying —

"I will go to her."

"You will be saving her — ah, sir, will you not be saving yourself," cried Mrs. Horneck.

He started slightly.

"Saving myself? What can your meaning be, Mrs. Horneck?"

"I tell you I was shocked beyond measure when I entered this room and saw you," she replied. "You are ill, sir; you are very ill, and the change to the garden at Barton will do you good. You have been neglecting yourself — yes, and some one who will nurse you back to life. Oh, Barton is the place for you!"

"There is no place I should like better to die at," said he.

"To die at?" she said. "Nonsense, sir! you are I trust, far from death still. Nay, you will find life, and not death, there. Life is there for you."

"Your daughter Mary is there," said he.

CHAPTER XXXI.

He wrote that very evening, after Mrs. Horneck had taken her departure, one of his merry letters to Katherine Bunbury, telling her that he had resolved to yield gracefully to her entreaties to visit her, and meant to leave for Barton the next day. When that letter was written he gave himself up to his thoughts.

All his thoughts were of Mary. He was going to place a barrier between her and himself. He was going to give himself a chance of life by making it impossible for him to love her. This writer of books had brought himself to think that if Mary Horneck were to marry Colonel Gwyn he, Oliver Goldsmith, would come to think of her as he thought of her sister—with the affection which exists between good friends.

While her mother had been talking to him about her and her loving heart, he had suddenly become possessed of the truth: it was her sympathetic heart that had led her to make the two mistakes of her life. First, she had fancied that she loved the impostor

whom she had met in Devonshire, and then she had fancied that she loved him, Oliver Goldsmith. He knew what she meant by the words which she had spoken in his presence. He knew that if he had not been strong enough to answer her as he had done that day, she would have told him that she loved him.

Her mother was right. She was in great danger through her liability to follow the promptings of her heart. If already she had made two such mistakes as he had become aware of, into what disaster might not she be led in the future?

Yes; her mother was right. Safety for a girl with so tender a heart was to be found only in marriage — marriage with such a man as Colonel Gwyn undoubtedly was. He recollected the details of Colonel Gwyn's visit to himself, and how favourably impressed he had been with the man. He undoubtedly possessed every trait of character that goes to constitute a good man and a good husband. Above all, he was devoted to Mary Horneck, and there was no man who would be better able to keep her from the dangers which surrounded her.

Yes, he would go to Barton and carry out Mrs. Horneck's request. He would, moreover, be careful to refrain from any men-

tion of the word duty, which would, the lady had declared, if introduced into his argument, tend to frustrate his intention.

He went down to Barton by coach the next day. He felt very ill indeed, and he was not quite so confident as Mrs. Horneck that the result of his visit would be to restore him to perfect health. His last thought before leaving was that if Mary was made happy nothing else was worth a moment's consideration.

She met him with a chaise driven by Bunbury, at the cross roads, where the coach set him down; and he could not fail to perceive that she was even more shocked than her mother had been at his changed appearance. While still on the top of the coach he saw her face lighted with pleasure the instant she caught sight of him. She waved her hand toward him, and Bunbury waved his whip. But the moment he had swung himself painfully and laboriously to the ground, he saw the look of amazement both on her face and on that of her brother-in-law.

She was speechless, but it was not in the nature of Bunbury to be so.

"Good Lord! Noll, what have you been doing to yourself?" he cried. "Why, you 're not like the same man. Is he, Mary?"

Mary only shook her head.

"I have been ill," said Oliver. "But I am better already, having seen you both with your brown country faces. How is my Little Comedy? Is she ready to give me another lesson in loo?"

"She will give you what you need most, you may be certain," said Bunbury, while the groom was strapping on his carpet-bag. "Oh! yes; we will take care that you get rid of that student's face of yours," he continued. "Yes, and those sunken eyes! Good Lord! what a wreck you are! But we 'll build you up again, never fear! Barton is the place for you and such as you, my friend."

"I tell you I am better already," cried Goldsmith; and then, as the chaise drove off, he glanced at the girl sitting opposite to him. Her face had become pale, her eyes were dim. She had spoken no word to him; she was not even looking at him. She was gazing over the hedgerows and the ploughed fields.

Bunbury rattled away in unison with the rattling of the chaise along the uneven road. He roared with laughter as he recalled some of the jests which had been played upon Goldsmith when he had last been at Barton; but though Oliver tried to smile in

response, Mary was silent. When the chaise arrived at the house, however, and Little Comedy welcomed her guest at the great door, her high spirits triumphed over even the depressing effect of her husband's artificial hilarity. She did not betray the shock which she experienced on observing how greatly changed was her friend since he had been with her and her sister at Ranelagh. She met him with a laugh and a cry of "You have never come to us without your scratch-wig? If you have forgot it, you will e'en have to go back for it."

The allusion to the merriment which had made the house noisy when he had last been at Barton caused Oliver to brighten up somewhat; and later on, at dinner, he yielded to the influence of Katherine Bunbury's splendid vitality. Other guests were at the table, and the genial chat quickly became general. After dinner, he sang several of his Irish songs for his friends in the drawing-room, Mary playing an accompaniment on the harpsichord. Before he went to his bed-room he was ready to confess that Mrs. Horneck had judged rightly what would be the effect upon himself of his visit to the house he loved. He felt better — better than he had been for months.

In the morning he was pleased to find

that Mary seemed to have recovered her usual spirits. She walked round the grounds with him and her sister after breakfast, and laughed without reservation at the latter's amusing imitation, after the manner of Garrick, of Colonel Gwyn's declaration of his passion, and of Mary's reply to him. She had caught very happily the manner of the suitor, though of course she made a burlesque of the scene, especially in assuming the fluttered demureness which she declared she had good reason for knowing had frightened the lover so greatly as to cause him to talk of the evil results of drinking tea, when he had meant to talk about love.

She had such a talent for this form of fun, and she put so much character into her casual travesties of every one whom she sought to imitate, she never gave offence, as a less adroit or less discriminating person would be certain to have done. Mary laughed even more heartily than Goldsmith at the account her sister gave of the imaginary scene.

Goldsmith soon found that the proposal of Colonel Gwyn had passed into the already long list of family jests, and he saw that he was expected to understand the many allusions daily made to the incident of his rejection. A new nickname had been found

by her brother-in-law for Mary, and of course Katherine quickly discovered one that was extremely appropriate to Colonel Gwyn; and thus, with sly glances and good-humoured mirth, the hours passed as they had always done in the house which had ever been so delightful to at least one of the guests.

He could not help feeling, however, before his visit had reached its fourth day, that the fact of their treating in this humourous fashion an incident which Mrs. Horneck had charged him to treat very seriously was extremely embarrassing to his mission. How was he to ask Mary to treat as the most serious incident in her life the one which was every day treated before her eyes with levity by her sister and her husband?

And yet he felt daily the truth of what Mrs. Horneck had said to him—that Mary's acceptance of Colonel Gwyn would be an assurance of her future such as might not be so easily found again. He feared to think what might be in store for a girl who had shown herself to be ruled only by her own sympathetic heart.

He resolved that he would speak to her without delay respecting Colonel Gwyn; and though he was afraid that at first she

might be disposed to laugh at his attempt to put a more serious complexion upon her rejection of the suitor whom her mother considered most eligible, he had no doubt that he could bring her to regard the matter with some degree of gravity.

The opportunity for making an attempt in this direction occurred on the afternoon of the fourth day of his visit. He found himself alone with Mary in the still-room. She had just put on an apron in order to put new covers on the jars of preserved walnuts. As she stood in the middle of the many-scented room, surrounded by bottles of distilled waters and jars of preserved fruits and great Worcester bowls of pot-pourri, with bundles of sweet herbs and drying lavenders suspended from the ceiling, Charles Bunbury, passing along the corridor with his dogs, glanced in.

"What a housewife we have become!" he cried. "Quite right, my dear; the head of the Gwyn household will need to be deft."

Mary laughed, throwing a sprig of thyme at him, and Oliver spoke before the dog's paws sounded on the polished oak of the staircase.

"I am afraid, my Jessamy Bride," said he, "that I do not enter into the spirit of

this jest about Colonel Gwyn so heartily as your sister or her husband."

"'Tis foolish on their part," said she. "But Little Comedy is ever on the watch for a subject for her jests, and Charles is an active abettor of her in her folly. This particular jest is, I think, a trifle threadbare by now."

"Colonel Gwyn is a gentleman who deserves the respect of every one," said he.

"Indeed, I agree with you," she cried. "I agree with you heartily. I do not know a man whom I respect more highly. Had I not every right to feel flattered by his attention?"

"No—no; you have no reason to feel flattered by the attention of any man from the Prince down—or should I say up?" he replied.

"'Twould be treason to say so," she laughed. "Well, let poor Colonel Gwyn be. What a pity 'tis Sir Isaac Newton did not discover a new way of treating walnuts for pickling! That discovery would have been more valuable to us than his theory of gravitation, which, I hold, never saved a poor woman a day's work."

"I do not want to let Colonel Gwyn be," said he quietly. "On the contrary, I came down here specially to talk of him."

"Ah, I perceive that you have been speaking with my mother," said she, continuing her work.

"Mary, my dear, I have been thinking about you very earnestly of late," said he.

"Only of late!" she cried. "Ah! I flattered myself that I had some of your thoughts long ago as well."

"I have always thought of you with the truest affection, dear child. But latterly you have never been out of my thoughts."

She ceased her work and looked towards him gratefully—attentively. He left his seat and went to her side.

"My sweet Jessamy Bride," said he, "I have thought of your future with great uneasiness of heart. I feel towards you as—as—perhaps a father might feel, or an elder brother. My happiness in the future is dependent upon yours, and alas! I fear for you; the world is full of snares."

"I know that," she quietly said. "Ah, you know that I have had some experience of the snares. If you had not come to my help what shame would have been mine!"

"Dear child, there was no blame to be attached to you in that painful affair," said he. "It was your tender heart that led you astray at first, and thank God you have the same good heart in your bosom. But alas!

'tis just the tenderness of your heart that makes me fear for you."

"Nay; it can become as steel upon occasions," said she. "Did not I send Colonel Gwyn away from me?"

"You were wrong to do so, my Mary," he said. "Colonel Gwyn is a good man—he is a man with whom your future would be sure. He would be able to shelter you from all dangers—from the dangers into which your own heart may lead you again as it led you before."

"You have come here to plead the cause of Colonel Gwyn?" said she.

"Yes," he replied. "I believe him to be a good man. I believe that as his wife you would be safe from all the dangers which surround such a girl as you in the world."

"Ah! my dear friend," she cried. "I have seen enough of the world to know that a woman is not sheltered from the dangers of the world from the day she marries. Nay, is it not often the case that the dangers only begin to beset her on that day?"

"Often—often. But it would not be so with you, dear child—at least, not if you marry Colonel Gwyn."

"Even if I do not love him? Ah! I fear that you have become a worldly man all at

once, Dr. Goldsmith. You counsel a poor weak girl from the standpoint of her match-making mother."

"Nay, God knows, my sweet Mary, what it costs me to speak to you in this way. God knows how much sweeter it would be for me to be able to think of you always as I think of you know—bound to no man—the dearest of all my friends. I know it would be impossible for me to occupy the same position as I now do in regard to you if you were married. Ah! I have seen that there is no more potent divider of friendship than marriage."

"And yet you urge upon me to marry Colonel Gwyn?"

"Yes—yes—I say I do think it would mean the assurance of your—your happiness—yes, happiness in the future."

"Surely no man ever had so good a heart as you!" she cried. "You are ready to sacrifice yourself—I mean you are ready to forego all the pleasure which our meeting, as we have been in the habit of meeting for the past four years, gives you, for the sake of seeing me on the way to happiness—or what you fancy will be happiness."

"I am ready, my dear child; you know what the sacrifice means to me."

"I do," she said after a pause. "I do,

because I know what it would mean to me. But you shall not be called to make that sacrifice. I will not marry Colonel Gwyn."

"Nay — nay — do not speak so definitely," he said.

"I will speak definitely," she cried. "Yes, the time is come for me to speak definitely. I might agree to marry Colonel Gwyn in the hope of being happy if I did not love some one else; but loving some one else with all my heart, I dare not — oh! I dare not even entertain the thought of marrying Colonel Gwyn."

"You love some one else?" he said slowly, wonderingly. For a moment there went through his mind the thought —

"*Her heart has led her astray once again.*"

"I love some one else with all my heart and all my strength," she cried; "I love one who is worthy of all the love of the best that lives in the world. I love one who is cruel enough to wish to turn me away from his heart, though that heart of his has known the secret of mine for long."

Now he knew what she meant. He put his hands together before her, saying in a hushed voice —

"Ah, child — child — spare me that pain — let me go from you."

"Not till you hear me," she said. "Ah!

cannot you perceive that I love you — only you, Oliver Goldsmith?"

"Hush — for God's sake!" he cried.

"I will not hush," she said. "I will speak for love's sake — for the sake of that love which I bear you — for the sake of that love which I know you return."

"Alas — alas!"

"I know it. Is there any shame in such a girl as I am confessing her love for such a man as you? I think that there is none. The shame before heaven would be in my keeping silence — in marrying a man I do not love. Ah! I have known you as no one else has known you. I have understood your nature — so sweet — so simple — so great — so true. I thought last year when you saved me from worse than death that the feeling which I had for you might perhaps be gratitude; but now I have come to know the truth."

He laid his hand on her arm, saying in a whisper —

"Stop — stop — for God's sake, stop! I — I — do not love you."

She looked at him and laughed at first. But as his head fell, her laugh died away. There was a long silence, during which she kept her eyes fixed upon him, as he stood before her looking at the floor.

"You do not love me?" she said in a slow whisper. "Will you say those words again with your eyes looking into mine?"

"Do not humiliate me further," he said. "Have some pity upon me."

"No — no; pity is not for me," she said. "If you spoke the truth when you said those words, speak it again now. Tell me again that you do not love me."

"You say you know me," he cried, "and yet you think it possible that I could take advantage of this second mistake that your kind and sympathetic heart has made for your own undoing. Look there — there — into that glass, and see what a terrible mistake your heart has made."

He pointed to a long, narrow mirror between the windows. It reflected an exquisite face and figure by the side of a face on which long suffering and struggle, long years of hardship and toil, had left their mark — a figure attenuated by want and ill-health.

"Look at that ludicrous contrast, my child," he said, "and you will see what a mistake your heart has made. Have I not heard the jests which have been made when we were walking together? Have I not noticed the pain they gave you? Do you think me capable of increasing that pain in the future?

Do you think me capable of bringing upon your family, who have been kinder than any living beings to me, the greatest misfortune that could befall them? Nay, nay, my dear child; you cannot think that I could be so base."

"I will not think of anything except that I love the man who is best worthy of being loved of all men in the world," said she. "Ah, sir, cannot you perceive that your attitude toward me now but strengthens my affection for you?"

"Mary — Mary — this is madness!"

"Listen to me," she said. "I feel that you return my affection; but I will put you to the test. If you can look into my face and tell me that you do not love me I will marry Colonel Gwyn."

There was another pause before he said —

"Have I not spoken once? Why should you urge me on to so painful an ordeal? Let me go — let me go."

"Not until you answer me—not until I have proved you. Look into my eyes, Oliver Goldsmith, and speak those words to me that you spoke just now."

"Ah, dear child ——"

"You cannot speak those words."

There was another long silence. The

terrible struggle that was going on in the heart of that man whose words are now so dear to the hearts of so many million men and women, was maintained in silence. No one but himself could hear the tempter's voice whispering to him to put his arms round the beautiful girl who stood before him, and kiss her on her cheeks, which were now rosy with expectation.

He lifted up his head. His lips moved, He put out a hand to her a little way, but with a moan he drew it back. Then he looked into her eyes, and said slowly —

"It is the truth. I do not love you with the heart of a lover."

"That is enough. Leave me! My heart is broken!"

She fell into a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

He looked at her for a moment; then, with a cry of agony, he went out of the room — out of the house.

In his heart, as he wandered on to the high road, there was not much of the exaltation of a man who knows that he has overcome an unworthy impulse.

CHAPTER XXXII.

When he did not return toward night Charles Bunbury and his wife became alarmed. He had only taken his hat and cloak from the hall as he went out; he had left no line to tell them that he did not mean to return.

Bunbury questioned Mary about him. Had he not been with her in the still-room, he inquired.

She told him the truth — as much of the truth as she could tell.

"I am afraid that his running away was due to me," she said. "If so, I shall never forgive myself."

"What can be your meaning, my dear?" he inquired. "I thought that you and he had always been the closest friends."

"If we had not been such friends we should never have quarreled," said she. "You know that our mother has had her heart set upon my acceptance of Colonel Gwyn. Well, she went to see Goldsmith at his cottage, and begged of him to come to

me with a view of inducing me to accept the proposal of Colonel Gwyn."

"I heard nothing of that," said he, with a look of astonishment. "And so I suppose when he began to be urgent in his pleading you got annoyed and said something that offended him."

She held down her head.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," said he "Have you not seen long ago that that man is no more than a child in simplicity?"

"I am ashamed of myself," said she. "I shall never forgive myself for my harshness."

"That will not bring him back," said her brother-in-law. "Oh! it is always the best of friends who part in this fashion."

Two days afterwards he told his wife that he was going to London. He had so sincere an attachment for Goldsmith, his wife knew very well that he felt that sudden departure of his very deeply, and that he would try and induce him to return.

But when Bunbury came back after the lapse of a couple of days, he came back alone. His wife met him in the chaise when the coach came up. His face was very grave.

"I saw the poor fellow," he said. "I

found him at his chambers in Brick Court. He is very ill indeed."

"What, too ill to be moved?" she cried.

He shook his head.

"Far too ill to be moved," he said. "I never saw a man in worse condition. He declared, however, that he had often had as severe attacks before now, and that he has no doubt he will recover. He sent his love to you and to Mary. He hopes you will forgive him for his rudeness, he says."

"His rudeness! his rudeness!" said Katherine, her eyes streaming with tears. "Oh, my poor friend—my poor friend!"

She did not tell her sister all that her husband had said to her. Mary was, of course, very anxious to hear how Oliver was, but Katherine only said that Charles had seen him and found him very ill. The doctor who was in attendance on him had promised to write if he thought it advisable for him to have a change to the country.

The next morning the two sisters were sitting together when the postboy's horn sounded. They started up simultaneously, awaiting a letter from the doctor.

No letter arrived, only a narrow parcel, clumsily sealed, addressed to Miss Horneck in a strange handwriting.

When she had broken the seals she

gave a cry, for the packet contained sheet after sheet in Goldsmith's hand — poems addressed to her — the love-songs which his heart had been singing to her through the long hopeless years.

She glanced at one, then at another, and another, with beating heart.

She started up, crying —

"Ah! I knew it, I knew it! He loves me — he loves me as I love him — only his love is deep, while mine was shallow! Oh, my dear love — he loves me, and now he is dying! Ah! I know that he is dying, or he would not have sent me these; he would have sacrificed himself — nay, he has sacrificed himself for me — for me!"

She threw herself on a sofa and buried her face in her hands.

"My dear — dear sister," said Katherine, "is it possible that you — you ——"

"That I loved him, do you ask?" cried Mary, raising her head. "Yes, I loved him — I love him still — I shall never love any one else, and I am going to him to tell him so. Ah! God will be good — God will be good. My love shall live until I go to him."

"My poor child!" said her sister. "I could never have guessed your secret. Come away. We will go to him together."

They left by the coach that day, and early the next morning they went together to Brick Court.

A woman weeping met them at the foot of the stairs. They recognised Mrs. Abington.

"Do not tell me that I am too late — for God's sake say that he still lives!" cried Mary.

The actress took her handkerchief from her eyes.

She did not speak. She did not even shake her head. She only looked at the girl, and the girl understood.

She threw herself into her sister's arms.

"He is dead!" she cried. "But, thank God, he did not die without knowing that one woman in the world loved him truly for his own sake."

"That surely is the best thought that a man can have, going into the Presence," said Mrs. Abington. "Ah, my child, I am a wicked woman, but I know that while you live your fondest reflection will be that the thought of your love soothed the last hours of the truest man that ever lived. Ah, there was none like him — a man of such sweet simplicity that every word he spoke came from his heart. Let others talk about

his works; you and I love the man, for we know that he was greater and not less than those works. And now he is in the presence of God, telling the Son who on earth was born of a woman that he had all a woman's love."

Mary put her arm about the neck of the actress, and kissed her.

She went with her sister among the weeping men and women — he had been a friend to all — up the stairs and into the darkened room.

She threw herself on her knees beside the bed.

THE END.

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