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GERALD FITZGERALD.

A NOVEL.

BY

GEORGE HERBERT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON :

T. C. NEWBY, PUBLISHER,

30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1858.



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PREFACE.

THE following letter is extracted from the *Athenæum* of December 5th, 1857 :—

“ On the 14th and 21st instant there appeared in the *Athenæum* an advertisement of a novel of mine (the M.S. of which has for some months been in the hands of Mr. Newby), entitled ‘Gerald Fitzgerald.’ On the 28th instant there appeared for the first time in the *Athenæum* an announcement of a work by Mr. Charles Lever, also entitled ‘Gerald Fitzgerald,’ to be published in the *Dublin University Magazine*. I wish to place these facts on record, *not* for the purpose of suggesting that ‘Harry Lorrequer’

has borrowed my title (such an idea I altogether disclaim), but simply that an odd coincidence may stand upon its proper basis, and those who leave the advertising columns of the *Athenæum* unread may not take it for granted that an author whose identity has hitherto been shrouded in the oracular 'we,' is unmasking his batteries beneath another man's bunting.—I am, &c., GEORGE HERBERT."

The author may add that, upon looking through the printed sheets, he has discovered a few clerical errors, typographical and otherwise, which will no doubt be spontaneously corrected by the reader, without the aid of a formal list of errata.

GERALD FITZGERALD.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I.

SIR ROGER MALDON was closeted with his youngest son — an ill-favoured youth, of wayward temper and obstinate belief.

“To-morrow,” said the father, “your brother goes to Eton. You will go with him.”

“And after Eton, sir?” said the boy, anxiously.

“The army.”

“O, I dislike the army! I'm not fit for it. Pray let me choose a profession for myself.”

“I tell you, sir, the army is the place for

you, as it has always been for second sons in your family. You'll go to Ireland, or to India, or to the colonies--perhaps to all of them. You'll see life; and if there's anything in you, it will show itself. At present, you whine and whimper about the house like a girl—and a very ill-looking girl, too!"

The father uttered these few last words in an undertone, and turning on his heel towards the door.

"Stay, sir!" exclaimed the boy. "Pray reconsider your determination. I dread the army—I do, indeed. Let me be a lawyer, a parson—anything you please, not in the army."

But Sir Roger Maldon was gone.

Almost at the same moment, in another part of the house, Lady Maldon was talking to her eldest son—a tall, handsome youth, the reverse of his brother in all things, strikingly so in person; and a fair representative of the race he belonged to.

“ You won’t mind Richard going with you?” said the lady. “ He’ll not follow you to college. He’s very studious, too; and a word from you will send him to his books. Besides, he’ll have no money to spend; and that will keep him out of notice.”

“ It’s very annoying, though!” replied the boy, “ I hate to be asked questions about him! Is he really my brother? Everybody says he’s not like any of us! Lord Dalton, the other day, whispered to me that he thought Richard must be a changeling! What is a changeling?”

“ A child left in a cradle in place of another child.”

“ Well, but that couldn’t be the case with Richard,—eh,—could it?” The boy looked seriously at his mother.

“ No!—at least, I think not—I don’t see how it could,” replied Lady Maldon.

And with this doubt on his mind, the

young gentleman permitted his brother to follow him to Eton.

The Maldons were a good family. There were no titles of nobility in Noah's ark, or they might have looked there for their common ancestor. As it was, they found him doing suit and service for the Eighth Henry, and receiving, in return, the honour of knighthood and the fee of an old priory just vacated by a number of holy men who carried across the seas many dilapidated tocs, teeth, fingers, shreds of old linen, crozier-heads and other relics, with which the pious Edward, having no money, had endowed their predecessors.

The newly-made knight soon rendered the Priory habitable for lay men and women; and for many, many generations it withstood the damp, destructive climate of England. But it gave way at last; and then, for safety's sake, the Sir Roger Maldon of George the First's reign built himself a new

habitation, as unlike a Priory as possible, and left the old place to the owls and the ivy. Now, it is a mere ruin, a picturesque pile enough, a feature for artists and sight-seers, but otherwise out of fashion and useless.

Sir Roger Maldon—the head of his house in these latter days—was prominently and obtrusively aristocratic. He showed his blood as pointedly as a race-horse. He was a tall, straight man, with a certain stiffness of back, that to people who go into ecstasies over the Laocoon, or borrow their notions of grace from street-tumblers, might have seemed awkward. His forehead was high, but not too benevolently broad; his mouth firm, enclosing a good set of teeth—square, close, and prominent; his eye large, dull, and dark; and his nose—arched, but not satanic—was a pattern feature, and like the noses of all the Maldon portraits. He had passed the rubicon of life, and yet gave no signs of decay. Indeed, it was a tradi-

tion in his family that the Maldons never did decay, but went to their account when beckoned without a stoop or a wrinkle.

He had married late in life. The woman he sought in his early days, preferred another suitor, and it took him a long time to make up his mind for a second courting. When at last he began to dread the extinction of his line, he picked a wife from an eccentric family settled near his own, and in due time his fear that the Maldons might be extinct at his death came to an end.

Another year passed, and the family title was doubly safe : there was a second son. This son was not happily received. After his few first screams, he was packed off to the nursery, pronounced to be anything but a pretty baby, and generally forgotten. Then came a daughter, a lovely little creature called Blanche because of her fair face, and settled at once as certain to bring a good name into the family !

It was this little girl who was most af-

fectured by the departure of the boys for Eton. For the first time in her life she was without playmates ; for the first time in her life she had serious thoughts. True, Lady Maldon, in mitigation of her daughter's loneliness, had her brought daily to her dressing-room, to spend a confidential ten minutes while her Ladyship was yet in her morning wrapper and could not be seriously disarranged by caresses. True, Sir Roger took his daughter to the Maldon picture-gallery, and read over to her his pedigree and her own—

“ My dear Blanche,” he would say, “ this picture, of your very earliest ancestor, was painted by Holbein ; this, of the next Baronet, by Vandyke. Here, you see, is the Sir Roger Maldon of Queen Anne's time, who went with the great Duke of Marlborough to the Low Countries. Those are cannon-balls in the corner there ; that's Marlborough in the smoke, waving his three-cornered hat.”

“And who is this little boy?” asked Blanche, pointing to a child’s picture.

The Baronet sighed heavily.

“Ah!” he said, “that little boy would have brought a peerage into the family. Queen Anne promised him as much for his beauty. But he died young, Marlborough was disgraced, and so there was no peerage for us.”

Blanche did not seem deeply affected by this last fact. Only the words “he died young,” troubled her little heart! Why did he die young? What was a peerage? These were the questions she asked her father. He evaded the first; but set himself seriously to answer the second—

“A peerage, my dear, is a title of nobility; a peer is a ruler of the kingdom. He sits in a great house, and controls the classes beneath him. He belongs to the secondary estate of the realm.”

All this information does not compensate Blanche for the loss of her playmates. She

wanders gloomily about the house and grounds, muses idly in corners, and among forgotten playthings. In the avenue, she looks up to the crows, and tries, as her father tells her, to venerate their dull, carking song. The Baronet is very fond of these crows; he believes them to be of good family. Probably an ancestor of their's flew over with the Conqueror. Indeed, it is said that they were first seen about Battle Abbey, fleshing their black beaks in the best blood of Saxon England! But Blanche is not moved to make friends with them. There is little charm in their plumage, none in their song; and once she heard a poor farmer complain so bitterly of their depredations, that they have been in bad odour with her ever since.

Her delight was to get away from the house, and into the village. There, she smiled at the people, and they looked at her, grinned, and ran away again! The men were seized with a strange desire to take

themselves by the forelock, the women to crouch beneath an abundance of apron; and as to the children, they stopped up their mouths with dirty fingers, cast down their eyes, and waddled into their hovels abashed.

The maid who attended the young lady was given to fancy work: her mind ran upon the glories of Miss Linwood's tapestry. She was always putting something together, and pulling it to pieces again. Her's were not the days of crochet, but of the little outbreak of needlework which preceded the advent of that fabric. Well, upon this needlework she was engaged once when Miss Blanche escaped from her and wandered in the woods alone. The little girl delighted in her liberty; she started butterflies, and pulled wild flowers; she sang to herself a nursery-rhyme setting forth the adventures of robin redbreast; she be-thought her of how kindly the little birds covered up the children in the wood! Suddenly she turned pale, and felt frightened. She

looked back for her maid—and O! the ma'ld was not to be seen! Wicked little girl that she was!—She covered her face, and wept!

The cause of her alarm was the approach of a thin, pale, sad-looking boy—quite unlike any of the villagers' children. He did not seem fierce or menacing, but suspiciously white and thoughtful! He had picked a quantity of flowers, too, and these, held in his thin, colourless hand, made a great contrast, and gave him the aspect of a little ghost, stricken with a love for botany!

But his smile was soft and assuring. He saw the little girl's trepidation.

“Don't be frightened,” he said,—“Will you have these flowers?”

Blanche was glad to accept the flowers as an assurance of safety. The action was like eating salt with a Mussulman, or smoking a pipe with a red Indian. Presently, she allowed the strange boy to take her hand, and show her the way out of the wood. She felt that she must secure his forbear-

ance by being civil to him. Confidence thus sprung up between the children; they even loitered by the way to gather more flowers; and then, Blanche, looking into her companion's face, said—

“Who are you? What's your name?”

“Gerald!” was the reply.

“Oh, what a funny name! My name's Blanche!” And the little lady and her companion went their way as before.

They were just emerging from the wood, when they heard voices. Blanche stood still, and trembled.

“She would run away, sir!—And all I could do, I couldn't stop her!”

“Silence!—And point out the place where you last saw her!”

Blanche knew these voices to be those of her father and the negligent maid.

“I'm here!” said the little lady, “I'm here! And Oh, don't, don't be cross with me!”

The father heard and was with her in a

moment. But ah! who was that ill-dressed, pale boy, holding his daughter's hand; the hand which was growing to fit, perhaps, the grasp of a marquis? What little vagabond was *he*? That he *was* a vagabond Sir Roger quite decided. So, seizing him by the shoulder, he pushed him rudely into the bushes, and taking Blanche tenderly in his arms, hurried her off to the Priory.

The maid followed—protesting her unremitting care of the child—but with part of the needlework hanging from her pocket.

“What's this?” said Lady Maldon, bringing forth and disclosing the worsted, needles and all, when the maid entered her presence.

“Oh, if you please, my lady, merely a cap I was making; I'm very bad off for caps, I am indeed, my lady!”

“And you were making this when you lost Miss Blanche?”

“Oh, no! not a stitch of it! When I lost my young lady I was doing nothing but

looking after her! And you'll forgive me!—I'm so fond of her—I love her! I do, indeed!”

“*Love her!*” said Lady Maldon.

“Love her!” echoed Sir Roger.

“Oh yes.—my lady, I do.”

“Then,” said the baronet, “you will leave Maldon Priory without a moment's delay.”

Blanche's next attendant submitted to an extra condition. She was to refrain from loving the young lady entrusted to her charge.

CHAPTER II.

FOR the first ten years of his married life, Gerald Grey had been unblessed with children. The music of small voices was alien to his home; the affection of young hearts was not constant to him. He was a simple man—of a nature to make sacrifices for a child; and he had a religious belief in the propriety of multiplication and increase. Therefore the denial of paternity was to him a sorrow of magnitude—a grief ever present; the sole one that embittered his lowly and laborious existence.

A little child—a visitor, and he had

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many such—sitting by his fireside, filled him with contending emotions. It pained while it pleased him. There was a charmed circle about it, into which he could not thoroughly enter. True, he might caress it, and for the time watch its endless variety of antics ; he might grow to love it a little ; but, sooner or later, he must part with it ; he must forget it, as it would forget him. And then, day after day, returning to his quiet home, he must listen idly for the lost voice, and look in vain for the little actor, now on some other stage, playing a new part, and with no more thought for yesterday's audience than for to-morrow's listeners !

But to this fleeting pleasure the good man and his wife gave themselves up ; to this questionable solace they clung with desperate affection. A little visitor to them never failed to find a welcome. The younger the visitor the better : one just weaned, best beyond comparison ! When they were quite alone, they looked sadly about, lost

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their cheerfulness, and answered each other in monosyllables. The sight of an infant in long clothes melted them to tears; the news of a neighbour's christening made them dull and dreamy. When twins came to a collateral branch of the family, Mrs. Grey was known to have spasms; when measles and whooping-cough were epidemic in a friend's house, Mr. Grey wished that that house was his own.

Such a state of mind rendered the good man easy of belief and hopeful of surprises. The eccentricities of Joanna Southcot would to him have been serious matter for contemplation: his understanding would succumb to what his heart wished for. Returning from work one mid-day, he found his house in disorder; a doctor's boy—basket and all—jostled him in the passage; the parlour was disarranged and deserted; from the bed-chamber above issued fractious and continued screaming. There were

footsteps in that chamber to which his ear was unaccustomed. He listened eagerly; he smiled faintly. His palpitating heart smote against his breast like an engine; he put to himself the flattering question—“Am I indeed a father?”

He crept softly up stairs; he tapped ceremoniously at the bed-room door; he coughed, drew back, and after an interval, tapped again. The door was half-opened, when lo! a stout lady in bombazine confronted him, and interposed the authority of her person. She put her finger to her lip, said—“Hush! he’s going off!” and closing the door with considerable firmness, left Mr. Grey to wonder on the landing. So he returned perforce to the parlour, and, seeing his dinner prepared, tried—ah! how vainly!—to eat.

Half-an-hour elapsed, and he heard a rustling on the stairs. The lady in bombazine entered to him. She was arranging

her shawl, and tying her bonnet. About her countenance there played an anxious, appealing expression.

“ Oh, sir ! You will love him—won't you ? I'm sure you will ! ”

Love him ! thought Mr. Grey. What does the woman mean ? Of course I shall love him.

Presently the bonnet was tied, the bombazine all but hidden.

“ Good-bye, sir.” said the owner of these adornments.

Mr. Grey rose, and confronted her. “ Your'e not *going*, surely ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the woman, with perfect coolness, “ but I shall call upon you often—as often as I can get here.”

“ Indeed ! ” said the good man. And as the rustling of the bombazine died away in the distance, he fell into his chair, wondered, and tried to think seriously.

Presently a vivid recollection came across his mind. That very morning he had left

his wife in perfect health, and in utter hopelessness of any event such as now seemed to have happened. He tried to smother this recollection, to pooh-pooh and put it aside, to hinder it from disturbing his new-born happiness. He succeeded; he convinced himself—assisted by the screaming above, now coming in short windy gusts of passion—that he was really a father; and hastening to complete his belief by the evidence of his acuter senses,—there, descending the stairs, in her ordinary cap and gown, her smile certain and settled, her physical capacity unimpaired, was, his wife!

“Mary!” he gasped out.

“Gerald!” was the reply.

The good man turned his head aside and retraced his steps to the parlour. A great bell tolled—a signal that he must obey as though it were fate; so he took his hat, avoided the anxious eye of his—wife, and went back silently to work.

The next day he was happier; he gave

himself up to the delight as he found it. The baby became the angel in the house. It was his pleasure to believe it endowed with surpassing intelligence and preternatural capacities for observation. Ere it was six weeks old, he maintained that it knew him; at the end of another week, he assigned to it a perfect knowledge of his wife. Then came the cat. Ah! that cat! What lessons it underwent as to its bearing and behaviour towards the baby. So severe and demonstrative were these, that at length the indignant animal, tired of them, swayed his tail angrily to and fro, walked majestically to the tiles, and remained there till he became reconciled to his diminished importance. Nevertheless, at two months old, the baby knew the cat!

The homage of Mrs. Grey rivalled that of her husband; perhaps surpassed it. The baby became the sun of her social system, the light of her little world. But now and then, she had sad, thoughtful moments.

As time wore away, these moments became more frequent. One day she received a letter. Her eyes filled with tears as she read it. The baby was sleeping in Mr. Grey's arms.

“What is it, Mary?” asked the husband, anxiously.

She made no reply ; but, passing the letter, took the child in exchange.

“Can you bear it, mother?” said Mr. Grey, after an interval. He had taken to call his wife “mother” since the coming of the child.

“No, Gerald, I can't!—I know I can't! It'll break both our hearts.”

She laid the baby gently in its cradle. There was such a silence in the room, that the child's light, regular breathing, sounded with oppressive distinctness. Fixed upon its resting-place were two pairs of motionless, dreamy eyes, thinking, as it were, into the future. To them it seemed a dreary future, indeed! Suddenly the child turned uneasily,

and cried out. The watching statues were startled into life; on their knees they sunk by the side of the cradle; together they soothed away the disturbing consciousness. Then, the baby slept again.

“What shall we do, Mary?” whispered the husband. His eyes looked into those of his wife, as though praying her to devise a remedy for the new grief. But she had no answer; none but a dull shake of the head, a sigh, and a tear that fell like a hail-stone upon the little creature she leant over.

“It will be just as though he died—to us—won’t it?” continued Mr. Grey. “And who’ll care for him as we do? Nobody!”

He uttered the last word with great emphasis, and with some indignation. The change of tone emboldened him; he rose from his kneeling position, and paced the room. Stopping suddenly, as though he had decided, he leant down, and put his great muscular arm round the cradle.

“Come, mother,” he said, “it’s time we

were asleep." And he bore off the baby in triumph.

From that night, great but secret preparations were made by the Greys. The current rumour of the neighbourhood was that they were about to emigrate; and as this rumour met with no denial from those principally concerned, it grew to have all the reputation of a fact. Indeed, when the Greys did leave their house, they were overwhelmed with congratulations and hand-shakings from all sides. Wishes that they might have a pleasant voyage and a prosperous future were showered upon them. And all this because they kept their own counsel, put their neighbours on a wrong scent, and, after some pardonable circumlocution, set up their household gods a few miles distant.

The baby suffered nothing by change of air; he grew wonderfully. The measles and the whooping-cough once missed by Mr. Grey from his home, now came to rejoice it.

half-a-dozen little disorders were met and overcome ; at a certain birthday, the word " baby " was abandoned, and the child was thenceforth called Gerald. At another epoch he was breeched,—an important ceremony with simple people ; and then—a year or two having slipped away—Gerald was sent to school.

School ! That was his first trouble. His preceptor was a nervous little man, who used a strap as an instrument of persuasion. His preceptor made up his mind that Gerald was dull because he took to a box of brick paints, and neglected Guy's Geography ; because he was not happy in his recitation of a passage from Somebody's abominable " Speaker ; " because when all the other boys were playing at noughts and crosses, he was drawing a cottage on the corner of his slate. Yes, Gerald was dull. He was returned to his father as dull. The school made very little of him, except, perhaps, that it helped him to be shy and sensitive.

It was now time for this shy and sensitive boy to go to work in the world. The Greys were great workers; they all looked for and expected to labour. For any one of them to be "out of work" was a horror that alarmed the whole race. So the boy must prepare for his heritage.

"What shall we make of you, Gerald?" said Mr. Grey, "Would you like to be a carpenter?"

Gerald looked meekly at his mother.

"I don't know," he replied.

"Don't know! Well, but, my dear boy, you must begin to know now. You must think; or if you don't,—why, you see, we must think for you."

There was an ominous silence. Presently the father spoke again.

"Come, now, what would you like to be?"

"A sailor," hazarded Gerald, impressed with ideas of a seafaring life such as could be mentioned only to the marines.

"Oh, every boy says that," replied the

father, "but we can't part with you, Gerald. If you were to go for a sailor, you'd break our hearts."

"I should think some light business," suggested Mrs. Grey, "something to do with paper-hanging, or, or—" and the good woman paused, fearful that the enlarged experience of her husband might rebuke her ignorance.

"Well, you see," said Mr. Grey, "my way doesn't exactly lie among light businesses. There's cabinet-making; that's a light sort of carpentering; and there's painting and glazing. Or, dear me,—now I think of it, why shouldn't Gerald be a printer?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Grey, "why not? There's William; he's a printer, and I'm sure he's *quite* a gentleman."

"Oh yes!" said the father reverently, "William *is* a gentleman. I'll speak to him about Gerald."

In due time Uncle William was spoken

to. His advice was highly favourable to Gerald's becoming a printer.

Printing," he said, "at least, my branch of it, is more an art than a business. A printing office is the best possible finishing-school for an intelligent lad. Look at the men the printing office has turned out!"

William Grey was earnest in what he said. He held printing and printers in high honour. His daily duties were performed in an atmosphere of literary greatness. It was his custom to talk learnedly of Faust, and Guttenberg, and Caxton, and Wynkyn de Worde, and to look upon them as men who had done more good for the world than a whole Pantheon of heroes. He believed in all that was said of the printing press. He looked upon it as the palladium of liberty and the real defence of nations. He loved to see it represented, as it has been, playing the part of Saint Michael, Saint George, and all good powers soever—sacred and profane. When people

began to call it the fourth estate, he was in raptures. The proudest moment of his life—he said so, and meant what he said—was when, at an annual meeting of printers, it became his duty to propose “Prosperity to the printing press.” This proposition he made and upheld with great fervour, casting a severe look about him which would have struck terror to the heart of any one happening to wish the printing press adversity!

No wonder then, that he took kindly to the idea of Gerald’s becoming a printer.

Gerald, he thought, would do credit to printing, and printing would do much for him. The lad was of a superior cast of mind; his character and habits were gentler than might have been expected from his nurture. Engraft upon these advantages the lessons of the printing office, and such a man might be produced as would do honour to his family! So thought Uncle William,

Gerald went to the printing office. For a few weeks he stood by and watched his uncle. The novelty of his position pleased him. He was a curious boy, and he found food for his curiosity. Then, after this probationary trial, came the mystery of apprenticeship. In the presence of an awful magnate, Uncle William's employer, who owned the services of a score of boys—all for seven years!—Gerald signed his name to a piece of parchment, put his fingers upon a red seal, supposed to be his own, and said "I deliver this as my act and deed!" He trembled as he did this. What did he deliver? What was his act? What his deed? What necromancy dwelt in the little spot of sealing wax? That, he was yet to learn.

Uncle William patted him on the back, to raise his spirits. He led him to the printing office. There the journeyman delivered an inaugural address :

" You now belong to a great business, my

boy; make the best of it, be steady, be industrious! study the interest of your master. You know what the indenture says—‘his secrets keep, and his lawful commands obey.’ Think of those words, lay them to heart, learn your business; and what is there that you may not aspire to?”

Gerald now took his place regularly in the office. He left his uncle’s side, and went among his fellow apprentices. They received him with many demonstrations of interest, their advances, however, taking a hostile rather than a friendly character. He was very shy of them indeed, for their language sometimes alarmed him. It was quite evident, too, that in the new comer there was something obnoxious to the old inhabitants. But he devoted himself steadily to his business. When any of the boys addressed him, he was civil to a nicety. When they neglected him, he was delighted.

But in time, the novelty of his occupation wore off. His duties became less and

less amusing. The consciousness grew upon him that the parchment he had signed and the something he had delivered as his act and deed—still those words puzzled him!—were serious matters, and justified his agitation at the critical moment. The office became more and more solemn—the faces of the people about him lengthened. It seemed that over the door of the business pandemonium was written,

“Who enter here, leave *mirth* behind!”

Alas! alas! the boy began to dislike his trade.

The first Easter of his business life was a great trial for him. There were the schoolfellows he had but just left, making holidays! Where were his holidays now?

“Oh you go to work, do you, Gerald?” said the boys, meeting him as he plodded morning after morning to business. “How do you like it? Don’t they give you any holidays?”

Gerald shook his head, and went on; but

out of the boys' sight how could he hinder a few tears from falling? He knew that those boys were going to the fields, where the wickets were to be set up, the bases settled, and the rounder triumphantly won. *He* was going to meet the awful face of Mr. Tympan!

Time, however, might have worn away these boyish griefs, silenced the poetry within him, and leavened the little purity it left with useful knowledge. Time might have made him a very good printer. But it was not to be. There were influences at work in the office opposed to any such thing. The hostile attitude of Gerald's fellow apprentices grew more confirmed. They were for ever seizing upon material guarantees. One day his cap, another, his jacket, disappeared. Occasionally he was tripped up, or tumbled down stairs, just for the fun of the thing. And to all this, Gerald opposed the mildest words, the humblest supplications.

But the treatment preyed upon his spirits and increased his growing dislike for printing. He was found crying over his dinner one day, in a quiet corner of the composing room. He knew not what made him cry; but certain it is that, gazing through the dull, dirty windows, the tears came to his eyes faster than he could dry them. This, in the estimation of his companions, was a crime of great enormity. *They* never cried. When anything troubled *them*, they swore; and there was an end of it. Why did not Gerald do the same? But he could not. He could find no relief in simple expletives; so he wept out his misery, grieved over his bondage, and lost health and spirits as he gained bitter experience.

Uncle William helped him against the boys to the extent of his ability; but Uncle William was not Argus. The boys were too many for him; and although they could not apply the *lex talionis*, and thrash him when he thrashed them, they observed its prin-

ciple, and William not unfrequently found his spectacles broken, or his slippers filled with printer's ink.

Forbearance—with what reason is not clear—is ascribed to the worm; and yet the worm is said to turn upon cruel occasions. So it was with Gerald. He bore his sufferings for a long time without retaliation; but one day he turned against his tormentor. This tormentor was a youth of callous feelings and coarse exterior; a boy with a round bullet head, topped with short hair; indeed, such a head as it is the delight of artists to place upon the shoulders of Jack Sheppard. Jack—so we will call him for the occasion—had a *penchant* for following Gerald, and dancing a kind of war dance before, behind, and about him. (Some years afterwards, the lad got into the hands of Barnum, and became an Ojibbeway.) Gerald had his objections to this dance, knowing, as he did, that its object was to provoke hostilities, and to give the dancer

a pretext for knocking the mild boy's cap off, kicking him, or otherwise bringing the interview to a pleasing termination.

One evening, when Gerald left the office, this dance was repeated. Jack's friends were delighted; to them it was a highly comic entertainment. They applauded it to the echo; they encored it; and so gratifying was their approbation to the feelings of the artist, that he ventured upon a new *pas*. Just at that point of the movement where, years afterwards, as an Ojibbeway, he was taught to howl and transfix something with an arrow, he came down upon Gerald's toe. He was a heavy boy, and his boots were made at Northampton.

The blood rushed into Gerald's cheeks; his eyes flashed, and his arms moved nervously.

"Oh, that's it!" said the future Ojibbeway, "well, come on then, I'm ready for you!" And he hurried off his jacket, flung his cap from him like a gauntlet, and tucked up his

sleeves in the orthodox manner. He wound about Gerald; he made many feints; he worked his arms backwards and forwards as though he had just lubricated their joints and was distributing the oil; he screwed his head into the proper fighting position; when, suddenly Gerald delivered a fair, straight stroke, that told wonderfully, and put his opponent's head quite out of order again.

The Ojibbeway now rushed at Gerald. There was much scrambling and a wondrous display of harmless gymnastics on both sides. Presently the spectators cried out,

“That's it, Jack! Keep his head in chancery! Hit him under!”

In the dreadful tribunal of chancery Gerald suffered severely. The Ojibbeway, having the advantage in height and length of arm, beat him cruelly. But he got to the ground, and then, rising to his feet, a new feeling took possession of him! A red stream trickling down his face, was unheeded: he had broken the ice, and found his

natural courage! There stood the Ojibbeway, still working his arms backwards and forwards, still making feints, still troubled about the conduct of his head. It was Gerald's business to knock that incipient savage down, to bruise him, to make him bite the dust, and own that he was vanquished. Gerald had this to do,—and he meant to do it.

He rushed at his opponent, beat down the wandering arms, disturbed the nice conduct of the bullet head. The boys, circling about the combatants, swayed to and fro, and fell away here and there, as the area of the struggle changed. Now they applauded Jack, now Gerald.

“Go it! give it him! There, that's it! Now you've got him!” These were the cries that told the outer ring what was minutely visible to the inner.

But the Ojibbeway hung back. He, too, was bleeding now. But for the severe eyes of his companions he would have scampered

away. As it was, he stood only to be punished. Gerald struck wildly but well. At last he made a grand rush, delivered a succession of blows, and the Ojibbeway, dropping to the ground, gave token of submission.

A man was seen rapidly approaching the little crowd.

“Police!” said one of the boys.

“Police!” echoed another.

And all but Gerald fled at the sound of that terrible word.

The man was Uncle William.

“My dear boy,” he said, wiping the blood from his nephew’s face, “how is this?”

“He hit me first,” replied Gerald.

“And you thrashed him afterwards?”

“Yes.”

“Well, never mind. Put something cold to your eye when you get home. I’ve wiped your face. You may tell your mother there’s no harm done.”

The mother was not so satisfied with this

adventure as Uncle William. But what was to be done? Boys will be boys. So Gerald went to work the next morning, leaving Mr. Grey and his wife apprehensive and sorrowful.

Gerald was now regarded by his fellow apprentices as a curiosity. For a time, they thought it prudent to suspend the wardance; but they met around the council fire, and concerted schemes, and the hatchet was not buried. They made their deliberations known to Gerald. He could hear them calculating the effect of imaginary strokes upon his devoted head; boasting of their ability to disfigure him so that his mother would not know him; and carrying this last idea to a singularity of detail that made Gerald shake with terrible anticipation! To be punished ordinarily, was bad enough; but to be robbed of his identity so that his mother would not recognise him, was a horror indeed! As day by day the realisation of this idea became more probable,

fear grew upon Gerald. The idea haunted him at last, and he even dreamt of it.

His life was, indeed, very wretched. He had not yet come to entertain that high opinion of printing and printers which animated his uncle. A poor little apprentice, with six years and more of probationary servitude before him, was little likely to find comfort in the recollection that Franklin was a printer, and that Franklin grew to be a great man! Such ideas as this were pressed upon him by his uncle; but they would not take root. He felt only a gushing, heart-breaking desire to be free of printing, to escape from the rough lads about him, and to find relief in some pursuit congenial to the dawning fancies of his mind.

“Father!” said Mrs. Grey, one morning when Gerald had gone to work, “the business is killing the poor boy. See how pale he is.”

“Aye! what?” exclaimed the good man.

He was at breakfast; his time for that meal was short; and he could afford only monosyllables. "Well, he *is* pale—very pale. What can we do with him?"

"Take him away. Send him into the country."

"Ah, but he's bound, you know! How are we to get him off?"

"Somehow," said Mrs. Grey. "Surely Mr. Tympan will give him up if we tell him the boy's dying!"

Mr. Grey laid down his knife and fork; he wiped his mouth with his hand. Then he said,—

"*What, Mary?*"

The wife repented of her suggestion. There was her husband; looking nervously at her; his hand shaking, his eyes filling with tears.

"At any rate, Gerald is very pale; and is growing very thin. If he goes on in this way, we shall have him a skeleton!"

"Skeleton!" said the father. "Ske-

leton ! Mary ! Have the boy home at once ! Go and fetch him from the office this very morning. We'll have no skeletons in this house !”

At that moment the clock struck, and Mr. Grey was admonished to go back to work.

Mr. Tympan, the awful magnate who owned the services of so many boys, was busy in his counting house, when the anxious eyes of Mrs. Grey peered between the rails. He was a peculiar man, who, from the lowest position in the printing office had risen to the highest, and who consequently had little consideration for the class and the condition he sprung from. He was not without talent of a particular kind : that talent had made him what he was. But his intellect was curious ; perhaps a little oblique. He was the most obstinate man alive. It was his pride to form false opinions, and stick to them. He would have disputed with all the doctors in Chris-

tendom, though the world should laugh in his face.

“ Pray excuse me, sir,” began Mrs. Grey, addressing him. “ But you must have observed the changed appearance of Gerald ?”

Gerald was all in all to Mrs. Grey ! What was he to Mr. Tympan ?

“ Who *is* Gerald ?” he enquired.

“ My son, sir—Gerald Grey.”

The magnate ran through his list of boys. He had them of all colours—White, Green, Brown ; and at last he came upon Grey.

“ Changed, is he ?” he said, “ Gets dirty, I suppose ? All boys get dirty for the first few years in a printing office. I did myself, I daresay. But it’ll wear off. He’ll get clean in time.”

“ No, sir ; that’s not it. His health is going. He’s turned pale, and grown thin, and really ——”

Here Mr. Tympan interrupted. He was ready with a clincher :

“The transition period of life, ma’am! All boys look pale and thin in the transition period of life! It’s quite proper that they should. If they were healthy at that period, why, you see, by the rules of medical science, they’d be unhealthy!”

The magnate felt all the better for having delivered himself of this; he thought the idea neat and well expressed. He smiled blandly at Mrs. Grey, and expected her to appreciate it. But no; she held fast to her position.

“Gerald is really ill, sir, and your boys are so rough,” she said. “I’m sure something must be done. He can never bear the confinement either; his constitution is very much weakened.

“Constitution!—confinement!” said Mr. Tympan, delighted with the opportunity for maintaining another paradox. “Why, ma’am, surely you are aware that confinement is the best possible thing for a weak constitution. Boys are always too energetic; the

weaker their constitutions, the more does this energy require to be kept down. Confinement keeps it down. A boy can't fatigue himself who's kept close to a frame for ten hours a day! Therefore I say that for weak boys in general, and for your boy in particular, confinement is really an advantage."

The face of Mrs. Grey wore a blank, unbelieving expression. Her eyes still peered anxiously through the rails. The magnate grew restless; he dipped his pen in the ink, took down a book, and turned over a file of invoices. But how, with that anxious mother's eye fixed upon him, could he write or calculate? Yet relief was at hand. A tall, thin man, who looked as though he had pledged himself to abstain generally from eating and drinking, and who accustomed himself to be intemperate upon temperance, showed his gaunt face above Mrs. Grey's shoulder.

"Ah! Mr. Teetotum! Proof of your

pamphlet? This way, if you please." And the magnate left the counting-house.

* * * *

"Mary!" said Mr. Grey, when the good woman, after vainly waiting for Mr. Tympan's return, reached home, and told the result of her mission, "Gerald shall not go back! He shall go into the country. The Jacksons will be very kind to him. We'll send him to them."

And so that pale, thin, London boy escaped from his purgatory, and was found roaming in the grounds of Maldon Priory, and pressing the little hand of the knight's daughter.

CHAPTER III.

GERALD was very happily placed in his retirement, though in the midst of humbleness. He was with one of those country families that so much surprise the inhabitants of great towns, and are so much surprised when they get into great towns themselves. The patronymic of the family was Jackson. Old Tom Jackson, as he was called by his familiars, was the patriarch of the tribe; and gathered about him were many other Jacksons, who looked up to him as the parent stem and great original Noah of the family ark. They venerated

his grey hairs, and believed in his wisdom. He sat in the chimney corner, and from thence delivered his oracles to true believers!

But the great motive power of the place was the old man's daughter-in-law—his son's wife. She was an excellent little woman, and kept the house, and everybody in it, in order! She had a small family, growing larger year by year. She was short, chubby, red-faced, bright-eyed, light of heart, and light-footed. She had more wit and wisdom than all her relations put together. Her name was Betsy.

She was very kind to Gerald. In fact, she was kind to all children—but to him especially. The poor boy's paleness commanded her pity—his gentle nature ensured her love. In the midst of her own rosy olive branches—who were thick and large limbed, with square features and moon faces—Gerald stood out like a statue. The eldest of the young Jacksons, who had his

own recollections of a wax-work exhibition and a certain chamber of horrors, thought he had seen Gerald before! The youngest looked up in the London boy's face, pinched his calves, pushed him, and was only relieved by hearing him speak.

“And how dost 'ee loike the country, Mas'r Gerald?” enquired the patriarch, a few days after the boy's arrival.

“I like it very much, sir.”

“You needn't say ‘surr’ to me!” replied the old man. “There aint no surrs in this yere family. They don't grow yere.”

The Jacksons all laughed at this witticism, for they knew that Tom liked his witticisms to be laughed at.

“You'll go back quite another creature!” said Betsy.

“Betsy, my gal,” interrupted the husband, “Mas'r Gerald don't eat. He wastes half his time over his knife and fork. Look after him, my gal.”

“ Ah !” said old Tom, “ fingers was made afore knives and forks. Take your fingers, my lad.”

Gerald laid down his knife and fork, for the attention of the family was overwhelming. How could he eat with a dozen eyes fixed upon him. Betsy saw his difficulty.

“ Now Tom,” she said, “ it’s time to go to work. And you boys, leave the table. Father, your pipe’s in the chimney there.”

And forthwith the table was deserted, and Gerald was allowed to finish his dinner in his own way.

And after dinner? What but liberty! —what but the glorious freedom of field and wood! To wander about and enjoy this freedom was his sole occupation. His young heart was thankful for so great a mercy, and his soul drank eagerly at the full fountains of nature.

Nature, too, gave him new ideas and strange longings. It suggested to him a new line of life. One day he took out paper

and pencil to sketch the ivy-covered ruin that stood by the Manor House. Oh, that ruin!—what a wonder it was. He had never seen anything of the kind before. The London ruins were mostly bare bricks and mortar, that stood one day to be carted off the next; or if preserved, were carefully enclosed, labelled with a pictorial illustration, and provided with a showman and a money-taker. But this was a real ruin—the ivy creeping over it, the birds singing from it, the sheep pulling the grass that grew at its foundations.

He was returning from a pilgrimage to this ruin when he met the little girl in the wood. The little girl made a great impression upon him. Her face was a fixed picture in his memory. Who was she? Did she live in the grand house that was called the Priory? Who was the rough, unkind gentleman that had carried her away? Surely not her father? And yet who else? Her uncle, perhaps! Ah, yes,

ner uncle. Gerald was delighted to think he had come reasonably upon this conclusion. It was better that he should be pushed by the little girl's uncle than by her father!

Wandering in the same neighbourhood the next day, he saw the little lady again, the cruel uncle riding by her side. She, too, was riding—on a pony! This sight gave Gerald a new pang. How could he hope for recognition from a little girl who rode on a pony! But, as he looked timidly at her, she shook her whip at him; and the cruel uncle, following the index of the whip, saw Gerald,—frowned, and made up his mind that the pale boy dogged them. Sir Roger Maldon determined to have him watched. Where did he come from?—who did he belong to? None of the villagers, certainly. So the baronet spoke to his gamekeeper, stating, as his opinion, that the lad was a town lad, and could be lurking in the country for no honest purpose.

That very afternoon Gerald was in the woods again. A man dressed in a green coat, and carrying a gun, came up to him, and enquired what he wanted there. The man's rough tone, and the sight of the gun, confused the boy. He made but a poor excuse, and slunk timidly away. Still he remained in the wood; and presently, being tired, he sat on the trunk of a felled tree, and watched the squirrels climbing, the large birds flying low along the ground, and the rabbits running in and out of cover.

Presently he heard a strange noise behind him. He turned, and saw a shy, brown animal trying to free itself from a noose. He had seen similar looking creatures, dead and dabbled with blood, in the shops of London poulterers. It was a hare. He rose and went timidly towards it. At a safe distance he stood still and watched the creature's struggles.

“ Ah !” said a voice behind him, “ you're caught, are you, young chap !”

And the man in the green coat, and with the gun on his shoulder, seized Gerald tightly by the arm, stooped to loosen the hare, and carried away his captive in triumph.

The shame of being led ignominiously through the village was overwhelming to Gerald. The little children who saw him, shrunk away and seemed so terrified that the poor boy imagined something horrible was about to happen to him ! He was bewildered ; he feared that he had transgressed in some way. Perhaps he had trespassed, had got among the man-traps and spring guns, and was to be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law ! There was a board nailed to a tree, promising this punishment, in one part of the grounds. Oh, how he cried when he recollected the existence of this board, and applied the terrible promise to his own case. With the utmost rigour of the law ! To what did that rigour extend ? He believed that the

utmost rigour of the law was carried out somewhere near Newgate!

In the meantime the Jacksons were in great trouble. Betsy sat up for Gerald till she started from her chair, and found the candle burnt out and the morning breaking. The good woman worked hard during the day, and therefore she must be excused for sleeping at night. She had no intention of closing her eyes for a moment. At dusk she sent her family to bed, said she'd wait another half-hour before raising the village to find Gerald; and then, poor woman, before the half-hour had expired, instead of looking for the boy, she was dreaming of horrible things happening to him. His lifeless body had just been drawn from a dull roadside pond, when she awoke screaming—

“Gerald! Gerald! Ah!—that's him! That's his poor, pale face! Good God! What will his mother say?”

She pushed the hair from her forehead,

opened her eyes, and looked about her. She shuddered, and gave a great sigh of relief!

“ Ah !” she said, “ I’ve been dreaming ! But oh dear me !—where *is* the boy ? Why did I go to sleep ? The dream may be true, after all.”

A dream, so pertinent and coming at such a time, might well startle a simple woman who had “ Napoleon’s Book of Fate” on the shelf, and was a regular subscriber to a prophetic Almanac. All the dreams that, in her limited experience, had ever come true, flashed across Betsy’s mind in a moment ; and the result was, that the dull pond and the lifeless body assumed real significance !

She had one hope ; Gerald might be outside, sleeping against the door, and ready to fall into the parlour when the door should be opened. She lifted the latch ; she pulled the door towards her—at first, gently, then hurriedly ; and at last, flinging it right back, she looked out, and—Gerald was not there .

Her hope was destroyed now : she fell back upon the pond and the lifeless body !

But she was not frightened into inaction. She roused her husband, pulled her eldest son out of bed. One she sent to the village constable ; the other, to scour the woods. Her own mission, of which she said nothing, was to a dull pond, the original of that so vividly shadowed forth in the dream ! It happened that this pond was almost dry ; so Betsy returned with a relieved heart.

Presently her husband came hurrying back. He was indignant ; he had seen the village constable.

“ You’ve found him, Tom ? Well, where is he ? Why don’t you speak ? ”

“ Yes, I ha’ found him,” said Tom. “ That is, I knows where he is ! ”

This was the critical point.

“ Tom,” said Betsy, seizing her husband, and trying to shake information from him. “ If you don’t tell me where the boy is, I shall die ! ”

Now Tom was a very simple fellow, indeed. He was a loyal labourer, and would have taken the Squire's carriage for the car of Juggernaut had the great man wished to ride roughly. The constable had impressed him with the conviction of Gerald's guilt, and to the constable he had replied—

“To think now that that there boy, as has come and lived along o' me and father, should ha' gone and been a poachin! What'll Sir Roger say o' us? What'll the Squire say? He's in the cage, is he? Well, serve 'un right, the young willun!”

And these very words he repeated to his wife.

“Nonsense!” said Betsy. “What does the boy know of poaching? What could he poach with? He'd be frightened at the sight of a gun; and as to a snare—— Oh, it's ridiculous!”

“But he's in the cage,” said Tom: it being a fixed idea with him that the Squire

could not put any one in the cage who was innocent of offence.

“Then we must get him out of it!” replied Betsy.

Her mind was much relieved now : the phantasmagoria of the pond and the dead body had entirely disappeared from it. She put on her best bonnet, her most imposing shawl ; she cut a large slice of bread, a corresponding rasher of bacon. She filled a small bottle with a rich, yellowish fluid that would have disturbed the conscience of a London milkman ! She hurried off to the cage.

The constable was just unlocking the door of the little round house, when Betsy tripped up to him. He had a piece of bread and a pitcher of water with him for the prisoner's breakfast. Betsy knew the man very well—he was an old lover of her's ; so she pushed into the round-house beside him ; and there, crouching in a corner, was Gerald.

Betsy asked the boy no questions, but knelt down on the straw, and uncorked her bottle. She gave him no time for remonstrance, but fixed the neck of the bottle in his mouth. He could not choose but drink ; for he was treated in this instance much as Betsy had treated her own Tom when that stout youth was in long clothes, and not satisfied with mere maternal stimulants.

Scarcely had Gerald recovered from the effects of this kindness, when Betsy was at him again.

“ Give me that jug,” she said to the constable ; and dipping her apron in the water that was for Gerald’s breakfast, she scrubbed the tear-marks from his face, kissed him, and filled his mouth with bread and bacon.

It was a fixed idea of Betsy’s that nothing could be said or done on an empty stomach. At home it was her particular business to see that stomachs were filled ; and perhaps the concentration of her energies upon this point, made her believe that it

was an important one. At any rate, such a belief was the substance of her remark to the constable, who looked on in wonder at her systematic but rapid proceedings.

“Now, Gerald,” she said, “you must tell me all about this. How did you come here?”

“The keeper brought him,” replied the constable.

“Ah!” said Betsy, “that isn’t what I mean. I want to know, Gerald, what you did to make the keeper bring you here?”

“Nothing!” replied the poor boy. He had passed a terrible night, alarmed at every sound,—sleepless, calling vainly for his mother, and still dreading the utmost rigour of the law! “I only sat down in the wood, and—and—looked at the hare!”

“*Looked* at the hare! *How* did you look at it, Gerald? Did you mean to touch it?”

“No! I was frightened of it! It was trying to get away from the wire!”

“ Oh !” said Betsy, drawing a long breath, “ it was snared, was it ? It was snared ; and you—you—were walking in the wood, and you—you—saw it—quite by accident ?”

“ Quite !” said Gerald.

“ Ah !” exclaimed Betsy, turning to the constable, “ just as I thought. This poor boy’s innocent enough ! What a set of fools you men are ! To take a child like that for a poacher ! Sam, I’m ashamed of you !”

The constable cast down his eyes. Many years ago he had said—“ Betsy, will you have me for a husband ?” And Betsy had replied—“ No ! Sam, you’re not steady enough !” And seeing what a wife Betsy made, he had regretted her decision ever since ! His own wife was a bit of a shrew, accustomed to rule him with the terrors of her tongue ; and therefore he never ceased to think of Betsy, and to contrast what was with what might have been !

“ I’m nothing to do with it, I’m sure,” he said meekly. “ *I* didn’t accuse the boy !”

“ But didn't you make my husband as foolish as the rest? Didn't you send him home with a parcel of stupid suspicions in his head? Now, I tell you what, Sam! Mind you treat that boy well—the little time he's here. Let's have no harsh words, no roughness with him! I'm going to see Sir Roger Maldon. I'll set things right. And if I hear that this poor boy's been ill-treated—Sam, I shall hate you!”

Betsy kissed Gerald again, told him she should be back soon, and went away. Upon her departure, the constable stood irresolutely in the doorway. He did not like to lock the boy in and leave him alone now; he thought it sad that he should have nothing to sit upon but straw! So, after much consideration, the constable fetched a chair from his own house, brought his breakfast with him, and giving Gerald the high seat, took to the straw himself.

Certainly, his wife was not in the best of tempers that morning.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR ROGER MALDON was of course in the commission of the peace, and it was his pride to take his seat on the bench at quarter sessions. He believed that this privilege was one of the few unsullied dignities remaining to the magnates of the land; and while many of his colleagues assumed judicial functions as mere pastime, or as affording opportunity for aping the "trusty and well-beloved" of Westminster, Sir Roger Maldon took to them seriously, with a sense of great responsibility, and with a desire to do justice as by law directed.

He was an excellent magistrate, the more so that he never allowed his feelings to stand in the way of his judgment. People who came before him with tears in their eyes and prayers on their lips ; who brought helpless children as mute or squalling appellants for his worship's mercy ; who induced friends to faint in corners of the justice room at critical moments ; found these arts of no avail with him. A miserable little rook-boy who had shot a pheasant instead of a crow, and, troubled by the enormity of his crime, had confessed to the woodreeve, might plead his confession, his poverty, his innocence of evil intention, and offer all the money he had in the world—perhaps the wages of a month's labour—as a sacrifice to offended law. But if that money did not meet the prescribed penalty—the pound of flesh that the Act said should be cut—as surely as Sir Roger Maldon sat on the bench, that miserable little rook-boy must go to prison !

This kind of justice was, as many people said, excellent; but still somewhat liable to make the meat it fed upon. A poor little boy, exalted to the dignity of a poacher, might be frightened for a time, but not permanently improved. An honest man, branded with infamy for a hasty act—scarcely a misdemeanour, certainly not a crime—might, in the bitterness of his soul, fall away from honesty. A simple labourer, flung into prison for cutting corn in his own garden on a Sunday, would scarcely return to liberty with an humble and a contrite heart. Oh these prisons!—What terrible responsibility hangs upon the men who send their fellows to languish in them—to leave them for better or return to them for worse!

Sir Roger Maldon was conscious of this responsibility, and believed himself able to bear it. Guided by the letter of the law, he felt that he could do no wrong. But perhaps he neglected that great precept of law which enjoins merciful consideration.

His district was, unhappily, a disturbed one. Game was sternly preserved, and poaching was greatly on the increase. Every sessions the baronet had to adjudicate upon this particular offence; and he did so with a stern determination, as he said from the bench, to “root out the crime from the county.”

It may be easily understood, then, that when Betsy Jackson—after waiting two hours in a dull ante-room—obtained an audience, she found the baronet in no mood to listen to her. He ran over her statement: She had come about a boy—a London boy (Sir Roger had a horror of London boys and Londoners in general) who was found in the woods poaching, had she? Now, she must be well aware that upon the boy's being found guilty—and that he would be found guilty the baronet had not the least doubt—nothing could save him from the punishment that the law ordained!

“But Oh, sir!—Oh your worship!” exclaimed Betsy. “He aint guilty! I'll take

my oath he aint. Oh do pray let him go. Think of his poor parents in London. How can I tell them that he's in prison!"

"Ah!" said the baronet. "Just as I thought. The boy comes from London! The country's deluged with crime from London. Has he, *to your knowledge*, been in prison before?"

"Lor, sir!" said Betsy, colouring richly, "What a question to ask an honest woman. Been in prison before! To my knowledge, too! Begging your worship's pardon, do you think, if I know'd that he'd been in prison, I should let him live along o' my boys, and sit in my house? Do you think he should break bread with me?"

The enormity of the baronet's suspicion brought tears to Betsy's eyes. She put her apron to her face, and shook and hiccupped with indignant sorrow.

"He lives with you, then? How long has he been in your house?" enquired Sir Roger.

Betsy hesitated in her answer; the baronet watched her narrowly. At last she recollected herself.

“About a week.”

“Ah!” said Rhadamanthus. “About a week. My good woman, it is quite evident that you know very little of this boy and his London habits. To your simple mind he may appear innocent; but to those who are accustomed to judge of such matters, the case presents quite a different aspect. I cannot interfere; the law must take its course. You are at liberty to retire.”

The baronet waved his hand grandly, to put an end to the interview; but Betsy still hesitated. Her hands were clasped; her eyes were turned appealingly towards the doomsman.

“Oh, do pray let him go—for his mother’s—for his father’s—sake. I’d answer for his innocence with my life.”

The hand was waved again; but its owner turned and started. A fair little girl, enter-

ing the room suddenly, ran to him, and caught at the arm that was still.

“Don’t make her cry so,” said the litt’e girl, crying too! “Let her have the boy!—oh! do.”

Miss Blanche had been listening. She often listened when poor people were in the justice room. To her that room was an awful, a fascinating mystery. Sympathy with those in trouble made her forget the proprieties of behaviour and defy even the cruel suggestions of Mrs. Trimmer. And in this case she was doubly interested. Her quick intelligence had divined that the boy in trouble was *her* boy—the boy who had given her the flowers in the wood—the boy about whom her father had spoken so cruelly to the gamekeeper. Already she had erected him into one of her heroes. He was worthy to succeed the doll she had resigned, to represent the “good boy” of the story-book she had taken to. In short, he was the first of that series of living favourites with-

out the solace of which what little lady ever grew out of pinafores—what little gentleman ever grew into tail-coats !

She repeated her simple prayer, “ Oh do—do let her have the boy. See how she’s crying.”

Her father rang his bell violently. A servant came trembling to answer it.

“ Miss Blanche’s maid—send her here at once,—immediately !”

The little lady fell back abashed. Her father turned over an Act of Parliament to beguile the time. Betsy was still supplicating, but silent. The maid came: she followed the index of the baronet’s finger and led her young lady from the room. Sir Roger flung the Act of parliament from him.

“ Now,” he said, turning to Betsy, “ leave this place instantly ! Not a word ! Go !”

The hand was waved again — more grandly, more imperiously than ever. Betsy turned away, despaired, and left the Priory.

“ Blanche,” said the father, half an hour

afterwards, "you did wrong—very wrong, just now. Never listen again, my dear. Never come to me when I am in that room. If you do, I shall be very, very angry."

The little lady hung her head and looked contrite.

"Come here, dear!" said the father. When she came, he drew her gently to him, smoothed her fair hair, and looked into her bright eyes.

"Don't you think you did wrong, Blanche?" he asked.

"Oh yes—yes," said the little lady. "But what are you going to do to the poor boy? Won't you let him go back to his mother?"

The father lifted his hand from the child's head, and turned from her impatiently. He was grieved that her mind should dwell on the affairs of the London vagabond in the round-house. It was profanity that her heart should beat, her silver voice plead, for him; above all that

his condition should move her to tears. He sighed heavily and left the room.

“Martha, what is the cage? Is it a prison?” asked Blanche, a few moments afterwards.

“Yes, Miss,” replied Martha.

“And what is a prison?”

“Oh! a dreadful place—all underground—where people are chained by the arms and legs, and chained all over—and have nothing to eat but bread, and nothing to drink but water—and their hair turns white in a single night! Oh! it’s a dreadful place!”

The maid had confused notions about a prison. She had read Jack Sheppard, and misunderstood the Prisoner of Chillon. She had heard of Venetian dungeons, and English jails before the time of Howard. Putting this and that together, she produced the pretty picture she had tried so forcibly to impress upon Blanche; a picture she was about fully to fill in with detail, when the little lady stopped her.

“ Oh, don't—don't, Martha. Don't tell me any more !”

“ Well, just as you please, Miss,” said Martha somewhat offended. (She had recalled to her mind the story of a prisoner who was eaten to the bone by water-rats, and was about to tell it.) “ But don't ask *me* any more questions.”

Presently Blanche, forgetting this command, looked up into Martha's face, and said—

“ Do you think father very cruel ?”

“ Miss Blanche,” replied the maid, severely, “ I can't answer that question. I've got my livin' to get ; I know my place, and I don't set up for a judge of my betters !”

“ Oh, dear !” said the little lady, buried, overwhelmed, in grief. And half an hour afterwards she was romping with the kitten, and screaming delightedly at its grotesque antics.

In the meantime, Gerald languished in

the cage. But the night came, and produced a change in the aspect of affairs. The baronet's keeper, going as usual on his nocturnal rounds, came upon a scene that he often looked for and expected, but seldom saw. On the very spot where he had found Gerald, a more formidable offender than the poor boy was breaking the commands of his country. Standing motionless and erect—the moon shining upon him and giving him the cold grey aspect of a statue—was a tall, athletic man, staring sternly into the gloom. A gun rested in the hollow of his arm, and by his side was a large, eager dog, watching its master's face, and waiting for a glance to inform its quick intelligence.

Presently, from the tree towards which the man's gaze was directed, a pheasant fluttered and fell to the ground. The dog crept stealthily away and returned with the bird in its mouth. But there was danger at hand; the dog was uneasy—its full,

quick eye informed its master of evil. The man started, and gazed anxiously about him. Then, levelling his gun, crash went a bullet through the trees! He had another barrel, but this he reserved, and waited. He expected his fire to be returned. It was returned, and the dog, howling piteously, leapt into the air, and fell—shot to the heart!

The keeper had but one antagonist now. He might have shot him as he had shot the dog, but a sense of humanity stayed his hand. He moved stealthily, slipping from cover to cover. Wherever he appeared, that second barrel was levelled point blank at him! The poacher was desperate, and careless of life. There was his faithful dog dying by his side. The poor animal's eyes were fixed upon his master, as though asking for help. Help the man could not give; but revenge—ah! revenge. He might have that!

But the keeper was wary. He had a

wife and children at home, and his life was valuable. There seemed to be no chance of taking the man unhurt. So at last he fired. There was a hoarse cry, a flash in the air, a second report, and master and dog were side by side—dying surely!

The moon shone through the trees and lighted up another scene. The keeper was resting on one knee, the dying man's head on his arm. The poor fellow, his voice broken by pangs, and his breathings short and tremulous, was telling something of his history. He had been a farmer, flourishing and well to do; but the squire's game came into his fields, and robbed and incensed him; and he had his revenge. He was tried for it, convicted, punished ignominiously. He was ruined, and he returned—to what? To take up as a trade that which he had at first dared in an angry moment. This was his story.

“And now,” he said, “you've done for me. Well, God forgive you. It was your

duty, I suppose ; and it would have been your life or mine. Let me see the dog. Ah, poor fellow, dying—dying, like me. And you've a young lad—an innocent lad, taken for my trespasses. I don't want to die doing him an injury. I saw you take him. I was waiting for the simpleton to go away and let me have my own. Mind, I say he's innocent ! Dying, as I am now, I say he's innocent."

And the voice ceased and was never heard again.

CHAPTER V.

MR. GREY was in a difficulty. Gerald had returned home, a new boy, in health, spirits, and appearance; a rosy-cheeked, hearty youth, with a free step, a bold voice, and a bright eye. The good people were delighted. But, still, what was the boy to do?—what was to be done with him? Printing he abhorred. Indeed, he seemed to dislike the pursuit of anything mechanical.

“What *are* we to do with you, Gerald?” said Mr. Grey.

Gerald had been endeavouring to extract

colour from the box of brick paints. The brick paints resisted his best efforts. With a sigh, he fell back upon his pencil, and contented himself with sketching in black and white.

“ Could I,” he asked somewhat timidly,—
“ Could I be a painter ?”

“ Of course you could, my boy,” said the father. “ But you’ve your living to get ; and you can’t be a painter and get your living too.”

“ Won’t painting get it ?”

“ Oh dear me,” said Mr. Grey, convulsed with merriment. “ Well you are a strange boy. What a question ! There may be some people who get their livings by painting. But you, Gerald ! Why, in the first place, who’s to make you a painter ?”

Gerald thought it hard that his father should suggest these doubts and difficulties: What more than his own fancy was required to make him a painter ? Give him a brush, and a box of paints with pigment in them,—

and he was ready to "paint the bow upon the bended heavens!"

"You might paint, you know, Gerald," continued the father, "and paint till you were tired, and if you could get the things to paint with. You might hang the pictures up here, too. Of course *I* shouldn't mind. But who'd *buy* any of them, my boy? That's the question. In this world, you see, people can't do without money; and money aint to be had without working for it."

Mrs. Grey had listened to all this in silence. But her thoughts were busy. She recollected that in a street adjacent, an unassuming artist hung out the insignia of his profession. He painted to order—painted anything. But the basis upon which he asked for the world's favour was that he produced large likenesses in oils for a guinea, and miniatures for half that sum. To his last patron the artist always offered the privilege of his window or his door-post, and in this way, he served two ends—he advertised himself, and made his customers famous. True,

some stuck-up people had refused the advantage; but not many. The majority were as delighted to see themselves simiously grinning through Mr. Maguire's glass windows, as are those more fortunate people who recognise their much-loved faces in the "Portrait of a Lady" and "Portrait of a Gentleman" on the walls of loftier establishments.

When the portraits and miniatures were asked for but slowly, the artist devoted his talent to more imaginative labour; and congregated all the glories of the country in his own back parlour. There is a story told of a painter who had coals shot carelessly in his studio, that he might catch the proper contour of fallen and dismembered rocks—of another who was accustomed to let the cistern overflow that he might be inspired to paint a waterfall. To such mean and mechanical arts as these Mr. Maguire never resorted. In the first place, he seldom had enough coals at one time to serve any artistic purpose—(what rock ever fell and left *debris* of only fourteen

pounds weight?)—and in the next, at the house he occupied, the water was not unfrequently cut off, and the cistern empty. But setting aside the existence of these obstacles, Mr. Maguire had a fund of imagination that rendered artifice unnecessary. He might have wandered through the world, and yet have failed to find such scenes as he conceived, sketched, and turned out of hand, between the four walls of his back parlour! But to every one of them he gave a name (chalked on the back of the canvas generally) and a local habitation. When the demand was good, too, for old masters, he worked for Wardour Street; but when this demand could not be quoted as firm, and when the imaginative landscapes were unasked for, he supplied the furniture-brokers with florid pieces to adorn the sitting-rooms of simple persons about to marry.

It was to this gentleman that Mrs. Grey, upon the departure of her husband, led Gerald.

It happened that the artist was at the window when Mrs. Grey rang his bell. The poor gentleman was anything but busy: in fact, he was looking through the window for recreation. But the appearance of the good woman and her handsome fresh-coloured boy sent a thrill of delight through his heart. What could they want but a likeness? As they crossed the road, Mr. Maguire was debating within himself what he should have for dinner. A herring and potatoes were in prospect. That ring at the bell made the dinner a chop and peas!

A little servant opened the street door to the visitors, and led them to the studio. A sonorous voice said "Come in!" and when Mrs. Grey and Gerald cast eyes upon the artist, he was arranged before a picture, with a palette on his thumb,—in fact, he had taken much the attitude of Titian, when Royalty stooped to pick up the painter's brush. Poor fellow! he had only just popped from one parlour to the other, pass-

ing the little servant in the passage, and giving her the order for the new dinner.

He was a tall, bony man, with large features, a loud voice and a wondrous magnificence of manner. He bowed to Mrs. Grey—he was great at bowing—and Mrs. Grey courteously returned the obeisance.

“The young gentleman, of course?” he said. “He’ll make an excellent portrait. Rather a classical face; a little too florid, perhaps, for the antique. Your son, I presume?”

“Yes,” said the good woman, diffidently, and in answer to the latter question. But—

The artist interrupted her.

“I am right in saying portrait I suppose? The young gentleman is too old for a miniature.”

“Oh sir,” exclaimed Mrs. Grey, seeing how fondly the man was deceiving himself, “You mistake. I’m very sorry; but I don’t want a portrait.”

“ Nor a miniature, ma'am ? ”

“ No,” replied Mrs. Grey.

The artist shook the palette from his thumb. His bland smile vanished ; he was Titian no more ! Involuntarily his thoughts recurred to the luxurious dinner he had been induced to anticipate. Where was the little servant, that he might countermand the order for the chop and peas, and content himself with the herring ! Alas ! alas ! but a moment before she had passed the threshold, and was now, perhaps, returning, with the chop in her hand and the peas in her apron. The workings of the poor man's mind were visible in his face. Mrs. Grey could see his disappointment. She was almost inclined to put Gerald in a chair, let him be painted, and pay the guinea. But guineas were not plentiful with her ; so the inclination was suffered to die away. She spoke :

“ My son, here, sir, thinks he should

like to be a painter. Is a painter's a good business?"

The artist was somewhat bitter :

" Yes, ma'am," he replied, " if he paints houses, and calls himself glazier as well as painter. Then it may be good, ma'am —then it may be good."

" There, Gerald," said Mrs. Grey, " you hear that. *Now* what do you say to being a painter?"

Gerald hung his head and looked pitifully at the pictures about him. But his desire was not shaken. It struck him that he might take to house painting and glazing as secondary matters, and when the lighter branch of the art had proved profitless. He would have said so ; but in the presence of that tall, bony gentleman he was abashed.

" Painting, ma'am," continued the artist, " is *not* a good business. Look at me. You behold the son of a gentleman, the possessor of a university education, the

owner of talents I trust not absolutely contemptible, and yet what am I? Ma'am,—I tell you this in confidence, the boy's not listening, he's busy with the pictures,—I am a poor devil, not knowing whether I shall have *any* dinner to-morrow, and scarcely able to afford one to-day. So it is to be a painter !”

Mrs. Grey looked at the poor gentleman in wonder. Her eyes filled with tears: there was such bitter sorrow in the artist's tone, such a world of care printed in lines and wrinkles on his countenance. She was about to mention that the dinner-hour of herself and husband was twelve punctually, and that to-morrow, particularly to-morrow, there would be a hot joint, baked potatoes, and suet pudding, when she was interrupted.

“ But still, ma'am,” said the poor gentleman, “ if I can serve your son I will. If inclination can make a painter of him, he seems to have enough of that. He's de-

vouring my poor productions ! Has he any vocation for the art ?”

“ Vocation, sir ?”

“ Yes, ma’am. Has he any call, as it were, to the profession, any talent that way ?”

“ He has never been *taught* anything, not even drawing. But——”

The artist waved his hand and smiled. He had a favourite crotchet, perhaps the one his worldly prosperity had split upon ; and this was, that the study of drawing was a needless accomplishment for a painter. *He* had never studied drawing : he prided himself upon the correctness of his eye, the truth of his instinct.

“ Drawing ! ma’am,” he exclaimed, “ a most unimportant matter. What did Buonarotti know of drawing ? He studied fishes’ fins in the market place. Raffaele,— what time had *he* for drawing, when, as a child, he surpassed the best efforts of his preceptor ?”

The good woman nodded her head. Who was Boonerotty? Who was Rarfail? Friends of Mr. Maguire's, no doubt. Well, he must know best about them.

“The worst painters, ma'am,” continued the artist, “are the best draughtsmen. There's A, and B, and C,—I need not mention names, it might be invidious to do so. Well, look at *their* pictures. There are lines, and angles, and curves in them, all true enough; but what else? I say, we paint with the mind, not with the eye—with the genius, not with the education.”

The artist lost sight of the fact that he had only a simple woman for an audience. He warmed up to the spirit of the platform, and hurled his sentences about him as though he aimed at the ears of a monster meeting. He had a splendid voice for a public speaker; he used happy and appropriate gesture; his language was free and flowing. He was a better orator than painter; why had he missed his proper

path? Well, let him wait. Some day, perhaps—but we must not anticipate.

“Though there are some people,” he continued, “who maintain that drawing is a requisite of the art—who go further still, and drag in anatomy. Anatomy!” Here the artist paused and looked grandly about him. “As though skeletons came for portraits, or were accustomed to lie about in landscapes. Pshaw!—if a poor artist wishes to know anything about anatomy, let him run his hand down his ribs, there will he find instruction.” And Mr. Maguire put his hand to the side of his blouse, and admirably attested the truth of his assertion.

But seeing the wondering eyes of his simple auditress, and noting her bewildered expression of countenance, the artist was recalled to a sense of the absurdity of his address; so he descended from the clouds and came down to the little world of Mrs. Grey's comprehension.

“ But let us see,” he exclaimed, “ what your son can do. Here, my lad, take this crayon and sketch me the head yonder. That’s the head of Demosthenes.”

Gerald took the chalk, looked up at the shaggy brows of the Greek, and did as he was desired. The artist watched him with interest. Before Gerald had put a curl on the head of the great orator, Mr. Maguire snatched the sketch from him, flung it aside, and slapping the boy on the shoulder, said—

“ You’re quick, clever, and capable. Mind, I don’t *advise* you to become, but I think you *may* become, a painter.”

Gerald was delighted. Mrs. Grey picked up the sketch, folded it neatly, and put it in her pocket, preparatory to embalming it in a drawer with Gerald’s first socks, his smallest shirt, and his neglected coral. Mr. Maguire found a new argument in support of his theory.

“ Never taught drawing,” he said.

“ Here again is my opinion confirmed. What can I do for your son, ma’am? Has he a father living? Are you comfortably off? Let him come to me occasionally, and I will do my best for him. If you can afford it, pay me; if you cannot, why, ma’am,—you cannot, and still I will do what I can for him.”

When Mrs. Grey and Gerald reached home their minds were burthened with a secret. They held up fingers and looked knowingly at each other when the good man came to dinner. They were to take Mr. Grey at a proper moment and overwhelm him with surprise. The moment came.

“ What do you think, father?” said the wife, “ Gerald is to be a painter.” She then graphically described the scene in Mr. Maguire’s studio, omitting the melancholy parts, and ended by triumphantly producing the nose, mouth, and chin of Demosthenes.

Mr. Grey had little leisure for admi-

ration, but what he had he made the best use of. The sketch puzzled him somewhat. Why had Demosthenes a bald head, only half an eye, and no eyebrows whatever? When he was satisfied upon these points, he left the table, said "good bye," and went back to work.

How happy were mother and son! In what dreams of greatness did they indulge! But ah, that knock—that dull official summons; what did that portend? The dreamers were both alarmed by a vague presentiment of evil.

"Let me go, Gerald," said Mrs. Grey.

The boy listened, his heart palpitating strangely.

"Is Gerald Grey here?" said a voice from the street.

Footsteps, heavy footsteps, sounded menacingly in the passage. The parlour door was flung open.

"This him?" said the voice. "He scarcely answers the description—'Pale,

thin, and meagre-looking;’ but I daresay it’s right. Come along, Master Gerald Grey.”

“Where?” said the boy, clinging to his mother.

“To the City Bridewell. The Chamberlain wants to see you; he’s fond of seeing runaway apprentices!”

And Gerald went.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. TYMPAN was a wary man, and could bide his time. He could keep his own counsel, too. He had caused a notice to be served on Mr. Grey in the early days of Gerald's disappearance; and the good man being full of business, his wife, taking the notice in her hand, went to make terms with the magnate. He looked over his spectacles at her, asked when the boy would be back, received his answer, and relapsed into impenetrable silence. So Mrs. Grey left the counting house fully persuaded that she had won a forgiveness, and that so

small an item of humanity as Gerald was little likely further to trouble the mind of his generous master. She even said—"Oh, thank you, sir!" and the magnate made no objection to her gratitude.

But Mr. Tympan had Gerald's act and deed in his desk, and he was not going to relinquish its advantages simply because a tearful mother entreated him to be merciful. Besides, the boy's desertion was the topic of the office. It was crected into an example, to be followed or not as it might be dangerous or safe. The youth with the bullet head and the short hair began to feel that a printing office crippled and confined his natural talents. He was quickening for Barnum! He was prepared to desert upon finding desertion safe; so were several others. Indeed, in Mr. Tympan's office, at that particular time, desertion was epidemic.

No wonder then that the magnate, being apprised of this fact, resolved to show no

mercy, and to commence those proceedings concerning himself, the City Chamberlain, and Gerald, which had their result in the abduction just recorded.

Having made a beginning, he thought it well to go on thoroughly. His example must be striking and terrific. He went to the composing room, where he saw William Grey busy at his frame.

“Grey,” said the magnate.

“Yes, sir,” returned the journeyman, stepping out promptly.

“Your nephew has run away from his business; he has set a bad example to his fellow apprentices; his parents have conspired to set me at defiance! You brought him here, you answered that he was an honest lad, you said that his parents were respectable. In a fortnight from this day I shall have no need of your services.” And the magnate walked majestically away.

Uncle William was thunderstruck! From a boy he had earned his subsistence in that office. He had come to look upon himself

as belonging to it, as a fixture, as something not to be separated from it while its walls held together and its machines were going. He was the "father of the chapel," the referee and arbiter of all questions that arose among his fellow workmen. By his fellow workmen he was looked up to and respected as a Nestor! When Mr. Tympan was a dirty little vagabond, picked from the streets by a mendicity officer, and thought just good enough to sweep the workshop, William Grey was hopefully learning his business there; was the pattern boy of the place;—and the dirty little vagabond was glad to run of errands for him, to wait about his table as a dog might; to do anything, in fact, that put reward into his mouth or his pocket.

And now! Where was the justice of fate? where the propriety of circumstance? Here was this boy—certainly larger, less dirty, and not so eager for halfpence as of old—coming into the composing-room, and by the

mere wind of his harsh eloquence, blowing away the traditions of a life, forgetting the service that had endured for a quarter of a century, and flinging a man past the meridian of viour upon the rude waves of an adventurous subsistence !

Never before had William been hurt by envy of Mr. Tympan and his prosperity. As the errand-boy's course developed itself ; as he left the streets for the warehouse, the warehouse for the desk saved money, and lent it at startling interest to his fellows ; and finally, the iron being quite hot, *i. e.* his master dying—Mr. Tympan struck it, and married the widow, Uncle William had made no envious comment ; but, content with his own position, had served one master as he had served the other. But now, conscious of insult, burning with a sense of wrong, and cherishing a mistaken feeling of degradation, he cursed the man as a *parvenu*, and called upon Heaven to remedy an injustice !

That night he left his work, in a strange humour. Half-a-dozen sympathetic friends pressed round him ; but he repelled them rudely, and shrunk from their offers of service. He went home—he was unmarried, and had no great love to soothe and support him—and there he pondered on his disgrace. He persisted in thinking it a disgrace. His judgment was warped, and could find no remedy for, no palliation of, the wrong. He was degraded ; he was hurled from his high position ; as a working man, he was ruined ! These thoughts oppressed him, and effected a radical change in his character. He had no pride in his business now. While he remained with Mr. Tympan he laboured with a dull careless instinct, every day serving him less efficiently ; and at the end of the prescribed fortnight, so poor a workman was Uncle William, that the labour of his hands would scarcely be missed in the establishment from which he was ejected !

He had been frugal, and had saved a little money. This, perhaps, was his misfortune; for, thinking as he did, the money served only to keep him for a time in idleness. He made no attempt to obtain employment; but wandered about, hurling anathemas against his wronger and complaining of the grievous relations of labour and capital. Mr. Tympan was capital; he was labour. Mr. Tympan had done him an injury; therefore capital simply meant wrong and oppression! He upheld this belief in conversation; he liked to hear others uphold it. Let any man get up in the parlour of a public-house, or on a platform, or on a common, and say that a capitalist was a vampire, living upon the life blood of labour, sucking it as he would an orange, and flinging it away when exhausted,—and Uncle William would swear that the speaker talked common sense! He illustrated all such arguments by his own case; and he would have overturned the entire social fabric as a means

of bringing Mr. Tympan down with the ruin!

He entered, too, upon a new course of life—the life of the public-house! There, he found men who, for the consideration of a draught from his pewter, would commiserate with and champion him to the utmost. There he fell in with the Pariahs of his craft, the idle vagabonds who live upon the charity of their fellow workmen, begging from office to office, brimful of lies, boastful of infirmities, and disappointed should their demands for subsistence be met by permission to earn it! Such men, unhappily, form the lees of every trade, blackening the entire body, and giving it an ill-reputation. They are a vortex, too, in which let an honest artisan once lose himself, and he may be whirled and kept down for ever!

Into this vortex Uncle William was insensibly drawn. At first he took his seat at the public-house table as an amateur merely,

a freshman, looking on in wonder, and shy of his novitiate. Then he graduated; he became a fellow, and by consequence the public-house was his principal resort. His companions were bleary-eyed, bottle-nosed impostors; men who lived upon beer and tobacco, and fouled the winds wherever they wandered! They hung about Uncle William; they expressed their great love for him; they drank his beer and smoked his tobacco; they rejoiced in his independence of labour,—and the adulation lasted just so long as he had money.

It was while affairs were in this condition that Gerald was taken to the City Bridewell. Mr. Grey, coming home, and hearing the terrible news, hastened off to confront the magnate.

“You’ve sent, sir—you’ve sent, my boy to prison!” said the poor man. “You’ve taken an honest lad, and put him among vagabonds. What do you mean, sir?”

Mr. Tympan asked his usual first question,—

“ Who are you ?”

“ I’m the lad’s father !” replied Mr. Grey, hotly.

“ Then, who is the lad ?” asked the magnate.

“ Gerald, Gerald Grey ; he was one of your apprentices.”

“ *Was* one of my apprentices !” said Mr. Tympan. “ You mean he *is* one of them ! And, as such, having misbehaved himself, the law has taken its course !”

“ The law !” said Mr. Grey, bitterly. “ What do you mean by setting the law upon such a child as that ? Why didn’t you set it upon his father ? Why didn’t you set it upon me ?”

“ Because,” replied the magnate, with admirable coolness, “ you’re *not* my apprentice, you see.”

Mr. Grey was bewildered ; but, staring

through the rails of the counting-house, he put a plain question.

“And won't you release him?—won't you get him at once out of the place you've sent him to?”

“My good man,” replied Mr. Tympan, “you ask for an impossibility. Put yourself in my position—governing a score of lads who require the very strictest discipline to keep them at all in order; who would defy me and run away one after the other if they could do so with impunity. Consider what would be the effect if they saw one of their number escape punishment for disobedience; and then, if you have the hardihood, ask me to release your son!”

Mr. Grey could not put himself in the position of the magnate.

“Will you,” he said persistently, “release Gerald?”

“My good man, I'm busy, and the law must take it's course,” was the reply.

Mr. Tympan was surrounded by rails, and

barricaded by ledgers. He sat on a high stool, quite beyond the reach of Mr. Grey's arm. It was well that he did, or the good man might have committed himself. He had serious thoughts of seizing the magnate, shaking a pardon from his lips, and flinging him back to his pandemonium. But there were the rails—there the ledgers. Besides, upon second thoughts, there was the law! So Mr. Grey left the place sullenly, and went to seek his brother in the printing office.

“Grey?” said a youth, when the good man enquired, “Oh he don't work here now. He's been gone this long time.”

“Gone?”

“Yes. He was sacked because his nephew ran away. If you want him, I dare say you'll find him at the Society House. He's mostly there now.”

The good man went away. His heart was heavy, troubles seemed to come thick upon him. Surely misfortune followed

Gerald! But what did William do at the house of call? Such a workman should command employment, not wait for it in a tavern! These were Mr. Grey's thoughts as he neared the new refuge of his brother.

Loitering about the doors of the house were a few of that brother's companions, greasy, dissolute-looking men, clothed like scarecrows, unwashed, unshaven, offering no evidence of clean linen, indeed, not showing linen of any kind, and generally distasteful to the eye and poisonous to the sense of smell. These formed an out-post. The main body was in the public-house parlour, leaning upon tables, standing by the fire-place, or lying at full length upon the seats. In the very midst of them, smoking a pipe, was Uncle William.

There was a great stir when Mr. Grey entered. Who was he? What did he want? A dozen pair of eyes seemed to ask these questions. William was the last to look up. When he did so, seeing his

brother, he shuffled his pipe aside, and said, "Gerald."

"William," said Mr. Grey, offering his hand, and receiving a few warm, clammy fingers in return.

"Won't you sit down?" asked William.

"No, not here," said the good man, looking suspiciously around. "And at such a time in the day, who could have expected to find *you* here!"

"Ah, who—who indeed! It isn't as it used to be, is it Gerald? I didn't come here once. But what does it matter? This is a very good place; and these are very good fellows; only they can't get work. They're waiting for it now."

"Well," said Mr. Grey, impatiently, "I want to talk to you. Get up, and walk home with me."

"What, go home with you? Go and see—and see—Mary? Why, look at me!"

Mr. Grey did look at him, and the scrutiny was a sad one. Already, he had

begun to take the complexion of his companions. But what of that? Happily, his brother had come to the rescue! He was led, murmuring slightly, from the room. As the two men walked along, the one told his tale of injury and disgrace,—told it in a querulous, carping, tone, and with many invectives against Mr. Tympan. There was no wholesome indignation in the speaker; his story was a complaint, a whine. And the moral of it was that he was ruined!

“And it’s my opinion,” he said, “that the whole system’s wrong. There should be no master, no man; the real employers are the public; there should be no middleman standing between the consumer and the producer. If I want a coat, the man who actually makes it should have the whole of the price, not a moiety of it.”

“Rubbish!” said Mr. Grey, as he listened to this well-worn jargon. “You never used to talk such nonsense.”

“ Nonsense !” replied William, “ Well, as you please, brother ; you have your opinion, I have mine. But your opinion would uphold Mr. Tympan in growing rich upon my labour and the labour of others, and then flinging me upon the world to do as I can.”

“ It would uphold no such thing !” said the good man, impatiently. “ I am as much at war with Mr. Tympan as you. What do you think ? He has sent Gerald to the City Bridewell—to prison !”

“ Well !” replied William, really astonished. “ Then he has two victims. But don’t you see that this carries out what I say ? Why should he have power to do this ? Under a different system, such a thing could never happen.”

Mr. Grey made no reply. He had hoped for some useful advice from his brother ; some assistance in Gerald’s difficulty. But he found that the man’s practical good sense had left him,—its place filled by abstract notions of right and wrong that only made confusion worse confounded !

CHAPTER VII.

How long Gerald might have remained in durance, if Mr. Tympan had had the ordering of justice, may be conceived from the foregoing. Probably the poor boy would have picked oakum for a month, been twice privately whipped, and then sent back to do better with his old master. But Mr. Tympan had not the ordering of justice—justice did not even regard him with a favourable eye ; for he seemed to come for her decision vindictively, and to believe that her only office was to punish.

The Chamberlain was a mild, generous

man; his leaning was always, as the law prescribes that it shall be, to the unfortunate. The good, honest face of Gerald's father; his plain statement of facts; the boy's own artless and tearful confession; and lastly, the scene described by Mrs. Grey as having happened in the magnate's counting house when she went to ask the great man's pardon; impressed the Chamberlain with an idea that this was a case to be judged rather by the light of equity than law. He asked Mr. Tympan in a persuasive tone if he would forgive the lad?

“Forgive him—and why? That half a dozen others may follow his example?—That the whole office may revolt?—If I were to do anything of the kind, my place would be in a tumult of revolution!”

“Mr. Tympan,” said the Chamberlain, quietly but solemnly. “Has it never occurred to you that you have a duty to perform to these apprentices of equal importance to that they are bound to render to

you? This duty is one of consideration and care for their health, habits, and general control while on your establishment. Have you performed this duty? I should think not; or why should those apprentices remaining to you celebrate as a triumph the escape of one of their number from your dominion? *You* say they would do this, and I think it is the worst evidence you could offer with a view to the punishment of this poor lad. He did his duty while he could, he acted entirely under the control of his parents when he left you; and those parents were, not unreasonably, led to believe that you had forgiven him. I can only advise that the indentures should be cancelled."

This was the Chamberlain's judgment. Immediately upon its conclusion, Mrs. Grey, who had watched the speaker with an anxiety so intense that her face was painful to look at,—burst into joyful tears; Mr. Grey rubbed his sleeve across his eyes, looked at the judge, and muttered "God

bless you, sir!" and Gerald leaped, rather than ran into the embrace of his mother! As for Mr. Tympan, that good gentleman took a pinch of snuff, sneezed violently, blew his nose loudly, as if in defiance, and left the place without further demonstration.

Uncle William was waiting outside. When he heard that Gerald was free, he merely said "Ah! he's lucky, very lucky, to escape the fangs of that scoundrel." And then he fell to his general topic, and reduced the whole affair to a simple question of labour and capital, the relative positions of which he pronounced to be at the bottom of all our social evils.

Although happy in his son's release, Mr. Grey was grieving for his brother. The question was ever recurring to him—"What brought William to this?"—He wished to recall the poor fellow to his old habits; to rescue him from the dissolute vagabondism into which he was evidently falling. With

this view, when they reached home, and William was with difficulty induced to sit down with them, Mr. Grey, by some unseen means, hinted to his wife that he desired to be alone with his brother. So she left the room, taking Gerald with her; and the two men were at liberty to talk in confidence.

“My dear William,” said Mr. Grey, “me and my boy have brought you to this. It is my duty to restore you to what you have been. Why can’t you look for another situation?—Why not find something, whatever it is, to employ you? While you are idle, I am wretched. Now, come, William, do, for my sake, look for work. Do, there’s a good fellow! If you don’t, but keep going on like this, why, really, I shall think you do it to reproach me for what’s passed and can’t be helped now. You’ll get work, won’t you?”

“Aint I looking for it, waiting for it, every day?” said William, in an equivocal, querulous tone. “What more can I do?”

“Get it!” said Mr. Grey, firmly.

“And where?” asked the brother.
“Would you have me go back to Mr. Tympan; and, on my knees—mind, on my knees!—ask his pardon, and beg him to employ me?—Would you——”

“William,” said Mr. Grey, sternly.
“Don’t talk like that.”

“Then what,” said the other,—“would you have me do?”

“Are you a man?” exclaimed Mr. Grey, who, not quite understanding his brother’s malady, thought this helplessness was assumed and unreal, “Can you sit there and tell me, that because one man won’t give you work no one else will? Oh, William! this is too bad. God send that my poor boy had never seen the place! It’s ill enough to know that his being there has done you harm. But that you should whine and whimper about it, and pretend that it’s ruined you for life, and there’s no remedy,—Oh, William,—I thought quite different of you!”

Mr. Grey rose from his chair. He was impatient of the conversation. Hard-working, industrious, as he was, his brother's conduct seemed to him mean and unworthy. What would *he* have done in a similar case? Why, moved the world to find work, and considered it his duty to do so, if only to relieve the pain and anxiety of those who had innocently brought him to such a pass! These were Mr. Grey's thoughts; and he could not help believing that if he and his family had unwittingly injured his brother, that brother was now perversely endeavouring to injure him.

Presently William rose. He felt thirsty; he longed for the sustenance and society of the public-house parlour.

"Good bye, Gerald," said he.

"Good bye, William," said Mr. Grey. A kind thought came to him; he seized the hand of his brother, and pressed it heartily. "Do you want money, William?" he said.

“ No,” was the reply, “ not at present.”

“ You will get work, then ?”

“ Why, how you bother me about work, Gerald ! I suppose you’re frightened I shall come upon you. But I shan’t. There’s the parish, you know ; there’s the parish !”

This was too much for Mr. Grey. With an angry word, he flung the door to, and as the harsh sound smote upon his ear, it seemed as though that shock rent asunder the tie of blood between them !

In a few weeks after this, Gerald was satisfactorily installed as a pupil at the studio of Mr. Maguire. The arrangement was satisfactory both to the artist and the neophyte. The one it supplied with a little ready cash ; the other with prospective profit and honour.

Mr. Maguire was much taken with Gerald. He saw capability in him ; “ and where there is capability, you know, sir (the artist said to Mr. Grey, on the occasion of the arrangements being completed), there is every

prospect of success : Indeed, where there is capability, what is there not?" Mr. Grey was very much impressed with this way of putting the matter ; and in confidence he afterwards told his wife that he thought Mr. Maguire a wonderful creature, whose conversation was that of a learned man and a gentleman.

Months, years passed thus — a boy's months and years pass very rapidly !— and Gerald grew to paint as well, aye, better than his preceptor. Mr. Maguire saw this, and he was honest about it. He paid a visit to Mr. Grey and told him so ; and Mr. Grey laughingly said that perhaps, then, they might be of service to one another. He said this upon the artist's warranty ; he would never have presumed to advance it upon his own. But he was so pleased with Mr. Maguire, that he advised Gerald to stay with him. At the same time he said a word or two upon another point :

“ And if, you know, Gerald, you could

begin to paint any of those pictures that people would buy, perhaps it wouldn't be any harm. See what you can do, my boy. I don't mind keeping you while you are *learning* this pretty business of yours; though, you see, it's not like any other business, where you get paid almost as soon as you begin it; but as Mr. Maguire says you can do so well, and you say you can do so well, why it might be no harm to get somebody else's opinion; and the best opinion you could get would be a golden one!"

Gerald went to work full of this idea; but very humbly. He wandered about picturesque places in the suburbs, with his portfolio and pencils, trying to find a fit subject for the market. Many sketches were made and discarded. At last he thought he had made the right one. He hurried to the studio, stretched his canvass, rubbed in his ground work, and made a beginning. Alas! his eagerness betrayed him. The picture was a hideous affair--a sharp, hasty, glaring

absurdity ; a thing Mr. Maguire was ashamed of and Gerald disgusted with !

He made another trial, and found another scene. He walked home quietly, looked at his sketch, laid it aside, thought over it, and took it up again. Even then the picture was not begun. He went once more to the scene, and saw it under a different aspect. The last aspect was the best ; so the whole sketch must be altered. This was done, and a week or two afterwards Gerald carefully conveyed home an original picture, marked in the corner with "G. G.," and pronounced by Mr. Maguire to be worthy of the Academy !

And now for the market. Who was to buy it ? This was a very serious question ; it altogether puzzled and got over the Greys. So the picture was taken back to Mr. Maguire, and the worthy artist, holding it in his hand, and regarding it admiringly, said—

“ Ah, Gerald, if, instead of ‘G. G.,’ this

canvass had 'X. Y. Z.' in the corner—I don't mean 'X. Y. Z.,' but you know who—we needn't ask who'd buy it. Carriages would be at our door, half a hundred eye-glasses would glitter and glance before the glorious work, and ere the colour was well dry, the picture would be bought, paid for, and hung up in a gallery! As it is, what shall we do with it?—what *can* we do with it? Gerald, my boy, it must go to the furniture brokers!"

In due time Gerald's landscape was elevated to the dignity suggested by Mr. Maguire, and was exposed for sale in close companionship with a fishing-rod and an eight-day clock. How often did Gerald pass and repass his cherished labour, wondering why it remained so long unpurchased, —why people of taste kept away from the neighbourhood, and perversely slighted the jewel enshrined there! Day after day, week after week, it hung in the same dismal companionship; the shopman brought it

out morning after morning, like any other article of furniture, and rubbed it with his apron much as he would rub a table, and hung it up, and ticketed it, and thought no more of it than if it were a coal-scuttle or a warming-pan! But there is a crisis in the career of most things: one day, as fate would have it for the last time, the shopman hung it up as usual. Gerald passed the place the next day, and the picture was gone!

Mr. Maguire went with a very confident air to enquire about it—"Have you sold my picture? Oh, you have; ah, I thought it would go off. Capital thing; send you another soon."

Mr. Maguire was just leaving the shop when the man stopped him; he had a suggestion to make. The picture certainly *did* sell, but not for a long time; hadn't Mr. Maguire something with more life in it? Pigs went off well; so did dogs, particularly the King Charles's. Mr. Maguire

smiled, nodded, and said he would consider the matter; he would try and send some pigs next week.

A month or two afterwards that particular broker's was distinguished beyond all others for its splendid collection of painted animals; the place was a very menagerie of art! Mr. Maguire had been at work; he had taken kindly to the man's suggestion; and one evening, after a happy monetary transaction with the broker, Mr. Maguire gave Gerald a supper, and the first toast he proposed was—"Here's to the pigs—and dogs!"

One day a carriage drove up to the artist's door. It put the whole neighbourhood in a ferment, and drew fifty heads out of window! An old gentleman descended from the carriage and rang the artist's bell. He was shown into the studio.

"You painted this picture, I believe?" said he, showing Mr. Maguire Gerald's landscape.

“No, I did not,” replied the artist, hesitatingly.

“Oh, you did not? Well, then, I have been deceived. I wish you good morning.”

“One moment, sir,” said Mr. Maguire, “I know who did paint it; in fact, it was painted here.”

“By a pupil?”

“Exactly,” replied the artist.

“Where is he?—is he here?—can I see him?”

The old gentleman spoke brusquely, and scarcely gave any one time to answer him. In this case Mr. Maguire had no occasion to answer; for Gerald, who had been in the background, listening anxiously and trembling with hope and expectation, now came forward, and his confusion, his blushes, and the anxious ingenuousness of his countenance, marked him as the favoured artist.

The old gentleman passed his hand across his eyes, and stared very hard at the youth. He fancied he had seen somebody like him

before, and the resemblance called up sad, serious recollections! But only for a moment. Looking pleasantly at Gerald, he said, still preserving his brusque, business-like tone—

“ You painted the picture, did you ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Gerald, modestly.

“ And you could paint a fellow to it ? ”

“ Oh, certainly, sir.”

“ Not so certainly,” exclaimed the old gentlemen. “ But it’s quite possible. At any rate, you can try.”

“ And with my pupil, sir, to try is to succeed ! ” said Mr. Maguire, with some grandeur of tone.

“ Oh, indeed ! ” replied the old gentleman, eyeing the elder artist curiously. “ *Your pupil*, then, is a favoured being.”

There was an unpleasant emphasis laid by the old gentleman upon the words “ your pupil,” which Mr. Maguire scarcely relished ; and indeed the old gentleman did not mean the artist to relish it ; for, unused as he was to Mr. Maguire’s magnificence of

manner, and knowing nothing of his real goodness of heart, the old gentleman had his suspicions of the poor fellow, disliked his forwardness, and thought that but for Gerald's presence, he might not have disclaimed the picture. Besides, the old gentleman was rich, he was accustomed to talk himself, not to listen; and in his presence people mostly shut their mouths till they were asked to open them.

“ Well, young sir,” he said, turning to Gerald, “ make an attempt—see what you can do. You are scarcely old enough to be spoiled by conceit. There's my card. Bring me a picture from your own hand worthy to hang by the side of this, and I will give you—never mind what; you shall not be disappointed.”

The old gentleman scarcely noticed Mr. Maguire as he left the studio. Gerald followed him to the door, saw him get into his carriage, heard the steps go bang, bang, bang! and then looked about him

and wondered where he was! In fairyland? Oh, yes, it must be! else why these wonderful changes—these magic strokes of fortune? Oh, ye who are rich! the power you hold eclipses that of Oberon, Titania, or any of the moonshine miracles of fancy! You may work upon the human heart so that from a dry desert it shall become an oasis; you may change curses into prayers, tears into smiles, disease into health! Why, oh why, not do this oftener!

From fairyland at the door the youth returned to fact in the studio. There stood Mr. Maguire, his head turned from Gerald, his action strange, his attention apparently absorbed in criticising one of his own pictures. The youth wondered. Why did his preceptor turn aside instead of congratulating him upon his good fortune?

“Sir,” said Gerald.

“My good boy,” returned the artist, not moving from his position, “what is it?”

The man’s voice was thick and tremulous,

his gaunt frame shook with the influence of some agonising emotion. There was no mistaking his shyness. That pompous, magniloquent man was crying bitterly—crying so that his breast heaved and his head dropped as an actor's might! The loose sleeves of his blouse were at his eyes; he was trying to brush away the fast-flowing tears. At last he fell into a chair and hid his face altogether!

Gerald was at his knee, trying to secure the hand of his preceptor.

“My dear sir,” he said, “how is this? What have I done to grieve you?”

“Nothing, my boy, nothing,” said the artist, squeezing kindly the hand that sought his own, “*you* have not grieved me; but I am foolish, over-sensitive, and too susceptible to slight or neglect. I am a gentleman, my boy, and yet your friend treated me as he might have treated a beggar! I asked him for nothing, and yet he refused me even his courtesy. That I should be humbled in the moment of your

triumph seemed hard to me ; it did, indeed, Gerald ! God knows that I rejoice in your success, my dear boy ! I love you for your genius. What am I that I should do anything else ?—a poor, desertless devil, a dauber of canvass, a painter of dogs ! pigs !—nothing more. There, my boy, take no notice of me ; I'm a fool !”

Mr. Maguire shook Gerald's hand as he said this, and left the studio. When he returned he was cheerful, wore a smiling face, and was himself again. But he had something on his mind, something for which he wanted a confidant. He relieved himself at last.

“ Gerald, my boy, there is a tide in the affairs of man ; Shakespeare says there is, and I'd sooner believe Shakespeare than the bench of bishops. Well, I mean to take this tide at the turn and see what it will do for me. I shall sell up, pack up, and be off to America. Not another pig will I paint.”

The artist kept his word. While painting his companion picture Gerald was disturbed. The landlady came to ask him if he would succeed Mr. Maguire and rent the two parlours. Elated by his success, Gerald asked himself—why not? Besides, as he remarked to his preceptor when they shook hands and parted, perhaps for ever,—when the artist should return, there would be the place as of old; there would be his home again. Gerald would hold it, if only for that hospitable purpose.

“ My dear boy,” said Mr. Maguire, “ you should say *if* I return! Understand me—I shall roll over the Falls of Niagara, or drop quietly from a Mississippi steamboat, if fate doesn’t use me better than it has done. If I return, I shall return a new man. My dear, dear boy! good bye, God bless you, and give you fame and fortune!”

Gerald wept, his preceptor departed.

CHAPTER VIII

ETON had done all it could for the two brothers. In one it had implanted a love for learning, in the other a distaste for it. But he who loved learning was to leave it; he who slighted it, was to have it still for his mistress, his gentle mother, his *Alma Mater!* Strange contrariety of fate; but there was no help for it. Roger Maldon was about to enter a college; Richard to join a regiment of the line.

The portions for younger children in the Maldon family were miserably small, serving merely to set them going in life. The

boys had generally chosen the profession of arms, and therefore the army came to be looked upon as their natural refuge. Some had turned out well; had come to command regiments when their heads were grey and their energies wasted; had been mentioned in despatches from the times of Monk and Marlborough to the days of Burgoyne and Wellington; and had reaped those mortuary honours which in country churchyards sometimes startle us with their tales of valour and victory! Others had died early, fagging on foreign stations, or falling in unrecorded skirmishes; their deaths creating commotion only among their juniors who were waiting for a step. Even now the Baronet had a brother serving abroad; a man as completely forgotten as though the grass grew over him and the wind whistled his epitaph! The army, then, was the place for Richard Maldon.

But the poor fellow dreaded his fate. Not that he was cowardly, or feared to meet his

fellow man in just warfare. But the profession was distasteful to him. For various reasons he believed himself to be unfit for it. His habits were studious ; his love was given to learning. He would have had Minerva unhelmetted and deprived of her belligerent associations. From *his* Pantheon he excluded warriors ! Give him a pen, and you might turn your sword into a ploughshare !—a library, and what to him were the spoils of India ? And at the basis of these feelings was a sense of personal unfitness—a shrinking from comparison with those upon whom nature had showered favours of form and feature. Alas, alas ! nature had neglected him ; had flung him roughly among his fellows, and forgotten those finishing touches which from the vain world win respect and admiration !

Such were the feelings of Richard Maldon, when, after a short sojourn at the Priory, he found himself gazetted as an ensign in her Majesty's Blank regiment of foot. For

a long time the money that secured this misery to him had been deposited at the Horse Guards; for years the interest that helped the money had been obtained. There was no escape for Richard. He must be a soldier, and bear her Majesty's commission. He felt as well able to be Atlas and bear the world!

Her Majesty's Blank regiment of foot was a "crack" regiment. After the Brahmins, it was the favourite. Now and then a Brahmin exchanged into it, commanded it, left it for the staff, and made way for another Brahmin—a process common in those days of distinction between the guards and the line. It was commanded by a Brahmin now. It was split into detachments, some abroad, some in Ireland, some in garrison and barrack towns at home. The lieutenant-colonel was an easy man, well connected, and gratified that there was much good blood in his regiment. He winked at the reputation of his officers for

fast and furious living ; he lived fast and furiously himself. From him the young gentlemen seldom met with measures of severity ; and therefore among themselves they were exceedingly jolly, and had nothing to complain of except when a subaltern grew restive, took objection to be pulled from his bed to perform the sword exercise, disliked having his door smashed in and cold water flung upon him, or turned rusty upon other matters of a like pleasing and military nature.

To this regiment Richard Maldon was introduced. With these young gentlemen he had to mess, consort, and make himself comfortable.

He got on very well the first day, for the officers' quarters were almost empty. There was a race somewhere, and in the evening the subalterns had a bespeak at the local theatre. But the second day was a trial for him. He sat down to dinner with his new companions. They were facetious ;

they whispered to and winked at one another; they made a great point of taking wine with the new man, and laughing when the new man put the wine to his lips. The evening came, and the young gentlemen went to billiards.

“Will you join us?” they said.

Richard declined the invitation, and went to his room. He got out his books and read. Presently he was disturbed: a subaltern burst his door open—

“What are you doing? What the deuce are you reading about?” said the sub.

Richard, determined to forbear and be polite, showed the intruder the *Commentaries*.

“Bosh! rubbish! ridiculous!” said the subaltern. “You might as well read Cock Robin! Havn’t you finished your education? A barrack isn’t a school, you know. Egad! you’re a disgrace to us!”

Richard smiled—“Is study disgraceful?” he asked.

“Rather!—I should think so at your time of life.”

“Well, I’m sorry for that. But reading is my recreation.”

“Indeed,” was the reply. “Well, I should advise you to give it up, and take to billiards.”

The young gentleman then went away, and Richard looked to the fastening of his door. Alas! the powerful arm of the subaltern had driven all before it. The fastening was broken, so Richard must sleep insecure! Fearing another visit, he backed up the door with a chest of drawers.

He had been asleep some time, when he was suddenly aroused. There was a great crash; the drawers were turned over, and the faces of several subalterns were grinning by the new man’s bedside. Then there was a sudden tug at his sheets. He was landed roughly on the floor, and the contents of a water-jug being thrown over him, he was

left to ponder upon the first practical joke of which he was the victim!

“Get wet, last night?” said one of the subalterns, when Richard appeared the next day at mess.

“I thought I heard the fall of something heavy!” said another.

Richard was silent. Surely a submissive demeanour would disarm these young gentlemen, and take the zest from the jokes they delighted in!

But no! they followed him up closely; they pressed him till he retorted.

“I tell you what, Maldon,” said a subaltern, one day, “if you don’t leave off those d——d quiet habits of yours, and act like a man, the whole mess’ll cut you. Why didn’t your father make you a clerk or a schoolmaster, instead of sending you among gentlemen?”

“Sir!” said Richard, with a caustic expression of countenance, “my father did what yours must despair of doing! He sent

me here to be of service to my country, not to trifle with it; to learn a profession, not to abuse its offices."

Of course, such language as this was not to be borne in any well-regulated regiment. It was repeated at the mess-table with derisive cheers; it was canvassed with a view to the chastisement of its author. Had Richard possessed a horse, the subalterns would have docked its tail; had he been a fool, they would have frightened him by arrangements for a sham duel. As it was, they were constant to the known remedies in infantry regiments; they fell back upon the nocturnal sword exercise, and the midnight shower-bath. These served their purpose: Richard was driven to send in a written complaint to his superior officer!

The superior officer was, doubtless, a good soldier in the field. Like most Englishmen, in hand to hand combat he was probably a hero. He may afterwards have proved his heroism on the bleak heights about Sebas-

topol or in the accursed shambles of Delhi! But as a ruler of young men of his own class—the products of a vicious system, obtaining nowhere beyond the limits of English obstinacy—he was not to be set up as an example. He treated Richard's complaint very coolly, called him a fool for his pains, and hinted to him that there were other regiments in Her Majesty's service where his *infirmities* might meet with better consideration.

What was the new man to do? He might exchange, truly; but with what certainty of relief? There were subalterns in all regiments; there was no geographical limit to practical joking. So he determined to suffer patiently, and to wear out his tormentors.

But one of the subalterns, the most prominent of the practical jokers, received that mild punishment known as wiggling! He was reprimanded, patted on the back, and told to be a good boy for the future. But this wiggling was wormwood to him. He

was a youth of birth and fortune; and he could not stomach reproof, even of the mildest character. Why,—had he not kicked a manager down his own staircase because the man, suddenly and unaccountably taken with a fit of modesty—stood between him and the actresses' dressing-room! How, then, could he put up with a wiggling?

He was a great player of billiards; a high priest at the board of green cloth! Put a white ball before him, give him a cue, and he was a genius! It was delightful to watch him; but it was terrible to play with him!

“Ah, Maldon,” he said, “You’re doing nothing. Come and have a game.”

This was the third day after the wiggling; and for the last three nights Richard had slept in peace. He began to think that the subalterns had left off their tricks, and were offering to him the hand of friendship. He was only too glad to grasp it; and in proof

of his gladness, he went to play with the professor.

The professor played carelessly, withheld his happiest strokes, and tried to lose. But that was impossible, playing against Richard! At the end of an hour, several sovereigns had left the pocket of the novice, and gone to the wine merchant for champagne.

Richard drank, and played on. There was a fascination in the game, after all! The professor, too, began to show his skill. He cannoned, filled the pockets, and ran over his score, with wondrous rapidity.

“Play on?” he said, presently, dropping his cue at the end of a game.

Richard was anxious and excited. His losses were large. He nodded assent.

“Pay up, then,” said the professor. “I hate the bother of keeping account.”

Richard paid up as far as his means would permit; but even then, there was a balance against him. So he pledged his credit; and then, of course, he had a fund inex-

haustible! No man knows the extent of his means till he has done something of this kind. But let him once do it, and for a time he may revel in the feelings of a millionaire! It was so with Richard. He was not playing for money, but against the professor's little book; not for five-pound notes, but merely to add to or subtract from various figures of five recorded by his companion's pencil! Besides, the luck would change; the game was not all skill. And so the novice went on.

One page of the note book was covered; two bottles of champagne had been drunk.

"Play on?" said the professor, coolly turning over a new leaf—of the book!

"Yes," replied Richard, savagely. And he took another cue—always the remedy of a bad player; mostly the cause of his playing worse!—balanced it, chalked it, ran it scientifically between his fingers, as he had seen his opponent do; and, beginning a new game, for the twentieth time missed his ball!

It was pleasant to watch the player now! You may have seen a certain great violinist, who might have been pardoned for playing Nero. You may have marked the persuasive grace of his movements; the wondrous delicacy of his touch; the dexterous swaying of the arm, which seems to feel out the music rather than play it! Such movements were those of the professor. Men who fling balls into the air, and catch them with curious dexterity, are called jugglers. The real juggler with balls is such a man as the subaltern!

A second leaf of the little book was filled when, by mutual consent, the play came to an end.

“How much do you think you owe me now?” said the subaltern, casting up, and writing a total.

Richard shook his head sullenly. There were fumes of champagne troubling it, and it ached.

“Well, I’ll tell you, for fear you should

forget. You owe me a cool five hundred ! There's a few pounds over ; but we'll say five hundred, because it's easy to recollect."

" Five hundred !—what ?" said Richard, stupidly.

" Pounds, my boy,—pounds !" cried the subaltern. " But what of that ? Here's a stamp. Come, don't be shabby ! But your hand to this. It's in blank ; but you may trust me to fill it up afterwards."

A pen was found, and Richard did as he was desired. When the subaltern had the signature in his possession, he whispered in Richard's ear.

" You confounded little sneak ! You'll go earwigging the colonel again, won't you ! Mind, I played with you to day to suit myself : never expect me to do it again ! I shall give you no revenge ! And now you can go and cry over your losses !"

Richard was dumb with despair ! He stood still, watching the professor's departure, and wondering if the scene and the

circumstances were real. Did he owe five hundred pounds? Was this the hand of friendship that he thought had been extended to him? Stupid, sullen, but crying like a child, he went to sleep off the fumes of the wine, and to wake to misery!

The very next day the subaltern solicited leave of absence. He went to London, to a man who called himself an army clothier, and did business in Saint James's Street. He had Richard's bill filled up, and due at a month's expiration, with him.

"Maldon!" said the outfitter, "who is he?" And he took a knightage from his desk, and turned to the proper letter.

"His father's a baronet of some property. The name's good enough."

"Ah, but he's a younger son!"

"Yes,—yes, certainly," said the subaltern.

"I'm terribly pressed just now," replied the outfitter. "I can give you very little money. A hundred, perhaps."

"And what else?"

“ Oh, jewelry, and—and—”

“ Musical boxes ?”

“ Yes, musical boxes—direct from the manufactory!”

The subaltern laughed.

“ Very well,” he said, “ but let me see the jewelry. The boxes can wait till I send for them.”

From a buhl cabinet that graced one side of the apartment, the outfitter produced, first, a morocco case, containing a serpent diamond bracelet; then another case, enshrining a turquoise brooch; even another, enclosing a hooped brilliant ring!

“ These,” he said, “ are worth two hundred; the musical boxes fifty; and the cash will make three hundred and fifty.”

“ Well; but they're all women's ornaments!” said the subaltern. “ I can't wear bracelets and brooches!”

“ We make it a point,” replied the outfitter, smiling good humouredly, “ to do

business in such a way as to benefit the ladies ! And, indeed, gentlemen seldom want jewelry for themselves."

" Oh, very good," was the reply. And for the considerations mentioned, Richard's bill passed into the hands of the chosen people !

A month and a few days had elapsed, when, leaving parade one morning, Richard was tapped on the shoulder. He turned, and saw a bandy little man, with keen grey eyes and a hook nose, holding out a slip of paper and directing attention to it.

" Mr Maldon I believe ? Your little bill," said the Israelite.

Richard took the bill. Yes, there was his signature for five hundred pounds ! There was the little man waiting for the money ! He hurried off to the great billiard player, and found him, leaning over the window sill of his apartment, smoking a cigar and talking pleasantly with several brother officers who were lounging on the pavement outside.

“ Here comes that little sneak !” said the subaltern, as Richard approached. “ Conway, I’ll bet you twenty pounds that the little wretch isn’t in the regiment a week longer !”

“ Done !” said Conway, “ if it’s only for sport. Besides, it will be worth twenty pounds to get rid of him.”

“ May I speak to you for a moment—*privately* ?” said Richard, addressing the professor.

“ I’ve not a moment to spare,” replied the subaltern. “ I haven’t picked my teeth since breakfast, and this is my first cigar. I shall be disengaged about the middle of next week !”

The officers laughed heartily. They guessed Richard’s business, for the existence of the bill and its arrival at maturity were no secrets among them. Besides, the produce of that bill had become common property. The musical boxes played overtures for the whole mess ; the bracelet had passed

from hand to hand, had been tossed for, raffled for, played at billiards for, and exchanged about over and over again. So had the brooch and the ring. And then one after the other these jewels left the barracks, to adorn the arms, the fingers, and the bosom of a dashing young lady who jobbed a brougham, and sometimes drove to the officers' quarters! In the end, this young lady having an uncle—a man with a world of nephews and nieces!—the trinkets passed to him, and she was enabled to pay her liveryman. How, then, knowing these things, could the subalterns refrain from laughing at the pale, anxious young fellow who sustained the damage!

“What's the matter?” said one, “have you lost a five pound note and found sixpence?”

“Will you give me a moment's private conversation?” said Richard, still addressing the professor.

“No, I won't. I know what you're shiver-

ing about,—the bill! I'm not the holder of it; I've nothing to do with it. It went to the Jews!"

Richard turned away, leaving the young gentlemen delighted with the scene that had happened. He went to parley with the bandy little man.

"I've no money; it's impossible for me to pay this," he said.

"Lor! but bless my shoul, haven't you got a father? Aint he a baronet? Shend me down to your father."

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Richard.

"What do you mean to do then?" asked the little man.

"I'm utterly helpless; I can do nothing."

"I tell you what you can do," suggested the Israelite, "you can renew the bill; but only for a month, mind—only for a month! Another little bill for fifty will do it."

Richard had, of course, as little prospect of being able to pay five hundred and fifty pounds in a month's time, as he had of pay-

ing five hundred pounds then. But what was he to do? To get the bill renewed was to get a reprieve. So he gave the little bill for fifty, and for a month he might be a free man!

Oh that month! Ordinarily it was a dull month, favourable to suicide and hypochondria. In that month toll-takers at the Bridge of Sighs were on the alert; keepers of private lunatic asylums made up extra beds and engaged additional strong men! In that month Guy Fawkes was burnt solely that the English people should not die of dullness! In that month the winds forgot to whistle, and the fog too hung funereally about, covering great cities as with a pall! The heavens wept pitifully in that month. What could they do when earth was so miserable!

But worse still, every day of that month helped to mature Richard's two bills, and to bring the prospect of a jail nearer and clearer to his apprehension!

The month came to an end, and there was the little man again! There was no renewal this time, for the Jews began to be anxious. One or two legal quibbles—such as that which robbed Shylock of a pound of merchant's flesh—had lately robbed his successors of many pounds sterling.

“Can't you give us shecurity?” said the bandy little man. “Haven't you any property you can charge with the amount? We can wait till you are of age if you give us shecurity and interest—and—interest!”

“I have no property; I have no expectation of any,” said Richard.

“Well, then,” replied the little man, “you must come with me; you must sell out; father'll buy you in again, you know. Come to London and shettle the business at once. If you don't, we must proceed to judgment and—and—and execution.”

Judgment and execution! Terrible words, thought Richard. Well, the commission must be sold. So he left the little man, and

after a moment with his superior officer, returned.

The subalterns were at the barrack window when Richard went away.

“By Jove!” said one of them, “he’s going.”

“Going, is he?” cried another.

“Yes; there he is; that’s Isaacs with him! Conway, you’ve lost your bet! Wind up the boxes!”

The musical chests were wound up. They played one against the other, producing a confused sound that was pleasant to the ears of the subalterns. As one of them said, it was like listening to a good row between Mozart and Donizetti, and a good row was the best entertainment going! So Richard departed to the sound of music—paid for, perhaps dearly, by himself!

CHAPTER IX.

EVERY house has its particular trouble, every family its little mystery. Maldon Priory was not an exception; neither were its inhabitants singular in being unafflicted. There was a tradition current among the servants that Lady Maldon was—yes, she was—eccentric! They talked of epileptic fits and delirium tremens—they recollected the coming of a little learned-looking man, fetched by the baronet himself in the middle of the night from the nearest post town, and having a reputation for remedying difficult diseases—they remembered that the

maid who attended her ladyship upon that occasion was from thence kept secluded from her fellows, and ultimately suited with an excellent situation, the duties of which took her to India ! All this remained green in the memories of the domestics. It was handed down from John to James and from Martha to Mary, as the succession happened, and lost none of its interest by the descent.

Just now this story was revived to give colour to a mystery that troubled the house. For a week Lady Maldon had kept her room, the learned little man had been attending upon her hourly, the baronet walked angrily and suspiciously about the house, and Blanche was confined to her own apartments!

Cruelly confined ! said the servants ; but the young lady said nothing of the kind. True, she was anxious ; she wondered what secret it was that her father seemed to preserve so religiously. But then he was

unusually kind and attentive, and sat with and talked divertingly to her. He took her out every day—he riding his great horse, and she her little pony. And when she did not misbehave herself—as she sometimes did, by smiling at and talking to the villagers—he was the most affectionate father alive!

He was very proud of, and anticipated great things for her. Already he had his eye upon the eldest sons of the county families. In a few, a very few years she would be a woman; and then, if she must be taken away from him, why, let nobility take her, and he would be content! Therefore must Giles keep his distance, and Peggy shut the door and hide herself when the young lady rides through the village!

Unfortunately, he was not seconded in this feeling by the daughter. Pride was the one quality of which she could not boast, and familiarity was her failing. To her, Peggy and Giles were objects of in-

terest. She had kind words for them, sometimes more substantial kindnesses. Riding with her father, she had been known to amble from his side, stop at the door of a cottage, and talk to a poor woman immediately afflicted with a paralysis of curtseying! Then some such dialogue as this would happen between the knight and his daughter.

“ You see Maldon Priory yonder, Blanche ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ And you have not forgotten the hovel you stopped at just now ? ”

“ Oh, no. The poor people—— ”

“ There, never mind the poor people! It is enough that they *are* poor, and that God in His wisdom made them so. But I wish to show you that just as much out of place as the hovel would look by the side of Maldon Priory, did you seem by the side of that low, ill-bred labouring woman ! ”

Blanche casts down her eyes.

“ Are you angry, father ? ”

“ No, my dear, not angry. But you have very little pride.”

“ But is it proper to be proud ? ”

“ Well, ‘ proud,’ though a good word, is perhaps a harsh one. I wish you to have more self-respect.”

Self-respect—what is self-respect ? thinks Blanche. And at home she refers to a little book, given to her by her father wherein this quality is made the subject of an essay. It seems to say that self-respect consists in avoiding mean and unworthy actions, and in that proper bearing towards the world which wins affection ! She shows the essay to her father. He tells her that the book is a child’s book, and she should grow out of it !

Thus she approaches womanhood. If she does not mend, thinks Sir Roger, what will become of her !

But during Lady Maldon’s illness, Blanche was humoured even in this failing.

She was allowed to find occupation for her thoughts in little acts of kindnesses that come gracefully from the daughter of the manor. She might do anything but pry into the secrets of her mother's seclusion !

The baronet detested illness. His own was a healthy family. The Maldons had always been consistent in paying the debt of nature without incurring the heavy interest of infirmity ! They knew no lingering years of bedridden suffering. On the contrary, two baronets of the line, hale, hearty gentlemen under fifty, had passed from their mortal estate without even time to partition their personal property and make their servants legatees !

The family of Lady Maldon had different habits of life and death. They were plagued with strange illnesses ; they gave long warnings of dissolution. It was not uncommon for their collateral branches to be set apart and destined for each other, in a royal and ridiculous manner ; and so good did they

think their blood, that they kept it to themselves and impoverished it! Almost all their married people were cousins!

Had Sir Roger Maldon known anything of this family's infirmity, undoubtedly he would have kept clear of it. But he married in haste; and now—with Lady Maldon hidden in her bed chamber, and the doctor coming daily—he was enabled to repent at leisure!

But her ladyship recovered, and Blanche was released from confinement. The young lady, holding out both her hands and asking many questions, ran to embrace her mother.

“My dear child,” said her ladyship, “How curious, how *exigeant* you are! Can't I be ill if I please? If I like my own room can't I keep it? I suppose I smell of medicine. Do I? So you've a letter from Richard eh?”

The last question was addressed by the lady to her husband, who was crushing a letter in his hand.

“ Yes,” he said.

“ Well, what’s it about? Is he going to India, or Canada, or where?”

“ He’s an idiot! as I always thought him; a graceless rascal,—with even less brains than beauty!”

“ Dear me!” exclaimed her ladyship. “ What is the matter?”

“ Read this,” said the baronet,—and he flung the letter to his wife.

“ Blanche,—you read it. My eyes are very weak just now.”

The young lady took the letter, and trembled as she opened it. Poor Richard! He was in the hands of the Jews; his credit pledged for five hundred and fifty pounds; and the debt daily increasing! He had nothing of value but his commission. Might he sell that?

“ This was the prayer of the letter.

“ And what do you intend to do?” said her ladyship.

“ Nothing!” replied the baronet, “ not

even answer him. He may sell if he pleases. I shall neither advise nor assist him."

Blanche's heart ached for her poor brother; but what could she do? Her father was stern and inflexible; her mother calm, cold, and repellent. The letter, too, was angrily torn up, and cast into the fire. So the address was destroyed, and the sister could not even write!

Soon after this, Roger Maldon was surprised by seeing his brother at Oxford. The heir was the centre of a circle, the glass of fashion for university men, and the great gun of his college! Wherever he went, he had a shoal of followers, and his name was a tower of strength. How, then, could he recognise as his brother a poor, humble young fellow who sought his Alma Mater only for her lessons? The idea was preposterous! Half his flock would fall away from and despise him for the connection. Besides, Richard was not entered of the same college as the heir. So what need was there for intercourse? None!

The brothers met, however, one evening, in the cloisters.

“ Ah! Richard! What do you do here?” said Roger, falling back into the shade. “ I thought you were in a marching regiment?”

“ I was,” replied the shabby young man.

“ And what do you intend to do now— Surely not to stay here?”

“ Yes, till I take a degree.”

“ And you mean to be a parson, I suppose?”

“ No, I have not settled my profession yet.”

“ Well, here, come this way, out of the light: those fellows are looking at us. You see, I’ve plenty of friends here; and if you should meet me, you know, at any time with them, why, you understand, it might be inconvenient for us to—to—”

“ Recognise each other?” suggested Richard.

“ Yes,—just so,” replied the heir. “ Good bye. You won’t forget what I say, will you?”

“ Oh no ! I shall not forget it ! ” said Richard bitterly. And he went back to his dull little room, bent over his books, and there found solace.

Sir Roger Maldon kept his word ; he neither assisted nor advised his youngest son. He left him to extricate himself from the toils of the chosen people as he pleased. The result was that the commission found its way to the army agents, was sold, and the money obtained for it applied in liquidating the debt due on the two bills, and in entering and maintaining Richard Maldon at Oxford as a student for a degree.

At the various stages of these proceedings Richard addressed letters to his father. To the last of these only did he obtain any reply ; and this reply was written in anger, Sir Roger declining to have anything to do with the balance of the commission money, and telling his son to keep it, and consider it as his entire heritage !

Well, the time passed away, and Roger Maldon went up for his degree, — just escaped plucking, and therefore his education was complete! He left Oxford, and returned home, intending, after a short retirement, to make the grand tour.

“Ah! Blanche,” he said, when he met his sister. “What a fine girl you’ve grown! Six months have made you almost a woman! But how dull this place seems.”

“Have you brought Richard with you?” enquired the sister.

“Richard! no. He has six months to stay yet. But I hear he’s doing great things.”

“When did you see him last?”

“My dear girl! what a terrible way you’re in about Richard. I haven’t seen him three times these three years!”

Blanche asked more questions. She had to assist at the cutting up and disposition of the fatted calf, which in a figurative sense, was killed to celebrate the heir’s majority. This calf was served up cold for

many days to come : indeed, while Roger Maldon was at the Priory, it was a standing dish. But he grew tired of it, tired of the place, and went away for foreign excitement.

Some months after this, there was a less significant arrival. Lady Maldon was uneasy, and Sir Roger secluded himself, as though he feared an unpleasant meeting. Only Blanche had a welcome for her poor brother ! But her welcome was fervent, and her love was manna to the soul of Richard ! It was all unexpected, too. The young man had not even hoped for it. He believed himself to be an outcast from family affections ; and here was this fair sister showering upon him the blessings of her regard !

“ You are a great scholar, Richard. I hear that you have gone far beyond your brother in university honours.”

“ What need has he of honours ? Has he not the substantial favours of fortune ?”

“ And you have to seek them ! Therefore your career should be the greater !”

“ And how to begin ? ”

“ Oh, I have a very pretty prospect sketched out for you ! ”

“ What is it ? ”

“ Why, you are to be a pastor ! You are to have charges and charities, and lead a reverend and decorous existence ! The rich are to respect, and the poor look up to you ! You are to preach the Gospel ! ”

Richard shook his head.

“ And you think me fit for those duties ? True, I could perform them ; but I should do so mechanically, and as I might follow a profession. And the church should not be a profession, Blanche ! Its offices should not be undertaken rashly, and without especial grace and fitness ! ”

“ But I thought you were studying for it ? What did you go to college for ? Why did you labour for a degree ? ”

“ My dear sister, a college does not fit a man for the pulpit ; a degree does not give him faith and authority ! And as for myself,

how, with a soul all uncured of my own, can I undertake the cure of others? What if, after blindly leading my fellows, I should discover that I was myself blind?"

Blanche had nothing to reply; but she thought her brother strange and wayward.

"How, then, shall we employ ourselves?" she said. "Mine are simple amusements. What books have you brought? Dry ones, of course. Well, you shall translate the great Greeks for me; and make me as familiar with Herodutus as with Hume; with Sophocles as with Shakspeare. You shall—"

There was a tap at the door.

"My lady wishes to see you, miss."

Blanche went down to her mother.

"Where have you been hiding? What have you been doing, Blanche?" said that lady. "We have a letter here from Roger. He's at Geneva, and has met with friends already!"

The sister's face expressed a very proper degree of congratulation.

“ What friends are they ?” she enquired.

“ Oh, you shall hear, at least, you shall hear all we know,” said her ladyship ; and she read—

“ ‘ I met a Monsieur de Lisle at Paris, at
‘ the Embassy. He is a very nice fellow ;
‘ talks of going to Baden with me ; is
‘ acquainted with the best life and the best
‘ people to be found out of England ! and
‘ that is saying a great deal, for the new
‘ ideas in this part of the world have
‘ driven all but the common herd to shady
‘ places. The roads and the hotels are just
‘ now crowded with tradesmen and their
‘ wives, and people who pay their travelling
‘ expenses by writing about what they have
‘ seen. Every third man has a note-book,
‘ and if you speak to him, ten to one but
‘ he sketches your person and prints
‘ your conversation ! So I consider myself
‘ fortunate in being here in a cottage out of
‘ the way, with the advantage of good so-
‘ ciety. M. de Lisle has a sister, a lady

‘ of great beauty and accomplishments.
‘ She travels with him.’ ”

Lady Maldon dropped her eye-glass, and looked at her daughter to see what she thought of the letter.

“ Very amusing, isn’t it, Blanche?”

“ Very,” replied the young lady.

The Baronet said nothing, but wondered of what family the De Lisles came, how long their pedigree was ; and, like a good father, encouraged other suspicions of those friends who had sufficient influence over his son to detain him, as Sir Roger thought, on the edge of a dreary lake !

CHAPTER X.

ROGER MALDON did not go direct to Baden when he left the cottage on the lake of Geneva. Something called him to Rome. From that city he dated a curious letter—a letter that puzzled his father, bewildered his mother, and was unintelligible to Blanche! It said nothing about the De Lisles, but enshrined a little romance, with which he had nought to do, but which seemed to interest him mightily! It was all about one Francesca, who was married unhappily—married to an old man, and condemned to receive his shivering adorations! The letter might

have been written by a woman, it had such a fervid but, melancholy tone; the episode might have been taken from a book, it was so very like a fourth edition of a thrice-told tale! Above all, the writer, who should have been tame as a schoolboy with Plato, was impassioned as the Greek chorus!

He was himself again in a month, however, for Baden cured him of sentiment. De Lisle was at his right hand; Count Kreutzer, a new friend, at his left. When he was tired of these, there was Mademoiselle!—as he said, a lady of great beauty and accomplishments! The letter explaining these facts was short and hurried. It was written more for filial courtesy than anything else, and seemed to say—“I’ve scarcely time for this; but you’ll expect it, and here it is. Besides, I want money. Let me have letters of credit immediately!”

The Baronet sat down and wrote a long reply to this communication. He enclosed

the letters of credit, but sent with them many warnings, many suggestions as to his son's behaviour. Baden was very well—everybody went there; but then there was so much play about! Let the novice beware of the tables! He must keep up his reputation as a gentleman; but he was not to be careless. All which fatherly advice no doubt did the young man much good, and influenced him mightily!

When Sir Roger Maldon rose from his seat, after writing this letter, he shuddered slightly, and complained of a pain in his side. The writing had given it him, he thought. Sedentary employment disagreed with him. But the hounds were out that day, and a run with them would set him right again!

Blanche saw her father just as he was leaving the house. She was alarmed at the pallor of his countenance!

“Don't ride to-day!” she said. “You

look anything but well! I never saw you pale before."

"Pale! Am I pale? Ah! it's the writing! A gallop will make me red again!" And, pushing Blanche gently aside, he mounted, and rode off to cover.

The fox that day was tenacious of his hiding-place. In a most discourteous manner, he kept twenty English gentlemen waiting in their saddles, all ready to run him to the death! He would not break! The first whip went slashing and swearing about; and as it was bitterly cold weather, several of the gentlemen were nearly frozen to their pig-skins!

"Devilish annoying, isn't it, Maldon?" said Lord Dalton, an awkward young gentleman, who had just come of age, and taken possession of his property.

The Baronet was ill and in an ill-humour. He was in no mood to be called "Maldon" by a young fellow who might be his grandson! He answered angrily—

“ My Lord ! For many years I had the honour of your father’s acquaintance ; but I never recollect him addressing me as you have done !”

“ Oh !” said the young lord, who was impervious and unimpressionable upon points of ceremony, and, indeed, upon most other points. “ Don’t you like it ? Well, I’ll call you what you do like, if you’ll tell me. What shall it be ?”

“ I shall be content with being unnoticed by your lordship !” replied the Baronet, stiffly.

The young gentleman would have had his retort, but the old huntsman started off. The fox was visible ; the dogs were flying after him like fate ; the horses were carrying their riders gallantly over hedge, ditch, and fence. Oh, what a run that was ! The fox crossed the borders of three counties, and tired out all but his toughest pursuers ! For years afterwards that fox-hunt was the subject of conversation at all tables ; its

history was written in a book almost as big and with as many illustrations as Foxe's Martyrs ! For miles round the public-house parlours were embellished with gorgeously coloured prints, showing the various phases of that fox hunt, from the break at the cover to the kill on the hill side !

In the last of this series of prints might be seen an elderly gentleman, in bright scarlet, leaning somewhat feebly towards the neck of his horse, yet following, like a thorough sportsman, to the death ! That figure was not an ill-representation of Sir Roger Maldon, one of three gentlemen who, as actors in the adventure, witnessed its conclusion.

These three gentlemen turned to ride home.

“ What's the matter, Maldon ? ” said one of them. “ Why, you're trembling ! ”

Sir Roger tried to grasp the reins firmer, to sit steadier, and to shake off his weakness ; but it was no use. Crossing a hedge

he lost his balance, slid from the saddle, and came to the ground!

He was put into a farmer's gig, and thus conveyed home. When he reached the Priory, he exerted himself to the utmost to hide his illness. He dismissed the gig at the avenue, led his horse to the door, and walked unassisted into the dining-room, where he found his wife and daughter waiting anxiously.

"Where *have* you been?" said her ladyship. "I'm famished!"

Blanche rose from her seat, and took her father's arm. It trembled terribly!

"We've had a long run—a very long run," he said. "I never recollect such a run in my life!" And he sat to the table.

The covers were removed, and the baronet took his knife and fork as usual.

"D—n it!" he said, flinging the knife petulantly from him,—“This won't cut! Let me have another.”

A second knife was brought, but

with the same result ; the hand that held it had not the strength of a child's ! Then the baronet believed that something serious was the matter with him. He tried to rise, and leave the table ; but he fell back powerless in his chair, covered his face with his hands, and cried,

“ Good God ! Then I *am* ill ! ”

Lady Maldon laid down the knife and fork she had been impatiently playing with during her husband's strange proceedings, raised her eye-glass, and looking inquiringly through it, said,

“ Well, you *do* look ill, really ! What a strange thing ! Send for the doctor at once. Blanche, my dear, will you carve ? ”

Blanche was busy. She was assisting her father to rise. With a great effort, he stood for a moment on his feet. Then, suddenly putting his hand to his side, and uttering spasmodic expressions of pain, he fell back to his former position.

There was a man behind Lady Maldon, waiting for her plate. Blanche beckoned to this man; and he came! His master was fainting!

“We must carry him to his bed-room,” said Blanche.

Shall I fetch James?” enquired the man.

Blanche nodded, and James made his appearance. Then the two men, taking their master by the heels and the shoulders, carried him solemnly from the room. As they were passing the doorway, Lady Maldon spoke:—

“Blanche, my dear! do tell them to put your poor father down, and carry him in some other way. I can’t bear his being moved like that!”

The physician, her ladyship’s medical attendant, was sent for, and he came. Lady Maldon was the first to see and talk to him. He listened to a diagnosis of her disorders for the last two or three months, and was then permitted to approach the real

patient. His countenance fell when he saw the baronet.

“ Serious! very serious!” he said, “ I must not conceal from you that this is a dangerous case, and may be fatal in twenty-four hours !”

Lady Maldon, to whom this was specially addressed, went at once to her toilet-table, and looked in the glass to see how the news affected her! She was certainly crying; and the sight convinced her that her inward feelings must be lacerated, and her heart little likely to hold together for any long period. She returned to her husband’s bedside; and there, dabbing a lace handkerchief to her eyes, she wept, and tried to worry her daughter into as useless a creature as herself.

“ Pray send me something,” she said to the physician, “ I can’t bear this. It will be too much for me. I know it will.”

Presently the baronet was calm enough to talk.

“Come here,” he said to his daughter, “I want to speak to you. I guess what your mother and the doctor have been whispering about. They need not treat me as a child! What they can say, I can bear to hear. If I am to die, I can die calmly.”

“Oh, no, no, no!” said Lady Maldon, hysterically, “don’t talk of dying! I can never bear it.”

“But I can!” said Sir Roger, somewhat sternly. “My only anxiety is about you, Blanche. I had great hopes for you; and now, who is to carry them out? Your brother is too young to have consideration enough. But I should like to see him, to talk to him. Write, Blanche; write at once. How long does the doctor give me?”

The poor girl shook her head. She had not the flow of words possessed by her mother, and such a scene made her dumb! All her energies were bent upon doing, not talking. So her father’s question was un-

answered. She wrote, however, as he desired. Alas, alas, with what vain hopes !

Lady Maldon was sobbing in a corner of the room ; camphor, sal volatile, vinegar— all were about her—and yet she could not keep up ! When her husband fell asleep, she beckoned Blanche to her.

“ This will be too much for me ! ” she said, “ I feel myself to be gradually sinking. I havn’t eaten a morsel since lunch ; and I’ve no appetite now. How *could* I have, under the circumstances ? Who could expect me to eat ? ”

Ah ! who indeed ! thought Blanche.

“ And Roger’s away ; and there’s nobody in the house if anything should happen ! At least there’s Richard ; but what can *he* do ? ”

“ Oh pray talk less familiarly of anything happening ! ” said Blanche. “ Let us hope that nothing will happen ! ”

“ But you heard what the doctor said ? ”

“ Oh yes, I heard. But doctors are sometimes wrong. He may be wrong. See how quietly father’s sleeping now. When he wakes, surely he will be better !”

Lady Maldon shook her head drearily. In her own mind she had determined that her husband could not get better ; and it seemed ill-natured of her daughter to disturb this certainty, and put doubt in its place. Besides, there was a kind of relief in believing in the worst : it put beyond possibility the deceptions that wait upon hope !

When the night came, her ladyship left the room, and retired to her uneasy couch. Richard took her place, and watched with his sister. With the first blush of morning, the physician was at the bedside of his patient. He whispered hurriedly to Blanche :

“ Call her ladyship !” If she wishes to see her husband alive, she must see him at once !”

Lady Maldon came down, shivering and complaining of the cold. But the physician’s

look alarmed her. She went meekly to her husband's bedside. He turned feebly, and seeing all eyes bent tearfully upon him, divined the reason.

“Good bye, Margaret!” he said. “Blanche, stoop down, and kiss me. Stay,—have I forgotten anything?”

His eye wandered round till it rested upon Richard.

“My boy!” he said, as the young man clasped the cold fingers of his father,—“I have been harsh to you. The recollection seems to rise up and rebuke me now. If I might live, but—but—”

The dying man had no more words; he sunk heavily upon his pillow.

“Hush!” said the physician, raising his hand, as Lady Maldon was about to speak. And even as the physician's hand drooped slowly to his side, the long sleep of death came gently upon Sir Roger Maldon!

CHAPTER XI.

“BETSY, my gal,” said Tom Jackson, when, after much reading and spelling, and many references to the dictionary, he had mastered the contents of a letter just received from London.—“Betsy, my gal, Mas’r Gerald’s coming down here to paint!”

“To do what?” enquired the wife.

“To paint!” repeated the husband.

“Lor!” said young Tom, now grown into a great raw lad of six feet or so—the very man for a grenadier—“what’s he goin’ to paint, I wonder? Squire’s gates looks

werry bad, certainly! P'raps he's goin' to paint them."

"No," replied Betsy, "I should think not. I fancy it's another sort of painting—pictures, you know."

"Oh," said the lad, "like them at the White Lion, in the parlour, I spose?"

"Yes," replied Betsy, "very likely. But how kind of him to think of us, now, and to come down here, aint it, Tom?"

"Werry!" returned the husband.

"Ah," said Betsy, thoughtfully, "he looked as though he'd come to be something great, he seemed so clever, didn't he, Tom? Wasn't I always saying he seemed clever?"

"Oh, yes, you was always a sayin' on it!"

Betsy sighed. She was melancholy that day. She thought the world was getting a little before her and her family! There was her tall, large-limbed son an idler; not that he wished to be unemployed, but much of Sir Roger Maldon's land was put out of cultivation. A new bailiff, a

man of an experimental turn, was doing great things with the estate. He was draining, inclosing, and fencing off. He pulled down cottages and built boilers; threshed his corn and cut his turnips by steam-power; hatched chickens in an oven; and made the farm buildings resound with the whizzing and crashing of wheels! At certain times to enter them was like going into a back kitchen on a washing day; to come away from them was to be conscious of headache. Greasy little boys, smelling vilely of oil, and covered with coal-dust, haunted the place. They assisted to keep up the snorting, the puffing, and the general air of dampness that reigned around them. Experiments were made in the baronet's fields,—when dull, mechanical things, being well watered, well warmed, well screwed together, and well oiled, were led to and put upon certain tracks, there to run blindly backwards and forwards till they wanted well watering, warming, screwing

together, and well oiling again ! They were man's most obedient, humble servants while they were in working order, and man kept his eye on them !—but let a bolt snap, let man be inattentive, and they would crush him, grind his bones, rend him limb from limb, and then break up and bury themselves, as though conscious of murder and stricken with remorse !

Tom Jackson and his family were not sufficiently learned in these wonders to appreciate the great, the incalculable benefits they conferred upon mankind ! The Jacksons were dull people in this matter, and seeing their eldest son idle, and the greasy little boys running about the farm, they had no love for machinery, but watched it jealously, and shook their heads at its progress. Neither did they take kindly to the improvements—the fencing and the enclosing—going on about them ; for these improvements were approaching them too nearly, and threatened to rob them of house

and home, as it had robbed several of their neighbours. There was a town within seven miles or so, truly; but then seven miles was a long distance for a labourer to walk to and from his work,—besides, the place was Tom's particular aversion! It was a factory town, crowded with close courts and alleys, into one of which, if Tom became a townsman, he must inevitably go! These facts, and this prospect then, made Betsy melancholy, and somewhat soured her husband's temper.

When the wife had been silent and thoughtful for a time, she looked at Tom and said—

“Ah, Tom, we aint better off, are we, than when Mas'r Gerald was here as a boy? Somehow times don't mend. When poor father was alive, though he did nothing, and before Reuben was took away from us, we lived just as well, didn't we? And we saved a little money, too!”

“Yes,” replied Tom, “we did. But

then, you know, my gal, there was none o' them there machines, and things! It's them things as ruins us poor people."

"Ah!" said Betsy, "perhaps they do, Tom."

"P'raps!" returned the husband, who was laconic except under excitement, "there aint no p'raps about it! Look at Tom there. What ought he to be doing, and what *is* he doing? And spose he was a doin' better, and wanted to git married, where's there a cottage or a bit o' land for him? How *could* he git married?"

Tom at once felt an intense desire to enter the holy estate of matrimony! Such a delight being denied him, what more natural than that he should crave for it? He never thought of it before; he knew no one to marry!—but if at that moment he had been asked to take any kind or condition of woman whatever to be his wedded wife, he would have answered "I wool!" and borne her triumphantly away to realise

the terrible picture painted by his father ! As it was, he sat down doggedly, and considered himself to be a young man blighted in the very flower of progenitive promise !

“ Well, Tom,” said Betsy, seeing her son’s dejection, “ let’s say no more about it, but hope for the best. It was very stupid o’ me to set it goin’ !”

“ Ah,” replied the husband, who, getting hold of a grievance, was averse to let it go : “ it’s all very well to hope ; but we may hope an’ hope while they’re pulling the place about our ears. I heard ’em talkin’ on it the other day ; and when they do it, why we shall have to go to the town and live up a court, and then God knows what’ll will become of us !”

Betsy was silent. She thought it well that her husband should subside into better spirits, not be worried into them by words. There was Tom, too, wanted soothing. Poor fellow !—couldn’t he get married ! His mother felt for him, and as she could not

give him a wife and a cottage, she gave him—what was really much better—a hot supper, and sent him happily to bed!

In a few days Gerald came, and his appearance was the signal for great wonder among the Jacksons. Oh what a man he was!—how he had grown; how improved; how handsome he was! what bright eyes he had; how white his teeth were! He was as much the object of astonishment as was the wolf found in the bed of Red Riding Hood's grandmother—the aspect of the two cases being different to the extent of Gerald not having eaten or intended to eat any old lady whatever; while Betsy, as was observed by her husband, evinced every inclination to eat Gerald!

“Oh, Mister Gerald,” she said, “you *have* grown into a gentleman! Well, after all, there aint so much difference between poor people and rich people! I'm sure you might stand by the Squire or Sir Roger and not be a bit the worse for it!”

“Indeed!” said Gerald, “then I *am* flattered! To be placed upon a level with a knight and a squire! What will happen next?”

Betsy was not aware that Gerald spoke half ironically, so she reiterated her assertion, bearing it out with many matters of detail that might well put Gerald to the blush. He was relieved when, the greeting being over, she permitted him to wear his favours in peace.

But Betsy’s notes of admiration were not all uncalled for : the artist had gained graces as he gained years. An easy untroubled life, the pursuit of a profession that he loved, the consciousness that he had chosen the right path, and was prospering in it—these were the aids that had helped the work of nature ; and it is enough to say that the result was something little to be wondered at, but much to be admired.

The artist had earned a name in his profession, and was known as a young painter

of much promise. The great Mr. Buskin had said he was ; so had Mr. Sock—another art-critic of reputation. Between Sock and Buskin, Gerald got on very well. They put him in books, and made him the hero of a circle ; they fought savagely for him, and were as much his partizans as though he retained, fed, and clothed them ! Probably they would have refused to lend him five shillings upon any pretence whatever ; but they were willing to peril their reputations, to stake the whole wealth of their words, in his behalf ! The champions of the other side were just as eager to hurl him from his eminence, and pull his reputation to pieces. They had a favourite of their own, for whom they fought as savagely and expended as many words as did Sock and Buskin for Gerald. To the one party Gerald was a genius ; to the other, an idiot ! But the public, discriminating between the two, bought his pictures, and thus did him the real service he wanted.

Undoubtedly the violent convulsions of Messrs. Sock and Buskin assisted Gerald in his profession. No better advertisement could he have had. Surely a picture that is worth fighting over is worth buying! That production must be great which can induce critics to foam at the mouth and call each other anything but gentlemen! So thought the public; and because the artist's name was dinned into their ears week after week, they agreed to consider it a great name, and the very best letter of recommendation when printed in a catalogue.

This was also Mr. Grey's opinion, and therefore the opposing agitations of the critics were to the good man a source of never-ending wonder. How any two people could differ about the merits of a picture painted by Gerald passed his understanding! There was the picture: it had blue, brown, and green in it; there were cows drinking, and sheep nibbling at turnips. There was a sun that seemed to give positive warmth, water

that refreshed the senses with a wonder of coolness ! A man, with whom no fault could be found except that he was squarish and had no features, was walking out of the horizon : had he been nearer to the cows, no doubt he would have been clearer to the eye. As it was, he very properly consisted of three neutral colours, produced by three dabs with three different brushes ! What could be said against such a picture as this ?

Thinking and reasoning thus, when Mr. Grey came upon a favourable criticism, he cried out, " Look here, Mary ! Here he is again ! " and, in the happiest humour, read the whole article, simply, as it were, to extract the particular sweetness that he loved. When, on the contrary, he came to an adverse criticism—and Gerald sent him one sometimes—he turned red in the face, shook his head, clenched his fist, and said to his wife :—

" This fellow's a villain, Mary. He's a painter himself ; he's envious, and wants to

injure Gerald!" and he flung the paper aside, and read no more that day.

All this happiness had been brought about by Gerald's earliest patron—the kind old man who had given the youth his first encouragement. No doubt, the little landscape bought by this gentleman was a simple production; but it exhibited signs of freshness and capability; it was an index to latent genius; and as such, it was the pleasure of its purchaser to esteem it! But it was after the completion of the second picture that Gerald began to advance in his profession. A little scene happened when this second picture was delivered. The old gentleman lived in a grand house, maintained a gallery, and was known as a connoisseur. He was a lonely man, having a family grief that made him crabbed upon occasions; and the collection of works of art was his hobby. In these works, perhaps, he found solace for his sorrows, and occupation for his thoughts. Once, Gerald discovered him

in tears ! He had been writing in an old red book, having the appearance of a diary. The artist could not help seeing what was written ; for the old gentleman called him to the table, and the book was open upon it. The last line ran thus :—

“ Her birthday ! a happy day once ; what is it now ? ”

But the old gentleman was seldom so sad as this. When Gerald took home the second picture, he found his patron in a merry mood, indeed ! The youth was ushered into the gallery. There, amidst the greatness and glory of the art, he saw his own modest landscape !

“ Come,” said the old gentleman, “ let me see what you’ve brought. Why, dear me, did I not tell you that I wanted a picture *as good* as the other ? ”

This was said after Gerald had uncovered the commission, and handed it to his patron ; and as it was said, to Gerald’s terror and astonishment, the connoisseur turned away,

and hid his face in his handkerchief! He writhed, he shook, he chuckled, and bent his body as though he were setting Gerald a back for leap-frog! Then he turned round, and seeing the youth's pale face, and nervous expression, said,

“Capital! That's the best picture of Disappointment I ever looked upon!”

He even turned away again, set another back, laughed again in his handkerchief, and suddenly resuming his former position, exclaimed,

“Good again! That's Indignation!”

Gerald was indignant, indeed; but the old gentleman soon cured him.

“My dear boy,” he said, “excuse me. You are not in the secret; but I am. There's nothing like studying from the life; and your face is very flexible. It's a capital face for expressing the passions. Were I a painter, you should sit to me: I'd provoke you one moment, please you the next; and

in time I should be able to illustrate Collins's Ode—on canvass !”

The old gentleman had now an opportunity of observing how joy was expressed ; and in the end, as Gerald was leaving the place—possessed of such a reward as made him think Cræsus had come again !—the connoisseur gave the youth some excellent advice, showing that he could be considerate as well as facetious :—

“Come here when you please,” he said, shaking Gerald's hand for a long, long, time, “perhaps these pictures may do you good. But escape from that tutor of yours : he'll ruin you if you don't ! He paints vilely ; paints pigs that would not be recognised were they to squeak ; and dogs that would be kicked for impostors if they were to bark ! you want drawing ; you must attend an academy, and take lessons. Mind what I say, you want drawing !

This advice Gerald took to heart and profited by. Poor Mr. Maguire was not present

to remonstrate ; so his pupil fell away from his old allegiance, and followed a new master. In time, his own genius and the teachings of this master helped him to great things. He became that pleasant mouthful over which the critics quarrelled.

How often did he contrast his happy position with what he might have been—his profession with the dull drudgery he had escaped ! Memory recalled to him the features of the dark printing office, the figure of the poor little boy, looking through the dirty windows towards the sky, and weeping in very wretchedness ! He could see the obnoxious apprentices, seated at the council fire ; he could hear the awful step of Mr. Tympan ! Uncle William, too !—ah, where was he now ? This was the saddest, the most real, of all Gerald's recollections !

Then, again, seated in his old place at Mr. Jackson's table, other thoughts came to him. Strange things had happened during his first visit to the country ! There was

the meeting with the little lady in the wood ; the meeting her on a pony,—where was *she* now ? There was the poaching ; the prison ; the release ; and the terrible event that had brought the release about ! He was thinking of these things, when he saw Tom's eyes fixed upon him, and beheld the young man's mouth shut like a mousetrap upon discovery.

“ There, Mister Gerald !” said Betsy, handing to him a plate which she had just polished with her apron, “ I've made it quite hot with rubbin !”

With many thanks, Gerald took the plate. Had it escaped the polishing, he would have been equally thankful. The friction of a common apron may improve the appearance of a plate ; but somehow or other, it always seems to leave a taste or a smell after it, that, to say the least, is not appetising.

“ I want you to tell me,” said Gerald, trying to divert general attention from his own particular proceedings, “ all you know about the family living in the Manor House—

the Priory, is it not?—in the grounds of which I once got into such mischief!”

“The Maldons?” said Betsy.

“Ah, yes, the Maldons!”

Gerald was much relieved: he was enabled to proceed with his dinner, the attention of the Jacksons being concentrated upon a new subject.

“The little girl I met in the wood,—who was she? Did I tell you I met a little girl in the wood?”

“No,” said Betsy.

“Well, I did; and I gave her some flowers I had picked.”

“Lor!” said Betsy, “perhaps it was Miss Blanche.”

“I dare say it was! Is Miss Blanche at the Priory now?”

“Yes. She walks or rides almost every day through the village.”

“And the old ruin! Is that standing? I came down here expressly to paint that ruin!”

“Lor!” exclaimed young Tom, “paint the rooin! What’s it want paintin’ for?”

“My dear Tom,” said Betsy, “you mistake. Mister Gerald does not mean to paint the ruin itself; but to paint something like it; to paint another ruin, you know, on paper. But why?” she continued, turning to the artist, “don’t you paint the house? It would make a deal grander picture.”

Gerald smiled at the simple woman, and tried to find an explanation that would meet her apprehension. The task was difficult, although Betsy was not more obtuse upon the point than many well-informed and practical people in the world.

“Because,” he said, “there’s a great difference between the house and the ruin. The ruin has all the poetry, the sentiment, you know, on its side; while the house was built, as it were, but yesterday, is made of unromantic bricks and mortar, and the people who lived in it have not been dead long enough to render their memories in-

teresting ! The ruin has survived a score of generations, was raised by the rude hands of our early ancestors, and its walls may have sheltered kings, knights, priests—all, in fact, that makes history grand or glorious !”

During the delivery of this poor oration, Betsy’s eyes had been fixed upon Gerald. At each pause in his voice, she had given him one nod ; as the climax approached, her mouth had opened wider and wider ; but when he came to a full stop, no image in a grocer’s window could have nodded more persistently !

“ Well, Mister Gerald,” she said, the nodding dying away naturally, “ I always thought you *was* clever ! but I never expected that ! It’s beautiful ! Tom, my dear, take the spoon out of your mouth ! Mister Gerald, *do* have another piece of bacon !”

CHAPTER XII.

THE crows cawed loudly among the trees in the avenue that led to Maldon Priory, and their dull song suited the silence and solemnity of the place. It was quite out of hearing of the wondrous noises that ruled in the farmyard, and sometimes flourished in the fields adjacent. High up among the Priory windows was a hatchment, and on this were perched two large black birds—fathers of families, creatures of repute in the rookery—sharpening their beaks upon the framework, and screwing their strange

eyes about to peep into the mysteries of heraldry!

Some twelve months before, the crows had watched the erecting of this hatchment with suspicious interest. The very oldest among them could not recollect any such event happening in their time, and they had no tradition handed down to them by their forefathers that might throw light upon it. So, when the carpenters had departed, two of the elders were dispatched to the escutcheon, to examine and report accordingly.

Oh! what a discord there was when they came back! The commissioners could not agree. One, perched upon his side, had seen this; the other, upon his side, had seen that! The crows were driven to appoint an umpire; and his report, being utterly and entirely different from that of either of the commissioners—because he had viewed the escutcheon from the centre—was

approved and entered among the minutes of the sable society.

From this time the escutcheon was the favourite trysting-place of the birds. Its sombreness suited them. Old female—sometimes male—crows, talked scandal there ; young crows went there to make love ! In short, look at the escutcheon when you might, ten to one that you saw a crow perched upon it !

The voices of these birds made Gerald conscious that he was approaching the Priory and the ruin. Their harsh music fell upon his ear like an old tune, awakening the romance of recollection ! Dislike the tone of this music as we may, let it burst from among tall, stately trees—offering their green arms to Heaven, sheltering simple sheep, or flinging fantastic shadows about the dappled backs of timid deer—embowering, too, a red-bricked, many-windowed mansion, softened and encrusted by the wearing

fingers of time ; and surely it will go to our hearts, give us solemn, subdued feelings, and permeate us with a sense of earth's sweetest grandeur !

Gerald was thus impressed. He sat down in the wood, and listened ; he listened and thought. He was a boy again ! He could see the fair little girl and the cruel uncle ! he felt over again his fears in the cage ! Ah ! he was sitting on the very spot where the tragedy had happened !—where the poacher and his dog were shot to the death ! He felt somehow that the poor man died to release him ! As the dead body was borne through the village, the boy's prison was unlocked, and he was free ! Then came the inquest and the gloom that hung about the place for many days ; and then the funeral ! Looking timidly over the low wall of the churchyard, Gerald witnessed this last act of the tragedy. The pastor muttered—“dust to dust !” the clods fell upon the coffin ; the last prayer was prayed ; and the crowd went

away. Then the boy entered the churchyard, and crept from stone to stone, till he neared the terrible trench! The grave-diggers were carelessly filling it up. Suddenly one of them paused in his labour, and looked straight at his fellow.

“Tom,” he said, “if I had the writin’ o’ this man’s epitaph, I’d say he was murdered!”

This scene—these words—came vividly to Gerald’s recollection now!

“Well,” he said, soliloquising aloud. “I think with the grave-digger. The man *was* murdered!—and on this very spot!”

“Your pardon, sir,” said a low, musical voice, coming from behind the artist, “May I ask *who* was murdered on this spot?”

Gerald turned hastily, if not indignantly. He saw a small, spare young man, aged beyond his years, with a careworn countenance, and a sad smile. The smile disarmed Gerald of indignation. It was soft and

winning. When it played about the stranger's face, it redeemed the coarseness and irregularity of his features. His voice, too, repeating the inquiry, sounded like a bell, and could provoke nothing but a gentle answer!

“A poor man,” replied Gerald, “who was called a poacher.”

“*Called* a poacher!” repeated the stranger.

“Yes,” said Gerald. “And will you credit me if I tell you, that once, when a boy, I too was called a poacher?”

“Scarcely.”

“But I was.”

“And you were innocent, of course?”

“I was not guilty.”

“Ah, you juggle with words! Was the poacher innocent also?”

“*He* was not guilty—not guilty of crime in the abstract. Juggle as I may with words, I can scarcely express what I mean. He was guilty, perhaps, when he came into

this wood to take what was not his own. And yet whose was it? The day before it might have fed in his field, helped to waste his substance! Who should have power of life and death over it then?"

"Ah," said the stranger, smiling his softest, "you bring into the country the reasoning of towns. Our simple minds are unfit to consider the subtleties of innocence in the abstract."

The stranger bowed, and would have passed on; but Gerald had no intention of parting with him so abruptly. It was pleasant to be met and opposed courteously—it was invigorating to come unexpectedly upon a brother in argument! Once upon a time brothers in arms were wont to meet in the same pleasant way, and batter each other in very love for chivalry! They became the best friends in the world when the passage of arms was over! Why should that time be out of joint? Gerald felt much inclined to put it together again.

From where he sat he could see the top of the old Priory ruin. He pointed to it, and said—

“Let us forget the poacher. How long, I wonder, has that old ruin defied decay?”

The stranger considered.

“Well,” he said, “it was built when the Confessor was on the throne. It was endowed by him. It stood intact till the reign of the first George.”

“You seem familiar with its history.”

“And should be what I seem. When that ruin was habitable, the greatest of my great grandfathers lived in it!”

Gerald was startled. Why, then, here was a Maldon standing before him!—Here, perhaps, was the fair little girl’s brother! And yet surely not. Where was the family likeness? This the brother of Blanche! At that moment the stranger bowed, smiled, and uttered words of farewell. The bow, the smile, the voice—these converted

Gerald. He thought the plain, graceless young man worthy of the loveliest sister that ever made mischief with the heart of her brother's friend!—and he sighed as the plain young man departed.

Gerald was alone. He went to the ruin; he had the materials of his art with him, and sat down to use them, but not a line, could he draw decently. Where was the charm of the ruin after all?—where its wondrous beauties? They had faded for a time. The artist wanted to look upon the loveliness of life! That strange young man had disturbed the proper current of his thoughts—scared the cunning from his hand. He rose and left the place. As he walked along he tore his miserable sketch into small pieces and scattered them to the winds. The crows—ever on the alert to allay their hungry cravings—saw these pieces in the air! They were credulous, and seldom looked upon paper; so they flew after

the white wonders, swallowed them, and then flew back in all the horrors of indigestion!

The artist reached the house of the Jacksons. Betsy was crying, the husband was silent and surly. Young Tom cherished an aspect of dull despair.

“Oh, Mister Gerald,” said Betsy, “we’ve got to go at last! The cottage is coming down, the land’s goin’ to be enclosed, and we shan’t have a roof to cover us.”

“Look’ee yere, sir,” said Tom, starting up and addressing the artist, “doan’t you think it hard—werry hard!—that they should turn us out of this here place, where grandfather lived, and father lived, and I’ve lived, and brought up a whole family o’ children? None of us never lived no where else, sir! Doan’t you think it’s hard?”

“Very, very hard!” said Gerald.

“Ah, I knowed you would; I said so,

didn't I, my gal? And now, where are we to go?"

Tom sat down in the very agony of despair; but his wife dried her eyes, and began to turn the matter over in her mind. She was looking for the bright side of the picture!

"My dear Tom," she said, sitting by her husband, and putting her hand on his shoulder, "we must do the best we can."

"I tell you, my gal," replied Tom, doggedly, "I aint goin' to live in that there town! I ain't goin' to live up a court, I'll starve fust! I'll go to Lunnun fust!"

"Well, but my dear," said Betsy, "the children can't starve, you know. Tom, my dear, be a man!—think of the children."

At this juncture the children—one of tender years, the other of somewhat tough aspect—entered the room. Betsy was moved to take them up and kiss them, to press them to her heart, to expend upon

them much more than ordinary affection ! She was also inspired to place them, one after the other, upon the knees of her husband. He looked at the children, brushed his hand across his eyes, and was then moved to do with the innocents as his wife had done ! The children had never before had so much fervent embracing at one time ! They were alarmed—the child of tender years especially ; and when Tom put them down they were both relieved, and ran back to their playthings. Poor little creatures ! they had no interest in the scene, it was beyond their small understandings. How do Mrs. Haller's children—the children of Norma—of the Duchess of York—feel under similar circumstances ? No doubt they hasten to the wings and take off their tight stockings in secret satisfaction !

But Betsy was struck with an idea.

“ I tell you what,” she said, “ the house aint down yet. I'll go to the Priory and

see Miss Maldon ! I'll ask her to interfere !
'The bailiff shan't have it all his own way !'

And buoyed up by this suggestion, the
Jacksons regained their good humour,
and their guest's heart ceased to ache for
them.

CHAPTER XIII.

RICHARD MALDON was reading lazily ; Blanche writing industriously. Now and then the young lady spoke to her brother :

“ Let me see ; where did the last letter say Roger was staying ? ”

“ At Baden.”

“ Ah, yes, at Baden. How fond he is of Baden ! ”

“ I had an adventure yesterday, Blanche.”

“ Oh indeed ! what was it ? ”

“ Merely a passage of polemics. I met a heretic, a man who has no faith in the justice of game laws ! ”

“ There are many such heretics, are there not? But did you convert him?”

“ No. I am scarcely a true believer myself! But as I live!—There, there, he is!”

Blanche left the writing-table, and followed Richard to the window. She did not wish to be caught peeping, so she looked over her brother's shoulder,—hiding all but her fair face.

“ Where is he?” she said.

“ There, — there,—by the edge of the wood. Why, surely he's an artist! What is that but a portfolio on his knee,—a pencil in his hand?”

“ Ah!—truly!” replied Blanche. “ But I must finish my letter. What day is this?”

“ Tuesday!”

“ Then if this is not sent to day, we shall lose a post; and that will be dreadful, so the bailiff says!”

“ What has he to do with it?”

“ Oh, I enclose a letter from him. Here it is.”

“ Ah !” said Richard. “ That bailiff is a busy man ! He seems to make money by the farm, certainly ; a feat never attempted before ; but the poor people suffer for it ! He pulls down their cottages, and sets them adrift without the least compunction !”

“ Indeed !” said Blanche.

“ Yes. I passed through the village yesterday, just before I met with the artist yonder. The bailiff had been at work ; I saw him leave a cottage, and I heard the weeping and wailing that followed !”

Blanche laid down her pen.

“ And are such doings necessary ?” she said.

“ Yes--to the plans of the bailiff ; not otherwise.”

A servant entered. “ A person from the village wants to see you, miss !”

The servant departed, and Betsy Jackson took her place. The poor woman made many curtsies, hung her head humbly, and

was abashed at her own boldness. Blanche knew her face well; it had never been forgotten since the scene in the justice room! It was a face that she looked for and liked to see in the village; for was it not closely connected with the hero that once upon a time the little lady had taken to heart, to replace her neglected doll, and to realize the good boy of her story-book! Blanche had therefore much interest in Betsy. She called her by her Christian name, and otherwise patronised her.

“What is it, Betsy?” she said.

“Oh Miss! You’ll excuse the liberty I’ve took; but I’m in great, very great, trouble! We’re goin’ to be turned out of house and home! We’ve had notice to leave; the bailiff give it to us yesterday! Oh pray do speak to Sir Roger for us!”

Richard looked meaningly at his sister, and Blanche understood him to hint that Betsy’s visit was the result of what he had alluded to! The bailiff’s letter was at her

right hand. It was a business letter, unsealed, and as she was to send it with her own, there could surely be no harm in looking over its contents! It might, perhaps, refer to the eviction of the Jacksons. Her instinct was right: ~~it~~ did. The bailiff urgently pressed for more authority—for full liberty, in fact, to do as he pleased with the hearths and homes within the jurisdiction of his stewardship!

“ You may return home, Betsy, and stay in your cottage—at least for a time,” said Blanche, firmly. “ I’m sure you will not be interfered with till Sir Roger comes back, even if you are then.”

The poor woman was overjoyed and prolific of blessings. She exalted Blanche at once to the beneficent dignity of an angel, and believed in her beatitude! Then she went back to her husband; and that very day Tom Jackson, meeting the bailiff, snapped his fingers—of course behind the bailiff’s back—at him!

The man in office was terribly angered when Blanche returned his letter, told him she had read it through, and did not think it of sufficient importance to merit immediate attention! But he was inwardly infuriated when she advised him to do nothing in the way of improvement till he saw his master! He promised himself, however, the sweets of revenge; and confidently waited for his master's coming.

Since the death of Sir Roger Maldon, the arrival of this bailiff was the only event that occurred out of the usual routine of things at the Priory. The heir had returned home, stayed just long enough to take possession, and had then gone back to his eager friends on the continent. Lady Maldon,—terribly cut up, of course, and extravagant in handkerchiefs and *sal volatile*,—had looked to the safety of her jointure, and taken to habits of retirement. She was kept alive and solaced by the occasional visits of her physician; and one day, when

Blanche happened to mention the awkward and embarrassing position of Richard, her ladyship asked,—Why wasn't he a captain? —Why wasn't he a clergyman? and begged that in her afflicted and bereaved condition, she might be spared any further cruelties!

Richard, then,—unsettled, uncertain what to do for a living—lingered, and did nothing! He seemed little likely to take to any active pursuit, for he delighted in literature and learned leisure. Why he missed becoming a fellow of his college, and thus winning his bread by labour that he loved, was a secret best known to himself,—perhaps having to do with that foolish modesty, that retiring diffidence, which isolated him from his scholastic brethren, and lost their friendship!

The natural result of this idle life was, that being a young man of literary tastes and laudable but profitless ambition, he sat down to write poetry; not verses to M. or N.; not Stanzas to Eliza, or any such co-

quettish trifling with the muses ; but poetry in sonorous lines of ten syllables, spasmodic cadence, and called epic ! The construction of this epic was his chief occupation, and—saving the solace of his sister's society—his sole happiness ! While he was engaged upon it, he was content. Living with the wondrous children of his fancy, thinking their thoughts, saying their smart sayings, and dealing out to them the peculiar justice of the study, he had a world to himself ! For the time he could forget the actual world—the world of his mother and his brother—and—glorious privilege!—he could rail at it in melodious numbers, and then, as if in defiance, take all his good people to a brighter and a better ! Surely this was consolation ! Every half-hour or so he ran to his sister, having with him a new length of the epic—hot, seething, as it were, from the furnace of his brain—and she, poor thing ! listened to him, and often applauded,

and never complained! What sister could do more? How many sisters would do as much?

Never since Homer had there been anything so grand as this epic! It was to wring from fortune the favours she had hitherto withheld! It was to go forth and conquer the connoisseurs! As yet it had subdued only a weak woman; had taken captive merely the poet's sister! The poet was eager to try its effect upon some one else, and his heart ached for a preliminary rehearsal. A thought struck him as he looked through the window at Gerald:—The first book was complete: what if the artist yonder could be brought beneath its fascinating influence! Richard was a man of energy—where the epic was concerned; to think was to act. He flung aside the volume he had been reading, gathered up the loose sheets of the poem, and alarmed his sister by a feverish haste that was unnatural to him! Unfortunately for his

purpose, the loose sheets were many ; like most young gentlemen who finish their education at crack colleges, he wrote a huge, indistinct hand that sprawled and meandered over the paper in the approved style of fashionable caligraphy. His writing was antipodal to that of the man who put the Lord's prayer in the circumference of a fourpenny piece : the circumference of the moon would barely have sufficed for him to perform the pious labour in ! The consequence was that the first book of the epic made a formidable bundle, a thing to frighten any man who knew the unpitiful rapacity of a manuscript author ! In this extremity, Blanche came to the rescue :

“ Why not,” she said, “ bring Mahomet to the mountain ? The task will surely be easier !”

It wanted but this. In the interests of the epic, what was ceremony ! So the poet cast aside his modesty, and took the welcome advice.

Gerald, now in the right frame of mind, and sketching furiously—was disturbed by the soft, bell-like voice again. He rose promptly, offered his hand, and the author accepting it, freedom and familiarity of speech were at once established.

“Do I interrupt you?” said Richard; knowing well enough that he did. But what was a sketch to an epic?

“No,” returned Gerald. “I am almost tired. I shall give up work for to-day!”

“Then, I have a favour to ask. I am an author,—at least, an author out of print.”

Gerald smiled.

“Ah! you smile! I suppose there are so many authors out of print?”

“Many—very many; but not necessarily the worse for that! What is the favour?”

“That you will be my first audience.”

Gerald hesitated, for he knew the terrors that might wait upon acquiescence. There is no more rapacious monster alive than your manuscript author! He is worse than

the Ancient Mariner, more terrible than the Sibyl, and has less compassion than either!

But the artist thought his new friend might be merciful of his kind,—so, preparing to seat himself, he gave token of assent.

“Not here!” said the poet, characteristically. “The muse is to be heard only at her particular shrine!”

“And that?”

“Is in one of the quietest chambers of Maldon Priory!”

Gerald felt, and rightly, that he was conferring a favour, so he had no delicacy in following the beneficiary. He passed the avenue, mounted the broad steps, and entered the house. Before Blanche could retreat, she found herself returning the courtesies of a well favoured young man, whose face seemed wondrously familiar to her! As to Gerald, he was confused, and troubled in the extreme; for his sense of familiarity was a certainty, and the lady was

no stranger to him! Besides, he had evidence that she had not to sustain, the suggestions of memory. Before him, surely enough, stood the fair little girl grown into a woman!

But the epic was produced; the epic was the business in hand. There might have been poetry, but there was no romance in that! Richard began to recite fervently and fiercely; to employ all the graces of elocution and the realities of feeling; to smile, scowl, look defiant and fearful, confident and craven! As a simple young man, given entirely to his subject, he declaimed with all the vigour of actual indignation! His very soul centred in the work! And yet—strange to say, before the first book was half exhausted, Gerald was somewhat bored! He asked himself—what was it all about? Why that constant recurrence of simile—that terrible luxury of imagination? The chief object of the poem seemed to be the elaborate illustration of an idea that

everything was like something else, and that nothing was what ordinary intelligence took it for! Here it was geological; there it was busy with astronomy; in another place it wandered into pantheistic divinity!—and running through the whole of it was a petty but unconscious egotism, which might be said to be its granite formation and to crop out with rugged offensiveness! Otherwise, what was it all about? It might be satisfactory to the author to talk of—

“The silver-hornèd moon, gemm'd with her stars;
The bright, all-searching, permeable glow!”

But to whom else? Where was the advantage of thus heaping words upon words? Above all, had not some such thing been said before?

But Richard went on uninterrupted to the end! Then, looking at Gerald with an air of triumph, he waited for a judgment.

“Your opinion?” he said, confidently.

Blanche, who had praised the epic much when given to her in small doses, was

scarcely so pleased as she might have been upon swallowing the whole! Judging, then, by her own feelings, and thinking that the artist might be an honest man, not accustomed to flatter or deceive,—she feared for the result, and laboured to get a reprieve for the epic.

“You should not press hastily for an opinion,” she said to her brother “Such a poem requires consideration.”

“Just so!” exclaimed Gerald, hoping to escape the judicial office.

But the author pressed for a verdict.

“Give me,” he said, “at least, an idea of your general impression. Never mind detail. What do you think of the work as a whole?”

“Well, as a whole,” replied the artist, with hesitation, “perhaps it is scarcely intelligible enough; probably a little too discursive; and the argument might, I should think, be better explained in fewer words!”

Richard smiled sarcastically, and said, "Indeed!" Then he turned to the window, made one or two dull remarks, and exhibited very little desire for the artist's further companionship! Blanche saw this, and was grieved; she endeavoured, by her own marked attention, to destroy the ungracious effect it might produce; and, of course, Gerald was delighted with her, and thought her the loveliest, the most amiable woman in the world! He ceased to think of the epic; he scarcely noticed its author; and it was only when propriety moved him to rise and say farewell to his enchantress, that he regretted the cold demeanour of her brother! Then his heart whispered—Oh, that I could call this man my friend! But, alas! the hand he offered was taken coldly, dropped hastily, and not a word was said of future intercourse!

"Blanche!" exclaimed the poet, when Gerald was out of hearing, "that young man, though an artist, has not an atom of

soul! I have no hesitation in saying that a common-place novel, or a trashy book of adventure, would please him better than the loftiest epic that was ever penned!"

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR ROGER MALDON was *en route* for his hereditary mansion. He brought friends with him; and for these friends he determined to put his house to its capabilities. The poor people of the village having heard of his coming, began to ring the bells very early on the day of his expected arrival, extemporised a sort of public welcome, set the time apart as a holiday, and brought out their Sunday clothes that they might find favour in the eyes of the baronet!

But, unhappily it was wet that day, and the rain came down and spoilt all their pre-

tensions ! The men who were to fling up their caps ; the maidens who were to strew flowers ; the fiddler who was to play a country version of the "Conquering Hero ;"—all disappeared suddenly and mysteriously ! Even the ringers, after two hours' exertion, left the belfry in peace ;—and when the baronet came by, in a plain travelling carriage, and without any ceremony, —the majority of his tenants were in the public house !

The friends whom Sir Roger brought with him were his hospitable entertainers on the Lake of Geneva, his society at Baden, and his companions everywhere else. They were Monsieur Auguste De Lisle and his sister Marie. To them he assigned the best suite of apartments in the Priory—removing Richard from a room that somewhat interfered with the arrangement, and requesting Blanche to resign a little *boudoir*. This Blanche did with good grace ; for was it not to comfort a lady—a foreign lady—a

very gorgeous creature, who spoke broken English with a grand perversity of accent that gave additional charms to the many she possessed!

The suite of apartments occupied by these two visitors was—as we have said—the best in the house. The rooms had a grand view over park and woodland, and the windows were within arm's-length of tall trees, which, when the wind was high, bent and bowed, and seemed to greet the eyes that looked out upon them! The crows, too, seeing something unusual astir, were eager to know the meaning of it; and when De Lisle put his head out of the window the morning after his arrival, to take, as he said “the air,” and to look at the “black-birds,” as he called them, the creatures cawed all the louder, and flapped their wings, and started from their nests—keeping their young families hungry while they did the stranger the honours of recognition! De Lisle appreciated this, and often

afterwards opened the window, and threw out inviting bribes, and talked to his sable friends !

De Lisle was a well-built, heavy-shouldered man, taken in nicely at the waist, and flowing into full-pleated rotundity at the hips. He had a dark olive skin, covered, in the proper places, by a bristly black beard, and moustachios that had never been ruined by the razor. His features were finely chiselled, and his eyes black, bold, and piercing ! His nose was aquiline—Mephistophilean, perhaps, inclining to the Devil's bridge ; and his mouth firm, it might be, sinister. Altogether he was a man of mark,—a man to be looked at twice, when met for the first time. When he stood to his full height, and played his eye angrily, his look was menacing—stiletto-like—and cut keenly with the edge of the passion it was intended to express. When he bent, and smiled, and said soft words, no one could be more gentle, kind, and persuasive !

He would have made a versatile actor, for he could play Lovelace as well as Iago!

His sister partook materially of these characteristics; indeed, the brother and sister were very much alike. And yet what was menacing in the man, was majestic in the woman. She was a paragon of majesty, and her carriage and presence were such as should belong to a queen! She might, in other times, have been Semiramis or Cleopatra! Indeed, her brother, when when they were alone, often abbreviated the latter name, and called her "Cleo!" Her age was difficult to tell: she may have been twenty-five—perhaps a year or two younger; for women of her mould and material come to maturity early, and sometimes do injustice to themselves in the matter of years!

There was great attraction in these two people for Sir Roger Maldon: they were privileged to be on terms of familiarity with him, and he unbent in their presence—and in their presence only. Perhaps it was be.

cause the brother and sister offered him the same distinction. They were French aristocrats; he was an English one; and he admired them, probably, because, like himself, they possessed a great power of individual repulsion, and were dangerous to approach as torpedos! During their travels, they had exercised their benumbing power upon several intrusive people, to the satisfaction of Sir Roger, who could conceive no better entertainment than that of slighting and behaving rudely to those he might consider beneath him!

The baronet had his simplicities; his head was exalted so high that he was deceived in many matters passing below its level. The French gentleman and his sister were aware of this, and reckoned up their host's weaknesses as easy as a child counts upon its fingers! They first met him in a diplomatic salon at Paris; in his hearing they spoke to his Excellency; in his sight Marie executed one of the most graceful

movements of the day! The baronet—till that moment cold and callous—watched Marie with interest. Certainly, she was the queen of the assembly! Yet, strange to say, not one of the attachés,—not one of the many gentlemen—young or old—of any note, in the place, ventured to ask her hand! Sir Roger set this down to her credit: she was too grand, too majestic for them! He went at once to her brother, made himself known, was received with great *empressement*; and from that moment he secured the De Lisles to himself!

It was made to appear—quite naturally and in the course of conversation—that the French gentleman was the representative of a good family, robbed and ruined by the confounded revolution. One of the De Lisles was a follower and friend of the first Hugh Capet; another was beloved and trusted by the great Francis; and a third was of those who wore the cross and band and conferred with the Guises and the

Queen Mother on the eve of Saint Bartholomew! They were obscure now;—yes, happily! In the new constitution of things in France, to have been famous would have been infamous!

These were De Lisle's statements, delivered to the baronet over several after-dinner tables, and under the influence of generous wine; and as Sir Roger was willing to believe anything from such a quarter, he was convinced that he listened to truth. His researches into modern history—French, especially—were not deep; and therefore he did not think and compare names and dates for himself. True, he was a well-educated young man, crammed with classical knowledge and familiar with languages that were seldom used orally. But this knowledge did not bring him down to his own day. From the age of Augustus he was a little at fault; and all he knew of the Gauls was that they were a rude, indecent people, obnoxious to the classical

world, and to be best dealt with by the Tenth Legion. Had Sir Roger Maldon lived in China, he would have been one of the firmest believers in outer barbarians!

A dinner at Maldon Priory was an event now: Lady Maldon appeared at table in new glory! Every day she appeared, and listened with subdued interest to De Lisle's stories of the *haute noblesse*. De Lisle tried to please her, and he succeeded.

"My dear Roger," she said to her son, when his visitors had been with him for some days, "your friend the Chevalier"—(Lady Maldon persisted in calling De Lisle the Chevalier)—"is excellent company. How terribly he must feel the loss of the society to which, in more fortunate times, his family was accustomed! You said that, in politics, he was an elder Bourbon, did you not?—that he would accept nothing from the Orleans branch?"

"Well, yes,—something of the kind," replied the baronet. "At any rate, he

withholds his countenance from the reigning family.”

“ Ah !” said her ladyship, “ I don’t wonder at it ! It seems that Louis Philippe prides himself upon being styled ‘ The Citizen King !’ As the Chevalier said, I say—‘ *Vive Henri Cinq !*’ ”

“ Truly !” exclaimed the baronet, yawning. And he left her ladyship to the enjoyment of her predilection.

At first, Blanche rather disliked her brother’s friends, and the feeling was perfectly mutual. Marie complained to De Lisle that Blanche teased her ! The English girl was so simple and sincere, so calm and collected ! Nothing excited or made an impression upon her ! When Marie majestically rolled out her broken English, Blanche did no more than try to understand it ; she made no remark upon its peculiarity, but answered the French lady just as though a common, every-day sort of person had addressed her. This Marie did not

like ; she was accustomed to create a sensation—to make people start, and remark, and wonder ! and it was an offence that Blanche—a little, pale English girl under age—should presume to be at ease in her presence !

As for De Lisle, for the first few days he quite sympathised with his sister in her dislike of the English girl. But after a time there came another feeling : the girl interested him ! If he could do nothing else, he could break her heart ! And why not ? He had never tried such a pastime before ; and really these English country houses were very dull ! He would begin to break her heart at once !

Blanche knew nothing of this kind intention on the part of her brother's guest ; and as the days passed she became more used to his society and the society of his sister. They improved upon acquaintance, and as they grew gracious, she grew considerate ; till at last De Lisle talked flat-

teringly of her, and even Marie began to dislike her less!

But Richard was ever distant and inaccessible. Not that any one—unless it might be his sister—courted *him*! From the first, De Lisle had watched the baronet's treatment of his brother, and had followed the example with all the good and bad grace of which he was capable. Marie, after the first glance, averted her eyes from the young man, and never could be brought to believe that he belonged to the family! She hinted as much, in a very flattering manner, to the baronet; and his answer gave her a rule by which to think of and treat Richard Maldon!

Marie took to horse-riding as naturally as though she had been bred in an English manor-house. Her fine figure looked still finer in a riding-habit; and when the breeze blew the black curls from her face, and a rich red glow made her dark skin transparent, she was a beauty as well as a queen!

Sir Roger saw this, and often indulged her with out-door exercise. When, for the sake of showing De Lisle and his sister how English gentlemen pass their time in the country, he took them to the cover-side, a dozen young fellows in scarlet were excited to admiration! “Di Vervon!—by Jove!” said one. “Rides like a Centaur—doesn’t she?” said another. But the baronet frowned them all down!—all except one, who coming up late, and hearing the remarks of his fellows, beheld Marie galloping in the distance, and added his approval to the many others that the lady’s face and figure called forth. That late comer was the young Lord Dalton!

Blanche sometimes joined her brother and his guests in these rides. She was with them when Marie captivated the young Nimrods in scarlet; and upon her return home, she found Richard dull, dejected, and inclined to be reproachful. He had finished the epic, and resting after his

great work, his mind was unoccupied, and he had left the world of fancy for the world of fact! He wanted to know what Blanche could see in those odious French people that she should give them her sweet society! He was querulous and complaining:

“I sought you,” he said, “to tell you of a resolve I have made. This house is no place for me, and I must leave it! I am even outstaying your affection!”

Blanche was eloquent with denial; but all to no purpose. There was a motive power urging Richard; and that power was the epic!

“Yes,” he continued, “I must leave this place, and bring my abilities to the market! I can but fail, and there will be an end of me!”

“Richard!”

“Blanche!”

This was the turning-point in the conversation, and from thence the poet began

to reason, and the sister to think. Richard's reasoning was all rose-colour and promise. He talked of his "pen" with a sublime confidence in its sustaining powers, and pointed to Scott, and Byron, and Southey, and the entire race of successful poets, to prove that the mines of Golconda were in the hands of the Muses! What would *Paradise Lost* have fetched in the nineteenth century!—and when a man belonging to that century had a *Paradise Lost* in his portmanteau, where was the limit to his fame and fortune?

Blanche was unable to answer this question, but she had her doubts about the matter. Of the few authors whose biographies she had dipped into, it occurred to her that many had died in penury, some in jail, and some had broken their hearts when their fortunes were fluctuating! Others had laid violent hands on themselves; and, indeed, take them for all in all, they were

not, as a class, what the dull world would call happy! Of two sets of men—those whose souls live in an alley, and those whose minds soar to the clouds—it was difficult to say which set a man had best belong to! There might be foulness and torpor in the alley, but in the clouds there was often starvation! This was a point well worth considering.

But not by the poet expectant! “You see, Blanche,” he said, “I am that helpless thing called a gentleman! You may have heard that one of my class finds it difficult to dig, and has a certain native modesty which hinders him from begging! Happily, the pen comes to release me from the inevitable conclusion that, situated as I am, such a man must starve! Would you, then, advise me to neglect its proffered advantages?”

Poor Blanche!—advice to an author! She might well murmur a faint “No,” and put her arms round her brother’s neck, and

kiss him fondly, and inwardly pray for him !
All this she did ; and the very next day
Richard, gathering up the loose sheets of
the epic, and giving it the monopoly of his
portmanteau, left Maldon Priory, and went
with the priceless treasure to London !

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Lady Maldon heard that Richard had departed—upon what business she did not enquire—her natural anxiety was quieted. She was glad, she said, that he had decided upon taking some independent course in life. All she hoped was that he would do nothing to degrade his family! With these few words, she dismissed the subject, and was never known to speak of it again!

The baronet was similarly affected by the news. But his hope as to the propriety of Richard's conduct was more strongly ex-

pressed than her ladyship's. He trusted that Richard would not forget the duty he owed to his family; that he would not descend to the meannesses of trade! Having expressed this trust, he also permitted the subject to drop, and never took it up again!

He was busy with an idea that was a source of continual anxiety to him. He felt that the Priory was getting dull, and knew that his friends—on account of this dullness, perhaps—were talking of departure. How should he amuse them and induce them to stay? Unfortunately, his circle of acquaintance was limited; for he had forgotten his father's friends, and made few friends of his own. He was looked upon by his neighbours as an absentee, voted inhospitable, and when the carriages rolled out and the cards were left, he was forgotten! This annoyed him just now, when he wanted the world at his feet and found that he stood alone! The ideas of his foreign friends had exalted him to the position of a territorial prince, with

a miniature court, a great following of flatterers, and an army of serving-men! He knew this, and their surprise at his quiet way of living galled him. He believed that they esteemed him the less for his failings in this matter, and began to think that English titles were mere badges of wealth, not evidences of rank and position.

“ My dear Maldon,” said De Lisle, once when the after-dinner conversation flagged unusually, “ what a solitary people you English aristocrats are! How you shut up and seclude yourselves! What poor service satisfies you! A man of your position should be the centre of a crowd, with half-a-dozen titles waiting upon him! You would have, in Germany. You’ve acres enough!”

“ Titles are scarce, you see, in England.” returned the host. “ Besides, our gentry object to render service, unless to the Crown! They have estates to look after; they fill civic offices.”

“ True!” replied De Lisle. “ Yet, I

think your system a poor one ! No wonder you travel so much !”

The conversation had its due effect upon the baronet. He determined to bring a neighbour or two about him ; and, looking through the list of county families for this purpose, foremost upon that list he found the honoured name of Lord Dalton ! The late baronet and the late lord had been on terms of close intimacy, and their present representatives had met at Eton. Lord Dalton was then a dull, uninteresting youth, hard to teach and careless to learn. But he had a peculiarity that, assisted by his rank and fortune, brought him many friends and made his life a merry one. It was impossible to offend him ! He was considered the best humoured boy in the school, and he managed to keep a highly pleasant company about him. He had a habit of making his way, and getting what he wanted, and he was gifted with a conceit that armed him against all attacks and

carried him well through all verbal encounters. He came, too, of a capital family: two of his ancestors had been executed for high treason; one had murdered his wife; and another had robbed the public treasury! So his name was historical, and men were accustomed to hear it mentioned with reverence.

The baronet thought it well to inaugurate the cultivation of new intimacies by seeking the scion of so distinguished a family as this; and the local paper supplied him with a pretext. It contained an item—a very prominent one—of news that brought grief upon the entire county! In the very first column of this local paper, in large, leaded type, was the report of an accident that had happened to his lordship! If the Editor did less than weep and call to his wife for consolation while he penned this report, he must have been more than man! The Trojan who drew Priam's curtains in the dead of night, to tell him half his Troy

was burnt, must have suffered by comparison with the reporter who first lighted upon and rushed to the newspaper office with the desolating intelligence! How he could possibly gain courage to go to Dalton House—as he did—day and night, to fetch bulletins and give occasion for second editions, is little less than miraculous!—For Lord Dalton had sustained a compound fracture of his left fore-finger!

Sir Roger Maldon—not waiting for the fourth edition of the local paper—went to Dalton House. He took his friends and his sister with him, and they all drew rein at the lodge. The house was a grand one,—approached by a semicircular path-way, and reached by a flight of broad marble steps. A terrace fronted the entire breadth of the mansion, and to this terrace the dining-room windows opened. As the baronet and his friends rode round the semicircle, something flitted backwards and forwards behind the windows. It was some-

thing in a bright red dressing gown and slippers, apparently leaping over the bent body of a little man in black cloth! The performance ceased when the visitors reached the marble steps; and the performer came out upon the terrace.

“ Ah !” Maldon, he said, “ Is it you ?— Thought I knew your face ! How de do ? Come in !”

“ No thank you !” replied the baronet, coldly. He scarcely liked the appearance and pursuits of his lordship; nor did he relish the bold glances that the young gentleman cast upon Marie.

“ Oh but you must ! I shan't let you go ! The lodge-keeper shall close the gates ; he shall, upon my soul ! Ah ! I forgot myself !—I'm always forgetting myself and making lapses—not *lapis*, Maldon ; you understand me. But come in !”

“ No, really,” replied the Baronet, “ I called only to enquire about the accident. You don't seem so *very* much hurt !”

“ Oh, lor bless you, no !—it's a mere

trifle!—but those newspaper fellers will put you in print if they can! I've one in my kitchen, now; he eats like a horse! The doctor's just given him a bulletin. But do come in!"

It was difficult to refuse so earnest an invitation, especially as it was backed up with some slight muscular energy exerted by Lord Dalton upon the Baronet's shoulder, with a view to pull him from his horse. So the whole party dismounted, and entered the dining-room, where they saw the little man in black cloth who had been making a back for his lordship. Blanche thought she knew him; and indeed she did; for he was her mother's physician!

"My doctor," said Lord Dalton, "Never mind him: he's nobody! Are you, doctor?"

The physician bowed. By the side of Lord Dalton, what was he?

"I've been jumping over his back for exercise. He makes a capital back; but he puts it in the bill! Don't you, doctor?"

The physician bowed again. He certainly did mean to put his back in the bill, not as a back, but as calisthenics !

Lunch was introduced, and it was excellent ; for Lord Dalton kept a capital cook, a man who wrote books upon his " art," wore orders, was a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and somehow rose from the kitchens to the company of noblemen ! Lord Dalton had him up now and then ; and he, no doubt, recorded his Lordship's conversations to enrich some future literary labours. The result, however, of his present occupation was satisfactory in the extreme : the lunch was delightful to all but Sir Roger Maldon. He might have got on very well, but he could not stomach his host ! Lord Dalton was so blusteringly attentive to Marie ; so curious in his questions and yet so careless about answers. He altogether lacked refinement, and talked and acted like an overgrown boy ! The effect of this

was that the Baronet grew coldly polite, and left his white soup untasted.

“ Now,” said his Lordship, rising from the table, and scarcely able to speak for a half-swallowed morsel—“ I shall ride back with you. You’ve seen my house, and I shall see yours. Doctor, may I ride? How’s the finger?—painful?—dangerous?—eh?”

“ Not absolutely dangerous,” said the physician, deferentially. “ With care, your Lordship can do no harm on horseback!”

“ Thankee, doctor! You’re a capital feller; you give capital advice; and you make a capital back! Well, I’m off to the stables!”

Lord Dalton, soon mounted, made a queer figure on horseback. He had a long body, narrow shoulders, and thin legs. His head was large and seemed to overweight him. He used to bet upon his head at Eton. It was too big for the biggest hat in the school, and deceived all the new boys. It

was the foundation of a proverb—"As large as Dalton's head;" a proverb that may be current at Eton even now. His face, fair and fresh-coloured, was lighted up by pale blue eyes, his nose had the bend sinister, and his teeth a habit of showing themselves like the teeth of a celebrated comedian of our days. He belonged to a cavalry regiment, and therefore his upper lip was lightly furred with a yellowish fungus.

He had no sensibilities, and was not the man to cry out before, or even after, he was hurt. Full of confidence in himself, he believed that he was a capital fellow, a fortunate fellow, a fellow to be followed and admired; and if, in the height of his enjoyment, any kind friend had advised him—as many kind friends are in the habit of advising—"Dalton, you are making an ass of yourself! Those who don't laugh at you are disgusted with you!"—he would have smiled and said,—

“Nonsense! Bosh! Don't you see how delighted the fellers are?”—and would have made the people merry or disgusted again before the kind friend had fully digested the reply?”

“This your place?” said his Lordship, as the party approached the Priory. “Dull, isn't it? Oh, those confounded crows! What's the difference between a rook and a crow? Do you know? I don't! I have heard that you eat the one, and you don't the other! Is it so?”

In this way his Lordship talked till dinner time, to the great amusement of the French gentleman and his sister, who had never seen such a strange animal before! Blanche laughed heartily at him; but the Baronet was annoyed beyond measure. Lady Maldon, coming down to dinner, was gracious in the extreme.

“Why havn't you been before?” she said. “Your father and poor Sir Roger were great friends!”

“ Better late than never, you know !” said his Lordship. “ I’m here now, aint I ?”

“ Oh, yes, you are here now ! And how’s your finger ? I’ve heard of it ?”

“ Oh, here it is !” said his Lordship, holding it up and moving it backwards and forwards in a facetious fashion. “ It aint very bad ! But you know those fellers will put you in the paper, if they can !”

The dinner passed away. For a wonder, Lord Dalton had been paying much more attention to his *vis-a-vis* than to the dishes ! His *vis-a-vis* was Marie. She could scarcely eat her soup for him ! He favoured her once or twice with a sly look that was the nearest possible approach to a wink. What did he mean ?

Then the ladies retired, and Lord Dalton was at liberty to talk of them.

“ Remarkably fine woman that sister of yours, Mister De Lisle ! Pass the wine, Maldon. No !—d—n the decanter ! I like to pour out of a black bottle ! I like the

sound it makes ! De Lisle, I drink to your lovely sister !”

His Lordship tossed off the wine, and De Lisle bowed his thanks.

“ Miss Maldon, too, is well worth looking at ! But, certainly, by the side of Mademoiselle, she comes off second best ! I’ve no sisters, you see ; I can’t get a woman to stay in my house, unless, you know,—unless, I——”

Lord Dalton paused, and looked knowingly at his two friends. He had forgotten himself again, and thought he was in the mess-room among boon companions—fellows who could take a joke ! But he was surprised to see the blank cold countenance of his host, and the curious, enquiring expression of De Lisle. Couldn’t they understand a wink ? He was about to make them do this, when the Baronet spoke :—

“ You are slighting your wine, my Lord ! The black bottle’s all your own !”

“ Don’t call me ‘ my Lord,’ Maldon ! I

don't mind your being familiar. You can forget differences of rank, and talk to me just as I might to you."

"Thank you!" said Sir Roger, sarcastically.

Except by signs and symbols, De Lisle took no part in this conversation, but he had quick eyes and ears for the scene. Now and then, particularly when his Lordship spoke of Marie, the French gentleman smiled, tossed off his wine, and let the glass fall with a ring upon the table; or he twirled it on its edge, and looked into the air, with all the *abandon* of a man possessed by a pleasant conceit! But when Lord Dalton, rising to leave, proffered his hand, De Lisle took it eagerly, shook it heartily, and said,—

"*Au revoir*, my Lord! I shall tell my sister your good opinion of her. She will be much gratified, I am sure!"

The baronet looked strangely at his guest. What did the man mean? Marie be gratified

by the coarse admiration of a foolish fellow like Lord Dalton! Preposterous! The Dalton line had lasted too long, and had produced an idiot! So thought Sir Roger Maldon; but he was scarcely reflective enough, and had no just idea of what a formidable creature a fool is! He had no conception of the value of blunt weapons in social warfare!

“What!” said Lady Maldon, when she beheld her son and his guests enter the drawing-room alone, “Has his lordship gone?”

“He has!”

“Oh! we were all expecting to be amused!” said Marie. “What a curious fellow Milord is!”

“Very!” returned De Disle, “quite entertaining, is he not?”

“Remarkably so!” said Marie. “Are there any more lords like him in England?”

“I think I may venture to say—for the

credit of the English aristocracy—that there are not !” replied the baronet.

This was said in a tone that at once extinguished Lord Dalton as an object of remark. But it left the French gentleman and his sister to the enjoyment of their thoughts and the cultivation of their merry conceits. These pleased them much, spoilt their card-playing, and made them generally absent. Thus the day passed off; and Sir Roger Maldon, when he retired to his chamber, could not congratulate himself on the success of his first attempt to bring friends about him! Before he took off his signet-ring, and said his prayers, he was moved to question himself:—Did he love Marie?—Had Lord Dalton made him jealous? He could answer neither of these questions to his satisfaction;—so he gave them up as riddles, and they did not recur to him till the sun rose the next morning, when he asked them over again! And a second time they were given up, and Lord

Dalton was abused for having suggested the game!

His guests, too, were busy with the subject. Before they went down to breakfast, they held counsel with closed doors. They stood by a window from whence De Lisle was wont to talk to the "black birds." The morning was dark and dull, and the crows cawed louder than ever, covered up their invalids with leaves and branches, and flew hither and thither to collect stray items for shelter. Presently the sky grew dark indeed! A heavy cloud sailed along, low in the air, like a messenger. The lighter fringe of the cloud came over the high trees; the dense black mass followed;—and then, as a dozen large drops fell like bullets into the loftiest nest, the patriarch of the tribe shook himself and sent forth a note of defiance! The whole choir took up the strange music!—And looking on this scene, hearing these sounds, De Lisle said quietly to his sister,

“What do you think of Lord Dalton?”

“ Oh, a curious fellow!—an amusing idiot! But what a fine place he has!”

“ Magnificent!—And if that place were your’s?”

The French lady shrugged her shoulders, sighed audibly, and turned towards the window.

“ Shall we go down to breakfast?” she said.

“ Yes. But stay! I hear a footstep?”

It was a servant, with letters. There was one for Marie. She opened it, turned pale, and fell into a chair.

“ What news?” said De Lisle, “ has death at last——?”

Marie shook her head.

“ Ah!” continued the brother, “ death seldom comes when wanted! But what of that? Some day it will come, Marie! and then——but let us go down to breakfast.”

The letter was locked in a cabinet, and Marie regained her colour, and moved towards the door. The dark clouds had left the heavens,

and the sun, with a hazy obscure face—like any other face after tears—shone out faintly. The crows were happy again! They left their nests, sallied forth into the fields, and found their breakfasts. The day, after all, turned out a bright one—at least for the birds!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE two parlours that were once tenanted by Mr. Maguire had still the honour of being occupied by an artist. True, the outward insignia of the profession had disappeared: there were no portraits in the windows, neither were there miniatures on the door-post. But the inner mysteries were the same; there were the same odours, the same dabs of colour on the walls, the same rough sketches, hanging, lying, and being trodden about, the same easel, the same stool; everything, in fact, but the tall, thin, anxious-looking man,—with his hands

prying nervously in the pockets of his blouse, and his head busy as to what he could afford for dinner!

In the place of this familiar figure, there was one more pleasant, if not more profitable, to contemplate: a successful labourer in the world of art—a contented, hopeful, young man, handsome, healthy, full of spirits, and with just sufficient means to satisfy his modest desires. This young man was Gerald Grey.

He was in the room devoted to private purposes—the very room in which poor Mr. Maguire once stood, checking his appetite by going into the dreary business of ways and means, and looking through the window for patrons! He had a friend with him; and the two men were reclining easily and talking lazily upon anything that came uppermost—neither of them lecturing the other, but both indulging in a give-and-take conversation that might have astonished Wordsworth and afforded the great Lexicographer a new sensation!

A pertinent passage from one of our poets had escaped from the lips of Gerald's companion. It contained an unanswerable argument.

"That decides the question," said Gerald.

"Quite!" replied the other,—“and shifts the responsibility from my shoulders to those of Shakespeare. And now let us change the subject; let us go to hard, everyday facts,—one of which is that the world as yet turns its back upon me! Nobody will look at the Epic: it is pronounced to be utterly unsaleable. One gentleman, whom I pressed rather closely for his opinion, gave it me at last with great freedom. ‘My dear sir!’ said he, ‘as far as I have read, which is not beyond the first half-dozen lines, the poem appears to be utterly incomprehensible and absurd; and depend upon it, no one would go farther into it than I have. There is nothing, sir, nothing at all, but to make tinder of it!’”

“ A charitable opinion, truly !” said Gerald. “ But why not try something else—a novel, for instance ?”

“ A novel !”

“ Yes, the world in three volumes !—a hero, a heroine, an angry father, a foolish mother, a town house, a country house, a fool, a villain, and cake and gloves for the last chapter ! There are your materials : make the most of them.”

“ My dear Gerald !—just the idea I want. You have saved me from despair ! They won't let me be a poet, so I must be a mountebank ! I'll write a novel !”

“ Softly ! Don't be too confident,” said Gerald, “ you may find the task more difficult than I have sketched or you imagine it. The artistic mind will probably produce a work of art ; it will not be satisfied with less ; and your's being an artistic ”—

“ Pshaw ! Gerald. Novels are mere manufactures, of which nonsense is the raw material !—or they are hard, outline tran-

scripts, picked up in the police-court or filched from the fireside, and seasoned with sentiment to make the plain story go down ! Nevertheless—and that's a long word—I'll write a novel !—and it shall so take the public that honest housewives shall forget the pot boils over and the cobwebs are about ; and fine ladies shall lie a-bed reading till noon ; and lovers, with heads all empty, shall have them filled with plain pictures of their own everlasting folly ! I'll write a novel !”

The way in which Gerald renewed his acquaintance with Richard Maldon was singular. Threading one of our great thoroughfares, turning in and out to escape the pressure of the daily crowd—a portfolio under his arm, and his mind busy with the world of pictures—he was suddenly made conscious of an obstacle in his path. That obstacle the artist's impetuosity brought to the ground ! He was profuse in apologies ; he assisted the stranger to rise ; he brushed

the dust from his coat ; and then, looking fairly in his face, saw that it was the face of Richard Maldon !

Of course the apologies were renewed with tenfold vigour, the coat was brushed with the ability of a Jew clothesman ; and the result of the accident was that an hour afterwards the artist and the poet were seated amicably together—the one talking of his hopes, his troubles, and his fears ; the other listening with an almost overwhelming sense of favour conferred ! For Richard talked of his sister—of her kind, generous heart, and the great love she bore him :

“ She is the only friend I have in the world !” he said, “ and were I to lose her, the world would be empty !”

He talked, too, of the epic, and was in high spirits about it then ! He had just come from Paternoster Row, where he had been courteously received by the head of a great publishing house, who smiled and

told him that ordinary poetry was a drug ; but that for extraordinary poetry, why—as the world knew—there was room enough. This quite satisfied Richard. He was convinced that if there was such a thing as X-traordinary poetry, his was Double X-traordinary, and would be accepted and admired upon its merits.

Time, as we have seen, had somewhat changed his opinion upon the point ; and this, perhaps, drew him nearer to Gerald, and made the two men companions. The artist was delighted to consort with the brother of Blanche, and reckon him as a friend ; and the poet found in the proffered friendship so much consolation, and such signal advantage in the shape of kind and considerate advice, that thorough confidence was speedily established between the two young men, and their liking for each other grew day by day.

Blanche was duly informed of the meet-

ing—ludicrous at first, fortunate in the end:—

“ Our artist (ran the letter which conveyed the information) is an excellent, kind creature. He has taken me in hand, and is trying to talk me into contentment. I pass many hours in his studio, or I walk about London with him, and moralise as well as one can in a crowd. So you see I am not so lonely as I might have been. True, I miss you very much—and you! do you miss me? I should grieve to know that you were sad; and yet—strange contradiction of feeling!—I have enough self-love to wish that my absence may be regretted! Of my prospects I will say little till they are brighter: the epic hangs on hand.”

Another letter—evidently written after the conversation just recorded—contained this passage:

“ What do you think, Blanche? Will

“ you believe me when I tell you that I am
“ actually writing a novel? It shall be
“ called ‘ Love and Lunacy ’—beginning in
“ Lesbos and ending in St. Luke’s! I am
“ told that the public (they talk much
“ about the public here in London) will not
“ look at anything thoughtful; so I am
“ trying to do without thinking at all! My
“ hero has blood on his hands already, and
“ my heroine and her maid are preparing
“ to go mad,—the one in white satin, the
“ other in white linen,—as Sheridan says.
“ Oh the artifice of all this! And yet the
“ epic——! There, I’m disgusted, and
“ shall say no more!”

Notwithstanding this contemptuous tone, Richard worked well at his task. Perhaps he was scarcely sincere in what he said and wrote about it; but the world had rejected the epic, and how, without some qualms of bitterness, could he take another mistress? He grew out of his distaste for the work, however, as the work progressed; and at

length he began thoroughly to interest himself in it. Duly considering this change, he was humbled and abashed at his own imperfections of thought. The result was a letter to his sister :

“ A young man with many prejudices,
“ Blanche, deserves a whipping. I fear I
“ deserve one myself ! Less than a week has
“ sufficed utterly to destroy an opinion
“ upon which I believed myself firm and
“ infallible. Pray burn the ridiculous letter
“ I last sent you. As to the epic——our
“ artist was right, the booksellers were
“ right, everybody was right but myself !
“ I tried to read a length of it yesterday,
“ and could not. It is crude and boyish in
“ the extreme.”

A few days after writing this letter, Richard Maldon was with Gerald again. He entered hastily, and found the artist busy upon a picture. It was the Priory ruin, by moonlight.

“ A marvel !” he exclaimed, “ Were my

brother to see it, he might claim it as his own! You painters are clever fellows—at least, the few of you who have any ideas.”

“ And how goes the novel ?” asked Gerald.

Richard hung his head, and smiled faintly.

“ You find the task a difficult one, eh ?”

“ No, not difficult, but different. I have changed my mind about it. I have been weeping with my own heroine, and the remorse of my hero for his first murder has so affected me that he has grown a good man, and is to leave his other wickednesses undone! Why, you only smile. You’re not surprised! You take the matter as of course!”

“ Just so,” said Gerald, “ why should I not? The mind has its fashions as well as the body, and wears them as capriciously. To-day, russet; and to-morrow motley; and the day after, whatever you please, so long as it be not consistent with the fancy of the day before.

“ Well, I am wiser, and must pay for

wisdom in the plentiful coin of conceit. But let us give up these dry topics ; I came here as an idler, and I want to make holiday. As yet, I have seen none of the sights of London. Are there any worth seeing ?”

“ Saint Paul’s, and Westminster Abbey, the Thames Tunnel, the outside of the National Gallery, the New Model Prison, the Museum, the——”

“ Stay ! Are there no living sights ? The Queen, I hear, is to open Parliament to-day. Shall we go and see her ?”

Gerald assented, and the two friends took their way to the west end of the town. It was “ queen’s weather,” and the streets were full of people. The sun, beaming with invitation, looked into dull shops and dark counting-houses, and made wavering money-gainers unhappy ; while those who in the successful pursuit of wealth could not be made unhappy by anything else, drew down their blinds, turned over their ledgers, and merely remarked that the day was close !

Richard Maldou was given greatly to moralise upon things about him, and when he found sermons in stones, he translated them for his friend's benefit. He was occupied with a process preliminary to this translation, when the artist shook him vigorously, and provoked a reply :

“ You are unkind ! You might have let me finish my problem. The grace Archimides had would have been sufficient ; and yet his was a simple task compared to mine ! ”

“ How ? ”

“ Why, his could be worked out with chalk, while mine—mine cannot be worked out at all ! ”

“ A reason for interrupting it. ”

“ Perhaps so ; but it will come again. Look at this half-million of brothers with scarcely more love for each other than the two first ! Is it not strange that these people should walk on thus indifferently to the end ? ”

“ What an odd question to put in Pall Mall ! ”

“ Ah, you are like the rest, careless! You leave your serious thoughts with the hassocks and the church services from Sunday to Sunday, and never bring them to bear upon the actual world! Yours is the religion of ease!”

“ And yours?”

“ Of enquiry.”

“ Very well! But look at those mounted giants! Dear me!—what a strange figure that is on horseback yonder!”

The strange figure was Lord Dalton, who had exchanged into the Blues, and now made his first appearance as one of Her Majesty's body-guard. He was naturally proud of his position, and carried his sword in a martial manner that was scarcely natural to him. Still, he looked affably upon the crowd, and the crowd returned the compliment by staring at his lordship with open mouths. Occasionally a vulgar little boy, more facetious and familiar with state than his fellows, would utter something in dis-

paragement of Lord Dalton's personal appearance; but his lordship did not hear the remark; and had he heard it, would never have believed that it was addressed to him!

Presently his lordship's troop was set in motion. The crowd followed it, and swayed to and fro; little children were hoisted in the air, and larger children obtained the advantage of a sudden and momentary elevation. All eyes were turned towards a certain archway!

Richard Maldon was one of the short people,—but he clung nervously to his friend's arm, strove to look above his neighbours, and was greatly excited! He saw the top of a carriage, garnished at one end by a portly coachman, at the other by three gorgeous creatures, standing in a semi-circle! He saw staves flying about, and descending upon his fellows' heads like drumsticks! He heard a cry, a groan, and innumerable hisses. Then, staring straight before him,

he saw a mild, domestic-looking lady, in a simple white bonnet,—bowing her head gracefully to a line of boisterous royalists who from either side claimed her attention.

“Hurrah!” exclaimed Richard raising his hat.

“Hurrah!” repeated Gerald. And the shout was taken up and accompanied royalty till it was housed and invisible to the outer barbarians.

“Now what did I shout for?” asked Richard. “Why am I in this perspiration? What makes my heart beat so ridiculously?”

Gerald was about to answer, when his attention was diverted. There was confusion in the crowd; in the midst of, and towering above it, a glazed hat gleamed in the sun, and strove to make way through the sea of hats by which it was surrounded. It was very irregular in its movements—at times disappearing altogether, and at other times shaking from side to side as though the wearer of it was engaged in a serious

struggle! At length it seemed to keep company with several of its fellows; and at last, it came out into the open space, and the crowd closed up and followed.

But many cries were raised in its rear, and many were the expressions of sympathy for a miserable looking old man, who was being hurled onward by the collar. The policeman heeded neither, but pursued his way sternly. As he passed Gerald, the artist started, rushed towards him, and seizing one arm of the captive, gazed in his face, and cried:—

“ My God, uncle!—Is this you ? ”

“ Bravo ! ” said the crowd,—thinking it a rescue. “ Bravo ! ”—

The policeman heard these “ bravos,”—and took the same view of Gerald’s proceedings as the crowd did. He was wroth; the staff was ready to his hand; he raised it, and Gerald fell, bleeding from the forehead!

Lord Dalton was just riding back to

barracks, to get a moment's relief from his helmet and breast-plate. He saw Gerald lying on the ground; he leant over his horse, and looked compassionately upon the artist.

“What's this?” he said, addressing no one in particular. “What's the matter? The man on the ground looks like a gentleman! Pick him up!” And as Gerald rose, his lordship looked in his face and said “Damn shame, sir! I hate those policemen! Here's my card! Say I saw it all!” And his lordship departed amid the cheers of the populace.

CHAPTER XVII.

SINCE Mr. Grey had parted in anger from his brother William, he had seen the fallen man but once ; and then they met under such circumstances as hardened both their hearts, and separated them more certainly than ever ! Mr. Grey sought his brother at the public house ; and there he found him ! His recent habits of life had become confirmed, and he had fallen entirely to the level of the society he mixed with. The poor fellow still had a little money ; and as he spent some of it among his companions, they were very faithful to him, and cham-

pioned his cause with all the strength of their lungs.

When these men saw Mr. Grey—with his honest but indignant face, and all the marks of labour fresh upon him,—they were scandalised that he should enter their domain!—above all, that he should push by them roughly, take his brother by the hand, and ask him to leave their company! They had learnt Uncle William's story, and they knew the cause of his dismissal from Mr. Tympan's. This, then, was the brother; this was the father of the boy who had been their companion's ruin!

Presuming upon this knowledge, one of them—a large, lazy fellow, with an unwashed, unshaven face, and eyes that blinked and fell when looked fairly into—took up the cudgels for the companion who was to be rescued:

“Can't you leave the man alone?” he said, taking the pipe from his mouth, and hiccupping the words with all the emphasis

of which he was capable. "He's comfortable enough where he is! Aint you, Grey?"

"Yes, I'm comfortable enough," said William, trying to free his hand from his brother's grasp. "Do—do—let me go, Gerald! What do you want with me?"

"What does he want!" said the man who had spoken before. "Why, I'll tell you what he wants! Don't our relations always look after us while we've got anything? And don't they keep a long way off of us if we havn't?"

"Ha! ha!—don't they!" said the whole company.

"And if I was you, Grey," continued the principal speaker, emboldened by the applause of his friends,—“I'd shake off the lot! It's all very well for 'em to come sneaking about you while your money lasts! But wait till it's gone!—Then see where they'll be!"

Mr. Grey said nothing in reply; he was

bending over his brother and whispering persuasive words in his ear :

“ For God’s sake, William, do come away from this place ! Do give up this life ! Come and live with me !—Work if you like, or be idle if you like ! But don’t go on in this way ! You are disgracing yourself—you are disgracing me, and all your family !”

“ Well,” said William, peevishly, “ and who brought me to disgrace ?—whose fault is it that I am here ?—did *I* give up my situation ?—did *I* work my own ruin ?”

“ No !” returned Mr. Grey, sternly, “ you did not ! Your ruin is not yet complete ; but you are trying to complete it ! I ask you again—Will you come away ?”

“ What !—now ?”

“ Now !” replied Mr. Grey.

“ No !—I can’t ! I ain’t going to get up and follow you just when you please ! Why do you want me to come now ? Won’t to-

morrow do,—or the next day,—or the day after ?”

William uttered this in a high, treble key, audible to the company.

“ You’d better leave your watch and your money with the landlord if you do go !” said one of the listeners.

Mr. Grey heard these words distinctly. He turned from his brother, looked about the room, and his eye at last fell upon the speaker.

“ This is *my* brother !” he said, with suppressed passion, and pointing to William. “ I ask him to leave this place—this company—and to go where he will have friends about him ! Now, will any one *repeat* the words I heard just now ?”

There seemed little likelihood of this challenge being taken up ; for Mr. Grey’s attitude was peculiar, and his eye menacing ! He was quite prepared to spring upon whomsoever should speak first, and do battle with him for the right ! William’s com-

panions saw this, and they shrunk and cowered beneath the glance directed at them. But at length the first speaker took courage. Were not his friends with him?—Was he not six feet high, and with all the outward marks of a ruffian?

“I will!” he said. “What do you want with the man?—Do you want to rob him of what he has, after ruining him?”

The suspense was over! Mr. Grey took but one stride, and his hand was on the fellow’s collar! He hurled him across the table to the open space! Then, letting him loose, and giving him one little word of warning, all the gathered force was liberated, and the tall ruffian fell crashing among the tables!

Mr. Grey waited for a moment or two; but his opponent made no show of rising; neither did the fellow’s companions offer to assist or revenge him! So with just one glance at William, the disappointed brother strode away, and thus ended the interview!

When he reached home, his wife was waiting anxiously to know the result of his mission.

“ You haven’t brought him ? ” she said.

“ No ! ” replied Mr. Grey, falling into a chair.

“ And isn’t he coming ? ”

“ No, he’s not, Mary ! He’s a vagabond, a worthless, lazy fellow ! He’s a—— ”

The poor man could say no more ! Even while he vented these reproaches, his heart denied them. A great burst of tears came and choked his utterance ! The voice of nature was powerful within him, and it whispered sadly and reproachfully—“ Still he’s my brother !—still he’s my brother ! ”

He never went to the public house again ; but each night, when the simple man said his prayers, he added a heartfelt, earnest appeal for William. “ And, Mary ! ” he would say sometimes,—“ pray for him ! ask God to help him !—for who else can ? ”

Months, years, passed away ; and still

Uncle William was an idler and a vagabond ! His money was soon exhausted ; he fell from his position as a hero, and took rank with the besotted creatures about him. It was pitiful to see him, lounging at the public house threshold, or nervously passing to and from the parlour, to enquire for work that seldom came ! There was a miserable apology for a book kept at the place, in which these unemployed men entered their names, and were, upon occasions, called to work according to the rota. But this work was merely temporary—for a day or a night, as the hurry might happen ; and then the value of it was brought to the public house, and probably spent there,—and no more was to be had till the rota was exhausted, and the name came round again.

Sometimes, with faculties muddled by a day's drink, Uncle William sallied out in the evening with his fellows, and took the round of the newspaper printing offices. A supplement, an extra sheet, or what not—

caused by a President's message, an overland mail, or a long-winded parliamentary debate—gave employment for the night to these desultory workmen; and then, in the cold, grey morning they crept shivering to their beds,—probably in an unclean attic, the worst room of a wretched, ill-kept house, in a close unwholesome court! Even this shelter was denied to some; and these waited till their house of call opened, and the pot-boy, rubbing his dazed eyes, let them in;—and in that dull, vile parlour—oh! how vile in the early morning, and after the night's smoking and drinking!—they sat down, and their heads fell upon the tables, and the sun, striking in upon their dirty, matted hair, their bleared eyes, and unwashed faces,—helped to make them more hideous! When they woke,—they had but two wants—beer, tobacco!

But the majority of these unhappy men were more to be pitied than blamed. The evils of the system made them what they

were. Many, like Uncle William, fell from competency through no fault of their own. They were suddenly thrown unemployed upon the world; they wanted work; and where were they to ask for it? The public house was the readiest place. There the book was kept;* there, if they received relief from their trade society, they *must* show themselves at stated intervals. If they were houseless, at least the place offered them temporary shelter; if they were hungry, beer was passed about the tables, and tobacco was to be had by begging for it!

What wonder, then, that the least industrious made the public house their home?—that the weak-minded contracted there the habits of those about them, lost self-respect,

* Since the above was written, the system pictured here has been partially reformed. The house of call—for Printers—has been severed from the public house. The result is a decided improvement in the habits and persons of the casually employed. But as a rule, other trades are conservative of the abuse; and so the argument may stand.

and were content to be the Pariahs of their class? As sure as the public house set its seal upon them, they were faithful to it! And what seal is more terrible, more glaring, and degraded?

The remedy is so plain that it need not be pointed out here. A public house should *not* be the chief medium through which work may be obtained! Such a place is utterly repugnant to all ideas of labour; it has temptations especially seductive to poverty and misfortune, and it offers for these a pretended anodyne that renders them permanent! In England we believe too strongly, in the capability of the bowl to drown care:—It is certain that after any such drowning, care always turns up—sometimes with a headache—the next morning; and the result of continual drowning is that care at last becomes a duller, deader body, and hangs about us, and refuses to be buried ever after!

When Uncle William grew tired of the

public house, and missed many of his old companions—some of whom had died, some retired to the workhouse, and others gone “on tramp,”—he determined to go on tramp himself. He obtained a card, or ticket of credit, from his trade society,—and in a pitiable plight as to clothing, started on the great north road. Oh what weary miles he plodded!—what harsh answers and miserable doles he had flung to him, as, from printing office to printing office, through the beautiful country, he pursued his career of legalized mendicancy! At one pleasant little town, that was approached by a wooden bridge, with a clear trout-stream bubbling beneath, and where there was a village-green, with boys playing at cricket and geese cackling about,—Uncle William made his way to the printing office, showed his card, and asked for work or money. The master was a plain, matter-of-fact man, with little pity in his constitution, and less patience for

poor wretches who could not help themselves.

“ Me and my men,” he said, “ work hard from Monday morning till Saturday night, and earn *our* living!—while you d—d idle vagabonds prowl about the country, and make us support you in laziness! There, that’s all you’ll get!” And he flung William a small piece of money, and told him roughly to go!

William picked up the piece of money, and left the place. Never, till then, had he felt how very, very, like a beggar he was! He went to the green, and sat down, and tried to interest himself in the cricket match. The sun shone gorgeously, and lighted up the scene about him. It pierced through the holes and among the rags that made up the apparel of the poor mendicant. Oh what a wretch he was! And what a contrast once! Looking into the shining haze before him, he saw himself as of old,—the honest, respected workman, independent of

the world, and shrinking from beggary even while he relieved it! The retrospect was too much for him!—He burst wildly into tears, fell on his face, and groaned aloud! All those gay, happy boys, came leaping, running, crowding about him. What was the matter?—“ Oh!—only a beggar in a fit!” And when Uncle William was calmer, and the boys had gone back, laughing, to cricket, he rose up and went his way muttering “ Only a beggar in a fit!—Only a beggar in a fit!”

A few months of this tramping made him an old, decrepid man. He returned to London, and to the public house, even worse than he had left them! There were his companions—not the same men as of old, but of a like kind, for the supply was ever constant!—There was the book, the beer, the tobacco! Nothing changed! And William took his place as naturally as though he had never left it!

There was no hope for him now! Once,

indeed, he seemed to have a chance. A rare accident happened. A demand came to the public house for a man to fill a permanent situation! William's name was first on the book, and he was looked upon as lucky, indeed! His companions crowded round him; they would expect to see him at the public house in the evening, when his day's work was done. He promised that they should see him, and he kept his word!

The next morning—the second of his engagement—he went to work, with a sleepy, uncertain gait, a trembling hand, smelling vilely of liquor, and half-an-hour behind time! When he returned to the public-house *that* evening, he pulled out a handful of silver, and offered to treat the company! He drank largely, and grew uproarious; he sung snatches of song, and made a drunken speech. At last, he burst into tears, and bellowed like a child! And in the midst of these tears, he turned his glazed, giddy eyes upon his companions, and said, hiccupping,

“ I’ve got the sack, gen’lmen ! By G—d I’ve got the sack ! ”

This was quite true. He had been summarily discharged. The public-house had marked him, and would *not* give him up !

Occasionally, the poor fellow had a fit of politics. Whenever a meeting was held, to take social or political questions into consideration, if Uncle William could hide his rags cleverly enough to pass the door-keeper, he was one of the audience. If it was a quiet, nonsensical meeting, got up by respectable people to give currency to platitudes, and get their names in the paper,—William would be sure to rise at its conclusion, and ask the chairman what he proposed to do to ameliorate the social condition of the people,—and whether he and the gentlemen on the platform were favourable to the enjoyment of property in common ? If it was a turbulent meeting, presided over by a fierce demagogue, and spoken to by professional agitators, he would sit delighted,

applaud, but say nothing! In the latter case, he came to no harm; but in the former, it mostly happened that a dozen respectable people pushed him, pulled him, held him down, and covered his mouth, till a policeman haled him out of the place, flung him in the road, and threw his hat after him! Indeed, he has been known, under these precise circumstances, to cling so tenaciously to the iron balustrades of a certain staircase in a great tavern in Bishopsgate, that the whole place shook with the commotion, and the waiters turned whiter than their cravats!

He had attended some place of the kind the night before Gerald saw him in the predicament detailed in the last chapter. The poor fellow had been torn almost to pieces by the respectable people and the policeman!—and in the end, he had been hurled into the road,—his head coming rudely against the paving-stones! The blow partly stunned him; but he rose, and went his way home. In the morning he awoke with

strange thoughts! He sought the public-house, and there told the story of his night's adventure! He told it in a queer way; but his companions thought he was merely tipsy.

“ Ah, by-the-bye,” said one, “ the Queen opens Parliament to-day. Let's all go and hiss !”

“ Capital !” said others. But the majority were against the hissing.

They all started, however,—Uncle William among them. As they went along he said to the man who walked with him—“ I tell you what! I shall try and speak to the Queen. Perhaps she'll do something for the people !”

His companion looked at him, laughed, and said, “ Ah !—you try! I'd advise you !”

“ I will !” said the poor, deluded fellow. And he did try; and the result has been told !

END OF VOL. I.

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