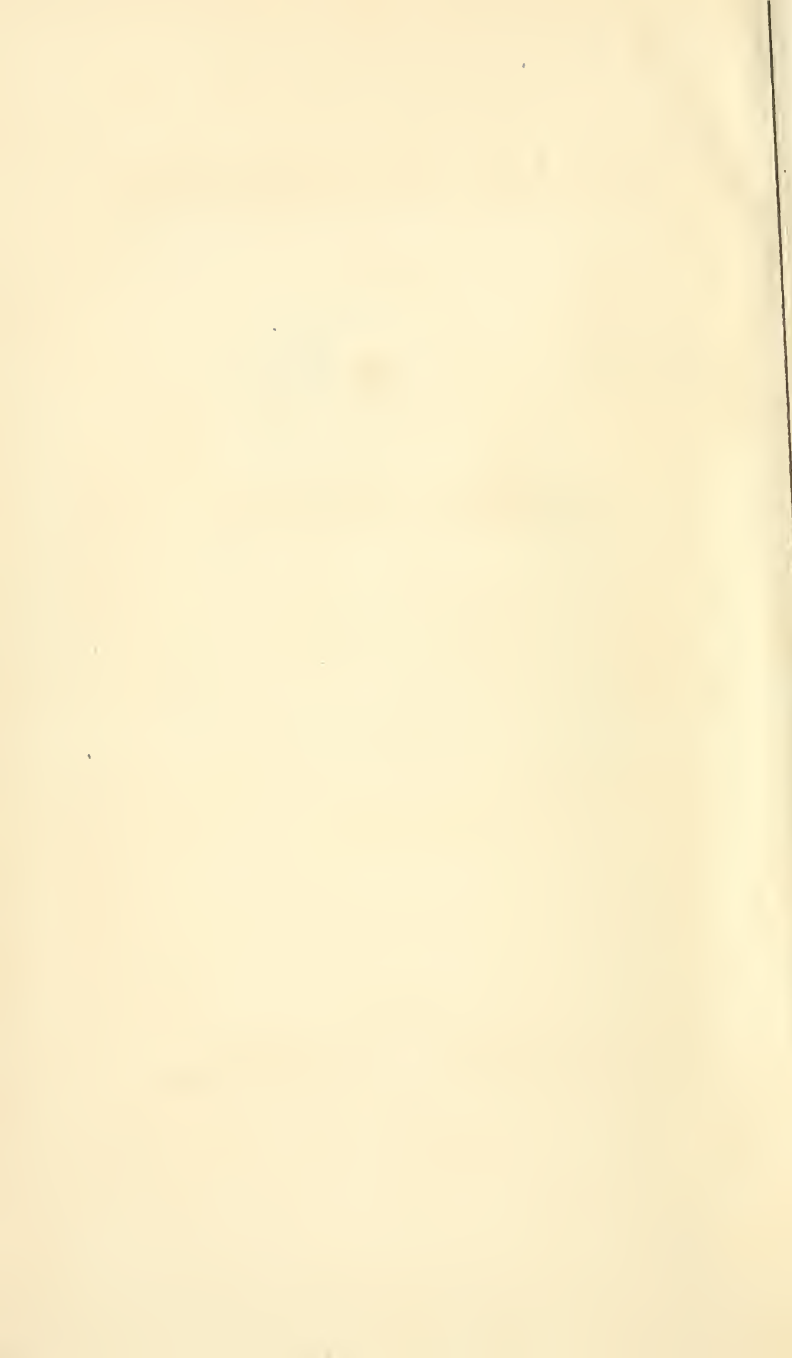




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LOCAL VIEWS. NEW MUSIC



GERALD FITZGERALD.

A NOVEL.

BY .

GEORGE HERBERT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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GERALD FITZGERALD.



CHAPTER I.

DE LISLE met with no such accident when returning from Maldon Priory as that which disarranged his nerves while journeying thither. The railway company had been cast in such very heavy damages at the suit of so very many persons who had been injured by the last collision, that the traffic manager looked about him, the locomotive superintendent was aroused, and things went on smoothly enough. It was discovered, at a special meeting of the Board of Directors, that it was much more like business, and, indeed, more profitable, to carry

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passengers in safety, than to crush, kill, or make mincemeat of them; and this discovery, being duly minuted, and read and approved at the next board meeting, the various officers of the line were directed accordingly.

De Lisle, therefore, reached London in safety, and when there, drove direct to the hotel at which he had left his sister and the baronet. He found the latter seated alone, with wine before him, and trying to divert himself with a book.

Now this was a bad sign. Whenever the baronet sat over his wine without company, there was something wrong with him—for he was not greatly addicted to the pleasures of the table; and whenever he took up a book it was purely in default of other occupation—for the pleasures of literature were not usually enticing to him. He slaked his thirst for entertainment at other fountains, and would neither have exhausted the cellars of Moët, nor cleared the shelves

of Mudie. These outward and visible signs, then, were evidences of something wrong within.

“What! alone?” said De Lisle, thrusting forth his hand.

The baronet looked up from his book, regarded his disturber coldly and curiously, and then made a show of reading again.

“Where is your welcome?” asked De Lisle, surprised. “What’s the matter?—Is this the greeting of a friend?”

“No,” replied Sir Roger, not looking up from the book,—“it is not!”

“Then what is it?”

“Ask yourself.”

“Come, come, this is mere trifling! London has soured you, I suppose. What has happened to make this change?”

“Shall I tell you?”

“Yes, and speedily.”

De Lisle sat down, filled a glass, and tossed off the contents to renovate his spirits. While he was doing this, the baronet shook

the leaves of the book, and a letter dropped from them to the table.

“There.” he said, flinging the letter across, “Read that, or look at it, and then, I suppose, you will ask me no more questions.”

De Lisle recognized the letter in an instant: it was the one he had posted the day before.

“May I ask,” he said, “how this came into your hands?”

“It was placed on this table.”

“Well, and it was addressed, as you might have seen, to Marie! How came it, open, into your possession?”

“Because it was open when delivered!”

A light broke in upon De Lisle. It occurred to him that he had sent the letter unsealed!

“Now, sir,” said the baronet, rising, “I suppose you are satisfied. I need scarcely tell you that what that letter in part refers to, has been done; that if your sister has

not failed in her intention, she is on her way to Paris ; and that if she is not something else already, she may some day be Lady Dalton !”

De Lisle rose now, and put a bold face on the matter. He saw that the game had been played out, and that his adversary understood the secret of it. He smiled sarcastically, and experienced a certain pleasant sensation, arising from the fact that if he had been check-mated at Maldon, his sometime friend had not come off with flying colours in London. Under this influence, his smile became broader and more visible, and at last it fairly broke out into a laugh !

The baronet’s blood could not well brook this, and he advanced threateningly to De Lisle. He kept his hands still, however ; but his words were not under control :

“ Leave this room, sir !” he said, “ Get out of my way before I commit myself !”

“ Softly, softly, Sir Roger Maldon !” was

the reply. "Why so hasty? I have a word or two to say yet."

"Will you quit this room?" cried the baronet.

"No, sir, I will not!" replied the French gentleman,—“not till I have said what I mean to say. You are a young man, a proud man, and withal a very foolish man! If I have been trifling, you have been trifling, too. If I have played false, you have not altogether played fairly. Now, you are over-reached by your neighbour—by a man of your own seeking—by Lord——”

The baronet's hand was on De Lisle's collar, and De Lisle's fingers were at the baronet's throat. The crisis had come now! Tables, chairs, sofas, were overturned, and the room quaked with the commotion. The decanters went into splinters, the wine ran about the floor, and the glasses cracked beneath the feet of the combatants. They got away from each other at last, and De Lisle seized the broken stump of a bottle

near him. He was about to fling it, when Sir Roger—in the plenitude of a good English accomplishment of which De Lisle knew nothing—planted two blows about his opponent's headpiece, that brought him to the ground. This shook the whole house, and the whole house—figuratively speaking—surged upon the scene of battle. De Lisle—bleeding, bruised, and white with passion—was picked up. The baronet's rage was mitigated by company :

“Take that man,” he said, “from the room !”

“Ah! take me !” exclaimed De Lisle, “But I'll have my revenge for this !” And, with a waiter at each side of him, and an entire household behind him, he was led down stairs.

Sir Roger, after this, went to his bed-room. He changed his clothes, put a little powder on two scratches across his face, and left the hotel. That night—Vermicelli's last—he looked into the theatre in the Haymarket. When he returned, he found—a challenge !

Now, England has become reasonably prudish in the matter of duels, and is so ungenerous as to put serious obstacles in the way of men who seek satisfaction at the point of a rapier, or at the will of a hair-trigger. By general consent, this method of making things right has been conceded to the hot bloods of the Sister Isle, and in them only has it come to be looked upon as at all respectable. Even they are cruelly hampered by sentimental conditions, and the law regards their little indulgences with no exceptional favour. Our opinions, however, upon the matter are two-faced. We laugh at Bob Acres on the stage, and think him a pitiful poltroon; but in the police-court, the laugh goes the other way, and Bob is the man for us! The "sitting magistrate"—when will magistrates begin to hatch?—compliments him on his pacific demeanour, the newspapers print his story verbatim, and the popular voice proclaims him to be a good and faithful servant

of the state. Sir Lucius, on the other hand, has to enter into recognizances, to suffer magisterial rebuke, and, in due time, to have his recognizances estreated.

But to make up for the decay of trial by battle, we have our action for assault and battery, for libel, slander, defamation of character, and all the other injuries that were once redressed by the strong arm, the expert wrist, and the sure eye. We bring our principals into court, pick our seconds from the bar, give to a judge the office of umpire, and leave to the jury the business of applying plaster. Thus, an injury committed upon A.B. by C.D., confers a benefit upon all the other letters of the alphabet, and augments, in its own little way, the valuable traffic of our commercial empire. Of course all this is very commonplace and utterly opposed to Malthusian doctrines. He that fights and runs away, has, it is said, a chance of fighting upon some more favourable occasion; 'but he

that fights, or attempts to fight, and has to draw a balance from his bankers, has little stomach for further daring. The result is, that fighting goes out of fashion, and men are inclined to pocket affronts rather than to pay for affronts out of pocket.

Sir Roger Maldon was, however, a man of the old school, and a challenge was to him something to be answered by other means than suing out articles of the peace against his challenger. Still the custom of his country weighed heavily with him, and he felt that the days of duelling—in England at least—were fairly over. But what was he to do? There was the cartel, with the when, the where, and the how of the matter, lying before him. He had struck De Lisle, and, so far, driven the man to a remedy by no means extinct even in civilised countries. After very careful consideration, the baronet acknowledged that there was nothing to be done but to accept the challenge.

He was not shaken in his opinion when he rose the next morning. He employed himself calmly and quietly enough throughout the day; and when the evening came, he put on an extra great-coat, and walked in the direction indicated by the cartel. He smiled as he went along, for he could not help thinking his errand a somewhat ridiculous one. Nevertheless, and as a proof of his strange humour,—when a poor half-clad wretch stepped out from a doorway, and cried—

“ Oh, for the love of God, sir — help me to get a bit of bread and a night’s lodging!—I shall die if I’m out in the streets to-night,—I know I shall!”—

The baronet did what was unusual for him : —he paused, looked pityingly at the man, and rendered him tenfold the help he asked !

Soon after this, he turned into Hyde Park, and struck across one of its chief arteries. At a certain point, he made a detour, and approached a clump of trees

adjacent to a piece of water. There was a circular seat round one of the trees, and on this two men were sitting and conversing in low tones. The baronet approached them coolly, when one, rising, said—

“*Vraiment, Monsieur*,—you are exact!”

The baronet bowed, and turned aside. The moment he did so, he received a blow from some hard instrument, that staggered him; another, and another; and then, falling to the ground, he heard De Lisle’s voice hissing in his ear:

“Sir Roger Maldon, we are on better terms now!”

CHAPTER II.

MR. TYMPAN'S time was valuable ; and in the affairs or the interests of other people, his judgments were deliberate. He was fond of meeting urgent applications by reference to the show of business about him, by an apparently absent demeanour, by saying—"What am I to do?—here are a hundred important matters waiting my attention — I've scarcely breathing time! — Look in next week"—and from that moment turning a deaf ear to entreaty, and falling back upon the repellent powers of his native obstinacy.

Now, for an anxious man to wait till next week, is—as many anxious men will, perhaps, from sad experience, affirm — an irksome but not an impossible task ; and therefore Mr. Tympan's usual terms of procrastination were easily enough conformed to for a first, a second, or even a third time. But when next week became an indefinite period—in fact when it grew to be a kind of debtor's next week—human patience was of course exhausted, and human indignation cried “ Humbug !”

Four or five of Mr. Tympan's next weeks had Richard Maldon passed over with merely a reasonable display of temper, although upon one occasion he was almost provoked to go back to him and demand the manuscript. This provocation came from a fellow-sufferer, a man who—wonderful to tell—lived by his pen, and who related strange stories of how he got his living ! He constructed leaders and manufactured London gossip for a provincial

paper; he did a little reviewing now and then for a metropolitan journal, and translated French novels for a penny magazine. He "advised" occasionally for a small publisher, or licked into shape the crude literary nonsense of some aristocratic booby. Now and then, a corporation, an association, or a company, employed him to make the worse appear the better reason, or, on the other hand, to make the better reason appear the worse. He wrote a sermon sometimes for a wonderful west-end preacher, or invented a speech for an honourable gentleman sent into the Commons on the public-house interest. His occupations, in this way, were multifarious, and required, at least, a comprehensive and ductile mind. But what he had chiefly to explain to Richard, was his unmitigated and ferocious enmity to publishers! As a class, they came beneath the vials of his wrath; but as individuals they were withered by the unerring aim of his anecdotes. He shook Richard's hand, when he

descended Mr. Tympan's steps, and with an earnest expression of countenance, said :

“ In short, sir, if I could get under Paternoster Row, with a barrel of powder and a bunch of matches, and blow up the booksellers in the busiest part of the day, I'd do it, sir—by Jove I'd do it!”

When Richard went to Mr. Tympan again, he had these anecdotes fresh in his mind, and he determined that the present “next week” should be the last. He was sanguine, however, of the result, and still cherished, together with his hopes of pecuniary independence, the arid ambition of literary success. Otherwise, his heart was aching and his mind troubled. From the world within—as he phrased it—the glory had departed, and a dull despair of its choicest happiness had taken possession of his thoughts. He went to Mr. Tympan.

“ Who, sir?” said the magnate, looking up from his table—“ Maldon?”

“ The same.”

“ Ah,—and, let me see, what is it?—a manuscript?”

“ Yes.”

“ About next week, I think, sir!”

“ Next week will not do!” returned Richard. “ I have waited for six next weeks already.”

“ My good sir!” exclaimed the magnate, “ you are very impatient, not to say troublesome! I havn’t had time to think of the matter yet. About next week.”

“ I must really press for your determination now,” said Richard. “ It is of the greatest importance to me. I depend upon the sale of the work for the very necessities of life!”

“ A poor dependence, young man!—a poor dependence!” exclaimed Mr. Tympan, sternly, and much less courteous now his disturber pleaded poverty. “ You may be certain sir, that you’ve built your house on the sand—you’ve brought your anchor to a false bottom! If you rely upon that

manuscript for subsistence, I tell you it's a bad reliance; but, bad or good, I'll not keep it from you any longer!"

Mr. Tympan rose, and after some time passed in the lumber-room, produced the El Dorado!

"There, sir—there it is," he said, "a little dusty perhaps. One of my clerks 'll wipe it for you as you go out. Good-day, sir!" And the magnate struck the alarum, and Richard departed.

He went back to the studio, and there saw Gerald.

"Well," said the artist, "what success?"

"None!" replied Richard, flinging the bundle on the table.

"What! rejected again?"

"Rejected again."

"Dear me!" said Gerald, thoughtfully, "I can't account for it. But never mind, my boy!—never mind. Hope for better things next time. Why, Richard!—why—

why what's the matter with you? Cheer up! don't give way. Richard—Richard!"

The artist ran to his friend, and seized him by the arm. The poor fellow swung helplessly round, and Gerald felt that there was nothing to do but to ease him gently to the floor, bathe his forehead, loosen his cravat, and wait till the womanly weakness left him. This happened presently; and Richard, white and wondering, was led to a chair.

"Why!" said the artist, hoping that his friend might catch the contagion of his smile, "you've been fainting and falling into my arms like a woman! Such a scene!"

"Have I?" replied Richard, wildly.

"Yes; but it's all right now. Here, have some brandy—a good drink—come! A fig for disappointment! Ah, now you're yourself again! I've something to tell you. You've heard me speak of Mr. Maguire, my preceptor, my predecessor here? Well, I've a letter from him. I'll read it to you."

Gerald opened the letter and read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR GERALD —Floreat Columbia !
“ good luck to the stars, stripes, and all the
“ other peculiarities of this land of white
“ freedom ! You ask me why, perhaps ?
“ I’ll tell you. Fortune, that jilted me in
“ dear old England, has flung herself and
“ her blessings in my lap here. I’m a new
“ man—a different item of the genus homo.
“ Scarcely had I set foot here when I found
“ out my proper vocation. What do you
“ think it is ? I’ll tell you ; it’s lecturing ;
“ and as the people here swallow lectures as
“ fast as they’re provided for them, I found
“ I had brought my pigs—not the ones that
“ used to go the broker’s, my boy !—to the
“ right market. I’ve exhausted all I know
“ of ‘ Art: Ancient, Mediæval, and Modern’
“ —for so runs the title of my most suc-
“ cessful effort—and I’m coming to Eng-
“ land for a time, partly for pleasure, partly
“ to refit. Anything new on the cards

“ about art, in your quarter of the globe,
“ eh? I’ve heard of your heresy, and am
“ coming to have a look at it. Married,
“ are you? ’spose you are. I’m married—
“ picked up one of the smartest women in
“ Broadway. She’s literary; helps me a
“ little, and bores me a good deal. She’s
“ a well-known woman in the States; has
“ been married twice before, stands five
“ feet eight in her stockings, and weighs,
“ when in good condition, exactly one
“ hundred and fifty-six pounds. So her
“ biography says; for they always put a
“ man or woman’s weight in his or her
“ biography here. Good-bye; expect me
“ by an early packet. Yours, (in prospe-
“ rity,) REUBEN MAGUIRE.”

“ Do you see a moral in this letter, well worth applying to yourself?” asked Gerald.

“ I see two!” replied Richard, turning his pale face towards his companion; “ and if I could believe in one of them, it would take me where your friend is. But all my

beliefs are gone now ; I have had a severe lesson, and have fallen into contempt with myself and carelessness for my prospects !”

As Richard said this, he left his seat, and approached the table on which the delusive *El Dorado* rested its unprofitable bulk. He took it up. “ Let this,” he said, “ follow the epic ! And may heaven preserve me from such folly again !”

He flung it into the fire.

“ My good fellow !” exclaimed the artist, “ what are you at ? Do you want to burn the house down ? This is mere madness !” And Gerald snatched the paper from the fire, blew out the flames that had seized upon it, and rescuing the once-cherished manuscript from its ruined covering, placed it carefully on the shelf of a what-not.

“ There,” he said, “ let that rest there ! And, mind, if ever it becomes of commercial value, I have a claim upon it for salvage !”

Richard smiled miserably, and desisted

from interference with his friend's arrangements. Then, one—the successful man—went to business; the other—the disappointed man—sat idle, and afflicted with desolating thoughts.

Presently the artist came from the studio.

“ I have a very strange and to me an inexplicable appointment for this afternoon,” he said. “ I want company. Come with me, and I will explain all I know of the affair as we go along.

“ No, thank you,” replied Richard, “ I want to write a letter or two, and see to some other matters. When shall you be back ?”

“ Oh, in an hour—it may be more. But as you won't come with me, good bye.”

“ Gerald !” said the disappointed man, detaining the artist, “ you've forgotten to shake hands with me ! Give me your hand. There, my friend—my dear friend—good bye—good bye !”

“ Why !” exclaimed Gerald, regarding

Richard with wonder, "you shake my hand as though I were never coming back again! This is something new."

"Well, let it be new!" replied Richard. "Let us shake hands as though you *were* never coming back again."

"Richard!"

"Merely a supposition, of course. *You* will come back surely enough! Do you think you shall see Rosa to-day?"

"I may."

"Well, then, give her this seal. Say I sent it to her as a present because I have nothing better to send. For you, my dear, dear friend, I have only the assurance of a more than brotherly affection! Good bye!"

The strange manner of the unhappy man disturbed Gerald; but he discarded suspicion of a serious nature, put the scene down to the recurrence of one of Richard's sentimental fits, and shaking his hand earnestly! exclaimed—

"Very well, my boy!—but keep up!

When I come back, we'll make an evening of it. I'm not on the very pinnacle of happiness myself; but to-night, at least, I'll be jolly for your sake! There, come, release my hand. Good bye! Two hours at the most."

He walked rapidly through the streets; for he could not quite subdue his uneasiness about Richard, and he was anxious to get back. He was called out, too upon strange business—business at the house of his deceased patron—and at the particular request of the cousin who had treated him so coarsely on the fatal morning. In the letter that called him, this business was described as trifling, and the word trifling was underlined. He reached the house, and—not taken to the dull ante-room this time—was shown straight into the presence of the cousin and two gentlemen,—one a tall, large-featured, stiff-cravatted, carefully-dressed person, who looked as though he was sitting for his portrait; and the

other—oddly enough!—the little hook-nosed lawyer who has before figured in this history.

“Dr. Howard—my late cousin’s confidential physician,” said the cousin, pointing to the stiff old gentleman with the large features. “Mr. Isaacs—my lawyer,” he continued, directing attention to the Old Bailey practitioner.

Somehow or other, after this formal introduction, there seemed great reluctance on the cousin’s part to begin the business of the meeting. He was evidently ill at ease; he tried to say a few good things about the weather, and said them very badly; he tried to push the wine about, but his hand trembled as he did so, and at last he poured some wine intended for his throat down the front of his shirt. This aroused him.

“At the request of this gentleman,” he said, pointing to the physician, who nodded,—“and, I may say, at my own desire to do everything that should be done, I have in-

vited you, Mr. Grey, to meet Mr. Howard, myself, and my lawyer"—here the practitioner nodded—"upon a trifling matter relating to my deceased cousin."

"Not trifling!" put in the physician, with emphasis,—“but of very great importance!”

"As you please," said the cousin. "There is no need to dispute about mere terms. However, Mr. Grey, it appears—upon the authority of Dr. Howard, who attended my cousin in his last illness—that on that painful occasion your name was often on the dying man's lips, and that certain gestures of the dying man led Mr. Howard to open a drawer, and there to discover a diary, carefully kept by my late cousin up to the very day of his death. Am I explicit enough, doctor? Do I tell your story rightly?"

"You have correctly stated the *facts* of the case," said the physician.

“ That diary Mr. Howard — scarcely legally, eh, Isaacs ? ” —

“ Scarcely,” replied the little lawyer.

“ That diary Mr. Howard—legally or not—retains in his possession ; and upon its very last entry he finds certain conjectures which he fancies that you, Mr. Grey, may be able to sustain. Have I said right ?—is not that your meaning, doctor ? ”

The physician bowed stiffly.

“ Then, if you please, will you produce the diary, and read to Mr. Grey the entry alluded to ? ”

“ I will,” said the doctor, bringing forth a thick quarto volume, in a soiled red cover, and heavily clasped. He laid the book on the table, kept one hand on it while he found his spectacles, and then, in a solemn and sonorous voice, read these simple words :

“ Should this solace be granted me—
“ should this child be her’s, God will have
“ heard my prayers ! And to whom else

“ could that face belong? It must be.
“ But till to-morrow—till G. G. comes—I
“ must have patience, and calm myself as I
“ can. Then for the truth !”

The physician paused, closed the book reverently, clasped it, and looked at Gerald.

“ Perhaps,” he said, “ we ought to have cross-questioned you before. When did you see my poor old friend last ?”

“ The night before his death !” replied the artist.

“ Ah ! the night on which this entry was written !”

“ Yes.”

“ And you—I suppose you—are the G. G. of the entry ?”

“ I beg your pardon !” said the little lawyer. “ Such a question should not be put : it’s much too leading ! It would be better to ask Mr. Grey if he can show that at any time or place, and in the presence of any third party or parties, and under any and what circumstances, and with what intent and meaning, the deceased, either

orally or by writing under his hand, or in any other manner, used the initials propounded!"

"Those initials are mine," said the artist, firmly, "and I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that I believe the entry refers to me."

"And do you know," asked the physician, "who the child alluded to is?"

There was an oppressive silence in the room when this question left the physician's lips—a silence only broken by Gerald replying, with some agitation—

"I think I do!"

The cousin turned pale, indeed; the little lawyer grew eager, and watched Gerald with shrewd attention; while the physician, with a self-satisfied air, broke forth into explanations:

"You see, Mr. Grey, I've been at some pains in this matter. Solely out of regard for my old friend—I have no other motive—I searched this diary through and through to find your full name and address. When

I found it, I said to myself—‘ This is the gentleman to whom the G. G. refers. He can, no doubt, throw some light upon the whole entry !’ Now, I have no personal interest in doing this : I do it solely out of regard for the wishes of my old friend.”

The cousin and his lawyer were whispering together during this explanation ; and at the end of it, the lawyer said—

“ And what, Mr. Howard, do you propose to do now ?”

“ What my old friend would have done,” was the reply. “ I intend—with Mr. Grey’s help—to seek out this child, and to act upon what evidence may thus arise. You will, of course, assist me, Mr. Grey ?”

“ Oh, willingly !” replied Gerald. “ But there is one who can assist you still better ; one who has been enquiring into the history of the child—I may as well say the young girl—for another purpose.”

“ And where, Mr. Grey, is this person to be found ?” asked the physician.

“ At my apartments.”

“ Oh, very well, then—let us seek him at once! Will either of you gentlemen,” he said, turning to the cousin and his lawyer, “ accompany us? I should wish everything to be done in a fair and straightforward way. I am solely endeavouring to carry out the wishes of my old friend: I have no other motive.”

The two gentlemen declined the invitation; so with much formal bowing on each side, the interview came to an end, and Gerald stepped into the physician's carriage. On their way to the studio, the doctor tried to impress his companion very strongly with the fact of his thorough disinterestedness in the matter in hand, and his want of all motive except the wish to do what his old friend would have desired.

“ Valuable as my time is, Mr. Grey,” he said; “ important as are the cases even now waiting my attention, I give up that time and neglect those cases purely out of regard

for the wishes of my deceased friend: I have no other motive. True, if I pleased, and if I were not altogether above such meanness, the fact that the man we have just left treats my old friend's creditors most indecently, might influence me—especially as I happen to be one of those creditors myself! Would you believe, sir, that a paltry sum of fifty guineas, which I thought but a poor remuneration for recent services to my dear old friend, was disputed by his successor? That little professional ape, sir—I allude to his lawyer—sent me a formal letter about it—offering half the money! I happened, however, to have secured possession of my old friend's diary—conceiving, as I did, that he meant me to take it; and when I came to the entry I have read to you, it struck me that it might refer to something of importance. I stated this, in answer to the lawyer's letter; and they pooh-pooh'd it, and the lawyer said it was of no consequence.

But, sir, they offered to pay my fees in full, if I'd give the book up! That determined me: I demanded the meeting of to-day!"

The carriage had now reached its destination. Gerald leapt out, and sought Richard. He was not in the parlour, he was not in the studio; and, in reply to a question, the servant said:

"Mr. Maldon, sir! Oh, he went out just after you, and took his portmanteau with him!"

All was explained now—the often-repeated "Good bye!" the hand-shaking, the seal for Rosa, the strange words for a temporary parting! Richard was gone; and where was the physician's information?

CHAPTER III.

GERALD and the physician were altogether unaware that they were closely followed to the studio by the little lawyer, who had now found further occupation that suited him, and who expressed his delight thereat, as he rattled along in an open cab, by rubbing his hands, snapping his fingers, taking snuff like a Zulu, and indulging in other pleasures peculiarly his own. When the doctor's carriage stopped, the cab stopped also ; and when it drove off again, the cab drove after it. The stern chase was not in this instance a long chase ; for the carriage soon turned

into a quiet street, where the children appeared to have commonable rights over the gutters, and free warren about the steps and doorways. There were shuttle-cocks flying about, buttons playing, tops spinning, and hoops tripping up the unwary passenger. Punch was just going away, the man with the panorama of the battle of Waterloo was just coming, and the organ-grinder was only a few streets off. The more useful, but equally-annoying grinder of scizzors had just commenced business there; and the tinker was swinging his censer backwards and forwards in anticipation. From all this it will be understood that the street was of the kind called quiet.

The physician's carriage, however, caused great commotion amongst the residents and squatters. They desisted, for a moment, from their several occupations, and looked at the equipage in wonder as it drew up at Mr. Grey's door; and when Gerald and the doctor got out of it, and entered the

house, the whole street was awe-stricken and dissatisfied.

Mr. Grey was little less surprised; but he was not able to express his wonder as he might have done, because illness had seized upon him and destroyed, for the time, his customary vigour. Idleness always made him melancholy; and he was obliged to be idle now, and to sit in his chair, and to watch the busy hands about him without helping them. Altogether, he bore his illness with a bad grace, said unkind things of himself, and inwardly chafed at the bondage he had fallen into; for his wife—though she submitted to him in health—in sickness ruled him with a tyranny of kindness!

Rosa, however, was his Hebe, and what he took from her hands was to him almost as ambrosia! He tried to forget his pain when she came to him, and to turn his moderate maledictions into miserable jokes. Thus, when the physician and Gerald

entered, he was suffering from a severe twinge; and with his hand on his leg, and the muscles of his face all drawn up, he was the most melancholy picture alive. But, nevertheless, he looked at Rosa, and tried to explain to her that the gout was quite a gentlemanly affliction:

“ You recollect that picture, Rosa, in Gerald’s studio, where there’s a very grand old gentleman sitting in a chair, with his leg tied up as mine might be, and with his great gouty foot on something which Gerald tells me is a genealogical tree?—But oh dear me!—who’s this? Why, Gerald, why, sir?”——

“ Pray, pray, don’t disturb yourself!” said the physician, approaching Mr. Grey, and pinching his leg without the least ceremony. “ Ah! gout, I see! Not chronic? Well, that’s a good thing!” And he turned to Rosa. But he started back suddenly when the full light of her blue eyes flashed upon him.

“ Did you ever,” he said, without turning

from her, but feeling for Gerald's arm, and drawing him forward,—“ Did you ever enter my poor old friend's private study?”

“ No,” replied the artist.

“ I should think not !” said the physician, “ or you could scarcely have come here and looked at that girl without seeing a strong likeness !”

“ To what ?”

“ Why, to a picture there !—to a picture that my old friend loved, and yet grieved, to look upon ;—a picture about which he has said to me—‘ Doctor !—that face is my only joy—my only sorrow !’ ”

This was said aloud, and all eyes were directed to Rosa. Mr. Grey for the moment forgot his affliction and stared with all his ability at her ; Mrs. Grey came forward and looked wonderingly into her face ; and as to Gerald, he searched her features with all an artist's interest ; and the result of course was that Rosa hung her head and felt abashed.

“ Now, I’ve an idea !” continued the physician in a whisper to Gerald. “ We must bring that young girl to the picture, face to face ! We shall have some trouble in getting the picture to her, so she must go to the picture ! My dear young lady !” he said, taking Rosa’s hand kindly, “ We have a little mystery to clear up, and we want you to help us. There is a strange story to be told, and we want to find out if you are the heroine of it !”

Mr. Grey was now about to rise ; but his wife forestalled him.

“ You don’t mean, sir,” she said, “ to take her away from us ?”

“ Well, not take her away—at least not yet !” replied the physician, “ But what *may* happen, there is no telling !”

“ You said something about ‘ a mystery,’ sir ?”

“ Oh yes !—a little mystery !—that’s what we want to clear up.”

“ Some mysteries, sir,” exclaimed Mr.

Grey, looking askance at his wife, "are best left alone. But if it's for Rosa's good, why of course——" He could say no more; for a twinge disturbed him, and hid his gathering emotion.

"My good man!" said the physician, breaking off into professional matters, "That gout of yours should be seen to! Here, give me pen, ink, and paper! You're low, and perhaps this 'll do you good."

He wrote:—Fee: fi: fo: fum:—and giving the prescription to Mr. Grey, turned to Gerald.

"If you can persuade this young lady," he said, "to step into my carriage now, and return with us, we shall strike the iron while it's hot! Everything's as clear as crystal to me!"

Gerald had little difficulty in persuading Rosa to accompany him. She was only too glad to be his companion; for it was generally her fate to find her eagerness in this direction somewhat seriously checked.

They were in the doctor's carriage together in a very short time; and great was the astonishment of the little lawyer when—as he remarked delicately to himself—the game he again followed was increased by a petticoat!

Over the stones went the two vehicles, threading with sinuous ease the mazes of that wondrous traffic which makes London at once ugly and prosperous. On they went, till they reached the house of which the cousin and heir-at-law was the somewhat alarmed master. He was at the window when the physician's carriage drew up, and the doctor's return filled him with strange forebodings. He had a wholesome fear of Mr. Howard, for he knew him to be a man of resolution, ability, and high standing. He would have paid him his fees fifty times over had he entertained the slightest suspicion of what had since happened! But when he saw the man jump lightly from his brougham, saw the artist follow him, and a

slim female figure follow the artist, he was beside himself, and his temper ran riot. He stamped on the ground, uttered violent imprecations, and screamed with rage; and then, when it was too late, he hurried into the hall, crying,

“ Don't let them in!—fling the door in their faces! Never say I'm at home to that d——d doctor!”

“ Sir!” exclaimed the physician, passing the doorway, “ I *am* in!—you *are* at home!—and I'm *not* a ‘ d——d doctor!’ ”

The cousin was sensibly rebuked, and obliged to acknowledge himself beaten. His violent outbursts of passion were always followed by somewhat craven calms. He had learned, too, to fear the doctor—to feel that his hostility was dangerous; and he recollected that the man was well-known to the town, and had believers and a circulation like a newspaper. The game, then, must be played quietly and carefully.

“ Excuse me,” he said, “ you mistake.

Your knock is so like So-and-So's, and just now he's canvassing for the parish business. He calls about this time, and I've given orders not to admit him. But, may I ask, what is the object of your return—and with this young lady, too?"

"Well," replied the physician, somewhat mollified, "the object of my return is to ask a favour of you. Will you grant it?"

"Oh, certainly," exclaimed the cousin, scarcely knowing what he said.

"Then," replied the doctor, striking at the right moment, "we will, with your permission, pass five minutes in my old friend's study."

The doctor waited for no further reply, but walked towards the stairs. A terrible suspicion came across the mind of the cousin. In the room they were approaching, there was a picture of one whom, many years ago, he had played with when they were both children, and, years after that, had taken by the hand, and talked of

love to! But she laughed at him and scorned his pretensions; told him she knew he only wanted her for her fortune, and that she and her fortune were pledged to another! That fortune was now his; but where was she?

He followed the physician and his companions up stairs. The doctor—apparently well acquainted with the place—opened the door of the study, and crying—“What! all in darkness!” applied his own hands to the shutters, and let in the light. While he was doing this, Gerald whispered confidence into Rosa’s ear, pressed her hand, and offered her such consoling words of love as came uppermost. These words took away all her fear, and made her happy. But suddenly the physician disturbed them; he pointed to a picture over the mantel-piece; he lifted Rosa’s veil; and then the poor girl fell on her knees, and with one wild scream, uttered the word “Mother!”

“It’s a lie—a plot—a rascally conspiracy

—a trick to cheat me and ruin my family !” cried the cousin, rushing forward, seizing Rosa, and bringing his basilisk eyes to bear full upon her face, “ Who has taught this girl her part, and lent her for this purpose ? I say, doctor, it’s a lie, a cheat, a conspiracy !—and you shall be punished for it !”

Rosa, rising hastily, had thrown herself upon Gerald to escape the man, and Gerald was putting her gently aside preparatory to taking the cousin by the collar.

“ Stay !” exclaimed the physician, stepping between them. “ Let us, on one side at least, act legally. For all this, we shall have ample satisfaction. For my part—actuated as I am solely by a sense of duty towards my old friend : I have no other motive—I can listen to these insulting assertions in perfect tranquility. They must be answered, Mr. Grey, in another place. Sir !” he continued, turning to the cousin. “ Our business with you is now at an end, and we shall trouble your house no further

—at least, while it *is* your house!—mind, I say while it *is* your house! Good-day, sir.”

The physician turned to the door, and pushed it back rather abruptly. It opened to the stairs, and down those stairs the little lawyer rolled over and over till at last he gathered himself up on the mat. He had just hurried out of the cab and into the house to witness the new scene, and his undignified descent was caused by the abruptness of the doctor’s movements.

Rosa wept very bitterly as she left the house with Gerald :

“What are you doing this for?” she asked.

“My dear Rosa, we are doing it for your good. You are a mystery, and we want to set you right. If you are kept from something that’s your’s, don’t you wish us to get it for you? If you have parents or relations living, don’t you wish us to find them out?”

Rosa turned her tearful eyes towards Gerald.

“Anything that *you* wish,” she said, earnestly, “I wish too.”

“My dear Mr. Grey!” interrupted the doctor, “I must now bid you good-bye. As far as we’ve gone, everything prospers. We must set the lawyers to work next. What we want is corroborative and documentary evidence. That we must get. Do you know, this strange affair quite excites me. And yet I do all this solely out of regard for the wishes of my old friend: I have no other motive. Good-bye! You shall hear from me to-morrow.”

And the physician, looking at his watch, and recollecting that a patient who was expected to die hourly might be dying for him at that moment, stepped into his carriage, and drove off.

As they walked home together, Gerald tried to explain to Rosa the probabilities of

the matter in which they were so unexpectedly involved; and to all his explanations she had only one reply—"If you think so, I think so, too!" or words to that effect. He grew suspicious of this form of answer at last, and by way of making her extend the circle of her anxieties, he told the story of Richard's disappearance, and ended by giving her the seal. He expected tears, perhaps; sympathy and sorrow certainly. But he had neither. Rosa took the trinket coldly, turned it over and over, carelessly and said,—

"Oh, you keep it for me, Gerald! What am I to do with a seal?"

"I keep it for you!" repeated the artist. "What are you to do with a seal! Oh, Rosa! have you no gratitude—no love—for one to whom you are so deeply indebted? If you ask me what to do with the seal, I answer—Wear it next your heart, and learn to love the giver!"

They parted at the door of Mr. Grey's

house, and Rosa went in sadly. *He—* Gerald—had told her to love Richard! That was enough. Forgetting Mr. Grey, she escaped to her room, and there, flinging herself on the bed, wept away an hour of bitter sorrow!

CHAPTER IV.

THE peculiar line of adventure in which the artist had now become involved, filled his hands with so much business that he was neglecting his profession. Day after day, the studio was deserted, and Gerald passed much apparently unprofitable time in the parlour; for day after day somebody came or something happened to demand his attention and carry him from his easel. On Monday it was the physician, anxious about the wishes of his dear old friend; on Tuesday, the lawyer, who had taken up the case upon the "no cure, no costs" principle, and

who therefore felt privileged to be troublesome ; and on Wednesday, Mr. Grey—dull and unhappy, strangely altered, and always with some new complaint of Rosa's growing wretchedness.

“ She cries from morning till night now, Gerald !” said the poor man. “ We can't tell what's come to her, but I suppose it's something to do with the ‘mystery’ the doctor talked of. Ah, my boy!—contentment, and a dinner of herbs, you know, are better, very much better, than the stalled ox and the rest of it ! All the names, all the relations, all the riches that people say we should have or we shouldn't, are nothing to a contented mind !—are they, Gerald ?”

Gerald paused before replying ; for lately he had come to have two opinions upon the point, and to entertain notions of right and wrong scarcely consonant with simple philosophy.

“ If a man bears a name that doesn't belong to him,” he said, “ or is kept in one

position while he is entitled to another, he is seriously wronged, and contentment is, or should be, out of place !”

“ Do you think so, really, Gerald ?” asked Mr. Grey, earnestly.

“ I do, most certainly.”

“ Then, if I—and my wife—were—were—to keep Rosa, or any body else, in ignorance of what she—or—or—anybody else—should have, why, you—you think—we should not be doing properly,—eh, eh, Gerald ?”

“ Think ! I know you would not !”

“ But, suppose, my boy,—suppose,” continued Mr. Grey, clutching at the artist, and astonishing him by his eagerness, “ suppose that any one was doing well as it is, and was happy, and contented, and like you—say like you—my boy !—suppose all that. Would you think we did wrong, then ?”

“ Decidedly ; in any case I should. And therefore I am doing what I can to unravel Rosa’s history, and to see her righted.”

Mr. Grey released Gerald's arm, and shrunk back as though his right to touch it was at an end. He put on his hat, tremblingly took the hand that was offered to him, and went home. There, as usual now, he found Rosa in tears, and Mrs. Grey trying vainly to console her. When the husband and wife were left alone, he said, staring moodily into the fire, and scarcely daring to look at his partner :

“ Mary!—for the best part of our lives we've been doing wrong. Gerald says so.”

“ Gerald?”

“ Yes, Mary,—Gerald. It came out through this business of Rosa's.”

They were both silent for a time, till Mrs. Grey, with an intuition of what had happened, burst into lamentations :

“ God knows,” she said, sobbing, “ we did what we thought best, didn't we, father? and we fancied, didn't we, that everything had turned out well?”

“ Yes, Mary, yes, we did. But it hasn't,

you see ; and I suppose it's not in nature that it should. However, Mary, we must do wrong no longer."

From that day the husband and wife tried to collect their courage for an event, to fortify themselves against a terrible shock of truth. This trial made them wretched, indeed ; their courage came but slowly, and their fortifications were built up only to fall down again. Though they laboured hard at this work—sometimes in dreams at night, and always from dawn till dusk—they made but little progress, and the time for striking the blow found them unprepared. This went on, till at last they doubted whether courage to strike it would ever come to them !

In the meantime, Gerald, noticing their strange depression, and thinking that their hearts ached solely for the sadness that had come upon Rosa, consoled them as well as he could, and devoted himself energetically to the very business the origin of which had

brought their grief about. But he was working in the dark; he wanted that information, that "mere outline" which he believed Richard to possess. Not only for Richard himself, then, but for all those in whom the artist was most interested, he felt it his duty to seek out the unhappy man, and so clear up the double mystery.

"If that gentleman can be found, sir," said the lawyer, "from what you have hinted, I think something might be done. But at present we are at a complete standstill."

"Ah!" echoed the physician, who was growing somewhat tired of the pursuit, "that's quite true. Without something of the kind my exertions in the matter—instigated solely by respect for my old friend's wishes: I have no other motive—will, I fear, be altogether unavailing."

Driven thus by the doctor and the lawyer, Gerald determined upon a bold step—one that delicacy alone had hindered him from

taking hitherto; and this was, to seek Richard at Maldon Priory! Having thus determined, there was no rest for him till the step was taken; and yet he lacked the courage to take it. He thought of sending a letter, or making a letter serve for all purposes. Yet to whom was he to address it? Perhaps he might have answered this reasonably, and sent the letter; but a strangely hopeful feeling impelled him to be himself the messenger, and to dare a discovery of another kind, about which his heart ached, and in which he might find either sweet solace or certain despondency.

Thus spurred to the encounter, he rose one morning, and long before affluent London had left its pillow, arrived at the railway station. His impatience had made him early, and he found himself amongst sleepy porters, yawning clerks, and a station master whose eyes were hardly open. He was thus enabled to watch the progress of shunting, coupling, and, indeed, all the

other interesting arrangements pertaining to a great terminus; till at length the signal was given, and the train was ready to start. Then, while the rattle of the guard's whistle yet rung in the ears of the nervous, and the shriek of the engine affrighted the timid, a gentleman of aristocratic *ensemble* walked deliberately to the door of the carriage in which the artist sat, and, with an air that was good breeding personified—it might be, petrified—entered, took his seat, devoted himself to a newspaper, and tried to believe that he was alone.

The train went on, emerging from the suburbs at last, and tearing, crashing, shaking through the country—the country, all the while, seeming to reel and run away from it. The occupants of the carriage were mostly quiet and English enough, with the exception of one stout, red-faced old lady, who might have been the wife or the widow of a substantial farmer, and who,

having passed the vinegar bashfulness of her salad days, had arrived at an oily period that made her easy and sociable with strangers. She sat next the stiff gentleman with the newspaper; and although he executed several strongly-marked flank movements, to escape the pressure of her broad basis, and to maintain the fiction that he was alone, she still asserted herself, and, to his great disgust, leant against him, and talked to him, and tried to use him as a handbook to the midland counties. To keep her quiet, he, at length, with a slight inclination of the head, dropped the paper somewhat sullenly in her lap. But this was worse still, for the paper contained news of a murder about which the old lady was reasonably curiously. She wanted him to annotate this news—to supply it with a running commentary; and her anxieties upon this head were such that he was at last thoroughly ruffled. When the train stopped, therefore, to relieve the engine

from a drought that had come upon it, he called the guard, had the carriage door unlocked, and took refuge in another compartment.

It was now Gerald's turn ; for he sat opposite the old lady, and therefore she fastened upon him :

“ Some people,” she said, “ are like bears—growling bears!—aint they, sir? Now I daresay that young upstart thinks hisself somebody !”

“ Yes,” replied Gerald, “ I daresay he does !” And he might have added—*I* think him somebody, too ; for is he not the brother of Blanche !

The excursion came to an end, and the artist left the carriage. He saw Sir Roger enter a vehicle that was waiting for him, and drive off. The walk was a short one, so Gerald went over the fields to Maldon. He passed through the old village, passed the well-remembered spot where once stood the cottage of Tom Jackson, and at length

neared the Priory. He heard the crows again, tuning their dull instruments; and he was again within sight of the very window from which Blanche had first looked down upon him. But here, his courage failed, oozed out at his fingers' ends, and he spent half-an-hour under a tree in bringing it back again. Then he approached the house, encountered a servant, and inquired for Richard.

The man shook his head. "Mr. Richard, sir? He's a stranger here. We haven't seen him for months!"

Gerald paused. Who was he to ask for next?

The man tried to relieve him: "Sir Roger, sir, has just come down."

"No, no," said Gerald, hesitating. "Is there—is there—anyone else in the house?"

"Her ladyship, sir."

Checked again!

"Miss Blanche, sir!"

Miss Blanche! Ah, here was comfort

at last ! With such a burning glow in his face, such a glad light in his eye, and with such poverty of language as befitted his agitation, Gerald answered " Yes."

At that moment, a heavy step was heard on the stairs : it was the housekeeper's ;— then a light one, and Blanche stood before the artist !

" Oh, Mr. Grey !" she said, hastening to him, and holding out her hand. " What of my brother ?"

She had to repeat the question, for the artist was bewildered.

" What of my brother, Mr. Grey ? Is he with you ?"

" I came here," said Gerald, " to enquire for him."

" Then, has he left London ?"

" He has."

This was enough ! " Mr. Grey," said Blanche, " this is sad news, indeed ! I have waited, week after week, to hear from him ; I have written to him, letter after

letter, and all but one have been returned to me !”

“ Not one of those letters reached him !” replied the artist.

“ Not one !—not the last ?”

“ To my knowledge, he has not had a letter from you since he left London !”

A light broke in upon Blanche now, and revealed, in no very pleasing colours, the figure of De Lisle. He had voluntarily taken the first letter, and that was the only one which had not been returned to her ! This gave her a key to the whole story ; and knowing Richard’s waywardness of temper, and his proneness to magnify the merest sign of neglect, she found a grievous explanation of all that had happened.

“ Mr. Grey,” she said, bursting into tears. “ I see it all now ! We have both been cruelly deceived !”

This hurried and agitating conversation had taken place in the presence of the housekeeper and the man who waited in

the hall, and it gave them very substantial reason for exhibiting some surprise. In common with all the servants at the Priory, they were capable of much wonder, and made the most of the little that happened. On this occasion they stood with eyes staring, mouths open, and hands ready for elevation. Blanche, turning round, saw this, and it then occurred to her that the hall was not a very fit place for important confidences. She therefore motioned Gerald to follow her; and he—agitated, grieved, and yet hopeful as he was—did so with alacrity.

But in the meantime, the baronet, who had been occupied in his dressing-room, preparing, somewhat reluctantly, for an interview with one or other of his family, had screwed his courage up to the necessary pitch for undergoing cross-questions; and, putting on his softest slippers, had made his way to the drawing-room. Now it happened that Lady Maldon, hearing of his

arrival, was in that drawing-room, bursting to ask, with what ability she could, the very questions her son so much dreaded.

“ Ah !” she said, when he entered, and found her sitting in state, “ where’s the chevalier ? Do you know, Roger, I’m quite out of *eau-de-Cologne* ! You haven’t come back without the Chevalier, have you ?”

What filial affection Sir Roger owned was thus turned aside. He had the marks of the Chevalier’s murderous attack still about him, and the mention of the man’s name was poison to his wounded spirit.

“ Is that all you have to ask ?” he said roughly.

“ All !” repeated Lady Maldon. “ How strange the world seems ! Why, that’s everything ! You know, of course, how I’ve been treated here ?”

The son stayed for no more words ; but left the room, and—with his mother but a few steps behind him—sought more sensible company. His soft slippers carried him

almost noiselessly to the breakfast parlour to which Blanche had led Gerald. The door was partly open, and, hearing voices, he paused. Miracle upon miracles!—what did he see! There was his sister,—Blanche, yes, Blanche—bending, blushing, and surrendering her hand to a young man who had come down to Maldon with him in the railway carriage!

For a moment he stood hesitating in the doorway, and gazing upon the wondrous scene. Then—unconscious that Lady Maldon was just behind him, looking on in wonder, too—he stepped into the room and confronted the culprits.

The moment was a terrible one! Right or wrong, vicious or virtuous, human nature is not so constituted as to be discovered at serious love-making without a transient sense of shame. The most innocent girl in the world, with the license made out, or the banns put up,—even with the bells ringing and the parson tying his neckcloth

—will feel some unpleasant agitations when caught in a corner with Charles—granting him, it may be, the first of many expected favours! The least reformed rake—implored by his friends to marry and save himself—will be confused and conscious of modesty should he be caught quietly lipping the fair little girl who is to have the doubtful harvest of his wild oats! Nay, your stout, rubicund materfamilias, busy with Mrs. Gamp, and recommending the good lady to her first-born, will start and turn redder if caught sentimentally rewarding her little man for the last new bonnet or the promised bassinette! What, then, could be expected of two persons so slightly experienced in conjugal scenes as Gerald and Blanche.

“Sir!” said the baronet, addressing the artist, “who are you, and what do you do in this house?”

Poor Gerald! In the shame and bewilderment of the time, he had lost his self-

command. His tongue—craven as the thing is when most wanted—clave to his mouth, and was a stringless instrument. He had forgotten who he was, and what he did in that house was a wonder to him!

“ I ask,” repeated the baronet, “ who are you, and what do you want here? Above all, do you know the lady you are taking liberties with ?”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Lady Maldon, from behind. “ Who is he?—he’s not the Chevalier! Why does he take the Chevalier’s liberties ?”

Confidence was coming back to the culprits; to Blanche especially. So sensitive a plant is love, that it curls up its leaves at the merest light of discovery; but so sublime is its courage, that taunt or trifle with it—and its revelations may wither you! Blanche answered :

“ This gentleman is my brother’s friend, and mine, as seeing what you have, should be plain to you !”

“ Oh, then !” said Lady Maldon, turning to the baronet—(she had forgotten Richard’s existence)—“ you know all about him ! Has he come instead of the Chevalier ?”

“ I ask again,” said Sir Roger, disregarding her ladyship, “ who are you, sir ? and what do you do in this house ?”

Gerald felt, although under great provocation, that he had no right to be uncivil. So, as he could not trust himself to words, he, after a time, found a card, and this he handed to the baronet. But, unfortunately, the card was one of those upon which, in Gerald’s earlier days, he had written the word “ artist ;” and, as Sir Roger scanned the description, his temper was not improved. An artist of the best kind was bad enough ; but there were so many artists of various grades, that room was left for the worst suspicions. He rang the bell violently, and said to his sister :

“ Blanche,—if you have any respect for me—for yourself—let this disgrace end here !

For you, sir," he continued, turning to Gerald, "I shall be obliged by your instant departure!"

There was but one course to take, and Blanche took it:

"Mr. Grey," she said, quietly, "what we have to say can be said out of doors." And with these words, she went to the hall, put on a broad gipsy hat, and left the house with Gerald.

There was no one in the room now but Lady Maldon and the baronet.

"What a scene!" cried her ladyship, tottering feebly to her son. "But, my dear Roger—why did you come alone?—where's Marie?—where's the Chevalier?"

The bell had been answered, and the man waited his master's commands. There was no one but Lady Maldon to show out now; so, not to be disappointed, the baronet looked towards her:

"Lady Maldon!" he said.

The man obeyed. And her ladyship, fol-

lowing him mechanically, was bowed and motioned out. She made sure that her son was behind her; and with the servant's assistance, returned to the drawing-room to receive him. There she waited till her patience and her strength were both exhausted; and, then, calling her nurse, she was taken up stairs to bed.

As to Gerald and Blanche, they passed some time talking in the avenue; and then, with a few last words—that dropped like stars into the heaven of their memory, and would shine there till they met again!—they parted.

CHAPTER V.

IT happened that while the scene detailed in the last chapter was in progress at Maldon Priory, a stout, hearty gentleman, loosely attired, wearing a pointed beard, a sweeping moustache, and a felt hat of foreign fashion, jumped from a cab at the artist's door, rang the bell confidently, and then enquired for the artist himself.

“Not at home!” he replied, in answer to the little servant. “Not at home! Confound him!—But when do you expect him back?”

“Oh!” said the wondering servant, “I’ll call Missis!”

She went to the stairs, and uttered a shrill sibilating cry, that brought up the landlady.

“What, Mrs. B.!” said the stranger, taking her hand and shaking it heartily.

“Sir!” replied the landlady, withdrawing her hand, and putting it with its fellow, beneath her apron,—“You have the advantage of me; I’m a respectable married woman; be quiet!”

The stranger burst into a loud peal of laughter. “What!” he said, “not know me, Mrs. B.?—not know your old, your earliest lodger?”

The landlady started. She looked at the stout hearty gentleman scrutinizingly; at the hat he wore, the beard he grew, and the Trinchinopoli he was smoking. She did not know her old, her earliest lodger!

“Well,” he said, smiling, “This is curious! Am I so changed, then? But I think I can identify myself. Years ago, ma’am, a poor devil,—a dauber of

dogs, pigs, and other animals not quadrupedal—hurried from his native land, leaving unpaid a bill for washing :—one shirt, one pair of drawers, one cotton pocket-handkerchief. The bill followed him, even to Liverpool ; but too late : he never paid it !”

“ Mr. Maguire !—Mr. Maguire !” said the landlady, shaking his hand heartily.

“ The same, ma’am, or, as it seems,—not the same !” he replied, returning the greeting with interest. “ And when do you expect my young pupil back ?”

“ This evening.”

“ This evening. Hum ! that’s a long time to wait. But I can’t go away without seeing him ; so, with your permission, Mrs. B., I’ll make myself at home in his apartment till he returns.”

“ Oh, I’m sure he’ll have no objection !” said the landlady. “ You were always such good friends, and I recollect he was very sad when you left him.”

“ Objection ! Mrs. B. ! Good friends !

We were more than friends, ma'am ! I was his Perugino, his preceptor, and put him in the very path of success !”

“ Oh yes,” said the landlady, leading the way to the parlour.

“ *This* his place ?” exclaimed Mr. Maguire, looking about him. “ Why, he lodges like a prince ! Rather different once, eh, Mrs. B.— when I was master here ?”

“ Rather !” replied the landlady, somewhat proudly. “ But if one may go by appearances, Mr. Maguire, there’s a difference with you, too.”

“ Well, Mrs. B., to speak frankly, there is ! I may say it has been my good fortune to undergo a thorough revolution of circumstances ; and that being the case, why the washing bill—one shirt, etc. etc.—can be at once——”

“ Oh, don’t mention it, pray !” replied the landlady.

“ Ah, ma’am !” said Mr. Maguire, looking at himself complacently, and philosophising,

—“ You’re blest with that cardinal virtue common in the world, which draws back and says ‘ don’t mention it !’ to a full purse, but comes down Avatar-like upon an empty one ! *Omne ignotum pro etc.*, as we used to say at school. What magnificent weather, Mrs. B. !”

The landlady took Mr. Maguire’s display of scholarship to conceal a compliment, and what she heard of Avatar conveyed to her the idea that a relation of the good Samaritan was in question. She therefore did all she could to make her old lodger comfortable in his successor’s apartments, and when he attempted to rock himself in one of Gerald’s easiest chairs, and said “ Does my young friend keep a larder, Mrs. B. ?” she replied that there was as nice a piece of pork in the safe as one might wish to set eyes on !

“ Onion fixings ?” asked Mr. Maguire.

“ Yes,—onions,” returned the landlady.

“ Then, Mrs. B., if you think that my young friend will take it as a favour, you

may bring up that pork and those onions at once !”

The landlady obeyed her own inclination in the matter ; and while she was away, Mr. Maguire said to himself,—“ I’ll just look into the studio, and see how my young friend gets on with his pictures !”

He did so ; and after a time passed thus, a twinkle very like a tear came to his eye, and the old feeling of art-worship returned to him.

“ Reuben, my boy !” he said, putting down gently and reverentially the painted dream that Gerald made a mystery of,—“ This was your early love—your first ambition. But you were not made for it, and your pupil was. In a whole lifetime you could have done nothing like this. Well, every man to his trade ; and your trade is not painting !”

This trifling outburst of sentiment sobered Mr. Maguire, and prepared him for the serious business of eating. That over, he

became buoyant again, and called to the little servant at his elbow :

“ Striped pig !”

The girl stared, ran hurriedly away, and repeated what she had heard to her mistress. The mistress came up.

“ What did you ask for ?” she said.

“ Striped pig, ma'am. But, dear me, I forget ! I'm always forgetting myself in England. I've been used, you see, to call things by wrong names for so long, that I can't get back to the habit of calling them by right. Do you know, ma'am, at Liverpool, the other day, I compromised myself in the eyes of several respectable people by calling my shirt a ' dicky !' It's a common word in the States, and my wife, in her last novel, uses it frequently.”

The landlady was full of wonder.

“ Yes,” he continued, “ I recollect an instance of it. It's in a kind of autobiography of herself, in which she runs amuck at all her relations, from her ' papa'

downwards. The passage describes one of the heroes of the story,—(for it's a peculiarity of her books, and a fine evidence of her masculine understanding, that her heroine always uses up several heroes)—and, after a telling us that the man had an eye like Mars, a nose like the Duke of Wellington, and curls like Hyperion, it goes on to say that his 'dicky was of the finest, the most superb cambric!' So you see, I get into a way of calling things by such names myself. But, in confidence, Mrs. B., I may tell you that in those parts of America where the morals of the people are closely cared for, and where the appetites of the people are governed with rather a tight hand, 'Striped pig' means intoxicating and alcoholic liquor!"

Mr. Maguire, after this explanation, was suited with what he desired; and, finding Gerald's cigar-box, he grew comfortable in the extreme. Then, he took a survey of the room, its furniture and adornments; and

at last his eye rested upon Richard's manuscript.

"What's this?" he said, bringing a handful of it to the table. "Gerald an author! Yes, sure enough!—the old thing—chapter and chapter. What would Minerva say to this? I'll see what it's like!"

He sat down, and somewhat lazily and contemptuously looked over the first few sheets. Then his laziness departed and his contempt vanished; then his cigar went out, was put down, and rolled from the table to the floor; then the striped pig was altogether neglected; and at length Mr. Maguire settled himself down to serious reading. Now and then he uttered a short laugh, gave a smart shake of the head, or his eyes twinkled, and he felt for his handkerchief. Then he tacked across to an opposite passion, set his teeth close, and clenched his hands. And at last, having reached a climax of some sort, he struck the table so that the glasses

shivered, and, pushing the chair back, rose from his seat.

“ Well,” he said, returning the manuscript to its place,—“ that young fellow’s a marvel! Not content with being one in a thousand among painters, he must aspire to be one in a hundred among authors! Why, Minerva couldn’t hold a candle to this!”

It was lucky for Mr. Maguire that the lady alluded to—not the goddess, but a far greater creature—was absent when he spoke so plainly of her unfitness for a not very well defined duty. The broad Atlantic was between her and her husband, or his words would have been taken as a text for one of her forthcoming chapters, and the whole American nation would have heard of the matter. As it was, Mr. Maguire acknowledged a momentary suspicion that he might have touched that spring upon which Rousseau moralizes, and so, in England, have shocked the literary vitality of his wife in America!

The time, however, approached for Gerald to return ; and in due course he came. Now, Mr. Maguire had made it a point of honour with the landlady to keep his arrival a secret beyond the bounds of the parlour ; and therefore when the artist entered, found his room full of smoke, and saw through the fragrant haze a liberty-loving gentleman seated in one easy chair, with his legs on another, he was naturally surprised, and addressed the intruder much as the landlady had done. He was soon undeceived, however. Mr. Maguire had scarcely said, “ Ha ! my young Raffaele !—can’t you recognize your old preceptor ? ” than the two men were grasping each other’s hands ; and, as Gerald had dropped a tear when Mr. Maguire departed, it was Mr. Maguire’s turn to be sentimental now he came back.

“ My dear young friend ! ” he said, brushing away the evidences of a weakness he had no need to be ashamed of,—“ this is a meeting I have long looked forward to, because it is a

meeting such as the old time could never afford. Then, my boy, there was always some miserable *arrière-pensée* clinging about my heart and belieing my pretended happiness! But now——! Will you believe me, Gerald, when I tell you that I haven't a care in the——”

“ Well?” said the artist, seeing that Mr. Maguire hesitated.

“ That I haven't a care in the——I mean on this side the Atlantic!”

“ And on the other?”

“ Well, on the other, you know, I've a wife!”

Gerald saw that the recollection of his possessions on the other side of the Atlantic afflicted Mr. Maguire with the very *arrière-pensée* from which he had just boasted his emancipation; and so the subject was changed. Looking closely at his old friend, the artist could scarcely believe that he saw the man who, in the old days, had put his

hand to his side, and illustrated an anatomical statement :

“ Oh, Master Slender !” he exclaimed, “ have you not become a Falstaff ?”

“ Hold ! my boy !” returned Mr. Maguire, “ and listen. But first let me tell you that Falstaff’s fat was an incubus ; while mine— as you may find if you pinch me anywhere—fits me firm as Roman armour. Know, then, that I have come into my estate ; that this substance belonged to me always, and was only kept away by the butcher and the baker, and all the other purveyors who conspired to effect my attenuation !”

Gerald smiled.

“ Besides,” continued the new man, “ there’s another point. How long is it since I left England ? Well, never mind, it’s long enough for my argument. You know that seven years use up a man altogether, and leave him none of his old constituents. I made a good deal of this idea at New Orleans. The audience thought it

was my discovery ; and one gentleman from the South rose up and addressed me upon it:—‘I tell you what, stranger!’ said he, ‘you’re not coming over us free and independent democrats with that sort of thing. You aint a-going to tell me that a man wears out like a pair of pants or a nigger! Now, I’ll bet you anything you like, from a neck-twister up to a twenty-dollar bill, that I’ll show you a mark on one of my critturs that I give him seven years ago twice over!—and I beg to propose to this enlightened assembly that it votes you a most tarnation liar; and I expect that that proposition will be carried neminy contradicenty!’ That’s merely an anecdote, Gerald, to show you that, although there may be two opinions upon the point, it’s a well illustrated fact that a man may be quite a different thing at the end of a given septennial period to what he was at the beginning. But you you’ve suffered a change, too!—taken to literature, eh?”

“ To literature ?”

“ Yes. I’ve found you out. You’re coming the Waverley Novels with us! Perhaps you wrote the ‘ Vestiges ’ ?”

“ Oh !” said Gerald, his eye lighting on the disturbed manuscript. “ Well, what do you think of my ability in that way ?”

“ Think ! my boy. Why, I think it a wonder ! How much do you get for such a thing as that, now ?”

“ What do you imagine ?—what do you fancy it would fetch in the American market ?”

“ Ah ! there I must refer you to Minerva. Did I tell you my wife’s name was Minerva ? But if I gave my opinion, I should say about as much as one of your best pictures !”

“ Ah !” said the artist, a new light breaking in upon him. “ Now, do you think you could prevail upon Mrs. Maguire to take that manuscript in hand, and dispose of it for me ?”

“ I’ll try, if you wish it.”

“ I do—earnestly.”

“ Very well,—the thing shall be done.”

The two men then sat down to make a night of it. Gerald, elated by the issue of the day's adventure, was unusually boisterous. The striped pig came again and again to table; the cigar-box passed and repassed till the bottom was visible. Then Mr. Maguire became nationally vocal, and poured out his soul in “The Harp that once through Tara's Halls.” Gerald returned the favour in a military stave mostly sung by civilians, with the burden of

“ Vive l'amour !—cigars and cogniac ;

Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, hurrah !

With these we bivouac !”

till at last it came to a thoroughly new arrangement of “Rule Britannia” for two voices. And oh ! what a mighty chorus was that—

“ Rule Britannia !

Britannia rules the waves :

Brit-tons nev-ver, nev-ver, nev-ver-r-r shall be slaves !”

when it was suddenly interrupted by a nervous and hurried peal at the bell!

“Who can that be?” said Gerald. “It’s very late!”

“Oh, the policeman!” replied Mr. Maguire, lugubriously. “We’re making too much noise for this quiet country. Here, take him out some striped pig!”

“No!” said Gerald, with a strange presentiment of evil. “Wait a moment; I’ll see.”

He went to the door and opened it. On the step stood Mr. Grey, with a white, anxious face.

“Rosa!” he said. “Have you seen her? She’s left us!”

“Left you!”

“Yes,—I thought it would come to this; she’s been so miserable lately. This morning she went out for a walk, and now, past midnight, she hasn’t returned!”

Gerald went back to Mr. Maguire.

“Something has happened!” he said, “I must go out. Make yourself comfortable here till I return.” And then he left the house with Mr. Grey, to take the dreary round of the metropolitan police stations.

All in vain! The search was fruitless; but ever and anon a terrible picture came to the artist’s mind, a picture founded upon a sad verse of a noble poem; the prose of which was present to Mr. Grey, who, through his tears could see a cold, pale face, with rich golden hair hanging tangled and begrimed about it, and blue eyes staring blindly at the moon, as the foul waters fell away, and left the poor sacrifice on the dull, damp shore!

When they parted, Mr. Grey took the artist’s hand.

“Gerald, my boy!” he said, “will you forgive me if ever I’ve done you a mischief? Will you still come to me and my poor wife, and love me as you used to do? Will you, Gerald?”

An indescribable feeling of suspicion came to the artist.

“Forgive you!—what do you mean?” he said.

“I can’t tell you now, Gerald,—I havn’t the courage. But soon, soon. And Gerald, —years ago, when you were a little child, you used to lisp out your prayers on my knee, and look in my face, and say ‘God bless my parents!’ Will you look in my face, and say ‘God bless you!’ now? Will you, will you, my boy?”

“Father!” replied Gerald, using a name he had long left unused, “God bless you! —good bye!”

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the physician next called upon Gerald, he brought the lawyer with him, and his first question was—

“ Well, Mr. Grey, has anything happened ?”

“ Something *has* happened !” returned the artist.

“ Ah ! I thought so !” cried the lawyer, “ or I should not have received this !”

“ Oh, no, you’d not have received that !” echoed the physician.

“ What ?” asked Gerald.

“ Why, this letter !” returned the lawyer,

carefully extracting one from a bundle of papers. "This would never have been written had not some untoward event taken place. At first, Mr. Grey—as I have explained to Mr. Howard.—I thought it was a trick, a subterfuge on the part of the other side to frighten us from proceeding. But if anything *has* happened, the letter is accounted for. There it is,—read it."

Gerald took the letter. It was couched in the most courteous terms, seemed wonderfully affectionate for a communication between two men who were employed to baffle and overreach each other, was characteristic of all professional sparring, and in consonance with the general custom of lawyers, who have a prescriptive right to

" First shake hands before they box ;
Then give each other plaguy knocks,
With all the love and kindness of a brother !"

For lawyers, even when at daggers drawn, use pens dipped in rose-water, and discharge from their full udders the very milk of

human kindness ! Thus, Isaac's letter ran as follows :—

“ MY DEAR SIR,—

“ Grey (next friend) v. —.

“ I have the pleasure to inform you that
“ a certain unexpected occurrence (the cir-
“ cumstances of which I am not at liberty
“ to disclose) has rendered my client per-
“ fectly indifferent to any further steps of
“ yours in this matter ; and he desires me
“ to say that the only object of his defence
“ will, after this notice, be to fix the opposite
“ party with the costs of all future pro-
“ ceedings, in the certain and absurd di-
“ lemma into which your client will un-
“ doubtedly bring himself. In a week, or
“ ten days at the most, I shall be at liberty
“ to state what that dilemma may be, and
“ to explain more fully the peculiar circum-
“ stances I have alluded to.—I am, my dear
“ sir, yours very truly,—SAMUEL ISAACS.”

“ Now,” said the physician, when Gerald had returned the letter to the lawyer,

“ what explanation can you give us, Mr. Grey? What has happened?”

“ Stay!” exclaimed the practitioner, “ As this is a matter I have undertaken upon a peculiar arrangement, I shall waive all professional scruples, and lay before you another letter which Mr. Isaacs has been good enough to send me.” And he took a second paper from the bundle, and handed it to the physician, who read as follows :

“ [*Private and confidential,*]

“ MY DEAR SIR. —The accompanying was
“ written under pressure, and at my client’s
“ express dictation ; under his nose, I may
“ say. But if your client is worth powder
“ and shot, and if you think that ridiculous
“ old quack [The physician paused : ‘ Ridi-
“ culous old quack!’ he repeated with
“ emphasis.] can be brought to book and
“ induced to compromise himself,—what I
“ have to say to you is *go on!* In any case,
“ the costs will, perhaps, come out of the
“ estate ; and the estate’s a good one. What

“ has happened is, I assure you, perfectly
“ romantic, and quite enough to settle the
“ whole affair. Still ‘ business is business,’
“ you know ; and more than that, business
“ of this kind is not too plentiful. You
“ understand ? I am, my dear sir ; yours
“ &c.”—

“ The rascal !” exclaimed the physician.
“ To play double in this way ! ‘ Ridiculous
old quack,’ too ! This, I should say, law-
yer, is actionable ?”

“ Well, not exactly, I fear !” replied the
practitioner, considering. “ You see, it’s
a privileged communication, and a plea to
that effect, would, I imagine, be a good
one.”

“ You think so ?”

“ Yes, I do. But, now, Mr. Grey, let us
hear what has happened.”

“ The object of our solicitude has left her
home, and gone no one knows whither !”

“ Ah !” said the lawyer.

“ Ah !” echoed the physician.

“ Yes,” replied Gerald.

The practitioner was terribly agitated now. He fumbled uneasily with his papers, mechanically selected one from them, and held it apart from the others.

“ Gone, and left us in the lurch !” he said. “ Gone, when there’s been a world of expense incurred, and I’ve paid I don’t know how much in fees, and spent a little fortune in cab-hire, stationery, and postages ! Mr. Grey, Mr. Howard, it’s incredible !”

“ True, nevertheless,” said Gerald.

“ Then,” continued the lawyer. “ I see it all ! The opposite party knows of this disappearance—perhaps has a hand in it. The girl may be dead, for what we know !—the letter says something about a romance !”

“ Sir !” exclaimed Gerald, frowning.

“ My dear sir !” continued the lawyer apologetically,—“ I merely suggest a meaning for the word ! But now what are we

to do. As we've gone so far, of course we go farther?"

The physician grew uneasy. He thought of Isaac's words—"if that ridiculous old quack can be brought to book and induced to compromise himself!"—and he determined not to be brought to book, and not to compromise himself.

"For my part," he said, "I think the case must drop now, or, at least, that it would be prudent to wait till we hear further. Actuated, as I am, solely by respect for my old friend's wishes—I have no other motive—it seems to me that it would be injudicious to proceed in the dark!"

"What!" cried the lawyer, looking at his two companions in dismay,—“incur all this expense, and then give in because we have met with a mere check?"

"My dear sir!" said the physician, feeling that the suggestion of expense was directed partly to him,—“I am not aware of any serious expense having been incurred;

and if it had, you remember our agreement, when I introduced you to Mr. Grey. 'No cure, no pay, you know!'

"But, sir," returned the lawyer, "at least you'll pay charges out of pocket? The agreement could have no reference to them!"

"Mr. Grey," said the physician, turning to Gerald, and making a retrograde movement towards the door, "you must well recollect that from the first day I meddled in this business, I have distinctly maintained that I did so solely out of respect to the wishes of my poor old friend—I had no other motive. That being the case, and the business having, as it appears to me, received a serious check, if not come to an untimely end, I feel myself at liberty to withdraw from it. It has already trespassed very considerably upon my professional avocations; and I think that, under all circumstances, and in justice to myself, to say nothing of my patients, I must sur-

render the hope I once had of seeing my old friend's wishes fully carried out. The diary, however, upon which our suspicions are founded, I shall, Mr. Grey, make over to you ; so that, if you think fit to pursue the matter further, you may have whatever evidence does exist."

The physician, during this long address, had persevered in his retrograde movement ; and, having talked himself to the door, he bowed to Gerald and the lawyer, and departed.

"Cool and considerate that! eh, Mr. Grey?" said the practitioner, still fumbling with the particular paper he had selected from several others in the early part of the discourse. "Cool and considerate! Well, what do you mean to do—go on, or declare off?"

"For the present," said Gerald, "I think with Mr. Howard, that the business must drop."

“In effect, then,” said the lawyer, “so far as I can see, the case is wound up?”

“Just so,” replied the artist.

“Then, sir,” continued the lawyer, opening the paper he had been trifling with,—“there is this to be considered. There are, as I have said, certain costs out of pocket and certain other expenses, to be looked to.”

“How much,” asked Gerald, “do those expenses amount to?”

“Merely a few pounds!” replied the lawyer, running his eye doubtfully down the long array of figures on the paper. “They’re here,—made out to this morning; and the costs of the present attendance can be added or allowed to stand over.”

He gave Gerald the bill of costs; and as the artist had been fortunate enough to escape the perusal of such a document before, it was a curiosity to him, and he scanned it with wondering interest. It was

a highly creditable production, looked at from a caligraphic or stationery point of view; and—as somebody has happily said of a handsome book,—its information ran through broad meadows of margin, and had an easy luxuriance of character peculiarly legal. The foolscap that formed its basis was stout, water-marked stuff, grained with a figure of Britannia, shield, trident, and all; and the ink that told its story was richly black and warranted indelible. The penmanship was of the fat, formal kind,—distinctly removed from the free and flowing commercial character on the one hand; and altogether alien to the sweeping Italian of the ladies' schools on the other. As to the book-keeping part of it—the casting and carrying over, the bringing forward and totalling—that was unexceptionable. Indeed the bill, taken as a whole, might have been hung up in an academy as a specimen of neatness and propriety, with the great advantage that the pupils would have

learnt, in one lesson, how to write and keep accounts, and *not* to go to law. There was only one ungracious feature connected with this bill of costs; and that was—the paying it!

But this ungraciousness was plain and patent to Gerald. The lawyer's "few pounds" turned out to be many, and the items seemed to require some little emendations.

"Will you leave this with me?" he said, putting the bill on the table.

The lawyer hesitated. He feared that Gerald was going to constitute himself a taxing master. Besides, he had made up the bill that morning, especially to ask for an advance upon it, then and there.

"Would it be convenient," he said, "for you to settle it—or partly settle it—now?"

Gerald looked considerably at the man, as he listened to his tremulous tones. The lawyer's attitude and expression were so like Mr. Maguire's, in the early days of

penury—when some troublesome old man or fussy old woman hesitated about paying for a likeness or a miniature—that the artist was moved by a generous impulse. He felt what many of us must have felt, that there is something sad in the prostration of spirit, the servile humility, which the want of money brings a man to; that of all the pitiful distinctions in society, the most pitiful, perhaps, is that between the needy creditor and the affluent debtor. For there are men who, in the ordinary way of business, delight in a very Japanese abasement, and crawl before those who are in nowise their betters, to get little bills settled and secure little orders! Reflecting thus, and noting the anxious look of the lawyer, Gerald determined to relieve his anxiety.

But not rashly nor without due economy and consideration. He was about to constitute himself the taxing master so much dreaded by the lawyer; and he took the bill from the table that he might do so textually.

“What,” he said, looking down the first page, and reading,—“does this mean?—

‘Long consultation with Mr. Howard, in
 ‘which he suggested to me the propriety
 ‘of consultation with you; attending
 ‘you, long consultation accordingly; cab-
 ‘hire, etc. etc. . . . £2 13s. 4d.

Why, if I recollect rightly, we met here, and the consultation to which this refers was merely to the effect that I was to call upon you the following day! How can you style that a ‘long consultation?’”

“My dear sir,” replied the lawyer, “in legal phraseology, nothing’s short! All consultations are long ones. But that item is not one of those which may be strictly classed under the head of out-of-pocket expenses. I shall be a loser by so much of that item as does not affect the cab-hire.”

“Well, then,” said Gerald, “here’s something else:—

‘Waiting at my place of business one
 ‘entire day, to meet the solicitor of the
 ‘opposite party, and his non-attendance
 £2 2s. 0d.

How is that? Is it customary to charge for the non attendance of the hostile lawyer?"

"I have before explained to you," returned the practitioner, growing somewhat petulant,—“that I do not class such items as those under the strict head of ‘out-of-pocket expenses.’ The bill is drawn in the ordinary way; but as it is not to be paid in the ordinary way, those items have nothing to do with our arrangement.”

“But this has—or partly has—I presume?” said Gerald, still remorselessly reading from the bill:—

‘Case for opinion of counsel, attending
‘him in long consultation; his opinion
‘thereon, fee and his clerk £10 10s. 0d.

Why that opinion, I believe, was merely to the effect that upon certain other papers being laid before him, counsel *would* give an opinion!”

“Just so,” replied the lawyer. “But, my dear sir, you see these questions of yours might be as long as the bill itself!”

“ So I think,” said Gerald, smiling.

“ However,” continued the lawyer, “ I have a proposition to make. As things have turned out, I am content to waive my claim upon being paid one half of the total sum mentioned. Do you agree to that ?”

As this happened to be the very proposition that Gerald himself was about to make, he very readily accepted the offer. Giving the lawyer a pen, and desiring him to write at the foot of the elegant bill of costs, a receipt for the full amount, the artist made himself bankrupt of ready cash, and so ended the difficulty.

“ Good day, sir,” said the recipient. “ And should any new facts come to light, I shall be happy, upon similar conditions, to proceed with the business. The case interests me, sir ; and so far as private feelings are consonant with professional ones, I feel very strongly upon the matter ; I do, indeed, sir ! Good day.”

“ So, then,” said Gerald, when the lawyer

had left him. "this strange affair has come to an end—an unhappy end, perhaps, for Rosa! Poor girl!" And he fell into a chair, and mused; and for another day the studio was deserted.

CHAPTER VII.

THE last days of Mr. Maguire's visit to England were approaching; for, not to mention his own inclinations, he had received a letter from his wife, in which she reminded him of his marital duties, and distinctly pointed out that with "the mighty deep"—as she phrased it—rolling between them, it was impossible for those duties, to be efficiently performed. This letter Mr. Maguire showed to Gerald.

"It's a favourable specimen of her style," he said, "and style she particularly prides herself upon. Would you like to hear it?"

“Much!” replied Gerald.

“Very well, then, here it is.” And he read:—

“DEAR MAGUIRE,—I’ve scarcely time to
“write domestic letters; but I think it due
“to myself to let you know that I am in
“existence, and that the mighty deep rolls
“between two persons who are wife and
“man. I’ve no sentiment in the matter;
“but as in this world we all have a mission,
“and as it’s your mission to be my husband,
“it seems strange that you should be loaf-
“ing about in the antiquated morsel of
“country you call home, and leaving me to
“all sorts of trials and temptations here.
“If men were not, as Carlyle says, (I dare
“say Emerson said so before him) mere
“contemptible clothes-horses and patent
“digesters—cigar-smoking, stick-whittling,
“tobacco-juice squirting, liquoring ‘lords
“of the creation,’ scarcely worth notice
“from a woman of *esprit*,—I suppose you
“would make back tracks in no time, and

“ be on your knees before I could say Mar-
 “ garet Fuller! As it is, I’d venture a
 “ dollar to a cent that you’re comfortable
 “ enough, and enjoying yourself vastly with
 “ the oligarch-ridden descendants of the
 “ half-dozen red-coats who ran back to
 “ their ships from Bunker’s Hill! But at
 “ any rate, I shall expect you by the packet
 “ that leaves the old country after the de-
 “ livery of this; and don’t let that packet
 “ fail to bring

“ her affectionate husband to

“ MINERVA MAGUIRE,

“ *née* MAWKINS.”

“ What do you think of it?” said Mr. Maguire, smiling faintly.

“ Bold and spirited!” replied Gerald.

“ Yes, it is; just as she talks and writes in her books through. She can’t help it, and I believe means nothing more than to say smart things. Her books are full of smart things. But I’ve come to bid you good bye, and to take away that manuscript

—if you are still in the same mind, and not alarmed by Mrs. Maguire's letter."

Gerald had some slight misgivings about Mrs. Maguire, after his small experience of her mental peculiarities; but he dispelled them, and handed the *El Dorado* to his old preceptor.

"Take care of it!" he said, "and put the name you will find written inside, on the title-page; not my name, recollect, but a more appropriate one."

"Ah! I see!" exclaimed Mr. Maguire, looking wondrously knowing. "That's wise of you, Gerald. You're going to trick the world by a *nom de plume*, because the world won't credit a man with excellence in two distinct pursuits! That's it, is it? Well, now I'm off. You shall hear from me soon. Good bye!"

It was somewhat inexplicable to the artist, but it was nevertheless a fact, that the difficulties of his friends had quite unsettled his views, and made him careless of his pro-

fession. He was oppressed by a strange premonitory excitement that kept him ill at ease, and impaired what was hitherto his greatest blessing—his contentment. His passions were inflamed by new ideas of himself and his position, and the thankfulness that once animated him, seemed to have departed for ever. This discontent was not improved by what he read in the diary sent to him by the physician—the diary of his old patron; for the story it contained—so far as any story could be made out—was full of mystery, and towards the end, overburdened with the melancholy outpourings of a broken spirit. Gerald grew so sad with reading it, that one day he locked it up, and vowed never to look at it again. But the very next day found him poring over it, and trying to gather from its hints a coherent history.

He was seriously troubled, too, upon another—perhaps a more weighty—matter. Whatever advantage he had gained in his

interview with Blanche at the Priory, had been seriously neutralised by a condition that her sisterly love had imposed upon him. While Richard was lost to his friends, Gerald was doomed to banishment from the neighbourhood to which his heart was irrevocably fixed; and, although not exactly stated, it was implied, that should Richard be lost for ever, the lovers were to mourn over his memory, celibate and incommunicate. These were hard terms, and it seemed little less than caprice on Blanche's part to make them. But they were made, and they must be looked upon as one of those self-denying ordinances that young ladies persevere in for credit's sake, and because the constitution of the female mind is such that it finds gratification in voluntary sacrifice.

But whatever were these conditions, and however made, they laid no embargo upon written correspondence; and therefore between the studio and the Priory letters

passed with pleasing regularity. Few letters of this kind are interesting to third persons, unless they come into court to establish a breach of promise, or are made public as evidence of much higher criminality. They are mostly too full of "sugar and spice and all that's nice" to please strange palates, and are only read when they become didactic, or have a broad vein of piety running through them; in fact, when they are moral lessons and not love letters at all. We should scarcely look at the epistles of Abelard and Heloise if the connection of the correspondents was all right and proper; nor would Stella and Vanessa have become familiar names if Swift had been a genuine lover instead of a brute. The love-letters, then, of two ordinary persons such as Gerald and Blanche, must, except where they lose their chief characteristic, be passed over, with the simple explanation that on each side they

were treasured up and thought the sweetest productions ever penned !

But inasmuch, as in some of Blanche's letters was written a part of this history, it is necessary to scan them for a few facts that might otherwise be lost. These facts relate principally to the doings of Sir Roger Maldon, who, so the earliest of the letters says, has grown melancholy and taken fiercely to field sports. He has become a new Nimrod, a mighty hunter, a great leaper of gates, and a woman hater above all things. He has not forgiven Blanche for the strange scene that happened when Gerald paid his last visit to the Priory ; but as his forgiveness is of no great moment, the evil can be borne. He shows his affection for Lady Maldon by studiously avoiding her company, and getting the doctor to advise retirement for her ladyship. Upon this, of course—as upon the baronet's general behaviour to his afflicted mother—Blanche comments in her own quiet way, and,

in the very same sentence, struggles to find excuses for it. While the baronet stays at home, which he does till the hunting season comes to an end, all he seems to do is to run foxes to the death, avoid the bewitching descendants of Diana Vernon, walk moodily about the Priory and the grounds, dismiss the officious bailiff for visiting Lord Dalton's steward, sweep off the land every vestige of scientific farming, and so delight the clodpoles by a return to time-honoured custom and rustic mediævalism.

It is pleasing to note how grateful the crows are—as may be gleaned from Blanche's letters, which do not forget Gerald's old acquaintances—for this. Of all their dislikes, the strongest, perhaps, was their dislike for steam. The railway that ran within a mile or two of Maldon Priory they had screamed out against in its infancy; and it was indelibly imprinted on their memories that a navigator had seized upon one of their tribe who had been dis-

abled by the wind of a pilot-engine, and devoured him, feathers, beak and all, in company with a quartern loaf and a gallon of beer, for a mere wager of sixpence ! But when the steam engine came home to them, and hissed within a mile of their eyrie ; when a reaping machine cut up one of their feeblest patriarchs, and a machine for squirting liquid manure blinded the lady-principal of their establishment, and rendered her unsavoury for a week, by a well-directed stream not nearly so sweet as certain Sweet Waters, they were incensed beyond measure, and cried out for justice. Therefore, when the baronet did away with the high farming of the moderns, and returned to the low farming of the ancients, the crows were glad, and unanimously voted him to be a good conservative.

But in time, Sir Roger left the Priory, and went abroad, and when Blanche mentioned him in her letters, it was to say she had heard from him from Paris, or one or

other of the capitals of Europe. She remarked that his last letter from Paris was conceived in a kindlier and more genial spirit than his communications had been of late, and that it was full of gossip about the opera and the opera-house. It was much the same with his next, which came from Berlin, and even with his next, which was dated from Vienna. He seemed to grow more affectionate as his travels grew more enlarged, and when he wrote from Stockholm, Copenhagen, and lastly, from St. Petersburg, it was worthy of remark, thought Blanche, that the keen air of the north warmed instead of chilling his humour!

But what Blanche remarked upon most was that all these letters contained gossip about the opera. It seemed as though the only object of his travels was to visit the opera-houses of all the capitals in Europe, and to record the latest novelties by this or that *maestro*. He had mastered a certain

musical slang that gave his letters a critical air; and he was at home with fugue and counterpoint and all the other phrases that we find now and then in the musical corners of newspapers. About this Blanche wondered much, and made free to impart her wonder to Gerald. One letter, too, because it was full of this new language, and because it contained some particulars of a matter then agitating the political world, Blanche transcribed verbatim, and sent the copy to Gerald, just as though he was a daily journal, and she wanted to advertise herself and all her relations. This letter ran partly as follows :

“ I have just left the opera-house, after a
“ thoroughly successful performance of
“ Meyerbeer’s new work, *L’Etoile du Nord*.
“ * * * The Emperor was present, the
“ Empress, and two of the Grand Dukes.
“ The Emperor is, as he has been repre-
“ sented, a tall, handsome man, of majestic
“ presence and with mild eyes; his sons

“ sturdy young fellows, formed much after
“ the parental model, and all, as it appears,
“ strongly attached to each other and to
“ their august parents. What the news-
“ papers say in England about disagreement
“ and difference of opinion between them
“ is mere calumny. They form one of the
“ happiest families I ever saw. * * * *
“ But there is a question just now agitating
“ the Russian court that may have very
“ serious results. It was originally raised,
“ or, perhaps, revived, by France, which
“ claims to interfere between Turkey and a
“ section of her Christian subjects, in rela-
“ tion to the Holy Places. France says that
“ the Latin Christians should have the keys
“ of these places ; and now Russia—which
“ never loses an opportunity of interfering
“ with Turkish affairs—says that the Greek
“ Christians should have them. The Em-
“ peror is, I believe, prepared to enforce his
“ claims, and has already sent one of his
“ ablest ministers, Prince Menschikoff—

“ (you can make out the name, I suppose ?)
“ to the Porte, as a preliminary step. In
“ his—the Emperor’s, I mean—dry way, he
“ speaks of the Sultan as ‘*l’homme malade*,’
“ and intimates pretty plainly that he thinks
“ the time for Mahommedan dissolution has
“ arrived. Our ambassador here has many
“ conversations with him on the point ;
“ which conversations (so his excellency
“ tells me in confidence) he takes down
“ almost word for word. The Emperor has,
“ it appears, every confidence in the good-
“ will of the statesman now at the head of
“ affairs in England, and speaks of him in
“ language almost endearing. There is no
“ telling yet how the matter will end. There
“ are whispers about war ; but it is not
“ thought here that Lord Aberdeen will act
“ violently.”

This was followed by further news of the opera—almost a critical exigesis of it—and by enthusiastic praise of the *prima donna*,

who was nameless. Why, thought Blanche, was this one subject always so fully touched upon? — why was every letter from her brother overladen with operatic information? There were other things worthy of notice in most of the capitals of Europe — there were other buildings than opera-houses that merited description. At Petersburg, apart from the Imperial circle, there were the Winter Palace and the Neuskoi Prospekt; at Vienna, the boy Emperor and his famous conference councillors; at Berlin, the amiable and politic king of Fatherland; and at Paris a man whose history passes even the inventions of romance, and whose very existence is a wonder. Yet all these attractions were forgotten, in favor of mere sound and fury, that to the baronet, at one time, signified nothing!

After the letter from Saint Petersburg, there was a great lapse in the news supplied by Blanche to Gerald about Sir Roger. She

knew nothing of him for many months, and all she had to write was the expression of her wonder at his long and sudden silence. But at length she heard of him through a hand not his own, which told her that he was lying ill at Rome, had taken a fever there, and was—so the strange hand said—being well nursed and cared for. What a wonder was this to Blanche! Whose was the fair Italian hand? Gerald gathered from what she said, that the question somewhat troubled her.

But notwithstanding this familiar and confiding correspondence between the lovers, both their hearts ached for closer communion. There is but small satisfaction in mere pen-and-ink palterings with passion; and just as certainly as there is no living upon love, so there is no keeping love alive solely upon love-letters! In time, Gerald began to chafe and fret at Blanche's conditions, and to despair of Richard's re-appearance. All attempts to find the truant

had failed ; and as if this were not sadness enough, it was weighted with a grief heavier still ! Thinking thus, Gerald sat down one day, and tried what his eloquence could do to break the hard compact.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE picture that hung in the study of Gerald's old patron had lately become an object of devotion ; and now, as had been the case for many a day, it looked down upon a kneeling penitent, who, with bitter words of self-reproach, scourged her already broken spirit. There was little light in the room ; for only one side of the shutter was laid back, and through the gap thus made, the evening sun sent a dim, dull glow that settled upon the face to which the penitent's eyes were directed, and gave it a seemingly conscious expression and a

melancholy life-likeness. But, as all things were in that study, the picture was obscured and overlaid by dust ; for the room was a neglected one, and its contents were disliked and its occupation prohibited. It was sacred to the memory of a great hatred, and upon all in it, because of its chief feature, was laid a ban, to break which was to be bold indeed.

But the ban was broken, and the room had its regular occupant. The wife of Blue Beard could not keep from the skeletons : the wife of the cousin and heir-at-law dared, deceived, and plotted to get at the picture !

She was childish in feature, delicate in form, and as unlike a wife as could well be. Blue-eyed, golden-haired, and with a light, transparent skin, she looked too fair for this world, and too fragile for the roughness she might meet in it. But alas !—this roughness had prostrated her now. Her eyes were blinded by tears, her rich auburn

hair fell clustering about her shoulders, and seemed to weep with her ; her hands were clasped, and from her lips came low, simple words of pain and penitence. She was confessing her errors, and asking forgiveness, and with the unreasoning reliance of a childish spirit, she felt that her prayers were heard, and her misery charitably mitigated.

Listening for every sound, and trembling with timid anticipation,—kneeling, praying, and appealing thus,—she kept her evening vigil. She had fastened the door on the inside, and so far secured herself from intrusion ; but suddenly a shade came across the picture, and the twilight was made more gloomy. The penitent turned hastily towards the window, and there, peering through the glass, she saw a face that was a terror to her. Only for a moment, though ; for the light came in again unobstructed, and the terrible vision was gone. Trembling with fear, she went to

the door, turned the key noiselessly, and stepped out. But too late!—Her husband's hand was on her shoulder, and she was thrust back into the room. There she cowered timidly in a corner, while the intruder threw open the shutters fully and confronted her.

“Here again!” he said. “Here, after my words and your promise!”

The unhappy wife had nothing to reply. She only trembled the more, and fell back still further into her retreat.

“Groaning, crying before that picture again!” continued the cousin,—“after your solemn promise that the last time I found you here *should* be the last! Well, does the sight of it comfort you? Do those lips say—‘I refused him, but you, my daughter, are his wife?—I jilted him, and you have paid the penalty?’ Does it say this?”

“It does—it does!”

“Then it says truly. Come here; give

me your hand, girl — you have nothing to be afraid of! Give me your hand.”

She approached him timidly, and obeyed.

“ Now,” he said, “ look again at that picture, and I’ll tell you a story the while. The woman it represents—your mother—was, when a child, a playmate of mine. I called her my little wife; for it was a family understanding that we grew up for each other, and that the fortune she would one day possess, was to be mine. I had nothing of my own; for on my side there was little more than respectable poverty. All the money that could be scraped together was spent upon my education, and when that was over, I entered the world without a penny. But what need had I of money, or training to get money. My fortune was there !”

The husband paused, and pointed to the picture.

“ Well, when I came of age, I of course

hastened to realise my prospects—to take possession of what I had been taught to live for. Just as that face looks now,—calm, cold, and beautiful,—it looked then, when I was told that I had made a mistake, that there was such a thing as free choice, and that it was proper to love before marrying! Do you understand me?”

The poor little wife, weeping bitterly, made a motion of assent.

“You do?—Then you see, of course, that all my hopes and expectations were at once blighted; that my youth had been wasted upon a delusion; that I was made a beggar by that woman’s waywardness; and you know enough of the world to comprehend that—after an idle boyhood—I had to turn my soft hands to hard work! But you do not comprehend, perhaps, the kind of suffering that work entailed upon me. A purgatory more fearful, superstition never conceived; a torment more heartbreaking fiend never invented! Still I had to do it.

There was only one alternative—it haunted me—and that was to make away with myself! I waited, however, and worked as well as I could. For years I waited, till only the other day, my time came. There was a death here, and the fortune that should have been mine twenty years ago, was mine then. But, to complete, as it were, my second ruin, mischance threw you in my way. Do you understand, now, why I have linked myself to a mere child?—why I have lied, and filled your ears with words that were ridiculous to me? I think you do.”

He ceased, and the poor wife fell away from him again, crept softly to the door, and so the scene ended.

She had been married scarcely a year; but the time seemed an age; for her husband was the incarnation of all her fears, and the grim terror of her existence. How she was married at all was a wonder; but the man who persuaded her to sign the con-

tract for misery, was not the man to whom she found herself linked when the scheme was accomplished. But a year ago he could fawn, and flatter, and speak and look softly. He had words in his mouth that were made for beneficent and holy purposes, but which, when juggled with, are apt instruments to mislead the weak, and to serve the designs of the wily. To one who sadly wanted consolation, he offered it in a guise, the spuriousness of which a simple girl could scarcely detect, and an aching heart could feebly resist. The religious ascendancy once obtained, the rest followed; and when, in a few weeks, the conquest was completed, the silly girl became a sad wife, and the man's proper nature returned to him.

How the first steps towards this were taken, may be told as follows. When Gerald and the physician visited Mr. Grey's house, the little lawyer, as has been related, kept his eye upon them. He went to the

tavern opposite, and entered into familiar conversation with the landlord :

“ Ah !” he said, “ D’ye have carriages often in this street ? I suppose some one’s ill over the way, and that’s the doctor’s trap ?”

“ Yes, I should think it might be,” replied the landlord,—“ and yet, it aint the parish doctor ; he comes in a gig !”

“ But perhaps the people over the way don’t have the parish doctor !” said Isaacs. “ They may be local aristocrats, you know, and do the grand,—eh ?”

“ Not exactly,” returned Boniface, “ Though the Greys are very respectable people—very respectable—for the lower orders, you know !”

“ The Greys !” exclaimed Isaacs.

“ Yes,—the Greys.”

“ You’re certain Grey’s the name ?”

“ Quite certain.”

“ Thank you !” replied the lawyer, rubbing his hands. “ And just put a dash of

bitters with this gin. They've a son, havn't they—a painter?"

The landlord was at fault here. The Greys were not talkative people, and had never advertised their redeeming connections.

"Never mind," said Isaacs. "Ah! there's the carriage off again!" And he jumped into his cab, followed Gerald, the physician, and Rosa, and reached his client's house in time to meet with the little mishap on the stairs.

When the three unwelcome visitors left the house, and Isaacs, was brushed down by a servant, he tapped his employer cheerfully on the shoulder and said:

"I see it all! There's danger in that girl. But you're a widower!"

"Well?" said the cousin.

"Why, that girl's a mere child. You must marry her!"

The client started, and considered a moment. Then he brightened up, took his

lawyer playfully by the ear, and led him to the dining-room. He closed the door, tapped the little man affectionately on the back, and said—

“ Isaacs, you’re a d——d clever fellow !”

They both sat down, then ; and as the decanters were on the table, wine was poured out, and they jingled glasses.

“ Now, how is it to be done ?” asked the client. “ How are we to get at the girl ?”

Isaacs winked. “ What’ll you give me,” he said, “ if I find her for you ?”

“ That,” replied the cousin, carefully, “ is only the first step. But I tell you what I’ll give you if the girl turns out to be what we think her, and if I succeed—mind, if I succeed !”

“ My dear sir,” said the lawyer, blandly, “ If you don’t succeed, you know, probably you’ll be a beggar. Therefore your success is a condition precedent to your giving me anything.”

“ Well, then,” returned the client, “ if

I succeed, I'll give you a thousand pounds !”

“ Done !” exclaimed Isaacs. “ But as we're doing business, we'll be business-like. You shall give me your note of hand now, for a thousand pounds, at three months. If you fail, you'll most likely have nothing to pay with, and it won't be worth my while to sue you, in that case.”

A bill stamp was produced ; and the promissory note drawn up, signed, and delivered.

“ Now,” said the cousin “ the first thing to do is to find where the girl lives.”

The lawyer winked again. “ Let me alone for that. I know where she lives already !”

“ Isaacs,” exclaimed the cousin, “ I said just now you were a d——d clever fellow. You're more :—you're a genius !”

And so the business was settled.

The very next day, the little lawyer was at the public house opposite Mr. Grey's door again. After a preliminary course of gin and bitters, he said to the landlord :

“ Are they a pious family over the way—those Greys ?”

“ Reasonably so,” returned the publican. “ But they’re chapel people.”

“ What time, now, might a gentleman—a friend of mine, a scripture reader—be likely to find the women alone? We’ve a petition going about, against the opening of all places but public-houses on Sunday, and we want some signatures. The men—I mean the working men, you know—are no good for that. But the women——”

“ Oh,” interrupted the landlord. “ The husband’s never at home between half-past eight and twelve in the morning, and between one and six in the evening.”

“ Thank you,” said Isaacs. “ And, perhaps, while it’s in the neighbourhood, if the petition’s brought to you, you’ll show it to the ladies of *your* family ?”

Ladies of his family!—thought the publican. Politeness personified! Ordinarily, he addressed his wife as his “ old woman,”

and customarily, he called his only daughter "Sal." But in the secrecy of his soul, he had long looked upon them both as ladies. One, at least, was gorgeous enough for a lady. She was the envy of the neighbourhood, and her display of silks, satins, and jewelry was little less than regal. As she stood behind the bar, in the busy part of the day, drawing beer with fingers encircled by rings, and wrists manacled by bracelets; with a brooch on her breast like the badge of a ticket-porter, and one at her waist scarcely inferior in size and value; with a chain about her neck, of civic proportions and cruel weight; with a family time-piece peeping from an orifice in the gathers of her dress; with ear-rings that dangled like little chandeliers about the sides of her head; and lastly, with a wondrous turban to crown all;—what was she but a lady! The landlord felt that Isaacs had hit the mark; and he promptly explained that the ladies of his family would be proud—he might say, most

proud—to sign a petition against the opening of all places but public-houses on Sunday !

Isaacs returned to his client, and reported progress ; and the day following, the client himself took an active part in the adventure. He passed a considerable time at his toilet, and got himself up very carefully. He donned a solemn suit of black, cut and constructed after a primitive fashion ; he put on a broad pair of boots with low flat heels ; encircled his neck with a limp white cravat, and displayed a small triangular piece of shirt, somewhat faded and yellowish in colour. Then, with a pair of steel spectacles on his nose, a book under his arm, and his hat worn so as to display a great benevolence of forehead, he walked slowly to the scene of operations. Mr. Grey was, of course, at work ; Mrs. Grey was busy with a butcher in the market ; and Rosa was thus left alone. She did not know her

visitor at first: clerical costume is so deceptive; and, therefore, when he asked confidently for Mrs. Grey, and, upon finding that Mrs. Grey was out, enquired if he could speak with Rosa, the simple girl ushered him into the parlour, and gave him a chair. Then he took off his hat, and she at once recognised him.

He saw her alarm, and soothed it with a few gentle words.

“You recollect our former meeting, I dare say,” he said. “I was not myself then; I had had much to try me. But, by the blessing of Providence I have grown calmer and more contented. Justice is justice, and what is to be will be.”

Rosa softened towards him, and even grew somewhat interested in his conversation. Her heart was very sad, and her eyes exhibited signs of recent tears.

“You have been weeping,” continued the cousin, “What, my poor child, is the

matter?—what distresses you? If it relates to anything in my power, confide in me, and you shall find me like a brother.”

Rosa replied by a full flood of tears, and the visitor made bold to take her hand.

“ You want consolation, my child,” he continued, “ and next to that consolation which is best of all, and which I pray earnestly that you may find, there is another consolation, perhaps? The picture in my study—you think it like your mother, do you?”

“ It is my mother !” said Rosa.

“ You think so? Well, if you would like to look again at it, or if you wish to have it, it is yours.”

The simple girl listened and thought. She was very wretched; and did, indeed, want consolation. After what Gerald had said to her, there was nothing for her to love, and little to look forward to. But the picture, perhaps, might fill up the vacancy. So, she suffered the visitor to retain her

hand, to whisper comfort to her, and at last she compromised herself by a promise.

“Then,” said the cousin. “Will you come to my house—to-morrow; or shall I fetch you from here?”

Rosa hesitated. The whole affair seemed so strange and sudden. At that moment, the tempter recollected the book he brought. He took it from the table. It was a neatly bound testament.

“Accept this,” he said, “as a proof of my sincere regard. Your friends are, I believe, somewhat hostile to me; but I should wish all hostility to be settled as that book directs. I will leave you now. But to-morrow may I call?—at this time?”

“No, no, not here!” replied Rosa, quickly, and with an accusing consciousness that she was wronging her friends by secret negotiation—“not here.”

“Then will you meet me—near here?” asked the cousin, seeing his opportunity.

The poor simple child bent her head, and

so the work was begun. The next day she went out; the next, and the next; and at length she went for that walk of which Mr. Grey had told Gerald; and the fatal step was irrevocably taken.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Rosa left the study, she crept down to the room in which the family were accustomed to sit, and there found the two grown-up daughters of her husband—Judith and Hannah. They belonged to the class of girls called fine; that is, they were large-boned and lofty, with such signs of blood in them as prominence and sharpness of feature are supposed to give. Their expression of face was like that which might belong to an inspector of nuisances, accustomed to having the nastiest things brought under his nasal consideration. In

their way, they were playful, and practised that kind of fun which the fable tells us is sport to some creatures, and death to others. When their little mother-in-law was introduced to them, they made a mock bow, and laughed in her face; and when she cried, they set up a feeble howl in imitation. They soon after nicknamed her "Dolly," and determined to use, and did use, her much as they would have used her wooden namesake. All this Rosa bore very quietly—only now and then going as far as to cry out a little, or to leave the room hurriedly, with a handkerchief pressed to her eyes.

It was to the society and sympathy of these young ladies, then, that she returned, after the scene in the study; and her appearance afforded them new food for entertainment. She was begrimed with weeping, and her dress was in disorder. Her hair—it was much more luxuriant and rich in colour than that of her daughters, so they called it "red"—hung loosely about her

shoulders; and her whole aspect was miserable in the extreme. They, on the contrary, were carefully got up. Their faces were clean and well powdered; their hair was rolled, gummed, plaited, and twisted; they wore much of that spurious lacework which every third lady we meet at home is now and then engaged upon; and take them for all in all, they were well dressed. Only one thing was exceptionable about them. Their shoulder-blades would *not* keep down; but, in their time, had cut through more silk dresses and dresses of other fabric, than it would be prudent to mention.

“Hannah,” said the eldest, when their little mother-in-law came humbly into the room, and seated herself on a small stool out of the way,—“Do look what a fright Dolly’s made of herself!”

Hannah looked. “Well, she has. Why, Dolly, what have they been doing to you?”

Dolly was silent. But, by way of becoming more gracious in the eyes of her

daughters, she put her hair straight, and tried to wipe the tear-marks from her face.

“ Oh, Dolly’s sulky !” continued the eldest girl,—“ She’s got the mumps !—There’s a little black dog down her back !”

“ So there is !” said Hannah. “ We must have him out. Now, Dolly, let’s see where he is !”

She went to Rosa, and, with very little trouble, squeezed one of her large and bony fingers between her mother-in-law’s shoulders and her dress. But the black dog was not to be found. It took a world of pinching and poking, to get at his supposed retreat, and when that was accomplished, Rosa writhed and shrunk so that he was not brought to light.

“ Oh, don’t !—don’t !” she cried. “ You hurt me, Hannah !—you do, dear,—really you do !”

“ Dolly’s delicate !” said the eldest daughter, screwing her shoulders out of mischief, and so saving the silk,—“ she can’t

bear to be touched. She'll fall to pieces if you're rough with her !”

“ What a funny thing that father should have married a Dolly !—isn't it ?” exclaimed Hannah, desisting for a moment from her pursuit of the black dog.

“ No !” replied Judith, “ it isn't ! There's nothing funny in it except, perhaps, that he had her partly for us to play with !”

“ Ah ! so he did ! !” said the younger daughter, resuming her search after the black dog. “ But what else was it he had her for ?”

“ Oh you know !” replied Judith, “ and so does Dolly, I dare say. Don't you Dolly ?”

Rosa was obliged to look up and reply ; for it was the habit of her daughters, when their little mother-in-law was perversely silent, to assist her in what they called finding her tongue ; and the process was painful to the unhappy patient. One stood behind her, and held her head as a dentist might ; the other stood before her, and filled

her mouth with large, bony fingers. This ended, of course, in Rosa feeling very sick, and sometimes in more visible results. But it was all in fun!—the young ladies loudly disclaimed any evil intention. And when their little mother-in-law cried, they were indignant and railed at her peevishness; and when, perchance, their finger-nails made her bleed, they ran out of the room with a hop, skip, and a jump,—just as schoolboys run when they have pinched their playmate's ear too roughly, or stuck a pin too far into any soft part of him!

To save this kind of search, then, Dolly found her tongue herself, and, in reply to Judith's question, said, bitterly:

“ I do, dear!—too well!”

“ Too well!” repeated the eldest daughter.
“ What do you mean by too well? *You* ought to be satisfied. Its we that should complain, for having a little chit of a thing like you put over us! Too well, indeed! Why, father never strikes you, does he?

You havn't seen him strike her, have you, Hannah?"

"No, not yet," was the reply. "She hasn't been here long enough. But her turn 'll come soon, I dare say. And why shouldn't it? She's no better than poor mother was; and she used to get it!"

"Get it?" asked Rosa, trembling, "get what?"

"Why, the stick, to be sure!"

"The stick?"

"Yes."

The little mother-in-law felt new alarm: she had not heard of the stick before! Was that to be added to her other terrors—to be obeyed, if not loved and honoured, with its master? It occurred to her that the mere sight of that stick would kill her; that she could ever survive to receive a blow from it seemed impossible!

"What's the matter, Dolly?" said Hannah, interrupting her little mother-in-

law's terrible meditations. "What are you looking so glum for?"

"Why," replied Rosa, getting up, and approaching her daughter, "I'll tell you, dear. But first I want to ask you something."

She put her arm affectionately round Hannah's waist, and looking up timidly to her eyes, said,—

"Did you say just now that your poor mother was--was—beaten with a stick; and that he—he—did it?"

"Who do you mean by 'he,' I should like to know?" asked Judith, imperiously, "Is that the way you talk of father?"

"Oh," cried Rosa, rushing from one daughter to soothe and caress the other—
"I meant nothing by saying 'he!'—I really didn't mean anything! But I'll call him what you like, dear; I won't say 'he' if it offends you. I'll call him your father in future."

"Call him your own father!" replied

Judith, breaking out into a display of that feeling which was, perhaps, at the bottom of their behaviour to Rosa—"call him your own father! It would be better than that he should call you his wife!"

"But Jude, dear!" said Rosa, doubling the force of her caresses, "don't be angry: I meant no harm; and do tell me if what Hannah says is true. Did your father really beat your poor mother with—with—a stick?"

"Shall we get the stick, and show it you?" asked the eldest daughter, laughing.

"Oh, no, no!" cried Rosa, "pray don't! I don't want to see it. But, Jude, dear—lean your head down—closer, dear!—Can't you hide the stick, or—or—*burn* it, Jude?"

"What!" exclaimed Hannah, who had caught Rosa's words—"Hide it, or burn it? Why, it 'd be more than Jude's head's worth!"

"Ah! that it would!" said the eldest daughter. "But I tell you what, Hannah, you go and get the stick! Be quiet about

it, and father won't know, and you can put it back again. Dolly *must* see it!"

"Oh, no, no," cried the little mother-in-law. "Oh, pray don't! Hannah, dear—pray don't!"

But the appeal was unheeded. Hannah ran off, and in a moment after, returned on tiptoe, with her finger on her lip. She brought the stick; it was nothing very dreadful to look at; merely a common walking-cane, with a ferrule. But it was heavy and stout enough to fall on fragile female shoulders.

"There, Dolly!" said Hannah, brandishing the stick, and speaking in a whisper. "Have a bit of it?—only in fun, only in fun, you know!" And she chased her mother-in-law round the room.

"Oh, don't!—pray don't!" cried Rosa, evading some gentle sweeps that were made at her.

"Come, only a little one!" said Hannah. "It won't hurt you. One—two——"

“ Three ! ” cried Judith.

The stick descended, caught Rosa at an angle, and hurt her so that she cried out loudly.

“ Oh, you little wretch ! — you little coward ! ” exclaimed Judith, in a terrible undertone. “ You spiteful little minx ! — you want to bring father down, and you will bring him down, too ! Hannah, hide the stick ! — make haste ! ”

“ It couldn't have hurt her ! ” said Hannah, in a whisper. “ It was nothing to what mother had, only a week before she died ! ”

“ Hush ! hide the stick ! ” said Judith. “ I hear somebody outside ! ”

The stick was partly hidden ; but too late ! Rosa's cry had brought her husband to the door ; and through the keyhole he saw the stick, and heard his daughter's last words. Now, the mere touching of that stick by strange hands was sacrilege ; for the weapon was sacred to his own violence.

But the offence was aggravated tenfold by the words that had been spoken. He flung open the door, burst into the room, and taking the stick from his daughter's hand, struck at her. But she was agile, and escaped the blow. It was the same with her sister, who made a rapid and successful exit. Only the poor little wife was left; and she cowered in a corner, held her hands over her head, and cried for mercy. But the husband must have a victim; and, as his daughters had escaped him, down fell the stick heavily upon his wife. One, two, three!—and the little mother-in-law fainted and fell on the carpet.

The man's rage was exhausted now, and a craven calm followed the storm. He put the stick aside, and knelt down by the child-like little creature, lying insensible at his feet. He lifted her arm, and it fell to the ground again; he spoke to her, and she was silent. He shook her, pinched her fingers,

cleared the hair from her temples, and—cowardice must be thanked for it-- he even kissed her! All to no purpose. She was calm and quiet as death.

The violent man was the victim now! The drunkenness of rage over, the terrible sobriety of fear came upon him. He went to the door, opened it stealthily, and looked out. Then he crept back, put his arm round Rosa, and lifted her up. Still she was quite insensible. So he carried her to her bedroom, locked the door inside; and all was silent.

Half-an-hour had elapsed thus, when a servant tapped.

“Mr. Isaacs, sir,” said the man.

“Curse the fellow! But tell him I’ll be down directly,” was the reply.

“There’s something going wrong!” said the little lawyer, when his client joined him. “They’re at work again; at least, that young painter is. It’s come to me quite

promiscuous; but I've heard that there's a tip-top man out of Lincoln's Inn employed on the business!"

"What!" cried the cousin. "Upon what business?"

"Oh, there's only one business between you and me!" said the lawyer. "But I can't imagine what they're about! Suppose, now, that the girl—I mean your wife—should not turn out to be the party we took her for?"

"Isaacs!" said the cousin, growing violent again. "Don't suppose any such thing. It's impossible; it's ridiculous!"

"Well, but what can they be at?" argued the lawyer. "They're scouring the country for evidence! Have you seen the paper to-day?"

"No," said the client.

"Here it is, then; and just look at this advertisement."

The client looked, started, and turned pale.

“ And this again,” said the lawyer, pointing to another part of the column.

“ Isaacs!” exclaimed the cousin, dropping the paper. “ It occurs to me that that d——d old quack, Howard, has never been asked to give up the diary !”

“ No more he has !” replied the lawyer.

“ And it’s upon that diary, I’ll undertake to say, that whatever’s now going on is founded !”

“ True, it may be !” replied the lawyer, coolly.

“ It may be !” repeated the cousin. “ Have you the impudence to sit there, and, as my legal adviser, my paid—and well paid—agent, tell me that such a thing may be ?”

“ Why not ?” asked Isaacs.

“ Why not ! Isn’t the fact of that diary not being in the house, or not being burnt, your fault ?”

“ I don’t see that exactly.”

“ Don’t you, you careless little villain !— you miserable little bloodsucker !” cried the client, catching his legal adviser by the throat, and shaking the breath out of his body. “ Don’t you !—not when you’ve had a thousand pounds to see it ; and when I may be ruined by your not seeing it ! Don’t you, you hook-nosed little rascal !”

“ Very—very—well !” returned Isaacs, gurgling out a broken word now and then, and trying to screw himself from his client’s grasp. “ You’re—a—nice lamb, aint you ? —you’re acting legal, to be sure ! Mind ! —you know who you’re shaking !—you’re shaking an attorney of one of her Majesty’s superior courts at Westminster !—mind that ! I can bring my action, I can recover damages ; and hang me if I don’t do it !”

“ Now answer me,” said the client, relaxing his hold a little, —“ was it not your duty to do thoroughly the work you’ve been paid for ?”

“ Yes,” replied Isaacs, temporizing.

“ And was it not a necessary part of that duty for you to have secured the diary ?”

“ If you’ll let me go, I’ll tell you,” replied Isaacs. “ But first, I wan’t to say a few things to you. Who interfered with my duty ?—who came to me, smoking hot, and said ‘ It’s all right !—the game’s our own !—the girl’s in my house, and now let ’em do their best and their worst !’—who said that, eh ?”

The cousin was somewhat quieted. He let his legal adviser go altogether, and nodded his head and listened :

“ And who made me write that letter to ’em, and so stop the whole affair before it was well finished ?—who did this, eh ? Now, if you hadn’t done so, if you’d have been a little cooler, and not counted your chickens so confounded soon,—why all might have hatched very well, and that diary might have been yours !”

“ Isaacs,” said the client, apologetically,

“ you know I’ve a hot, hasty temper, and am easily put out. I can’t help it, and I give way to it a good deal too much. But, I’m open to argument, Isaacs ; I’m always ready to hear reason ; and there *is* some reason in what you say.”

“ Of course there is ! ” exclaimed the lawyer.

“ Yes, of course there is ! ” repeated the client. “ And therefore, Isaacs, I’m willing to make amends for what has happened. There, come, forget it, Isaacs ! ”

The little man sidled about, and put on a pretence of injured feeling and delicacy. But he saw there was money to be made ; and, after all, in the way of business, a shaking was not much ! So he took the hand that was extended to him, and presently said—

“ Well, what’s to be done ? ”

“ What do you think ? ” asked the client.

Isaacs considered. At last a bright thought struck him.

“Suppose,” he said, “I go to the physician, and demand that diary now? I may get something out of them, or I may hear or see something.”

“Capital!” exclaimed the client. “And, I tell you what, Isaacs,—let me see,—to-morrow’s Saturday. Well, you attend to the matter to-morrow; and on the next day, Sunday, come and dine with me. We can talk things over.”

“Sunday!” said the little Israelite. “Talk about business on Sunday! I thought you were a churchwarden, and that you’d book’d a curate for your eldest daughter!”

“True enough,” replied the client, “but if you were converted, Isaacs, you’d understand that a man may pull his property from a pit—even on Sunday!”

“Ah, ah!” chuckled the lawyer. “And as they say at the theatre, the What’s-his-name can cite scripture for his purpose! No offence! That What’s-his-name’s a

most respectable person : I don't know how we should get on at all without him ! Good day."

And the two men parted amicably.

The client returned to the bed-room where he had left Rosa. She was not there ! He searched all the other rooms in the house, and even pushed the door of the study, though he knew he had just locked that safely enough. Still the poor little wife was not to be found. Then he enquired of his daughters, and at last of the servants. But no one had seen or heard anything of her. The husband felt that the retributive angel was swift upon him !

CHAPTER X.

THE quiet street again! “Muf-fins!” cried an active small voice, belonging to a miserable boy whose general dirtiness was only negated by a white apron. “Creeses!” shrieked a lineal descendant of her of Endor. “Winkles!” shouted a burly costermonger, with closely cropped hair and a cultivated street voice. “Yare spr-a-ats!” roared another, with a Billingsgate baritone. And so on, until the customary market chorus was completed.

Mr. Grey and his wife had just sat down to tea—the meal over which, in the old

times, they were wont to be merry, and to make up for the hurry and heavier business of the day; and for his comfort at which the husband used to change his attire and brush from his face the evidences of hard labour. But things were changed now; and Mr. Grey sat down very differently. He came straight from his work into the parlour; he put his hat in a corner, wiped his face with a handkerchief, set his dirty boots down carelessly on the carpet; and with chips of wood in his whiskers, and on his hands small buttons of mortar that cracked and fell away as the warmth dried them, he sat silent, and stared thoughtfully at the fire.

His wife was almost as gloomy, and nearly as careless. She merely recognised him when he came in, by a sad look; she set about her table duties mechanically, poured out the tea and cut the bread and butter as a business, and when it was necessary to ask or answer a question, she spoke laconi-

cally and in a tone of dreary discomfort.

“ Sweet enough ? ” she said, as the cup passed.

“ Yes, ” was the reply.

“ Another piece ? ”

“ No, Mary. ”

And from the first cup to the last, from the beginning to the end of that meal which was once the cheerful harvest of the day's industry, these words only were uttered by the husband and wife !

The reason for this was plain enough ; for it is difficult to sin, even in this world, without suffering, at one time or other, from the unerring retribution of earthly justice. Years ago, though the offence seemed to them merely venial, the Greys had sinned deeply, and the necessary consequences had come at last. Gazing moodily into the fire, the husband seemed to see his home as it once was, when, in early times, Gerald had belonged to it, and when, in later, Rosa had shed upon it the light of her

childlike presence. One he had called his son; the other almost his daughter. But what of these pretended children now! In the heat and agitation of a great discovery, Gerald was striving heart and soul to reconstruct the chain of evidence which in his infancy had been cruelly broken; and Rosa was away, her fate a mystery—yet, perhaps, as Mr. Grey thought, to be terribly cleared up!

Moodily he stared into the fire, and saw the whole picture there; and sadly he turned from it, and was made conscious of his desolation.

“Mary,” he said, presently, “this is the hand of Providence — heavy enough, wretched enough for us!”

The wife looked at him, and wondered at his fulness of speech. He had not said so much for many days.

“Yes,” he continued, “this is what, if our eyes had not been blinded, we might have looked forward to.”

“Gerald,” replied the wife, “don’t be cast down so. Providence will alter it some day, and we shall both be happier.”

“Yes, Mary,” said the husband, thoughtfully. “Some day—if what we’re told’s true—we shall. Surely we’ve repented enough, and the eleventh hour hasn’t come yet!”

“Gerald!” exclaimed Mrs. Grey, weeping, “don’t talk so—pray don’t! Do keep up! We shall be happy in this world, I hope.”

“Do you, Mary!” said the husband. “Then, I’ll try to hope too.”

He only said this because he saw the tears in his wife’s eyes, and felt that his gloomy language had brought them there. He had very little—if any—hope himself. But, for the time, and for the consolation of his partner in sorrow, he did what he could to banish the gloomy bearing that had lately become natural to him. He tried hard to do this; he sat erect and stiff,

and stared nervously about him; conscious all the while that though care might be for the moment hidden, it was merely in ambush, and would overwhelm him again upon the least relaxation of his vigilance.

While he was thus upon the defensive, the market cries came home to his wife's ears; and, with a recollection that sprats were not costly fish, and that eating was at least a very practical amusement, she went to the door and arrested one of the costermongers in his loud career.

"Alive, mum, every one on 'em!" said the man, taking up a handful of the fish, and letting them fall back in detail.

Mrs. Grey held out her plate, and the costermonger filled it.

"Sprats!" cried a voice from the opposite side of the street.

"Coming, mum!" answered the costermonger; and he put the basket on his head and turned away.

He did so sharply, and ran against a

slim female figure that crouched by the railings and tried to pass him.

“ Beg pardon ! sprats, mum ? ” he said.

The slim figure made another attempt to pass him, and succeeding, bewildered Mrs. Grey by falling into the good woman’s arms.

“ Gerald !—Gerald ! ” cried the wife.

“ What is it, Mary ? ” he asked. “ Why, who—who’s—that ? ”

“ Gerald, ” replied Mrs. Grey, “ It’s Rosa ! ”

Mr. Grey started back. “ Rosa ! ” he repeated. “ Rosa ! ”

“ Yes. ” said the wife, “ Hush !—she’s fainting ! ”

The husband took the insensible girl gently in his arms, and carried her into the parlour. Then, laying her tenderly on the sofa, he fell back, and regarded her with suspicion.

She was—to his thinking—richly dressed, and the thought made him pause, and hesitate in his tenderness. He feared to meet fine clothes, unless their possession could be

satisfactorily accounted for ; and he shuddered as he saw what he considered her magnificence. Conjectures came thick upon him, and he asked himself tremblingly—How came that magnificence about her ?

She recovered presently, and looked up in wonder. Then she put her hand to her shoulder, and crying “ Oh the stick ! the stick ! ” shrunk back from the two simple people who were staring at her.

“ Rosa ! ” said Mrs. Grey, taking her hand, “ Rosa, my dear !—you’re here, you’re at home ! ”

“ What ? ” said the poor girl, listening, “ where am I ? ”

“ At home ! ” repeated Mrs. Grey.

She turned slowly round, and passed her hands across her eyes. Then, with a great burst of tears, she flung her arms about the neck that was bending to her, and became conscious.

Mr. Grey was bewildered, and in great doubt as to his proper bearing. He was

not decided even when Rosa, with Mrs. Grey's assistance, left the sofa and fell on her knees before him. Apart from his stern sense of the injury she had done him by her unexplained flight, he was still suspicious of her apparel; and though his heart ached to offer her an unconditional forgiveness, in proportion to the greatness of his love for her was his fear that she might be unworthy of love.

"My child," he said, looking down judiciously at her. "Why, after nearly breaking our hearts, do you come to us now?"

She had no answer but a low sob.

"We thought you were dead, Rosa, and we mourned for you as though you were. We never could believe that you were alive and well, and kept so cruelly away from us."

"Never mind, father," said Mrs. Grey, in a whisper. "Kiss her."

Longing to obey his wife, the wavering

judge yet felt that he must control himself, and inflict the little penalty of his words.

“What do you come to us for, Rosa?” he continued. “After staying away so long, what is it brings you here now?”

She looked up, and clung tightly to him. “Oh protect me!” she said. “Hide me from him!—hide me from him!”

“From him!—from whom?” asked Mr Grey.

“From him—from my husband!” replied Rosa.

“Your husband, Rosa! Who is your husband? Did you leave us, then, to get married?”

“Father!” said Mrs. Grey. “Don’t ask her any more questions. Say you’ll forgive her. We all want forgiveness.”

“Mary,” replied the husband, “I know we do!—I know it well enough. But, if Rosa’s married, I can make no promises—I can’t interfere between man and wife.”

“But he beats me—beats me with a

stick!" cried the girl. "Oh my poor shoulder! Look at it!"

The stern man changed countenance, and the judicial firmness left him. Wig, gown, ermine, all fell away; and, leaving the canopy and the cushion, he was weak and human again. The rich dress that alarmed him he now handled eagerly; he turned the silk aside; he found a rent in it; and just beneath, on the poor penitent's shoulder, was a dark, angry line, tinging her white skin as a rainbow flushes the sky!

"Mary!" exclaimed the new man, "get me my hat! Rosa, my dear child, tell me where he—lie—lives!"

"Oh, no, no!" said Rosa, rising and clutching at him. "Don't go!—stay and protect me!—stay and keep me from him!"

She clutched at Mr. Grey, and fairly detained him by her frantic energy. But he struggled to free himself; and, casting his eyes upon a stout weapon, knobbed and

rugged, that stood in the corner, he pointed to it, and said to his wife :

“ Get me that stick, Mary ! He beats her, does he ? Mary, d’ye hear ?—get me that stick ! ”

But Rosa still clung to him, and Mrs. Grey was slow to obey his behest.

“ Get me that stick, Mary ! ” he repeated, “ And, Rosa, let me to go, and tell me who and what this—this —— I suppose he *looks* like a man ! —— is, and where he’s to be found.”

“ Oh, don’t go to him ! ” cried the poor girl, —“ don’t let him know where I am ! Let him think I’m dead, as I ought to be, and then he won’t come after me ! ”

Mr. Grey was conquered. Nothing less than a severe struggle would have freed him from Rosa’s grasp ; and a severe struggle with so frightened and fragile a creature was not to be thought of. So he allowed his manly indignation to cool down, and merely muttering at intervals—“ He beats

you, does he!—he beats you!” resigned himself to passiveness. He tried, presently, to get some further information out of Rosa; but he was not the just judge of a few minutes before. He wavered, and put in weak suggestions—looking all the while with an anti-judicial fondness at the culprit.

“My dear child,” he said, “before we can love you again, as we used to do, and before we can promise to hide you from anybody, you must tell us why you were so cruel as to go away, and stop away, and never let us hear a word about you. If we’d known you were alive, it ’d have been something to us. What did you do this for, Rosa?”

“Wait till the morning, father,” interrupted Mrs. Grey. “She’ll be better able to tell us all about it in the morning.”

It was so settled; and Mr. Grey, lifting the suppliant from her position of appeal, was about to take her to his heart. But here, his doubts intervened; and, so

achieving a kind of Roman virtue, he pushed her to the heart of another. As he hoped, there she was tenderly received; there she met with maternal charity and sweet womanly forgiveness; and there, with her head resting on a bosom that throbbed with sympathy for her, and with her broken heart easing itself against the heart of a sister, she was led from the room.

Long and anxiously Mr. Grey waited for his wife's return. When she came, it was with her apron to her eyes, and weeping sadly.

“Don't blame her, father—don't blame her!” said the poor woman. “She was tempted away from us, as many a child has been tempted before, and she's been shut up and used cruelly. And, father!—*she loved Gerald!*—and he told her not to love him, and so her heart was almost broken!”

During this explanation, Mr. Grey had shown great uneasiness, and turning gradually from his wife, had stared hard at the

knobbed stick that stood in the corner. As his wife went on—her emotion made her talk slowly—the knobs on the stick seemed, to Mr. Grey's eyes, to be unsteady, and to have filmy rings floating about them; and, at last, when Gerald was mentioned, a watery haze came all over the stick, and for the time hid it.

“Do you think,” said the poor man, turning slowly, and passing his cuff furtively across his eyes. “Do you think, Mary, that if I was to go to Rosa, she'd be glad to see me, and would forget all I said just now? You do, Mary? Then, God be praised! I'll go to her.”

He went to the room that Rosa had called her's; he opened the door gently, and neared the bedside. Scattered about the pillow as of old, was the rich golden hair he had so loved to look upon. She was asleep, he thought; so he parted one sunny curl from its companions, and leant down to kiss it. Rosa turned; and seeing

the kind familiar face bending over her, she uttered a cry of thankfulness, and leapt into his arms.

“Never, never to leave us again, Rosa?” he said.

“Never, never!” she replied.

CHAPTER XI.

A PASSAGE in one of Blanche's latest letters to Gerald, ran thus:—

“ Sir Roger is coming home, and from
“ what he writes, it appears that some great
“ event, of which he makes as great a mys-
“ tery, has happened. He tells me to pre-
“ pare for a surprise, and in the same sen-
“ tence, bids me not to be surprised. He
“ has, he says, thoroughly recovered from
“ his late illness, chiefly through the care
“ and attention (he underlines these words)
“ of one whose devotion (this word he
“ makes much of) has imposed upon him the

“ deepest obligations. What does all this
“ mean? * * * * You will be glad to
“ hear that some old friends of mine (and
“ yours) are here again. I have taken a
“ few liberties with the household lately,
“ and one of these has been the restoration
“ of the Jackson family to their old neigh-
“ bourhood. Tom makes a good gardener,
“ and his wife is more than at home in the
“ dairy. She saw you the other day, when
“ you came here in defiance of my strong
“ prohibition; and since then, she has in-
“ dulged in such strange outbursts of sim-
“ ple familiarity that I have been obliged
“ to be serious with her. This is your
“ fault: you would violate our arrange-
“ ment. How sad and excited you seemed.
“ What has happened? When you come
“ again—I mean when you write again—
“ you must tell me.”

“ ‘ Sad and excited,’ indeed!” said the
artist, as he consigned this letter to the
society of its fellows. “ I have reason,

surely enough, to be sad and excited!" And he relapsed into the gloom that had lately afflicted him.

For contentment—"parent of delight," as one of our poets says—had deserted Gerald. From a happy man, proud of his position, blessed, as he believed himself to be, by his success in that dearest ambition of every man's life, his love for woman—he had become a restless, eager, combatant against one of life's most serious mischances, and was absorbed in the very heat of what seemed to be a hopeless struggle. But the other day, he thought heaven and the world had used him well; that, as the son of a poor and simple man—whose highest privilege was to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and whose sole expectation was to die, and beyond his narrow circle to be forgotten,—he had achieved much, and been especially favoured by fortune. But now!—What, he thought, had Providence and the world done for him

now? It had permitted him to labour for that which should, perhaps, have been his without a moment's anxiety or a day's pain; had hidden from him the knowledge of his birth and position; and blighted his manhood, in its most critical period, by a miserable revelation!

This new discontent had not been with him long; for it was but recently that Mr. Grey found courage to bring it about. After many visits, and many attempts to speak, the words came at last:

“Gerald,” he said, “I’ve been uneasy in my mind for a long time. I’ve something to tell you. But first, my boy, give me your hand, as it may be, perhaps, the last time you’ll do so.”

The artist, who was busy with a picture, set down his palette, and wonderingly acquiesced.

“You recollect,” continued Mr. Grey, tremulously, “what you told me once when we spoke about Rosa—that any one was

wronged by being kept in ignorance of their parents?"

The artist nodded.

"Well, my boy—don't take your hand away!—suppose *you* were wronged in that manner?"

Gerald burst out now. Something that had lately haunted him took distinct proportions.

"What—what—do you mean?" he said. "What are you supposing? How am I wronged? Are you not my father?"

The flood came now. "Gerald," exclaimed the poor man, "I am not!"

The artist stood apart from Mr. Grey, and regarded him with wonder.

"Who am I?—what am I, then?" he asked.

"Listen to me, Gerald. Many years ago—as many as you are old almost—a child was brought to my poor wife. We had no children of our own, and we loved

children, we did, indeed, Gerald ; and when you came we were happy."

" Yes, yes," said the artist, interrupting, and thinking to hasten the revelation. " And you—you were left with the child, and brought it up as your own ?"

Mr. Grey's courage was going, but he felt that he must finish the story.

" It *was* left, Gerald ; and though it was to be fetched away from us, we believed its birth was an unhappy one, and that if we gave it up, it would only go to strangers again. And we loved it so, Gerald !—we loved it so,—that—that we went away from our home and took it with us !"

The artist heard no more ! He was maddened by a new phrenzy. When Mr. Grey held out his hand, he avoided it, and paced the room. When the poor man clutched at his coat, he brushed him aside, and spoke sternly :

" Ten minutes ago," he said, " I called you ' father !' I loved and honoured you as

I believed you deserved. I would have upheld your goodness and probity against all the world! But now, I must leave God to forgive you; for you have so changed my opinion, that I can offer you no forgiveness myself!"

This ended the interview. With a low cry of anguish, Mr. Grey turned to depart. When at the door, he looked round, and made one vain attempt at appeal. He was answered by a trembling hand, motioning him to depart; and sorrowfully he went.

Gerald, left to himself, grew calmer, and tried to balance the advantages and disadvantages of his position. But the scale was all one way. He could believe in nothing but that he had been grievously cheated of fortune. His very success in life was turned against any other belief, and seemed to give him ground for conceiving a natural exaltation. All the changelings, all the lost children that story books told of, had been written at last into

carriages, titles of nobility, and long lines of ancestral grandeur. To be mysterious, was to be magnificent: there was no help for it: it was a law of nature. When people were poor and lowly, there was nothing to keep them out of, and they had their rights and took their proper places from infancy: wrongs would have been wasted upon them! What, then, was he to think?

Prompted by these high imaginings, he looked about him. He studied the romance of the aristocracy, and racked his brains for the recollection of some noble family that had lost its most promising scion. The Howards were all right; so were the Gowers; and a long list of other deeply-descended nobles seemed to sit in the hereditary assembly, and go in and out of the Cabinet with the most cheerful regularity. There were more claimants for vacant peerages than there were vacant peerages for claimants. All this was very sad.

It never occurred to the artist to think of good Mr. Coram and his benevolent basket hanging at a gate in Bloomsbury; for his mind was not assisted by reminiscences of nobility being found in that quarter. A basket discovered in the bulrushes by the daughters of a king, was all very well: there was no vulgarity in that. But a basket over against a mere brick building, peeped into by a porter, and emptied into the hands of a board of guardians, was a commonplace affair, and most unsatisfactory as a basis for good-breeding! So Gerald never thought of that.

The next day, however, Mr. Grey, tremblingly and doubtfully, came back. He was eager to mend the broken chain of evidence; and by way of doing this, he gave Gerald the name of the lady in bombazine who appeared in an early chapter of this history. That was something. The artist at once went to a lawyer, and the lawyer drew up an advertisement. It was only for

the lady in bombazine to manifest herself, and she might hear of something to her advantage. That advertisement, and another of a different kind, alarmed the little practitioner, and made him go to his client with such terrible information as has been recorded.

* * * *

The course of events is now made clear up to the moment of Rosa's return. The day following that event, Gerald received the letter from Blanche, which has been quoted. He had scarcely put it aside, when Isaacs and his client drove up to the artist's door; the lawyer only leaving the cab, and seeking Gerald.

“In the ordinary course of business, sir,” said the little practitioner,—“I have just had the honour of waiting upon Mr. Howard, a most worthy gentleman, and a member of Her Majesty's royal college of physicians. He is a man, sir, who most thoroughly understands the gravity of all legal pro-

ceedings; and I may say, he was most affable."

"Well, sir," replied the artist, "What of that?—what is your business?"

"I'm coming to that, sir," returned Isaacs, whose professional avocations had made him acquainted with the routine of what one of our greatest and noblest of contemporary writers has eternally stamped with the name of the Circumlocution Office—"I'm coming to that, sir. To be brief, then, I may say that under all circumstances, and with a due regard to legality, and in justice to a client of mine, and, indeed, in justice to all parties,—I felt it my duty to request Mr. Howard to return to my client a certain diary, which he—Mr. Howard—had, or should have had, in his possession or under his control. That gentleman, sir, refers me to you; and I now ask you to deliver up the book."

"Which I must decline to do," said Gerald, curtly.

“Decline to do!” returned Isaacs. “But, my dear sir, you must be aware that the diary is the property of my client, and that you run a certain risk in withholding it from him?”

“Nevertheless,” said Gerald, “I intend to keep the book. Certainly at this moment, I must refuse to give it up.”

“At this moment, sir!—at this moment!” exclaimed Isaacs, thinking himself upon the brink of the discovery—“Why at this moment?”

“Because,” returned the artist, “at this moment I am reading it!”

The lawyer was thrown back. He grew excited, and the old habit of stammering returned to him.

“But you must not f—f—orget that the book is n—n—ot yours; that it’s my c—c—lient’s! There’s the l—l—aw, sir!—the l—l—aw!”

“Sir!” replied the artist. “There is

the law ; I'm aware of that ; and to the law I must leave you."

Isaacs grew more excited. The law was very well ; but he didn't care to be left to it.

" Would you like me to summon you ?" he said. " Would you like me to have you bef—f—ore a magistrate ? I'll do it, sir, I'll do it ! I'll expose you, sir ! I'll give counsel a guinea, and he'll say such things——"

Gerald tapped the little lawyer on the shoulder, and pointed to the door.

" Keep your hands off, sir !—Keep your hands off !" said the little man, backing out. And so he returned to the cab, and joined his client.

Gerald followed him, and presently taking a cab, directed the driver to Mr. Grey's. Arriving there, he was reasonably astonished to find himself upon the heels of Isaacs and his client, and to behold the latter knock confidently at the well-known door in the quiet street. He was still more surprised

when, in company with the two men, he was ushered by Mrs. Grey—who thought her visitors were all of a party—into the parlour. But he was thoroughly bewildered when he heard a timid scream, and saw the lost Rosa start from a chair and hide herself behind the sofa!

“As I thought” said the client, following her, and then turning to Mrs. Grey. “Are you aware, madam, that this is my wife?”

“What?” cried Gerald, placing himself between Rosa and her husband. “Your wife!”

“Yes, sir, my wife!”

“Yes, sir,” echoed the lawyer, “his wife!”

Gerald took Rosa’s hand, and bringing her from her retreat, confronted her with her husband.

“Rosa, is this true?” he asked.

She only clung to him, and cried “Oh protect me!—don’t let him take me away!”

“ Isaacs,” whispered the client. “ Go!— make haste! and bring a constable!”

The lawyer went, and while Gerald was trying to force an explanation from Rosa, came back with a policeman. The client turned to the officer:

“ There is my card,” he said, “ That lady is my wife. She left her home last night, and I call upon you to assist me in taking her back.”

There were no laws for the protection of wives and children then; and therefore, although Rosa was both a wife and a child, she could plead nothing in bar of her husband's claim. At that time, the stick or the fist was a legalized incident of the marriage contract, and between savage and civilized domestic life there was little difference in the woman's favour. So it was vain for Rosa to protest; vain for her to cling to Gerald, and look to him for such sweeping measures as chivalry might have prompted. He asked her one question:

“ Rosa, is this your husband ?”

She fell into his arms, fainting and muttering “ Yes ;” and then, under the eye of the constable, she was surrendered to her lawful owner, carried to the cab, and Gerald and Mrs. Grey were left alone.

CHAPTER XII.

THE great American work was in the hands of everybody. All the privateering publishers were down upon it with colours flying. Wherever you went, it stared you in the face, and in whatever society you found yourself, it was the grand topic of conversation. The newspapers were full of it, and the literary journals were compelled to give it room. Calculating machines were set to work to tell how many square miles the general issue would cover, supposing every book to be laid side to side and end to end; how many Towers of Babel might

be built with it; how the globe might be wrapped up like a Seville orange and handed over to Chaos, if the paper it consumed could be manufactured in one sheet; how many paper-makers, printers, and bookbinders it set to work; and, last not least, the precise sum netted by the stamp-office on this one little item of contribution to the taxes on knowledge.

Of all the English publishers who made money by the great American work, the most fortunate, in this respect, was Mr. Tympan. His edition was the cheapest edition, and owned the gaudiest cover. It was the earliest, too; and in every way had the advantage of its fellows. It kept the magnate's machines going day and night, and made his warehouse busy. He wanted something of the kind; for affairs had not prospered with him of late. The dilettanti declined to put "Tympan's Shakspeare" on their shelves; and the Council of Education passed a cruel resolution which stopped

“Tympan’s History of England” at the Picts and Scots. Of Tympan’s many “Libraries,” several had turned out signal failures; and of his long list of “Lives” and “Histories,” there was scarcely one that did not betray the loose hand of the hack writer or the slipshod English of the literary mechanic, and so meet with summary expulsion from all educated or intelligent households. This being the case, the great American work was a windfall to Mr. Tympan, and served as a straw to keep his head above the cold water of the Bankruptcy Court, and to extend for a short time the lease of his simulated prosperity.

One evening, while the copies of this work, at the rate of two or three thousand per day, were leaving his warehouse, the magnate made his usual preparations for going home. At the door stood his phaeton—a creaking little affair, in the back seat of which on a Sunday he was good enough to confine—for no fault of their own—such

of his poor relations as consented to have their teeth loosened, their backs well-nigh broken, and their extremities cruelly cramped. Attached to the phaeton was a small brown pony that a child might have driven safely, but which it was Mr. Tympan's cherished fancy to accuse of high blood and restiveness, and to believe capable of carrying off any plate from any other pony of similar size in England. He was taking his customary review of this pony—lifting its feet, looking at its shoes, patting its back, studying its gear, and walking round and about it—before starting; and, having done this, he made an attempt to step into the vehicle.

“Can you give me any information about the author of this?” said a gentleman detaining Mr. Tympan and showing him a copy of the great American work.

“I!” exclaimed the magnate. “I give you any information! How should I know anything about the author?”

“ Yet your name is on the title-page, and you publish it !”

“ So I do,” said Mr. Tympan. “ And I publish Shakspeare. But I don’t know him !”

“ Pshaw !” was the reply. “ I speak of a living man ! Surely you know from whom you bought the right to issue this work ?”

The magnate turned round good-humouredly, and smiled at his simple interrogator.

“ You don’t understand these things,” he said. “ Are you aware that the work you hold in your hand comes from America ? There’s no right about it at all. You may publish it, or the man over the way may publish it, or anybody else that pleases may publish it. It’s a principle of free trade, sir !” And Mr. Tympan stepped into his phaeton.

“ Stay !” said the persistent inquirer, holding back vehicle, horse and all, “ At least you can give me the name of the publisher in America ?”

The magnate was terribly alarmed. The pony had been touched by strange hands, and was pricking up its ears and swishing its tail preparatory to that restiveness of which Mr. Tympan accused it. He jumped out hastily, and ran to its head.

“Are you aware, sir,” he said angrily, “that this pony is thorough-bred, and most dangerous to handle?”

“I am not,” replied the disturber, smiling, and regarding the sleepy animal with curiosity.

“Then let me make you aware of it!” said Mr. Tympan. “I wouldn’t trust a stranger with him for the world! Oblige me by getting out of the way; and if you want any information about the book, those are my premises, and there are my clerks!”

The magnate, after soothing the sleepy pony into more profound somnolence, thought it safe to gather up the reins and get into the phaeton again. Then he started, and his interrogator entered the publishing

establishment. The place was full of literary lumber, and the counters were covered with the loose sheets of a new work, "Tympan's Religious Exercises." As the text of one essay, Mr. Tympan's author had selected the words "Thou shalt not steal!"—and as a commentary on the text, Mr. Tympan's clerk was just packing up a parcel of the new American book. There was a moral in this which had, doubtless, escaped Mr. Tympan, as many other morals had done. It was not made clear to him that "Thou shalt not steal" might apply to American works.

The clerks could give no better information to Gerald—for he was the persistent inquirer—than Mr. Tympan had done. They referred him, however, to the Preface, and there he at once detected the florid hand of Mrs. Maguire :

"In ushering this work into the world
" (it said) the Editress has a few remarks
" to offer. She is not at liberty to say

“ more of the author than that he is—as
“ she is led to believe by one who has
“ linked his fate with her own—an English-
“ man, and a painter of considerable re-
“ putation. He appears, at least, to be an
“ independent and original thinker,—a man
“ of whom it may be said—to use the words
“ of one of our towering American minds
“ —like Luther, like Paul, he goes on his
“ own hook. His sympathies are wide and
“ lofty, and—to quote from another of our
“ towering spirits—he may be justly looked
“ upon as a Kosmos. In every page of the
“ work the reader will observe evidences
“ of an artistic education. The book is,
“ *par excellence*, a painter’s book——”

Gerald paused. “ Confound the woman !”
he exclaimed. “ It never occurred to me
that she’d write a preface ! She’s made
Richard a painter, and dressed him up in
my garments ! Never mind : the fame of
this book ought to reach him, wherever
he is !”

The fame of the book did reach Richard ; but to tell how, we must pay a visit to a remote corner of England, where—isolated from the noise and turbulence of the great world—a dull, misanthropical student was wearing away the edge of his ambitious spirit upon thankless and uncongenial labour. It was a mountain district, into the valleys of which news travelled but slowly, and where the inhabitants were rude, and as far as they could recollect, aboriginal. They spoke a rugged and clipped dialect that was a barrier between them and strangers, and they delighted in manners and customs that were in themselves scarcely inviting.

It was in this neighbourhood and with these people that Richard—after a preliminary course of desolate wandering—had settled down as the master of a miserable foundation school, the prime revenues of which were diverted to the uses of an affiliated ecclesiastical establishment that

found fat livings for a little knot of men calling themselves dean, canons, and the like. Originally these revenues amounted to about fifty pounds a-year ; but the growth of time had increased them forty-fold, and they were now something handsome. The affiliated ecclesiastical establishment, however, made its own calculations ; and as the deed of gift settled the remuneration to be paid to the schoolmaster at a certain figure, the dean and canons saw no reason to depart from the strict letter of the bequest, and considered, in relation to the school, that what was forty pounds in the days of the Tudors, should be forty pounds now. They neglected, however, to apply this calculation to themselves ; and, therefore, while the school had forty pounds, the church netted that sum forty times over.

This forty pounds was Richard's stipend — aided, certainly, by some few extras in the shape of coals and candles, and eked out by certain pence which the trustees of

the foundation were good enough to secure to him from the pockets of the scholars. The great folks of the neighbourhood, however, gave the school their entire countenance, and rather prided themselves upon its existence. They paid it inquisitorial visits, and every now and then arranged a show of prize scholars, at which the cheap volumes of the Bible Society stood them in good stead and saved their purses. They even went so far as to pat the prize scholars on the head, and now and then to encourage great learning by inducting its possessors into the mystery of scaring crows from their kitchen-gardens, or blacking boots in their domestic offices. So—to parody a well-known piece of military hyperbole—every boy may be said to have carried a blacking-brush in his school-bag, and to have a career of great exaltation before him !

Teaching as usual one day, Richard was favoured by the presence of two of the lady visitors, who came to pick out the best

boy for this exaltation, and who applied to the master for proper testimonials. There were several scholars ripe for plucking, and one of these Richard pointed out for approbation. He was a clever boy, who had carried off a succession of prizes, and, in his way, was double-first-class of the establishment. The ladies went to him and patted his head; they thought he was a likely boy for the blacking-brush. But while they were catechising him, the master turned over a leaf of a book they had left upon his desk. The language, he thought, was familiar to him. Nay, it was his own! Before him—truly enough—was the *El Dorado*, printed and published!

He was so agitated when the lady visitors came back, that he forgot his courtesy.

“The lad will do, I think,” said one of them. “He has his catechism by heart!”

Richard was silent: he was nervously turning the leaves of the book.

“The boy will do, I think, sir!” repeated the lady, sharply.

“What!—the boy?—will—will do?” replied Richard, absently. “Thank you. What will he do?”

“The man’s out of his senses!” said the second lady. And she snatched away the book, and, with her companion, left the school-room.

But Richard had seen enough: the name of his cherished literary offspring in fair printed characters; his own name; and—most inexplicable of all—the name of Mr. Tympan! Why, Mr. Tympan had rejected the book—rejected it with contumely! No matter. The work had been given to the world; and Richard’s mastership was over!

“Sir!” cried a little boy, coming to him with a difficulty,—“how many is twice two?”

The master looked down upon his pupil kindly:

“Four, my boy!” he replied. “And recollect it; for it is the last figure I shall ever tell you!”

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR ROGER MALDON had returned to England, and was once more the temporary inhabitant of a London hotel. So far as he could secure retirement in such a place, he lived retired, and though he had a companion, he was seldom seen out of doors with her. The gentlemen, however, who deal in fashionable intelligence, discovered him ; and when he read in a morning paper the announcement that Sir Roger and Lady Maldon had arrived in town, preparatory to their departure for Maldon Priory, where they were about to entertain a distinguished

circle, he was both alarmed and surprised. He had not the slightest idea of entertaining any circle, distinguished or undistinguished, and he could only account for the statement, by recollecting that the season had arrived for distinguished circles to be entertained, and that the fashionable intelligencers knew what was what. The paragraph, however, frightened him away from London, and the paper was thus enabled to establish its veracity by an announcement that he *had* departed for Maldon Priory, and that he *was* entertaining a distinguished circle !

This circle may be assumed to have had width, and to have included the crows, who at least, constituted a very noisy element of it; for the result of his arrival discomfited them, and put them out of sorts. They esteemed their own voices highly, and did not like the opposition voice that the baronet brought down with him. Let any one of the birds approach the Priory at

certain hours of the day, and he might hear sounds his soul was not accustomed to; or, when the wind was favourable, let him sit sulkily and solemnly in his nest, and these sounds would come to him, and trouble his spirit with such envy, that he might well be induced to tumble from his eminence, fix his wings flat to his body, and brain himself without benefit of clergy.

The crows delighted in a monotone; they harped upon one string; and unlike the great Italian, from that produced but indifferent melody. The new music that alarmed them was full of luxuriant variety, and florid to a fault; it started into life, and died away, in passionate bursts and lingering, fading inflections, that trembled with rich melody, and filled the glad air with wondrous echoes! Against this, what could they do? Nothing but protest. And this they did, and recorded their indignation at a public meeting which was brought

to an ungraceful end by the approach of feeding-time in the farmyard.

The source from whence came this objectionable melody was one of very considerable though newly-born importance at Maldon Priory; and how this importance was brought about may be learnt from the following narrative. That grand operatic tour, of which we last heard from St. Petersburg, came to an end in the city of the Czar—to the astonishment, and, indeed, to the great grief of the musical world; for the star that suffered occultation was in the very morning of its brilliancy, and of its meridian there were wondrous prophecies. The musical world was not accustomed to believe in the adieux of a *prima donna*, and from instinct, as well as experience, could clearly understand that while the glittering treasures of the starry heavens were to be had for a mere song, it was too much to imagine that all the farewells in the world

could hinder them from being swept again and again, even though time might make the repetition most melancholy, most unmusical. No; a *prima donna's* adieu was taken to mean *au revoir*; and therefore when, in the sight of a great potentate who was known as the preserver of European order till it pleased him to become the destroyer of it, the lady in question carried her last bouquets from the stage, the musical world was reasonably surprised, and cried out upon truth because for once it was not proved to be a liar!

When this real adieu happened, Sir Roger Maldon felt that his reward was at hand. He had followed the lady for many, many, months with the most chivalrous devotion. He was her knight errant, her slave, her anything but husband. The latter he never contemplated being; his pride revolted at it. Marry an opera-singer! The bare notion was panic to him. And yet, than this talented lady, Diana was not

more discreet, Juno was not more peerless. From the gay capital on the Seine to the damp metropolis on the Neva; from dull London to dirty Berlin, she had carried herself with provoking modesty. To the hangers-on behind the scenes,—the gay old bucks with false calves, false teeth, false hair, in fact with everything false except their quivering anatomy; to the silly young gentlemen, of great fortune and prematurely decayed morals, who mounted guard at the stage-door,—she was known as the Icicle! Her wondrous beauty attracted them, and her coldness kept them at a distance. They courted her, slandered her, pestered her with intrusive favours, and did everything but win smiles from her. What smiles she had in private life were reserved for the baronet; and even these were no warmer than pure friendship might warrant.

On her return from St. Petersburg, he was permitted to travel with her; for, in her journey to the Russian capital, she had

met with some few discourtesies. The officials she encountered were peculiarly Slavonic in their ideas of honesty, and her courier was neither of a bold nor a commanding disposition. She was glad, therefore, to accept the services of an English gentleman who could knock down a Ruffianoffsky upon occasion ; and Sir Roger, with his old Oxford experiences, felt himself fully equal to the task. He was disappointed, however, with the return journey. The lady was as politely distant as ever ; and as to Ruffianoffsky, only once did he hold out his hand and show his teeth ; and then his hand was lamed and his teeth knocked down his throat by the too ready Englishman !

At a certain point, where the line of greater civilisation was reached, the lady persisted in parting with him, bidding him go to England, marry highly, and die happily. She said this in her own light, brilliant way, and much as she might have sung it to the tenor on the stage of the

opera-house. But yet it pained her, and had a sad meaning. The baronet saw this, and thinking the favourable moment near, he poured out his professions of love. She listened to him in silence, gave him her hand to kiss, called to the courier, and went her way unsullied !

But when at Rome, they met again ; and there, his fierce, feverish passion had an ill effect upon the baronet. It laid him on that bed of sickness of which Blanche had been advised by the fair female hand. The *prima donna* was melted then. She forgot her reserve ; and seeing the young Englishman delivered to the careless care of hirelings, she interfered and did for him that which a silent heroine of our day did for a crowd of brave men struggling for perilled life in a foul hospital at Scutari ! Recollections of the past urged her to do this ; for the Englishman and herself were not new acquaintances. They had met when the stage was to her a thing only to be

looked upon with wonder; when she was on the eve of marriage—for pecuniary reasons, and because the atmosphere of Rome was not favourable for an unprotected girl—with a near relation who might have been, but unhappily was not, her father. She was the Francesca about whom the baronet wrote his little story. But her husband made no hasty provision for her; and, dying almost before he learnt to call her his wife, left her again unprotected and at the world's mercy for subsistence. The Englishman was away then. So, with her rich voice, her wondrous beauty, and her many accomplishments, she took an independent course, and became VERMICELLI!—

When the baronet's illness abated, and he grew conscious, she felt that her duty was at an end; and with the fixed principle that guided her demeanour towards him, she prepared to depart. He rose up and entreated her to stay; he tried the stale device of promising to become a bro

ther—nothing more!—to her. But she was inexorable. So, forgetting all but his love, he conquered the pride that consumed him, and asked her to become his wife! With one joyful burst of feeling, she fell into his arms and consented.

No wonder, then, that the Priory was musical, and that the crows were discomfited by such sounds as an English country village had scarcely heard before. No wonder that the baronet tried to find retirement in a London hotel, and shrunk from contact with a world that might twit him with the public part his wife had played in it. The world was sure to do this; for among the many solaces open to the idle, the surpassing solace of scandal is, perhaps, the solace paramount. Fashionable circles famed for it are always well attended; books that record it are always eagerly sought after. What paragraph in newspaper finds so many readers as that which, with innumerable stars and dashes, reveals some rankling secret, eating into a

family's honour, or only preserving, by its imagined inviolability, some half-broken heart from thorough laceration? What tale of heroism is so much talked of as that which exalts one man to the skies, and plunges another into the bottomless pit of degradation? These questions are easily answered; and therefore it may be well understood that Sir Roger Maldon was nervously sensitive about his family affairs, and reasonably fearful of finding himself advertised as the husband of a *prima donna*.

Yet this fear and this nervousness were wholesome chastisements for him. The world might have talked itself hoarse about any mere *liaison* of his, without troubling his pride or making him suffer a moment's annoyance—because he knew very well that, unless the circumstances happened to be peculiarly atrocious, the men would have laughed and the women would have pardoned the whole matter. But when what might have been merely

a loose connection was made a solemn and serious contract; when, in fact, society had its most stringent article duly subscribed to,—both men and women would agree to regard the respectable result with contemptuous pity.

It was a great struggle, then, for the baronet to introduce his wife to her new relations; and not till the gentlemen who deal in fashionable intelligence frightened him from London, did he find courage to go down to Maldon. He had tried to prepare his sister for the revelation by his letters; but his mother was totally unprepared, and he feared more for her imbecile indiscretion than for the delicate wonder of her daughter. When he arrived, however, Blanche came to the door to meet him. She started when she saw the well-remembered Italian face—striking from its very loveliness. “Vermicelli!” was on her lips; but she hesitated, and took the lady’s hand. They retired together; and in a

short time, were good friends. Blanche was loving and sisterly; and the new wife, with her warm Italian ways, seemed to have brought her native sun to melt the hearts of all about her. But there was Lady Maldon to be encountered; and, though her senses were blunted, and her ideas all at sixes and sevens, she had yet enough consciousness left to make her curious, and to agitate her with questions about the strange woman who had turned her into a dowager. The moment she saw Francesca she appealed to her son:

“Why,” she asked, “how is this? This is not the Chevalier’s sister?”

Blanche went hastily to her mother, and whispered; but her ladyship would not be quiet.

“My dear Roger!” she said, “who is this lady? She looks like a foreigner!”

The son frowned. But as his wife was looking on, he spoke courteously.

“ This lady,” he replied, “ is—as you are pleased to say—a foreigner. She comes from Italy.”

“ Italy,” repeated her ladyship, “ Italy ! But who is she ?” And then breaking into another subject, she asked for De Lisle and Marie, and went into the old ecstasies about her handkerchiefs and *eau-de-Cologne*.

“ When shall we see him again ?” she asked, referring to De Lisle.

“ Never !” replied the baronet, angrily.

“ Oh dear me !” cried her ladyship, recovering unusual consciousness. “ I thought he was with you all this time ! I’ve been looking for him day after day. When he left here last he took away all my ready money, and some papers of your poor father’s that he was to turn into money ! What am I to do ?—what am I to do ?”

This great accession of remembrance on the part of Lady Maldon quite exhausted her ; and the stout nurse being at her side,

she was carried off to her room—still crying feebly—“What am I to do?—what am I to do?”

And so the great ceremony of family introduction was over.

CHAPTER XIV.

“BETSY, my gal,” said Tom Jackson, a few days after the new arrival. “Hark! listen! d’ye hear that?”

“What, Tom?”

“Why, that there music we’ve heard every day since her young ladyship come down here! Hark! There it is again!”

They were in the kitchen garden, of which Tom, through Blanche’s instrumentality, was now the chief; and the husband, arrested in the act of pulling an onion, and the wife in that of receiving it in her apron,

turned in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, and listened.

“Wonderful!” said Tom, “aint it, my gal? It must be a flute she’s a playing on!”

“I don’t think it’s a regular flute,” replied Betsy, “it sounds too natural for anything wooden. You may depend on it Tom, that it’s that kind of flute all of us have in our throats; only all of us, you know, can’t play upon it like her young ladyship!”

“No,” said Tom, wondering, “all on us can’t.”

They went on with their business, again, only now and then pausing when the wondrous vocalisation became unusually florid, or when some prolonged quivering called forth their simple notes of admiration. At length, returning to the house, they sat down in their own particular little room, and talked of their affairs.

“Poor Tom!” said Betsy, wiping away a tear that the recollection forced from her,

“ Poor fellow ! I ’spose he’ll get better, and we shall see him again ? ”

“ Oh, yes, my gal !—we must suppose so ! ” replied the husband. “ He says he was only wounded—not killed, you know, Betsy : he doesn’t say that !—and in the paper I seed the other day, it said that they were a curin’ a’most every one on ’em. Cheer up, my gal !—he ll come back to us—quicker, perhaps, than if he was all safe and sound ! ”

“ Poor fellow ! ” repeated Betsy, taking a soiled letter from her pocket, and regarding it tenderly. “ Here’s what he wrote to us from that dreadful place—the Crimeer, as he calls it. Read it again to me, Tom ; I can’t look at it. I haven’t the heart. ”

For the twentieth time, perhaps, the father unfolded the letter ; and for the fourth, or fifth, at least, he spelt through its large straggling characters, and made what he could of them for his wife’s consolation. Circumstances have lately brought

many letters ; written by private soldiers, to light, and, with just pride and congratulation, some of these letters have been published to the world, to prove that there are men in the ranks capable of feeling strongly, thinking wisely, and expressing themselves with ability of no ordinary character. But, unfortunately, Tom Jackson was not of these men. His ideas were anything but remarkable, and his language was of the very rudest and simplest kind :—

“ MY DEER PARENTS,—(began his letter)
“ I rite this hopeing you are in good helth,
“ which I am not—jist at pressent. I was
“ orderd out with my kumpny the other
“ day, all of a suden, bekos the Rushuns
“ was a comin’ on at our lines. Our yung
“ leftennant chered us on, wavin his sord,
“ and cryin ‘ at em, Bufs !’ and we did go
“ at em, and after a volle, chargd with the
“ baynet. I was fust upon em, and skeured
“ two or three till a round shot cum and it
“ me on the sholder. I droptd down then,

“ and now I’m in ospital. I told you in
“ what I rote before that the Bufs was
“ orderd suden from Indey, and of course
“ I along with ’em. I may git ome soon as
“ as I’m woonded. Have you heerd any-
“ thin’ about the littel gal that livd along o’
“ Missis Gray—her as ’ was took out of a
“ fire? Does she put her things in that
“ there workbox I give her? I can’t rite
“ any more bekos there goin’ to do some-
“ thin’ to my arm. God bles you, my deer
“ parents. Good bye.—TOM JACKSON, cor-
“ pral, granydeer kumpny, —— Bufs, at
“ pressent in the Crimeer.”

The letter was refolded and returned to Betsy’s pocket, and the good woman, seeing that the reading of it had made her husband somewhat dull, recovered her native elasticity of spirit, and put a bright face upon the matter.

“ What a sight Tom ’ll be when he comes home—won’t he?” she said,—“ all covered with ribbons and medals and crosses. How

they will look at him in the village—won't they, Tom?"

"Yes, they will look at him," replied the husband.

"And of course he'll be promoted?" said Betsy. "They always promote the wounded, don't they?"

"I don't know, my gal!" replied Tom, who, now that his wife was cheerful, conceived he had a right to be dull. "They may, and they mayn't."

"Well, we shall see," said Betsy. "Come, cheer up, Tom! We shall have him back, perhaps, before we expect it!"

While they were talking thus, the music they had heard still reverberated through the Priory, reached the very farthest of the domestic offices, and roused the feathered vocalists in the garden. It reached Lady Maldon, who was being wheeled about as usual; and, although she had heard it for several days, she was not quite satisfied how it was produced, and from whence

it came. The first day, when it was a timid gentle warbling—trying, as it were, the compass of its new home—she put it down to the birds. The second day, when it was somewhat bolder, she thought, with Tom Jackson, that it came from a mechanical wind instrument. But now, on the third, when it rung out full and free, and seemed to revel in its own surpassing richness, she was quite at a loss to account for it. She stopped her chair suddenly, and, looking at the stout nurse, said,—

“Payne, what *is* that strange noise?”

“Oh, don’t your ladyship know?” said the woman. “It’s her young ladyship! She’s always a singing!—quite theatrical!”

Lady Maldon started. “Theatrical!” she whispered to herself, “Theatrical!” And then, crying out, “Wheel me back, Payne; wheel me back!” she was assisted straight to the drawing-room, where, seated at the piano, her son’s wife was trifling

with the keys, and pouring out her soul of music in "*Ah non giunge.*"

The baronet and Blanche—the sister reading or pretending to read, a book, and the brother listening idly to his wife—were both in the room when her ladyship entered.

"How very theatrical!" cried the dowager. "Roger,—how very theatrical your wife's singing is!"

The singer paused, and looked wonderingly at her mother-in-law. Was this intended as an insult? Was this the treatment she was to expect in her husband's house? But her thoughts were soon answered. The baronet motioned to his mother's nurse, and Payne—who had done all the mischief by suggesting the word "theatrical"—took the opportunity to tell her patient that she must be fatigued, and, without more ado, led her unanswered from the room.

Then the husband put his arm gently

round the singer's waist, and coaxed her back to the piano.

"My mother," he said, "means no harm. She's an invalid. You must finish that piece."

He said this at a great sacrifice of feeling ; for might he have crushed the piano under his heel, burnt every piece of music in the house, and painlessly afflicted his wife with a permanent loss of those vocal abilities of her's, he would gladly have done it ! She never sat down to the instrument, but he saw Vermicelli before him ; she never sung a note without carrying him back to the concert-room and the opera house ! One day, she burst out with a charming air from "*La Fille du Régiment*," and tramped the room with a momentary return of her old enthusiasm.

"For God's sake, Francesca !" cried the husband, "don't do that ! You'll drive me mad !"

"Why ?" she asked innocently.

“ Because,” he replied, hesitating “ because—of the dress you wore! A *cantinière!*” And he shuddered.

The fair Italian took this lesson to heart, and for a time curbed her musical spirit. But the result was apparent: her cheerfulness deserted her, and in its place came a grievous discontent that now and then moved her to tears. The baronet saw this; and as his love for her was the strongest passion he had, he tried to conquer his distaste for the music of old, and to subdue the hurtful reminiscences that it called up.

“ Francesca,” he said, “ I have not heard you sing lately!”

“ No,” replied the wife. “ You dislike my singing, don’t you?”

“ Dislike it! Let me hear it again.”

Her eyes lighted up with the old expression, and her voice was ready. But she hesitated.

“ It pains you?—it calls back other times?”

“ It did ; but, perhaps, it may not now, —that is, if you avoid some things.”

“ Ah !—the *cantinière* !”

“ Yes,—the *cantinière* ! We have a more vulgar name for that in England ; we say sutler. Besides, the dress !”

The wife smiled mournfully ; and from that day, though she could not still her old habit, she avoided the more masculine and adventurous of operatic characters, and always contrived to warble such melodies as had no unpleasant suggestions of stage costume in them. Yet even then, she felt occasionally at fault, and, for the first time in her life, thought that the great composers might have made it their rule instead of their exception, to select less distinguished women as the vehicles of their melodious inspiration. Perjured priestesses, kings favourites, buffoons' daughters, even virtuous peasants so sadly afflicted that they paid nocturnal visits to the bed-chambers of noblemen, were, it occurred to her upon

reflection, not the only heroines that could call forth the sympathy of educated audiences. What she might have thought had her operatic experiences been of later date, and she had been compelled to warble

“ Tra voi, sapìò dividere
 Il tempo mio giocondo
 Tutto è follia nel mondo
 Ciò che non è piacer.
 Godiam ; fugace e rapido
 E il gaudio dell’ amore ;
 E fior che nasce e muore
 Nè più si può goder ”—

there is no saying. She might have been constrained to fall back on oratorio !

When Lady Maldon had retired, however, the kind words of the fair singer’s husband easily won her back to the piano ; and there she again poured out her inexhaustible soul of music. The baronet returned to his chair, and Blanche simulated an attempt to proceed with her reading.

“ What book is that ? ” said her brother.

Now this was the question Blanche had

been waiting for. But instead of answering promptly, she passed the book to him, and waited the result.

He took it in silence, looked over a page or two, and then turned to the title.

“ ‘ By Richard Maldon ! ’ ” he said, rising, and throwing the book on the table. “ What does this mean, Blanche ? ”

The sister rose, and approached him. It was her great hope to make peace and establish friendship between the brothers ; and she pleaded earnestly to that end. But seemingly with little effect. The baronet was cold, haughty, and unreasonable. The book was a rude, gaudy thing to look at, outwardly suggestive of Grub Street, and its price was a mere shilling or so. There were no broad margins, gilt edges, nor daintly-smelling morocco bindings about it. When men of family wrote books—thought the baronet—they gave them to the world handsomely, and whatever the matter was, took care that the manner should be the chief feature. But Richard offered his

thoughts to the public in a cheap, plebeian guise that had all the character of needy professional authorship about it! He was not at all inclined to take Richard to his heart for producing a book that looked mean, and sold for a shilling or so.

Blanche despaired, and ceased to plead. But at the moment, the singer came to her aid, with the very melody that had enraptured the audience and demanded an encore at Vermicelli's concert! The recollection struck both brother and sister simultaneously. The one it confused; to the other it gave courage.

"Give me the book," said the baronet, "I'll read it!"

Thus placed between two fires—his wife on the one hand, his sister on the other—Sir Roger Maldon found himself surrendering, day after day, some little instalment of his unnatural pride. As sure as the sun rose, the singer lifted up her voice; as sure as it set, she whiled away the twilight with

luscious melody. Just as surely, too, Blanche plied her brother with human and loving suggestions, and without, perhaps, touching his heart, she very considerably influenced his reason. She made him confess that he liked the book, made him own that the man who wrote it was worthy of some admiration; and at last he said,—

“Blanche, bring him here!”

It was then that the whole story was revealed; that Richard's departure, his dreary life in the metropolis, his disappointments, and the traitorous intervention of De Lisle, were fully recounted—ending, of course, with the revelation that he had disappeared. When all this was told, the baronet made a further advance.

“Blanche,” he said, “we must find him!”
And the duty he took upon himself.

CHAPTER XV.

FOLLOWING closely upon its seizure of Sir Roger Maldon, the fashionable intelligence had caught one of his friends. Lord Dalton, it said, had, after a long sojourn on the continent, returned to England, preparatory to entertaining a most distinguished circle at Dalton House ; but, oddly enough, it said nothing about Lady Dalton ! There was a reason for this ; for his lordship had returned to England alone. During his absence he had suffered a very striking change ; and when he appeared at his club, sauntered down the yard at Tattersall's, or

joined the mess-table from which he had so long seceded, his friends scarcely knew him!

“How deuced thin you’ve got, Dalton!” said one. “How confoundedly long your face is!” cried another. “Dalton!” exclaimed a third,—“you were never a remarkably good-looking fellow; but, ’pon my life, you’re a regular cad now!”

Friendly recognitions such as these poured in upon his lordship, just as they pour in upon men of lesser mark, under similar circumstances. Our acquaintances seem to think they do us a peculiar favour by pointing out our sad changes, and, perhaps, with good reason, telling us of our faded looks. When we were well and hearty, they had nothing to say about it, and their jaws were locked against all personalities. But when our features sharpen, our plumpness leaves us, our cheeks lose their colour, and our eyes fall into retirement, every man of our acquaintance takes public note of the melancholy alteration. They do it, too, as though

the fact could never have occurred to ourselves; as though we had no looking-glasses, but took to the water with all the self-admiration of Narcissi!

Lord Dalton felt this; and it annoyed him greatly; for much of his old ease and effrontery had departed. He was certainly a sadder, very probably a wiser, man than of old; and he could not disbelieve the very distinct assurances given to him by all his friends that he presented a most miserable aspect. So, after a short time passed in the Metropolis, he came down to Dalton House to recruit; and the moment he arrived, he sent for the physician whose skill was called into requisition when Lord Dalton sprained his left fore-finger.

“ Doctor,” he said, “ do I look ill?”

“ Very,” replied the medical man.

“ What’s the matter with me, then?”

“ Nervous excitement — thought — late hours — want of recreation — ”

“ No; stop there doctor!” said his lord-

ship. "I've had recreation enough since I've been away; indeed, a doosed deal too much!"

"Unpleasant recreation?" suggested the physician

"Yes, that's just it—doosed unpleasant. Well, now, what do you prescribe?"

"Three months at home—here!" replied the doctor, impressively. "Light diet, little wine, and a couple of hours' riding a day,"

"That all?"

"No. This!" And the physician handed him a prescription.

"Anything else?"

"Well, yes; quiet society, if you can get it."

"What — the parson, and yourself, I suppose, and the lawyer, and the—the—undertaker, and the rest of 'em?"

"No, my lord," replied the doctor, "*not* the undertaker, if you do as I advise."

"And if I dont?"

“Why, then the undertaker *may* be necessary !”

The young lord had no desire for the undertaker’s society, so he determined to follow his doctor’s advice.

“Three months at home !” he said, running through the items of recovery. “Well, the hunting’s coming round again ; that’s something. But then as to the light diet—there’s the cook—he’s a pupil of Francatelli’s, and a *cordon bleu* ! What shall I do about the cook ?”

“Give him a holiday.”

“By Jove ! I will. I’ll lend him to the club. Their cook’s gone to the Crimea ! But as to the wine. What do you call a little ?”

“Oh, a bottle of sherry every third day, and claret in moderation.”

“No champagne ?”

“No, my lord ; not in the present state of the vintage !”

This ended the interview, and Lord

Dalton prepared to follow his doctor's advice. But, unhappily, that distinguished circle, of which the fashionable intelligence warned the world, began to gather about him, and after the first few weeks of his retirement, he found himself in the midst of acquaintances. At the time, too, the noble lord at the head of the government—how stereotyped that phrase seems, and how strange it would sound to say, the right honourable gentleman at the head of the government, as we used, in the days of Pitt and the rest—had gone to the country upon an adverse vote of the House of Commons; and Lord Dalton's own little territorial constituency was to be plagued with the fury of a contested election. The man who served in the last parliament made a mistake, and voted according to his conscience, forgetful that the Premier had in his hand the trump card of dissolution, and was just the politician to play it for the sake of sitting on the treasury bench. The Premier was

then an immense favourite with the constituencies, and, except upon eccentric occasions, commanded an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. All this was very much against the recent member for Lord Dalton's little place, especially as the electors had lately exhibited signs of freedom and independence, and some few of them had gone so far as to invite a new man to come over and be put in nomination. The retirement of Lord Dalton was, therefore, considerably disturbed; and he had the member and the member's wife, and all the public friends of the member, filling his rooms, and affording him society the very reverse of quiet.

But the worst part of the business was the arrival of the new candidate, who happened to bear a name peculiarly distasteful to Lord Dalton. He dated his addresses, too, from Maldon Priory, and was backed by very great interest in that quarter. Not that this interest helped him in the ordinary

way, by making his candidature a mere matter of house-to-house begging, alike degrading to himself and destructive to the political honesty of the electors. No; for the new candidate there was no personal canvassing, no electioneering trickery, and as little claptrap as possible. A sensible and modest address in the local journals, a plain and sincere oration at one or two public places, and a few placards, were the weapons with which the new candidate came to the contest, and, as it seemed, made very satisfactory progress towards obtaining the confidence of the constituency.

But to Lord Dalton's member, as, indeed, to most professional politicians, the principles of the new candidate were a mystery. He laid no obtrusive claim to the much-abused appellation of liberal; he made no pretence to be the fossil curiosity called Tory. Neither did he dress himself in the used-up buff and blue of whiggism, nor mask in the motley attire of the creature called con-

servative. As to the modern invention, entitled radical, that was not to be detected in his addresses. What was he then? Lord Dalton, with his Ovidian recollections, pronounced him to be Proteus; and it was considered, at Dalton House, a capital idea to issue a handbill, ostensibly addressed to the new candidate, commencing with "Thou comest in such a questionable shape!"

The new candidate, however, made his way, in spite of the various dodges of his opponents, and at the nomination, so evenly were the hands balanced, that it was thought desirable to demand a poll. The contest then grew more earnest, and the squibs issued from Dalton House with more irritating regularity. Lord Dalton himself entered heart and soul into the struggle; and, regardless of physical consequences, plied his tenants and trades-people with personal solicitation. He had no fear of being prosecuted for intimidation of voters, and therefore his language to the freely disposed was something like the following:

“ I tell you what it is, Bloomfield,—I like a man’s opinions to go with the land he gets his bread by. This place is a whig place, as all the world knows ; and when I put my hand to a lease, I consider that the lessee becomes a whig from that moment ! So I advise you to vote for my man. He’s everything that’s wanted, and you can’t want any more.”

In spite of these exertions, however, the candidate who published his addresses from Maldon Priory, maintained his ground and was considered to stand a fair chance of success ; and when the polling-day came, his friends brought him to the hustings with confidence. These friends were Sir Roger Maldon and a few country gentlemen who were heartily tired of Lord Dalton’s member, and began to feel that the whig of our political middle ages, like the tory opposed to him, might be safely suffered to die a natural death in these perilous times for party. They were men of great in-

fluence, too, in their respective neighbourhoods, and it was very generally looked upon as safe and patriotic to follow them wherever they might, in reason, lead.

On the other hand, Lord Dalton's man was but poorly supported beyond the limits of Dalton House. He was known to be a thorough parliamentary hack, whose eye was always fixed upon the treasury bench except when those who sat there sat uneasily. Then, as happened to be the case during the discussion which was the immediate cause of the minister going to the country, he gave a vote that seemed conscientious, but, at the same time, one that might serve him in the not unlikely event of accident or change. He was thus a mere piece of parliamentary furniture, only waiting to be used by the incoming tenants of office; and, as such, he wearied the more intelligent of his constituents.

This was made very plain during the progress of the poll; for the new candidate

kept steadily in the van, while the ex-member chafed in the rear. Every half-hour or so Lord Dalton espied one of his tenants coming boldly to the hustings, and giving his vote to the opposite party; and, as if this were not bad enough, just when the clerks were about to close their books, the chief tradesmen of the neighbourhood, who had formed themselves into an association to secure firmness and unity of principle, came up in a body, and gave the election its *coup de grace* by placing the new candidate in a final majority.

Then came the last scene. On one side of the hustings stood Lord Dalton and his friends, with the ex-member; on the other side, Sir Roger Maldon and his friends with the successful candidate. It was the first time the baronet and Lord Dalton had met since the scene at the carriage-door, in the well-known West End street; and therefore, although, for form's sake, they bowed and seemed polite enough, they were both

confused and annoyed at the unavoidable encounter. The numbers polled by each side, however, were about to be officially announced; and this being done amidst mingled cheers and hisses—the former predominating when the triumph of the new candidate was shown to be a certainty—the impatient crowd waited for the new member to come forward and speak.

This the new member presently did. He was—as Lord Dalton's party had tenderly insinuated in their many squibs—a young man of insignificant appearance, and but little favoured by the Graces. Compared with the grey-headed hack politician at the other side of the hustings, he suffered considerably at first sight. But when, after a few nervous moments, and some little modest trepidation, he launched fairly into his discourse, he won upon the hearts of his audience and chained their attention till he ceased. What he said, it would be idle to recapitulate while we have such

model orations laid constantly before us, through a fortuitous recurrence of parliaments almost realising the dreams of democracy. But so far as his political principles could be gathered from his speech, they seemed to consist in a wise avoidance of popular panaceas on the one hand and party dogmatism on the other. He was not lavish in individual promises; but to thinking men, he promised enough, and appeared likely to shine in what does not always follow promises—performance. His language was so far satisfactory to the electors and the crowd, that when he retired, a very general cry of “Three cheers for Richard Maldon!” was lustily responded to.

“Doosed annoying, isn’t it?” said Lord Dalton, as he drove away with the ex-member,—“and what makes it more annoying is that the fellow should have come from the quarter he has! Did I ever tell you that Sir Roger Maldon and I were mixed up in a very serious matter?”

“ No,” replied the ex-member.

“ Well, we were ; and I should be damn glad if we were not ! You know I’m married ?”

“ Yes.”

“ And you know I’m separated from my wife ?”

“ I should guess so by your being here alone.”

“ But you don’t know that if I hadn’t made a fool of myself Sir Roger Maldon might have been in my shoes now ? ’Gad ! I wish he was !”

“ I had no idea of such a thing !”

“ Daresay not ; but it’s true. I took the woman from him in London, and married her twice over—once in Protestant fashion, and once in Catholic : to satisfy her scruples, she said ; but to make the money secure, as I find it to be. The woman would have killed me had I lived with her a week longer than I did ; and as to her brother—I had to send a bullet through that man in

the Bois de Boulogne. I didn't kill him ; but of course they had me nicely, and the only way I got to England was by securing Lady Dalton fifty thousand francs of *rente*. So you see I've made a pretty mess of it ; and all through the man whose brother's just beaten us !”

They reached Dalton House as his lordship said this ; and there, to his great astonishment, he found Count Kreutzer awaiting him.

“ Why, how's this ?—what's the matter, Count ?” he said. “ Who the doose could have have expected you here ?”

“ I have news,” replied the Count, in a somewhat melancholy tone, “ that I imagine, will be, to you, a very sufficient excuse for my coming.”

“ What !” cried his lordship, anxiously. “ Lady Dalton met with an accident ?—caught a fever ?—ill ?—dying ?—eh ?”

The Count shook his head.

“ Now don't disappoint me !” said the

young lord. "Didn't you say you had good news for me? Let me hear the worst; I can bear it, you know!"

The Count still hesitated; but Lord Dalton seized his hand, and tried to wring the news from him by an eager display of friendship.

"Now, come, Count! come, my good feller, my dear feller! let's have it out at once; don't keep a man in suspense. You've heard something about Lady Dalton. She's ill, or dying, or -- or—or—dead!—eh, Count?"

"Neither the one nor the other!" replied Kruetzer, solemnly.

Lord Dalton dropped his visitor's hand and fell back.

"Count!" he said, "you're making an ass of yourself! What the doose do you want here?"

"My lord," replied the visitor, "I pardon your coarse expressions, because I happen to know the peculiar circumstances in

which you foolishly placed yourself. But if you'll be cool for a moment, and retire with me to some less public place than a political circle, I *will* tell you something that may be as welcome as the news you seem so eager for."

"My dear feller," said Lord Dalton, taking Kreutzer's hand again, and again indulging in hope,—“never mind what I say. I'll retire anywhere with you!—I'll clear the house for you!—only don't make me play Tantalus!”

They left the ex-member and his friends—who had been staring in wonder at the little scene—and adjourned to his lordship's “study”—the chief features of which were a few pairs of boxing-gloves, some foils, masks, cricket apparatus, saddles, bridles, riding-whips, hunting-boots, fowling-pieces, pistols, a volume bearing the name of Hoyle, and various other volumes chiefly relating to the management of dogs and horses.

“ Now,” said the eager husband, offering his visitor a chair, and nervously taking one himself—“ what is it ?”

“ In the first place, my lord, you’re a free man !—a bachelor again ; and there is no such woman as Lady Dalton !”

“ Count !” cried the emancipated aristocrat,—“ give me your hand ! No Lady Dalton !—no Lady Dalton ! Why, I shall go mad !—mad—mad with joy !”

He laughed in such a wild, incoherent manner that Kreutzer was alarmed. He shouted and danced about with such childish abandon, as to suggest that the news had been too much for his senses. At last he put his hand to his side, uttered a cry of pain, and fell flat on the floor. He had broken a blood vessel !

The doctor was sent for instantly. He came ; and by his direction, the patient was put to bed, and the count forbidden to finish his story till Lord Dalton should be strong enough to hear it.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER much dreary delay, and many repetitions of the advertisement for the lady in bombazine, the “tip-top lawyer out of Lincoln’s Inn”—to use Isaac’s words—began to see his way more clearly to the object about which his client had consulted him. To his great satisfaction, he found upon the office-table one morning a letter, bearing a country post-mark, and containing the following important information :

“SIR,—Having had my attention called
“to a newspaper, which it kindly retched
“me from London through a lady whom

“ I’ve attended I may say almost every
“ year since her marriage to a husband
“ which, under the most trying circum-
“ stances, is an honor to his sects, and most
“ liberal, and his heart is in the right place,
“ I send these few lines to you to say that
“ please God I shall be in town come next
“ Wednesday, and my address which is the
“ lying-in hospital will find me there. If I
“ may be so bold as to say so, and my me-
“ mory which is not what is used to be, and
“ how could it be expected at my age, con-
“ sidering all I have had to go through, and
“ some men are not at all considerate for
“ their wives’ best friends in the hour of
“ affliction, and suffer afterwards, and I’ve
“ known many cases where it has been so,
“ I think I know something about the bus-
“ ness mentioned in the paper, which was
“ most disgraceful and hurt me very much
“ at the time, and the mother, poor thing,
“ almost drove her mad, and for what I
“ know killed her, such is life, and for years

“ I thought of it, as it ornted me day and
“ night, and I got no sleep, and what I can
“ recollect I shall be glad to tell, and I
“ don’t care who to, not to the Queen her-
“ self; and as to my expenses to London,
“ which I did not think of being there so
“ soon, I leave it to you, and the fare is
“ 14s. 9d., parlymentary. Hopeing to hear
“ from you, I am, your respectfully, SARAH
“ SANDERS.”

It is needless to say that this letter was answered with great promptitude, and that a post-office order, payable to Sarah Sanders, accompanied the answer. The following Wednesday the old lady came to town, and, by the lawyer’s direction, made her way straight to his office.

Time had considerably changed her, and according to the account which she gave to the lawyer as soon as she was seated and found breath, she had suffered many viscusitudes. Her settled mission was that of a monthly nurse; but, finding the business

scarcely sufficient for her wants, she had engrafted upon it a secondary pursuit, which made her entire occupation epic and complete. This secondary pursuit was a dreary one, truly, and consisted in the performance of those rites which will make the last toilet of most of us. These things she explained fully to the lawyer before entering upon the business that had brought her to town; and when her garrulity upon the point was exhausted, she settled down to the more relevant matter, and the lawyer took rough notes of her discourse.

“ Yes, sir,” she said, in answer to a question. “ it’s more nor twenty years ago that I took that poor child to the—let me see, who did you say?—ah, yes, to the Greys. I knew they were fond of children, which it was why I took it to ’em, and that they might take more to the child I said it was unfortunate. I suppose they thought I meant a good deal by that, and it’s my fault, and perhaps I’m something to blame

for it. Oh, sir! I've got an attack of the spasms! Have you a little sperrit in the house?"

The desired stimulant was obtained, and the old lady went on:

"It's poor mother, sir!—she was a weak, and yet a headstrong young thing, and she married for love, which, to say the least, and I think you'll agree with me, is improvident, sir. I've attended a good many ladies in my time, sir, and I may say that where it was only a love matter, things didn't turn out well. A little of it was no harm, and where there was money on both sides; but where there was only love, some people was most mean, which it couldn't be helped, perhaps, and little things to keep one up was out of the question."

"Certainly, certainly," said the patient lawyer, dotting down innumerable asterisks in his note-book.

"And you see, sir, where it's only love, and families is offended, and not a soul

comes near the house, there's nothing but the bare month's money for us, which it's different when there's a knock at the door every minute, and the baby's dressed a dozen times a day for company. You see, sir?"

"Yes," replied the wearied listener, dotting down more asterisks.

"But as I was saying, she married for love, and run away from her father, and the man she married—he went by the name of Captain Arthur—though his real name, which it was a secret, were Fitzgerald!"

"Ah!" cried the lawyer, writing honest English now.

"Yes, sir, Fitzgerald; and he was anything but a good husband, and first he made her send the child away because, as he said, his regiment was going abroad, and he couldn't take it with him; and then he didn't go after all, but stayed in England till a second was born—a girl; and then he started off all of a sudden, and left his

poor wife to do as she could till a letter and a little money came to her from the East Indies! He was disappointed, sir, that his wife's father wouldn't forgive her, which it was because of her not marrying her cousin, as was natural, and all her family expected it!"

"My good woman," said the lawyer, "that is enough at present. But mind, we shall want you again—perhaps in a court of justice. You can swear to these things?"

"Of course I can. When I tell you, sir, that at many and many a coroner's inquest I've sworn——"

"Yes, yes," returned the lawyer, "I understand. And mind, you're not to leave London till the matter's settled. What money you want you can have."

The old lady departed, uttering many thanks, and the lawyer at once went to Gerald. The artist was out at the time, but was shortly expected to return; so the lawyer waited. He saw a heavily-clasped,

soiled red book on the table, open at a page in which a name that the old lady had mentioned was several times repeated. Why, here was the most complete and certain corroboration of her story!—names, occurrences, and dates, all recorded minutely! The lawyer brightened up indeed, and waited for his client with the most lively anxiety.

The artist came at last, but he had a friend with him, and therefore the disclosure was delayed till Gerald initiated it by saying—

“Any good news? This gentleman—Mr. Richard Maldon—is a very intimate friend of mine, and therefore you can talk as though we were alone.”

“Mr. Richard Maldon!” said the lawyer, who, as a part of his professional duty liked to exhibit a knowledge of everything and everybody, “just come in for So-and-so? Sharp contest, sir, I believe? A client of mine was agent for the other side, for the

Whig party. They spent a good deal of money, I'm told."

Richard smiled to find himself so soon a public man.

"But, perhaps you'll excuse me,—there's a book going about with the same name on; everybody's reading it. Your book, sir?"

Richard nodded and smiled again.

"Allow me to congratulate you; I've not read the work myself; but from all I hear of it, and my wife's a great reader, it's no common production."

Richard made a very profound bow this time, and Gerald again asked—

"What news?"

"I may speak, I imagine, then, with perfect freedom before this gentleman? Well, in the first place, the woman advertised for has been in consultation with me, and her statements are most full and satisfactory. This book, too," continued the lawyer, pointing to the diary, "which I found open on your table, contains, as it seems to

me, the most perfect corroborative testimony to the truth of the woman's story."

"That book!" said Gerald, wonderingly.

"Yes, sir, that book. Turn to the page it opens so naturally at, and there, if I mistake not, you will find your own name and the names of your parents!"

Gerald turned to the book, and there he read once again a passage he had lately pored over with strange, clinging interest.

"Can this be true?" he said, looking up.
"Merciful Providence! can this be true!"

The lawyer allowed his client's agitation to wear away a little, and then handed him the rough notes of the nurse's disclosure.

"Those, I think," he said, "will convince you that this timely revelation *is* true. In substance, those notes contain the statement made by the person I have mentioned."

A moment's more reading, and Gerald started up, elated with a new and thankful

feeling. True, he was not a long-lost scion of some afflicted noble family; true, the Howards, Greys, Gowers and the rest would derive no immediate consolation from this sudden *éclaircissement*. But, at any rate, the mystery was solved; the cloud that hung about his origin was dispelled, and he was able to say that his father was, at least, a gentleman! To be able to say this was doubly delightful to him just now; for the only obstacle that seemed to stand between him and Blanche was the pride of family and the prejudice of gentle birth. That pride satisfied, and that prejudice removed, the way was clear to him, and the happy end of his pilgrimage approached!

The lawyer allowed him to indulge these thoughts for a time; but, to the professional mind, there was a much more important matter to be considered than the consummation of a mere romance. There was the substantial result to be looked to. Had Gerald turned out to be the rightful heir to

the premier earldom of England, and been on the very eve of leading the lovely and accomplished daughter of the premier duke to an altar presided over by a triad of high-church bishops, it would have signified nothing to the professional gentleman whose zeal had discovered the necessary facts, while the fief was unrecovered, and the dower of the duke's daughter not yet engrossed upon parchment. No; there was the grand feature of the business yet to be seized upon; and to this end, the lawyer put a few questions to his client.

“ You know the hand that wrote those words in the diary !”

“ I do.”

“ In what relation did the writer stand to the Captain Arthur Fitzgerald alluded to, do you think ?”

“ That of father-in-law,” said the artist, tremulously.

“ He was, I suppose, a man of property ? I am assuming him to be dead, you see.”

“ Yes, he was.”

“ And he made a will ?”

“ No ; he did not.”

“ Then who administered to his estate under the intestacy ?”

“ A cousin.”

“ Then, of course, that cousin stands in your shoes ?”

“ Yes.”

“ One of the clearest cases, to day,” said the lawyer, rising, “ that I ever recollect meeting ; and yet one of the darkest only yesterday ! We must prepare to eject the cousin. Let me congratulate you, sir, on your birth and fortune ! Bye-the-bye, can you give me any idea of the value of the inheritance ?”

Gerald could not : all he could say was that he believed its value to be very considerable. With this assurance, the lawyer, after going into some technical details, and obtaining some further information, left the studio, taking the diary with him.

“Gerald!” exclaimed Richard, seizing his friend by the hand, when they were alone. “Don’t think me worldly for what I say. But from the bottom of my heart, I rejoice at this change of name and parentage in one who will soon, I hope, be legally what he has so long been actually—my dearest brother! Talk, as we may, about the nobility of worth; and honour, as we do, the high eminence of genius or intellect; there yet are class distinctions too strongly rooted among us for that man to be thoroughly happy who by the accidents of fortune overleaps them! Therefore, Gerald, though our souls were brethren, and our hopes, I believe, centred in the same object, I am still thankful that things have changed, and that you can defy the world while conforming to its prejudices!”

It may seem childish of these two men, perhaps, but it is nevertheless true, that when this declaratory adhesion to the world’s philosophy had been uttered and accepted

they went to the studio, and selected one from the many pictures there. It was the painted dream; and, lifting it to the easel, Richard said, smiling, and yet with a constrained and doubtful expression,

“ It approaches realization, Gerald ? ”

A feeling as of church music stealing over the senses, came to the artist; and, taking his friend's hand, he succumbed to the gratitude at his heart, and welcomed his new happiness with tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE complex and somewhat extraordinary machinery by the aid of which in real life the rightful heir is enabled thoroughly to eject the wrongful heir, and to obtain complete restitution, is of so abstruse and wonderful a character that a mere story-teller may well pause before committing himself to its dangerous intricacies. A great romance-writer of our day tells us plainly in a preface that upon finding himself involved in similar legal intricacies, though his chart was correct, his compasses true enough, and his soundings taken with due regularity, he

was compelled by adverse winds to hail a pilot from the Middle Temple, and to ask his opinion while weathering the storm of forensic criticism. Another writer, great in his degree, and a lawyer to boot—with a legal library at his back, and the light of considerable professional experience about him—ventured boldly upon the bladders, and gave us distinct evidence that even he had gone somewhat beyond his depth.

A mere smatterer, then, in the language of Coke and Blackstone, may well hesitate before committing himself to so uncertain a course, and thus daring the maelström that, no doubt, yawns to receive him. Besides, it may be sufficient for ordinary purposes, to intimate that upon the troubled expanse of litigation Gerald was now fairly launched; that the writs were issued, the governor and company of the Bank of England were duly warned, the unnamed successors of John Doe and Richard Roe

were evoked; and the great cause was in the paper for trial.

The excitement, therefore, on the part of Isaacs and his client, was considerable. But while the lawyer was lively and eager in the business, the client was moody and somewhat slow. Instead of meeting the matter boldly, he pressed for delay; and when Isaacs came to consult with him upon it, he hung back, and but poorly seconded his adviser's zeal. For Isaacs was very zealous. He had never before been engaged upon such an important case; and he had never before, save in criminal matters, had a case that seemed so very likely to go against his employer. He was strongly fortified, however, by counsel's opinion; for, to the credit of counsel, be it said, they can mostly lay claim to that distinguished classical virtue which, *mutatis mutandis*, induces them to make no show of despair though every other atom in the legal world may cry out upon the instability of their

briefs. This is very high praise ; for if that man be worthy of immortality who is alone in maintaining the ultimate prosperity of his country when his country verges upon utter ruin,—what eulogium is too lofty for the learned gentleman who, knowing that his client has not a leg to stand upon, yet takes his fees and refreshers, and goes to court with all the sublime confidence of a conquering hero !

The counsel consulted by Isaacs and his client did this ; they met at each other's chambers, and advised, and wrote long opinions, and looked through a whole library of reports, and unearched a dreary list of wrong decisions, with which to alarm the presiding legal mind by the terrible bogie of precedent. One of the juniors—a very clever young man, who had eaten his terms with great *éclat*, and received a certificate that he had creditably passed a public examination—did this index-work with exemplary industry ; and the day before the

trial a most formidable array of wrong-headedness was prepared for the Bench's consideration.

Still the principal in the matter was scarcely so satisfied with the aspect of affairs as his legal advisers. He had not studied the law, and therefore the stimulus of wrong decisions was unknown to him. When, at the eleventh hour, Isaacs waited upon him, the lawyer found the house in disorder, and saw unmistakable signs that something extraordinary was in progress.

"What's the matter?" he asked, "Are you going to move? Whose trunks are those in the passage?"

"Mine!" replied the client. "This business is killing me. I'm going to leave it to you, and take a little country air till it's decided."

"The deuce you are!" said Isaacs.

"Yes," returned the unwilling litigant, "It can serve no purpose my staying

here, and I shall make you my plenipotentiary."

"Thank you," said the lawyer, "But I'd rather not. I want a full purse as well as full powers."

"Well," replied the client, outwardly calm, "and havn't I given you a full purse? Didn't you have a cheque only the other day, and another a day or two before?—and, in fact, haven't I been doing little else but drawing cheques since the business commenced?"

"What of that!" said the lawyer, "of course you have. Isn't the whole affair a matter of drawing cheques? You'd better draw cheques to-day, than have none to draw, or nothing to draw upon, to-morrow."

"And then," continued the client, still calm on the surface, "you forget that you had a thousand pounds of me when we thought all was safe. You forget that, Isaacs!"

"No, I don't," returned the little man.

“And if I did, you’d soon make me recollect it again, always harping on it as you are! But I tell you what!—money I must have now, and I don’t at all like the look of your proceedings.”

“Don’t you?” said the client, smiling, but nervously setting his teeth together. “Well, I’m sorry for that. What do you want money for?”

“Why, for counsel, to be sure! Havn’t we got to shake the testimony of that old nurse? Havn’t we got to prove that she’s committed perjury, or been in prison, or lost her character somehow? If we can’t do that, the case is over; and I know no man who can do it so well as——”

“I tell you what, Isaacs,” interrupted the client, “we’ve counsel enough. You know as well as I do that too many cooks, etc., etc., and it seems to me that we’ve spent a fortune on counsel already. Besides, there’s no time for any new men. Isaacs, my little friend, this is an invention of yours!

However, as I'm going away for a time, and I leave you in my place,—there, there's a fifty pound note for you. You can go on with that, I suppose?"

Isaacs took the note and looked at it depreciatingly.

"What's this?" he said. "What's fifty pounds when we're just in the very thick of the business? Make it ten fifties, and I'll say something to it."

"Isaacs," returned the client, still maintaining his outward calmness, "put that note in your pocket. I advise you seriously to do so; because if you don't, I shall take the note back again."

"Will you!" said the lawyer. "And what then?—who'll go on with the case?"

"That I can't tell you; but, at any rate, you do as I tell you."

The little lawyer grew wroth. He was puzzled by his client's coolness.

"I tell *you* what, now," he said, "it occurs to me that you are not acting quite

plain and straightforward; that you're up to something!"

The client smiled faintly. "What may that be?" he asked.

"Why, it's my opinion you're going to make a bolt of it, and that a good deal of money's gone before you!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, 'indeed,' Mr. Coolness!—'indeed!' I've had my suspicions a long time; I've not slept with my eyes shut always; and I believe that you've been realizing pretty fast lately!"

"Isaacs," said the client, "don't provoke me!—you know my temper!"

"Oh, a fig for your temper! Other people have got tempers as well as you! I've got a t-t-emper, and I've as much right t-t-o use it as y-y-ou have!"

"Isaacs," exclaimed the client, menacingly, "leave this house!"

"I shan't!" replied the little lawyer. "I

shan't stir a step till you give me some more money."

The client rose, and walked gently towards his legal adviser, who retreated into a corner, and seizing a chair, held it before him, and continued his remarks across it:

"It's my opinion, as I said just now, that you're up to something, and that you're not acting fair. What do you want with all those things in the passage?—what do you want to go away for just as the trial's coming on?"

Isaacs dodged about, always keeping the chair before him, as he spoke, and holding his client so far at bay. But in an unlucky moment, he put the leg of the chair through the glass window of a bookcase, and, confused by the smash and the clatter about him, he lost his guard and his client had him by the shoulder. But the little lawyer was game to the last. Still clinging to the chair, and rattling it about his client's toes, he continued his objurgations:

“ And it’s my opinion that you’re a rogue, a s-s-windler, sir, and that you’re going to f-f-ly in the face of the l-l-aw, sir ! There’s nobody to hear me—there’s no witnesses—and it aint actionable ; and I tell it you to your f-f-ace, sir ! ”

“ Do you,” said the client, wrenching the chair from his legal adviser,—“ do you ? Then I shake you thus, and thus, and thus, for telling me so. There’s no one to see me—there’s no witnesses, and it aint actionable ! ” And he shook his lawyer to and fro, till the little man had not even breath enough to stammer with.

These friendly contests, however, mostly have ludicrous ends ; and so it happened now ; for when Isaacs was trying most vigorously to free himself from his client’s grasp, and the client was most pertinaciously keeping his hold, the little lawyer’s coat gave way, and both men lost their balance, and came to the ground.

Then, picking themselves up to a sitting posture, they sat and looked at each other.

“ Isaacs,” said the client, “ all this is very foolish : ‘ it aint actionable,’ you know ! Couldn’t we do much better by being civil to one another ?”

“ I don’t know,” replied Isaacs, sulkily, and looking at his bare shirt-sleeve.

“ Don’t you ?” continued the client, picking up the dismembered half of his lawyer’s garment, and holding it out for inspection. “ Well, look here : you see what happens when we pull different ways ?”

Isaacs looked gloomily at the coat, and, with a grim smile, nodded assent.

“ But if we pull together, there’s no harm done, eh ? —the coat remains whole ?”

Isaacs nodded again—scarcely able, though smarting with injuries, to refrain from expressing his sense of the ludicrous.

“ Very well, then,” continued the client, smirking much in the same way as his legal adviser. “ Suppose we do pull together ?”

He offered the little lawyer his hand, and, with a gentle tug, brought him to his feet.

“Now,” he said, “just wait here while I go and get you another coat, and then we’ll see if things can be settled amicably.”

During the early part of this conversation, Isaacs had noticed with very great curiosity, that a cash-box—the key most invitingly in the lock—stood on the sideboard. He connected the appearance of that cash-box with the trunks in the hall, the intended journey for fresh air, and, indeed, with all the evidences of flight about his client.

“Ah!” he cried, recollecting his old criminal experiences,—“that’s the swag, I’ll be bound!”

He crept softly to the sideboard and put his hand on the key. He listened a moment, and then turned the key gently. He listened again, and then lifted the lid of the box. He was prepared to see money,

but not to see it in such large quantities, and in such strange forms.

“ Foreign notes !” he exclaimed, turning over the contents of the box,—“ In regular bundles, too ! Foreign bullion, by the handful ! Only a mere trifle of English money ! Pretty, this ! Oh ! oh !—I see the game now ! My gentleman’s off altogether ! Well, I guessed it !”

He lingered over the box, looking fondly at its crisp and glittering contents, and enjoying the sweet sorrow of a long farewell. But this lingering made him even more loath to consummate the parting ; and he meditated. Where, he thought, would be the harm of taking a bundle or two of those notes, and, in the character of stakeholder, detaining them till the legal combat should be decided one way or the other ? If he could only get out of the house, all would be safe ; his client would scarcely dare to expose the felony. Besides, such a course was in the interests of justice,

and therefore no felony at all! This thought determined him. He cleared the box of its valuable bundles, closed the lid, turned the key, and took his seat again.

The client was so quick upon him after this, that for a moment Isaacs thought he had been discovered, and the thought made him tremble a little and turn a little pale. The client, however, though his eye glanced once at the box, betrayed no knowledge of what had happened, but held up a coat he had with him for his lawyer's approbation.

"This do?" he said. "A little too long everywhere, perhaps; but that's a good fault. Besides, the coat's a capital one—called by a French name, made by a tailor who sits in the House of Commons,—registered, patented, puffed, and all the rest of it! Now, this arm first, Isaacs. Ah! that's it! Capital!—fits you like a shirt! Well, they call it a *sac*, you know. Tuck up the cuffs. And now to business."

This light and airy conversation was so

unusual with the client, and so foreign to his habit, that it disturbed Isaacs, and made him wonder. Could he have seen ——? Oh no; he came in properly enough! Still the little lawyer was made uncomfortable when he observed that the key-hole—a large one—was exactly opposite the side-board on which stood the cash-box!

“Now to business,” said the client, smiling cruelly,—“you say you want some more money, do you?”

Isaacs was so terribly agitated by fear, that he had not a word in his mouth. He could only nod, and use gutturals.

“Money!—ah, money!” continued the client, appearing to moralise. “What is it they say money’s the root of, Isaacs?”

“Hall Hevil!” returned the lawyer, who was only enabled to speak by using strong spasmodic aspirates—so terribly was he suffering from fear of discovery.

“Yes, all evil—all evil!” continued the client, slowly. “So it is—so it is. Well,

Isaacs, it's some of this terrible root you want, is it? How much did you say?—Ten fifties?"

"Y.—y—es!" replied the trembling lawyer.

"Why, Isaacs!—how you tremble!" said the client. "You don't find the coat damp, do you? However, just reach me that cash-box: it's nearest you."

Isaacs was obliged to find his tongue now.

"I w—w—on't press the matter," he said, "I'll see w—w—hat can be done without it. Another t—t—ime."

"Oh no, no!" replied the client. "I'm going on a journey, you know, Isaacs—a long journey. Indeed, there's no telling when I shall be back. Give me the box."

The little lawyer mechanically put his hand out to reach the cash-box; but for the life of him he couldn't touch it. So, rising, and taking his hat suddenly, he made an attempt to escape.

"Stay!" said the client, seizing him once

more by the shoulder. "Don't go without your deserts, my little man! You sit there, while I open the box, and see what I can do for you."

He forced Isaacs to a chair; and then, unlocking the cash-box, and lifting the lid, saw only the foreign bullion.

"How's this?" he exclaimed. "Why, Isaacs!—I've no money! This box was full of notes just now: I leave the room, with you in it; and when I return,—hey, presto!—the box is empty! Explain, Isaacs, explain."

In a frantic attempt to escape, Isaacs made a bound to the door, and even got into the passage. But there he was caught. His captor, however, was not needlessly rough with him; but grasping his collar firmly, and pushing him on before, made him descend the stairs; saying, as he did so—

"We must go to the wine cellar, Isaacs. It's a capital cellar—runs under two adjoin-

ing houses ; and you may as well be there as in the House of Detention, you know."

They reached the cellar, the door of which happened to be open ; and there the client fixed his lawyer against a bin, and emptied his pockets, till he came to the bundles of foreign notes. Then, pushing him further into the darkness, he took some stout cord and tied him securely to a rack.

"Now, mind," he said, when he left the terrified little man,—“I shall send to you in exactly two hours. But if I hear your voice, I shall make it four.”

He then left the cellar, locked the door, went back to the dining-room, returned the notes to the cash-box, and put the cash-box in a trunk ; and, a moment after, a servant who had been sent out some time previously, came back with a cab

“Put those trunks on the cab,—no, not this one—this must go inside!” he said, directing the man, “and here,—take this key: it’s the key of the wine cellar. In

exactly two hours from this time — it's now ten minutes to four—go to the cellar, open the door, and bring up the last bottle you'll find in the further port bin. Put it on my table. In two hours, mind; not before."

And the client stepped into the cab, and drove off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXACTLY two hours after the strange elopement described in the last chapter, and while the client and the cash-box were being tenderly transmitted from a railway terminus to a channel packet, the servant who had such strict instructions about the bottle of wine, took a decanter and the key handed to him by his master, and went down leisurely to the cellar. By an odd coincidence, all his kitchen companions were out making holiday, and, therefore the lower part of the house was silent and deserted. But as the man approached the cellar, he

fancied he heard a voice, though a muffled one; and when he put his ear to the key-hole of the cellar door, he distinctly heard this voice saying,

“ Here, help, hullo!—Let me out!
Mur—de—r—r!”

The servant very naturally started back; and not being of a courageous disposition, retreated hastily up-stairs, to inform the ladies of the family that there was a man being murdered in the cellar!

He found them in some little excitement, too; for, since Rosa's flight and her enforced return, they had been forbidden to associate with her; and, therefore they had to exercise their playful tricks upon each other. Upon this occasion, they were gasping for breath, after a severe struggle, in which Hannah had secured a small bunch of her sister's hair, and Judith had carried away the whole of Hannah's head-dress. The quarrel, as appeared from their spasmodic recriminations, had its basis in a back-comb,

belonging to one and wilfully stamped upon and broken up by the other.

“ You little vixen !” cried Judith.

“ You great coward !” retorted Hannah.

“ If you please, miss,” said the servant, “ there’s a man crying ‘ murder’ in the cellar !”

The young ladies forget their own private griefs, and, approaching the man, said with startling accord,—

“ What ?”

“ A man crying ‘ murder’ in the cellar, miss ?”

“ Murder in the cellar !” repeated Judith. “ And where’s your master ?”

“ Gone out, miss.”

“ When will he be back ?”

“ I don’t know, miss.”

Hannah came creeping up to Judith, and Judith clung to Hannah now. The girls were terribly alarmed, and each looked to the other for counsel.

“ Go,” they said, presently—“ go to your

mistress. You'll find her in her bedroom." And directly the man had gone, they locked themselves in, opened the front window, and cried "murder!" so loud that the whole square was startled.

In the meantime, the man went to his little mistress, whom he found, feeble and ill, and reclining uneasily in a large bedroom chair from which she was seldom absent. She was like wax-work, indeed, now; for the little colour she once had, had departed, and in its place was that sallow, unhealthy tinge which those who mimic the human form divine in plastic materials, most commonly give to it. Her strength, too—never more than a child's—was quite gone, and her voice was thin and tremulous. She turned slightly when, after some little prelude, the man entered; and when, in all the plenitude of his fears, he burst out with his startling information, she uttered a low, timid, cry, and fainted!

What was the man to do? With his

young misses screaming from the window beneath, and with his little mistress fainting in the chamber above, there seemed nothing about him but bewilderment. So, by way of relieving himself, he ran up to the next floor, threw open the window, and echoed the cries of the young ladies below him.

Of course a crowd soon congregated about the house; and, at length, when he had done chasing a little boy with a hoop, and warning from the kerbstone a miserable man who persisted in wheezing out a popular melody, a policeman came leisurely up, and brought his official authority to bear upon the strange uproar. Seeing him on the step, and hearing him knock at the door, the servant took courage, and descended from his eminence.

“Now,” said the constable, entering the hall, “what’s all this? Who’s being murdered?”

With much mystery, and walking on tip-toe, the servant led the officer down stairs;

and then, giving him the key, and pointing to the wine-cellar, said, with a ghastly expression, and in a tragic tone,—

“ There !”

“ Here—help—hullo!—Let me out!—Mur—der—r—r!” cried the voice inside.

The policeman opened the door ; and the first words he heard were,—

“ Oh, you villain!—Oh, you murderous villain!—You want to kill me !”

“ Hush !” said the policeman, closing the door again, and turning to the servant. “ Get a light ! There’s two of ’em !”

The light was produced, and then the constable, taking his truncheon from under the tails of his coat, entered the cellar. He was surprised to see only a little man, with an impure edge of foam gathered about the corners of his mouth, biting at a cord that held him by the left arm.

Directly Isaacs saw who his visitor was, he drew back sulkily. He thought the man had come to take him for the felony. But

in a moment, his legal cunning returned, and he recollected that his client had carried away the evidence against him.

“Cut this cord, policeman,” he said. “And just please to recollect the position you find me in. Please to recollect that!—and mind, *I'm* the injured party.”

The constable quickly released him; and then, when he saw only the wondering servant staring at him, and was asked by the officer “how all this came about?” he guessed the exact circumstances, and said, turning to the domestic,—

“Where’s your master?”

“Oh!” replied the man, “he left the house two hours ago!”

“Two hours ago?” repeated Isaacs.

“Yes, sir.”

“Just as I thought! Policeman, there’s my card. You know me, of course?—and this man knows me. And now oblige me by calling a cab.”

The constable declined to leave the

lawyer, however, under such mysterious circumstances; and so, after a time, the cab was brought by the servant, and while Judith and Hannah were looking on from the first floor landing-place, and their little mother-in-law was listening affrighted in her chamber, Isaacs was borne away to the police-station.

After a time, the two young ladies found curiosity and courage enough to call the servant.

“What was it?” asked Judith.

“Mr. Isaacs—master’s lawyer—locked in the wine cellar, miss!”

“Who locked him there?”

“Don’t know, miss, unless it was master?”

“Well, keep by us!” said Judith. And with the man by their side, the two young ladies explored the dining-room, saw the torn coat, the broken glass, and the other evidences of confusion, and, at length, instinctively went to their father’s bedroom.

A letter on the dressing-table at once

attracted Judith, and she opened it. It was addressed to her, and enclosed a bank-note for fifty pounds.

“DEAR JUDE — (it said) — Don’t be
“alarmed if you should not see me for a
“short time. I’m going out of town. At-
“tend to the housekeeping; and if Isaacs
“calls, just say I’m out—nothing more.
“You will probably hear from me in a day
“or two. Good bye. Show this to Hannah,
“and kiss her for me. Say nothing about
“it to your mother.”

Judith folded the fifty pound note, and put it carefully in her purse. Then she dismissed the servant, and went up stairs to take counsel with her sister. Presently the entire staff of domestics returned; one of them—the housemaid — being most affectionately escorted, even to the door in the area, by a tall lifeguardsman; and another—the cook—receiving similar gallantries from a corporal of infantry. Of course, the servants sat up rather late, canvassing the

strange adventures of the day ; but, at last, tired nature's sweet restorer came upon the whole household, and the day's wonder was, for the time, forgotten.

But with the morning came Isaacs, accompanied by a peace-officer.

“ Your master returned ? ” he said.

“ No, ” replied the servant, who opened the door to him.

“ Right again ! ” said Isaacs. “ Just as I thought ! Well, send your mistress down. ”

“ Which ? ” asked the man.

“ Oh, the factotum ! ”

The servant stared ; but he thought Miss Judith might do for the strange thing ; so he went away—presently returning with that young lady.

“ Good morning ! ” said Isaacs. “ Father at home, miss ? ”

“ No, ” replied Judith, agreeably to instructions. “ He's gone out. ”

“Gone out!” repeated the little lawyer.

“Run away, you mean!”

“Sir!” exclaimed Judith.

“Miss!” replied Isaacs.

A dreadful suspicion now came across the eldest daughter. Her father *might* have run away!

“I may as well tell you,” said the lawyer, pleasantly, and delighted with an opportunity for making the sins of the father descend upon the children—“that you’re as good as orphans! You’ve no parent now but your mother-in-law; for your father’s no more than a dead man to this country; and no better than a felon if we can catch him in any other!”

Hannah came forward at the moment; and the two girls—subdued by affliction—clung to one another, and mingled their misery. Isaacs, however, disregarded their tears, and their sad, broken words. Looking upon them with satisfied calmness, he continued his observations:

“At this moment,” he said, “there’s a trial going on — or rather there’s a case being stated *ex parte*, for I’ve told counsel to throw up their briefs—which will turn you and all that belong to you out of this house! I’m not joking, young ladies. When the court rises to-day, you’ll be beggared and homeless!”

He turned on his heel as he said this; and, with his companion, departed.

The two girls, crying bitterly, and scarcely able to comprehend their situation, went up to their little mother-in-law. They found her in bed, weeping, like themselves, but from another cause.

“Jude!” she said, faintly, when they disturbed her. “What is it? Don’t touch me; I’m dying! Where’s your father?”

“Gone away!—left us!” cried Judith.

“Gone away?” repeated Rosa, rising feebly from her pillow. “But he’ll come back?”

“No,” replied Judith.

“Then send”—said Rosa, faintly—“send for Mrs. Grey. On the table, there, in that—that—letter—you’ll find her address. Will you, Jude?”

Mechanically the girl obeyed; and, soon after, a servant was despatched to the humble home in the quiet street.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Isaacs left the house of his client, after his interview with the two young ladies, he went direct to Westminster Hall, in a somewhat close chamber of which a venerable law lord was listening to an elaborate statement of facts from the mouth of a leading common-law counsel. The statement being over, one of the chief witnesses—an old lady in faded bombazine—was confronted with the jury. She gave her evidence with tolerable precision, whipped up and checked here and there, as she was, by the learned gentleman who examined her.

Still her style of testimony was not altogether free from the ludicrous ; and as the venerable lord on the Bench liked to have his joke—and, bad or good, would have it—the court was, what with the chief justice and the old woman, convulsed every few minutes or so with merriment.

“ You took,” said his lordship, interrupting the old lady, “ you took the child to those people, your fellow witnesses, the Greys ; it was a *male* child ? ”

The old lady nodded.

“ And they,” continued his lordship, looking at the assembled bar,—“ and they acted *MALA fides* with it ? ”

The court roared.

To understand why the court did this, it may be useful to know that a joke in a court of justice is a very different thing to a joke anywhere else. Its current value depends greatly upon the utterer, and has little to do with its own intrinsic merit. Thus, if we apply to the appraisalment of

legal jokes the system by which we get at the results of competitive examination, we may put against the joke of a chief justice say 1,000 marks; against that of a proximate lord chancellor, 750; against that of a probable attorney-general, 500; solicitor-general, 450; and to the jokes of silk gownsmen we may safely assign 300. A junior never jokes in court. If he did, it would be thought unprofessional and indecent.

In spite of humourous interruptions, however, the old lady continued her evidence unruffled; and when, without being cross-examined, she was permitted to retire, mysterious whispers passed between the leading counsel. These whispers prevailed for some time; the two juniors on each side were called to join in them; and at last the six wigs all nodded in unison together. Then a little note on large paper was penned by the leader on Gerald's side, and being signed by him, was passed to the

leader on the other side, who, after perusing it, appended his signature, and handed it to the juniors for their signatures. At length, the completed instrument was sent to the chief justice, who looked at it, and dropped it down to his chief clerk. All this being done, the jury were informed from the bench that the case was at an end, and it became understood that Gerald had a verdict.

“ My dear sir ! ” said Isaacs, coming up to the artist, as he left the court, “ this speedy termination to affairs is my doing. I found that my client was playing foul, and I at once, in the interests of justice, washed my hands of him ! ”

Gerald stared at the man, and scarcely knew what to reply. The little lawyer saw this, and continued :

“ If I can be of any service to you, in arranging matters, or in setting the somewhat confused state of things right, I shall be glad to do it. You'll find everything at

sixes and sevens, sir. Your sister, too, if I mistake not——”

“ Sister !” said Gerald, startled at first by the strangeness of the fact.

“ Yes, sir ; the wife of the man who was once my client, but who is now, or shortly will be, a felon and an outlaw,—that lady is, I believe, sadly in want of friends and consolation.”

Gerald’s antipathy to the man vanished now.

“ Has her husband, then, left her ?” he asked.

“ He has ; and it seems to me extremely unlikely that he’ll ever come back. If I might advise, I should say—go to the house at once. You’ll find her there !”

Gerald, thinking nothing of his legal right, did as Isaacs advised, and accompanied by the little lawyer—who seemed intensely delighted with the new business, and who yet saw money to be made at it—again passed the familiar threshold. Of

course, the first obstacles in his path were the weeping daughters of the late proprietor. He was polite to them—too polite, Isaacs thought ; so he put in a word by way of moderation :

“ Begin, sir, as you’ll have to go on ! You’ll find those girls regular harpies if you encourage ’em. They’re only left here as spies !”

Gerald took no notice of Isaacs, but enquired for Rosa ; and, following the weeping girls, was shown to the patient’s bed-chamber. Judith entered the room, and, after a time, returned and said that the visitor might follow her. Gerald, taking advantage of the permission, went slowly into the invalid’s chamber, and was surprised, indeed, to see Mrs. Grey—who had but an hour ago left the court with her self-accusing and dejected husband—bending over the poor little wife, drying her tears, and doing other little acts of loving kindness

He approached the bed softly, and taking Rosa's thin, colourless hand, pressed it to his lips, and said—

“ Sister !”

“ Sister !” cried the little wife, starting up,—“ Sister !”

“ Yes, Rosa,” said Gerald, leaning down, and kissing her cheek,—“ in tracing your history, I have learnt my own. We are brother and sister !”

More tears, more overflowing feelings of gratitude, more silent but sincere thanksgivings, and then the simple scene came to an end.

“ You'll not leave me, Gerald ?” said Rosa. “ I can live, perhaps, now, with you for my brother ? You won't leave me—will you ? You can keep me from—from him now, can't you ?”

“ Don't fear, sister !” replied Gerald, “ depend upon it, I will protect you !”

* * * *

In less than a week from this promise,

Rosa was settled in the humble home again, where, under the motherly and loving eye of Mrs. Grey, she regained the little strength and the delicate health that were natural to her. And yet the house was not what it used to be. Something that would never return to it had departed; and a solemn and subdued tone had supplied its old air of cheerfulness. That venerable lord who sat on the bench in the court of justice—forgetting, for the moment, to be funny, and taking a very proper opportunity to utter those extra-judicial sentiments and little pieces of didactic clap-trap for which he was famous—had cut Mr. Grey to the soul by reading him a severe lecture upon moral honesty, and by telling him in the end that he had only just escaped being a convicted criminal! These words, referring to a deed done some twenty years ago, and coming so heavily from the bench, went home truly enough; and morning, noon, or night, Mr. Grey never forgot them!

Sad and subdued thus, the humble home is one day disturbed by a visitor. A tall, gaunt, figure, in a stained scarlet coat peeping from beneath a dingy grey wrapper ; a red handkerchief about its neck, and a forage-cap on its head ; walks lamely into the parlour. The figure is Tom Jackson, fresh from a military hospital in Turkey.

“ Ah ! Mister Grey ! ” he says. “ How d’ye do ? ” And then, seeing Rosa, he seizes upon her, and attempts to bring his haggard face to bear upon her pallid cheek.

She puts her hands up, pushes him away in terror, and retreats to a corner of the room. He sits down, flings off his outer garment, and the three spectators utter a cry of alarm !

“ Why, why, Tom, ” says Mr. Grey. “ You’ve got nothing in your left sleeve ! ”

“ Yes I have, ” replies Tom.

“ You have, my boy ?—Well, but what is it ? ”

“ Glory ! They told me—at least a kind

gentleman did in the hospital—that it was full o' glory!"

"Full of glory!" repeated Mr. Grey, simply. "What did they mean, Tom?—How could it be full of glory?"

"'Cause it's empty o' anythin' else, I spose!" said Tom.

A general shuddering afflicts Tom's listeners, and they are so silent and cold, and Rosa falls so far back into obscurity, that the poor fellow is scarcely satisfied with his reception. It was an idea of his—one he had had drummed into him by wiser men than himself—that an arm lost in the service of his country made him gracious in his country's eye, and gave him claims to his country's admiration. He had been told this over and over again, in books, and newspapers, and from platforms, and by legislative assemblies; and so deeply was the idea impressed upon him that had he returned to England—as some brave fellows have done—without a limb to his body, he would

have esteemed himself fortunate in having such superabundant claims to the affectionate admiration of his countrymen. This was his mistake. He should have known that—unless under peculiar conditions—we honour mutilated humanity in the abstract rather than in the flesh ; that the means by which it came about are glorious in our eyes, but that the end is miserable and mostly kept at a distance. When we meet it in the public ways, we shudder surely enough, but scarcely admire ; and when we provide permanently for it, we do so in a hospital, or compound with our consciences by giving it something like sixpence per day per limb. Tom did not know this ; and therefore, he imagined that by leaving his arm in the Crimea, he had doubled his natural favours, and rendered himself irresistible in the eyes of her he most desired to captivate.

But this flattering piece of imagination is soon destroyed. He sees that Rosa shudders and shrinks from him, that even

the strong nerves of Mr. Grey are a little shaken by his appearance; and when he looks at Mrs. Grey, he observes that her face wears a painful, pitying expression, and that she thinks him injured rather than advantaged. Even when he offers to tell them all about his arm, to uncover the terrible mystery, and to illustrate his remarks by actual reference to it, they say "Oh no!—don't Tom!" and join in lively entreaties to him to keep his arm covered. So he draws the grey cloak about him, and, with a heavy sigh, sinks into despondency.

"You soon left India," says Mr. Grey, thinking to enliven him. "You didn't see much of it, I 'spose?"

"No," replies Tom, "I didn't see much more nor Kurrakee."

"And what did you see in the Crimea?"

"Not much. I wor wounded soon, you see."

"Yes, you were wounded soon, Tom. But you saw some battles?"

“ No ; I didn't see no battles. I see some skirmishes.”

“ And you were in one, I suppose ?”

“ Yes, I wor in one, when that there arm——”

“ Yes,” replies Mr. Grey, hastily. “ Yes, when you lost your arm, Tom. But what else did you see ?”

“ The hospital !” I see plenty there.”

“ Ah, yes ; but you bore your sufferings like a man, Tom ?”

“ Yes, I bore my sufferins like a man. But them there doctors, they cut and sawed——”

“ Ah, yes, just so,” interrupts Mrs. Grey, nipping Tom in the very bud of revelation, —“ the doctors are very clever.”

“ No they aint !” said Tom, “ They let me bleed——”

“ Tom !” says Mr. Grey, interrupting again. “ Never mind that ! Rosa's not very well, you know ; and she's delicate, and

may not like to hear what the doctors did to you."

Tom is now completely cast down. His hospital experiences are the most vivid of his recollections, and upon them he is even prepared to be eloquent. The object, however, of his visit is yet untouched, and for that he musters all his courage.

"I've something to say—to—to Rosa there," he gasps out,—“if you'll leave us alone!"

"Leave you alone, Tom?"

"Yes. What I've got to say I can't say afore you: it aint proper!"

Mr. Grey and his wife wonder what Tom can have to say to Rosa that is improper; and they smile faintly at him, and tell him he's joking.

"No I aint jokin'!" he replies. "I couldn't joke about what I've got to say; and if you don't leave us alone, I'll say it afore you!"

Rosa makes a quiet attempt to escape from the room ; but Tom, clutching her with his one hand, holds her back and compels her to listen :

“ When I give you that there work-box,” he says, “ you recollect what I told you—that I wanted somebody to think on, and that you’d do to think on, if you’d think o’ me? You recollect that? Well, I did think o’ you ; I never forgot you ; and when I was knocked down, and tramped over and heard nothin’ but the roarin’ o’ guns and the cries o’ them that fell about me, I didn’t mind, and didn’t think o’ anythin’ but you !—because, thinks I, there’s that little gal ’ll love——”

Rosa breaks away now, and Mr. Grey interferes.

“ Tom, my boy,” he says, “ You don’t know what you’re doing !—You mustn’t love Rosa, and Rosa can never love you. She can never love anyone else either ; and she’ll never, never, marry !”

Tom starts, draws the grey sleeve across his eyes, seizes his cap, and, with such a cry of agony as the battle-field could never draw from him, departs.

CHAPTER XX.

HAPPINESS for good, misery for evil: the old story of story-books; and where's the folly of another example? If in life it is not always so, it should be so; and it were sad, indeed, to preach a lower doctrine.

There is a justice called poetical, as being more often done in books than out of them, and being more complete, perhaps, in poetry than prose; for poets have privileges of paradise, or may set up their puppet-shows on the shores of burning marl. Southey may take a king clumsily to heaven, much as he might convoy a dull boy to the gallery

of a theatre; and Dante may take himself to the other place, and find his own Beatrice there. This is poetical justice with which prose must not meddle; and it gives us some clue to the reason why a mere story comes naturally to an end when the good people in it marry and begin to live happily. The novelist might go on with them till they were grey-headed; but then ——! So, to avoid a consummation which can never be less than melancholy, he leaves them when they enter their heaven on earth, or traverses that region with them only so far as to satisfy himself that their line of heroism is likely to be perpetuated.

It must be so now. About eighteen months from a certain day on which Lord Dalton, passing through the village adjacent to Maldon Priory, heard church-bells ringing, saw carriages rolling about, and put to himself the question—"Why do the villagers fuddle themselves?"—Blanche and Gerald are leaning over a pink and white

mystery, fretting uneasily in a sea of snowy cradle furniture. At the moment, the physician—who but Mr. Howard?—enters and takes his seat officially by the object of devotion. He puts his little finger gently in Baby's mouth, and Baby seizes upon it savagely.

“ Ah ! ” says the physician, withdrawing his finger hastily—“ it's through ! ”

“ Through the finger ? ” asks the artist.”

“ No ; the gum,” replies the physician.

Then they all stoop to look at the new tooth—Blanche, of course, on her knees. Around that little struggling ivory they gather as might three diggers, who had come upon a nugget cropping through the quartz ! The Baby resents their marked attention ; and Blanche, taking it to her bosom, stills its infantile alarms. Then the physician goes away to his patients, the father to his studio, and the Baby sleeps. The mother is again on her knees by the cradle, watching the little face, kissing it,

and thinking what great ties God has given her! And presently comes Richard Maldon, with a paper in his hand—a paper in which, not without pride, he finds his own maiden speech to the legislative assembly.

“Here’s a curious case here!” he says, pointing to a criminal report. “Some one we know, I think?”

To understand this report, it will be necessary to refer to the recent career of Mr. Tympan, who is the life and soul of it. Here he is, then, in a dingy piece of ground, surrounded by a low, ancient wall, and overlooked by a dull gaol-like house, against the entrance to which are stuck up various painted boards and printed notices interesting to the poor and to charitable persons who take parish apprentices. Mr. Tympan’s hat is napless and low-crowned; his coat coarse and grey in colour; his trowsers of corduroy, and his shoes large, low, and flat. He is just going up to the master to complain of his soup.

“ Tympan again !” says the master, “ that incorrigible pauper, Tympan ! Take the soup back ! Tell him it’s thicker, fatter, and altogether better than he deserves ! Tell him it was tasted only yesterday by the Board, and that *their* stomachs were satisfied with it !”

The master has cause to be angry with Mr. Tympan, and to regulate his taste by other men’s stomachs ; for Mr. Tympan is incorrigible indeed ! He it is who maintains that the beef is not beef, that the bread is not bread ; in fact, that whatever his parish gives him is not what it should be. He it is who makes public the secrets of the casual ward, and even lets in light upon the corpse-swopping in the dead-house ! He it is who scrapes the verdigris from the pump, makes pills of it, and swallows them, that he may fare sumptuously in the sick ward. He is never so well off, he says, as when he is treated for being ill. And with all this, he clings to the place, and main-

tains that an Englishman's house—even his workhouse—is his castle, and that though he may be stuffed with queer things there, who shall hurl him from its battlements!

Returning with the unrectified soup, he meets a fellow-pauper—a thin, bald-headed, bent old man, walking with a stick, and stopping at every step or so to cough.

“ Ah, Grey!” cries Mr. Tympan. “ You out? What do *you* think of the soup?”

Uncle William's cough hinders him from replying for a time, during which Mr. Tympan wilfully spills his soup on the ground, and declares that he can see the stones through it as it falls!

“ If,” he says, thoughtfully, “ if the old body-snatcher there was to take and boil down the clk in the British Museum, this would be the result. It's disgraceful! And I've paid rates and taxes in this parish for five-and-twenty years!”

“ Come here,” says Uncle William, feebly. Mr. Tympan advances a step.

“ Closer.”

Mr. Tympan advances a step farther ; and then the feeble man thrusts out his palsied hand, and grasps his old enemy by the throat.

“ You ruined me!—you made me a vagabond ! You—you—you——”

A fit of coughing seizes him, and his hold relaxes. Mr. Tympan shakes him off, and he falls to the ground.

From his observatory the master sees all this ; and the occasion strikes him as being a capital one for punishing the incorrigible pauper, Tympan. As William is taken back at once to the infirmary, and soon dies there, the case against the incorrigible pauper assumes grave dimensions ; and so, by a kind of left-handed justice, he spends some of the latter days of his life in the House of Correction, where—practising on the pump as usual—his name becomes famous, and Richard shows it to Gerald in the newspaper.

“ Lord Dalton, too,” he says, “ has just

married again. My brother's old friends"—he utters this in a whisper—"turned out badly, indeed! They were mere adventurers,—of neither family nor reputation. Marie was married years before Sir Roger met her; and to a brother of Count Kreutzer!—Only think of that. The poor fellow became a lunatic, and was closely confined by them at last! When Lord Dalton heard this, of course he was free."

* * * *

If, in a panoramic way, we pass in review some other characters of this story, they appear thus. Sir Roger Maldon conquers his distaste for his wife's singing, and even encourages a choral society, that, inspired by her who was once Vermicelli, starts up in the village, and threatens to ruin the select Harmonic Meeting at the public house. Lady Maldon goes so far as to call for a serenade when she wants a lullaby. The Jacksons bring up their

younger branches in pastoral prosperity, and Tom takes to his one arm a wife who loves him and looks upon him as a hero. The Greys find consolation in having Rosa permanently settled with them; and the two young ladies who were once Rosa's torment, flourish as milliners till they lose a little of their acerbity as married women. But here the canvass is rolled out, and the curtain must drop.

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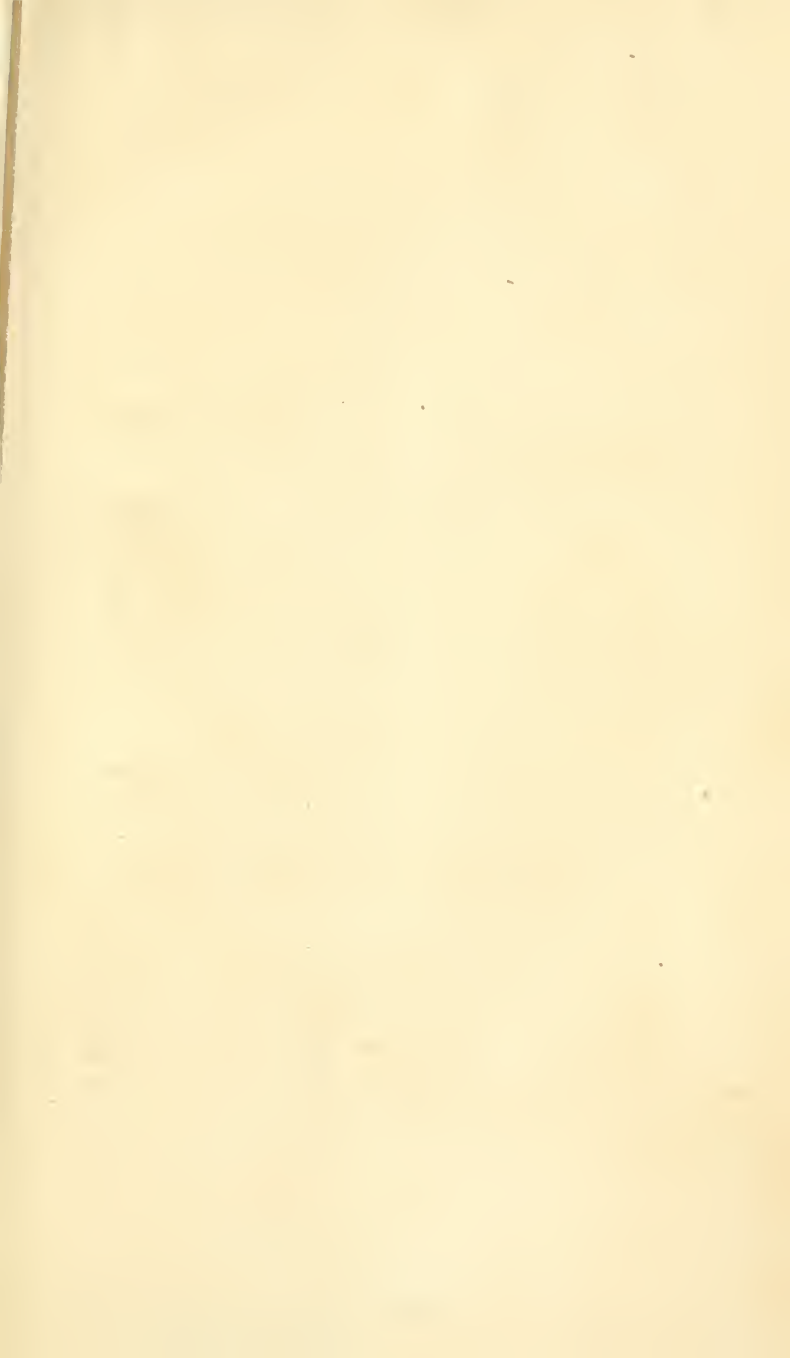
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