

W. HAM

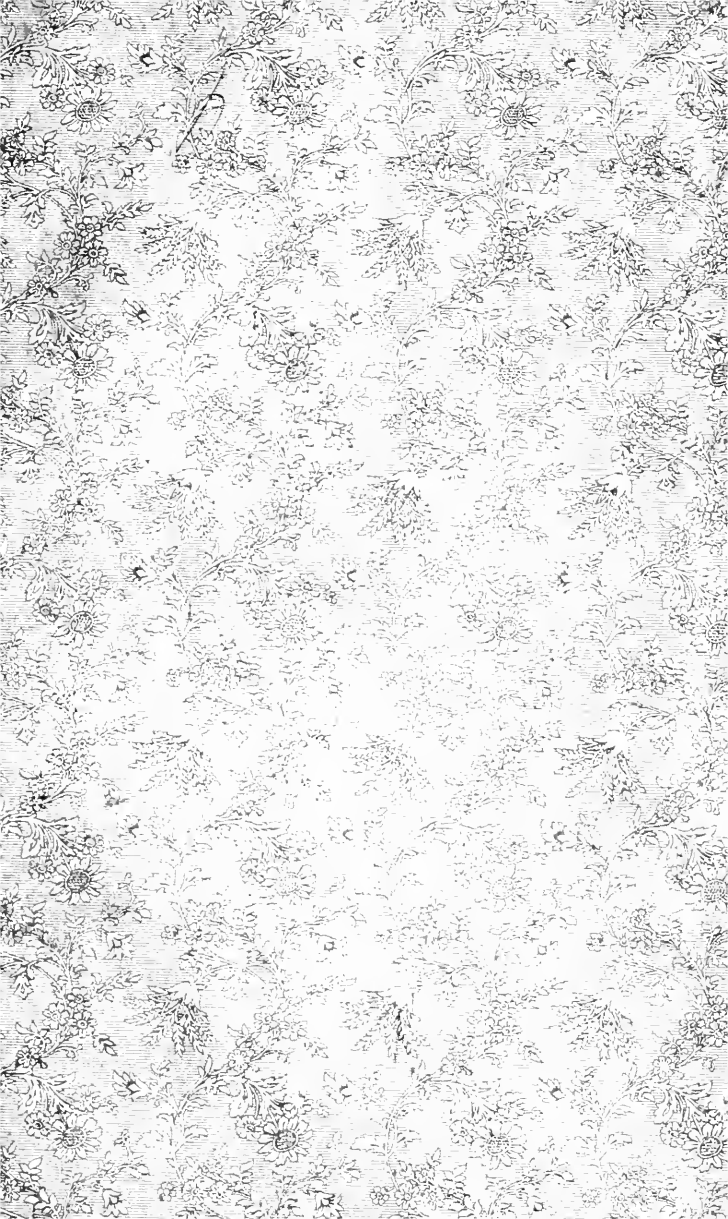
VS. MILTON



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THE WILMER COLLECTION
OF CIVIL WAR NOVELS
PRESENTED BY
RICHARD H. WILMER, JR.



To Ma Cherie. Blanche Schreiner.
the original of Miss B. Sinclair.
Page 71. With the compliments
of the Author,
— Jas. J. Kane

London. Feb. 12/95.

MIRIAM vs. MILTON

OR THE

MYSTERY OF EVERDALE LAKE.

BY

JAS. J. KANE, U. S. NAVY,

AUTHOR OF

“ADRIFT ON THE BLACK WILD TIDE,”

“ILIAN, OR THE CURSE OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH.”



LONDON :

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The English Edition

OF THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

John Keppie, Esq.,

LIVERPOOL.

As the author is indebted to him for many tokens of friendship in the days of yore, he would therefore beg leave to tender this token of gratitude to his highly-esteemed friend.

With Fraternal Greeting.

The author begs leave to introduce his readers to the following principal characters. There are others who are only incidental to the story, and therefore not mentioned here.

English Characters.

Rear-Admiral and Lady Creedmore, R. N.
Miriam and Milton Creedmore.
Richard Shirley.
Mrs. Elizabeth Van Reem.
Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and Family.
Martin Nickley, of Granthorn Park.
Edmond Harold, Earl of Montville.
Lieut. Bentley, Royal Navy.
Mrs. Harriet Ainsworth, of Beechwood Seminary.
Pauline Van Sant.
Oslena, the Gipsy Queen.
Ziska, the Gipsy Chief.
Lord Grassmere and Lady Martha.
Rev. A. J. Sarmaine.
Sister M. Delphine.

American Characters.

Colonel H. Derwent, of Kentucky.
Captain Isaiah Moorehead, of Boston.
Joseph Richardson, Society of Friends.
Cousin Margaret, of New York.
Joshua Harkness.
Etaline Roberts, of Virginia.
Henrietta St. Clair.
Henry Winston, the Scout.
Lieut. Hilton, Confederate Army.
Kate and Ida Derwent.
Jerold Slevington.
Marcy Graston, Mining Engineer.
Bill Jenkins, the Miner.
Lieut. Grimes, U. S. Army.
Grey Cloud, the Indian Chief.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE PLOT.

"The education of a child should commence one hundred years before it is born."—PROF. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

THE above quotation is so much in affinity with the problem of the plot of this story, that it is given to help the reader to understand the failure of the strange life in dual form of Miriam and her twin brother Milton. There was no previous training through the law of hereditary influence for an exchanged condition of existence.

The author spent many weary months in the endeavour to collect an indisputable array of facts to sustain the problem of this new departure from the old and well-worn tracks of novel writers in general. It was found, however, that these proofs were too deep to suit the average reader. He therefore decided to follow the advice of a friend, the President of a University, who said, "that in a romance the magic of imagination was more potent to please the general public than theories difficult to sustain."

The plot of this narrative may seem improbable to those who hear of it for the first time, yet the theory is not a new one. It has had many advocates in all ages of the world, and some of the ablest minds in every country have accepted it.

Two citations are given to show that there is a widespread belief that we are on the eve of very important discoveries, not only in Anthropology but in Science and Mechanics.

This leads us to hope that some definite knowledge as to the relation of the Body, Soul, and Spirit to each other may soon be discovered. In the absence, however, of positive information the author has taken the liberty of assuming the true solution of the problem of the plot.

A newspaper recently stated that "In this wonderful age of ours, nothing presents such an exhibition of ignorance of what

has been done in the past, nor such a low appreciation of human capacity, as to take a snap judgment of new ideas. Does not each day of our lives bring forth some new marvel of mechanical invention or scientific discovery?

“Even the most confirmed pessimist has to admit that man and the planet which he inhabits are no longer in the elementary stages of evolution. The brilliant victories achieved by science in the last decade alone give hope of still greater explorations in nature’s hitherto closely-guarded domain.”

We may add, what field so fertile or that gives promise of grander results than in the study of Anthropology—man’s composition, Physical, Psychological, and Spiritual?

Prof. Wilford Hall, in his introduction to his work on the “Problem of Human Life,” states:—

“The closing decades of the present century are marked in the history of the world for their unexampled massing of revolutionary discoveries and startling events. No other equal period of historic time has been so fraught with marvellous conceptions, profound advances in philosophic and scientific research, and surprising mechanical inventions, since the dawn of civilization. I have hinted at the progressive strides of our own immediate time, in discovery and invention, as a warning note against surprise, let what will be announced in the future or as already achieved. The age in which we live seems to accelerate its own progressive development by the momentum it receives in each new advance. Where it is to end we know not; but the practical observer, with mind and eye upon the alert, gazes into the future with a well-grounded expectancy of discoveries in Science and Philosophy which shall utterly eclipse anything the world has yet witnessed.”

The author has given these quotations without any desire to fortify his position by extracts, which in their totality would have no bearing on his problem. He wishes simply to warn his readers not to condemn in advance his new proposition, even if it should seem somewhat startling—perhaps radical and revolutionary.

Although he had the plot of this work in embryo for ten years, yet its production in its present state is due to an editorial in the *New York Herald* some time ago in reference to the prevailing discontent of women in general about what they term the unjust limitation of their sex.

The object, therefore, of these pages is to show that the lot of the average woman is superior to the lot of the average man. Also, that no success in life can be attained without discipline. This is the unalterable law of our being, and applies to every department of activity. The neglect of this important factor has caused the sad failure of many women attempting a career in life.

If the reader will look over the Appendix before commencing this story, the key-note of the plot will be found.

Briefly stated, it is summed up in the acceptance of the Tripart nature of man as set forth by Dr. Broadman, viz., Man is composed of three factors. 1st, A Body; 2nd, A Soul, which is the vital principle; 3rd, A Spirit, or mind, the Ego. The union of the first two makes a living creature. The union of the three makes what is known as a human being. The exchange, therefore, which the author assumes took place in *Miriam and Milton*, was that of the Spirit and not the Soul, or life-giving principle. Our individuality is in the former, and not in the latter.

With this brief statement the story opens.

The manuscript of *Miriam vs. Milton* was finished in June, 1891. A leading New York publisher, to whom it was at that time offered, stated that the plot was one hundred years ahead of the times. The verdict of the readers must alone decide this question. The author declines to wait ninety-seven years longer.

JAS. J. KANE, U. S. Navy,
U. S. NAVAL STATION,
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

MARCH 4th, 1894.

FIRST DIVISION.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE TWINS.

CHAPTER I.

EVERDALE.

ONE of the most delightful spots in England is the Lake district. As many have visited this region, and much has been written about it, we are compelled for want of room to pass it by with only a brief mention.

It is the intention to eliminate from this story all superfluous scenic descriptions. Few readers care for this style of literature, and our present space is too limited to indulge in it.

At the southern end of one of the smaller lakes is a picturesque village, nestling between two hills. The place was called "Everdale," and belonged, with all its broad acres, to the Master of Everdale Manor. This was a fine old stone mansion, built in the days of England's great Queen Elizabeth. The battlemented walls, and the heavy drawbridge over the now filled-up moat, was a proof that the building was able to stand a siege, and a long one at that. The history of this old English manor would fill many pages of interesting matter. Over this we must reluctantly pass.

Two years before our story opens the lord of the manor was Rear-Admiral Hastings Creedmore, who with Lady Creedmore spent most of their time at this lovely, quiet home.

The Creedmores had always been naval men, from the time that their great ancestor commanded one of the war vessels that brought William the Conqueror and his troops to England. After the Battle of Hastings they settled down in permanent possession. Once in at least every generation a member of the Creedmore family was expected to bear the name of this great battle.

Lady Creedmore was a daughter of the house of Shirley; descended from one of the Saxon nobles, who died by the side of the warrior, King Harold, in the battle before mentioned.

The Shirleys were a noted race, proud and high spirited, and the ruling trait among the generality of their women was a strong masculine temper. Their Saxon blood never apparently mixed harmoniously with that of the Norman invaders.

A roving disposition was the strongest characteristic of the Creedmores. A strange peculiarity, which was never accounted for, was the fact that whoever of the family bore the name of Hastings was, with a very few exceptions, the father of twins. This was not deprecated, for they had abundant wealth.

The present admiral and his wife were happily mated, for while Lady Creedmore, though young, lacked none of the family traits, yet the extreme good nature and jovial disposition of her husband prevented any serious disagreements.

On the first anniversary of their wedding day, the anxious father, who at that time was First Lieutenant of a large frigate fitting out for sea, received the following letter from the family doctor:—

EVERDALE MANOR, March 3rd, 1840.

MY DEAR LIEUTENANT CREEDMORE,

Allow me to congratulate you upon the safe arrival of the strangers this morning. Bearing as you do the name of the great battle, you could not expect less than twins. Your daughter came first, then your son. Mother and children doing splendidly.

The question of their names is already a matter of dispute among your relatives, which, however, will not be decided until you return home.

Your true friend,

JOHN RAINS, M.D

The delighted father obtained a few days' leave to visit his home, and proposed to his wife to call their baby boy, Hastings, Jun. The Saxon mother refused to name her child after a battle that was a reminder of the defeat of her ancestors. She proposed to name the boy Milton Edgar, and her husband could call the girl what he liked. "Well, then," was the answer, "let her be called Miriam, because her mother exhibited rebellion to the established order of things in this late generation."

"Very well," was the reply, "and supplement it with the name of Esther, the lovely obedient Queen." Thus were the names of our heroine and hero settled.

By referring to these ancestral traits, and accepting the law of hereditary influences, we may in some measure understand the development of character that follows in these pages.

On the nineteenth birthday of the twins, their father, who had meanwhile been promoted to Commander and then Post-Captain, received his commission as Rear-Admiral, with instructions to hoist his broad pennant on a fine frigate fitting out as flagship of a foreign station.

Everdale Manor was filled to its utmost capacity with kindred and friends, invited to join in the festivities in honour of the double anniversary.

Boating on the lake was one of the attractions of Everdale, and, although the day was cold and blustering, Lady Creedmore, who had been ailing for several days, joined her guests in the round of the lake, stopping for a brief visit to a small island called "Crusoe's Retreat." She fully realized the imprudence of exposing herself to the keen March wind, especially on the water, and expected nothing less than a cold as a result. This promptly came, and held on with a tenacity which defied the skill of her physician to remove. In six months after, viz., on the third of September, she quietly passed away, in her thirty-eighth year. Her husband, the Admiral, at the time was with his ship in a foreign port. As soon as he heard of his melancholy bereavement he asked to be recalled, and on his return went directly to Everdale. He told his friends that, while it was perhaps his duty to live and look after his children, yet he would be glad to join his wife, and he added that together they could explore some of the planets, whose bright orbits had interested him so much in his midnight watches at sea. He was a great enthusiast on the subject of explorations, and at one time had volunteered to go to the Arctic Ocean in search of Sir John Franklin.

On the thirteenth of May following his wife's death he laid down to die; he had long been a sufferer from heart trouble.

True to his sailor's instinct, in the moment of dissolution he said, "The anchor's weigh'd; brace sharp to the wind. Adieu!"

The spirit was freed from its earthly mansion, and untrammelled and unfettered by prejudice, ignorance, or limited knowledge, it now could set out on its explorations. What pen could do justice to the enthusiasm of this explorer, starting out on such a grand voyage of discovery? Some would perhaps say, "If he could only return with a clear account of the problems of the universe." But of what use would they be to us? From the want of analogies we could not understand the reports of life and its conditions, on even a single one of the planets.

With the exception of his children the Admiral left no near kindred.

Lady Creedmore had two brothers—the older, Sir Thomas Shirley, and the younger, Richard Shirley, also a widowed sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Van Reem. Sir Thomas was married and lived in the South of England. His brother was a bachelor. By invitation of the Admiral on his return home from his last cruise, he had taken up his residence at Everdale. Mrs. Van Reem also came and took charge of the house, and both uncle and aunt continued the education of the twins of the gallant Admiral, as they were universally called.

This was the situation of affairs on New Year's Day, 1861.

In the next two chapters we will present the sister and brother in the light in which they were known to their relatives and friends.

CHAPTER II.

MIRIAM ESTHER CREEDMORE.

ONE of the most difficult tasks that the author has found in the preparation of this book is the analysis of the character of Miriam.

At the outset it must be stated that she was no ordinary girl, and yet not entirely singular, for there are many more of that same mould who keep their peculiarities well hidden. There are thousands of women who go through life in half-suppressed rebellion to the "decrees of fate," as they term the origin of their being. They wish that they had been born men. Many of them, looking at it from a human point of view, would make a better success of life's work as men than they do as women. On the other hand, there are men who should have been women.

This is the way we look at this matter in our short-sighted and finite weakness; but the great Judge who sees the end from the beginning knows what is best, and makes no mistake in the assignment of the sexes.

We will follow out the theory that body, soul, and spirit are merely co-existent factors, and will present the physical traits of Miriam, then the qualities or faculties of the co-partners.

Where to draw the line on all these points is by no means an easy task, and on some of them we must be brief, for they involve too much metaphysical discussion, which we wish to avoid.

It may be pardonable at this point to use a quotation, which will explain in a few words a graphic description of the physical character of Miriam. "She was moulded in one of Nature's loveliest moods." She was somewhat taller than the average height, and her luxuriant hair, a golden brown, fell below her waist. The head was well proportioned, with a forehead broad and high. Her father had often remarked, when looking at her highly-intellectual face, "that there was a lavish and needless waste of brain power, because, being a girl, she could make no profitable use of the superabundant talent." Her deep-blue eyes were marvels and enigmas to all who were permitted to look into their lustrous depth, which was only done by a favoured few; she had a peculiar habit of keeping them half closed, and apparently in deep contemplation. But when aroused by excitement they would open and enlarge, and a language flash out more forcible than if spoken by word of mouth. Fully half of her waking hours were spent in an ideal world of her own, thinking of what she would do if she had been born a boy. She felt forcibly the want of harmonious relations in her organization—the want of adaptability of her restless, powerful spirit imprisoned in a feminine mould, and limited by customs and old-time prejudice in the scope of activity. This feeling grew stronger day by day.

Nature had indeed been very generous in physical gifts. Her hands and feet were small; but she had a firm step, and walked with the air of one who felt that she had no apology to offer for coming into the world, and, being in it now, proposed to make the most of what had been placed in her reach.

In classic times she would have been the ideal model for the great Athena. Lavish, however, as Nature had been in the outward form, there was a still greater display of mental power. Her memory was keen, both for places, names, and faces, and had a tenacious hold upon all that she read or heard. A union of these peculiarities is seldom found. Her judgment was clear and her will inflexible. She had indomitable perseverance, exhaustless energy, and courage of a rare order; fear and herself were apparently strangers.

These points are very important to observe, as it will be shown later on that they were chiefly the characteristics of her spirit—the tenant at will of a beautiful tabernacle of clay.

It was the unanimous conclusion of all who knew her, that a masculine spirit must have entered by mistake into a body intended for a gentler feminine one.

As a rider she had no equal in her county. It was the acme of her delight to mount a restless hunter and go over fences, hedges, and up the mountain side, leaving her companions far behind. But one man was ever able to keep near her. That was a Mr. Martin Nickley, a country gentleman and a large landed proprietor, one of her neighbours. He spent much of his time in his stables. On horse-lore he was an accepted authority. He was a graduate of Oxford, and his friends often remarked that it must have been his horses that pulled him through. He was rich, and while his gold covered a multitude of sins, yet even that gilded garment could not hide his many weaknesses. He frequently asserted that every woman had her price, and virtue and chastity were commodities to be weighed in the balance with the yellow metal, and that a hundred guineas would go a long way. With these sentiments openly expressed, he was the very last man that a prudent father or mother with loving daughters would care to have enter their household. Yet he met no difficulty in that respect. He had some strange fascination over most women that was a mystery to the men. Perhaps it was his out-spoken sentiments and his dare-devil manner or his superior horsemanship that gained him such favour with the women-folks.

It is a well-known fact that most ladies, especially young ones, are very susceptible to a horse-tamer. The boldest rider always gets the sweetest smiles from the feminine portion of humanity.

As already stated, he alone was able to keep up with Miriam on all occasions when the gentry met to follow the hounds. By some fate he always seemed to be on hand whenever the restless girl went forth for a ride in the morning or evening. Often she set out attended only by a groom, who was soon left behind, though making frantic efforts to keep up with his mistress, but Mr. Nickley would dash past on a thoroughbred and invariably came up with the wild rider, as Miriam was called. Very rarely could Milton, her brother, be induced to risk his neck in cross-country racing. The main road and a gentle pace were good enough for him.

It was no secret that Martin Nickley was desperately in love with the only woman that he ever met who understood horse nature. While his own capacity was limited to this knowledge, he could not appreciate the fact that Miriam was also a keen

judge of human nature, and had fully weighed him for all he was worth. Indeed she had only endured his occasional companionship because of his wonderful mastery over horses; and her friendship was perhaps no greater than that accorded to her own coal-black steed.

Yet this man was in hopes of winning this woman for himself. To make her mistress of Granthorn Park was his great ambition.

From this description of Miriam the reader must not draw the inference that she was a mannish girl. Far from it. While feeling that her spirit was intended for a masculine body, yet she fully realized that, in her present condition of existence, society would expect a comportment and manner of living in strict compliance with the laws and customs laid down for womankind. On this point she was very precise and exact. Except for an occasional outburst of ambition, which mostly found vent in wild and oft-times reckless riding, she was blameless in all points. She was modest, quiet, and unassuming.

Her voice was of a rare quality, and being a skilful musician she would at times entrance her audience with her vocal powers. She was very fond of giving select readings, and had versatile talents. She could make her hearers cry like children over her pathetic rendering, and the next minute would have them convulsed with laughter when rendering some humorous phase of life.

It is needless to say that with such characteristics, both physical and mental, Miriam had hosts of friends. Her girl companions idolized her, and her gentleman friends worshipped her. Thus we describe her at the opening of our story.

CHAPTER III.

MILTON EDGAR CREEDMORE.

MILTON, being Miriam's twin brother, bore such a facial resemblance that their relationship was apparent at a glance.

In mental capacity he was in no way inferior. He was a quick and apt scholar. He was less demonstrative than his sister, and in tastes and aspirations was diametrically opposed to her. His hair was the same colour, but his eyes were grey.

In bodily structure Milton was an enigma; apparently effeminate, shrinking and retiring when in repose, but, once started into active vitality, a new being seemed to emerge or develop, and the strength of a giant took the place of the hitherto girlish effort. His physical training had been well looked after, and he was an expert in all manly sports. His father, the Admiral, had been an enthusiast on this subject. One of the best boxing masters in London had been engaged to give him lessons in the art of self-defence. When he first saw his pupil he turned up his nose in contempt of the effeminate boy, as he called him. He did not hold this opinion very long, however, for inside of a week he was knocked down three times in succession by his young pupil with the gloves.

It was a misfortune, perhaps, for Milton that his education had taken place at home, and not in the rough but highly-practical English schools. His father had proposed to send him to Eton, but his mother would not consent to let her delicate boy go away from her own supervision. So it came about that he and his sister were taught by able instructors at home, and thus Milton, already half a girl by nature, had virtually developed into one by home training, at least in disposition and feminine tastes.

There were occasions, nevertheless, when his latent powers were exerted, very much to the astonishment of his kindred and friends. Sometimes he and Miriam would make brief visits to their uncle, Sir Thomas Shirley, in the South of England, who had two sons and three daughters. The boys were about the same age as Milton. They had both experienced the marvellous strength of their girlish-looking cousin, and were never anxious for a second trial; but it was their delight to get some of their young friends to test his powers. At one special visit, three stalwart young men, judging from Milton's slender appearance and timid way that he was a capital subject for practical jokes, endeavoured to duck him in a fish-pond. Their amazement was beyond description when the frail-looking youth picked them up one by one and tossed them into deep water. As it was the month of November their cold water bath subdued their ardour, and Milton after that was treated with deference and respect.

This great strength was never put forth, however, except when he was aroused either by attempts on himself or in protecting animals from acts of cruelty. The latter was his particular hobby. Once, when visiting in the North, he met a

young Yorkshire driver, burly and massive, who was most unmercifully lashing a jibbing horse with a heavy whip, which drew the blood at every stroke. Miriam was walking with her brother and she begged of him not to interfere. The manly spirit of the boy, however, was aroused. He at first quietly suggested to the country boor the advisability of trying a little gentle persuasion on the horse, and not so much whip. The answer was characteristic of that district, "I have a great moind to give thee a taste of this whip; and were it not for the lass beside thee I would do it enyhow." With a spring like a tiger Milton leaped upon the Yorkshire lad, wrenched the whip from his grasp, and then laid it with such vigour on his shoulders that he fairly howled for mercy, and begged for it on both knees. The whip was then flung over the top of some trees, and the twins walked quietly home.

While Milton had been well trained physically, yet he seldom joined in boyish games, and as a rule shrank from boys' company. He preferred the society of girls. With them he was always a favourite, for he was so quiet and gentle. He was an accomplished musician, and the piano had charms for him which nothing else could equal.

He exhibited a girl's timid nature in a hundred different ways, and it was only when fully aroused that he showed the metal that was in him.

He never lost his temper with his sister. He continually looked to her for advice, and her slightest wish was at all times his law. In proportion as she was restless, fearless, and brave, he was, on the other hand, quiet, subdued, and exceedingly timid. When, however, the limit of her powers was reached he would suddenly emerge from his timidity like one awakening from a dream, and take the leadership. This was illustrated one afternoon a few months after the death of the Admiral, their father. They had gone out driving behind a pair of high-spirited horses. Milton did not relish the prospect of a ride behind such fast steppers, but Miriam, who had virtually assumed the power of head of the family, commanded her brother peremptorily to get into the carriage, and, dismissing the groom, she took the reins herself.

After getting well out on the country road the restive animals took the bit between their teeth, and set off on a dead run. In vain Miriam pulled and tugged at the reins, and called "Whoa!" The excited brutes galloped all the faster, and the prospect was almost certain that the carriage would be dashed to pieces and the occupants perhaps killed.

The utmost range of the girl's strength had now been reached. She grew faint and pale, and handing the lines to Milton, she said in a weak voice, "Can you do anything to stop these horses?" Quietly but firmly the young man took a turn of the reins around each hand, and laying back he quickly brought the horses' heads almost down to their forefeet, and so stopped them. They were trembling all over, more with fear than anything else of the power suddenly exerted upon them, which had curbed their haughty spirits and restrained them in their mad career. Milton then quietly drove home and lifted his half-fainting sister out of the carriage. The next day, however, she again resumed her sway, and her brother yielded as a matter of course.

Admiral Creedmore had often said to his son, "Milton, you should have been a girl instead of Miriam." The only answer the boy ever made was, "Well, father, I wish I could exchange with her; I would rather be a girl." The effeminate traits of his son were a great trial to the Admiral, who looked forward to a manly representative as a successor of his name. A little incident occurred when Milton was nineteen years old that opened the father's eyes, and made him feel that after all there were qualities in his heir that would become important factors in his subsequent career.

Just before he sailed in his flagship, as narrated in the opening chapter of this book, he sent for Milton to spend a few days with him on board. He had often proposed to get for the youth a midshipman's appointment, but Lady Creedmore had persuaded him out of it, on the plea that their boy would never make a sailor; he was too timid.

When Milton arrived on board the flagship his father sent for one of the older midshipmen, and directed him to show his son around the vessel and explain the fittings and the battery.

Of all the harum-scarum and fun-loving midshipmen on board the ship, Edward Bentley was perhaps the one above all others. To play a practical joke on the son of the Admiral was a serious matter, but the demure and hesitating demeanour of Milton was more than young Bentley could endure. He resolved to attempt a few. As he was showing Milton around the ship they reached the forward part of the spar-deck, and Milton asked what held the anchor-chain, which was passed three times around the windlass bitt, and then led down into the hold.

"Oh," said Bentley, "we pick out the naughty sailors and detail five at a time to hold on to the end."

The girlish face of Milton tempted Ned Bentley to see how far he could go in the way of ridicule, so he several times said in answer to questions, "No, Miss," and "Yes, Miss," and then would half apologise and say that he had shown so many pretty girls around the ship that he was apt to forget himself. Twice he answered, "No, dear," and "Yes, dear."

The seamen who overheard these remarks were intensely amused. Several of them remarked in an undertone that they wondered how the young man's mamma could trust the dear creature away from her apron-strings.

Midshipman Bentley became so intent upon the fun that he was creating that he did not notice the flashing of the grey eyes of the Admiral's son. The limit of patience and endurance was fast being reached, and the frolicsome middy was about to be taught a lesson that would never be forgotten. In answer to a quiet question, "Was the windlass-end ever used for any other purpose than holding the anchor-chain?"

"Oh, yes," said Bentley, "the Master-at-Arms puts naughty sailors over it, and gives them a dose of the oil of hemp."

"What is the oil of hemp?" Milton quietly asked.

Ned picked up the end of a rope and answered, "This is it, and it has wonderful curative powers; it makes good men out of bad ones."

"Is it good for boys?" was the next inquiry.

"Yes, indeed; nothing could be better," replied Ned.

Milton took the rope in his right hand and looked at it carefully. The next moment he seized the midshipman by the collar of his jacket, laid him over the windlass-end, and holding him as though he were in a vice, he gave him a dozen with the rope's end. The biter was badly bitten and howled with pain. Milton then let him up, and, taking his hand, remarked quietly: "Now, Mr. Bentley, as we thoroughly understand each other, let us be friends and go on with our examination of the ship. I am not so feminine as I look."

If he had been struck by lightning the middy would not have been more astonished, not only from the pain of the blows but at the iron grasp which held him as though he had been a baby. Bentley was the champion of the mess, and was celebrated for his muscular development. He was quick to perceive that he had greatly under-estimated the girlish-looking boy. He took the proffered hand, remarking, "Yes, Mr. Creedmore, I would like to be your friend. I fully deserved what you gave me."

The moral effect of this example upon the crew was very great, and had Milton been a midshipman five hundred men would have followed his lead in boarding an enemy's vessel.

When the Admiral heard of it he was amazed. He knew that his boy had latent strength, but was of the opinion that he had not spirit enough to put it forth in such a way. He sent for him at once and for young Bentley, and told Milton that he must apologise to the midshipman for what he had done.

"No, indeed, Admiral," was Bentley's reply; "I am the one to apologise. I was playing jokes on your son, and he only gave me what I richly deserved."

"Very well," was the reply; "I will make amends by asking you to dine with us to-day, and I will take you under my special favour."

That dose of the oil of hemp was very fortunate for Midshipman Bentley at a later period.

When they were alone the Admiral said to his boy: "Milton, I have often said to you that you ought to have been a girl, but, after all, I think you have latent qualities in you which will be the making of a splendid man."

CHAPTER IV.

REBELLION.

HAVING presented the twins in their peculiar character, the author feels tempted at this point to pause for a moment and consider briefly a question of metaphysics which bears directly on the plot of this narrative.

It is assumed by many leading metaphysicians that the spirits of humanity are of the neuter gender, neither male nor female. This seems to be the direct teaching of the Bible, Mathew xxii., 30.

In such case, if there should be an exchange of one spirit with another in its brief tenure of a tenement of fragile and perishable clay, no law of the eternal fitness of things can be violated.

The respective employments of the sexes are merely the result of education, and nothing more. Cooking, dressmaking, and millinery, for example, are acknowledged occupations of

women. Yet the best cooks are men, and the highest artistic productions of female garments are devised by such men as Worth, of Paris, and others. The most successful millinery establishments are conducted by men. The government of a nation is allotted to be man's province, yet some of the most successful rulers have been women.

Many of the illustrations of this paradox of the occupations could be given, but we have no time to enter upon discussions outside the line of our story.

Six months had passed away since Admiral Creedmore's death. Mrs. Van Reem had charge of the domestic economy of Everdale, and Uncle Richard Shirley managed the estate. Everything was done for the two children that could possibly advance their welfare. It was, therefore, a source of great anxiety to both uncle and aunt, as they noticed the growing disposition on the part of Miriam to rebel against the decree of fate, or whatever else it was, that sent her into this life as a girl, while her twin brother, Milton, had the coveted honour, which he did not appreciate.

Mrs. Van Reem was a woman of very positive character. No children had ever blessed her union with her husband, the late Mr. Van Reem. Her maternal instincts had been directed, therefore, in ruling him, but only when at home. He managed his business on strict principles and attended to everything himself, and when he died, from the result of a cold, he left his widow a comfortable fortune.

She had more than the average of the strong characteristics of the Shirley family. No one was a more strenuous advocate for the old-fashioned English way of bringing up girls in training them for domestic duties. She found Miriam of a different disposition from most girls that she had known.

She often declared that her sister, Lady Creedmore, having been too indulgent to her children, had spoiled them. When she came to Everdale to take charge, she did not feel that she could act towards her niece as she would have done had Miriam been her own child.

Most of the time Miriam was easy to persuade, but sometimes her restless spirit would break away from restraint, and it found vent in reckless riding over the hills. This always restored her equilibrium.

Neither uncle nor aunt could tolerate Martin Nickley. They highly disapproved when their niece accepted him for a companion on her wild rides across the country.

Her answer to these remonstrances was that, whenever he felt disposed to go out to ride, she could not prevent him. She added that he was always respectful and deferential to her, and that twice when her hunter had run away he had stopped him.

Again and again her aunt had expostulated with her upon the danger of riding such a vicious animal as her favourite horse. The late Admiral had purchased him but never dared to ride him. He was called "Cataline," a well-deserved name, for he was unreliable and treacherous, and continually learning new tricks. He had thrown six riders, killing two of them. Miriam liked him, however, and he returned the affection. He had never tried to throw her, but would occasionally break out into a wild run, perhaps to work off the exuberance of his spirit.

Milton heartily disliked Cataline, and the animal seemed to know this, for he tried several times to bite and kick him. The youth, however, was too cautious to give him a chance.

The rebellious spirit of Miriam was daily growing in intensity, and a family council was called to consider the best means to overcome her strange feeling of discontent. Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and several others of their kindred came to Everdale, and the whole matter was fully discussed. During this visit the very worst possible traits of Miriam's character were exhibited. Most of the time she had been ladylike and correct in her deportment, but now she acted so perversely that her relations were amazed and prophesied all manner of evil that would result from such a wilful course. It was finally agreed that the best thing to do was to send her to "Beechwood Seminary," a finishing school for young ladies. It was presided over by Mrs. H. Ainsworth, a member of the Shirley family. The school had a national reputation for sending out highly-accomplished and very tractable girls. This seminary had been proposed several times before, both to Admiral and Lady Creedmore, but they would not listen to it.

Now her guardians thought that it was absolutely necessary for the girl's future welfare to place her under the strict discipline exercised at Beechwood.

When Miriam heard of this resolve she quietly, but firmly, declined to enter that worse than prison, as she termed the school. Mrs. Van Reem, however, was equally determined that she should go, especially as she was backed up by all her kindred in this, which they considered the only course. A letter was sent to Mrs. Ainsworth, asking her to take Miriam under her charge and employ whatever discipline was necessary to

curb her restless and untractable spirit. Two days afterwards the answer came back. Mrs. Ainsworth was at all times willing to do what she could for her kinsfolk. She had heard so much of Miriam's headstrong character, and as her father, the late Admiral, had positively refused to send his daughter to her school, she must therefore respectfully decline the proposition. She had already several young ladies under her charge whose dispositions were about all she could do to control, and one such ungovernable a spirit as Miriam's would be liable to lead to open rebellion.

The family council broke up, and the only result was to embitter the girl, whose welfare they had sought to promote, and make her more discontented. Her disposition was an enigma to all her relatives; they could not understand her.

Miriam had what every woman longs for—beauty, youth, health, and wealth, yet she was extremely discontented with her lot as a girl. She wanted to be a boy. With such a strong masculine spirit as Nature had given her, how could she enjoy life? Day after day her aunt would say to her, "What is the use of repining? You must accept the conditions of existence in which Providence has placed you. Make a profitable use of your brilliant talents. You cannot change your nature, and your repining only makes you miserable and your relatives unhappy."

All this, however, had no effect. The spirit of rebellion was daily growing, and a culmination was not far off.

Milton was very easy to manage. His love for his sister was so great that when she uttered her complaints he often said to her, "If we could only exchange bodies I would cheerfully do so. Perhaps it can be done."

"How can it be possible?" Miriam asked.

"I do not know, but I had a dream the other night that we both died and were given permission to return to life, each in possession of the other's body. Perhaps such a change would not be out of harmony with Nature's laws."

"Would you be willing, Milton?" demanded she, "to take my place in life as a girl, to have all your movements criticised, a limit put on your actions, and to hear a dozen times a day 'you must not do this or act in that manner, it is not ladylike; it is proper for your brother to do such things but not for a girl.' You have no conception of the restraints which have been put upon me since our father and mother died. Your love for me must indeed be very great if you are willing to give up all your prospects in life as a man, and take upon yourself the limited and narrow sphere of a woman. They are treated

like children nearly all their lives; their reputation liable to be blasted by any evil tongue. A man may sin deeply and the world will easily forgive; but let a woman err, even slightly, and she is crushed by the weight of public opinion."

"Miriam," he replied, "notwithstanding all that you have said I am willing to take my chances. I would make a name for myself that the world would honour. I would study the history of all the great women, and strive to follow in their footsteps."

"Milton, this is all very well in theory, but it is difficult to put into practice."

Thus the time went by. Miriam was becoming more boyish every day, and Milton more girlish. What a blessed thing it is for mortals that the future is beyond our vision. We build air castles, and when they tumble to the ground we continue to re-build, until the weariness of old age prevents further effort. Then we live in the past. Happy is that man and that woman who have a pleasant past to dwell in.

CHAPTER V.

EVERDALE LAKE.

THE 3rd of March, 1861, opened with all the genial warmth of a beautiful spring day.

At Everdale Manor great preparations were made to celebrate the event. It was the twenty-first birthday of the twins. At noon the executors of their late father's estate were to hand over to them a statement of accounts and the full control of their patrimony.

To Miriam the prospects were anything but flattering. Some of the conditions of her father's will she thought disparaged her abilities because she was a girl, and she was greatly excited.

Was not her spirit more masculine than Milton's? Had she not a stronger will and better executive power? Why, then, was she ignored in the management of the property? It was true she had an equal share of the income, but Milton was placed at the head. Never had she felt the humiliation of being a girl so much in her past life. It was indeed a misfortune, she declared to herself, to come into the world in

feminine mould. Could it be, that she had existed in another planet or mode of life, and for some unexpiated fault was sent into life here as a girl in order to make reparation? When she complained, everyone said to her that she must make the best of it. No; she would not make the best of it, but would rebel. How much this would accomplish she did not consider. She proposed to vigorously protest against what she considered the injustice of fate.

Never had she been known to display such ill temper as on this eventful morning, destined to be fraught with such momentous consequence to her and Milton.

A proposal of marriage received that very day from a young English earl added fuel to the fire of her discontent. He had unexpectedly succeeded to a large estate by the death of a brother. He had served as a lieutenant under the late Admiral, her father, and had several times been a guest at Everdale, but being then a younger son had no expectations. Now, with an earldom and vast property, he offered his hand and heart to Miriam. To ninety-nine women out of a hundred this proposal would have given great pleasure. But Miriam had her own notion about marriage. It was a bond that chained a wife to her husband, and made her his slave for life. The law made him her head, her lord, her master. To be asked, therefore, to give up her freedom was, in her estimation, an indignity.

With her uncle and aunt she could hold her own by argument; but in this case of a husband the law of the land made her his exclusive possession, merged her name in that of his, and thus sank her individuality, her identity, and she would be known as his wife, his property, the same as his horse, his house, his dog. She seized the perfumed letter, with one of the oldest English coronets at its head, tore it into a hundred fragments, and stamped on them.

The sense of restraint now seemed to stifle her breath. She felt she must get out of the house, away from her kindred and friends, and proposed to Milton to go out on the lake. There they could be alone, and upon her quiet, gentle, loving brother she could find vent for her pent-up feelings of discontent and rebellion.

Everdale lake was as smooth as glass; not a ripple was upon the water, yet at this season it was liable to become exceedingly rough if an unexpected squall should sweep down through the valley.

They pushed off from the shore; Miriam took the oars, as was her custom. They landed upon the small islet previously

mentioned as "Crusoe's Retreat," and, sitting in a rustic summer-house, free from all interruptions, they exchanged ideas of life and its mysteries. Miriam bitterly complained of the disadvantages of being a girl, and how galling it was to one of her temperament and masculine spirit. Milton insisted that the advantages of life as a woman were certainly greater and more conducive to happiness than those which fell to the lot of ordinary men.

"Look at woman in all her limitations," said Miriam. "From infancy to the grave she is, at best, but a piece of fragile clay, delicate and tender, unable to face or cope with the rough experiences of life. Two-thirds of my sex are seldom free from ailments of one kind or another."

"Admit all that," was the gentle reply; "do you think that men enjoy a continual bed of roses as they journey through this mortal vale, as our rector so often expresses it in his sermons? Neither of us can pretend to know much of the hardships encountered by either sex, only what we have read. Even though men are stronger physically, do they not need it all to hold their own in the daily battles?"

"But this battle, as you call it, Milton, is the spice of life. It keeps men from growing rusty. Time never hangs heavily on their hands, and the fruits of victory are more keenly enjoyed, because all their energy is roused to obtain them."

"You must acknowledge, Miriam," said her brother, "that, as a girl, you live and breathe in a purer atmosphere than the average boy. You surely do not think it an advantage to listen to the low jest and vulgar talk that I often have to endure because I am a boy?"

"Why don't you avoid such company if you feel that it degrades you?"

"How can I, my sweet sister? To do so, I must live secluded as in a glass case. I cordially detest it, but I have to endure it very often, or give mortal offence even to guests under our roof. Take your friend, Martin Nickley, for instance."

"Milton, stop," cried the excited girl, "do not call that man my friend. I only endure him once in a while as a companion on my 'wild horseback rides,' as you call them, because you, my only brother, decline to go with me."

"That is because I have serious objections to breaking my neck, and I hate violent horseback exercise."

"And I, on my part, hate a snail-pace over the country roads. Do you know, Milton, that I have built many air castles of what I would do if I were only a boy?"

“Do you object, beautiful sister of mine, to tell me what some of those lofty castles are like? What line of action would you map out for yourself if you and I should exchange bodies?”

“One of the first things I would do would be to leave England and go to America and look up Uncle Joseph Richardson, the husband of our late aunt, the only sister of our father. In that land of great possibilities I would find free scope for my ambitions.”

“So far, well, Miriam; now go into particulars about some of these air castles.”

“You know, Milton, that the papers set forth that there is a strong probability of war breaking out between the Northern and Southern States. I would ascertain the merits of each side of the controversy, and the side that I thought was in the right I would join, and go into the very thickest of the battle. I would aspire to place my name high on the temple of fame.”

“That sounds very poetic,” said her brother; “but suppose you were killed before you reached that temple of fame—in fact, within the first hour of the battle—what then?”

“Oh, Milton, that is just like a man, always talking and looking upon the dark side. I would not for a moment anticipate such an ending. My ambition would be to bear the standard of the cause I had espoused, and keep it waving on high.”

“Everyone to their taste, my imperious sister; but I prefer the quiet life of Everdale to any such pictures as you have drawn. Perhaps you could suggest some other excitement besides war in that fair land far over the sea.”

“Yes, I have thought over several employments, and the one that has for me the greatest fascination is to own a cattle-ranch, and head the cowboys in their wild rides over the endless plains of the far West. To think that, because I am a girl, I am debarred from this grand sport makes my discontent all the more intolerable. Oh, Milton, I feel that I would rather end my rebelliousness under the waters of this lake—yes, die to-day—sooner than continue life as a discontented woman.”

To emphasize her remark Miriam stood up with defiance in every gesture. The next moment a puff of wind took her hat from off her head, and loosened the fastenings of her golden brown hair, which waved in the wind like a haughty banner. Then came a sudden squall, lashing the hitherto quiet waters into angry foam.

"Miriam," cried her brother, "this is wicked in you to talk and act so. It is flying into the face of Providence. When this squall is over let us return to the house at once."

Milton was aroused to a sense of the danger that threatened them. It was only a quarter of a mile to the landing at the foot of their garden, but the boat was a very light one and the water was rough. There was a quiet dignity and a firmness of manner in him that his sister had never witnessed before, and it exasperated her.

"You are putting on airs in advance of the hour of noon, when you become the head of the family, but I am equal to you in all respects," was the angry retort of the now passion-swayed girl.

"Miriam, we have had enough of this," answered Milton. The angry flush of her brother's face told the sister that it was best not to arouse the hitherto dormant passion within him. Without another word she took his arm and went with him to the boat, and both got into it. Unfortunately her obstinacy of disposition got the best of Miriam. She again took the oars and insisted upon rowing back. Half way over another squall came down the narrow valley. In vain Miriam tried to make headway. The wind was across their bow. She refused to give up the oars until the boat was half full of water. Then Milton took them from her, and exerted his marvellous strength. If he had been permitted to do so five minutes sooner all might have been well. It was now too late, a wave swept over them, and the boat capsized.

"Hold on to the boat," he cried to his sister. She did so for a moment, and then told him as the shore was only three hundred feet away she would swim to it.

Uncle and aunt, kindred and friends, had already gathered at the landing, and were anxiously watching the struggle with wind and water.

"For Heaven's sake, Miriam, don't let go," pleaded her brother. "Do you not see that another boat is making ready to come to our assistance; with your heavy clothing on it is perfect madness to try to swim to shore against wind and waves. Don't be rash."

"I can take care of myself," was the cool rejoinder, and the fated girl made a bold attempt to swim to shore.

Milton, who was an expert swimmer, let go his hold upon the boat and made his way to her side. All efforts were in vain. The garments of the rash girl prevented motion, and she began to sink.

“Save yourself, Milton,” she called out, “and leave me to my fate.”

“Never,” was the answer of the noble boy, as he put his arm around his sister and tried to hold her up. The task, however, was too much, and they sank in each other’s embrace to the bottom of the lake.

Five minutes later and the rescue boat had reached the spot where the two went down. Among the occupants were Mr. Martin Nickley, also Midshipman Ned Bentley, who had come home with the late Admiral Creedmore, and was now attached to another vessel. He had arrived only a few minutes before the catastrophe at Everdale.

Young Bentley fastened a rope about his waist, and taking a stone in his hand to hold him down in the water, which was only fifteen feet deep, he went overboard, followed by Mr. Nickley, similarly equipped.

Thirty seconds passed, and one of the ropes was violently pulled. Quickly it was drawn in, and young Bentley came to the surface holding Milton’s body in his arms. A shout of joy went up, which was answered by the anxious ones on shore. Ten seconds later and Mr. Nickley rose to the surface. He could not find the girl, but resolved to try again. Taking another stone from the boat and holding it tightly he went to the bottom and groped around. A few seconds later he gave the signal, and was pulled up, holding the form of Miriam. Both were quickly taken into the boat, which a moment after was fastened to the landing. Hurriedly the bodies were carried to the house. Two physicians were among the guests, and everything was done that was possible. An hour later the result was made known. The twins of Everdale were pronounced dead.

Milton might have saved himself, everyone said, but he had refused to abandon his sister; and all agreed that Miriam’s obstinacy caused the death of both.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXCHANGE.

It was high noon, and the bell of the parish church at Everdale was tolling the requiem for the departed ones.

The feast had all been prepared, and tenants and friends had assembled to do honour to the occasion of the double birthday.

Dismay was now on every face. Women by the score were wildly weeping for the great calamity. In their separate chambers the bodies of the drowned were being manipulated by skilful physicians, seeking with all the highest arts known to medical science to restore life, but so far without avail. At last even the most sanguine gave up hope; all efforts ceased, the still, calm faces were covered, the door of the death apartments were closed, and the dead left alone.

The sorrow was universal. All felt the loss as though some near of kin had been taken. The virtues of Milton were extolled by the women, for he was a very great favourite with them. His gentle, quiet ways and hatred of cruelty to animals, his ready sympathy for all who were sick, afflicted, or in distress, had made him many friends. The men were loud in their praise of the high-spirited Miriam. The sudden extinction of such a life, bright, sparkling, and daring, was no ordinary loss. Her dauntless courage and fearless character, added to her rare beauty, were sufficient to make all feel that her death, tragic in the extreme, was something awful to realise.

The great ox continued to roast before a huge fire, but no one felt hungry. The casks of ale remained untapped, for no one felt thirsty. The large assembly had been appalled by the terrible disaster of the double death.

Midshipman Bentley walked up and down the broad piazza of Everdale Manor, regretting that the rescue boat had not been a few minutes sooner. Ever since the occurrence two years ago, on the Admiral's flagship, he had cherished a warm friendship for the quiet lad, whose character was in such contrast to his own. He was glad that he had found the body as quickly as he did, and mourned that it was too late to save the valued life.

Perhaps for the first time in his life Martin Nickley felt the pang of deep regret. Miriam was the only woman he had ever loved, so far as such a nature could really love. He had risked

his own life to save her ; and if she could be restored to consciousness this would be a debt that would bear a great deal of interest for many years to come. The analysis of his feelings exhibited about the same amount of sorrow that would follow the loss of a favourite horse—one on which he had laid high expectations of fame and money.

The verdict of the doctors was accepted as final by all assembled at Everdale. The funeral was the next thing in order.

Suddenly a piercing scream rent the air, and one of the chambermaids, with a blanched and terror-stricken face, rushed out on the porch, gesticulating wildly, and saying at the top of her voice—"Ghosts—spirits—the twins !"

The doctors and several of the bravest of the men hurried to the library. This apartment separated the chambers where the bodies had been placed. A sight met them that made even the boldest grow pale with terror. Two forms wrapped in blankets and sitting in arm chairs, side by side, and talking in a low tone, confronted them. It was some minutes before it was fully realized that the dead had indeed come back to life, and that the effort for resuscitation had borne fruit.

The joyful news spread like wildfire, and the room was quickly filled with kindred and friends. Wonder was expressed on all faces at the unexpected event. Great, however, was the astonishment at the remarkable deportment of the twins. On previous occasions Miriam had always been the leader ; she did the talking and usually gave her orders in a peremptory manner.

Now it was Milton who spoke, saying that they had just gone through a very strange experience, the details of which would not be made known at present. He also gave directions that all their relatives and friends should hereafter call each of them by their second name. In future they would only answer to Edgar and Esther.

They proposed to at once return to their beds, so as to avoid any injurious results that might be likely to follow from their immersion in the cold waters of the lake. In the meantime they desired the feast to go on as originally contemplated. Their uncle and aunt would represent them. The rendering of accounts would do at some future day.

Language fails to describe the intense joy that pervaded the great assembly. The large ox was duly carved, and justice was fully done to the casks of old English ale. The health of the restored twins of Everdale was repeatedly drank, and each time amidst loud applause.

The lower down the guests had been in the valley of despondency the higher they now soared in the excess of joy.

Midshipman Ned Bentley was the hero of the hour. All the ladies thought it their duty to kiss him. Nothing, however, moved him so much as the tearful thanks of Mrs. Van Reem, Uncle Richard Shirley, Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley, followed by the other kindred.

Martin Nickley was not forgotten, and his action in risking his life served as a plenary indulgence for his past shortcomings. To all congratulations he smiled his acknowledgments with the air of a man who has made a very profitable investment, and has reason to expect large dividends.

The midshipman rejoiced because he had saved a human life, and sought no other reward than the approval of his own conscience. The other was gratified because he considered he held a heavy mortgage on the girl whose body he had snatched from the jaws of death.

Three days later Edgar and Esther had fully recovered from the shock of the immersion. Aunt Elizabeth was a great deal longer in recovering her surprise over the change in the characteristics of the twins. Edgar had indeed developed unexpected traits. His voice, manner, and language were decisive, and admitted of no appeal.

Esther, on the other hand, was quiet, gentle, and submissive. She was anxious to please, and acted like a girl entering a new school, seeking for information in regard to the rules and regulations, and very much afraid of infringing upon some of them. Her aunt, having found Miriam more than a match at all points, was disposed to take advantage of this. The girl's change of disposition had been attributed to the great fright and the nearness to the dark abyss of death. The meek display might not last long. Mrs. Van Reem resolved to secure the mastery and hold the upper hand, in case of a return to the old haughty characteristics. She was not long in finding out that the meek Esther had limits in her temper beyond which it was not prudent to venture. This was made known about a week after the restoration from drowning. Midshipman Bentley had remained as a most welcome guest, but had to return two days later to rejoin his ship. A grand fox hunt was organized, and many riders were assembled in the spacious grounds of Everdale Manor. Edgar asked his sister whether she wished to ride Cataline in the hunt. If so the side-saddle would be put on him, and she could get ready.

"No, indeed," was the answer. "I will not ride that vicious horse, and do not propose to take part in the hunt. I have no idea of risking my neck in going over hedges and ditches."

"All right, sweet sister of mine. You surrender all claim to ownership in Cataline in exchange for my slow-going cob, Brutus."

"You are welcome, Edgar, to Cataline, and also to Brutus. I have given up horseback riding."

"Very well, I will go and see whether Cataline will accept his new master."

When it was known that Edgar had given orders that his sister's fiery horse should be saddled and bridled for his use, all the guests assembled to witness the experiment.

Uncle Richard strongly advised his nephew not to take such a great risk as trying to manage an animal that had a bad record, and on whose back very few men had been able to stay.

"It was always a mystery," remarked Mrs. Van Reem, "how your sister not only held her place, but displayed a fondness for one of the most treacherous brutes in the shape of horse-flesh."

Several grooms stood by ready to pounce upon the horse as soon as he should rear and plunge, as was his custom whenever a man attempted to get on his back. Cataline's reputation for ugliness was very bad indeed. He seemed to know this, and was apparently proud of it.

Fully equipped he was led, or rather pranced around, rearing and plunging, up to the hall door. When Esther saw him she grew pale, and begged her brother to forego his attempt. There were several far better horses in the stable, she pleaded, and why tempt Providence in this manner? Words and persuasions were of no avail. Cataline must be subdued, and Edgar proposed to do it. He quickly seized the bridle, and with a grasp of iron brought the animal's head down to his own, and in a clear, firm voice said, "Cataline, do you know me?"

It is a well-ascertained fact that dogs and horses have a peculiar faculty of penetration not possessed by man. In this case it was not so much the voice, or the strong hand which held his restive head as though it were in a vice. There was something which flashed out from the keen grey eyes that impressed Cataline with the thought that in some way, which it was beyond his power to define, his former mistress, the only being who had ever mastered him, was standing before him. The voice and dress were indeed different, but the flashing of the eyes magnetized and exerted the same spell over him that

Miriam had done. He gave a loud neigh of recognition. The next moment Edgar was in the saddle, and the fiery Cataline became as gentle and submissive as ever he had been under the guidance of his fair mistress.

As the party rode away to the fox hunt, Martin Nickley, who, since the rescue from the lake, had been a frequent visitor at Everdale, rode up to the porch where the ladies stood, and said: "Miss Creedmore, I am very sorry that you are not mounted to-day. The sport promises to be a grand one. If there is no horse in your stable that you can ride, I will be glad to place a gentle one at your disposal."

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Nickley," she replied, "but I have determined to ride no more—at least for the present."

"Surely this is not final?" he asked.

"Indeed it is," was the reply.

With a look of wonder, and a glance of admiration at the form of the beautiful girl, who seemed to have grown more lovely than ever, Mr. Nickley turned his horse and joined the other riders.

Mrs. Van Reem felt that this was a good opportunity for a display of her authority.

"Esther, my child," said she, "it is my wish that you dismiss Mr. Martin Nickley, in the same manner that you have dismissed that vicious horse, Cataline. Both are on a common plane for deceitfulness, ugliness, bad temper, and evil reputation. Your bath in Everdale Lake has brought to the surface your latent good sense. That wild riding of yours was always very unladylike."

For a moment Esther made no reply, but looked steadily into her aunt's face until the latter quailed before her gaze. She then replied:

"I may have much to answer for when I leave this world, but ingratitude will not be one of my failings. Mr. Martin Nickley saved my life. But for him my body might yet be lying at the bottom of the lake, and I do not propose to dismiss him. I look upon him as my friend. In reference to horse-back riding, I may take it up again whenever it suits my fancy. I admit that in some things my disposition has undergone a change. Many girls turn over a new leaf when they reach their twenty-first birthday, and are thenceforth mistress of their own actions. In all reasonable things you will find me, hereafter, docile and obedient. I can be easily led by kindness, but harshness and attempted force will only harden my nature. Many a girl that might have been developed into

an angel with kind moral suasion, has been made a devil by an opposite course. There is a limit to the patience of everyone. Mine has been reached in the treatment I have received during the last week from you. My mother left me in your care to fill her place. The sooner, therefore, that we understand each other the better for your peace of mind and my future happiness. Almost from the hour I was rescued from the bottom of the lake you have, without ceasing, rehearsed my exuberance of spirit in the past two years, and have seen fit to take a course of repression to 'crush my proud will,' as you termed it, lest I should break out again. Half-a-dozen loving words would have done more to control me than all the lectures and homilies I have listened to."

With quiet dignity Esther drew her white zephyr shawl about her, and turning to her Uncle Richard, put her arm about his neck and kissed him, and then went to her room.

"Elizabeth," said Mr. Shirley, "the girl is right. I am glad she has spoken so freely. You never did understand that child, and you certainly do not know her disposition now."

"Richard, if you had your way you would spoil her entirely. Men do not understand the moods of a wilful girl. I propose to humble her haughty spirit. The Creedmore stock was always wild and restless. I do not propose to let that headstrong girl disgrace the Shirley blood."

"Be careful, my sister. You may, by too stern treatment, ruin both body and spirit."

Prophetic words, as the sequel will show.

SECOND DIVISION.

THE EXPERIMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEPARATION.

IT was the second of April, and Edgar and Esther were to part, for reasons that will be made known later on.

They had each received an equal share of their late father's estate. The Manor of Everdale was to be kept as a mutual home for them both, and Richard Shirley and Mrs. Van Reem were to have the management of it for life. One-third of the heritage was to be held in trust for the support of the manor. The remainder, in two equal parts, was to be given to his children. Milton was to have absolute control of his patrimony when he arrived at age. Miriam's share was to be held in reserve until her thirty-eighth birthday, which was her mother's age when she died, but she was to have the interest provided her executors were satisfied with her manner of living. Should either of the twins die without issue the survivor was to receive the whole. Miriam's headstrong disposition, and the fear that she would make an unhappy marriage, had induced her father to take the precaution he did in holding her portion in trust. It was also expected that by this arrangement her uncle and aunt would be better able to control her.

Edgar had announced his intention of leaving for America to seek an opening for business suited to his talents. He had a letter of credit for twenty thousand pounds, which was his share in cash of the patrimony. All who had previously known him were amazed at the great change that had come over the hitherto timid boy.

It seemed as though the twins had exchanged natures. Everyone talked about it, but no one could satisfactorily explain the matter.

One hour before their separation they went down to the foot of their garden, and stood on the little landing on the shore of the lake where, just a month previous, both of their inanimate bodies were landed from the rescue boat. They wanted to be alone to take their last farewell.

"My dear Edgar," said his sister, "we are about to part, perhaps for a lifetime. Your wish has been gratified, and you have the privilege of manhood, with all its freedom of action, to engage in any enterprise you see fit. You have money, talents, and ambition, with a glorious possibility before you. I will expect to hear of your upward progress, and will look for your name high up on the temple of fame. I remain behind with the prospects of severe conflicts between our respected aunt and myself. My executors have the power to withhold my income if my ways do not suit them. While you must admit that you have the best of the exchange yet I do not regret it, because you will be happy. You will have a very exciting life in America, and that will just suit your restless spirit. It is hard to think that we may not again look upon each other's face, and cannot even correspond, but I hope to hear about you very often. How can I say farewell?"

"Esther, my loving and always unselfish one," said Edgar, "the pang of parting is indeed very great to me. I wish I could stay to help you. I am well aware, from past experience, that you will have many conflicts of authority with Aunt Elizabeth, but I feel satisfied that you will be able to hold your own at every point. Uncle Richard idolizes and will always stand by you. Make a confidant of him. Your great beauty will make you a power in the land. I speak from knowledge when I say, be on your guard against Martin Nickley. He saved your body from death in the lake, but he may demand a fearful recompense. Aunt Elizabeth proposes to send you to Beechwood School. It is a choice between two evils—life there under the stern discipline of Mrs. Ainsworth, and life here under our dictatorial and overbearing kinswoman. Both are bad enough. There are some nice girls at Beechwood, as I have always heard, and perhaps, after all, you will be better off at that school. Then, when you are matrimonially inclined, the Earl of Montville will be very devoted."

Slowly, arm in arm, brother and sister walked back to the house. The carriage was waiting. One last embrace and Edgar,

accompanied by his uncle, was driven to the railway station to take the train for Liverpool.

Great and heartrending was the grief of Esther as the carriage disappeared in a turn of the road. The awful sense of her loneliness came over her; the strain was too much, and she sank on the porch in a dead faint. It was fully two hours before a doctor, who had been summoned, could restore her to consciousness.

We must now devote the rest of this chapter to Edgar in the dawn of his new experience.

After leaving Everdale station all went well until just before they reached Preston, when by a misplaced switch the train ran off the track, doing considerable damage. It was an omen of disaster, and Edgar felt it; but could he expect that, in his new life, everything would run smoothly?

A passage had been secured by the Cunard steamship sailing very early next morning. In due time Edgar was on board the vessel that was waiting to convey him to a far-off land, where, among strangers, he would find phases of life unthought of, undreamt of, even in his wildest fancy.

The parting from his uncle, following so close to that from his sister, was a great trial, and for the first time he pondered the question whether he had done wisely in asking for the exchange. Would not the former condition have been better? It was too late to repent. Slowly at first the massive steamship left her moorings in the Mersey and shaped her course for New York, and England, dear old England, was left far behind.

The ship was well out to sea before Edgar was able to look up his fellow-passengers. He suffered from sea-sickness, but his strong will aided him to shake it off.

The passenger list was a large one, but we are interested with only two of them. One was a regular Southern fire-eater, Colonel Henry Derwent, of Kentucky, and was the room-mate of Edgar. The other one, whose stateroom was opposite, was a sea captain, and came into Edgar's room the morning after the ship left Liverpool and offered his services and advice, introducing himself as "Captain Isaiah Moorehead, from Boston, sir, at your service." "Now, Mr. Creedmore," said he, "take my advice and go on deck and keep there, build up your stomach with hard bread and salt beef; nothing like it, sir, to give you a pair of sea-legs that will enable you to hold your own in any gale of wind." Colonel Derwent, who was in the upper berth, and feeling far from amiable, raised himself up, and in a sneering tone asked, "From Boston, did you say, sir?"

"Yes," was the reply, "from good old Boston, the hub of the universe, the land where every man is free to call his body and his soul his own."

"Hub of H——!" was the savage rejoinder. "It is the land of cranks and the hotbed of abolitionists. I suppose, sir, you are going back to join in the hue and cry to take our niggers from us—our property, sir—for which, sir, we paid our honest dollars, sir. I myself propose to join in the defence of our homes and firesides, sir, and we can hold our own, sir, against all Yankee comers, sir, and be blanked to you, sir."

This greeting was rather unexpected to Captain Moorehead, who had, with a bluff old sailor's instinct, come to offer assistance. So he replied, in a quiet tone, "I believe this is Colonel Derwent, of Kentucky, is it not?"

"Yes, sir, that is my name, but not at the service of a—— Yankee abolitionist, sir."

"Well, Colonel," was the answer, "one learns a great deal in going through life. I always laboured under the impression that Kentucky colonels were gentlemen and men of honour, but I suppose there are exceptions to that rule, and as I find I was mistaken in you, sir, I beg leave to withdraw."

"How were you mistaken, sir?" roared the angry Kentuckian; but Captain Moorehead had left and closed the door behind him.

The excitement was too much for the Colonel's stomach, for he reached for a basin and paid the landsman's tribute to old ocean.

As Captain Isaiah Moorehead is closely interwoven in our narrative, a brief description of him is necessary.

The Mooreheads were seafaring men ever since the first of the family came over in one of the ships that followed the historical "Mayflower." The captain's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all shipmasters, and Isaiah had inherited a fair share of this world's goods. He had just sold a fine clipper ship in Liverpool, and was returning home to build another. He had been liberally educated and was a close student, both of men and books, the former being the most practical and useful, and, in fact, a necessary attainment. The most successful men in business are those who have closely studied their fellow-men.

The other noticeable points in Captain Moorehead's character will be made known from time to time, as we meet him in the progress of our story on the field of battle and the mining camps of the far West.

Little did Edgar think how these two fellow-passengers would be so thoroughly interwoven in his own history.

Colonel Derwent was a typical Kentuckian, and could not rest easy until he had avenged the insult from Captain Moorehead. He felt the necessity of meeting the old sea-dog on equal terms, and therefore proposed to wait until his stomach regained its normal condition, and then he could have satisfaction, as he remarked to Edgar two days after the above event.

“Mr. Creedmore, you are an Englishman,” said he, “and therefore, cannot understand the code of honour that prevails in old Kentucky. Why, sir, I would be disgraced if I did not wipe out that insult in blood; yes, sir, in blood. That Yankee skipper said I was no gentleman and not a man of honour. He will find to his cost, sir, that I am both, sir; and now, Mr. Creedmore, I will expect, as you are my room-mate and overheard this insult, that you will be my second, sir. In Kentucky a man always gets his best friend to represent him. It is an honour, sir, and I confer this on you, for I like you, sir; you are a gentleman, every inch of you, sir, and if you ever need a second yourself call upon me, sir, and I will see that you have blood and satisfaction, all you want, sir.”

Here was a prospect of excitement for Edgar at the very beginning of his new career. The former Milton would have certainly kept away from this entanglement had he been in his place. Edgar, however, was new to this business, and as the Colonel told him that to refuse the proposed honour would be an eternal disgrace, he accepted it; and three days after, when everyone had recovered his equilibrium, he waited upon Captain Moorehead with a challenge from Colonel Derwent. Satisfaction was required with the weapons of a gentleman—bowie knives, revolvers, or rifles.

Captain Moorehead was very much astonished, for he had had no intention of insulting anyone. The controversial points of the day were of a very exciting nature, and hot words were continually exchanged between partisans of the North and South. However, if Colonel Derwent wanted to fight, why, of course, the Captain would oblige him at any time or place. Captain Moorehead was as brave as a lion, always cool and collected. On several occasions he had quelled serious mutinies on his ships by his determined manner. He referred Mr. Creedmore to his first officer, who was also a fellow-passenger. He said, however, to Edgar, “I don’t think, young man, that you have entered into this business of your own accord, and you

may yet find that I will prove a better friend to you than that Southern fire-eater, Colonel Henry Derwent."

The first officer referred to by Captain Moorehead was a Mr. Joshua Harkness, of Bath, Maine. He was a young man but a thorough seaman. When Edgar made known his errand the reply was characteristic of the down-East population of the Union.

"What blamed nonsense this code of honour, as your fire-eating Kentucky colonel calls it; want to cut each other's throats because of a misunderstanding which five minutes of mutual explanation would make satisfactory to both parties. All right, I will stand by my Captain, but I want to inform you that he is one of the best shots with a rifle or pistol that I ever came across. He has had lots of practice at sea."

Colonel Derwent insisted that permission should be obtained from the captain of the Cunard steamship, and the duel take place at once. This wish was duly made known, but Captain Leitch was no stranger to this sort of experience. More than once he had received applications of the same kind. "Wait until you get to New York," was his answer, "and then in Hoboken you will find suitable places. Besides, we have no embalmer on board, and I should judge his services will be required for one or both the principals."

So it was settled that the duel should take place at Hoboken the morning after the arrival in port.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAY QUEEN.

THE first of May was just such a genial spring day as poets dream about. The ordinary adjectives would be inadequate to express its invigorating influences, so characteristic of the lake region.

It was two months since the upset in Everdale Lake, and one month since Edgar left for New York. A letter had been received from him by the morning post telling of his safe arrival, and that he was staying with his Uncle Richardson, and had about made up his mind to join the Northern forces for the suppression of the rebellion. The war would probably

not last six months, and then he proposed going West to look for an opening for business. He promised in his next letter to give the details of his trip across and meeting his kindred in New York. This letter was a great relief to Esther, for her life at home was far from happy. Her aunt was continually dreading lest her niece should again develop the old haughty disposition. Now that she in a measure controlled her, she wanted to make assurance doubly sure by a severe course of repression and daily lectures, that were perfect torture to the highly-sensitive girl. She had meant to send her to Beechwood Seminary just as soon as Edgar sailed for America, and was hardly persuaded out of it by her brother Richard. That terrible school will be described later on; but enough to say that its very name was a terror to all young girls for a radius of one hundred miles from the place where it was situated.

Mrs. Van Reem was a most determined woman, and perhaps narrow in her ideas of bringing up girls. Once having made up her mind on any point it was very hard to turn her aside. With Miriam she had never been able to hold her own. In fact the girl controlled the whole establishment to suit herself. Her imperious will was a law that none of the servants dared to disobey; and her aunt could never understand how the magnetism of that mysterious force, which her niece exerted, overwhelmed even herself. But the charm was broken after the bath in Everdale Lake, and she had resolved that it would never control her any more, if lectures and severe training could prevent it.

Esther was no match for her aunt, for while she at times resented any extra display of authority, yet the iron, inflexible will of Mrs. Van Reem was too potent to subdue. So day by day the aunt grew stronger in the exercise of will power, until her niece gradually yielded. Uncle Richard took Esther's part, but even his masculine will was not up to the standard of his sister's. On one point he would not at first yield, and that was to give his consent to sending Esther to Beechwood School. Time and again he said, "Elizabeth, I don't believe in bringing up girls under a rigid, inflexible discipline. Why not teach them independence of character, the same that is instilled into the boys? Why should a girl be made to feel that she is comparable to a piece of fragile china, liable to be broken by careless handling? The great majority of English girls to-day are mere children in self-reliance, and when thrown upon their own resources are perfectly helpless."

“Why, Richard,” was the reply, “do you want to bring Esther up after the fashion of American girls? I read a statement the other day that any American young lady could travel alone from one end of the Union to the other without being molested. The idea of it! If an English girl was to attempt such a thing over here she would lose her character. Now, Richard, you must understand once for all that my duty to my niece is of too much importance to take any risks, and I firmly believe that Mrs. Ainsworth, our kinswoman in charge of Beechwood, is the proper person to finish Esther’s education.”

Uncle Richard now loved his gentle, quiet niece as he never did before. The former haughty spirit of Miriam was not productive of reciprocal affection, but the girl was so completely changed that he fairly idolized her.

The clock was striking ten in the forenoon of the first of May, as above described, when a bevy of girls called on Esther to inform her that she had been chosen as the May Queen, and that she would be crowned in the afternoon. This made the fourth year this honour had been conferred upon her. To their amazement she absolutely declined. It was only fair now that some other girl should be chosen. Then, again, she was not feeling well, and was too utterly miserable to join in any festive sports. Her mind was made up on this point, and nothing could change it. The following dialogue took place:—

Miss Agnes Thomson said: “Esther, darling, what on earth has come over you in the last two months? Ever since you and your brother were fished out of the lake you seem to have changed natures.”

“The close call we had for our lives has tended to develop in me a more serious frame of mind. I am not so wild and reckless as I was before that disaster.”

Miss Lena Delphin answered: “Oh come, Esther, you are not going to turn preacher, are you? If a bath in Everdale Lake makes such a radical change in one’s disposition, turning a lively and energetic girl into a meek, submissive nun, I will keep away from it.”

“So will I,” answered all the girls in a chorus.

“If I call for you to-morrow, in company with my brother, a lieutenant of the horse-guards, will you join us in a ride across the hills?” asked May Irwin, the daughter of a rich baronet.

“I don’t care for such violent exercise any more,” said Esther.

"Why, you are celebrated," was the reply, "as the most daring lady rider in the lake district. Surely you are not going to give it up."

"Yes, indeed, I am. My aunt insists that hereafter I must devote my time to music, French, and the study of domestic economy."

The answer to this was a chorus of exclamations, such as "Well I never!" "What next?" "Just listen! "Upon my word!" "The idea!" "Did you ever?" and "Deliver us from a bath in Everdale Lake!"

The next moment Esther hid her face in her handkerchief and cried as though her heart would break. The full force of the freedom she had given up came over her. If this experience was the beginning, what would the years bring forth?

All her fair visitors sought to comfort her, but without avail. Her aunt came into the room at this point, and remarked, "It is something unusual to see Esther in tears. Until two months ago I never saw a tear in her eye. I hope she is not going to turn and play the baby."

Almost like a flash of lightning, Esther rose to her feet and with her deep blue eyes blazing with excitement and anger, she faced her aunt, and in low, suppressed tones replied, "God help any baby that had to depend upon you for sympathy and love." Then, with quiet dignity, she asked her callers to excuse her, and went out of the room with all the haughtiness of an offended queen. She went to her brother's room, fastened the door, and burst into a flood of tears.

Since his departure she often came to his room and found comfort in inspecting the things he left behind. She went to a cupboard and took out his boxing gloves, his foils and visor, his foot and cricket balls and bats, and other articles of amusement; but that which was the most precious was his meerschaum pipe, a present from Midshipman Ned Bentley. Yes, Milton smoked, and, sitting in that very arm chair, spent many hours enjoying the fragrant weed. As Edgar he did not seem to care for it.*

The more Esther looked at the well-remembered pipe the more she became fascinated with it, and the suggestion came to her that if when in a boy's body she loved to smoke, why not as a girl? Just one or two little whiffs, no more. So the pipe was half filled and duly lit. Then came the old comfortable position in the easy chair, with feet perched on the table; what harm

* Query.—Is smoking an enjoyment of the soul or the spirit? Animals cannot endure smoking, and in accordance with our theory they have souls.

could there be in doing so? She was alone in the room. The two little whiffs were taken, and then two more. The cloud of smoke was indeed a token of old days; but, oh! what is this nasty nausea feeling that comes so unexpectedly? Milton never had that. The pipe was placed on the table, and the dainty head, with its curling locks of golden-brown hair, lay back in the arm chair, so sick; oh, dear, she would not try the pipe any more. There was a large bay window in the room, opening on to a small verandah which connected with the hall. Suddenly the window was darkened, and Mrs. Van Reem stepped over the low window-sill and came into the room. Esther never moved, she was too ill to do so; her feet were still on the edge of the low table. Her aunt at first could hardly find words to express her amazement. It was not the sporting implements laid out on the long table at the side of the room, nor the meerschaum pipe, that excited her wrath, but the undignified position of her niece. At last she found vent, and exclaimed, "Of all the things I ever heard tell about, this caps the climax. What would your mother say if she were living? To think that after all my training you would put your feet on a table just like your brother. It was allowable for him to do so, but not for a girl! This settles the matter, and to Beechwood you go the day after to-morrow. Mrs. Ainsworth wrote last week and said that she had heard such favourable accounts of your change of disposition that she would take you on trial. If she only could see you now, never would she let you enter her school. Take your feet down from that table, Miss."

Slowly the little feet were lowered to the floor, and paler grew the beautiful face.

"What makes you look so white?" asked Mrs. Van Reem in a snappish tone.

"The smell of tobacco," was the meek answer.

"Stuff and nonsense. Why you sit day after day in the library and your Uncle Richard smokes, and you never complain. I do believe you tried to smoke, and I hope it will make you really ill; then it will be a lesson to you. But sick or well to Beechwood you go the day after to-morrow."

Without another word Mrs. Van Reem unlocked the door and went out, and Esther was left alone with her memory of the past and no bright expectations for the future. Gradually she fell into a sleep.

Two hours later Agnes Thomson came into the room, dressed in white, exclaiming, "Esther, darling, wake up. I have been chosen May Queen since you would not take it, and I

want you to come and be one of my maids of honour. Here comes Lena Delphin, and she will help me to dress you."

"I am too ill," replied Esther; "please excuse me."

"No, we cannot do it," was the answer. "Your dear old Uncle Richard told us to insist upon your going. Besides, you will be the leading beauty. Why, how pale you look!"

"Resistance to such pleading was out of the question, and half an hour afterwards amid the large assembly Esther was acknowledged as the belle of the lake region.

She was dressed in a rich robe of fine white cashmere, trimmed with white silk, her arms and neck bare, and on all sides were heard the exclamations, "Superb!" "The queenly Esther!" "What radiant beauty!" Among those who came to speak to her was Mr. Martin Nickley, and as he took her hand he said: "Miss Creedmore, a single smile from your sweet lips would repay any man a thousandfold for bringing you up from the bottom of the lake. To me it was a great privilege, and I would cheerfully risk my life again to do you even a small favour." Slowly the lustrous blue eyes were raised to his, and a slight shudder crept over her. Was it an omen, or merely the wind that caused it?

The sport went on, and great was the enthusiasm when Miss Agnes Thomson, the lovely brunette, was duly crowned as Queen of May. Some one had woven a crown of red and white roses and placed them over Esther's brow. Later on, when in her room taking them off, she found a small piece of folded paper, with the following words written in a girl's fine handwriting:—

"Beware of the smile of Martin Nickley, for it is more deadly than the bite of a serpent. This warning is from one who speaks from sad experience.—A Victim."

A reception followed in the evening at the house of Sir Peter Irwin, and Esther and her uncle and aunt went. There was a very large gathering. The magnet that drew all eyes was Esther, dressed in a rich pink silk robe, which showed off her queenly form to perfection. During a lull in the dancing she was surrounded by a number of beautiful girls, and to them she told her aunt's decision. "Where do you think I am going the day after to-morrow, girls?"

"To London," said one; "To Liverpool," "To Manchester," "To Paris," "To the Continent," said others.

"No; to none of those places, but to Beechwood Seminary," was the reply. "What do you think of that?"

Not a word was spoken, for all the girls were too frightened. A dozen hands pressed hers, and tears were shed for sympathy.

CHAPTER III.

NEW YORK IN 1861.

WHAT stirring memories are aroused at the very mention of the year '61 by those of this generation who were old enough to take part in the thrilling excitement of the times.

Much as we would like to dwell upon the chain of causes that led up to the breaking out of the civil war between the North and South, yet we can only briefly refer to such portions as come within the experience of Edgar Creedmore.

We left him at the end of the first chapter on board the Cunard steamship bound for New York. He was the second for the fiery Colonel Derwent, and the duel was to come off at Hoboken the morning after the ship's arrival. Nothing of special interest occurred during the remainder of the passage. The Kentucky colonel could have found abundant cause for more duels, but, as he remarked to Edgar, "One war at a time, sir. Besides, I have no particular grudge against Captain Moorehead, sir; it is only against the party he represents. Yes, sir, it is the blank abolition party that I want to fight. I would like to wipe them all out, sir, every mother's son of them, sir."

The grand entrance of New York Harbour made a favourable impression upon Edgar as he stood upon the steamer's deck, and Colonel Derwent pointed out all the places of interest.

It was late in the afternoon of the thirteenth day of April when the passengers got their luggage through the custom inspection, and Edgar and the colonel went direct to the Fifth Avenue Hotel. After their dinner they went out to see New York by gaslight. The colonel was in a serious frame of mind, for the duel that he had on hand was no child's affair. The weapons which had been chosen by Captain Moorehead were rifles at forty paces, then each combatant was to draw his six-shooter and advance and fire all the charges; if neither was wounded the principals were to shake hands.

The colonel found that he had under-estimated the courage of the "Yankee skipper," as he termed him. He remarked to Edgar in their rambles after leaving the hotel, "I did not think there was any fight in that down-Easter, sir; but now I find he is full of it, and rather enjoys the prospects. I hear he is a splendid shot, sir, and cool and firm."

“Yes,” answered Edgar, who was in hopes that the duel could be averted, “I was told that he can hit a floating object in the water with a revolver a distance of seventy-five feet five out of every six shots, and with a rifle can score a bull’s-eye at three hundred yards every time.

This was not pleasant news to the hitherto warlike colonel, but he put on a bold face, and said, “Well, Mr. Creedmore, they will tell you, sir, in Kentucky, that the Derwents are no slouches at the trigger. At the same time I don’t want to kill this Yankee captain, sir; he is not a bad sort of a fellow, and if he would only apologize, sir, and say he did not mean to insult me, why, sir, I would be satisfied.

Edgar had no hope of this, for the captain’s chief officer, Joshua Harkness, was apparently very anxious to have the duel come off. A little exciting practice would do the captain good, he told Edgar. “Nothing like real war to sharpen up one’s wits; then, also, if our principals kill each other, why, Mr. Creedmore, you and I can take a little friendly hand at mutual target practice.” The prospect was not encouraging for the next morning’s work for the Kentuckian.

The colonel related to Edgar the history of his past life, and gave him some letters to post in case of a fatal termination next day. “And if I fall,” he said, smiling, “you can have me embalmed or pickled, sir.”

“It will never do, sir,” he continued, “to be killed in a miserable affair like this; for I have letters from home, sir, offering me the colonelcy of a regiment ready to take the field to defend our homes, and by gad, sir, I offer you now the position of first lieutenant in one of my companies, sir. Think the matter over, sir, and if you are ever in a tight place in any Kentucky town, or where the troops from our State are encamped, sir, make use of the motto of our family, and you will find staunch friends, sir. The motto is, ‘The star of Derwent never fades.’”

Edgar never for one moment thought that the motto would do him any good, for he had no idea of going to Kentucky, and as for war the small one on hand was about all he wanted.

The colonel and his second were in no humour for any sight-seeing, so they went back to their hotel and retired early, leaving orders to be called at 4-30 and a carriage to be ready at 5 a.m.

Edgar could not sleep. He thought of the possibility of one or both contestants being killed in the morning, and he probably would be held for trial. This matter was not of his seeking,

and it was certainly an unfavourable beginning of his career in the *New World* to figure as a second in a deadly duel the morning after his arrival.

He was up and dressed by four in the morning, and by five both he and the colonel and the surgeon, who had been engaged, left the hotel for Hoboken Heights, that historic duelling ground. They were the first to arrive; and a few moments later a second carriage drove up and Captain Moorehead and his second, Mr. Joshua Harkness, got out, having with them a young doctor. Two cases were passed out, one containing a pair of sporting rifles, and the other a brace of finely-embellished Colt's revolvers. Mr. Harkness proceeded to load them all carefully, and then handing both cases to Edgar, asked him to let Colonel Derwent take his choice of a rifle and a revolver. Then forty paces were duly measured off with a tape-line, and the practical Mr. Harkness drove a small stake at each point. A coin was tossed up for positions and Edgar won, and the colonel took his place with his back to the rising sun. Both combatants had taken their coats and vests off, and stood ready with the rifles in hand and the revolvers in frogs attached to belts around their waists. Captain Moorehead was as pleasant and as jolly as though fighting a duel was a mere pastime to him; he was perfectly cool and collected. Not so with Colonel Derwent; he realized the importance of the occasion, and while just as self-possessed as his opponent he was in no mood for levity.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" called out Mr. Harkness. "All ready," answered the colonel and Edgar. "Hold on a moment," said Captain Moorehead; "these shooting irons are new and may want a little lubricating. Please hand me the oil-can," and with the utmost nonchalance he oiled the hammer and trigger of the rifle, then of the revolver, and, handing the oil-can to Edgar, said with a smile, "Please take this to the colonel with my compliments. A little oil will make the trigger pull much easier."

This exhibition of nerve was too much for Colonel Derwent, and he threw his rifle and revolver on the ground, and said, "Captain Moorehead, you are too brave a man for me to fire at. Shoot away at me to your heart's content, sir. I was a fool to quarrel with such a brave man as you are. I was mistaken in you and deserve to be shot for my foolishness, sir." Captain Moorehead immediately threw his weapons on the ground, and walked over to the colonel, and taking his hand, said, "My dear Colonel Derwent, let us shake hands. I have no ill feeling against

you. This duelling business is foolishness and we are both too old to indulge in it. I never had any idea of insulting you."

It is needless to say that a friendly handshaking followed all round, and none were more pleased than the seconds of both parties. They all returned to their carriages, and accepted the colonel's invitation to breakfast at the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

It was indeed a happy ending to what at one time promised to be a very disagreeable affair. That evening both Captain Moorehead and Colonel Derwent left for their respective homes. Edgar took a carriage and drove to the house of his Uncle Richardson, where he was welcomed in a genial, hearty manner by his uncle and daughter.

Joseph Richardson was of English parentage, and a member of the Society of Friends. His family and the Creedmores had been intimate for two generations, and the only sister of the late Admiral Creedmore, the gentle Ruth, had known Joseph from childhood, and when she was twenty years old had accepted his offer of marriage. A year later she accompanied him to New York, where Mr. Richardson engaged in business.

Ten years of happy married life passed pleasantly when Mrs. Richardson died, leaving a lovely daughter, who, at the opening of our story, was nineteen years of age, and devoted her time to her father's welfare. Margaret Richardson inherited her mother's sweet disposition. Her hazel eyes and very dark brown hair, almost black, with a broad forehead, made her home the centre of attraction for many of the young men of the old families. Her heart was still her own until the coming of her English cousin. Edgar possessed all the qualities of her ideal young man, and the day after his arrival Maggie realized that love—that very much idealized quality of human nature—had germinated in her heart. Whether the final product would be happiness or heartache was a problem yet in the womb of time.

Edgar found on his arrival in New York that the whole country was in the throes of a great convulsion, owing to the dark cloud of war which rolled over the Northern States from the echoes of Sumpter's guns.

There was but one answer to the gauge of battle flung down by the Southern section, and that was that the Union should be preserved, even if it took the blood of a million men to sustain the compact.

This war feeling was infectious, and a week after his landing from the Cunarder he asked his uncle's advice about accepting an offer of second lieutenantcy in a company of the 71st N. Y.

Volunteers. This had been made by one of his late fellow-passengers. The answer of Mr. Richardson was characteristic of even the peace-loving Quaker, imbued with loyal sentiment to the North and a disapproval of the Southern effort to extend the limits of the slave States.

“Edgar, if thou hast made up thy mind to throw in thy lot with the North, and are not willing to be dissuaded from engaging in warlike operations, then I would advise thee to begin at the bottom of the ladder. Thou hast neither practical nor theoretical knowledge of the art and science of governing a company of men. Thou must learn to obey before thou can expect to command with success. This is applicable to all pursuits in life, as thou wilt find if thou art spared to come back from this appeal to the sword. I am not yet persuaded but that diplomacy might have averted this calamity if men on both sides had not been so hot-headed and unreasonable in their demand. Thou shalt have my earnest prayer for thy safe return.”

Cousin Maggie was brimful of patriotism, and answered to the point when her young English kinsman asked her opinion.

“Edgar, go to the front by all means, and who knows but that you may come back with the stars of a major-general on your shoulders, and then”—here she hesitated.

“Then what?” playfully said Edgar, looking into the bright hazel eyes, which revealed her feelings, much, perhaps, against her wish.

“I will finish that sentence when I see the stars on those broad shoulders.”

“But suppose I do not come back with stars on my shoulders, will I be welcome, fair cousin of mine?”

“How can you ask such a question? Have we not already made you welcome? No matter if you return as a private soldier, if you come with honour you will find no cause to complain of how I will receive you.”

“But, Maggie, have you thought of a contingency? If I go into battle I may never return—what then? Will my memory be kept green in your home and in your heart? Would you once in a while shed a tear for the memory of your British cousin, slain in the defence of his adopted flag?”

The beautiful and patriotic girl, with her expressive eyes filled with tears, said, “Edgar, we are both too young to think of so sad an ending. No; I will not think of such a contingency. You will come back with honour. Will you accept this little

locket? it is an heirloom of the Creedmore family, and tradition has it that whoever wears it will be protected from harm. It has already been worn in five battles. My mother gave it to me in trust."

The little locket was duly transferred to her cousin's neck, and its talismanic powers were certainly not abated by passing into possession of the new owner.

Edgar gave his letter of credit for twenty thousand pounds to his uncle to take care of and invest, and decided to follow the sound advice of beginning at the bottom of the ladder. It is not every young man, with a fortune of one hundred thousand dollars in his possession, that would consent to enlist as a private; but then it was war time, and promotion was rapid to the ambitious and energetic aspirant.

Edgar would have preferred to wait a month or so before volunteering for active service, but the 71st Regiment had been strongly recommended to him as one of the best and most thoroughly equipped in the State of New York. They were to be mustered into the service of the general government on the 21st, and owing to the urgent necessity for troops at Washington would leave at once. Therefore, if he wished to go with them, he had no time to lose. The service was only for three months, so he decided to go with this regiment in preference to any other, and made his arrangements accordingly.

The excitements of an active life were thus unexpectedly opened to him, and he was quick and prompt to avail himself of the opportunity. His star was in the ascendant; would it be in accord with the Derwent motto?

CHAPTER IV.

BEECHWOOD SEMINARY.

ESTHER had a full two months to take a survey of the talents entrusted to her keeping in her new sphere.

The great difficulty experienced so far was the want of adaptability of her spirit to the new order of things. The exchange had been made without the opportunity of previous training, in regard to the handling of the delicate, elaborate, and highly-finished piece of human mechanism that was given to her to manage and direct in all its movements.

A single error might be the means of irretrievable disaster. A boy could take many departures from the straight line of rectitude, and the world, at all times lenient to him, would call it the exuberance of youth, and would caution him to be more careful in future.

Let a girl make one deviation from the narrow path prescribed for her sex, and though there may be pardon in the next world there is none here.

The injustice or right of this discrimination is too weighty a problem to discuss, so we pass it by. Nevertheless, Esther thought over all of the laws which governed women in their movements, and, while anxious to avoid mistakes, yet found it difficult so to walk that none should find fault.

It was indeed a great misfortune that she found herself under the control of such a narrow-minded woman as Mrs. Van Reem.

A family council decided that Beechwood Seminary was the best place after all to send Esther. It was true that her father had refused his consent, and the fiery, imperious Miriam was not a subject that Mrs. Ainsworth cared to have in her school; but now that the haughty disposition was curbed and subdued it was a different matter. It was also noticed by her kindred that instead of the former quick decisiveness of action in all matters there was now a hesitancy, and a disposition to procrastinate and to put off to another occasion everything that could be so done. There was also an unhealthy and morbid tendency to linger over her brother's implements of sport, which he had left behind. It was very difficult to get her to join in the amusements of the many young ladies who were on visiting terms with her family. Invitations were poured upon her in abundance, but she invariably declined on one plea or another. At Beechwood she would be compelled to mingle with her class-mates, and then the absence from old associations would be very beneficial. Beechwood Seminary had a wide reputation for thorough training of young ladies in all the arts and accomplishments of domestic life. Many girls of an exceedingly refractory nature, perverse, headstrong, and wilful, had been entirely changed during a two years' residence there. It was not a preparatory school, but rather a finishing one. No girl under sixteen could enter. The average age of most of the scholars was twenty years.

The seminary was situated at the upper end of Beechwood village, and was forty miles distant from Everdale on the line of railway.

The grounds and buildings were the exclusive property of the principal, Mrs. Harriet Ainsworth, a member of the Shirley family. She was the widow of the late Rufus Ainsworth, and at his death his country seat at Beechwood, so named after his mother's family, had been enlarged and turned into a finishing school. Mrs. Ainsworth had ample funds at her disposal; but, having inherited a very strong share of the masculine disposition of the Shirleys, she needed some outlet for restless ambition. She chose to teach, and so far had made a very great success of it.

She was a very tall woman, but had an exceedingly shapely form; her waist was small, which lent a charm to her personal appearance, and while fully forty years old, yet when in repose looked about twenty-five. Her eyes were large and magnetic, and perhaps it was this feature that was the secret of her great power over the girls placed under her charge. Woe betide any of her pupils who did not show signs of submission and instant obedience when those great orbs were turned upon her. If they flashed but once it became a very serious matter for the offender; but when an angry frown succeeded the flash, then what followed was known only to the delinquent and the principal. Both kept their own counsel. No Beechwood scholar had ever been known to betray the secret discipline of the school. The mothers of the girls may have been able to obtain the information, but no one else did.

It was this very mystery that made the seminary a dreaded place, and often times the mere threat to send a refractory daughter to Beechwood was more potent than any argument that could be used.

In view of all these well-known facts, it was not to be expected that Esther Creedmore should feel very happy, on the morning of the third of May, when a servant informed her that the carriage was at the door to take her and her aunt to the railway station, where they were to purchase tickets direct to Beechwood village. She was dressed in a travelling suit of pearl-grey cloth that set off her shapely figure. A small cap of the same material fitted close to her head, but did not hide her broad and high forehead.

Esther was going through a mental struggle that needed but slight provocation to develop into fiery rebellion. If she should positively refuse to go, what then? Her trustees had the power to withhold every shilling of her income, if previous to her marriage she failed to follow their instructions. They would make it so unpleasant for her at Everdale that she would

be compelled to leave. She dared not write to her brother or meet him face to face. Whither could she go or what could she do for a living? It was true that she might accept an offer of marriage from Martin Nickley, but the very thought of it was repulsive.

She paid no heed to a second summons from her aunt that they would miss the train unless she came down at once. She was weeping and looking longingly at the cricket bats and balls and other paraphernalia of sporting things laid out on the table, and was taking a farewell look of these well-remembered objects. If she missed the train, why it would give her one more day at home. But Mrs. Van Reem had no idea of any such delay, so she came herself, all ready to break out in sharp reproof upon her niece, but one look into that tear-stained face awakened a motherly feeling in her heart. Putting her arms around the weeping girl, and laying the beautiful head on her breast, she said:

“Esther, my child, you are not going away for any long period. It is only two months to vacation and you then will come home again. Mrs. Ainsworth is your own kinswoman, and the stories of her severity are greatly exaggerated. I know you will enjoy the school life at Beechwood. The pupils are all young ladies of the very best families, for only such can afford to pay the high charge of one hundred guineas a year. Don't be despondent; leave all these things, and they will not be disturbed until you come back.”

With one longing, farewell glance Esther left the room, and taking her uncle's arm as she reached the porch got into the carriage followed by both aunt and uncle, and they were driven to the station. They were just in time for the express train. A parting kiss to Uncle Richard and Esther found herself a moment after in a moving carriage.

It was just half-past eleven when the guard called out “Beechwood Station.” On alighting, Esther and her aunt found Mrs. Ainsworth's carriage in waiting to convey them to the seminary. This was indeed a special honour, for the average pupil had to take the stage-coach. Their reception was everything that could be desired; Mrs. Ainsworth was on the porch with two of the teachers. She was dressed in a gown of heavy black silk, a lace collar of rich material encircled her neck, and at her cuffs were seen lace of costly fabric. The hand that took hold of Esther's was soft, while the large eyes fully corroborated the words of welcome that the lips were uttering.

Mrs. Ainsworth was earnest and enthusiastic, for while she had the care of many daughters of houses famous in English

history, yet in Esther she looked not only upon a kinswoman, but a representative of two of the oldest English families, and the fame of the late Admiral Creedmore was not yet forgotten.

After being introduced to all the teachers and the matron, Esther was duly presented to each of her new school-mates. She was too nervous and excited to observe the quiet and subdued air of each one, as they took her hand bidding her welcome. Two of them were detailed to show her to her room. For one week they were to be her monitors. Their duty was to explain in detail all the rules and regulations of the seminary, and also to suffer any punishment that would result from the infringement of these rules by the new pupil. Their names were Pauline Ella Vansant and Elvira Nancy Huben.

Miss Vansant was the daughter of a colonel in the English Army, and was known in the school as "the sweet little blonde," being only eighteen years old. Her form was *petite*, while her brown eyes and small mouth gave her face an exceedingly juvenile expression. She was the impersonation of good nature and a general favourite with her class-mates. Her hair fell in natural short curls, which made her the acknowledged belle of the school. She was a bright scholar, and rarely gave cause for entering any demerits against her, being at all times brimful of fun, yet exceedingly careful in observing rules. No better monitor could have been chosen for Esther.

Miss Elvira Huben was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, and related on her mother's side to the Earl of Montville, already mentioned as a lover and admirer of Miriam. Her mother's marriage had been contracted against the protests of her high-born relatives, but she had weighed well all the consequences and never regretted her choice. The Rev. Mr. Huben was a clergyman of good family and a highly-accomplished gentleman.

Elvira was in her twenty-first year. A delicate constitution had kept her from school, and while inheriting her father's brilliant talents had not been able to develop them as fast as she wished. She had only been at Beechwood since the opening of the fall term. She was a brunette of medium height, and nearly always dressed in black, which brought out in bold relief her lily-white skin. Being of a studious and serious turn of mind, she was therefore in strong contrast to the lively and fun-loving Pauline. Together, however, they were certainly the best-qualified pair of monitors for Esther in her present frame of mind.

Mrs. Van Reem accepted a pressing invitation to spend a few days at Beechwood ; she also consented to attend a party given by one of the old county families that same evening.

Mrs. Ainsworth had an invitation for herself and teachers, and any friend that might be visiting, also such of her pupils as she should feel disposed to let go. Very rarely, however, was this latter privilege accorded. She remarked to Mrs. Van Reem, "I don't think that any of my senior girls would care to go, because they have a new scholar for initiation to-night. Oh, well, girls like to have a little enjoyment, and it is only on such occasions that I relax my rules. A great many pupils come to this seminary full of starchy manners, and the sooner this is taken out of them the better for all concerned."

Mrs. Van Reem fully agreed with her kinswoman on this point, and said :

"I trust you may not find Esther a difficult subject for you to handle. Her mortal peril in Everdale Lake has subdued much of her former fiery imperious style, but she may break out again if not checked in time."

Mrs. Ainsworth smiled with the consciousness of a general whose discipline has been tried in the ordeal of battle and never failed.

In a quiet but firm tone she answered : "For ten years I have been the head of Beechwood Seminary, and never had a pupil whose haughty spirit I could not bend to my will. Esther must be very different to the average English girl if at the end of two years she does not leave this establishment meek, quiet, subdued, and ladylike in every respect. Inside of three days you will notice a change."

There were twenty-one girls at Beechwood ; ten of them belonged to the upper form and eleven to the lower one. Two years was the regular course.

After dinner Mrs. Ainsworth sent for her and examined her in her studies, and was amazed to find that she had not a scholar who could equal her in mental attainment. Turning to Mrs. Van Reem she remarked : "Esther knows already as much as we can teach her in a literary way, and it will be, therefore, necessary to concentrate our efforts on domestic economy and the higher branches of English, French, and German literature, for which a special teacher will be engaged at the opening of the fall term. As there are only two months now to vacation, a rehearsal of her past studies will be the best course to pursue."

Turning to Esther, she continued: "We will get along very well together if you will keep before your mind all that is implied in three words, viz., *Obedience, Punctuality, and Earnestness*. Obey all the rules of the seminary. Be punctual to the minute in study hours and the other divisions of the day's work, and show an earnestness in all the routine of school life. I will expect you to give me at this time to-morrow the full definition of the words I have just named, as found in the English dictionary. You can go now and receive further information from your monitors."

With a low courtesy Esther bowed and left the room without saying a word.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mrs. Van Reem, "I would not have believed this possible if I had not seen it. The atmosphere of Beechwood is certainly conducive to toning down the haughty and rebellious spirits of headstrong girls."

Esther was duly instructed on all points by her monitors, and was told that the upper form girls rarely spoke to the lower form; they had their own playground and separate table at meals. As she was the last comer she would be expected to be a sort of maid-of-all-work for the ten girls of the upper form. She would have to brush their clothes, dress their hair, and perform other minor details, and at the same time must not neglect her own studies; and her room at all hours of the day was to be ready for inspection by visitors.

A small book for demerits was given her, but no entry would be made for the first week; after that probably the book would be in frequent demand. Every time that the figure "ten" was reached there was a settlement.

"In what way?" asked Esther.

"Mrs. Ainsworth will send you notice to report to her after evening prayers, and what passes between you is at all times a matter of strict confidence. After the interview, which is generally very impressive, the demerits are cancelled and you start anew. I hope, dear Esther," said both Pauline and Elvira, as they put their arms around her, "that our books of faults won't be called upon for record during our week of monitorship."

"I will do my best to avoid infringing any rules," was the tearful answer.

When the hour came for retiring both of her monitors kissed her good night, and said it was a stringent rule that a new girl must sleep alone the first night, so they left her.

It was indeed with a heavy heart that she laid down to sleep. In her home at Everdale she had often heard vague rumours

of the harassing of new girls at Beechwood. Her aunt and Mrs. Ainsworth and all the teachers had gone to the party, and the house was left in charge of the matron. The field was clear, and resistance was out of the question. So, come what may, she must endure the infliction.

Esther had just dozed off into a sleep when a light flashed in her face, and she saw ten girls ranged around her bed, dressed in white, with masks on their faces. Her eyes were bandaged, and she was told to keep perfectly quiet. For one hour she went through an experience which we cannot relate. The secrets of Beechwood were too well kept. When she got back to her room she was dripping wet, and Pauline and Elvira came to her assistance, helping her to put on dry clothes, and she slept undisturbed through the remainder of the night. This was her initiation into the mysteries of Beechwood Seminary.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE RANKS OF THE 71ST.

ON the 18th day of April, just five days after his arrival, in accordance with his resolution Edgar presented himself at the Armoury of the 71st N. Y. Vol. for enlistment as a private. He came with a letter from the friend referred to as a fellow-passenger. He saw Colonel A. Vosburg, the commander of the regiment, and told him that he had been offered a second lieutenant's commission, but did not feel competent to command men, and preferred to serve in the ranks; then if found qualified he would be better fitted for a higher position. The young Englishman was warmly welcomed; it was a proud day in his existence when he put on the uniform of the Union forces, and he immediately went into training. He carefully studied all the details of the manual of arms, and made it a special point to be exact and prompt in the drills, and obeyed the orders of his superiors with alacrity.

He was in the very highest phase of excitement when his regiment received orders to embark on the steamer "R. R. Cuyler" for Annapolis on the way to Washington. There was not a prouder man in that warlike body, a full thousand strong, marching down Broadway, than Edgar Creedmore. They were singing, "We are marching on," &c.

Thousands of fair ladies waved them adieu. None was more enthusiastic than the little Quaker cousin, Maggie, who, filled with the loyalty of the hour, waved her handkerchief from a window, and Edgar looking up returned her greeting. They expected to see each other in a few months, when they supposed the war would be over, and the castles which they had built in the air would thus materialize on the solid land. Maggie was deeply in love with her soldier boy, her brave, generous English cousin, as she was proud to term him to her friends, and he was in love with his new profession of arms; as to marriage, that was perhaps an event of the future which might be judicious, but he never wasted a thought on it now. His vision dwelt upon the temple of fame—no ordinary pinnacle for him, one of the loftiest was alone suited to his ambition. Failure to reach it was out of the question; it must be reached. Others had placed their names there, why should not his be emblazoned so that all could read it?

The martial music as he kept step to it, the glistening of the sun on the polished bayonets, the wild cheers of the onlookers, all tended to increase the intoxication of the hour. As the regiment was rounding a street corner Edgar unwarily stepped on an orange peel, and would have fallen if he had not been caught in time by a comrade.

The first lieutenant of his company sagely remarked, "Creedmore, you march with your head too high in the air. It does not pay to dwell so much among the stars while you are still related to mundane affairs. Watch where you tread and be sure of your footing. This is a safe motto to follow, both in the army and out of it."

It would have been better for Edgar's peace of mind if he had acted upon that advice. The man who gave it was a true philosopher. A failure to follow it himself, however, caused him to fall on the field of battle severely wounded within ninety days after.

Ten days after his enlistment Edgar gave proof of the mettle that was in him. One cold, rainy night, while on sentinel duty at the outskirts of the camp at the Navy Yard in Washington, a captain of one of the companies, a very pompous individual, unduly elated with his new uniform, came with a swaggering gait. When halted by Edgar and the countersign demanded he refused, merely stating that he had forgotten the countersign, but that he was Captain Blank, of Co.—, and set out to walk on. Little did he reckon with whom he had to deal. With a peremptory "halt" Edgar brought his gun to

the heart of the stranger and told him he would certainly fire if he moved another step. To be stopped in this manner by a private soldier was more than the dignity of the new-fledged captain could endure. He drew his sword and threatened to cut down the sentry unless he let him pass. "Drop that sword or I will put a bullet through you," was uttered in a firm tone. The click of the hammer showed that he was in earnest. The captain tried to parley, but this was declined. The rain was now coming down in torrents. Edgar called for the corporal of the guard, and the crest-fallen captain was taken to the guard-house until his identity could be fully established. When the affair was reported to the colonel next morning he sent for Edgar and highly commended his action. A few days later, having shown great proficiency in drilling, he was made a corporal of his company. The captain who had made such a fool of himself never heard the end of the affair, and it afforded amusement for the whole regiment for many a long day.

The art of warfare was new to both privates and officers, and it was some time before the participants became expert in the stern discipline found necessary in all ages of the world for the success of the last resort, the appeal to the sword.

Edgar was well aware that he bore no charmed life, and must therefore take his chances in what the French call the "Fortune de la Guerre."

Little did he dream, however, of the many stirring adventures through which he was destined to pass. The rough life of the camp and daily drilling and exercise tended to develop his physical frame, and even his sister would fail to recognise the sunburnt, hardy-looking, and stalwart young soldier as the same mild and effeminate boy of only three months previous.

This active, stirring life was in full accord with his restless spirit, and he enjoyed it beyond measure. A field of action was now open to him practically unlimited, and a great future lay before him. What it might bring forth he did not care to know. He felt that not all the gold of the universe would tempt him to change back to the former life, with its limitations countless in their number.

For two months and a half the headquarters of the 71st was in camp at the Navy Yard, but from time to time some of the companies were detailed for vigorous expeditions, and three times the whole regiment was sent to Alexandria, where they had their baptism of fire. The important service rendered to the Union cause by the 71st New York is too well known to need recapitulation at this late day. Perhaps it is safe to say that no

other three months' State troops can claim any superior war record. Some of the other volunteer regiments that had gone to the war looked upon the entire affair as a picnic. Of course a little shooting was expected, a few exchanges of shots to keep the time from hanging heavily on their hands. The idea of engaging in a pitched battle where hundreds of their number would fall upon the field dead and dying had had little place in their anticipations. It was well enough to read about in novels and war histories. Not so, however, was the *personnel* of the 71st New York. This regiment was composed of as brave men as ever left the Empire State, but, like thousands of others, they had not been educated up to the standard of allowing themselves to be calmly shot to sustain a principle. This requires training and preparation, as after events proved.

Information was wanted of the position and strength of a body of insurgent troops, strongly entrenched in a thickly wooded height, and Corporal Creedmore volunteered his services.

An English cotton buyer anxious to get north had left his baggage behind, and among his things was a suit of civilian clothes that fitted Edgar, and he so disguised himself that none of his company would have recognised him. He was not ignorant of the danger he ran of being caught and hanged as a spy, but this lent a spice to the adventure. He was well mounted and provided with papers prepared for the occasion, giving him authority to pass the lines as the representative of the English Consul at New York, searching for information as to the whereabouts of the heir of an English earldom, last heard from as being in Virginia. As this was not an unusual occurrence he anticipated little difficulty. His papers being fully endorsed by the colonel of his regiment as being correct, he started out expecting to be absent two days. A Massachusetts regiment was encamped on a bluff to the right of the place to which he was bound, and he hoped to pass it unnoticed. Just as daylight was breaking he found himself suddenly surrounded by a detachment of Federal troops, and the officer in command sternly ordered him to halt and dismount. Great was his astonishment when he recognised Captain Moorehead, who had raised a company in his native town and had been made captain of it. Much as he would like to have taken his former fellow-traveller into his confidence, yet prudence dictated that the less his identity was known the greater would be his chance of success, and also less danger to his own person. He decided,

therefore, to assume the haughty English style. After his papers were examined he expressed a wish to continue his journey, as everything was in order. He said casually to the captain, "I dined last evening with the colonel of the 71st, and found him a perfect gentleman, and trust I will meet the same courtesy from you."

"Your name is Robert Shirley," remarked the keen Captain Moorehead, looking at the name on the pass. "You resemble very strongly a late fellow-passenger on the Cunard steamer that I came over on in April. I could almost have sworn that you were the same individual, but as you have failed to recognise me, why, I must be mistaken."

"What was his name?" was the cool interrogation.

"Edgar M. Creedmore; and a right noble fellow he was too. I would like to meet him again," answered the captain.

"Ah, I am delighted to meet a friend of my cousin Edgar. He was always a quiet sort of a fellow until you stirred him up, and then he became a very dangerous subject to manage. He had the wild West on the brain, wanted to raise cattle, scalp a few Indians, and other outlandish things. He will soon get cured of that nonsense."

"Since you are the cousin of my friend Mr. Edgar Creedmore, you can pass on," said Captain Moorehead, looking closely into the eyes of the Englishman. "I never thought that even cousins could so closely resemble each other."

With a quiet expression of thanks Edgar remounted his horse and rode on, meeting no further impediment. It was seven o'clock as he reined up at a wayside inn called the Randolph House.

The landlord met him as he dismounted, and bade him welcome in true Virginia style, and instructed his daughter to wait on the gentleman and see that he wanted for nothing. Etaline was the girl's name, and she was very pretty and winsome in her ways. Edgar captured her at once when she brought his breakfast to him by saying:

"Miss Roberts, you should have lived in the height of Grecian power and splendour."

"Please don't call me Miss Roberts," was the pleading answer, "every one calls me 'Etaline.' But why do you think I ought to have lived so far back in history?"

"Because," said Edgar in his most gallant style, "such a vision of extreme loveliness bursting in upon the gaze of the susceptible Greeks would at once have raised you to the rank of Grecian goddesses."

“Do all Englishmen flatter like that?” said the highly-delighted girl, as her eyes sparkled with the keen sense of enjoyment of the compliment paid her beauty.

“Look in your mirror,” replied Edgar, “and then you will surely acknowledge that I do not flatter. This breakfast served by your fair hands, Etaline, will be long remembered in my future history.”

Two results followed from this little bit of complimentary talk. Etaline lost her heart. This was not a serious matter to anyone except herself. The other was that Edgar obtained information that proved of the greatest advantage to the Union cause. He was told of the strength of the Confederate forces, which was his special mission to learn. Also of the work of a supposed Jewish pedlar passing backward and forward with despatches from the friends of the Confederate Government in Washington. He was also told of an intended attack on the 71st New York.

The girl told him that everything that went on in that regiment was known to General G. T. Beauregard, the Brigadier-General commanding the Confederate forces in Virginia. This last piece of information was not of a pleasant nature, for it might leak out that Corporal Creedmore had gone disguised as an Englishman in quest of knowledge that it would be prudent to have withheld from him. The result of discovery would be exceedingly unpleasant, so he determined to leave at dark. But as fate would have it General Beauregard and his staff rode up to the hotel at dinner-time, and of course the representative of the English Consul at New York was introduced.

Nothing so wins the heart of the average Virginian gentleman as a thoroughbred Englishman, and when he is seeking for the missing heir of an earldom a romance is woven around him that is positively enchanting.

As Edgar was highly accomplished and a perfect gentleman, he received a welcome that fairly surprised him. He was constrained to accept an invitation to visit General Beauregard's headquarters, and rode over all the fortifications, and thus came into possession of points of strength and also of weakness that would be potent agents in the coming battle which all felt was near at hand. It was the afternoon of the third day before he got back to the Randolph House, and prepared to return that night to his regiment.

He was in a quandary as to his precise duty in regard to the valuable information he had obtained. He had won the confidence of the Confederates by the fact of his English education.

Could he lawfully use the points so obtained in a civil war between two sections of a country alien to his own? It was a problem. He had taken an oath to defend the Union cause. How far did that oath obligate him? His life if necessary, yes—but his honour!—he would sleep over that question. He gave orders to be called at seven o'clock in the evening, at which time his dinner was to be ready, and at eight o'clock he would resume his journey.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GIPSY CAMP.

THE first week of Esther's life at Beechwood was one filled with surprises. The rules of the seminary were explained gradually: a portion each day was Mrs. Ainsworth's method of making an indelible impression upon the minds of new pupils. The iron hand of discipline was gradually laid upon Esther. From 6-30 in the morning to 10-30 at night the hours were divided for study, recitations, recreation, and meals. Extreme punctuality was a very stringent requirement. Intellectually Esther stood without a rival in the school, yet, being the last comer, she was compelled by the custom of the establishment to become the fag of girls whose only advantage was that of priority in membership. As it was only two months to vacation she accepted the situation gracefully and soon became a general favourite with both classmates and teachers. Her aunt remained four days, and her niece did not regret her departure.

Most of her time was spent in the study of domestic economy, both practical and theoretical.

A detail of six girls was made each week. Two superintended the daily purchases, two looked after the rooms and reported the pupils who failed to keep their chambers in perfect order, and two attended to the cooking and the servants. Esther was constantly on this detail in one department or another. The minutiae of daily life at Beechwood comprised so much that we have not space to record it. We can only touch upon the important events. Three weeks after her arrival a little incident occurred which will give a faint idea of Mrs. Ainsworth's mode of training the young ladies placed under

her charge. It may seem outrageous to American girls brought up under the moral suasion employed in that country. But in England and Germany thirty years ago it was considered *comme il faut*.

On retiring to her room one night Esther found a robe of coarse grey material upon her bed. She wondered who would wear such a garment, especially as it was fastened at the back, with buttons all the way from the neck to the skirt. She threw it contemptuously on a chair, and got ready to retire. Pauline and Elvira, who had both become very much attached to her, came into her room to say good night, and to them she mentioned the strange-looking garment. Instantly they said in a frightened manner :

“What have you been doing? For pity’s sake tell us.”

Esther replied, “Oh, nothing particular. I believe I got some marks. My little book was asked for and returned, and I did not open it to see how many marks were made.”

“Let us look at it,” said her monitors, and when it was opened they exclaimed, “Fifteen marks! That accounts for the grey robe. You must put it on and go to Mrs. Ainsworth’s room.”

“But I don’t want to put that nasty thing on. It smells musty.”

“Nevertheless,” said Pauline dryly, “you will have to wear it, and don’t keep our respected principal waiting too long for the interview.”

The grey robe was duly put on. Esther surveyed herself in the mirror and remarked, “the horrid thing don’t fit me.”

“Well,” was the response, “something else will. Don’t make any noise. Good night.”

Half-an-hour later the stately Esther returned to her room and savagely flung her little book down on the table. The record against her was cancelled. What took place in the chamber of Mrs. Ainsworth we are not at liberty to disclose. There were two doors to her room and a heavy curtain besides. This kept all impromptu orations from being heard by pupils and teachers, who were required to be in their own apartments and their doors closed at eleven p.m.

The first Thursday in July was Commencement Day, and the next morning Esther left for her home at Everdale. Her uncle and aunt found a beneficial change. They concluded that after all that was said against Beechwood, the routine, while severe, was just the thing their niece needed in her present frame of

The foregoing description of punishment is taken almost verbatim from an English newspaper.

mind. July and August passed rapidly in a round of pleasure and visiting. Esther now accepted all invitations, and was the reigning belle of every occasion. Martin Nickley was devoted in his attentions, but, while Esther was polite and affable, she gave him no particular encouragement.

On the 10th of September she returned to Beechwood in company with two young ladies, daughters of neighbouring families. Her position in the seminary was an improved one.

Mrs. Van Reem had sent a letter to Mrs. Ainsworth asking her not to relax her discipline with her niece, but to keep a firm hand upon her at all times.

The lines were therefore gradually drawn tighter until, instead of subduing the girl, a spirit of rebellion was awakened. Finding that she was not placed upon her honour, she did not feel bound to obey the rules when she could in safety to herself set them aside. More than once Esther had worn the detested grey robe, but the result was to harden her feelings, and failed to accomplish any lasting result.

In the latter part of October a gipsy camp came into the neighbourhood, and Esther was anxious to test the power of the so-called gipsy queen, and learn if she could tell her of the past, also of what fate had in store for the future. Nothing would induce Mrs. Ainsworth to let any of her pupils indulge in such foolish nonsense as having their fortunes told. Therefore the visit must be made after dark. Esther had a dauntless spirit, and was brave almost to rashness.

Beechwood Seminary was flanked on three sides by a stone wall, and on the other a small lake completed the protection. In the rear of the kitchen was the provision gate, as it was called, used only during the day, and the key was kept on a hook in the lower hall. To get out, therefore, through this gate was not a very difficult matter provided Caesar, the powerful watch dog, could be conciliated. Mrs. Ainsworth had so trained him that any pupil attempting to leave the grounds after dark was sure to be caught by the great mastiff, who held to her dress, and at the same time gave an alarm that brought the principal out of doors at once. A number of girls had been stopped in this way, and he was proof against all efforts to make friends with him. The scholars hated him and the dog seemed to know it, but it only increased his watchfulness. It was intense satisfaction to him whenever he could get hold of one of them outside of the building at night. A week before the event we are about to record he hurt one of his paws, but found no sympathy from any of the pupils except

Esther, who bandaged the injured limb and washed it with water. The massive brute showed every possible token of gratitude, and no animal can be more so than those of the canine species.

Esther made up her mind to risk a visit to the gipsy camp; its very rashness and danger was a relief from the monotony of the severe discipline of Beechwood. At seven o'clock one evening she asked to be permitted to retire to her room on the plea of a headache. She made all preparations carefully, putting on a short walking dress, heavy boots, and a cap with a veil to hide her features. Watching her chance she slipped down the back staircase when the servants were all in their rooms on the top floor; quietly she took the key and, opening the back door, found Cæsar just outside. She gave him some bones collected for the occasion and rubbing his bandaged paw, spoke kindly to him. He licked her hand, but made no effort to detain her. A moment after she was outside of the grounds and had locked the gate. It was a walk of only ten minutes to the gipsy camp. She was conducted at once to the tent of the so-called gipsy queen. Nothing was thought of a young girl coming alone, as it was a common occurrence.

Esther placed a sovereign in the gipsy's hand and asked for her future fate.

She was told in substance a story that would fit the case of eight out of every ten girls. There would be sunshine and storm, she would be happily mated, and then would come trials, then dark clouds, yes, very dark, and daylight would finally come after a drear, dismal night, and so on and much more, all of the same tenor. Not a word of her past history was mentioned.

On leaving the tent of the gipsy queen she failed to put her veil over her face, and the gipsy chief caught a glimpse of a countenance of unusual beauty. He at once claimed a kiss. This Esther refused and tried to get away from him, but he held on to her. The spirit-faculty of memory suggested a movement she had often practised when in a boy's body. Placing her right foot behind the ankle of the gipsy and suddenly seizing him by the collar she tripped him up, and the next moment was off like a deer over the fields. The night was very dark, and instead of taking the main road through the village back to Beechwood, she doubled on her tracks and took a back road, and reached the school grounds without meeting anyone. The gipsy chief suspected that the fair visitor was from the seminary, and as the place was well known to

him he reached it first and kept watch by the provision gate. He was rewarded by seeing a muffled figure unlock the door and enter; before the gate could be fastened from the inside he burst it open and entered the grounds. Esther ran rapidly to the back entrance, but it was locked and bolted. This was a surprise. She hastened around to the front and was met half-way by Cæsar, who immediately took hold of her dress, and gave a low growl of warning. She at once realized the necessity of keeping perfectly cool, for if caught by any one of the teachers or the principal the punishment would be something terrible. Reaching down, with a low sympathetic voice she said, "Dear old Cæsar, how is your paw?" For a moment there was a struggle between duty and gratitude, but the latter won, and he let go the dress and wagged his tail in token of recognition. The next moment the gipsy, who had followed her, rushed forward and, taking hold of her, exclaimed, "Ah, my pretty lass, I have you now."

"Cæsar, take him," was the quick rejoinder from the girl.

With a savage bark the mastiff sprang upon the intruder and bore him to the ground.

Esther at once fled to the hall door and hid by the side of the porch. Mrs. Ainsworth and the matron happened at that time to be in the office, which was a small front room on the left of the main entrance.

Hearing the alarm from Cæsar, both women went out expecting, as usual, to find some pupil roaming round the grounds.

Esther watched her chance and went in by the now open door, and taking the precaution of slipping off her boots in the lower hall, went directly to her room, where she quietly disrobed and, hiding all evidence of her clandestine adventure, was soon in bed.

In the meantime Mrs Ainsworth called off the dog, and the gipsy explained that one of her pupils had visited his camp to have her fortune told; he had escorted her home, for which service he was promised half a crown, but on reaching the grounds the girl refused the compensation agreed upon and set the dog on him. As all this was told with an injured air of innocence, Mrs. Ainsworth gave him the half crown, and after seeing him safely out of the provision gate, took the key, which was still in the lock, fastened all securely, and returned to the house to find the culprit.

"In this establishment there are but four girls," remarked Mrs. Ainsworth to the matron, "who have the physical courage

to go out alone a night like this, and the most daring of the lot is Esther Creedmore." To her room therefore they went. On reaching it everything was found quiet and in perfect order. A wrapper lay on a chair, with a pair of dainty slippers beside it; and the girl was apparently sleeping profoundly. There was not the slightest evidence that the occupant had been out of it since she was excused at seven o'clock. As it was not ten, most of the girls were still up, and were in the rooms of the teachers, as was the custom, listening to stories. Mrs. Ainsworth went to all the apartments. Every pupil was able to prove that she had been seen a number of times that evening. Esther was the only one who had not been seen since seven o'clock. Back to her room the principal went, accompanied by all the teachers; she was awakened and asked to produce her walking boots. She looked from one to another in amazement at the unexpected visit, and then took from her cupboard a pair of boots. They were examined, but no mud was found. Esther had such an air of innocence and intense surprise on her face that her classmates, who had come also into her room as well as the teachers, were convinced that she had not been out.

Miss Blanche Sinclair suggested that more than likely it was one of the servants.

"No," said Mrs. Ainsworth, "the gipsy told me that the girl was tall and handsome. I am satisfied that a pupil was out, for the key was in the lock, and Cæsar gave that peculiar growl which he always does when he catches a scholar out at night; then he gave a deep bay when he took hold of the intruding gipsy. That dog is very faithful and intelligent, and I have an idea by which, with his aid, I can detect the guilty one; and then let her look out, as I will make an example of her that will not be forgotten for many years to come. Let every girl now retire to her room. Florence Johnson, you can sleep with Esther to-night. I place her in your charge."

Florence belonged to the upper form, and had always shown dislike to Esther. Perhaps on the principle that as some people are diametrically opposed to each other in mental as well physical attributes, they become deadly enemies. It was so in this case. Florence Johnson was homely, a slow scholar and unpopular generally, and may be summed up in the expression Esther often used, "She was the most hateful girl she ever met."

Mrs. Ainsworth had as members of her faculty three teachers besides Mrs. Morton, who was the matron (and gave

lectures on domestic economy); Miss Blanche Sinclair was the teacher of arts and sciences, and her sister, Miss Mabel, was teacher of music. They were the daughters of an English mining engineer, who in the days of his prosperity had educated them at Beechwood, and after graduation had accepted situations with Mrs. Ainsworth. They were both brilliant scholars, and two more lovable young ladies could not be found in all England. Both of them took kindly to Esther, and saved her a number of times from getting into trouble by not reporting her when she failed to observe the rules of the seminary.

Miss Elinor Sterling, teacher of languages, was the daughter of a younger son of one of the old families of the realm. He had great expectations, and only needed two or three relatives to die to put him in possession of a large estate. This they declined to do, so in despair he died himself. His daughter took to teaching. Her family connections made her valuable to Mrs. Ainsworth. Her proud, haughty disposition was not conducive to popularity among the students. She took kindly, however, to Esther, and tried to make things as pleasant as possible for her. None of the teachers believed that Esther had visited the gipsy camp. They felt confident it was one of the servants.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

AT seven o'clock Edgar was awakened from a sound sleep by the porter of the hotel and told that dinner was all ready. His horse, saddled and bridled, was held in front of the porch. He quickly descended, and the lovely Etaline waited on him and kept him amused with her graphic description of the many people who patronised the hotel. Suddenly a sound of the trampling of horses' feet was heard, and a troop of cavalry halted before the door, and the leader called out in emphatic language, "Where is that blank, smooth-tongued Englishman? We believe he is a spy in the pay of the Yankees. Blank all Englishmen in general. What right have they to meddle in our family fight?"

Etaline, with full presence of mind, went to the dining-room door leading to the main hall, and told her father, who had been sitting out in the porch, to keep the soldiers talking for a few minutes, as their guest must not be arrested under their roof. She then bolted the door, and turning to Edgar, who had arisen from the table, said :

“Mr. Shirley, I fully believe you to be an honest Englishman, but these are exciting times, and to be even suspected is equivalent to being condemned; men in this vicinity are sometimes shot and tried afterwards. Your horse is now in possession of the troopers. Come with me and I will find you another.”

They went out to the stable by the back way, where Etaline brought out a beautiful grey pony, saying, “Now, Mr. Shirley, take Bess, and put my brother’s saddle on her; walk with her over the fields in the rear of our house, and you will strike the main road; ride for all you are worth; you can send the pony back by some friend of my father’s. You will have a long start of those soldiers; they have not in their possession a horse that can overtake Bess when she is on her mettle. Good-bye; I hope we can meet again before long.”

Edgar fully appreciated the thoughtfulness of the noble girl, and taking her hand said, “Etaline, I give you my word of honour that I am an Englishman, and have only been in this country three months. I may yet be of service to you and your father, and if such is the case you will find in me a friend that will stand by you, even unto death. For the present, adieu!”

The next moment Etaline was alone, with her tears flowing fast. She looked anxiously at the rapidly-retreating figure, which was soon lost to sight in the darkness.

The girl returned to the house and found the hall full of soldiers demanding, in angry tones, the person of the Englishman, who they claimed was a corporal of the 71st N. Y. Volunteers, and was a — Yankee spy.

“He is an Englishman ‘to the manner born,’” answered Mr. Roberts. “Don’t you suppose I know the difference between a Yankee and a Britisher?”

Etaline was anxious to gain time, so she said, “Mr. Shirley is a true gentleman; even General Beauregard admitted that. When he has finished his dinner he will answer all your questions satisfactorily. You have possession of his horse, so that he cannot escape you. Father,” she continued, “bring out that demijohn of old rye and let these gallant soldiers

drink to our health." A full half-hour passed, the whisky was good, and justice was done to the hospitality of the Randolph House. Finally the leader of the troops intimated that it was time to demand some explanation of the man they came to arrest. He went to the dining-room door, which he found unbolted, but no one was inside. Etaline suggested perhaps he had gone into the garden to smoke. Search was made, but no trace of the Englishman was found. The troopers mounted their horses and searched the road for several miles, but without result, and they returned to their camp feeling confident that the landlord's daughter had some hand in the escape of the stranger.

Edgar reached his regiment without being molested, and reported at once to his colonel, who fully appreciated the valuable information that was brought to him and at once promoted Creedmore to be a sergeant. At daylight he sent him to Major-General Irwin McDowell.

Edgar now no longer felt any compunction of conscience at making known the enemy's weak points after the language that was used by the leader of the troops sent to arrest him. He had sworn to defend the cause of the Union against all her enemies, and as the Southern leaders were using spies of every rank to keep themselves well informed, they could not complain if the same agencies were used against them.

General McDowell was highly pleased at the frank bearing of Sergeant Creedmore. On learning that he was the only son of the late Rear-Admiral Creedmore, of the Royal Navy, he at once offered him the position of aide-de-camp, with the rank of second-lieutenant, which was accepted.

The information thus unexpectedly brought to General McDowell was very important, and was the means of preventing a raid in force by the Confederates on the unguarded position of several Union regiments.

Lieutenant Creedmore was instructed to arrest the bogus Jewish pedlar of whom he had heard so much from Etaline. He found a darkey boy who knew Mr. Roberts of the Randolph House, and with a gift of five dollars entrusted to him the task of taking "Bess" back to her mistress, with a brief note of thanks, and stating that he had accepted service under General McDowell.

Two days after the same darkey boy brought back an answer, and Edgar then fully realized that the fair and lovely Etaline was desperately in love with him. This was embarrassing, as he felt he could not reciprocate. He thought the best

way was not to encourage her, and the fire of love would finally die out. Like many another man, he underestimated her character. Some women can transfer their affections as easily as a bird flitting from tree to tree, whilst with others to love once is to love for eternity.

This work does not profess to be a love story, and we must therefore eliminate all such descriptions from our pages except where absolutely necessary. Sterner scenes will now occupy our attention.

At the same time it must be distinctly understood that we are not composing a history of the late civil war. Such battle scenes as are described are taken from duly-authenticated records. The reader will remember how Miriam stated that if she could become a man she would like nothing better than to ride into the very thickest of a battle and there enjoy the keen excitement of the hour. This seemed to her an outlet to her superabundant vitality. So far we have seen how Edgar made no mistakes, and rose step by step in the upward journey on the rugged hill-side of fame. Away up in a high altitude was a lofty pinnacle. Others had reached it, and why not one so highly favoured by a kind Providence? Edgar had yet to learn, as also had Esther, that adaptation is the unalterable law that governs all things on this planet.

If the aphorism which comes from the pen of the celebrated Oliver Wendell Holmes, quoted on the opening page of this volume, is true, then our education commenced one hundred years before we were born. It purposed that we should run in a certain groove; consequently success can only be obtained by sticking to the said groove. Out of it we will certainly fail at the most critical point. This is the moral of our tale. Let us take up once more the thread of our narrative.

It was now the middle of July, and both the Northern and Southern leaders were anxious for a general contest—a pitched battle, in order to test the fighting qualities of both sides.

The forward movement was taken by the Union army, commanded in the field by General Irwin McDowell. His forces were moved up and concentrated around the ridge on which Centreville is situated. A large Southern force, under the immediate command of General James Longstreet, was strongly posted at Blackburn Ford, on Bull Run. General Beauregard, commander-in-chief, was kept fully apprised by his spies of every movement of the Union troops. In this regard he had better information than his opponents.

The most reliable information as to the relative number of each army places it at thirty-five thousand. No battle of the late civil war has involved such endless controversies as this Battle of Bull Run, fought on Sunday, the 21st of July, 1861.

In the fore part of the day the Union army was victorious, and the Confederates, disheartened by heavy losses, were about to withdraw from their position when they were heavily reinforced. This turned the tide of battle. General Robert Patterson, at the head of twenty-two thousand men, was in camp at Charleston, Va., but failed to send a single regiment to the aid of General McDowell. For this he was relieved of his command by General Banks on the 25th, four days after the Bull Run disaster. Horace Greeley, in his *History of the Civil War*, vol. i., page 547, referring to this battle, states: "The causes of this disaster, so shamefully misstated and perverted at the time, are now generally understood. The true controlling reasons of our defeat are briefly these :

First:—The fundamental fatal error on our side was that spirit of hesitation, of indecision, of calculated delay, of stolid obstruction, which guided our military councils, scattering our forces and paralyzing our efforts." On page 552 he continues, "Although our army, before fighting on that disastrous day, was largely composed of the bravest and truest patriots in the Union, it contained also much indifferent material. Many in the general stagnation and dearth of employment had volunteered under a firm conviction that there would be no serious fighting; that the rebels were not in earnest; that there would be a promenade, a frolic, and ultimately a compromise, which would send everyone home, unharmed and exultant, to receive from admiring, cheering thousands the guerdon of his valour. Hence some regiments were very badly officered, and others gave way and scattered or fled just when they were most needed."

It has been conceded that the loss of this battle was one of the best things that could have happened to the Union cause, for it consolidated the nation and opened the eyes of the people to the magnitude of the war.

On the other hand the people of the South, rejoicing in the extravagant description of the valour of the Southern troops, were led to believe that a single regiment was sufficient to drive before it a whole brigade of Northern mudsills, and did not see the necessity of a thorough preparation for the herculean task before them.

We must now take up the experience of Edgar as one of the aides-de-camp to General McDowell. Orders were issued to

give battle at all points at 6 a.m. on the morning of the 21st. It was 6-30 when General Tyler, in front of the stone bridge, opened with his artillery, and it was three hours later when Hunter's advance, under Colonel Burnside, crossed at Sudley Springs. This delay to carry out his instructions irritated General McDowell beyond measure, and his aides were kept busy riding over the field urging on the divisions and inquiring the cause of the delay. Edgar won many praises from the General owing to his rapid movements and quick perception of the condition of things.

It was noon of this never-to-be forgotten day when General McDowell sent Lieutenant Creedmore with a peremptory message to the officer commanding the Second Maine and Third Connecticut to carry by storm a Confederate battery of artillery strongly posted behind breastworks. Instead of returning to the General for further orders, Edgar desired to witness the assault. This was an error, for he could do no good by waiting, while he would have been of great service to his chief in the critical moments when victory or defeat was hanging in the balance. It was an hour long looked forward to, and he longed to ride at the head of the charging columns as they swept over fences and ditches right up to the enemy's breastworks. He sat on his horse watching the gallant charge, saw the "boys in blue" as they met their death at the very muzzles of the enemy's guns. He shouted for joy as the buildings behind which the guns were sheltered were carried. Then came heavy reinforcements to the hard-pressed Confederates, and they drove the attacking party back and made many prisoners. Lieutenant Creedmore now turned his horse and rode for life down the hillside, but a few moments after his horse was shot from under him and both rolled in the dust together. Before he could recover himself he was surrounded by a dozen Confederate troops and made prisoner. His leg was sprained by the fall, and he could not walk. A soldier was left to guard him, whilst the others sped on. His captivity was short, however, for a second charge was made to repel the advance of the now elated Southern troops, and Edgar heard a familiar voice saying, "Hello, is that you, Lieutenant Creedmore? Are you badly wounded?" And looking up he saw the smoke-darkened face of Captain Moorehead, of a Maine regiment.

Another horse was soon procured and he was placed on it. Once mounted he was able to hold his seat, although suffering considerable pain, and he reported in person to General McDowell. He persisted in keeping on the field and carried

many orders after that, but his error of judgment, while only known to himself, was a keen source of pain and annoyance.

When the sun set upon that bloody field of battle on that warm July Sunday evening, General McDowell, with all that was implied in the lost battle, was yet not unmindful of the aides who had so faithfully carried his orders. To none was he more complimentary than to Lieutenant Creedmore, who, pale from his suffering and bruises, yet rode manfully beside his chief. Thus ended the first battle of Bull Run.

As we are interested in the movements of the 71st N. Y., it would be well to state that the whole regiment, under the command of Henry P. Martin (who succeeded Colonel Vosburg after his death on the 20th of May), left the Navy Yard on the 16th of July in heavy marching order, and was assigned to the Burnside Brigade. They occupied the extreme right of the line of battle at Bull Run and turned the enemy's flank. The regiment lost eleven killed, thirty-nine wounded, twelve prisoners, and four afterwards died from wounds.

Their term of service expired the day the battle was fought. The men were too loyal and patriotic to think of leaving, and went into battle seven hundred and fifty strong. The regiment has good cause to be proud of its work in that memorable battle. Many of the privates were promoted to officers and served faithfully throughout the entire war in various regiments. As long as the 71st N. Y. is in existence it can always point with pride to the noble record of its battle-scarred veterans.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CATILINE CONSPIRACY.

At nine o'clock on the morning following the episode of the gipsy camp Mrs. Ainsworth walked into the library where the girls were all assembled for roll-call. There was a thunder-cloud upon her face, ready to break out in fearful wrath upon the culprit who should be proved guilty of the gross infringement of her rules and regulations. She told her pupils it was without exception the most heinous offence ever committed since the school was opened. Expulsion in dire disgrace was only a minor penalty, which would follow as a matter of course.

In order to give impressiveness to the whole proceedings she had invited the Vicar of Beechwood to read the morning prayers. When this was finished he also gave his opinion of any young lady who should so forget the dignity due to her position as to visit a gipsy camp late in the evening.

All eyes were turned upon Esther during these remarks, but she sat at her desk calm and unmoved. An angry flush on her cheeks added to her beauty. There was a dangerous fire in her eyes, and perhaps the "famous girl-tamer," as Mrs. Ainsworth was called, would find more than her match if she ventured too far in accusing the high-spirited girl without sufficient proof to sustain the charge.

All the pupils were ordered to stand in line, and a smile of grim satisfaction came over Mrs. Ainsworth's face as she thought of her brilliant idea of detecting the guilty one.

"Bring in the dog *Cæsar*," was her order to Mrs. Morton. A moment after the huge mastiff came into the room, walking with a dignified air as though knowing that something very important was on hand, for he was rarely allowed to visit the library.

"Good old *Cæsar*," said his mistress, as she patted him on the head, "show me the girl that you found outside last night."

There was intense interest now manifested on the faces of pupils and teachers. Did the dog know what was wanted, and if he did, would he tell? For he must know that his doing so would bring severe punishment on the girl he designated.

Cæsar looked quietly down the long line of anxious faces. Esther was the last one, and she was looking at him with a cold, hard stare. He apparently read her thoughts, for he turned to his mistress and wagged his tail and gave a low bark.

"*Cæsar*," repeated Mrs. Ainsworth in a tone of authority not to be mistaken, "go and do as I tell you, sir; take hold of the girl's dress that you met outside last night."

Slowly the mastiff walked up and down the line, looking each girl in the face, and then stopping before Florence Johnson he gave a bark and took hold of her dress.

The girls laughed aloud. Even Mrs. Ainsworth smiled, for Florence was indeed the last girl in her school who would dare to go outside in the grounds after dark alone, much less visit a gipsy camp.

Florence, however, hated *Cæsar* and the dog knew it, for she often called him names and gave him savage looks.

This accusation by the highly-intelligent mastiff was a serious matter, and Florence was not only indignant but thoroughly frightened.

So she exclaimed, "You mean thing, you are telling a falsehood; let go my dress; you know I was not outside last night." Then she burst into tears.

"Don't be afraid, Florence," called out Mrs. Ainsworth. "I know you are not the guilty one. Cæsar, point the right girl out this minute, do you hear?" she continued, feeling chagrined that her pet scheme of detection was liable to fail.

The dog wagged his tail, and again went up to Florence and barked.

His mistress seized a ruler that was on the table and started to hit him with it, saying, "Why don't you do as I tell you?"

Cæsar did not propose to take a thrashing, so he made a bound for the door, and his mistress flung the ruler at him, hitting him over the back; he stopped, picked it up, and went down the stairs with rapid speed.

Mrs. Ainsworth was almost beside herself with rage at the failure of her plan. She was convinced that Esther was the culprit, but how to bring this home to her was a problem.

Turning to her scholars she said, "I will now draw lots, and the last girl's name taken from the list will be dealt with in a serious manner, and if the offender can look on and see an innocent girl punished for her offence, then the sting of conscience will make itself felt for the remainder of her life."

This was one of the rules at Beechwood. When a misdemeanour was committed lots were drawn, and the one chosen underwent the punishment.

On a number of occasions this had been successful in bringing out the offender, who could not stand another girl suffering for her offence.

Folded slips, with the names of each pupil written thereon, were placed in a vase, and Mrs. Morton being blindfolded drew out one at a time, and the last one was that of "Elvira Huben."

"Come out in the middle of the room, Elvira," said Mrs. Ainsworth. Pale and trembling the lovely Elvira left the ranks sobbing like a child. "If the girl who is guilty of the offence can now look on and see Elvira punished, then she must have a heart of stone and is unworthy of the name of woman," continued Mrs. Ainsworth.

That moment was a trying one to Esther, for Elvira and Pauline were her two best friends. To confess that she was the

one sought for would involve a series of punishments too awful to contemplate, and then be dismissed in disgrace with a reputation ruined for life. Yet how could she endure to look on and see her bosom friend undergo an agony of punishment? It was an awful moment, but her nature was too noble and generous to let another suffer, and that one so very dear to her. She took a step forward and was about to proclaim herself when Mrs. Morton called out saying that only twenty names had been put in the vase. A search was made for the missing slip, and it was found behind the table where it had dropped. This, of course, made the drawing invalid, and it had to be gone over again. Elvira, much relieved, went back to her place in the ranks beside Esther, who took her hand and congratulated her.

Once more the slips were drawn out, and the last name read "Esther M. Creedmore."

A smile of intense satisfaction came over Mrs. Ainsworth's face as she heard the name; she felt confident that now the culprit was before her, and would no doubt confess when undergoing the punishment she proposed to inflict.

"Esther," she called out, "stand in the middle of the room and tell me what you have to say why you should not be chastised. The lot has fallen to you, and you know my rules in this respect."

Pale almost as marble, but with her deep-blue eyes opened to their full extent, and flashing with a magnetising power never previously developed, the stately girl walked slowly up to the principal until she stood within three feet of her, and, looking her in the face, said, with a voice quivering with emotion:

"Mrs. Ainsworth, your method of taking by lot a girl to undergo a punishment as a sort of vicarious atonement for the offence of someone that you cannot find out is unworthy of this day and generation. It should be far beneath the dignity of an Englishwoman to act in this manner to English girls placed under her charge. I am no longer a child, and do not propose for one moment to allow you to inflict any indignity upon me. Heretofore I have submitted to the discipline of the school, but a public example will not be made of me. You can at once take my name off your list, for I positively decline to remain any longer at a school where such arbitrary modes are practised. You have not the slightest proof that any pupil went out last night, except the word of a lying gipsy who was found prowling in your grounds. You have tried by unworthy

means to fasten the guilt upon me, and for the first time in my life I feel ashamed that you are my kinswoman. I will at once telegraph for both of my uncles, and the methods employed at Beechwood will be given to all England through the press. I am no longer your pupil."

With head erect and a stately step Esther left the library followed by fifteen of her classmates.

A flash of lightning could not more completely have paralysed Mrs. Ainsworth than this defiant speech of the hitherto gentle, meek, and yielding Esther.

She made no reply, but sat like one dazed by some appalling disaster. Those flashing eyes of her kinswoman had hypnotised her.

Miss Blanche Sinclair, the teacher of arts and sciences, and Miss Mabel Sinclair, her sister, teacher of music, now came up and stated that owing to the tenor of Esther's words, which they fully upheld, they wished to tender their resignations, and were willing in lieu of notice to forfeit the salary that was due them. If Beechwood was going to be investigated they did not want to be brought into public print.

Miss Elinor Sterling, the teacher of languages, said that she coincided with what Miss Blanche and Miss Mabel had stated, and also begged leave to resign.

The Vicar of Beechwood then asked to be excused, and remarked that he had been drawn into a false position.

Mrs. Ainsworth never moved nor spoke.

Mrs. Morton, the matron, told the remaining six girls that they could retire, and then tried to arouse her principal, but the shock was too much for her nerves, and there she sat without moving a limb. It was well into the afternoon before she could be persuaded to retire to her bed, and her physician was called in, and gave her an opiate to soothe her.

In the meantime Esther, with the faithful Caesar at her side, and followed by the fifteen girls who had left the library with her, went out of the establishment, and the porter opened the lodge gate at once for them. They went direct to the telegraph office, and messages were sent to parents and guardians to come to Beechwood on the morrow on highly-important business. Esther sent the same message to her Uncle Richard and Sir Thomas Shirley. An hour later replies came to every telegram stating that those telegraphed for would be on hand the following day.

The girls returned to the seminary, but all recitations were at an end. The fifteen pupils who had followed Esther's lead

now met in her room and persuaded her not to withdraw from the school, but to form an alliance, offensive and defensive, and when their relatives came, ask to have the rules of the school modified.

They formed themselves into an organisation and called it "The Society for the Emancipation of Schoolgirls." Esther was chosen president of it, and Elvira secretary, and Pauline the censor, to see that no member grew faint-hearted, but that all should stand together.

The next day was a red-letter one in the history of Beechwood. The morning train brought twenty-five of the relatives of the pupils. Among those who came were Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and Richard Shirley. The latter told his niece that her aunt, Mrs. Van Reem, was away on a visit. The Rev. Mr. Huben and Colonel Vansant also came. When the visitors had assembled in the library Esther, at the head of her society, explained the reasons for calling them together and related the condition of things and the humiliation practised upon the pupils, which, she claimed, lowered them in their own estimation and did not tend to develop the higher and nobler traits of character. Fear and craftiness, and not love and honour, were thus engendered in the minds of the scholars. No one was ever placed upon their honour, and when the principal imagined someone violated her rules she would often punish all in order to make sure of the supposed culprit, or lots would be drawn and the unfortunate girl whose name was drawn out last would be publicly chastised.

The visitors were horrified and amazed at the statements made, and as the three teachers had resigned it was evident that the seminary needed overhauling. Mrs. Ainsworth was sick in bed and her physician forbade her seeing anyone. She sent word out that she placed herself and her management entirely in the hands of the visitors.

At the meeting Sir Thomas Shirley was chosen chairman. A committee was appointed to draft new rules and regulations, which, when drawn up, were signed by all present, and they were sent to the principal to sign, with the option of losing all her scholars. She signed at once without reading them, and sent a message to her three teachers asking for the withdrawal of their resignations, and placed Miss Sinclair in charge during her illness. Among the important items incorporated in the new *regimé* was that hereafter no corporal punishment should be inflicted upon any pupil. Every girl should be placed upon her honour in all matters relating to school life. Moral suasion

was to be the ruling factor, and if this failed then the scholar who declined to be governed in this way was to be sent home. Everything was completed by the afternoon, and all the visitors took their departure. Beechwood Seminary resumed its course of study under the improved regulations.

It was a week before Mrs. Ainsworth left her bed, and a few days after she accepted an invitation to visit Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley, where she stayed until the Christmas vacation. She wrote to Mrs. Van Reem suggesting that as Esther was the leader of the "Catiline Conspirators" who overturned her long-established usages she had better be withdrawn. Esther felt bound to stand by the other girls and declined to stay at home.

The Spring and Summer terms passed away without any incident arising to disturb the harmony of the seminary. Mrs. Ainsworth, when she returned after Christmas, was a changed woman. Her overbearing manner was gone. She treated Esther with kindness and respect, although she spoke of her to others as the fiery Catiline conspirator, and said that there was not money enough in all England to induce her to face the blazing eyes of that girl when her passions were aroused.

Esther left the school for good at the commencement in June, but Beechwood Seminary was no longer a terror to young girls.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DERWENT MOTTO.

It was the 8th of August before Lieutenant Creedmore was able to leave the hospital and again take his place on the staff of General McDowell.

General George B. McClellan had been made the Commander-in-Chief of the military department of Washington, and of N. E. Virginia.

General McDowell was retained in command of a corps of the army of Virginia, but the valuable work which he did for the Union cause cannot be told in a brief narrative like this.

Imperative orders came from Washington to capture, at all hazards, the Confederate spies, who were constantly passing

between Richmond and Washington. All classes of persons were engaged in this business, but the women, especially the young ones, were most successful. In case of capture they trusted to their sex to shield them from serious consequences; they were very bold, and there was a romance about the business that suited their nature.

General McDowell detailed Lieutenant Creedmore for the special purpose of detecting these spies, and all the men he wanted were placed at his disposal to aid him in this work. Inside of a week no less than ten persons were sent as prisoners to Washington, captured with evidence convicting them of carrying contraband goods and information of the movement of the Union troops.

Edgar was anxious to capture the famous Jewish pedlar, of whose exploits Etaline had informed him. He thought that the man was a cheat, for a genuine Government spy would not be likely to boast of his work, well knowing that spies on the other side would be apt to report him, making his detection almost certain. General Beauregard had spoken of this man and had laughed quite heartily over his adventures. A strict inquiry among the various army corps failed to produce a single man who had even seen any such person as a Jewish pedlar. Yet every two weeks he reported in Richmond with a fresh basket of contraband goods, late Northern papers, and a detailed account of the position and strength of many of the Union regiments and brigades.

There was a mystery about the whole affair that made Lieutenant Creedmore anxious to solve it.

On a sultry afternoon in the last week of August he was sitting in his tent deeply engrossed in studying a map of Virginia when he suddenly became aware of boisterous laughter from a group of soldiers gathered around an old coloured man who was peddling chicken sandwiches. Some unknown cause seemed to prompt him to go and interview this "venerable African," as he was called. Slavery in its full import was a novelty to him, and he gathered much valuable information in cross-questioning the various escaped slaves that he had met since joining the army. Here then was an old one that could give him many new points upon his favourite subject.

Edgar had a very keen ear, and the accent peculiar to the Virginia negroes could not be so aptly counterfeited but that he would instantly detect the fraud. He had been told that there were white men who had been brought up among the coloured race and had acquired their accent so thoroughly

as to make it difficult to distinguish them except by their physiognomy.

Lieutenant Creedmore, as he listened to the witty answers of the new-comer, realized at once that he was acting a part, and that the man was not what he appeared to be. He determined to question him closely.

"Where do you get the chickens to make so many sandwiches?" he asked him.

"Say, boss, I guess you ise a stranger in dis ere part ob de country, kase you would not ask a nigger whare he done got dem chickens."

"I admit I am somewhat strange to Virginian customs, and they interest me very much. Is not that basket a heavy one for an old man like you to carry around?"

"Well, boss, you know the nigger is used to de carrying ob big loads, and dey don't mind it. As long as I ken gib de Yankee boys some ob de luxuries ob life, I don't mind de hard labour."

"How many sandwiches can you put in that basket?" Edgar continued.

"Well, de fact of de matter I don't gone and count 'em. I fills 'em up, and when dey am gwine out I replenishes."

"Well, old man," said the lieutenant, "I am very fond of mathematical problems, and curious to know how many sandwiches can be put in that basket, so I will have it examined."

"Now, boss, I don't tink it am necessary to go to all dat trouble. I once put one hundred and fifty in dis yere basket, and golly it made my ole back ache to lug it round. I must object to hab my sandwiches mussed around by de soldiers; dey don't got clean hands, and den when dey is put back nobody done go buy dem kase dey all soiled."

"If everything is all right," replied Edgar, "you will have no trouble in selling the balance of your stock, for I will buy them myself." He then ordered several of the soldiers to examine the basket.

Underneath a layer of sandwiches was found a false cover, which, when taken out, revealed a large quantity of contraband goods, late Northern newspapers, and about twenty-five letters for persons in Richmond. Everything was laid out on the grass, and then Lieutenant Creedmore in a stern voice asked the old man to explain the meaning of these contraband articles.

With the utmost coolness he answered, "Dat am as great a mystery to dis nigger as to you. My ole woman she done gone

and fill dis yere basket last night, and I don't know where dese yere things belong."

"I know where they belong if you don't," was Lieutenant Creedmore's reply, and laying his hand on the man's head pulled off a cap, and with it came the woolly wig and whiskers, revealing the brown hair and smooth face of a white man with his face blackened. He was then partially stripped and proved to be a man of about thirty years of age.

"I think," said Edgar to the men around him, "that at last we have found the long-looked-for Jewish pedlar. Place him in double irons, and if a drumhead court-martial does not impose the punishment of death for being a spy, then I am very much mistaken." The first surmise was correct, but the last one was not verified. The man was tried, but convicted of being a blockade-runner, engaged only in contraband trade, and was sent to prison for twelve months.

Lieutenant Creedmore caught a number of others, but as this became so common it no longer excited even curiosity.

General McDowell obtained promotion for him to the rank of first-lieutenant, and while he kept him on his staff detailed him for the special purpose of watching and examining all persons attempting to pass the lines. He was given a guard of fifty men, with a second-lieutenant and two sergeants and two corporals to assist him, and the valuable result of their work was strongly commended by General McClellan himself. We have only space to record a few of the more notable cases that came under his attention.

Late in the Autumn of 1862 word was brought to Lieutenant Creedmore that a farm house in a secluded spot was the rendezvous for the spies and scouts both going to Richmond and returning from it. He formed a plan to raid the place and capture all connected with it. He set out at dark with his men well mounted, and having with them as guide an escaped slave, or, as such were then called, "a contraband." This man was very intelligent, about thirty years of age, and as brave and daring as one of the celebrated Numidian warriors. He was very different from the ordinary men of his colour. He was a mulatto, and known as Henry Winston, the name of his former owner. His serious, pensive nature impressed Lieutenant Creedmore that he was a valuable man to have, so he was duly mustered into the Union services as a scout. Having been reared in that locality and his master being a civil engineer, he had accompanied him all over that region, and was therefore a very great acquisition in the important service in which Edgar

was now engaged. Henry rarely laughed, and his words were few but well chosen. He had learned to read and write by permission of his owner, who felt that he would be more valuable to him with these accomplishments than without them. His master had raised a company and joined General Beauregard's forces, but was killed in a skirmish, and Henry felt that it was his duty now to look after himself. This he did by going over to the Union forces, and in order to make himself more acceptable he had brought with him six valuable horses, the property of his late master, who had left no immediate relatives. It was Lieutenant Creedmore's good fortune to be the first one to find him out, and, being assured of his reliability, took him as above stated into his service. Edgar at once appropriated one of the chargers and allowed Henry to keep any horse of his own selection. He accordingly chose a coal-black one of a rather fiery, impetuous nature, somewhat akin, as Edgar thought, to the famous Catiline. The other horses were given to his company. All this took place a week before the raid that we are about to describe. As stated, it was after dark when they set out for the farm house, the vicinity of which they reached by daylight. Having secreted his men, Edgar put on a suit of English citizen's clothes and provided himself with a pass, duly signed, permitting Edwin Harten, of Liverpool, England, to cross the lines on his way to Wilmington, N.C., to bring north his mother and sister, who were anxious to return home.

When he reached the farm house gate, he found two savage bloodhounds in possession of the pathway. Their deep baying brought to the door the master of the premises, who with an oath demanded his business.

Edgar told him that he was an Englishman on his way to Wilmington on special business, and he wished to get a conveyance to take him to Richmond and would pay well for it.

The man examined the pass critically, then surveyed his visitor from head to foot and replied :

"You look all right and talk like a Britisher, but there are so many Yankee spies around that one has to be careful. If you are honest I want to help you along ; but if you are not, and I find it out, then my dogs will make a meal of what is left of you. Have you no pass-word besides these papers ?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I have one, but I don't suppose it will pass current in this State. It is only good for Kentucky."

"Let me have it," said the master of the house, "and I will soon tell you if it is good for anything in old Virginia."

It was on the impulse of the moment that Edgar remembered Colonel Derwent's advice to use his motto if he wanted help. He was doubtful of its use in the present case, but as it would do no harm he tried it and said :

"'The star of Derwent never fades.' It does not in old Kentucky ; how about this State ?"

"Who gave you that motto ?" was asked in a softened tone with welcome in it.

"Colonel Derwent himself," was the reply.

"Then I bid you welcome," said the Virginian, opening the gate and admitting him, the hounds following them up to the porch.

The house was once a mansion of some pretension to architectural beauty, and had many evidences left of former grandeur. Edgar was conducted into the dining room, where he was introduced to half-a-dozen men, who, although the hour was early, were already at breakfast. The Derwent motto was a sufficient introduction, and the friend of the famous Kentucky colonel was greeted in a very genial manner. Three of the men present were bound to Richmond, and offered to escort the young Englishman to that city. An hour later they were all sitting on the front porch when the deep baying of the hounds told of the presence of strangers. The next moment a volley was fired which instantly killed both dogs, and before the men could move a body of Union soldiers had covered them with their rifles and the stern command to surrender was given. Resistance was out of the question. The men were searched and then placed under guard. Edgar came forward and showed his papers and asked to be allowed to go on his journey. The officer in command duly inspected them, and none of the prisoners for a moment suspected that the quiet-looking Englishman was other than what he had stated, or dreamt that he was the leader of the Union troops who had captured them.

The reply to Edgar's request was that as his papers were all right he could continue his journey, but it would be necessary to escort him part of the way. Twenty-five of the troopers were sent back to headquarters with the prisoners, while the remainder proposed to raid another establishment, of which Edgar had heard from his new acquaintance. As soon as the prisoners had gone Lieutenant Creedmore once more assumed his uniform and rode some fifteen miles under the guidance of his faithful scout, Henry Winston.

Neither Lieutenant Creedmore nor his second in command had noticed a little humpbacked white boy sitting in a corner

sunning himself; nor had they seen the flashing of the eyes of the master of the house to the boy, which telegraphic code he understood to mean that assistance and a rescue must be had at all hazards.

It was a mistake for Lieutenant Creedmore to divide his men. Success had made him careless, and he was about to be taught a lesson that every officer should remember: "Never divide your forces in the enemy's country." The lesson was dearly bought, but it was effective.

CHAPTER X

THE THREE GRACES.

ESTHER's school life was now over. As to how much she was benefited by the time spent at Beechwood was a problem to Mrs. Van Reem. The expected outbreak of the former fiery and headstrong character of her niece had not taken place, and at last the worthy aunt came to the conclusion that the plunge in Everdale Lake was lasting in its effects. In reviewing both dispositions she often thought that perhaps after all Miriam's impetuous nature was preferable to the present cold and indifferent one. The former often put her arms around her neck and kissed her affectionately. Esther never did so. There were many hours when she felt that she could put up with an outbreak of her niece's temper if only followed as in the past by demonstrative affection.

Two weeks after Esther's return from Beechwood she accepted an invitation from her uncle, Sir Thomas, to spend the summer at his house. She lost no time in going, for she dearly loved her Aunt Martha, who in turn was exceedingly fond of her orphan niece.

Esther was received with a warm welcome at Elmswood Manor, the grand old home of the Shirleys for many generations.

Her cousins looked upon her as quite a heroine from the fact of her victory over Mrs. Ainsworth.

Sir Thomas Shirley may be summed up in all that is inferred in the words of that favourite song so much in vogue many years ago, "A fine old English gentleman, one of the olden

time." To all who came under his roof he had a hearty, genial welcome. He never would agree with his sister, Mrs. Van Reem, in her old-fashioned notions about bringing up girls. Time and again he told her that she was making a serious mistake in her treatment of Esther that would result in developing a wilful, headstrong disposition as the girl grew older. He loved Esther fondly, and her life was always a happy one under his care.

Lady Shirley, or "Aunt Martha," as Esther called her, was very affectionate in her way and rarely lost her temper, but was extremely methodical. On one point she was particular, that was that her daughters should at all times during the day be presentable. She would pardon almost any other fault, except negligence of attire. She left the training of her boys to their father, but looked closely after her girls. The eldest son, Robert, was in his twenty-fourth year. Having great expectations he took life as easy as possible, was very patronising in his way, and had inherited his father's good nature. He was an adept in all the manly accomplishments of his day.

His brother, John, was twenty years old, as full of fun and mischief as it was possible to contain and not explode. He had on several occasions been brought to grief by attempting jokes on his Cousin Milton. He was never happy, except when inventing some new pranks.

Adelaide, the eldest daughter, was the same age as Esther. Her disposition partook of the Shirley characteristic of the female line, and was cold and haughty to strangers. She upheld any display of independence in a girl's character, and strongly approved of her cousin in her revolt at Beechwood.

Eleanor, the second daughter, was the sage of the family, the critic and encyclopædia, to whom they all referred in disputed statements, and her decision was accepted as final. She was in her eighteenth year, but a well-read girl for one of her age.

Irene was "the baby," as she was called, although sixteen years old. Her sweet, loving disposition made her a general favourite. To make others happy seemed her main object in life. Her father called her his nightingale, for her clear contralto voice was heard all the day long warbling some notes of song.

As their characters thus briefly presented are interwoven in the course of our story, we will be the better enabled to understand their actions as they appear from time to time.

There is another important personage that we wish to present to our readers, and that is Winifred Vivian, the daughter of a retired English naval chaplain, who made his home in a pretty

but elaborate cottage, built in the Swiss style, on the Elmswood estate. The chaplain and his wife were very much sought after, and the rare beauty of Winifred brought many suitors to her feet. Robert Shirley was one of the most devoted, but the girl seemed to be in no hurry to make a choice. She was born in the same month as Esther, and between the two a strong friendship had developed in their early years, which augmented as they grew older. The chaplain had made his last cruise on the flagship with the late Admiral Creedmore, and felt under obligations to do all in his power to look after his orphan daughter.

The three girls most intimately associated with Esther's future life were her two special friends at Beechwood, Pauline Vansant and Elvira Huben, also Winifred Vivian. It was a strong trio. They were afterwards termed "the Three Graces in black," as a contradistinction to Sir Thomas Shirley's daughters, who were called "the Three Graces in red, white, and blue."

We mention these facts to show that no girl could have had more judicious, more unselfish, and tenacious friends than Esther Creedmore; none better suited to keep her free from the debasing influence of a polluted atmosphere. A kind Providence had provided a special and pure influence to surround the pathway of her girlhood.

A week after Esther's arrival at Elmswood Manor her cousins prepared a little scheme to test her nerves.

It is needless to say that John was at the head of it, but all the others entered heartily into the plan.

They had yet to learn that beneath their lovely cousin's quiet, yielding disposition there was a keenness of perception that took cognizance of every detail and quickly analysed its meaning. Esther realised at once that some plot was hatching to frighten her, perhaps at some unexpected moment. So she resolved to spring upon the conspirators a counter-plot, and thus to have all the fun on her own side. She went and consulted with Winifred, who in turn referred the matter to her father. The worthy chaplain, in his long experience in the English Navy, had seen practical jokes of every kind played on board ship, and at once suggested the details for the counter-plot that would decidedly turn the tables on the fun-loving cousins. The first thing was to find out what the other side proposed to do; then to take means to cause its failure at the critical moment, and afterwards to spring on them a surprise in return.

The following afternoon Esther made a careful search of her room. At one end of it there was a large window opening out on a verandah. The window-sill was very high, and against it was an old-fashioned chest of drawers. On looking behind it she found a piece of heavy muslin, painted black on the margins, leaving in the centre the outlines of a woman's figure in a white robe. A line was attached to a roller to which the muslin was made fast. It was arranged to hoist this up to the top of the window. It was to be manipulated from the outside, and as the moon being full would shine directly on the muslin, the effect would be very startling to the occupant of the room at night.

Esther knew that this canvas ghost would be carefully examined by her cousins before retiring, so she did not disturb it, but proceeded to arrange matters for her own project.

The Rev. Mr. Vivian and his wife and daughter were invited over to dinner. After the gentlemen had joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Robert proposed that ghost stories be the order of the evening. He began the first one, by relating an old tradition of a girl who had been walled up alive by her father for marrying his coachman, who was then arrested for her murder, and kept in prison for a long time. Regularly every year in July, the anniversary of her death, she appeared at the bedroom window of the various families of the neighbourhood with an illuminated paper in her hand, which read, "Find my body and give it a Christian burial." The description of this beautiful girl, with her long red hair, was fully detailed. Esther knew that all this was meant to prepare her mind for the ghostly visitor on the muslin. She put her head in Winifred's lap to hide her smiles, and declared she had enough of such frightful stories.

John said it was his turn. He told a story of some nocturnal visitors, and was followed by each of his sisters. When they had finished Esther remarked that after what had been related she would certainly see apparitions, and they must not be surprised if she screamed for all she was worth. Winifred must stay and sleep with her.

She asked the chaplain if he could not tell some Indian ghost story to counteract the effect of what had already been told. All present eagerly seconded this request, so the good-natured clergyman consented.

He related a case that he heard of when in Calcutta. An English army officer brought to India a handsome young wife belonging to a noble Scotch family. She was very much

admired by the other officers of the regiment and also by civilians. Her husband became intensely jealous of her and they had frequent quarrels. Having to go away on an expedition he left his wife in their quarters with only two native servants. One dark night some one knocked at the front door. Looking out of her chamber window the wife was told that there was a very important message from her husband which must be delivered to her in person. She took a small hand-lamp and went down and opened the door. This was the last ever seen of her alive.

When her husband returned, he declared that his wife's ghost came into his room every night with a lamp in her hand and beckoned him to follow her. A week afterwards he was found dead with a pistol clenched tightly in his hand and a bullet in his temple, lying upon a freshly-made mound. This was dug up and the body of the wife found with her throat cut, and the lamp buried beside her.

As this story was more weird than the others which had been related, it was at once proposed that the chaplain should tell some naval story—some of his experience on a man of war.

He then told them of a lieutenant on a flagship of which he was chaplain. This officer was a splendid man, powerfully built, and a universal favourite with the crew and his brother officers. The ship was at Malta, and entertainments afloat and ashore were the order of the day. The lieutenant drank more liquor than he was able to get rid of, and one night he rushed out of his room exclaiming that there were two large snakes suspended by a string in front of his air-port, and that they tried to bite him. His brother officers carefully searched his room, and assured him that there was nothing of the kind to be found. He went into several of the other rooms, and the snakes still followed him. Three days after he died.

During this recital both of the boys had their eyes riveted on the chaplain, and when he finished they pushed away their glasses of punch which were half filled, and Robert asked :

“Is that a very bad sign when one fancies he sees snakes?”

“Yes, indeed, very bad and very dangerous.”

“Then I won't take any more punch to-night ; I can almost see the snakes now.”

“I agree with you,” said the now serious John. “No more for me ; I would be frightened out of a year's growth if I saw any snakes in my room.”

The young ladies all said they felt very nervous, and thought it was time to retire.

The chaplain and his wife took their departure, and Winifred and Esther went to their room.

The latter made up her mind not to play her part, except as a matter of retaliation.

Her cousins were not so enthusiastic as they had been before the relating of the chaplain's stories. Irene thought that they should abandon their project to frighten Esther, but her brothers said that having gone so far, and made all preparations, it would never do to back out.

Half an hour later the five practical jokers gathered on the porch, and waited to hear their cousin and Winifred scream, as the canvas ghost was hoisted before their window. The line was pulled but it would not move, and finally it broke. The boys proposed that their sisters should call Esther and Winifred into their room under pretence of helping them to search under the bed and in the closets, and one of them would refix the cord. This was tried, but neither girl would get up. They said they were too frightened, and would not budge unless the house was on fire. This failure was a great disappointment, for they did want to see how much nerve their stately cousin had. They all went silently to their rooms.

Before retiring Esther had fastened the line attached to the roller of the canvas ghost to the window knob, and prevented it from being hoisted. Both the girls now silently left their room. The moon was very bright and shone directly on the window of the boys and also on their sisters. The porch above described went all around the house. Esther took from the bag she carried in her hand a pair of stuffed snakes, over which phosphorus had been rubbed, and fastened them to a line that had been prepared during the afternoon, hoisted the snakes half-way up the window of the boys' room, and held them. Almost immediately John's voice was heard exclaiming, "Robert, wake up; good gracious! I see snakes. I won't touch any more punch as long as I live." Then Robert was heard saying, "they are there sure enough; I hope I am not going to die. I don't wonder that poor lieutenant died." Both boys hid their faces in the bedclothes and the snakes were lowered and put away.

Esther and her companion returned to the hall and went round the other way to Adelaide's room, where her two sisters were also sleeping. They were all very nervous. The little plot to frighten their cousin had acted as a boomerang; the climax was to come. A bolster had been prepared by Esther with a corset on to give it a waist, then a white robe put over

it, and a mask of a woman's face put on with long hair attached ; a piece of red flannel was sewed across the throat, and the whole resembled the murdered wife of the English army officer. Slowly this was raised by a cord which ran through a screw-eye at the top of the window. The result was something startling. Scream after scream rang through the house, and Esther and Winifred had just time to lower their dummy and carry it to their room. Hastily putting on wrappers they went to Adelaide's chamber. Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and the servants also came. The three girls all asserted that they had seen a genuine ghost. The murdered lady had appeared to them at the window. The boys also declared that they had seen a pair of snakes and no mistake.

Sir Thomas gazed searchingly into the face of his innocent-looking niece and remarked, "well, my advice is not to play practical jokes on Esther any more, for I think she is too much for you."

A light then began to break in upon the mystery. Robert and John both said, "sweet Cousin Esther, do relive our minds and prolong our lives by telling us that we did not see snakes?"

"Yes, you saw them truly," was the answer, "and you can see them again to-morrow after breakfast."

"How about the ghost of the murdered lady?" asked Adelaide.

"I will exhibit her also," was the reply.

After a hearty laugh all around they returned to their chambers. "No more jokes on Esther," was the verdict of her cousins.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OATH OF REVENGE.

THE house which was the object of Lieutenant Creedmore's expedition was soon reached and surrounded. They found in possession a gentleman of about 60 years, who with his daughter were the sole occupants, besides two slaves.

Mr. James St. Clair, the owner, was what was then termed an F. F. V. (one of the First Families of Virginia). He betrayed no surprise at the coming of the Union troops. His hospitality was cordially extended. His daughter Henrietta made herself

very agreeable to Lieutenant Creedmore. He was invited to lunch, and a meal was also prepared for the men and non-commissioned officers. All made themselves at home except the scout, Henry Winston. He suspected some ambush, as he noticed the humpbacked boy with a look of exultation on his face. Henry at last found an opportunity of urging Lieutenant Creedmore to lose no time in returning to headquarters. They were in an enemy's country, he pleaded, and that humpbacked boy, "Fred," as he was called, made his home at the house which they had raided that morning. More than likely he had given warning to the local militia. General Beauregard's headquarters were not far off, and if word once reached him their way back would be cut off.

Edgar, while he realised the force of what his scout told him, was afraid that if he gave the order to retreat before sunset his men might think he was showing the white feather, and nothing he dreaded so much as the imputation of cowardice. So he continued to enjoy the conversation of Mr. St. Clair and his fair daughter, and was about to yield to a pressing invitation to stay for dinner when a slave rode up on a foam-covered horse, and seeing Henry Winston, whom he had formerly known, told him that a company of cavalry was only two miles away, that another company had set out to intercept the body of troops that had the prisoners, and if they wished to avoid giving battle to a superior force they must leave at once. In less than five minutes Edgar had taken a reluctant farewell of Mr. St. Clair and Henrietta, and was riding at the head of his men at full speed back to headquarters.

They had almost reached the house which they raided in the morning, when rounding a sharp turn in the road they were fired upon from ambush. Two men were killed and three wounded, and two horses disabled. Without pausing for a moment they charged the ambush, firing with their carbines at short range. They found a force of twelve men—four were killed and six wounded, the other two being made prisoners. They discovered a light twelve-pounder field-piece in position, with a splendid pair of horses all ready to limber up. They also found saddled and bridled twelve horses, all blooded animals, belonging to the Confederates, who were a party of Virginia planters hastily got together, and they felt that twelve such gentlemen were more than a match for twice their number of Yankee troops. No time was lost. Lieutenant Creedmore took his dead and wounded and prisoners, including the field-piece, leaving the enemy's dead

behind him, and a few minutes afterwards they reached the deserted farm-house. They were met by a slave who told them that the road below was in possession of a large force of Confederate troops, and escape that way was impossible.

The only course that remained was to entrench at once, which they did, using rails and farm waggons for a barricade.

One of the Union soldiers was a proverbial Connecticut Yankee, full of inventive genius. He suggested to Lieutenant Creedmore the advisability of mounting several Quaker guns, which he made from stove pipes. The ends were filled with black clay and hollowed out to represent field-pieces, and looked so natural that the enemy were deceived by their appearance. There were apparently six formidable guns. The genuine howitzer was arranged to shift from point to point. These hurried preparations were hardly completed when a cloud of dust gave notice of the approach of the pursuing column. They were received with a deadly fire, the field-piece which had failed to act for the Confederates in the critical moment now worked smoothly and with terrible results. The attacking column, seeing the ominous black muzzles of six guns in position, hastily retreated. The force at the lower end of the road moved up at once to the help of their comrades, but a volley of musketry and a charge of grape and canister from the dreaded field-piece, and also the sight of the strong battery, threw them into a panic, and they fell back, leaving the Union standard flying in the evening breeze on the victorious barricade. Lieutenant Creedmore was well aware that each hour would bring reinforcements to the enemy, while none would come to him. At daybreak his weak points would become apparent, and his entrenchment would be carried by assault.

The scout Henry stated that he knew of a bridle path through the woods in the rear of the house that would lead to the main road about ten miles from their destination. It would be impossible to take the gun along. When it was quite dark a trench was dug for the two dead troopers, the field-piece was spiked and the carriage broken, and silently they evacuated their entrenchment. They found no sign of the enemy, and when they reached the main road lost no time but made all haste, and by daylight were safely back in the Union camp. They found that their comrades under the second lieutenant had safely reached the camp with their prisoners the night before, and had not been molested nor had even exchanged a hostile shot.

General McDowell was highly pleased at the conduct of his aide, and made such a favourable report about his work that a week later he was promoted to the rank of captain. Slowly the ladder was being mounted.

This last raid was of great benefit to Edgar in many ways. It taught him valuable lessons in the art of war.

General McDowell gave him an increased force, so that he had one hundred picked men, all splendidly mounted. Their various raids were in the main successful, and filled with many thrilling adventures. Thus the winter of 1861 passed away, and the spring of '62 was well advanced when Captain Creedmore, returning from a foraging expedition, was told by General McDowell that the evening previous a very beautiful English lady had ridden into camp attended by a single groom, and wished to proceed to Washington on her way to New York to take a steamer to England to join her widowed father. She had been visiting friends in the South when the war broke out, and remained with them expecting that peace would soon be declared, but could wait no longer.

Captain Creedmore was at once suspicious. He went to the tent occupied by the lady, who was sitting at a table enjoying her evening meal. She arose to greet the officer, and invited him to a seat. She had no conception that she was talking to a full-blooded Englishman. She gave her name as Miss Mamie Mayfair, of Manchester, England, and entertained her visitor with descriptions of English life, "so different, you know, from American ideas." She said this with a bewitching smile. Captain Creedmore was satisfied that he had seen her somewhere, but could not recall the fact. It was the first time his keen memory had failed him. He had heard that voice, but there was some change in the make-up, so that he could not exactly tell where he had seen her. He was certain that she had never been in England, and felt no doubt that she was a spy, and that he would soon detect her. With a very interested expression, he said to her :

"Manchester is quite a seaport town, is it not?"

"Yes, indeed," was the reply. "I sailed from there to New York when I came over a year ago."

"It is also very near London, only a few miles?" was again asked.

"Yes," said the girl. "I always did my shopping in London; such large shops there. I often went there in the forenoon and was back home to dinner. It is only twenty-five miles away."

“Do you remember, Miss Mayfair, how far Liverpool is from Manchester? It is a very long way, is it not?”

“Oh, yes, fully three hundred miles. Takes all day to make the journey.”

Captain Creedmore now arose from the table, remarking pleasantly, “To-morrow I will furnish an escort for your journey to Washington, and I hope your voyage to your home in Manchester will be very agreeable.”

The irony of this remark was not apparent to Miss Mayfair. She did not think for a moment that she was suspected.

Captain Creedmore went at once to General McDowell, and told him that the fair, so-called young English lady was a Southern spy, and no doubt carrying despatches to Washington.

A regular female detective was employed at headquarters to examine suspected women, but she was away sick. It was necessary that this young lady should be searched, otherwise the valuable secret despatches she was carrying would not be secured. How to search her was a problem. General McDowell was inclined to doubt that she was a spy; her story was straightforward, and she appeared to be familiar with English history and customs.

Captain Creedmore told him that he was perfectly sure she had never been in England. He explained to the General that he had questioned her in relation to the distance between Manchester and London, which was fully two hundred miles, and only thirty miles to Liverpool, also that Manchester was an inland city. She perhaps had read about English cities, but was sadly at fault in their geographical situation.

Captain Creedmore sent for his scout, Henry Winston, and asked him whether he did not think this young lady was from the South.

“I am sure of it,” was the reply, “and I have seen her somewhere; she is disguised. Why don’t you search her, or get up some commotion in the camp, and in the excitement take away the satchel she carries?”

“Her despatches are not in the bag she has with her,” he replied. “She has them about her person, more than likely sewed up in the waist of her dress. An idea has come to me resulting from your suggestion. I think it will work to a charm.”

At ten o’clock that night a sentry called out to Miss Mayfair that her tent was on fire and she had better come out at once. She had merely taken her dress off, and was sleeping soundly on the army bed. Half asleep and thoroughly frightened she

rushed out with a shawl on her shoulders. The sentry put his cloak around her, and an officer escorted her to another tent. She had no sooner reached it than she turned in wild alarm to go back. She had forgotten her dress. All her papers were in the waist of it. The officer told her that everything would be brought over, and she need fear no alarm.

In the meantime Captain Creedmore had gone into the vacated tent. As he expected he had found two packages sewn up in each side of her basque. It took but a moment to extract them, and some dummy papers put in their place. A blonde wig lay on a small table by the head of the cot. This told the story. All the things were bundled up, and Captain Creedmore and Henry went over with them to the other tent. They found Miss Mayfair sitting on a camp stool with the sentry's cloak around her, and looking terribly pale and worried. In her excitement she had forgotten her wig and disguise.

The Captain gave her a searching glance and smiled. His doubts had been confirmed, and Miss Mayfair was thus revealed in her true colours.

He quietly remarked: "Miss Henrietta St. Clair, the next time you pass for an English lady, I would advise you to become more proficient in English geography. You will now consider yourself a prisoner, and to-morrow you will be sent under escort to Washington. The papers sewn up in your basque will be delivered safely, but not to the persons for whom they were intended.

A lioness robbed of her whelps could not have exhibited greater fury than this girl. She called Captain Creedmore all the names she could think of, with strong adjectives attached, and finally ended by taking a solemn oath never to rest until she had her revenge. "I will see you lodged safely in Libby Prison," said she, "and will watch with keen delight your slow starvation. You are too mean to live. It was you who got up that contemptible trick of setting the tent on fire, and when I rushed out you went in and took my papers. In that raid of yours last fall you killed a man I loved, and I have to get square with you for that. Remember that just as sure as you live I will yet have my day of vengeance, and it will be sweet. Go on now and do your worst."

Captain Creedmore bowed profoundly, and smiled as he answered, "Miss St. Clair, we are making war against men and not against women. Therefore no one will molest you at our headquarters. The papers that you were carrying are no

doubt of importance to your people, so they will be to us, and will perhaps save many valuable lives. I performed my duty, and have been as considerate of your feelings as it was possible to be under the circumstances. I now have the honour to bid you good night."

The baffled Southern girl was left alone, with only the measured tread of the sentinel before her tent to remind her that she was a prisoner.

Captain Creedmore went at once to General McDowell, and the captured despatches were opened. They were of such an important nature that an officer with a strong escort was detailed to take them to General McClellan, who wrote back a very complimentary letter to Captain Creedmore, as did Secretary Stanton a week later.

Miss St. Clair on arriving at Washington was sent a prisoner to Fort Lafayette, where she remained some time.

Captain Creedmore was very successful in arresting "contraband mail carriers," as they were called, and had many amusing experiences.

One afternoon he received a letter from Miss Etaline Roberts, stating that she and her father were prisoners bound for Washington, and implored his help. An hour later he handed her an order for her release and her father also, and a pass through the lines to their home. Etaline, with her eyes filled with tears, took his hands and kissed them, at the same time expressing her gratitude in fervent language.

Edgar replied gallantly, saying: "No thanks are due, my fair Etaline. I am only paying back part of a debt to you. If I had been caught that night at your hotel it would have gone hard with me."

"I have often wanted to see you since that never-to-be-forgotten evening," said Etaline. "I heard about you from time to time. I have also heard recently that Henrietta St. Clair took a solemn oath to be revenged on you, and vowed to get you into Libby Prison. All I can say is, that if you ever go there I will secure your release. Henrietta will find that I am more than a match for her. That girl was a fool to act as she did. It was your duty to intercept all unlawful correspondence. She knew the risk she assumed. We were schoolmates. She was always proud and conceited. I had a jolly laugh when I heard how you got her out of the tent and secured the papers. The officials in Richmond, though regretting the failure to get the documents through, yet were

amused at your ingenious way of finding out who she was. She tried to do something wonderful, and found herself in Fort Lafayette." Thus Etaline and Edgar parted for a season.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BELTED EARL.

ESTHER had been at Elmswood two weeks when, one bright afternoon, returning from a ramble with her cousins, she was agreeably surprised in walking up the fine carriage-way, shaded with elm trees on both sides, to see a great mastiff come bounding down from the house, barking and wagging his tail with joy. "Why, if this isn't Cæsar," she exclaimed. "How did you come here, you dear old dog?" She put her arms round his neck and hugged him.

Her uncle, Sir Thomas, was on the porch, and told her that the dog had been brought from the railway station an hour previously by one of the *employés*, with a note from Mrs. Ainsworth, which read as follows:—

BEECHWOOD SEMINARY, July 25th, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR THOMAS,

I am enjoying this summer's vacation as I never did the same period of rest before. To me it is a great satisfaction to feel that I am the mistress once more of my own house. You may think it very strange, but I cannot help feeling a great dislike to my dog Cæsar. I am fully satisfied in my own mind that Esther won him away from his allegiance to me. Her power over him was so great that he refused to betray her in the critical moment. Since she left I had a long talk with the gipsy queen, and she described the girl that came that night to her camp so clearly that it left no room for doubt that it was Esther. The law may be right which defines that no one shall be termed guilty until duly proved so. Well, that episode is passed, but Cæsar, having betrayed my confidence, I send him as a present to Esther. She may have use for him; I have none.

Give my very kind love to your wife, and I hope the visit of your niece to your house may not result in the revolution that her coming to this seminary did here. I remain,

Your affectionate kinswoman,

HARRIET AINSWORTH.

SIR THOMAS SHIRLEY, Bart.,
Elmswood Manor.

A burst of laughter from Esther and her cousins greeted the reading of this letter, and Cæsar got an extra hug all round. He showed his attachment to his new mistress at once, and never was an animal more devoted from that time than he was.

Two days afterwards Cæsar, on going out in the morning, acted very strangely. He slept on a rug outside Esther's door at night. He ran round the walk in front and by the side of the house, sniffing the ground and barking savagely. Robert, who was a keen judge of the various traits of dogs, surmised that some stranger had been round the house during the night, and one whom Cæsar did not like. The lodge-keeper on being sent for stated that at ten o'clock the previous night he found a gipsy looking into the drawing-room window, and on being asked what he was doing stated that he had a letter for Miss Creedmore, which he must deliver in person and he would call next day, and that it was necessary for him to see her alone. Robert and John were very indignant at the presumption of the gipsy, and stated that if they caught him prowling around the house again he would have cause to regret it.

As related in a previous chapter, one of the weaknesses of Esther's character was superstition and a yearning desire to probe into the future. She had heard two days previously that a gipsy encampment had come into the vicinity. She wondered at the time whether it was the same one that she had visited ten months previously at Beechwood. She resolved to investigate for herself. With Cæsar's escort she felt safe.

After breakfast she excused herself to her cousins, saying that she would run over and see Winifred for a few moments.

There was a circular clump of woods surrounded by a stone wall about a mile from the manor, and a summer-house built in rustic fashion in the centre of it. It was used as a picnic ground for the Shirley family and friends. The children of the parish church also had the use of it on special occasions. She went directly to this place, as it was on high ground and commanded a view of the surrounding country. An iron gate was the only entrance. She had the key with her. On reaching the place she unlocked the gate and entering stood on the porch of the rustic house, and surveyed the grand panorama spread before her for many miles. While thus engaged a warning bark from Cæsar gave notice of the approach of a stranger. She called the dog to her side, and a moment later the gipsy chief stood before her, with his cap in his hand, and in a deferential attitude he addressed her :

“Miss Creedmore, I am glad to have the opportunity of setting myself right before you. Last year, when you visited my wife, the queen of our tribe, I asked for a kiss. This is a toll I take from the many girls who come to have their fortunes told. Further than that I would not have harmed a hair of your head, and if you had not thrown me down I would have escorted you safely back to the seminary, and thus saved you from a very unpleasant experience. For reasons which I am unable to explain I feel a deep interest in your welfare, and I assure you by the sacred traditions of our tribe, and this is the greatest oath a gipsy can take, that you will always find in me a true friend. We make a special study of the stars, and there are signs and tokens which have been handed down from remote ages which have never failed in their import. Two nights ago I watched you as you stood on the porch of Mr. Vivian’s house, while his daughter Winifred had her arm round your waist. She was looking at you in the full light of the moon, while you were intently gazing at the evening star. I also watched for the signs. First a small cloud passed over the star, then a few moments later a darker one came and obscured it. That passed away and was followed by a still darker one, which obscured it for thirteen minutes. Then it, too, passed away, but the star was dimmed and did not shine so brightly as before. Now for the meaning of these signs. In your case ‘coming events are casting their shadows before.’ A small cloud will come over you but it will pass away; then will come greater trouble, but this you will succeed in putting aside. Then will come a great calamity which will last thirteen years. You will again shine out before the world, but the great lustre will have departed, never more to return. Being thus forewarned, why not become forearmed? Let me see your hand.” Taking it in his he continued: “I see lines of immediate danger. Some one, whether woman or man I cannot tell, is now plotting against your welfare. Be prudent, be cautious. I never felt the same interest in a human being as I now do in you. If you ever want my help post me a letter directed simply to Ziska, the Gipsy Chief. Put it in any post-office and it will find me.”

Esther was deeply interested in what was said. The man was sincere, but just what amount of belief to place in his prognostication she was puzzled to define. She took out her purse and taking a sovereign offered it to him, which he respectfully declined, saying: “I dare not take money for what I have told you. I am under an influence which I

cannot account for. I have a foreboding of evil coming upon you to-day that is overpowering in its effect. You had better return to the manor and I will follow at a respectful distance, and see that no harm comes to you."

Cæsar at this point gave a low growl, then a fierce bark. A heavy footstep was heard coming up the walk from the iron gateway, and the next moment Martin Nickley stood before them. He had on a riding suit and was booted and spurred, with a heavy whip in his hand. In a tone of surprise, mingled with sarcasm, he said :

"I am astonished and grieved to see the fastidious daughter of the house of Shirley and of Creedmore holding a private conference with a vagabond gipsy, who, if he had his deserts, ought to be transported to penal servitude for life. Allow me," he continued, offering his arm to Esther, "to escort you to more respectable society."

The swarthy complexion of the gipsy turned to a darker hue in the effort to suppress the anger which was slowly shaking his frame, and he slowly replied: "If you, Mr. Nickley, were placed in one scale and I in the other it would take a dozen men like myself to balance your iniquity. In all my shortcomings no man can say that I ever basely robbed a girl of her honour, and then threw her aside as a worthless toy. There is no blood of wronged women crying to heaven for vengeance against me, as there is against you."

Martin Nickley waved his whip, saying: "I will show how I chastise such a villain as you are." But before he could strike, the gipsy chief snatched the whip out of his hand and flung it far into the woods, saying :

"Martin Nickley, if you do not respect the presence of this lady I do, and were it not for her I would give you such a chastisement as you never had before."

Martin Nickley was beside himself with rage as he replied, "I will get a warrant out for your arrest from Sir Thomas, and have you sent to jail."

"No, you won't," was the sneering retort. "If you have forgotten Cecilia Thorndike I have not, and there are others who remember her also. Your visit to Elmswood would be very brief if all the details of that affair were known to Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley. I will leave you now," and a moment after the gipsy had disappeared in the woods.

Esther and Martin Nickley then walked back to the manor. He told her that he arrived five minutes after she had left

the house, that he was staying with a friend in the neighbourhood, and had come over to see her.

On reaching the house Sir Thomas came out to greet them, saying to Esther: "My dear child, I have a surprise for you. The Earl of Montville has just come on a visit, and is very anxious to meet you once more. He has been abroad and returned yesterday. He wrote to me some months ago, saying that your rejection of his offer of marriage took all the life and energy out of him. He now comes back to see whether he still has any chance of meeting with favour at your hands."

Martin Nickley's face grew black, and turning to Esther he said:

"When a belted earl comes wooing to my lady fair, then a commoner has no chance of even a smile by way of a reward for risking his life in searching for your body at the bottom of the lake."

"Sir Thomas," he said, "please excuse me now and convey my greetings to your family." He then mounted his horse and rode away without another word.

"Very jealous, my dear," said the uncle to his niece. "Truly he saved your life, and apparently he wants a big reward."

The young and handsome Earl of Montville came out on the porch bareheaded, and taking Esther's hand greeted her very cordially, remarking, "Fair queen of beauty, you grow more lovely than ever. In all my travels I have seen nothing to excel the radiant splendour of your eyes. Do you remember how as children we used to play together on these very grounds when we both visited here? Have you forgotten the sparring matches I had with your brother? I hear he is doing splendidly in America, and has been promoted for gallant service on the field of battle. I never thought Milton cared for warlike sport."

"Edgar is his name now," said Esther, with a quiet smile.

"Oh, pardon me, I forgot," said the earl; "that was a queer notion of both of you wishing to be called by your second name."

"The immersion in the lake changed our dispositions," replied Esther, "and we wanted our friends to note the effect; that was all."

The earl promised to stay a week provided his company was agreeable, and when they got tired of him to let him know.

An earl of the realm, young, rich, and handsome, was a prize that young ladies would not be apt to get tired of in a hurry.

Esther's cousins made up their minds that if she did not want to be a countess, then they would strive for the coronet.

The following morning a gentleman waited on the earl with a challenge from Martin Nickley to fight a duel in Belgium. The matter was referred to Sir Thomas, who rode over to where Mr. Nickley was stopping, and told him that the Earl of Montville was a playmate from childhood with Esther; he served as a lieutenant on her father's flagship, and had his permission to pay attention to his daughter.

Mr. Nickley had cooled off, and replied that if Esther preferred the belted earl to one who had saved her life well and good, he would withdraw from the field. By so doing she exhibited so much ingratitude that she was not worth fighting about. He withdrew his challenge and also his proposal of marriage. A young lady who thought so little of her dignity as to make appointments in a summer-house with a roving, vagabond gipsy chief was not a woman that he wanted for a wife.

Sir Thomas gave a look of withering scorn at Martin Nickley, and without answering a single word he mounted his horse and rode home.

Esther told her uncle frankly and candidly the object of going to the summer-house. She had Cæsar with her at the time, and the gipsy was most respectful in his deportment, and his advice was good.

"That may be," was the answer, "but it is not well to allow such a man as Martin Nickley to have even a slender thread to work up into a whole texture of insinuations and inferences."

Martin Nickley resolved that if the earl won Esther as his wife, then before she became the Countess of Montville her good name should be tarnished.

The following day he called in person on Mrs. Van Reem, and gave her an exaggerated statement of her niece meeting the gipsy chief alone in a summer-house. He also told the same story to Mrs. Ainsworth. This was the beginning. God help the girl who has a villain like that to assail and undermine her reputation.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM.

ONE sultry afternoon in the early part of August, 1862, Edgar returned to headquarters, tired and dusty after a long ride. He had a very strong mounted force, as several attempts were made to capture him. False rumours were often brought of spies and contraband mails and goods stored at certain points, but he was too wary to fall into the trap laid for him.

On this occasion he brought back a noted spy who had passed to and fro a number of times through the lines without being detected. On his way back that morning he stopped to visit his old friend, Moorehead, now the major of his regiment, who told him of a very distressing case that had fallen under his notice only the day previous. An aged widow had come to the front to look for her only son, who had been killed or taken prisoner in a skirmish, and she was now collecting money to go to Richmond to learn whether he was in Libby Prison. The major had given her every assistance in his power.

When Captain Creedmore heard the details he smiled, and said he would also assist if she could tell a straight story.

"Oh, she is all right," answered the major. "She brought me a letter of introduction from a friend in Boston."

"My dear major," said Creedmore, "I have been taken in so often in the last year that I suspect everyone now, especially women folks."

As soon as the widow saw the celebrated spy-detective she changed colour and exhibited great fear. Edgar watched her keenly, her gait, her way of walking, and a dozen other points. Her accent, to his quick ear, revealed her at once as a Southern woman. Her eyes flashed too quickly for an old person. Her movements were agile and nervous. She felt that she was being weighed in the balance, and her face flushed to a crimson hue. Edgar did not say much; he let his eyes do the talking, and their language was indeed potent. The widow saw that her game was up. So she said in a sharp, snappish way:

"Well, what are going to do?"

"Fort Lafayette," was the laconic answer. He motioned to Henry, who coming up behind touched her on the shoulder and told her to take off her widow's bonnet and veil. She did so. He pointed to her grey wig, and this she also removed,

revealing a head of bright golden hair, and the features of a young woman of twenty-five years. Captain Creedmore smiled as he said :

“ Grey hairs will come fast enough, and it is a pity to hide such radiant beauty under a grey wig and widow’s cap.

The girl appreciated the compliment, even though she knew a term of imprisonment was before her, and she reciprocated and said :

“ Well, Captain Creedmore, I would rather be found out by you than any one else. I felt I had little hope when I saw your keen grey eyes with their wonderful power bearing on me.”

Edgar always tried to avoid a scene whenever he could, and as compliments cost nothing he lavished them freely whenever he found that they conciliated.

When he reported to General McDowell he found him in company with a Southern officer, who had come in under a flag of truce. The voice was familiar, and as he listened to the conversation, standing by the tent-door, he thought of all that had passed since he first heard it.

“ I tell you, General, that the South, sir, is very far from being exhausted, sir. We have a large reserve, sir, and we can hold our own for ten years, sir.”

At this point Colonel Derwent, for it was he, turned his head, and beholding Edgar at the tent door jumped up and shook him warmly by the hand, exclaiming :

“ I am right glad, sir, to see my old friend Creedmore. It does my heart good, sir,” and turning to General McDowell he continued : “ General, this young man, sir, did me a favour a year ago last April, sir. He stood by me as my second in a duel, sir, and right nobly did he acquit himself, sir. I may be able to reciprocate, sir. Now, my dear Creedmore, be careful and try to come out of this war alive, sir, and come and see me then in old Kentucky, and I will do all I can to make your visit pleasant, sir. Good bye, general. Thanks, sir, for your kindness.” The next moment the Kentuckian had ridden back to the Southern lines.

Preparations were now made by the Federal authorities to resist the advances of General Lee, and the prospects were that two large armies would meet in the shock of battle. Both sides would fight with trained veterans, and there was not any likelihood of such disgraceful conduct as characterised the first battle of Bull Run.

General McDowell’s corps of 15,000 men, under the immediate command of General Pope, was ordered on the 27th of

August to press forward from Warrenton to Manassas Junction. General Pope was at Centreville, and Major Creedmore, who had been promoted, was sent to him with special information which he had obtained of the strength of General Longstreet's division, also that if a determined attack in force was made on General Jackson entrenched at Manassas, he would be enclosed, and if assailed by 25,000 men on either side would have to surrender. This attack must be made before he was reinforced by General Longstreet, who was advancing for that purpose.

General Pope was very much impressed with the frank and soldierly bearing of the young Englishman, and complimented him highly on the work he had already performed for the Union cause. While he was in conversation with him word was brought that General Jackson was not to be caught napping. He had evacuated Manassas, and thus escaped the destruction which probably awaited him had he persisted in waiting for Longstreet's reinforcements. General Pope immediately sent Major Creedmore back with orders to General McDowell to intercept Jackson, and give him battle at all hazards.

Edgar narrowly escaped capture. It was late in the afternoon of the 29th of August, when ascending a hill he saw before him in the valley below the retreating forces of Jackson, moving towards Thoroughfare Gap. While watching these troops he saw General King's division, of General McDowell's corps, advancing at a quick rate, and a sanguinary combat ensued, which was terminated by darkness coming on. The losses on both sides were heavy. The enemy had among the severely wounded, Major General Ewell and Brigadier-General Taliaferro. Edgar at once reported to General King, and took his report, and went on his way to General McDowell, arriving early next morning.

It would be impossible, in this brief narrative, to dwell upon all the hard fighting that took place in this campaign, and the second battle of Bull Run. We can only say that Major Creedmore, from early dawn to late at night, was continually in the saddle. He was familiar with all the turnpikes and cross-sections. For much of this knowledge he was indebted to his faithful scout, Henry Winstou, whom he never failed to take with him on all his expeditions, and by whom he was saved from capture a number of times, by taking his advice. He found a devoted friend in Etaline Roberts. Though loyal to the Southern cause, she would on all occasions send him warning of the plots to capture him. She gave him no information of the movements

of the Confederate troops, but only of what concerned his personal safety. He was well aware that the girl loved him, and as she was apparently happy in this matter he did nothing either to encourage or discourage her. It became proverbial in the army that Major Creedmore bore a charmed life, as did also his famous charger, which had been as already stated the property of Henry's former owner. He called the horse "Cicero." The animal was of an iron-grey colour, and never seemed to show signs of fatigue. He was quiet and had no bad tricks, but, when needed, he could get over the ground with marvellous speed. He became deeply attached to his new master. The animal, when not in motion, would stand like a statue, and was nicknamed by the troops "the stone horse," "the bronze charger," and also the complimentary name of "the horse that thinks." Edgar became possessed with the idea that if anything should happen to his horse the charm of his own good luck would be broken. This feeling seemed to grow upon him. While he had no fear for his own safety, being a stranger to this quality of human nature, yet he was anxious at all times lest Cicero should be wounded or killed. Many a time had some hidden sharp-shooter taken them both for a target, but always failed to hit either. How long this would last was a problem that troubled him.

A fall campaign was started by General Lee invading Maryland at the head of a large army, estimated to be about 90,000 strong. He crossed the Potomac and moved on to Frederick, which was occupied without resistance. General Lee believed that the Marylanders would rise on his coming, and recruits by the thousand would join his standard. On the 8th of September he issued a very seductive address to the Marylanders. The result was a great disappointment, for not more than three hundred joined, while he lost more than that number by desertion.

General McDowell sent Major Creedmore to General McClellan with the information that a large force of Confederates in his front had disappeared, and had crossed into Maryland. As it was evident that a great battle was imminent McClellan detailed the major to serve on his staff, which honour he was glad to accept.

General McClellan had, by a rare stroke of good fortune, become possessed of a copy of General Lee's general orders, which specified his prospective movements. This was an immense advantage to the Union leader, and he was quick to avail himself of it.

It is impossible in our limited space to describe the fighting that took place daily, from the 8th of September until the final culmination on the 17th, of the great Battle of Antietam. The result of this victory for the Union forces was the withdrawal of Lee's army back into Virginia, with a loss of about 15,000 in killed, wounded, and missing. The victory was dearly purchased, for the Northern army lost 12,469, of which number over 9,000 were wounded.

It was a proud day for Edgar when he found himself serving on the staff of the famous and popular Union general, George B. McClellan. The temple of fame, of which he had so often dreamed, he felt confident was at last in sight. There was no doubt that he would safely reach it. What would come after he cared not to dwell upon.

What pen can describe the enthusiasm of a character with the qualities of Edgar Creedmore, now having attained the very acme of his ambition? There is a fascination and an indescribable excitement in riding over a field of battle carrying despatches amidst flying bullets and bursting shells.

It was the forenoon of the 17th, in the closing acts of the drama of Antietam's bloody field, whose soil was soaked with the best blood of both the North and South. Edgar was carrying an important message to one of the corps commanders when a twelve-pound shell burst in front of him. His horse reared, almost going over backward, then going ahead a few paces and falling down dead. The grief that filled Major Creedmore's heart is beyond description. The faithful charger, that had nobly carried him out of impending dangers, was now lifeless; and would his good fortune go with his beloved Cicero? The answer seemed a favourable one, for as he looked up he saw coming towards him a magnificent riderless horse, all saddled and bridled. The animal was terribly frightened. Edgar waited until he got close to him, and spoke in a kind voice. The horse stood still as though glad to find a friend on such a field, where men and horses were dying together.

Two minutes after Major Creedmore was mounted on his new acquisition and speeding away to his destination.

At nine o'clock that night Edgar had to carry an important despatch to General Franklin, whose corps, the Sixth, composed of his own, Couch and Syke's Divisions, had formed the left wing of McClellan's grand army, and had borne the brunt of that fierce battle. In crossing the battle-field he heard from a wounded soldier a plaintive cry for help. There was something so pathetic in the voice, "an indescribable feeling that

penetrated his inmost spirit," that he at once dismounted, and holding his horse's bridle in his left hand he knelt by the side of the wounded individual, whom he discovered to be a Union trooper, one of General Franklin's veterans. The life blood was ebbing fast from a wound in the breast. Edgar took out his handkerchief to stop the blood. As he unbuttoned the coat he discovered that the soldier was a woman. This was not the first time that his keen eyes had penetrated the disguise of the fair sex, who from patriotism and love of adventure had donned the male garments and enlisted in the ranks. This one in particular made no secret of the matter, but told her story in a few brief words. She was the daughter of a Methodist clergyman, who was pastor of a church with a very moderate salary, and with a large family to support. She had left home, and was employed in a dry goods establishment in the city of C—. When the war drum sounded daily through the streets she felt an overpowering desire to shoulder a musket. A fellow-clerk to whom she confided her feelings lent her a suit of male garments and enlisted with her. He was killed in the first battle in which they were engaged. So far she had concealed her identity and escaped unhurt. The fortune of war had now overtaken her, and she willingly yielded up her life for the Union cause. She asked Edgar to write a letter to her father and mother and tell them of the fate of their daughter. He could also tell them that she died unsullied and uncontaminated, and yielded back her spirit pure to God who created her. A few moments afterwards she ceased to breathe. Edgar straightened out her limbs and cut off a lock of her hair to send with her last message. He wrote a note for the burial detail, to lay away the soldier's body and to mark the resting place with a tablet with the words "R. S.," and signed his name to it as aide-de-camp. This he knew would assure a respectful burial. He afterwards sent the letter and lock of hair as directed.

Thus closed the day upon Antietam's bloody battle-field.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOCH LOMOND.

IF the reader will go back to the fourth chapter of the first division, a remark will be found, made by Miriam, "that a woman's character was a fragile affair at best, and liable to be blasted at any moment by a report from an evil tongue."

Esther began to realise the truth of this statement. Martin Nickley did not fail to make the most out of the mole-hill that he had discovered, and sought to swell it into a mountain. Within a week every friend and relative of Esther's had heard that she had met in a clandestine manner a gipsy chief, in a summer-house on her uncle's estate. Her uncle, Sir Thomas, wrote fully twenty letters explaining the whole affair. This was the first cloud over the face of the evening star referred to by Ziska.

Mrs. Van Reem felt it incumbent upon her to write to her brother, Sir Thomas, and warn him that his ideas of moral suasion were not adapted for one having the peculiar characteristics of Esther. The girl needed a firm hand, and should be given to understand in plain Anglo-Saxon that any wilful conduct on her part would result in her executors withholding her income, as they had the power to do so under her father's will.

She was surprised that her niece had so little pride as to risk a scandal in meeting a low, vulgar gipsy alone, without one of her cousins to accompany her. This had given rise to a great deal of talk. She had written a letter of thanks to Martin Nickley for the severe thrashing he had given this gipsy, and also for taking Esther away forcibly from the presence of this man. Mr. Nickley had told her how he had horsewhipped the presumptuous fortune-teller until he begged for mercy.

Mrs. Van Reem further stated that this conduct of her niece made her ill.

This letter was followed by one from Mrs. Ainsworth, which speaks for itself:—

BEECHWOOD SEMINARY,
August 2nd, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR THOMAS,

I received a personal visit from Mr. Martin Nickley, who related to me a detailed account of the reckless conduct of your niece, Esther. It is a deep mortification to me to think that she was a member

of this school, for her actions reflect on my training. It appears that it was the same gipsy band that she visited one night while a student here. I am amazed that she should value her own good name and that of your family so lightly as to risk it by meeting a gipsy chief alone in a summer-house on your estate. After this I will not be surprised at anything that I may hear concerning her.

For yourself and family I have the very highest esteem. Believe me,

Your affectionate kinswoman,

HARRIET AINSWORTH.

Esther felt keenly the tenor of both these letters. She knew that she was innocent of any wrong intention when she visited the summer-house, and that not a word would have been said about it but for the vile conduct of Martin Nickley. If Edgar were only in England he would take steps to silence his slanderous tongue. Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley were exceedingly kind to her, and in Winifred Vivian she found a warm friend. Her cousins, Adelaide and Eleanor, were very jealous of her influence over the Earl of Montville. He had several times proposed to her, and offered to marry her at once. To his proposal she asked time to consider it.

On the morning of the 5th of August she received a letter from Ziska, the gipsy chief, giving her warning of a plan concocted by Martin Nickley to kidnap her person and thus place her in a compromising position, which would necessitate her accepting his offer of marriage. She did not feel unkindly disposed towards Mr. Nickley, as she was conscious that she owed him a great debt of gratitude for saving her life. Under this influence she might possibly have been disposed to accept him if he had acted properly. He was now driving her to take the offer of the earl.

She gave this letter to her uncle. Her cousins, Robert and John, assured her that Mr. Nickley would have a larger contract on his hands than he had contemplated, if he thought he could get her away from their house by force. Martin Nickley had indeed a design of this sort, and loitered in the neighbourhood with two of his servants. A carriage was kept at a convenient place. As Esther often took rambles alone with Cæsar and sometimes with Winifred, he thought there would be little difficulty. The first thing to do was to get rid of the dog.

Later in the evening Mr. Nickley sent one of his men with a letter to Sir Thomas from some gentleman in the neighbourhood, asking for information about some trivial matter. Whilst waiting for an answer the man spoke a few kind words to the dog, and laid down by the porch a piece of poisoned meat. The

morsel was very tempting, but Cæsar had been trained from a puppy never to take anything from a stranger. Besides, he was a very intelligent animal, and suspected that something was wrong, because it was so unusual for visitors to bring him food, as he had all he wanted from the kitchen. Some persons declare that animals do not reason, but they do, nevertheless. There were several cats round the house, and in the estimation of most dogs, cats do not possess any great commercial value. Cæsar took the piece of meat to the back yard where the cats were holding a "primary meeting," and left it near them. The following morning the meat was gone, and four cats were found dead.

It did not require any great amount of reasoning power in Cæsar to convince him that the meat was dangerous, and that his death was to be the result of eating the choice morsel.

Esther was now fully warned of the plot against her welfare, and gave Mr. Nickley no opportunity to put it in operation.

In the middle of August Sir Thomas, as was his custom, resolved to visit Scotland with all of his family. The Earl of Montville consented to be one of the party, and Esther looked forward to a relief from the annoyance of Martin Nickley. She had written him a letter declining his offer of marriage. While in no way forgetting the debt of gratitude due him, she was not willing to become his wife, especially after the unkind letters he had written about her.

To this he replied that he loved her as he had never loved a woman before, and it was a great disappointment to him. It was true he could not place at her feet a coronet, but he could show as large a bank account as the earl, and his life-devotion would be greater. Therefore she could not expect that he would tamely look on while another carried off the prize that he felt belonged to him. He acknowledged having written several letters derogatory to her character, but it was because he was goaded almost to madness by her ingratitude.

He stood ready at any hour to make her his wife. This would prove to all that the rumours of her meeting the gipsy chief were of no account. He asked that she would take time for reflection before finally deciding to reject him and accept his rival. If she consented to this, say for six months or a year, then if at the end of that time she felt that she could not reciprocate his love and devotion he would try to forget her.

It is needless to say that Esther felt the full force of his crafty letter. She was not willing that he should think her ungrateful; she also did not feel that she was in love with

the earl. She liked him; he was very devoted and highly accomplished, and was a companion to whom she could talk on literary matters, and who appreciated her talent as no one else did. As already stated Esther had a very brilliant mind. She was extremely fond of psychology, a subject that none of her cousins, not even the gifted Eleanor, could understand.

The earl found that if he wanted to hold the advantage already gained he must be able to discuss metaphysics with her. He was quick to perceive that she was no ordinary girl; in fact, one out of a million. Her religious temperament was very high—as well it might be after her strange experience.

The evening before the departure for Scotland Esther consented to a moonlight ride with the earl. The moment that she was seated in the saddle a strange longing came over her for a wild run over the hills. The feeling was uncontrollable, and as soon as they left the grounds of Elmswood away they went. It was the first time she had ridden a horse since the lake episode. Both were mounted on thoroughbreds, the roads were good, the moon very bright, and the exhilaration was keen. Caesar followed them, as did also two other dogs of the establishment. He was amazed at this freak of his mistress. The dogs took short cuts across fields, while the horses kept the pike. The riders did not rein up until they reached a high hill ten miles away from their starting point. The view in the moonlight was weird and grand, and neither spoke for several minutes. The occasion was too favourable for wooing to be lost, and the earl proposed to make good use of it.

“Esther,” he said, “you promised a few days ago to give me an answer to my proposal. You are aware that we have known each other from childhood. When I grew to manhood my constant dream was to have you as my bride. When I unexpectedly succeeded to the earldom at the death of my older brother, the greatest joy I had was the hope that you would share it with me. I have waited so long that I am willing to wait until you are ready, if only you will give me some encouragement.”

“Edmond,” she gently replied, “I would not marry you, or anyone else, without I could give my whole, undivided heart. I promise you, however, a positive answer in six months from to-day. This will give me time to analyse my own feelings. If then we are married there will be no occasion to repent at leisure. I now acknowledge that I like you very much indeed, and with that you must be content for the present.”

Esther, sitting erect on her horse, with her superb figure in a close-fitting riding habit outlined against the indigo sky, formed a grand picture in the golden haze of the harvest moon.

At that moment the earl felt that he would cheerfully have given half of his large estate to be able to call her his bride.

The ride back was without incident. All the family were on the porch waiting for their return. There was a strong tincture of jealousy in Adelaide's tone as she remarked: "I hope you won't get cold after your wild riding. I thought your horse ran away with you."

It was a merry party that left Elmswood on the following morning. Winifred went with them, as Esther would not go without her. Edinburgh was reached late in the evening, and they went direct to the Balmoral Hotel, where apartments had been secured.

Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, is for its size one of the most imposing, interesting, and magnificent cities of Europe.

A week passed away pleasantly in visiting places of interest in and near the city. On all occasions the earl was the constant attendant of Esther, when they went to the Castle, Holyrood Palace, the National Picture Gallery, and the Botanical and Zoological Gardens. They also visited Melrose Abbey and Abbotsford. This last is of world renown as the home of Sir Walter Scott. They went to Dryburgh Abbey and many other places of deep interest.

Arrangements were made to visit Loch Lomond, the queen of Scotch lakes. The morning on which they were to go was wet and dismal, and Sir Thomas proposed that they should take carriages and drive to Leith, the seaport of Edinburgh, and dine with an old friend of his who had sent a pressing invitation. They all went except Esther, who complained of a very severe headache. The earl also stayed behind, as he wished to see a friend on some special business.

An hour after their departure the rain ceased and the sun came out clear and bright.

The earl called for Esther and told her that there was just time for her to dress and get the train for Balloch, at the foot of Loch Lomond, where they could take the steamer for Tarbet; a sail on the lake would do her good. It did not need any arguments to persuade her. She was ready in a few minutes. They enjoyed the trip up the tranquil waters of Loch Lomond and got off at Tarbet, proposing to take the steamer on the return trip from Inversnaid, at the head of the

lake. They took a carriage across to Arrochar, at the head of Loch Long, a distance of about two miles.

On reaching this place they had dinner at the hotel, and afterwards drove to several noted scenes and set out on their return to Tarbet. When within a mile of the place the front axle broke. This necessitated walking the rest of the way. On their arrival they found that the steamer had made her landing and was then a mile distant. There was no other steamer that day, and no way to get back to Edinburgh before the following morning.

They hired a fresh carriage and drove back to Arrochar, going direct to the manse of the Established Church, where they found the Rev. James Demar the pastor in charge. To him the earl introduced himself and explained the situation. The worthy Presbyterian clergyman at once offered the shelter of his home to Esther, while the earl could stay at the hotel. This would prevent a scandal arising from this incident.

A very pleasant evening was spent, the earl remaining for dinner. The Rev. Mr. Demar was a highly-cultured gentleman, and those who have partaken of his hospitality always remember it as a pleasant episode of the past.

The following morning the earl and Esther took the steamer on Loch Long for Greenock, thence by rail to Edinburgh, where they arrived at eleven o'clock. It is needless to remark that Sir Thomas and his family were alarmed at the non-arrival of Esther and her escort on the previous evening, and at once surmised the cause, as the earl had left a note stating that they were going to Tarbet and then over to the other lakes. A letter from the Rev. James Demar gave satisfactory evidence of Esther's whereabouts on the previous evening to all her friends, except Mr. Martin Nickley. He had followed them to Scotland and heard of the lake incident, and made up his mind to make the most of it.

CHAPTER XV.

LIBBY PRISON.

AMONG the few who were benefited by the Union victory won on Antietam's battle-field was Major Creedmore.

General McClellan, in recognition of his valuable services, procured for him promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Edgar held no sinecure, for he was almost constantly in the saddle.

After the battle of Antietam General Lee retired to the vicinity of Winchester. Finding that he had not been pursued or molested by McClellan, he sent General Stuart on a bold raid into Pennsylvania, who penetrated as far as Chambersburg. He there destroyed a large amount of supplies, and parolled 275 sick and wounded soldiers whom he found in the hospital, also burned the railroad depôt, machine shops, and several trains of loaded cars. Colonel Creedmore was sent at the head of a strong force to get information of Stuart's position, but the wily Confederate had no purpose of making a prolonged stay in the Keystone State. Long before the coveted information reached General McClellan he had recrossed into Virginia.

In the latter part of October General McClellan moved his army to Warrenton, where on the 7th of November he was directed to turn his command over to General Burnside, and to proceed to his home in Trenton, New Jersey.

Horace Greeley, in his *History of the Civil War* (page 342, vol. 2), states that General Burnside reluctantly and with unfeigned self-distrust succeeded to the command of the army of the Potomac. The devotion of its principal officers and of many of their subordinates to McClellan was so ardent that any other commander must have had a poor chance of hearty, unquestioning support, and Burnside would gladly have shrunk from the ordeal. Having no alternative but disobedience of orders, he accepted the trust and immediately made preparations for a movement of his forces down the Rappahannock to Fredericksburg, which he had selected as the proper as well as the direct line of operations from Washington against Richmond.

The fearful slaughter of Union soldiers hurled against the strongly-entrenched Confederate troops under General Lee, 80,000 strong, and over one hundred guns posted on heights that the Union batteries could not reach, is a matter of historic

record. Over this dark page we must pass. They were sacrificed to the public clamour for some practical results.

During the terrible fighting of December 10th and 11th Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore served General Burnside as faithfully as he ever did McDowell and McClellan. It was towards the close of the 11th December when Edgar, hastening with an important despatch to General Franklin, who commanded the left wing, rode into a thick clump of woods, where he found Captain Moorehead with a battery of artillery and only two hundred men strongly entrenched behind a breastwork of rail logs. The captain told Colonel Creedmore that he had been sent to take possession of this point, and was surrounded on the way by a regiment of Confederate troops. He gained the woods, where the under-brush was so thick as to hide the fact of his having only six twelve-pounders. He adopted the rule of scattering his guns and firing at the enemy from six different points. His fire was so rapid that the Confederates concluded there must be a very large force and hastily retreated. Lieutenant Harkness was wounded, but was well cared for. The captain asked Edgar to have reinforcements sent to him as soon as possible. This was done by General Franklin, and the brave action was fully reported by Colonel Creedmore. The gallant Captain Moorehead was promoted to the grade of lieutenant-colonel, and given command of a battery of twenty field-pieces.

On the 28th of January, 1863, General Burnside was relieved from the command of the army of the Potomac, and General Joe Hooker assumed command.

The reputation of Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore was too well known in the army not to make him a very desirable aide-de-camp, and General Hooker knew him well, as he had often carried despatches to him, and one of the first things he did was to invite the young man on his staff. He followed General Hooker in that memorable advance on Richmond in April, which culminated in the bloody battle of Chancellorsville, where in the charge by Stonewall Jackson's division, 25,000 strong, on the fortified positions of General Pleasanton, the Confederate chieftain lost his life.

On Sunday morning, May 3rd, Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore, on proceeding to report his observation of the enemy's movements from a distant point, where he had been sent, found General Hooker lying on the ground. He had been stunned by a heavy shot striking a pillar of the house against which he was leaning. His staff officers supposed him to be

dying. By noon, however, he had fully recovered and once more assumed command, although for several hours the large army of the Potomac was virtually without a head, and that in the midst of a great battle.

On the 25th of May Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore received a letter from Etaline Roberts stating that Henrietta St. Clair had obtained her freedom and was returning South. Etaline further told him that it would henceforth be diamond cut diamond between herself and Henrietta, and she would keep him apprised of all plots against his person.

Edgar thoroughly appreciated the kindness of Etaline, but felt fully able to look after his own safety, and therefore took no precautions whatever in view of the warning received. A week later at sundown, while sitting at his tent door, a ragged specimen of a contraband came to him and said that he had been sent to give him notice that Miss Henrietta St. Clair was at that moment in hiding at a small house about a mile outside of the lines and close to the river. The man added that if he should take five well-armed men, unmounted, and follow him through the woods he would escort him to the place, and her capture was certain. She had in her possession, he declared, valuable papers which she was taking to Richmond.

The man was a mulatto, and had a straightforward way of speaking and was evidently honest. He had the peculiar Virginia-negro dialect. He further stated that he had had nothing to eat since the previous day. Colonel Creedmore ordered his servant to give him a meal, while he went and selected five trustworthy men. He regretted that he had sent his faithful scout, Henry Winston, away on a message to Colonel Moorehead, for he would not return before morning.

Edgar's judgment prompted him to take one hundred well-mounted men, but the contraband told him that such a force would defeat the object of the expedition, as Miss St. Clair was on the watch. Her capture would be more easily accomplished if she were taken unawares by half-a-dozen men coming through the woods.

At nine o'clock Edgar started with six picked men, well armed. It was a starlight night, and they had no difficulty in reaching the river by eleven p.m., where at anchor were a number of Union gun boats. They soon came to a large house, which their guide told them was the place. Slowly and cautiously they advanced. As they reached the rear of the house, in which several lights were burning, Edgar's quick eye noticed five armed men who walked past one of the windows,

and suspecting treachery he demanded in a stern tone of the contraband what was meant by those men in the house.

"It means," was the reply in excellent English, "that you are my prisoner as well as your men. I am Lieutenant St. Clair, of the Confederate army, a cousin of Henrietta, and I have within call 100 well-armed men. Resistance is useless." A heavy revolver was placed against Edgar's forehead, and the man continued: "Will you surrender, or shall I blow your brains out? I had no idea I could play the ragged contraband so successfully on such a keen detective as you are reputed to be. Miss St. Clair will be glad to welcome you inside."

Edgar never quailed, but, looking the man straight in the face without speaking, he suddenly caught his wrist with his left hand and raised the pistol over his head; it went off, but the bullet flew harmlessly among the trees. The next instant Colonel Creedmore placed his own revolver against the spy's face and fired. The man dropped dead at his feet. There was instant commotion in the house as the shots rang out in the night air. A great massive bloodhound came bounding down the pathway, but was immediately killed by one of Edgar's men. It was high time to retreat, and they made rapidly for the banks of the river. A mile below the house they were stopped by a body of men close by a large boat. Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore at once surmised that they belonged to one of the gun boats. He gave his name and rank, and stated briefly the reason that brought them there, and also that they were pursued by a company of Confederate troops, who would soon be up with them. The officer in command of the boat party, Acting-Ensign A. J. Kane, invited them off to their vessel, which was the "Commodore Jones." They had hardly left the shore when the Confederates arrived and gave them a volley. Three men were slightly wounded, the darkness preventing more serious damage. The gun boat opened fire on the shore at once with nine-inch grape and canister, and the Confederates hurriedly retreated. The next morning fifteen dead men lying on the bank of the river told the sequel of the adventure.

By the following morning Colonel Creedmore and his men were back at headquarters.

Edgar was so mortified at being deceived by a fictitious contraband, that he obtained permission from General Hooker to take a force of 250 men and raid the house where he had gone the previous night. He arrived there in the afternoon, and was rather surprised to find Miss St. Clair calmly eating dinner in company with half-a-dozen Confederate officers.

They were all disarmed and made prisoners, together with 75 men found in and about the premises. No resistance was offered, and the march was begun back to the Union lines. Miss St. Clair had on a close-fitting riding habit of grey cloth, trimmed with Confederate army buttons, and was very affable to Colonel Creedmore, quietly remarking: "The fates of war are against me and I am a second time your prisoner, but you know the old adage, 'He laughs best who laughs last.'" The girl appeared to be perfectly light-spirited, yet Edgar had no suspicion that anything was wrong; he rode beside his fair prisoner. He did wonder at the ease with which the capture had been made, but what could 75 men do against 250?

The road back was mostly through a wooded tract. When about in the middle of it Henry Winston, who was ahead, suddenly rode back and reported that the road was blocked by a strongly-entrenched Confederate force. A moment later a bugle sounded on the right, and a masked battery was revealed with long black muzzles protruding. Another bugle was sounded on the left, and the same sight met their astonished gaze. On looking back they saw a mounted force quietly take position as if on parade. The Union troops were dumbfounded at the suddenness of this unexpected ambush. The prisoners at a signal quietly took the rifles from their guards, and a dozen bayonets encircled Colonel Creedmore's neck. An officer in dashing grey uniform now rode up calling for unconditional surrender, and giving his name as General Stuart, of General Lee's forces. He had over 2,000 men under him, and resistance was useless.

At this point Miss St. Clair, with a mocking laugh, said: "Colonel Creedmore, don't you think that I have the last laugh? This is the hour I have dreamed about for a year, and by to-morrow, when you are landed in Libby, my oath will be fulfilled." The march was now reversed.

The following afternoon the doors of Libby Prison opened and closed upon Colonel Creedmore, and Henrietta's threat was accomplished.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TONGUE OF SCANDAL.

By the effort of Martin Nickley the second cloud referred to by the gipsy came over Esther's fair name. A full account of her visit to Arrochar was published in several newspapers, written in such a way as to leave doubt whether she had been at the manse all night. One article was headed :—

AN OLD STORY TOLD AGAIN.

THE PICNIC OF AN ENGLISH EARL.

A DAUGHTER OF A COMMONER RETURNS TO HER FRIENDS,
A SADDER BUT A WISER WOMAN.

Marked copies of these papers were sent to all of Esther's friends and kindred. Every one of her schoolmates at Beechwood had one, and even the servants at Everdale Manor and all the tenants on the estate got copies. The tongue of scandal was very free with Esther's name.

Sir Thomas threatened to bring a suit against the newspapers, and they all published the correct statement with the letter from the Rev. Mr. Demar. The *Daily Scotsman* sent a special reporter to Arrochar, and his vindication was complete. An editorial article denounced the cowardly attack upon the character of a fair young girl. Any man who could take part in such a contemptible business was not fit to live.

The authorship of the scandal was traced to Martin Nickley; a reaction set in, and he was held up to public scorn and contempt.

Mrs. Van Reem wrote a characteristic letter to Sir Thomas, who immediately sealed it up and returned it to his sister with the endorsement on its face in red ink, "The sentiments expressed in this letter are unworthy of a member of the Shirley family. So please destroy it."

Mrs. Ainsworth could not let the opportunity go by without expressing her opinion also to Sir Thomas, who replied to it in the following terse language :—

BALMORAL HOTEL,

MRS. AINSWORTH.

EDINBURGH, September 2nd, 1862.

Madam,—After reading your letter I flung it in the fire and then washed my hands, as I felt they were polluted by contact with an epistle coming from such a malignant source as your spleen and venom prove

you to be at this present time. I must decline to receive you into my house or have any more communications from you until you fully apologise to my niece and myself for your unjust suspicions.

The Earl of Montville is too honourable a man to take even the slightest advantage of the confidence reposed in him by Esther.

I remain, &c.,

THOMAS SHIRLEY.

The result of this letter was a very humble apology, but Mrs. Ainsworth never after recovered her lost position in Sir Thomas Shirley's estimation.

When Pauline and her father heard of the incident they both went to Edinburgh, and the loving girl told Esther that she would stand by her even if all the world went against her.

The colonel immediately sent a challenge by mail to Martin Nickley to fight a duel, or he would horsewhip him. The reply was characteristic of the man. Martin Nickley stated "that he fully appreciated the honour conferred upon him in being asked to fight such a gallant soldier, but as he had no quarrel with him, and England needed all her fighting material, he would not be so unpatriotic as to kill a man in a private quarrel who was needed to stop an enemy's bullet."

Sir Thomas told the colonel that he would demean himself in fighting such a scoundrel, so the matter dropped.

Elvira Huben wrote a letter in which she expressed the fullest confidence in her former class-mate, and hoped before long to be able to congratulate her as the Countess of Montville.

The tour of Scotland was abruptly terminated, and the whole party returned to Elmswood.

Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley became more devoted to Esther, and her life under their roof was a pleasant one. Her cousins Robert and John did all in their power to add to her happiness. Adelaide and Eleanor showed occasional fits of jealousy, but Irene more than made up for any perverseness of her sisters. She upheld her fair cousin with an oft-quoted scriptural expression, that she was "chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

Esther's beauty augmented daily, and wherever she went she became at once a central star of great magnitude. The cloud had now entirely passed away, and it was a well-known fact that the evil rumours were set on foot by the fierce jealousy of Martin Nickley. He never abated his efforts for a moment. He made a second attempt in November to abduct Esther. The plot was well laid, and was chiefly foiled by the watchfulness of the dog Cæsar. Two men were engaged by Martin Nickley to help him in the job. Robert and John were informed of

their intention by Ziska, the gipsy chief. Winifred had been absent a few days on a visit to some friends. One afternoon Esther received a letter, written apparently in the handwriting of the Rev. Mr. Vivian, and signed with his name, stating that his daughter had just returned home quite ill, and wanted Esther to come over at once and spend the night with her. Without a moment's hesitation she got ready and started alone to go through the woods. Cæsar at the time was in the lodge-keeper's house; he rushed out, and standing before his mistress, barked in a warning tone, and appeared to be very much excited. His baying brought Robert and John to the spot, to whom Esther gave Mr. Vivian's letter. They both doubted its authenticity, but in order to be sure of it they consented to accompany her. When half way through the woods they came upon a closed carriage and a powerful span of horses standing in a side road. Cæsar now became almost frantic, and rushed to the door of the carriage and barked furiously. The window was then let down and an arm extended holding a pistol, which was aimed at the dog; a flash and a report followed, but the bullet flew wide of the mark. John picked up a stone and hurled it into the carriage, and the next moment the door opened and Martin Nickley sprang out with the blood streaming down his face from a gash made by the well-aimed missile. Two powerful and heavily-armed men, who had been hiding behind some trees, now came to Nickley's aid. It would have gone hard with Esther and her cousins but for the timely arrival of the lodge-porter and two of the gamekeepers with double-barrelled guns. They had suspected trouble from the actions of Cæsar, and had quietly followed their young masters.

Martin Nickley, on seeing these reinforcements, returned to his carriage and was followed by his men who, jumping on the coachman's seat, quickly drove away.

When the residence of the Rev. Mr. Vivian was reached, they found that the worthy gentleman had gone to London to bring his daughter home. Of course this decided the impression that the letter was a forgery and a decoy, which would have resulted in Esther's abduction but for the faithful Cæsar.

A warrant was issued for Martin Nickley's arrest, but before it could be served he had gone to Paris to be absent some time.

Esther now had rest from the persecution of her vindictive suitor. The earl renewed his proposal of marriage. To his entreaties Esther promised to give a final answer on New Year's Day. Uncle Richard came to Elmswood for a visit and also to induce his niece to return to Everdale. He was

devotedly attached to the girl, and she on her part fully reciprocated his affection, but she could not endure the lectures of her aunt. Besides, there were other reasons that she could not explain to Uncle Richard. Milton's room at Everdale was so full of the memories of the past, and brought up so many doubts as to the wisdom of what she and her brother had done, that the wisest course was to keep away from it.

New Year's Day of 1863 was an exhilarating one. The air was crisp and clear. A grand ball was to be given at the residence of one of the oldest families of the county. It was talked about and prepared for fully a month ahead. Those who felt disposed could come with masks. Esther chose a costume that became her superb figure—that of a Grecian maiden of the day when Athens was in the height of her fame and glory.

The earl also had prepared for himself a dress of the style worn by the Round Men of King Arthur.

Sir Thomas gave a dinner to some of his most intimate friends, to which Winifred and her father were invited.

The ball which followed at the house above referred to was a brilliant success.

The earl had been seeking all day for a favourable opportunity of asking for an answer from Esther, according to her promise. The girl seemed to take delight in his anxiety and gave him no chance to find her alone. When the ball was at its height the earl, who of course knew Esther's disguise, managed to get her away into a retired corner of the conservatory, where, amidst fragrant flowers, in low, soft words, he again told her the old story of his love and asked for her acceptance of his hand and heart. He took from his pocket a solitaire diamond ring of great value, and said to her :

“Esther, for six months I have carried this ring in my pocket, hoping that some day you would wear it as a token of our engagement and as a pledge of my earnest love for you. Mine is a devotion that will know no cessation while my heart throbs in my breast, and will never grow weary. To make you happy will be the one aim of my life. Will you let me put it on your finger?”

Slowly, without a word, the dainty hand was placed in his. He took off the white kid glove, and on the index finger he placed the hoop of gold with its sparkling gem resplendent in its beauty.

Neither of the lovers noticed the stealthy approach of a tall figure, masked in the costume of a monk. A heavy hand was

suddenly placed on the earl's shoulder, and a voice of suppressed passion said :

"You have won her, but you cannot keep her."

Both recognised the voice of Martin Nickley. The next moment he was lost in the throng.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SACRIFICE OF ETALINE.

WHEN Henry Winston saw Colonel Creedmore made a prisoner, he realised the fate in store for himself if caught with arms in his hands. No quarter was given to former slaves found red-handed in battle. He dismounted and in the confusion had, unnoticed, taken off his uniform and hid it in the thick underbrush. He worked his way to the rear, where he found a dozen negroes, servants of the officers of General Stuart's forces. Several of them were known to him, and five minutes later no one would have recognised the Union scout in the ragged contraband. Watching his chance he slipped away in the darkness, and by morning had reported to General Hooker the capture of his aide-de-camp. A strong rescue party was sent out, but they were too late.

Great was the rejoicing among the officials in Richmond when it was known that the celebrated Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore was a prisoner and safely lodged in Libby, the Southern Bastile.

Henrietta St. Clair had sworn to land him in the famous prison, and proposed to make his sojourn anything but agreeable. She obtained an order from the Secretary of War to have her prize, as she called him, placed in solitary confinement, and no one was to be allowed to see him without a written order from the Secretary, countersigned by herself. This was something unusual, but her father's influence was strong with the Secretary of War, and the girl had her own way, for a while at least.

Etaline Roberts soon heard of the capture, and went at once to Richmond. She was told of the stringent orders in regard to his close confinement, and resolved to see him at all hazards. She called upon Henrietta, and congratulated her upon her

triumph, and said that the South owed her a debt of great gratitude for so successfully capturing the celebrated Yankee Colonel, and she would very much like to see her prisoner. "What does he look like? Is he a handsome man?" said the artful girl to the unsuspecting Henrietta.

"He looks just what he is," was the reply, "a conceited Englishman, but his pride will be humbled before we get through with him. As to his being a handsome man, well I never did consider him such. If you care to see him I will go with you to the prison. I think, however, you will be disappointed in your expectations of beholding something wonderful."

The following day these two girls, so widely different in their feelings towards the captive Englishman, were admitted into the prison. Etaline, when she saw the Colonel in his cell looking downcast, could hardly restrain her tears, but gave no sign of recognition. Unnoticed by anyone she managed to slip a note into his hand, in which she stated that her efforts in his behalf would not cease until he was released from captivity.

Four months of prison life passed and Edgar began to despair of getting out alive. His fare was just enough to keep soul and body together. Etaline had not been able to see him again, or even to get a letter to his cell, but she left no stone unturned to get him exchanged. This was a matter that the Confederate Secretary of War would not entertain.

On the first week in October an inspection of Libby Prison was made by order of President Davis. Colonel Creedmore's cell door was opened as well as the others for the officers charged with the duty to inspect and report the condition. Among the number was a captain of a Kentucky regiment who, when he heard the colonel was an Englishman, went to his cell and asked a few questions, and how it was that he was in close confinement.

Edgar stated his case briefly, and then thinking of Colonel Derwent's motto said, "In your State the star of Derwent never fades, I am told, but there is no star of hope for me in this prison."

The Confederate officer was amazed when he heard these words, and asked Edgar "Who told him of this star?"

"Colonel Derwent himself, one of my fellow-passengers on the Cunard steamer," said Edgar.

"Would you like to see the colonel?" was the question in a low tone. "He arrived in Richmond yesterday."

"Yes, if he cares enough to come I will certainly be glad to see him."

“He will surely come,” was the response. “If he thought enough of you to give the secret password of his family he will stand by you when in distress.”

Sure enough the next day Colonel Derwent came with an order from President Davis to make Colonel Creedmore's captivity as pleasant as possible. He was removed into a better room and a more liberal allowance of food was served out to him. Colonel Derwent endeavoured to have Edgar exchanged, and had a promise that the matter would be favourably considered. Another two months passed and nothing was done. Etaline was now permitted to see Edgar from time to time, and brought him such supplies as she was able to procure.

On the 2nd of December she came to see him, and brought a letter received the previous day from Henrietta St. Clair, who had been for the past two months in the north acting as an agent for the Confederate Government. She stated in the letter that she had gained the confidence of Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War, and had almost succeeded in ruining Colonel Creedmore's character. She had informed the Secretary that he was a paid spy of the Confederate Government, his captivity was part of the plan, and he was living like a nabob in Libby Prison. She had passed herself off as a widow of an officer of a Boston regiment killed in battle, and was now under pay from the War Department in Washington. She had proposed on her return to have the Colonel drummed out of Richmond, and his reception in the Union lines would not be a pleasant one. Her revenge would then be complete.

Colonel Creedmore was almost beside himself when he read this letter, and he asked Etaline if there was no way by which he could escape and go to Washington and confront this woman, and show her up in her true light.

Etaline, with tears in her eyes, told him she saw but one way, and that was a sacrifice of herself.

“Why, Etaline, what do you mean?” he asked.

There was a struggle in the girl's mind, and then amidst her fast-flowing tears she explained her proposition.

“It is very important that you should get out of this prison and reach Washington before Henrietta ruins your character for life. Her conduct partakes of private revenge, and she is no longer actuated in your case by love of the South, and I propose to checkmate her. One of the lieutenants on duty in this prison is an old playmate of mine, and has urged me repeatedly to marry him. I have refused to listen to his suit.

This morning I showed him Henrietta's letter, and he agreed to help me to get you out on one condition."

"What were the terms of it?" he asked.

"For his help to give you a chance to escape I was to promise to become his wife."

"And your answer?" said Edgar, reading in the girl's eyes her unspoken love for himself.

Slowly she answered, "As there was no other way to save your honour I consented. This evening at dark I will come and bring you one of my dresses. You will put it on and take my hat and veil, and as we are nearly of the same size you can easily pass the guard. One of my servants will be at hand with my pony phaeton and will drive you to the Randolph House, which you will reach by daylight. Once there you will be safe, and can easily get into the Union lines."

"How about you, and what will be the consequence when you are discovered?"

"I have arranged all that," she replied. "I will put your coat on for a while and cover myself up. Then Lieutenant Hilton will let me out; I will have a Spanish lace shawl to throw over my head, and can easily pass out of the gate. A line will be made fast to your window-sill, and that will show how you got away. Here is a file; cut two of the bars when you have a chance, and before you leave your cell pull the bars apart. It is needless to say that there is a great risk of detection, for the guards keep a strict watch, but the audacity of the attempt will more than likely enable you to escape successfully.

Everything as then planned was carried without a hitch. Colonel Creedmore, in the black dress and shawl and close veil, with his moustache shaved off, quietly walked up to the guard and dropped in a box the pass given to Etaline. Two or three officers standing by the door took off their hats to the supposed Miss Randolph. In front of the hotel near by, the pony phaeton was waiting, and Edgar was delighted to find his faithful scout, Henry Winston, well disguised, sitting on the driver's seat. The turnout was so well known that no questions were asked as they drove through the gates. Henry had the countersign, and once clear on the highway the speed was all that the pony could put forth.

An hour after Edgar had passed through the famous prison gates, Etaline, leaning on the arm of Lieutenant Hilton, went out, and deposited in the box a piece of blank paper resembling the visitor's pass. She went direct to the home of one of her young lady friends and found it convenient to stay in bed for

three days, and then went home to the Randolph House. A week later she kept her promise, and gave her hand in marriage to Lieutenant Hilton.

Colonel Creedmore reached the Randolph mansion at daylight of the following morning. Just before arriving he put on a civilian suit that Henry had concealed in an old ruin. He was hidden in the hayloft all day, and after dark he left and reached the Union lines next morning in company with Henry. He reported to General George G. Meade, who had on the 28th of June succeeded to the command of the army of the Potomac.

Colonel Creedmore received a genial welcome from his many friends in the army, but they would never have recognised him if he had not made himself known. It was not so much the loss of the military moustache as the change in his face, produced by a scarcity of food and unhealthy quarters.

He showed General Meade the letter of Henrietta St. Clair to Etaline, and asked for a court of inquiry as to his loyalty. The general told him that there was no need of any court. His long and faithful services to the Union cause were too well known to be lightly set aside by a designing woman. General Meade gave him a strong letter of endorsement to Secretary Stanton, and closed it by saying:—"Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore's face tells its own story of severe privations, and its frank, genial expression will promptly brand as false any malicious statements of his enemies."

On the morning of the 5th of December, Edgar reached Washington after his six months' sojourn in Libby Prison. He drew on his uncle for funds, and going to a military tailor was fortunate in finding a uniform that fitted him.

At noon he went to the War Department, and sent his card and the letter from General Meade to Secretary Stanton.

As the fates would have it, Henrietta had the previous day obtained a letter from Secretary Stanton to General Meade recommending her as a useful spy, able and willing to risk going to Richmond and bring back valuable information. Not satisfied with this, she returned the next day to get an order to be read to the army of the Potomac denouncing Lieutenant-Colonel Creedmore as a spy in the pay of the Confederate Government. The order was made out and the Secretary was about to sign it when he received Colonel Creedmore's card and the letter from General Meade which he read.

"Admit him," was his reply to the door-keeper.

Henrietta did not recognise the cadaverous-looking officer in a brand new uniform as her prize, safely caged, as she thought, in Libby.

Not so, however, with Edgar, for as soon as he caught sight of the trim figure in widow's weeds and a blonde wig on her head, sitting by the Secretary's desk, and smiling one of her sweetest and most captivating smiles, he promptly said :

"Why, Miss Henrietta St. Clair, what are you doing here disguised as a widow? Are you planning some new deviltry?"

The effect of these words was something startling. Secretary Stanton jumped to his feet, his eyes flashing with the indignation he felt. If there was anything he disliked more than another it was to have his finer feelings worked upon by an artful woman.

Turning to Colonel Creedmore, he said :

"Is this woman that Henrietta St. Clair whom I released from Fort Lafayette seven months ago, confined there on the charge of being a Southern spy?"

"Yes, Mr. Secretary; it is the same person."

Secretary Stanton brought his hand down with terrific force upon the bell on his table, and he told his messenger to send an officer and guard to his room. When they came he said :

"Take this woman to Fort Lafayette and keep her there in close confinement until the war closes."

"Turning to Edgar, he continued : "I trust, Colonel Creedmore, you will pardon any unjust suspicion I may have entertained about your loyalty to the Union cause. I was a fool to allow myself to be imposed upon by that woman, who passed herself off as a widow of a Union officer killed in battle. As a compensation I will have your promotion made out to be a full colonel of volunteers, with leave of absence until you have recovered from the effects of your imprisonment. Then I will assign you to whatever duty you may select. I will be most happy to have you dine with me at six o'clock this evening."

The sacrifice of Etaline had just been made in time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MANSE OF ARROCHAR.

ESTHER had pledged herself to the Earl of Montville, but would not consent to have the ceremony take place until after six months. She loved the earl, but found it hard to reconcile the idea of marriage with her former condition of existence. In the agreement with her brother nothing had been said on this subject; she wanted more time to consider this matter.

In the latter part of the month of February she went back to Everdale with her uncle Richard. Her reception by her aunt was not of an enthusiastic nature, for she had been strongly prejudiced against her niece by Mrs. Ainsworth. Mrs. Van Reem was constantly expecting a renewal of Esther's former fiery character. She could not understand the sudden change of disposition, and did not believe it permanent; in fact, she was on the look-out for an outbreak, and felt it her duty to be constantly on her guard to crush any evidence of rebellion.

Two years had now elapsed since the event and Esther was twenty-three years old, but the clause in the late admiral's will giving the executors power to withhold his daughter's income placed her entirely in their power. This was done owing to the urgent representations of Mrs. Van Reem working on the admiral's mind in the last few months of his life. It was a fatal error on his part, destined to be fraught with serious consequences to the daughter whose welfare he had sought to promote.

On the morning of the 3rd March, which was the second anniversary of the exchange and the first one Esther spent at home, she made up her mind to go over to Crusoe's Retreat and, alone in the memorable summer-house, to ponder over the deep mystery of the exchange of tabernacles.

She told no one of her purpose, and was well pleased when at the breakfast table her aunt told her that she was going to Manchester to make some purchases, and would not be back before evening. Her uncle had to go to Preston and wanted his niece to go with him, but she declined on the plea of having a cold.

"I would not be surprised," said Mrs. Van Reem, "to learn that, after we leave, you will be foolish enough to go out on the lake and risk getting drowned a second time."

An angry retort came to Esther's lips, but she restrained, and, with a smile, said, "I suppose, aunty, if I were to get

drowned and efforts at resuscitation were to fail you would not put on mourning for me."

This touched a tender spot in Mrs. Van Reem, for she replied "You have a very bad opinion of me, my child. I may be strict in my ideas of propriety, but your loss would be very grievous to all of us."

Esther was moved at this display of tenderness, and, putting her arms around her aunt, kissed her affectionately. This was such a rare event that Uncle Richard exclaimed:

"I wonder if I am dreaming, or is this a harbinger of the millennium?"

The only answer made by his niece was the pressure of her soft arms around his neck, with a kiss followed by a smile; then her wonderful eyes opened to their full extent and her love for him flashed out.

An hour later, after both had gone, Esther with a shawl around her and followed by Cæsar, who was her constant companion, went down to the boat landing. She had given instructions to have the same boat ready for her that had capsized on that eventful day two years previously.

Cæsar, while fond of the water, did not care for a boat, and showed a decided repugnance to getting into it, until his mistress said, "All right, Cæsar, I will leave you behind," when he cautiously got into the craft with a low growl as a sort of protest. The day was like a May morning, calm and genial. With a few strokes of the oars the landing at Crusoe's Retreat was reached, and Esther was soon seated in the summer-house. An hour of delightful reveries was passed. It did not seem more than five minutes, there was so much to think about in the past, and so many air castles for the future. Cæsar, who had been sleeping at her feet, jumped up, and barking loudly ran down to the boat landing. Esther was astonished at beholding the other larger boat being made fast, and the manly form of Ned Bentley, now a sub-lieutenant of the Royal Navy, get out, and with him were Pauline, Elvira, and Winifred. They had arrived by the same train, and came to Everdale to congratulate her on her twenty-third birthday; they wanted to surprise her, and did not write or telegraph.

They all went back to the house, where telegrams began to pour in from friends and kindred wishing many happy returns of the day.

Uncle Richard had planned a number of surprises for his niece. Nothing had been said to her about having any birthday party, so she looked for a quiet time.

Great was her astonishment when the afternoon train brought back her uncle Richard with a present of a pair of diamond earrings. Mrs. Van Reem brought a beautiful pale-blue silk dress which had been made for the occasion. Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and all his family also came with valuable tokens. The Earl of Montville presented her with a diamond coronet for her hair.

Among others who came were Miss Blanche Sinclair and her sister, Miss Mabel, of Beechwood Seminary, and six of her former class-mates. They were invited by Uncle Richard as a surprise for his niece.

The dinner at seven o'clock was one of the grandest ever given in Everdale Manor, and the reception which followed was an event remembered for many years.

It was fully a week before the last of the guests took their departure and the old manor resumed its quiet features.

Mrs. Van Reem urged her niece to make preparations for her coming marriage with the earl, but Esther told her that although she was engaged no day had been set for the ceremony, and it would perhaps be a year before it took place.

Four months passed away without anything arising to disturb the harmony of life at Everdale. Mrs. Van Reem, finding that no outbreak took place in her niece's disposition, became more genial in her treatment. The earl was a frequent visitor, and he and his affianced enjoyed many pleasant rides. Catiline, to the wonder of everyone, had become a very tractable animal, and the earl rode him in preference to any other horse.

It was arranged that a grand party should be made up for a complete tour of Scotland, spending at least two months there. Uncle Richard and Mrs. Van Reem, Sir Thomas and all his family, Winifred and her father and mother, also Colonel Vansant and his daughter, and the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Huben and Elvira. They were to meet at the Balmoral Hotel on the 3rd of July.

Not a word had been heard of Martin Nickley since New Year's night. Uncle Richard had taken extra precautions in guarding the grounds of Everdale, and Esther never went outside of them without being well attended. After his two failures to abduct the girl, her kindred supposed that no further effort would be made to molest her.

According to appointment, all who were invited met in Edinburgh at the appointed place and time. The month of July was passed in visiting the North of Scotland, the party

going as far as Inverness, and visiting the famous battle-field of Culloden, where the star of the ill-fated Stuart was extinguished by the Duke of Cumberland.

The early part of August found them at the head of Loch Lomond. The earl proposed that they should spend a few days at Arrochar, where there was good boating and fishing on Loch Long.

The hospitable Mr. Demar entertained as many of the party as his house would hold, while the balance found accommodation at the hotel. On the evening of the second day, while Esther was sitting under a shade-tree on the grounds of the manse listening to an ancient Highlander playing the bagpipe, a little boy came up and placed a note in her hand and waited for an answer. She was surprised, on opening it, to see the signature of Martin Nickley.

It read as follows :—

ARROCHAR, August 5th, 1863.

MISS E. CREEDMORE,

Pardon the liberty I take of once more sending you a few lines. They will be the last I will ever write to you.

I am about to leave England for a long tour through India, and wanted to say farewell to you, the only woman among the many I have met whom I cared to have as my wife. Two years ago, when I risked my life to save yours, I thought perhaps you would be grateful to me for doing so. Since you rejected my offer of marriage I have no longer any inducement to keep me in dear old England.

I did want to hold your hand once more and ask you to forgive me for attempting to abduct you. I did so because I felt you were influenced against me. I am waiting now at the house of a worthy farmer a mile below the manse. The family are honourable and will protect you. Five minutes is all I ask, and if you will only say in person that you will forgive me I will go on my long journey with a lighter heart, and also will feel that ingratitude is not a part of your nature.

The boy who takes this letter will conduct you to this house. If you don't care to come, then farewell for ever.

Your heart-broken lover,

MARTIN NICELEY.

This letter moved Esther to her heart's core. Most of her party had gone out for a sail on the lake. Winifred was asleep on a sofa in the manse. Mrs. Demar had gone to make a sick call, and only the children were at home; she had declined to go boat sailing, for she disliked the water and had pleaded a headache. Twice she read the letter, and finally decided to go and see Mr. Nickley and take Cæsar with her, but the dog could not be found. Esther went to the house to ask Winifred to go with her, but finding her sleeping so profoundly resolved to go alone.

As she left the manse and followed the boy a strong foreboding of evil came over her, and she twice started to return. A quarter of a mile from Arrochar she met Mr. Nickley, who greeted her cordially and asked her forgiveness. He pointed to a steam yacht lying at anchor, and said that he had chartered her, and he expected in ten minutes to be on board bound for France on his way to India. A boat manned by four sailors was waiting for him in a small inlet a few hundred feet from where they stood. Esther told Mr. Nickley that she freely forgave him and hoped his life would be happy, and would never forget the debt of gratitude due him. "Neither will I," said Nickley in a sneering tone, and the next moment he placed a handkerchief saturated with ether to her face, and throwing a shawl over her head picked her up in his arms and carried her to the boat, and the next moment was being rowed rapidly to his steam yacht. Hardly had he left the shore before Cæsar came tearing down the road barking furiously. His deep bay resounded a long distance over the waters of the lake. At this juncture two boats filled with Esther's party came swiftly round a sharp bend of the shore under sail. The frantic manner of Cæsar was recognised, and the apparent endeavour of the strange boat to get away led to a suspicion of something wrong. As the wind was strong a few minutes sufficed to head off the stranger, and the burly form of Martin Nickley was seen. As the three boats came together the earl, followed by Robert and John Shirley, leaped into Nickley's craft. John picked up the unconscious form of Esther and took her into the other boat, while his brother and the earl pounded Nickley until he was almost insensible, and then let him go. Esther soon revived and told the story of the abduction.

Her kindred decided that the marriage with the earl ought to take place at once.

To this she made no objection, and the next morning was fixed for the ceremony.

It was thought best to take no action against Martin Nickley, as, no doubt, he would leave the country at once.

It is needless to say that Cæsar came in for a large share of petting.

The dinner at the manse was a joyous affair, and all were thankful at Esther's narrow escape.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RIDE FOR LIFE.

COLONEL CREEDMORE dined with Secretary Stanton and related to him the detail of his prison life, and gave him much valuable information.

The Secretary, when he heard of the sacrifice of Etaline, remarked that the noble action of this woman more than counterbalanced the distrust engendered in his mind by the deceit of Henrietta St. Clair.

The following day Edgar left for New York, and received a royal welcome from his uncle Richardson and his lovely daughter, Margaret. To her he remarked :

“ My fair cousin, I am back from the war after an experience of over two years and a half and cannot show the stars of a major-general, but I have the eagle of a colonel won in hard toil, and propose as soon as I am well to return and keep at it until the war ends.”

Edgar did not need to be told of the love which had germinated in the heart of his beautiful cousin for him. It shone in her face and was revealed in every word. He had but to ask for her hand and it would have been freely given. To him love and marriage were out of the question at present. The restoration of the Union was the goal for which he was aiming, in company with the one million men under arms for the cause of the loyal North.

Colonel Creedmore received a grand ovation from the 71st Regiment. They had watched with personal pride the gradual promotion of one of their men from the ranks up to full colonel, and whilst he was in prison had used every effort to have him exchanged. Of all the regiments sent out from New York none had a grander record than the 71st. Many of the members afterwards entered the regular service as officers.

Uncle Richardson used every endeavour to persuade his nephew to remain in New York, as his health was very much undermined by exposure and, more than all, by the close confinement of Libby Prison.

The war spirit was too dominant in the young Englishman to return to the quiet routine of private life. On the 1st of March, 1864, he reported by letter to Secretary Stanton, and

on the 5th he was instructed to report to General Grant for assignment to duty.

General Grant had been nominated and confirmed as Lieutenant-General.

On the 8th of March Colonel Creedmore reported to General Grant in Washington. It was the day that President Lincoln's order appeared investing General Grant with the chief command of all the armies of the United States. The army of the Potomac, under the command of General Meade, was completely reorganised, and was made to consist of three army corps instead of five, its former number.

Colonel Creedmore was assigned to duty on the staff of General Meade, and was warmly welcomed back by his many friends. On all sides he had advice to beware of blonde-haired beauties, but as the one referred to was safe in Fort Lafayette he thought that with the experiences of the past he could keep out of Libby, for he knew that if he paid a second visit there his reception would not be a genial one.

The scout, Henry Winston, who had remained with General Meade, now came back to his old commander.

In the last week of April the army of the Potomac was held in preparation to cross the Rapidan, and information was wanted of the exact position of Lee's army, which was alert and vigilant, and was west of the tract of land known as the Wilderness.

This was a wild table-land filled with ravines, dwarfish timber, and bushes, and had only three or four good roads.

Colonel Creedmore was instructed to take 250 mounted men and as few incumbrances as possible, and find where the Confederates were entrenched. He would like to have taken a battery of four field-pieces, but as this would prevent rapid progress it could not be thought of in an expedition where celerity of movement was of paramount importance. Henry Winston, who was always full of new ideas, suggested that Quaker guns would answer their purpose, and two of them could be carried on a horse. Four of them had been recently captured from the Confederates; they were splendid imitations of twelve-pound siege guns, and only weighed twenty-five pounds each, whereas the genuine article would have been fully 1,000 pounds.

These four Quaker guns were therefore taken along with the light carriage that held them, and were covered over so that no spy could betray the artifice.

Colonel Creedmore and his men had only been four hours on the march when the outposts reported a large body of the

enemy advancing. It was but a moment's work to leave the road and conceal themselves in the dense underbrush, the troops being dismounted. The enemy was found to be a scouting party of infantry 400 strong. As soon as they passed the road was barricaded with logs and bushes, and the Quaker guns duly mounted.

An hour later the Confederates came back in full retreat, pursued by a Union regiment. Great was their amazement to find the road over which they had passed such a short time previously now strongly entrenched, with four wicked-looking siege guns commanding the position. They found themselves between two fires, and as they thought resistance was useless they surrendered without firing a shot, as they felt confident that there must be a full thousand men that held them in check. They grounded their arms, and in a few minutes the other body of Federal troops came up, and Colonel Creedmore was delighted to find it was a Massachusetts regiment commanded by his old friend, Colonel Moorehead.

When the leader of the Confederate troops saw four men deliberately walk up, each taking up one of the field-pieces and fasten two of them on a horse, he was dumb with amazement. Turning to Colonel Creedmore he said: "How is it possible for a single man to lift one of those heavy pieces of ordnance? Why, they must weigh half a ton."

"Oh, no," was the answer, "only 25 pounds. They are of the Quaker order, and of white pine wood."

For a moment there was silence; then the Confederate colonel commenced to swear, slowly at first but gathering momentum at each word. He asked to be shot for being a jackass and a poor specimen at that, and said that he could never hold up his head any more after surrendering without a blow to four miserable Quaker guns.

When informed that they were of Confederate make he started off on another swearing spell. To use an expression of Henry Winston's, "He was the maddest man Virginia had ever produced."

During the battle of the Wilderness, fought under the immediate command of General Grant, Colonel Creedmore again rendered invaluable service. It was to him the most memorable campaign of the whole war. Among the prisoners taken by the Union troops was Etaline's husband, Lieutenant Hilton. Edgar did not hear of it until a week later, when he received a letter from her asking his influence to have her husband's captivity rendered as pleasant as possible. This he

did at once, and was thus enabled partly to repay his obligations and his gratitude for his escape from Libby.

Colonel Derwent was also taken prisoner, being badly wounded. He sent for Colonel Creedmore, who promptly responded and had his friend removed to comfortable quarters, and when sufficiently recovered he was sent to New York, where he found kindness and hospitality, which very few other Confederate prisoners obtained—at least not in the marked manner which he received as the result of Edgar's influence.

The battle of the Wilderness cost the Union the loss of 26,000 men, of whom 6,000 were taken prisoners. The month of May, 1864, was a veritable red-letter month in the history of the Civil War. More fierce fighting took place in this month than any other, and more blood shed both for the Union and against it. The loss of officers was also very heavy.

Colonel Creedmore had a very narrow escape from capture about the middle of the month. He had carried a very important despatch late in the afternoon, and on his return to General Meade's headquarters almost rode into an ambush of Confederate scouts. He was called upon to surrender at once but paid no heed to it, and putting spurs to his horse made for the Union lines. It was a full mile-and-a-half away; bullets flew around him like hail, but he seemed to bear a charmed life. He had around his neck the little gold locket given to him three years previously by his cousin, Margaret. He thought of its reputed charm, but his faith in its potent agency was not very strong. His reliance now was in the speed and endurance of his war steed. It is a well-known fact that there are periods in the life of every horse when he seems to know, either by instinct or reason, that a human life depends upon his resources, and he puts forth every power to save that life, even at the sacrifice of his own.

So it was in this case; Colonel Creedmore's well-trained animal knew, without being urged, that he must strain every muscle of his powerful body, and he did so. Faster and faster he went over the ground, but the enemy were slowly gaining.

Edgar saw in the distance the flags waving on the Union breastworks, and began to wonder why his pursuers should risk capture themselves by riding recklessly into the Federal lines. Strange as it may appear, his uppermost thoughts were upon the imprudence and audacity of his pursuers. How foolish they were, and what a risk they were running! Several times as he looked back he saw that the distance between them was growing less. He rode down into a glen and realized that

when he reached the opposite hill he would become a splendid target at short range for his enemies. The risk was great, but there was no other alternative.

Just as he reached the summit his horse stumbled and fell, too exhausted to rise. Edgar cleared himself from the stirrup and prepared to run for all he was worth, when, to his amazement, he heard the welcome voice of Colonel Moorehead, saying, "Take your time, my dear colonel; don't be in a hurry. I have my regiment strongly posted in these woods, and can amply take care of your pursuers." The underbrush was so thick that the Confederates did not notice Colonel Moorehead, and came on feeling confident of securing their chase.

Five minutes later they were surrounded and made prisoners before they could realise the situation.

Colonel Creedmore took the hand of his friend, and said :

"You have added another debt of gratitude which I can never repay. There is a special Providence in all this. You seem to appear at the right moment; it looks as though it had all been arranged beforehand. What a lucky thing for me that you were not killed in that proposed duel three years ago on Hoboken Heights."

"My dear Creedmore, if it was lucky for you it was doubly so for me."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CASTLE BY THE SEA.

Hast thou seen that lordly castle,
 That castle by the sea?
 Golden and red above it,
 The clouds float gorgeously.

The winds and the waves of ocean,
 Had they a merry chime?
 Did'st thou hear from those lofty chambers,
 The harp and the minstrel's rhyme?

* * * * *

Led they not forth in rapture,
 A beauteous maiden there?
 Resplendent as the morning sun,
 Beaming with golden hair!—*Longfellow.*

THE morning of August 6th, 1863, was all that could be desired by any bride for a wedding day. There was no time to prepare an elaborate trousseau. It was decided that Esther

should be married in a travelling dress of dark blue cloth, relieved by narrow crimson silk stripes. The garment had not been previously worn, and was prepared for the Scotch tour. The ceremony was to take place at 2-30 p.m., and after a reception all were to drive over to Tarbet to see the bride and groom off in the steamer to Balloch, on their way to Edinburgh, where they were to spend the night. The next day they would go to Leith and take the coasting steamer which would land them at Belhaven, near which the earl had a very romantic castle, built on a high bluff overlooking the North Sea. It was arranged that on that day week all the party at Arrochar, including the Rev. and Mrs. Demar, with several other friends of Esther's, were to come to Harold Castle, as it was called, and spend two weeks as the guest of the earl.

Esther, somehow, did not seem to anticipate cheerfully her marriage. She had a foreboding of evil which she could not shake off. Her cousin Adelaide made no attempt to conceal her feelings. She had been living in hopes that Esther would decline the earl, and then she herself would have a chance for the coveted coronet.

She refused point blank to act as a bridesmaid, and her sister Irene, with Winifred, Pauline, and Elvira accepted the honour. A friend of the earl's, who was sojourning at the hotel at Tarbet, was to be the best man, and Robert and John were the other groomsmen, as also the eldest son of the Rev. Mr. Demar.

The children of the house and a dozen more from neighbouring families had been at work all morning gathering flowers and ornamenting a summer-house that stood in the front lawn. The sides had been removed, so that it formed a canopy resting on four pillars, and was fixed to resemble a large bell. Under this the bridal couple were to stand.

The marriage settlements had all been signed, and the ceremony was to be that prescribed by the Established Church of Scotland, which was brief and to the point.

At half-past two Esther came out of the manse leaning on the arm of her uncle, Sir Thomas. Never had she looked so superb. The excitement lent an additional charm to her classic features. She was as serious looking as a novice about to take the black veil in a convent.

Winifred whispered into her ear, "For pity's sake, Esther, smile and look cheerful; this is a wedding and not a funeral." She was in one of her abstracted moods, and would have shown no more emotion if she had been going to lay her dainty head on the fatal block.

She did not seem to realise that she was about to share in the name and fortune of one of England's proudest titles.

Under the flower-laden canopy she took her place, and Sir Thomas placed her hand in that of the earl's, saying:

"Edmond, I give over into your keeping my beloved niece. May your future married life be filled with the blessing of harmonious relations between you both. I know that Esther will amply repay all your love and devotion to her."

To the question by the Rev. Mr. Demar, "Will you take this woman for your lawful wedded wife?" &c., the earl answered in a clear, joyous tone, "I will!" When it came to Esther's turn she answered in the affirmative in a dazed sort of way. Before she could realise it the ceremony was over, the hoop of gold was on her finger, and she heard herself being congratulated as the Countess of Montville. When her bosom friend kissed her she said, "Oh, Winifred, am I really married?" She seemed to awaken out of a dream when her husband gave the bridal kiss.

The reception that followed was brief. The carriages were waiting, and they left to drive over to Tarbet. In the first carriage were the newly-married couple, and Esther asked that Robert and Winifred might also get in with them. On the way over the bride had a reaction from her dreamy mood, and was as full of life and fun as a schoolgirl.

They did not have long to wait at Tarbet for the steamer. There was a grand send-off. Esther watched with a sad feeling the receding faces until lost to view by a bend of the lake.

They reached the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh at seven o'clock, and after dinner they took a quiet stroll through some of the streets. The best time to get an insight into Scotch life is in the month of August, in the evening. The whole population, at work during the day, fill the streets after their evening meal. The shops are brilliantly lighted and the scene is a gay one.

At noon on the following day the earl and his bride went to Leith and took the steamer that made daily sailings to the principal ports on the North Sea. Belhaven, where they disembarked, is one of the most romantic spots on the whole coast. A coach with four horses and two outriders, all in the handsome livery of the house of Harold, stood waiting.

On their arrival at the porter's lodge at the entrance to the castle grounds they found a number of tenants assembled to bid them welcome. Twelve little girls dressed in white muslin, with broad Scotch plaid ribbons from shoulder to hip, each carrying

a basket of flowers, stood ready to give an old-fashioned welcome to the bride.

The steward of the estate apologised for not having made more elaborate preparations, but as he only received the notice by telegraph the previous day he had done the best he could.

The earl and Esther got out of their carriage and walked up the pathway to the castle.

The children went before them, singing a joyous refrain of welcome, and spreading the flowers over the pathway of the lord of the manor and his winsome bride. This enthusiastic reception was totally unexpected and was fully enjoyed by both of them.

When they reached the reception room all the guests were individually presented.

After dinner, to which eight of the earl's special friends were invited, Esther retired to her chamber and arrayed herself in a robe of white cashmere, richly embroidered in silver. This dress became her style of beauty, and her husband, in the enthusiasm of the moment, when she came into the drawing room, took both her hands in his and said :

"Esther, I always knew that you were an uncommonly handsome woman, but now you are nearer to my ideal of an angel than any person I ever met."

For an answer to this high compliment Esther smiled, but she threw her soul into that smile, and her husband felt that half his fortune would be a low price to pay for being the recipient of such a token of love.

The following six days went by like a dream. They received and returned calls, and visited old ruins famous in Scottish history. Their chief pleasure was to watch the roll of the waters from the high turrets of the castle. Steamers and sailing craft of every description passed by at all hours. The weather was delightful, and their spirits were harmoniously blended.

In the afternoon of the 13th of August the steamer from Leith landed at Belhaven with the expected guests. All the party came who were at Arrochar with the exception of Adelaide ; she pleaded illness and went to visit a class-mate of hers in Glasgow. The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Huben came the following day, the latter a cousin of the earl's. Their daughter Elvira looked sweeter than ever. Colonel and Mrs. Vansant and the lovely Pauline came on the 14th.

The earl received his guests at the landing, and at the castle Esther stood on the porch and bade them welcome. She was dressed in a becoming robe of plaid silk, and with the sun shining on her golden-brown hair drew forth praises from all,

sufficient to have turned the head of any girl not so well balanced as she was.

Language fails to describe the festivities of the following two weeks. It may be expressed in the sentence, "Joy was unconfined." From early morn to midnight the castle walls and lofty chambers resounded with music, song, and laughter.

On the 1st of September the guests took their departure on their return to England, and the earl and countess went with them.

They stopped for a day at York, and enjoyed the sight-seeing of that ancient city. They arrived in London on the 3rd—a day that was to be in future years a memorable one in the history of the twins.

A week was spent in the earl's town house, and on the 10th the guests went to their homes.

[The author feels compelled at this point to digress for a moment from the thread of his narrative, and to state to his readers that he is feeling alarmed at the growing proportions of this book, while so much of the experience of his hero and heroine are yet to be told. He has already been compelled to eliminate the headings of six chapters from this division and to condense the material into other chapters, and may have to curtail more to save the story from being too bulky. There are still fifteen years of life in their exchanged condition to be recorded. Therefore some of this history must be concise, and this will be the case for the next two years of Esther's life.]

The earl and his bride went direct to Paris, and did not return to England again for two years. They visited during that time the principal cities of France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. A month was spent at Palermo. Then they went to Malta, Alexandria, and Cairo. From there to Jaffa and Jerusalem, and across Palestine to Damascus and on to Beyrout, Smyrna, Constantinople, Athens, Naples, and Rome. Twice they visited Florence and Venice. Of Switzerland they never grew tired.

It was one long honeymoon, not a single display of ill-temper on either side. They were well mated.

On the 6th of August, 1865, the second anniversary of their marriage, they found themselves back once more in their Castle by the Sea, where they proposed to rest and recuperate after their long tour.

There we leave them for a while.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNDER SHERIDAN.

ON the 11th of May, 1864, General Grant wrote to the War Department a statement of what had been done, and closed it with those memorable words, which became famous all over the Union:—

“I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.”

True to this promise he did fight all summer, and the result of a full dozen battles was a heavy loss to the Union forces, estimated at 100,000 men in killed, wounded, and missing.

The loss to the South was in proportion. Colonel Creedmore participated in all those engagements without being injured in any way. Many times he found he was made a target of, but came out of each battle unharmed. As this is not a war history we cannot undertake to give an account of the fierce fighting of this memorable summer, lasting from the 1st of May to the 1st of November.

We have already given more pages to Edgar's war experience than was our intention at the outset.

We will take up one incident that will serve to bring out in bold relief the cool self-possession of this remarkable man.

In the battle of Cold Harbour, on the 7th of June, while the fighting was raging fiercely, a Confederate battery planted on a hill was very annoying to the position where General Meade had established his headquarters, and he finally told Colonel Creedmore to have a strong force sent against it to capture the position.

“I can have that hill vacated inside of an hour without the loss of a single man,” was the quiet answer to these orders.

“Then by all means do it,” was General Meade's reply. He was too busy in watching the battle to notice the smile on the face of his daring aide-de-camp.

Edgar rode back to the rear to his tent, where he put in execution a plot he had in view for several days.

Among the recent captures was a mounted colonel's uniform belonging to one of the aides of General Lee. Edgar had the lining taken out of it, as also out of one of his own uniforms, and had them joined together. This he at once put on with the Union blue outside. He put in his pocket a Confederate

hat, and with heavy top-boots over white riding trousers he started off. He knew that it was a very risky business, for if captured with this double uniform he would certainly be hanged as a spy.

The excitement of the proposed adventure compensated for the risk. Men were being slain on every hand, and in the midst of a fierce battle no one had time to think of the risk of death. That is part of a soldier's contract.

Colonel Creedmore rode away rapidly and gained a thick clump of trees not far from the Confederate battery. Dismounting he turned his coat and put on the Southern hat and then rode boldly up to the hill, and asking one of the outposts the name of the officer in charge was told that Colonel Harbet, of Georgia, was in command, and Captain Lawson was next in rank.

Edgar, without a moment's hesitation, rode into the entrenchments, and in a very haughty manner demanded why the orders of General Lee had not been carried out.

The surprised Colonel Harbet replied that he did not know which orders were meant, as he had received half-a-dozen since morning.

"Then report yourself under arrest to General Lee," was Edgar's cool answer, and continuing he said, "Captain Lawson, by orders of Lieutenant-General Lee you will assume charge of this battery and proceed with all your guns and take possession of yonder elevated point."

This order was promptly obeyed, and within ten minutes Colonel Creedmore was left the sole occupant of the hill, calmly watching with his glasses the fierce charges of the Union troops. In a few minutes afterwards he left, and on reaching the clump of trees he again turned his coat and rode back to where Colonel Moorehead was stationed with his regiment, and told him of the situation. He sent Captain Joshua Harkness with three companies to occupy the vacant hill. Edgar went to his tent and took off the dangerous coat which had answered its purpose, and reported to General Meade. The vacating of the hill had been noticed from headquarters, and also its occupancy by the Union force, but no special attention was paid to it, as it was supposed to be some plan of General Lee. The latter, when he heard of it, concluded some of his aides had blundered.

It was a week later before General Meade heard the true explanation and he laughed heartily, but thought the risk was too great to try that plan again.

When General Phil Sheridan was told about it he made an application to General Grant to have Colonel Creedmore

detailed for duty under him. He said that he needed just such a man—cool, daring, and full of new devices. A man who could capture an important position in the midst of a great battle without the loss of a man was indeed a very valuable acquisition.

A few days after Edgar reported himself to General Sheridan.

There is a grain of superstition in every nature, no matter how well trained.

The reader will remember that in April, 1861, cousin Margaret had placed around Edgar's neck a family heirloom in the shape of a locket, with a tradition of its great talismanic powers. This was lost in some way on the day in which he rode into the Confederate entrenchment and ordered them to vacate the hill. He felt the loss of it very keenly, and seemed to think that the charm that had protected him so far was now to be withdrawn. He was well aware that he had reached his highest altitude in the Union service. The fact of his being an Englishman had created some jealousy in army circles. This was due in some measure to the unfriendly attitude of the British Government, and no matter how great Colonel Creedmore's services had been in the past the rank of colonel was the limit of promotion. He had no cause to complain of his treatment, for everywhere he received the greatest honour, from General Grant down to the humblest private in the ranks.

General Sheridan always treated him with special favour, and entrusted him with very important despatches.

On the 7th of August Major-General Sheridan was appointed the new commander of the Department of West Virginia, Washington, and Susquehanna. Colonel Creedmore went with him and remained on his staff until the close of the war.

In the battle of Opequan, commenced on the 19th of September against the Confederate forces under General Early, who held Opequan Creek, covering Winchester, Edgar found that the extraordinary good fortune which had attended him since his entry into the Union army had not deserted him, even though he had lost his charmed locket.

At two in the afternoon Colonel Creedmore was sent by General Sheridan with instructions to General Crook, commanding the 8th Corps (late of the army of West Virginia), to charge the enemy's left flank. These orders were duly delivered and carried out. While returning to headquarters, in riding through the woods he was suddenly surrounded by a detachment of the 8th S.C., whose colonel, with 171 men, had been captured several days before. Colonel Creedmore was not asked

to surrender, but was pulled from his horse and searched for despatches almost before he knew it. The prospect looked very favourable for another sojourn in Libby, and as he had left there nine months previously without ceremony he did not expect that his return would be conducive to his happiness.

The suspense was not long, for Colonel Thomas, of the 8th Vermont, charged the woods at double quick, and General Crook charged from the flanks with wild cheering. Everything was carried, and the Confederates did not stand upon the order of going but went at once, leaving a number of prisoners behind them. An hour afterwards Colonel Creedmore reported to General Sheridan as though nothing had happened.

Battle succeeded battle until November, when both armies went into winter quarters.

Nothing of special importance took place until the following spring. Fort Fischer was captured in January, 1865, by the combined efforts of the naval fleet under the renowned Rear-Admiral Porter, and eight thousand men under General Terry.

The early spring brought with it a renewal of hostilities all along the lines defending Richmond. General Sheridan's fame rose to its zenith in the battle which closed the great rebellion.

He was instructed by General Grant to open the spring campaign of 1865 by a daring raid aimed at Lynchburg, and the Confederate communications generally.

On the 27th of February he left Winchester at the head of 10,000 men, all mounted. He moved so rapidly that he utterly defeated General Early, and destroyed a large quantity of Southern supplies. He took his force around General Lee's army, crossed the James River at Jones Landing, and reported to General Grant on the 27th of March in front of Petersburg.

Colonel Creedmore was thus made a participant in the closing scenes of the greatest civil war known in history.

On Sunday, April 2nd, Richmond was evacuated, and the following day it was occupied by the Federal forces. On the 9th of April General Lee surrendered his grand army that he had led and directed during four years.

This virtually finished the Confederacy. What followed is a matter of public history.

In June the work of disbanding the million men yet under arms for the defence of the Union began. Colonel Creedmore, broken in health, resigned his commission and returned to New York to his uncle's house, and took Henry Winston with him.

It is needless to say that he was given a grand welcome home, not only by his peace-loving uncle but more particularly

by the fair Margaret. She had long since got over the idea prevalent with many of her sex of looking for the stars of a major-general on the shoulders of their lovers. They were glad to have them back, even if they came with honourable war records as private soldiers.

Edgar, who had been kept duly apprised from time to time of the welfare of his sister, was well pleased when he heard of her marriage to the earl, and would have gone to England himself but for his obligations. There was now peace in the land.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HOOPS OF GOLD.

A FEW days after the arrival of the earl and countess at Harold Castle their numerous kindred began to arrive to give them a welcome home. Once more the lofty chambers resounded with mirth and melody.

Adelaide came this time in a happy frame of mind, for she was engaged to be married to the oldest son of a baronet, with a fair prospect of succeeding to an earldom.

Winifred's happy face told of her betrothal to Robert Shirley. Pauline and Elvira both showed by their light spirits that their hearts were free.

Mrs. Ainsworth wrote a very gracious letter and wished Esther and her husband many years of happiness. Every chamber of the spacious castle was filled. The large estate afforded abundant game for those inclined to hunting. There was shooting on the moors, fishing and boat sailing on the North Sea, and fine roads for riding and driving. Not a single incident happened to mar the pleasure. The Rev. and Mrs. Demar came, and by their genial presence added much to the enjoyment of the visitors. At the end of three weeks all had taken their departure, and the earl and countess proposed to remain a few days longer and then leave for a visit to Sir Thomas Shirley in the South of England.

The second morning after the departure of the last of their guests the earl received a telegram from Glasgow, stating that a relative of his was very ill in a hotel and wished to see him at once.

Esther was not feeling well, and so remained at the castle while her husband was away. They had never been separated for a single day since their marriage, and she could not shake off a feeling of coming evil which seemed to weigh her down.

The earl had just time to get ready for the steamer, which called at Belhaven at noon. He bade his wife good-bye and told her he would return in two days, unless it was absolutely necessary to remain with his sick relative a day or so longer.

Esther watched the carriage until it was out of sight in a bend of the road.

It was the 3rd of September—a day fated to be a red-letter one in her history.

An hour after the departure of her husband a caller was announced. Her first inclination was to decline to see him, but he sent up a letter signed by the Rev. J. Demar, introducing the Rev. Duncan Albright. She went to the drawing room and found a grey-haired gentleman of a decidedly clerical appearance. He was well informed and had travelled extensively on the continent, and, having visited so many places that Esther had seen on her late tour, she became very much interested in him. He was asked to stay for lunch, which he consented to do.

On the table was a heavy coffee urn, with an alcohol lamp under it. The coffee was exceedingly hot, and Esther in trying to blow out the light set fire to the lamp itself. Her guest, in the endeavour to assist her, upset a large portion of the coffee over her left hand, blistering it very badly. He apologised profusely for his carelessness, but told her he was a doctor as well as a clergyman, and sent a servant for some lime, sweet oil, and water, and placing the blistered hand in it took off her wedding ring, bandaged the hand, and told her that in a day or so she would be all right.

Esther suffered so much pain that she requested her guest to remain until the return of the earl. This he said he could not do, as he had to meet one of his sons on the following day in Edinburgh. He would remain accordingly for that night only.

Esther told Mr. Albright that it was a bad omen to be compelled to take off her wedding ring, but as it could not be helped she would keep it in sight on her pincushion in her bedroom.

The pain from the blistered hand continued to increase so much that, after dinner, she asked to be excused and retired to her chamber. The agony became unbearable, and Esther sent her maid for Mr. Albright, who administered a sleeping powder,

and in an hour later she was sound asleep. A maid had been in the room all the time, and the clergyman took some powders from his pocket, instructing the girl to take them to the kitchen and mix them in a cup of hot water and sugar, and if her mistress was restless during the night to give her half of the medicine. When he found himself alone he went to the pin-cushion and took the wedding ring, also the engagement ring and two others which were special gifts from the earl to his wife. He examined them carefully and replaced them. This done the clergyman retired for the night.

The following morning Esther met her guest at the breakfast table; she was looking pale and had her hand bandaged up. He told her that he would have to leave at eleven o'clock, but before doing so had something very important to communicate, which must be in private.

After breakfast they retired to the library, but were hardly seated when a servant announced that one of the gamekeepers from Everdale had just arrived with the dog Cæsar and a letter from Mrs. Van Reem, which read as follows:—

MY DEAR ESTHER,

EVERDALE MANOR,
September 2nd, 1865.

On our return here yesterday I found that your favourite dog Cæsar has developed a strong hatred towards Martin Nickley, for which I do not blame him, but as the law is on the side of the man and not of the dog the latter is at a disadvantage. Cæsar watches every opportunity to attack Nickley, and twice he has been shot at; so I concluded to send the animal to you. The gamekeeper will take the steamer from Newcastle to-morrow evening and will reach you early the morning after. You had better leave Cæsar at the castle when you start off on your visit to the South of England. Mr. Nickley left two days ago for parts unknown, and the fervent wish of all is that he may never return. Your Uncle Richard sends his best love, in which I heartily join.

Your affectionate aunt,

ELIZABETH VAN REEM.

Esther related to her guest the history of the dog, and asked him if he would like to see the animal.

This offer was declined very emphatically on the plea that he was once bitten by a mastiff and could not endure large dogs; in fact, they made him very nervous.

The Rev. Mr. Albright, having recovered from the nervousness into which he was thrown by the news of the arrival of the great mastiff, proceeded with the object he had in view when he asked for a private interview.

“Lady Harold,” he commenced, “you will pardon me if I ask you a few questions, which, I assure you, are prompted by a desire to serve you. The Rev. Mr. Demar also has the same

kindly feeling, for he now knows that he was imposed upon, but did not obtain his information until after his return home from his visit to this castle. I find it very difficult to muster up sufficient courage to inform you of your present status in reference to the Earl of Montville, but it is better that you should seek for an explanation from him. You told me that he received a telegram yesterday morning, asking him to meet a sick relative in Glasgow."

"Yes," was the reply of the countess, whose eyes were open to their full extent, as though seeking to read the inmost thoughts of her visitor.

"Do you ever go to his private desk?" was the next question of Mr. Albright.

"No, I do not. I trust my husband to the uttermost, and he does the same with me; I never touch his private papers."

"Last evening," said he, "you gave me permission to write a letter at your husband's desk, and I found this letter with others of the same tenor. It makes my mission here easier to explain than I had anticipated. I feel the shame and deception practiced on you very keenly, and I pity you from the very depths of my heart."

"You speak in enigmas, and I demand to know at once what you insinuate," said Esther, rising to her feet, with her large eyes blazing with excitement.

"Be calm, Lady Harold, and don't get excited. Perhaps it is only a blackmail on the part of some designing woman, and no doubt the earl can give the proper solution. Read this letter." It was as follows:—

GLASGOW, September 1st, 1865.

MY OWN DARLING HAROLD,

Is it not about time to put an end to this farce of your mock wedding with Esther Creedmore? I never would have consented to your going off with her if I had not relied upon your statement that you would send her home at the end of a year. You cannot and dare not deny that, by the laws of Scotland, you were my lawful husband long before that ceremony at Arrochar blanse. You played the innocent bridegroom on that occasion to perfection.

I will send you a night message to-morrow to meet a sick relative at the Queen's Hotel in this city, and will look for you on the evening of the 3rd. On your return to the castle you must inform the proud-spirited Esther that she is only your wife by brevette, and that I am the true Countess of Montville. We can go abroad until the scandal of it is forgotten. I am sorry for the girl, but I do not propose to resign my rights. I don't suppose it will come very hard on her, for I feel satisfied from what you have written to me from time to time that she really did not care very much for you. I must now close.

Your own loving and devoted,

FLORENCE HAROLD, Countess of Montville.

It was fully twenty minutes before Esther spoke. Three times she read the letter. Her face became intensely pale, and she was more like a piece of sculptured marble as she sat in her chair wrapped in her robe of white cashmere.

At last she arose, and asking Mr. Albright to excuse her went to her chamber. In ten minutes she returned with a letter addressed to the earl and a small jewel box. She handed both to her visitor, and in cold, hard tones said to him :

“Mr. Albright, you will confer a very great favour if you will go to Glasgow, seek for the earl at the Queen’s Hotel, and give him this letter and this box which contains his engagement and wedding rings. I shall return at once to Everdale Manor and consult my relatives. Did you find any more letters in the desk where you got this one?”

“Yes,” was the reply, “I found five others, tied with a blue ribbon, marked ‘private.’ I must leave now as I have just time to get the steamer at Belhaven. Command my services at any time.”

Esther accompanied her guest to the hall door, and as it was opened by the footman Caesar, who was on the porch, sprang in and greeted his mistress with all the ardour of his dog nature. The next moment he quivered with excitement and sprang savagely at the carriage door, which had just closed upon Mr. Albright. The dog barked furiously, and only ceased when Esther went and took hold of his collar. He looked up into her face with an expression almost human, as though he wanted to tell her something.

Esther told the gamekeeper from Everdale that she had made up her mind to return with him on the afternoon steamer to Newcastle, and from there a train could be taken to Everdale.

The servants were too well trained to express any surprise at this unexpected movement of the countess. She told her maid to pack all her clothes, and under the escort of the gamekeeper she left Harold Castle never more to return. Caesar went with her.

They arrived at Newcastle on the following morning, and from there she telegraphed to her uncle Richard to expect her in the evening, and also wired to her uncle Sir Thomas and his wife to come at once to Everdale on a matter of life and death.

On arrival at Everdale station she found both her uncles and aunts waiting to receive her. Esther’s face was closely veiled, so that her emotion could not be read by any one. Her relatives surmised that she had quarrelled with her husband,

and that it would pass off in a day or so. When seated in the carriage she made a request to be let alone until the manor was reached.

Once in the privacy of the library she threw on the table the package of letters, and told her relatives to read them and advise her in the morning what to do.

She then retired to her chamber, where, after partaking of a cup of tea and some toast, she dismissed her maid for the night and was left alone with her thoughts, happy in the fact that her fingers no longer held the hoops of gold, which were once the emblems of fidelity, honour, and love, but which now were rejected baubles stamped with treachery. Never for a moment did she question the wisdom of her hasty step in leaving Harold Castle. The discovery of the earl's double life was a terrible blow to Esther's sensitive nature.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SWORD AND THE PLOUGHSHARE.

1865.

AT the close of the Civil War the great army of the North, over a million strong, was disbanded, and the veterans of a hundred battles turned their swords into ploughshares. The majority took up the peaceful associations of their former lives without any regret at leaving the active, stirring life of the camp.

Edgar soon recovered his normal health and vitality, and was disposed to accept a proposal of his uncle Richardson to go into business with him.

The one hundred thousand dollars which he had given into his care were returned to him with one hundred and fifty thousand more added. At the end of two months there came a reaction and a craving for more excitement than was to be found in mercantile pursuits.

At this point the refining influence of Margaret Richardson had a powerful effect over Edgar and the reaction passed away, leaving him with the valuable experience of his four years of army life thoroughly disciplined and ready for any phase of business.

He fully made up his mind to enter into his uncle's counting-house as equal partner. It was their understanding that in the course of a few years he was to have the entire control and profits. Margaret's liking for her English cousin was well known to her father, who accordingly looked upon him as a future son-in-law. All these plans might have been carried out but for a single mistake. How often is the current of many lives turned by the event of an hour!

When Edgar came home from the war, in May, he found Colonel Derwent a prisoner at large, just recovering from his wounds. He had been not only well cared for, and all his wants supplied, but had the entrée to many houses of the best families. This was due to the influence of Colonel Creedmore.

On the 1st of June he was released from his parole, and permitted to return to Kentucky. For a week before leaving he was Edgar's guest at the house of Mr. Richardson, and was anxious to show his gratitude to his friend Creedmore, as he called him.

He urged him to return to Kentucky with him. This was declined for the present, but a partial promise was made that the invitation would be accepted in the autumn if business engagements permitted.

Colonel Derwent took his departure for his home, leaving a very favourable impression upon all with whom he came in contact. The four years of war experience had tamed his former fiery spirit, and he had had enough of fighting.

On the 1st of September Edgar came back to New York, with his uncle and his cousin Margaret, from Saratoga, where they had spent the summer. It was arranged that on the 3rd the new partnership sign was to be placed on the door of the old warehouse, and the large business was to be conducted thenceforward under the name of "Richardson & Creedmore, Wholesale Commission Merchants."

Edgar found a number of letters awaiting his return. One was from the Earl of Montville, telling of the safe return home from their long honeymoon. Another was from Etaline Hilton, stating that she and her husband expected to go West to Colorado to reside. Edgar learned also that Henrietta St. Clair had come back from Fort Lafayette very much embittered against the Yankees in general and himself in particular. Her father was dead and the large estate had become virtually a wreck. She attributed all her misfortune to the man who had nipped in the bud her bright career as a Confederate spy, and had checkmated her in the hour of triumph. She had told Etaline

that the day of vengeance would yet come, and that Colonel Creedmore should bite the dust at her feet. Etaline's letter closed with the hope that she herself could in some way be of use to him.

There was also a letter from Colonel Moorehead, stating that he had given up all his seafaring ambitions and proposed to go to Denver, Colorado, in the spring to buy a ranch and raise cattle, and that he would be pleased to welcome his old comrade to his new home at any time.

After all the letters had been read the envelopes were thrown in the waste basket, and the letters duly placed on a file until time should be found to answer them. As Edgar rose from the table he noticed three envelopes that had apparently dropped on the floor, and stooping down he threw them in the basket. His cousin Margaret, being of a very practical and careful turn of mind, examined all the empty envelopes to see that no letters had escaped being opened. She was rewarded in her search by finding that the last one taken from the floor had a letter inside, and was from Colonel Derwent. It contained a very urgent invitation to Colonel Creedmore to visit Kentucky, stating that although he had served on the Northern side yet his many acts of kindness to Southern prisoners had made him many warm friends. The writer himself wished to show his gratitude for the care taken of him when wounded and a prisoner. He would have an opportunity of seeing life in the South under the new order of things.

When cousin Margaret read this letter she urged Edgar to write a kind declination, stating that as he was about to enter into business with his uncle he could not leave New York at present, but some other time he would be glad to avail himself of the offer of hospitality. This letter was duly written. Edgar wanted to go out and post it at once, but his cousin persuaded him to wait until morning as it was raining.

This was the fatal mistake of her life, and bitterly did she afterwards repent of it.

The following day Edgar told his cousin that he was glad he did not post the letter, as he had gone through a severe struggle during the night about the invitation of Colonel Derwent, and, after mature reflection, had decided to go to Kentucky for a month. On the 3rd of October he would be back to take his place in his uncle's warehouse as the new partner.

Uncle Richardson did his best to persuade his nephew not to visit Kentucky until the animosity against the North had abated.

Edgar replied that he needed a change, and felt satisfied that he would come back at the end of a month better prepared for mercantile life.

On the morning of the 3rd of September he left for Louisville, where he was met by Colonel Derwent and escorted to his plantation.

Nothing was left undone to give a genial, hearty, and right royal welcome to Colonel Creedmore by all the members of the Derwent family. Mrs. Derwent had fitted up her guest's chamber in luxurious style for the use of the man who succoured her husband when he was severely wounded and a prisoner, and contributed so much to his welfare afterwards. She had two charming daughters, Kate and Ida. Both of them made up their minds that the gallant Englishman should want for no comfort during his stay under their roof. They were splendid horsewomen, and the day after Edgar's arrival they proposed a ride to several places of interest near their home. Their father was not sufficiently recovered from his wounds to ride a horse, so he let his daughters take charge of his guest. Edgar had a strong partiality for women who could successfully manage a horse, and as the Misses Derwent were famous riders he felt that his stay at Harmondale Plantation (the name of Colonel Derwent's property) would be more pleasant than he had anticipated.

It is doubtful if there was another man of the Union army who would have received the same welcome as Colonel Creedmore. The fact that he fought against the South was outbalanced by his English birth and his relationship to two of the oldest families of Great Britain. Then again he was wealthy, had an attractive manly form, was highly educated, and exceedingly brilliant.

The month of September passed away before Edgar could realise it. His uncle in New York wrote an urgent letter asking him to return and take his place in the counting-room. His cousin Margaret also pleaded in a long letter, asking him not to stay away any longer as her father needed assistance in his business.

It would have taken a man of sterner stuff than Colonel Creedmore to resist the persuasions of both Mrs. Derwent and her beautiful daughters to extend his visit at least another month, and if possible to remain for Christmas. Edgar finally yielded so far as to promise to stay until the 1st of November. Then he would surely take his place as partner in the new firm in New York.

Among the many who were on terms of friendship with Colonel Derwent was a man named Captain Jerold Slevington. He had no particular business, but always paid his debts punctually. He served in the war as captain of a company in Colonel Derwent's regiment. He stood six feet two inches high and was broad in proportion. He was quiet in his deportment, did not talk much, and was a splendid judge of human character. He soon acquired a strong influence over Edgar. It was indeed a day of ill omen for the young Englishman when he first took the hand of Captain Slevington in his, and exchanged greetings. The stalwart Kentuckian had a grip like a vice, and Edgar's fingers felt the pressure for an hour afterwards. Moralising would be pardonable here, but we pass on.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FATAL RECOGNITION.

WHEN the Earl of Montville reached Edinburgh from Leith it was five o'clock. He drove to the Balmoral for dinner, where he found a telegram from his kinsman in Glasgow, stating that he had recovered from his illness and was about leaving the city. The earl made up his mind to return next day at noon by the steamer. At the hour named he stood on the pier, and was about to go on board when a footman in livery handed him a telegram, signed Rev. J. Albright, stating that he had called at Harold Castle to see him, and was then on his way to Edinburgh to meet him. It was a matter of life and death, and he hoped the earl would stay at the Balmoral until the arrival of the boat from Belhaven.

The earl's first impulse was to go on his return journey, and as the two steamers met in a harbour on the way he could easily find Mr. Albright and ask him to return with him. He hesitated over the matter, and while he did so the gangway plank was hauled aboard and slowly the steamer left, and with its departure there came to him that terrible foreboding of danger which many men experience. Coming events in his case did indeed cast their shadows before.

He turned away from the pier and went back to the Balmoral, there to await the Rev. Mr. Albright. Promptly at five he came, and presented a letter of introduction from the Rev. Mr. Demar.

This was so strongly worded that the earl gave him a very cordial welcome and insisted that they should partake of dinner, and afterwards would have ample time for the business that brought his new friend to Edinburgh. It was seven o'clock when they found themselves alone in a private parlour, and Mr. Albright, with the proverbial Scottish bluntness, came to the point at once without any bye-play.

"I am the bearer," he said, "of a very important message from your wife, the Countess of Montville. Before I deliver it I would like permission to ask a few questions which may throw light on a dark subject. I do not ask this from idle curiosity, but from a wish to serve you."

"How long did you know the countess before you married her?"

"We were playmates from childhood," was the answer of the earl, who exhibited the utmost astonishment at the question; "but why do you ask?"

"The letter from the Rev. Mr. Demar ought to convince you that I am a friend of his, and therefore anxious to serve you from the fact that you were married at his house," replied Mr. Albright. "Will you permit me to ask one or two more questions? Did you not have a rival of some sort? Was there not several attempts made to abduct Miss Creedmore?"

"Yes, I had a rival. A certain Martin Nickley fancied he had some claim on my wife, from the fact that he assisted in raising her body from Everdale Lake when she and her brother were capsized and sank to the bottom."

"You use the word 'assisted;' I heard that he did it alone, going down and groping around at the risk of his life until he found her."

"I admit all that; but saving a woman from death does not give her rescuer a life mortgage on her personality, and this was what Mr. Nickley claimed. My wife was grateful for this act on his part, but she could not love him."

"Are you sure of this last assertion? Women are strange creatures, and their nature is a mystery. They are impulsive at times."

"Pardon me," said the earl, rising, "but I must decline to entertain a single doubt of the unwavering devotion of Lady Harold for myself, and I would therefore beg leave to ask you to state the object of your visit at once."

"Certainly," said Mr. Albright, as he rose to his feet. "Your wife asked me to hand you this package, which has a letter inside. I came to see you at the special request of

Mr. Demar, who was pained at certain rumours that reached him on his return from his visit to Harold Castle last week. I will now withdraw, as I must leave on the night train for London to meet my eldest son. A letter to my bankers, Messrs. Edmonds & Co., Threadneedle Street, London, will reach me. I will be most happy to serve you at any time."

A moment later and the earl was alone. He felt sure that he had seen his visitor before, but he could not exactly say where. Without the slightest misgiving he opened the package and found half-a-dozen rings, one being the engagement solitaire diamond he had given to his wife, and another the wedding ring. What could this mean?

Hastily tearing open the letter he read the contents. What followed immediately afterwards the earl never knew up to the hour of his death. He was aroused to consciousness by the clock on the mantel-piece striking the midnight hour with its cathedral gong. A crushed letter was in his hand, and on the table six glittering hoops of gold lay, with the stirring mementoes of their history. Once again he read the letter:—

HAROLD CASTLE, September 4th, 1865.

MY HUSBAND,

This is the last time that I will call you by this name. We must part at once and part for ever. You know full well all that is involved in this separation for me. I am a woman, and therefore my mistakes are considered by the uncharitable world as little short of criminal. I was led into this false position of our marriage against my better judgment. Having yielded I must pay the penalty. I ask but one favour, and that is to be let alone. I surrender back the name you gave me, with the rings which once encircled my fingers as pledges of undying love. I am rudely awakened from this dream, and the only anticipation of joy in which I now dare indulge is the fact that death, sooner or later, will end the awful agony which has taken full possession of me.

Under no condition will I accept a single penny from you. This hour of parting has revealed to me how much I did love you, but that love is dead and can never be resuscitated. Our future pathways are now in opposite directions; they should never have been brought together.

I am leaving Harold Castle by the afternoon steamer, and this is the last time I will ever write to you. Once more, farewell.

ESTHER M. CREEDMORE.

The earl, holding the crumpled letter in his hand, went to the sideboard, and filling a tumbler with brandy drank it down and threw himself on his bed without undressing. The strong liquor stupefied him and gave him no chance to weigh all the facts contained in Esther's letter. In this critical juncture of his history he needed a cool brain, and the brandy, as it flew through his veins, swept away his last chance of averting the awful calamity about to fall upon his house.

At six in the morning he arose and left Edinburgh for London, sending a telegram to his butler at Harold Castle to forward his clothes to his London residence.

We must now go back to Esther at Everdale Manor.

Very early on the morning after her arrival she went to the library, and found both her uncles and her aunts deep in consultation as to the best means to pursue in this crisis.

Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley felt satisfied that there must be some mistake—a probable case of blackmail, as the earl was too honourable a man to deceive his best friends wilfully.

“No doubt he may have known this woman,” they said, “and perhaps she tried under Scotch laws to prove a prior marriage.”

Mrs. Van Reem said that the letters now before them had been received by the earl at the different places which he visited on his wedding tour, for they all bore foreign postmarks. It was, therefore, a very deep conspiracy, or a case of total depravity on the part of Edmond Harold.

It was finally decided that Sir Thomas should see the earl and ask for satisfactory explanations.

At nine o'clock in the forenoon Esther received the following telegram, which cast a ray of sunshine on the darkened household :—

LONDON, September 6th, 1865.

TO THE COUNTESS OF MONTVILLE,
EVERDALE MANOR.

Important evidence just discovered. Case of blackmail. All will be well if you come to London at once. The earl is here and will explain everything. Come alone; will meet you.

REV. J. ALBRIGHT.

At first Esther was not inclined to go to London, but her relatives urged her to do so, saying that as she left her husband's home without hearing what he had to say it was her duty to go at once and meet him. An hour later she was on her way to London.

When the earl reached his destination he was met by the Rev. Mr. Albright, who seemed to have been aware of his departure, and therefore he was expected. Mr. Albright told him that he had been working on his case all day, and was very certain that it was a deep conspiracy on the part of some enemy. He would arrange on the next day for a meeting with the countess.

In the meantime he suggested that they should go to the Adelphi Hotel, where he had engaged apartments. On reaching

it a splendid supper was served in a private parlour, and the earl brightened up at the prospect of once more meeting his wife.

Mr. Albright urged him to drink champagne, as it would give him needed strength. When they were ready to retire the earl was persuaded to take a hot brandy punch, and half-an-hour later was sleeping soundly.

The following morning he arose with a splitting headache, and was in the worst possible humour. He found a note from Mr. Albright on his table saying that urgent business called him out of town. It further stated that he would return by five o'clock, when he would call for the earl to go where his wife would be found with her kindred, and everything would be made satisfactory once more. In the meantime Mr. Albright insisted that it was absolutely necessary that no one should know he was in the city until the proper moment came for unmasking the conspiracy. As the earl had perfect confidence in his new friend he followed his advice and kept indoors.

When Esther arrived at Euston station she was met by Mr. Albright, who was most respectful in his greeting and attention. He told her that from the evidence he was able to collect it was a villainous attempt to blackmail her husband, and that those implicated in it would be brought to justice.

A handsome carriage with a coachman in livery was waiting for them. They at once got into it and were driven away.

Mr. Albright stated that they were going to the house of a friend of his, who lived in a small street off the Strand, and her husband would join her there.

When they arrived they were met by a pleasant-faced woman dressed in deep mourning, who was introduced as Mrs. Henville. She cordially greeted the Countess of Montville, and insisted that they should partake of lunch, which was ready.

Wine and champagne were on the table in abundance. Esther was persuaded to drink of both. Her nerves needed strengthening after the nervous prostration of the past few days. Shortly after she complained of feeling very ill and was assisted to a lounge in the room. A moment later she was unconscious.

At six o'clock she was rudely awakened by Mrs. Henville, who stated that the earl was coming to see her and she must get up. A glass with some mixture was handed to her and she drank its contents. It revived her at once, and she now perceived that her hair was all unbound and her dress

unfastened. No time was given to arrange her toilet; not a moment must be lost, Mrs. Henville told her, for if her husband saw her coming out of this house his confidence in her character would be ruined.

The hallway was dark. A man took her arm and opened the door, where a carriage was waiting. Leaning against a lamp-post, pale and haggard, stood her husband, the Earl of Montville. On the opposite side of the street was a footman in livery, and with him were Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and her Uncle Richard and Mrs. Van Reem, also Colonel Vansant and his daughter Pauline.

Esther looked up to see who had hold of her arm, and was amazed to behold the triumphant face of Martin Nickley.

He stooped and kissed her, remarking in a loud tone, which was heard by the earl and her relatives :

“ My own darling Esther, we are united at last, and I won't leave you again in the clutches of your brutal husband.”

A voice, which sounded like Esther's, replied : “ My darling Martin, you are the only man I ever truly loved. Farewell to all my kindred and my husband. I will cling to you while life lasts.”

The next moment she was lifted into the carriage by Martin Nickley, who followed after her; the door was closed by the footman and they were driven rapidly away.

No effort was made by the earl to stop her. He walked down the street, and went to Charing Cross and took the train for Paris. Language would fail to describe his feelings, and we will not attempt it.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WILD WEST.

THE 1st of November came and found Edgar wavering and undecided about his future plans.

The morning mail had brought him a pleading letter from his cousin Margaret, asking him to return at once as her father was ill from over-work and needed his help in his business. It was a letter that, if received at any other time and place, would have stirred every fibre of his nature. At present he was under the influence of Colonel Derwent's daughters, who were both in love with the stalwart Englishman, and sought by all means in their power to keep him as a guest. Captain Slevington had gained a strong control over him, and persuaded him to invest a large sum of money on some fast horses on the racecourse. The result was a clear gain of five thousand dollars. It would have been better for him if he had lost ten times that amount. It became a strong lever in the hands of a man like Slevington, and he did not fail to use it.

He was anxious to visit the newly-discovered gold mines in Colorado, where, if a man had some capital, he could make an immense fortune in a short time.

In urging this subject one day, he said: "My dear Colonel Creedmore, it is utterly impossible for you to settle down to a mercantile life in New York after four years of camp life; you, who are the hero and veteran of a hundred battles.

"In the Wild West, as some people term it, you will find work suited to your taste and disposition. There is no State that presents such golden opportunities as Colorado. Take your capital which you have in the bank at New York to Denver, and inside of a year it will double itself. I will go with you and give you the benefit of my experience. Kentucky is too slow and conservative. It makes me weep when I think of the grand possibilities in Denver, the rising capital of Colorado, to a man of your firm will and keen judgment of human character. Then, again, you have a quarter of a million in cool cash at your call. Why, my dear fellow, the business ways of New York are too prim and precise for you. Horace Greeley's advice to 'go West, young man,' is decidedly the best thing he ever got off. Well, I don't want to unduly persuade you. Your dear old quaker uncle in Gotham has an eye to your

money to prop up his business. Oh, well, I will go alone to Denver and watch my chance."

Day after day Captain Slevington worked upon Colonel Creedmore, throwing ridicule upon his uncle's proposition and then painting in glowing colours life upon a ranch, with the possibilities of owning a gold mine and thereby amassing a boundless fortune in the far West. The captain knew his man, and was not surprised when, on the 10th of November, Edgar told him he had decided to go to Denver to look at the place, and if not satisfied he would return to New York.

As soon as Colonel Derwent realised the influence obtained over his guest by Captain Slevington he was alarmed. He knew that the latter was a gambler and would be likely to lead his friend into dangerous speculations, and certainly would not be over-scrupulous about the way he obtained the money from the young Englishman.

Then, again, he had perceived that both his daughters were deeply in love with Colonel Creedmore, and he entertained hopes that he might marry one of them, and accordingly endeavoured to persuade Edgar to settle in Kentucky. His wife and daughters aided him in this course; they pleaded so strongly against his going to Denver that he yielded so far as to agree to stay until Christmas, and then Colonel Derwent promised to go with him to assist in prospecting.

This arrangement did not in any way suit the views of Captain Slevington, but that individual was too astute to openly oppose it. He finally thought of a plan to keep Colonel Derwent at home, and thus give him a free hand with Colonel Creedmore.

A vacancy in Congress occurring at this time in Colonel Derwent's county, Captain Slevington started a boom in favour of the Colonel. He was not only nominated by acclamation but overwhelmingly elected. He left for Washington, having obtained Edgar's word that he would not leave for Colorado before Christmas. Captain Slevington went alone, and a week later he wrote a glowing account of the prospects in gold mining. He said that by rare good fortune he met on the train one of the owners of the Rose Hill Gold Mine, who had been to New York to purchase mining machinery. What was needed was capital to develop the mine. It was valued at one million dollars. A half interest, however, could be purchased for \$250,000, but must be taken up at once, as it would not go begging.

A quantity of the ore was sent on by express for analysis. When it arrived it was assayed, and found to be worth five

thousand dollars to the ton. This looked most promising, and the gold fever took full possession of Edgar.

Mrs. Derwent, at this point, felt that if Colonel Creedmore was to be won as a son-in-law one of her daughters must retire from the field. She stated this matter candidly to them, and proposed that the one who loved the Englishman the most should remain. Both insisted strenuously that they could not live without him. Their mother, taking a lesson from Solomon, told them that the proper way to arrange this matter was to draw lots as to who should remain at home, while the other was to go away on a visit. Kate immediately accepted this proposition, but Ida positively refused to incur the risk. Under no circumstances would she let Colonel Creedmore know that she loved him, yet she would not surrender her hope of winning him.

Mrs. Derwent then decided that her youngest daughter displayed the greatest love and that Kate must yield.

Reluctantly she did so, and the next day went off on a visit to her uncle's. Ida being thus left in undisputed occupation of the field sought, in every proper and maidenly way, to make an impression on the heart of the young Englishman.

She was tall and had a mind well stored, having been at school continuously for twelve years. She was very domestic, and her skill in the culinary department was often exercised to produce choice dishes for their guest. Her hair was of flaxen colour, with hazel eyes which were large and expressive. Her nature was very confiding. Taken altogether she was well adapted for a wife to a man of Edgar's mould.

He was not blind to the fact of this preference for himself, and for the first time he seriously debated the question of marriage. He weighed the claims of his cousin Margaret against Ida Derwent and found both were exceedingly desirable. He loved them both; yes, the passion had germinated and he was in love. He thought of the sweet Etaline and her sacrifice for him, and although she was married he was also in love with her. He could only marry one, however, and the choice was necessarily narrowed down to Margaret and Ida.

This matter could not and must not be decided hastily. To relieve his mind he wrote a non-committal but an affectionate letter to Margaret, and stated that he was going to Denver after Christmas, adding that if the life there did not suit him he would return to New York and take up his duties in her father's counting-house as a partner, and she would find him a devoted cousin.

Captain Slevington sent on from Denver a second instalment of ore from the Rose Hill Mine, which was more valuable than the first lot. The gold fever grew apace, and Edgar was indeed badly smitten. He wrote a full statement of this mine to his friend, Colonel Moorehead, at Boston, and asked his advice about it. The answer was characteristic of the cautious seaman navigating in strange waters. "Be careful," he wrote, "of false charts, and remember the old adage that 'all is not gold that glitters.' If the Rose Hill Mine is what it is represented to be, then rest assured that it will not go begging." He ended by saying that he would be glad to meet his friend Colonel Creedmore in Denver on or about the 5th of January.

The Christmas season at Harmondale Plantation was celebrated in true Kentucky style. The colonel came home for the holidays. The remembrance of it became such a factor in Edgar's after experience that it assumed a calendar period, and events that happened were looked upon as taking place so many days or months from that Christmas at Harmondale. Even the Derwents spoke of it as "that Christmas-tide," as though there was no other such event in the past or likely to come again. For Edgar and Ida Derwent it was indeed a memorable event.

How often as the years rolled by did the girl console herself by saying "It might have been," while the fated Englishman felt "It should have been." If it had, how much bitter agony would have been avoided. One of the old coloured slaves of his host, on Christmas morn, in answer to the wish of a merry time, had said to him in reply: "Massa Colonel, last night as you danced wid de beautiful Miss Ida, I done gone and felt dat de fates and de Lord designed you for each oder. Better you don't gone and fly in de face ob Providence by a wilful resistance to de fore-ordained plan ob taking dat lady for your wife."

These words were never forgotten by Edgar. Yet he could not tell why he did not take the hand and heart that would have been freely given to him for the asking.

Many men have had the same experience. How often are we puzzled over the problem, whether it is a chance or Providence that shapes our ends—very roughly indeed at times!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE COMMONER.

AFTER the episode of the last chapter Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley went back to Elmswood, and his brother and sister returned to Everdale. Not a word of comment was uttered. They were too utterly dumbfounded to speak.

Not so, however, the lovely Pauline. She told her father that Esther was certainly the victim of a base conspiracy by that double-dyed villain, Martin Nickley. She was willing to stake her life on the fact that the Countess of Montville never uttered the words of endearment which they heard. Nickley had on several occasions given exhibitions of his power of ventriloquism, and had a great faculty of mimicry. Esther was under the influence of some powerful drug, and she must therefore be rescued at all hazards from the power of the scoundrel who had abducted her.

Colonel Vansant, urged on by his daughter, employed the best detectives to hunt up the place where Nickley had taken Esther, and he himself enlisted several of his friends in the cause.

Four weeks passed away before any clue was obtained. A detective informed the colonel one morning that Martin Nickley, the man he was looking for, had been seen the previous evening in one of the clubs, but that no trace had yet been found of the lost Countess of Montville. Immediately Colonel Vansant went to the club mentioned and found the report true. In fact, Martin Nickley had breakfasted there and was expected to return for dinner.

Colonel Vansant had just reached his sixtieth year; Nickley was twenty years younger and had great physical power. The former was likely to be at a great disadvantage in a trial of strength. Still the brave colonel never wavered for a moment. He determined to publicly horsewhip the villain who for several years had pursued Esther and twice tried to abduct her. For this purpose he purchased a strong, short whip, such as was used by draymen, and concealing it in his coat went back to the club all ready to make an example of his stalwart opponent. It wanted five minutes of five when Esther's champion, who but a moment previously had picked up the evening paper to glance at it, was startled by a burly form at his side saying in a sneering tone :

“Well, Colonel Vansant, I hear you have been looking for me. Sorry if I have kept you waiting. You surely have not come alone to undertake the rather difficult contract of trying to horsewhip me. That is a game at which two can play.”

For a moment the colonel was thrown off his guard by this unexpected bravado of the man for whom he was looking.

The next instant he drew from the folds of his light overcoat the heavy whip, and quick as a stroke of lightning the lash was entwined around Martin Nickley's face and neck like the folds of a snake, leaving a deep crimson mark. The pain was great, but greater far the mortification of being lashed in a club in the presence of fully fifty members.

With a savage roar like a wounded tiger Nickley wrenched the whip from the colonel's hand, then raising the loaded butt he would have certainly brought it down on the head of his opponent with deadly effect, but at that instant he was seized from behind and thrown violently to the floor. Before he could recover himself he was dragged to the head of the stairs and then down to the bottom, and was unceremoniously hustled into the street with a parting kick from a foot cased in a heavy walking boot.

The discomfited villain turned round to see who had taken such unwarranted liberties, and was amazed to behold the strong-limbed Ned Bentley, now a lieutenant in Her Majesty's Navy.

“I will settle this account at another time,” was all he said, and jumping into a passing hansom he drove away, and Lieutenant Bentley joined Colonel Vansant and offered his services to find out what had become of Esther.

In most of the London clubs the stealing of a man's wife is not considered by the members a serious offence, provided, of course, that it is not their own.

Martin Nickley made no secret of what he had accomplished in abducting the Countess of Montville.

No one thought for a moment of calling him to account or of asking for his expulsion. A public horsewhipping in the club rooms was, however, an indelible stain on the character of a member. Action was therefore taken at once by the governing committee, and after due deliberation Martin Nickley's name was erased from membership and a receipted bill sent to him for all claims, these items being paid out of the general deficiency fund. This was the standing rule of this very exclusive club.

As it would be considered tainted, no money could be paid into the treasury from an expelled member.

The following day this terrible disgrace was the talk of all London.

Martin Nickley lost no time in leaving England and going direct to Paris.

Strange as it may appear he looked upon himself as a man very much injured by the Earl of Montville. Esther, he declared to himself, should have been his wife, and the consequences resulting from his effort to obtain what he felt was his right was only another debt for which he proposed to obtain satisfaction from his rival.

On his arrival in Paris he was not long in finding out the café frequented by the earl. Seeking the place in the afternoon, when it was crowded by English visitors as well as the *élite* of the gay capital, Nickley took a seat at a table near at hand without being observed by his rival.

Edmond Harold was the picture of utter despair; his eyes were bloodshot, and he had been drinking heavily to drown his sorrow. Feeling satisfied that his wife had left him voluntarily, the words of endearment he heard from her addressed to Martin Nickley were sufficient evidence to him that, while she gave him her hand, her heart did not go with it. Sadly he thought of the happy two years of their honeymoon, during which not a single cross word had been exchanged between them.

Her death would have been a very great calamity, but her desertion and the accepting such a man as Nickley was a thousand-fold more agonising. The more he dwelt upon it the greater was his mental torture. Why should he suffer any longer? A single plunge in the Seine and all would be over. Yes, he would take the step. There was nothing to live for. He arose from the table where he had been sitting, and started for the door to carry out his suicidal intent. He was about to put his hat on his head when a man arose from a table by which he was passing and confronted him, saying:

“Edmond Harold, you are a peer of the realm, but that will not protect you from a public chastisement for your baseness in stealing the woman whose life I saved, and who loved me. You undermined me in her affections. I took her away from you because you had no right to stolen property. This earth is not large enough to hold us both. We must meet in Belgium, and under the shadow of the Lion Mount, on the fateful field of Waterloo, we will decide the ownership of Esther.”

Amazement would be a mild word to express the feelings of the earl, not only at the words just uttered but at meeting the

man who had so deeply wronged him. All thought of self-destruction fled from his mind, and was succeeded by a desire for revenge. But would he not lower himself by meeting such a scoundrel on the field of honour? Expressing in his face and his language all the scorn, contempt, and hatred for the man before him, he replied :

“Martin Nickley, for the first time in my life I begin to doubt the fact of the Almighty’s supervision over the affairs of this world because such a villain as you can go unpunished. If you were a gentleman I would not weigh the fact of your being a commoner, but would meet you anywhere for a duel unto death. You have descended to such base methods that it places you outside of civilised society. I therefore decline your challenge with scorn. Get out of my pathway.”

“Edmond Harold,” said Nickley, “I will be under the shadow of the Lion Mount by daylight to-morrow morning. The train leaves Paris at six this evening for Brussels, and if you fail to be there I will publicly horsewhip you and brand you as a coward. In order that you may have no further excuse I will give you a public insult. Take this.” Suiting the action to the word Martin Nickley dashed a glass of wine into the earl’s face, and, leaving his card on the table, said :

“At daylight to-morrow ; don’t forget. The Count Henri Rochmere will represent me ; arrangements can be made on the field. *Au revoir!*”

The earl wiped the wine from his face and started for the door, where he met Lieutenant Bentley, who had just arrived, and had come to Paris specially to find him and to help in the search for the lost Countess of Montville. He explained the matter to him, and Bentley agreed to go to Belgium as his second. A surgeon was hunted up and invited, and at six o’clock they took the train for Brussels. Martin Nickley and his second were on the same train.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ROSE HILL GOLD MINE.

ON the morning of the 3rd of January, 1866, Edgar and Ida Derwent stood by the mantelpiece in the breakfast room to say the last words of parting before the rest of the family should come from their rooms. Kate had returned a few days previously. She did not acquiesce in her sister's claim of possessing all right to the Englishman, and was not disposed to let them have any quiet talk by themselves if she could prevent it.

From the many words of encouragement from Edgar Ida had expected a proposal before he should leave. There was no doubt in his own mind that he loved the girl well enough to ask her to be his wife, but he also loved his little quaker cousin, Margaret Richardson. She had a priority of love and, besides, was a kinswoman; and her father had profitably invested his patrimony and more than doubled it. Therefore there was added to her claim gratitude and blood relationship. Ida was the most lovely of the two, more demonstrative; but in Margaret's nature there was a depth of love and true devotion that would keep on loving "for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse," and that would not become extinct even if death should part them. Edgar was indeed in a quandary. The proper, manly course to pursue would have been to decide promptly which girl he would prefer, Ida or Margaret, and then to state his preference. Instead of that he adopted a vacillating and wavering line of action, and thus kept two women in an agony of suspense.

Taking Ida's hand in his, and with his eyes fixed upon her, he calmly remarked:

"Ida, we are about to part, for how long I do not know. There is much I would like to tell you if I had time, but must postpone to another occasion what now fills my heart. Write to me as often as you can, and I will keep you fully apprised about my movements. If I find that the Rose Hill Mine is half as valuable as is claimed for it, why I will be a very rich man inside of a year, and then I will be at liberty to place certain matters before you for your consideration. I will not attempt to express in language my gratitude for the hospitality I have received under this roof, and this has been made doubly

dear to me by your unselfish efforts in my behalf. I will not say farewell, but only a brief *au revoir*. If I find everything favourable and straightforward at Denver I will telegraph to your father, and he has promised to join me at once. Here comes your sister Kate."

At ten o'clock Edgar took his departure for the station, accompanied by all the Derwent family. Ida was the last to shake hands with him, and in parting he said :

"Fair daughter of Kentucky, the memory of your winsome face will be a guiding star until I return from Denver, and then I will ask you——"

This sentence was never finished, for the train began to move away. A moment later those on the platform were left far behind, and Edgar was speeding to the far West.

The journey was without special incident. On his arrival at Denver he was met by Captain Slevington, who greeted him cordially and conducted him to a hotel.

The following morning they mounted horses and rode to the Rose Hill Mine, a distance of 30 miles. They had a relay of horses, and reached the place late in the afternoon. The country was wild and rugged. The mine was situated at the base of a hill well up on the road to Central Village. The surroundings were about the same as many others of the mining camps then so common in Colorado.

A log shanty bore the name of "The Mountain House." Even to the veteran Colonel Creedmore, with his four years' war experience, there came a strong revulsion of feeling as he sat down to his evening meal in company with a score of miners and others, all in their shirt sleeves, hands and faces strange to soap and water.

The table consisted of rough pine boards, placed on two empty flour barrels, with tin pots and tin plates. Ruefully he thought of the elegant table service at the stately old mansion of Colonel Derwent.

The accommodation for sleeping was primitive in the extreme. Tired as he was Edgar could not sleep, and by morning had made up his mind to go back by the first train from Denver to New York and take his place as his uncle's partner.

The next day it required all Captain Slevington's eloquence to awaken anything like enthusiasm in Colonel Creedmore; even the large lumps of rich ore taken out of the mine before his very eyes failed to stir him. Nothing would induce him to spend another night in such a place, so it was decided that

they should return to Denver that afternoon. By hard riding they could reach it before midnight, and as it was clear weather, with moonlight, there was no impediment but the rough roads.

At four o'clock Edgar, with Captain Slevington and two uncouth-looking men, introduced as part owners of the mine, left the camp. By seven o'clock they halted and cooked their evening meal. An hour later they proceeded on their journey.

The party had been discussing the probability of meeting "road agents," as they were called in Western parlance (any one of these bold riders of the plains would have shot you on sight had you been foolhardy enough to call them highwaymen). Not that Colonel Creedmore or his companions feared an attack, for Captain Slevington had a full four years' war record on the Southern side, and the two others were part of "Mosby's Guerillas"—"shooting at sight" was their business. But, then, these road agents were very careless about finding out the antecedents of those whom they proposed to attack. A rumour had spread that a very rich Englishman was expected to visit the Rose Hill Mine, and in the slang of the district he was considered "a soft snap." His arrival would soon be known all over that mining region.

The party had reached by ten o'clock the worst part of the road. Captain Slevington was riding ahead, followed in single file by Colonel Creedmore and the other two men. Each man held his bridle by the left hand, while the right grasped a Colt's navy six-shooter. Suddenly, without warning, each horse's bridle was grasped on the left and a revolver was levelled at the riders. Two men on the right covered them with rifles, and the stern command was given, "throw up your hands or you are dead men!"

Not a word was spoken in reply, but four pistol shots rang out in the night air and the four men holding the bridles dropped to the ground. The two rifles cracked but the bullets flew wide of their mark. Again four more revolver shots were heard and the two men on the right fell.

No stop was made to see if the road agents were killed or only wounded. The party rode on without displaying any excitement and reached Denver a few minutes before midnight.

Edgar never heard afterwards of the result of the shooting. If they were killed they were buried by their companions in crime; if only wounded they were quickly removed to places of safety.

The beds of the splendid hotel in Denver were duly appreciated by all the travellers, and by Colonel Creedmore in particular.

The next day he was delighted to see his old war comrade, Colonel Moorehead, walk into the hotel fresh from Boston. With him came Henry Winston, sent out specially by Margaret Richardson to look after her cousin's welfare.

It was the 7th of January, and was destined to be a memorable day for our hero. The morning mail had brought a letter in a woman's handwriting that sent a thrill of pleasure through Edgar's veins. It was from Etaline, who stated that she and her husband were keeping house in Denver. Lieutenant Hilton was engaged in his business of civil engineering, and would be glad to serve him in any way. Both proposed to call at his hotel by ten o'clock.

When they arrived they were accorded a genial, hearty welcome, and an hour was spent with Colonel Moorehead, Slevington and Winston being also of the party, talking over the old war days.

Then came the subject of the Rose Hill Mine. Everyone had heard of it. It was the talk of Denver. Lieutenant Hilton offered to survey the place in company with an expert, and upon the report made action could be taken.

Colonel Moorehead also wished to go, and Henry Winston asked to be of the party. They were advised to take their own tent and provisions and go well armed.

The following morning they set out, twelve in all, including the two part owners who came back with Edgar.

Five days later they all returned with enthusiastic accounts of the rich mine, and all Denver was wild over the reports.

The owners, six in number, had previously offered to sell their claims for \$250,000, but now put it up to one million, and would only sell one half for cash, taking stock for the balance.

A company was quickly formed and Colonel Creedmore was elected president, Colonel Moorehead vice-president, and Colonel Derwent was offered by telegraph the position of treasurer, which he duly accepted. Lieutenant Hilton was made engineer of the mine.

Captain Slevington persuaded Edgar to secure one-quarter of the stock, and he immediately drew on his uncle for \$250,000.

The gold mine fever spread, and even the cautious Mr. Richardson sent on \$25,000 as his own investment. Colonel Creedmore advanced \$20,000 to Lieutenant Hilton and \$5,000 to Henry Winston.

He borrowed this money from one of the bankers of the city, giving fifty thousand dollars worth of stock as collateral

security. It was considered ample. The demand for shares was greater than the supply, and the premium gradually rose until by the 1st of March it had reached 200 with the par value 100.

Large orders for machinery were sent to New York, and every preparation made to develop the great resources of the mine.

Colonel Derwent resigned his seat in Congress, and gave all his time to the now prosperous company.

On the 1st of March Henry Winston, who had been for a week at the mine, returned to Denver and sought out President Creedmore, and told him that there were rumours that the Rose Hill Mine was only a projecting spur of ore, and that the main body was situated in another claim held by the former owners of the Rose Hill, who had unloaded all their stock. He urged Edgar to sell half of his stock while it was at such a high premium. In case of failure he would not be at any loss; this was what many of the stockholders were doing.

Mr. Richardson had sold half of his. When Colonel Derwent and Captain Moorehead heard of these rumours they sold one-half of their holding, so did Lieutenant Hilton and Henry Winston, paying off the loans, thus relieving Colonel Creedmore.

He on his part absolutely refused to part with a single share.

Etaline came in person to his office and urged him to make himself secure in case of a failure of the ore. He was firm and would not consent. He had faith in the mine, and the premium was going up every day. Demands for the stock were coming in from all parts of the Union. As soon as the expected machinery came then dividends would be declared, and there was no telling where the stock would go. He was too old a soldier to become frightened at stock-jobbing rumours. The assay of the ore showed that it was one of the richest that had yet been discovered. Why should he sell? If the other investors were weak-kneed he, as the president, would stand firm.

Etaline withdrew with a sad feeling, because Edgar had put his whole fortune into this one enterprise.

While she was faithful to her husband in every respect, yet her heart had gone out years before to the man of her choice, and for his welfare she would have yielded her life. This was the state of affairs on the 2nd of March, 1866.

Could Edgar forget this month and what it developed five years previously? Had he reached the zenith of his fame? Why this terrible depression, as he sat in his luxurious office the envied president of the rich Rose Hill Gold Mining Company? Thus we leave him for a while.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SHADOW OF THE LION MOUNT.

IT was just seventeen minutes after the midnight hour when the train containing the Earl of Montville and his opponent arrived at Brussels. The former with Lieutenant Bentley went to the Hotel de Bellevue, while Martin Nickley and his second went to the private residence of a friend of the count. The latter called upon Lieutenant Bentley shortly after his arrival, and arranged the details of the duel. Carriages were to be ready at five o'clock to drive to the field of Waterloo, distant twelve miles. By half-past six, under the shadow of the Lion Mount, the principals were to face each other with pistols and fire at the word "three." Count Rochmere stated that Mr. Nickley, whom he had known for several years, was very bitter, and insisted on at least three shots in case the other two were without result.

Everything was arranged, and at the appointed hour the next morning the earl and Lieutenant Bentley were sitting in a handsome *coupé* drawn by a splendid team of iron-grey horses, speeding to the celebrated field of Waterloo. They arrived at 6-15, being the first on the field. They left their carriage some distance away, so as not to excite any suspicion.

Ten minutes later the count and Martin Nickley arrived. Both of the seconds shook hands, while the principals glared at each other in fierce anger.

The day before Edmond Harold was anxious to court death, in order to find relief from his anguish resulting from the loss of Esther. It may seem strange that a man of his standing should calmly submit to the loss of his wife without making some effort to get her back.

In the first place, he fully believed that Esther had ceased to love him, and he never would have raised a finger to keep a wife against her will. The letter she had written to him from Harold Castle had misled him, and he could not understand why she could have preferred such a coarse man as Martin Nickley to himself. This was the first time in his career when he really wanted to take human life. He knew that his opponent was a man of great nerve and a dead shot. But he himself had practiced with a pistol until he considered himself an expert. Edmond Harold was the soul of honour, and under

no consideration would he think of taking the least unfair advantage of his opponent. Martin Nickley, while the pistols were being loaded, carefully scanned his opponent, and was not long in realising that the earl was cool, calm, and collected, and would fire to kill. He felt that his adversary had taken an undue advantage of him in the matter of Esther Creedmore, by the fascination of his position as an earl of the realm, and thus carried away the prize. Therefore, if he could retaliate by firing at the word "one," he would be justifiable in so doing.

The sun was under a heavy cloud and consequently there could be no particular advantage in position. When it was proposed to toss for positions Martin Nickley objected, and expressed a wish that the earl should choose his place and also have the choice of the pistols. Suddenly he became very courteous, and claimed that as he had forced the earl into this duel he should have as his right all the possible advantage of positions and other details. Lieutenant Bentley was cool and self-possessed, while the count was very much excited, and in his eagerness virtually assumed control after the principals were in position.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "at the word 'one' you will face each other, at the word 'two' you will raise your weapons, and at the word 'three' you will fire. Are you both ready?"

"Yes," said Martin Nickley.

"Ready," answered the earl.

For fully thirty seconds there was perfect silence; then came in quick succession the command:

"One, two, three, fire."

Edmond Harold had expected the words to come slowly, and was not prepared for the nervous excitement of the Frenchman.

His opponent, however, had made up his mind when he should fire, and did so promptly at the word "one." His bullet struck the earl on the right side just above the hip bone, and ploughed its way on the edge of the stomach, making a long wound fully thirteen inches in length.

Without flinching Edmond Harold took deliberate aim and fired, while the count uttered a vehement protest: "Too late, monsieur; you have lost your chance."

The bullet struck Martin Nickley on his right arm above the elbow, breaking the bone and making also a flesh wound in his breast. The blood flowed freely, and the surgeon who came with the count at first pronounced his wound fatal, but after examination said it was serious.

The other doctor congratulated the earl upon his narrow escape. His wound was bandaged and both parties returned to Brussels, Martin Nickley taking the first train for Paris, much against the advice of his doctor.

The earl went to Belgium and booked by the evening steamer for Harwich, and the next morning was at his London residence accompanied by Lieutenant Bentley. Neither the principal nor his second expected a fatal termination; but as a precaution a London surgeon was called in, and he, after a careful examination, frankly told his patient that one of the intestines had been pierced, and that there was but small hope of his recovery.

Three days later inflammation set in and the earl's condition became alarming. Lieutenant Bentley wired to Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley and their brother Richard. They promptly responded, but Mrs. Van Reem declined to come. When they arrived the sick man was sinking fast, and taking Sir Thomas by the hand he said, "I am the victim of a cruel conspiracy. If you will believe me innocent of any deception to your niece I will die happy."

The hand of the dying man was cordially pressed for answer, and the fast-flowing tears of those surrounding his bed convinced him that no ill will was harboured against his fair name.

At eight o'clock in the evening he awakened out of a sleep and repeated the words, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." A moment later he said, "Give my parting love to Esther and tell her——" A smile came over his face, and quietly the spirit of the young Earl of Montville joined the great congregation of the dead without finishing his last message.

Three days later his body was laid beside the dust of his ancestors, and the title and entailed estate passed into the possession of a young nephew, the son of his only sister, who for several years had been living in Australia with her husband.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FALLEN AIR CASTLE.

1866.

It is a notable fact in the history of many individuals that certain days in the year are veritable red-letter ones. Good and evil fortune come on the same day, very often after an interval of several years. It is so in our story with Edgar and Esther. We cannot stop to discuss this fact or try to explain by what law this is brought about.

The morning of the 3rd of March was very stormy. The wind blew the falling snow into the faces of those who had been venturesome enough to brave the fury of the Storm King as unrestrained he took full possession of the streets of Denver.

The reader will remember that obstinacy had been a leading trait of Miriam's character. It was now strongly developed in Edgar. A meeting had been called for the stockholders of the Rose Hill Gold Mine. It was to take place at ten o'clock this very morning. President Creedmore was in the office of the company at an early hour. A proposition had been laid before him from the men who were the former owners of his mine. Finding that the tract of ground which they had sold contained only a spur of the ore, and that they still held the main body in their possession, they now offered to sell the adjoining tract of fifty acres for half a million dollars. Colonel Derwent and Colonel Moorehead, as well as several others of the directors, were in favour of accepting this proposition. Colonel Creedmore, however, bitterly opposed it. An hour before the appointed time several members of the board of directors sent requests that he should postpone the meeting till another day. He felt very certain that, with a full representation of the stockholders, he would be overruled in the stand he had taken of absolutely refusing to purchase any more mining claims until it was demonstrated that their mine did not contain the principal body of the ore. Contrary to all expectations, however, there was a very full attendance of those interested in the Rose Hill Mine. After the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting the proposition to purchase was duly laid before the stockholders. It was soon apparent that there was an almost unanimous feeling in favour of the acquisition of all

the land that could be purchased in the vicinity of their claim. This was Colonel Creedmore's opportunity and he availed himself of it. Having made up his mind on this subject he was well prepared to sustain his point. He now presented his views so clearly that on the vote being taken he had a majority on his side. It was a victory dearly won. Colonel Derwent and Colonel Moorehead both resigned from the directorate. Lieutenant Hilton entered his protest against the course adopted, but as the majority had so decided he declared that he would stand by them and work for the success of the enterprise.

In the afternoon it was known in Denver that several of the late directors of the Rose Hill Mine had disposed of all their shares and that large blocks were offered by other holders, and there was dissension in the management. The shares which had been held at a high premium began to fall, and by the evening of the 5th were below par.

Captain Slevington had opposed President Creedmore in his course. He was now violent in abuse of his protege, as he called Edgar, and accused him of ruining the prospects of the mine. The hardest blow, however, was the fact that his two staunch friends, Derwent and Moorehead, left for their respective homes without seeing him. They sent brief notes saying that, as they could not agree with him in the course he was taking, they had sold their shares and thus left him free in his actions.

By the middle of March the stock had fallen to \$50 a share. President Creedmore was still unconvinced that his views were erroneous, but finally yielded to the wishes of the majority and wrote to the holders of the claim which had been offered to this company, and consented to take the land at their offer of half a million dollars. By return mail, however, he received a reply that they had sold all their holdings to an English syndicate for one million dollars.

On the 1st of April he was astonished when the general manager of the Rose Hill Mine came into his office, and, without taking off his hat, coolly sat down, remarking in true Western style:

“Well, ‘guvnor,’ the Rose Hill is busted higher than a kite. Reckon you had better have bought that ere adjoining claim; the ledge is ‘give’ out. Rather think you had best vamoose the ranch afore the stockholders hear the news and go for your scalp. I am going to skedaddle myself, as they might take a notion to give me a hoist up some tree. A ‘necktie sociable’ would not suit my health just now; so good-bye, old man.”

An hour later Captain Slevington came into the office, and said in a savage tone :

“Just see what your infernal obstinacy has produced. If you had purchased that adjoining claim the Rose Hill Mine would to-day have been up to three hundred dollars a share, whereas it is now below twenty, and will soon be at zero. There is a large crowd gathering opposite the Exchange, and I heard some very ugly remarks uttered about you as I left there a few minutes ago. Take my advice and leave Denver until the storm blows over.”

President Creedmore became thoroughly demoralised. The proper course would have been to remain at his post and face the stockholders. He should have called a meeting at once, and consulted as to the best line of action in the present crisis of affairs.

A suggestion had been made to him on the previous day by one of the directors. It would be sound policy, he suggested, to call upon the manager of the English syndicate which had purchased the claim that he had refused. Perhaps an arrangement could be brought about by which the two companies might be consolidated. The English syndicate would naturally be anxious to stand well with the Denver financiers, and the failure of the Rose Hill Mine would react calamitously upon the new enterprise. Again President Creedmore made a fatal error by refusing to listen to men who possessed much experience in mining.

The clock was striking the noonday hour when a tumult of angry voices coming up the street apprised Edgar that if he waited any longer he would have to face an excited crowd. Yet no man connected with the Rose Hill Mine was better able to hold an angry mob in check than the cool-headed president. Captain Slevington was his evil genius. He now urged him to leave the city at once. This was the turning point of his life. Should he turn his back upon his duty and quail at the critical moment, then his hitherto good fortune was certain to abandon him. It is so in the history of every man and every woman who in some crucial moment of their existence magnify the troubles that confront them and surrender almost without an effort, whereas a bold front often will gain for them the victory. Many a man has foolishly taken his life in a crisis like this.

President Creedmore went to a livery stable, procured a carriage, and drove to the ranch of a friend some twenty miles from Denver, leaving all his valuable claims and the vast

interests confided to his keeping by the stockholders to take care of themselves.

When the crowd of excited shareholders arrived at the office they were met by one of the directors, who soothed them by a few well-chosen words. In every great enterprise, he told them, there were times when it required the combined effort of all connected with it to keep it afloat, and this was the case with the Rose Hill Mine. To attack the president or to make a public demonstration could do no good, and would only be detrimental to their own interests. This had a quieting effect upon the crowd and they silently dispersed.

On the following day the general manager of the English syndicate called at the office of the Rose Hill Mine to offer a proposition of consolidation on very favourable terms. President Creedmore being absent nothing could be done until his return.

A week passed, during which the stock of the Rose Hill Mine went up twenty points, and everything looked favourable for the stockholders. It only needed the return of the president to bring the shares back to par. Captain Slevington now followed Edgar to his hiding place, and told him an exaggerated story about the anger of the investors in the mine. He had received a large bonus from the former owners of the mine, and had been enabled besides to sell his stock at a premium. The success of the Rose Hill Mine would therefore now be of no benefit to him, but rather a detriment. It would restore the popularity of Colonel Creedmore, and enable him to become a millionaire. This would take him out of Slevington's power; whereas if he should be brought under the ban of the law he could be made use of to great advantage. It became now the settled plan of Slevington to ruin Colonel Creedmore beyond recovery. This may appear little short of murder. Men of this stamp, however, gamblers by profession, think nothing of the havoc and ruin that follows their designs.

The reader may wonder why a man of Edgar's keen insight into human nature did not see through all the deep villany of his treacherous friend. The answer is that, being thoroughly honest himself, he was not of a suspicious disposition and gave full credit to others.

On the tenth day after the sudden departure of the President of the Rose Hill Mine, rumours began to be spread abroad that he was short in his accounts, and that he had left the State to avoid arrest. A meeting of the directors was called. Captain Slevington attended it as one of the original members, and made

serious charges against him. A warrant was procured and a reward offered for information leading to his arrest. The following day all Denver was flooded with handbills circulated by Slevington. Not satisfied with this he also spread malicious reports. Thus he endeavoured to ruin utterly the man who had trusted him in this dark hour of his life.

Believing now that Edgar's reputation had been hopelessly blasted, Slevington made his way to the ranch where the colonel was hiding and showed him some of the handbills. The storm of indignation would blow over, he said, and it would be best to keep quiet. No pen can describe the awful agony endured by the sensitive nature of Colonel Creedmore. He valued his reputation more than anything else in the world. These serious charges, if left uncontradicted, would remain as a lasting stigma. If they should come to the ears of his uncle Richardson and his cousin Margaret, what suffering it would inflict upon them!

He determined to return to Denver and face all accusations. He now perceived Slevington's character in its true light, and became convinced that he must have some unworthy design in the advice to remain in hiding.

Late that night, without giving Slevington any intimation of his purpose, he procured a horse and set out for Denver, arriving early the following morning. He went directly to the sheriff and surrendered himself. The news spread over the city like wildfire. Among his friends who remained loyal to him in this gloomy period none were more earnest in his behalf than Etaline and Lieutenant Hilton, her husband. Henry Winston was also active for his old chief. By noon more than fifty persons offered to go on his bail bond. This was fixed in the sum of five thousand dollars. Edgar went to his apartments and found everything had been seized by the sheriff, but all was promptly restored.

A meeting of the stockholders was called to devise the best plan to secure their interests. The general manager of the English syndicate was also present. Instructed by his principals he now could only offer one-quarter of the amount originally proposed. This was accepted, and Colonel Creedmore left the president's chair. The famous Rose Hill Gold Mine became the property of the new corporation. When a settlement was made it was found that the liabilities for machinery ordered and other expenses absorbed all that had been realised from the transfer. Colonel Creedmore thus found himself adrift in the city of Denver with less than a hundred dollars to

his name ; whereas only three months previously he arrived there worth a quarter of a million dollars.

On the 5th of April his trial took place. Notwithstanding Captain Slevington's efforts he was triumphantly acquitted by the jury without leaving their seats. Fortune once more smiled upon him. His uncle Richardson wrote to him telling him to draw upon him for five thousand dollars. He also added that his place as partner in the firm was waiting for him to take it, the capital that was needed was on hand, and nothing would ever be said about the Denver speculation. Colonel Moorehead and Colonel Derwent also wrote very kind letters, and each enclosed drafts for five thousand dollars. They were promptly returned with letters of thanks. He had resolved to fight his way alone, and declined all pecuniary assistance.

CHAPTER XXX.

LONDON BY GASLIGHT.

THE author is compelled to pass over a space of five years of the life of Esther. During this long period no one of her kindred or friends had received any word from her ; in fact, it was not even known where she was. From the hour on that fatal 5th of September, 1865, she had completely disappeared. No trace had been left behind to reveal where her abductor had taken her.

At Everdale everything had moved along in a quiet manner. Uncle Richard Shirley had aged very much. He deeply felt the loss of his favourite niece. Mrs. Van Reem was extremely bitter in her denunciation of the late Earl of Montville. She declared that if he had taken prompt action when he received Esther's letter all the subsequent misfortune might have been averted.

Martin Nickley's stately residence, which was only two miles from Everdale, was left to the care of servants. If the master ever occasionally returned no one outside of his household knew of it. The dog Cæsar seemed to divine that the long-continued absence of his mistress was owing to Martin Nickley. He became so fierce and vindictive that it was necessary for him to be kept continually chained. Once he broke loose and made his way over to the estate of his enemy. If the dog

could have had his long-sought-for privilege of fastening his fangs in Nickley's flesh it would have been a woeful meeting for the lord of the manor. Cæsar would have died before letting go.

At Elmswood there were some changes of note. Robert and Winifred had been married for three years, and a bouncing boy had blessed the union. They lived at the manor. Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley often spoke of Esther, and wondered whether she was alive. A large sum had been spent for detective search, but to no purpose. Both mourned her as dead. Adelaide had given her hand in marriage to the man of her choice, and her husband was the heir of an earldom. She and her sister never mentioned their unfortunate cousin's name. Eleanor was of too harsh a nature to think of such a thing as pardon for Esther's offence. Not so, however, the loving Irene. She would never allow a single word to be spoken against the name of her fair cousin. With her the fall of Esther was a misfortune and not a crime. Willingly would she have gone to Esther's assistance if she but knew where to find her. So, too, would the ever-faithful Winifred. Many times had she and her husband gone to distant places when the rumour came to them that Esther had been seen there.

The fun-loving John Shirley found a mate in Elvira Huben. It was the result of a practical joke which he played upon that sedate young lady when she came on a visit to Winifred. He had frightened her very much one night by hoisting a bolster up to the window with the mask of a woman's face fastened to it. Elvira's screams roused the household, and the following day his father insisted upon a full apology. This was promptly given. John offered his hand and heart as a propitiatory sacrifice and such a portion of his father's estate as would be assigned to him. Elvira accepted the offer. Sir Thomas was so pleased at the good fortune of his youngest son in securing such a splendid helpmate that he settled upon him a liberal allowance. Elvira also brought a fair dowry, and the marriage was a very happy one.

After the death of the Earl of Montville his executors placed in the Bank of England the portion belonging to Esther, to be held subject to the decision of the courts as to who was the rightful Countess of Montville. So far no claim had been made for it by anyone. The interest of Esther's patrimony was deposited in the same bank subject to her order, as she had kept her private account there after her marriage. This money likewise remained uncalled for. Having thus reviewed the salient

points of the five years that have elapsed since the abduction of the Countess of Montville, we now take up her history once more.

London by gaslight is one of the notabilia of the great modern Babylon. It is only when the shades of night have fallen that a visitor can see the hidden life of the vast metropolis. There does not exist to-day among the children of men a genius sufficiently gifted to portray in adequate terms all the guilt and misery which remains hidden during the blaze of noonday illumination, and only comes to view under the glare of the gaslight.

Any author in search of weird material for a work not of fiction but of drama, more pathetic and more intensified than the loftiest imagination could evolve, can find here all he wants. Let him stand for one single hour at the corner of Regent or Piccadilly Circus, about nine o'clock at night, and there he will behold scenes which no other city can equal—not even Paris, with all its wickedness. Of all the months in the year the gloomy fogs render November one of the worst for a stranger to see London for the first time, if he would carry away a favourable impression.

The 10th of November, 1870, was a miserable day. A black fog hung over the city, and even the gaslights only made the gloom more depressing. At six o'clock in the evening the streets were deserted. The shops were nearly all closed, for no one that could help it was abroad. Locomotion was extremely difficult, and few cabs were to be found.

At seven o'clock on this dark evening a solitary figure of stalwart proportions was walking up and down by the opening of Westminster Bridge, almost under the shadow of the massive cathedral, which for six hundred years has reared its lofty spires heavenward. He was evidently expecting some one. Ever and anon he would look up at the clock on the square steeple and then peer into the darkness. A close observer would have seen on his swarthy face the indication of intense anxiety, also a fear lest some unforeseen occurrence had prevented the person he was expecting from keeping the appointment. The chimes on the steeple had just sounded the quarter past when the figure of a woman, closely veiled, came out of the gloom. Taking his hand, she spoke in a sad but musical voice :

“Ziska, I hope I have not kept you waiting very long.”

An expression of intense joy and excitement lit up the face of the gypsy. Taking off his cap, he replied in a tone of great respect :

“Fair Countess of Montville, I would cheerfully wait twenty years for the opportunity of greeting you. Assisted by the members not only of my own tribe but also those of our race in England and in many cities of the Continent, I have searched for you long and eagerly. Had you been buried a thousand fathoms deep under the sea you could not have been more securely hidden than you have been. It is very rare that the keen eyes of the gipsy people fail to penetrate secrets that baffle the keenest detectives. Martin Nickley has been traced to Dieppe. He then mysteriously disappeared as though the earth had swallowed him.”

“Ziska,” answered Esther (for it was indeed no other than the missing Countess of Montville, for whom the detectives of the leading cities of Europe had vainly searched), “Oh, Ziska, I trembled when I saw you for fear you would turn away in loathing from me. I am degraded in my own sight, and would look upon death as a blessing. I am to-day without a friend in this wide world. I thought perhaps you might assist me in this lone hour of my life. If you refuse to help me, then I will have no other resource than to plunge over this bridge. The Thames will receive with a kind embrace those who are rejected by their fellow-mortals.”

“How could you think of such a thing,” the gipsy chief asked, as the tears came to his eyes. “Rest assured that I will stand by you, and to avenge you will be the chief aim of my life. To me you are now, and always will be, the respected Countess of Montville. There is no other that can claim the title. The new earl has not yet married.”

“I thank you with all my heart,” answered Esther. “These kind words are the first I have heard for many a long day; but please do not call me the Countess of Montville. I have no right to it. My marriage to Edmond Harold was void. There had been a prior marriage to Florence Mayburn.”

“Rest assured,” replied the gipsy, “no such marriage ever took place. That was part of the conspiracy of Martin Nickley. I will explain all to you to-morrow. Come with me now, for my wife is waiting at our tent and I have a conveyance ready to take you there. When you are fully rested you will know all of the base plot which was so successfully carried out by that arch-villain Nickley. Notwithstanding his great wealth he will yet wear the prison garments. I received your letter from Dieppe only this morning and I hastened to meet you. Tell me where was the place of your concealment and why no trace of you could be found?”

“The story can be told in a very few words,” answered Esther. “Five years ago on the 5th of September last I was taken to some place near the Strand to meet my husband. I had been placed under a powerful drug, and so have only a faint recollection of seeing the earl at the door of the house as I came out, and also several of my kindred. When I had fully recovered consciousness I was a prisoner in a chateau on a small islet about twenty miles from Dieppe. The place was nominally owned by the Count Henri Rochmere, but really was the property of Martin Nickley. There were only three servants—an old man and his wife and their daughter, who was my waiting-maid. They were ignorant to an extreme degree, and had been informed that I was not in my right mind and must never be allowed to escape. I was supposed to be the wife of Martin Nickley, and was always addressed as ‘Madame.’ I cannot find language to describe the mental torture I have endured. Martin remained with me for the first month after our arrival. He then went away, and returned in five days with his arm in a sling. It had been broken above the elbow, and he told me that it was done by Edmond Harold in a duel fought on my account in Belgium. The earl had spread malicious reports about me, he declared, and he had challenged him to fight a duel. Harold was badly wounded, and had returned to England. A week later he informed me that the earl was dead. This news threw me into a violent fever, and it was two months before I recovered. During all this time Martin watched me as tenderly as such a man could. After my recovery it was my turn to nurse him, as his arm troubled him very much. One day he brought a priest—at least he was dressed as one—and Martin insisted that we should be married. I was powerless, and had to submit to what I considered a mockery. It did seem as though the man tried to love me. A month passed in what he was pleased to call our honeymoon, after which a doctor from Paris who had been called in advised that Martin should go to Italy for a change. The Count Henri Rochmere accompanied him, and I was left behind to pass the time as best as I could. I had no lack of money, and could procure anything from Paris that I wanted. I could not, however, send any letters; in fact, I had been required to give my solemn word not to write to any one. This I sacredly kept. Thus year after year passed, and Martin spent a good deal of the time with me. He seemed to enjoy the solitude of our island home. He always came and went disguised as a fisherman. This was the reason that you

and others could not find me. A week ago to-day he told me that he was tired of my company and that I was free to go where I pleased. Our so-called marriage, he declared, was not legal. The supposed priest was a cabdriver whom he had hired to come to the chateau to perform a mock ceremony. I had suspected as much, and this information did not surprise me. Martin gave me a hundred pounds of English money, and promised to pay me the same amount every month provided I did not trouble him in any way. He then took me to Paris and set me free to go where I pleased. I wrote to you at a venture, not knowing whether my letter would reach you or that you would care to help me. Martin has kept me fully informed as to the welfare of my kindred and my friends. This is my history and my experience for five years past."

Ziska had been deeply interested in this recital. He now took Esther's hand and replied: "A kind Providence has placed you in my care, and only over my dead body shall Martin Nickley get possession of you again. Come, let us go and join my wife, and under her care you will be safe from all annoyance."

The two passed along the bridge and made their way through several streets, at last reaching the conveyance in waiting. At that moment a carriage with a span of spirited horses drove rapidly down the street and came near running over Esther. A liveried footman and coachman were on the front seat. The latter swore at her for getting in the way and causing him to stop his horses. Ziska took her part. A lash from the whip was his only reply. The next moment the coachman was pulled from his seat and received a severe beating. The occupant of the carriage opened the door and came out to ascertain the cause of the detention. The burly form of Martin Nickley appeared before their astonished gaze. The footman judiciously kept his place and held the horses. Both men recognised each other. The sight of Esther with Ziska put Nickley into a frenzy of passion. He struck the gipsy a heavy blow. Instantly it was returned. More followed and Ester's abductor was getting the worst of it. At this critical moment, however, several policemen came to the spot and conducted them all to the station house. On arriving Nickley preferred charges against Ziska for assault upon himself and his coachman, and deposited one hundred pounds as security. The sight of this money and the presence of the handsome carriage with servants in livery led the police officer to accept the charge. The rich man was permitted to go on his own

recognizances while the gipsy was placed in a cell. Nickley took Esther away with him.

Three days later the case was tried, and again gold was successful against justice. The gipsy was convicted of assault with intent to rob, and sentenced to penal servitude for five years.

Esther's testimony would perhaps have saved him, but she could not be found. She had again disappeared.

The gipsy chief was transported, and Martin Nickley was once more triumphant.

At this point the dying words of the late Earl of Montville come to mind, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord." Perhaps some will say, "How long, oh, how long, must the injured wait for justice? Fear not; it will come with an energy of operation, heightened by delay, waiting for the cup to be filled."

CHAPTER XXXI.

LYNCH LAW.

IN the last chapter of Edgar's life we left him adrift in the city of Denver with only one hundred dollars in his pocket. He received numerous offers of pecuniary help but declined them all. He pondered long over the generous proposal of his uncle to return to New York and take his place in the firm, but finally decided to decline it. He was virtually a pauper. He felt that if he went to New York he would be entirely dependent upon his uncle. So he resolved to stay out West and seek in some way to retrieve his fortune.

Captain Slevington still desired to retain his hold upon him, and offered him a chance to make some money—"in an honourable way," as he expressed it. By his efforts Edgar obtained a situation in a large mining supply warehouse. Its headquarters were in New York, but the Western branch was in Denver. Colonel Creedmore was just the man that the managers needed. They were willing to pay him a very large salary, which he gladly accepted. Colonel Moorehead offered him a position in Boston, but Edgar wrote a very earnest letter of thanks in

reply, and stated that there were far better opportunities out West to regain what he had lost than in the older cities of the East. Colonel Derwent also wrote a second urgent letter to Colonel Creedmore inviting him to return to Kentucky, where without doubt there was a fine opening, in which the capital chiefly required was brains and indomitable energy. These qualifications his friend Creedmore possessed in a remarkable degree. Ida Derwent also wrote a letter filled with pleadings which, if it had not been for his pride, would have caused him to return to the hospitable old manor of the Derwents, where the memory of the Christmastide so lately passed was still fresh. Her letter might have been successful but that Edgar mentioned the fact to Captain Slevington. Strange as it may appear, this man had once more gained an ascendancy over Edgar, who, having refused money from every one else, now accepted it from this gambler. Having failed in his former tactics Slevington endeavoured to screen his conduct by a profuse attention to the wants of the man whom he had sought to ruin. Colonel Creedmore advised Henry Winston to return to New York and accept a position in the warehouse of Mr. Richardson. Winston consented and left for New York accordingly. Lieutenant Hilton accepted a situation on the Union Pacific Railroad. Both he and his wife were devotedly attached to Edgar. Etaline's devotion seemed to grow stronger, and she would have sacrificed her life cheerfully at any time to have aided the man who had won her heart in the old war days.

A month after the failure of the Rose Hill Mine Colonel Creedmore left Denver to visit some distant mines, and obtain orders for the company who employed him. Almost from the outset he was very successful. He was brought into contact with that large body of men who were tired of the restraints of civilised life, and found vent and scope for their ambition in the exciting experiences of the mining camps of the far West. Travelling in this region at this period was rather primitive, and not only so but highly dangerous. Every one went armed. There was no attempt at concealment of this fact; but, on the contrary, arms were carried where they could be both seen and used at a moment's warning. Not to go armed was to invite attack. The best-armed man, and the one who was the readiest with his "shooting-irons," was the most likely to be left undisturbed. Any person who attended strictly to his own affairs, but was always ready to repel attack, could transact his business in safety. Liquor was the origin of all the trouble

in the mining regions. It was said in some of the camps that for every pint of liquor sold a full pint of human blood was shed.

About the middle of May Colonel Creedmore reached Cheyenne, and then set out to visit several of the mines situated about thirty miles from this point.

Late in the evening of the 20th May, tired, dusty, and thirsty, he rode into a pass called "Dead Man's Run." This peculiar name had been given to it on account of the many pioneers and Indians murdered there. A natural road lay through a canyon, on either side of which there rose a low bluff of rocks, forming a splendid barricade. Behind them Indians often were in ambush and at other times road agents. Whoever entered this dangerous pass when the rocks were held by his foes must run for his life, and if he could gain a distance of one hundred yards he found a place of safety. He then had the advantage of his enemies, as they could not maintain their position. More men were killed on this Run than in any other spot in the far West. Very few succeeded in getting through. One man, however, had saved his own life and gained a reputation which was known far and wide. He had taught the red scalpers a lesson that was not soon forgotten. One cold morning in the month of February, 1865, Marcy Graston, while seeking for new fields, came to this rocky pass. Knowing the danger he carefully surveyed the place from a safe distance, but finding no sign of Indians went through. Hardly had he entered the pass when six rifle shots rang out on the morning air. None hit him, however, the intense cold preventing the Indians from taking a proper aim. Graston ran the gauntlet, and before the end of the Run was reached another volley was fired. The bullets fell all around but he was unharmed. Reaching a place of safety he now returned the fire, and picked off his enemies one by one until all were slain. Henceforward the name of Marcy Graston became synonymous with extermination.

Before leaving Cheyenne Colonel Creedmore had been duly cautioned about the celebrated pass of Dead Man's Run. With his usual contempt for danger he took no extra precaution. Indians were not the only foes to contend against. Road agents often came to the place to replenish their empty purses at the expense of unwary miners.

Colonel Creedmore had just reached the beginning of the Run when, from a projecting ledge of rock, a man sprang out and grasped his horse's bridle, and called a peremptory "halt!"

He looked the man in the face without betraying the slightest surprise.

"Good evening, my friend," said he; "I am delighted to meet you. I am tired and hungry. What have you got to eat?"

Three others now came forward and received the same salutation. There was something about Colonel Creedmore's bearing that overawed the road agents. He quietly dismounted and, addressing the man who had hold of his bridle, said:

"Give my horse a good rub down and feed him well. Now, partners," he continued, "let me see some of your hospitality."

Among men of this stamp there was nothing so likely to charm them as this *sang froid*. Nerve was their admiration, and the man who exhibited the most of it was very sure to be well treated. They accordingly gave Edgar a hearty welcome, and invited him at once to partake of their evening meal. He frankly told them his business, and also his name. They had heard of him, and with that peculiar fraternal feeling found only in the far West they assured him of their sympathy, and hoped that he would retrieve his fortunes. In their turn they were no less candid than himself. They informed him that they were waiting for the mail coach, which was due about eight o'clock, and was reported to have several passengers who were carrying a large amount of specie. The coach was certain, of course, to be well guarded, and he would be welcome to join them and share the danger as well as the booty in case of success. If he chose to decline the offer, then "mum" was to be the word at all times.

Colonel Creedmore thanked them, but said that he preferred to be "mum." He was not the sort of man to reward hospitality by betraying them, and so would ride on and get out of the way. They replied to him that after the job was done they would leave at once and be far distant by daylight next morning. They further advised him not to ride into the camp until after their business was over. He would be in danger otherwise of being suspected of having some hand in the affair. He could lie concealed among the rocks, and after the coach went on he could ride back a distance and then return to the pass and go on to the mining camp to which he was bound. As he was virtually a prisoner he had no alternative. The night became very dark and the road agents took their appointed places. Edgar found a place of concealment where he could see all that went on without being seen. Prompt to time the heavy mail coach came up to the pass at a ten-mile speed. On each side of the driver sat a man holding a Spencer carbine, with its ten

cartridges all ready for discharge. Right in the middle of the pass the two leading horses stumbled and fell, entangled apparently in some cordage. Not a sound was heard to indicate the presence of foes. The driver and two guards dismounted, and throwing their carbines over their shoulders asked the male passengers to get out and help to lift up the horses. This was no sooner done than they were surrounded by four men, and the stern command was given by the leader :

“Hold up your hands or you will be instantly shot ! We outnumber you three to one.”

The guards were disarmed at the instant. Two of the robbers kept their rifles in position while the other two searched the passengers, taking from them their cash belts and watches and all valuables. Resistance was useless and none was attempted. The stern but business-like searchers did not disturb two ladies who were inside the coach. They took the specie box and mail bag and then gave their victims liberty to proceed on their journey, telling them that a band of Indians was lurking in the vicinity and it would be best for them to waste no time. It did not take long to clear the horses, and the stage left at a rapid speed. The language used by the men on the coach was not of a character that would bear repeating. Even the presence of the ladies did not prevent this forcible expression of their feelings.

Colonel Creedmore from his place of concealment heard all that was said. He recognised among the passengers the crest-fallen Jerold Slevington and also Lieutenant Hilton. The ladies got out of the coach after the departure of the road agents, and Edgar recognised, by the aid of the carriage lamps, the fair classical face of Etaline, and also to his utter amazement the petite form of Henrietta St. Clair. He had not seen her since that memorable day in Secretary Stanton's office in Washington, nearly three years previously. He had expected to meet Lieutenant Hilton and his wife at the camp, but did not look for either Slevington or Henrietta. This latter combination was not to his liking. Colonel Creedmore waited for fully two hours after the departure of the mail coach before he went to the place where his horse had been concealed. Mounting him he rode back a few miles and then retraced his steps, reaching the mining camp without incident early in the morning.

The robbery of the coach being one of the incidental perils of the road was not looked upon as anything very extraordinary, and but for the loud and boisterous excitement of Slevington

would have passed off without particular notice. He had lost a very large sum of money, and sought to reorganise a searching party to ride after the road agents, in order if they were caught to mete out to them the law of Judge Lynch.

When Colonel Creedmore rode into the camp he was soon surrounded by a number of miners, who asked him for details of the journey, and also if he had seen any road agents. With a guileless air he inquired whether any had attacked the camp. He was then informed of the particulars of the robbery on the previous night. Expressing astonishment, he remarked that it was fortunate for him that his journey had been delayed or he might have been also a sufferer. As he was dismounting Slevington came up, and in a peremptory manner said :

“Creedmore, I want you to join me in a search party.”

“Not much use,” was the quiet answer. “Those road agents have put fully fifty miles between themselves and that pass; and besides it would be difficult to tell which way they went.”

Slevington was furious at this refusal, and, to be revenged, he set the rumour in circulation that Colonel Creedmore himself was just the sort of a man to be a leader of road agents. His declining to join in pursuit was evidence of complicity with them.

Henrietta St. Clair kept in the background but seconded these efforts of Slevington. It might have gone hard with Creedmore then and there, but Lieutenant Hilton and his wife came at once to the rescue. All his chances for business, however, were spoiled in that vicinity.

Slevington had cooled down somewhat by evening, but there were several other men in the camp who, to cover their own misdeeds, sought on occasions like these to enforce Lynch law. A party of six just such characters banded together and resolved that they would “hang Creedmore and try him afterwards.” An hour before midnight was the appointed time.

Marcy Graston, whom we have already mentioned, heard of this plot. He had taken a great liking to Edgar, and in order to frustrate the lynchers warned him of their designs. After dark Creedmore went to the outskirts of the camp, where Graston had a fresh horse ready, and Lieutenant Hilton and Etaline were waiting to bid him God-speed on his way. A few minutes later the would-be victim of Judge Lynch had left the mining camp far behind.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EARL'S DAUGHTER.

TEN months had passed away since the episode of Westminster Bridge. Ziska had been sent to Australia in a convict ship and everything moved along smoothly for Martin Nickley. His lands prospered and returned an increase for their owner. He was like thousands of others who, "Because sentence against their evil works was not executed speedily, therefore their hearts were fully set in them to do evil."

Nickley realised, when he saw that Esther had made an appointment with the gipsy chief, that she might become a dangerous obstacle in the way of his schemes. He carried her away with him in order to prevent her giving testimony in favour of Ziska. He now resolved to send her to a place of safety where he could use her for any of his purposes. Not being allowed to see the newspapers during the trial, she knew nothing in regard to the fate of the gipsy. Thus the months passed without anything of special interest to vary the monotony of her life. She was virtually a prisoner at the house of Mrs. Henley, the so-called sister of the Rev. Mr. Albright, and was then living near Osterly Park, situated about nine miles from London.

On the 1st of September, 1871, Esther received a peremptory message from Martin Nickley to meet him at two o'clock at the steps of the National Gallery, in Trafalgar Square. This she refused to obey. Hitherto she had been directly under his personal magnetism, and in consequence was submissive to his will. He had yet to learn that the power of hypnotism cannot be exerted at pleasure, except by personal contact.

It was five o'clock in the evening when the wrathful abductor drove up to Mrs. Henley's cottage, and striding into the parlour asked the servant girl, who answered his ring, to inform Esther Creedmore that he wished to see her without a moment's delay. It was fully twenty minutes before the object of his visit came into the room, and with a dignified mien and in a tone of wonder and surprise inquired:

"Did you wish to see me?"

Nickley was startled by this greeting. He began to question whether his victim was becoming unbalanced in mind. This mood of hers was new to him. He had not seen her since that

eventful evening ten months previously. Most of this time he had spent abroad with a new attraction.

In a low suppressed tone he demanded :

“Why did you not meet me at the steps of the National Gallery? I directed my messenger to tell you to be prompt. I waited for an hour, and that is more than I would do for the Lord Mayor of London.”

Esther opened her wonderful eyes to their full extent, and said :

“Martin, a year ago you told me I was at liberty to go to the Devil for all you cared. I suppose that ended all connection between us. I therefore declined to accept any verbal message to meet you. You have kept me a virtual prisoner here in this house; but as I have been well treated, and was relieved from all annoyance from you, I have not complained. My life has been blasted, and therefore I prefer a sequestered place like this. I dread going into the city, as I am liable to meet some of my kindred or my friends. You know that I have suffered grievously from meeting Mr. Albright. I have never seen him since, and am not anxious to do so again.”

There was indeed a change in Esther's manner. Nickley began to realise that his hold upon her consisted in his power to hypnotise her by his presence. This opened up a fresh field of thought, and gave him an insight into a new domain wherein he would find more conquests. Force and harshness were out of the question with such a girl as Esther, so he tried mild persuasion.

“Esther,” said he, “I acknowledge that I have been somewhat tyrannical in my conduct, but it must be evident to you that if I had not loved you I would not have taken all this trouble. In all my capricious moods I have never been cruel; that is, I have never ill-treated you, and if I did say in a moment of passion a year ago that you could go to his Satanic Majesty it was owing to annoyance from that cabdriver—I mean that so-called priest who deceived me in telling that he was a priest and then afterwards attempted to blackmail me. It is just as well that we were not really married, for we were never suited for each other. If I have wronged you I will make all the reparation in my power. Henceforward you are free to come and go as you please, and my allowance of twelve hundred pounds a year shall be regularly paid into your bank. There is a large surplus to your credit in the Bank of England from your father's estate. Why do you not use it? It is at your disposal without question from anyone.”

"No, it is not," said Esther. "The fact of my false marriage to Edmond Harold made the original proviso of my father's will still in force, and my aunt, Mrs. Van Reem, would never consent that I should touch a single pound of it. Besides, I have no use for any of it."

"If what I have allowed you is not enough," Nickley answered, "I will increase it. You must admit that I have not been niggardly in money matters in the past and I do not propose to be so now. I have a new idea. Would you like to go as governess in the family of an earl, where there will be plenty of life and excitement—you can forget the past and bury it in oblivion?"

Long and sadly did Esther gaze into the face of the man before her to read, if possible, the reason of this sudden solicitude on his part. There was evidently some new scheme of villany under the guise of this anxiety to look after her interests. Being so completely in his power she was conscious that the best way to avoid any unpleasant outbreak was to agree to his wishes.

"What arrangements have you made about this position?" she asked, in a tone of voice indicating that she had made up her mind to accept.

"Everything has been settled," said Nickley. "Of course you will have to go under an assumed name, and I thought that the name of Esther Ducie would be appropriate. You will be the orphan daughter of the late Rev. Henry Ducie, belonging to an old Huguenot family. No one will question this matter. The earl's family consists of a single daughter named Luella. She is a romantic girl, and you will be a companion to her, to help her in French and prevent her making a fool of herself by running away with some adventurer. The earl's sister, the Lady Martha Ormund, keeps house for him. The estate is heavily mortgaged and they cannot pay a very large salary, but that is of no moment to you. Your duties will be light, and you will be considered one of the family. The earl is passionately fond of music. His daughter does not play, neither does his sister, and you will be expected to charm them with your brilliant talents."

There was an amused smile on Esther's face, which brought back some of the old life and vitality. The more she thought of the new plan the more she liked it.

"What is the name of the earl?"

"Lord Grassmere, better known as the Earl of Condor."

"I have met him, but I do not think that he will recognise me. When do you wish me to take up this new duty of governess?"

“To-morrow. Take the one o'clock train from Osterly Park, and at the Great Western Station in London the Rev. Mr. Albright will meet you, and my carriage will take you to Euston; from there it is only fifteen minutes' ride by rail to Grassmere Park. The Lady Martha and her niece will meet you, and you may be sure of a genial reception at Grassmere Park Manor.”

Mr. Nickley stayed for tea, and made himself very agreeable. He seemed to be very happy over the ready acceptance of his plans. It was late when he took his departure.

The following day at the appointed time Esther met Mr. Albright at the Great Western Station. She looked him closely in the face to ascertain whether he were not Martin Nickley disguised. She had often suspected this, but now a close inspection convinced her that he was a different person. He bore a close resemblance, yet there was a much older look in his face. Esther was closely veiled, and she was amused when she was addressed as Miss Ducie by her clerical-looking escort. At three to the minute Grassmere Park was reached, and on the platform the earl himself was waiting with a handsome coach and servants in livery. Nothing could have exceeded the genial, hearty welcome accorded to Esther and Mr. Albright.

“The ladies wanted to come,” said Lord Grassmere, “but as the air is so damp I advised them to remain at home, and I have come myself to bid you welcome to Grassmere Manor.” Then, directly addressing Esther, he said :

“Miss Ducie, I have heard much about your beauty; I must say, however, that the description comes far short of the original.”

“I feel greatly honoured at this lofty compliment,” replied Esther, “coming as it does from the representative of such a long line of famous earls. To stand high in your esteem is indeed a great pleasure to me.”

The smile and gracious bow that came from Lord Grassmere assured Esther that she had won a high place in the good graces of her employer.

No less genial was the reception given on arrival at the manor by the Lady Martha and the fair Luella.

The latter was a slightly-built girl of seventeen years, with flaxen hair. She was romantic to a perilous extent and fairly idolized the poem of “Young Lochinvar.” She often declared that no man could have her for a wife unless he came wooing in that style. Although the daughter of a hundred earls there was in her none of the characteristics described in Tennyson's poem, “Lady Clara Vere de Vere.”

As a commoner, she would have been considered a pretty girl and no more. She took at once to Esther as though she had known her for many years. The Lady Martha was very good looking, but somewhat inclined to take life as easily as possible. She was good natured in the extreme; so was the earl. Thus we find that, in one sense, Esther was very fortunate in getting into such a home.

Mr. Albright stayed until the next morning, and declined a pressing invitation from Lord Grassmere to remain for several days. Business of a very important nature, he declared, called him back to London.

During the long hours of Esther's life at the chateau near Dieppe music had been her only solace, especially when Nickley was absent. She had rare powers, and now in her new place they were called into requisition. Her favourite piece was Schubert's "Last Greeting." In that grand inspiration of the great composer she fairly revelled. She played it upon the second evening of her sojourn at Grassmere. The earl and his daughter and sister were fairly overwhelmed by the spirit of the song, and the power evoked from the piano by the skilled hand.

In less than a week Lord Grassmere, who was a widower of fifty-five years, proposed to Esther. She replied that her heart was not her own, and that he must not ask for any particulars, otherwise she would be compelled to leave. The earl bowed to the inevitable, and offered to double her stipend. This she respectfully declined, on the ground that she did not earn what she was now getting. Life at Grassmere Manor was a quiet one, but it was in accord with her feelings. All went well until the arrival of the Count Morella de Naymour, whose character and acts will occupy the next chapter that comes in sequence.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CLOSE CALL.

AFTER leaving the mining camp where he had met with such an unfriendly reception Edgar set out to return to Cheyenne. After going several miles, however, he changed his mind, and took the direction for a new mine lately discovered near the western border of Wyoming Territory. He reached the place on the evening of the fifth day. He followed the line of the railroad and had no difficulty in obtaining food and lodgings, such as they were. He was very successful in getting orders for large quantities of mining machinery. He now determined to keep on to the westward, the ulterior point of destination being San Francisco. He hoped to reach that place early in the spring. He was destined, however, to pass through many experiences before he should see the Golden Gate. That springtime to which he was looking forward was to extend to five years.

Late in the summer of 1866 Colonel Creedmore had the opportunity of acting the part of the good Samaritan. There was this difference, however, that the said "Samaritan" was able to return the kindness with interest added several fold. It was the opening dawn of a balmy day in September. Edgar had encamped during the previous night under a large tree, with only the canopy of heaven for a covering. His morning meal was a scanty one. He expected to reach a settlement by eventide, where he would have a long rest and be able to do some profitable business for his firm. On reaching the summit of a low knoll as the sun was rising he stopped his horse and drank in the enchanting beauty of the landscape. There was a clump of trees about half a mile on his right, and on the outskirts he saw a wounded Indian pony limping along and eating the rich grass with evident relish. To his experienced eye this signified that there was either a wounded or dead Indian not far from the place. Riding cautiously he easily secured the animal, and then dismounting he soon discovered a wounded Indian with his back against a tree and his bow and arrow in hand. Edgar stood still for a moment without making any attempt to draw his own weapons, and then said :

"My friend, is this your pony, and can I do anything for you?"

A joyful expression beamed in the face of the wounded man as he replied in excellent English :

“White man, if you come in peace I will hail you as a messenger sent by the Great Spirit to aid me. I have always been the friend of the white man, and many lives have been saved and numerous scalps have rested on their owners’ heads through my solicitation. I am the Indian chief, ‘Grey Cloud.’ My father was the great warrior, ‘Sun Beam.’ No better friend of the pale faces ever lived than he. Yet he was slain in ambush by some pioneer simply because his skin was red. When but a boy I was captured by a company of soldiers and sent to the East to be educated in a school. When twenty-one years old I visited my tribe. My father, the chief, gave me the choice to take my place in our tribe, or he would call upon the ‘Great Manitou’ to punish me for leaving the lands where my fathers fought and died. I put off the garments of the white man, and at my father’s death was chosen to his place. My experience among the pale faces convinced me that the Indian must give way before the advancing tide of civilisation. Last evening I encamped here on my way to meet the commissioner sent out by the Great Father at Washington to confer about our lands. When preparing my evening meal a party of white men came along. I invited them to partake of what was ready. They did so, and then repaid my hospitality by taking my rifle and blanket and disabling my pony. On remonstrating they shot me, giving as a reason that the only good Indian was a dead one.”

Edgar was greatly moved by this recital, and immediately brought water from a stream near by to bathe the Indian’s wound. Some broth was then prepared from a portion of dried meat left in the saddle bags. He also promised the wounded man to stay by him until he was able to travel, and would go with him back to his tribe. A look of deep gratitude was all that the Indian had to give in return. Game was abundant and Edgar procured plenty. A week thus passed away pleasantly. He built a hut of branches and gave his own blanket to the sick man.

On the morning of the eighth day a band of Indians was seen in the distance. A hostile tribe was roaming over the plains. Every effort was accordingly put forth by Colonel Creedmore and the now convalescent chief to defend themselves in case of an attack. Great, however, was their joy when the band came nearer to perceive that it was a portion of the wounded man’s tribe in search of him. When they heard how Edgar had cared

for their chief they were enthusiastic in their expression of joy. The encampment of the tribe was not far away, and Grey Cloud insisted that his benefactor should go back with him. No warrior returning from a victorious campaign met with such a grand reception as Colonel Creedmore got from all the tribe, old and young. Fair dusky maidens placed wreaths on his brow, and the warriors laid their weapons and blankets at his feet. This was the greatest honour that they could confer on him. He was constrained to stay for two months, having a most agreeable time in hunting and in watching the sports devised in his honour. When the 1st of November came Colonel Creedmore told his hosts that he must take leave, for he had hopes of getting large orders for the firm he represented.

On the morning of his departure he was surprised to see a magnificent horse all saddled and bridled waiting for him as the gift of the chief. As they parted the latter said to him :

“Colonel Creedmore, will you accept this horse and this carbine as a small token of gratitude from me? I would like to go part of the way with you but cannot ride very far. I am indebted to you for my life, and may be able to repay some day part of what I owe to you. Some of my young men will go with you to the encampment to which you are bound; and now, may the Great Spirit protect you.”

The tribe escorted him for several miles, and then left him with a score of young warriors, who rode by his side. Edgar had learned from Grey Cloud that the leader of the gang who had shot him was called “Wild Rob Roy.” He was of Scotch descent and was considered one of the most dangerous men on the plains.

On the evening of the second day the party reached the place of destination. He now parted from his escort with many expressions of regret. They on their part evinced the deepest feeling, for they had become greatly attached to him. At the period of which we are writing there were many men to be found in every encampment who thought no more of shooting an Indian than they would a dog; in fact, this feeling has not died out even at the present day. Therefore when it became known that the new-comer, as Edgar was called, had come to the outskirts of the camp with a band of redskins as escort he did not receive a very cordial welcome. Indeed several of the miners were in favour of giving him notice to leave at once. As soon, however, as his name was made known he was made welcome by a large number. The

late President of the famous Rose Hill Mine was not a stranger to the majority of them, at least by reputation. There were a few, nevertheless, who were ill-disposed to Colonel Creedmore because of his relations with the Indians. In their creed this was an unpardonable sin. Among the miners was a man called Bill Jenkins. He was from the State of New York, and was known by the name of "Honest Bill." A more honest and straightforward man could not be found in the West. He was the first to greet Edgar and bid him welcome to the Paradise Gate Mining Camp. This name had been given to it from the fact of the beautiful entrance at the head of the valley that led to the camp. The landscape at the gate was something beyond adequate description. Here the analogy ended. A wilder set of men, as a rule, never got together. In a few words as possible he stated that he had rendered a favour to some Indians whom he met and that they had escorted him to Paradise Camp, as there was a band of hostiles roaming around scalping all whom they found alone. This was considered satisfactory, and through the influence of Jenkins Edgar obtained several large orders for machinery. Three months were passed pleasantly, and the machinery ordered having duly arrived Colonel Creedmore superintended its erection in place, and so became the most popular man in the camp.

In the first week of February, 1867, Edgar heard that a band of road agents, eight in number, and led by no less a personage than Wild Rob Roy, was in the neighbourhood and were expected in the camp any day. Bill Jenkins and Colonel Creedmore consulted as to the best means of keeping order, if these undesirable men should make themselves obnoxious. The result was that a dozen honest miners banded together and elected Edgar as their captain. They were known as the "Paradise Vigilance Committee." They had resolved to keep the peace at all hazards.

Colonel Creedmore had not contemplated to remain so long. His experience, however, was too highly valued to part with him, and a liberal offer from the largest mine owners induced him to stay; he wrote to Lieutenant Hilton to come at once and bring Marcy Graston with him. He was looking for their arrival daily, and was laying great stress upon the value of Etaline's advice. Experience had taught him that she was a keen observer of men, and at present this quality would be of vast service.

On the evening of the 10th of February, about nine o'clock, a band of men rode into the camp shouting wildly, firing off

their revolvers, and proclaiming that if objection was made to their action they were ready to wipe out the whole encampment. Colonel Creedmore assembled his band, and inside of half an hour had placed the invaders under guard, where he left them to get sober. The most submissive of them all was the leader, no less a personage than the famous road agent, "Rob Roy."

On the following day, upon the promise of good behaviour, they were let go. Everything went along smoothly for a week, when in some way "Rob Roy"—or, to give his true name, Rufus MacGregor—learned that Colonel Creedmore had saved the life of the Indian chief whom he and his band had shot. A reaction set in against the hitherto popular Englishman. MacGregor taking advantage of it surrounded him with his band and grossly insulted him, and dared him to fight a duel unto death. Bill Jenkins was with him at the time, and they were at a distant point from the main camp. The miscreants did not imagine that the quiet Englishman would accept. The "code," as then practised at Paradise Camp, was almost certain death to one of the combatants. The challenge was accepted promptly and the ground cleared at once for the duel. The terms were that the two seconds were to hold each a loaded six-shooter Colt's revolver, and the principals were to throw a silver dollar in the air for choice of first shots. The one that won was to take his pistol from his second and fire the six chambers in succession at twenty-five paces apart. It then became the privilege of the other, if he was able to return the compliment. No one, however, had ever survived to do so.

MacGregor took a coin out of his pocket and asked Colonel Creedmore to name his choice, "heads or tails." Before his second could warn him he called out "heads." The coin went up in the air and "tails" came up as it fell to the ground. Bill Jenkins turned deadly pale. His friend, he apprehended, was a dead man. MacGregor was the best shot on the plains. With a triumphant leer he took the pistol from his second, and in order to enjoy his triumph as much as possible he carefully examined the weapon, took deliberate aim, and fired. Without moving a muscle Edgar stood his ground. The shot flew by his head. Another and a third shot also sped along without touching him. MacGregor became nervous at this failure of his marksmanship. Once more two shots rang out on the still air and the Englishman was unharmed. The Scotchman now turned pale. His life depended upon his next shot. He well knew that his opponent would not fail to kill at once when it came his turn.

Slowly the revolver was raised and the trigger pulled. The hand was too nervous and the leaden messenger flew wide of its mark. Edgar knew that unless he acted promptly the band would interfere to save their chief. Quickly taking the pistol from the extended hand of Bill Jenkins he discharged two shots in rapid succession, and waited to see the result. A moment later the dreaded chief of the road agents fell forward on his face, with two bullets through his heart. Jenkins hastened to him and took from the vest pocket of the dead man two silver dollars, one with two heads and the other with two tails, and said to his principal, "Colonel Creedmore, you should not have called out your choice until the coin was in the air."

Great was the rejoicing in the camp, and Edgar was congratulated on his escape from the "close call."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MODERN LOCHINVAR.

ESTHER passed three months of a very pleasant life at Grassmere Manor; in fact, it was the only happiness she had known since September, 1865. She was well aware that Martin Nickley had some deeply-hidden design of his own in procuring her this situation as companion for Lord Grassmere's daughter. The question of her own welfare did not enter into his calculations. She surmised that possibly he might be seeking an alliance with the Lady Martha, who was now past forty and would not object to a wealthy suitor.

One bright morning about the middle of December the earl told the ladies at the breakfast table that a few days previously he had invited the Count Rochmere to spend the Christmas season with him at Grassmere Manor. He had met the count several times when in Paris, he remarked, and had found him an agreeable companion. He had just received a letter from the count saying that he could not come, as he had given a previous promise to another friend. He had taken the great liberty, however, of giving a letter of introduction to his old friend, Count Morella Naymour. On his father's side the count belonged to one of the oldest French families, and his

mother was the daughter of the house of Morella, one of the noblest in Italian history. He spoke English fluently ; in fact, knew several languages, and was very rich.

This last qualification was the most attractive. Three days later a handsome carriage drove to Grassmere Manor and the footman took a card to the hall door bearing the name of Count Morella Naymour. The Earl of Condor was at home and received his visitor in the drawing-room, giving him a hearty English welcome. He was pressed to stay for dinner, and after the Lady Martha had added her persuasions he finally consented.

“My daughter will be so pleased to meet you,” said Lord Grassmere, “and we have as a member of our family a charming young lady, a countrywoman of yours by descent, a Miss Ducie, who plays and sings like an angel. I never heard an angel sing,” the earl added, “but then I have an idea of how a celestial being could sing, and Miss Ducie is without a rival, as far as I have heard, both in song and music.”

“Such attractions are a very strong inducement,” the count replied, “but the gracious welcome of the Lady Martha is alone sufficient. I have heard so much of the far-famed beauty of your daughter that I am impatient to see her.”

“I know that she will be delighted to meet you,” answered Lord Grassmere. “At present she and Miss Ducie are out riding, but they will be home in an hour’s time.”

The count related many events of his travels, and at dinner he met Lady Luella and Miss Ducie, to both of whom he was very agreeable. After the gentlemen had rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room Miss Ducie charmed them with some of her best selections. When the hour for retiring came the count bade them all a gracious good night, saying that he would be very much pleased to accept their further hospitality, but he had given a positive promise to Lord Morton to breakfast with him at his club. He would be happy to come some other time.

The following day Esther received a letter from Martin Nickley, instructing her to obey the wishes of the Count Morella as she would himself. This filled her cup of misery full to overflowing. As long as the villainy of this man was aimed at herself she could endure it, but when he desired to use her in some scheme of his against an innocent girl she resolved to have nothing to do with him. She had already penetrated the make-up of the Count Morella Naymour and recognised Martin Nickley. He had long sought an alliance with one of the old

families of the nobility. If such were his present intentions no obstacle would be placed in his way, but if he had any designs against the earl's daughter she resolved to denounce him to Lord Grassmere. She waited for him to exhibit his tactics. It would have been better for her own peace of mind if Nickley had been shown up in his true colours.

The Count Morella came frequently to Grassmere Manor, sometimes remaining for several days. Not once did he betray his identity to Esther ; in fact, he flattered himself that she had not penetrated his disguise. Martin Nickley was a born actor. He had a rare control over his features and never lost his presence of mind. Esther thought it best to keep her discovery to herself.

The 1st of May came. The count had made many visits to the Manor but had not unmasked his purpose. He paid great attention to the Lady Martha, and the earl was well pleased at this preference for his sister. She received many valuable presents from the count and looked for a formal proposal.

The 1st of May was always a great day at Grassmere Manor. This one in particular was to be a special festive occasion, as the fair Luella had been chosen as the Queen of May. The count had been specially invited, but sent a letter of regret from Paris stating that business of the utmost importance called him away to Italy.

On the 3rd of May Esther and Luella went out for a ride, accompanied by a French groom who had been recommended to Lord Grassmere by the count. They visited an old ruined abbey situated about fifteen miles from Grassmere. The day was a beautiful one and the abbey was reached by noon. They spread out their lunch in the old refectory and enjoyed themselves talking over the history of the place. It was three hundred years since the monks held possession, yet the walls were in a state of perfect repair. At two o'clock they set out on their return. Their horses were spirited animals. Esther was fully occupied in managing hers. She had enjoyed the horseback exercise ever since coming to Grassmere. During the years intervening since the episode of the lake she had cared very little for riding ; now, however, there was a craving for it as a relief from the burden of the past.

Esther and Luella had ridden about five miles on their return, when the latter said to her companion, playfully :

“What a fine place this glen would be for a modern Lochinvar to take me away, and make me his bonny bride before my angry father could overtake us.”

“My dear Luella,” said Esther, “why do you harbour such wild notions? It does very well to read about in old Scotch history, but is out of fashion in these practical days.”

“I cannot help it, Esther,” replied Luella. “It is in my nature. I suppose that some ancestor of mine eloped in this fashion, and such things run in the blood. At times this feeling is overpowering and I cannot keep it down. But who is this coming so gallantly mounted? I declare it is the Count Morella. I thought he was in Italy.”

Esther turned deathly pale as she caught sight of him. She had a foreboding that his presence at this lonely spot meant danger to her companion.

The count saluted the ladies in a gallant manner. Luella told him that they had been talking of Lochinvar and also of the lady who ran away with a Highland chief, but was drowned in the lake just as her father reached the shore.

There was a peculiar smile on the face of the count as he replied :

“So, fair daughter of a hundred earls, you would like to see a modern Lochinvar, who would take you to his castle far over the sea. Well, suppose I play the *rôle*, but in a more dignified style. Let me hold your horse’s bridle and off we go.”

The count gave Esther one significant look, and holding on to the bridle of Luella’s horse he rode rapidly away accompanied by the groom, leaving Esther alone to return home and explain the abduction as best she could to the earl.

Esther’s first impulse was to go to London and never go back to Grassmere Manor. After reflection, however, she perceived that in failing to return she would be suspected of complicity in the abduction. Then, again, she did not dare give the right name of the count, because there was no good reason to offer for keeping this matter a secret so long. She was afraid to betray him, and so resolved to make up a story of her own. The earl was passionately fond of his daughter, and Esther dreaded his anger.

When Esther arrived at the manor she told the groom that took charge of her horse as she dismounted that the Lady Luella had gone to make a call upon a young lady friend who was ill, and would not probably return for a day or so. She then sought the apartments of the Lady Martha, and told her in a few brief words that her niece had been abducted by an Italian who looked like a nobleman, and that it was probably a preconcerted affair, as Luella went away without making any attempt at escape.

“Oh, how dreadful!” said the Lady Martha. My brother will be exceedingly vexed on his return. He received a telegram just after you went out riding from his friend the Count Rochmere in Paris, asking him to come on at once and join in a grand boar hunt. He left at an hour’s notice, and will not likely return for a week. He left no directions and I do not know where to telegraph to him.”

“Of course this Italian nobleman will marry Luella, will he not?”

“Certainly,” said Esther, although from her own experience she would not place much stress on the validity of such a marriage, and yet Martin Nickley might be disposed to contract a lawful marriage; in fact, be glad to do so with such an old house as that of Condor. Still there was no telling what such a deeply-dyed villain would do. Time alone would show.

It was deemed advisable to keep the abduction a secret from the servants and also from the friends of the family. Word was given out that the Lady Luella had decided to visit Paris with a friend who was going there for a change of climate, and some clothes were sent to London ostensibly to meet her.

A week passed away before the return of Lord Grassmere. The Lady Martha was afraid to tell her brother, and directed Esther to break the news to him. She did it with fear and trembling. His manner was very different from what she expected. He only shrugged his shoulders, and coolly remarked:

“Women have strange notions at times. Read this letter which I just received from Luella. I heard of this elopement from the Count Morella as I was leaving Paris on my return. He told me that he knew the Italian count well, who was very rich and had been engaged to some lady of noble birth in his own country, but found that he loved my daughter the first time he met her at a party in London. I was also informed that Luella had planned the elopement herself.”

Esther then read the following letter:—

ROUEN, FRANCE, May 7th, 1872.

MY DEAR FATHER,

Don’t be angry with your Luella at the step she has taken in eloping in a romantic way. We left London on the night of the 3rd and were married in this city on the morning of the 4th by a Catholic priest, and are resting here for a few days, when we go south to visit some of my husband’s relatives. There are certain family reasons why I cannot give you the name of my husband at present, but I can say that he belongs to an Italian family as old as your own. He made me a present to-day of a handsome diamond coronet, and he is immensely rich. We love each other and are suited, and when you know all you will forgive me and give us your blessing. Give my love to my Aunt Martha, and say I have had my wish,

and that my modern Lochinvar is all I could desire. Ask Esther to overlook any pain I may have caused her by leaving her so abruptly, but it was all planned beforehand—I mean the elopement, not the shock to her nerves. She did look awfully surprised when we rode away so coolly with the groom.

I would have written the day I was married, but I heard that you had gone to Paris for a week.

With much love for your own sweet self and also for aunty, and not forgetting Esther, I remain lovingly,

YOUR OWN LITTLE LUELLA.

“I trust, Lord Grassmere, that you hold me guiltless of all blame in this matter,” said Esther, as she handed back the letter to the earl.

“Why, of course. Why should I blame you? This romantic affair has been Luella’s dream for several years, and I hope that she will not have cause to regret it.”

“Now that your daughter has gone I suppose you will not need my services any longer,” continued Esther.

“I will need them more than ever,” was the answer. “I wish you to take her place, not only in my heart but also with my sister, who could not spare you under any consideration. Consider Grassmere Manor your home for life—if not as the Countess of Condor then as my daughter, and to close the bargain I will give you a father’s kiss.”

Esther made no objection to this proposal, and she took the place vacated by the romantic Luella.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PINKERTON’S TRAIL.

SIX months after the event recorded in the last chapter Edgar received a letter from Lieutenant Hilton, saying that he had made a strike and purchased a claim which gave promise of a rich development. He also told him that if he would come on to Cheyenne at once he would give him an equal share. Machinery was needed, and more than all Edgar’s experience.

This letter was shown to Bill Jenkins, who after reading it advised his friend to go, and offered to go with him and lend his services as superintendent, as he had considerable experience at that work. The offer was accepted and they both bade

farewell to their friends and went to Cheyenne. They arrived without incident on the 14th of August, 1867. Edgar found that his old friend Marcy Graston was in partnership with Lieutenant Hilton, but a place was made for Colonel Creedmore, and Bill Jenkins was installed as superintendent. Fortune once more smiled upon Edgar, for the new mine was far richer than even the most sanguine expectations of either Lieutenant Hilton or Marcy Graston, who was really the one that discovered its true value. He had purchased it for a mere trifle from a man who stumbled upon it accidentally and at once offered it for a thousand dollars. This was not an isolated case. Some of the richest mines out West were purchased in this manner from prospectors who had not the money to develop their finds.

One of the first things that Edgar heard on his arrival was that Henrietta St. Clair had married Captain Slevington. He felt equal to their combined efforts, especially as Etaline told him that she would be on the watch.

The new mine was called the "West End." When the original discoverer had been asked where the place was situated, he answered :

"Oh, you will find the claim at the west end of a narrow valley." So this name was given to the place.

The stock was soon in great demand. Edgar wrote to Colonel Moorehead, in Boston, to come on at once, and also to Colonel Derwent, in Kentucky. They both responded in person and bought freely, and gave their advice and experience. The shares went higher and higher, for silver ore of a fine grade was taken out in large quantities.

In June of 1868 an offer was made by an English syndicate to purchase the stock. The sum named was a large one, yet if the ore did not give out an equivalent amount could be obtained in a year. But here was the risk. Several of the best mines had suddenly failed when least expected. It was therefore decided to accept the offer. Edgar and his partners now had a quarter of a million dollars apiece. Colonel Moorehead pleaded with Edgar to return to Boston with him, and Colonel Derwent used all his eloquence to induce him to go back to Kentucky. He was inclined to accept the latter's invitation, for the fair Ida was waiting to give him a cordial welcome.

Margaret Richardson, hearing of Edgar's good fortune, wrote a letter that would have accomplished its object if there had not been other pressure brought to bear on her cousin. Lieutenant Hilton had decided late in the fall of 1868 to go to Denver, and make that city his permanent home. Etaline

therefore urged Edgar to go with them. This latter suggestion was accepted. Graston and Jenkins also decided to go to the same place. Colonel Moorehead and Colonel Derwent both returned to their respective homes, regretting that they could not have with them the man to whom they were so warmly attached.

The evening before the intended departure of Edgar and his friends for Denver, the man who had sold them the West End claim came to them at their hotel, and informed them that he had discovered a place that would far surpass any yet found in the West. Etaline protested against any more speculation in mines. She insisted that if they should invest their money in real estate in Denver it would yield them a large return. Why, therefore, run such a great risk as to engage in another mining enterprise?

Graston and Jenkins urged the matter so strongly that it was decided to investigate it.

On the following day Lieutenant Hilton and Edgar, accompanied by their two partners and the "claim finder," as he was called, set out on horseback, leaving Etaline at the hotel.

This trip was destined to be more exciting to Colonel Creedmore than he had any idea of when he left Cheyenne.

It will be remembered that Edgar in a former chapter was with the road agents when they stopped the mail coach, and Captain Slevington lost a large amount. Somehow the latter entertained the notion that Colonel Creedmore knew more about this matter than he had admitted. Having married Henrietta St. Clair, she strongly urged that he should place the matter in the hands of Pinkerton's Agency, and one of their men was sent out, who decided to procure a warrant for the arrest of Colonel Creedmore. The detective had the misfortune of being just too late to find the man he was after at the places he visited. Besides, he knew that the evidence on which the charge was based was very slight, and unless he proceeded cautiously he would be liable for damages.

On the evening of the first day after leaving Cheyenne Edgar and his companions stopped at a mine encampment called "Silver Glen." The first man who met them was Captain Slevington. As nothing was known by them of the warrant of arrest they greeted him warmly, but said nothing of their errand, remarking that they were prospecting. Slevington told them that he and his wife were living in a small cottage, and he was the owner of a valuable claim.

When Henrietta heard from her husband of the arrival of Colonel Creedmore she made up her mind that the opportunity was a good one to get her revenge upon the man who had foiled her in so many of her projects.

Silver Glen Camp, like many others at that time, was kept in order by an elected body of men, who were really a Vigilance Committee. To the members of this despotic force Henrietta went, and told them that among the arrivals that evening was a leader of the road agents, for whom there was a warrant out on account of the robbery of the mail coach at Dead Man's Run over two years previously. An accusation like this was a very serious matter, and many a man on far less evidence had been hanged. To be accused was to be found guilty, and the punishment quickly followed. The Vigilance Committee was composed of six men, and they got ready at once. This meant an expulsion from the camp or a "neck-tie sociable." By the merest accident Bill Jenkins heard of the preparation. It was useless to parley with a mob bent on mischief. The best way was to get the proposed victim out of the place as soon as possible. Jenkins was no lover of women, and when he heard that it was by the instigation of Slevington's wife that the lynching was to be carried out, became more determined to circumvent her. It was considered prudent for Edgar to leave alone, while the rest of the party were to remain behind. This plan was carried out. At about eleven o'clock the Vigilance Committee visited the tent of the new-comers, and demanded to see Colonel Creedmore. Bill Jenkins informed them that the man whom they were seeking had left the tent about an hour before to call upon his old friend, Captain Slevington, and had not returned. The tent was thrown open and an examination made. The leader was satisfied of the truth of the statement. They then left to hunt for their man around the encampment. Slevington and his wife were found at a neighbour's cabin, and when told of the failure to find Colonel Creedmore, and that he had probably gone to hunt them up, they hastened home to their cottage. On their arrival they went in the back way while the vigilants remained in front with their rifles ready to shoot on sight, this being the usual custom with desperate characters. Such they judged Edgar to be from the exaggerated accounts of Henrietta. This time she had over-reached herself. She and her husband searched the back part of their cottage, and then, without lighting a lamp, they suddenly opened the front door. The vigilants on watch, thinking it was Colonel Creedmore trying to escape, opened fire, and six rifle shots broke the stillness of the midnight.

When a light was procured Captain Slevington and his wife were found lying dead. The latter had received four of the shots, while a single one had penetrated the brain of the former.

The next day a jury decided that their death was purely their own fault for not lighting a lamp. They were buried in one grave, and no further search was made for Colonel Creedmore. His companions left quietly, and joined him by appointment two days after. When he heard of the death, tragic in the extreme, of his two enemies he made no remark. Surely he bore a charmed life!

On the evening of the third day they reached the new claim and made a careful examination. It was valuable; but, being so remote from the line of the railroad, and, more than all, there being a great scarcity of water, they decided not to work it at present. They bought it, however, for a thousand dollars, and returned to Cheyenne. Here they found Etaline very much alarmed over the reports from Silver Glen Camp that had reached Cheyenne.

The safe arrival of Edgar was of greater joy to her than she cared to express.

After a few days of rest the party all set out for Denver, where they arrived on the 1st of February, 1869. Edgar contemplated how much he had gone through in the three years since he first came to that city, and how different was his standing now to what it was then. He had possession of the same amount of money, but he had gained a vast deal of experience which had been dearly bought. Beyond buying some city lots no special investment was made. The "Quartette Mining Company," as they facetiously called themselves, were in no mood for speculation. Perhaps one of the reasons was the ill-health of Lieutenant Hilton. He had contracted a fever on the last journey, and found it difficult to shake it off. His companions were very anxious on his account. He was a valuable member and hard to replace. He grew gradually worse and on the 10th of October he died, leaving his wife a sad mourner, for she had been faithful to him ever since the compact in Richmond that gave Colonel Creedmore his freedom in 1863. It was true she had given her heart long before to Edgar, but she never was remiss in any way to the man she married. They had lived happily together, and he had made her a devoted husband.

A month after the death of Lieutenant Hilton Edgar was suddenly arrested by one of Pinkerton's men for complicity in the affair at Dead Man's Run. The charge was quickly

disproved and he was acquitted. The annoyance preyed on his mind, however, and it was some time before he got over it. The Pinkerton's trail had been a long one.

In the spring of 1870 Colonel Creedmore entered into active partnership with Graston and Jenkins, and Etaline was also made a partner in the profits. Mining machinery was their specialty. They were fortunate in selling for a large advance the claim that they had purchased when they left Cheyenne to look at the new find.

For a while we must leave them in Denver while we take up the experience of Esther.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FAITHFUL CESAR.

ESTHER's life at Grassmere Manor during the summer and autumn of 1872 was like a peaceful dream. She had taken the place which Luella had vacated. The latter wrote from time to time stating that she was very happy in her wedded life, and hoped as soon as her husband's family affairs were settled to return to England.

The earl became more deeply in love with his "golden-haired charmer" as he called his daughter's companion. She on her part kept her own counsel. Very rarely was London visited. Her relatives had been told that she had gone to Australia as a governess, and they made no further effort to find her.

On the 5th of November the Count Morella Naymour suddenly drove up to the door of the manor, and sent his card in to the earl.

At first Lord Grassmere was inclined to send the card back with a curt message that he was not at home to the count, but Lady Martha suggested that perhaps he could give them some definite information in regard to the husband of Luella.

When ushered into the drawing-room he was received very coldly. The earl accused him of having some hand in the abduction of his daughter. This was at once stoutly denied by the count, who answered in an excited manner somewhat after the French style :

“Why, Lord Grassmere, how could you have such an opinion of me? I am grieved that you should entertain the thought for one moment that I would violate your hospitality. All true Frenchmen would scorn to do a thing so vile as to take advantage of the trust placed in them by the father of a family. This has grieved me more than anything that has happened to me since I first came to England. I will confess that I met your daughter and her husband in Paris, and I gave them my word that I would not betray their confidence. You will know all concerning the count and his family in a short time.

Lord Grassmere was a man of generous impulses. Feeling that perhaps he had wronged the Count Morella he sought to make amends by pressing him to spend a few days at Grassmere Manor. The invitation was accepted, and he was not long in gaining a complete ascendancy over the earl.

To Esther the count was freezingly polite. The visit only lasted four days. Lord Grassmere then went to Paris with his guest in the hope of meeting his daughter, and thus penetrating the mystery which overshadowed the whole affair.

One week later Esther received by post a letter from the earl in Paris enclosing a cheque for twenty-five pounds, and stating that her services were no longer needed. The hand of Martin Nickley was too apparent in this transaction to cause Esther to feel any annoyance at this hasty action of her employer. She lost no time in packing her trunk. In an hour after the receipt of the letter of dismissal she asked to see Lady Martha to bid her good-bye, but even this was declined. Orders were given to the coachman to take Miss Ducie to the railway station whenever she was ready to go. Great was the grief among the servants at the prospect of losing the popular adopted daughter, and all felt that the French count had some hand in this abrupt departure of the winsome young lady.

Two hours after she left a telegram came for her from the earl recalling the dismissal, and one also for the Lady Martha saying that he had received information within an hour which had proved to him unequivocally that Esther had no hand whatsoever in the elopement of Luella. Two servants were at once sent to London to find her, if possible, and deliver the telegram. Lady Martha also wrote a very urgent note asking her to return at once, and to overlook her want of courtesy in refusing to see her when she asked for an interview.

The following day they returned saying that they could not find the slightest trace of Miss Esther.

That same evening Lord Grassmere also arrived back home. When he heard of the failure of his telegrams he was almost frantic with grief. Never had she been so dear to him as now, when the bitterness of his unjust suspicion came home with full power. Where could he find her when no one knew to what place she had gone. London was about the last place to hunt for any one when there was no clue to begin with.

Next day the earl went to London and engaged the services of one of the best detectives. He spent a full week himself walking the streets by day and often late into the night, but not the faintest trace of the missing Esther was obtained. Sadly he returned home.

The whole trouble had been caused by the direct accusation of Esther by an English lady residing in Paris, who had known the earl for many years, and also knew of the elopement of his daughter. The evidence appeared so clear that Lord Grassmere had accepted the statement. In the first burst of his indignation he wrote to his sister telling her what he had heard, and also wrote the fatal letter of dismissal to Esther herself. The next day by the merest accident he met his daughter in the Bois de Boulogne, driving in a handsome carriage with servants in the livery of the Count Rochmere. He left his own conveyance and entered hers. She told him promptly that Esther had absolutely nothing to do with the elopement, and she alone had managed the whole affair. She also assured him that she was very happy with her husband. He was now in Italy, she said, and expecting to arrange his family matters within a month, after which they would announce their marriage to their respective friends. She was married to her husband beyond the shadow of a doubt, as the ceremony took place in a chapel in the city of Rouen. After this explanation the earl realised his mistake in accusing Esther, and hastened at once to remedy it by telegraphing her and also his sister. It was too late, however, and we will now take up Esther's experience after she reached London.

On arriving at Euston Station she left her trunk in the baggage room and went out undecided where to go. If only Ziska had not been transported she would have gone directly to his encampment. She was afraid, however, to go to his wife, lest she might upbraid her of being the cause of his transportation. She wandered to Westminster Bridge, and when half way along it the impulse came over her to throw herself into the river and thus end all her agony. She was actually contemplating this rash step when she heard a voice at her side.

“My child, you look dejected and sad. If I mistake not you are debating the problem of ending your life.”

Esther turned quickly around and stood face to face with the gipsy queen.

“By all the traditions of our tribe,” exclaimed the latter, “if this is not the long-lost Esther, the Countess of Montville!”

“Do you not hate me, Oslena?” she asked, beholding the wife of the man who had lost his liberty on her account.

“Why should I, my child? Your misfortunes have made you very dear to me. Long ago I swore that I would leave no stone unturned till the villain who is the cause of your deep trials received full justice. But where have you been? For the last two years I have searched diligently for you. I knew well that Nickley would keep you concealed till after the trial of my husband.”

Esther then gave a brief recital of what had occurred since that eventful night two years ago, when on this very bridge she had met Ziska and been so rudely torn away from him.

“My dear child,” said the gipsy queen, when Esther had finished, “a kind Providence must have sent me hither this afternoon. Come with me to our camp. Martin Nickley will be a sharper man than I give him credit for if he can get you away from my protection.”

The following day Esther wrote a long letter to both her uncles, and after giving a brief account of her experience for the last seven years asked them to put forth their influence to procure the pardon of Ziska, with permission to return to England. She also asked as a favour that none of her relatives should seek her in her present retirement. She hoped before long, she added, that matters would be cleared up so that she could face them all without a blush of shame.

Two days later she received letters of warm, sympathetic affection from her Uncle Richard Shirley and also from Sir Thomas. The latter informed her that he had seen the Hon. Secretary for Home Affairs, a pardon had been posted to the governor of the penal settlement, and Ziska would be permitted to return home at once. Her uncles enclosed cheques for a large amount, which she at once gave to the gipsy queen to be used for the benefit of the tribe.

A month after Esther's arrival in the gipsy camp she received an agreeable surprise. On getting up in the morning her dog Cæsar stood at her tent door. Great alike was the joy of both girl and dog at the pleasure of once more seeing each other. Queen Oslena had planned this surprise. She had sent a

special messenger to Mr. Richard Shirley, and asked that Cæsar should be sent as a companion to his niece. Esther's life was once more pleasant and free from care and trouble. The members of the gipsy camp did all in their power to make things as agreeable as possible for her.

Wherever Esther went Cæsar went also. It would have been a bold man that would dare molest her with that champion at her side. The animal was now old, yet he had not lost the peculiar expression of showing his teeth whenever anyone tried to take liberties with him, whether it was dog or man. His devotion to his mistress was so strongly manifested that everyone called him the "Faithful Cæsar." Nothing would so arouse him to fierceness as the mention of the name of Martin Nickley. In this matter the huge mastiff was almost human in his instincts. Day after day he seemed to be on the watch for this man. Everyone knew that could he have but once seen him it would have been a fight unto death. Thus months passed without incident. All at the encampment were waiting for the return of their absent chief from Australia; then would come a day of reckoning for the mutual enemy, as Nickley was termed.

And how was this man getting along? Serenely enough. Once more had he been made a welcome guest at Grassmere Manor. He volunteered promptly to search for the missing Esther, but at the same time took good care that he did not obtain any clue to her hiding place. Her presence at the manor would be an obstruction to his plans. What they were he kept to himself. He was very devoted in his attentions to Lady Martha. For the first time in his life, however, he was worried over some matter. Was it remorse? No; such a nature as his had long ago stifled the warnings of conscience. The trouble was that some of his well-laid schemes had not matured as he had expected, and there was also in his eye that peculiar expressive look which is invariably seen in those who are expecting a sudden raising of the veil that has hidden their inner life from the world. The time, however, was not yet ripe for retribution.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SAN FRANCISCO.

THE firm of Creedmore, Graston, Jenkins & Co., dealers in mining machinery, quickly rose to the "top notch of the business houses" of Denver, using the Western vernacular.

They had the essential qualifications for success, viz., large capital, experience in their particular line, and undaunted energy. According to the usual results in such cases, where there is a market for the goods the profits should have been satisfactory.

After two years of hard work, however, there were no profits but a heavy deficiency. Orders for machinery were numerous; in fact, the demand was greater than the supply. Why, then, the failure? The solution is not far to seek. Colorado, Wyoming, and adjacent territories were thronged with mining companies. The great majority were without a working capital, but they each had great expectations. Having nothing to risk, and consequently nothing to lose, they ordered machinery—some of it of the most costly nature—wherever they could obtain credit. If successful they paid their bills; but in most cases they failed, and then they made an assignment with heavy liabilities and no assets except a hole in the ground and the aforesaid machinery, greatly deteriorated in value.

The firm of Creedmore & Company being composed of men of kind disposition no one applied for credit in vain to them. They held mortgages on a large number of mines and many claims had been turned over to them. In April, 1872, the firm decided to wind up their business, and by the 1st of July they ascertained that they had lost a full quarter of a million dollars. They held on, however, to all their claims, trusting that on a future day some of them might become valuable. They were strongly advised to invest the remainder of their fortune in real estate in Denver. This would have doubled in value within five years without effort on their part. Etaline strongly urged this course, but at the same time consented to abide by the decision of the others. For several months their favourite theme had been the grand opportunities in San Francisco. The Golden Gate had long been their Mecca.

It was finally decided to go there, so they bade farewell to their many friends in Denver and took their way Westward. They spent two months on the way, collecting a considerable amount of debts, and arrived at their destination by the last of October. They found speculation there at a high fever point. Mining stocks and wheat were the two commodities in greatest demand. The latter was apparently the safest investment; so, after careful investigation, by the 1st of December the firm name of Creedmore, Graston, Jenkins & Co. was emblazoned on two handsome brass plates on each pillar of their granite warehouse. The "Company" was Etaline. She had left all of her late husband's money in the firm and had gone on a visit to Virginia to her home. Her father was still living and had married the widow of a Confederate colonel. But she could not be content away from the man who held her heart. As soon as they were fairly started in their new enterprise she joined them, taking with her as a companion a cousin called Sylvia Thornton. The latter had promised not to fall in love with any man; in fact, declared that she had made up her mind to live and die an old maid.

The day after their arrival the ladies had the pleasure of receiving a call from the members of the firm, and the beauty and sparkling wit of the Virginia belle made a deep impression on Bill Jenkins. He had been known all his lifetime as a woman-hater. He had never been able to see any good points in "those designing women-folks," as he invariably called them. Being thus strongly entrenched in his views he considered himself proof against all the craft of the fair sex. He was positive that no woman lived that could make his heart beat one throb quicker than the ordinary routine of that important member of his corporeal structure.

It was therefore somewhat in the nature of a surprise to both Colonel Creedmore and Marcy Graston when they noticed he was taking unusual pains in his toilet, and was looking decidedly sprucer than they had ever known him before. They were dumbfounded a week later to see him drive up to the warehouse one afternoon with a handsome span of horses, and much more so when he told them that he was going to take Mrs. Hilton and her cousin out for a drive to Seal Rock. Day after day these drives were the regular routine. They were therefore prepared for the announcement a month later of the engagement of the hitherto reserved and bashful Bill Jenkins. The girl had broken her vow to her cousin by falling in love, although she sought to screen herself by stoutly

declaring that it was Willie that had fallen in love with her. She did not allow anyone to call him "Bill" in her presence.

The marriage took place in January, 1873. Whole columns of the morning papers were filled with details of the brilliant ceremony. The diamonds, the dresses, the lovely women, the notable people, were the chief topics. During the reception that followed afterwards Marcy Graston said to Colonel Creedmore :

"My dear Colonel, it is your turn next." Then, looking at Mrs. Hilton, he continued : "How superb that charming little widow looks to-day in her navy-blue velvet dress. Another sweet woman like that and I might follow the example of Bill. By the way, we must not call him Bill any longer. His wife objects to that abbreviation. But I never expected to see our partner mated."

At this moment Edgar caught a glance of the brilliant eyes of Etaline. It went to his heart's core and stirred him as nothing had ever done before. For a moment there was a struggle between the claims of his cousin Margaret and Ida Derwent. He weighed them mentally in one scale against Etaline and her sacrifices for him. He thought of how much he owed to her. She had saved him from prison and even death itself. What had been done to repay this great devotion? Quickly he came to a decision. Going over to her he took her hand and looked into her eyes. Not a word was spoken ; no need of it, for their faces told the tale. They read each other's thoughts and became engaged, not by word of mouth but by the affinity of spirit with spirit.

The marriage of William Jenkins was a happy one, and neither ever had cause to regret the choice.

The spring of 1874 came around quickly. Edgar and Etaline were to be married in May, but it was postponed till the fall. No reason was assigned, but Edgar requested it.

A spirit of wild speculation had taken hold of many thousands of the inhabitants of San Francisco. Wheat was king. The firm of Creedmore & Co. controlled the market. They bought largely of the new wheat in the fields. The price fell ; still they bought, their credit was good, and they "loaded up" heavily. It went lower and lower. When it reached the lowest figure the hitherto wealthy firm of Creedmore, Graston, Jenkins & Co. was bankrupt. After a settlement with the creditors all was found to be lost but honour. They paid one hundred cents on the dollar on all claims. Jenkins proposed that they should leave the city and go back to the

mining districts, as they still had a number of claims that they had taken for debts while in Denver, and these might be disposed of to advantage.

Colonel Creedmore said that he had enough of mining, and proposed to remain where he was. He accordingly sold out all claims for a small sum of ready cash. Etaline, however, retained her share and left her interests with the partners. She procured an engagement as a teacher in a public school, and Graston and Jenkins and his wife took their departure for the East.

Uncle Richardson, when he heard of the great failure, wrote and urged his nephew to come to New York and accept the long-offered position in his business. Cousin Margaret wrote an urgent letter, and it might have prevailed for he was heartily tired of the West. But he was pledged to Etaline and could not break with her.

Once more his two staunch friends, Colonel Moorehead and Colonel Derwent, wrote offering financial assistance, and also an opportunity to go into business. He wrote back thanking them with all his heart, but adding that it was of no use as the fates were against him. He declined to accept a single dollar from his uncle. It was perhaps foolish in him thus to refuse the kind offer of assistance, but he desired to retrieve his fortunes unaided. He offered to release Etaline from her engagement, but she was "true blue" and refused to desert him in this hour of his need. Were he the poorest man in the Union she would have clung to him.

After this last great failure Edgar's disposition changed. He became sullen and unsociable. He drifted into the gambling saloons, and soon became a regular visitor at those haunts of hazard.

A wild desire seized upon him to win back by cards what he had lost by speculation in the wheat market. He took to drinking heavily, and began to sink in the social scale. Every dollar went to the gambling table. His late two partners sent him remittances from time to time, ignoring the fact that they had bought his claims. They were very successful in collecting old bills due to them. Falling lower and lower he even borrowed money from Etaline. He was fast approaching a tragedy in his history which would leave an impression behind that not even death itself would efface. The sting of remorse would make itself felt for a lifetime.

It was the springtime of 1875, just ten years since the war closed. The result of the decade was only barren leaves in his life, and now he was sinking into the depths of crime and degradation.

In the exchange of bodies no assurance had been given to either that they would be free from the temptations common to humanity at large. It would have been well for both of them if they had kept this fact prominently before their minds.

Could Edgar only have seen the awful and sudden doom that came down upon one that he loved, cheerfully would he have given his own life to have averted the terrible blow.

Although the reader will wish that this disaster could have been averted, yet on the whole it will be seen later on that it was best for the victim. Tears may be shed for the swift ending of a lovely, sweet life, but there is consolation in the contemplation of the compensations in the other planet of our existence for all the disappointments of this weary pilgrimage. Edgar's cup of misery was not yet drained to its dregs, and the needful experience was far from being complete.

When in the zenith of his existence as a rich and prosperous merchant social honours were lavished upon him without stint. Now that he was a confirmed gambler one by one his friends left him, and only Etaline was true as steel to him.

It is with difficulty that we avoid the temptation to moralise. We leave that to the reader.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BOATMAN OF THE THAMES.

THE 10th of October, 1873, was a cold day. A dark cloud hung over the metropolis that threatened to develope into a proverbial London fog. The gipsy camp at this time was situated about two miles from Westminster Bridge on the Surrey side of the Thames. Esther had assumed the gipsy costume, and at no period of her life was she the recipient of so much attention, for all the members of the tribe were very devoted in their treatment of "the countess," as she was invariably called by them. She followed them in their wanderings, and enjoyed the life because of its freedom from the persecutions of Martin Nickley. He on his part made no attempt to trace out her whereabouts. It was therefore somewhat in the nature of a surprise when, on the morning of the above

day, she received a letter from him asking her to meet him that evening on Westminster Bridge at ten o'clock. The following is a copy of the letter:—

LONDON, October 9th, 1873.

MY DEAR ESTHER,

I have long known where you were in seclusion and respected your wish to be left alone. I have lately discovered very important clues in relation to your marriage to Edmond Harold, late Earl of Montville. You owe it to your family to clear away all doubts in regard to this marriage.

You will perhaps be greatly surprised to hear about the claims of that Paris cabdriver who performed the marriage ceremony for us at our island chateau seven years ago. I have very much to tell you. Come alone. You have nothing to fear from me. If when I had you in my complete power for five years I did not harm you in any way I am not likely to do so now. However, if you have any fears of me do not come.

To-morrow night at ten o'clock I will be on Westminster Bridge, standing by the third lamp-post. I will send a carriage at half-past nine to meet you at the corner of Edmund Lane and Surrey Road. The same carriage will take you back to the gipsy camp after our interview.

As our past relations concern no one but ourselves I would therefore suggest that you mention this meeting to no person in the encampment. A failure on your part to come will be to your own detriment. I cannot understand why you did not return to Grassmere Manor after all the efforts on the part of the earl to induce you to forget the hasty letter he wrote to you. You had hardly been gone an hour when he sent a telegram to recall it. I will speak of this and other matters when I see you to-morrow evening. Until then,

I remain your best friend,

MARTIN NICKLEY.

Esther pondered long and carefully over this letter. It was plausible on its face, there was very much in it to excite her curiosity, and the man who wrote it understood feminine nature and Esther's in particular. She was sitting by the door of her tent with the letter in her lap when Caesar came up and put his massive head to her hand and licked it. Smiling at the action of the dog, she said in a half abstracted way :

“Caesar, old doggie, this letter is from Martin Nickley, and he wants me to meet him this evening. What shall I do about it?”

Little did Esther imagine that the mastiff would understand her question, and she had forgotten for the moment his antipathy at the mere mention of the name of Nickley. She was therefore very much amazed when the sagacious brute gave a low growl of disapproval and seized the letter in his mouth, and placing it on the ground tore it in several pieces, and when

his mistress tried to take it away from him he picked up the remnants and bounded out of her tent and disappeared in the woods.

As to how much of the tenour of Nickley's letter was understood by Cæsar we are not prepared to say. There are, however, so many well-authenticated records of dogs understanding conversations not specially directed to them that we feel that the actions of a highly-bred mastiff, as in this case, are not without many parallels.

An hour after this occurrence Cæsar returned and kept close watch upon every movement of his mistress. He was apparently determined that wherever she went he would go also. As the shades of evening fell this watch was more keenly kept. Esther had made up her mind to meet Nickley and hear what he had to say, but knew that it would never do to take the dog with her, and also that if he was forcibly chained up he would arouse the camp with his howling. Therefore she resolved on diplomacy, and after giving Cæsar a bountiful supper of meat she partly undressed and lay down upon her bed. As a rule she slept alone, though very often one of the young girls of the camp kept her company. Cæsar slept at her tent door.

The dog was now feeling the effects of old age, and slept sounder than in his younger days. It was not long, therefore, before he was sleeping "the sleep of the just." He did not suspect his mistress of having any design of evading his watchfulness.

At a quarter-past nine Esther rose, and dressing speedily slipped under the back part of the tent and got clear of the camp without having been seen by any one. She found Nickley's carriage at the appointed place, and was soon moving on rapidly to the bridge that was already so interwoven with her history, and which was destined to be still more so. A fierce storm had been predicted and cabled from New York, and it was expected to reach the British Isles that very day.

The sun had gone down in a dark bank of clouds, which at this hour were scudding along, driven before a strong westerly gale. Every few moments a rift was made that allowed the crescent moon to shed a brief light, and then all was dark again. The late pedestrians were hurrying homeward as fast as possible, and the guardians of the watch were installed in places of security from the fast-approaching storm. When Esther's carriage reached the entrance of the bridge the door was opened, and the footman told her it was the wish of his

master that she should go alone to meet him, and he himself would wait for her return at this point. Closely veiled she went rapidly along the great bridge without meeting anyone. At the third lamp-post Martin Nickley was found waiting to receive her. He took both her hands in his and greeted her warmly and affectionately, saying :

“Fair queen of my heart, no other woman has ever had the hold that you have on me. I have looked forward to meeting you this evening with more joy than I can express. I am glad that you came alone. As the storm will soon be upon us I must be brief in what I have to say. In the first place, in reference to your marriage to Edmond Harold, I can clear away all the dark mystery that has gathered around that event, and will do so provided you will follow my wishes. I want you to promise not to return to that gipsy camp, but to go to a hotel that I will name. To-morrow you are to meet me at the office of my legal adviser and sign certain papers that I have prepared for you, and without reading them you are to swear that you know their contents. Then I wish you to sail for Australia and remain there for three years, and I will give you in hand three thousand pounds. At the end of the three years I will place you in possession of such information as will set you right before the eyes of the world and those of your kindred, and you will obtain full recognition as the Countess of Montville.”

During this recital Esther's hands were held by Nickley. She now withdrew them. Throwing back her veil, and with an inflection on every word to show that she meant all that was said, her eyes flashing as they only did when fully aroused, replied :

“Martin Nickley, I came here to-night against my better judgment to meet you. I had no idea that you thought my moral nature had sunk to such a low level as to be willing to perjure myself, and thus place me more fully in your power. My answer to your request will be final and decisive. I emphatically decline to leave the gipsy camp where I have been so kindly treated. Neither will I sign any papers without knowing the contents. As to going to Australia I will not entertain the proposition for a single instant. I cannot leave England for reasons that must not be disclosed at present. I do not need your gold, and if you care for me as you profess then you will relieve me of your presence. You ruined that foolish girl Luella, and perhaps now you are seeking some new conquest. I feel guilty for the silence observed in that

affair. Ziska is expected home this week, and he can obtain the information about the claims of the so-called Countess of Montville."

"Ziska's term of sentence is not up," said Nickley. "How can he come back?"

"I wrote to my uncles," answered Esther, "and they obtained a pardon for him; and when he gets back he will have a reckoning with you that will not be to your credit."

At this point great drops of rain began to fall, and Esther continued:

"As the storm is breaking upon us I beg of you to excuse me waiting here any longer."

A dark, angry flush came over Nickley's face that threatened terrible danger to the girl before him. In low suppressed tones of passion he said with a sneer:

"So you think that you and that lying gipsy scoundrel, a transported convict, can cross my path and clear away the mystery of Harold Castle. Listen! Unless you swear to do what I have just asked you I will throw you over this bridge."

He seized her with both hands and raised her to the top of the low parapet. Then drawing from a breast pocket a long keen knife he put it to her throat, and with a savage oath said:

"Esther, I mean what I say. Now, will you solemnly swear to do my bidding? Promise, or I will bury this in your heart and send you where dead women tell no tales."

"Never," was the decided answer, and the brave girl called loudly for help.

Quickly the gleaming knife was raised, but before it could descend a large mastiff sprang at Nickley's throat and fastened his teeth in his shoulder. Letting go his victim he buried the keen blade in the shaggy sides of the dog. The next moment Esther lost her balance, and with a shriek fell over into the river. Immediately the faithful *Cæsar*, for it was no other than he, sprang after his mistress. Nickley was horrified. He had no intention of harming the girl. He only purposed to frighten her by pressing the blade of the knife to her throat. He looked over the parapet to see where she had gone. The next moment he was felled to the ground by a powerful blow and saw a heavily-built man bending over him, saying excitedly as he grasped his throat:

"Martin Nickley, tell me what you have done with Esther?"

"Is that you, Ziska?" said the now crestfallen bully.

"Yes," was the answer. "I am Ziska, and this is the hour I have long looked forward to in the weary hours of my banishment. If you have harmed a single hair of that girl's head I will kill you without compassion."

"Quick, Ziska," was the reply, "let us search for her. She was sitting on the parapet when that savage brute of a dog rushed upon me, and she lost her balance and fell over into the river."

"What is the meaning of that blood on your hands?" was the next inquiry. "Also, whose blood is that on that blade?"

"I used the knife to ward off the dog. Do you suppose that I would stab a girl? Come, we are wasting time when Esther perhaps is drowning."

Ziska saw the force of this argument and allowed his antagonist to arise. They both went rapidly to the end of the bridge and then down by the steps to the edge of the river. A flash of lightning revealed a boat pulling rapidly down the current to London Bridge.

"Ziska," said Nickley, "that boat must have picked her up. Will you follow it to the place where it may land? I will see you to-morrow. There is a Providence that takes care of that girl."

"Martin Nickley," was the answer, "if I find that Esther has not been rescued I will have you arrested for her murder."

The next moment the gipsy was gone.

An hour before the occurrence just related Hans Nelsola, the well-known boatman of the Thames, was sitting before a cheerful fire in his cabin sleeping in his easy chair. His wife was sewing, and at his feet a dog was taking an after-dinner siesta. Hans was a London celebrity. He was a Norwegian by birth, and had sailed out of London for a score of years, and had been married for five years. At the termination of his last voyage his ship had need of extensive repairs, and Hans stayed by her. The old cabin had been replaced by a new one of larger dimensions, and as the weather-beaten structure was hoisted over the side an idea struck Hans. If he could obtain possession of it he would have a very comfortable home. That very day the watchman of the ship yard had been discharged and Hans at once applied for the place. He obtained it, and the old cabin was fitted up for his use. Hans never was happier than when walking the roof of his dwelling—his "quarter-deck," as he called it.

He had the privilege of picking up odd jobs on the river, and had been instrumental in saving many lives of unfortunate

women who had sought death in the muddy waters of the Thames. He brought them to his cabin, and his wife had led them over to a more cheerful way of thinking and procured them honest employment.

At nine o'clock of that evening as just recorded Hans was asleep. Waking up suddenly he said to his wife that he had a dream of a woman drowning and that there was no one to help her.

"It is only a dream," said his wife, "and it is too dangerous to go out on the river a night like this."

"Nevertheless, I feel that I must go," answered her husband. "I will pull up to Westminster Bridge and wait for an hour and then return. Come, Jack," he said to his dog, who was also a waif of the river; having found him one dark night, no doubt he had fallen over from some vessel. As the boat pushed off from the shore Jack took his place in the bow and kept a lookout.

It was not long before the boat was secured under the third arch of the bridge, and there awaited events. An hour had passed and the storm was about to break in all its fury. Hans concluded to return to his cabin. He had just unfastened the line when a scream was heard, and a splash by his own boat told the old story. A second later and he had caught hold of the garments of a woman. He hauled her in the boat when a second splash told of another unfortunate being. He reached over to take in the drowning form when, as he pulled it over the gunwale, he exclaimed, "A dog! Well, what next?"

Jack immediately came to offer his sympathy to his canine brother, while his master attended to the woman.

He found her conscious, and she said in answer to his inquiry: "I fell by accident, and if you will take me ashore I will pay you well."

It was Esther; truly she was a girl with a charmed life.

"I will take you to my home," said Hans; "but do not talk of pay. My wife will find you dry clothes."

A moment later and the boat was speeding down the river.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LOW GRADE.

IN the first division of this work it will be borne in mind that Miriam stated to her brother that if it were possible for them to exchange bodies, then the aim of her spirit would be to reach the highest pinnacle of fame. Never for one moment did she conceive that there might be an opposite course leading down to the lowest grade of human experience. We are now compelled to describe the gradual decline of Edgar till the low grade was reached.

It was May, 1875. Colonel Creedmore had left San Francisco and gone to Virginia City. There he could gamble without meeting those who had known him as the prosperous merchant. It was an evil day for him when he put foot in that mountain city of Nevada. He had left Etaline without letting her know where he proposed to go. He felt a pang of remorse every time he met her; there was such a depth of love manifested in her deep blue eyes. He was well aware that he had never made any adequate return for the many sacrifices and proofs of her devotion for himself. She was alone and friendless, and he was bound to stand by her at all hazards. It was not a manly thing to desert her now, when her money was gone and she needed some one to advise her so far away from her Virginian home.

A week after his arrival in Virginia City he received a letter from her, dated from Carson City, saying that she was on her way to persuade him to go back to Denver, where there were so many good openings for a man of his experience. He also had many friends in that city who would gladly assist him to recover what he had lost. She pointed out the fact that he had more than made up what he lost on his first visit to Denver. Then, again, his late two partners were collecting some of their debts. It was true that he had sold out his share to them, but they had declined to take any advantage of this sale.

She had just received a cheque from them for one thousand dollars as part of some collections, half of which was for him. More was to follow. They reported that they were doing very well. Sylvia had presented her husband with a boy, whom they had named Edgar Marcy Jenkins. Etaline intended to go to Cheyenne to meet them after she left Virginia City.

The item that pleased Edgar most in this letter was the information as to the cheque. Five hundred at this time would be of great benefit to him. He had won some money on the previous day and needed more to win a very large amount.

He met her on her arrival at the station and she gave him his share at once. He procured rooms for her with a very respectable family, and that evening he was in the gambling saloon. He never left it all night. The following morning when he did not come for her as by appointment she sought for him, and was told where he might be found. The lady with whom she was boarding was the wife of a superintendent of one of the mines. She went with her in the search and boldly entered the gambling house. To one unacquainted with such scenes it was an awful sight. At one of the tables Etaline saw the pale and haggard face of Edgar, his eyes bloodshot, and his whole manner full of the intense excitement that characterised all who were playing for heavy stakes.

He on his part did not look up to see who had come into the room. The only attraction for him then was the cards that were being dealt out by a man called "Bullet-headed Jim."

As long as Etaline had known Colonel Creedmore she never heard him use profane or vulgar language. What was her astonishment to hear him now use a fearful oath, and accuse the dealer of the cards of cheating. This was a serious affair. Instantly "Bully Jim," as he was more frequently called, drew his revolver, and covering Colonel Creedmore said with an oath :

"Apologise, or draw your shooting-irons."

Without a moment's hesitation Colonel Creedmore drew a heavy revolver, but before he could use it Bully Jim fired. The shot missed, and was returned by Edgar with a miss also. Instantly Etaline threw herself in front of him and received the second shot full in the breast.

There was a terrible commotion in the gambling saloon. A score of pistols were drawn and Bullet-headed Jim was pierced by a dozen shots, amid the cries :

"He shot a woman ; kill him !"

Edgar fired twice into the body of his antagonist. He then picked up the prostrate form of Etaline and carried her to her boarding place. A doctor who was called pronounced the wound fatal, and that she could not live beyond sundown. Colonel Creedmore was filled with remorse and deep anguish, and asked the dying girl what he could do for her :

"I ask but one request," said she, "and that is to die in your arms as your wife."

A minister of the Gospel was sent for, and he married them before witnesses who were weeping at the pathetic scene.

When Edgar stooped and kissed Etaline and called her "his darling wife," her face lit up at the supreme happiness which was felt at the consummation of the hopes of years of weary waiting. She was the wife at last of the man she loved; yes, worshipped with an almost idolatrous love. She must, however, leave him soon; but death had no terrors for her, for might she not be of more service to him in the other sphere in watching over him in all his wanderings. Rarely is such love found by man. We read of it, but seldom is it realised—unselfish, devoted, and faithful unto death.

Animals, as in the case of the dog Cæsar, very often show this constant devotion, but, alas! humanity is more selfish.

Six hours after the marriage Etaline passed away in the arms of her husband. What his feelings were can better be imagined than described. So without further comment we leave him with his conscience and degradation.

"Bully Jim" was dead, and the coroner's verdict was "died as the fool dieth, viz., by his own cussedness." This verdict was applauded by all as being the product of much wisdom. At sundown he was buried, attended by half-a-dozen old cronies.

The verdict in the case of Etaline was "died for the man she loved."

The following day the whole of Virginia City turned out to attend her funeral. Stalwart men wept who had not shed a tear for many a long day, when the minister spoke in touching language of her sad end in behalf of the man to whom she had been attached for so many years.

Tenderly she was laid away to rest in a grave on the highest point of the cemetery, and to-day the visitor can see her tomb from afar, a broken column of white marble, with only the words:

ETALINE.

"AFTER LIFE'S FITFUL FEVER
SHE SLEEPS WELL."

This monument was sent by her cousin Sylvia from Cheyenne.

For a full week after the death of his wife Edgar was plunged in the depths of despair. All motive for ambition was gone. But the bitterest cup was yet to be held to his lips. A committee waited upon him with the message that while there were no doubt many men in Virginia City far more wicked than himself, yet, as his wife lost her life in a gambling saloon

trying to save him in a quarrel of his own—in fact, brought on by himself—they must “draw the line” at this point. Therefore he would “consult his best interests” if he would leave the place within twenty-four hours, or sooner if possible. One of the committee quietly said that a man whom they once “advised” to leave had not taken the hint, and the next day his friends were put to the expense of his funeral. There was no mistaking this language, for these men were the members of the Vigilance Committee.

By sundown Colonel Creedmore had left the city far behind.

To what degradation had he fallen when he was not considered good enough for such a place as Virginia City in the year of grace 1875! It was only now that he realised how much he had truly loved Etaline. It was a moonlight night, and he was walking down the mountain side. He reached Silver City about ten o'clock, and put up at the small hotel. The following morning he took the train for Carson City, and thence for Salt Lake City. He had a draft for five hundred dollars which his wife had endorsed over to him before she died. Besides this he had about fifty dollars. All else had gone in gambling. Again and again he had asked himself the question: Why had he failed just at the critical moment in all the emergencies of his life in the last ten years? Bitterly he regretted the exchanged conditions of his life. A thousand times better he felt it would have been to have remained in his original body. As a girl a grand success might have been made of life and its opportunities. He wondered whether he could exchange back. He had not heard from England for some time, and he hoped the spirit of Milton was making a better record than he was doing. There was no such possibility of a failure so complete as in the present case.

Down-hearted and weary of life Edgar Creedmore reached Salt Lake City. He could form no plans for the future and saw no silver lining to the clouds that hung over him. He had trusted as a matter of course to a special Providence to take care of him and his interests without much effort on his own behalf, and was disposed to think that Providence had greatly neglected its part. Religious exercises had been but a trivial factor in his life in the last ten years. His experience of anthropology in the few brief moments of the exchange had given him a large fund to draw from, but he had exhausted it; in fact, drawn on all of it long ago, and had not in any way added to it. Now he was bankrupt, and could only drift and wait for developments.

It was an evil influence that had led him to Virginia City, and it was something of the same character that brought him to Salt Lake.

It is a well-known fact that misfortunes never come singly, but that one follows another in rapid succession. When Edgar arrived in the capital of Mormonism he found the inhabitants in a very excited condition, owing to the robbery of the stage-coach on the previous night between Salt Lake and Ogden, the station where the connections were made with the trains to the West and East. Wells, Fargo & Company had lost a large amount of specie in transit. An emigrant train had been robbed only a few days previously and two of the party murdered. This last outrage led to the formation of a Vigilance Committee. All strangers were closely scrutinised, and Colonel Creedmore was suspected at once. To ascertain his character a telegram was sent to Virginia City, and a response received that he had been forced to leave that place. He was staying at a hotel kept by a Mormon bishop, who had taken a strange liking to his guest and felt confident of his innocence, as he was not the kind of man to become a road agent. The bishop knew that it was useless to argue with a mob bent on finding a victim, and told Edgar it would be best for him to leave the city at once. But this was easier said than done. All avenues were closely guarded, and in an hour the vigilants would surround the hotel and demand their man. It happened that there was sojourning at the same hotel a prospecting miner, who was very ill and wished to sell his outfit, including a fine horse. The bishop advised Edgar to make this purchase, which could be had for two hundred dollars. The draft for five hundred dollars which Etaline had obtained from the bank of California, and endorsed over to him before she died, was as good as gold. He handed it out and received the difference in coin. The problem, however, was to get the horse and himself out of the city without observation. The Mormon bishop was equal to the occasion. He told his guest that he would send the horse away by one of his servants. It would be necessary for him to go out disguised as a woman. One of his wives would furnish him with a dress, cloak, and hood. As it was then dusk no trouble would be experienced in reaching the outskirts of the city, where the horse would be found waiting; then he had better ride for the mountains. Once there he would have to take his chance with the road agents who were on the watch for what they could find.

This programme was quickly carried out. Just as the vigilants had surrounded the hotel Edgar was mounted, and, bidding farewell to his escort with many thanks for the disguise, he rode rapidly up the mountain path. The sick miner whom he had seen for a few moments had told him that at a distance of twenty miles from the city limit he would come to a cross road, and by taking the left-hand one he would find a mile further on a deserted cabin in very good repair, with a shed for his horse and clear water from a mountain stream. Game was plentiful, and there was a new rifle and abundance of ammunition in the outfit. It was an hour before midnight when he reached the place designated. He was pleased to find it far better than he expected, and was soon fast asleep rolled up in his blanket. In the morning, after a careful survey of his surrounding, and finding—thanks to the forethought of the bishop and his wives—that he had a good supply of provisions, he felt that he could rest for a while in peace. It was the first time in several years that he offered a genuine prayer to his Maker for His bounties. There is nothing like deep adversity to bring a man to a realising sense of his total dependence on an over-ruling Providence. After all he was very fortunate in his escapes from great danger. If he had fallen into the hands of the vigilants it would have gone hard with him. He made up his mind to follow the dying advice of his wife to seek out his former partners and to remain with them. A few days of rest he felt would do him good and then he would go on his way.

CHAPTER XL.

THE CAMP OF ZISKA.

LONG before Hans could reach his cottage the storm burst upon him in all its fury. The rain came down in torrents and the lightning was fearful. Still the boat sped on and finally reached the landing of the shipyard. The noble-hearted boatman took the dripping form of Esther in his arms and carried her into the cheerful sitting-room, where his wife was anxiously waiting his return. It took but a few minutes to change the wet garments while Hans went out to secure his boat, and found that the dog he had rescued was unable to move. A

vivid flash of lightning revealed to the astonished Norwegian that the bottom of the boat was full of blood flowing from a deep gash in the side of the mastiff. Tenderly lifting the animal he carried him into the cottage, saying to his wife :

“Here is another patient.”

As soon as Esther saw her faithful Cæsar was wounded she gave utterance to a cry of agony, and, bending over his prostrate form, cried in heartbreaking tones :

“Oh, Cæsar, my faithful friend and protector, has the curse reached you? You have given your life to save your mistress.”

The dying mastiff made an effort to rise and then licked her hand. A moment later, with a look of intense devotion on his face, he uttered a groan and expired with his head resting in the arms of the girl he had served with all the fidelity of his dog nature. Esther knelt by the side of her faithful dead friend and wept as though her heart would break. Rising to her feet, and with her hand raised toward heaven, she exclaimed :

“Martin Nickley, when the hour of retribution comes there will be a bitter debt to pay for the life of this faithful dog.”

Jack now came forward and licked the face of the dead animal, and gave a long low whine as a requiem to the departed. Hans and his wife joined in the testimony of sympathy, knowing that there was some deep drama behind all this scene.

Esther was conducted to the “spare state-room,” as it was called, and retired to rest with a sad and heavy heart. The loss of Cæsar was a great blow to her and it made her feel very bitter towards Nickley. She slept very little during the night and the following morning was ill with fever, the result of the immersion in the river coupled with the excitement. She wrote a few lines to the gipsy queen, and asked Hans to take it in person and wait for an answer. At eleven o'clock she was surprised to see not only the sweet motherly face of Oslena but also the stalwart form of Ziska. It is needless to say that they were overjoyed at finding alive one that they were afraid had met a watery grave.

Ziska told her that he had been up all night, and had vainly followed the boat which he saw going down the river. He also told her of what had followed after she fell over the parapet.

Esther was puzzled to know how Ziska had found out where she had gone and how he managed to come up just in time to save her.

“It was all owing to that faithful old dog of yours,” was the answer.

"I arrived in England yesterday afternoon, and came up from Liverpool on the express train and reached the camp at half-past nine. My wife and myself went at once to your tent and called you. We found it empty and Cæsar sleeping at the door. When he found you were not in the tent he became frantic. He rushed around as though he had gone mad, and then went to some bushes and brought back some scraps of paper, which he laid at my feet. I put them together, and read the letter that Martin Nickley had sent asking you to meet him at Westminster Bridge. The carriage that brought me to the camp was still waiting. I took the dog and hurried to the appointed place of meeting, and was just in time to be of assistance. I am sorry that Cæsar did not take a good-sized piece of flesh out of that contemptible villain. By the way, how is that faithful animal? Nickley had a blood-stained knife in his hand when I knocked him down."

Tears filled Esther's eyes as she replied, "Faithful unto death, as it was always predicted that he would be. There he lies," and she pointed to a tarpaulin that covered the dog's remains in the corner of a sitting-room.

Ziska raised the covering, and tears came to his eyes as he saw the cold body of what had been one of the most affectionate dogs in England.

"He died a warrior," said the gipsy, "and he shall have a warrior's funeral."

He took a sovereign from his pocket and offered it to Hans to purchase a box to hold the body of the dog. Hans refused the money, saying that he had one that would suit but would not take pay for it, or for any hospitality to the fair lady, whom he would be glad to serve in any possible way. Esther was found to be too ill to risk removal at present, so it was decided that Oslena should watch over her and give her such medicine as was used in her tribe.

Cæsar's body was duly boxed, and as Ziska took it away his mistress's feelings could no longer be controlled. Wildly she wept and lamented for her noble mastiff. She thought of the school days at Beechwood and of the test of Cæsar between duty and gratitude. With unwearied sagacity he had watched her interests and saved her when she was almost abducted by Nickley at Arrochar.

Only yesterday, with almost human instinct, he had in his dumb way entered his protest against her going to meet the man who was her enemy and his. He had even watched her movements so that she should not go without him.

In vain Oslena tried to comfort her, and Mrs. Nelsola did her best to cheer up the weeping girl. At last, tired out, she fell asleep.

We must now go back to the movements of Martin Nickley. After parting from the gipsy chief he recrossed the bridge to send home his coachman who had brought Esther to the place. Then he retraced his steps and took a cab to his apartments. He was very much worried over the events of the evening. If Ziska failed to find Esther then he would be completely in the power of the gipsy, and probably have to pay a heavy blackmail for his silence.

The following evening he drove to the gipsy encampment, and without leaving his carriage sent his coachman to tell Ziska that he wished to see him. He fully expected to find him sullen in the extreme, and was amazed when the gipsy greeted him cordially and invited him to visit his tent, saying that no one would know of his presence in the camp. Nickley had not a particle of fear in his composition. He got out of his carriage and asked the question that was absorbing his nature.

“Ziska, have you found Esther?”

“I found the body of Cæsar,” was the reply. “It lies in yonder box, and for the sake of its mistress I propose to give it a decent burial to-morrow. The boat that we saw may have picked her up. I will search at all the landings, and have been hard at work to-day.”

This was what Nickley feared, and turning to the gipsy continued :

“Ziska, I will pay for all the costs of the search. Here is one hundred pounds, and do not spare expense in finding whether she was picked up.”

Ziska took the money with more satisfaction than he ever enjoyed over any other transaction in his past life. He resolved to use the funds for Esther's benefit. Before leaving Nickley said to the gipsy, looking him in the face with one of his cold, hard looks :

“Ziska, suppose you do not find that the girl has been saved, what then?”

The gipsy fully understood all that was implied in this remark.

“You would be liable to arrest for her murder,” answered Ziska coolly.

“That is a matter that rests between us,” said Nickley, “and we will discuss the terms at another time.”

The gipsy chief had all the shrewdness inherent in his race, but for the educated villain with gold and broad acres at his back he was no match. It was not a case of diamond cutting diamond by any means, but that of a diamond cutting tough glass, in which case the diamond wins every time.

The proud man of money, who stood unmoved and had no pity when the friendless gipsy was sentenced to five years' transportation on the false charge of highway robbery, was not such a fool as to expect that all this would be forgotten. Too well he knew that revenge is a strong passion in the gipsy character. The latter now held the winning card, and betrayed his exultant feeling in the flashing of his eyes. Gold and position were not proof against the charge of murder.

As Nickley was getting into his carriage he turned and took a valuable diamond ring off his finger, and taking the gipsy's hand said :

"Ziska, take this diamond as a token of my goodwill, and let the past be buried in oblivion. I hold no ill-will against you. Let me know the moment that you have found any trace of Esther—dead or alive. I will meet you at the third lamp-post on Westminster Bridge three nights hence at nine o'clock. For the present, farewell."

The next moment the carriage was driving rapidly away. Ziska never moved for some time. He was enjoying the triumph of his feelings. Looking at the glittering diamond by the light of the moon he remarked to himself :

"This is what the Americans call a 'Bonanza,' and I will work it for all it is worth."

The next morning he went to the boatman's cottage, and found that Esther was improving very fast under the careful nursing of his wife. He told them both of the events of the preceding evening, and showed them the ring that Nickley had given him. His wife said it was evident that Nickley was very much afraid of being denounced for the murder of Esther. The latter told him that even in gifts Martin Nickley was to be closely watched.

"Ziska, you will find him a deeper scoundrel than you imagine. He has deceived some very shrewd men. Be very careful in all your dealings with him."

"Never fear, Esther," was the confident answer. "I am more than a match for such a man as Martin Nickley."

On the third evening at the appointed hour Ziska was walking along Westminster Bridge from the Surrey end. As he reached the third lamp-post he found Nickley waiting for

him. This extreme punctuality seemed to the gipsy an indication of fear, and he was therefore inclined to be a little haughty to the man whom he thought he held in his power. This manifestation was quickly noticed by Nickley, whose greeting was very cordial. He then asked whether anything had been discovered of Esther.

"Several bodies of women have been found," was the answer; "and I heard this afternoon of one that was picked up several miles down the river who had golden-brown hair. I will investigate this case to-morrow and let you know the result."

"Ziska," said Nickley in a slow, measured tone, "I expect to leave for Dieppe by the midnight train and have only a few minutes for our business. In case you do not find Esther, what am I to pay you for your silence on all points regarding my dealings with her?"

"You know best what the value of my silence will be," was the answer.

"Well, suppose we compare the value of your silence and mine, and see which has the greater worth and who has the most at stake," said Nickley in a sneering tone that was irritating in the extreme.

"I do not see that I have anything to fear from the knowledge that you have of any action of mine," answered the gipsy haughtily.

"Oh, don't you? Then perhaps I may enlighten you, and after you read this advertisement which appeared in *The Times* yesterday you may place a very high value on my silence."

The gipsy took the slip that was handed to him and read as follows:

"The individual who robbed a gentleman several nights ago on Westminster Bridge, taking several Bank of England notes and a valuable diamond ring, will be liberally rewarded by returning the latter to the undersigned and no questions asked.

M. N., Victoria Chambers, W."

"I do not see that this advertisement concerns me in any way," said Ziska.

"Then you are duller than I gave you credit for," remarked Nickley. "Now let me explain. I was robbed here on this bridge on the night of the great storm. I lost one hundred pounds in marked Bank of England notes, and a valuable diamond ring worth one thousand pounds. Two days ago this identical ring was purchased from you by a pedlar for the sum of seventy-five pounds. You changed a hundred-pound note for him and gave five Bank of England notes, all of the

value of five pounds. These were part of the notes stolen from me. I bought this ring yesterday, and also have the notes and the sworn testimony of this pedlar. The penalty for robbery with violence is twenty years' penal servitude and fifty lashes. Is the value of my silence enhancing in your estimation?"

"Why, Martin Nickley, you gave me this ring and also the money, and I sold the ring because it was dangerous for a gipsy to carry a diamond ring about his person."

"What jury or judge will believe the story that I would give away a ring valued at one thousand pounds and also a large sum of money? Remember that you are still a ticket-of-leave man. You have not a single witness to prove that I gave you this ring. So much for the value of my silence. Now for yours. You think you can prove that I flung Esther over this bridge, and you have several pieces of a letter purporting to be written by me. Now I never wrote any letter, and the production of a forged piece of paper will add to your sentence five years more. If Esther's body is found then it will be evident that she committed suicide. She often threatened to do it. I have abundant proof of that. Now, then, my dear fellow, I have no ill-will against you and no idea of sending you away for twenty-five years, only I do not propose to be blackmailed."

"Here are fifty pounds in gold. This is all that I will give you till you send or bring me definite news about Esther. If she is dead I must see her body; if alive I must see her in person. Then I will give you one thousand pounds. Till then, good-bye."

The next moment Nickley walked away and got into his carriage, which was waiting for him under the shadow of England's great historic granite building. Ziska was dumb with amazement. He saw the full force of Nickley's argument. He was indeed in the power of that man. Grinding his teeth in rage, he said:

"Not for ten thousand times ten thousand pounds would I betray Esther to such a villain."

Slowly he wended his way back to his tent.

Ten days after Esther's rescue from the river she had recovered sufficiently to allow of her removal to the gipsy camp. The motherly Oslena had gone for a short visit, and Mrs. Nelsola had also gone out to purchase supplies. Esther was sitting before the fire when Hans came into the room, and standing before the girl said to her:

“Miss Esther, to-morrow you purpose to leave us. I would ask as a favour, if you think my services of any value, to let me kiss your hand. That to me will be a great boon.”

“Why, Hans, you dear good fellow,” she replied, “I consider that I owe you more than I ever can repay. I will kiss you if that will be any gratification.”

She rose to her feet, threw her white arms around his neck, and implanted a warm kiss upon his cheek. A wave of wild fire swept through the giant frame of the Norwegian. He clasped her in his arms and kissed her again, saying :

“Oh, Miss Esther, I would toil for a hundred years for such a kiss as that.”

Perhaps it was just as well for the peace of the household that Esther returned next day to the gipsy camp.

Her first errand was to visit the grave of her faithful Cæsar. Over it she shed tears, and hoped that a day of vengeance would come. She put on the full costume of a gipsy and became very popular as a fortune-teller.

Thus eighteen months of a pleasant roving life passed away. Not a word was heard from Martin Nickley. No more money was received from him by Ziska.

CHAPTER XLI.

ROAD AGENTS.

WE left Edgar in hiding upon the mountain that overlooks Salt Lake City. It is wonderful how a rest will recuperate the physical system. For six days the fugitive was undisturbed by his fellow men. Several wild beasts came to make social calls, but their reception was not of a nature to induce others to emulate the visit. The first that came was a bear, and Edgar thought so much of the caller that with a well-directed shot from his Spencer carbine he persuaded him to leave his skin behind as a mat for the door of the cabin. A wolf and a deer shared the same fate. The mountain stream abounded with fish, and as the miner's outfit had good tackle there was no trouble in getting a large supply.

In the early morning of the sixth day, while Edgar was engaged in getting his breakfast out of the brook, landing a number of fine fish, he noticed something sparkling in the

water. Reaching down he took up a handful of the sand and detected particles of gold mingled with it. Going back to his cabin he made ready a hasty breakfast, and set to work for a further search of the bed of the stream. The result of the day's work was gratifying. With his rude appliances he had washed out fully five ounces of gold. Visions of wealth filled his mind, and he thought how much better this was than gambling. He had promised Etaline on her deathbed never to enter a gambling saloon again.

Just as the sun was setting and he was preparing his evening meal he was very much surprised to see two mounted men ride up to his cabin and cover him with carbines, saying in the language of the mines: "Throw up your hands, partner, or we will fill your carcase with lead."

We omit the oath with which they accentuated this request.

One sterling quality of Colonel Creedmore was that he never lost his presence of mind. Looking quietly at the new comers, he replied:

"Just in time for supper, pards. I have not much to offer, but what I have you are welcome to partake of. You will find good pasture for your horses and plenty of water. So hurry up, and I will put on some more fish and an extra venison steak."

Without further word the invitation was accepted. A few moments later they were all seated at the rude table with appetites ready for anything that was set before them.

When the meal was finished they went out and sat down upon rustic seats in front of the cabin. The new comers were called respectively Jerry Smythe and Archie McDonald. They were very much puzzled to classify their host. He was not a regular miner. There was some mystery about him, however, that they were anxious to solve. One of them commenced:

"Say, partner, you look to me like a man who is down on his luck."

"Well, perhaps I am," was the reply. "In fact, I think I am very much so."

"Well now, partner, seeing as how you have treated us as white men, if we can help matters along just tell us where the pinch comes, and we will chip in and help you out."

"A thousand thanks," was the reply, "but my troubles are too deep for you to aid me at present. I suppose you, like myself, are waiting for something to turn up."

"Well yes, partner, we are just waiting for something to turn up. We do not mind telling you, seeing as how you are

white all over. The fact of the matter is we are road agents; that is, we borrow from those that can spare what we need."

"Perhaps, then," was Edgar's reply, "you know something about the robbery of the Wells, Fargo & Company's specie box, a few days ago, near Ogden."

"Well, partner, we did not have a hand in that affair, although we know who did have a say in it."

"I know who had to suffer," was the answer. "It was a close call for me, and but for the Mormon bishop that keeps the hotel in Main Street I would have been the recipient of a 'neck-tie sociable.' The vigilants surrounded the hotel, but I left in season, thanks to the disguise furnished me."

"Now, partner, that is what we call hard to suffer for the sins of other people. The men who put up that job on the stage coach were our two pards, Black Tom and Red Loomey. We have been waiting for them here for some days. We reckon they have been closely pressed, but they will turn up before long and you will find that they will do the square thing by you. Those two men are a team hard to beat. Black Tom is not a nigger by a jugful, but we call him by that name on account of his black beard, which makes him look savage and fierce. Red Loomey is a contrast, for his beard is fiery red. When those two pards stop a stage folks shell right out."

"Is this mountain, so near to Salt Lake City, a safe place to hide?" asked Edgar. "Are you not liable to be surrounded at a moment's notice?"

"Have to take our chances, pard. However, we will hear by morning from our two pards, and then we will move to other places. Never pays to work the same locality too much. How would you like to join us? You will find us white every time. We like you. Any man who can look down two rifle-barrels as you did this evening without being disturbed is just the man for a road agent."

"Many thanks for your kind offer," Edgar answered, "but I think I can offer you something better than your risky business. What say you to a share in a gold mine, where you can get more specie than you will find in the ordinary stage-coach, and no risk to run of vigilants?"

"Gold mine, did you say, pard? Well, just count us in, and here are our hands on it. Yes, I reckon you are about right, the vigilants are spoiling our business. But where is the mine, pard?"

Colonel Creedmore explained to his two visitors his good luck in the mountain stream, and assured them that there was plenty

for all. The sight of the five ounces of gold decided them, and they concluded that honesty would be the best policy for the present.

Just as they were preparing to go to bed a long low whistle was heard, followed by three quick blasts. Both Jerry and Archie jumped to their feet, exclaiming:

“Here come our partners. Listen for another signal.”

They answered by three shrill blasts on whistles which they pulled from their pockets. A long mournful blast was again heard from the stranger. This was followed by four quick notes.

The effect on the two road agents was electrical. They seized their rifles and got their revolvers ready, and said to their host:

“Say, pard, get your shooting irons ready. The vigilants are coming and they will treat you just as they will us—a short shrift and a long rope over the first tree that comes handy.”

The next moment a man rode up to the cabin, and jumped off covered with blood.

“Glad to see you, pards,” was his salutation.

“Where is Black Tom?” asked Archie, as Jerry took hold of the horse.

“Up spout,” was the reply of Red Loomey, for it was that celebrated individual. “I reckon by this time he has gone up the flume. Those vigilants do not waste time over road agents caught red-handed. Tom had the specie, and when his horse was shot he had not much chance, being found with the money on his person. I rode away for all I was worth.”

“Loomey was made welcome to the cabin, and his wounds, which were not serious, were bound up. He told his comrades that he and Tom had been surprised at daylight that morning as they were trying to reach the mountain. They had gone to the north of Ogden after taking the plunder from the stage coach and were laying low when surprised.

When Red Loomey heard of the experience of Edgar, and of the find of the gold dust, he proposed that the colonel should be made captain of their band in the place of Black Tom, who had undoubtedly been hung before this.

“What we need more than anything else at this present time,” said he, “is a man of some experience. The colonel has been through the war and is not afraid of gunpowder. Then, again, we must have a man who can control his temper, and that Black Tom could not do. He got awful mad yesterday when I proposed that we travel by night and not by daylight.”

This offer to be made captain of a band of road agents came to Edgar somewhat in the nature of a surprise. However, it was one of those situations in which he must secure control of the force of the tide or it would overwhelm him. Besides, he needed help at this moment to work the new gold find, and, by taking charge of their movements, these men might be led to a more honest mode of life; so, with the express proviso that they should render prompt obedience to all his orders, he consented. To this they agreed, and Colonel Creedmore was accepted as their chief. He first remarked to them that it would not pay to abandon their gold field, but that it was necessary to be prepared for the vigilants. He added that as their description had been widely advertised it would be necessary for them to remove their beards, and pass themselves off as Englishmen looking for investments. As there were many of this class in the West, and he himself was from England and had letters to that effect, there would be no difficulty in carrying out the programme.

An hour later no one would have recognised the three road agents in the smooth-faced, innocent-looking prospecting miners.

Colonel Creedmore told them that just after his failure in San Francisco he had met an Englishman named Sir Thomas Shannon, who received a number of letters from the English Government with the words on the envelope—"On Her Majesty's Service." One day, when making a call at the hotel of this gentleman, he found four of these empty envelopes in the waste basket, and had put them in his pocket. He had an uncle in England, Sir Thomas Shirley, and the suggestion had come to him that by a change in the name of Shannon to Shirley these envelopes might be of use. He now proposed to put them in a coat pocket and hang the coat up. Early next morning they were all to go out to the creek and set to work hunting for gold. If the vigilants came they would first examine the cottage, as that was on their road. The envelopes would probably save them from any annoyance.

At daylight this plan was put in operation. An hour later they were not at all surprised to see a band of twenty men ride up and surround the cabin. As Edgar and his men were at work in the creek they had not been seen at first by the vigilants. Red Loomey turned pale, and it was with difficulty that he could be assured that there was no danger if he kept cool. At heart the man was a coward. The self-possession of Colonel Creedmore had its effect on the others, and they all remained quietly at work. Five minutes later ten of the

strangers rode up. Pointing their rifles at the four miners working in the bed of the creek they told them to hold up their hands or they would be riddled with shot. Colonel Creedmore walked over to the leader, and with a rifle almost touching his breast quietly said, in a tone of indignant authority :

“To what are we indebted for this unwarranted intrusion? We are Englishmen prospecting on lawful claims. We are unarmed. If you are men of peace then allow us to go on with our work; if you are road agents you can help yourselves to what you can find, as you outnumber us. But rest assured that the law will overtake you.”

A thunderbolt could not have unnerved the man more thoroughly than this firm attitude of Edgar.

Before an answer could be made to this demand of Colonel Creedmore the other gang of men rode up, and the captain of the vigilants dismounting asked in a very deferential tone which was Sir Thomas Shirley?

“I am,” said Edgar advancing and holding out his hand.

“A thousand pardons, Sir Thomas, if we have disturbed you. But the fact of the matter is we have been looking for several road agents who we had reason to think were hiding in this mountain.”

“If you have any doubts,” was Edgar’s answer, “I can show you our passports.”

“Not necessary, my dear Sir Thomas. Have you found any gold?” was asked.

“Only a little so far; but with proper machinery a large amount can be obtained from this creek. We thought of going to Salt Lake City and organising a gold mining company.”

“Why not organise it at once?” asked the captain. “I am a banker of Salt Lake, and as I lost a large amount by the robbery of the Wells, Fargo Express, we went out in two parties to hunt down the robbers. We have several men of means in this company, and we can begin this business now.”

All the band dismounted, and examinations were made of the gold dust already found and of the bed of the creek. Excitement rose to fever heat. All efforts at hunting road agents was at an end. The sight of newly-discovered gold was too potent an agent to allow any other thought to occupy their minds.

Within two hours the company was organised, all the vigilants taking stock. It was to be known as the “Trout Creek Gold Mining Company.” Edgar declined the presidency, as he had to return to England, and the banker was chosen.

The terms were five thousand dollars cash to Edgar and his three assistants, and forty-five thousand dollars of the capital stock, all of which was to be sent to him in England. The banker handed the order for the stock over to Colonel Creedmore. He agreed to mail a draft for the five thousand dollars as soon as funds were collected from the shareholders. The latter then informed the members of the company that he had received urgent letters of recall from Her Majesty's Government. He had delayed his return as they were anxious to find out the value of this claim. He had purchased it from the original discoverer, who was too ill and too poor to do anything with it himself. Not a single one of the vigilants doubted this statement. Gold blinded their eyes, and the story was the only one of many of the same kind that had been fully authenticated.

At sundown Edgar and his three companions took their departure on the pretext that they wished to inspect another claim a hundred miles to the east. Riding some twenty miles they encamped for the night in a deserted cabin. The true natures of Red Loomey and his two companions were then exhibited. Gratitude to Edgar for having saved their lives was not once considered. They found fault with him for not demanding the gold for their share of the mine. Edgar explained that if he had done so it might have excited suspicion, and when the draft was cashed they would get what they were entitled to under their agreement. They would not listen to him, but accused him of trying to get the best of them. Fierce words followed, and Edgar finally declared that he would not have anything more to do with them. He unfastened his horse and mounted him. Immediately Red Loomey covered him with his revolver and ordered him to dismount and hand over all his cash.

Edgar knowing that he had dangerous men to deal with had his pistol already in his hand.

"Take your choice," was his quiet answer—"safety under my leadership, or the tender mercies of the vigilants. You know that there is another party hunting in this mountain. If they find you here you will be dead men in an hour. They will hang you as they no doubt did Black Tom."

A fearful oath was the reply. "We defy the vigilants. We want all your valuables, and then we will look after ourselves."

The next moment Red Loomey fired, more to frighten Edgar than to hurt him, but little did he imagine with whom he had to deal, for Edgar sent a bullet straight through the heart of

the brutal highwayman. Then putting spurs to his horse he rode away. The others were too astonished to give chase.

It was a starlight night and the road was in fair condition.

Two weeks later Edgar read in a paper that "a party of vigilants out on the mountains heard some firing, and on going to the place found two road agents with the dead body of a companion whom they were about to bury. The trial was short and simple, and the morning light discovered two men dangling from a tree with a placard on their breast, 'A warning to evil doers.'"

CHAPTER XLII.

DISCRIMINATION.

THE 1st of May, 1875, was in noted contrast to the weather that had been the lot of those living in England. The winter had been a hard and severe one, and the spring was backward. Almost without warning a summer day was ushered in, and the delighted Londoners, cooped up for so many months in the fogs and rains of their city, poured out in masses into the country to get a breath of pure ozone.

Ziska's camp was back in its old place, and the young maidens of the metropolis came in large numbers to know what the fates had in store for them. On the outskirts of the camp was a grove of trees, and seated on a rustic bench was a couple. The lady, while juvenile in appearance, was past thirty, and her companion was thirty-five. He had a certain jovial look about him that gave evidence of a fun-loving nature. Yet to a careful observer there was to be seen a firm-looking jaw that left the impression of a sternness of will, which made him a very unsafe man to trifle with. He was in undress naval uniform, and had evidently come to London from some ship-of-war for a brief visit. His fair companion had now taken off her hat and allowed the wind to blow her curly locks in waving masses. He now addressed her :

"Pauline," he said, "I have waited ten long years for your hand. I think it is about time that my patience was rewarded."

"Such patience is worthy of a better cause," answered the girl.

"No cause could be better than your love," was the gallant reply; "but you will admit that there is a limit to everything. Our ship is to be paid off in a few days, and I thought it would be a sensible thing for you and myself to go into commission and hoist our pennant for a voyage on the sea of life."

"Well Ned, who is to be captain of this craft, as you seafaring men would call it?" was asked in a playful way.

"Why you are, of course. I never knew a woman yet that did not take command at once. So, my dear Pauline, name the day."

"How would this day next year suit you?"

"Would not suit at all," was the emphatic answer. "When we were first engaged you told me you would not marry while your father was alive. Now that he has been dead a year I think that it is time to hoist the broad pennant of a commodore. Nothing less will suit you."

"I have an idea, my dear Ned. Let us go and have our fortune told by the handsome gipsy princess. Every one is talking about her marvellous power. She is called Elсора, and beautiful as the dream of an angel. She is now in the gipsy camp over yonder."

"All right," was the reply. "I also have heard some reports of her."

A few moments later the couple were ushered into the tent of Elсора. When they saw her they were both startled. Pauline sprang forward, saying:

"Oh, Esther darling, are you still alive?"

Ned, who was indeed Lieutenant Bentley, clasped her hand warmly, saying:

"I wonder if all this is not a dream! I have sought you so long and heard of your death so often that I can hardly credit my eyes now."

"I believe I am very much alive at present," answered Esther, "and more than delighted to see you both. I suppose you came to hear your fortune told. I can predict for you both a happy life."

"Esther darling, we would rather hear of your past fortune than anything else at present," said Pauline.

"Not much to tell that is very creditable, I assure you," was the reply. "However, I can tell you all that has happened since that awful day in the Strand ten years ago. How the time goes by, and how many changes have taken place since that event! Before I commence, however, let me offer you some refreshments, and then I will give orders not to be disturbed until I get through."

A bountiful lunch was spread in the tent, and after the things had been cleared away Esther told her hearers all her experience. Several times Lieutenant Bentley jumped up, saying: "Oh, that double-dyed villain! How I wish I had killed him that day five years ago when I flung him out of the club."

Pauline wept like a child at the recital of the wrongs of her schoolmate and repeatedly kissed her, saying:

"Surely this suffering is at an end now."

Little did that trio think of all that must be gone through before that happy consummation when it could be truly said, "It is finished."

It was five o'clock when Ned Bentley and Pauline arose to take their departure. In vain they had urged Esther to come with them and allow her relatives to bring a suit against Martin Nickley for his misdeeds. She would not listen to it; she could not face the gaze of the public in a court of justice, and have her life rehearsed in the newspapers. She was happy in her present sphere and enjoyed the roving existence.

She would be glad, however, she declared, to see them both at any time, and also to welcome Winifred and Elvira, both happily mated to her cousins. It was agreed between them that no one else should know of her whereabouts. An interview was arranged to take place in the present encampment on the following afternoon, and Ned was to be the escort.

Esther watched the receding forms of her two friends, and then, as she thought of what might have been, she wept with her heart almost breaking at the darkness of the cloud that for ten long weary years had obscured her life. She saw no way out of it with honour to herself. Life to her was not worth living without self-respect, and that had been lost long ago.

An hour after their departure Ziska came to her tent with his wife. When they saw her eyes red with weeping they asked whether any one had annoyed her in any way. She told them no; that it was only one of her spells, and would soon pass away. They both loved Esther, and Ziska would have killed any one who would dare to insult his "sweet Elsora," as he called her.

"I have some news for you," said the gipsy, "but will wait till morning before I tell you."

"I do not think that my curiosity would stand such a strain," said she. "If the news is good it will cheer me up; if bad then the sooner I hear it the quicker I will get over it."

“Well, my child, it is not good news, but bad. Who do you think is dead—died a week ago in childbirth?”

For a moment Esther pondered and then said Luella!

“Yes,” was the answer. “A French nurse brought a baby girl to Grassmere Manor two days ago. The earl does not know to this day who the count is that ran away with his daughter, and I doubt if Luella herself knew at the time of her death. The earl once drove me off his grounds and therefore owe him no goodwill, otherwise I would inform him.

It was indeed with a sad and heavy heart that Esther retired to her bed that night. Still she was cheered at the prospect of seeing her three best and warmest friends.

At three o'clock the next afternoon a carriage drove up to the gipsies' encampment. For the first time in ten years Winifred and Elvira were enabled to set their eyes upon Esther. Pauline also greeted her again enthusiastically. Lieutenant Bentley said that he would leave the women to themselves while he went for a drive.

The two cousins, as well as Pauline, came with the full determination of persuading Esther to return with them, and they felt that there would be no difficulty in doing so.

When the subject was introduced Esther with tears in her eyes told them that there were too many barriers in the way. Till they were removed nothing would induce her to enter into the houses of her kindred.

When asked to tell what they were, she replied that the chief one was the distinction which the world would make between her misfortunes and the crimes of her persecutor, Martin Nickley. During her past life she had not willingly done any wrong or violated the law of the land. Nickley's whole career from boyhood was one long list of falsehoods and outrageous actions. In spite of all this he could enter into all classes of society, and no one professed to be contaminated by associating with him. But she would be spurned because this man had by force kept her a close prisoner for five years as his mistress. The iron prejudices of society were too strong for her to overcome. The cruel words uttered against her by some of her relatives could never be forgotten. She was bound fast by the mere fact of her sex, and must patiently wait for a vindication that probably would never come in this world. She was not able to fight this injustice single handed. But till she could stand before all her kindred and the world at large without a shadow on her fair name, it was better for her to live in her present obscurity and poverty. Nothing would induce her to

falter in the resolution taken years ago, not to use any funds of her family till her reputation was cleared. In her present mode of existence she was as happy as could be expected. All of the tribe were exceedingly kind to her. She had not entered a church for ten years, for the injustice against which she protested was just as strong in religious circles as in those of the outside world. When it came her turn to die she would render back her spirit to her Creator, and trust for that mercy and forgiveness that were denied her here.

Pauline and her two companions felt the full force of this logic. They knew too well that the lines of this discrimination were being more tightly drawn instead of there being any weakening or mitigation of their severity.

By the unwritten law of society a woman's mistakes were treated as crimes. A man's culpable actions with women were simply follies. This unjust distinction sends thousands of confiding girls every year to a suicide's grave, while their wrong-doer is unchallenged and at full liberty to seek fresh victims for his gratification. Parents know this fact too well, but a false modesty deters them from warning their daughters.

At five o'clock Lieutenant Bentley returned. Little did Elvira and Winifred think as they parted from Esther that when next they should see her a change would have taken place, deep and mysterious in its influence upon her career—a change that perhaps some readers may not understand.

Esther watched the receding carriage till it was out of sight. When turning away she was surprised to see a handsome barouche stop before her. Martin Nickley stepped from it and called her. The next moment Ziska, who had been watching her, came up, and with anger and contempt on his swarthy face stood beside her to protect her. Nickley was not a man to waste time in any surprise, but came to the point at once. When angry his language was not choice.

"You double-dyed villain! Why did you deceive me in regard to that girl? You gave me to understand that she was dead," were his words.

"I did not deceive you," was the gipsy's reply. "You must have been a fool if you thought for one moment that I would deliver this girl up to you again after she had escaped with her life!"

"All right, my worthy gipsy. That charge of highway robbery stands good, and we will see if twenty years' transportation will not cool your ardour."

The next moment Nickley was driving away furiously.

Ziska knew too well that he stood no chance against this charge. The fact that he was a gipsy would tend to his conviction on evidence much less positive than Nickley could produce. Prompt action was necessary, and it was taken.

An hour later the gipsy camp was broken up and scattered. Ziska and Esther made their way to Antwerp, where they arrived the following morning without incident. Esther was placed in a boarding-house, while Ziska told her it was necessary he should hide till the search for him at the instance of Nickley should be over. Then he would see her again.

One evening a month later, as Esther was walking along the Esplanade, she was both surprised and delighted to meet Lieutenant Bentley and Pauline. They were on their honeymoon. When they heard of her experience since they last met they were both very indignant.

"Oh, Esther," said Lieutenant Bentley, "why will you not let me have this deep-dyed villain arrested at once and thus end all this agony?"

"It would be of no use," was the reply. "His gold is too powerful. Let him alone and he will yet come to grief."

Esther told her two friends that she was seeking a situation as a governess, but had no recommendation.

The following day they procured a place for her with an English family residing in Antwerp. A few days later Pauline and her husband left on their tour.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GREY CLOUD.

THREE weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter of Edgar's life he rode into Paradise Gate mining camp. On his way he had written to his uncle in England and asked him to endorse the draft over to him, and to keep the certificates of stock when they were sent from Salt Lake City. He told him that at some other time he would explain why he had had the draft made out in his name. It was partly owing to his recent failure in San Francisco. The answer he desired to be sent to him at Denver. This letter had been posted from a station on the Union Pacific Railway.

At Paradise Gate he had expected to hear something of his late partners. He was very much disappointed on his arrival to find that no one had heard of them for several months. His reception was encouraging. He found remunerative employment at once, and everything pointed to a period of rest and quiet. After his late experience he was in hopes that the tide of evil fortune was about to turn, and that prosperous times would again come to him. The five thousand dollars, when it should come back from England, would afford the means of a good beginning in business. Had the three road agents acted justly he would have divided this money with them. Their death left him the rightful owner of all. The ownership of the mine was his by discovery, and his offer to them was a gratuity which they did not appreciate. They had lost their lives solely through their own criminal conduct. Red Loomey was a scoundrel to the backbone, and Edgar was not surprised at what he did; but Archie was a Scotchman, and as for Jerry Smythe he was a weak man and easily led. Edgar regretted to take human life, but when his own was in the balance it caused no compunctions of conscience to kill anyone who tried to murder him. So he dismissed the matter.

Six months of quiet life passed at the mining camp of Paradise Gate. Not a word had been heard from Sir Thomas Shirley. Edgar had written to Denver, directing all his letters to be forwarded to him at his present residence. It was in the latter part of November that the harmony of his life was again disturbed by an incident that resulted from loss of temper. Edgar attempted to draw a fine point in reference to his promise to Etaline when dying that he would not enter a gambling saloon for the purpose of risking his money on games of chance. The passion had taken a deep hold of him and it was a terrible temptation to resist. At last he began to analyse the promise, and to debate with himself what was implied by the term "gambling saloon." In old-fashioned phraseology he was "beating the devil about the bush." After much reflection Edgar came to the conclusion that a few innocent games of chance in his rooms did not constitute gambling in the strict sense of the word. Then, again, he reasoned his apartments were not devoted to gambling, therefore in thus amusing himself and his friends he would not be violating his sacred promise.

As already remarked, a little incident arose which rapidly developed into an important factor of his life.

A few friends were gathered in his rooms, and a game of euchre was played for one dollar a stake from each player. Liquor was passed around and all partook freely of it. A dispute finally arose about the game, when one of the party, excited by whiskey, drew his revolver and threatened to shoot the first man who challenged his word. In a moment of excitement Edgar drew his pistol, and covering the half-drunken miner said with an oath to emphasise his words :

“Put up that shooting iron or I will serve you as I served Red Loomey and one or two others I might mention.”

No sooner were these words uttered than the imprudence of them was apparent. He would have given much to have recalled them.

One of the men in the room who heard this remark was Ellis Ringworth, a native of the State of New York. His reputation was not of the best ; in fact, he was suspected of knowing something of several robberies that had taken place in the neighbourhood of the camp. His eyes were black, keen, and penetrating. He quietly fixed his gaze on Edgar for a few minutes to see whether the boast he had made was only bravado. How Red Loomey met his death was a mystery in Paradise Gate Camp, where he had been well known. That he was killed by his two companions was not believed by the miners. The report had reached them from the vigilants who had hanged Jerry and Archie that the two men made a statement, saying they had elected a certain Colonel Croyden as their captain, and he had shot Red Loomey in a quarrel. This was the name that Edgar had given to the road agents.

When Ellis heard Colonel Creedmore say that he had shot Red Loomey, and compared the similarity of the two names of Croyden and Creedmore, he quietly went out and looking up some of his friends told them the facts of the case, and proposed to them to demand from the Englishman a retraction of his boast, or an avowal that he really did the shooting. Edgar was not aware that the three road agents belonged to a secret society called “The Free Lances.” They were sworn to avenge the death of any of their number who died without having fair play. As far as they could find out Red Loomey was murdered, and they had long sought to discover by whom the fatal shot was fired. Although there were many friends of Loomey in Paradise Gate, there were also a number of miners who rejoiced at his death.

Inside of an hour the boast of Colonel Creedmore was known throughout the whole camp. Several of his friends came

at once and urged him to leave without delay. The Free Lances were powerful and vindictive, they told him, and it was their usual custom to hang a suspected enemy first and try his case afterwards. In the present instance there would not be very much ceremony. He had declared publicly that he had shot one of their number. Edgar required no urging. He was soon mounted and riding away in the darkness of the night. This, however, was exactly what Ellis Ringworth expected, and it suited him better that vengeance should be taken outside of the camp than within its limits.

A miner named Sergeant Grimes was amongst Edgar's friends. He had served a number of years in the regular army, and also through the war. Colonel Creedmore had rendered him a service at the battle of Antietam, when he lay wounded on the field. Grimes had never forgotten it. Being aware that the Free Lances would have spies watching the colonel he resolved to outwit them. The two exchanged horses, Edgar receiving a dark bay for his light-grey one. Sergeant Grimes mounted and took the road used by the stage coach, while Colonel Creedmore went directly towards the mountain. In half an hour the sergeant heard the tramping of pursuing horses. He knew that Ringworth had the fleetest horse in Paradise Camp, and therefore was not surprised when he perceived that one of the horses was gaining on him. An hour afterwards a horseman rode up to him, and pointing a revolver to his head ordered him to halt. Grimes reined in his animal and recognised Ringworth. He covered him with a pair of army Colt's revolvers, and demanded what he wanted. Ellis was furious when he found that it was not the man whom he was after. With an oath he demanded to know why the sergeant was riding so furiously at that time of night.

"Going to send a telegram from the railroad station," was the answer. "My wife is ill and I am anxious about her. But what are you doing chasing a strange horseman at midnight?"

"Why are you riding Colonel Creedmore's horse?" asked Ellis.

"I borrowed it; mine was lame. Why don't you answer my question?" demanded Grimes.

"We are hunting for road agents," was the reply of Ringworth, as he rode away.

The sergeant resumed his journey to the station, distant about twelve miles from the camp. As it was a common thing for the miners to go to the telegraph office at all hours of the day and night Grimes' statement was accepted without a doubt.

as to the truth of it. The Free Lances rode back to the camp believing that their spies had mistaken the grey horse with the sergeant on it for the colonel's.

We must now follow the latter, who had made his escape without being seen by anyone. Five miles out he found himself in an Indian encampment. Immediately he was surrounded by a number of Indians and was made a prisoner. He began to fear that he had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. Asking the name of their tribe and who was their chief, he was told that Grey Cloud was the head man. Turning to a young man at his side he said in the Indian dialect :

“Go tell the great war chief that his pale-faced brother, Colonel Creedmore, will accept of his hospitality.”

In an instant a dozen hands were extended. They bade him welcome to their camp, and apologised for his rough reception.

A moment later and Grey Cloud came. He grasped both of Edgar's hands and said to him :

“My pale-faced brother honours the Indian chief by coming to his camp.”

Edgar went to Grey Cloud's tent. Here he told him the reason of his late visit, and asked his advice as to the best way of reaching Denver.

“It was very fortunate that you came into my encampment, otherwise you would have found it very hard to have escaped the Free Lances,” was the reply of the Indian chief. “I am glad, however, of the opportunity to repay your kindness extended to me ten years ago on the plains. In the first place I would advise you to send back Grimes' horse, as he may incur the vengeance of your enemies. One of my young men will take him back and let him loose near Paradise Gate camp. The horse will find his way to his stable. It will be necessary for you to disguise yourself as one of our number. I can get you to the railway station when the excitement has died out.”

The next day no one would have recognised Edgar with his face stained and a blanket thrown around him. The members of the tribe were all intensely amused at the disguise. He was one of the few white men whose names were held sacred. His action in saving the life of their chief ten years previously had never been forgotten. Edgar spent three months with Grey Cloud as his guest, and then took his departure not without reluctance for Denver. Before going he sent word to Sergeant Grimes that he was safe. He received for his answer the information that Ellis Ringworth had accused

several miners of helping the Englishman to escape, that one of them had resented the imputation and had shot Ellis dead. A vigilance committee had also been organised, and the whole band of Free Lances were ordered to leave Paradise Gate mining camp with the assurance that if they ever returned they would be lynched. Colonel Creedmore was safe in coming back if he wanted. He was anxious, however, to reach Denver, for he wished to find out what had become of the long-expected letter from his uncle.

It was the 1st of March, 1877, when Colonel Creedmore once more set foot in Denver. When he left it he had over a quarter of a million dollars; now he had but two hundred.

On the following day he obtained the lost letter from his uncle. It had been sent to a friend of his, and was accidentally mixed up with other papers. The draft was at once endorsed, and on presentation the amount was promptly paid. It was blood money. It cost a human life to hold it, and now brought with it a curse.

Edgar spent a year in Denver, trying first one thing and then another. Fortune frowned on him. His money was all spent, and he was sick. He wrote to his uncle in New York for assistance and waited for the result.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CONVENT GATE.

IN the year 1876, in the month of June, on the eve of the anniversary of Waterloo, a large number of tourists, mostly English, assembled in the capital of Belgium to witness the *fêtes*. They had been widely advertised, ostensibly to commemorate the great victory that gave peace to Europe. The real object was to attract strangers to Brussels. The shopkeepers and others would thus be benefited by the influx of a large floating population. Among those that came was the family with whom Esther was employed as governess.

A strange desire that she could not account for came over her to visit the Lion Mount on the field of the great historic battle. She longed to stand on the spot where her late husband

had given his life in her behalf. She went thither alone. As she stood by the mount the old love for Edmond Harold came over her with overwhelming power. She wept as she had never done before in all her life. At that moment the impression came upon her that she had wronged him by suspecting his fidelity. An intense longing seized her to throw off the bonds that bound her to this life so that in the other existence she might find her husband. In her bitterness of soul she cried: "O Harold! can you ever forgive me?"

No answer came to her exclamations of vain regret. Passing sightseers wondered that a young woman should be weeping at that spot. It could not be for any friend or near relative slain so many years ago.

Reluctantly she went to the railway station and returned to Brussels.

By what irony of fate was it that the first person she saw at the station was the now doubly-hateful form of Martin Nickley?

With that cool audacity for which he was characterised he came up, and taking her hand as though he had parted from her but yesterday he asked:

"How are you feeling to-day, Esther? Glad to see you in this gay capital. When did you leave Scotland?"

There was a quiet gleam of triumph in his eye. He determined at once that the girl he had sought so long and who had evaded his search should not again escape.

"I have not been in Scotland for the last ten years," said she.

"Why, how is that? After you left that vile gipsy camp last year I received letters from several women saying that if I would go to Edinburgh I would find you. I spent several months in a wild goose chase, and still these letters kept coming saying that you were first in one place and then in another in Scotland."

Esther smiled at this information. No doubt dear Pauline had caused the letters to be sent to give her a chance to live in peace and quietness. She must get away from this man at all hazards. She perceived herself fast coming under the influence of his hypnotic power, and decided never to let him have the mastery which he had possessed in the past. He had many resources at his command and no scruples to employ them. He was very gentle in his manner and talked with all the courtesy of a Chesterfield.

"I suppose you have heard all about Ziska," he continued. "He sailed for America to escape from the charge of highway

robbery. No doubt he told you that I gave him the diamond ring and a hundred pounds. How that gipsy could lie! In fact, the race make their living by lying. Now, my dear Esther, I wish you to come back with me to England. I need your services very much indeed. You can aid me in a little matter; nothing wrong, I assure you. You know that I am liberal in money matters. I will have a thousand pounds deposited to your credit in bank, and you can have it as soon as you sign certain papers. Then, if you would like to go to America or Australia, I will allow you twelve hundred pounds a year for life."

Esther's face flushed with anger at this proposal. She had at this time twenty thousand pounds at her command in the bank from her father's estate, and the paltry offer now made to her showed that she was held by this man at a low value, like a degraded outcast.

They were passing a large building at the time, and over the portal Esther read the words: "The Convent of the Magdalene." At the massive door two nuns were talking. The impulse came over her to seek the protection of this asylum. Before Nickley could prevent her she ran to them and in French asked for protection. The door was immediately opened wide and one of the sisters took her in charge. The other was the Mother Superior. The surprised Englishman demanded his wife, declaring that Esther was of unsound mind and that he was taking her to England for treatment.

"Madam," he said, "you must not believe what she tells you."

The good Mother Superior was a woman of large experience. The pretext of insanity had been tried very often by persons wishing to get possession of young girls who had come to this institution. She was also a keen judge of character. One quick look at Esther's face and a close scrutiny of the man before her convinced her that he was a bad man, and she at once determined that the girl should have protection at her hands.

Martin Nickley tried to force his way in, but was confronted by the quiet, dignified form of the sister, who said to him:

"Monsieur, I trust that you are a gentleman. If you are not I have but to press this little button and in answer to my summons the gendarmes will quickly respond. If you are brought before the Commissary of Police on the charge of attempting to force your way into this sacred asylum it will fare very hard with you."

The truth of this remark was too evident. The baffled Englishman turned away, saying:

"All right. I will seek the assistance of the Commissary of Police myself to regain the person of my wife."

Martin Nickley was now thoroughly aroused and resolved to obtain the control of Esther at all hazards. He went at once to an "advocate" with whom he was acquainted and gave him a heavy retaining fee. As the hour was late and the whole city engaged in the *fête* it was thought best to wait till the next day. The following morning an order was served on the Mother Superior to bring the young English lady into court. An answer was returned that she was very ill in bed. Another order was then served forbidding her departure from the city till her case had been examined by the magistrate.

Nickley spent his money freely, and his story created quite an excitement among the English residents. It was declared by them an outrage to prevent a man from seeing his wife who was suffering from dementia, as it was called. The English consul took the matter up. When the British Lion wagged his tail and gave an ominous growl it was a serious affair. Something had to be done and that at once. The next day Esther was represented as very seriously ill from nervous prostration. Twenty hours later she was reported dead.

Nickley would not accept this report unless he could see her dead body. He was accordingly shown into a dimly-lighted room, where he beheld the dead form of a girl laid out in her coffin. Around her forehead was a white cloth, and trailing under it was a quantity of the well-known golden brown hair. A small plait of hair was given to Nickley. As he approached the coffin to make sure that the occupant was not only dead but actually Esther herself, the Mother Superior took a locket from the body, saying:

"Monsieur, this locket was found on the person of your wife. The picture is the likeness of a young man. I suppose it is her brother. She wished it to be buried with her. Shall we do so?"

Without the slightest suspicion Nickley opened the locket. A look of horror came over his countenance. The face of Edmond Harold was painted on the ivory—the man whom he murdered in this very city ten years before! It is true the law called the occurrence a duel, but nevertheless it was clearly murder. Great drops of perspiration stood on the forehead of the now trembling man. Handing back the locket to the Mother Superior he said:

"I am satisfied. I will give you a thousand francs for her interment and another thousand for charity."

“Then, with a bowed and humbled head, Nickley went out from the chamber of death, with the sting of remorse making itself felt for the first time in many years. In his way he had loved Esther, and now that he supposed her dead he mourned for her. He left for England that very day.

The announcement of Esther's death was duly published in a number of English and Scotch papers. She was mentioned as the Countess of Montville, daughter of the late Admiral Creedmore, of Everdale Manor.

Nickley, as the Count Morella, now made frequent visits to Grassmere Manor. Presently he offered his hand to the Lady Martha. She could not make up her mind to accept him, and the courtship went on.

Esther had told her story to the Mother Superior. The duel of her late husband, the earl, had been the talk of Brussels at the time of its occurrence, and it had not been forgotten. Her statement was believed. The English consul, however, had made such a stir about her case that nothing could save her from being given up to Nickley as her husband. It was found necessary, therefore, to set afloat the rumour of her death. A young girl had just died in the institution. Esther's hair was cut off and part of it placed on the head of the corpse. The locket did the rest. It was now imperative for her to change her name; she accordingly took that of Madeline Montana, the name of the girl whose body had passed as her own. This girl had been a nursemaid who had loved and been betrayed.

The sisters of the convent decided that Esther for her own safety should take the same position in life as her namesake, and a place was found for her as child's nurse with a French family that spent a good deal of time travelling. Not one of her friends could have recognised her when she left the convent. Her beautiful hair had been cut short, and now, dressed in plain costume with white apron and cap, she was a typical French nursemaid. As she spoke French fluently no one suspected who she was. Her face was very youthful.

Esther spent two years in this employment. She was not happy—far from it. She had to endure the fierce jealousy of her mistress, made more intense by the constant worrying of the mother-in-law. This woman held the purse strings. She had perceived that her son was in love with Madeline, and did not suppose that any girl could help being in love with him. She was not far from the truth so far as her son was concerned, but Esther had been a perfect model of decorum. While she was respectful she gave no encouragement to her young master.

This only increased his ardour. She would have left the employment but for the fact that she had given her sacred promise to the Mother Superior of the Convent of the Magdalene that she would remain with this family for at least two years.

In July, 1878, she left them in Antwerp and sought for other employment. Her late mistress gave her a bad name, and she could not find any family that would accept her without a character.

On the 24th of August her money was almost gone ; she had only enough to buy a ticket for a deck passage to London, and on arriving there had just ten shillings left. What could she do ? Her friends all thought her dead, and perhaps it was better that they should. She tried to find Ziska's camp, for Oslena would give her a home, but no one knew where they had gone. Thus we leave her for the present, alone and friendless in London.

CHAPTER XLV.

UNDER THE LION'S PAW.

ON a cold, bleak day in February, 1878, Edgar was sick in bed at a boarding house in Denver. He had failed in all his enterprises, and was now waiting, "Micawber-like," for "something to turn up." To his surprise it did. A card was sent to his room. He read the words, "Margaret Richardson, New York." A gold find would not have caused more excitement than this well-remembered name. Sick as he felt he arose at once, and hastily dressing went down and greeted his cousin affectionately. Margaret had come prepared to lecture him for not returning to New York years before. The sight of the pale and haggard face prevented this and enlisted all her sympathy at once. She had cause to feel very sore at the treatment from him. If she had suffered so had he. She now spoke to him in tones of affection, telling him that she was going to take him back with her to New York. His old servant, Henry Winston, was with her, having remained in her father's employ all these years.

Edgar made no objections to returning with his cousin. He was heartily sick of the West. His uncle was very old and had withdrawn from business, and Margaret devoted her life to his welfare.

It was a treat for the sick man to see the genial face of Henry once more. A week later they all left Denver and arrived in New York without incident. Uncle Richardson was not so hearty and genial in his welcome to his nephew as his daughter had been. He had heard many stories that never came to Margaret's ears. The rumours that had come to New York had been magnified and enlarged; mole hills had developed into mountains. This is usually the case. The white-haired old man shuddered as he took the hand of his returning kinsman. That hand was stained with blood. Indeed, but for his daughter Edgar would never have come again to his house.

The worthy old Quaker was not inclined to emulate the father of the prodigal, as recorded in the parable. No fatted calf was killed. No friends were invited to welcome the wanderer and make merry over his return. He gave his nephew shelter and his daughter supplied money.

The day after Edgar's arrival his uncle inquired of him coldly whether he had lost all his funds, and what prospect there was of a dividend from any of his Western claims. Ten years ago he would have freely given him without a question half of his business. Now even the shelter was afforded to him for only a short period. This was quietly intimated by the following questions:

"Edgar," the uncle asked, "hast thou formed any plans for the future? How dost thou expect to make a living, and where wilt thou abide? Hast thou had enough of the West?"

"I have plenty of claims in mines that will materialise into something more tangible than air castles one of these days. I have never been a burden to any one of my friends and do not propose to become so now. Colonel Derwent will find me a good position in Kentucky, so will Colonel Moorehead in Boston."

"If thou hadst not gone to Kentucky thirteen years ago thou might have been to-day a very rich man."

"That is a mooted question, uncle. Perhaps I can do better if I go a second time. I will write to Colonel Derwent to-day."

"I can do better for thee than that Southerner," answered the uncle with a more kindly tone. He heartily disliked

Colonel Derwent. He blamed him for taking his nephew away from New York. But for him Edgar might have been his son-in-law and at the head of his late business.

The mention of the name of the Kentuckian was a shrewd move on Edgar's part. It was like a red flag to a bull. The effect was apparent the next day, when his uncle handed him a cheque for a thousand dollars, and told him to get what he needed in the way of a wardrobe and to consider his house his home.

Fickle fortune seemed to have once more smiled on Edgar. If the recipient had only been equal to the occasion doubtless the lost thousands would have been regained.

A month after his return to New York he was surprised to get a letter from his late partners in Deadwood enclosing a draft for one thousand dollars as part of a collection which they had made, and giving the information that they had a very valuable mine which they were now working. If Colonel Creedmore would only join them a million could be made. This was not an idle day dream, as the sequel will show. He had enough of the West and the offer was declined. If he had gone and joined Bill Jenkins and honest, hardworking Marcy Graston he would have avoided bitter sufferings. The fates willed otherwise, however, and the climax was thus hastened.

The letter did him more harm than good. Legally he had no claim on his late partners. He had sold them all his rights. They declined, however, to consider it a fair transaction, and regarded him as a partner. As the husband of Etaline they sent him her share. His cousin Margaret had full charge of all her father's financial affairs and supplied him liberally with money.

The quiet home life at his uncle's did not suit him. He craved for excitement, and found relief in visiting some of the gambling saloons of New York. He had promised his dying wife not to risk his money on games of chance in gambling saloons, and that he would abstain from taking any part therein. The very fact that the loving, trusting Etaline had lost her life in visiting such a place ought to have been sufficient to keep him away. Edgar meant to keep his promise inviolate. He felt confident that he had strength of will that would carry him through all temptations.

When any man, however, deliberately places himself in the way of temptation, trusting in his own power to keep from him from falling, he has taken his fate, so to speak, out of the hands of Providence into his own. Sooner or later he will be sure to

surrender. It is, therefore, no matter for surprise that in three months after Edgar's arrival in New York he had become a confirmed gambler. He lost money day by day. He wrote to his partners at Deadwood to send him what they could spare. This they did, sending no less than three thousand dollars. He also borrowed a large sum from his trusting cousin. He told her that he had entered into a speculation and hoped to make a very large amount. He had resolved to stop gambling the moment he got back the amount he had already lost. The final result is not hard to conjecture. The meshes of his fate were gradually drawing about him and the crisis in his career was not far off.

In July Mr. Richardson and his daughter took a cottage at Long Branch for the season. Edgar, of course, went with them. He was not long in finding out the gilded palace where so many fortunes have been lost. The place was "high-toned," and stakes were large. It was no place for a poor man; we might add it was no place for any man. The early part of August was the racing season, and Long Branch was crowded. Of course many who thronged the racecourse in the daytime filled the gambling saloon at night. Edgar had reached the uttermost limit of his finances, and could only look on and see others win and gain. Miss Richardson had learned what her English cousin was doing with his money, and her allowances to him were curtailed accordingly.

On the 10th of the month Edgar, flushed with wine, forged a cheque upon his uncle's bank and signed his name to it. Meeting a friend who had come to the races he asked him to advance the money. As he was known to be the nephew of the rich quaker the money was paid at once. Edgar went to one of the tables and placed down a hundred dollar bill. In a moment it was lost. Another shared the same fate. Going to another table he tried his luck again with the same result. Within half an hour he lost five hundred dollars more. The remaining three hundred was his last chance. He tried another table, and in order to shorten the agony he put down all that he had. Fortune smiled on him, for in an hour he had won two thousand dollars. He hastened to find the man to whom he had given the forged cheque; he searched among the hotels but in vain. At nine o'clock at night he returned to his uncle's cottage and found only his cousin up; her father had retired. Margaret had remained to plead with him. He listened to all she had to say without a word of comment, for his heart was full of foreboding. At last she said :

"Edgar, my father said to me to-day that it would be best if you can find another place to board, as you ——"

Here she hesitated, and her cousin finished the sentence: "I have worn out my welcome."

His cousin made no reply. Her heart was heavy. She had built many air castles upon him, and they had all fallen to the ground. She arose and asked:

"Is anything wrong in your affairs? Here are two letters and two telegrams, and my father received one this afternoon from the Chief of Police in New York asking where you could be found."

Edgar hastily tore open the letters. One was from Colonel Derwent saying that he had just received word from Denver that one of Pinkerton's men had a warrant out for the arrest of Colonel Creedmore on the charge of murder and forgery. It was charged that he had killed a man called "Red Loomey," and also that he was the chief of the band of road agents that had robbed the mail coach between Ogden and Salt Lake City. The telegram was also from the colonel. It contained the information that he would be in Long Branch on Monday morning. The other letter and telegram were from Sergeant Grimes. The Free Lances had once more gained control at Paradise Camp, it was stated. The sergeant had accordingly returned to the army, and had now been sent to take charge of a recruiting station in New York City. He had been informed by a friend at Paradise Camp that an effort would be made to arrest Colonel Creedmore for killing Red Loomey, and bring him back for trial. It was arranged that a band of Free Lances would lynch the colonel as soon as he arrived. The telegram informed him that a detective was then in New York looking for him, and warned him to be on his guard.

Edgar said nothing to his cousin about the contents of these letters. With a heavy heart he retired to his room, but not to sleep. He was more worried over the forged cheque than anything else. He resolved to make a diligent search for the man who had negotiated it.

The following morning being Sunday Edgar slept until the breakfast bell at nine o'clock awoke him. He dressed hastily and came down. As he reached the hall he heard some one talking to his uncle on the porch. A moment later he saw his friend who had cashed the forged cheque leave and walk away. His uncle came in, and in a husky tone said to his daughter:

"Margaret, thou can send a cup of coffee to my room," and without noticing his nephew he left the apartment.

Edgar declined to sit down, and the breakfast was sent away untouched. At half-past nine Mr. Richardson sent for Edgar, and, handing him the forged cheque, asked him if he had received the money for it the previous evening.

"Yes," was the reply. "I did not purpose, however, that it should go to bank. I tried to find the man last evening. Did you pay him?"

"I did," said his uncle, "and thou hast fallen greatly when thou art driven to such methods. Since thy return from the West I have been liberal with money, and thou might have had twice this sum if thou hadst come to me for it. It pains me beyond measure to think that the son of my late wife's brother should forge my name to paper. Tell me: why does the Chief of Police of New York want to know where to find thee?"

Edgar then for the first time related to his uncle his full history since he went West. At the end of the recital Mr. Richardson said:

"Edgar, thou hadst better leave this country and go back to England."

"Any place but there," was the reply. "After all my failures I do not care to meet my kindred."

"Better to meet them than face Western justice, especially the vigilants. Thou will have no fair trial with them in their present temper."

"Uncle," said Edgar, "here is the thousand dollars that I received for that cheque."

"Keep it; thou will need it now," was the reply.

"No," was the answer; "I have a thousand more left. I am not such a spendthrift as you suppose."

"I would prefer that thou should retain this money; I now give it to thee."

Both talked over the course to pursue, and decided that the best plan to take would be for Edgar to leave Long Branch by the evening train and sail on Wednesday by the Cunard steamer.

At seven o'clock he bade a last farewell to his uncle and cousin, and left in the darkness for New York. On his arrival he went to the lodgings of Sergeant Grimes, and found him at home. The generous man offered him a place in the army, and promised to get him out of the city without anyone knowing it. He resolved to wait for Colonel Derwent. He also sent a telegram to Colonel Moorehead at Boston.

The next day Edgar remained in the house while the Sergeant went to meet the Kentuckian and the old shipmaster.

The latter came first and then the former. After they both had heard the full statement of affairs they strongly urged that the course recommended by Mr. Richardson was the best. It would be prudent, they insisted, for Colonel Creedmore to place himself at once under the protection of the English consul. After dark this was done. Once under the "lion's paw" it would be difficult to get him away.

The morning after his departure from Long Branch one of Pinkerton's detectives rang the bell of the cottage of Mr. Richardson, with a warrant of arrest for his nephew on serious charges. He declared himself very sorry to come on such a painful errand. With a very quiet, dignified manner Mr. Richardson replied :

"My nephew left yesterday, and if thou wilt go to Louisville, Kentucky, and find the abode of a certain Colonel Derwent, thou may possibly learn the whereabouts of the man thou art after."

"Can I search the house?" the detective promptly asked.

"If thou dost not believe my word that my nephew left yesterday thou art welcome to look to thy heart's content."

"No," was the reply; "I believe you. Pardon me for the momentary doubt."

Late on Tuesday night Edgar went with the English consul on board the Cunarder at her dock at Jersey City. He there found his friends Colonel Derwent and Colonel Moorehead, and also Sergeant Grimes. All of them offered him money, which was declined, as he had two thousand dollars in his pocket. His passage was paid by his two staunch friends. They now bade him farewell. At daylight the next morning the steamer sailed. When the open sea was reached the fugitive felt secure, as he was under the flag that is respected from pole to pole and zone to zone. He who could take away one thus placed must needs be a strong man.

Sadly did Edgar compare his present condition with the high hopes he had entertained seventeen years previous. He carried away an aching heart, but left hearts aching still heavier behind him. Margaret Richardson and Ida Derwent were mourning over unrequited love. A marble shaft marked buried hopes on a lonely hillside in far-off Nevada.

The massive Cunard steamship sped on day by day over summer seas without incident, and in due season arrived at her destination, the grand old seaport of Liverpool.

CHAPTER XLVI.

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

WE left Esther alone, friendless and almost penniless, in the great city of London. Very few can realise all that is implied in this statement. You, gilded daughter of fashion, reclining in a luxurious chair reading these pages, what do you know of such an experience? Perhaps the most you can say will be, "Oh, how dreadful!" Others will ask: why does she suffer when she can obtain money that belongs to her now in the bank?

She cannot do this. She had been pronounced dead, and is therefore without any claim; and to declare herself alive would be to start anew the persecutions of Martin Nickley. But why not appeal to the law? What chance would she have with her reputation against a man with the large income of her persecutor?

Esther obtained lodgings at a cheap place and paid ten shillings for it in advance, leaving herself absolutely without a single penny. In vain did she walk the streets day after day seeking for a situation that she could honourably take. She had no recommendation, and without one it was impossible to obtain honourable employment. As already stated she arrived in London on the morning of the 25th. It was a beautiful August Sunday. The great mass of the fashionable portion of the inhabitants had gone to the sea shore or to the country. The following Sunday was the 1st of September, and the landlady asked Esther for the week's board in advance.

The girl replied that she had failed to find employment, but would obtain some money from some of her friends in a day or so.

"A girl with such uncommon beauty as you have ought not to be without a few pounds in your pocket," the woman replied with a meaning not to be mistaken. Esther shuddered at the suggestion. She would first drown herself in the Thames. Death was preferable a thousand times than such a life.

On Monday morning she set out again. Walking up Regent Street, a sign in the window of a millinery establishment attracted her attention:

"A girl wanted as a model."

In answer to her request for the situation she was informed that fifty applications had been received already. If, however, her name and references were left an answer would be given next day.

To this Esther replied that although there were many persons of distinction to whom reference could be made there were family reasons that prevented asking any favour of relatives. Could she not have the vacancy on her own merits if that would be satisfactory?

"No, you can not," said the woman who was in charge; "we have enough applications from girls with good characters without taking those of doubtful reputations."

Esther blushed deeply at this insinuation and she turned to leave, when a gentleman who had overheard the conversation came forward with the remark:

"I rather like your appearance. May I ask your name?"

"Madeline Montana," was the reply.

"You are the very image of the late Countess of Montville," was his rejoinder. "I never thought such beauty could be duplicated. I once had the pleasure of spending a day with the earl and his wife at Harold Castle, and for the sake of the resemblance I will give you the position of model. I do not think we can find a better one," he continued, turning to his manager, the woman who had insulted Esther.

"We can find plenty with characters," was the sneering answer.

"This lady suits me," said the gentleman in a positive tone that admitted of no debate on this question. "Miss Montana," he continued, "your salary will be one pound a week, and you can take your place at once. It will be your duty to fit on bonnets and hats so that our customers can see their beauty and style.

The forewoman gave Esther a look filled with hate and scorn that was not significant of future harmonious relations.

As this chapter relates the combined experiences of the twins, we must leave Esther for a while and go back to Edgar.

The Cunard steamship arrived at Liverpool on the morning of the 24th. That evening he was in London.

He knew the great risk incurred in coming back to England. If he should meet Esther face to face both would die within the next twenty-four hours. This was the compact and there could be no deviation from it. There was a mystery, however, about his sister's life that he could not understand. He had been informed of the death of the Earl of Montville, and that his

widow was living in retirement. Her name was never mentioned afterwards by any of his kindred. As he had agreed not to write to her or make inquiries, he took it for granted that she had quarrelled with her relatives and was living secluded. Never for a moment did he dream of any degradation in her experience. It was bad enough for one of the family to fall without the other.

Edgar arrived in London at the Midland Station and took rooms at the Midland Hotel. A telegram was sent to both of his uncles informing them of his arrival. He received an invitation to come at once to their homes. He determined to visit Everdale first, and wired to his Uncle Richard Shirley to expect him on Monday afternoon.

In the meantime he tried to find out what had become of Esther. He called at the house of the family solicitor, but learned that he was at the seashore. At five o'clock in the evening he returned to his hotel. Here he was surprised to find waiting for him Lieutenant Bentley. The meeting was hearty and genial. Bentley explained that he was under orders to join a large frigate as her first lieutenant, and his wife was then in London. They had received a telegram from Sir Thomas Shirley to call upon him and tell him all the family news.

Edgar wanted to ask about Esther. Bentley dreaded to tell him of her fate. It was for that purpose that he had been sent to the hotel.

"Come, old fellow," said Edgar; "let us have dinner and then for all the news."

Two hours later Edgar heard the whole story and the reported death of Esther at Brussels two years previously.

When Bentley had finished Edgar jumped up, saying, "I will kill this scoundrel. Surely the law will not punish me for so doing."

"Edgar, my dear boy," said Lieutenant Bentley, "you have the American notions about human life. Out West where you have lived so long you might kill such a man and nothing would be said, but in England human life is held very dear."

"Is there no law that can reach him?" Edgar eagerly asked.

"None, now that your sister is dead."

"But are you sure she is dead? Who saw her die and what evidence have you that this is a fact?"

"The notice was published in a number of newspapers that she died in the hospital of the Magdalene in Brussels," said Lieutenant Bentley.

"Oh, what a place to die! How my proud father would have felt this disgrace; and my mother, what agony it would have been to her if she were alive! My mind is made up. I will seek this villain and demand my sister's life at his hands. I will challenge him to fight."

"Remember, Edgar, that he killed the Earl of Montville," said Bentley. "He is a splendid shot, and is brave and cool withal that he is such a consummate villain. Then, again, he has the most unaccountable good luck."

"So have I," was the reply. "I fought several duels and killed my man every time. I will exterminate this fellow inside of a week."

"Do not forget, my dear Edgar, that you are now in Old England. If, however, you are determined to fight and Nickley accepts the challenge, which I very much doubt, then count on me as your friend. I was the second for the earl and would like to see that murder avenged."

The next day Edgar visited Lieutenant Bentley and his wife. Pauline was loud in her praise of Esther and bitter in denunciation of Martin Nickley. She told him of the school life at Beechwood Seminary and of the faithful dog Cæsar.

The following afternoon Edgar was welcomed at Everdale by both Uncle Richard and Mrs. Van Reem. Seventeen years had passed since he left the old home. His lofty ambitious hopes had indeed proved but day dreams. He said nothing about his purpose. Nickley, he found, was not then at home, but was expected in a few days. Three days later he had returned. Edgar lost no time in going to Granthorn Park. He found Nickley sitting on the veranda smoking a cigar with the air of a man at peace with himself and all mankind. With the scorn of his nature concentrated in his face Edgar walked up to him, and in a quiet but determined tone said:

"Martin Nickley, do you know me?"

Without moving from his chair Nickley took his eyeglass, and leisurely fitting it to his eye scanned his visitor from head to foot.

"Ah," he remarked. "By George! this is Edgar Creedmore. To what am I indebted for this visit?"

This cool audacity was too much for Edgar. He snatched the eyeglass and threw it over the lawn. His fiery indignation then broke loose and he poured out the pent-up wrath of his nature on Nickley. With withering rebuke he denounced his unmanly conduct, calling him a coward and villain, and challenged him to fight in Belgium.

"I will give you a chance to murder me as you did the Earl of Montville. I demand from you the life of my sister."

Nickley rose to his feet calm and unmoved, and without showing the least resentment replied :

"Mr. Creedmore, your sojourn in America has not improved your manners ; I suppose this is the Western style of greeting. It is rather a novelty in England. To all your abuse I will reply as a gentleman. Your sister Esther is my lawful wife. I thought her dead and in her grave. Those sisters of charity in Belgium deceived me. She has been seen in London and recognised by several of my friends. I have been trying to find out where she is staying. I heard that she was seeking for a situation. I will give her a thousand pounds to relieve her wants. As your brother-in-law I must therefore decline to fight you. When you come as an English gentleman I will always be glad to welcome you to Granthorn Park. I now beg to be excused."

With a pleasant bow Nickley went into the house and closed the door behind him.

Edgar stood for a moment like one in a dream. He was startled to hear that his sister was alive and in London, and that she was the wife of this man. He walked away and returned to Everdale on foot. That night he was again in London and resolved to find where Esther was residing. The next day he called upon Lieutenant Bentley and told him and his wife what he had heard. They agreed at once to help him. Word was sent to Elmswood, and in response John and Robert Shirley telegraphed they would come to London to assist in the search with their wives, Winifred and Elvira.

Edgar was now in a terrible quandary. He was eager to see his sister, yet he dared not meet her. If she should be found, what excuse could be offered to his kindred for declining to see her ?

It was Monday night, the 2nd of September. The stars were out and not a cloud was to be seen. Edgar wended his way to Westminster Bridge to see the place where his sister fell over into the river. Being near midnight the bridge was deserted. Looking towards the third lamp-post he saw a woman standing. A moment later she was climbing the parapet. It was a plain case of attempted suicide. Rushing forward he took hold of her dress, saying :

"Rash woman ! why do you want to take this fatal step ?"

She turned her face towards him and the light of the gas lamp revealed their identity to each other.

"My God, Esther! is that you?"

"Edgar," was the reply. "We are doomed."

Brother and sister had met face to face.

This was in violation of the solemn compact made seventeen years previous at Everdale Lake.

The penalty as then stated would be the death of both inside of twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE "PRINCESS ALICE."

THE certainty of death brought no feeling of regret to the reunited twins. They walked away arm in arm. Two objects met their view; one was a passing cab empty, and the other was a brilliantly-lighted café. The former proved a quick conveyance to the Midland Hotel, and the other suggested necessary refreshment for the exhausted body. Turning to his sister, Edgar asked whether she was hungry.

"I have had nothing to eat since breakfast," was the reply; "and that comprised a red herring, a stale roll, with a cup of very weak tea."

"No wonder, my dear sister, you felt like jumping into the river."

"It was something more potent than hunger that drove me to that last extreme. I have been tired of life long ago," Esther sadly replied.

"Then life has not moved along in a pleasant groove since we parted seventeen years ago? I have heard nothing about your movements lately."

"No," answered Esther, "it has not, and the coming of death is a pleasant change to me; in fact, but for your timely arrival I should have plunged into the Thames."

"Well, my sister, to-morrow you can tell me all that has happened. Have you ever forgotten the details of the five provisos to which we solemnly agreed on that eventful day when our bodies were at the bottom of Everdale Lake?"

"Surely I never could forget them, Edgar, and perhaps it would be as well to recall them and see if we are doomed. In the first place we agreed to assume the second name previously borne by the other."

“ I think, Esther, we have kept that one.”

“ The second was, we must separate within thirty days and thenceforth never hold correspondence, or see each other face to face for the remainder of our lives. The penalty for a violation of this would be the death of both in twenty-four hours afterwards.”

“ This second one, Esther, seems to me a little ambiguous. We have not corresponded, and our meeting face to face was a mere accident. At first I thought we would have to die, but now I have some hope. The fact is I am not fit to die at present ; my life for the last dozen years has been a hard fight with fortune, and I have gone down hill. Now for the other provisos.”

“ Third : We were to make the best possible use of the new condition of existence. Our talents were to be improved, and the aim of each should be so to live that the world would be the better for our return.

“ Fourth : The secret of this exchange was to be rigidly guarded.

“ Fifth : This permission to return to physical life carried with it no assurance of longevity. We would not be free from any consequences resulting from violations of either the physical, organic, or other laws of our being.

“ A solemn acceptance of these conditions,” added Edgar, “ was freely given ; the way was then clear for us to take the occupancy of each other’s body. We were futher informed that the spirit-memory would always be an important factor in our new condition. This would enable us to have in review our past experience. The faculty of memory belonging to the soul, or psychic principle of life, would enable each to know what had been previously learned and to carry on the work. Thus there would be in constant operation two faculties of memory.

“ As both of us had been well educated and stood equal in mental attainments, we took possession of our new habitations well stored and richly furnished with intellectual powers of a superior order.

“ The question that now confronts us and on which our lives depend is, have we faithfully kept our solemn covenant ?

“ For my part I am very sorry to say, Esther, that I have failed to keep the third proviso ; I doubt if the world is any better for my return to it. I have carefully guarded the secret of our return. In reference to the fifth, I have suffered from the violations of the physical and organic laws of my being.

To-morrow forenoon you shall hear my adventures since my departure on the Cunard steamer in 1861. It is of no use wasting time now in vain regrets. Let us go over to yonder *café*."

It has been said that hunger is one of the most potent agents in driving a man or woman to suicide. As soon as Esther had partaken of some refreshments, and knew that her brother was with her to share her lot, she wondered at the insane desire that had taken such hold of her in the early part of the day. Martin Nickley would now have a man to cope with fully able to handle him, physically and otherwise. Edgar was very different from the delicate-looking Milton. The war experience and the frontier life had developed a manly form.

Edgar on his part was happier than he had been for many a long day. The hounding of fortune, as he termed it, would surely end. He looked forward to a pleasant life in the home of his late father. Everdale Manor was a grand place to rest in after all his rough experiences in the far West.

A substantial supper, to which both did ample justice, being finished they drove to the Midland Hotel. A room was assigned to Esther next her brother's, and they retired to their respective chambers to meditate on what the morrow had in store for them. Never were their peculiar characteristics more evident than on this eventful night. Esther spent a full half-hour in prayer, then, committing her spirit to the care of her Creator, lay down and sank into a dreamless sleep. Edgar, on the other hand, undressed at once and went to bed. He felt that death might come to him before the next midnight. The manner of its coming did not give him the least concern. He thought over his past life, and especially of the lives he had taken, not only in battle but in his Western adventures. Yes, there was blood on his hands, and the noble Etaline had lost her life on his account. Presently he fell into a troubled sleep. His dreams were confused. He saw the face of Red Loomey with a revolver in his hand demanding his valuables. At the back of him was Bullet-headed Jim. Then Etaline and Ida Derwent and Margaret Richardson appeared before him, all warning him of some impending danger. Next he saw Esther in the river calling for help. He plunged in to save her and was carried down into the deep waters. He immediately awoke. The perspiration was coming out at every pore. Eagerly he longed for daylight. He did not fear death. Why should he? Had he not once before gone through the portals, and many times on the field of battle had faced the

death messenger? Again sleep came to his eyelids. He found himself in the midst of a large crowd of men and women hurrying to a great warehouse. He entered and saw a long row of bodies covered with sheets. Going to one of them and pulling away the cover he saw the face of Esther. He awoke with a terrible cry. It was now daylight. He arose, dressed himself, and went out for a walk, coming back with the morning paper. Glancing his eye over the pages he saw the advertisement of an excursion down the river on the steamer "Princess Alice." It was just the opportunity to get away for a few hours before seeing his friends and cousins. He wrote out a telegram and sent it to Lieutenant Bentley, saying that he had found his sister. They were going on an excursion, he added, and would be pleased if Pauline and he should dine with them at seven in the evening. He sent a similar message to Robert and John. Then going to Esther's room he found her dressed and looking bright and cheerful. She entered heartily into the plan of going down the river.

After breakfast they drove to the steamer's landing and took passage on the ill-fated vessel. Hundreds were on board and hundreds more were coming. It was nine o'clock when she set out with fully one thousand passengers on board. It was noon when the steamer reached her destination. Edgar and his sister went ashore and rambled among the groves of trees. He told her some of his American experiences.

At two p.m. the "Princess Alice" started on her return trip with fully eleven hundred persons on board. It was impossible to move about.

At the last landing that was made several passengers went ashore. They were afraid of some accident to a steamer crowded beyond the limit of safety. Fully a hundred persons were on the pier wanting to go on board, but the agent refused to open the gates. He was roundly cursed by a number of men anxious to return to the city. The next day he was blessed by the same men, who were grateful to him for not opening the gates.

Slowly the doomed vessel wended her way up the river. A mile below London Bridge a large iron steamship was seen heading downward. Whistles were blown on both vessels as they came nearer. The stranger was the "Bywell Castle," outward bound. Some one blundered. Who it was has been a moot point ever since. A moment later and the heavy collier struck the lightly-built passenger craft just forward of the paddle-wheel. There was a sound of crashing timbers mingled

with shrieks of human agony. Men, women, and children were crushed by the bow of the huge vessel. Slowly the "Bywell Castle" backed away and the "Princess Alice" began to sink, bow first. Edgar and Esther were on the after part of the steamer and saw many dead bodies floating past them. The accident took place off a chemical works, and the water was of a poisonous nature. Hundreds were thus killed the moment they touched the water. It was an awful scene to which no pen can do justice. At last the cruel waters reached the frightened remnant at the stern of the steamer and swept them into eternity.

Edgar had grasped the after-rail with one hand and held Esther with the other. Cheerfully would he have given his own life to have saved her. Not a word was spoken by either. They knew their fate and were resigned to it. Suddenly the steamer went from under them. Still holding each other's hands they sank below the surface and were swept down by the ebb-tide. They came to the top of the water below the chemical works, and could have reached the shore in safety but for a dozen other passengers who seized hold of them to save themselves. Boats were coming to their rescue, but they went under.

The author was in London at the time of this unparalleled disaster, and therefore is not making history but relating it. He was also staying at the Midland Grand Hotel on this same 3rd of September. Well does he remember the awful, agonised looks of several ladies and gentlemen who were waiting for the return of friends who had gone out on the unlucky steamer.

At six o'clock word was brought to the hotel that a large number of bodies had been landed at a certain pier, and laid out in a warehouse to be identified.

Wild rumours were abroad that fully four hundred persons were drowned. Alas! that number fell far short of the truth. Seven hundred bodies had been landed, and it was estimated that fully two hundred more were swept out to sea.

Lieutenant and Mrs. Bentley, also Robert and his brother John with Winifred and Elvira, were waiting in a parlour for the return of Edgar and Esther. They were considering means by which Martin Nickley could be brought to justice. Their unfortunate cousin they resolved should have their care and devotion. No more would they let her go away from them. All sorts of reproofs and scoldings for Mrs. Van Reem were ready if she dared to utter a single reproachful word to her niece. If she did they would rebuke her, and make her life unpleasant at Everdale. Esther was the lawful mistress of the manor.

Uncle Richard had sent a telegram, in answer to one telling him of the finding of his niece, that he would be in London by eight o'clock to give a cordial welcome to her. She should return with him to her rightful home. His sister, Mrs. Van Reem, was going away for a long visit to the South of England. Thus they planned and were full of joyful expectations.

One of the porters at the hotel who had taken a great fancy to Edgar had been waiting at the door for an hour to be ready, when he and his sister should return, to assist them out of the cab. He was the first to hear of the disaster. Pale with excitement he rushed to the parlour where the relatives of the twins were waiting for their return, and told them the terrible news. A few minutes later the rumour was confirmed by a telegram, stating that if there were any friends of the ill-fated passengers at the hotel they were desired to come at once and identify their remains. Out of the number on board only about one hundred were saved.

Lieutenant Bentley with Robert and John drove to the place designated and made a careful examination of the bodies. The twins were not there. They waited while body after body was brought in. At last they began to hope that Edgar and his sister had been rescued. Perhaps they were now on the way to the hotel. Just then a dozen bodies were brought in that had been washed ashore below the scene of the disaster. Alternating between hope and fear they waited till these victims were placed side by side. The last two faces to which they came were the ones they had been seeking; Edgar and his sister were sleeping the sleep of death as placidly as though in their beds. After a proper identification the two bodies were given to them, and were removed to an undertaker's to be prepared for burial.

Slowly and sadly Lieutenant Bentley and his two companions returned to the hotel with the dreadful news. They found uncle Richard waiting.

We must now leave them alone with their calamity. Intrusion upon mourning friends is in bad taste. Telegrams of the sad event were sent to Everdale and Elmswood.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PLANET OF JUDGMENT.

THE creeds of all nations have one fundamental doctrine in common, and that is "a judgment on the actions of the human race when the spirit shall leave the body after what is technically called death has taken place." No revelation has been given describing the location, yet for many reasons which we have no time to state we assume that this place of judgment is on some other planet.

How long it takes to reach this point when the call is made for us to go is not to our purpose to suggest. Neither can we discuss the mode of locomotion used in getting there. Sufficient to say we are informed that a full record of our lives is kept, and we must face the charge that will be brought against us.

Another important point which we assume, and that is that those who will conduct this examination, namely, the judges, must be of our own race. To put angels on the judgment throne would not be in harmony with the plans of our Creator in his government of this world, so far as He has been revealed. The Apostles were told they should sit upon thrones, judging not the world at large but the twelve tribes of Israel. Why this particular distinction? Evidently because they were better qualified to judge those of their own faith than any one else. Assuming that this interpretation is a correct one, we are not straining the point when we say that each generation of men will be judged by a chosen number of their fellows, who may be found qualified for this special duty. Hundreds of thousands of mortals are dying every day. Each will require a separate hearing, and our sense of equity inspires the thought that the judges before whom we may be brought will have had some experience of the affairs of our own day.

What would a man who lived four thousand years ago know of the trials and deep worriment of this highly practical and wonderful nineteenth century, especially the closing decade?

Admit that this is all speculation, yet in the absence of positive information on this subject the above has some plausibility, while the deductions and assumptions set forth are not beyond the bounds of probability.

As to the possibility of a spirit being able to return to this mundane sphere from the so-called Planet of Judgment, either

for a continued existence or a brief visit, that is a problem too deep for our limited space. There are many well-authenticated cases of persons who have passed through the actual experience of dissolution and yet have been resuscitated and restored to full health.

This digression from the thread of our narrative is necessary to prepare the reader for the second exchange that will be described in the next chapter.

We are exploring strange territory and following out a new line of thought; therefore we are compelled to do more theorising than would be found profitable in any ordinary plot.

This subject is one that is certain, sooner or later, to become of vital interest to each reader of this book. We must go through the experience, and those best qualified for the ordeal will be the men and women who have prepared themselves for it by timely reflection and study.

We will now continue our description of what took place after the second eviction of the twins from their bodies.

We left them in the poisonous waters of the Thames struggling with several of their fellow-passengers. Esther had fainted, and Edgar thus had a double burden trying to save himself and his sister at the same time. The shore was not far away and boats had begun to put off to the rescue. The two would undoubtedly have been saved had it not been for a young woman who, coming to the surface with all her senses about her, caught Edgar by the shoulder and said to him :

“Don't you see that girl is dead? Let her go and save me.”

It was a critical moment with her and there was not time to stand on fine points, so she endeavoured to unwind the strong arms that held Esther and thus secure the support for herself. Edgar held on all the tighter, and his anger was aroused at this attempt of a stranger to ask his help at a moment when he had more than enough to do to save himself.

Drowning people do not mind rebuffs, even when couched in the emphatic language that Edgar used on this occasion. The stranger clung fast to him, and under this increased burden he could no longer keep his head above water. Just as they were sinking the girl said to him :

“You are cruel to let me drown.”

She was one of those mortals that know the full value of complete self-possession. She now let go her hold and seized upon an elderly man who was making frantic efforts to reach the shore. He tried to shake her off, but it was of no use, and the result would have been doubtful had not a boat

arrived at this moment and picked them up. Now that she was saved herself she urged the boatman to save "that other man with a dead girl in his arms," meaning Edgar. Diligent search was made, and a hundred yards below they were found just under the surface and taken into the boat. On being carried ashore they were laid out on the sand, but their forms were motionless. The boatman bending over Esther uttered a cry of astonishment. He was no other than Hans Nelsola, and quickly recognised the one whom he had taken from the river five years before. Hans hired a boy to run to his cottage not far off to tell his wife to come at once. Other lives were at stake, so the noble boatman went out to save all whom he could. Twenty persons were thus rescued by him. When no more were to be found he went back to the spot where he had left the twins, and, taking the bodies in the boat with himself and wife, went to his cabin. Every effort was made to bring back the life that the cruel waters had extinguished. After a fruitless effort Hans took the bodies once more in his boat at ten o'clock at night and brought them to the warehouse where the others were laid out. Two boats ahead of him had just landed a dozen drowned persons.

It is assumed by many that when we vacate this, our earthly, body we must have some one of a superior intelligence to act as a guide to the Planet of Judgment. At the death-harvest of the "Princess Alice" over seven hundred spirits were suddenly evicted from their bodies without a moment's warning. The term "evicted" is an appropriate one here, as these spirits had been really dispossessed from their earthly habitations. No other having been provided they were compelled to migrate from this globe to some new form of existence.

We have no means of knowing whether each departing spirit has a separate guide or, taking a case like the present disaster, one would be sufficient for a hundred or more of the evicted and, we may add, deeply-surprised spirits.

Another question comes up at this point, and that is how long can we remain after the separation from our bodies takes place.

The tendency of thought on this subject inclines to the belief of an immediate departure. When, however, it is seen that the vital principle is not quite extinct a delay is no doubt obtained.

Acting on this last assumption we conclude that the spirits of the twins did not join the great throng that took their final leave of the scenes of their probationary state.

Their past experience gave them reason to hope that they might once more return to life, each in their first condition. They both made this request contingent upon the fact that the life-giving electrical current was not irretrievably broken in both bodies. One would not accept a return without the other.

Over this experience we must pass, for a detail of what they went through would be perhaps speculation and assumptions that would call forth severe criticism.

Those who may be interested in this subject will find a full and truthful account in the work called *Adrift on the Black Wild Tide*, by the author of this volume.

THIRD DIVISION.

REFORMATION.

CHAPTER I.

BACK IN THE OLD TABERNALES.

WEDNESDAY morning, the 4th of September, 1878, was indeed a red-letter day in the history of many families in the great city of London. A wave of horror and dismay swept over the inhabitants, as they read in the morning journals the thrilling account of the fearful loss of life by the sinking of the "Princess Alice."

Entire households were stricken out of existence. All day long a vast crowd of men, women, and children filled the streets leading to the warehouse where the bodies were deposited. Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley came from Elmswood at once. A consultation was held by all the members of the family, to which Lieutenant Bentley was invited. The latter suggested that, as the two had once before been resuscitated upon a similar occasion, it might be advisable to call upon some physician of standing to examine both bodies and ascertain whether all life was extinct. He had taken the precaution the previous night to give strict orders to the undertaker not to use any embalming fluid, but to wait and see if there were any signs of vitality left.

This proposition was agreed to, and they at once sent for a prominent specialist. On his arrival they went with him to where the bodies were lying side by side in oaken caskets.

The undertaker met them at the door and remarked that at daylight he had noticed that both bodies were warm, and he had placed bottles of hot water at their feet. A few moments previously the eyelids of the lady had slightly moved. This was a ray of sunshine to the sorrowing kindred. The doctor,

however, cautioned them not to be too sanguine. Muscular contraction would cause the movement of the eyelids, and he had known a corpse to remain warm for several days. He next proceeded to apply an electric battery to the two bodies. After a few moments Esther opened her eyes and looked around the room with consciousness visibly demonstrated on her face.

Pauline, who had come with her husband, could no longer control her feelings. She sprang forward impulsively, caught the hand of her schoolmate, with the tears streaming down her face, and said :

“ Oh, Esther, speak, and tell us that you are alive.”

A smile of recognition came into the countenance of the now resuscitated woman, and she answered quietly :

“ Yes ; I am back once more in the old tabernacle.”

The stalwart Lieutenant Bentley placed his arms under Esther and lifted her out of the casket. He was fearful lest the knowledge of having been in the coffin might dangerously agitate her. She was placed on a sofa. All eyes were then turned to Edgar. His pale form as yet had given no sign of returning vitality. It was indeed a thrilling moment. Esther, with her head resting in the arms of Pauline, watched as anxiously as the others. An hour passed and there were still no favourable signs. The specialist was about to give up his efforts. It was evident, he declared, that the brother had not the recuperative powers of his sister.

Esther now spoke and said : “ Doctor, I am certain that he is not dead. His heart is weak. Concentrate your efforts on that organ and I think you will see evidences of life.”

This advice was followed. One hour later the brother also opened his eyes. There was at once visible on his countenance a smile of intense satisfaction. All those present attributed this to delight at being restored to consciousness. But it was more. He had found himself in possession of his original body. The exchange had been a disastrous one. For thirteen long years there had been a career of suffering and a steady deterioration in self-respect. He was asked whether he recognised those around him.

“ Yes,” he replied, “ I have been watching you all for the last two hours.”

“ Quite a common occurrence,” said the doctor. “ I have seen the same thing a number of times. Very often persons in a state of coma while apparently unconscious are cognisant of all that is taking place.”

By evening both the patients were found sufficiently strong to be removed to the Midland Grand Hotel. They were then placed in comfortable apartments. Once more were the hopes of kindred and friends raised from the depths of despair to the summit of joy and happiness. No one was happier than Lieutenant Bentley. Well he might be. All felt that if it had not been for his forethought in forbidding the use of embalming fluids and ice caskets, before there was a positive proof of death, resuscitation would have been impossible.

The following day a marked change was noticed in the disposition of the twins. In Esther's eyes there was a look of determination that had not been seen there for many a long day. Her whole character seemed to have undergone a complete rendition. Pauline was amazed. She had always known her as a gentle, yielding, lovable girl. Now there was a resolute woman with a manner of speech that indicated a will of iron.

The change in Edgar was just as decided. Instead of the bold man with nerves of steel, who could look calmly into the muzzle of a revolver without flinching, there was apparently a very meek one. The story of Colonel Creedmore's coolness and bravery on the field of battle, and his success as prospector and mining engineer, were well known to all his friends. Was it possible that this man, now so quiet and shrinking in his disposition, was the same individual who gained such a wide reputation as an officer serving on the staff of noted Federal commanders? It was well known that no ordinary man of English birth could have held such a proud position, or have been in demand by generals like McDowell, McClellan, Burnside, Hooker, Meade, and Sheridan. To what was this change of character due? Could the two have changed bodies? No one was able to give a satisfactory answer. The wonder was increased a day later when Esther announced that, as she and her brother had experienced ill fortune since they changed their names, they now agreed to take again their original ones, and that from this time onward they would answer to the names of Miriam and Milton.

After a rest of three days Sir Thomas Shirley pressed his nephew and niece to return with him to Elmswood.

Miriam asked whether she could expect a genial welcome from her cousins.

"Certainly," was the reply. "Why not?"

"Because," said she, "they have never extended to me any sympathy in all my misfortunes. I do not wish to go where I would be considered as having disgraced the family name."

"My dear child," was the answer from her aunt Martha, "we did not know where to find you. No effort was spared in search for your whereabouts. Rest assured that you and your brother will be received with all the love of the old days."

Uncle Richard desired them to come to Everdale first. It was their home, he declared, and as his sister Mrs. Van Reem had gone away for a visit Miriam could take charge of the household.

It was finally decided that all should go to Elmswood first, and Uncle Richard agreed to go also. Of course it was insisted upon that Lieutenant Bentley and his wife should come and stay as long as possible. As the former had to join his ship in two days Pauline consented to make a prolonged visit. She was puzzled more and more over the change in her old school-mate. The last time she had seen her was in Antwerp, in June, 1875, as a fugitive from Martin Nickley. He must have had a very powerful mind to have held such a complete sway over such a woman as Miriam. The thought came to Pauline, as it did to others, that the great tension caused by the nearly extinguished principle of life might have strengthened some latent qualities of their minds and weakened others. This seemed a satisfactory as well as a logical deduction, and was therefore accepted.

In the school days of Beechwood Seminary, Pauline remembered that only on one occasion did Esther exhibit any resolute will in her behaviour. That was when Mrs. Ainsworth attempted to chastise her publicly. The strong woman had then recoiled before the indignant girl. If Esther had only kept up the fire that blazed out on that memorable occasion Martin Nickley would never have had control of her for these many years. That brilliant flashing of the eyes was now again visible; and when on the day following the arrival at Elmswood the name of Nickley was mentioned, Miriam was aroused to a pitch of excitement that astonished her kindred. There was indeed no cause to complain of the reception at that old manor. Robert and John, who with their wives had returned on the previous day, met them at the railway station, and at the house Winifred and Elvira greeted them on the porch and hugged and kissed Miriam so affectionately that there could remain no doubt of a genuine welcome. As she entered the hall door she was clasped by Irene, who cried like a child for very joy. Irene had never married. She had many offers, but always said she was cut out for an old maid. Adelaide and Eleanor were away with their husbands making the tour of the continent. They each had

three children. Robert had four "olive branches," as his father called them, while John was blessed with two boys.

A month slipped away so rapidly that it was hardly observed. Mrs. Van Reem wrote to her brothers that when her niece could produce a marriage certificate showing that she was lawfully married to Martin Nickley, then she herself would be glad to welcome her. If, however, her brother Richard persisted in bringing a degraded woman to Everdale, then she would stay away. Neither Miriam nor Milton saw this letter. It was, however, the cause of much anxiety. All knew that Mrs. Van Reem was a woman of a very positive character and had the dogged Shirley disposition. When her mind was once made up she would never waver or falter in any purpose.

Day by day Miriam grew more and more haughty. Pauline was the only one who could control her. The gentle Irene stood in awe of her cousin. Milton likewise was completely under the sway of his sister. At times she treated him as though he were a child. A storm was gathering and it soon broke out. The sister found out, however, as she had in earlier years, that her brother also had fire in his nature, and that his will was stronger than her own when it was once aroused. Milton was feminine in his tastes, but he was in no sense effeminate. The distinction is a wide one between these terms.

CHAPTER II.

RECRIMINATIONS.

THERE is no intention to burden these pages with metaphysical propositions that may be unintelligible to many readers. Some brief explanation, however, is necessary. The reader will remember the statement before made, that in every human being there are two faculties of memory, viz., the soul-faculty and the spirit-faculty. The former is akin to the animal's endowment and perishes with the body; while the latter goes with the spirit into the other world and increases in power as the ages roll on. A simple illustration of this meaning may be found in the example of two persons owning furnished houses. They become dissatisfied with their respective homes and agree to exchange. They each prepare a memorandum of

the contents of their habitations, and leaving it on the hall table make the exchange. On taking possession of their abodes the proprietors find the memorandum thus left behind, and are enabled to know exactly where everything connected with their new homes is to be found. Anything that may be lacking will be explained at subsequent meetings. This illustration may be somewhat primitive, but it comes near enough to be easily understood. In a way like this Miriam, on taking possession of her former female body and in looking over the record left behind, found that a certain stigma was attached to her on account of the way her brother had managed the trust. On the other hand Milton was amazed to find that a serious charge of murder was resting on him, and it was possible he might be extradited and compelled to return to America for trial.

We have remarked that Miriam had been daily growing more haughty. She had perceived that unless the marriage with the Earl of Montville could be established as valid, as well as the subsequent one with Martin Nickley, there was no possible chance for her to hold any position in society. Even her kindred, if they persisted in harbouring her, would have to run the risk of being themselves ostracised. This made her very bitter towards her brother. The beginning in life seventeen years ago was a brilliant one, and the present low condition she felt must have resulted from criminal negligence.

It was one month after their last rescue when Miriam could no longer control her indignation. The gathering storm broke on Milton's head.

A lovely autumn day was the 4th of October. Early in the morning Miriam asked her brother to come with her to the rustic house before described, where Martin Nickley had met Esther when she was talking to the gipsy Ziska.

At this place they could confer without interruption and explain much of their past lives. Miriam felt she had the principal grievance. She began :

“Milton, how could you be such a fool as to leave Edmond Harold so abruptly without seeking from him an explanation of the charges brought against him by that fraud, Joseph Albright?”

“How could I do otherwise after the evidence laid before me?” was the answer. “Yet I now feel that my action was hasty.”

“Then, again, what made you live so long with that deeply-dyed villain, Martin Nickley? I would have killed him or set that chateau on fire where you were confined.”

“ Ah, Miriam, your long residence in America has given you a very cheap idea of the value of human life. Across the water they excuse a woman for killing a man who deceived her. In England they would hang her. On the whole I did the best I could under the circumstances.”

Miriam restrained the tears that forced themselves into her eyes, and said in bitter tones as the memory of what had taken place came up in review before her :

“ All I have to say to you, my brother, is that I left you a body carefully trained and a pure name, and now on my return, to use a mild expression, I find that the fair name I left you is tainted. I am a virtual outcast. My fortune is held by terms of the will of my late father subject to the control of the executors, and there must be a unanimous agreement to give me charge of the funds. Of course if my marriage was found to be legal then I would have the management myself. Our aunt, Mrs. Van Reem, I am persuaded will never agree to this, or receive me unless I can show the validity of my marriage. I could not stay at Everdale under a cloud, and must therefore seek for some employment.”

“ Well, Miriam,” responded her brother, “ perhaps it is my turn to ask for explanations as to the management of what was committed to your charge. I will not speak of the large amount of money that fell to my share and which you took to America and lost out West. I find on the record the stain of human blood. You took two lives, and others were lost by your actions. Also you added forgery to the number of failures.”

“ I do not deny all this,” was her answer, “ but you know that the faults of men are extenuated. You can go into any society and be well received. No one will feel degraded by your presence. But look at me. I am only tolerated here at Elmswood because you are with me. Why, even the very servants know my position, and the humiliations are increasing every day. The task of reformation is a harder one than I dreamed of. Very severe trials are before me, and how I am going through them is a mystery. If I had my life to live over again how different would be the record ! But vain are these regrets. You have sown and I must reap the bitter harvest.”

At this endeavour to lay all the blame of the fallen condition on him Milton began to show signs of irritation. If his sister could have left behind her a stainless record, then she might have cause to find fault. Taking her hand, he said in tones that showed the limits of his patience had been reached :

“Miriam, these recriminations are waste of time. The only course for both of us is to begin at once and rectify our mistakes. Then we can secure the respect of not only our kindred but the world at large. The marriage to the Earl of Montville will yet be found valid, and so will the one to Martin Nickley. Remember that he has acknowledged this fact, and if you will only have patience it can be proved. For my own part, if I am extradited I will go over to America and appeal to the Grand Army of the Republic; they have never been known to desert a comrade of the war. I have no fear of the result if I can get a fair trial. Then, again, I have hopes that some of the mine investments will prove of value.”

“Perhaps, after all, your view is the correct one,” said the sister. “It is certainly of no use to repine over what is now beyond our power to recall. I will from this time endeavour to make amends for past errors, and be on my guard for the designs of Martin Nickley. In the body over which he had control so long he will find a different spirit.”

As they set out to walk away arm in arm, who should they meet face to face but the very man they had been speaking about! Martin Nickley stood in their pathway and, with a confidence born of past successes, paying no attention to Milton, he coolly addressed Miriam:

“Well, my fair one, I hear that you have elected to be called by your old name. I rather like the change, for it was the one that first took my heart. Allow me to congratulate you upon your narrow escape from death. I have not had the opportunity of seeing you since that event. I believe that I have some claim on you. I now want you to come with me and I will provide for all your wants. By the merest accident I heard that you were not dead, as reported by those sisters of charity in Brussels. Why did you run away from that shop in Regent Street a month ago where you were employed as a model? I was informed that you had taken the position, and went there to offer ample funds for your support. I do not think you behaved rightly in acting as you did.”

During this speech Miriam looked at Nickley with a cold, haughty stare. She replied:

“I am not aware that you have any claims upon me that I care to recognise. I do not need any funds from you, and cannot see why you should interest yourself any longer in my movements.”

“You did not talk that way seventeen years ago,” he replied, “when I was searching the bottom of Everdale Lake for your

body. For weeks after your rescue from death your expressions of thankfulness were boundless. You said that the debt of gratitude due me for that action never would be forgotten. Now you coolly say that no claims of mine will be recognised. I propose to enforce my rights and insist that you go with me. A carriage is waiting and you must come to London at once. You gave me the slip on several occasions, but I will take care that it is not repeated this time. I am fully prepared for all contingencies, for no one else has the right that I have and hope you will not create a scene."

The scorn on Miriam's face was intensified. She was about to reply when Milton stepped forward and said in a quiet tone :

That while he and his sister fully recognised the services of the rescue as just stated, yet they were both of the opinion that the debt had been fully paid ; therefore they declined to debate the question any further. If violence were offered it would result disastrously for those attempting it.

"Upon my word," was Nickley's answer, "I admire your American assurance. It is very refreshing, but allow me to remind you that you are now in England and not on the Western plains. Besides, I think that you will have about all you can do to manage your own affairs without meddling with mine. So please do not interfere with what does not concern you. Your crimes in America have yet to be atoned for."

Milton did not allow a muscle to quiver at this reflection, but the flashing of his eyes told that he was wrought up to the utmost tension, and if Nickley had not been so wrapt up in his own importance he would have noticed the gathering storm. Perhaps he needed a lesson and he got it. He reached out and took Miriam's hand saying :

"Come with me."

The next instant a grasp of iron was laid on his wrist, and his arm was flung to one side as though struck by a sledge-hammer.

Milton said in low, suppressed tones, quivering with passion :
"Do not presume to touch my sister; your hand is polluted."

Nickley took a whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill blast. In answer to it a powerful thick-set man who was concealed at some distance came running forward. He had not gone more than a hundred yards when he was felled to the ground by a powerful blow from an assailant, who unexpectedly rushed forward from behind a tree. Nickley ran to the assistance of his

hired servant, but was too late to see who had dealt the blow. Miriam and Milton took a short path home and were not molested further. They had both recognised Ziska who had come to their aid.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. VAN REEM.

ONCE more had Martin Nickley been foiled in his attempt. He had some reason for his persistence besides that of revenge. Unexpectedly he had found himself in a false position, and either he or Miriam must go to the wall. For this reason he had offered her a large sum to leave the country and she had refused. This made it necessary to his ends to weave around her a web that would place her entirely at his mercy. A new factor had unexpectedly appeared in the person of her brother, and it was now evident that Milton would have to be removed out of the way before the road would be clear to deal with Miriam. Nickley was not a man to deliberate long over any project. He made up his mind quickly and put in execution the purpose at which he arrived. Three days after his rebuff he sent a detective to New York with credentials from Scotland Yard. The man was instructed to find out all about the actions of Colonel Creedmore out West, and to institute proceedings for extradition. Whether this could or could not be sustained Milton must be sent to America. This matter settled and his man having sailed, Nickley set on foot a plot of his own to alienate the affections of Miriam's kindred and friends. He purposed to make her a noted character to the end that if she should chance to be arrested on any charge it would be an easy matter to get her transported for a long period. Nickley knew that Mrs. Van Reem was the best one to work upon. He was well aware that there was no man that she hated worse than himself. So much the better for his purpose. As far as he was personally concerned this was a matter of the most supreme indifference. Mrs. Harriet Ainsworth was still teaching at Beechwood. He also surmised she would be a valuable aid to his project. There must be no failure. He resolved to take plenty of time to ensure success.

A combination of circumstances had made his new scheme a matter of life and death. If Miriam had only been drowned in the "Princess Alice" it would have taken a great load off his mind. For what he had done or was proposing to do there did not enter into his thoughts a single compunction of conscience. He had ruined a dozen other women, and not one had given him the trouble that Miriam did. He was a cold, hard, calculating man. He weighed gold in the balance against woman's virtue, and if he paid liberally for all claims he considered that it was nobody's business. We now leave him engaged in maturing his plot.

On the evening of the day that they encountered Martin Nickley, Milton received a note from Ziska asking for an interview. The gipsy also asked to see Miriam. He told them that he had to keep in hiding, for, at the instance of Nickley, there had been a warrant issued against him on the charge of highway robbery with violence.

A messenger was waiting for an answer. As it was a moonlight night Ziska was invited to come into the grounds of Elmswood. An hour later Miriam and Milton were holding him by the hand. They heartily thanked him not only for the timely assistance of that day but for all the attentions of the past. They now offered him money, but this Ziska absolutely refused. He told them that he came to Elmswood two days previously. Having seen Nickley pass with his carriage he instantly apprehended that some mischief was contemplated. A strict watch had been kept, with the result as recorded. The gipsy further informed them that Nickley must have some great object at stake, otherwise he would not spend so much money for the mere gratification of malice. Half a dozen members of his tribe were detailed not only to follow Nickley secretly but to find out the motive of this persecution. In parting Ziska remarked that they were all engaged against a common foe, and cautioned them to be on their guard against this villain, as he had some diabolical scheme on hand for their harm. The twins were confident, however, that they were a match for Martin Nickley. This disparagement of the power and resources of their enemy brought them sad misfortune.

On the 1st of November Milton and his sister with their uncle Richard left Elmswood for Everdale. Pauline had gone to pay a visit to some of her husband's relatives, and promised to spend the Christmas holidays with Miriam. The stay at their uncle's house had been very pleasant in every way, although Miriam was, perhaps, over-sensitive. Her aunt Martha,

with her daughters-in-law and the sweet Irene, had done all in their power to make things as agreeable as possible. Miriam was gradually coming back to her old self. Her voice was often heard in song, and this more than anything else was a healthy restorative for mind and body.

Two months passed swiftly at Everdale without anything arising to disturb harmonious relations. Pauline was now with Miriam, and did much to make her forget the past, at the same time encouraging her to look forward to the time when the mystery attending the estrangement of the Earl of Montville should be cleared away. This would release the large amount of money from the estate, which was now held awaiting the decision as to who was the lawful Countess of Montville. Not a word had been heard from the woman who had claimed to be his wife prior to his marriage with Esther Creedmore. The latter had never made any claim for the money, feeling that she was deceived in her espousal. Miriam, however, was not willing to wait for this claimant, but proposed to make her show her hand and bring forward her proofs. Her uncle Richard employed skilful lawyers, and they served notice on the trustees of the estate of the late Edmond Harold to show cause why the dower should not be paid at once to his widow.

Martin Nickley's actions hastened this movement. It did not suit his plans for Miriam to be acknowledged as the rightful Countess of Montville. That one person should succeed in his plots and not be detected may seem overdrawn, yet this man did succeed. The author is by no means employing his imagination in this description; in fact, one-half the villainies of Nickley have not been recorded. Such only have been mentioned as concern the dealings with Miriam.

Mrs. Van Reem had declined to return to Everdale while her niece was at the place. But she grew tired of these tactics and suddenly made a bold move to take possession of her home. Having been there so long she seemed to forget that Milton and Miriam were the legitimate owners, and her claim was based on a mere technicality of the will of her brother-in-law, the late admiral.

Miriam had taken charge of the household, and everything moved along peacefully. Everybody was very much astonished when, on the 4th of February, Mrs. Van Reem arrived at Everdale early in the morning, and gave orders to the servants as though she had only been absent a single day. When her brother Richard came down to breakfast she reproached him for allowing a vile woman, who had been the mistress of several

men, to come into the manor, where only pure women had been welcome. Then, again, she declared Milton was a murderer, and had escaped from New York to avoid arrest for his crimes. He had repaid his uncle's generosity in America by forging his name to pay a gambling debt. His whole career over there had been one long round of dissipation and crime. She said it was a wonder that her dead sister did not rise from her grave and enter protest in person at this desecration of Everdale. All their friends knew of these things and it was a very serious matter for herself and brother, because they were harbouring an unworthy woman and a notorious gambler and murderer. She reminded her brother that as Miriam was not married it required the unanimous consent of the trustees to give her the interest of her patrimony. Under no conditions would she herself consent to this. To say that Mr. Richard Shirley was astounded would be using a mild term. He loved his niece and nephew fervently. He had allowed his sister to manage the household as she thought best without interference from him. This, however, was a different matter.

"Elizabeth," said he, "you have brought very serious charges against the son and daughter of our late brother-in-law. What proof have you of these allegations? I am afraid that you have allowed a scoundrel like Nickley to prejudice your mind. There may be some rumours of Milton sowing his wild oats, yet I do not think that it approaches anything like what you have just represented. You know that we have an abundance of newspaper clippings giving an account of his bravery during the late war between the North and South; also of his honourable career from papers in Denver and San Francisco. In the face of all these facts I cannot accept mere rumours, no doubt instigated by his enemies. As far as Miriam is concerned, her marriage with the late earl was valid. I have taken steps to have it proved to be legitimate, and everything will be made satisfactory. Instead of trying to crush her it is your duty to try and help her, and not at this period to put obstacles in the way. Martin Nickley has acknowledged her as his wife."

"Richard, you are a fool," said his sister in a savage tone. "Surely you do not think that I have accepted these things which I have just related on mere hearsay evidence? Neither would I allow myself to be influenced by Martin Nickley. I hate the man, and would not aid him in his evil designs. There is abundant proof for what has been stated. Everdale was to be the joint home of the twins provided they led honest and pure lives. Now there has come a time for me to assert my

rights here, and I will do so at once. That vile woman must not give another order in this house. I have instructed the servants not to obey her on the penalty of instant discharge."

"Elizabeth," replied her brother, "I have something to say in the premises, and do not propose to drive away the rightful heirs from their home. This was their father's house and it belongs to them. Your rights here are only a life residence."

"Richard, you are an arrant fool and a very poor specimen to talk like that. I am surprised to hear you at your time of life become the defender of a woman who has so far forgotten her ancient blood as to become a mistress to those able to pay the price for her deceptive smiles. My late brother-in-law left me in charge of Everdale, and I will be faithful to that trust while life lasts."

At this moment Miriam and Milton came into the room and both stood before their kinswoman. Their faces were quivering with passion. They had heard nearly all the conversation, and Miriam spoke first:

"Mrs. Van Reem," said she, "never again will I call you aunt. I regret that any of your blood is in my veins. Your statements in regard to myself are false in every particular. It is useless to bandy words with you. You are a disgrace to the Shirley blood. I am here in my late father's home, and any servant who dares to disobey my orders will be discharged peremptorily. You are merely a housekeeper in this establishment, and as my honoured uncle has stated our rights I have nothing further to say. My brother can speak for himself."

Milton quietly said: "Madam, your assertions concerning my past history are beneath notice; to attempt to answer them would lower all self-respect. You will kindly retire to your apartments."

Mrs. Van Reem was for the moment subdued before them. She left the room saying:

"Perhaps neither of you will talk so bravely in a month from to-day."

CHAPTER IV.

AT BAY.

THE reader must not set down Mrs. Van Reem as a woman of a cold, heartless character. Her conduct in the present instance was the result of hereditary training. There are thousands of men and women in England to-day who worship ancestral birth, and the further back they can go the greater their reverence for the family name. The one unpardonable sin in their belief is the disgrace that is brought on the family heritage by any member who wilfully steps outside the strictly-defined path. The Shirley family, tracing their lineage back to the Conquest, were doubly vigilant of their inheritance. It was this that made Mrs. Van Reem so bitter against her niece. As for her nephew his uncles would deal with him. Although she had been for the time subdued by the flashing of the eyes of both Miriam and Milton, yet she was far from giving up the contest. She wrote at once to Mrs. Ainsworth to meet her at Elmswood, and the next day, without even seeing her brother Richard, she took her departure for that place.

Pauline, who had been absent for a week, again returned to Everdale. Nothing could turn her against her schoolmate. Her husband was on his ship in the Mediterranean Squadron. She knew that he would stand by both Milton and Miriam through all trials and tribulations.

Martin Nickley redoubled his efforts. The detective in America was not making the progress that he expected. Why should he? Being well paid and having a good time of it he was in no hurry to end such a profitable employment, so he sent information from time to time and reported progress. Nickley was too shrewd a man to stand this. He cabled over to his *employé* that the papers must be made out at once for the extradition of Colonel Creedmore. Four days later he received an answer that everything was "O.K." This reply was not entirely satisfactory, and he sent another message asking for particulars. The answer was that his wishes had been carried out. With this he had to be content.

Ziska was on the alert, and communicated that he had just heard from one of the servants at Elmswood that false testimony of the most outrageous kind had been sent to Sir Thomas Shirley from Antwerp, Brussels, and other places, including

Paris. All of these statements had been purchased by Nickley's gold. They were stamped by the seal of the English consul at each of these places. Another woman's crimes had been palmed off on these officials as the deeds of Miriam herself, and thus the storm-cloud gathered material. Ziska urged Milton not to wait for the coming attack, but to make a counter move on his enemy. The gipsy was convinced that Nickley had committed bigamy, and if this should be communicated to the French authorities as well as to Lord Grassmere, then it would be all he could do to look after his own safety. If this advice had been followed it might have saved much tribulation.

The family at Elmswood did not at first suspect that it was the gold of Nickley which had secured the information that so excited them. They believed that some friend equally jealous as themselves of the good name that had been so carefully guarded for many years was seeking the removal of the stain. It was decided that Miriam must not remain at Everdale, but take refuge in some convent and stay there for the rest of her life. In the case of Milton he would be advised to emigrate to Australia, and funds to keep him in moderate style would be assured to him on condition that he never returned to England.

Winifred and Elvira, as well as Irene, entered their protest against this condemning of their cousins unheard. They were powerless, however, against Mrs. Van Reem and Mrs. Ainsworth, now reinforced by Adelaide and her sister Eleanor. The husbands were also at one on this point. Robert and his brother John held aloof, while their father sided with the women. It was a divided family. The majority assumed that a certain course was necessary. Yet how to put their project into execution was a problem. Miriam and Milton were in their own lawful home, and the courts would uphold them in their rights. Family tradition was one thing but the law of possession was another.

Uncle Richard was on their side and just as firm as his sister. The latter mourned over the degeneracy that had fallen upon the once proud name. She belonged to that large class in England who would look upon an erring daughter as a stranger, and even though she were dying in a ditch would pass her by with supreme indifference.

There are too many well-authenticated cases of this sort. Special instances are not needed. Fathers have been known to pass by their sons when in prison garb with a cold, haughty stare, and without a sign of recognition. They were dead to them and to their family. The one unpardonable sin in the old

English families is the stain that is put upon this idol of the house—"the heritage of virtue." This refers chiefly to the women. The men may—in fact, often do—transgress this law. If detected then it is called "injudicious," "very improper," "not to be repeated." But for a daughter of the house who has fallen adjectives of a very strong meaning are used to express the indignation and abhorrence of the fault. Pardon, reformation, and atonement are out of the question. English-speaking Christendom has no token of salvation for such pariahs in a family.

Mrs. Van Reem had given the twins one month to lower their haughty tone. For the manner in which they had answered her she was not vindictive towards them; far from it, but was jealous of her reputation and resolved to uphold it. Having been left the guardian of Miriam, she proposed to have something to say in regard to the household affairs at Everdale. During the thirteen years that Esther was a wanderer no effort was made to reclaim her. She had never been educated up to this heaven-born principle of mercy to the wayward and unfortunate. A Saviour would pardon this class, but an English woman of ancient blood has another rule of action.

No one had been more surprised than Mrs. Van Reem at the change in the characteristics of her niece after the resuscitation on the 4th of September. The old haughty spirit of Miriam had returned. The worthy matron could not account for it, so she let the matter drop as being above her comprehension.

Monday, the 3rd of March, 1879, was ushered in with a strong north-east gale. The snow fell in heavy flakes. It was just such a day as to make everyone feel blue and miserable. At Everdale preparations were made to celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of the rescue from the bottom of the lake. Lieutenant Bentley sent a telegram from Malta offering congratulations for the day. A few friends had been invited to dine. Among those who came were Robert and John Shirley with their wives, Winifred and Elvira. The Rev. Mr. Huben came as well as Chaplain Vivian, who although seventy-five years old was just as erect as when we last met him seventeen years previously. Ziska and Oslena were provided with a bountiful dinner in the butler's room. A handsome present was sent to Hans Nelsola and his wife.

Not a single one of those invited had declined, and there was a goodly gathering in the old manor which for many years had been so quiet. Dinner was appointed for five o'clock. There was a buzz of admiration when Miriam came into the

drawing-room robed in a rich garment of dark blue velvet. Never in her life did she look so majestic. Milton had indeed taken good care of the physical tabernacle entrusted to him. It was a birthday festival as well as a celebration of the rescue. Miriam was thirty-nine years old, yet she looked only twenty-five. The sparkle in her eyes was as brilliant as in the days of yore. Milton looked much older than his sister, and showed plainly the effects of hard life on the plains as well as the severe war service.

The snow had ceased falling, and the sun was struggling to emerge from the cloud-banks that had hidden its light all day. The guests went out on the porch to watch for a moment the war of the elements. Cloud after cloud came along, and all were piled in one dark mass in front of the setting orb as though anxious to hide its light from the children of men. One small but compact cloud was seen hurrying onward before the driving gale. It struck the larger body, and by its momentum carried the whole obstruction away from the face of the sun, allowing the golden light to spread over the landscape. The effect on all those assembled was exhilarating. It was a happy omen of the renewed life of the brother and sister. The Rev. Mr. Huben, on whose arm Miriam was leaning, said to her :

“How emblematic of life is the action of those clouds. Often are we troubled and our horizon filled with darkness and sorrows, but in a moment when we least expect it the clouds are swept away and sunshine comes once more to our weary and heavy-laden hearts.”

Both Miriam and her brother had been strict churchgoers since their last return from the shades of death. On the previous day they had attended the morning and evening services at the parish church of Everdale.

The birthday dinner was all that could be desired. Everyone was in the best of humour. There was not the slightest token of the awful blow about to be dealt by Martin Nickley. He had been kept informed by the aid of his gold of all that was passing at Everdale Manor. He laid his plans to culminate on this particular occasion, when the dear and tried friends were to be present to witness the disgrace. Nickley threw the javelins of his malice just when they would wound the deepest and rankle with agonising touch. He never asked or gave quarter in his warfare.

After the dinner the ladies retired to the drawing-room ; the gentlemen smoked and chatted for half an hour before joining

them. There was a traitor among the servants. A light had been placed in a window; this was the signal and the moment was at hand. The thunderbolt fell, as it was intended, with deadening effect—not one moment too soon or too late.

A carriage drove up to the door. All were expressing wonder who it could be; perhaps some callers. The latter surmise was, indeed, the correct one. A moment later two detectives from Scotland Yard entered the room, accompanied by an American officer.

“Which is Colonel Creedmore?” said one of them, looking around the room, scanning the faces of the gentlemen present with an inquiring gaze.

“I am,” said Milton, coming forward from the side of Pauline, whom he had taken to dinner.

“In the name of Her Majesty,” said the officer, laying his hands on Milton. “This officer,” he continued, pointing to the American, “has an order of arrest for you under the Extradition Treaty. You are wanted in the United States on the charge of MURDER, FORGERY, and ROBBERY!”

“Very good,” was the quiet answer of Milton, casting a swift look at his sister. “Please allow me to change my dress.”

“Certainly,” was the answer.

Half an hour later Milton was driven away in the carriage with the officers. Those assembled were almost paralysed by the swiftness of the stroke. All eyes were turned to Miriam, who sat on a sofa, deadly pale. One javelin had gone home; the other was to follow.

CHAPTER V.

THE WANDERER.

MIRIAM, having been warned of the evil designs of Nickley, was not altogether surprised at the arrest of her brother. She was also well aware that if taken to Salt Lake City he would be acquitted if he had a fair trial. The danger was from the mob, or, more than likely, the vigilants would take the law into their own hands and hang him without waiting for a verdict.

On the day following the arrest, Robert with his brother John went to London and instructed their family solicitor to look after the interests of Milton. The hearing was to be held

on Thursday, and it took place at the Bow Street office. The papers were too carefully prepared in America to permit of any doubts being cast on the evidence. Milton was accordingly handed over to the charge of the American officer to sail on Saturday's steamer for New York. His cousins, with the Rev. Mr. Huben and Chaplain Vivian, accompanied him to the vessel and every provision was made for his comfort. Uncle Richard sent him a draft on New York for five hundred pounds, and told him to draw upon him for any further sum he needed. Miriam wrote a letter full of sisterly counsel, advising him on arrival to send at once for Colonel Derwent and Colonel Moorehead. His cousin Margaret would be of great service. A letter had been posted to her by the same steamer that would take him over. His lawyers arranged that no indignity should be offered to him in transit. No one was to know that he was a prisoner. In this matter, however, Martin Nickley had tried to anticipate them. He procured the publication in all the newspapers that the "notorious Colonel Creedmore" had been arrested on the charge of murder and would sail by the Guion Line steamer on Saturday. Milton's cousins, however, paid the difference of passage on the Cunard steamship, and as the detective made no objection they embarked on her. Nickley was thus foiled in the base design of making the voyage unpleasant for his victim.

In one hour after Milton had sailed Martin Nickley opened his campaign against the woman whose life he had embittered so much. She was seated in the library talking to Pauline and uncle Richard. The rest of her kindred had gone to their homes. Two callers were announced—"On Her Majesty's Service." These magic words open every door, from the stately palace to the humblest cottage. It may mean promotion or appointment to some lucrative office. But it oftener implies that the prison cells are ready for one more unfortunate. When the callers in this particular instance had been ushered into the library they asked for Esther Creedmore, *alias* Madeline Montana.

"My name is Miriam Esther Creedmore Harold, the Countess of Montville, at your service," said the woman for whom they had come.

"There must be some mistake," was the reply of one of the men, awed by her magnetic gaze. "We have an order of arrest issued by the Chief of Police in Brussels for a woman described as——," here the officer hesitated, but continued: "You do not look like the person we want. Did you ever assume the name

of Madeline Montana? Pardon me for asking such a question, but we are here on Her Majesty's Service, and——." Again the officer of the law hesitated, for Miriam stood before him erect, looking haughty, cold, and unmoved. She knew well this was Nickley's work, and there was no alternative but to go with the officers.

"Yes," was her quiet reply. "I did bear that name for two years in order to avoid the persecutions of a man called Martin Nickley, but never disgraced it. It was the name of a girl who died in the convent of the Magdeline in Brussels. Her life was an unfortunate one; no doubt some stigma may have been attached to her, which will account for the order of arrest you now hold. This is part of the contemptible plot of the man I just named."

"Very sorry, madam," was the reply of the officer; "but we have no other course except to ask you to come with us to London, where I trust the charges can be proved to be utterly without foundation."

As there was no train for an hour the officers were invited to dinner, while Miriam made her preparations. Her uncle Richard and Pauline also went with her to London. It was late when they arrived, and they were driven to Bow Street, where bail was refused, as the charge was a capital one, being that of "child murder."

Miriam's sensitive nature could not stand this awful imputation and she swooned away. When consciousness returned it was to find herself in a cell attended by a young woman wearing prison raiment. Her proud spirit, however, came to her aid, and declining further assistance calmly awaited the issues of the morrow.

Uncle Richard did not for one moment believe in the guilt of his niece, and resolved to defend her with all his resources. He employed able lawyers to represent her at the preliminary trial for extradition to Belgium. Early on the following day they had an interview with her and heard the whole story. They at once sent a messenger to Brussels to obtain the evidence of the Mother Superior of the Convent of the Magdalene. Bail was again offered but refused. The hearing was set down for Wednesday, the 12th of March. Martin Nickley also paid a prominent solicitor to aid the Crown in the pending examination. He did not want the woman sent to Brussels, he protested, nor did he wish his name mixed up in this affair in any way. He told the solicitor that he felt sorry for the family, and if Miriam would only confess her guilt a

way would be found to get her out of the country. Thus he assumed the position of a friend to the accused, but also as not in favour of compromising justice. He had nevertheless prepared an exaggerated account of the whole affair for the press, and paid liberally for its insertion. All the London dailies on the morning succeeding the arrest had sensational articles headed :

“CRIME IN HIGH LIFE.

AN ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTER ARRESTED FOR CHILD MURDER.

TWO PROMINENT OLD ENGLISH FAMILIES INVOLVED.”

Marked copies of these papers were sent to Sir Thomas Shirley and all friends of the family. Nickley did not let the opportunity pass without having a fling at Pauline, in order to get square with her husband and also her late father, for he had never forgotten the horsewhipping nor the expulsion from the club fourteen years previously. So in Tuesday's papers an article appeared stating that Mrs. Pauline Bentley, the wife of the first lieutenant of the flagship “Stiffsides,” now at Malta, was the bosom friend and companion of the accused, Miriam Creedmore, *alias* Madeline Montana. A number of these papers were sent to all naval stations and ships in commission.

Martin Nickley expected an easy victory in the trial, and as a result Miriam would be given in charge of the officer from Brussels. This man was in his pay. The anticipation was that she would be badly frightened and willing to accept his offer of escape by leaving the country, going to Australia never to return. His calculations were based upon his experience of Esther's character. To be sure he lately had seen some exhibition of a haughty spirit, but that he attributed to the example of Milton. The latter being now out of the way, he hoped to find the same timid girl that he had managed so long in past years.

The examination was short. The able solicitors employed by uncle Richard produced the sworn statement of the Mother Superior at Brussels, which proved conclusively that the charge was an old exploded one that was decided two years before the real Madeline died. All the other evidence was rebutted by undoubted proof of innocence. Miriam was absolved completely of the charges, but the judge rebuked her for her folly in taking the name of such a noted character as this Montana girl.

Miriam was now a free woman, but all London knew of her past career. She left the court room suffering from nervous prostration, and went with her uncle and Pauline to the

Midland Hotel, and might have recovered from the shock speedily but for a letter received the next day from Mrs. Van Reem. It was written from Everdale, where she had returned and once more installed herself as mistress.

She told her niece that, having disgraced the family heritage, she must never presume to set her polluted feet inside the manor. The best thing now would be to assume a new name and emigrate to Australia. There she could find employment as a servant, and if reports were satisfactory an allowance would be sent to her. Even her uncle must not return until he had given evidence of repentance for his disgraceful conduct in "harbouring a fallen woman." Mrs. Ainsworth wrote asking that Miriam would never mention the fact of her sojourn for eighteen months at Beechwood School. Her name had been erased from the list of former pupils.

A third letter came from her cousin Adelaide, stating that the doors of Elmswood were closed against her for ever. In the hour when she needed kind, sympathetic words from her relatives not one ray of hope could she get except from Pauline and uncle Richard. The worship of that terrible god, *family heritage*, was in the way of any assistance.

As we have before stated Miriam was of a strong nature, but there are limits to even the most powerful. These three letters were too much for endurance. Her mind became weakened under the awful strain and a desire came to flee from her kindred. Why should uncle Richard be under the family ban on her account? Even the loving Pauline was injured because of loyal friendship for her schoolmate.

The day was cold and blustering, the wind was from the east, and snow fell at intervals. It was the last effort of winter. Miriam left the hotel quietly without Pauline knowing of it. Her uncle had gone out to attend to some business. She had no particular purpose, no place to go for shelter, and even neglected to take money. She had on a travelling dress of navy-blue cloth.

A brief note was left for uncle Richard asking him not to seek her. She desired to get away from all connections and friends, otherwise madness would result from the strain.

Up one street Miriam wandered and down another. The snow began to fall heavily. Still the proud spirit sustained the physical nature, but the latter began to show signs of weakening. It was now four o'clock. Her breakfast had been a slight one, and nothing since then had passed her lips. She saw a sign with the words, "Home for the Friendless." It was a

pretentious mansion, given by a maiden lady on her death-bed for the purpose indicated, with a liberal endowment. In charge of the home was a woman belonging to the same class as Mrs. Van Reem—a widow, but with very little of the milk of human kindness in her constitution.

Miriam rang the bell, which was answered by a young girl of about fourteen years. A chair was in the hall, into which the tired wanderer dropped with a sigh of relief for even this brief rest. A moment later the deaconess, as she was pleased to call herself, swept into the hall robed in a dress of black silk that must have cost at least fifteen shillings a yard. Her manner was cold and scornful. She looked at Miriam with a quick survey of her wet raiment. Then in slow, measured words said: "Did you wish to see me?"

Miriam put her hand to her head as though to collect her thoughts, and answered:

"Can I have shelter for the night?"

"Have you any money?" was the query.

"Money, did you say? No; but I can get some to-morrow."

"Oh, yes, perhaps you can; I have heard this story so often. Well, if you have no money we have no place for you. But I can give you a little change." The deaconess at this moment remembered that she had received that very day a sovereign from a charitable lady to be given to some deserving woman. Here was a doubtful case. If the whole of this sum, she reasoned with herself, was given it might be wasted on a worthless person. In order, therefore, not to be deceived she handed out a shilling and kept the balance herself, thus making sure that the bounty of the donor should not be wasted on one who would not appreciate the gift. The head of this so-called charitable establishment called the young girl and bade her open the door for "this woman," as she designated Miriam. Before it was closed the child was told to get a pail of water and a scrubbing-brush to wash the chair where this person sat, as it was polluted. This was meant as an object-lesson for the young girl.

Miriam heard this remark and turning to the deaconess flung the shilling at her feet, and with her eyes blazing forth all the indignation of her nature, said:

"You should change your sign, calling it 'The Home of Hypocrisy.' God help the friendless when they come to you for aid and shelter."

With this retort she left the house and faced the now bitter storm. Once more summoning all the energy of her dauntless

spirit she resolved not to falter in the resolution to keep away from her kindred. It was indeed the hour of triumph for Martin Nickley. Alone she could not fight him. She asked heaven for help, for light, for guidance in this hour of extremity, and the prayer was answered at once.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOUSE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

FROM the statement made in the last chapter the reader may think that the author has a personal feeling in this matter. In refutation of this he would say that the account narrated about the Home for the Friendless was copied from a London journal, and adopted by him as germane to the story he is now relating.

What Miriam needed in her present condition was something to arouse her from the depression of mind. This had been effectually done by the action of the deaconess in directing the chair to be washed in which she had sat for a few minutes' rest. The snow now came down in large flakes, covering her as with a white mantle. On she pressed with no particular object in view, only to keep moving. The clock of a church was just striking six when she stopped by an arched gateway. A lamp burning over it illuminated a sign which when read stirred every fibre of her nature. With a shudder she shrank back, exclaiming :

“ Oh, no ; not that ! ”

She put her hands up to her face and the hot tears came as a relief. Once again she looked at the sign, and leaned against the stone door-post for support. The first impulse was to return to the Midland Hotel, where uncle Richard and Pauline would give a cordial welcome. A passing cab went slowly by ; when on the point of hailing it her hand went up involuntarily to the bell handle. The words which agitated her so much was, “ The House of the Good Shepherd.” To seek entrance under its sheltering roof would be a virtual admission of a fallen condition. She was startled at the impulse that caused her to ring the bell. The door, or, more

properly speaking, the gate, opened but no one was there. Going inside, a large granite building at the end of a walk thirty feet distant met her gaze. Stone steps led up to the main doorway. A lamp shone in the centre over the porch. She wondered what her reception would be at this establishment. Certainly it could not be worse than that accorded at the Home for the Friendless. Her feet had hardly touched the lower step when the massive door swung wide open, and a Sister of Charity stood to give her a welcome. The hall was refreshingly warm. As the door closed behind her a gentle voice said, in a tone so sweet and musical that set all doubts at rest in regard to the reception that would be accorded :

“Welcome, my sister, to this house, in the Saviour’s name.”

These words were spoken by a woman who might have been forty years of age. She was dressed in the habit of the order of St. Joseph. The face was one of striking beauty with a skin pale, but of a texture so fine as to be almost juvenile. Her eyes were hazel, with a high forehead, to which the white covering of the order on her brow lent an additional charm. Quietly the sister surveyed the visitor, and Miriam spoke in answer to the token of welcome :

“Can I have shelter for the night? I have no money, but this ring is of some value.”

She took off her glove and showed a diamond ring that was presented by uncle Richard as a birthday token.

“Keep the ring, my sister; you are welcome to what we have in the name of our blessed Redeemer. We seek no information here as to your past history, except such as you may volunteer to relate. Your clothes are wet and your hands cold. Come, and I will give you dry raiment and a warm meal.”

“I ask only shelter for the night,” replied Miriam sorrowfully. “Let me sleep in the kitchen before the fire. I may pollute your house by remaining longer. To-morrow you can wash the chair on which I sleep so that it will taint no one else.”

The sting of the insult of the deaconess was rankling in her bosom; at the thought of it she sat down in a chair and wept bitterly.

The sister, who was no other than the Mother Superior of the establishment, was passing through the hall when the bell rang. She now knelt down beside Miriam, and putting her arms around her, said :

“Where did you get such an impression of our sisterhood as to think we would do anything so uncharitable as to make you feel unwelcome? If you are in trouble we will seek to alleviate it; if you are hungry we will feed you; if you are sick we will try to heal not only the body but the soul; if you are persecuted here you will be secure from annoyance of every kind. But you must not remain a moment longer in your wet garments.”

Two other sisters now came into the hall and repeated the welcome so heartily that Miriam arose to follow them. She told of the cruel words spoken to her at the Home for the Friendless.

The Mother Superior, whose name in the convent was Sister Marie Delphine, after hearing Miriam's story said to her:

“By the rules of our order we never presume to judge of the actions of other institutions. We endeavour to act and so conduct ourselves here that we may be found blameless before all mankind, and as far as possible in the sight of our blessed Master.”

Miriam was taken to a warm bedroom. As her feet were wet she was persuaded to go to bed. A few moments later a supper was brought to the bedside. She was truly thankful for the kind Providence that led her to this house of the Good Samaritans. Little did she think that this very establishment, whose name had made her shudder when she first saw it, was to be so strangely interwoven with her history in the critical hour when her whole destiny hung upon the effort to break the chain of circumstantial evidence.

At eight o'clock she was sleeping soundly.

The regular priest in attendance on the sisters of the House of the Good Shepherd was away in Rome on a visit, and acting in his place was the Rev. A. J. Sarmaine, the vice-rector of a college. Father Sarmaine was thirty-five years of age, but his smooth face and clear-cut features gave him a much younger look. He belonged to one of the old English families. His father had intended him for the diplomatic service. After graduating at Stonyhurst College, the great and justly-celebrated Jesuit institution of learning in the North of England, he spent two years as *attaché* in the English Embassy at Paris. His thoughts, however, turned to the Church. He was one of those men who are born to this work, and can no more keep from entering into sacred orders than they can help coming into the world. It was a great disappointment to his father, who had looked anxiously forward to the time when

promotion step by step would raise him to the rank of ambassador. His mother was also ambitious of worldly honours. He was, however, a dutiful son, and while his heart was set on holy things yet realised that his father, who had spent so much money on his education, had a right to advise him about his movements. He exhibited his aspirations for work in the vineyard of his Divine Master so strongly to his parents that they finally yielded. The seven years' judicious training at Stonyhurst had borne legitimate fruit. In due course of time he was ordained. His superior talents took him at once to the front. He was now, as we have stated, the vice-rector of a large college. It was very rare to find so young a man in a post of so great responsibility.

Father Sarmaine was of a very gentle disposition, liberal in his views, and, while devoted to the interests of the Catholic faith, yet was willing to give credit to those of other denominations for their earnest zeal in the service of their common Lord and Master. Massillon, the great evangelical preacher of the 18th century, was his favourite author. Wherever he went his genial face attracted attention as being one of a higher grade than the ordinary class of priests. No other in the City of London was better adapted for the peculiar work of the House of the Good Shepherd. There was such a kindly, sympathetic look in his eyes that women in distress or sorrow felt that they could confide in him. No matter how low they had fallen there was no look of reproach. Yet no one would have dared to take the slightest liberty with him. Thus we present him to our readers, and hope his actions as he comes upon the scene of our story may not belie the analysis of his character. This is no fancy sketch. The author first met him in Rome, and had abundant opportunities of studying his disposition in the mutual friendship that followed.

The morning after the arrival of Miriam Father Sarmaine went, as was his custom, to visit the sisters and also to speak to the new-comers. The Mother Superior told him of her guest, whom she did not feel like regarding as one of the refugees from a world whose cup of pleasure had been drained to the bitter dregs. He waited in the parlour while Sister Marie Delphine went to invite her charge to an interview with their pastor.

The rest during the night and the peaceful surroundings of the house had a very beneficial effect upon Miriam. From what he had heard of her the priest expected to see a woman of fashion who had become tired of the frivolities of her surroundings and was glad of a respite. The stately

form of Miriam swept into the room with all the polished grace of a woman of education and refinement. When those wonderful eyes opened in their full power and beauty Father Sarmaine bowed lower than he remembered to have done for many a long day. There was an indescribable something in her countenance that excited his curiosity and won his utmost sympathy. Asking her to be seated he expressed his great pleasure at this interview, and offered full assistance in any way that would be of service to the honoured guest of the house.

Miriam told him frankly that she was not of his faith but belonged to the Established Church. "It must have been an overruling Providence that led me here," she continued, "for I have found nothing but kindness, and the dear Mother Superior has entwined herself around my heart. I owe you some explanation for my advent last evening, and hope that you do not take me for one of those unfortunate beings of my sex for whose special benefit this house has been established. My history is a strange one, but perhaps you have heard so many that you would not care to hear mine."

"I must confess," was the answer, "that you inspire me with more than ordinary interest, and will be glad to hear whatever you may be pleased to impart. One look at your intelligent face is sufficient to convince the most sceptical that you have moved in a circle far above the class you have mentioned."

Miriam then told the priest her history, combining the dual life, but only relating the experience in England. She gave him the letters that came from her aunt and cousin, and stated the reason for wishing to relieve her uncle from all embarrassment. He was further told that while she had no money yet her diamonds were worth a thousand pounds, and offered them to him to dispose of and use the funds as he thought best.

"Under no consideration will I take these gems," was his reply. "Remain here under our protection, and I will aid you in every way in my power to prove your marriage valid with the late Earl of Montville. Under this sacred roof Martin Nickley will not dare molest you, and everything will be done for your comfort."

On leaving the house Father Sarmaine told the Mother Superior that the Countess of Montville impressed him as the most cultured woman he ever had the pleasure of meeting. Thus we leave her for a while. Milton has some claim on our time.

CHAPTER VII.

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC.

MILTON'S passage on the Cunarder was without incident. There was none of that romantic adventure which characterised Edgar's trip when he went over just eighteen years before.

He was recorded on the list of passengers as Mr. Milton, and no one knew that he was a prisoner. On arriving at New York he was taken to the Tombs Prison and the authorities at Salt Lake City were duly notified.

He had planned his course while on the steamer and now put everything into operation. In the first place he wrote to his cousin Margaret and uncle Joseph, telling of his arrival and the cause. Then he telegraphed to Colonel Derwent, also to Colonel Moorehead. He followed the advice of Miriam by wiring to the Grand Army Post, in San Francisco, where his name had been recorded as a comrade of good standing. He next sent word to Marcy Graston and Bill Jenkins to meet him at Salt Lake City. If the trial should be conducted fairly he had no fear of the result.

One of the charges on which he had been extradited was that of obtaining money by false pretences. This was a side issue. Murder was the main point—the murder of Red Loomey and several others whom he had never seen. In many of the Western towns to be accused was equivalent to being found guilty. There was a strong feeling against him at Salt Lake owing to the large amount of money lost on account of the Trout Creek Mining Co. The blame of all the mismanagement had been laid on Colonel Creedmore. He was an Englishman; this was enough to condemn him in the Western States. He was accused of "salting the mine," passing himself off as an English baronet and thus working on the credulity of the vigilants, who were blinded at the sight of the virgin gold taken out of the bed of the creek. There was also the unfavourable impression at Virginia City owing to the death of the noble Etaline. Milton thus had to face a combination of circumstances that in the aggregate might lead to serious consequences. Martin Nickley's agent had followed up all clues and grossly exaggerated every item of fact.

He expected that his cousin Margaret would have been the first to come to his prison to bid him welcome back to America.

She did not appear. In one hour after he had wired to Colonel Moorehead the answer came from him stating that he would leave by the Fall River boat that evening, bringing a lawyer with him to take charge of his case and go to Salt Lake. Then came an almost identical answer from Colonel Derwent from Louisville, Kentucky. In the evening he received a telegram from his Grand Army Post in San Francisco, telling him that one of the ablest lawyers in that city had been retained to meet him on his arrival at Ogden, and also authorising him to draw on the post for five hundred dollars. He had sent his message to Marcy Graston at Denver, as that was the last place at which he had been heard from. Late in the evening came a despatch from him to send on by mail full particulars of the charges, and assuring him that both his old partners would stand by him for all they were worth. Not a line or word came from his cousin. Strangers were helping with money, also giving their time freely to aid and assist him in this dark hour. Where were his kindred?

Nevertheless Margaret had not neglected him. She had spent an hour with her father pleading for permission to employ able counsel to defend her English cousin. It was the first time in her history that she had to argue any point with her father. He let her have her own way in everything. Margaret was a dutiful daughter and never imposed on her trusting parent. But now he was worked to a high pitch. She never faltered in her devotion to her cousin, and in this hour of his sorest need proposed to stand by him, even if all the world said he was guilty. Not in many years had Mr. Richardson developed the "bull-dog tenacity" of his English nature, which now came to the surface. He had never forgiven Edgar the forgery of his name at Long Branch during the previous summer, though he helped to get him out of the country. Now that he was brought back a prisoner to stand trial for his misdeeds he was willing to renounce the tie of kinship. In closing the conversation he was wrought up to a state of passion very unusual for a staid member of the Society of Friends.

"I tell thee, Margaret," he declared, "I will not use a dollar of mine to prevent the law from taking its course on thy kinsman. Verily he must suffer for his crimes. I feel guilty in aiding his escape last August."

"But, father," she pleaded, "he has not been proved guilty of any crimes, and although he has been brought back from England it was owing to the malice of one Martin Nickley

who found him in the way. I had full particulars of this from Miriam by the last mail."

"My child, thee must remember that there are many rumours likewise of that woman that are not to her credit. Verily I cannot understand why the children of my late brother-in-law should turn out so unfortunate."

"You forget, my worthy father, that Edgar, or Milton as he now prefers to be called, has a grand war record and his army life was without stain. Remember how you welcomed him back and offered him half of your business, and even sent to Denver a large sum of money to invest in the Rose Hill Gold Mine."

"Ah, Margaret, thee hast called up some points in my life that have troubled me very much indeed. The weakness of the flesh overcame me, and the pride of relationship in the excitement of that war period made me forget the teaching of the Society of Friends. I did rejoice when victory crowned the Northern standard. It was a temptation from the Evil One, and I am being punished now for my exultation with those sons of Belial."

"Why, father, you don't call the brave defenders of our glorious Union 'sons of Belial?' Where would our country have been if they had not gone forth at the call of duty?"

"Margaret, I repeat to thee what I have often said before, that they were a necessary evil in those days, and now that we do not need them I am opposed to any remembrance of their so-called valour. Look at the Grand Army of the Republic! What are they but a collection of sons of Belial! I have no doubt that they will help thy cousin, and verily I trust he will not make known his relationship to us."

"I am deeply grieved to hear you talk in this way, my father," said the girl, "and for my part do not propose to desert Milton when he needs our help. I will seek at once for a lawyer of experience to defend him, and want you to go with me to the jail to see him."

"Thou canst retain the lawyer, but I will not go to the prison. I never was in any place of that kind in my life, and would feel grieved to have thee go where only men of Belial are placed to restrain them from depredations."

Margaret knew that her father, if left alone for awhile, would repent of his harsh views. So she went to the "man of law" who had charge of her father's affairs, and told him the case as it stood; also that she was anxious to see her cousin, but her father declined to go with her.

"He will change his mind by to-morrow," was the lawyer's answer. "I have to go to court in a few minutes, but will see Colonel Creedmore the first thing in the morning. Nothing will be done in his case for a week, as they must wait for the requisition from Salt Lake."

Margaret went home and wrote a long letter to Milton, telling him what she had done in his behalf, and would see him in person as soon as her father was able to go out. She said that she believed him innocent of the charges, and he could always count on her warm sympathy, no matter what others might say about him. This letter was received the day after his arrival, and its effect on the imprisoned Englishman was wonderful. It braced him up so that when Colonel Moorehead arrived with a Boston lawyer, prepared to go with him to Salt Lake, he felt that victory was almost assured.

"Comrade Moorehead," as he chose to be called, was exceedingly cordial in his greeting, and told his "comrade of the war," as he styled Milton, that bail for any amount would be forthcoming. He would also make his case known to some of the Grand Army Posts in the city, and they would rally round him, so that he need have no fear of the result.

That afternoon Milton was delighted to see his uncle ushered into the reception room where he was talking to Colonel Moorehead. His sweet cousin was with her father, and the manner in which he was received by his kindred was a circumstance that he never forgot. Quaker though he was the old man had softened, and his heart was opened towards his nephew.

"Milton," he said, "thou shalt have all the money thou may require for thy defence. Thou must keep up a stout heart. It may be as well to have these charges tried and thine innocence proved; then thou canst go about in peace without fear of arrest."

"A thousand thanks, dear uncle, for your kind words; but I have all the money I need, and my comrades of the Grand Army have volunteered to assist me by procuring able counsel and funds to carry out the defence. What I need now is not gold, but that which gold cannot buy—loving words of belief in my innocence. I am not guilty of the charges brought against me."

The tears came into Milton's eyes, and his uncle was touched as he never was before.

"Milton," he said, "I will come to see thee every day, and the best that the city can produce in the way of eating shall be

brought to thee. My man of law tells me that the authorities will not take bail, for if they would I can put up for thee one hundred thousand dollars."

After a few words of kind greeting from cousin Margaret she left with her father.

"Milton has changed," said the old quaker. "Verily I cannot understand it. There is more of a gentle spirit in the flash of those eyes than what there was last August."

"There is something about Milton that is mysterious," said the daughter.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the grey-haired and battle-scarred veteran, Colonel Derwent, embraced Milton, saying: "My dear Colonel Creedmore, I left my home on an hour's notice and propose to stand by you until you are a free man. I have with me five thousand dollars and there is more behind it. Those Salt Lake idiots will be taught a lesson."

Thus the days passed pleasantly. A number of comrades of the Grand Army came to see him. Among them were several prominent lawyers, who offered to defend him on his trial. All this was without thought of compensation from the prisoner. The comradeship of veterans was indeed a tie stronger than that of blood. Although they were classed as "men of Belial" by many of the Society of Friends, who were only too glad to avail themselves of their strong arms and stalwart forms to keep at bay for four years the men who sought to burn their homes over their heads, yet now that the danger was past looked upon them as butchers. We will now go back to England.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHATEAU DE NAYMOURS.

WHEN Richard Shirley returned to the Midland Hotel and found a note that Miriam had left him he was very much grieved that she had acted in this rash and hasty manner. Not for a moment did he have any doubts of her entire innocence. Pauline was prostrated by Miriam's departure, and resolved to devote her time to finding out where she had gone. This was a more difficult matter than she had anticipated. Miriam had

resolved to remain under the protection of the Sisters of Charity, and Father Sarmaine said that she would at all times find him at her service.

The sudden flight had surprised Martin Nickley. He employed able detectives, but no trace of the missing one was obtained. No one thought of asking for information at the House of the Good Shepherd. It was naturally supposed by the average policeman to be the very last place to which a proud-spirited woman like Miriam would go for refuge. A week passed without the slightest clue, and Nickley began to think that she had actually thrown herself into the river. He knew that Esther had manifested such symptoms several times, and therefore offered a large reward for the body. Gladly would he have paid more than a thousand pounds to have seen it laid out for the grave. It became necessary for his security that Miriam should die; the longer she lived the more his own danger augmented. Business of a very urgent nature called him away to Italy, and we must go back for a few moments to a part of our narrative which will make certain matters clear that may have been a little equivocal. The reader will remember that when Martin Nickley first came to see Lord Grassmere it was with an introduction from Count Rochmere, who sent his friend Count Morella de Naymours to take his place. The right to this title we will now explain. In 1864, while Nickley was in Italy watching the movements of his rival, Edmond Harold, and his bride on their honeymoon, he learned that the old Chateau de Naymours was for sale. It was situated at the head of Lake Como, and had been for many years the patrimony of the family. The last of the male line was the Count Morella Naymours. He had stipulated in his will that after his death or that of his two sisters the property should be sold. The only condition made was that the purchaser should bear his name. One of these sisters was a widow without children and the other a maiden lady. As they were in need of money they were anxious to sell the chateau, having power to do so under the will. Martin Nickley bought it, together with three hundred acres of land. The purchase carried with it the title of count, subject to the transfer tax. The agent of the Italian Government called upon Nickley, and informed him that the assessment for the title when not directly inherited would be five thousand pounds of English money. As this was half the price paid for the whole estate the honour was declined. He had no particular use for the rank, being very plebeian in his ideas. He knew that in

all other countries except Italy he could use it whenever he desired. In searching over the old family records, however, he found that he was entitled to the additional title of Count Nucingar. This came to a former heir by inheritance but was not used, as that of Naymours was the older and more honourable. Under the latter name he had married the daughter of Lord Grassmere and taken her to the chateau, where she spent most of the time of her married life. Her little daughter was called Luella Nucingar.

The time had come now when the legal right to use in Italy the title of Count Morella de Naymours was necessary for Martin Nickley.

He was engaged to marry Lady Martha Ormond, sister of Lord Grassmere. The marriage was to have taken place in October. He had fitted up the chateau in elegant style for his expected bride. The appearance of Esther, whom he thought dead, had caused him to delay the wedding until spring. His plea was ill health.

Now that Miriam had probably drowned herself he felt at liberty to go to Italy. After much bargaining with the officers of the Italian Government the tax for the legal right to use the title of count was fixed at two thousand pounds. Nickley drew up the papers himself, and stipulated that he was privileged to assume all the rank belonging to the house of Naymours. When the money was paid and the papers of nobility had been signed by the king, Nickley had the notice printed in the newspapers that under the royal signet he was the Count de Naymours and also the Count Nucingar. The Italian authorities were very much chagrined to find that two titles had been given for the price of one.

Although Nickley for so many years had despised the title, yet, now that he was so addressed by the government, he became proud of it. It needed only his marriage to the earl's sister to complete his ambition. He had an income of twenty thousand pounds a year, his habits were not expensive, and he was anxious for children to perpetuate his name. How, then, did Miriam stand in his way? Because he had acknowledged to Milton that she was his lawful wife. He had not intended to make this confession; it came out before he was aware of it. Nevertheless, though this so-called marriage was not a demonstrated fact, he could not afford the risk that it should be made a matter of inquiry. The reader will remember that Esther told Ziska, on Westminster Bridge, that Nickley had brought a man to perform the ceremony at the chateau where she was

a prisoner. This man assumed to be a priest. Afterwards, Nickley had told her that he was a Paris cab-driver. This was indeed his occupation. His solicitor had told him that such a marriage in France was void. In Scotland it would have been legal, but in England it was not. The easiest solution was to induce Miriam to leave the country, failing in that then worry her to her grave. He regarded this whole matter as thousands of men do. He was a man with a large income, healthy, and of possible great use to his country. Such a life was valuable. Besides, he was an Italian count. This made his estimate of his worth rise higher. Against this was a woman whose character was ruined, and had been discarded by most of her relatives. She could not enjoy life. The best thing for her would be to die and thus leave him free from all impediments. This is a cold-blooded argument. Yet it is indulged in by many. He was doubtful as to whether Miriam had any intention of ending her mortal existence. She did not believe what Nickley had told Milton, about her being his lawful wife. She hated the man, and only desired to be let alone by him. But this he did not propose to do so long as she was living. "That woman has more lives than a cat," was his observation to the man whom he employed to search for her body.

Nickley returned to England early in June, and went directly to Grassmere Manor to pay his respects to his affianced wife, the Lady Martha. Not far from the earl's residence was an old-fashioned building, called "Langworth Hall." The late owner had been a very eccentric bachelor. He was taken sick suddenly in the streets of London and sent to a hospital where the sisters of charity were the nurses. They waited on him attentively without knowing that he was a rich man and large landed proprietor. He died in the hospital, but before doing so made a will leaving Langworth Hall and the interest of ten thousand pounds to keep it in repair for the use of the sisters as a summer home.

On the 15th of June Sister Delphine took Miriam, who was ill from worry and mental depression, to Langworth. At first she was not willing to go, apprehending that she might not only meet Martin Nickley but Lady Martha or the earl himself.

On arrival Miriam kept herself carefully secluded in the grounds. She had made a full statement to Father Sarmaine and Sister Delphine about her former stay at Grassmere Manor under the name of Esther Ducie, the daughter of a Huguenot clergyman. This had been done at the suggestion

of Nickley and was not in accordance with her own desire. Lady Martha, although a member of the Established Church, very often came to the hall to pay a visit. Miriam therefore took care to keep her face closely veiled every time she went out walking with one or more of the sisters.

On the 20th of June, while taking one of those walks with the Mother Superior, they suddenly encountered Pauline, who was visiting in the neighbourhood. She stopped and spoke to Sister Delphine, informing her that several ladies were making garments for the annual fair to be given by the sisters in July. Miriam's heart was touched when hearing the musical voice of her dearest friend. Her own face being closely veiled she had not been recognised by Pauline. Remaining silent for a moment she then pronounced her name—Pauline.

There was but one woman in the world that could speak like that, and instantly Miriam found herself clasped in the arms of her schoolmate. Together they walked back to the hall. Pauline went in to spend the rest of the day, and heard the experience of the last three months. She in turn told of how several letters had been received from her husband, telling her to stand by Miriam through all reports no matter what the world said. She had walked the streets early and late watching faces, but never once seeing the one dearer than all others. At sundown she took her departure, promising to come next day. Early on the following morning Father Sarmaine paid a visit to the sisters and expressed a wish to see Miriam. He had long since perceived that she was a woman of unusual mental abilities, but had refrained so far from speaking to her about religious matters. If she could be won over to the Catholic faith it would be quite an acquisition, especially when her right to the title of Countess of Montville should be established. He felt sure this would speedily come, as the case was now pending in the courts. This would release the very large amount of money due to her from her father's estate, besides her dower interest. The priest must not be regarded as mercenary in this transaction. Shelter had been freely given to Miriam when nothing was known of her position. The very fact that she sought refuge in the House of the Good Shepherd was an indication that she had no friends to inquire after her.

During the three months that Miriam had been under the charge of the sisters she was always treated with marked respect, money being freely furnished for her needs by Father Sarmaine out of his private funds. He had positively refused

to sell her diamonds or allow her to part with them. As stated in a previous chapter, the priest was not disposed to take advantage of her distressed position to press upon her a religion different in some of its teachings from the one in which she had been brought up. He now asked her whether there was any information regarding the Catholic faith that would enable her to look upon it as the one essential to salvation. If there was he would be happy to impart it.

"Father Sarmaine," she replied, "there is not such a radical difference between the Established and the Catholic faith as to require much argument to draw one over to yours. But until cleared from all imputations resting on my character I would prefer to remain in my present condition. I have had an experience—in fact, two of them—that has led me to place more value on the main points of Christianity and not so much on the various denominations that divide it. Some other time I will tell you some strange things."

At this point visitors came in and the religious talk was postponed to a future day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DIAMOND CROSS.

MIRIAM was conscious that coming to Langworth Hall was an error of judgment, for it was close to Grassmere Manor where Martin Nickley was in the habit of visiting. Had she stayed away much suffering might have been avoided.

Pauline was now a regular visitor, and went out with Miriam for walks together. On the tenth day of her arrival the bell rang about ten o'clock. Miriam expecting that it was her friend answered it in person. She was very much astonished to behold Lady Martha. The latter recognised her although it was now seven years since the departure from Grassmere Manor.

"My dear Esther," was the salutation. "What are you doing here? I thought you were a Protestant, being the daughter of a Huguenot clergyman. Have you gone over to Rome?"

"No," was the answer, "I am on a visit to Sister Marie Delphine, who is a friend of mine. My name is Miriam. Esther is my second name."

"My brother, the earl, will be delighted to know that you are in the neighbourhood once more. We shall expect you over to see us at the manor. I suppose that you have heard all about my engagement to Count Morella de Naymours. We are to be married shortly."

"This is the first I have heard of it," was the answer.

"He has fitted up the grand old Naymours chateau on the border of Lake Como, and we will be delighted to see you there," said Lady Martha.

Miriam was indeed astonished at this information. Perhaps now there would be peace and rest from Nickley's persecutions. She was tempted to tell Lady Martha that the count and Martin Nickley were one and the same person. After due reflection, however, she concluded it was none of her business. An hour later Pauline came and Lady Martha left.

Miriam speedily made up her mind to go back to London to the House of the Good Shepherd. Pauline agreed with her that it was the best course to adopt. While talking the matter over with the Mother Superior the bell rang and Lord Grassmere was announced.

"My dear Esther," said the earl, "I am delighted to see you. My sister has just told me that you were here, and I would have called sooner if I had known that you were in the neighbourhood. She also informed me that your first name is Miriam. Well, they are both good names. Count Morella is in Paris. You have heard of his engagement to my sister. I am anxious to hear all about you since you left us. It is seven years ago and you hardly look older than you did then. You must also see my little grandchild. Ah! how you did try to persuade that daughter of mine to get those romantic notions out of her head. Well, poor child, she is gone."

Miriam replied: "I feel greatly honoured, Lord Grassmere, at your visit and deeply grateful for your kind invitation, but am about to return to London to-day. Some other time I will be delighted to accept your hospitality."

"Impossible to think of letting you go, my dear Miriam. I hunted for you many long months; now that you are found I shall expect a visit. My sister needs your help at this present time. She wants your advice about the choice of a number of things for her coming marriage. I know that the Mother Superior will spare you when she knows how much we want you."

Lord Grassmere declined to take "no" for an answer. Miriam was constrained to accept the offer of hospitality, and went with him to the manor. She found the little Luella a bright

charming girl, the very image of her late mother. The moment she crossed the threshold of the house a strange feeling of depression that could not be accounted for took possession of her. She was certain also that Martin Nickley would hear of her presence at the residence of his affianced. It placed her in a quandary as to the proper course to pursue. She dreaded his vengeance if he discovered that his personality was made known.

Pauline came to see her the day after her arrival at the manor, and advised her to tell the earl everything and expose the character of this man.

"Miriam," she said, "you cannot expect any consideration from Nickley. Why should you hesitate a single moment? By striking now you may baffle some design he may have against you. Rest assured that he will not let you alone after what has been done to Milton and yourself. I am satisfied that your brother would never have been extradited but for Nickley's gold."

"If that could be verified," said Miriam, "I would turn on him with all the vindictive fury of my nature. I am only waiting for the fact of my marriage to Edmond Harold to be established beyond the shadow of a doubt, then Mr. Nickley will have a war on his hands that will fully occupy his time."

"Miriam," said Pauline, "I am convinced that Nickley holds the key to the solution of that problem. He will never let you have the advantage that such a clearance would give. I have been working quietly myself on that affair, and have discovered that the so-called Rev. Albright is his relative. The Rev. Mr. Demar, of Arrochar, wrote to me in answer to a letter of inquiry about this matter, and said that he was deceived in Mr. Albright, whom he was sure was not a clergyman. I have employed a private detective to look up the character of this man. In a few days a full report of his antecedents will be given me. My husband advised this course. I am going to London to-morrow and will keep you informed of all news. But take my advice and look out for some trap that will be surely laid for you. That arch-enemy of yours would not be happy unless he was plotting mischief. If I were in your place I would leave this house to-morrow on some plea or another."

"I am anxious to go," said Miriam, "but a letter came from the Rev. Father Sarmaine this morning asking me to stay here as long as possible. He has hopes of winning over the earl and his sister to the Church of Rome. Being under such obligations to him I cannot well refuse to stay, and will remain here on his account rather than on my own."

"Well, I hope nothing will arise during this visit to increase your troubles, but I cannot shake off a presentiment of evil."

"I have the same feeling," said Miriam. "The earl and his sister are very kind to me. Would you believe it, he asked me just before you came in if my heart was still my own?"

"Well, what next!" said Pauline. "No doubt the next thing that I hear will be that you are the Countess of ——"

"De Naymours," said a voice behind them; and turning they beheld the smiling face of Martin Nickley, disguised as the Count Morella de Naymours.

The irony of his tone betrayed the fact that he had overheard their dialogue; but without any exhibition of anger he continued:

"Ah, Miss Ducie, I am delighted to see you once again under this hospitable roof. It is a long time since this privilege was accorded to me. This is your sister, I suppose," he said, turning to Pauline. "I have just arrived from Paris owing to a telegram received yesterday, and have not yet seen the earl. I would like to ask the opinion of you two ladies upon a matter of a present brought from Paris for Lady Martha. You are aware that in Italy a diamond cross is an appropriate gift to one's affianced; but I would like to know if in England it would be considered the proper thing to do."

The count took from his pocket a beautiful case covered with crimson velvet, having the arms of the house of Naymours embossed in gold on the cover. Opening it he showed a gold cross studded with diamonds, each stone weighing not less than five carats. The ladies answered that such a gift would be a princely one for any English lady. "I suppose," they continued, "this is for Lady Martha Ormond."

"Yes," was the reply, "I bought it for a souvenir. Must return to Italy to-morrow to look after some improvements to my chateau on the banks of Lake Como. As I expect to be absent for several weeks I brought this little trinket to console my affianced for my expected absence."

Martin Nickley's disguise was perfect and no one could easily have penetrated it. His long residence abroad had given him a foreign aspect. His assurance was unbounded, and certainly his power over women was phenomenal. As much as Miriam and Pauline hated him, yet they were brought under his peculiar influence and constrained in spite of themselves to be affable with him.

Miriam introduced Pauline as the wife of Lieutenant E. Bentley, of H.M. Ironclad "Stiffsides," flagship of the Flying Squadron.

Lord Grassmere now came into the room, followed a few moments later by his sister. The Count Morella presented the cross to her without any formality, merely saying :

"My dear Lady Martha, may I ask your acceptance of this little souvenir? It is only a trifle, but hope it will be a reminder of the fact that in this life we have crosses to bear. May we all carry them as easily as you will this little one."

"Satan turned preacher," whispered Pauline to Miriam.

"Ah, did you say a preacher?" said the count, turning round. "Well, I flatter myself that I could do as well as half of those who make a profession of being preachers."

Never was the magic power of this remarkable man more apparent than on this particular day. He had no superior in relating stories. He was so full of humour that his hearers were convulsed with laughter. Indeed Pauline was more on her guard than Miriam.

Although pressed to stay for the night he declined to do so, on the plea that he had to take an early train for Paris. At eleven o'clock his carriage was announced. He found a moment to whisper to Miriam: "My friendship means life and my enmity is death. Your brother's welfare depends upon your discretion. Betray my secret and his life will be the forfeit." The next moment he was gone.

"A very remarkable man," said Lord Grassmere to Miriam; "very well educated for a foreigner."

"I do not like him," said Pauline bluntly. "He treats women as though they were children. Lady Martha," she continued, "when you marry the count be sure and assert your rights at the beginning."

"All women do that without being told," said the earl.

When Miriam and her schoolmate retired for the night they spent two hours in discussing the events of the day, and trying to solve the problem of Martin Nickley's power over them both when he was with them. As soon as he was gone they felt freed from his influence. They could not account for it. Indeed many others besides themselves in London had tried the solution of this problem. It was the subject of much discussion in the clubs and elsewhere. All admitted, however, that his power over women was something marvellous.

The following day Pauline left the manor, promising to be back in a week. For three days Miriam had a very pleasant

time of it. She gave her advice to Lady Martha about her wedding trousseau. Several seamstresses were employed and there was much cutting and fitting. Age does not dim the vanity of the fair sex ; the earl's sister was no exception to the general rule.

CHAPTER X.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

WHEN Pauline arrived in London she went directly to the Midland Hotel, and found Mr. Richard Shirley there in a very despondent state of mind over the abrupt departure of Miriam. He had heard nothing from the detectives whom he had employed to search for her ; that is, he heard nothing satisfactory. They reported very often and promptly at the end of each week when they came for their pay.

Learning from Pauline that his missing niece had been found he was greatly relieved. He told her that the claim on the executors of the estate of the late Earl of Montville was about to come up for trial, and no doubt Miriam would be given the recognition that was her right.

"I hope by September to be able to return with her to Everdale," he added, "and then my worthy sister will have to find some other residence. The house is not large enough for Miriam and her aunt to dwell together. We expect also to have Milton back with us, and look forward to a season of peace and rest. My sister has abundant funds of her own. She can live with our brother Sir Thomas, or at Beechwood Seminary."

Pauline told him of the dual life of Nickley, who was passing himself off as the Count Morella.

"He has the right to the title," was the answer. "I learned this last week. He is too shrewd a man to do anything like that without full authority. His money purchased the rank of Count de Naymours. There is nothing to prevent him from marrying the Lady Martha, and I doubt even if it was known he was the notorious Martin Nickley whether the match would be broken off. Lord Grassmere is poor. Twenty thousand pounds a year is a great magnet to draw even prouder families than the house of Condor."

We will now turn back to Miriam. The sixth day after her arrival at the manor she came down to the breakfast table and found Lady Martha in a state of agitation almost uncontrollable.

"Miriam," she said, "I have met with a dreadful loss. Some one stole the diamond cross last night from my room. Did you hear any noise after you retired? I had the cross in my hand and laid it on my pincushion. This morning it was gone. The most singular thing is that my door leading into the hall was bolted and the one leading into your room was open."

"I heard nothing," said Miriam. "If burglars entered the house they would not have gone without taking the jewellery that was on my table. My door was not bolted. I think, however, that I would have heard anyone coming into the apartment."

After breakfast search was made for the missing article but no trace was found. A letter now came to Miriam from Father Sarmaine at Langworth Hall, stating that he had just come from London for the day and wished to see her. She went immediately to her room and put on a white cashmere dress that was hanging up in her closet. On her arrival at the hall she told Sister Delphine about the loss of the cross. Father Sarmaine remarked that perhaps it was mislaid and would no doubt be found.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, as Miriam was about to return to Grassmere Manor, a man was ushered into the reception room. He announced that he was a detective from Scotland Yard, having been sent for with the view of finding out who had stolen the cross from Lady Martha. In the presence of the Mother Superior and Father Sarmaine he asked Miriam a number of questions, and then quietly remarked :

"I think I know where the missing cross is at this present moment."

"Where?" asked Miriam.

"In your pocket," was the answer. "I have been observing you very closely and noticed that you display a nervous manner; also you have put your hand frequently into your pocket. If you will turn it inside out it will relieve my suspicions."

Miriam flushed to the temples at this imputation. She immediately pulled the pocket out. Nothing was found in it but a handkerchief. "Pardon me," said the detective, "let me examine. Ah!" he continued: "What is this?"

Taking a penknife he cut open the lower part of the pocket and took out the missing diamond cross wrapped up in a costly lace handkerchief belonging to Lady Martha.

"Just what I expected," he quietly remarked. "I am under the painful necessity of asking you to accompany me to London."

Miriam drew herself up to her full height, and, looking the officer straight in the face, answered in a scornful tone :

"The person who put that bauble in my pocket must have told you just where to look for it. Go tell your employer, Martin Nickley, that this plot of his will fail as all the others have done."

"Mr. Nickley is not my employer," said the detective. "I came from Scotland Yard to find out who took the cross. I simply made use of certain clues which I obtained at Grassmere Manor. That jewel which you call a bauble is worth over a thousand pounds."

"Miriam," said Father Sarmaine, looking at her with an expression of surprise, "this is a very serious matter. How do you account for the cross being in your pocket?"

"The only theory that I can advance is that one of the servants, or more likely one of the seamstresses employed at the manor, is in the pay of Martin Nickley. As my dress was in the closet it was a simple matter to put the cross in the pocket and sew it up. This man"—pointing to the officer—"seemed to know just where to look for it. Why should I want to steal the diamonds when I have those of my own that are out of place in my present condition of life?"

"Oh Miriam!" said the Mother Superior, "this accusation is dreadful."

"Surely," was the answer, "neither you nor Father Sarmaine will for one moment think that I have sunk so low as to violate hospitality. I have been fully warned that Martin Nickley would invent some new design to get me into trouble. He will find a different spirit to deal with, however, than in the days gone by. Hitherto I have submitted tamely to his persecutions; but now war will be declared upon him, and one or the other will be driven to the wall. I acknowledge, however, that in the present instance the evidence is against me, but my innocence will be proved."

"I have heard such statements before," remarked the detective, "and you will find some trouble to get the bail that will be required. If I mistake not you were arrested last March on a requisition from the Chief of Police in Brussels."

There was a conflict in the mind of Father Sarmaine. The circumstantial evidence before him was apparently conclusive against Miriam, yet his experience of the honesty of her life was equally convincing. Her face was truthful. She did not

betray the least agitation at the finding of the missing cross in her possession. He soon came to the conclusion that some one in the pay of Nickley had put it where it had been found. He resolved to stand by her. Turning to the officer he said :

“I can procure all the bail that may be needed for her appearance, and will go to London and meet you at the office in Scotland Yard. Until she is proved guilty I trust that you will treat her as an innocent person.”

“I will also go with you,” was the loving assurance of the Mother Superior, as she put her arms around Miriam’s neck and kissed her.

Miriam now changed her dress for a black one, giving the white garment to the officer to be used as evidence. When they arrived in London Father Sarmaine took a cab and drove to the house of his brother, a wealthy merchant, from whom he procured a cheque for one thousand pounds to be used as the amount of bail for Miriam. When he reached the dreaded place—the terror of the criminal element—called Scotland Yard he learned that Miriam and the Mother Superior had gone away together. Bail had been given by Martin Nickley himself. This seemed very strange. If this man was at the bottom of this conspiracy why should he provide the bail bond? The priest went at once to the House of the Good Shepherd and found Miriam. She told him that when they arrived at Scotland Yard Mr. Nickley was there professedly upon some other matter. When he heard of the accusation against Miriam he declared to the Chief of Police that he was certain she was innocent. He said that the original thief had no doubt placed the stolen article in the pocket where it was found, in the hope that no one would think of looking in the room or among the clothing of a guest of the house. So convinced he declared himself to be of the innocence of this lady that he placed a thousand pound note down for the bail bond, which was accepted. Not only had he spoken in this manner but offered Miriam a cheque for five hundred pounds. This she had politely but firmly declined. She explained to Father Sarmaine that Nickley had beyond doubt some design behind all this sudden display of generosity.

“I think he has,” was the reply. “I will therefore go again to Scotland Yard and deposit my cheque for the full amount of the bail. This man Nickley may take it into his head to surrender you, or possibly try to obtain possession of your person. From the fact of being your bondsman he can come at any time with a constable to take you away, ostensibly to

put you in jail. You would then be in his power. I have heard of such things before. His presence at the Central Office already, with a thousand pound note in his pocket, looks to me like a pre-arranged plan."

The following day Father Sarmaine called upon the family solicitor of the late Admiral Creedmore, and went with him to deposit the cheque for one thousand pounds with the officials of Scotland Yard. He requested them in case Mr. Nickley should come at any time to make a surrender of the woman for whom he was surety not to mention this fact to him. When the Chief of Police heard the whole explanation he concurred with Father Sarmaine. He added that he did not think the charges against the accused would be brought for trial.

The day after the return to London Miriam wrote to Pauline and told her the history of the arrest, and requested her also to inform her uncle Richard that she would be glad to see him. At five o'clock in the afternoon both of them went to the House of the Good Shepherd. The meeting was very affecting. Uncle Richard besought his niece to return to the Midland Hotel with him, but she answered that it would be better for her to remain where she was until the trial took place. Pauline stayed all night with her schoolmate. She declared to Miriam that this last plot was instigated by Nickley, being the final effort of a man driven to desperation by repeated failures.

"Your solicitor told me yesterday," she continued, "that within a month he felt certain that your claim as the Countess of Montville would be recognised by the courts. Then for a move against Nickley, which will expose his villainy and place him behind prison bars, where he properly belongs. Milton, I am sure, will also be cleared of the charges brought against him. A triumphal march to Everdale to dislodge Mrs. Van Reem will follow."

"How can I ever thank you, my sweet Pauline," was Miriam's rejoinder to these cheering predictions of her faithful friend.

"You will thank me best," was the reply, "by showing more determined action in the future than you have done in the past. Remember how much good resulted from the bold stand you made at Beechwood. I cannot understand your quiet submission for so many years to this man Nickley."

Miriam put her arms around Pauline's neck as she answered :

"In everything, except love, you will find me a different woman to the Esther of the past."

"I hope so," was the reply.

CHAPTER XI.

TRIAL BY JURY.

WE must now turn back to Milton and follow him to Salt Lake City. During the ten days' sojourn in the Tombs he was visited daily by his cousin and her father. The worthy old quaker had softened very much towards his nephew. The best that the market afforded was purchased for his repasts. Many members of the Grand Army of the Republic came frequently; both Colonel Moorehead and Colonel Derwent spent a large portion of their time with him. When the final papers arrived they accompanied him, together with two lawyers whom they had engaged. Mr. Richardson also insisted upon sending a young man, a member of the bar, who had already made quite an excellent reputation in the courts of New York.

Milton was escorted to the train by a goodly number of friends. His uncle Joseph said just before the train started :

"Milton, when thou wentest to the war eighteen years ago I told thee that I felt satisfied that thou wouldst return with honours, and now repeat the same thing. Within a month I will look for thy safe return with all charges against thee disproved. Then thou shalt have such a welcome that thou hast never experienced before. Here is a letter that will cheer thee on thy journey."

Cousin Margaret, with her eyes filled with tears, whispered to him her farewell: "Milton, I will pray for you daily and hourly as I did in the old war days. Write as often as you can. God be with you."

Amid the waving of many handkerchiefs the train moved out of the station at Jersey City.

Could Martin Nickley have seen this enthusiastic display he would have felt that it was a bad omen for him. But a hard fight was in reserve.

The letter which Mr. Richardson gave to cheer his nephew contained five bank notes of five hundred dollars each.

When the party arrived at Denver they were met by Marcy Graston, with whom were William Jenkins and his wife. No greeting is more hearty and full of honest welcome than that accorded by the miners of the far West. These staunch old friends of Colonel Creedmore did nothing by halves. They had already sent on to Salt Lake City one of the ablest lawyers of

Denver, and they proposed to go themselves. Some one had stirred up the lawless element of the population in the capital of Mormonism, and they were likely to be met by a vigilance committee when they arrived at Ogden. Fortunately Lieutenant Grimes, the old war friend of the colonel, who had lately passed his examination and commissioned second lieutenant in the regular army, was now with his company at Salt Lake. He had been informed of the coming of Colonel Creedmore, and was sure to take care of all vigilants who might have planned a "neck-tie sociable," as the lynching parties were called.

After a rest of one day the company set out for Cheyenne. More old friends of the English colonel, as Creedmore was termed, were present at the station at that place to bid him welcome. Money was offered without stint. Several even proposed to accompany him if it was necessary. Marcy Craston thanked them on behalf of the colonel, and stated that they would be called upon if needed.

At the first station on this side of Ogden an Indian chief, with six warriors all heavily armed, got on the train. Many of the passengers felt very nervous as these stalwart sons of the forest walked through the train, looking each passenger in the face. They were evidently seeking some person. When they reached the Pullman coach the coloured porter sought to stop them, saying :

"Dis am a private car, sah, and dere is no room for intruders, sah."

"Stand on one side," answered the Indian chief in excellent English, with an accent that commanded instant obedience.

The porter obeyed this order with alacrity, and instinctively put his hand to his head as though to be sure of his wool.

"Is it all there?" asked the chief, with a faint perception of a smile.

"Yes, sah, it am dere sure enough."

"Then if you want to keep it where it belongs do not interfere with us, but show me where I can find Colonel Creedmore."

"Golly! do you want to raise his scalp? Reckon as how you had better be kind ob careful for de colonel hab lots ob friends on dis yere car."

At this moment the chief caught sight of the man he was seeking, and he said to him :

"My pale-faced brother, the Indian chief Grey Cloud comes to greet you and place himself and his warriors at your disposal. At Ogden station waiting for your arrival there is a large band

of vigilants led on by an Englishman. Lieutenant Grimes is also there with twenty soldiers, but they are only a handful. I have provided sixteen horses waiting a mile on this side of the station; by taking them we can reach Salt Lake ahead of the vigilants. Any loss of life now would injure your chances of acquittal at your coming trial. I cannot understand how all this excitement has been raised or for what purpose."

Graston and Jenkins both greeted the chief. They knew him personally and introduced him to the others.

Grey Cloud's advice was followed. The train was stopped at the appointed place and the company mounted the waiting animals, with the Indians as escort. The conductor of the train promised to inform Lieutenant Grimes, so that he might return at once to Salt Lake. It was late at night when the party arrived in that city, where the officer delivered his prisoner to the authorities.

Nickley's agent had been using money freely to keep up the excitement against Colonel Creedmore. When after waiting two days at Ogden the vigilants heard that the man they were seeking was safe in the jail at Salt Lake City, they returned to find how their victim escaped them. They now decided to wait for the trial.

Colonel Creedmore found on arrival that his Grand Army Post had sent on one of the ablest lawyers in San Francisco to aid him in his defence.

The District Attorney who had charge of the case of "*The People vs. Colonel Creedmore*" was a young man. He had read law with his father, a celebrated judge in San Francisco. The father's reputation as a jurist obtained for the son the position which he now held. Genius, however, is not always hereditary. Nevertheless, young Simmons felt confident that he not only possessed all his worthy father's legal attainments but a great deal more. It did not worry him a particle when he heard that five skilful lawyers were engaged for the defence. It was the one great opportunity of a lifetime. He pictured in his imagination the consternation of these five disciples of Blackstone when, after his brilliant and convincing indictment, the jury should pronounce the prisoner guilty without leaving their seats. Then he thought in his exultation how all the newspapers would teem with laudatory articles about the talented district attorney. There loomed up in the distance the judge's bench. His father would be proud of such a son. He was in this frame of mind when Nickley's agent, who had once been a detective at Scotland Yard, came to see him. The

man gave his name as Mr. William Barlow. He had credentials from the Chief of Police of London, and stated that he had been sent to find out what kind of a character this Colonel Creedmore bore. In fact, the colonel was wanted in England. "If I can be of assistance to you," he continued, "command my services. There are five lawyers retained for the defence, and I would advise you to obtain help. Money is no object in obtaining a conviction," he added in conclusion.

Mr. Simmons put on the dignified and patronising air which his father often assumed, and bowing said with the tone of a man confident of victory :

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Barlow, but if Colonel Creedmore had all the lawyers in this territory it would make no difference to me. My indictment is prepared and the conviction of the prisoner is a certainty. My father, Judge Simmons, of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of California, is always at my service. But there is no need of outside help. No jury can help convicting on the evidence that I have at my disposal. Hope to see you at the trial, Mr. Barlow. You can have a copy of my speech to take back to England. It is very concise and will without doubt be often referred to in the future jurisprudence, not only of this city but also in the territory of Utah.

When Mr. Barlow went out he said to himself aloud: "What a conceited ass that man is. Colonel Creedmore will certainly be acquitted."

The most zealous workers for the accused were Marcy Graston, with his partner William Jenkins. They felt certain that the charge of murder and highway robbery could not be sustained. The great danger lay in the failure of the Trout Creek Mining Co. So many persons in Salt Lake City had lost money in that enterprise that they would go in for hanging Colonel Creedmore. It was universally believed that he had "salted the mine," and sold out to the individuals who came so unexpectedly upon the scene. This, then, was the weak point. They resolved accordingly to examine the abandoned claim, feeling certain that the colonel would never unload a fraudulent mine.

The day of the trial was observed as a holiday. Most of the shops were closed. Everyone wanted to hear the evidence and to see the man who was extradited from England. His name had been in everybody's mouth for a month past. The counsel for the defence challenged one after another of the jurymen summoned. Many wanted to serve. It took two days to secure twelve men that were satisfactory to the prosecution and the defendant's counsel.

Young Simmons was impatient to begin the reading of his indictment. He was very specific in his statement. His father had trained him well on that point. He spoke in the first place of the duty of all citizens uniting in behalf of law and order. Then he called attention to the reign of terror that had existed for several months. This was due to robbery of stage coaches and even highway plunder of the citizens of Salt Lake City almost in broad daylight. The population were compelled to rise in self-defence and form a vigilance committee. They had finally ran these depredators down and made short work of those caught red-handed. The chief of this noted band escaped to England. He had been extradited and brought back to receive the penalty due to his crimes. Many murders were committed by this band of Free Lances, as they were pleased to call themselves. Not content with plundering mail coaches, they had been bold enough to organise the most stupendous swindle ever known in the history of the territory. With unblushing audacity they placed a quantity of gold dust in the bed of a stream within sight of the city. The controlling spirit of that enterprise was an Englishman by birth, who had assumed the name of an English nobleman. By false representations he induced many of the citizens of Salt Lake not only to invest large sums in this salted mine but to lose valuable time. "This leader—this head of the band that terrorised the inhabitants of our peaceful city so long—is now a prisoner at the bar, and I feel sure that you, gentlemen of the jury, will bring in a verdict of guilty without leaving your seats. Our laws provide that every man shall have a fair trial, no matter how heinous his crimes may have been. The accused in this case has shown his consciousness of the peril in which he stands by bringing here with him no less than five of the ablest lawyers from various parts of the Union. What better evidence of guilt do you need than this fact alone! Gentlemen of the jury, against these five brilliant members of the bar I stand here alone as the representative of your outraged laws. I had such confidence in the good sense of any jury that could possibly be selected for this trial that I have made no elaborate preparations. I do not rely upon oratorical efforts to obtain a verdict for the people. My sole dependence is upon a plain statement of facts, after which conviction must follow as a matter of course. These talented gentlemen who are conducting the defence will no doubt seek to lead you astray on the technicalities of evidence. But the case is too clear and the statements of our witnesses cannot be set aside. Now,

gentlemen of the jury, your fellow-citizens are looking to you to vindicate the laws that have been violated so often by the man who now stands before you a trembling prisoner. He already reads in your honest faces the doom which you are certain to pronounce on him when the case is finally given into your hands."

One hour was occupied in this preliminary address, and when the young district attorney finished, the hard cold looks on the faces of the jury were an indication that no mercy would be extended to the accused.

Slowly and deliberately Mr. Geo. Tinckler, the lawyer from San Francisco, rose to his feet, and looking at the triumphant face of young Simmons said in a tone of intense disgust :

"Of all the rubbish I ever heard in a court of justice this is the climax! Your father, the judge, once told me that you could be depended upon for making a fool of yourself every time. Your conceit, he said, would carry you away." Turning to the jury, he continued : "Gentlemen, I blush for the majesty of the law of this city because it is managed by a man who has such a low estimate of the commonsense of a highly respectable body of citizens like yourselves."

Simmons could have stood any amount of logic in refuting his charges, but this was too much for him. He lost his temper, and forgetting his position went over to Mr. Tinckler, and putting his fist in his face exclaimed in a towering passion :

"You are a liar, sir. I brand your statements as false ; in fact, you are the most consummate liar in this territory. San Francisco cannot produce your equal. My father would not make any such remark about me. He would not speak to such a low vulgar cur as you are. You cannot save that rascal, your client, by any such statements. I defy you, sir."

To all this abuse Mr. Tinckler bowed and smiled ; then turning to the jury remarked in a calm tone :

"Gentlemen, it needs no repetition on my part about the asinine disposition of the district attorney ; he brays for himself."

The defence thus scored a point, and that was to present the prosecution in a ridiculous aspect. The representative of the people lost his temper, and did not recover it again for the rest of the day.

The witnesses for the prosecution were most unmercifully handled by the counsel for the defence, their evidence being confusing and contradictory. Those who were produced for

Colonel Creedmore were invulnerable, notwithstanding the frantic efforts of young Simmons to break the weight of their statements.

The hearing was concluded at four o'clock. At five the jury intimated that they could not possibly agree. Nine were for acquittal, one did not know which way to vote, and the other two were in favour of a verdict of guilty, on the principle that if a man is accused he ought to be convicted first and tried afterwards.

A new trial was ordered and the prisoner remained in the custody of the sheriff.

As Mr. Barlow was leaving the court he said to a bystander: "Just what I expected from the overweening conceit of the district attorney. Hope it will be a lesson to him."

CHAPTER XII.

THE NUGGET OF GOLD.

NOTWITHSTANDING what Mr. Tinckler said to the jury he as well as the other gentlemen associated with him in the defence of Colonel Creedmore were fully aware that young Simmons, even if he had allowed himself to be carried away by a momentary conceit, was by no means a fool. The new trial was to take place in ten days. They neglected no preparations.

The district attorney called to his aid one of the most gifted lawyers of Salt Lake City. Additional witnesses were procured and fully instructed in regard to their evidence.

Marcy Graston, who had been away from the city for a week, returned three days after the disagreement of the jury, and held a long consultation with Colonel Creedmore's lawyers. Directly afterwards they, together with the Indian chief, Grey Cloud, began to buy up the shares of the defunct Trout Creek Gold Mining Co. The Indian had offered a bag of gold to his pale-faced brother to aid in his defence. It had been declined, but was told that if it was needed he would be called upon for the loan. Now he, like the others, bought up the shares, saying to those who held them that he wanted to remove all cause of ill-feeling against his friend. When the

holders of these shares found there was a market, a regular scramble took place to unload the "dead cats," as defunct mining stocks were called. Mr. Barlow was in Simmons' office talking about the coming trial when word was brought of the new tactics of the defence. Mr. Simmons laughed scornfully as he heard it. "Let them buy all they want," was his reply; "it won't save their client."

Mr. Barlow stroked his chin, and taking his hat went out and at once purchased fifty shares, all he could find, paying five dollars a share, the par value being fifty dollars.

The astute detective said nothing of this purchase to anyone. The general impression in Salt Lake was that it was done to soften the hard feelings against Colonel Creedmore. The latter already held one-half of the stock in his own name.

Two days afterwards there was an increased demand for the stock. As high as one hundred dollars was offered for it by old friends of Marcy Graston. The man who sold the shares to Mr. Barlow went and offered him double the par value for them, but it was declined. He desired, he said, to take them back to England as evidence against Colonel Creedmore in case the jury should fail to convict him on the next trial. Mr. Barlow himself tried to purchase more stock, but not a share could be had at any price. After the trial he was told plenty would be on the market, but not before.

The day appointed for the second trial was a beautiful one. The court was crowded to suffocation. Grey Cloud was present alone; his six followers were absent. So likewise was William Jenkins. Marcy Graston was on hand, dressed in a long linen duster. Colonel Creedmore was cheerful. His face had a far-off look. He had just heard of the failure to extradite Miriam to Brussels. The jury was selected with but three challenges from the defence. This fact puzzled young Simmons. The new indictment had been carefully drawn, and laid great stress upon the fraud connected with the Trout Creek Mining Company. "Salting a mine" was esteemed to be the most heinous crime in the territory—worse than horse-stealing, and among the mining class that was a capital offence. Witness after witness was put on the stand, and the lawyers for the defence did not cross-question them. In fact, they evinced a decided indifference to what was testified. Young Simmons was very much nettled at this procedure by his legal opponents. Two of them read a newspaper while he was laying down the law to the jury. All this was too much for the district attorney. He felt that the elaborate efforts he was making for a conviction merited at least

some show of interest. But there was none. Finally the prosecution was finished. They had presented their case skilfully. To offset all that had been proved would require a very strong rebuttal.

All eyes were now turned on Mr. Tinckler. He rose slowly and drawing himself up to his full height—for he stood over six feet—spoke impressively and with a measured tone, as though aware of the importance of every word :

“Gentlemen of the jury, your patience must be well-nigh exhausted by the mass of irrelevant testimony forced upon your notice by the talented though very young district attorney. I must acknowledge that I have not paid much attention. We do not propose, however, to keep you away from your business very long. The charges of murder and highway robbery are so absurd that we will not waste your time in trying to disprove them. Great stress has been laid by the prosecution upon the so-called ‘salting’ of the Trout Creek Mine. If it can be proved to your satisfaction that this mine was not only a veritable claim, but that it is rich to-day in good paying ore, then we will expect a verdict of acquittal for our client. In fact, we believe you will render this as your unanimous opinion without the formality of leaving the court room. ‘Marcy Graston.’”

All eyes were now turned to this individual. He walked up to the witness stand, and after taking the oath removed his linen duster and stood in a miner’s garb. He had on a blue woollen shirt and heavy top boots, whilst around his waist was a large leather belt filled apparently with small stones. His eyes sparkled with a merry twinkle as he surveyed the district attorney, and then looked at the judge and jury. Mr. Tinckler proceeded to examine him :

“Marcy Graston, what is your occupation?”

“A prospecting miner.”

“How long have you been engaged in this business?”

“Just thirty years. I am a California forty-niner.”

“You claim to be an expert in mining, do you not?”

“I think I can tell whether a mine is likely to prove a paying one or not.”

“Do you know the accused at the bar?”

“Yes; I have known him for over ten years.”

“From your knowledge of him, would you infer that he is the kind of a man to salt a mine and sell it as a genuine one?”

“No, sir. He is the last man in God’s creation who would do such a low, contemptible trick.”

"Do you know anything regarding the Trout Creek Gold Mine?"

"Yes. In company with my partner, William Jenkins, I have made a thorough survey of all the land belonging to the claim."

"What did you find in your examination?"

"We found out the reason why paying ore was not panned out after the mining company was fully organized."

"Will you state this reason?"

"Gold dust was found in the bed of the creek for a distance of a quarter of a mile, and then all evidence of it was lost. At the point where the last particle of ore was taken out is a high bluff. The water is deep here and runs swiftly. We examined above this bluff but no gold was seen. Below this we found several ounces scattered along the bed of the brook."

"What inference did you draw from all this?"

"We made up our minds that the bluff was the source whence the gold came."

"What course did you then pursue?"

"We employed the six warriors of Grey Cloud's band to work for us. We did so as we knew we could depend upon them to guard our secret. We blasted the rock that formed the bluff."

"What did you find?"

"Just what we expected to find—a large quantity of ore that had accumulated for many years, and also a rich vein from which the ore had been washing away."

"What do you consider the worth of this mine?"

"Gold ore to the value of fully one million dollars is in sight."

"Who is in charge of this treasure now?"

"Grey Cloud's warriors and my partner. Also Lieutenant Grimes and his company of soldiers."

"Have you any specimens of ore with you to show the jury?"

"Yes, I have a few nuggets of gold."

Here Marcy Graston took out of his leather belt a dozen nuggets of all sizes, from that of a walnut to one the size of a hen's egg. These were passed to the jury to examine. Intense excitement now filled the court room. The young district attorney forgot all about his case and took hold of one of the nuggets with a feeling of admiration. Even the judge weighed one in his hand mentally estimating its value.

Mr. Tinckler now asked one more question :

"Have you any more nuggets?"

"Yes, I have one that is very heavy, and I could bring many like it into court."

Here he took from his pocket a nugget the size of his fist. It was of pure gold in a virgin state. The excitement was now at fever heat, and it was with difficulty that the jury could be kept in their seats. Mr. Tinckler then stated that he had done with the witness and turned him over to the prosecution.

Mr. Simmons was equal to the occasion. He said to the jury: "As the defence by a masterly stroke has gained a Waterloo, we ask the jury to acquit the gentleman who is a prisoner at the bar. In behalf of this city I offer him an apology for all that he may have unjustly suffered by being wrongly accused."

The judge said that he had no remarks to make. He was still holding in his hand the large nugget that had been passed to him.

Without a moment's hesitation the twelve jurymen rose to their feet, and before the clerk of the court had time to ask them if they had agreed upon a verdict the foreman said:

"We find that Colonel Creedmore is innocent of all the charges brought against him." Cheer after cheer filled the court room. Everyone rushed forward to grasp his hands and then the hands of his counsel. Colonel Derwent threw his arms about his friend and hugged him. Colonel Moorehead in his excitement shook hands with everyone. Grey Cloud forgot the stoic dignity of his race and embraced Marcy Graston, saying:

"This is a grand victory for our pale-faced brother."

Mr. Tinckler went up to Mr. Simmons and said:

"Well, young man, what message shall I take back to your worthy father?"

"Tell him that I consider you the ablest lawyer in the State of California. No one congratulates you more heartily upon your victory than I do. The experience to me will be profitable and I do not regret the defeat, for I should dislike to hang an innocent man. I was urged on by that English detective who profits by this matter, for I heard that he bought fifty shares of the Trout Creek Mine at five dollars a share. He is a very keen fellow."

Mr. Barlow now came forward and acknowledged that he had been in the employ of Martin Nickley. From that hour he would have nothing more to do with such a knave. He had now become a rich man, for he was offered on the spot five hundred dollars a share for his stock and refused the offer.

On the following day the Trout Creek Mining Company was reorganized. Marcy Graston was chosen president, and Mr. Tinckler was made vice-president. All the stock was held by Colonel Creedmore and his friends. It was a fortune at one effort to all of them. Grey Cloud's bag of gold had become a source of revenue that promised many comforts to himself and his tribe. We now leave Salt Lake City and go back to England.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE THUNDER OF ROME.

FATHER SARMAINE had deposited the thousand pounds as bail for Miriam. The more he thought of the matter the more he was convinced that Nickley had some deep-laid scheme behind his pretence of anxiety for her welfare. The priest accordingly gave strict orders to the Mother Superior that if Nickley should call at any time she should send for him at once.

Several weeks passed. Nothing was done to disturb Miriam. Her trial was set down for the 3rd of September. She received a long letter from Milton telling of his acquittal; also that he was engaged with Marcy Graston, William Jenkins, and Colonels Derwent and Moorehead, assisted by the five lawyers who had been retained for his defence, in developing the Trout Creek Gold Mine. He said nothing of the great value of the property, but enclosed a draft for two thousand pounds, adding that he would send the same amount every month until his return. This he explained would hardly be under a year, as the mine required all his attention. His lawyers had given up their practice and were located for the present at Salt Lake City. He also told her that the detective employed by Nickley had turned against him, and would at any time give evidence adverse to his late employer that would land him in prison. But at present it was all he could do to attend to the fortune which so unexpectedly came to him.

This was indeed cheering news to Miriam. She gave the money to Father Sarmaine to be used in her defence. The latter wrote to Milton telling him of his sister's peril. It might

go hard with her if Lady Martha should press the charge. He advised Milton, therefore, to return to England at once. Miriam's safety was of more importance now than the finding of gold. It was the first week in August. No movement had been made by Nickley to disturb Miriam. Father Sarmaine began to think that perhaps after all he had wronged the man.

Preparations for the trial were now in progress. Lady Martha refused obstinately to listen to any compromise. She declared to the solicitors retained for the defence that she fully believed her guest had taken the cross, and was determined to go on with the trial, and ask for the full punishment the law accorded to such a crime.

The matter was very serious. The cross had been found in Miriam's possession. Then there was the condemnatory fact that she had previously gone to Lord Grassmere's house under an assumed name. She had at various times taken a name not her own. All this was very much against her. If convicted on this charge the penalty would not be less than ten years' penal servitude.

There was absolutely no defence. The only hope that her friends now entertained was to persuade the Lady Martha to decline to prosecute. Mr. Richard Shirley offered to pay over to her estate the sum of five thousand pounds if she would withdraw the charges against his niece. At first she was inclined to listen to this proposition, but the Count Morella wrote to her from Italy stating that if any compromise were made their engagement would end. If she wavered in this matter it would be an exhibition of contempt for his gifts. The honour of the ancient house of Naymours required that the sacrilegious thief should be severely punished. This fixed her determination to prosecute to the last extremity. Father Sarmaine sent several of his most intimate friends to plead with Lady Martha, but she was inflexible in her purpose that the law must be vindicated.

The second Monday of August was wet and stormy. About one o'clock in the afternoon Father Sarmaine received a letter from a lady, who wrote that she was a member of an old English house and had long contemplated entering the communion of the Roman Church, believing it to be the only gate to heaven. She had been very ill for a week past, and her doctor had stated that day that the ailment might result seriously at any time. She desired him to come speedily to receive her declaration of adherence to his Church. It was in contemplation to leave her fortune to charity, and wanted his advice as to the best way to dispose of it.

This was not the first time that the worthy priest had received letters of a similar import. He delivered his appointed lecture to his class and called a cab, telling the driver to go to the place designated in the letter. The cab-driver was well informed in regard to streets and numbers. As soon as he heard the directions he answered :

"There is no such place in Dalston. I have lived in that vicinity for many years and am sure of it. In the West End there is a street of that name."

"I am certain," said the priest, "that the lady mentioned Dalston. I was at the convent of the Good Shepherd when the letter arrived. I gave it to the Mother Superior to read and came away without it. The lady that I am going to see asked me to call at half-past four. I have already allowed myself just time to get there. If, however, you will drive quickly to the convent I can procure the letter and will not be so very late for the appointment."

It was just ten minutes past four when the convent gate was reached. Sister M. Delphine could not find the letter. She laid it on the parlour table to go and receive a lady visitor. Diligent search was made but it had vanished. The clock struck half-past four and Father Sarmaine was very impatient. A convert to his Church, perhaps now dying, was waiting for him to give absolution. Then, also, unless that missing letter could be found a fortune would be lost to the cause of charity. At that moment the door bell rang, and when it was answered by a sister three men entered. Two of them said they were officers of the law. They had come to take Miriam Creedmore to jail as her bondsman, Mr. Nickley, now present with them, had been informed that she was about to leave the country and accordingly wished to surrender her.

Father Sarmaine instantly came into the hall and stated that he had filed a bail bond for the sum of one thousand pounds, and had at the same time signed a release in blank for Mr. Nickley. All that was necessary would be for him to go to Scotland Yard, get his money, and a release from all liability.

"I decline to do anything of the kind," said Nickley, haughtily. "This woman must be delivered to these officers of the law at once."

"And I refuse to deliver up this woman," said Father Sarmaine, "unless you bring me an order from the Chief of Police at Scotland Yard."

"Then these officers will search this house and take her by force," was Nickley's rejoinder. "This convinces me more than ever that you are aiding her to go to America to join her worthless brother, who has been acquitted in Salt Lake City. But he dare not come back to England. I now propose to prevent you from allowing this woman to escape."

Father Sarmaïne was a slender man and delicate looking. He certainly was no match for the burley Nickley. His face paled and flushed at this charge against him, but he kept down the angry words that came to his lips. He placed his hand upon his heart to restrain its wild beating, and then repeated aloud in Latin the first six verses of the lxx. Psalm, which were certainly appropriate for the occasion :

"In te domine speravi, non confundar in cœternum; in justitia tua libera me, et eripe me. Inclina ad me aurem tuam, et salva me. Esto mihi in Deum protectorem et in locum munitum ut saluum me facias. Quoniam firmamentum meum refugium meum es tu. Deus meus, eripe me de manu peccatoris, et de manu contra legem agentis et iniqui. Quoniam tu es patientia mea, Domine. Domine, spes mea a juventute mea."

During this recital Nickley stood with his arms folded and a scornful smile on his face. When the priest finished he said :

"Do you take us for a parcel of imbecile Hottentots, that you can charm with Latin mummerly? Give up that woman to the custody of these officers."

"I will do so," was the answer, "when you comply with the requirements I have named and not before."

"Then by warrant of law these constables will search this house."

"Show me the warrant of law you mention," said the priest, "and I will open the doors for you."

"I hold myself personally responsible for their actions," retorted Nickley, now losing control of his temper. "Officers, do your duty," he continued, turning to the two men by his side.

"If you dare to intrude in this house without warrant of law," said Father Sarmaïne, "I will call down upon your guilty heads the curse of our Holy Church."

"Keep your curses for the fools that you control and who are frightened by them; we are men and not children. Officers, go ahead."

The constables did not move. They were not Catholics; in fact, were nothing in particular. Like many of their class they belonged to no denomination. There was something, however, in the voice and manner of the priest that awed and held them back.

Father Sarmaine made a motion to one of the sisters, who brought two lighted candles into the hall and stood by his side. He took from his pocket a stole which he had with him to visit the dying lady, and also his breviary. Making the sign of the cross he commenced to read the cxxxix. Psalm in Latin :

“Eripe me, Domine, ab homine malo ; a viro iniquo eripe me. Qui cogitaverunt iniquitates in corde ; tota die constituebant prelia.”

“Look here, Mr. Nickley,” said the two constables, “if it is all the same to you, seeing as how we are poor men with families, and do not care to run any risk of curses on ourselves or children, we will leave, and perhaps you can get some other officers who do not mind such things.”

“Why, men, this is all tomfoolery ; all the Latin mummary in the world cannot hurt you one particle.”

The priest continued : *“Acuerunt linguas suas sicut serpentis ; venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum.”*

“Father Sarmaine, we are not in this business and we are off,” said the two officers, starting for the door.

“The Lord be with you,” was the reply. “Go in peace.”

Martin Nickley was very much put out by being left alone. He stood for a moment watching the forms of the sisters, who had gathered in the hall and knelt with bowed heads as the priest went on with the Psalm :

“Custodi me, Domine de manu peccatoris ; et ab hominibus iniquis eripe me.”

This last verse was read with such distinct emphasis that Martin Nickley felt the force of it, for he perfectly understood the meaning of the Latin.

“You have gained your point this time,” he said to Father Sarmaine ; “but I will come again with such process of law that you will not dare to defy me.”

“I am not a lawbreaker but a strict upholder of the law,” was the reply, and then the reading of the Psalm was continued.

Nickley turned on his heel and went out slamming the door behind him. The Psalm was finished and then another search was made for the missing letter, but it could not be found.

“I believe that woman must have taken it,” said the Mother Superior. ☩

“What kind of a woman was she ?” asked Miriam, who had been standing in the hall dressed in the garb of the sisterhood.

Sister M. Delphine described her.

“That description corresponds exactly with one of the seamstresses who was working at Grassmere Manor preparing the outfit for Lady Martha. I believe she wrote the letter herself by directions of Nickley, for I feel certain she is in his employ.”

This let in new light upon the subject and convinced the priest that he had been imposed upon in order to get him out of the way. He gave the cabman a sovereign and dismissed him with his blessing.

CHAPTER XIV.

RETRIBUTION.

IN the afternoon of the 2nd of September Father Sarmaine was seated in his study at the college, engaged in deep thought as to how he could save Miriam from her impending fate. The next day was the one set down for the trial, and the solicitors gave but little hope unless something unexpected should happen. Lady Martha had resisted all appeals to refrain from pressing her charge. The priest's servant brought him a card; when he saw the name he jumped up, saying:

“Admit him at once.”

The name read “Milton E. Creedmore.”

“I am delighted to make your acquaintance,” said Milton as he came into the room. “Allow me to thank you for all that you have done for my sister.”

“Do not mention it,” was the answer. “I am only too happy to have been of service to her. You have come just in time too, and I am inspired with the hope that your coming will break the network which Nickley has woven around her.”

“I arrived in Liverpool this morning and came on to London at once. I did not telegraph to any one on my return. I took my uncle Richard by surprise at the Midland, and found there with him our family solicitor, who gave me full particulars. I came here from the hotel, but cannot see my sister now as I am going at once to confer with Lord Grassmere. I may induce him

to keep his sister away from the trial to-morrow. He does not know that Martin Nickley and the Count Morella de Naymours are one and the same person. I proposed to tell him, but our solicitor advised waiting and informing Lady Martha of this fact on the witness stand."

"Well, Mr. Creedmore, Miriam will be delighted to hear that you have returned to England. As it will be late when you come back from Grassmere Manor I will bring her round to see you at the Midland Hotel in the morning. She can meet her friends there before going to the court room."

Milton had only just time to catch the train to Grassmere from Euston Station; he therefore cut short his call and went to the telegraph office. He wired his uncle Sir Thomas of his return to England, and would expect to have him and all his family stand by their kinswoman in this hour of her need. When Milton arrived at Grassmere Manor he sent his card in to the earl. The card was returned with a message saying that Lord Grassmere declined to see Mr. Creedmore.

"Tell the Earl of Condor," said Milton, "that if Lady Martha dares to accuse my sister all England will know within twenty-four hours of the shame that has fallen on his proud house."

He was about to leave the manor and return to the station when the earl came into the room and asked in an imperious tone what he meant by such a message to him.

"Do you dare to reflect upon the marriage of my late daughter, Luella? She was legally married to the Count Nucingar."

"The count had a wife living at the time," said Milton.

"I do not believe it," answered the earl.

"The public will not be quite so unbelieving," was the reply.

At this point Lady Martha also came into the room. Milton went on with his assertions.

"I know of what I am speaking, and there will be abundant proof to-morrow. You will find that it will not be the house of Creedmore that is on trial but that of Condor. I will now make you a proposition. I only arrived from America to-day. I made a large amount of money in a gold mine out West. If you will consent to withdraw these charges against my sister I will place to the credit of your granddaughter twenty thousand pounds. If you will sign the agreement now I will draw my cheque at once for the sum named. To show you that I am good for that amount here is a draft on the Bank of England for one hundred thousand pounds."

The offer was indeed a tempting one. Here was a chance for the little Luella. The earl and his sister retired for a few moments to talk over the proposition. The former was in favour of accepting the offer.

"I do not want any scandal," he said. "You know there is some doubt about the legality of the marriage of Luella."

Lady Martha replied that she wanted more time to think of it. So they told Milton that their answer would be given in the morning. He then went back to London.

The morning of the 3rd was a dismal day. Rain had fallen in torrents during the night. The streets were very slippery. At an early hour Miriam, accompanied by Father Sarmaine, went to the Midland Hotel, where he left her with her uncle and Milton. The meeting of brother and sister was indeed a joyful one. This was the anniversary of their wonderful experience. The year had been one of trial and tribulation. Now they were once more in the throes of a mortal combat. The liberty of one of them was at stake. What had this day in store? Surely they were not rescued from death to be overwhelmed in the awful disaster that now confronted them? While they were talking over the prospects of the coming trial the waiter brought up on a tray several cards. They read as follows: Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Shirley, Mr. and Mrs. John Shirley, Miss Irene Shirley.

They were at once shown up. The greeting was cordial and hearty, there being no reserve.

Sir Thomas kissed Miriam, with tears in his eyes.

"My dear child," said he, "we propose to stay with you and fight your battles. Adelaide and Eleanor are on the continent, or I know they would have come also."

He remarked that they had travelled all night to reach London in time. Winifred and Elvira were delighted to see Miriam once more. Breakfast was ordered at once; just as they were going down to it Pauline was announced. No one had worked for Miriam more assiduously than the lovely Pauline. Hardly were they seated at the breakfast table when a stranger in undress naval uniform walked into the room unannounced. Pauline gave a scream as she saw him, and the next moment was clasped in his arms.

"Lieutenant Bentley!" they all exclaimed.

Taking Miriam's hands in both of his, he said:

"I have come from Malta on special leave, and travelled day and night so as to be on hand. If he would only fight I would kill that scoundrel Nickley."

"A thousand thanks to you, my dear Bentley," said Milton. "How can I ever repay your kindness and that of your wife to my sister."

At ten o'clock Father Sarmaine came with a carriage to take Miriam to the court for trial. He was warmly greeted by all the kindred of the woman whom he had so faithfully defended. As they stood on the porch of the hotel the sun burst out from a heavy mass of clouds that had hidden its golden light all the morning.

"A favourable omen," said Ziska, coming up and taking Miriam's hand. "I would give my right arm to help you. I have been in Paris for several weeks on your business."

On arrival at the court room it was found that the queen's counsellor had been assisted by two of the best solicitors in London. Nickley had paid for their services.

The first to greet the accused was the Rev. Mr. Huben and the Rev. Mr. Vivian. They told her to be hopeful, for her innocence was fully believed in by all her friends.

After the preliminary proceedings the name of Lady Martha Ormond was called by the clerk of the court. For a moment there was silence. Milton looked anxiously to see whether she would respond. She did, and with dignified mien went to the witness stand and took the oath. The solicitor for the Crown drew from her the full statement regarding the loss of the diamond cross, and of the impossibility of any one coming into her room except through that of her guest, Miss Ducie, as she was formerly called. Lady Martha told of the finding of the missing cross in the pocket of this woman, whom she had invited to her home. In answer to a question whether she supposed that some one else had placed the cross where it was found, she replied :

"No ; any woman who assumes several *aliases* is capable of any crime."

The witness was now turned over to the solicitors for the defence.

"Lady Martha, who gave you this cross?" was asked.

"The Count Morella De Naymours."

"Is it true that you are engaged to be married to this count?"

"Yes, we are to be married at the end of this month."

"I suppose you are well aware that this Count De Naymours and Count Nucingar who married your niece and Martin Nickley are one and the same person?"

The Lady Martha turned pale as she replied :

"No; I am not aware of any such thing. The Count Morella is an Italian nobleman, while this Nickley is a notorious Englishman, whom I would not allow to come under my roof."

"Well, it appears from your own statement that you are engaged to him, and have allowed him to come many times under your roof."

"This is false. I appeal to the hon. judge on the bench for protection. You ought not to be allowed to insult me in this fashion, or to slander the honourable name of my affianced husband."

"Lady Martha," said the Justice, "I thought you knew that Martin Nickley had lately purchased the title of Naymours from the Italian government, which also carried with it that of Count Nucingar."

"This is the first information I have had on this subject; surely there must be some mistake."

More questions were asked of her but she became confused and contradicted herself repeatedly. The vision of the happy life at the chateau on the banks of Lake Como was fast vanishing from her mind. Much better to have accepted the twenty thousand pounds offered for the little Luella. She would have done so, but she had received a letter from the count that morning saying that if she failed to testify he would return to Italy and their engagement would be at an end for ever.

Lady Martha was badly broken down when she left the witness box. The solicitors for the defence now told the judge that they had summoned Martin Nickley to appear as a witness, but he had declined to come. They proposed to prove from his evidence that the whole charge of the theft of the diamond cross was planned and carried through by this man for purposes of his own, which would be fully exposed on cross-examination.

The justice at once signed an order for the arrest of Nickley, and gave it into the hands of an officer of the court. At this moment, before he had time to leave, a messenger came into the court room from Scotland Yard with a package directed to the justice. When he opened it he found a large pocket book filled with letters and papers, and also a letter from the Chief of Police, stating that "a dead man had just been brought in by several officers." They reported that as he was crossing the street near the Mansion House he had slipped and fallen in front of a heavy van. Before it could be stopped it passed over him and crushed his life out. A summons had been found on him directed to one Martin Nickley, commanding him to appear at court to testify in the case of "*The Crown vs. Miriam Creedmore.*"

In the pocket book were letters all directed to the same name. The dead man, therefore, could be no other than Martin Nickley himself.

When this announcement was made by the justice there was great commotion in the court room. Lady Martha fainted. A woman in the audience screamed and was carried out in a swoon. The court was adjourned to the following day. Miriam was allowed to go with her friends, as the bail bond was renewed.

CHAPTER XV.

ENGLISH JUSTICE.

ALL the lady friends of Miriam who were with her at the trial went back with her to the Midland Hotel. Sister M. Delphine, after kissing her affectionately, said that judgment had befallen her enemy. He had dared the curse of the Holy Church and had paid the penalty of his rashness. She promised to be present on the next day to assist by her presence.

All the men of the party went to Scotland Yard to identify the dead man. When the sheet that covered the body was taken off there lay the mangled form of Martin Nickley. The wheels of the van had gone over his thighs and stomach, crushing out his life at once. His face was untouched, and wore the same sardonic smile that he usually had in life. There was also a worried expression, as though something had gone wrong. The smile was one of determination to crush all opposition. The whole expression seemed like that of a man at bay, but resolute to hold his own at all hazards, against the world if necessary. When death overtook him he was smiling at the attempt to make him testify against himself in the court room, to which he was hurrying when he was called to a higher tribunal.

Father Sarmaine stood for some time in silence viewing the face of the dead, recalling the last time he had seen him so defiant at the Convent of the Good Shepherd. Had the curse really come down upon him, or was this one of the many accidents so common to the great metropolis? No one mourned

his death. The world was purer, every one felt, for the taking away of such a man. It would have been better if he had never been born.

After the coroner's inquest the body was sent to his home at Granthorn Park, and buried in the churchyard at Everdale.

There was a joyful dinner party at the Midland Hotel that evening. Father Sarmaine asked the blessing. All the solicitors for the defence were there. Both Miriam and Milton looked younger than they had done for several years. Uncle Richard was almost boyish in his delight at the turn affairs had taken. Pauline was the star of the group. She was doubly happy. Her class-mate was virtually out of danger, her husband was with her, and she was once more the merry schoolgirl of the days of Beechwood. The faithful Ziska had not been forgotten. He and his wife were provided with a bountiful dinner in the hotel, and they drank to the health of the twins of Everdale. Ziska smiled as he had not dared to do for several years. The charge of highway robbery had been hanging over his head, but now he could go about his business without let or hindrance.

The ladies had retired to the drawing-room and the gentlemen were smoking when a servant brought a letter to Milton.

The letter was from Florence Mayburn. She asked to see him at once alone. After an interview of half an hour Milton sent for the three solicitors. They were closeted for an hour. They then rejoined their party in the drawing-room. When the court was opened on the following morning the solicitors for the Crown stated that they had been instructed by the Earl of Condor to withdraw all charges against Miss Ducie, otherwise known as Miriam Creedmore. Her solicitors declined to accept this. They had important witnesses to examine in her behalf and desired her full vindication.

The justice stated that he had examined the papers found in the pocket book of the late Martin Nickley. He was able to assist in unravelling the network of circumstantial evidence that had been woven around the accused. If death had not taken this man away his crimes would have merited not less than twenty years' penal servitude.

Lady Martha was too ill to appear in response to a special summons. Lord Grassmere, however, came to hear the outcome of the examination. He seemed to have grown ten years older since the previous day. The morning papers were filled with the particulars of the trial and dwelt upon the fact that his sister was engaged to the notorious Martin Nickley, who had eloped with his late daughter.

The first witness called was Florence Mayburn. She was a handsome woman of about forty years and youthful looking. Miriam recognized her as one of the seamstresses employed by Lady Martha. Her face wore a determined aspect as though fully conscious that penal servitude was staring her in the face, yet resolved that she would clear her conscience of the part she had taken in the conspiracy against Miriam. In answer to the first question whether she had known the late Martin Nickley, and how long, the reply was :

“ I have known him for twenty years.”

“ What relation were you to him ? ”

“ His mistress.”

“ What was his general disposition ? ”

“ Kind, and in money matters generous provided you did not cross him.”

“ Have you ever met the accused ? ”

“ Yes, several times ; but I was never introduced to her.”

“ Do you know anything about these letters ? ”

A package was handed to her.

“ Yes ; I wrote them at the dictation of Martin Nickley.”

“ Please state the object of doing so.”

“ Mr. Nickley had been expecting to marry Miss Creedmore, and when she married Edmond Harold, Earl of Montville, he was furious over the success of his rival and determined to wreck his happiness. He procured an introduction for me to the earl as one of his kinswomen. Having several whom he had never seen he was liberal to them, never asking questions. He was happy with his wife, and when told that I was thrown upon my own resources at once made me a liberal allowance. He permitted me to correspond with him and I did so frequently. I always wrote two letters— one being that of thanks for his kindness ; the other was a letter of endearment, as though I was his wife. The latter one Mr. Nickley kept, as also the answers received in reply. These answers were destroyed and in their place I imitated the earl’s handwriting, so that it would take an expert to detect the forgery. I wrote letters of affection for myself and disparaged his wife. These were carefully placed in the envelopes bearing the foreign post marks. This was kept up for two years, until his return to Harold Castle. The time being then ripe for the explosion of the mine, as Nickley called it, he sent his uncle, a Mr. Albright, who bore a close resemblance to himself and who was a physician, to visit Harold Castle. The earl was called away by a fraudulent

telegraphic message to Edinburgh. Taking advantage of the illness of the Countess of Montville Mr. Albright adroitly exchanged all the letters of thanks which I had written to the earl, and put in their place the letters of endearment. Each one was regularly dated and put in the proper envelope. All of these letters were placed in the hands of the countess, and the statement made to her that she was not his wife. As was expected she left the castle at once and went back to Everdale. What followed is well known. Mr. Albright did his part successfully."

During this recital of the deep scheme as carried out by Nickley the most profound attention was given.

The examining solicitor again asked her :

"What was the reason of the continued persecution by Martin Nickley of the lady whom he had so foully wronged?"

"After the death of the earl from the wound which he received in the duel in Belgium, Nickley found a cab-driver in Paris who resembled a priest, and for a consideration he consented to go to the chateau where the countess was confined virtually as a prisoner to perform a mock-marriage ceremony. This man did the thing so naturally that Nickley was rather startled at the familiarity he exhibited of the formulæ of marriage. In reply to a question as to how he knew so much about it, the cab-driver told him that he had several times before performed the same job, and was credited with doing it better than half of the priests. Nickley remarked that if he had not known him as a cab-driver he would swear that he was a veritable priest of the Roman Church. This last surmise was a correct one. The man was a priest who had been suspended by his bishop for some cause, and six years afterwards was restored to his clerical duties. As he was a regularly ordained priest his marriages were legal in the sight of the law. This marriage was registered according to the French code, and Nickley was so informed five years later. He did not believe it, however, and married the romantic Luella under the name of the Count of Nucingar. This was bigamy in France. For this reason he had tried to induce Esther to sign a release or to get her out of the way. This priest wrote to him several times saying he must acknowledge as his lawful wife the woman whom he had married in the chateau. Nickley offered him a large sum of money to keep quiet on the subject, but he refused to do so."

Another question was asked :

"What do you know about the diamond cross that was found in the pocket of the accused person now at the bar on her trial?"

"I was employed at Grassmere Manor to help Lady Martha in her preparations for her coming marriage to Nickley, but was really there to keep him apprised in regard to all that passed. I informed him that Miriam had come as a guest. By the positive orders of Nickley I took the cross at night and sewed it in the pocket where the detective, at my suggestion, found it."

"Do you know anything about a letter that was written to Father Sarmaine to call upon a sick lady in Dalston?"

"I wrote the letter myself. The purpose was to get the priest away from the convent, so that Nickley would have a better chance to take Miriam from the sisters' care. I also visited the convent, saw the letter on the table, and destroyed it. I reported to my employer that the field was clear."

"What prompted you to make the confession you have now related?"

"While Martin Nickley was alive I was under his power so completely that I did not dare to say my soul was my own. Now that he is dead I am anxious to clear the reputation of an innocent and much-wronged woman, whatever the result may be to myself."

The solicitors for the Crown asked the witness whether she was aware that the confession she had now made would entail a severe penalty—perhaps ten years' penal servitude.

The reply was that she had fully counted the cost, and was now ready for the punishment due for the base part taken against an innocent woman. She would rather spend ten years in prison than one year in the power of such a man as the late Martin Nickley.

A witness that Ziska had brought from Paris was then placed on the stand. He proved to be the French priest already mentioned as having performed the marriage ceremony between Esther and Martin Nickley. The court interpreter translated his evidence, which corroborated the statement made by Florence Mayburn. He produced a copy of the register of the marriage, and also an indorsement that it was regular, according to French law, and valid in every particular.

Lord Grassmere had listened to all the evidence given without moving a muscle. He now came forward and handed to the justice a will of the late Martin Nickley, duly authenticated, leaving all his property without reserve to his beloved wife, the Countess of Naymours. She was also made the sole executrix and to have absolute control of all the estate. This included his property at Lake Como, the chateau of Naymours. A few

of his servants were remembered in small legacies, and a hundred pounds a year was set apart to be given to his uncle Albright, subject to the approval of his wife.

The earl stated that this will had been made out for the benefit of his sister when she should become the lawful wife of the Count de Naymours. As it had been proved that he had a wife living this will was valid in her behalf. He now wished to congratulate the Countess of Montville on the clearance of her character. It had been against his wishes that any action was taken about the matter of the diamond cross.

The case was submitted to the jury, and without leaving their seats they returned a verdict of "not guilty."

Cheer after cheer followed, and the judge did nothing to suppress the applause. Leaving the bench he came down and took the hand of Miriam, saying to her:

"In the name of English justice I now apologise for the sufferings you have endured. You leave this court a free woman; not a stain of any kind rests upon your fair name. You are now the Countess of Montville, entitled to all the dower of your husband, the late Earl of Montville. Being the legal wife of Martin Nickley his property under his will is yours. This makes you also the Countess of Naymours and of Nucingar. Accept my congratulations."

The impetuous Pauline threw herself into Miriam's arms and cried like a child. Milton then took her hand, followed by all her kindred. Ziska was happy beyond description.

CHAPTER XVI.

GRANTHORN PARK.

Now that the mystery that hung over the marriage of the Earl of Montville has been cleared we proceed to wind up this narrative. The author dislikes to read any story which ends abruptly. He therefore proposes to finish this tale without leaving his readers to draw inferences in regard to the characters that have figured in its pages. The celebrated trial of the *Crown vs. Creedmore* had been the talk of all London. The evening papers carried the news of the result broadcast. Everyone condemned the action of Florence Mayburn in deceiving the Earl of Montville. She was promptly arrested on charges of conspiracy, but was immediately bailed out by Milton Creedmore. Miriam refused to prosecute, and gave her five hundred pounds with a ticket to Australia.

There was another grand dinner at the Midland Hotel. The same company sat down as on the previous evening. Again and again was Miriam's health drank, both as the Countess of Montville and Countess of Naymours. She declined to receive callers and a large basketful of cards was left for her at the hotel. Pauline and her husband both remained with her.

On the following day after breakfast Miriam held a consultation with her kindred as to the best course to pursue. Uncle Richard stated that on the previous evening he had sent a telegram to Everdale to his sister, Mrs. Van Reem, informing her of the result of the trial, and giving her directions to make ready to receive Miriam and to have triumphal arches erected. This, he said, would be a very plain hint for his intolerant sister to vacate the premises.

The strain on Miriam's nerves had been very great. It was now decided that she should leave London as soon as possible. Ziska sent a message saying that business of importance called him away from London, but with her permission he would see her at Everdale.

Miriam first visited the Convent of the Good Shepherd. It would be impossible, she told Sister M. Delphine, to pay the great debt of gratitude she owed to her and also to Father Sarmaine, but all that was possible for a grateful woman to do

in this life would be done by her. She left a cheque for one thousand pounds for the use of the convent. Milton gave a like sum, and Sir Thomas and his brother did likewise.

Pauline had set out early with her husband on an errand of her own. She told him that he must ask no questions, but for once in his life obey her.

"My dear Pauline," he replied, "that is what I have been doing ever since we were married. But do tell me what you propose to do with the box of soap and those six scrubbing brushes, and that chair which the driver has on the seat with him?"

"Ned, my darling, you never allow your orders to be called in question on board of your ship; so I will expect you to try a little of your own discipline."

A pair of bright, sparkling, mischievous eyes looked into his and two little hands held him by the head. He was kissed so fervently that he replied:

"All right, 'mum' is the word. I would rather a thousand-fold be here obeying you than giving orders on the flagship at Malta. But, good gracious! you are not going into this place," he continued as the carriage stopped, and the driver opened the door before a house where a large sign hung out in gold letters, with the words "HOME OF THE FRIENDLESS."

"Yes, I have a donation for the matron of this establishment."

When they were ushered into the parlour the deaconess came into the room robed in the same silk dress in which she received Miriam several months before. She asked her visitors to be seated. Pauline haughtily declined, and said:

"We will only detain you a moment. Here is a donation for this establishment."

"A thousand thanks," replied the deaconess. "I will see that your charitable gifts are given to worthy objects. Many come to our house and we turn none away. We ask no questions but aid all, no matter what their creed or colour."

"This chair," said Pauline, "I purchased this morning, and the Countess of Montville and of Naymours sat in it for five minutes. There is also a box of soap and six scrubbing brushes. I thought perhaps that the chair used by the countess on her last visit was about worn out by frequent scrubbing."

"I do not understand what you mean," said the deaconess, turning red in the face at this insinuation.

"Do you remember six months ago, one stormy evening in March, that a woman came to this house and asked for shelter for the night, which was refused? You gave her a shilling and

turned her out into the bitter cold, when she was half dead with walking? Then you added insult to injury by calling a girl and telling her to wash and scrub the chair used by the woman, as it was tainted. I have now to inform you that your visitor was the Countess of Montville and of Naymours, one of the richest widows in the kingdom. Good day."

Taking her husband's arm Pauline went out and returned to the Midland.

"Why, Pauline," said he, "you never told me of this insult to Miriam. I ought to have known of it, and I would have opened on her with all my batteries and raked her fore and aft."

"I gave her enough to last for some time, but we are not done with her yet, by any means," said his wife.

On the following day Miriam and her brother, with all of her kindred that had stood by her on the trial, as well as Pauline and Lieutenant Bentley, set out for Everdale.

The first to meet them on the platform was Ziska and his wife, with their tribe dressed in holiday attire. He informed them that he had come on ahead, lest the steward of the estate would not make the preparations for the welcome that the occasion demanded. He and his men had worked hard and he trusted that his efforts would meet with her approval. He also told her that Mrs. Van Reem had gone to visit Mrs. Ainsworth at Beechwood, but said nothing to the steward about making any preparations to welcome back the twins of Everdale to their ancestral home.

Miriam took the hand of the gipsy chief in both of hers, and with tears in her eyes replied :

"My noble Ziska, you have suffered on my account. I am indebted to you for my life. I trust that you and your dear wife will never have to complain of my ingratitude."

As the party reached the massive gates of the lordly manor of Everdale a large triumphal arch erected by Ziska was seen, and over it the words painted in gold letters : "Welcome to the Twins of Everdale." Half way up on the lawn was another arch, with the words : "Welcome to the Countess of Montville and of Naymours." Still another arch was found before the porch of the mansion, emblazoned with : "Welcome to the Lord of the Manor, Colonel Milton E. Creedmore."

This handy-work of Ziska was fully appreciated by all the company. In the stately drawing-room Miriam and Milton gave a hearty welcome to their friends. Ziska and his wife were provided with suitable apartments, while the rest of the tribe encamped on the border of the lake.

The name of Mrs. Van Reem was not mentioned. In the general rejoicing that followed the triumphal return she was forgotten. Pauline told them of her visit to the deaconess and the gift of the soap and brushes, setting them in a tumult of laughter.

On the day following their arrival, while they were seated on the porch after breakfast, a carriage drove up. Two gentlemen got out, announcing themselves as the solicitors of the late Martin Nickley. They had come, under the provisions of the will, to place the countess in charge of his property. They desired her to go with them to Granthorn Park and take formal possession.

Miriam not only hated the man but also his residence. It was, however, a magnificent manor, with beautiful grounds. She consented to go after lunch. The solicitors replied that they would prepare the servants for the reception of their new mistress.

Miriam was informed that a lodge of fine design, costing over one thousand pounds, and intended by Nickley for one of his henchmen who had been doing some of his dirty work, was just completed but not occupied. She resolved to give it to Ziska and his wife for a residence. His tribe would be employed on the premises and would have a permanent home. She sent for Ziska, but neither he or any member of his tribe could be found.

It was just three o'clock as Miriam with Milton, uncle Richard, and Pauline, seated in a magnificent carriage drawn by four horses, drove into the magnificent grounds of Granthorn Park. The other guests came after them in carriages. Ziska's absence was now accounted for. He had just given the finishing touches to an arch of evergreens, with the words over it in roses red and white: "Welcome to the new Mistress of the Manor, the Countess De Naymours."

On the grand porch they were met by the solicitors and the servants, headed by the steward. Miriam was formally installed as the owner of the estate by being presented with the keys on a silver tray. She touched them with her finger and gave them back to the steward.

All the apartments were duly inspected. When they had returned to the drawing-room Miriam, who was leaning on the arm of her brother, said:

"Milton, you can have Granthorn Park if you care to accept it."

"I am very much obliged," was his answer, "but I do not want it. Everdale is good enough for me."

“What will I do with it? I am not willing to live here.”

“Give it to Lieutenant Bentley and Pauline jointly for life.”

“That is a splendid idea. I will offer him the charge of the property. It needs some one to look after it.”

Pauline was engaged with her husband looking at some of the master paintings on the walls, and Miriam went to her and said:

“Pauline, I want you to permit me to call your husband Ned.”

“Certainly,” was the reply.

“I will consider it an honour to be thus styled,” said the lieutenant.

“Will you believe it?” said Miriam. “This estate is going begging for an owner. I offered it to Milton but he refused it. I do not want it, and now offer it to you both as a residence for life. The income from the lands proper will maintain you and the household. I will also add two thousand pounds a year if you will consent to manage the whole of Martin Nickley’s property here and abroad.”

“Miriam,” said Pauline in her astonishment, “you do not mean it!”

“Yes, I do. This arrangement will keep your husband at home, so that he need not go back to Malta to join his ship.”

“Miriam,” said Bentley, “how can I ever repay such unparalleled generosity?”

“It was paid long ago,” was her reply. “Will you accept the manor? Here, Monton,” she called to the steward, who still held the tray containing the keys. “Pass that tray over to your new master.”

Lieutenant Bentley took the tray in his hands, and said to Miriam:

“I hope that you will never have cause to regret this confidence in me.”

Pauline threw her arms around Miriam and cried for very joy.

“One more act,” said Miriam, “and we will return to Everdale. I want to place Ziska in charge of the lodge, and I hope, Ned, he will prove as faithful to your interests as he has done to mine.”

It was a proud day for the gipsy when he took possession of his new home.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE AMERICAN COUSIN.

A MONTH had passed since the triumphal return of the twins to their old home. Sir Thomas had gone back to Elmswood with a promise from Miriam that she would pay him a visit before Christmas. Adelaide and Eleanor had both written warm letters of congratulation, and rejoicing in the clearing of their cousin's reputation. They threw the blame of holding aloof from her on Mrs. Van Reem. Mrs. Ainsworth sickened and died of mortification. She left all her property to Miriam, and asked forgiveness for her unjust suspicions. Miriam gave the school with all its profit over to Miss Blanche Sinclair and her sister Mabel, who had remained there all these years. Both had refused splendid offers of marriage, for their father had recovered his lost fortune; but his two eldest daughters preferred teaching and training others for domestic duties. Their fame in this respect had become a household word. To have been educated by the Misses Sinclair was considered a very great honour. Their youngest sister, the brilliant and witty Miss Maud, had married a baronet, to the surprise of her mother, who thought she was too young. Mrs. Van Reem, stubborn to the last, went over to Paris to spend the rest of her days. The obstinate Shirley nature refused to accept the solution of the problem regarding her niece. Pauline expressed herself very forcibly by saying that it would take the logic of an archangel to change the opinions of that hateful aunt, Mrs. Van Reem. Such is the tendency resulting from a worship of the hereditary idol.

Miriam provided a liberal allowance out of Nickley's estate for the little Luella. Hans Nelsola and his wife were invited to take charge of the boats on the lake, with a snug cottage to live in for life. They promptly accepted the offer. It was the realisation of a sailor's paradise—a virtual snug harbour, good pay, and very little to do.

Through the influence of Sir Thomas Shirley Lieutenant Bentley received his promotion to the grade of commander, and was at his own request placed on the retired list. He found Ziska a very valuable man. The first time the gipsy chief sat down to a meal in his new home he smiled before a portrait of Martin Nickley. It had been taken out of the drawing-room

of the mansion and was about to be consigned to the attic. He asked for it and had placed it in his dining-room. Smiling before it he said to his wife :

“ My dear, who laughs last laughs best.”

Milton had written giving a full account of the trial and its *denouement* to his uncle Joseph and cousin Margaret ; also to his late partners, who had stood so nobly by him in the hour of his extremity. He also wrote to Colonels Derwent and Moorehead. By return of mail he received answers extending hearty congratulations to himself and his sister.

Uncle Joseph wrote that he had disposed of his property in New York and was about to sail for England, to end his days in his native land. He requested Milton to look out for an estate near Everdale, and if one could be found he would buy it on arrival. Such a place had been on the market for some time, and Milton obtained the refusal for it until his uncle should arrive. He and his daughter reached Liverpool on the 10th of November by a Cunard steamer, and were met by Milton and Miriam. It is needless to say that both received a hearty welcome and were escorted to Everdale. At the station they were met by Richard Shirley and Sir Thomas and his wife. It was many years since they had last met.

As soon as Mr. Richardson saw the mansion which was for sale he told Milton to conclude the bargain at once. The place was a very fine one ; in fact it was superior to Everdale, and was sold at a low price. By the first of December he was installed in his new home. Milton was a daily visitor, as his uncle needed his assistance to invest his funds. Miriam had in the meantime gone on a visit to her uncle Sir Thomas. Adelaide and Eleanor came home with their husbands. While Miriam had cause of grievance with them for the cold way in which they had treated her she passed it all over. The loving Irene had been faithful all the time, and her devotion atoned for the actions of her sisters. It was arranged that all should spend Christmas at Everdale. Father Sarmaine had also promised to come. Miriam returned about the 20th of December to get ready for her guests. The first thing that Milton told her was that he had gone into partnership with their uncle Joseph.

“ Partnership,” said his sister ; “ have you not money enough already ? ”

“ Yes,” he answered ; “ plenty of money, but my new venture is something more profitable.”

“ What are the terms of the partnership ? ” was asked.

“Love, honour, and obey,” by the stronger sex to the weaker; also, “With all my worldly goods I thee endow.”

“I have expected as much,” said Miriam. “So our American cousin has won your heart. I am glad you will be so near. I congratulate you both. When are you to be installed as the heir of Queensdale Park, the home of our worthy quaker uncle?”

“The marriage is to take place on the third of next March, our 41st birthday. It will be the twentieth anniversary of our rescue from the lake. What an eventful experience we both have had! I propose to invite over to our wedding Colonel and Mrs. Derwent and Colonel and Mrs. Moorehead and his only daughter; also Marcy Graston and William Jenkins with his noble wife.”

The invitations were duly sent and accepted. The guests all arrived on the same steamer, a Cunarder, and were met at Liverpool by Milton. When they reached Everdale Commander Bentley and Mr. Richardson insisted that a division of the Americans should be made. The former claimed Colonel Moorehead and wife and daughter, as being in affinity with the old sea dog. The latter took Mr. and Mrs. W. Jenkins as his share. Miriam had the pleasure of welcoming Colonel and Mrs. Derwent. Both of their daughters were married and had young children. This had prevented them from accepting the invitation to come to the wedding of the gallant Colonel Creedmore. Milton looked after Marcy Graston.

The 3rd of March, 1880, was a day made to order; at least that was the opinion of all the friends and relatives gathered at Everdale and at Granthorn and Queensdale Parks. The Rev. James Demar and his wife had come by special invitation from Arrochar. The venerable Chaplain Vivian was to perform the ceremony, assisted by the Rev. Mr. Huben as well as the Vicar of Everdale.

Ziska, when permitted to build triumphal arches, was in his glory. He had erected no fewer than seven. Hans Nelsola was kept at work taking the guests across the lake to Queensdale Park.

Mr. Richardson asked that a preliminary quaker ceremony should take place at his house before going to the church.

This was done at half-past ten o'clock. Milton and his cousin before all the assembled guests took each other for man and wife until death should part them. Then they received the blessing of the old quaker, who said to his son-in-law:

“Milton, I give to thy charge and keeping my daughter Margaret. Thou will find her at all times a loving faithful

spouse, for she hath been to me a very devoted child. May the Lord bless thee both through life."

The old man was overcome and could say no more.

Four steam launches had been provided to take the guests across the lake, and they each had in tow a large barge filled to its utmost capacity. At the Parish Church the regular ceremony of the Established formula took place. The couple were finally pronounced husband and wife. There were six bridesmaids, Irene being of the number. The bride was dressed in quaker style—a plain silk dress of rich pearl grey silk without ornaments of any kind. Over all she had a white lace veil but no orange blossoms.

The reception took place at Everdale Manor. There were many wedding presents, both from the English kindred and the American guests.

Just as they were sitting down to the wedding breakfast Miriam presented her brother with a long envelope, which he found to contain the conveyance of the lands and Chateau de Naymours, and the right given by the King of Italy to the title of count of that name. This was indeed a princely gift. Commander Bentley asked for three cheers for the new Count Milton de Naymours. Father Sarmaine asked a blessing on the wedding breakfast, and then, as the poet expressed it, they "let joy be unconfined."

Mr. Richardson was one of the jolliest of the company. He could not refrain from getting off a pun on his son-in-law.

"Thee canst call Milton "count" as much as thee may please; but I count him as my son, and this count is the best."

This was greeted with rounds of applause.

After the breakfast the wedding party assembled in the drawing-room, where the bride and bridegroom were to receive the congratulations of the tenants of the three estates and others who might call.

Miriam held a short consultation with her brother and his wife, and then announced the programme for the wedding tour.

The happy couple were to go to Paris, then to Nice and Lake Como to take possession of the Chateau de Naymours. On the first of May all who were present were to meet them there to spend a month at the chateau, which was large enough to accommodate them.

At sundown there was a grand demonstration in honour of Milton and his American bride. On the platform of the station as they were about to leave Ziska's wife presented the bride with a beautiful basket of flowers, saying that they were sure to

bring good fortune. The same train took many of the guests. Mr. Richardson went to Everdale to live until the time appointed to go to Lake Como. He and uncle Richard were a happy couple, and never tired of talking of old friends. Sir Thomas insisted upon taking with him Marcy Graston, and would have taken Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins also but Miriam objected. Commander Bentley held on to his prize, as he termed Colonel and Mrs. Moorhead, with their worthy daughter.

Marcy Graston was the lion of the hour at Elmswood. John and Robert were never weary of hearing about Western life. There was no better talker than Marcy. He told them that Mr. Barlow, the detective whom Nickley had sent out to Salt Lake City, and who had bought a number of shares of the Trout Creek Gold Mine, was now the manager of it. He had organized an English syndicate and purchased all the shares for a very large amount. The mine was paying a big dividend. Marcy told them that he held several good investments in mining lands, and proposed to return in the fall with his partner and work them up. Colonel Creedmore, as he always called Milton, was a half partner in all these claims.

Robert and John soon had the mining fever badly, and Winifred and Elvira proposed that they should all go to America on a visit.

The last week in April saw the invited guests wending their way to Lake Como. Mr. Richardson and uncle Richard with Miriam were the first to arrive. Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins, who had visited Paris, were next. Father Sarmaine had gone to spend the Easter in Rome, and stopped at Como on his way home. All had arrived on the first of May except Sir Thomas, his wife and Irene, and Marcy Graston. Adelaide with Eleanor came from Germany with their husbands. A telegram was received at noon stating that Sir Thomas and Lady Shirley would arrive at two o'clock. When they came every one asked for Irene and Marcy Graston.

"Mr. Graston will be here to-morrow," was the reply. "Irene will also come with a friend."

The next day Milton received a telegraphic message that Mr. and Mrs. Graston would be due at noon. This caused great excitement.

"Of all the unexpected things," said Mr. Jenkins, "this takes the premium. That old bachelor getting married. I wonder who captured him."

The station was filled with all the guests to give welcome to Marcy and his bride at noon. When he stepped upon the

platform he handed out a lady closely veiled, and said to those present :

“Ladies and gentlemen, my wife.”

Everyone waited for her to raise her veil. Slowly she did so and Adelaide and Eleanor screamed, saying :

“It is Irene! Who ever thought that the old maid of the family would get married!”

“Thank you for the compliment,” said the blushing bride, “but as I am the youngest daughter I am allowed a margin of twenty years over my oldest sisters.”

“Every one laughed at this apt reply. The next moment the ladies of the party were saluting and kissing her.

Pauline went up to Sir Thomas, and said to him :

“Why did you not invite us to the wedding?”

He replied : “Mr. Graston claimed he was too bashful a man to have a public ceremony.”

The author feels that while mating people is a happy ending to all stories yet it gets monotonous. He will now bid adieu to his readers and his characters at the same time, leaving them all to enjoy themselves at the Chateau de Naymours on the banks of the beautiful Lake of Como.

In closing he would call his readers' attention to the great contrast between the phase of life of Edgar Creedmore, the hunted fugitive from justice, and the peaceful life of the Countess of Montville, the rich widow, respected and surrounded by loving friends. We are sure that no inducements would obtain the consent of the spirit of Miriam to return to a man's body with such an experience as she had in this condition of existence.

The author was informed by a man of wide reading not long ago, that the world was on the eve of startling discoveries in the hitherto mysterious domain of anthropology.

The problem of our plot may be a little ahead of the times, but perhaps not so very much after all.

The reader has the privilege of making his own deductions from what is related in the foregoing pages ; so the matter must now rest.

THE END.

U. S. NAVAL STATION,
NORFOLK, VA.,
June 10th, 1891.

APPENDIX.

Extract from an Essay by Dr. Dana D. Boardman, LL.D., published in the *Baptist Quarterly*, 1867. Philadelphia.

Dr. Boardman states in one passage that "christendom has persisted in clinging to the old pagan notion of man's double nature, instead of accepting the spiritual doctrine of his triple constitution. Man consists of body, life or living principle, and spirit. It is the union of these three which makes up the wonderful thing which we call a human being. The body is the organ of communication between the other parts of man's nature and the outward world—the avenue through which he is fed emotionally, intellectually, and morally. The second element of man's nature is the psychic force, which makes the object which possesses it, whatever it be, a living being. What a wonderful thing this vital principal is! What its nature is—whether material or immaterial—what its origin and laws of working, is the most baffling as well as the most fascinating of nature's secrets, utterly defying lancet and microscope, crucible and balance, physiologist and philosopher. Phenomenally surveyed the soul seems to be endowed with a most mysterious gathering, forming and organising force. It seems to be the inmost centre and pivot of the personality, around which the whole man as now constituted—physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—gathers, crystallizes, and lives. In answer to its mystic powers, the heart throbs, the lungs dilate and contract, the sensibilities awaken, the passions take fire, the imagination roams, the reason marches forth in logical sequence, and the will strides on in exploits of conquest. And all this is shared in an immeasurably lower degree by the animals around him.

“Reason and instinct we are disposed to believe are only relative terms. That which in man we call reason, in animals we call instinct—that mysterious force which vitalizes and builds up the fabric of the human body is the same mysterious force which vitalizes and builds up the fabric of the animacule. The difference is not so much one in nature or kind as in degree or intensity.

“The third and highest element of man’s nature is the Pneuma, or Spirit. This is distinctively the religious faculty. It is the organ by which man has the sense of God, by which he comes up into contact with Him, and apprehends and knows Him. God is not said to be the Father of our bodies or souls; of these He is only the maker and framer, but He is said to be the Father of our Spirits.

“This is the celestial sign which separates man so radically and everlastingly from the animal creation. The animal has a Psyche—a soul—as well as man. He not only has life, but having it can reason and desire and feel and love and rejoice and be enraged, and do a thousand things like a human soul. But unlike man he has no Pneuma. He cannot know God or worship Him.”

LITERARY MEN AND SAVANTS ALIKE EXPECT IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES IN THE REALM OF ANTHROPOLOGY. WHETHER THIS BOOK IS IN ANY REASONABLE SENSE AN ADVANCE COURIER OF SUCH DISCOVERIES, ITS READERS MUST DETERMINE FOR THEMSELVES.—*Wilder.*

MIRIAM vs. MILTON.

The following review is from the pen of Prof. Alex. Wilder, M.D., of Newark, N.J. For thirteen years he held the post of associate editor with the late Wm. C. Bryant of the New York Evening Post:—

THE PLOT.

A concept of a startling nature underlies the story of Miriam and her twin brother, Milton. There is nothing in the way the plot is set forth which need shock the sensibility of a person most fastidious on such topics. It certainly is deeply interesting to every reader. It is unlike the works of Bulwer, Haggard, Stevenson, and other prominent writers because the field is entirely the author's own.

The heroine and hero of this tale are a twin sister and brother, children of Rear-Admiral Creedmore, of the Royal Navy. They are, as is often the case, counterparts in their essential qualities. Miriam, the sister, is talented, brilliant, and possessed of faculties of a rare order. With all these endowments she is restless and with a temperament masculine in its aspirations. The brother is as talented as she, but of a reserved nature, and with qualities generally regarded as feminine. Their kindred observe these differences, and often suggest that somehow the spirit of each had become allied to the wrong body.

When celebrating their twenty-first birthday they go out for a sail on the lake near their home, their boat is capsized by a squall, and they sink to the bottom. **Their spirits are forcibly separated from their bodies.** In the region in which they find themselves they make an earnest supplication to the Disposer of events, and are permitted to return to the earth life, each taking the body of the other. They were rescued from the water after an immersion of ten minutes. The physicians at first pronounced them dead, but after a period of active exertion animation is restored. Their return was qualified by several conditions. Henceforth the youth takes the name of Edgar, and the maiden that of Esther.

It is the year 1861. Edgar makes his way to America, and enlists in the 71st N. Y. Volunteers, is speedily engaged in active service, wins distinction, and finally becomes a Colonel. He serves in turn upon the staff of the various Generals commanding the army of the Potomac. **Vivid accounts are given of the various Battle Scenes in which he participated.**

After the war Colonel Edgar Creedmore tries his fortune in the Far West. Thirteen years of adventure follow with sad tales of misfortune, which are thrilling and romantic.

The history of Esther's experience is no less sorrowful. It is a terrible story of conspiracy and crime. The reader is led through seventeen years of plotting and adventure in the higher and lower grades of English and Continental life.

After this period the brother and sister meet, but this being in violation of their solemn agreement they are again involved in a drowning disaster and once more permitted to resume their original bodies, but are entangled with each other's untoward experiences. After many trials the errors of the twins are retrieved, and they take their place in the social world purified and benefited by their strange episodes of life.

The interest of this very remarkable story is maintained from the first chapter to the last. It is full of entertainment as well as stimulus to profound thought. **This outline only faintly expresses the plot of this narrative; the details cannot even be guessed.**

EVERY CLERGYMAN AND EVERY DOCTOR SHOULD READ THIS STORY, FOR THE SCHEME IS BASED UPON A PROPOSITION DEMANDING FROM REFLECTING MINDS THE MOST SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.—*Wilder.*

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"The author, when supposed to be dead, traversed the river of death until he had caught glimpses of the Celestial City, and was sent back to earth again. There is nothing in the book in conflict with God's Word, and much that is deeply interesting and impressive. The spirit of the book is earnest and reverential."—*National Baptist, Philadelphia*.

"A curious story, very well told. The author is master of a good style, and has a fine imagination. The material could be shaped into an allegory of extraordinary interest."—*Religious Herald*.

"The experience of Mr. Kane forms a striking and interesting narrative, from whatever point of view it is considered. We shall all of us learn some day how much of it is true, and any criticism upon it in advance of a like experience must be purely speculative. Certainly, no one can envy the chaplain his exceptional capacity for repeating an experience which most are quite satisfied to go through with but once."—*U. S. Army and Navy Journal*.

The author does not waste any time in superfluous matter, but introduces his readers into the mysteries of the spirit-land in such a prompt manner that the attention is riveted at once, and completely absorbed until the book is finished. He gives no explanation of the phenomena; neither does he draw any deduction, nor offer any theory, but leaves his readers to their own conclusions. Mr. Kane is well known among his friends as being a most thoroughly practical man and not at all visionary, thus making his narrative all the more singular. The work has received the endorsement of a large number of clergymen of all denominations, and should be in every household in the land. To those who are suffering from bereavement the book will come like a messenger from the other shore, telling of the bright land across the dark river. To all classes the book will throw a beam of light across the pathway to the border-land; for the author minutely describes his sensations in the throes of death, and the wonderful development of the spirit faculties, and showing that the hour of dissolution should be looked upon as the gateway to untold happiness. Having been eight times at the point of death, and three times pronounced dead, the author has had unusual facilities for a glimpse of the other sphere. The favourable notices of the secular and religious press are a sufficient endorsement of the character of this book.—THOS. C. MURPHY, D.D., Philadelphia.

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7 & 9, Victoria Street, Liverpool; and all Booksellers.

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