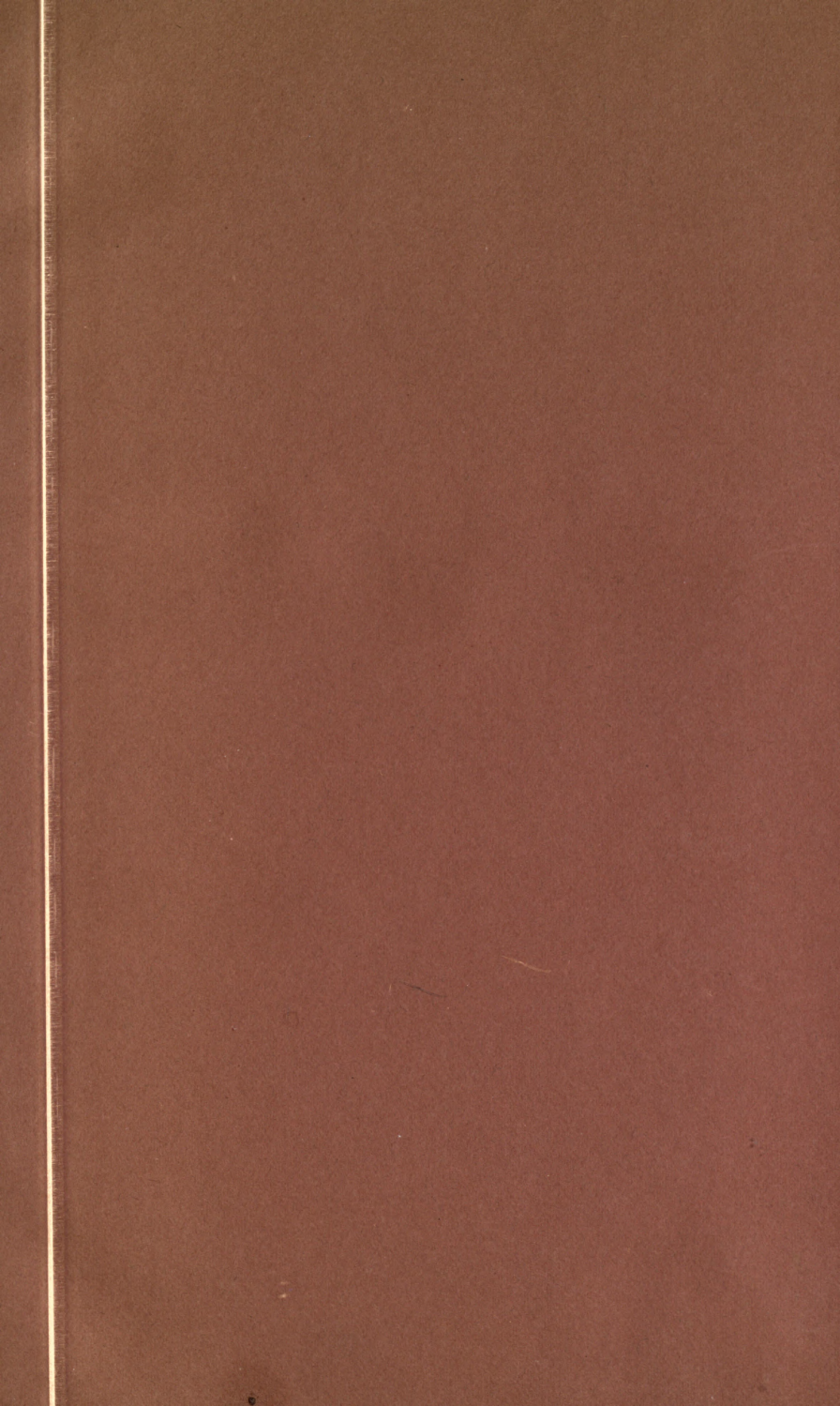




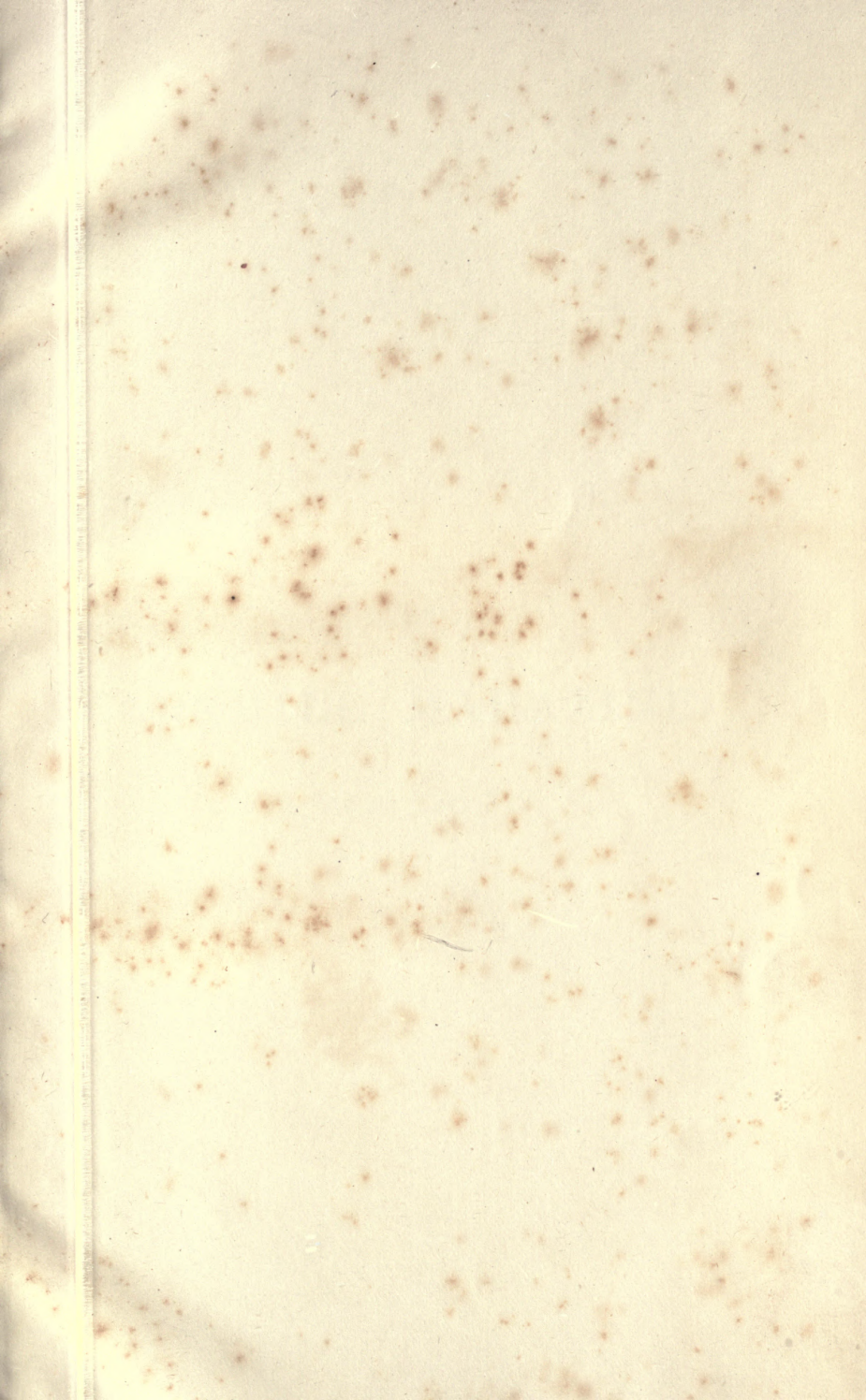
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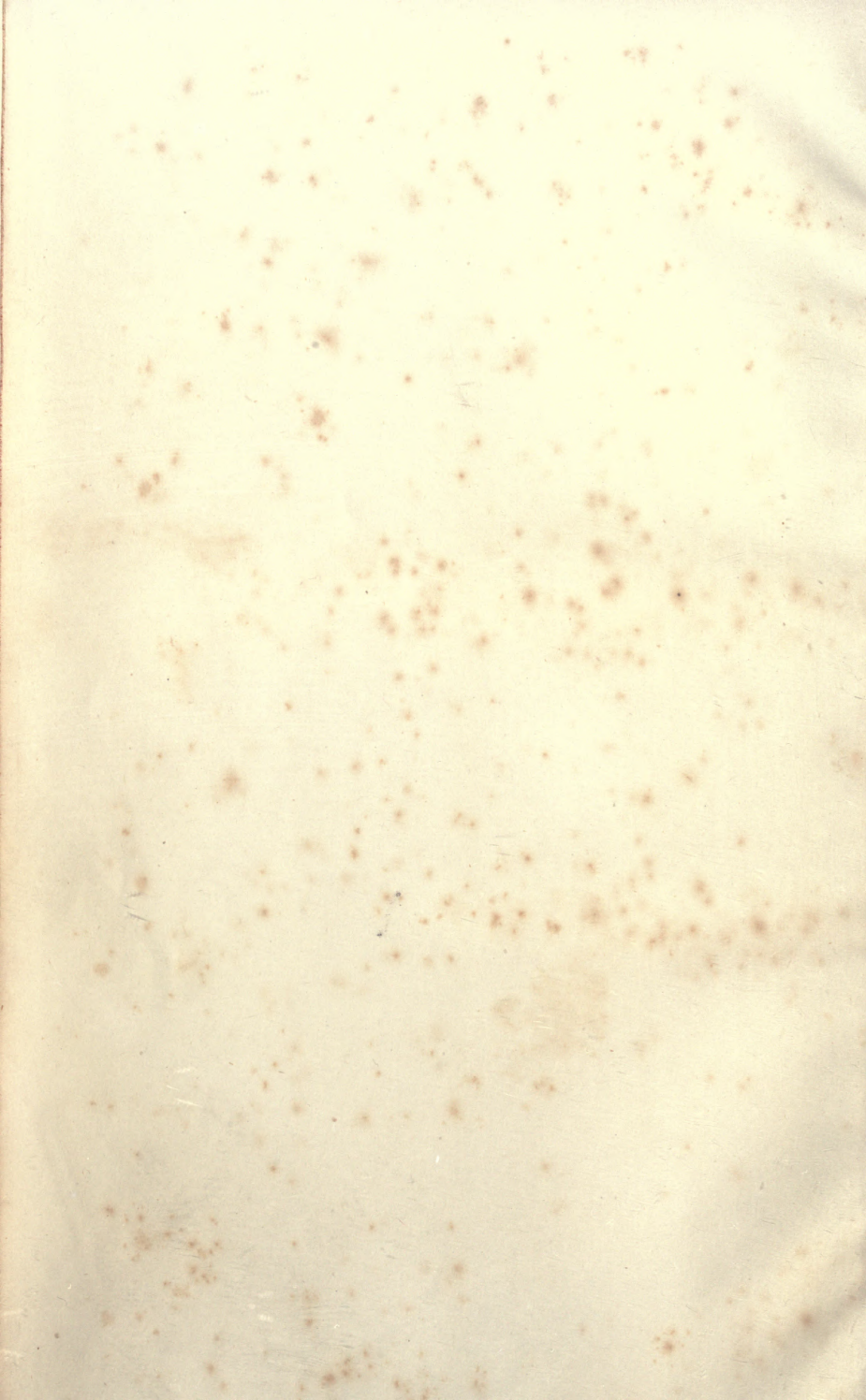














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*NETTLESHIP'S SCORE.*

I.

It was Nettleship's match; or, rather, the University match that cricketers persist in calling Nettleship's, because it is generally held to have been Nettleship's long score—and apparently nothing else—that ultimately won the game for Oxford. It was the second day of the match, and the luncheon interval, which occurred shortly after Nettleship had gone in.

The day was gorgeous, as those who were up at Lord's will remember; and the dresses of the ladies were in keeping with the day, as half-a-dozen newspapers observed next morning. Never, it was agreed, had the well-appointed ground in St. John's Wood presented a fairer spectacle than during that interval. A perfect galaxy of beauty floated before your eyes across the trim green sward; behind you the dainty picnic was already in full swing on the tops of the handsome drags; in every direction champagne corks were popping with enviable iteration; and over all shone the hot June sun. So the papers said, and not without truth. Personally, however, it is more than likely that you took little or no interest in these phenomena. You knew them by heart, you see, as well as the descriptive gentlemen who reported them, at long range, from the Strand. More probably you spent the time in those exceptionally delightful recognitions which come but once a year, and at Lord's; where you have the annual opportunity of offering a good cigar to your old house-master—who had you flogged for smoking in your study—and of patronising the snob you used to fag for. You and some other fellow strolled about the ground together, and sought out the old set, and criticised them horribly; and, no doubt, among other objects, you drew his

attention to one of the players who was lunching in a landau, and was somewhat conspicuous, being the only one of the twenty-two—so far as could be seen—who preferred this sort of discomfort to the regular thing under cover. 'That's Nettleship,' you said; 'he's in, you know.' And of course the other fellow said pointedly that he could see that Nettleship was having his innings, and laughed; and you laughed too, indulgently, but drew nearer, to stare at the man who seemed already to have collared the Cambridge bowling.

All Oxford knew Nettleship by sight, and probably so did most Cambridge men. He had played the three previous years at Lord's, and though he had been a disappointment in those three matches, no one who had seen him in the field was likely to forget him. Not so much because he was the finest cover-point in either team, but almost entirely on account of his good looks, which were quite singular, and not at all of the conventional order. His jet-black hair, for instance, was a sheer anachronism in its length and curliness, and would have been considered extremely bad form in anybody but Nettleship. His pale face also was clean-shaven for no good reason; but forehead, nose, and chin were modelled in the very best Greek style. So, at least, they had seemed when Nettleship played his first match at Lord's as a freshman. They were now, it was remarked, a trifle sharp and angular. In short—though it was the face of a determined, persevering poet, at least *looking* the part, rather than that of a born athlete—it was a face that everyone knew. Even the ladies at Lord's, who notoriously never look at the cricket, except to furnish their annual supply of high-class 'comic copy' in the form of artless comment—even the ladies knew Mr. Nettleship by sight, and really watched the game if he fielded close to the ropes. As for the men of his time, it has been hinted that they judged him by no ordinary standard of 'form,' though they may have regarded him as a dangerous and even impossible model. It may be added that they did not even speak of him in the ordinary way. It is Brown of Oriel, Jones of Brasenose, Robinson of New. It was Nettleship of the 'Varsity—Nettleship of Oxford. And Nettleship of Oxford was having his innings, it was observed; and the reference was not so much to the thirty or forty runs he had already made, and the hundred he was possibly good for, as to the fact that Nettleship was calmly eating salmon mayonnaise by the side of one of the loveliest girls on the ground, on the apex of whose parasol flaunted a dark-blue knot.



The landau patronised by the celebrated Oxonian was a new one, though in point of existence the crest upon the door was a good deal newer. The liveries of footman and page were also very new, and their wearers were at any rate new to London (which was plain from their behaviour). In fact, Nettleship of the 'Varsity was with painfully new people. Their name was M'Ilwraith; old M'Ilwraith was one of the newest of the new M.P.'s; and their town house was an institution whose age in weeks could be reckoned on the fingers of two hands.

Nettleship finished his salmon mayonnaise as regardless of the world's eyes as though he were still at the wicket.

'Let me take your plate,' said the lovely girl at his side; and Nettleship let her, or at any rate did not attempt to prevent her until too late. Then he apologised, of course, but coolly.

'Elaine!' said the girl's mother with some severity. 'That is Thomas's business. Thomas!'

Thomas, the page, arose somewhat flushed from a playful bear-fight with the Masters M'Ilwraith under the carriage, and was within an ace of spilling the remains of the mayonnaise over Miss M'Ilwraith's dress, in his self-consciousness.

'That boy is quite unbearable,' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith with irritation. 'Mr. Nettleship,' she continued, in tones that were artificially hospitable but unmistakably cold, 'what dare we offer you? My eldest boy has told me such terrible tales about training, that really one does not know, you know.'

There was a moral wheeze in the lady's voice that Nettleship's ear detected with the celerity and certainty of a stethoscope. At once he became alert and attentive. He wanted nothing more—not that cricket demanded any particular training, like the Sports—but what might he get for Mrs. M'Ilwraith? Oyster patties, salad, strawberries, ices, champagne? He must be allowed to make himself useful, he protested; and for some minutes Mrs. M'Ilwraith received more assiduous attention at his hands than she had ever seen him pay her daughter, or any other woman, young or old. This, of course, may have been diplomacy in Nettleship. His eyes were blue, and keen, and searching; his smile had of late taken a cynical curl; and indeed there were diplomatic potentialities in every corner of his mobile, clear-cut countenance. But there was enough of careless candour in his smiling glance—enough to be largely genuine.

This glance, too, was levelled exclusively at the elder lady.

Nor could it have done any violence to his optic nerves to contemplate Mrs. M'Ilwraith closely and long, for, as elder ladies go, she was among the very prettiest. Stout she undoubtedly was, but her hair was still golden, almost, and her own entirely; while her complexion had resolutely refused to grow any older some thirty years ago, and had carried out its independent resolve without the aid of a single cosmetic. She was dimpled, too, with sympathetic, poetical dimples not in complete harmony with her present character, though they had very well suited those idyllic and comparatively humble days in which Mrs. M'Ilwraith had read her 'Tennyson' to such practical purpose as to christen every child out of the well-loved volume. In addition to these lingering charms of a simple girlhood, there was her later, more worldly, but scarcely less pleasing attribute of being always thoroughly well dressed in the best possible taste. This, of course, was greatly *en évidence* to-day; while, as usual, her face offered a choice study in comfortable serenity. As for Elaine M'Ilwraith, she was precisely what it was plain that her mother had been at Elaine's age; only prettier, you would have said; and less shallow, I happen to know.

'You say you are living in town now?' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith.

'For the last few months,' Nettleship replied. 'Since I got back from my globe trot.'

'Then how does it happen that you are playing for your College still?'

('For his University,' Elaine suggested.)

'Oh, we are allowed to play four seasons, don't you know?' Nettleship explained. 'It wasn't my intention to play this year, and I haven't been up once this term; but they bothered me about the London matches, and I suppose I was too keen, myself, to refuse.'

At this moment an elephantine young man rolled up to the carriage and leant heavily upon the door. He was very stout indeed, and extremely like Mrs. M'Ilwraith in face. In fact, he was her eldest boy. But those terrible tales of training mentioned by that lady were evidently not her son's personal experiences.

'Ned, my boy,' cried this young man, slapping Nettleship heavily upon the shoulder, 'you're drinking nothing! Thomas—champagne for Mr. Nettleship.'

'Arthur,' said Nettleship, 'I don't want any.'

Arthur insisting, however, he took the glass, put it once to his lips, and seized an early opportunity of surreptitiously convey-



ing it over the far side of the carriage into the hands of young Launcelot M'Ilwraith, who shared it (unfairly) with the still younger Enoch Arden M'Ilwraith; who flung the dregs in the footman's face.

The bell for clearing the ground was now likely to ring at any moment. Luncheon, so far as Nettleship was concerned, was long over. He took the opportunity, however, before going back to the pavilion, afforded by Arthur's whispering into his mother's ear the names of the nobles on the contiguous drags, in fulfilment of a solemn charge delivered before leaving home—Nettleship took this opportunity to turn and speak to Elaine.

'What ages it is since we met!' he said, looking at her critically.

'It is just a year and a half,' Elaine said simply.

He, for his part, had no idea when it was; he would not have owned to one in any case; but Elaine's long memory did not displease him, and he answered with a laugh:

'Is it really all that? I say, Elaine, how old we are all getting! You must be—let me see—twenty—what?'

'How ridiculous you are! Twenty's a year away still. I'm nineteen on Friday, as you might know if you—if——'

'Friday! Oho, your birthday's on Friday!' whistled Nettleship—as though, until the other year, he had not sent her presents, regularly as the calendar, on that day. 'You ought to celebrate it, Elaine, in Sussex Square.'

'What is that, Mr. Nettleship?' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith sharply. Her face, however, did not for a moment lose its serenity. That was its way.

'I made so bold as to suggest a birthday party in Elaine's honour,' said Nettleship, with the coolness of an old-established family friend.

(Arthur, having detected his small brothers in the act of opening a fresh bottle of champagne in their inferno under the carriage, was engaged in brotherly chastisement, so he did not hear what followed.)

'A party!' cried Mrs. M'Ilwraith, taken aback for the moment, but yet able to promptly press her daughter's foot with her own. 'Oh, I see, an "At Home," a Reception. And all because of a birthday! Why, really, Mr. Nettleship—the children are not children now!'

'It appears not,' said Nettleship, rising as the bell rang in the

pavilion; 'when they were I was "Ned" to you all!' And with a somewhat cold smile, and a short leave-taking, he was gone.

A thousand glances followed his retreating form in the jacket that was no longer dark blue, but honourably faded. It was its fourth and last appearance at Lord's on this great occasion. A thousand tongues talked 'Nettleship,' for the moment. It was his last chance in the 'Varsity match. He had never done anything in it before. Yet he was the best bat in the eleven; he had begun well; he did look like rising to the occasion this time, and coming off at last.

But in the new landau Elaine ventured at once upon a mild remonstrance with her mother.

'How very odd of you not to tell him about Friday evening, mamma! You implied an untruth, even if you didn't tell one.'

'If it was only "a lie which is half a truth,"' said Mrs. McIlwraith blandly, remembering a phrase but forgetting entirely the context; 'if it was only that, my dear, I am sorry. It shows that I need practice. Don't look absurd, Elaine! Town life would be unbearable without the fib—the little, necessary fib. I settled that before we left the country.'

'But why on earth not ask him? When we know him so well!'

'Why on earth? Every reason on earth,' smiled Mrs. McIlwraith, in perfect good-humour. 'Must I remind you of some of them? Well, then, they are losing money, the Nettleships, as fast as ever they can. Before long they will fail; nothing can prevent it. Your father has reason to know this. Your father saw reason to cease doing business with them at least a year ago. This young man has no longer any prospects. Why did he hurry home from abroad, after six months, when he went for eighteen, if it was not that supplies ceased? Yes, all the sons had a few thousands from their mother, I know that; but it is the merest pittance, and goodness knows what he is doing for a living in town, or how he dare be playing here. These are a few of the reasons on earth; and they are reasons enough for our not going out of our way to ask him to the house. Because a young man has a room in the Temple, Elaine, it doesn't follow—Elaine! you are not listening! Why, the girl is clapping her hands like a lunatic! What is it?'

'Ned hit two fourers the first over!' said Elaine, without taking her sparkling eyes from the game.



'Ned, indeed!' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith. But it was obviously of no use to say more just then, when Elaine was so shamefully excited. Mrs. M'Ilwraith subsided into composed silence. After all, it was not so very hard to get into town ways; and, really, when one tried, it came quite natural to show the cold shoulder to one's oldest country friends. . . . Ned, indeed!

For additional serenity she raised her eyes to the box of the vehicle. There sat Enid, the second Miss M'Ilwraith, and by her side a most satisfactory young man. Those twain were really delightfully engrossed in one another. They were in a planet of their own, from which it seldom occurred to them to turn their heads and look down. The young man was enormously wealthy, though lineally of small account. But everything was not to be compassed at once. There should be no taint of trade in Elaine's bargain—not even of successful trade. Ned! The idea!

The hot afternoon wore on, and the fieldsmen's shadows became longer and narrower every over. Launcelot, Enoch, and their friend the page snored happily under the axletrees. As for Mrs. M'Ilwraith, she had become inured to rounds of applause that did not in the least excite her curiosity, and was herself on the point of dozing, when a peculiarly long and loud uproar induced her to open her eyes. She opened them upon the strangely pale face of Elaine.

'Whatever is the matter?' cried Mrs. M'Ilwraith.

'Hush!' Elaine whispered. 'He's out! Wait a moment! There!'

Mrs. M'Ilwraith had descried the figure of young Nettleship walking slowly from the wicket, with bent shoulders—after the first outburst, in dead silence. But as he neared the densely crowded pavilion the shouting and clapping of hands burst forth again with redoubled enthusiasm. Elaine clapped too, clapped wildly, and the pink was back in her face.

'Dear me, it must be something quite out of the way to make all this fuss about,' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith, perceiving at last that the occasion was a great one. 'In whose honour, pray, is all this din?'

'In Ned's—Ned's!' cried Elaine, still clapping furiously. 'See, the other side are clapping too! Oh, I do hope it is a hundred—it must be a hundred—it can't be short of a hundred!'

But it was—by one run. Nettleship's memorable score was exactly ninety-nine!

Sympathy at once made itself felt in a fresh and touching roar. But as for Elaine, tears sprang into her fine, flashing eyes; she leant back in the landau, and the match interested her no more.

Her mother appeared to be thinking. At last she said:

‘Has he distinguished himself so *very* much, my dear?’

‘Oh, mamma—tremendously!’

A pause. ‘Then,’ said Mrs. M’Ilwraith, naïvely, ‘why don’t he come back and sit with us?’

‘He might, perhaps,’ answered Elaine, ‘if he had distinguished himself less.’ And for a moment her wishes were at variance.

‘Elaine,’ said her mother, after another and a longer pause, ‘will there be anything about him in the papers to-morrow?’

‘Anything? Columns!’

‘And people will talk about him?’

‘Of course, mamma—as the hero of the match!’

‘Elaine,’ said Mrs. M’Ilwraith at last (it was just as they were going), ‘send Mr. Nettleship a card this evening—for Friday, you know!’

## II.

So many men get a hundred runs in the University match, that it would be superfluous to describe the variety of congratulations—from excited clergymen and callous Old Blues, from hoary veterans and beardless boys—that assailed Nettleship in the pavilion. Of late years ‘centuries’ in first-class cricket have become so terribly common, and at least one century in the University match so entirely inevitable, that Nettleship was rather glad than otherwise to have just fallen short of the commonplace three figures. He had achieved a record all to himself, for ninety-nine is the rarest of scores, and has never before or since been made in the Oxford and Cambridge matches. Indeed, Nettleship would have been perfectly contented but for the tiresome expressions of sympathy, on account of that one run short, that mingled largely with the praises buzzing in his ears. The popular commiseration savoured of strained sentiment, for it could not have been more demonstrative if he had got no runs at all, and it bored Nettleship supremely; in fact, it had a good deal to do with his leaving the ground when he did, a full hour before play ceased, there being no danger of Oxford having to field again that evening.



He tried to get away unobserved ; but the penalties of a public personality are inexorable, and the invitations and questions that pelted him between the pavilion and the gates were something heart-breaking. Nettleship refused the invitations, ignored the questions, and eventually rattled off alone in a hansom.

Speeding towards the City in that hansom, the young man underwent a swift transfiguration. His head drooped in dejection, his pointed features grew sensibly sharper, his eyes filled with bitterness ; and an ugly distortion—a mere parody of a smile, and a poor one—froze upon his lips. Two pictures, both of himself, were in his mind. Lord's cricket-ground was the background of the one, an ill-furnished room in the Temple that of the other. His back was turned upon the first, his face was set towards the second ; and the iron was deep in his soul. He had carried off the honours of this afternoon pretty coolly, if not (from purely physical causes) exactly in cold blood ; yet, looking at him now, one would have taken him for a young man denied all his life the happiness of a single triumphal hour. In fact, Nettleship was to be pitied ; but not at his own computation. For young men are the worst judges of their own hardships ; and this one was driving to chambers in the Temple, not to a garret—driving, too, not walking—and had an income upon which it was quite possible to live in tolerable comfort, dress decently, and occasionally even to drink wine at meals. What was impossible for Nettleship was to live as he had been accustomed to live ; as he considered Nature had intended him to live from the first ; as all the men he had been playing with to-day lived. But, misery being purely a matter of comparison, even this qualified form of it was in Nettleship's case considerable, not to say grievous.

The hansom was halfway to the Temple when, apparently on a sudden impulse, the fare knocked violently with his knuckles upon the trap overhead. A square of blue sky was stamped for a moment in the roof of the cab, to be instantly obliterated by a sun-flayed ear and whiskered cheek. Into that ear Nettleship pronounced the name of a celebrated emporium of fashionable virtu and saleable conceits in metal and fabric. Three minutes later he was in the artistic precincts of the shop itself, asking for the manager by name, and giving his own. The manager came forward at once.

‘Ah!’ said he, ‘about your curios. I am right? Well, follow me, sir.’

Nettleship did so. They paused before a table, artistic in itself, upon which a number of Asiatic curios were effectively arranged.

‘Here they are, sir, and in advantageous position, as I think you will admit. But I am sorry to say their number is undiminished—undiminished, sir, by so much as a single spear-head. I told you my fears frankly, I think, at the first; so far, I regret to say, they are realised. There is no sale for curios now. They have gone out. They are not the Craze, sir. You know what the Craze is now, sir; and two Crazes cannot be coexistent. I am perfectly frank—they must be done to death one at a time, sir, *seniores priores.*’ (Nettleship smiled.) ‘Now, a year ago it would have been different. *We* would have speculated in these things then, sir (for they are very pretty things indeed, Mr. Nettleship; we would have nothing to do with them at all, not even on the present terms, if they were not such exceedingly pretty things). But, as it is, we dare not speculate in them; as it is, the speculation must be yours, sir.’

The man was voluble, and knew his business. Considering everything, there was a pinch of humour in the situation. Nettleship smiled again, not entirely in bitterness.

‘There has been no inquiry at all about the things, then?’ said Nettleship, preparing to leave the shop.

‘None to my knowledge. But stay: I will make sure before you go.’

The manager left him. In less than a minute he returned.

‘There *has* been an inquiry, after all—and a good deal of interest shown—about this.’ He took up a small bronze water-vase, delicately traced with strange figures. It was the one thing in his collection that Nettleship had supposed to be of real value, though he had kept tobacco in it until the day it occurred to him to make money out of his curios.

‘But,’ said Nettleship, ‘nothing came of it, you say?’

‘No, because we named your price. It will never go at fifty guineas, sir; it’s too tall altogether.’

Nettleship looked coldly at the man of business: he had a keen eye for Crazes, no doubt, but what was he to know about the antique art of India? On the other hand, Nettleship himself was completely ignorant of that subject. He had only some chance acquaintance’s word for it, out in India, that this little



vase was a valuable property. Nettleship looked at the man of business very coldly indeed.

'Look here,' he said slowly, and in the preternaturally calm tones in which one might warn a fellow-creature of one's immediate intention of throwing him through the window. 'Look here: *next* time anyone asks, let it go for thirty!'

Without another word he stalked from the shop. The hansom rattled on until it stopped at Middle Temple Lane. There Nettleship got out, walked into Brick Court, and up the stone stairs to his chambers. For the next hour he lounged in a chair, thinking the vagrant thoughts that are encouraged, if not inspired, by the smoking of several cigarettes at a sitting. Naturally, in his case, they were not the pleasantest thoughts in the world; yet, when he got up and stretched himself, and went out to dine, his mood had improved. It was then eight o'clock. He returned at five minutes to nine; so that his dinner, wherever he got it, could not have been a very elaborate affair. Dropping once more into his arm-chair, he abandoned himself to further thought—possibly to thought of a more concentrated character than before, for a single cigarette sustained it; though the long summer twilight went through all its mellow gradations, and finally deepened into complete darkness, before the young man at last rose and lit the lamp. This done, he carried the lamp to a pedestal desk, and sitting down at the desk drew up his chair close. There was now an appearance of settled purpose in his manner, and his face was full of cool determination; it wore, in fact, the identical expression that the Cambridge bowlers of that year have such good reason to remember.

Nettleship had not sat down to write, however. Unlocking a drawer in the left-hand pedestal, he took out of it handfuls of photographs of various sizes, which he heaped together on the flat part of the desk, close to the lamp. Without more ado he proceeded deliberately to sort the photographs, throwing most of them carelessly on one side, but picking out one in twenty, or so, and placing it carefully on the slope in front of him. So might the modern Paris approach his invidious task, without embarrassment, the fatal apple already packed up, and ticketed for the Parcels Post; for the photographs were nearly all of the other sex. But there were evidences that this was no selection of the fairest. In the first place, the greatest beauties of the civilised world were tossed aside without a moment's thought; in

the second, the selected photographs were all of one woman, in the various stages of her girlhood. The conclusion was manifestly foregone. The chosen woman was Elaine M'Ilwraith.

Her photographs he now arranged in one long row on the slope of the desk, in chronological order, from left to right. To the disinterested philosopher the series would have offered interesting illustrations of the respective improvements in photography and the female dress during late years, quite apart from the graduated coming forth of a most attractive flower of girlhood. Nettleship's reflections, however, were to the point. He shifted the lamp from the left side of the desk to the right, and turned up the wick. The strongest rays then fell upon the latest photographs. Upon these young Nettleship gazed long and thoughtfully. The act was sentimental; but the expression of the actor was nothing of the kind. It was not even a tender expression; nor was it, on the other hand, coldly calculating—altogether; it was merely thoughtful. Edward Nettleship was making up his mind.

He did make up his mind at last, and put together the photographs of Elaine, and restored them to the drawer—where, by the way, they no longer kept theatrical company, or any company but their own. One of Elaine's photographs, however—the latest and the best—was kept out. It was a full-length portrait in fancy dress, with an expansive hat, a milk-pail, a milk-stool, and other pretty properties; and this really charming picture was stuck up forthwith upon the chimney-piece.

Nettleship had made up his mind at last—once and for all, and for good. The words upon his lips as he blew out the lamp were indicative of an uncompromising attitude.

'She would have liked it well enough once,' he said; 'she will have to lump it now. The fool of a woman!'

But this, as it happened, was scarcely kind to the lady alluded to, seeing that an invitation card for her 'At Home' on Friday was even then gravitating towards Nettleship's letter-box.

### III.

'WHERE did this come from?' said Elaine to Enid.

It was Friday evening, at the new house in Sussex Square. The first carriage might arrive at any moment. As yet the two girls had the drawing-room to themselves, and were delicately disarranging the room in a truly enlightened spirit; though



there was in it a newness, a stiffness, and a pervading sense of Tottenham Court Road that only the hand of time could soften. The subject of Elaine's inquiry, however, whencesoever it had come, was not—it was safe to bet—of that thoroughfare. And indeed, as Enid explained, it had come from quite another quarter, that afternoon, on approval.

'Approval!' said Elaine, with a slight and pardonable sneer. 'Does that mean that it is to be paraded to-night, and to-morrow returned as unsuitable? It has happened before, you know.'

'Perhaps it is to happen again. I don't know. I only know that, as we drove back from the Park, mamma declared she must get something pretty for the room; so we went to Glindoni's, and this little oddity took her fancy. It *is* pretty, isn't it?—and it looks well by itself on this absurd little table. Well, you know mamma's way—her town way. I heard her say, "Mr. M'Ilwraith is a great judge of Eastern work—quite his hobby, in fact—but it seems an enormous price. I really cannot decide until he sees it." So it ended in our bringing it away with us in the carriage.'

'Hobby, indeed!' said Elaine scornfully. 'When had papa any hobby but one? But it appears to be an article in the London creed—at least, in mamma's interpretation of it—to tell stories whenever you possibly can. I must say, I congratulate her on the ease with which she embraces the new faith. At least she has the courage of her inventions.'

'Hasn't she! But let us leave the vase where it is, for it is really very pretty——'

'And no doubt valuable; which makes it meaner still. Yes it can stay there—but, hush!'

For at that moment Mr. M'Ilwraith entered the room. As his daughter had truly observed, he had but one hobby—and that was political, which made him a dangerous man to meet in quiet corners. He talked of nothing else. Allowances could perhaps be made for him on the plea that he was so very new to the House; but those who knew him best found it hard to make them. A new Bill, which affected Mr. M'Ilwraith's sympathies as a politician no less than his personal interests as an employer of labour, was then intermittently before the House; and, naturally enough, his head was full of it. It was a fine head, a magnificent head, but he ran fearful risks with it: it was absolutely distended with that Bill. Even now, in the absence of men of his own weight, the poltroon fell upon his defenceless daughters,

and assaulted them with his last night's speech. No. They had not read it. They confessed they had not, and hung their heads.

'Ah!' said Mr. M'Ilwraith kindly. 'No time, I see; an exceptional day, I suppose. Well, well, we'll say no more about it at present. The *Times* is still intact, I dare say; you have laid it aside for a quiet time perhaps. Good! You will find the report of my speech full—satisfactorily full, I may say—though not verbatim. I could wish it had been verbatim. But you will read it, girls, before you go to bed, and we will discuss it at breakfast; when I shall be able to give you, word for word—for my memory is luckily a good one—all that they saw necessary to exclude.'

'You are not going to-night, papa?' Enid ventured.

'To the House? Yes; late—in time for the division. I must do that in deference to my constituents. Personally, however, there is nothing of any interest to me going on to-night. What is the division about, you ask, Elaine? Ireland, my girl, Ireland. Now, what is far more important in my eyes—'

Mr. M'Ilwraith took his foot from the stirrup, in the very act of remounting, on the entrance, at this point, of his wife. His wife's want of appreciation or sympathy where his nearest and dearest projects were concerned was notorious, and damaging to the dignity of the senator. She had even been known to tap each ear with each index-finger simultaneously, in pantomimic illustration of the velocity with which her husband's best periods passed in and out of her cranium. There was no occasion, however, to stable the trusty animal just yet. Already there were sounds upon the stairs, and old M'Ilwraith smelt the blood of Englishmen to whom resistance and escape would be alike impossible.

Once started, the influx of guests seemed never to abate during the remainder of the evening. Following the very oldest precedents, Mrs. M'Ilwraith had laid herself out for lions, and not without success. There were some entirely tame lions from Westminster, colleagues of her husband—whom they sedulously shunned all the evening. There was the wife of an illustrious lion—Professor Josling—who regretted that that eminent antiquary could not himself be present. There was a fearful and wonderful lion from the Chinese Legation, who was so scandalously guyed, behind his back, by the well-bred Enoch Arden (instigated by the bold Launcelot), that Thomas, the page, dis-



graced himself with the coffee-tray, and received notice that very night. Then there was the athletic lion captured at Lord's, a literary cub from Fleet Street, and an artistic whelp from Chelsea. To crown all, a professional lion—with a high-class satirical entertainment, free from vulgarity—was due at eleven.

As the evening advanced, Mrs. M'Ilwraith might have been seen moving about among the nobodies of her party and whispering into their private ears interesting personalities concerning the somebodies. For the time being, in fact, she became a kind of verbal paragraphist of the evening press; and as she was, if possible, rather more inaccurate than her prototype, the listener was either distracted or entertained, according to his—or, more generally, her—intelligence.

'That, my dear Mrs. Smythe, is Mrs. Josting, wife of the celebrated antiquity. He is busy with the proofs of a new book, so was prevented from coming—much to his disgust, he sends me word. Proofs, you know—so like these terrible Professors—they are for ever proving what nobody wants to know, you know! . . . And that is our delightful oddity, Mr. Ling-Lung—Chinese Embassy, you know. Shall I introduce you? No? Then let me whisper: he came in those lovely garments at my special request! . . . You know Mr. Nettleship, of course? No? Dear me, I thought everybody knew Mr. Nettleship. He is the champion cricketer of England; bowled ninety-nine of the Cambridge wickets at Lord's the other day. Ninety-nine, poor man! So near and yet so far! We had a carriage on the ground, and he lunched with us during the match, you know.'

Having thus displayed her knowledge of the national game, Mrs. M'Ilwraith raised her *pince-nez* with a view to pointing out its doughty exponent. He was nowhere to be seen. Mrs. M'Ilwraith steered a zigzag course down the room, but could find him nowhere. Elaine was missing too. A sudden dread entered the lady's breast.

The windows of the room were tall, narrow, three in number, and opened each upon a small balcony of the most useless type. They were wide open on account of the excessively warm weather; for the same reason the blinds were up; and soft Oriental curtains (from Glindoni's) alone—and but partially—excluded the zephyrs of Sussex Square. Naturally enough, among the silky fabrics of window number three, innocently contemplating the night, Mrs. M'Ilwraith discovered the missing pair. Their backs, of course, were alone presented; but Mrs.

M'Ilwraith instantly identified Elaine's dress, and tapped her daughter on the shoulder with her fan—in excellent imitation of the business between the smart detective and the discomfited villain in the fifth act.

Elaine started, of course ; nevertheless, the radiance could not and would not at once forsake her face when she turned and confronted her mother. Mrs. M'Ilwraith spoke not a word. Her blue eyes glittered upon Nettleship's cool face for one instant ; the next, she turned, as abruptly as was possible in a woman of her size, and sailed away with her prize. The little incident was quickly over, and attracted no notice, owing to forethought in the choice of windows.

Nettleship continued in solitude his survey of the night. He was in no way put out ; but he did not immediately step back into the light of the room. When he did, however, his step was a thought jaunty, his smile bordered upon insolence, and his hands were in his pockets. He became at once aware that something of interest was taking place at the other end of the room. A small crowd was surrounding somebody, reminding Nettleship, in a small way, of the crowd by St. Clement Danes when the converted cannibal is swallowing the lighted fuses. With a somewhat similar amount of curiosity he approached this crowd. On his way he saw his host lead off the ill-starred Chinaman to political execution in the study. A moment later he heard the silvery tones of his hostess proceeding from the centre of the little crowd—

'Indeed, and indeed, you make too much of my modest little heirloom, dear Mrs. Josling !'

'If the Professor were here, he would make a good deal more of it,' that lady stoutly rejoined. 'But you must really allow me to obtain a simple impression, with this pencil and piece of paper, of such delicate and utterly fantastic tracery. He shall see what that is like, at all events.'

There was a pause. Nettleship raised himself to his full height, and saw an intellectual-looking lady carefully pencilling a piece of paper held closely over a spherical surface. He was mildly interested.

'And this has really been in your family for a century, Mrs. M'Ilwraith ?' some one asked.

'Since the Battle of Plassey,' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith glibly. 'My grandfather fought there.'



‘That’s perfectly true,’ thought Nettleship. ‘I have heard of it often enough. But I never before heard of any heirloom. What can it be?’

He drew himself up once more to his full height, which it was his bad habit not to make the most of. And then he saw what it was—and would have whistled aloud had he not been a thoroughly cool-headed fellow. For the cynosure of all eyes—the heirloom of the M’Ilwraiths—the spoil of Plassey—was nothing more or less than the Indian vase of bronze lately in Nettleship’s own possession, and but three days ago on sale at Glindoni’s!

‘And still they come!’ cried Mrs. M’Ilwraith, smiling—under the public eye—quite sweetly upon the famous cricketer. ‘Look at it, Mr. Nettleship? Of course you may! With pleasure! But really, it is too absurd! To think that our wretched little heirloom should attract so much attention!’

Nettleship did look at it—with exaggerated interest; with unnecessary elaboration; in every light and upon every side; at ridiculous length. His lingering manner was in itself calculated to attract attention. Mrs. M’Ilwraith began to feel uncomfortable.

‘Do you know, Mrs. M’Ilwraith,’ he said at last, with great distinctness, ‘I cannot remember ever once to have seen this most interesting curio up North?’

Mrs. M’Ilwraith explained, with a strange mixture of hot and cold in her manner, that she had kept it under lock and key while the children were young. And then, with a sudden determination to carry it off serenely, in spite of her feelings, Mrs. M’Ilwraith laughed. It was a nervous, unsuccessful laugh; nor was there any apparent reason for a laugh at all.

But Nettleship had already attracted the attention that was so undesirable; and this was doubled in an instant when the young man deliberately raised the bronze vase to his nose, and sniffed it suspiciously.

‘Why,’ he exclaimed, looking round upon the company, ‘it smells of tobacco!’

‘Impossible!’ said poor Mrs. M’Ilwraith, forcing another laugh. But this time her laughter was worse than unsuccessful and nervous—it was hysterical.

‘Oh, but it does, though,’ chuckled Nettleship, putting the vase into his hostess’s trembling hands; ‘try it! It’s tobacco or nothing. What’s more, I recognise the brand. It’s Callender’s Honeydew Mixture. I smoke it myself.’

Mrs. M'Ilwraith turned white as a sheet; but she was not the woman to faint, and Nettleship knew it.

'I never knew before,' went on the forward young man, humorously, 'that Mr. M'Ilwraith smoked Callender's Honeydew Mixture!'

It was here put forward by several persons, who considered Nettleship's manner offensive, that Mr. M'Ilwraith did not smoke at all, but, on the other hand, cordially detested tobacco in any shape or form. Nettleship knew this also; had known it from his boyhood, in fact. Moreover, he was perfectly aware that his manner *was* offensive; and, at a glance of agonised appeal from Mrs. M'Ilwraith, he had the wit at last to change the subject. And this he did so deftly that the lady experienced in her first moments of relief an emotion of gratitude towards her torturer. In the same way, no doubt, the mediævals loved the thumbscrew-man when he slackened off on their renunciation of the faith. We hear, it is true, only of those who never, never renounced; but no doubt there was an unpretentious majority that did.

The entry of the distinguished entertainer, however, set Mrs. M'Ilwraith free to begin hating young Nettleship for the rest of her natural life. Still, her presence of mind was shattered for the evening; she had not even enough left to prevent Elaine and Nettleship sitting together during the entertainment. And this is a portion of the whispered conversation that took place between the pair:—

'I shall have to win your mother next.'

'I wish I thought you could, Ned.'

'I believe I can, though only by scoring off her first.'

'Then do, Ned, do! Don't mind me a little bit.'

'Well, I don't mean to in this case, my darling. The fact is, I see my way to scoring off her as it is—with absolute certainty!'

If he had seen his way to scoring off the fiend himself—in the shape of the Demon Bowler—with absolute certainty (and on a bad wicket), he could not have declared it with greater exultation. Yet there were few keener cricketers living than Ned Nettleship!



## IV.

At eleven o'clock the following morning Nettleship strode into Glindoni's. He was waited upon by the manager with surprising alacrity.

'I have good news for you, sir; good news at last, Mr. Nettleship.'

'Have you indeed!' said Nettleship coldly. The man's congratulatory tone would have been offensive to him under any circumstances.

'Well, I *think* I have, sir. That little Indian vase has been taken by a lady customer, on approval——'

'On approval, eh?' cried Nettleship.

'Well, yes; but you may rely upon it that it is in safe hands; and I may tell you that I have every reason to believe they will keep it, and pay the price.'

'There you are mistaken. They will neither keep it nor will they pay the price. You must get it back from them at once. Money will not buy it now!'

'Sir!'

'I have had a narrow escape,' continued Nettleship. 'I have discovered that that simple-looking vase is absolutely priceless.'

The shopman whistled, and turned red.

'So I must ask you, if you please, to send a special messenger for it at once, in a hansom. Nay, my good sir; I'll pay you for the trouble and expense at your own figure—only send off your messenger at once.'

But the tradesman's confusion had nothing to do with the young man's request. It was simply accounted for by an overwhelming sense of a marvellous bargain missed—through an imperfect knowledge of Eastern relics, and an exaggerated, narrow-minded, imbecile regard for Craze.

The request, indeed, was immediately complied with. In the course of an hour the messenger returned with the vase, and brought word from Mrs. M'Ilwraith that her custom ceased from that hour. Nettleship paid up as liberally for the trouble as the dignity of Messrs. Glindoni would permit, jumped into the emissary's hansom, and drove off to the Temple with his treasure. He entered his chambers in high exultation; the prospect of the score looked even rosier—and immeasurably rosier—than when he had left his chambers an hour ago.

That was on the Saturday. Nettleship waited patiently until the following Tuesday, which was Mrs. M'Ilwraith's day for receiving callers. At half-past four to the minute on the Tuesday afternoon, he presented himself in Sussex Square.

Even as he was announced, the flowing speech of Mrs. Professor Josling fell upon his ears; and Nettleship scented the vase. He was received with flawless outward serenity, sat down modestly in an obscure corner (which, however, commanded a fine view of his hostess's face), and flattered Mrs. Josling with a peculiarly earnest attention as that lady resumed her interrupted narration.

'Well, as I was saying, I was prepared to interest my husband with my little reproduction of the tracery; but I did not expect to administer a galvanic shock, my dear Mrs. M'Ilwraith. He pushed back his proofs, and said—indeed, I don't know what he didn't say. He is so excitable, the Professor—and nervous, and almost irritable—when he is busy with proofs. The artistic temperament, Mrs. M'Ilwraith; for, as you know, the Professor is a man of letters as well as a scientist. But above all he is a *virtuoso*; and my crude reproduction absorbed him at the time to the exclusion of all other subjects. At first I could learn nothing. He was lost in rapt contemplation of the design. But at last he told me that your vase must be a very valuable possession indeed; that he only knew of one other like it in existence, and that in the British Museum. The quaint figures on the vase, he says, probably represent scenes in the life of Gautama Buddha, which would complete the resemblance to the Museum vase. But, to be quite sure, he would like above all things to see the vase itself. He desired me to tell you this, and to crave, on his behalf, the favour of permission to call quietly one afternoon and thoroughly examine the vase.'

Poor, miserable Mrs. M'Ilwraith! To be asked a favour by the renowned Professor Josling, and *such* a favour; to have Professor Josling inviting himself to her house, in the most delightful, unceremonious, friendliest fashion; and to be powerless to say him yea or nay, or to do anything but sit in her chair and gasp for breath! It was a terrible punishment for a few harmless tarradiddles such as were every day demanded from the most virtuous by the exigencies of town life!

'He would have accompanied me this afternoon,' added Mrs. Josling, 'but for his book; he is sending the final sheets of the revise to the printers this evening.'



That he had not come that afternoon was a small mercy, if he was bent upon coming sooner or later; but Mrs. M'Ilwraith had never felt so thankful for anything in her life as for the Professor's present pressing engagements. She shuddered as she figured in her mind the scene she had escaped. She glanced towards the door in apprehension, dreading, even yet, to see him enter at any moment. An acquiescent smile of ghastly serenity froze upon her lips; she wrenched and wrung her fingers with such quiet violence that the diamonds on one hand must have cut the flesh of the other had the hands been less plump.

'And so, my dear Mrs. M'Ilwraith—if you are certain that he will not bother you—if you are quite sure he will not be in your way—if you are positive that it will not weary you to entertain for one short hour, if as much, an old and ardent enthusiast—why then, might we say one afternoon this week?'

Mrs. M'Ilwraith bowed. For the life of her she could not melt or modify or in any way alter the horrid grin that had settled upon her rigid countenance.

'To-morrow,' suggested Mrs. Josling, whose manner was an ingenious blend of persistency and condescension, 'to-morrow, perhaps, would *not* do?'

Then at last, and with a desperate effort, Mrs. M'Ilwraith loosened her tongue. Mrs. Josling was begged to understand that to-morrow afternoon would, as it happened, do beautifully. The Professor would be only too welcome, at whatever hour he chose to come. As for Mrs. M'Ilwraith, her feelings had temporarily prevented her from expressing herself; she apologised for the weakness; but, indeed, nobody could tell what a pride and a pleasure it was to think that her simple little relic should attract the attention of so distinguished a connoisseur. The last sentence almost stuck in her throat halfway; it was helped out only by a tremendous resolve to be taken with sudden sickness that very night, and ordered off to the country by her physician the next day.

So the Professor's visit was arranged. And Nettleship, sitting like a mouse in his obscure corner, admired Mrs. M'Ilwraith for the first time in his life, and determined to make amends in the future for the torture he was inflicting upon her in the present. Nor did he add to the latter by contributing a single word to this part of the conversation. On the contrary, when Mrs. Josling was seen with *pince-nez* levelled inquiringly at the little plush table

that supported the vase no longer, it was young Mr. Nettleship, and no one else, who adroitly decoyed the lady's attention, and came to the rescue for a second time with a felicitous change of subject. Thereafter the conversation gradually drifted into safer channels. And presently, one by one, the people went, until there was nobody left but young Mr. Nettleship in his quiet corner. Then he, too, got up to go, and bent over his hostess with impassive face and outstretched hand. But Mrs. M'Ilwraith refused his hand—or rather, did not raise her own to meet it—but looked him full in the face, and said—

‘Do not go just yet. Enid, my love, I hear your brothers making a dreadful noise in the schoolroom; go to them.’ Enid went. Elaine had already gone. ‘Now, Mr. Nettleship, sit down there; I want to have a little chat with you.’

Nettleship took the low chair pointed out to him; it was almost at the lady's feet. He had counted on something of this sort, but not on a manner quite so calm and unruffled. After all, she was a wonderful woman—a woman capable of coping with the occasion, perhaps. It was possible, quite possible, that to score off such a woman might prove a more difficult task than it had appeared at first sight. But Nettleship had never in all his life either feared or despised the bowling before going in. He went in now on his mettle.

Mrs. M'Ilwraith opened the attack by coming to the point in the very first sentence.

‘About this vase. You know something about it, Mr. Nettleship; more than I do, it would appear. Tell me what you know.’

Nettleship drew up his shoulders an inconsiderable fraction of an inch.

‘I never heard you speak of it before last night. You kept your heirloom so dark, Mrs. M'Ilwraith.’ He was beginning with confidence, but with caution—the bases upon which most scores are built.

‘Indeed! I will not ask you not to be impertinent. I will merely ask you where you saw it before.’

‘Why, Mrs. M'Ilwraith, I can't remember your ever showing it to me before in all my life,’ exclaimed Nettleship.

Mrs. M'Ilwraith tried a plainer ball.

‘You know, as well as I do, that one cannot always tell the truth in trifles.’



'I know that one does not.'

'Very well. You will readily understand it when I tell you that this stupid vase is no heirloom at all.'

'I understand that perfectly. But—but *which* vase?'

He swung about in his chair, with half-closed eyes and craning neck, looking for what was not there. It was an effective stroke.

'The vase is no longer in my house,' said Mrs. M'Ilwraith. 'You knew that too.'

Nettleship glanced at her swiftly. 'Did you only get it on approval?'

The lady started. 'What makes you think that?'

'Perhaps I go to Glindoni's now and then.'

'Do you?' demanded Mrs. M'Ilwraith plainly. And, indeed, the indirect stage was past.

'Well, yes.'

'That is where you saw it?'

'One of the places.'

'One of the places! Did you know the owner, then?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Then who is the owner?'

'You wish to know?'

'I have asked you.'

'Well, then, I am the owner myself. I came by the vase in India. Glindoni was trying to sell it for me.'

They were sitting near a window. The sun had sunk behind the opposite houses, and the soft summer light made their faces soft—all but the eyes. They were watching one another like duellists. Mrs. M'Ilwraith was a woman, after all, capable at least of grappling with an emergency. She showed it now.

'It was you, then,' said she, 'who made Glindoni send for it in haste last Saturday? You had a motive in that. It was you who tortured me the other night, when you discovered my trifling untruth. You had also a motive in that, I do you the credit of supposing. You had also a motive in stopping this afternoon until everyone else was gone. Shall I tell you your motives? I will. But I will first make you easy on one point—they shall not succeed! I would die rather than forgive you for—for the other night!'

For the first time her calmness was shaken. The last words trembled—with subdued ferocity.

Nettleship smiled. But the bowling had become uncommonly good. Mrs. M'Ilwraith continued:

'Your motives may be compressed into one word—"Elaine."'

'Ah!' said Nettleship, 'Elaine! I want to marry Elaine, and Elaine wants to marry me. Why should you object?'

The policy was startling, insolent, risky—everything but unwise.

Mrs. M'Ilwraith smiled her scornful answer, and only observed:

'You must have told the story briefly.'

'It was an old story retold—that takes less time,' replied Nettleship.

'Retold in vain, Edward Nettleship.'

The game was slow for a while after that.

'How about the Professor?' said Nettleship at last.

'I am laid up when he comes—sudden indisposition. I leave town the following day at my doctor's urgent advice.'

Another pause.

'Such a thousand pities!' murmured Nettleship to himself.

'Are you referring to yourself and Elaine?' inquired Mrs. M'Ilwraith, sweetly.

'Oh dear no. I was thinking about Professor Josling. The poor old chap will be so awfully cut up. After looking forward to his quiet afternoon with you—soaking in his favourite subject, and talking shop to a good listener, for once, and generally boring you to his heart's content. He is counting upon an hour's real sympathy, you may depend upon it; for clever men's wives never appreciate them, as you know, Mrs. M'Ilwraith. Poor old chap! It *is* hard lines on him.'

The picture of Mrs. M'Ilwraith and Professor Josling in close confabulation over the vase, and presently over the five o'clock teapot, and of the firm founding of an intimate friendship with that eminent man, was entirely irresistible. Mrs. M'Ilwraith closed her eyes and gloated over the splendid impossibility for one weak, yearning, despairing minute. And during that minute Nettleship felt that he had collared the bowling at last, and might safely force the game.

'There is,' he continued accordingly, in an altered tone, 'another thing to consider—the Professor's curiosity. He means getting a sight of the vase, and, like the indelicate little boy, he won't be happy, you know, till he does get it. If you went away, he'd apply to Mr. M'Ilwraith straight. Then the cat would be out of the bag—and the Professor out of your visiting list!



With a sudden sob Mrs. M'Ilwraith raised her hands to her face. 'Then what am I to do?' she wailed.

Nettleship bounded from his chair, knelt before her, took her hands in his, and looked earnestly in the wretched lady's face.

'Give me Elaine—for my Indian vase!'

Oh, beyond all doubt it was the most infamous, impudent price ever quoted in even our marriage market. . . . And yet—Mrs. M'Ilwraith bowed her head.

The game was won!

'You rule Mr. M'Ilwraith in such matters with an absolute rule, do you not?' said Ned, a few minutes later.

Mrs. M'Ilwraith confessed to that.

'Then we must approach him together. I have not time to go to the Temple and dress and come back. May I stop as I am? Thank you. Then we'll back each other up after dinner, and together we'll carry our point in five minutes; and then I'll bring the what's-its-name in the morning. Is it agreed?'

Again Mrs. M'Ilwraith bowed her head.

'I *have* scored,' said Ned to Elaine, in the private moment that was granted them before he left the house. 'I was a brute about it, I know; but I scored.'

'You generally do,' Elaine returned, with liquid eyes.

'Ah! But it was a better score than that the other day, if that's what you're driving at. Better bowling, I assure you.'

He paused, surveyed the lovely girl before him, inwardly congratulated himself for a lucky rascal, and added with the utmost candour:

'And a better match, too!'

## A WILD SWANNERY.

By no means the most beautiful, yet certainly one of the most interesting portions of the Dorsetshire coast is that long pebble bank known as the Chesel Beach. Almost unique of its kind on the seaboard of Britain, it forms a remarkable instance of the sea opposing a barrier to its own force. Its name is said to be derived from *Kiesel* (German, a flint), the Saxon for 'gravel.' Beginning at Chesilton, in the so-called Isle of Portland, which the Chesel Beach renders only a peninsula, it runs westward parallel with the shore, from which it is separated by a narrow frith for  $16\frac{3}{4}$  miles, finishing at a place called Swyre, near Burton Bradstock, where the pebbles end and the coast rises into cliffs with a foreshore of clean fine sand. The peculiarity of the beach is that it consists entirely of pebbles unmixed with sand; and a further peculiarity is that these pebbles, which at the Portland end are as large as a pigeon's egg, diminish in size gradually to the westward until at Swyre they are no bigger than peas; so that it is said that smugglers landing, as the exigencies of their business required, in the dead of a dark night, could make a pretty good guess at their whereabouts by the size of the pebbles. So for mile upon mile this mighty accumulation of pebbles forms a natural breakwater, protecting the low-lying meadows of the mainland from the wash of the Channel waves, and at the back of it, at the head of the Fleet inlet, on a long lagoon which extends from Portland mouth to Reed's End boat-house, a distance of eight miles, is the famous Dorsetshire swannery.

This swannery forms a part and parcel of the manor of Abbotsbury, or, as in Domesday Book, Abedesberie, an ancient *vill*, situated in a pleasant and fruitful vale near the sea. In the latter end of the Saxon dynasty (we learn from Hutchins) it belonged to one Orcus, the house-carle or steward (*œconomus*) of King Canute, who with his wife Thola founded and endowed a small religious house, which they peopled with monks of the Benedictine order from Cermil, or Cerne, and which, afterwards expanding into a full monastic establishment, became an appanage of the great Abbey of Glastonbury. All that remains now of this monastery are a fine old tithe barn and the ruins of St. Catharine's



Chapel, a venerable edifice of stone standing on a height overlooking the sea, whose massive walls, supported by buttresses of great strength, have well withstood the ravages of time.

The swannery, if not so old as Orcus and the early worshippers at St. Catharine's shrine, is nevertheless of considerable antiquity, dating at least from the times of the Tudors. In Henry VIII.'s reign the manor appears to have been granted to Sir Giles Strangways, Knt., and in Elizabeth's the premises, with one hundred messuages, the water, soil, and fishery called East Flete, and the flight of wild swans, called the 'Game of Swans,' yearly breeding, nesting, and coming there, together with certain privileges, such as wreck of the sea and exemption from the power of the Lord Admiral of England, were held at Sir Giles's death by John Strangways, Esq., of the queen in chief; also the site of the monastery, view of frankpledge and court-leet in Abbotsbury, with the flight of wild swans breeding in the estuary called the West Flete.

All this belongs now to the Earls of Ilchester, descendants of the Strangways aforesaid; and of their courtesy leave is accorded to the stranger to visit and inspect this most interesting spot.

Abbotsbury is reached by a little branch line from that of the Great Western to Weymouth; and a short walk past the church (which has a history of its own, for it stood a siege and was partially blown up by gunpowder in the last civil war) and the great tithe barn brings us by a meadow path to the keeper's lodge. Admitted through a door in a high wall and conducted a short distance along a grassy alley we come upon the Fleet itself, a long narrow frith of salt or brackish water running up behind the Chesel Beach, and coasting no fewer than five parishes on its way. Here the swans live in the place which they have inhabited from time immemorial quite in a wild state, the only protection accorded to them being from the guns of cockney fowlers, to whom they might otherwise offer a tempting and noble mark.

It is a wonderful scene; there are swans everywhere—swans on the sea, swans on shore, and swans in the air. Far down the Fleet their snow-white plumage gleams; they range and fly where they will, and are sometimes seen as far up the coast as Swanage, or on the wide backwater of Poole.

It is a rare and beautiful sight to behold the majestic birds, in their calm inviolate dignity, sailing in splendid squadrons on the tranquil mere, the form of each clearly reflected in its glassy

depths. Now the fond sire of a flight of cygnets glides proudly in towards the shore, curbing his serpentine neck and hissing a haughty defiance at the intruders who have invaded his territory and come to inspect his brood. Presumptuous ones! let them keep their distance; he would not care to inspect theirs; a true patrician is your swan, supremely satisfied with himself and his order, disdainful of all outsiders.

But satisfied of his visitors' innocent intentions, the father of the brood wheels noiselessly, as on a pivot, and with stealthy strokes of his powerful paddles rejoins his convoy. Then, while one watches, a clang of wings is heard, and slowly overhead comes a flight of seven, the beat of their great pinions sounding as regular as the creaking in their rowlocks of oars well pulled in time. Outside the frith are some that swim upon the open sea.

I saw them beat the surges under them,  
And ride upon their backs; they trod the water,  
Whose enmity they flung aside, and breasted  
The surge most swoln that met them.

But they like best the smooth surface of the still lagoon, where each can see the image of his own proud self mirrored beneath, and feed on the succulent weeds which grow in its shallow marge.

A very curious sight does the marshy shore present in the breeding season. Then the ground is dotted with nests, a pair of swans to each, one covering the eggs, the other sitting or standing, a snow-white sentinel, beside his mate. The swans do not breed until they are three years old; they are strictly monogamous, and the male parent takes his full share in the incubation. The nests, formed of dry reeds, are of great size, and are made upon grassy tussocks among the osiers, the whole breeding-ground, moist with runnels of water, being so freely intersected by narrow alleys of sound turf that the visitor is enabled to inspect them closely; nor does his approach disturb the equanimity of the birds, though if molested during the breeding season, or while the brood is young, the swan is a bird that will defend himself, and still more his offspring, with considerable valour. They lay from five to eight very large thick-shelled white eggs, and the period of incubation is six weeks.

The swan is not indigenous to the British Isles, but is supposed to have been introduced from Eastern Europe or Asia many centuries back. Our climate, however, suits them well, and at Abbotsbury they have flourished exceedingly. The number there



now is about 800 ; formerly more were kept, as many as 1,500 ; while further back again tradition gives the number as seven or eight thousand. In winter time many sorts of wild birds put in an appearance, when the sooty plumage of innumerable coots forms a striking contrast with the snowy whiteness of the swans. Some few years back a black swan, that *rara avis in terris*, kept the white ones company for a while, but none knew whence it came or whither it went. There are also hoopers, or wild swans, a smaller species. Wild species are, perhaps, always smaller than tame, though generally more beautiful ; but this does not seem to be the case with the swan, as M. Baillon, king's counsellor and bailiff of Waben, at Montreuil-sur-Mer, remarks : ' The abundance and the choice of food have augmented the bulk of the tame swan, but its form has lost none of its elegance ; it has preserved the same graces and the same freedom in all its motions ; its majestic port is ever admired. I doubt even whether all these qualities are found to equal extent in the wild bird.' At Abbotsbury, however, the swans are not fed ; they find ample provision for themselves in the *algæ* and other marsh plants which grow on the banks of the Fleet.

The grace and power with which the swan moves in what we may call his native element are delightful. On land he has been coupled with the dismounted dragoon to illustrate the extreme of awkwardness, and it must be confessed that his gait is most ungainly ; but afloat he is superb. According to that keen observer and eminent naturalist, Buffon, the swan presents the finest natural model for the art of navigation. ' Its raised neck and round swelling breast exhibit the prow of a ship cleaving the waves ; its broad belly represents the keel ; its body, pressed down before, rises behind into the stern ; the tail is a genuine rudder ; its feet are broad oars ; and its wings, half opened to the wind and gently inflated, are the sails which impel the animated machine.'

The swan is said to live to a great age ; over a hundred years have been credited to him, but this is probably an exaggeration. He is generally of a pacific temperament ; but, most ardent in love, will fight with considerable rancour and determination for the object of his affections, a whole day being sometimes no more than sufficient for the settlement of a disputed claim. The combatants commence with violent strokes of their powerful wings, but as they become more infuriated they close with deadly pur-

pose, interlocking their sinuous necks, and endeavouring each to drown his adversary by forcing his head under water.

The cygnets when first hatched are extremely ugly, giving, in fact, no sort of promise of their future grace ; wherein we perceive how true to nature was the nursery fable of 'The Ugly Duckling,' in which we have all in our time delighted. They are covered with soft down of a dark yellowish grey, and their first feathers are still of the same hue, becoming lighter, however, after each moult ; but it is not until the bird is two years old that his plumage attains that snowy candour which dazzles yet delights the eye, and contrasts so brilliantly with the verdure of the banks by which he glides—

*Pascentem niveos herboso flumine cygnos.*

A bird of silence is the swan ; unlike his congeners, the goose and duck, he has little to say, and that little is a low, discordant utterance, a sort of creaking sound, anything but canorous. The ancients endeavoured to describe it by an imitative word, *drensare*, as in Ovid—

*Grus gruit, inque glomis cygni prope flumina drensant.*

The beautiful legend of the song of the dying swan, so dear to the old-world poets, is, we fear, entirely a myth. They ascribed to it a prophetic spirit ; Callimachus, Æschylus, Theocritus, and Lucretius have all drawn comparisons from it ; so weighty philosophers even as Plato and Aristotle have not disdained a passing allusion to it, while Pythagoras, in his full belief in his wondrous doctrine of the transmigration of souls, did not hesitate to proclaim the swan's dying chant to be a hymn of exultation upon the immediate prospect of passing into a happier state.

Yet who of mortals could conceive of a happier estate for swans than is theirs at Abbotsbury, where they dwell beneath the ægis of a puissant lord ? Abundance of delicious food grows for them in the marshes which fringe their long lagoons ; keepers defend their nests from molestation of dogs or boys, themselves from the guns of the fowler. They may lave at will in the pellucid waters of the Fleet or ride on the outer waves, or they may spread their mighty wings to the blast and fly far afield, returning when the sinking sun reddens the long grey line of the Chesel Beach to their ancestral home.

The Abbotsbury swans, however, have not been always left in peaceful possession of their delightful inheritance. It happens that by law of the realm all white swans found in an open river



and unmarked belong by prerogative to the sovereign. Accordingly, in the reign of Elizabeth, a writ was ordered out of the Exchequer to the Sheriff of Dorset to seize all the white swans at Abbotsbury which were unmarked. Thereupon the Abbot and his men rose up in defence of their rights (which churchmen can do as well as laymen when their temporalities are threatened), and pleaded that the mere was a part of their glebe; that they were seized of the estuary, banks, and soil in fee; and that there had been time out of mind a 'game' or flight of wild swans, which in their monkish Latin they styled 'volatus cygnorum et eignettorum;' that the Abbot and his predecessors did breed up (*pullulent*) for the use of their kitchen some of the lesser cygnets, and used yearly to mark them by clipping the pinion of their wings to prevent them flying away. The holy churchmen proved possession and won their case.

A similar question as to right of fishery within the mere has been lately raised, when the present proprietor went into court and in person gallantly defended his own cause, with like success to the Abbot of old.

At the back of the swannery is a decoy for wildfowl, constructed in the usual manner—a gradually diminishing tube of netting with wide mouth, into which the wild duck, widgeon, and teal are lured by the decoy birds, and then driven up to be meshed in a pocket at the end. The lagoon is noted also (or was formerly) for its oyster beds; but there is little fish in it beyond eels, flounders, and a few grey mullet. Outside the breakwater, however, vast hauls of mackerel are sometimes made, though the exposed situation of the coast renders fishing a precarious business. Whenever there is a capful of wind from the south or south-west, a considerable surf rises upon the shore, which would fill the seine with sand and pebbles and render the hauling of it an impossibility, even if the weight of them did not rend it in pieces. So during the winter gales the boats have to be dragged away; even on the summit of the great pebble ridge they would not be safe, vessels of over one hundred tons burden having been known to be washed clean over the Chesel bank by the fury of the sea.

Some former customs of the fishermen on this bit of coast are worthy of remark, as being of great antiquity and reminiscent of more pious times than these. Eleven men and one boy were the proper complement of each fishing-boat, and at the beginning of the season, before the first launching of the boat, when the fresh-

scraped ashen oar-blades were laid bow-wards on the thwarts, and net and all were ready, the captain, *more clericorum*, said, 'Let us pray'; then the whole crew would kneel bareheaded around their craft and join in silent address to the Almighty, commending themselves and their adventure to His protection and favour. Then after a reverent pause they rose to their feet, and all saying 'In the name of God,' with a 'yeo-heave-ho!' the heavy boat grated down the pebbly beach into the sea.

It is interesting to watch them at their labour. Reclining halfway up the pebble ridge we can observe them at our ease, while the spiral rings of smoke from the fragrant briar mingle with the pungent smell of the seaweed, and we breathe the health-giving ozone.

A couple of men man the boat and push out with the seine; the duty of the others is to haul it in. What slow work it is! Starting a good half-mile below us in two teams, they gradually work their way up, maintaining a constant strain upon the drag-lines, and sinking at each plodding step ankle deep in the loose pebbles. Half an hour—three-quarters—nearly an hour slips by before they are anywhere near; but at length they approach, the two lines of men, though advancing in the same direction, gradually converging as the jaws of the net contract, and the wet line increases its coils on the shingle. By this time the boat is well in shore, and rocks gently without the ring of turbid water enclosed by the seine. The weight of the men leaning over both on one side to manipulate the net tilts her almost gunwale under; but she is a stiff-built craft, and does not mind it. Now comes the critical moment, as the dripping line lies in fathoms coil upon coil on the beach, and the stolid weather-tanned faces are turned seawards to count the spoil. In comes the seine, yard after yard of empty netting—just a flash of silver at the end—three mackerel and a catfish! So much labour for naught!

Ah, well, it is the fortune of war all the world over. Sometimes the seine comes in with a goodly weight of silver fish in its meshes. As many as thirty or forty thousands of mackerel have before now been caught at a draught, and before the railroad was near to take them to market they would be sold for one penny the hundred, or used as manure for the land. But of late years no such draughts have been taken, and what the fishermen tell us is probably correct, that they barely earn more than the average wage of labour in those parts, a poor ten shillings a week.



Their ancient method of dividing the profits also was somewhat curious. The captain of each boat had the sole disposal of what was taken, and he accounted for the produce of the week's labour in the following manner. The crew assembled on Saturday night at his cottage, where the table was set out with a huge flagon of ale, biscuit and cheese, pipes and tobacco. Opposite to each man was laid his share of the gains, when before attacking the refreshments they would kneel around the table and return thanks for the bounty of Heaven, concluding with the significant expression :

*The God who gave us this can give us more.*

Whenever it happened that more fish were caught than could be sold, they parted the residue into lots, and one man being blindfolded, the captain, pointing first to one lot and then to another in the sight of all, would ask him whose it should be, when the person named would take the portion and be content with it.

Another very ancient observance was kept up until quite lately, and may be so still. On old May Day the children of the crew of each boat would build up large garlands of flowers on a wooden frame and carry it from house to house, receiving pence or cakes ; and later in the day the people would throng the shore while the garlands were carried out in boats and thrown into the sea to bring luck to the nets.

A late lord of the manor, ' Lord Harry ' of happy memory, who was particularly conservative of such ancient customs, was wont to indulge the children in this pastime, and in his own genial way would accompany them to the beach, where he would cause his chaplain to read a portion of Scripture suitable to the occasion, and then they would sing a psalm and all join in prayer.

As regards climate Abbotsbury is one of the most favoured spots on the southern coast ; without being, to use the common phrase, relaxing, it is so mild that shrubs of an exotic nature, including the olive, which elsewhere will hardly survive the severity of the British winter, have been grown in the castle garden in the open air. The absence of a harbour or beach suitable for bathing has happily prevented it becoming a watering-place, fashionable or otherwise ; but it is well worth visiting, both for its noble swannery and for the remarkable formation of its great natural barrier to the sea. There is but one other wild swannery in Great Britain, and the Chesel Beach finds its only counterpart in the Pebble Ridge of Westward Ho, which however is of quite small extent.

## CIRCUIT NOTES.

*Chester* : December 3.—Through the dusty windows of the Crown Court the sun streams in, through yellow blinds ; not in direct shafts of light, but in a diffused autumnal haze over the jury's heads. At the back leans a dingy line of witnesses and friends and mere onlookers, in an almost exact identity of attitude and expression, broken only by the bright blue blouse of a butcher and the rigid long black coat and gloves of a policeman. Behind them, pell mell, are massed all the riff-raff of the city, with here and there a soldier, spruce and alert.

And now steps up crime into the dock of the Crown Court, blinking and touzled. First, a woman in a cheap waterproof, disreputably stylish, out of whose fringe and lovelocks I suspect the prison regulations will soon take the impudent curl. She is a professional pianist at a free-and-easy and is charged with conveying 3*l.* 5*s.* from the pockets of a chance friend, a second-hand clothes-dealer, who made her acquaintance by complaining that the place was dull, as they stood drinking a morning draught next each other at the free-and-easy bar. Really, what fools these chance acquaintances, these retired corn-dealers and such like are! Sharp enough at their own trade no doubt; not to be taken in over corn or old clothes, but babbling children in the hands of Doll Tearsheet. Tearsheet says if the place is dull he must wait till evening, hear her on the piano; that will wake him and give him a notion of what joys the town is capable. So the young man waits, in hopeful ecstasy, I suppose, till the lights of the free-and-easy are lit, and they spend the interval in drinking at every bar that will serve them. Nothing astonishes me more, by the way, than the amount these people drink without thinking anything of it. 'Were you drunk?' asks the counsel, not only in this case but in many. 'Drunk?' (with deep scorn) 'why I'd only 'ad 'alf a dozen whiskies and a glass of stout and three or four beers; drunk!' Their notion of being drunk is absolute and complete oblivion. 'Drunk?' says another; 'well, I wasn't paralysed! I knew what I was about, I knew I'd had too much. But not what I call drunk.' Tearsheet defends herself with ingenuity, an ingenuity acquired by practice, evidently; it is not



the maiden and convincing ingenuity of innocence. Hers was not the light figure, she swears, that stole downstairs into the parlour where the young man lay heavily on a mattress in front of the fire, nor hers the hand that nicked the purse from under the pillow on which lay the stupid and fuddled head. He remembers somebody coming, and only turned drowsily. At seven o'clock he finds himself, after washing his head and face, minus 3*l.* 5*s.*, and charges Tearsheet, swears to one of the half-crowns found on her. But, as I say, she defends herself ingeniously, and the jury refuse to convict. I think I should have done the same, though on looking over her record I find she has often been in trouble before. What a merciful provision that is of our law, that the jury know nothing of a prisoner's antecedent peccadilloes; they simply try him on the charge before them. The result is sometimes a *παρὰπροδοκίαν*, for you watch with breathless interest a prisoner defend himself with the valour of apparent injured innocence; and when the jury find him guilty, the prisoner's character that seemed in danger turns out after all a scarecrow, for he's been in trouble ever since he was fourteen when he began with five years in a reformatory. If the jury had known *that*, I don't suppose they would have debated so long and earnestly over their verdict. So Tearsheet is restored to her piano and plays 'God save the Queen' in the evening with more than usual expression. I can see her drinking with all the other free-and-easies, by token of her escape from a false and shameful charge.

But, bless me, whom have we here? this stylish young man in a light suit, a brown hat, and general air of seaside boarding-house fashion. 'Sir,' I feel inclined to say, 'you have mistaken the way, you have accidentally strayed into the dock! *this* is the way on to the bench, not behind those nasty common spikes!' Observe the high and distinguished air with which he carries his elbows and manages his hat like a *jeune premier*. What can he have been doing? Only marrying more than one wife, cheating more than one landlady, and trying desperately hard to hang himself in the police cell, since shame and remorse seem to have been his fellow prisoners even there. In a well-bred voice he pleads *guiltay* to the bigamy and attempted suicide; *not guiltay* to the charges of fraud. And this is the impostor's end always? Always the end of the *soi-disant* officer in a crack lancer regiment who may perhaps have been an officer's servant and picked up his undeniable manners by observation from the anteroom? Where

then is the old humorous successful impostor who made us all laugh so much with his tricks and never got caught? I'm afraid they're all dead in these watchful days; Mascarille and Scapin may no longer safely rollick with their funny turns, and poor Gil Blas trembles before the corregidor at Bow Street. The fact is, who is and who is not to stand in the dock is outside our human arrangements altogether; we are most of us, in my opinion, criminals and deserve to stand there, for one thing or another. The detection of crime is one of the profoundest of the many mysteries by which we are surrounded, and I can only attempt to explain it by the suggestion that there are a myriad forms of punishment outside of the rough and ready engine of the criminal law. I commit a crime and am not caught, don't stand cowed in the dock. Perhaps not, but conscience arraigns me more surely than the clerk of assize, and the judge is always present to condemn in one shape or another. I think there are many men who pass their whole lives in the dock, who would be only too relieved to serve a term of imprisonment and wipe the affair off the slate of the mind, as many of these poor fellows do. This young man has married more than one trusting woman (O woman, use your intellects and trust none of us! for trusting often means temptation, and we are all Adamites), and, worst of all, stays with a widow keeping lodgings—one of many widows, alas!—for four days, and walks off with his teas and suppers and bottled beer unpaid for. What has he to say for himself? He stands there guilty by his own confession of felony; what has he to say why the Court should not pronounce sentence on him according to law? Only that his first wife left him after a year and a half's bliss, he not being able to keep her, unable to get anything to do, and the desertion nearly killed him. He draws a touching picture of his return one evening to the empty room, his finding the note on the table, his despair, and so on. I dare say it's true, I dare say it isn't; I don't know. He should have thought of his ability to keep her before he married, instead of romancing of wealthy parents and house property at Kensington, as we hear he did to the second wife and may suppose he did to the first. Meantime, he's been taking furnished houses about the country, or trying to. It was in one of them he met his second fate, the lessor's daughter, and perhaps carried her off from some honest fellow. She is called to give evidence against, or rather for him; says he always was kind to her and even pawned his watch to keep her. She



smiles at the court a good deal in rather a silly self-satisfied fashion, and strikes me as on the whole rather amused at her position. Perhaps it's hysteria, or the notion that if she pleases the judge he may be more lenient to the prisoner. You never can tell. The other day we had a witness who did nothing but laugh; nothing could stop her, nor could she for the life of her say at what she was laughing. At last the judge, tried by her persistent cackle (pure nervousness, by the way), demanded in awful tones, 'Madam, are you laughing at *me*?' and the witness with a fresh peal says 'Yes!' I think she thought he'd be pleased. The shiny and wavy-haired bigamist watches the girl piteously, and moves his fingers despairingly along his forehead as though pressing something back there. Guilty he is, and gets nine months, and a fortnight for the attempted suicide. I dare say his friends know nothing of all this—he's plainly under a false name—and will be asking each other if anything has been heard of George lately. What in the name of heaven will become of him? He's only thirty-two, and I've no doubt at sixty will be described as a gentlemanly man, well educated, against whom a number of previous convictions have been proved. Then it will be penal servitude for the rest of his days.

After him comes a very hardened and rusty engine-driver, who robbed a church. Robbed a church? he? it's all a mistake; he's as innocent as the babe unborn. It was 'a sailor mon' did it, and gave him the things to hold, chasubles and stoles and the rest of them. He barks 'Not guilty,' at intervals as regular as minute guns; there's nothing to be got from him but that. That, however, is not the opinion of the jury, and it turns out he has often been previously convicted; in and out of prison, in fact, like those little barometrical figures that tell the state of the weather. It's all the same to him what the opinion of the jury is, and where he goes; he breaks up a bit of wood off the front of the dock and sucks it, fires off a final 'Not guilty,' and stumps below.

When you get tired of sitting in court, even though the evening be wet, there is no pleasanter city than Chester, and shelter nowhere safer than the rows. In the rows you seem to be walking in Tudor England, down long corridors whereof time hath knocked one side into the street for light and air. At six o'clock, when the hanging gas-lamps are lit, the shops closing, and Mimi Pinson, the shopgirl, going home, she looks at you curiously and fearlessly, as though at the passing visitor down the hotel stair-

case. Ancient shadows as old and black as the Wars of the Roses slouch and lumber across her light steps along the warped old flooring, and children leap and tumble from the balconied steps where the antique furniture is pushed; icebound sideboards and empty cupboards, and cenotaphs of coffers that once held the trousseaux of the Cheshire brides. In those leaning buildings, slippered as it were, and shrunk, there is reverend and trusty age, while youth troops along their fronts, jubilant and light, as gay as in a bazaar when they buy their Christmas toys and cards. Eternal contrast, eternal and happy meeting and exchange between the two, the river that flows between the never-changing banks. And I notice how all this reverend age of passage has its varying character: here its fashion of long gloves and cathedral millinery, its solid literature of good men's lives and harmless girls' religious stories, its rich pastrycook, whose luscious odours wrap a man up like a blanket, its tobacconist where the *jeunesse argentée* of office and barrack hang over the counter; here its stalls of tripe in little dishes and ear-shaped oysters—lower Edgware Road, in fact; and here its sombre grouping of bookstall and old print-light that flickers on wormy cupboard of Wardour Street. And again, on one side no shops at all, but the most peaceful of shelters tucked away under the eaves that seem the nest of the pew-opener, the milliner that works at home, the alto of the cathedral choir. Tramway bells jingle, and urchins yelp in Strandish tones the latest editions of the Liverpool *Echo*, and high over all, the cathedral curfew jangles with the bugle from the castle yard.

*December 4. In Court.*—An inexplicable female burglar, in quiet and rusty pew-opener black, decent attitude of suppressed shame, and a broad, shaded hat that casts hollow shadows on a shifty shy face. 'A very melancholy case,' everybody whispers: respectability turned housebreaker, the hus'wife's keys dwindled and collapsed to skeletons; a terrible shock to all her friends and relatives; respectability, after all, broad-arrow marked. So long has this quiet girl sat round the evening lamp, her father reading the paper, her sister sewing, the little business of the genteel shop talked over, its rise and fall; and observe! the house scarcely still, honest labour scarcely asleep, but she takes the neighbourly keys confided to her for care, and takes from the neighbourly shop whatever her itching fingers can lay hold of! And has done for months, and at last was caught at it in the very act. 'Good God! You, Louisa!'—when they pictured to themselves some



one as we picture a burglar, short, coarse, brutal, frightful! any one but this tall slip of a girl, sister, and friend. And there she stands in the dock calm and collected, respectability arraigned as it seldom is in this way, the malign whispers of the court circling round her, sibilant, and from the castle yard the shouts of the sergeants drilling the recruits—'Right turn!' Who can help wondering why she did it, how the fall began? Was there some scapegrace brother pestering her for money? Some too well-loved scoundrel that had long exhausted her savings? There is no sign on her of any vice, any thirst for dress or ornament; was it mere love of money in itself, hoarded as a squirrel hoards nuts for the long winter before it? Had she, perhaps, some greed for knowledge and no books to be bought out of her pittance? I can imagine—at least, I think I can—a sculptor robbing for material for his work, a painter for colours and canvas, an author for pens and paper, or for leisure; an artist of any sort, in fact, that he may better pursue the object he has passionately in view, as the apprentice in the play used every Christmas to empty the till for his Millament. Which of all was it here? Nobody knows, or cares to ask; she pleads guilty and is duly sentenced, and with the quiet step of a hospital nurse goes below to begin the first of her long days of hard labour.

And next after her—strong contrast to her melancholy black—three merry men in scarlet, privates at the depot, who heard the midnight Chester chimes, and wandered along the rows, rattling shutters and rousing the old cry of the Haymarket medical student. At an unshuttered window of plate glass, Mr. Dawes's, they paused to ring a peal with their knobbed sticks; the result, damage done to the amount of 10*l.*, and the picket turned out under command of a smart young corporal with shiny swoops and horns of hair, who carried two of them off to the guard-room. The third came in, tired and repentant, at 1.55, draggled and weary, very much as a dog that has been out all night hunting on the hillside. Next morning, solemn and sober, they haven't a notion what they did, and that they repeat now, standing at the attention bright and alert as though they had never been drunk in their lives. I am told they are the smartest soldiers, and the most unmanageable characters, in the depot. 'Three months' hard labour,' and they scuttle from the dock down below, as though dying to begin at once.

*Brecon*: December 8.—In Brecon one feels in the home of

watercolour sketch, of church and castle and river-arch and high-climbing frosty hills. Frostily they cluster this brilliant bride-cake morning round the pale yellow court-house and the frowsy crowds, and high in their calm glittering triumph above the dusty-haired man in the dock, who in his nervousness seems to be sucking a lozenge. A long record of false pretence and robbery against that man, twenty-one years, a manhood of crime, the coming of age to-day of his first committal. He prays for one more chance, bowing in a beaten fashion. He is described in the calendar as of imperfect education and forty-nine years of age; the discipline of the prison exercise and regular judicious food makes him look younger. I don't believe his return to gaol for five years is much of a shock to him; I dare say he has memories not unpleasant of a great deal of it. You see he has at any rate the certainty of a lodging, of being entirely provided for, treated not unkindly. I can quite imagine that many of these men look with far greater anxiety on the coming out of prison than the going in, for after the first fall it is terrible work to live, especially if shreds of primæval honesty still cling. Who will employ a man who has been in prison? for myself I confess I shouldn't much care about it. So at any rate his anxiety for the next five years on that score is removed and he with it, below.

Misery sits with bat-wings on the forehead of the young carter who has stolen twenty-three pounds; misery that corrugates the fresh skin, while the rest of his face is absolutely callous, and his fingers drill and drum the front of the dock to the tune of 'Blue bonnets over the border!' He and a stranger—absolutely honest the stranger, the prosecution desire it to be understood—lodged together in the room where the ostler of the house kept all his savings, in a foolish unlocked box. The last thing at night curiosity led the carter to look in the box—curiosity or perhaps the fear of some one hiding there; and there most unfortunately was the money in portable sovereigns, half-crowns, and sixpences. Temptation and fall! the devil laughing up on the crossbeam, while the respectable fellow lodger, wearied with honest toil, snores by the window. And the next day the young carter and the ostler's savings *desunt*, and the unfortunate young man is apprehended at a neighbouring fair, in possession of many fine things he was previously notoriously in want of; the devil, this time, mightily amused, on the wooden horse Ormonde of the merry-go-round. Consider what a shock all this was for his female friend



Mopsa, the discovery that her ribbons and ballad sheets and sheep-shearing presents generally were all the proceeds of her simple clown's crime! So the Autolyeus-carter gets eight months, and descends with his fresh cheeks and forehead of misery, the bat-wings folded in mortal gloom, and the devil more amused than ever on the end of the white rod of the under-sheriff. To give place to villainy, squat and venomous, in malignant white face and black hair. A robber—great heaven, what a robber! As on the wet and windy night the little dressmaker's apprentice goes home from work across the fields, with waterproof and umbrella, little basket and horn lantern, the old man met her coming back, covered with mud and crying piteously. Twelve years' penal servitude, and the crowded court gives a sigh and hum of satisfaction.

*Caermarthen* : December 12.—The trumpets blow, this damp December morning, the frost having gradually yielded, as yesterday we rattled along the banks of the hurrying Wye; blow, as though to wake tender-hearted Dick Steele who sleeps across the way, close against the south chancel door. Poor Dick!—

From perils of a hundred gaols,  
Escaped to starve and die in Wales!

I fancy him laughing at our trumpets, mightily amused, where he lies under his fine new brass tablet, over against the broken tomb of Sir Rhys and his lady. 'The Rogues! they think to smoke me! *That* the last Trump? Blow away, gentlemen, I'll not Budge!' Ah, if we could only get him out, only just across the way, into judge's lodgings, how his black eyes would light up! 'Go back, Dick! you're bit!' Can't you see his irresistible return, after just one bottle, seeing that Prue waits for him and is no longer to be bubbled by the old excuse of business and the gentleman at the coffee-house whose friendship and good offices are so important for their united interests? What a gossip we could have had together, Dick, if only about the Strand and its changes, the new plays, the young Templars, and the altered aspect of St. James's! What *would* he have had to say to the cake and coffee-rooms opposite St. Martin's, the public-house where now you can get hot beef-tea, the comic opera that runs a lifetime, the evening edition bawled before people have had time to read the morning? Ah, Dick, it's years since a gentleman was drunk in the forenoon, and our young Templar is *jeune homme sérieux*

(no, Dick, don't damn my French!), wears pince-nez, and has joined the volunteers. Better so, Dick, believe me, better so!

*Swansea: December 13.*—It is dark before we get to Swansea, along the Towy flowing into the night and the sea. Rural Wales we leave behind us, soft mountain and fluent valley, and out of the blackness flares the iron blast furnace and glooms the chimney stack. No more the gay light cloud wreathing the Beacon, but the belched streamer of the smoke that trails away, ominous as the Norseman's banner. And here in this noisy smirched town of copper-works and dockyard, Christmas gingerly approaches us with shuffling feet and hoarse carol; for a man with a horse's head dances to us in the hall while we dine, the fellows of his commonwealth masked behind the kitchen door yelling something utterly incomprehensible and religious in Welsh. Somehow it is very touching, when they have gone, to hear the distant companies of singers taking up their different themes, like knots of shepherds chanting under the Eastern sky. More distant they grow and faint—they are singing as they walk towards Bethlehem; while far over the bay glitters the lighthouse on the Somersetshire coast, like the star. Sing on, shepherds! how delicious is the reverie those fading melodies awake as I sit with 'The Legend of Montrose' in front of the fire!

Our first prison guest in Swansea is a malingering sailor burglar, twisted like dirty ivy with a pretended rheumatism, and plainly mad of malice. To the few ladies in the gallery he waves black knotted fingers, and then to the reporters; he stands grasping the dock spikes with one hand and pressing down the badger-hair bristles on his bullet head with the other. Nothing will induce him to notice clerk, or judge, or gaol governor; he refuses to plead and continues to wave the black knotted fingers. We cannot order him the *peine forte et dure* in the prison yard, but we empanel a jury to find whether he be mute of malice, or by the visitation of God; and, on the evidence of the doctor who declares him sound in every respect—that when in prison and believing himself unwatched his motions are quick and alert, and his intelligence bright when laid traps for—the jury find him mute of malice, and he very properly gets seven years, a multitude of previous convictions being proved against him. And an ill-graced actor to the last, he has to be carried below, waving the black fingers and wagging the dingy bullet head. And then we have two young fellows from Guy Faux day who shot a stylish prosecutrix as she



stood at her door watching the procession of bonfire boys go past. Light-heartedly they let off a revolver, like wheeling Arabs in the fantasia, and shot her on the back of her yellow fluffy head; not dangerously, merely a superficial wound that made her lie down in the front parlour and scream and kick. It was all evidently an accident, so perhaps, as they're now discharged, and she, from the way she gives her evidence, clearly bears no malice, one of the young men will make a match of it with her, for marriages have surely begun in stranger fashion than this. Cupid is always represented as shooting our sex through the heart; why shouldn't we begin by shooting the other superficially through the head? And then a burglar, very depressed and guilty-looking, who pleads as guilty as he looks; and a young schoolmaster in grave trouble, who gets off somehow, having learnt a lesson, I judge, that will last him all his days; and a village post-master, whose trial, whether he be careless or guilty, lasts so long and is so dull, that I am glad to get out of the hot stale court on to the pier.

At the end of the pier, gulls overhead, men digging sand away on the shore, and smoke blown along under the lea of the hills, I can hear cheering and see the tug coming down the harbour strenuously drawing after her the 'Pride of Swansea,' bound for the River Plate. Three young women are round the lighthouse under the fog bell, waiting to see her go past. The tug 'Digby Grand' bows gravely as she feels the swell of the bay and strains at the rope that ties her to the 'Pride,' on whose bows stands a man, his legs wide apart, a little boy beside him, looking down the length of the vessel and waiting the moment to give his orders for the sails. The three young women see their friend, in shirt sleeves, but he is too busy to notice them, for already the crew are running for the ropes. How calm the sea is, how favourable the sky, red with a happy flush, how prosperous all seems for the voyage! Good bye, 'Pride of Swansea!' Thou hast storm before thee, many a black night, a labouring day, before some nine months hence thou wilt return, and these three young women come to greet thee shrilly. Where art thou now, I wonder, this moment as I write, on what sweltering sea, in what blistering port? As I look back from the town end of the pier, mists shroud thee, the tug has left thee, thy journey has already begun. Good bye!

When I come back to court the noisome odours of it seem to slap my face. If they are like this now, with sanitation, ventila-

tion, and most of us using the cold bath, what must it have been in the good old days of gaol fever and the black assize? A woman forger sits in the dock, and the shadow of the dock spikes falls on her face—a troubled Jewess, well dressed, with little bags, money-bags, under her eyes. Her mother, whose name she forged, gives evidence against her in the strange tongue Jüdisch, that mixture of Hebrew, German, and Polish they talk in Silesia in the border towns and villages, and known to us as Yiddish, from Whitechapel. Utterly incomprehensible; if you'll believe me, not one intelligible word, as the 'bus-driver said of the Frenchman seated chattering beside him. But in what universal tongue she speaks as I pass her crying and sobbing in the hall, the common tongue of maternity; her Jüdisch I could not understand, but how plain the cry of the mother for the child in trouble! I dare say they hadn't spoken for years, and still at the bottom of the mother's heart, hardened with money-getting and the struggle for life, there lay the germ of love that in this heated atmosphere of crime ripened as rapidly as the oleander of the Eastern conjuror into the bower of weeping elm in which the child might shelter.

*December 16.*—Murder is at the bar, idiot murder, that killed a boy in the wood. And yet not utterly vacant, not more vacant, it seems to me, than the ordinary boy that watches the wheat and scares the crows; scarcely any difference, only that he's splashed with blood, child blood, and no mud from the wet November fields. He leans on the front of the dock, his large hand covering his mouth, the hand that did it. When the doctor gives his opinion that the boy is imbecile and unable to plead, certain lines of amusement break out round his mouth and on his forehead. I don't think his expression is a whit more vacant than the ordinary young gentleman's one sees in Piccadilly and round Hatchett's watching the coaches come in. However, it appears he's the natural child of a lunatic, and he's ordered to be detained during her Majesty's pleasure.

And now the assize draws to a close. Here's a man who stole a shovel and says 'some men gave it him, axed him if it was any use.' *Two months! stand down!* And Eliza Jones, domestic servant, who trusted man and now weeps in honest grief through large black gloves. How many of these poor Hetty Sorrels have we not had to deal with, agonised and scarlet with shame and chattering with fear; always the same story, always deserted, left to bear the shock of the staring court alone and stricken. 'Hark



in thine ear, change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?' And a sly hairdresser, gondolier combination of a man, who pretended an agency and got various small sums from various small people who couldn't afford them. How nervously he rubs his hands one over the other! He looks like the Master of Ravenswood turned scamp and proper food for the Tolbooth.

The assizes draw to a close, the clock points nearly to seven, and the few tired barristers left are throwing bits of paper at each other. The seats are so empty now you can see the names where the different parties sit—barristers, solicitors, grand jury, under-sheriff, public—in black letters on deal grained to imitate oak. There's still noise from the dockyard and the occasional hollow whistle of a steamer. Our last prisoner threw a knife at his wife because dinner wasn't ready; the result a punctured wound at the back of the head. Knife unwrapped; is that the kind of knife to cause the kind of wound? Exactly, says the surgeon. A clear case; the wife a nagger no doubt, but still nadders mustn't be answered with knives. 'Is this a nagger that I see before me? Come, let me stab thee!' Even in these days of new and original readings that would scarcely do. And yet, clear as the case is, the jury find him not guilty. It's so near to Christmas they cannot bear the idea of imprisonment, so they make him a Christmas-box of his liberty. A verdict of the kindly improper description. Outside the court I see the late prisoner looking anxiously for his wife, and she as anxiously trying to avoid him. *Peace and goodwill.* I don't suppose the jury have gone really the best way to work to secure it. End of the assizes; let us take one late turn on the pier and go back to town by the mail.

### THE RING OF THOTH.

MR. JOHN VANSITTART SMITH, F.R.S., of 147A Gower Street, was a man whose energy of purpose and clearness of thought might have placed him in the very first rank of scientific observers. He was the victim, however, of a universal ambition which prompted him to aim at distinction in many subjects rather than pre-eminence in one. In his early days he had shown an aptitude for zoology and for botany which caused his friends to look upon him as a second Darwin, but when a professorship was almost within his reach he had suddenly discontinued his studies and turned his whole attention to chemistry. Here his researches upon the spectra of the metals had won him his fellowship in the Royal Society; but again he played the coquette with his subject, and after a year's absence from the laboratory he joined the Oriental Society, and delivered a paper on the Hieroglyphic and Demotic inscriptions of El Kab, thus giving a crowning example both of the versatility and of the inconstancy of his talents.

The most fickle of woers, however, is apt to be caught at last, and so it was with John Vansittart Smith. The more he burrowed his way into Egyptology the more impressed he became by the vast field which it opened to the inquirer, and by the extreme importance of a subject which promised to throw a light upon the first germs of human civilisation and the origin of the greater part of our arts and sciences. So struck was Mr. Smith that he straightway married an Egyptological young lady who had written upon the sixth dynasty, and having thus secured a sound base of operations he set himself to collect materials for a work which should unite the research of Lepsius and the ingenuity of Champollion. The preparation of this *magnum opus* entailed many hurried visits to the magnificent Egyptian collections of the Louvre, upon the last of which, no longer ago than the middle of last October, he became involved in a most strange and noteworthy adventure.

The trains had been slow and the Channel had been rough, so that the student arrived in Paris in a somewhat befogged and feverish condition. On reaching the Hôtel de France, in the Rue Laffitte, he had thrown himself upon a sofa for a couple of hours,



but, finding that he was unable to sleep, he determined, in spite of his fatigue, to make his way to the Louvre, settle the point which he had come to decide, and take the evening train back to Dieppe. Having come to this conclusion, he donned his greatcoat, for it was a raw rainy day, and made his way across the Boulevard des Italiens and down the Avenue de l'Opéra. Once in the Louvre he was on familiar ground, and he speedily made his way to the collection of papyri which it was his intention to consult.

The warmest admirers of John Vansittart Smith could hardly claim for him that he was a handsome man. His high-beaked nose and prominent chin had something of the same acute and incisive character which distinguished his intellect. He held his head in a birdlike fashion, and birdlike, too, was the pecking motion with which, in conversation, he threw out his objections and retorts. As he stood, with the high collar of his greatcoat raised to his ears, he might have seen from the reflection in the glass case before him that his appearance was a singular one. Yet it came upon him as a sudden jar when an English voice behind him exclaimed in very audible tones, 'What a queer-looking mortal!'

The student had a large amount of petty vanity in his composition which manifested itself by an ostentatious and overdone disregard of all personal considerations. He straightened his lips and looked rigidly at the roll of papyrus, while his heart filled with bitterness against the whole race of travelling Britons.

'Yes,' said another voice, 'he really is an extraordinary fellow.'

'Do you know,' said the first speaker, 'one could almost believe that by the continual contemplation of mummies the chap has become half a mummy himself?'

'He has certainly an Egyptian cast of countenance,' said the other.

John Vansittart Smith spun round upon his heel with the intention of shaming his countrymen by a corrosive remark or two. To his surprise and relief, the two young fellows who had been conversing had their shoulders turned towards him, and were gazing at one of the Louvre attendants who was polishing some brass work at the other side of the room.

'Carter will be waiting for us at the Palais Royal,' said one tourist to the other, glancing at his watch, and they clattered away, leaving the student to his labours.

'I wonder what these chatterers call an Egyptian cast of

countenance,' thought John Vansittart Smith, and he moved his position slightly in order to catch a glimpse of the man's face. He started as his eyes fell upon it. It was indeed the very face with which his studies had made him familiar. The regular statuesque features, broad brow, well-rounded chin, and dusky complexion were the exact counterpart of the innumerable statues, mummy-cases, and pictures which adorned the walls of the apartment. The thing was beyond all coincidence. The man must be an Egyptian. The national angularity of the shoulders and narrowness of the hips were alone sufficient to identify him.

John Vansittart Smith shuffled towards the attendant with some intention of addressing him. He was not light of touch in conversation, and found it difficult to strike the happy mean between the brusqueness of the superior and the geniality of the equal. As he came nearer, the man presented his side face to him but kept his gaze still bent upon his work. Vansittart Smith, fixing his eyes upon the fellow's skin, was conscious of a sudden impression that there was something inhuman and preternatural about its appearance. Over the temple and cheek-bone it was as glazed and as shiny as varnished parchment. There was no suggestion of pores. One could not fancy a drop of moisture upon that arid surface. From brow to chin, however, it was cross-hatched by a million delicate wrinkles which shot and interlaced as though Nature in some Maori mood had tried how wild and intricate a pattern she could devise.

'Où est la collection de Memphis?' asked the student, with the awkward air of a man who is devising a question merely for the purpose of opening a conversation.

'C'est là,' replied the man brusquely, nodding his head at the other side of the room.

'Vous êtes un Egyptien, n'est-ce pas?' asked the Englishman.

The attendant looked up and turned his strange dark eyes upon his questioner. They were vitreous, with a misty dry shyness, such as Smith had never seen in a human head before. As he gazed into them he saw some strong emotion gather in their depths, which rose and deepened until it broke into a look of something akin both to horror and to hatred.

'Non, monsieur; je suis Français.' The man turned abruptly and bent low over his polishing. The student gazed at him for a moment in astonishment, and then turning to a chair in a retired corner behind one of the doors he proceeded to make notes of his



researches among the papyri. His thoughts, however, refused to return into their former groove. They would run upon the enigmatical attendant with the sphinx-like face and the parchment skin.

'Where have I seen such eyes?' said Vansittart Smith to himself. 'There is something saurian about them, something reptilian. There's the membrana nictitans of the snakes,' he mused, be-thinking himself of his zoological studies. 'It gives a shiny effect. But there was something more here. There was a sense of power, of wisdom—so I read them—and of weariness, utter weariness, and ineffable despair. It may be all imagination, but I never had so strong an impression. By Jove, I must have another look at them!' He rose and paced round the Egyptian rooms, but the man who had excited his curiosity had disappeared.

The student sat down again in his quiet corner, and continued to work at his notes. He had gained the information which he required from the papyri, and it only remained to write it down while it was still fresh in his memory. For a time his pencil travelled rapidly over the paper, but soon the lines became less level, the words more blurred, and finally the pencil tinkled down upon the floor, and the head of the student dropped heavily forward upon his chest. Tired out by his journey, he slept so soundly in his lonely post behind the door that neither the clanking civil guard, nor the footsteps of sightseers, nor even the loud hoarse bell which gives the signal for closing were sufficient to arouse him.

Twilight deepened into darkness, the bustle from the Rue de Rivoli waxed and then waned, distant Notre-Dame clanged out the hour of midnight, and still the dark and lonely figure sat silently in the shadow. It was not until close upon one in the morning that, with a sudden gasp and an intaking of the breath, Vansittart Smith returned to consciousness. For a moment it flashed upon him that he had dropped asleep in his study-chair at home. The moon was shining fitfully through the unshuttered window, however, and, as his eye ran along the lines of mummies and the endless array of polished cases, he remembered clearly where he was and how he came there. The student was not a nervous man. He possessed that love of a novel situation which is peculiar to his race. Stretching out his cramped limbs, he looked at his watch, and burst into a chuckle as he observed the hour. The episode would make an admirable anecdote to be introduced into his next paper as a relief to the graver and heavier speculations.

He was a little cold, but wide awake and much refreshed. It was no wonder that the guardians had overlooked him, for the door threw its heavy black shadow right across him.

The complete silence was impressive. Neither outside nor inside was there a creak or a murmur. He was alone with the dead men of a dead civilisation. What though the outer city reeked of the garish nineteenth century! In all this chamber there was scarce an article, from the shrivelled ear of wheat to the pigment-box of the painter, which had not held its own against four thousand years. Here was the flotsam and jetsam washed up by the great ocean of time from that far-off empire. From stately Thebes, from lordly Luxor, from the great temples of Heliopolis, from a hundred rifled tombs, these relics had been brought. The student glanced round at the long silent figures who flickered vaguely up through the gloom, at the busy toilers who were now so restful, and he fell into a reverent and thoughtful mood. An unwonted sense of his own youth and insignificance came over him. Leaning back in his chair, he gazed dreamily down the long vista of rooms, all silvery with the moonshine, which extend through the whole wing of the wide-spread building. His eyes fell upon the yellow glare of a distant lamp.

John Vansittart Smith sat up on his chair with his nerves all on edge. The light was advancing slowly towards him, pausing from time to time, and then coming jerkily onwards. The bearer moved noiselessly. In the utter silence there was no suspicion of the pat of a footfall. An idea of robbers entered the Englishman's head. He snuggled up further into the corner. The light was two rooms off. Now it was in the next chamber, and still there was no sound. With something approaching to a thrill of fear the student observed a face, floating in the air as it were, behind the flare of the lamp. The figure was wrapped in shadow, but the light fell full upon the strange eager face. There was no mistaking the metallic glistening eyes and the cadaverous skin. It was the attendant with whom he had conversed.

Vansittart Smith's first impulse was to come forward and address him. A few words of explanation would set the matter clear, and lead doubtless to his being conducted to some side door from which he might make his way to his hotel. As the man entered the chamber, however, there was something so stealthy in his movements, and so furtive in his expression, that the Englishman altered his intention. This was clearly no ordinary official walking



the rounds. The fellow wore felt-soled slippers, stepped with a rising chest, and glanced quickly from left to right, while his hurried gasping breathing thrilled the flame of his lamp. Vansittart Smith crouched silently back into the corner and watched him keenly, convinced that his errand was one of secret and probably sinister import.

There was no hesitation in the other's movements. He stepped lightly and swiftly across to one of the great cases, and, drawing a key from his pocket, he unlocked it. From the upper shelf he pulled down a mummy, which he bore away with him, and laid it with much care and solicitude upon the ground. By it he placed his lamp, and then squatting down beside it in Eastern fashion he began with long quivering fingers to undo the cerecloths and bandages which girt it round. As the crackling rolls of linen peeled off one after the other, a strong aromatic odour filled the chamber, and fragments of scented wood and of spices pattered down upon the marble floor.

It was clear to John Vansittart Smith that this mummy had never been unswathed before. The operation interested him keenly. He thrilled all over with curiosity, and his birdlike head protruded further and further from behind the door. When, however, the last roll had been removed from the four-thousand-year-old head, it was all that he could do to stifle an outcry of amazement. First, a cascade of long, black, glossy tresses poured over the workman's hands and arms. A second turn of the bandage revealed a low, white forehead, with a pair of delicately arched eyebrows. A third uncovered a pair of bright, deeply fringed eyes, and a straight, well-cut nose, while a fourth and last showed a sweet, full, sensitive mouth, and a beautifully curved chin. The whole face was one of extraordinary loveliness, save for the one blemish that in the centre of the forehead there was a single irregular, coffee-coloured splotch. It was a triumph of the embalmer's art. Vansittart Smith's eyes grew larger and larger as he gazed upon it, and he chirruped in his throat with satisfaction.

Its effect upon the Egyptologist was as nothing, however, compared with that which it produced upon the strange attendant. He threw his hands up into the air, burst into a harsh clatter of words, and then, hurling himself down upon the ground beside the mummy, he threw his arms round her, and kissed her repeatedly upon the lips and brow. 'Ma petite!' he groaned in French. 'Ma pauvre petite!' His voice broke with emotion,

and his innumerable wrinkles quivered and writhed, but the student observed in the lamplight that his shining eyes were still as dry and tearless as two beads of steel. For some minutes he lay, with a twitching face, crooning and moaning over the beautiful head. Then he broke into a sudden smile, said some words in an unknown tongue, and sprang to his feet with the vigorous air of one who has braced himself for an effort.

In the centre of the room there was a large circular case which contained, as the student had frequently remarked, a magnificent collection of early Egyptian rings and precious stones. To this the attendant strode, and, unlocking it, he threw it open. On the ledge at the side he placed his lamp, and beside it a small earthenware jar which he had drawn from his pocket. He then took a handful of rings from the case, and with a most serious and anxious face he proceeded to smear each in turn with some liquid substance from the earthen pot, holding them to the light as he did so. He was clearly disappointed with the first lot, for he threw them petulantly back into the case, and drew out some more. One of these, a massive ring with a large crystal set in it, he seized and eagerly tested with the contents of the jar. Instantly he uttered a cry of joy, and threw out his arms in a wild gesture which upset the pot and sent the liquid streaming across the floor to the very feet of the Englishman. The attendant drew a red handkerchief from his bosom, and, mopping up the mess, he followed it into the corner, where in a moment he found himself face to face with his observer.

‘Excuse me,’ said John Vansittart Smith, with all imaginable politeness; ‘I have been unfortunate enough to fall asleep behind this door.’

‘And you have been watching me?’ the other asked in English, with a most venomous look on his corpse-like face.

The student was a man of veracity. ‘I confess,’ said he, ‘that I have noticed your movements, and that they have aroused my curiosity and interest in the highest degree.’

The man drew a long flamboyant-bladed knife from his bosom. ‘You have had a very narrow escape,’ he said; ‘had I seen you ten minutes ago, I should have driven this through your heart. As it is, if you touch me or interfere with me in any way you are a dead man.’

‘I have no wish to interfere with you,’ the student answered. ‘My presence here is entirely accidental. All I ask is that you



will have the extreme kindness to show me out through some side door.' He spoke with great suavity, for the man was still pressing the tip of his dagger against the palm of his left hand, as though to assure himself of its sharpness, while his face preserved its malignant expression.

'If I thought——' said he. 'But no, perhaps it is as well. What is your name?'

The Englishman gave it.

'Vansittart Smith,' the other repeated. 'Are you the same Vansittart Smith who gave a paper in London upon El Kab? I saw a report of it. Your knowledge of the subject is contemptible.'

'Sir!' cried the Egyptologist.

'Yet it is superior to that of many who make even greater pretensions. The whole keystone of our old life in Egypt was not the inscriptions or monuments of which you make so much, but was our hermetic philosophy and mystic knowledge, of which you say little or nothing.'

'Our old life!' repeated the scholar, wide-eyed; and then suddenly, 'Good God, look at the mummy's face!'

The strange man turned and flashed his light upon the dead woman, uttering a long doleful cry as he did so. The action of the air had already undone all the art of the embalmer. The skin had fallen away, the eyes had sunk inwards, the discoloured lips had writhed away from the yellow teeth, and the brown mark upon the forehead alone showed that it was indeed the same face which had shown such youth and beauty a few short minutes before.

The man flapped his hands together in grief and horror. Then mastering himself by a strong effort he turned his hard eyes once more upon the Englishman.

'It does not matter,' he said, in a shaking voice. 'It does not really matter. I came here to-night with the fixed determination to do something. It is now done. All else is as nothing. I have found my quest. The old curse is broken. I can rejoin her. What matter about her inanimate shell so long as her spirit is awaiting me at the other side of the veil!'

'These are wild words,' said Vansittart Smith. He was becoming more and more convinced that he had to do with a madman.

'Time presses, and I must go,' continued the other. 'The moment is at hand for which I have waited this weary time. But I must show you out first. Come with me.'

Taking up the lamp, he turned from the disordered chamber, and led the student swiftly through the long series of the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian apartments. At the end of the latter he pushed open a small door let into the wall and descended a winding stone stair. The Englishman felt the cold fresh air of the night upon his brow. There was a door opposite him which appeared to communicate with the street. To the right of this another door stood ajar, throwing a spurt of yellow light across the passage. 'Come in here!' said the attendant, shortly.

Vansittart Smith hesitated. He had hoped that he had come to the end of his adventure. Yet his curiosity was strong within him. He could not leave the matter unsolved, so he followed his strange companion into the lighted chamber.

It was a small room, such as is devoted to a *concierge*. A wood fire sparkled in the grate. At one side stood a truckle bed, and at the other a coarse wooden chair, with a round table in the centre, which bore the remains of a meal. As the visitor's eye glanced round he could not but remark with an ever-recurring thrill that all the small details of the room were of the most quaint design and antique workmanship. The candlesticks, the vases upon the chimney-piece, the fire-irons, the ornaments upon the walls, were all such as he had been wont to associate with the remote past. The gnarled heavy-eyed man sat himself down upon the edge of the bed, and motioned his guest into the chair.

'There may be design in this,' he said, still speaking excellent English. 'It may be decreed that I should leave some account behind as a warning to all rash mortals who would set their wits up against workings of nature. I leave it with you. Make such use as you will of it. I speak to you now with my feet upon the threshold of the other world.'

'I am, as you surmised, an Egyptian—not one of the down-trodden race of slaves who now inhabit the Delta of the Nile, but a survivor of that fiercer and harder people who tamed the Hebrew, drove the Ethiopian back into the southern deserts, and built those mighty works which have been the envy and the wonder of all after generations. It was in the reign of Tuthmosis, sixteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, that I first saw the light. You shrink away from me. Wait, and you will see that I am more to be pitied than to be feared.

'My name was Sosra. My father had been the chief priest of Osiris in the great temple of Abaris, which stood in those days



upon the Bubastic branch of the Nile. I was brought up in the temple and was trained in all those mystic arts which are spoken of in your own Bible. I was an apt pupil. Before I was sixteen I had learned all which the wisest priest could teach me. From that time on I studied Nature's secrets for myself and shared my knowledge with no man.

'Of all the questions which attracted me there were none over which I laboured so long as over those which concern themselves with the nature of life. I probed deeply into the vital principle. The aim of medicine had been to drive away disease when it appeared. It seemed to me that a method might be devised which should so fortify the body as to prevent weakness or death from ever taking hold of it. It is useless that I should recount my researches. You would scarce comprehend them if I did. They were carried out partly upon animals, partly upon slaves, and partly on myself. Suffice it that their result was to furnish me with a substance which, when injected into the blood, would endow the body with strength to resist the effects of time, of violence, or of disease. It would not indeed confer immortality, but its potency would endure for many thousands of years. I used it upon a cat and afterwards drugged the creature with the most deadly poisons. That cat is alive in Lower Egypt at the present moment. There was nothing of mystery or magic in the matter. It was simply a chemical discovery, which may well be made again.

'Love of life runs high in the young. It seemed to me that I had broken away from all human care now that I had abolished pain and driven death to such a distance. With a light heart I poured the accursed stuff into my veins. Then I looked round for some one whom I could benefit. There was a young priest of Thoth, Parmes by name, who had won my goodwill by his earnest nature and his devotion to his studies. To him I whispered my secret, and at his request I injected him with my elixir. I should now, I reflected, never be without a companion of the same age as myself.

'After this grand discovery I relaxed my studies to some extent, but Parmes continued his with redoubled energy. Every day I could see him working with his flasks and his distiller in the Temple of Thoth, but he said little to me as to the result of his labours. For my own part, I used to walk through the city and look around me with exultation as I reflected that all this was destined to pass away, and that only I should remain. The people

would bow to me as they passed me, for the fame of my knowledge had gone abroad.

‘There was war at this time, and the Great King had sent down his soldiers to the eastern boundary to drive away the Hyksos. A Governor, too, was sent to Abaris, that he might hold it for the King. I had heard much of the beauty of the daughter of this Governor, but one day as I walked out with Parmes we met her, borne upon the shoulders of her slaves. I was struck with love as with lightning. My heart went out from me. I could have thrown myself beneath the feet of her bearers. This was my woman. Life without her was impossible. I swore by the head of Horus that she should be mine. I swore it to the priest of Thoth. He turned away from me with a brow which was as black as midnight.

‘There is no need to tell you of our wooing. She came to love me even as I loved her. It seems that Parmes had seen her before I did, and had shown her that he too loved her, but I could smile at his passion, for I knew that her heart was mine. The white plague had come upon the city and many were stricken, but I laid my hands upon the sick and nursed them without fear or scathe. She marvelled at my daring. Then I told her my secret and begged her that she would let me use my art upon her.

“Your flower shall then be unwithered, Atma,” I said. “Other things may pass away, but you and I, and our great love for each other, shall outlive the tomb of King Chefru.”

‘But she was full of timid maidenly objections. “Was it right?” she asked, “was it not a thwarting of the will of the gods? If the great Osiris had wished that our years should be so long, would he not himself have brought it about?”

‘With fond and loving words I overcame her doubts, and yet she hesitated. It was a great question, she said. She would think it over for this one night. In the morning I should know her resolution. Surely one night was not too much to ask. She wished to pray to Isis for help in her decision.

‘With a sinking heart and a sad foreboding of evil I left her with her tirewomen. In the morning, when the early sacrifice was over, I hurried to her house. A frightened slave met me upon the steps. Her mistress was ill, she said, very ill. In a frenzy I broke my way through the attendants, and rushed through hall and corridor to my Atma’s chamber. She lay upon her couch, her head high upon the pillow, with a pallid face and a glazed eye.



On her forehead there blazed a single angry purple patch. I knew that hell-mark of old. It was the scar of the white plague, the sign-manual of death.

‘Why should I speak of that terrible time? For months I was mad, fevered, delirious, and yet I could not die. Never did an Arab thirst after the sweet wells as I longed after death. Could poison or steel have shortened the thread of my existence, I should soon have rejoined my love in the land with the narrow portal. I tried, but it was of no avail. The accursed influence was too strong upon me. One night as I lay upon my couch, weak and weary, Parmes, the priest of Thoth, came to my chamber. He stood in the circle of the lamplight, and he looked down upon me with eyes which were bright with a mad joy.

“Why did you let the maiden die?” he asked; “why did you not strengthen her as you strengthened me?”

“I was too late,” I answered. “But I had forgot. You also loved her. You are my fellow in misfortune. Is it not terrible to think of the centuries which must pass ere we look upon her again? Fools, fools, that we were to take death to be our enemy!”

“You may say that,” he cried with a wild laugh; “the words come well from your lips. For me, they have no meaning.”

“What mean you?” I cried, raising myself upon my elbow. “Surely, friend, this grief has turned your brain.” His face was aflame with joy, and he writhed and shook like one who hath a devil.

“Do you know whither I go?” he asked.

“Nay,” I answered, “I cannot tell.”

“I go to her,” said he. “She lies embalmed in the further tomb by the double palm-tree beyond the city wall.”

“Why do you go there?” I asked.

“To die!” he shrieked, “to die! I am not bound by earthen fetters.”

“But the elixir is in your blood,” I cried.

“I can defy it,” said he; “I have found a stronger principle which will destroy it. It is working in my veins at this moment, and in an hour I shall be a dead man. I shall join her and you shall remain behind.”

‘As I looked upon him I could see that he spoke words of truth. The light in his eye told me that he was indeed beyond the power of the elixir.

“You will teach me!” I cried.

“Never!” he answered.

“I implore you, by the wisdom of Thoth, by the majesty of Anubis!”

“It is useless,” he said, coldly.

“Then I will find it out,” I cried.

“You cannot,” he answered; “it came to me by chance. There is one ingredient which you can never get. Save that which is in the ring of Thoth, none will ever more be made.”

“In the ring of Thoth!” I repeated; “where then is the ring of Thoth?”

“That also you shall never know,” he answered. “You won her love. Who has won in the end? I leave you to your sordid earth life. My chains are broken. I must go!” He turned upon his heel and fled from the chamber. In the morning came the news that the Priest of Thoth was dead.

My days after that were spent in study. I must find this subtle poison which was strong enough to undo the elixir. From early dawn to midnight I bent over the test-tube and the furnace. Above all, I collected the papyri and the chemical flasks of the Priest of Thoth. Alas! they taught me little. Here and there some hint or stray expression would raise hope in my bosom, but no good ever came of it. Still, month after month, I struggled on. When my heart grew faint, I would make my way to the tomb by the palm-trees. There, standing by the dead casket from which the jewel had been rifled, I would feel her sweet presence, and would whisper to her that I would rejoin her if mortal wit could solve the riddle.

Parmes had said that his discovery was connected with the ring of Thoth. I had some remembrance of the trinket. It was a large and weighty circlet made, not of gold, but of a rarer and heavier metal brought from the mines of Mount Harbal. Platinum, you call it. The ring had, I remembered, a hollow crystal set in it, in which some few drops of liquid might be stored. Now, the secret of Parmes could not have to do with the metal alone, for there were many rings of that metal in the Temple. Was it not more likely that he had stored his precious poison within the cavity of the crystal? I had scarce come to this conclusion before; in hunting through his papers, I came upon one which told me that it was indeed so, and that there was still some of the liquid unused.

“But how to find the ring? It was not upon him when he was



stripped for the embalmer. Of that I made sure. Neither was it among his private effects. In vain I searched every room that he had entered, every box, and vase, and chattel that he had owned. I sifted the very sand of the desert in the places where he had been wont to walk; but, do what I would, I could come upon no traces of the ring of Thoth. Yet it may be that my labours would have overcome all obstacles had it not been for a new and unlooked-for misfortune.

‘A great war had been waged against the Hyksos, and the Captains of the Great King had been cut off in the desert, with all their bowmen and horsemen. The shepherd tribes were upon us like the locusts in a dry year. From the wilderness of Shur to the great bitter lake there was blood by day and fire by night. Abaris was the bulwark of Egypt, but we could not keep the savages back. The city fell. The Governor and the soldiers were put to the sword, and I, with many more, was led away into captivity.

‘For years and years I tended cattle in the great plains by the Euphrates. My master died, and his son grew old, but I was still as far from death as ever. At last I escaped upon a swift camel, and made my way back to Egypt. The Hyksos had settled in the land which they had conquered, and their own King ruled over the country. Abaris had been torn down, the city had been burned, and of the great Temple there was nothing left save an unsightly mound. Everywhere the tombs had been rifled and the monuments destroyed. Of my Atma’s grave no sign was left. It was buried in the sands of the desert, and the palm-trees which marked the spot had long disappeared. The papers of Parmes and the remains of the Temple of Thoth were either destroyed or scattered far and wide over the deserts of Syria. All search after them was vain.

‘From that time I gave up all hope of ever finding the ring or discovering the subtle drug. I set myself to live as patiently as might be until the effect of the elixir should wear away. How can you understand how terrible a thing time is, you who have experience only of the narrow course which lies between the cradle and the grave! I know it to my cost, I who have floated down the whole stream of history. I was old when Ilium fell. I was very old when Herodotus came to Memphis. I was bowed down with years when the new gospel came upon earth. Yet you see me much as other men are, with the cursed elixir still sweetening

my blood, and guarding me against that which I would court. Now at last, at last I have come to the end of it!

‘I have travelled in all lands and I have dwelt with all nations. Every tongue is the same to me. I learned them all to help pass the weary time. I need not tell you how slowly they drifted by, the long dawn of modern civilisation, the dreary middle years, the dark times of barbarism. They are all behind me now. I have never looked with the eyes of love upon another woman. Atma knows that I have been constant to her.

‘It was my custom to read all that the scholars had to say upon Ancient Egypt. I have been in many positions, sometimes affluent, sometimes poor, but I have always found enough to enable me to buy the journals which deal with such matters. Some nine months ago I was in San Francisco, when I read an account of some discoveries made in the neighbourhood of Abaris. My heart leapt into my mouth as I read it. It said that the excavator had busied himself in exploring some tombs recently unearthed. In one there had been found an unopened mummy with an inscription upon the outer case setting forth that it contained the body of the daughter of the Governor of the city in the days of Tuthmosis. It added that on removing the outer case there had been exposed a large platinum ring set with a crystal, which had been laid upon the breast of the embalmed woman. This, then, was where Parmes had hid the ring of Thoth. He might well say that it was safe, for no Egyptian would ever stain his soul by moving even the outer case of a buried friend.

‘That very night I set off from San Francisco, and in a few weeks I found myself once more at Abaris, if a few sand-heaps and crumbling walls may retain the name of the great city. I hurried to the Frenchmen who were digging there and asked them for the ring. They replied that both the ring and the mummy had been sent to the Boulak Museum at Cairo. To Boulak I went, but only to be told that Mariette Bey had claimed them and had shipped them to the Louvre. I followed them, and there at last, in the Egyptian chamber, I came, after close upon four thousand years, upon the remains of my Atma, and upon the ring for which I had sought so long.

‘But how was I to lay hands upon them? How was I to have them for my very own? It chanced that the office of attendant was vacant. I went to the Director. I convinced him that I knew much about Egypt. In my eagerness I said too much. He



remarked that a Professor's chair would suit me better than a seat in the Conciergerie. I knew more, he said, than he did. It was only by blundering, and letting him think that he had over-estimated my knowledge, that I prevailed upon him to let me move the few effects which I have retained into this chamber. It is my first and my last night here.

‘Such is my story, Mr. Vansittart Smith. I need not say more to a man of your perception. By a strange chance you have this night looked upon the face of the woman whom I loved in those far-off days. There were many rings with crystals in the case, and I had to test for the platinum to be sure of the one which I wanted. A glance at the crystal has shown me that the liquid is indeed within it, and that I shall at last be able to shake off that accursed health which has been worse to me than the foulest disease. I have nothing more to say to you. I have unburdened myself. You may tell my story or you may withhold it at your pleasure. The choice rests with you. I owe you some amends, for you have had a narrow escape of your life this night. I was a desperate man, and not to be baulked in my purpose. Had I seen you before the thing was done, I might have put it beyond your power to oppose me or to raise an alarm. This is the door. It leads into the Rue de Rivoli. Good night!’

The Englishman glanced back. For a moment the lean figure of Sosra the Egyptian stood framed in the narrow doorway. The next the door had slammed, and the heavy rasping of a bolt broke on the silent night.

It was on the second day after his return to London that Mr. John Vansittart Smith saw the following concise narrative in the Paris correspondence of the ‘Times’:—‘Curious Occurrence in the Louvre.—Yesterday morning a strange discovery was made in the principal Egyptian Chamber. The *ouvriers* who are employed to clean out the rooms in the morning found one of the attendants lying dead upon the floor with his arms round one of the mummies. So close was his embrace that it was only with the utmost difficulty that they were separated. One of the cases containing valuable rings had been opened and rifled. The authorities are of opinion that the man was bearing away the mummy with some idea of selling it to a private collector, but that he was struck down in the very act by long-standing disease of the heart. It is said that he was a man of uncertain age and eccentric habits, without any living relations to mourn over his dramatic and untimely end.’

*STRANGERS WITHIN OUR GATES.*

IN the course of miscellaneous reading few subjects can have greater interest for Englishmen than the numerous opinions and observations which have been made on us by foreign travellers of all ages, and recorded in their notebooks, memoirs, and journals. During the last visit of the Shah to England we presented the curious spectacle to the whole of the civilised world of an entire nation on view, and inviting inspection for a second time by a very uninteresting Oriental. Whether we shall have secured that potentate's good-will and patronage by our very conscientious lionising of him, and be kindly permitted to make his railways, and our own fortunes at the same time, is a question which time alone can answer, for those who have patience sufficiently Persian to wait. Every expression of opinion, real or imagined, supposed to have been uttered by the Shah was treasured and dilated on by the daily press. When the supply of these *dicta* ran short, the bolder writers adopted the expedient of putting themselves in the Shah's place, and began long articles, embodying their own ideas on England in general, by using the insinuating or suggestive method, as, 'Doubtless he will be struck with the crowded shipping of the Thames, evidences of Great Britain's maritime supremacy,' and so on indefinitely, though the great man may at the time have been dozing or sipping the 'sherbet of the Infidel,' or doing anything else which would relieve the dreariness of a colossal bout of sight-seeing. Now many newspapers are looking forward to a diary by the great man which shall publish his impressions of us to an expectant world. We find a great help to our nineteenth-century habits of introspection in the lights, lurid or roseate, thrown on us by all those who, having seen us face to face, have written on us, and so enable us to 'see ourselves as others see us,' whether with the eyes of a Cæsar or a Count Smorltork. It is a sad fact, and one to be mentioned at the outset, that the travellers of all periods invariably allude to their sufferings from the odious *mal de mer*, which is an illness afforded in its finest type and highest development by our Straits of Dover. To go back a little more than two centuries to the Sieur de la Serre,



the historian of the 'Entry of Mary de Medicis, Queen-Mother of France, into England, 1638,' he has some remarks on this subject, and they are worthy of the graceful pen of a gallant Frenchman. After chronicling the surprising exemption of his patroness from the malady, who in an unexampled manner excited the envy of her fellow-travellers by maintaining her 'accustomed air and majesty,' he proceeds to tell also how 'the queen landed with an incredible joy, having been seven whole days in a continual storm; but certainly the compassion her Majesty had for her ladies and maids-of-honour gave rise to the greatest part of this satisfaction. And, not to speak falsely, the graces and attractions of these ladies were a little in disorder on their leaving the ship; for in so great and continued a storm they were more attentive to the alleviating their uneasiness than the preserving their beauty; everything about them seemed so sorrowful and so deplorable that the most beautiful among them touched the hearts of the beholders more with pity than with love; although after so many apprehensions of shipwreck the joy to see themselves safe in port possessed them so absolutely that one might observe at the same time the appearance of present joy and the marks of a past sorrow.' It is an unheroic fact that one of our early monarchs suffered much more acutely than the illustrious queen-mother of France, and was forced to appoint an especial officer to alleviate his sufferings at sea. A manor in the parish of River, near Dover, was granted to one Solomon de Dover, the tenure being for 'the sergeanty and service of holding the king's head between Dover and Whitsond, as often as it should happen for him to pass the sea between those parts, and there should be occasion for it.' It would be no light tenure certainly in these days, when the chief personage in our realm makes such frequent use of the royal yachts; indeed, the service must have required not only great loyalty in the lord of the manor but also excellent sea-legs. Once on shore our visitors seem to have had the most varying receptions. Mary de Medicis was received at Harwich and Colchester with music and fireworks, which lasted far into the night, and 'those of the most melancholy disposition changed their humour, in order to join in the general rejoicing. At Chelmsford all the neighbouring peasants, men and women, being assembled in different companies on the road by which her Majesty was to pass, without any other order or command than that which their own zeal had that morning imposed on them, some led by a violin, others by a bagpipe, all together received

the queen, dancing to the sound of these instruments, enlivened by a thousand acclamations of joy.' In fact, the worthy Sieur de la Serre draws an idyllic picture of merry England, and one almost pretty enough to form a pendant to that in the 'Sentimental Journey,' where Sterne, seized with contagious gaiety, throws his boots into the ditch and joins the peasants of Picardy in an Arcadian dance.

Another kind of reception was apparently in vogue in the next reign, and the surliness displayed may be attributed to the deterioration of our national good-breeding and the loss of our gaiety of heart during the interval of the Commonwealth. Sorbière, a French gentleman who translated Hobbes's works into his own language, gives an account of the treatment he met with on landing at Dover in the reign of Charles II. 'They fall,' he says, 'to the opprobrious term of "French dogs," which is the epithet they give us in England, as I have often heard them call the French in Holland *Mushrooms*, which yet is more tolerable than *Matto Francese*—*i.e.* foolish Frenchman—a name by which the common people of Italy are pleased to distinguish them. . . . To tell you the truth, both the one and the other make use of these opprobrious terms with some reason, upon account of the noise we make at our coming amongst them, and by way of reprehending a certain forwardness in us, which they call indiscretion, which in effect makes us appear very ridiculous to them. For his forwardness is so opposite to their serious temper and the coolness of their proceedings, as well as to the patience with which they allow everyone to perform what he goes about. . . . These things depend so much upon men's behaviour,' &c. It seems that M. Sorbière's troubles were greatly increased by his ignorance of the language; more than once his fellow-travellers 'not only declined in the inns to take care as they ought of a stranger, who could not tell how to make the people understand him, but I was as little regarded as if I had been a bale of goods. . . . I was desirous to show my civilities by my interpreter to those who were not so much tainted with rusticity, which they were so far from taking right that they deemed it to be raillery and an affront, which embarrassed me so that I must have recourse unto my interpreter to be apprised of it.' Sully, in his 'Memoirs,' records a very awkward broil between members of his suite and some citizens which happened on the very first night of their arrival in London on a special mission to James I. In this



encounter, a respectable Englishman having been killed, the people followed the French to their lodgings, threatening immediate vengeance. 'The affair soon began to appear of great consequence, for the number of people assembled was presently increased to upwards of three thousand, which obliged the French to fly to the house of the ambassador. . . . The honour of my nation, my own in particular, and the interest of my negotiation were the first objects that presented themselves to my mind. I was also most sensibly grieved that my entry into London should be marked at the beginning with so fatal an accident.' The culprit was in Sully's retinue, a 'young man, son of the Sieur de Combaut, principal examiner in Chancery, very rich, and a kinsman likewise of Beaumont's (the French ambassador in residence), who, entering that moment, desired me to give young Combaut into his hands that he might endeavour to save him. . . . "I do not wonder," replied I to Beaumont with an air of authority and indignation, "that the English and you are at variance, if you are capable of preferring the interest of yourself and your relations to that of the king and the public; but the service of the king, my master, and the safety of so many gentlemen of good families shall not suffer for such an impudent stripling as this." I told Beaumont in plain terms that Combaut should be beheaded in a few minutes; to be short, I desired Beaumont to quit my apartment, for I thought it would be improper to have him present in the council which I intended to hold immediately, in order to pronounce sentence of death upon Combaut. In this council I made choice of the oldest and wisest of my retinue; and the affair being presently determined, I sent Arnaud to inform the Mayor of London of it, and to desire him to have his officers ready the next day to conduct the culprit to the place of execution, and to have the executioner there ready to receive him.' The Lord Mayor seems to have been taken atack by Sully's promptitude to avenge the death of the Englishman killed in hot blood in a fray, and desired him to soften the sentence, but fruitlessly, for he would not revoke it, but handed Monsieur Combaut over to the Lord Mayor to be dealt with according to the law of the land. 'I accordingly sent Combaut to him, so that the whole proceeding became a private affair between the Mayor and Combaut, or rather Beaumont; who, without much difficulty, obtained this magistrate's consent to set Combaut at liberty—a favour which none could impute to

me. On the contrary, I perceived both the French and English seemed to think that if the affair had been determined by me it would not have ended so well for Combaut; and the consequence of this to me, with respect to the English and the French, was that the former began to love me and the latter to fear me more.' This incident has been given at full length as a characteristic piece of diplomacy of the highest order, and worthy of Henry Quatre's great minister and devoted servant.

It appears that the French excited great ridicule amongst certain classes of the English on into the eighteenth century. The Abbé le Blanc, a writer whose 'Letters on the English and French Nations' were highly praised by Voltaire, remarked that the typical Frenchman of our comedies had much to do in forming the popular British estimate, and adds: 'People in general think all the French are like those wretched refugees who, in the coffee-houses of London, excite compassion rather than contempt. It is after these originals that the comic authors paint our manners; in one of their plays a French *petit-maître* drops a bit of cheese in pulling his handkerchief out of his pocket.' The Abbé tells the story of a stage-manager who, wishing to restore a too critical pit to good humour, interpolated a whole scene into the play holding up French manners, customs, and especially cookery, to ridicule; this device was entirely successful. Le Blanc admits, however, that the rudeness of the lower classes was amply atoned for by the civilities and politeness of the well-bred of the upper classes. Misson, whose 'Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England' first appeared at the Hague in 1698, is very severe on the affectations of the English. He says: 'The use of patches is not unknown to the French ladies; but she that wears them must be young and handsome. In England, young, old, handsome, ugly, are all bepatched till they are bedrid. I have often counted fifteen patches or more upon the swarthy, wrinkled phiz of an old hag threescore and ten and upwards. Thus the Englishwomen refine upon our fashions.' The young Englishman of the period has equally severe measure dealt out to him by the austere Misson: 'The playhouse, chocolate-houses, and the parks in spring perfectly swarm with fops and beaus. Their whole business is to hunt after new fashions. . . . They are creatures compounded of a periwig and a coat laden with powder as white as a miller's, a face besmeared with snuff, and a few affected airs.' 'A beau is the more remarkable in England



because, generally speaking, Englishmen dress in a plain, uniform manner.' However, Misson's critique of the English people, as a whole, is very gracious. 'Other nations,' he says, 'accuse the common people among the English of incivility, because they generally accost one another without putting their hands to their hats, and without that flood of compliments that usually pours out of the mouth of the French, the Italians, &c. But they take the thing in a wrong light; the idea of the English is that civility does not consist wholly of these outward shows, which very often are hypocritical and deceitful. . . . I am willing to believe that the English are subject to certain faults, as no doubt all nations are; but, everything considered, I am satisfied by several years' experience that, the more strangers are acquainted with the English, the more they will esteem and love them. What brave men do I know in England! What moderation! What generosity! What uprightness of heart! What piety and charity! Yes, there are in England persons that may be truly called accomplished—men who are wisdom and goodness itself.' Such a character contrasts strongly with that given of us in the fifteenth century by Sasek, the journalist of the Bohemian embassy to England in 1466. He says: 'The English are so cunning and faithless that a foreigner would not be sure of his life among them. A Briton is not to be trusted on his bended knees!' The Dutch historian Van Meteren, who was probably a merchant in London (*circa* 1558–1612), says: 'The people are bold, courageous, ardent, and cruel in war, fiery in attack, and having little fear of death; they are not vindictive, but very inconstant, rash, vain-glorious, light, and deceiving, and very suspicious, especially of foreigners, whom they despise. They are full of courtly and affected manner of words which they take for gentility, civility, and wisdom. They are eloquent and very hospitable; they feed well and delicately, and eat a great deal of meat, and, as the Germans pass the bounds of sobriety in drinking, these do the same in eating.' Lemnius, a physician, compatriot, and contemporary of Van Meteren, writes: 'Every gentleman and every worthy person showed unto me all points of most friendly courtesy, and, taking me first by the hand, lovingly embraced and bade me right heartily welcome.'

Some very graphic allusions to English university and ordinary life are to be found in the letters Erasmus wrote from Cambridge to his friend Ammonius in London. On December 21, 1510, he

complains to his friend Ammonius, in a jocular letter, that he was blockaded by the plague, beset with thieves, and drugged with bad wine. Erasmus seems to have been a judge of good wine, and to have been at first ill-satisfied with his fare at Cambridge. At the latter end of August 1511 he tells Ammonius that he did not intend to remain long at Queens' College; that he did not like the ale, and that the wine to be procured there was not much more to his taste, and he ends by requesting him to send a cask of the best Greek wine (Malmsey?) that could be procured in London. From this time Ammonius contrived to send his friend a constant supply; upon one occasion, when that supply appears to have been accidentally interrupted, Erasmus, returning an empty cask, reminds him of this neglect rather pointedly, saying, 'I return your cask, which I have kept by me empty rather a long time, in order that I might at least enjoy the smell of Greek wine.' In the month of May 1511, Erasmus, with a superstitious feeling strange in such a man, went on a pilgrimage to the famous shrine of our Lady of Walsingham; in place of a more substantial offering he presented some Greek iambic verses to the Virgin, a curious memorial both of his piety and of the first commencement of the study of that language in Cambridge. His discontent with his surroundings grew, and in sending his 'Icaromenippus' to his friend, in November of the same year, he complains that there was not a scribe in the University who could write moderately well. At this time he writes: 'Many are absent from fear of the plague, although when they are all here it is still a solitude. The expense is intolerable, the gain not a halfpenny. It is now hardly five months since I came, yet have I already spent sixty nobles (about 20*l.*), while I have only received one noble from some of my auditors.' He proceeds to say that he was determined to persevere, and to do his utmost to plant a love of the Greek language in the University, in which he finally succeeded. The opposition to the study apparently was not so severe as at Oxford, where a party was formed against it, who called themselves Trojans, taking individually the names of Priam, Hector, Paris, &c., and waging an uncompromising warfare against the other party in general. Erasmus's ill-humour against Cambridge at this period was increased by the miscarriage of parts of his correspondence with Ammonius, which had been entrusted to the care of some of the townsmen, and even of portions of his wine, and causes him to remark that the common



people of Cambridge exceeded the rest of the inhospitable Britons, because they 'joined the greatest malice to the greatest rusticity.' However, many of his remarks are evidently caused by petulance, as on the whole he owned that he was handsomely treated in England and his great talents and scholarship amply recognised and rewarded. The unanimity of the sixteenth-century travellers in speaking against the English is very striking. Paulus Jovius says: 'They are commonly destitute of good-breeding, and are despisers of foreigners, since they esteem him a wretched being, and but half a man, who may be born elsewhere than in Britain, and far more miserable him whose fate it should be to leave his breath and bones in a foreign land.' Perlin, whose 'Description of England and Scotland' was first published in Paris in 1558, but of whom nothing is known, has made a vigorous summary of our national character: 'It is to be noted that in this excellent kingdom there is no kind of order; the people are reprobates and thorough enemies to good manners and letters, for they don't know whether they belong to God or the devil, which Saint Paul has reprehended in many people, saying, "Be not transported with divers sorts of winds, but be constant and steady to your belief."' "

One explanation of the incivility of the English may be accounted for by the large foreign immigration which had been steadily going on for many years. In June 1551 five or six hundred men complained in a body to the Lord Mayor of the large influx of foreigners, whom, if no remedy were found, they were prepared to kill. On this complaint a census was taken by the Lord Mayor, which discovered forty thousand besides women and children, 'for the most part heretics fled out of other countries;' the corporation thereupon took measures to prevent breaches of the peace. In November 1583 there were certified by the Mayor of Norwich to be 4,679 strangers residing in that city, being Dutch refugees and others. In 1582 a plan was made and presented to the Secretary of State for the employment of French refugees in the manufacture of cloth and the erection of a wool staple in London. In the next century, in 1626, attempts were made to help these refugees to carry on their trades without interference, and in 1635 a large immigration of Walloons caused the people of Dover much perplexity, and many of them were sent to 'repair to more inland towns.' Grosley, a visitor from Troyes, and whose 'Londres' (which first appeared at Lausanne in 1770)

was the best guide to London for thirty or forty years after his visit, throws much light on the condition of refugees in England. He says the refugees, whether rich or poor, were all incessantly exclaiming against France, against the Court, and against the Jesuits, who had busied themselves in the reign of James II. to gain authority here. 'A considerable number of these refugees, being reduced to beggary, and to all the servility and meanness which that humble state either authorises or suggests, exhausted and tired out the charity of the English, who soon used themselves to consider these beggars as representatives of the whole French nation.' Monsieur Grosley makes some observations on the respective characters of our kings, and remarks how rare it is for men to love those who force their esteem, or to always esteem those whom they love. Among the kings he considers Henry VII. and William III. the wisest princes that ever reigned in England, and tells us that Charles II. 'was greatly beloved and little esteemed.' He gives a character to the reigning sovereign, George III., worthy of a prince in a fairy tale, and says: 'All those he speaks to he accosts in the most polite manner, and never opens his lips except to say the most obliging things.' He considers it unparalleled in the history of monarchies that his palace should be practically unguarded and his 'country retreat inferior in magnificence to many,' but he thinks this and other proofs of want of stateliness are among means of acquiring popular esteem. He is startled with the freedom of speech he meets with among the lower classes, and observes that coachmen and carmen never stop at the king's approach, and take a pride in not bowing to him. 'Why should we bow to George?' say this insolent rabble; 'he should bow to us. He lives at our expense.'

The Abbé le Blanc also seemed to be disgusted at the familiarity with which our lower classes treated the nobility, and gives his experience at a time when political feeling ran high. For the sake of convenience he was travelling in the company of a peer of the realm whose acquaintance he had made on his way to London, and in whose society he was extending his journey to Northampton, where he tells how: 'Here each party has its particular inns, and if a member of Parliament is in the opposition to the Court, he is under a necessity of going to an inn of his party, or he is a lost man; for either they would believe he had turned coat or they would turn it for him. My fellow-traveller was much better off than I; for finding the wine bad, he had recourse to beer; and



the fowl proving hard, he revenged himself on the pudding, which was soft enough. But I, who am not seasoned to this gross food, and drink little or no beer—I, who am neither of the party of Corruption nor Opposition, neither Whig nor Tory, what business had I in this wretched house? This is not all: I saw the moment when I thought our innkeeper's hatred to the Ministry would give him a right to sit down with us. We were obliged, at least, to drink out of the same pot with him to his health, and to the healths of all those of the town of Northampton who were enemies to Sir Robert Walpole (against whom I have not the least subject of complaint), and friends to our landlord, with whom you see I have no great reason to be in love. And what is still worse, I was under a necessity of listening to the reasoning of this zealous partisan of the Opposition. My travelling companion had the politeness to entertain him during the whole supper-time; for it was not the innkeeper that made court to my lord, but my lord to the innkeeper. This last exclaimed bitterly against the corruption of the Ministry and the remissness of the Parliament. My lord used his utmost endeavours to excuse the conduct of his party to our political innkeeper, and to persuade him that they constantly did all that was possible to be done in the present circumstances. "No, my lord," replied he in a passion, "they do not," &c. Thereupon he wished us good-night, and departed in great wrath. As soon as he was gone, "Sir," said my fellow-traveller, "you must not be surprised at all this. In this country we are obliged to manage all sorts of people, in order to keep up our credit in the country. This fellow, notwithstanding his appearance, is rich; and rude and brutal as he is, he passes for an honest man, and is taken notice of; he is of greater importance here than you can well imagine; his vote at elections constantly guides those of all his neighbours."

Can anything be more true to life than this electioneering peer and the bumptious elector of local importance? The whole scene is a curious complement to Rousseau's sarcasm that 'the English think they are free, but they are much mistaken. They are only so during an election of members of Parliament; as soon as this election is made they are slaves, they are nothing; and the use they make of their liberty during the few moments of its duration shows how little they deserve to keep it.' The political aspect of England greatly interests all German travellers, and there exist such curiously differing judgments recorded by

competent critics on the subject, that a good specimen of their views may be got from contrasting Heine's and Von Raumer's judgment on the same man. Von Raumer was in England in 1835; he was Professor of History at the University of Berlin, and himself says he wrote on us 'under the influence of the deepest and warmest feelings.'

He writes just after the death of William Cobbett the following acute passage on that worthy and his followers: 'These men,' he says, 'thought, lived, felt like plebeians, and therefore found an echo in the people; and it would have been more rational to investigate the causes of this than to make it a subject of lamentation. Instead of wasting their time in fruitless abuse, people would then discover means of redressing real evils, of showing the groundlessness of false complaints, and of exhibiting absurdities in all their nakedness. If there be any individuals who think to turn the democratic heritage of these men to account, they will probably find themselves mistaken. The spirit of resistance to power, which grows with rank luxuriance on the rough uncultured soil of the people, has a native life which, when trained and pruned, bears the noblest fruit—such, for instance, as heroic devotion to country. On the other hand, the revolutionary tendency which is nurtured in the closet, which borrows all its force from the annihilation of the positive, and thinks to lead nations captive with a few phrases, is shallow in its origin, presumptuous in its course, destructive in its results. Popular life is far too rich, varied, earnest, vivid, to be long chained to the dry bones of a superficial system. Their sorrows and their joys are not to be learned from the political herbariums of system-mongers; and when once it comes to blows, there are thoughts and feelings in motion that are not dreamt of in the philosophy of these political pedagogues.'

Heine has set forth some of his English impressions in his 'Reisebilder,' a book which is the quintessence of Heine at his freshest and most fascinating time; prose, verse, the wildest wit, and the most sober earnest being equally mixed in these 'Traveling Sketches.' He came over to England in the fever heat of a *francisé* enthusiasm, and, full of an ardent *parisianisme*, set to work to demolish the British Philistine. His creed then was: 'The French are the chosen people of the new religion; its first gospels and dogmas have been drawn up in their language; Paris is the New Jerusalem, and the Rhine is the Jordan which divides



the consecrated land of freedom from the land of the Philistines.' He loved the French for their accessibility to ideas, the absence of hold which prescription and routine have on them, and their readiness to move or alter at the bidding (real or supposed) of reason. This gives us the keynote of his detestation of the English character and his remark, 'I might settle in England if it were not that I should find there two things, coal-smoke and Englishmen; I cannot abide either.' He sketches Cobbett thus: 'While I translate Cobbett's words the man himself comes bodily before my mind's eye, as I saw him at that uproarious dinner at the Crown and Anchor tavern, with his scolding red face and his radical laugh, in which venomous hate mingles with a mocking exultation of his enemies' surely approaching downfall. He is a chained cur, who falls with equal fury on everyone whom he does not know, often bites the best friend of the house in the calves, barks incessantly, and just because of this incessantness of his barking cannot get listened to, even when he barks at a real thief. Therefore the distinguished thieves who plunder England do not think it necessary to throw the growling Cobbett a bone to stop his mouth. This makes the dog furiously savage, and he shows all his hungry teeth. Poor old Cobbett! England's dog! I have no love for thee, for every vulgar nature my soul abhors; but thou touchest me to the inmost soul with pity, as I see how thou strainest in vain to break loose and to get at those thieves who make off with their booty before thy very eyes, and mock at thy fruitless springs and thine impotent howling.'

Poor Heine was to die under the sad conviction that the future of his beloved France lay in the Communism which he so hated for its narrowness and grossness. On his deathbed, in 1856, 'the Child of the French Revolution' (as he often calls himself) cried aloud in agony of spirit: 'It is all of no use; the future belongs to our enemies the Communists, and Louis Napoleon is their John the Baptist.' The saying that 'The Englishman loves liberty like his lawful wife, the Frenchman loves her like his mistress, the German loves her like his old grandmother,' is well known, but before quitting Heine (always a topic of singular attraction) his amplification of this must not be omitted; it is so true, and at the same time shows his mixed vein of *malice* and poetry to perfection. He says: 'And yet, after all, no one can even tell how things may fall out. The grumpy Englishman, in an ill-temper with his wife, is capable of some day putting a rope

round her neck, and taking her to be sold at Smithfield. The inconstant Frenchman may become unfaithful to his adored mistress, and be seen fluttering about the Palais Royal after another. But the German will never quite abandon his old grandmother; he will always keep for her a nook by the chimney-corner, where she can tell her fairy stories to the listening children.'

All our visitors interested in politics have something to say of the House of Commons, which is a source of unflinching comment, and they generally describe the appearance of the leading politicians of the day. Prince Pückler-Muskau was present in the House at a debate during the ministerial crisis of 1827. He says Brougham might be compared in debate to a 'dexterous and elegant boxer; Canning presented the image of a finished, antique gladiator. All was noble, refined, simple; then suddenly, at one splendid point, his eloquence burst forth like lightning, grand and all-subduing.' The next day the Prince heard and saw the Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords, and says: 'He is no orator, and was compelled *bon gré mal gré* to enter upon his defence like an accused person. . . . There was something touching to me in seeing the hero of this century in so subdued a situation.' However, the Duke brings his speech to a tolerably successful conclusion, amid his supporters' ringing cheers. Then the other Ministers rise to apologise for resigning. Old Lord Eldon weeps copiously, but produces no similar emotion in his auditors. Lord Holland was sharp and striking; Lord King showed a great deal of wit, not always in the best taste; Lord Lansdowne made a calm and appropriate statement, more remarkable for good sense than brilliancy. Lord Grey 'excelled the rest in dignity of manner, a thing which English orators, almost without exception, either neglect or cannot acquire.'

Professor Silliman, from Boston, gives good portraits of Pitt and Fox as he saw them in the House in 1805. He describes Pitt thus: 'In his person he is tall and spare; he has small limbs, with large knees and feet; his features are sharp; his nose large, pointed, and turning up; his complexion sanguine; his voice deep-toned and commanding, yet sweet and perfectly well modulated; and his whole presence, notwithstanding the want of symmetry in his limbs, is, when he rises to speak, full of superiority and conscious dignity. . . . Fox's manner is flowing, easy, and natural, but without the dignity and impressiveness of Pitt. He stood leaning forward, as if going uphill, and his fists were



clenched and thrust into his waistcoat pockets,' &c. Moritz, a German gentleman who travelled on foot in England in 1782, says he preferred the entertainment to be met with at the Houses of Parliament 'to most other amusements.' He was much struck at seeing 'the whole of the British nation assembled in its representatives,' although in 'rather a mean-looking building that not a little resembles a chapel. The members of the House of Commons have nothing particular in their dress; they even come into the House in their great coats, and with boots and spurs. It is not at all uncommon to see a member lying stretched out on one of the benches while others are debating. Some crack nuts, others eat oranges or whatever else is in season, &c. One sometimes sees one member speaking and another accompanying the speech with his actions. This I remarked more than once in a worthy old citizen, who was afraid of speaking himself, but when his neighbour spoke he accompanied every energetic sentence with a suitable gesticulation, by which means his whole body was sometimes in motion.'

The women of England receive even more admiring comments from our stranger visitors than the British Constitution itself; it would make a study apart to record all the varying tributes to the charms of our countrywomen. Perhaps the quaintest commendation is that of Dr. Gemelli Careri (an Italian gentleman), who was in England in 1686. He says: 'The women are very beautiful and genteel and courteous of behaviour, being, in short, looked upon as one of the valuable things which England affords, which are

*Anglia mons, pons, fons, Ecclesia, foemina, lana.*

Add to this commendation that they do whatsoever they please, and do so generally wear the breeches (as we use to say), that it is now become a proverb that England is the hell of horses and the paradise of women; and if there were a bridge from the island to the continent, all the women in Europe would run thither.'

## INSIGHT.

THERE is no commonplace!  
 The lowliest thing hath grace;  
     Dull everydays yet hold  
     A loveliness untold.  
 'Tis we, 'tis we are purblind if no miracle we trace.

Earth is a marvellous scroll  
 To the revealing soul;  
     Life is one long delight  
     To him who reads aright;  
 The years a glad procession of infinite wonders roll.

Who sees beyond the veil  
 No meaner thoughts assail;  
     Daily upon him rises  
     A world of new surprises,  
 And fair the city sparrow as the orient nightingale.

His fine sense does not need  
 On actual sight to feed;  
     Many a palace high  
     He hath in cumuli;  
 Nymph-haunted streams and leafy lawns—where shakes one  
 little reed.

He craves no southern night  
 Purple athrob with light—  
     A quiet twilight dim  
     More than suffices him,  
 Still soar above his head the depths of vasty heaven's might.

He needs no pine-crowned lake  
 Where curvèd ripples break—  
     A little wayside pool  
     Doth in its bosom cool  
 The evanescent image of unfathomed azure take.



Higher than Alps he goes,  
 Than peaks of luminous snows—  
     For him a poplar tree  
     Can a frail ladder be  
 To sunset's mystic hills of gold or morning's mounts of rose.

Nought made of man may harm  
 The care-enchaining charm  
     When the white-robed chestnut tree  
     His fettered soul sets free  
 To roam the realms of cloudland by its blossom-cumbered arm ;

And his hot pulses gain  
 A sure surcease from pain  
     If but a soft breeze passes  
     Over a space of grasses,  
 Some sacred spot where tyrannous life binds this calm soul in  
 vain.

He knows no weak regrets  
 And, liberate, forgets—  
     When April clouds float through  
     The vague delicious blue—  
 The petty brain that troubles or the puny heart that frets.

Falls from him unawares  
 The burden of his cares  
     When on the dingy town  
     The mighty Spring comes down,  
 When amber buds of lilac leaves beatify the squares ;

Or sweeps the glorious throng  
 Through narrow lanes, along  
     The city sad and sober  
     Of wild winds of October,  
 Uplift, upborne from miry ways upon their pinions strong.

A strip of midnight sky  
 'Twixt crowding houses high—  
     Ah ! starry gates ope wide !  
     And raised and sanctified  
 His little life on little earth, its foolish clamours die.

Compassed with joys he lives  
 That each bright moment gives,  
     Engirt with majesties  
     His unsealed eyesight sees,  
 To him each cloud and leaf and blade are heavenly fugitives.

He reads the revelations  
 Of angels' habitations,  
     Whether aloft they spring  
     On light refulgent wing,  
 Or masked amidst oblivious men they plod in humble stations.

For no one lives apart  
 In the mind-deadening mart,  
     But round his being dense  
     Streams benign influence,  
 But glimpsèd gleams of spirit forms can irradate his heart.

Never was any lot  
 So utterly forgot ;  
     Nought vile or common is  
     In Nature's scheme of bliss,  
 There is no life so isolate that beauty knows it not.

The music of the spheres  
 Sounds upon city ears,  
     And radiant visions greet  
     The watcher in the street.  
 Only look long and deep and far—and Heaven itself appears !



## SHETLAND PONIES.

THE Shetland pony has been invested with a halo of romance somewhat out of keeping with the prosaic surroundings of its native home. And this, apparently, from a very early date, for we chanced to read not long ago that, traditionally, 'the Shetland pony was carried from the Caucasian range, by ancient worshippers of Odin, to Scandinavia, thence to Shetland'—in which tradition we discern a trace of humour, if nothing more, as, considering the size of some of these animals, they are much more fitted to be 'carried' than to transport anyone, whether from the Caucasus or elsewhere. But this is not all. Not only is the origin of the breed thus presumably lost in the mists of antiquity; a number of popular misconceptions also prevail in regard to the present-day nature and habits of the animals, all of which it seems desirable to correct. They are now not only drafted annually in large numbers to the south, but are extensively shipped abroad. A few words then in regard to the breed, as it exists to-day, may not be out of place.

To begin with, we must contend—in opposition to the popularly received belief—that there is no such thing as *the* genuine Shetland pony, in the sense of a single pure and original breed. There happen to be several distinct kinds in the islands, and these, besides being subject to natural variation, have been further increased in number by crossing. Crosses apart, however, an Unst pony is very different from a South Mainland one, while both of these again differ from a Fetlar specimen. There are also Fair Isle and Bressay varieties. It would be invidious to seek to indicate in this paper which of these is to be considered the best. Each kind, no doubt, has its special excellences, but a sufficient latitude is perhaps allowed when we state that a pure-bred pony may be anything between, say, 36 and 48 inches high at the shoulder. A small-sized pony again is not, necessarily, any better or more valuable than a large one; though for certain purposes, such as working in coal-mines, the smaller animal only is employed. As a general rule extremes of size, either way, fetch correspondingly extreme prices.

Broadly speaking, the ponies to be seen throughout, say, the

mainland of Shetland—and they are to be met with everywhere, in spite of reported scarcity—may be divided into two classes, those kept by large breeders, generally in fenced parks, and the proletariat class employed by the peasantry in labour. Strings of the latter may be seen any day upon the roads, dragging peat-fuel from the hills in lilliputian carts. They are wonderfully tough and strong for their size, live upon hard fare, and require, or at least receive, little attention. Numbers of them live out of doors all the year round, except in the severest weather. The time-honoured fiction that they are habitually left out in the snow, and preserve themselves from being drifted over by walking constantly in a circle, contradicts itself. As a matter of fact, snow often lies for seven or eight weeks in Shetland, covering the ground to a great depth. Under these circumstances the animals, if exposed, would certainly succumb, and they are far too valuable to their owners for this to be permitted. But they certainly do rough it out of doors in very inclement weather, seeking the doubtful shelter of dykes and outhouses; while in hard seasons the stud of the breeder is carefully housed in sheds made for the purpose. Unquestionably these ponies can stand a great amount of exposure, being fitted for this by a double or treble thickness of coat. But it is very much to be questioned—the popular belief to the contrary notwithstanding—if any of them are the better for being subjected to an extreme test of this kind. Ponies sent south at an early age rarely, if ever, pass through such an ordeal, and it is not found, we believe, that *their* natural hardiness deserts them, or even diminishes, when they receive fair treatment and proper shelter during inclement seasons. If stabled, however, as in many cases they must necessarily be, by the southern buyer, they should have abundance of fresh air; a simple shed, by way of cover, is almost all that is necessary for them. And it is imperative that at all times they should have ready access to drinking water. No animal can exist so short a time without it unharmed. It is self-evident that if a pony be entirely dependent on outdoor feed his condition must necessarily vary with the season. Apoplectically full in summer, he must be sorely reduced in winter. This must, sooner or later, injuriously affect the health and stamina of the animal. Iceland ponies again, on account of the rigorous climate, are regularly stabled in winter, and should consequently be more robust than they actually are, as being subjected to fewer vicissitudes of diet and climate. Why this is not the case must be traced partly to the original inferiority of the breed, and partly



to the manner in which they are shipped to this country—packed by hundreds in the holds of steamers, with insufficient air and water during the voyage, an ordeal quite sufficient to ruin them for life. The writer, who has had considerable experience in the keeping of Shetland ponies, has carefully experimented as to the best hygienic arrangements for their indoor accommodation. He finds that a rough stone building, loosely cemented, so as to allow a free current of air to pass through the walls, with ordinary stable fittings on a small scale, and covered with a galvanised iron roof, forms their best shelter. During the day, in almost all weathers, they should have their heads loose, in rough pasture, and in summer they can safely be left out at night, with the exception of young foals. Strange to say, the latter are remarkably delicate. For indoor food common wheaten-bran made into a mash, with the addition of a little Indian meal, suits them much better than oats; while hay or straw, with turnips or potatoes, and perhaps a little linseed cake, complete their stable dietary. Generally speaking, they are somewhat gross feeders, and, though capable of standing unharmed a surfeit which would ruin an ordinary horse, they should have a carefully measured allowance, varying according to their size and to the work they have to do.

Now as to the much-vexed question of height. A variation of, say, three hands between the average large and small sized ponies means a good deal in the case of such a tiny animal. Yet it obtains, as we have said, among undoubtedly pure-bred specimens, and entirely independent of any foreign cross. Accidental variations of size occur, of course, in breeding, and may be perpetuated, though this is not always to be relied upon. The true explanation, according to one of the most experienced of Shetland judges, is that size is mainly, though perhaps not entirely, a question of *feed*. On the richer pastures the tendency is towards increase of size, and *vice versâ*. Scanty feeding on hard pasture tends to diminish the height, and also to develop that superabundance of hair which is popularly (though erroneously) regarded as one of the distinguishing marks of the genuine strain. We ourselves have seen in Shetland a naturally undersized foal, likely, from its appearance, to make a good 'mine-pony,' and therefore to fetch some 15*l.* when of the requisite age, being purposely kept on scanty pasture by its owner, in order that it might not exceed the regulation dimensions for this class of animals. In point of fact the youngster, originally small perhaps, was purposely dwarfed by

spare diet, somewhat after the fashion of light-weight jockeys. And it is a well-known fact that a certain renowned breed of ponies on the mainland of Shetland, noted for extra hardiness and symmetry, are, one and all of them, considerably over the average height, owing presumably to the rich pasture on which they have been continuously kept for many years.

The craze for undersized ponies, in our opinion, has had its day. Except as curiosities, or for the purposes of the *ménage*, these pigmy animals are practically useless. Perhaps the fashion of purchasing them at extraordinarily high prices would not have lasted so long had it been fully understood that their production was mainly a question of scanty feeding, either in the case of the animals themselves or of their more or less immediate progenitors. And the same may be said of superabundant hair. The experiment can easily be made by anyone curious in these matters. Subject a pony to extreme hardship, leaving it out of doors in all weathers, and it will develop hair—and we may add hoofs—accordingly. A veritable Shetlander, picked at random from the various breeds, is just as likely to be smooth-haired and clean-limbed as shaggy. It all depends upon the treatment, or at least mainly so. The conventional Shetland pony—the animal represented in picture-books—namely, about 40 to 44 inches high, very tight-jointed, and with an impossible growth of hair all over him, is just about as bad a type of this famous race as can well be imagined. From his build he is generally short-winded and thoroughly impracticable in his paces. A South Mainland specimen, on the other hand, long and rakish in build—hard-grown, as the saying is—and clean-limbed, will far surpass his companion in staying power. One of this hardy breed—in our opinion the ideal Shetland pony—has been known to travel from Sumburgh to Lerwick and back the same day, with a tolerably heavy riding weight, say fifty-six miles altogether of extremely hilly road. But, minor differences apart, there *are* certain characteristics—unfailing tests in their way with the experienced judge—which go to the ‘make up’ of a Shetland, as distinguished from an Iceland or Faroe, pony—*e.g.* a certain unmistakable breadth of build, set of pasterns, and, more particularly, an apathetic air which no other breed possesses. Your ‘Sheltie’ is not a quick animal, is inclined to be sleepy rather than otherwise in his paces, and is, as a rule, disposed to do no more than he can help in the way of exertion, though, if put to it, he evinces great power of endurance, and will go



through an immense amount of work for his size. The Iceland variety is altogether inferior, shorter-lived, narrower in build, and generally fallacious, but, with all this, he is quicker, livelier, and lacks that air of pensive melancholy which haunts every Shetland pony. Our advice is to avoid the inferior animal, however highly recommended. Their price is, roughly speaking, about half that of the Shetlander, but the money is ill-saved. The average life of an Icelander is about twelve or thirteen years, while the other will live to twenty-five or even more.

During the earlier months of spring, before the snow has fairly disappeared from the Shetland uplands, the American buyer travels over the length and breadth of the isles, picking up every likely animal he can find for the foreign market. In order to secure a good selection it is necessary to forestall him. Hence mid-winter is the best time to buy. Just at present there is a comparative scarcity of fine animals in the islands. Within the last three years, and even before that, a disease affecting the ponies, incurable save in the earlier stages, and called sarcoptic mange, ravaged many districts. Infected animals were freely slaughtered, and the epidemic may be said to have spent itself. Still the ponies are fewer than they once were, and the price all round is considerably higher. At present it may be said to range from 10*l.* to 30*l.* and upwards for three-year-olds. It is impossible, however, within the limits of this paper to instruct intending buyers. The prices are very variable, as the animals often pass through several hands before reaching the ultimate purchaser. The latter will probably be victimised if buying from so-called agents in the south, as the latter will endeavour to extort 18*l.* or 20*l.* for an animal which has cost him little more than half that sum in Shetland. The only safe plan is to purchase through a respectable dealer on the spot.

The variety of colouring in these tiny animals is extraordinary. Almost every possible—and some all but impossible—shade of horse colour may be seen during a day's ride through the mainland, from the lightest fawn, almost white, by grey and slaty shades of gradation to brown and black. There are no dapple-greys that we wot of. There is a tradition, of the usual value, that brown is the 'true and original' hue. Cream ponies, if otherwise good, fetch a higher price than others, as being a 'fancy colour,' and the same may be said of 'piebalds.' The theory that light-coloured animals are not so robust or hardy as dark ones is not borne out by observation. A stripe, or ribbon-like mark,

down the spine is a sign of Norwegian blood, the infusion dating many years back. If the Caucasian legend is to be relied upon, however, the Norway pony is at least first cousin to the Shetland one.

A mob of ponies feeding together in the open air will use their heels to each other most liberally. This is a painful but undeniable fact, known to every breeder. When running wild on their native hills they are extremely pugnacious, and will fight most determinedly, not only with each other but with larger horses, frequently to the discomfiture of the latter. So far true, but our romancer—the Shetland Munchausen—goes on to affirm that if

Fib and Tib and Pink and Pin,  
Tick and Quick and Jill and Jin

are but congregated loosely together in a shed, or other building, they will no longer quarrel. Amity will reign where hopeless discord formerly prevailed. We can only say, Try the experiment! We have. The whole thing is a baseless fiction. They are patient and enduring, these ponies of Linga;<sup>1</sup> in many cases they may be trained to a docility and sagacity almost human, but there is a point with most of them—such, at least, is our experience of them, indoors as well as out—when their patience gives way to positive ferocity, and when once their blood is up they are not so easily pacified. An experience we once had with a recalcitrant riding pony in a rural smithy—it was his first shoeing—will never fade from our recollection, nor, we imagine, from that of the village Vulcan.

Never groom a Shetland pony as you would an ordinary horse. They should be well brushed, and their manes and tails combed; but the indiscriminate use of the currycomb is positively hurtful to them. More especially is this the case if the animal is to be left much out of doors. Observe one of them in the open air on a wet day, and you will notice that the rain runs off his coat as off a duck's back. But if the 'set' be removed the coat will no longer be waterproof. It is scarcely necessary to add that, by immemorial custom, the mane and tail should be lightly trimmed and no more. Nothing can be more incongruous than the sight of one of them closely cropped. The tail should just be off the ground. So careful are Shetland dealers in this respect that we have often received animals despatched by them with the tail thoughtfully tied in a double knot, in case of accidents on ship-board.

<sup>1</sup> Linga, or Heath Isle, the ancient name for Shetland, now on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, heath or heather being practically extinct.



The Shetland pony is shy of a strange owner, and at first requires to be jealously watched in a new home, as being apt to bolt on the first opportunity. Unfailing tradition steps in here and gravely informs us that a straying pony, however far removed from the land of its birth, will invariably shape its course for the north—in the direction, that is, of its native home. Needless to say that, by preference, it does nothing of the kind. As far as our experience enables us to judge, a straying pony, wherever it may be, traverses the line of least resistance.

We have said that they are exported in large numbers annually. The wonder, in our opinion, is that they are not still more extensively purchased. They are singularly affectionate and repay any amount of attention. Their uses are manifold, as they are capital saddle animals—one of 47 inches being quite up to an ordinary riding weight—are as a rule surefooted and reliable, go well either singly or paired in harness, make the best of hill ponies, give little trouble, and are the most captivating of all possible pets. Take them all in all, they are by far the best of the pony race. Perhaps their only drawback is their almost infinite teachableness, which tends to make them acquire bad as well as good habits; but this is a question of training. In nine cases out of ten their breaking-in is entrusted to inexperienced boys, with the usual result of developing a tendency to shy or to throw their rider, at which latter manœuvre they may become perfect adepts. These tricks are never unlearned. But, with an ordinary amount of skilled attention from the first, they may be perfectly disciplined.

Mr. J. Sands is the poet of this special subject—perhaps the only singer the Shetland pony ever had. In touching verse he pictures the mother pony with her downy foal feeding together on the windswept grassy hills of Shetland, the latter soon to be parted from her to go to work in the grimy coalmine. A fine touch of nature this, but not without its share of, apparently inevitable, fallacy. For mine-ponies, though certainly condemned to lifelong imprisonment, are well looked after and carefully tended. Assuredly their lot underground is preferable to ill-treatment above ground, and though a pony may suffer from something like 'home sickness' for a few days in a new dwelling, the attack seldom lasts long. Our pony, though somewhat of a pessimist, is a philosopher, and adapts itself with wonderful facility to a change of home and ownership.

## THE BURNT MILLION.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY,' ETC. ETC.

### CHAPTER XXVI.

IN LAKELAND.

THERE are two valleys in Lakeland, side by side, far removed from those which are familiar to its tourists, both of them beautiful, but with a beauty that owes little to verdure and less to foliage, each traversed by a rocky stream—in the one case by the Werdle, in the other by the Start—from which they take their names. In the Werdle valley there is a farm or two, a roadside inn, and a vicarage with a church in proportion to the value of the benefice, which it would be mockery indeed to call 'a living;' in the Start valley there are, where it is widest, but a few cottages, and where it narrows and the huge fells begin to hem it in, there is no sign of human habitation; there are no cattle, nor sheep. The hill fox and the fowl-mart are to be found there, indeed, but only by those who know where to look for them; the very birds that haunt those solitary walls of rock are few; the rock raven and the buzzard hover over them. Past Werdle, and over the hill that separates it from its neighbour-valley, and up the Start vale at its head, is the mountain road to Halswater. Many fair scenes and many fine ones are to be beheld by the pedestrian upon his way; but what will strike him most, not from its beauty, though it is very beautiful, but from the unexpectedness of finding it amongst such wild and grim surroundings, is the view of a country-house. Until eight hundred feet or so of the pass has been ascended, Nature in her wildest garb alone presents herself to him; but presently, through a cleft in a much loftier mountain range, his eye falls on a glint of blue, which is the foot of Halswater; and on its sterile verge, as if dropped there from the clouds, a mansion with lawns and gardens belted with noble trees, like an oasis in the desert. To find such an abode of luxury and ease cradled in crag and fell is startling, but there is nothing in its appearance that jars upon Nature's



grandeur; time has so mellowed what art so well began that it seems no more out of place than any other of those ancestral English homes which seem part and parcel of the landscape they adorn. The wonder of the beholder is how it got there. To have dragged the materials for building it over the way he has come would have defied even Egyptian labour. Five hundred feet higher, and the secret is disclosed to him; yonder lies the ocean; and even where he stands the discordant shriek of the hawk will, in wild weather, not seldom mingle with the whine of the sea-gull. It was said in old times that only two dalesmen knew the road to Halswater Hall, but the sailor always knew it. It was he who brought the oak for its panelling, the marble for its mantels, and the pictures for its gallery.

With the sea half-a-dozen miles or so away for its background, the mansion looks even a more enviable dwelling-place than at the first glance. But, like more humble homes, it has not been able to close its doors against misfortunes; not only have Disease and Death visited it in their never-omitted rounds, but even War has found its way there. In Cromwell's time, indeed, its position was so remote that it is written its inmates and their neighbours knew not of the existence of the Great Protector till he and his work had passed away, but in the later Stuart days Faction, jealous of its peaceful solitude, and disguised in the garb of Loyalty, made it a nest of treason. Then the sea brought ships by night, and the ships brought men, and the standard of Rebellion was raised where yonder clump of pines casts its shadows on the lake, and the mountain echoes learnt for the first time the sound of the trumpet. Then Authority came and with relentless foot crushed Rebellion out, and set her torch to the fair dwelling—where the mark of it can still be seen—and wrote her name in blood in all the peaceful valleys so deeply that it took generations to efface it. But one thing it left alive, veiled Discontent: and though there was no more war there was treason still, and the sea brought plotters from the north who lay *perdu* in the stately place, and priests who dwelt, like conies, in holes and corners of it, and once a fugitive, it is said, with a dark face but jovial mien, before whom Sir Eustace himself stood unbonneted, and who drank out of the only cup of silver the soldiers of the Hanoverian had left in the plate room.

Then the ancient family in time died out, and though it could not be quite said that its memory had faded 'from all the circle

of the hills,' its legends were giving place to gossip about the new-comers. A dozen years ago or so, one Mr. Joseph Tremenhere, from London, an unknown, supposed to be connected with commercial pursuits, had bought the place and renewed its glories, but in the modern fashion. The domestics were almost as many as of yore, and far more gorgeously attired; new pleasure-boats and a steam yacht were added to the house flotilla; the billiard-room was fitted up with gas-reflectors (a circumstance that set the very dale aflame); and it was even believed by some that ice was to be found on the dinner-table in the hottest summer day. Stories in this style of Eastern exaggeration were told of the hall and its owner by the landlord of the 'Fisher's Welcome' at the head of the lake, to amuse his guests when the wet weather, as it was wont to do in those parts, set in. Mr. Tremenhere had been a 'good sort,' it seemed, and thought no more of giving a guinea to a guide or a boatman than if it were a shilling; but he did not go to kirk, nor had he the excuse of belonging to the ancient faith as his predecessors at the Hall had done; for their chapel was now only used as a music gallery. It was hazarded by some gentleman sportsman at the 'Welcome' that Mr. Tremenhere might be a Jew—a pleasantry received with rapture, and one which in the neighbourhood (where jokes were scarce) was often quoted to the general enjoyment.

As to the members of his family, Miss Tremenhere was thought to be rather calm and stately, which in the mistress of so great a household seemed pardonable enough; Miss Philippa to be good-natured and very civil; but Miss Grace, all were agreed, was the flower of the flock. She had a good word for everyone, and an open hand (with something in it) wherever it was needed. There was much less mystery about the new proprietor of the Hall than there had been about the old ones, but Mr. Edward Roscoe puzzled folks. He always accompanied his patron on his summer holiday, but without sharing his diversions: for fishing he had apparently as little taste as skill; there were a few grouse on the hills about the house, but they suffered no diminution in their numbers at his hands; he did not seem to be moved by that passion for the picturesque which brought some harmless lunatics to Halswater; no one, in short, could understand why Mr. Roscoe was a standing dish at his host's table. At first they took him for the bridegroom elect of one of the two elder Miss Tremenheres, but in course of years that illusion vanished. They then concluded he was



Mr. Tremenhere's secretary, as indeed he was, and something more. If they could have guessed the real nature of his duties, it would have astonished them exceedingly; for the owner of Halswater Hall had nothing in common with Josh of Lebanon Lodge, Kensington. He caught fish on his hook instead of men—the speckled trout and the scarlet char, in place of the nobility and the military—and placed them in stew-ponds to be devoured at leisure. He put the screw on none of his tenants, and therefore had no necessity of employing Mr. Roscoe's skill with that instrument; and yet that gentleman was somehow as unpopular as an Irish landlord's agent under the Plan of the Campaign. When the news came to his Northern home of Mr. Tremenhere's decease, the honest dalesmen were moved to sorrow, but found some mitigation of it in the reflection that now that they had lost the substance they would also lose the shadow that had dogged it; but in this they were fated to be mistaken.

When the three bereaved sisters arrived at the Hall, Mr. Roscoe arrived with them; only, instead of living under the same roof as of old, he was accommodated in a cottage in the grounds, which had been used by the old family, in the days of their hospitality, for overflow guests.

Matters were not so pleasant in the household as they had been at Elm Place. The presence of visitors had there had a restraining influence upon the two elder sisters, who, now that they were alone together, often said sharp things (in the sense of antagonism rather than cleverness, as Ajax was called *acerrimus* Ajax) to each other, and still sharper, in confidence, to Mr. Roscoe, of each other. That gentleman's position, though as general manager of so vast an establishment, and one in whom the most implicit trust was placed, it seemed to be enviable, had some crumpled rose-leaves about it, and even occasionally thorns. Each sister wanted the attention he paid to the other; but Agnes—which was curious, since she had usually more self-command—by far the most openly. She 'could not understand why he gave himself the trouble to make such a fool of Philippa,' which was her way of stating that he spoilt her; to which he would reply with his most winning smile, 'It is for your sake,' which always pacified her.

It must not be imagined, however, notwithstanding this tenderness of speech, that anything he said to her could be construed into a declaration of love; nor did Agnes complain of this reticence—not so much, perhaps, because she was old enough to know

better, as of a certain understanding which existed between them. With Philippa he was tender too, but in a less confidential way; and yet her too he contrived to keep in good temper. Mr. Edward Roscoe, indeed, deserved the name of a good manager even more than those who grudgingly enough bestowed it on him imagined; but no one knew what his success cost him. Moreover, with every day his position became more precarious, as is apt to be the case with those who have given 'promises to pay' without the possession of assets. It is true that there was no date on the bill, but it had to be renewed nevertheless, and the operation, though it had some likeness to a lover's quarrel, was by no means the renewal of love. He was pressed, too, from without (though that need not be referred to at present) as well as from within, and was already in such straits as might have made some men desperate. But though Edward Roscoe had nothing of what we call faith, he believed in Edward Roscoe, and, like all men of his type, was confident that time and chance would somehow work together in favour of so deserving an object.

Much more apart from him than her sisters, but hardly more ignorant of the plans he was devising, and in which she too had her place, stood Grace Tremenhere. Indeed she stood apart from her sisters also, though they still united in treating her, after their fashion, with tenderness. Of her at least they had no jealousy, and though to some degree she stood in their way, they did not visit that involuntary crime with their displeasure. In some respects, though their hopes rested on her having reached a marriageable age, they still considered her as a child, her presence softened their characters—long warped from what they might have been, and stunted by rivalry and discontent—and evoked what little remained to them of fun and freshness. Unfortunately for her peace of mind, their humour—as always happens with women of coarse natures—took the form of raillery about her supposed admirers. When the post came (at an hour when it leaves places less out of the world), they would pretend to look at the superscription of her letters, and were perpetually asking her when Lord Cheribert was to make his appearance. 'We told you, you know, that if he came we should know for certain what he came for, and his last words, as you remember, were that he intended to come.'

It was a very unwelcome as well as threadbare jest, but it was difficult for her to put a stop to it, and it was at least some



comfort that their assurance of his lordship's intention prevented them from harping upon a still more tender string. If they had ever entertained a suspicion about Walter Sinclair, it was clear they had dismissed it. But as regarded the girl herself, it was certain that she thought of that young gentleman a good deal more than when he had been their visitor. He was not, of course, her lover; unlike Lord Cheribert, he had never breathed a word of love to her; but what he had said—his few vague phrases of repressed admiration—were recalled to her mind much oftener than the other's passionate and determined words. The remembrance of the latter filled her with alarm, and even with repugnance. She feared his perseverance and importunity, which in that lonely spot, surrounded by those who, far from having sympathy with her resistance, would be ranged upon their side, would, she felt, be well-nigh intolerable. If she had but had Mr. Allerton to appeal to—for she had no idea that his influence had been thrown into the other scale—it would have been some comfort; but she was absolutely without adviser, save the secret whispers of her high-beating heart.

If Walter—that is Mr. Walter Sinclair—should keep his promise of coming up to Halswater—but his doing so was doubtful; fool that she was to have discouraged him!—then indeed—but even *that* was set with difficulties and embarrassments. Perhaps they might quarrel, and she be the unwilling cause; these two young men, one of whom she liked so much—at a distance—and the other whom she—she did not say she loved even to herself, but a blush, though none was there to see it, spoke for her.

One night, as the ladies were thinking of retiring, a sound of wheels upon the broad gravel sweep made itself heard in the drawing-room; for by coming a score of miles and more from the nearest station the house was now approachable by wheels, which in the old time it had not been; then there was a peal at the front-door bell.

'He has come at last!' cried the elder sisters in a breath, and both of them looked significantly at Grace.

'The idea of his coming here instead of to the inn!' exclaimed Agnes; 'this is making himself at home indeed. You must put him up in the cottage, Mr. Roscoe.'

'You need not disturb yourself, Miss Agnes, nor need Miss Grace put on that heightened colour,' observed the gentleman

appealed to. 'I hear a voice which is certainly not that of Lord Cheribert.'

'But who on earth can it be?' asked Agnes.

'Why, of course it's Mr. Roscoe's brother,' observed Philippa.

'How do you know that?' inquired Agnes, with sudden vehemence.

'I don't know it, I only guess it,' answered Philippa with an uneasy look, 'because, as you know, he has been expected for so long.'

Then the door opened and the butler announced Mr. Richard Roscoe.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### MR. RICHARD.

THE man who was thus ushered for the first time into the presence of the Tremehere family would have been remarkable anywhere, but in that splendid drawing-room, surrounded by all the accessories of wealth and luxury, his appearance was especially striking from its incongruity. He was dressed in what is known in the neighbourhood of Ratcliff Highway as 'slops,' a suit of ready-made clothes that hung on his gaunt, spare limbs like the attire of a scarecrow. It was, or had been, a sailor's suit, but he had not the least resemblance to a sailor. He had long brown hair, and a beard so deeply tinged with grey that it did not seem to match it. Though at least six feet in height, he had not a superfluous ounce of flesh about him; he was emaciated and hollow-eyed, like one who had endured great hardships; to his brother, who had a robust frame, and was attired in faultless evening dress, he presented the strongest contrast. They had absolutely nothing in common. There was something in the new-comer, however, which spoke of vanished strength, or at least of great powers of endurance: what could be seen of his muscles stood out like whipcord. His eyes were very expressive, wild as those of a hawk; perhaps at one time they might have been as fierce, but they had now a hunted look in them. A judge of physiognomy would have pronounced this man to have passed through some terrible experience.

The meeting between the brothers was friendly, but not cordial. The new-comer seemed to have some doubt of his welcome; while the other, despite his habitual self-command, was evidently



embarrassed. His manner was nervous, and he spoke with a rapidity that was quite unusual to him.

‘So, Richard, you are come at last,’ he said as they shook hands. ‘I am glad to see you, and I think I may say as much for my kind friends here.’ And with that he introduced him to the sisters.

The visitor was evidently quite unaccustomed to society. As he took each lady by the hand he stared at her with unconcealed curiosity, and detained it in his grasp much longer than is common on a first acquaintance; upon Grace he stared with an undisguised but by no means rude admiration; it was like the natural admiration exhibited by the savage.

‘You must excuse,’ he said with an awkward smile, and in a hoarse voice, that spoke even more of ill-health than his wasted frame and the glitter of his eyes, ‘what you find amiss in my manners; I have not seen a lady for these ten years!’

‘My brother Richard has been a backwoodsman,’ explained Mr. Roscoe curtly.

‘Well, scarcely that, Edward,’ he replied drily; ‘you are doubtless thinking of the wild man of the woods; I have been a hunter on the prairie.’

Agnes exclaimed, ‘How interesting!’ Philippa laughingly observed, ‘Like Leather-stocking.’ Grace regarded him in thoughtful silence; she remembered that Walter Sinclair had described his father as having followed that calling, and expressed his own admiration for it.

‘There is not much to hunt here, Mr. Richard, I fear,’ continued Agnes, ‘except the hill fox; but you are doubtless a fisherman, and we can promise you some sport in that way; and I dare say Grace, who is our mountaineer, will act as your guide over the hills. Anything we can do for Mr. Roscoe’s brother will give us pleasure.’

The new-comer looked up with gratified surprise.

‘I wish your sister a better office, Miss Tremenhere, but I thank you kindly.’

There was nothing of cringing or humility in his tone; but it was unmistakably one of astonishment at the nature of his welcome, as also of the surroundings. He seemed amazed at finding his own reflection in the mirrors (of which there were many in the drawing-room, for poor ‘Josh’s’ taste in ornamentation had been French and florid), and now and then cast furtive glances at

the gilded ceiling as though wondering how the gold had been made to stop on it.

‘How long have you been in England, Mr. Richard?’ inquired Agnes presently.

‘In London only forty-eight hours; I came straight up from Liverpool, and only remained in town just to buy these things,’ and he looked down at his shop suit with a painful sense of their inadequacy to the occasion.

‘It was very good of you,’ continued Agnes graciously, ‘to leave all the attractions of town to come down to us at once.’

The new-comer looked embarrassed, and turned an inquiring glance towards his elder brother.

‘I ventured to tell him that he would be welcome here,’ explained Mr. Roscoe; ‘and he was naturally, I hope, desirous to see me after the lapse of so many years.’

‘It could hardly be otherwise,’ observed Philippa.

‘We are most pleased, I’m sure,’ chimed in Agnes. And Grace too smiled acquiescence.

All which was a proof indeed of Mr. Roscoe’s influence with the family, for it is one thing to welcome one’s friend, and quite another to welcome one’s friend’s friend.

With all the good-will in the world, however, to put their guest at his ease, the sisters found it a little difficult. There were, of course, excuses for him; he had not been used, as he himself had owned, to society; he knew nothing of his entertainers; after so long a separation even his brother could have hardly seemed familiar to him; but all these pleas having been allowed, it was still felt by the two elder ladies that Mr. Richard Roscoe was a little awkward: perhaps he suffered by comparison with that complete self-possession and ease of manner which they could never sufficiently admire in his elder brother; Grace thought him only shy. She pitied him, because she understood that he was poor, and had suffered privations. Her interest was always attracted by such persons, just as natures of another kind are attracted by those who are rich and prosperous. Yet even she too experienced a certain sense of relief when Mr. Roscoe took his brother away to the supper that had been prepared for him in the lodgings where he was to be bestowed.

The night was moonless and very dark. It would have been no easy matter even for one well acquainted with the grounds about the house to find his way to the cottage without damage



to the flower-beds, if not to himself; but what seemed much more beautiful and striking to the stranger than any wonders of mere and fell that had met his eye that day, the whole garden was lit by gas-lamps. This too was owed to the taste of the departed Josh. The gas, of course, was made at home, or rather in a little wood apart from the house, which hid what was unsightly in the means of its manufacture; but the lamp-posts, very nicely gilded, had been imported from London. It was no wonder that Mr. Richard Roscoe opened his mouth as well as his eyes in astonishment at these artificial splendours.

‘Well, I *am* darned! this beats all!’ he murmured, with hushed amaze.

At which involuntary tribute of admiration Mr. Edward burst out laughing. It was not a pleasant laugh, which was not his fault, for he had scarcely any experience in laughing, but it was a genuine one. The astonishment of his relative at finding him in such very luxuriant clover tickled him, because it was a compliment to the intelligence which had placed him there; it was only himself who knew that his position was not quite so enviable as it appeared to be, and it gratified him to see it thus so fully recognised by one incapable of pretence or any stroke of diplomacy. It even pleased him to see the wonder with which this simple hunter of the prairies regarded the glass and silver upon the table laid for his entertainment, and the obsequiousness of the servant in attendance.

‘If I had known of your arrival I would have got you something better for supper,’ observed Mr. Edward slyly.

‘Better! Why, I have not sat down to such a meal these five years.’

The answer was a little beyond the other’s expectation. ‘You need not wait, Thomas,’ he observed curtly; ‘I will look after Mr. Richard myself.’

It struck him a moment too late that it had been rather indiscreet in him to let the footman know that any brother of his had not been used to luxury from his cradle. He did not shut his eyes to the probability of the members of the Tremehere household regarding him from quite another point of view than that of their mistress or mistresses; and though he was not one to care much for the opinion of the servants’ hall, he felt it was foolish to have given them a handle for gossip. Slight as had been the incident, it sufficed to put a stop to the late feelings of

self-glorification in which he had permitted himself to indulge, and to replace him in his usual attitude of cold serenity.

‘You have not brought much luggage with you, Dick, I noticed,’ he observed, lighting a cigar, while the other attacked the viands.

‘And yet it looks more than it is,’ replied the other frankly. ‘I did not dare bring down the things I came over in; so the portmanteau is half empty.’

‘The portmanteau! If you had only given me time, I would have seen that you had five portmanteaus.’

‘Then you would have had to send me the money to buy them. I am stone broke.’

‘I suppose so. Look here, Dick: you must never be without money in your pocket.’ He now unlocked a drawer, and, taking out a handful of sovereigns, placed them beside his brother’s plate.

The other coloured to his forehead. ‘I was only joking,’ he said, with an air of annoyance, and even of distress. ‘I am not a schoolboy, that I should take a “tip” like that.’

‘Take it as a loan then. You will very likely have no need to spend it; but it will not do for you—or, if you prefer that way of putting it, for *me*—to be without ready money. Ten pounds, man—what do you suppose is ten pounds, or a hundred, or a thousand, for that matter, to a man in my position?—and I don’t choose my brother to be penniless.’

‘That circumstance did not seem to distress you very much at one time,’ returned the other drily.

The reply was unexpected, and for a moment Mr. Edward’s face looked very unlike that of a host—even a host at somebody else’s expense; but the frown cleared away as quickly as it came.

‘That’s quite true,’ he answered, laughing; ‘but circumstances alter cases. If there was ever a time when we were like two beggars fighting for a crust, forget it. I have now, at all events, not only the will but the power to make you ample amends.’

‘I do not wish to live upon your bounty, Edward,’ was the cold rejoinder; the speaker’s eyes were looking at the little heap of gold with marked disfavour.

‘I wish I had given him a hundred,’ was the other’s reflection; ‘it is merely avarice that takes this mask of pride.’



'You gave me to understand that if I came over here I should find employment of some kind.'

'So you shall, Dick. Do not fear that you will not be worth your wages.' Then added to himself, 'I do believe he is the same tom-fool he ever was; and I'm another to have ever sent for him on the belief that he could have altered.'

'But I should like to know what the employment is,' persisted Richard. He had not the resolution of his brother, the dogged determination that can tire out all ordinary opposition, and almost reverse the adverse decrees of fate; but he was not without a strain of it, as the other knew. 'When you wrote to me upon the matter, you spoke of it as being something well worth my while—or, as you expressed it, "any man's while"—but you did not even hint at what it was.'

'That is quite true, Dick; it was something that I could not set down in black and white.'

'Then I won't do it. I have been in trouble once—thanks to you—and that is enough,' was the vehement rejoinder. 'It shall never happen again—of that you may take your oath, Edward; or, rather, I will take *my* oath, which is much surer.'

'I forgive you your unbrotherly sentiments,' answered the other, in tones the quiet calmness of which contrasted strangely with the other's passion; 'the more so since I admit that there is some cause for them; but what I cannot understand is how a person of your intelligence can suppose me capable of making any proposition such as you hint at. You may say, of course, "But you *have* done things of that kind," to which I reply it is true that an individual of *my* name once did them—a wretched penniless adventurer—but he has nothing whatever in common with the person who is now addressing you. You have seen with your own eyes what I am here—the confidence in which I am held by your hostesses, who are the mistresses of millions. Can you think me such a fool as to risk it by doing anything discreditable?'

'I am speaking of what you may want *me* to do,' answered the other, to whom wine and good cheer seemed to have given both strength and spirit. 'You have confessed just now that you could not set it down in black and white.'

'How could I? It was a very delicate business, though one that was entirely free from illegality of any kind. Unhappily, your long delay has, I fear, caused the part I intended for you to

be filled up by another. I can now promise you nothing so splendid; but there is much work to be done, of part of which you can relieve me, in connection with the Tremehere estate, which, for the present at all events, will give you profitable occupation.'

'Out-of-door work, of course, I could do—overlooking and so forth—and I know something of grass-farming.'

'Your talents will, I am sure, be most useful,' said the other drily.

'Mr. Tremehere, I suppose, made you his executor?' observed Richard after a pause.

'Not a bit of it,' answered the other, with a contemptuous smile. 'I have made myself what you see I am; and you have not seen me at my best even yet,' he added, with a sudden burst of pride.

'What! Thane of Cawdor that shall be King of Scotland! You mean to marry one of them, do you?'

'There are things more unlikely to happen in the world than that, Dick. To tell you the honest truth, I was at one time in hopes that you might have married the other.'

'The other? You mean Miss Philippa, I suppose, since I can hardly flatter myself I could have captivated the young one.'

'Well, yes, Miss Philippa, of course. But all that's over now.'

'She's engaged, is she?'

'Well, in a manner, yes; but she doesn't like it talked about.'

'And you are to marry Miss Agnes?'

'I never said so. I have no right to say so. I only said that there were things more unlikely to happen; and you must understand that even that was said in the strictest confidence. Come, it's getting late, and we are early risers at Halswater. How is your room? I hope you think it snug enough.'

'Snug!' said Richard, rolling his hollow eyes about what was certainly a very handsome apartment. 'I feel like Christopher Sly in the play.'

'Or like Mr. Squeers in his Sunday clothes,' replied Mr. Edward, laughing, 'astonished at finding yourself so respectable.'



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## AN INEXPLICABLE ALARM.

THE most prudent and scheming folk cannot make provision for everything, and especially for what they may say or do themselves in a moment of impulse.

For many months Mr. Edward Roscoe had been in expectation of some such meeting as that which had just taken place between himself and his brother. A less confident man would perhaps have rehearsed his own part in it beforehand; but, though he was by no means one to trust to the inspiration of the moment, he had not dreamt of taking such a precaution. He had always been Richard's superior (and, to say truth, had treated him as if he was), and somewhat despised his intelligence. He had not made allowance for the independence of character which the knocking about in the world for years gives to a man who may have had but little of it to start with. He had expected to find him as clay to the hand of the potter, and he had found him rather stiff clay; he foresaw that he should have more trouble with him than he expected, and, on the whole, was sorry he had sent for him. He regretted now that he had given way to the temptation of boasting to him of his own position; his pride of place had caused him, he felt, to be unnecessarily confidential. It was foolish of him to admit, or rather to allow Richard to guess, that he had marriage with Agnes in his eye; for once, moved by impulses of which he was now rather ashamed, he had been both frank and truthful. He had really sent for his brother with the object he had mentioned, directly he had become aware of the contents of Mr. Tremehere's will; but the wife he had designed for him was not Philippa but Grace. At that time the latter had had no suitor, and it struck Mr. Edward that she could not do better than ally herself with one who would be under his own control, and with whom matters could be made easy. As he remembered Richard, he was a handsome young fellow, not without spirit, though always inclined to lean upon another rather than trust to his own resources; somewhat sentimental in feeling, and very impressionable to female beauty. Fortunately, since Lord Cheribert had stepped into the vacant place, he no longer wanted his brother for this purpose, for indeed he now

seemed quite unfitted for it. To his eyes he looked a broken man, worn out by fatigues and ill-health, which had also made him irritable and difficult to deal with. He had, it is true, suffered certain wrongs at his elder brother's hands; but that was long ago; and since Edward had shown a disposition to make amends, it was Richard's duty (as, indeed, he had hinted to him) to forget them, and make himself useful to his patron. In time, and with kind and judicious treatment, this would doubtless come about; and in that case it would not be a matter to be deplored that he had thus made a confidant of him, as respected his own matrimonial designs, from the first.

It would be of immense advantage to him to have at the Hall one whose interests were his own, for he was well aware that, with the exception of its two mistresses, there was no one at Halswater Hall on whose good-will he could rely. Though he had nothing to complain of from Grace herself, he felt that he could hardly count upon her personal regard as of old. Her intimate relations with Mr. Allerton, his declared enemy, forbade it. This was another reason why he was anxious to get her a husband as soon as possible, who would remove her from the scene of his operations. If she had really any tenderness for Lord Cheribert, which he did not doubt, he was confident that, so far as she was concerned, the immense pecuniary loss which her marriage would cause her would weigh with her not a feather; nor from what he knew of Lord Cheribert did he think that if even he was made conscious of that fact it would seriously affect his intentions. The young man was reckless and headstrong, and had always been wont to please himself at any cost; his noble father, of course, would entertain the strongest objections to such a match without the gilding, but the young man's career had been one long opposition to the paternal wishes.

Mr. Allerton's views, if they were adverse, would be of much more consequence, since he enjoyed the confidence of both the young people; but in Mr. Allerton lay Mr. Roscoe's chief hope; it was, he believed, in the lawyer's power to set aside the conditions of Mr. Tremenhere's will, and if that were effected he would be satisfied, though in a different manner from that which he now contemplated.

Unconscious of the large share she occupied in Mr. Roscoe's thoughts, and having nothing in common with them, Grace Tremenhere recommenced her home life (for in spite of the com-



paratively short time she resided there every year, she had always looked on Halswater as 'home') much as she had been wont to pass it, though under changed conditions. There was no father now to saunter about the garden with his 'little fairy,' or to tempt to wander further afield; his sedentary habits had hitherto often prevented her from taking the long walks over the fells in which her soul delighted, and which she undertook with perfect fearlessness. She knew her way, as her sisters said, 'blindfold,' and indeed so it almost seemed to their townbred fancy; even in the hill fogs, of which, however, she had had as yet no serious experience, she rarely lost her bearings, and had been termed in consequence by some chance visitor at the inn 'the Maiden of the Mist.' It was curious how much oftener than before her wanderings now took the direction of the inn—not the direct road which ran by the lake side, but some mountain path, or mountain where there was no path, from which in the far distance the white-walled 'Welcome,' set in its emerald dale, could be seen gleaming like a star.

The first snow had not yet fallen on the fells, but the mists were growing more frequent, and Autumn, though there were few leaves to show the mark of her 'fiery finger,' was coming on apace. The air was rich and heavy with the scent of it, and, though not unwholesome to those in health, already perilous to those of feeble lungs. The circumstance was not unwelcome to her, since it afforded her a good excuse for not becoming that mountain guide to their new visitor which her sisters had promised for her. Mr. Richard Roscoe was, for the present at all events, distinctly an invalid; he had a churchyard cough (as his brother humorously termed it), found mountain climbing much too laborious, and the damps of evening injurious. She was sorry for him, for he was of a roving nature, had spent the later years of his life more out of doors than in, and inaction was irksome to him; but just now the companionship of anyone, and especially of a stranger, would have been very obnoxious to her. She preferred to think her own thoughts—vague, and often sad as they were—in the free air of hills, to making polite conversation. It was her custom, after the occupations of the morning, which generally included visits to the sick in the neighbouring hamlet, to dedicate the afternoon to nature in a long ramble with the faithful Rip over the fells. In a few weeks more there would be no rambling of that kind; the hollows of the hills would be filled

up with snow, and their summits cold and icebound; but in the meantime she enjoyed her mountain walks immensely. Though she was no poet, and the cataract could not be said to 'haunt her like a passion,' she took great pleasure in the foaming becks, and the steep sheer precipices down which they plunged. Her eye was keen, her foot was sure, and fear was unknown to her. Not seldom had she found the sheep 'crag fast,' and told the shepherd of the danger of his missing charge. Such scenes, such pleasures, were a hundred times more grateful to her than the amusements and dissipations of the town. Her rôle of 'heiress' was singularly unsuited to her, and but for the benefits which, thanks to Mr. Allerton, she was enabled vicariously to diffuse, it gave her no pleasure. All that she had seen and heard since her father's death of the effects of wealth had engendered contempt and dislike of it. It had been the cause of her sisters' disrespect to his memory, and, as she vaguely perceived, of their hostility to one another. Perhaps she had even a presentiment that it might one day prove an obstacle to the dearest though unconfessed desire of her soul.

Although Grace was glad to escape from the threatened companionship of Mr. Richard Roscoe in her walks, his society at times was far from displeasing to her; and indeed, though it could scarcely be called an acquisition, it had for the whole family at Halswater a certain sense of relief. His presence, as in the case of the former visitors at Elm Place, was a restraint upon the hostility with which the two elder sisters unhappily regarded each other, and which seemed to increase day by day. It afforded his brother opportunities of escape from their continuous appeals against each other. For Grace, too, at least Richard had also an attraction of his own. Independent of the obvious delicacy of his health that claimed her pity, there was a melancholy about him which bespoke her sympathy. She felt sure that some recollection of his past gave him acute mental pain, though he did his best to conceal it, and she had reason to suspect, from a word dropped now and again, that this was caused by the remembrance of another's sufferings. That he had suffered himself from severe privations, he admitted, though he was very disinclined to dwell on them. 'I have had a very hard life, Miss Grace,' he once said to her, but it did not seem to her to have made a hard man of him. She had an instinct that under a rough exterior he carried a tender heart. When she had



replied on that occasion, 'And also, from what your brother tells me, a perilous life,' he had answered 'Yes,' then added with a painful smile, 'You must not ask me to detail my adventures: they are nothing to boast of, and would only distress you to hear of them.'

She had an idea that some one dear to him had undergone in his company some shocking experience which it was painful to recall. Even what his brother knew of what he had gone through in his wild and wandering life, and which Edward was rather inclined to depreciate, as is the custom with men of his class (who have often perils enough, but quite of another kind than those of the traveller and the explorer), was sufficient to establish his courage; his very modesty upon the point corroborated it; and yet Richard Roscoe exhibited at times an utterly groundless trepidation. It did not need a medical training to understand that this was the consequence of some shock to the nerves. His sleep was disturbed by terrible dreams—a circumstance which it was impossible to conceal from the servants at the cottage. 'Poor Richard is frightened by shadows,' Mr. Roscoe used rather contemptuously to observe, 'though, to do him justice, I believe, by nothing else.'

Just now he was really too much of an invalid for much exertion, and it was difficult to believe, what was nevertheless the fact, that when in health he had possessed thews of steel and nerves of iron. On one occasion, however, it happened that a horse was brought for Mr. Roscoe to 'trot out,' for his own riding. The groom who led it up to the door warned him that in his opinion it was a nasty one, of a bad temper.

'Why do you say that?'

'Well, sir, he has thrown two men in the yard already.'

'Then you had better try him yourself instead of me,' suggested prudent Mr. Edward. The groom mounted, not very willingly, and after a second or two of 'masterly inaction,' the creature sprang into the air with its four legs brought together like those of a chamois on a crag, and cast the man over his head.

'A buck-jumper, by Jingo!' exclaimed the invalid, who, with the ladies, was watching this performance from the porch, and in three strides he was by the horse's side, and had vaulted on his back in a second.

It seemed almost like a miracle performed by a cripple; but still greater was the wonder of the beholders when, as the animal

bucked again and again, with his head so low that he looked headless, they saw the rider maintain his seat as though he and his steed were one. In the end the man tired out the horse, who for the time was completely subjugated, and having descended from the saddle in safety, Mr. Richard fainted away. Among the outdoor servants at the Hall he became from that moment, what his brother had never been to his *valet-de-chambre*, a hero; and, indeed, the feat made no slight impression even on the ladies. Physically, it did him no good, since for days afterwards he felt the effects of it. One afternoon Grace sacrificed her walk, and took the invalid in her pony-carriage for a drive to the seaside. For this act of kindness he was more than grateful, and as they drove along he became more confidential than he had hitherto permitted himself to be. He spoke of his aimless and broken life in a manner that touched Grace keenly, but with a conviction of its hopelessness that seemed to forbid a word of encouragement.

‘I was never much,’ he said in his queer fashion, ‘and could never have come to much; so after all it don’t much matter.’

About his brother’s connection with his affairs he was reticent, but he owned that he was under a great obligation to him for having invited him to Halswater. Without it, he averred that he would have had no more chance of mixing with such society as he had found than of ‘getting to heaven’—a contingency he seemed to consider exceedingly remote. He never spoke of Walter Sinclair, and Grace did not venture to touch upon that subject; she shrank from exhibiting her interest in him to one who, from what Walter had said, had after all been his father’s friend rather than his own. Once he let fall a congratulatory word about Lord Cheribert, but upon perceiving the subject to be unwelcome to his companion immediately dropped it; not, however, without a glance of pleased surprise, which afterwards recurred to her with significance. He seemed to her somehow to read her real feelings as regarded the young lord, and to express his satisfaction that he had not found favour in her sight; a circumstance probably due to what it was only too likely he had heard of Lord Cheribert’s mode of life. Yet, if so, it was somewhat strange that Mr. Richard Roscoe, of all men with a past, should be masquerading as Mrs. Grundy. There were things, however, stranger than that about him, as she had presently cause to know.

The proposed limit of their drive was a certain little country



town, in the environs of which there was a field in which, as it happened, a travelling circus had pitched its tent. As they neared it, certain sounds shrilled from within it, which overcame the concert of drums and trumpet without.

‘Great heavens!’ exclaimed Richard Roscoe, ‘did you hear that?’

‘I heard some one holloaing,’ replied Grace; ‘there is some equestrian performance going on: the people are cheering.’

‘No, no,’ replied her companion, at the same time, to her extreme astonishment, laying his hand upon the reins; ‘it is not that; it is something quite different. Would you oblige me by turning back—pray let us go home.’

She assented, of course. The speaker’s face was pale, and greatly agitated. The dew even stood out upon his forehead. For the moment she had feared for his reason; but directly the pony’s head was turned the vehemence of her companion’s manner disappeared. His expression of alarm and, as it had even seemed, of panic, was succeeded by one of exhaustion and distress; he lay back in the vehicle as one reclining in an invalid carriage. They drove a mile or more in total silence.

Then he said: ‘Miss Grace, you must think me out of my mind; it is only that something which occurred yonder awoke a very painful association. You have forgiven me for my foolish conduct, I know.’

‘There was nothing to forgive in it,’ she answered, mustering up a smile.

‘It is kind of you to say so; but you are always kind. May I still further trespass upon your good-nature by asking you to say nothing of the—to you doubtless unaccountable—weakness of which I have been guilty?’

She promised silence, of course, and kept her promise; but it would have been contrary to human nature had not her curiosity been aroused by the incident. She took some pains to discover what sort of entertainment was then going about that part of the country; but all she gathered was that it was a circus, consisting of the usual performing steeds, a tribe of wild Indians (probably Irish), and ‘the champion huntress of the Rocky Mountains,’ a young lady scantily attired, for that inclement region, in tights.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE HILL FOG.

FOR the next few days after his drive with Grace Mr. Richard confined himself to the cottage, on the plea of indisposition, and Grace would perhaps have forgotten what she was nevertheless persuaded had been its cause, but for a paragraph that happened to meet her eye in the county newspaper. It had the sensational heading of 'Mysterious Attack upon an Indian Chief,' and described how one of the members of a travelling circus, taking a Sunday walk on the hill in the vicinity of the neighbouring town, had been set upon and severely beaten by some unknown person.

Robbery could not have been the motive—indeed there was little beyond a blanket and feathers to steal; and it was the Chief's opinion that nothing less than murder had been intended; he had thought himself lucky to save his scalp.

The paragraph escaped the attention of the other members of the family, and Grace forbore to refer to it, lest the mind of the invalid should be led to revert to a subject it was obviously better he should forget; and the incident made the less impression upon her because of certain circumstances which just now took place in connection with her own affairs. The Tremenhare ladies had not only not been brought up in the strict sect of the Pharisees (notwithstanding the terms of their father's will), but had been left very much to their own devices; they had read, for example, pretty much what they pleased, nor had anyone ever dreamt of forbidding them the daily newspaper. At Halswater (where, however, they did not get it till the next day) it was eagerly perused by all of them, as the link which united them to the outside world.

On a certain afternoon, when Grace took it up as usual in the library, where her sisters were sitting, she found that it was two days old.

'Where is yesterday's newspaper?' she inquired of Agnes.

'It has not come to-day, my darling,' replied her sister.

Her tone, Grace thought, was unusually kind and tender.

'But indeed I saw Philippa with it,' she answered.

'No, my dear,' said Philippa, patting Grace's cheek with her



hand, an unwonted mark of sisterly affection in her also, 'that was the old copy. No newspaper came to-day; we shall doubtless get two to-morrow.'

Mr. Roscoe, who had opened the post-bag according to custom, confirmed this statement; but nevertheless the missing paper never turned up.

The incident made little impression on Grace, but the increased affection in the manner of her sisters, which continued to be manifested to her, did not escape her attention. Even Mr. Edward, who was always paternal in his behaviour to her, seemed to catch from them this epidemic of tenderness.

If there was an exception in the general domestic attitude towards her, it was that of Mr. Richard. Ever since their little adventure together he had seemed to shun her society, but now he appeared absolutely to shrink from it. There was nothing, indeed, of antagonism or dislike in his manner; on the contrary, it seemed rather to arise from an excess of modesty and the sense of his own unworthiness. He seldom spoke to her, but sometimes she caught his eyes fixed upon her with an earnestness that suggested a much closer study of her than she had dreamt of; but in this too there was nothing inquisitive or impertinent. The expression of his face, as that flush of recognition had shown it to her, was one of tenderness, but also of profound pity. It had nothing of selfishness about it, and yet she felt strangely disinclined to ask its explanation. Even with her sisters she maintained a strict reticence as respected their change of conduct; for it somehow came into her mind that the continued delay of Lord Cherburt to pay his promised visit was at the bottom of it.

Perhaps they had heard that he did not intend to come at all, and were keeping the news from her, under the mistaken idea that it would be a disappointment that would wring her very heartstrings. If so, this would explain Mr. Richard's sympathy, for, as she knew from his reference to him when they were driving together, he had been informed of her supposed attachment to the young lord. She was too sensible to resent it, since it was obvious that he meant well; but of course it was disagreeable.

What corroborated Grace's view of this matter was that she noticed more than once, on her entering the room where her sisters and Mr. Roscoe were sitting together, that her arrival caused them to suddenly break off their conversation and start some other topic. If her surmise was correct, this was only to be

expected; but what did astonish her very much was that Mr. Richard was actually taken to task by his brother for not pursuing the same line of conduct adopted by the rest. This came to her knowledge by the merest accident.

She was in her boudoir one afternoon—writing a letter to Mrs. Lindon, who had sent her a pressing invitation to visit her at the seaside—when the two brothers passed under her window. She loved the fresh air, even when it had the bite of winter in it; but this was not Mr. Roscoe's taste, and from seeing the window open he naturally concluded that she was out of doors. If he had thought otherwise, he would certainly not have said what he did say in her hearing. It was only a scrap of conversation as they went slowly by, and she had no time to make her presence known to them before it was uttered and they had passed by.

'I think you are behaving very foolishly to the girl, Richard. Why can't you treat the matter as we do?'

'Because I can't feel as you do,' was the quiet reply. 'In place of her needing commiseration I think she has had a fortunate escape.'

'Still, for her own sake it would be only natural if you were to show a little sympathy, which some day she would be grateful for, and at all events it is the best way to recommend——' and then the voices died away as the sound of the steps upon the gravel grew faint.

That these words had reference to herself she had no doubt; but their meaning puzzled her. What *could* it matter to Mr. Roscoe that his brother showed no sympathy about a matter concerning which he had no personal knowledge, and what was it that a contrary course of conduct was likely to recommend to her? It never entered into her mind that she should be the centre of any scheme or plot; she had no apprehension of danger of any kind; she was conscious of having aroused no enmity, and indeed had just now rather to complain of an excess of affection than the want of it.

But she did feel the need of sympathy very much; nay more, she suffered from a certain sense of isolation, which had of late grown more and more intolerable. She had never, it is true, had even a school friend; she had been brought up at home, and the home visitors, except perhaps Mrs. Lindon, had never been much more to her than acquaintances. Hitherto this lack of intimates had not troubled her, because she had had no secret to share with



them. But now—now—oh, what would she not have given for some loving friend of her own sex to whom to confide the tender hope that lay hid in her heart, and the anxious fears that hemmed it round! Under no circumstances would she have confided it to either of her sisters, nor perhaps at any time, though in her father's lifetime she had not felt herself so much estranged from them, but least of all just now, when the very interest they manifested in her was probably caused by a total misconception of her feelings. She could give no explanation of it, but somehow or other the few words she had just heard fall from the lips of the two brothers intensified this feeling of isolation. It had been her intention, on sitting down to write to Mrs. Lindon, to decline that lady's invitation; her would-be hostess had always been kind to her (as, indeed, she would have been to her sisters had they not rejected her advances); but she felt she had little in common with her, and to pay visits when we are out of heart is a melancholy counterfeit of enjoyment indeed. But now even Mrs. Lindon's roof seemed preferable to that of home. For the present, however, she left the letter unfinished, and since it was still early in the afternoon, started at once for one of her walks over the fells. More than once Grace had found the mere exercise of lung and limb in the open air a tonic for the mind, and seldom had she felt the need of a tonic more than on the present occasion.

There would not be many more such walks for her that year, she knew. Early as it was, the autumn mists were already beginning to rise on Halswater. Upon the south side of it rose precipitous cliffs of friable stone, very apt at that season to descend in considerable volume, like miniature avalanches, into the lake, which made the narrow path that skirted its dark depths not a little dangerous. In clear weather this thin line could be traced to Dale End, the very extremity of the mere, where the 'Fisher's Welcome' stood, with a handful of stone-built cottages about it, and the little church which, but for its tower, might have passed for a cottage too; but now, less than halfway on its course, the path was lost in a fleecy veil, which was not the haze of distance.

More significant still, on the eastward horizon, as far as the eye could range, there was a patch of pure white, which a less experienced person might have taken for cloud; but Grace knew better. It was no cloud, but would endure for months and months to come, and spread and spread till all other peaks were like it—the first snow on the Skiddaw Range. Nearer at home there were

other signs which a good daleswoman like herself could read. One of them, had she been inclined to nervous fears, might have made her pause. Though the afternoon was fine and all the hills stood out as clear as though cut with the chisel, Blackscale, one of the outpost mountains which stand like sentinels on the sea-coast, was half hidden in mist. There is a local proverb,

When Blackscale has a cap,  
Halse Fell knows full well of that,

the translation of which is that when the mist settles on one it will not be long before it finds the other. And Halse Fell was the very spot whither Grace was bound. It was the highest mountain in the neighbourhood, though not nearly so much of a climb to Halswater folk, who were themselves very highly placed, as it would have been to one starting from the seacoast. Grace herself had often been to the top of it and back in a little over three hours. She did not now intend to scale its summit, though it looked very tempting, but, keeping pretty much to the level to which she had already attained, to circumnavigate it, and, striking over its neck, to descend by a well-known path into Dale End, and so home by the road. Though quite fearless, and confident in her own powers, she was not reckless, and much too wise to run the risk of being caught by a mist on the top of Halse Fell, a picturesque locality made up of precipice alternating with ravine.

Long before Grace reached the proposed turning-point of her journey the sunshine had given place to a grey gloom, which yet was not the garb of evening. The weather looked literally 'dirty,' though she was too little of a sailor, and too much of a gentlewoman, to call it so. Instead of running on ahead of her mistress and investigating the rocks for what Mr. Roscoe (who was cockney to the backbone, and prided himself on it) *would* call sweetmeats (meaning sweetmarts), Rip kept close to her skirts. Rip had never seen a mart, whether sweet or foul, but, when on the hills, he was always buoyed up by the hope of seeing, or at all events of smelling, one. Now, on the contrary, he seemed to be saying to himself, 'No more hunting after these rock carrions. Would it were supper-time and all were well, and my mistress and I safe at home at Halswater!'

It was ridiculous to suppose that a town-bred dog should scent atmospheric dangers upon the mountains of Cumberland; but his spirits had certainly quitted him with inexplicable precipitancy.



and every now and then he would give a short impatient bark, which said as plainly as dog could speak, 'Hurry up, unless you want to be up here all night, and perhaps longer.'

This strange conduct of her little companion did not escape Grace's attention, and though she did not understand it it caused her insensibly to quicken her steps. She had rounded Halse Fell, and was just about to leave it for the lower ground, when she suddenly found herself in darkness. The fell had not only put its cap on, it was drawn down over its white face as that other white cap, still more terrible to look upon, covers the features of the poor wretch about to be 'turned off' on the gallows. The suddenness of the thing (for there is nothing so sudden as a hill fog, except a sea fog) gave it, for the moment, quite the air of a catastrophe. To be in cotton-wool is a phrase significant of superfluous comfort; and yet, curiously enough, it seemed to express better than any other the situation in which Grace now found herself, in which there was no comfort at all. She seemed to be wrapped around in that garment which ladies call 'a cloud'—only of a coarse texture and very wet. It was over her eyes and nose and mouth, and rendered everything invisible and deadened every sound.

She could just hear the piercing whine (with half the sharpness taken out of it) of the faithful dog at her feet, exclaiming, 'Now the London fog had come at last, which he had felt in the air for the last ten minutes,' and inquiring, 'What were they to do now?' She didn't know any more than he did. What had happened was beyond her experience. She only knew from hearsay that there was one danger which cragsmen feared above all the rest except the snow-drift, namely the hill fog, and that here it was.

It might clear away in five minutes, and it might last all night. To move would be fatal. Should she take one unconscious turn to left or right, she was well aware that she would lose all her bearings; and yet, from a few feet lower than where she stood now, could she but have seen a hundred yards in front of her, she knew there would be comparative safety. She could no more see a hundred yards, or ten, or five, however, than she could see a hundred miles. Things might have been worse, of course. She might have been at the top of the fell instead of halfway down it. She had been in fogs herself, but not in one like this, nor so far from home. But matters were serious enough as they were.

Though there was no wind of course, the air had become very damp and chill. To keep her head clear, to husband her strength, should a chance of exerting it be given her, and to remain as warm as possible, were the best, and indeed the only, things to be done. Keeping her eyes straight before her, she sat down, and took Rip on her lap. But for its peril, the position was absurd enough; but it was really perilous. Lightly clad as she was, for the convenience of walking, she could hardly survive the consequences of such a night on the open fell.

Moreover, though she had plenty of courage, her previous experience of life unfitted her for such an ordeal. A native of the hills would not have been so depressed by the circumstances in which she had found herself so unexpectedly placed. To a townsman the want of arrangements for lighting the place at night seems always the most serious defect of the country—he misses his gas-lamps more than anything—but night on the mountains, without moon or star, with the sense of having been put in a bed with wet sheets added, is a much more serious matter. The contrast her situation afforded to anything within her experience added vastly to its tragedy. An incident she had once read of a clerk in a Fleet Street bank being sent suddenly on pressing business into Wales, and all but perishing the very next night, through a sprained ankle, on a spur of Snowdon, came into her mind. How frightful the desolation of his position had seemed to him—its unaccustomed loneliness and weird surroundings, and the ever-present consciousness of being cut off from his fellows, in a world utterly unknown to him!

She was now enduring the selfsame pangs.

*(To be continued.)*



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*THE BURNT MILLION.*

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY,' ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XXX.

RIP FINDS A FRIEND.

As the time went by, each minute with the tardiness of an hour, and each decreasing, as she was well aware—for was it not bringing on the night?—her slender stock of hope, it seemed to her that had it not been for the presence of her little dumb companion she must even thus early have given up the fight. But Rip was more frightened even than his mistress, and shivered and moaned, and 'snoozled' his cold nose in her thin cloak, so piteously, that the thought of having something to protect even more helpless than herself quickened her energies. The look-out, however—if such it could be called, where nothing was to be seen: her own hand held up before her was scarcely visible—was gloomy indeed. There had been times of late, when, wretched in her isolation at home, and sickened with suspense, and the unbroken silence of one she loved in secret, death had almost appeared welcome to her; but, as in the fable, now that he seemed to be drawing near to her, she shrank from the King of Terrors.

What would she have given now to be sitting by the fire in her boudoir, even though without much cheerful food for thought! The affection of her sisters might not be of a very genuine kind, but how truly would they pity her could they know of her melancholy position! Mr. Roscoe himself (though there was

little 'love lost' between them) would not be unmoved; and Mr. Richard, she was confident, would be something more than sympathetic. If Lord Cheribert could know, too, whether he had thought better of coming to Halswater or not, or as the conduct of her relatives almost led her to suspect, had altered his view in regard to her—what pangs of pity would he not suffer on her account! how furious he would be with Fate itself, that had so cruelly treated her! He would be as angry with the mountains, if she should perish among them, as King Xerxes. And above all, what would Walter say? There was no reserve in her thoughts about him now; why should there be, when in all probability they were her last thoughts? She was saying good-bye to Walter though he knew it not, and nobody would ever know it.

She had closed her eyes, as people often do when their thoughts are very sad and deep, but opened them quickly as the dog gave a sharp quick bark. She looked up, and, lo! there was a small clear space in front of them; it was very limited, and bore the same sort of ratio to the blinding mist about them as the space swept for a few slides on a frozen lake where all else is covered with snow; but space there was, so that she could see her way down to the Col—the top of the pass that led to Dale End. She strove to rise to her feet, but it was very difficult; her limbs were stiff and numb to a degree that she had not suspected; it seemed to her that she was already half-way to death.

The dog had leapt from her arms and run forwards, as if rejoicing at its new-found liberty, and she feebly tottered after it. With every step she felt strength and hope returning to her; a few more yards, and she knew that, if her present course could only be maintained, safety, or what in comparison would be safety—and swift as the thought of it the mist closed round her again like a curtain, and she dared not move one step. Her position was locally only a little better than it had been, and in one respect a hundred times worse, for she had lost her little companion. In vain she uttered his name in a tone of passionate entreaty such as she would have thought it impossible to use towards a dumb animal; it might even be that he did not recognise her voice, or, what was more likely, it could not pierce the wool-like atmosphere that hid her from even his sharp eyes. How idle were all those stories of canine instinct, when the poor animal was thus unable to rejoin her though separated by such a little space! That he



already yearned to do so she was convinced ; and notwithstanding her own miserable condition, she felt a tender pity for the little creature deprived of its human friend. It would, indeed, probably survive when she should have perished, but it would never forget its mistress, or find a new one to fill her place ; she loved the dog, not only for its own sake but for another's.

It was amazing how the loss of this little link to the world of life increased her sense of loneliness and despair. After her late experience, she dared not sit down again, and indeed even yet she had not quite recovered the use of her limbs ; she stood, with her arms folded to keep warmth in them, and her eyes fixed before her, in feeble hope that some current of wind, as before, might lift the veil in front of her.

Then suddenly she heard the dog bark. The very sound was cheering to her, but the nature of the sound was infinitely more inspiriting ; for notwithstanding the thickness of the atmosphere, which choked it, and made it seem a far greater distance from her than the animal really was, she recognised in it an unmistakable note of joy. Rip had found something—perhaps even somebody—the meeting with which had transported him with pleasure. She knew Rip's bark too well to doubt it ; and she could almost imagine the little creature jumping and bounding as it gave forth those notes of glee.

They were not only repeated but continuous, and with an irresistible impulse she pushed through the wall of mist, which parted and closed like water behind the hand in their direction. She could see nothing, but they sounded nearer and nearer, and presently the dog himself sprang out of the fleecy veil in joyous welcome, and then sprang back again.

She followed, and presently the figure of a man loomed up before her.

' Good Heavens ! it *is* Miss Grace ! ' he cried.

She answered nothing ; she had recognised him, but the shock of joy was too much for her overtaxed energies, and she fell fainting into Walter Sinclair's arms.

Was it night and a dream ? she wondered, when, having presently come to herself, she found the man, on whom her thoughts had dwelt so long and tenderly, beside her in that desolate place. How *could* he have got there ? Amazing, however, as was the circumstance, it was no time for asking questions. For the moment, indeed, her vocal powers seemed to have deserted

her with all the rest. Walter, however, had a flask of sherry in his pocket, and administered to her some of its contents, with instantaneous effect. How strange it is that there are persons, otherwise in their right minds, who (because some people are drunkards) persuade themselves that under no possible circumstances can wine be beneficial to anybody! To this shivering and nerve-shaken girl it gave new life, and instead of 'stealing away her brains' recovered them for her.

She wasted no time in congratulations—not unconscious, perhaps, that there had been enough of them already, and warm ones, upon the gentleman's part; it had been so necessary, you see, to preserve her circulation—but showed her practical good sense at once by the inquiry:

'You came up from Dale End, I suppose.'

'Yes; I was bound for the Star valley; and on the Mare's Back here, as they call it, I believe, the fog caught me. As I had noticed there was a precipice on either side, I thought it best to stay where I was; I was getting a little tired of waiting when Rip found me. Now, as it seems to me, I could wait for ever quite patiently.'

Grace took no notice of this philosophic reflection.

'It is the most dangerous pass in the district—that is, to the stranger,' she observed, 'but to one who knows the bearings, if one could only find them——'

'I have a pocket-compass,' he interrupted; 'happily (or I should not have found you), it was of no use to me, but perhaps you can make something of it.'

It was much too dark for the face of the little instrument to be discerned, but Walter had some cigar-lights (there are some people, again, who say that smoking is pernicious, but they are quite mad), and by help of one Grace made out their position.

'We are facing due east, and must keep straight on,' she said with confidence.

'In that case you must let me go first,' he answered quietly, 'for, without presuming to doubt your information, it seems to me, so far as I have been able to keep the direction in my mind, that will lead us over the left-hand precipice.'

'No doubt,' she replied, smiling; 'and to turn back would lead us over the right-hand one. You have an admirable memory, but you are not a dalesman, Mr. Sinclair.'

It was amazing how the speaker's spirits had come back to



her. She spoke almost as if she were already out of her difficulties, whereas apparently all that had happened was a slight improvement in the position. It was as though the defenders of some beleaguered city had received an unexpected reinforcement, which was nevertheless much too weak to enable them to make a sally, so that they were beleaguered still.

‘I am in your hands, of course,’ said Walter. This was not quite a correct statement, for Grace was in *his* hands; or rather her hand was in one of his, while his other arm encircled her waist; it was so important, you see, that they should not get separated in the fog; even poor little Rip seemed to understand this, and stuck almost as close to them as they were to one another. ‘I will do exactly as you please; but it seems to me that we had better wait here, where we are pretty comfortable, till the fog lifts and shows us where we are going.’

‘Unless the wind rises the fog will not lift,’ said Grace. ‘At present there is still daylight somewhere, if we can only get to it.’

‘Eastward ho, then, with all my heart!’ exclaimed Walter.

Then they moved forward very slowly, one foot at a time, like folks in the dark on a broad landing feeling for the stair. After a few steps they both nearly came to grief over a little cairn of stones.

‘Thank Heaven, we have found it!’ exclaimed Grace delightedly.

‘That heap of stones! You are thankful for small mercies,’ observed her companion, laughing, ‘for it almost tripped us up. And, by the bye, there are plenty more of them; I remember seeing thirty or forty of them at least, so pray be careful.’

‘These little cairns are landmarks,’ said Grace earnestly. ‘I would rather have found one of them than a handful of diamonds. They are placed on this dangerous spot for the very purpose of assisting persons in the same plight as ourselves to find their way. With ordinary caution we ought now to get to Dale End in safety. Again I say “Thank Heaven!”’

‘You must forgive me, dear Miss Grace, because selfishness is man’s nature, for not echoing that sentiment,’ said Walter softly. ‘I shall never be so happy in my life, I fear, as when we were lost upon the hills together.’

‘It was certainly fortunate for both of us that we found one another,’ observed Grace with a provoking simplicity. ‘It would

never have happened but for dear little Rip. How glad he was to see you! as, indeed, he ought to be.'

'And not one half so glad as I was to see him. I was thinking of you the very moment before I heard the dog's cheery bark.'

'That is strange indeed,' said Grace, who omitted to add that within a few minutes of their meeting she herself had been thinking of *him*.

'And yet not so very strange,' he continued softly, 'since I have thought of little else for the last three days, ever since I have been at Dale End.'

'Three days!' she replied, in a tone of involuntary reproach; 'And why did you not let us know at Halswater how near you were to us?'

There was a long silence; Grace could not see her companion's face, but she knew it was troubled by some grave emotion.

'I did not like,' he answered presently, in a tone of profound sadness, 'to visit, so soon at least, what I was well convinced would be a house of mourning.'

'A house of mourning!' she repeated wonderingly. 'Nothing has happened, so far as I am aware of.'

'What! Is it possible you do not know? Does it, then, fall to my lot, who would give my life to save you from a single sorrow, to be the bearer of such evil tidings?'

'Great Heavens, do not keep me in suspense, Mr. Sinclair! Is there bad news?'—her voice trembled, her heart grew sick, as she remembered how she had suspected something was kept back from her at the Hall, and it was borne in upon her what that something must be—'Oh, do not tell me that anything has happened to Lord Cheribert!'

'Then I must hold my tongue,' was the sad rejoinder.

'Is he—is he *dead*?' she gasped.

Walter Sinclair bowed his head, as though the man they spoke of lay beside them in his coffin.

'Yes; he was thrown from his horse in the steeplechase and killed on the spot.'

Grace burst into a passion of tears. 'He said it would be his last race,' she sobbed, 'but how little did he think of it in *this* way! What a future seemed to lay before him! And how worthy he would have been of it! He had an honest and a noble heart.'



Walter Sinclair removed his hat ; he seemed to be listening to a eulogy delivered at the grave-side, to every word of which he was assenting.

‘He had not an enemy in the world,’ she went on, unconscious of a listener, ‘but only those who knew him knew his worth. But for money—the having too much of it, and then the having too little of it, and the company among whom it threw him—he would have been a nobler and a better man. He lost his life through it. Dead, and so young ! Good Heavens, it is terrible !’

She was still sobbing ; her frame was strangely agitated. It was no other motive than sheer fear of her falling that now caused Sinclair to place his arm around her.

She shook herself free of him with a sort of frantic energy.

‘No !’ she cried, ‘I will walk alone.’

He was amazed, for she had not hitherto rejected similar assistance ; he could not guess, of course, that she was rejecting it now out of respect for the dead man’s memory. The young lord had loved her with his whole heart, she knew, though she had not returned his love ; and just now, with the tidings of his death knelling in her ears, she would not wrong him by accepting another’s love.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### HAND IN HAND.

‘SWIFT as thought,’ we say, and yet how little we picture to ourselves not only the immense rapidity with which it travels, but the amazing variety of the subjects with which it deals. In one instant we are communing with our Creator, in the next we are colloquing (an Irish term, but very appropriate) with the Enemy of Mankind. The Curse cuts short the Prayer, or (though not so frequently) *vice versâ*. In a flash we have reached heaven, and sounded the depths of hell. That every word which a man speaks shall one day be cast up against him is credible enough, but that every thought of our hearts shall be made known is a statement too tremendous for the human mind to grasp. If we knew what everybody else was thinking about we should probably hold very little communication with our fellow-creatures ; they would be boycotted ; we should say to ourselves, ‘We really cannot speak to such people. What a mercy it is we don’t belong to them.’

Even into a young girl's mind there intrude, I suppose, occasionally strange thoughts, things which they had rather not—*much* rather not—utter. As for men, if any man says that he has never been frightened by his own thoughts, he is either a fool, who never thinks, or a liar.

Within the last half-hour the brain of Grace Tremenhare had been busier than it had ever been before within the same period of time. There had been occasions—on that of the fire in the theatre, for example, or that of the death of her father—when she had thought more deeply, and even more vividly; but the thoughts that had crowded into her mind of late had been more various as well as enthralling. They had, in truth, exhausted her almost as much as the physical trials she had undergone. She had looked Death in the face, and said good-bye to Love and Life. And having found both again, she was dissatisfied with them, because the Friendship she had prized so much was now no more. It did not occur to her that if Lord Cheribert had lived, his pertinacity and perseverance, which she never could have rewarded as he wished, would have made both her and him very unhappy; she lamented his death, and the manner of it, beyond measure, chiefly because it had cut him off from the new and nobler course of life he had proposed to himself, but also, no doubt, because he had been her lover. Walter Sinclair, very unjustly, was now suffering from the misfortune that had befallen his rival; it seemed to Grace a disloyalty to the dead man, whose grave had but just closed over him, to let her heart go forth to meet that of the living man she loved, as it longed to do. Nevertheless, the patience and gentleness with which he bore her marked change of manner and her frigid silence presently moved her to pity. As they advanced cautiously from one cairn to another—for all was still wrapped in mist—she forced herself to talk to him a little.

‘How strange, indeed, that we should have met here, and under such different circumstances from those under which we parted, Mr. Sinclair!’

An innocent observation enough; but it is one of the disadvantages of compulsory conversation that even the platitudes we use as soon as they have left our lips seem to have some embarrassing significance. Directly she had uttered the words she felt that they might be referred to moral and not material change, the latter of which was of course what she had had in her mind. She



almost seemed to herself to have been saying, 'At that time we did not understand one another, did we?' and felt the colour, which fortunately he could not see, flame up in her cheek as she waited for his reply.

'The place is different, indeed,' he answered gently, 'but as to the circumstances, alas! I see little change in them. What does it matter whether a river or a ravine separates a man from the place where he would be, when both are alike impassable?'

'I do not understand you,' she murmured.

'It is like enough,' was the quiet rejoinder. 'My conduct now appears unintelligible even to myself. I see that it has angered you, and no wonder: you must have thought me mad.'

'No.' Even a monosyllable may have tenderness in it, but this had none. She would give him no encouragement—just now—but, on the other hand, she would not affect to misunderstand him; above all, she would not repulse him as she had once done—a cruelty of which she had so bitterly repented.

'Then that must be owing to your kindness of heart,' he continued, 'which makes allowances for everybody. If you had known what I have gone through, it would, I venture to think, have not been so great an exercise of charity; but then you have not known. If I promise you that it will be the last time that I shall ever refer to it, and that to-day will be the last day that you will ever see me, may I tell it you, Miss Grace?'

'You may tell it me,' she answered softly.

'Then my excuse is that from the first moment I ever saw you I loved you. When I remember who you are, and what I am, it seems the confession of a madman; but it is the truth. You must consider from whence I came; a place where all social gulfs that sever man from woman are passable or can be bridged over; nor, indeed, was I at that time aware of the depth of that gulf, which then as now separates you from me; under the shelter of your roof I got to recognise it; though too late for my own peace of mind. You will bear me witness that when I took leave of you I dropped no hint of this. My admiration I could not conceal, but I hid my love in my breast; as the Spartan boy his fox, I never betrayed the torture it caused me. Like him, I was too proud to speak; for though, like my poor father before me, I have been a hunter, a fortune-hunter I could never be.'

Grace was about to speak, but he stopped her with a gentle movement of his hand. 'You were going to ask me doubtless:

“But since you were so wisely resolved, why did you put yourself voluntarily in the way of temptation by coming up to Halswater?” I may honestly say that Mr. Allerton is partly to blame for this; he had heard of my intention to visit Cumberland, and pressed me to put it into execution that he might have some information on which he could rely as to how matters were going on with you and yours. He had no suspicion of my own weakness; if I had told him of it, he would have said, kindly disposed though he is towards me, “Do not set your affection on the moon, young man,” and he would have been quite right. Nevertheless, what also urged me to take this step was, I admit, my own mad folly; like the moth that seeks the flame in which it is doomed to shrivel, I could not resist the attraction of it. Nevertheless, I exercised some control over myself; when I said that I did not come to the Hall because of the sorrow in which I knew it would be plunged by reason of Lord Cheribert’s death, it was not the whole truth; prudence also held me back—a mere selfish prudence, which whispered that ill as it was to encourage an illusion, it would be worse to have it shattered by one before whom my whole soul bowed in reverence. Perhaps but for this chance interview I should never have seen you, for I was well aware of the danger of meeting you face to face; I knew that I might forget—the gulf that circumstances have fixed between us.’

‘Do you mean my money?’

She spoke coldly, even contemptuously; but there was an undercurrent in her tone that freed it from offence; he felt that the contempt was not for him.

‘That is, of course, a very important matter.’

‘Not to me, Mr. Sinclair; nor, unless I have much mistaken your character, to you. As a matter of fact, however,’ here she smiled a little, ‘the gulf you speak of is neither so deep nor so wide as you imagine. It is unnecessary to discuss the question, which would have no attraction for me; Mr. Allerton would have put you in possession of all such details had you asked him.’

‘Good Heavens, but how could I ask him! Such an idea never crossed my mind; nor if it had should I have dared to utter it. What would he have thought of me? He has at present a better opinion of me than I deserve, but in that case he would have had a far worse one.’

‘I suppose so; I quite see your difficulty,’ she answered serenely: ‘he would have taken a lawyer’s view, and misunderstood you.’



‘And you do *not* misunderstand me?’ he answered with tender earnestness, ‘and you say the gulf is not so deep nor wide between us as I had imagined. Is it possible, dare I ask is it possible, that you would give me—no, lend me—your hand to help me across it? Or, if that is too much, would you mind saying that you are not angry with me?’

‘I am certainly not angry with you, Mr. Sinclair.’

‘Nor even displeased that you have met me? That is all that I ask just now. It may seem a small thing to you—in that lies my hope—but it would be such a great thing to me. Are you not displeased?’

‘I am not displeased with Rip for finding you: that is as much as you can expect me to say, I think,’ she answered softly.

‘It is more than I dared to hope for,’ he answered rapturously. ‘What a good dog it is! what a *dear* dog!’

‘He is not, however, exactly a St. Bernard,’ answered his mistress, smiling; ‘the discovery of what we call in Lakeland “the Smooed” is not, I think, the calling that best suits him. The poor little creature seems afraid of putting one paw before another, and sticks to my skirts like a leech.’

‘In my opinion that is another proof of his sagacity,’ observed her companion. ‘How can he do better than stop where he is?’

‘At all events it behoves *us* to do better,’ returned the young lady; she had fortunately recovered the use of her wits at the very time when the young gentleman seemed to have taken leave of them. ‘This is the last cairn, if I have counted rightly, and the mist is as thick as ever, but we have now only to keep on descending; there is nothing to break our necks between here and Dale End.’

For the moment she had forgotten her late peril, and even the evil tidings that had so saddened her: her heart had found what it had so long sought for, though her tongue had not confessed it. The sunshine that was wanting without was resplendent within. Though their way was not slippery at one place, Walter was moved to hold out his hand to help her; she took it, and somehow it didn’t seem worth while to let go of it, till they reached the level ground; she might possibly have retained it even then, but the fog was no longer so thick, and it struck her that since objects began to be visible to them they might be visible to others.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

## NEW LIFE.

By the time they reached the 'Angler's Rest' the sky had only the dull hue of an autumn evening, though the hills were hidden in impenetrable cloud, which Grace shuddered to think might have been her pall.

The landlord, Jack Atkinson, who came out to greet them, exclaimed, 'Tis lucky, miss, you were not taking your usual walk over the fells to-day.' He took it for granted she had come by the road. She did not think it necessary to enlighten him on that point: there was gossip even at Dale End, and it would not have been pleasant to make her late adventure the food for it. It struck her, moreover, that her association with her present companion would have to be accounted for. 'Mr. Sinclair is an old friend of our family,' she said, in as indifferent a tone as she could command. 'I hope you are treating him well at the "Rest," Mr. Atkinson.'

'Well, indeed, I hope so, miss; though I didn't know as he was a friend of the Hall folk.' And he looked at Sinclair with some surprise. No doubt it seemed curious to him that his guest should have stayed at the inn so long without referring to that circumstance. Sinclair had no such misgivings, and was, indeed, not thinking of his host at all. Men in love are so reckless.

'You look white and tired, Miss Grace,' said the landlord; 'let me have the dogcart out and take you home on wheels.'

'A very good notion!' exclaimed Walter; 'permit me to have the pleasure of driving you, Miss Tremenhere.'

'Thank you very much, Mr. Sinclair,' said Grace politely, 'but I prefer to trust myself to Mr. Atkinson, if he will be so good. His horse is spirited, and the road a bad one, and he knows them both.'

She flattered herself (as is generally the case when we do something disagreeable to another in hopes of some material benefit) that she had effected quite a master-stroke of policy; Atkinson would, she thought, perceive in this preference for his company how indifferent to her was that of Mr. Sinclair. Unhappily, the expression of Walter's face showed that he was very far from indifferent to this arrangement.



'Sorry to cut you out, sir,' said the landlord, with a broad grin, 'but the lady's commands must be obeyed,' and off he went to fetch the cart.

'How could you be so cruel!' exclaimed Walter, with a melancholy sigh.

'How can you be so foolish!' returned Grace, with indignation—not, however, very genuine, for she already felt pity for his disappointment, as indeed she did for her own—'Do you wish to set all these people talking?'

'Oh, I see,' interrupted the young man, with eager, if somewhat tardy, intelligence.

'Not that there is anything really to talk *about*,' continued Grace (which made him all gloom again), 'but country gossip is so easily excited. I shall tell my sisters, of course, that you are here, and under what circumstances I have met you. And I dare say your friend Mr. Roscoe will bring you an invitation from them to dine with us.'

She could not resist that little dig about Mr. Roscoe, for whom he had always shown a respect which she considered beyond that gentleman's deserts.

'I don't know whether I shall accept his invitation,' answered Walter, with a smile that belied his words.

'Well, that is just as you please.' The landlord now brought out the dogcart, and Walter helped her into it. 'His brother, Mr. Richard, whom you said was a friend of your father's, is now staying with us, which will doubtless be an attraction to you. *Au revoir*, Mr. Sinclair.'

It was really an excellent piece of acting, but it was a mistake to use the French phrase, which the wily proprietor of the 'Angler's Rest' at once set down as part of a secret code of signals established between the young people.

'Seems disappointed like, don't he, miss?' he observed with confidential slyness, as they left her melancholy cavalier behind them; then, perceiving his remark was unappreciated, continued in a less personal vein, 'Thinks he could have driven the horse hisself as well as I can, no doubt. Them Londoners has such a conceit of theirselves. Not, however, as I reckon as Mr. Sinclair is a reglar Londoner, though he came from London?'

'I believe not,' said Grace, seeing a reply was evidently expected; 'he is a friend of Mr. Roscoe's, who can doubtless tell you all about him.'

‘And that wouldn’t be much, I reckon, neither,’ laughed the innkeeper. ‘He ain’t much given to talk, ain’t Mr. Roscoe. Got his brother with him at the Hall, I understand; looks poorly, don’t he? And yet he has been a good sportsman in his time, I warrant; not like Mr. Edward.’

Grace began to be sorry, for more reasons than one, that she had favoured Mr. Atkinson at the expense of his rival. The man’s tongue ran like a mill-wheel in flood time: and she trembled to think how it might run upon her own affairs as well as those of her belongings. There was nothing, she now felt, that could separate her from Walter; but she did not wish that matter to be taken for granted, or to reach the ears of her relatives by any outside channel. She had lived so much out of the world, that the lively interest which the generality of mankind take in other people’s affairs was unknown to her. Perhaps, too, she didn’t make allowance for the fact that other people who live out of the world (as at Dale End) never lose an opportunity of hearing something of it, from those they imagine to be possessed of the information. She thought it more dignified as well as discreet to remain silent; but even that, as it turned out, afforded no security.

‘Sad thing that about Lord Cheribert at the steeplechase, the other day, was it not, miss?’ continued her companion after a short pause. He was really flattered by the preference the young lady had shown him (for he had an honest admiration for her), and thought it, perhaps, part of his duty (as, alas! so many other folks do) to ‘make conversation.’ ‘Mr. Sinclair told me as he knew something of him. Broke his neck in a moment, he did, and didn’t suffer like young Harris of the fell foot, as injured his spine—that is *some* comfort.’

‘It was a very, very shocking thing,’ murmured Grace, sick and shivering.

‘Very much so; though, to be sure, if all tales are true, his lordship was a wild ’un. Ran through half a dozen fortunes, they tell me, by help of the Jews—I mean moneylenders.’

The last words were spoken in an apologetic tone, and the ruddy and weather-worn face of the honest publican as he uttered them became a lively purple. He was naturally loquacious, as an innkeeper should be, and, like the pitcher that goes often to the well, he sometimes got into trouble through it; but it seemed to him that he had never come to such utter grief as on the present occasion. It was only lately that some hint of the late owner of



Halswater Hall having belonged to the Jewish persuasion had percolated to Dale End; but it had got there, somehow, and given a new life to its little community as a topic of conversation; in the kitchen of the 'Angler's Rest' (for that humble hostelry had no bar-room), Mr. Atkinson had found it most agreeable and provocative of thirst; but that he should have made such a slip as to allude to Jews in the presence of Miss Grace, whom he pictured to himself as sensitive upon the matter as though if her parent had been hung she would have been to an allusion to a rope, filled him with remorse and horror.

Grace knew nothing of the cause, but hailed with gratitude the silence that fell upon her companion in consequence, and endured till they reached the Hall gates. Here she dismissed and recompensed him, and entered the long avenue that led to the house on foot. How different were her feelings from those with which she had left home a few hours before! What experiences had she since gone through! What fears, what sorrows, what delights! How changed, too, was her material position, for had she not found—never, never to be lost again—the beloved of her heart! Her isolation was over; though the winter was about to fall on things without, with her 'all was May from head to heel.' The splendours of her home had hitherto had small attraction for her, but it now seemed a bower of delight. Her path for life would for the future be strewn with flowers.

It is well for us that, now and then, we should have such day-dreams, however sad may be the awakening from them. If we poor mortals could look into the future the shadow of things-to-be would quench all our sunshine. If to Grace Tremehere the events that were about to happen to her and hers could have been foretold as they were fabled to be of old, the gloom of evening that was now falling around her would have worn the darkness of midnight, and the evening moon would have risen above her as red as blood.

But to her mind's eye all that was not already peace was promise. The troubles of the past—for the moment even her sorrow for the dead—were forgotten. As her eye caught the figure of Mr. Richard coming down the avenue, it reminded her, indeed, of the conversation she had overheard before setting out on her walk between him and his brother, but without recalling the disagreeable sensations it had cost her; she knew no more of what it

meant than before, but its mystery no longer troubled her. Love filled her heart and left no room for trouble.

Mr. Richard had been walking rapidly, but on catching sight of her came on more slowly, as though there was no longer need for haste.

‘I am so glad to see you safe at home, Miss Grace,’ he said with nervous eagerness; ‘the boatmen told me that the mist upon the hills was very thick, and I feared you had gone that way.’

‘I hope I have not alarmed my sisters,’ she returned evasively.

‘No, they knew nothing of it, and indeed I have been pacing up and down here to avoid their notice; I have been very much distressed indeed.’

His countenance corroborated his words: it was pale and agitated with nervous twitchings, and his hollow eyes expressed the anxiety that had not yet quitted them.

‘You are very kind,’ answered Grace gently; ‘but here I am, you see, safe and sound. It strikes me that you are running some risk yourself, Mr. Richard, in being out so late in the dewy air after your recent illness.’

‘I! What does *that* signify?’ he answered. His tone had a contemptuous bitterness which seemed to invite comment; but some instinct warned her to take no notice of it.

‘You should take more care of yourself,’ she replied quietly. ‘And as to fears on other people’s account,’ she added with a smile, ‘we should not give way to them. Even in our own case how idle are often even our worst apprehensions, which nevertheless cause half the unhappiness of our lives!’

It was not always that Grace took such cheerful and sensible views of things, but just now she was looking at life through those windows which love paints rose-colour.

‘That is perhaps true,’ returned her companion, but with a deep-drawn sigh, and regarding her with a look of tenderest pity; ‘but how often, again, is our heart at its lightest on the eve of sorrow, as the bird sings its blithest, unconscious that the hawk is hovering over it.’

‘That is what our Cumberland folk call being “fey,”’ answered Grace, with a forced smile; she knew to what the other was referring; the tidings of the death of her supposed lover, of which he of course imagined her to be still ignorant. She was certainly not called upon to enlighten him upon the point, but she felt



reproved at her own momentary forgetfulness of the calamity, which his words seemed to imply.

‘I have some good news for you, Mr. Richard,’ she continued, eager to change the subject for another, even though it was not one she would otherwise have been willing to speak of with a comparative stranger; ‘Mr. Walter Sinclair, whose father was, I understand, one of your oldest friends, is staying at Dale End.’

‘Indeed! Walter Sinclair!’ he replied with interest. ‘I should greatly like to see him—indeed it is absolutely necessary that I should do so,’ he added as if with an after-thought.

‘Then nothing can be easier. He is already a friend of the family, you know, and especially of your brother.’

This was another master-stroke of policy of our heroine’s: let us not blame her for it, but only hope it will prove more successful than her last; it is only natural that the weaker sex should employ their little subtleties, which have, after all, nothing of hypocrisy about them. Her design was—though she had fairly made up her mind that no earthly power should keep her and Walter sundered—that Mr. Roscoe should himself be made to invite him to the cottage. O joy!—but we must dissemble, for the present at least, for sister Agnes is standing at the front door awaiting us, unbonneted, but with a warm shawl thrown round her shoulders, for the air is chill.

‘My dearest Grace, how late you are! We were getting to be quite anxious about you. I am told that there is quite a fog upon the fells.

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

POOR DICK.

It was necessary, of course, that Grace should tell her sisters of her meeting with Walter Sinclair on the fells, and also of the sad tidings he had brought her. As it happened, though it would have shocked her to have foreseen any such effect in it, the latter communication greatly assisted her in the more delicate revelation she had to make to them concerning her relations with Walter, and indeed almost did away with the necessity of making it at all. The way in which she spoke of Lord Cheribert’s death, though she did so with what was evidently the most genuine and heartfelt sorrow, yet convinced them they had been in error in

supposing that she had loved him ; while the manner in which she referred to Walter convinced them of where her affections had been really placed. This was a satisfaction to both of them, for in their eyes Grace stood in the way of neither of them (whatever Mr. Roscoe might think to the contrary) as they did in that of one another, and they were really as fond of her as it was in their natures to be. They had the turn for match-making common to their sex, and now that Lord Cheribert was gone (though they would have greatly preferred him for a brother-in-law) they were well content (over and above the fact that it would be to their pecuniary advantage) that Walter Sinclair had found favour in their sister's eyes.

‘Of course we will have him here,’ said Agnes kindly when the three ladies were alone together after dinner ; ‘he might almost as well be in London as at Dale End ; Mr. Roscoe shall invite him to the Cottage, where there is plenty of accommodation for another guest ; and that, you know, will settle the matter, so there will be no more room for misunderstanding on anybody's part.’

‘There is no chance of any misunderstanding between Walter and myself,’ said Grace rather drily, and with a little flush.

‘Which is as much as to say,’ observed Philippa, laughing, ‘that you two young people have arranged your own affairs together, and are quite independent of the interference of anybody ; but nobody,’ and here she patted Grace's cheek with her fan, ‘is going to interfere, my dear, so you need not become a fretful porcupine all of a sudden and shoot your quills at us.’

‘I am sure that Mr. Roscoe, for one, will be certainly glad to hear of the matter,’ remarked Agnes gravely.

‘And so am I,’ put in Philippa quickly ; neither sister could ever confess their acquaintance with Mr. Roscoe's views and opinions without the other claiming to have an equal knowledge of them.

‘He always liked Mr. Sinclair,’ continued Agnes, ignoring the interruption, ‘and the circumstances that his father was such a friend of the young man's father, though unimportant in itself, serves to knit the whole thing together very pleasantly.’

In this, however, Agnes was not altogether correct, to judge by a conversation which was at that very moment going on in the smoking-room between the two brothers. Perhaps it was only by contrast with the good spirits of the rest, but Mr. Richard had



been even more silent and gloomy than usual during dinner, and had confined his conversation chiefly to monosyllables; and even under the consolation of tobacco he bore a very depressed and melancholy air.

‘I am really very sorry for you, Dick,’ said his brother in a sympathetic tone very unusual to him; ‘I am sorry to see you taking your disappointment so to heart, but you must see as plainly as I do that the advice I gave to you this morning was thrown away. Matters have taken quite a different tone—indeed we were going altogether upon false ground—and we shall now have to give the whole thing up.’ Richard groaned, and put his hand before his eyes, as if to shield them from the other’s gaze. ‘Upon my life I’m ashamed of you, Dick,’ the other went on disdainfully, ‘that a man of your experience of life should take on so about a girl, as if there was only one in the world.’

‘There is only one in the world for me,’ returned Richard passionately.

‘Then you will be so good as to consider her *out* of the world,’ observed the other peremptorily, ‘as dead as Cheribert; she is dead to you from this moment, and there’s an end of it. I will just show you how the matter stands.’

‘It is unnecessary,’ replied Richard in hoarse low tones.

‘Never mind, I’ll state the case, so that there shall be no more mistakes about it.’ He stood up with a huge cigar in his mouth and his back to the fire (as old Josh used to stand when he was setting *him* to rights), while his brother sucked at his pipe, with his eyes fixed on the carpet. ‘We must have the girl married to somebody, and as soon as possible. When Cheribert broke his neck I thought there was a good chance for you, and, as you know, gave you my best advice how to take advantage of it. It would have been more agreeable to me, of course, that you should have had her than anyone else; but it seems the young lady had already made her choice of a man that was alive and well.’ He put the last word in with a slight stress upon it, as though he would have said, ‘not a fellow like you, with one leg in the grave.’ ‘That being so, your hope is gone; we—or I, if you prefer plain speaking, and I don’t see why there should be any concealment about the matter—cannot afford to wait any longer for the chapter of accidents, which, indeed, is much more likely to turn out against you than in your favour, and I mean to bring things to a head as soon as possible. Sinclair will be here to-morrow, under this very

roof, and here he will stay until they are married. That is as sure as death. Come, be a reasonable man; you must surely know that you have not a shadow of a chance against him.'

'I know it,' answered the other despairingly, 'and if I *had* a chance I would not take it—not against *him*.'

'Well, I care nothing about the sentimental aspects of the question, but I am glad, at all events, you have arrived at such a sensible conclusion.'

'I have got a letter for him,' went on Richard gloomily, and like one speaking to himself rather than to another, 'entrusted to my hands by his father only a few hours before he was murdered.'

'Murdered, was he?' said Edward, with a little start, and some show of interest. 'How did that come about?'

'It is a shocking story, and I cannot tell it you just now,' replied the other, again placing his hands before his eyes with a shudder, as though he would have shut out some terrible scene. 'But when we parted he gave me a little packet for his son which he said was of great importance.'

'And what was in it?'

'It was sealed up; but if it had not been so I should not have dreamt of prying into poor Sinclair's secrets. It was a sacred trust.'

'Well, you've still got it, I suppose?'

'Yes, but not here. I did not like to carry it about with me in my wild and wandering life, but left it in safe custody with one on whom I could rely.'

'In America?'

'Yes. I am ashamed to say that when I got your summons I forgot all about the packet. Not, perhaps, that I should have sent for it in any case, since the lad whom it concerned was more likely to be there than here. But now, of course, I shall send for it at once.'

'Quite right. But, if you will be guided by me, I would say nothing about it till it comes.'

'Why not?' inquired Richard, looking up at his brother with a quick suspicious glance.

'Well, if it happens to be lost, you see, it will be a great disappointment to him, for which he will naturally blame you. If he gets it, well and good; and if he does not get it, and if he does not know of it, it will not trouble him.'



‘I have already told Miss Grace that I have been entrusted with it.’

‘That is as good—or bad—as telling *him*,’ replied the other sharply; ‘it is amazing to me how a man who knows that he is naturally indiscreet should not keep a better guard over his tongue.’

‘Or, before speaking, consult some shrewd adviser who has no interest of his own to serve,’ observed Richard drily.

‘That, of course, would be better still,’ was the cool rejoinder. ‘I think you must admit that the person to whom you refer has managed matters more successfully for you of late than you ever did for yourself.’

‘It seems so to you, no doubt; and yet I wish to Heaven that I had never accepted your invitation to come to Halswater.’

‘Do you? You prefer potted beef to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and a tent-bed to a spring mattress, eh? It’s a queer taste. Well, I am sorry I can’t offer you a squaw and a wigwam, but you see it can’t be done.’

‘You were giving me some advice about keeping guard upon my tongue just now, Edward,’ answered the other hoarsely, ‘I would remind you to keep yours in check.’

‘Tut, tut, you flame up as quickly as a prairie fire, Dick. It would be a bad thing for both of us—but much worse for you—if we were to quarrel. I was wrong to poke fun at you, of course; but once the thing was manifestly over and gone—done with—I thought you would not be so thin-skinned. It is absolutely necessary, however, my dear fellow, that you should understand it *is* done with. It will not do for you to remain here in the same house with this young couple and let them perceive that you have a hankering to cut the bridegroom’s throat. It is necessary that the course of true love should, in this case, not only run smooth, but quickly and without distraction. If you have any doubt of your own self-command I will send you to some warm place—not to the devil, as some people would, but to the Isle of Wight or Torquay, for the recovery of your health, for a month or two; then, when they are married and settled, you could come back again.’

‘No, no,’ pleaded the other passionately; ‘let me be with her as long as I can; it won’t be long in any case. I give you my word of honour that neither of them shall ever guess—’

‘Take a drop of brandy, Dick,’ said his brother, pouring him out a wineglassful, and looking at him as he sat speechless and

breathless, with genuine interest. The recollection had come into his mind of a somewhat similar scene with his old partner 'Josh,' to whom he had administered the same remedy! The parallel, however, was not complete; there was nothing the matter in the case of his present patient with the heart itself, but only that its emotion had overpowered him.

'Don't let us talk about this matter any more, my good fellow,' he continued soothingly, 'your word is passed, and I can rely on you.'

Grace's first act on finding herself alone that night was to finish her letter to Mrs. Lindon; its conclusion, it need scarcely be said, was different from that she had proposed to herself a few hours ago, and declined that lady's invitation to visit her. There would be a guest at home (though she did not give that as her excuse), whom she would not have left for many Mrs. Lindons.

Rip was always accustomed to sleep in his young mistress's boudoir, but on this occasion he changed his quarters; she took his wool-lined basket into her own room, and as he lay there hunting for sweetmarts in his dreams—and with quite as much chance of catching one as when awake—she sat far into the night regarding him with tender eyes, and thinking of him who had once saved her life at hazard of his own. But not of him alone. More than once the tenderness was dissolved in tears, and then it was not with Walter Sinclair that her thoughts were occupied, but with that other, who had also been her lover, and on whom cruel death had laid its sudden hand in his youth and strength. Never more would his blythe voice gladden human ear, nor his comeliness delight the eyes of all who beheld it! It is only a very few of us whose life affects 'the gaiety of nations,' but it might be truly said of Lord Cheribert that into whatever company he came he had brought gaiety with him. Moreover, to Grace at least he had disclosed a heart tender and true, and capable of noble deeds (though, alas! they had never been accomplished), and of generous thoughts, which, let us hope, did not perish with him. What had become of them, she wondered, her mind straying into unaccustomed fields of thoughts; and of *him*?

(To be continued.)



## 'GRANGERISING.'

ONE of the notable features in the present bibliophilist *furia* is the revival or resuscitation of a certain obscure clergyman, whose one publication was destined, for nearly a century, to have an extraordinary influence. He succeeded in devising or inventing an altogether new taste, and in furnishing a number of idle persons with a mode of employing their spare time, and the cash which it was likely enough they could not so well spare. Many have bewailed the appearance of this cleric as one of the most disastrous events that have occurred in the realms of 'book-land,' akin to something like famine, plague, or conflagration in other departments. Others bless his memory, and have cheerfully consecrated their whole life to carrying out his doctrine. This person was, however, one of the most worthy, amiable men of his time, with a good deal of simplicity in his character, enjoying the friendship of persons of all conditions; modest withal, and with a certain attraction in his nature. He was, in short, the REVEREND JAMES GRANGER, and the science, pastime, or 'Art of Devastation,' which he introduced, is known now as 'Grangerising.'

To 'the general' this may not convey much, and Granger and his 'Grangerising' seem mysteriously obscure. About the middle of last century, when he attained his fame, at one bound, as it were, the amateurs of the day, including Mr. Walpole, had a passion for gathering what were called 'heads'—that is, engraved portraits of notable persons. These were of all kinds and merit; some, like the copperplates of Edelinck and Picard, after Mignard and others, being fine works of art. But they were sought not for their artistic merits, but as representing some small celebrity, of whom it was unlikely that a portrait should be in existence. Often a 'head' was specially etched or engraved from some old picture to fill the blank. Many would form a collection of English nobles, or of the members of a particular noble family, or of a particular reign. The Duchess of Portland indulged in this hobby, and had a fine collection of 'heads'; but Mr. James West, Secretary to the Treasury, and President of the Royal Society, was most conspicuous in this line, having filled twenty-three folio volumes with 'heads,' which, on being 'dispersed' at his

death, it took thirteen days to sell by auction. Still there was wanting system and direction for these labours. To the 'head' collector all was fish that came to his net; he had to stow them away in portfolios, and he felt that this was a rambling, incoherent mode of following the business. The Rev. Mr. Granger, however, conceived the happy idea which set all this to rights. What was wanted was a sort of gallery in which the pictures should be hung, or a narrative which they would illustrate, and where they could take their places in regular series. What could be better for such a purpose than 'A History of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution, illustrated by portraits and characters, intended as an essay towards reducing our biography to system, and containing a methodical catalogue of engraved English heads during the above period, with a preface showing their utility in answering the various purposes of medals;' or, 'A Catalogue of above Four Thousand English Heads of Eminent and Extraordinary Persons from Egbert to George III., under the several reigns, and classed according to their rank, offices, and characters; with Anecdotes and Biographical Notes, &c.' There were various titles of this kind suggested, but the worthy Granger's idea was clear enough. In such a programme the names of thousands and thousands of persons could be introduced. Here would be ranged kings, nobles, statesmen—in short, here was accommodation for the flotsam and jetsam lying unclassed and disordered in the portfolios. Granger further consulted the convenience of his patrons by issuing sets in quarto with every second page blank, so that gentlemen might insert their own 'heads' at the proper places.

It is really amazing to think what an influence this simple event—the publication of two small, 'lean' quartos—has had in the book world. Excellent Tom Davies, the publisher, wrote jubilantly to the author on May 16, 1769: "The Biographical History of England" is published. May it be a propitious day!' It was received by the most learned and captious antiquarians with enthusiasm. Everyone was enchanted by the originality of the idea and the irresistible entertainment offered. The simple vicar received the most genuine compliments for his work, and the editions went off rapidly. Johnson declared that 'it was full of amusing anecdotes, but might have been better done,' adding—what was, no doubt, the reason for this depreciation—'the dog is a Whig.' The praise, however, was well deserved, as it is a most curiously attractive and original work, which can be opened any-



where and read with a piquant enjoyment. The plan is that of a catalogue or dictionary; the name of the person is given with a description of the ‘head,’ the artist, and the date, followed by some quaint and interesting account drawn from recondite resources. Besides this, there is the charm of the style, which, simple and expressive, is also humorous, as in this sketch of John Knox:—‘Joannes Cnoxus (Knoxus). R. Cooper, sc. John Knox, one of the exiles for religion in Switzerland, published his “Blast of the Trumpet” against the government of women in this reign. It was lucky for him that he was out of the queen’s reach when he sounded the trumpet. In the next reign he had the courage to rend the ears of the Queen of Scots with several blasts from the pulpit.’ In other pages there are found some strange odd particulars, and he notes the changes of costume and other traits of national habits and manners. The plan of the work was admirably laid out. After the reign of Henry VII. the portraits are divided into twelve classes. 1. Kings, queens, &c. 2. Great officers of state. 3. Peers. 4. Archbishops, divines, &c. 5. Officials. 6. Men of the robe. 7. Men of the sword. 8. Sons of peers without titles, knights, baronets, &c. 9. Physicians, poets, and other ingenious persons. 10. Painters. 11. Ladies and others of the female sex. 12. Persons of both sexes, chiefly of the lowest order of people.

That this amiable sort of Vicar of Wakefield, who loved and venerated everything in the shape of books, should have proved, unwittingly of course, their enemy in the deadliest form—a sort of ‘Jack the Ripper’—is in itself a sort of grotesque idea. Actuated by the best intentions, such as was the excellent Dr. Guillotin in *his* invention, his object, as we have seen, was to provide shelter for the loose detached prints which go knocking about the world. It was easy to arrange all the heads that were issued separately or ‘stuck in the printshops,’ like Lofty’s head in the play. But presently it was found that many of the most desirable ones belonged to books which they illustrated, and could be obtained nowhere else. With that the signal was given, and for over a century the work has gone on bravely of slaughtering, cutting up, and rifling many a noble tome for the sake of its prints. The ravaging that has obtained steadily for over a century is almost inconceivable. The finer and more stately the volume, the more likely it is to become a prey to this sort of spoiler. Once the prints have been rifled, the volume is felt to

be a maimed and useless incumbrance ; it becomes a cripple, as it were, and its fate is usually to be cast away or torn up. Worse than this, a whole 'set' is often destroyed for the sake of obtaining a print or two. There is surely something reckless and even savage in this process. It once entered into the head of a heartless collector that he would have a 'Grangerised' Shakespeare—that is, he would collect every known illustration of every scene and play. Now few works have been more splendidly illustrated than the works by 'the Bard.' Some years ago the present writer began the agreeable task of collecting all the illustrated editions, and was astonished to find to what an extent artist and engraver had exerted their talents in this direction. From the massive, sumptuous quartos of Boydell, which, it is said, cost 100,000*l.* to bring out, down to the miniature sets of Pickering and Tilt, all excite admiration for the grace and taste displayed. The surprising number of these editions is no less extraordinary. Our collector set to work systematically. Every edition was stripped ruthlessly and left for dead. When all the scenes procurable had been obtained, there was a rich field opened up in the 'heads' of the Bard himself, often used as a frontispiece, and which entailed further destruction. Then came the topography—the countries, towns, cathedrals, battle scenes, &c. Then the portraits of the kings, nobles, &c. In short, thousands of fine books must have been butchered to make this collector's holiday, suggesting the epicure who had a sheep killed regularly for the sake of the sweetbread. In his self-complacency the slaughterer had a list of his 'Illustrations to Shakespeare' printed, which filled a thick volume. The name of this person was, we believe, Hanrott. It is said that this spoliated Shakespeare contained over 2,300 prints, bound in twenty volumes, and was sold for 556*l.*

Another marvel in this line was the Bowyer Bible, itself an illustrated prodigy, which was expanded to 45 huge folios, and was bursting with over 6,000 prints. It was valued at 3,000 guineas, and was put up to raffle at a guinea a chance among 4,000 subscribers. The purchaser, however, could obtain little over 400*l.* for his prize. Another of these delusionists was a Mr. Sutherland, who selected 'Clarendon's History' as his subject, laying out some 10,000*l.* The work was carried on by his widow, who gave 80*l.* for a single plate. Voltaire's works in ninety volumes might seem bulky enough to start with ; but some courageous soul set to work on it, adding 12,000 engravings, of which 10,000 were portraits. The most terrible of all these



depredators was a Mr. John Bagford, a shoemaker-bibliographer, who cut up books with less compunction than he did his hides. This Philistine, who had some knowledge and collected for patrons, had in an evil moment conceived the idea of a 'History of Printing,' to be illustrated by specimens of title-pages, frontispieces, &c., from every kind of volume. The enthusiast travelled about a good deal, even on the Continent, and was employed by his patrons to pick up rarities. But he was busy all the time with his ghoul-like business, which was to tear out from some noble old copy the frontispiece or title-page as a specimen of printing. The result of his labours was the forty volumes of titles that are now in the British Museum, some of them torn from 'fifteeners,' or 'incunables,' books of the fathers of printing. On which Dr. Dibdin, with genuine grief and indignation, writes: 'A modern collector and lover of perfect copies will witness *with shuddering*, among Bagford's immense collection of titles, *the frontispiece of the "Complutensian Polyglot"* and Channing's "History of Hertfordshire," torn out to illustrate a "History of Printing." As is only fitting, the patentee of the process is himself often glorified in the most sumptuous way. Mr. Lilly, the bookseller, had a copy of the history with 1,300 portraits in nineteen volumes, and offered it for the modest sum of 38*l.* 'But,' says an American writer, 'we cannot regard a volume of this character without pain—not that we welcome portraits less, but books more; anyhow, many noble tomes have been pillaged to add to the ill-gotten gains of "illustrated copies."'

Another favourite subject, and suitable also for the Grangerite, is 'Boswell's Johnson.' It must be admitted that this delightful book may gain a fresh chance by being thus treated, but 'within the limits of becoming' 'Grangerism.' The present writer in a modest, guarded fashion once attempted the task, garnishing his own quartos—a first edition—with only what was strictly necessary; yet about a thousand pictures were essential, chiefly portraits, with contemporary views of Lichfield, London, Birmingham, &c. So thoroughly organised is the craft that there is actually to be found, though exceedingly scarce, a picture of the circus rider whom Johnson alludes to as riding two horses at once. The work expanded under this treatment to six quarto volumes, which present a curious 'dappled' appearance as the pages are turned over. County histories, as of Hertfordshire, Lancashire, &c., have been often thus treated.

The Vicar of Shiplake, having all his own sins to bear, must not, however, be held accountable for this debased form of 'Grangerism' now in fashion. A gradual corruption has set in, and instead of merely securing illustrations and portraits suggested by the allusions in the text, every sort of scrap, cutting, document, &c., is now 'pasted in' and bound up. The copy has thus become a sort of hotch-potch or dust-bin into which everything is cast, and where nothing is refused. As an instance, we shall take what is now a popular subject for this form of treatment, viz. Forster's 'Life of Dickens,' and which is thought to offer, from the number of names mentioned, almost as favourable opportunities as Granger's own work. The first step is to have the book inlaid (or inset) to quarto size. This is a rather expensive process to begin with, if well done, costing about twopence a leaf, and in this case about five pounds for the whole. Mr. Wright, of Paris, who is an enthusiastic collector in this department, is now preparing an illustrated copy of the 'Life of Garrick' by Percy Fitzgerald, in the treatment of which there is to be no limit of labour or expense. Every page is 'inset' in a large folio page of the very finest drawing paper, round which runs a florid border in colours, designed by an artist of merit, and exhibiting suitable dramatic emblems and devices. The next step in the 'monument' will be to form an index of the names, persons, and places, &c., of every person of whom there should be a portrait, which, in some cases, must be specially 'processed' from a photograph; there must be also a contemporary picture of every place mentioned, and, as in Dickens's case he travelled a good deal over England, Ireland, Scotland, France, America, Italy, &c., this department is likely to be full enough. Of every person mentioned a specimen of handwriting must be secured. Dickens wrote plays; all the play-bills should be there, as well as pictures of theatres. Is there an allusion to a speech, a cutting from a newspaper with a report must be given. Original deeds, agreements, programmes of sports, corrected proofs, &c., must be secured. It requires considerable art to arrange these heterogeneous materials handsomely; oftentimes a single page is so full of allusions that it may require a dozen illustrations to illustrate it, and thus it may be said we shall not be able 'to see the wood because of the trees.' Mr. Harvey, of St. James's Street, had some time ago a splendidly illustrated copy of 'Dickens's Life,' which was minutely described in a number of the *World*. It was sumptuously bound, and was worth, even for the value of



the materials, a great deal of money. The autograph-seller or printseller has an immense facility in forming such a collection, as he has by him thousands of suitable prints, letters, &c., all duly classified, and which he has only to look through. Mr. Wright, before alluded to, is also preparing an illustrated 'Forster's Life,' which he intends shall eclipse everything hitherto attempted.

When a Grangerite who loves his art not wisely but too well displays with secret pride the work on which he has been expending the labour and money of a life, informing you that for such a little tract, a *unique*, he gave 70*l.*, or for that print 10*l.* or 20*l.*, a feeling of melancholy, certainly not of admiration, comes over us at the strange exhibition of delusion. The little tract has no interest whatever; it is a scrubby, badly printed thing written on some slight occasion now forgotten, but then no one else has a copy! The book itself, which has cost a small fortune even to bind, paste, and manipulate, is after all a disagreeable thing to look at, an incongruous patchwork; on this page a 'cutting' from a newspaper in a meadow of margin; here a small vignette; there a large quarto print that has to be folded down to fit; here a play-bill; there the faded writing of a letter. As you turn over the pages the effect is disagreeable, from the discordant colours of the different papers, the unnatural margins, out of proportion to the size of the type.

Dr. Ferriar, a congenial bibliophilist, who amused himself and others by detecting what he called 'Sterne's plagiaries,' was particularly severe on the Grangerite of his time, thus describing him at his work:—

He pastes, from injur'd volumes snipt away,  
 His English heads in chronicled array,  
 Torn from their destined page (unworthy meed  
 Of knightly counsel and heroic deed).  
 Not *Faithorne's* stroke nor *Field's* own types can save  
 The gallant Veres and one-eyed Ogle brave.  
 Indignant readers seek the image fled,  
 And curse the busy fool *who wants a head*.  
 Proudly he shows, with many a smile elate,  
 The scrambling subjects of the *private plate*;  
 While time his action and his name bereaves,  
 They grin for ever in the guarded leaves.

The eminent Frognal Dibdin, D.D. and F.S.A., the style and dress of whose books must have suggested the Ruskinian pattern, most ardent of bibliophilists, was scornfully indignant with these spoilers of noble tomes. He looked on it as a contemptible business. 'Granger's work,' he says, 'seems to have sounded the

tocsin for a general rummage after and plunder of old prints. Venerable philosophers and veteran heroes, who had long reposed in unmolested dignity within those magnificent folio volumes which recorded their achievements, were instantly dragged forth from their peaceful abodes to be laid by the side of some clumsy modern engraving within an *Illustrated Granger*.' Another of the fraternity hints darkly that the mania leads to spoliation, not only of a work but of its owner. 'If this *gout* for prints,' says James Mores, 'and thieving continues, let private owners and public libraries look well to their books, for there will not remain a valuable book ungarbled by their connoisseuring villainy, for neither honesty nor oaths restrain them.'

For this successful work of 'unconscious villainy' the Vicar of Shiplake received about 400*l.* in cash as well as in *kind*—that is, the shrewd Tom Davies tempted him with books, &c. Still he did not complain. What we are most pleased with is the affectionate tone of his friends and correspondents, who were always eager to meet him though comparative strangers. As he wrote to one of Mr. Ryder's family, he was perfectly content with his remote vicarage. 'I am still what the generality of the beneficed clergy would call a poor vicar, but am really "rich as content," and enjoy the golden mean. I have often said since I have been vicar of this place that I had no expectation of being worth 100*l.* of my own acquiring.' Indeed this worthy, energetic man suggests not a little Parson Adams; and a little incident when he was encouraged to point out some mistakes in the great Mr. Walpole's book, for which he was duly snubbed, is a piece of comedy.

At last, while still dreaming of his 'heads' and meditating new ventures, he died suddenly and was 'Grangerised' himself, and 'inset' in the parish churchyard. On him there was written this inscription:—

'TO THE MEMORY  
OF THE

REVEREND JAMES GRANGER,

who on the Sunday after Easter, when the Sacrament is administered in the church of Shiplake, Oxfordshire, of which he was vicar, was seized with an apoplectic fit while at the Communion table there, after having gone through the duties of the desk and pulpit as usual, and notwithstanding every medical assistance died early the next morning, April 5, 1776. His death was similar to that of the Cardinal de Berulle.'



*'HARD CITIZENS.'*

WHEN I entered the State of Texas in the second week of March, 1884, the first news I heard was that Ben Thompson had been killed at San Antone. As this seemed to be full of interest to my American companions, I stepped up and took a hand in the round game of inquiry. All I then found out was that Ben Thompson had been a desperado and a 'hard citizen,' the slayer of many in hot and cold blood, one who was universally respected for his admitted skill with the revolver, and the cool courage which gave him the advantage, that he was hated and feared, and that finally he had 'run agin' lead' in a quarrel with a man named Foster. That Kingfisher, a friend and partner, had died with him, caused no one any sorrow, though he was a much better man than Ben. Still, they had been 'unlovely in their lives, and in death they were not divided.'

I had frequently been told Texas was full of surprises which tended to make life in that State of the Lone Star extremely interesting. At the same time I had been warned against attempting any little practical jokes on my own account, as the mortality due to such enterprises was large. I was told that the Texan with artistic tastes had hanging in his cabin or shanty a tasteful scroll with the legend 'In the midst of Life, we are in Death,' and it was by the constant contemplation of this that the majority were enabled to meet death coolly. All these remarks I had put down to the spirit which delights in making afraid, but when I came into the State, and heard of the sudden dismissal of two men who in their time had killed some scores, I began to think there was some truth in the usually baseless talk about Texas. I determined to look up Ben Thompson's life, and what I propose writing now is a brief account of him, of his partner in death, of his brother who was, when I left the State, still in life, and of some few little incidents I knew of directly, either from seeing them or from being acquainted with the actors.

Ben Thompson was a 'blue nose' or Nova Scotian by birth, his parents being English. His father, a sailor, was well known in Austin as 'Drunken Thompson,' and from what can be gathered from the mass of legend which springs up around any celebrated

man-slayer, it appears Ben and Bill grew up in wild untamed luxuriance to later boyhood without manifesting any fitness for the great careers before them. But when about sixteen, on a Fourth of July, doubtless when his ardour of soul had been inflamed by patriotism and potato spirit, or 'bug juice,' a luckless youth insulted him, and was promptly carried home with a charge of small shot inside, which, if it did not kill him, spoilt his holiday, at all events. It is said that during his adolescence he killed his employer, an old farmer, because the latter took to switching him one day for some offence. As this was denied by Ben, who was not so modest as to wish to reduce the number of his legitimate triumphs, I shall leave it out of record. But I may remark that he would doubtless have been justified in such killing according to earlier Texan homicidal law, on the ground of self-defence. This is the usual plea of the man-slayer in Texas and the West, and wide latitude, indeed, is given to the definition. A look may, if it have to the self-defender sufficient of malice in it, justify resort to the pistol-pocket. A touch frequently justifies instant shooting. So, even if Ben had killed the farmer, it would merely have been self-defence, and he would have left the court without a stain on his character.

Ben had been to school for three years about this time, but he probably found it irksome to handle the pen when the butt of the sixshooter appealed so to his itching palm, and he was removed from school before he had time to transplant any of his fellow-scholars from the school-benches to the neighbouring graveyard. He went to learn how to set types in a printing office in Austin, but probably finding it monotonous, and without opportunities for an energetic man, he gave it up. In 1863 he began to become famous. He and a companion got into a 'difficulty' (Western American for a shooting quarrel) with a lieutenant of the Army and two privates. Ben was a tactician. He was the aggressor, but such were his splendid abilities in his own particular line that his opponent struck him, causing a vacancy in the Army List. At the same time one of the privates went to the Hospital and the other ran. Ben found many opportunities of defending his precious life after this; in fact, he went about defending it. Some time after this incident Ben saw an Italian teamster with a mule branded U.S.A. Now immorality in horses or mules touches a Texan in a tender spot. You may shoot a man's brother and he may not break off friendly relations with you; but steal his horses



and he and his neighbours will hang you when they catch you. A month after I went to Texas, a posse of vigilantes hanged seven horsestealers to one tree on the borders of the Indian Territory, and the week after, the remainder of the gang (five in number) adorned another tree, and this while there were scores of murderers walking about unclaimed of Justice. Ben, when he saw the brand, being virtuously indignant on the part of the States, proceeded to unharness the mule. The teamster brought out a gun, a shot gun, or a 'double-pronged scatter gun,' as it is sometimes called, but before he could bring it to bear, he died so suddenly that it is probable he never knew what hurt him. This, of course, was also self-defence.

After this Ben was in the band of a Mexican, Cortinas, along with his brother Bill. While having a friendly game of poker round the camp fire with one of the lieutenants, the latter made objection to Ben's taking the stakes, or 'raking in the pot.' The cheerful and ever-ready sixshooter settled the question; the lieutenant took the bullet and Ben the bullion. Whether it was in consequence of this heroic deed or not I am unable to determine, but shortly after Ben was made a captain in the Mexican forces, and while occupying this post he was sent in charge of a body of men to arrest a number of deserters. These, in attempting to escape, jumped into the Rio Grande, and tried to swim across. Ben shot six of them as they were swimming, and ordered his men to 'do up' the rest. By proceeding thus he saved the deserters a troublesome and painful march, and the army authorities the worry of a court-martial and execution. This was military necessity, not self-defence.

That Ben was not devoid of the gentler sentiments, that he was kind and thoughtful for his relatives and ready to undertake any disagreeable task for those he loved, is shown by the next 'rotch on the butt of the gun,' that records the death of Ben's brother-in-law. Ben had a sister, about whom I have learnt nothing, save that, as she *was* his sister, it seems probable she must have been of a kindly disposition. I do not insist on this, however, it is only *à priori* evidence. Jim Moore was of a rash disposition, without that quickness with weapons which such a temperament requires, if the owner of it does not desire an early grave. He was rash enough not only to wed Ben's sister, but to curse her just as if she had no brother at all, or was sister to only a common ordinary man. She threatened to complain to Ben,

and Jim said he didn't care. Next day Thompson came up to remonstrate with his brother-in-law. When Jim saw the drawn revolver he went over the back fence, but Ben was too quick for him, and the sister was a widow with her husband hung up to dry on the palings. This was not self-defence, and Ben was tried by a military court, and sent to the Penitentiary, where as a general thing only such horse-thieves as escaped Judge Lynch found a refuge. Ben was incarcerated for a year, but when civil government was restored it was thought highly injudicious to keep such a public-spirited citizen in the 'Calaboose' for a trifling misdemeanour, especially as the motive impelling him was much to the credit of his heart. So the Governor, under some little pressure, let him out, once more a free man. He was, however, not very grateful, and hearing that the Governor had made some insulting remarks about him while he was under lock and key, he cowhided him in the streets of Austin.

Shortly after his release, one of those wandering showmen who run what they call a variety show, consisting of song and dance artists, male and female, and a bar for the retailing of spirits, set up in Austin. Artemus Ward said the girl could not go in without paying, but she could pay without going in. Some lively young men of the town thought they might be allowed the former privilege if they demanded it in sufficient numbers. But the showman and his men put them outside, disturbing their equanimity in the process. Ben was in town. He, while there seemed no prospect of a disturbance, preferred the amusements of the town; but when he heard of the insults heaped upon his friends, he burnt with ardour to view the inside of the canvas tent, and went down determined to run that variety show on a democratic basis with equal rights to everybody. The proprietor was a stranger, and unacquainted with Ben. So when he laid hold of his arm it is hardly probable he knew he might with greater impunity handle a live shell or a Texas steer. Ben was instantly in fear of his life, and the show devolved on the widow. Although this was undoubtedly in self-defence, Ben thought it well to leave Texas for a while, and went up to Leadville, Colorado. The keen air of this altitudinous city exhilarated him so, that before leaving he went in a procession of one down the main street, firing volleys from his two revolvers, while the citizens in whose honour this was done retired to the back streets, where the police officers preserved order.



While in the mountains, it is said that one of the western railroads, having a dispute about the right of way with another railroad, hired Ben Thompson at a liberal stipend to defend the rights in question. The opposing company made Ben a present of about 400*l*. He was not stubborn. He showed himself open to reason, and went his way, returning to the Lone Star State.

The man who was Ben's *fidus Achates* was John King Fisher, commonly called Kingfisher. He was of desperate character from his youth, and while living in Maverick County his home was the rendezvous for cattle thieves and desperadoes. He was known to have killed a number of men, but nothing was proved against him, so finally he came in and stood his trial, and for want of evidence was acquitted. After this he was a comparatively peaceable man, and was made deputy-sheriff of Uvalde.

It was in San Antonio, or San Antone (silent *e*), that the last act of the combined drama of these two men was played out. Late in '83 there was a fight in a gambling-house in that city, in which Ben killed a man named Harris. On the 11th of March, '84, Ben and his brother Bill, about whom I shall say something afterwards, were in town. Ben was drunk, and came across Kingfisher. Together they went into the bar of the Vaudeville Theatre, to get more drink. This was late at night. At the bar there was a man named Simms, who had been at the shooting of Harris. Ben got talking with him in a wild boisterous way, saying that now he was rich, and could get out of any trouble he got into. He spoke about Harris, who had been killed, and said it was the man's own fault that his death happened. Then he said, 'Joe Foster was the man I ought to have killed.' Then he saw Joe Foster at the other end of the hall, and sent Simms over to ask him to come and speak to him. Foster came over. Ben offered his hand, which he wouldn't take. This infuriated Ben, and he made vague threats, saying he would expose Foster as a thief. Finally he pulled his sixshooter, shoving it into Foster's face. As he pulled it back he cocked it. There was a police officer standing by, named Coy, who grabbed hold of the pistol, saying, 'Don't fire, Ben; I'm an officer.' But he shot, and then there was a general firing. When it ceased Ben and Kingfisher had fallen, Coy was wounded in the leg, and Foster shot in the knee. Next day his leg was amputated. Both the desperadoes were dead. Kingfisher had a wound in the left eye, and one under the left ear, a wound above the heart, and another in the left leg.

Thompson had been shot over the eye, in the forehead, the chin, and the abdomen. Ben Thompson was forty years of age, and his friend only twenty-seven.

Bill Thompson is, as far as I know, still alive. I believe there are many murders placed to his account. I have been told that on one occasion, when he had been drinking and was in an ugly temper, he dismounted from his horse, which he left loose. Near at hand was a horse belonging to a boy, who had given it oats. Bill's horse came and shoved his nose into the feed, ousting the other. The boy removed the intruder, upon which Bill said, 'Boy, if you do that again, I'll blow the roof of your head off.' The boy, thinking he was not serious, did it again, and Bill kept his word. He was not brought to justice. When I was at Big Springs a man shot a German because he *was* a German. The unfortunate Teuton had not been in the town a quarter of an hour. The murderer got on his horse and rode out of town.

At Sweetwater two men were shot the day after I passed through it. I do not know any details of this case, but while I was near Snyder, in Scurry County, North-west Texas, there was what Texans look upon as an amusing incident. I had met, in one of the towns on the Texas and Pacific Railroad, a man named, I think, Chambers. He was a cattleman, and had been a cowboy. He was, I found, a very pleasant man to talk to, and we got quite friendly while in town together. He lived at Snyder, and one Sunday night was in a saloon in this little town playing poker with the proprietor. For some time things went on quietly, but at last there was the inevitable row. What it was about nobody knew. Chambers rushed out after a weapon, for fortunately neither was wearing a revolver at the time, and going into his house across the road, took his Winchester rifle, which can be fired seventeen times without reloading. Meantime, the saloon-keeper got his breechloading gun and some cartridges. Chambers opened the ball by shooting right through the house—for it was all wood—on to the prairie beyond. The saloon-keeper poked his gun out and fired, missing Chambers completely, for not a pellet struck him, though it killed a fowl. Meantime Chambers kept on firing, but without effect, owing to his opponent's luck. Next shot fired from the gun burst it, injuring the saloon man's thumb. At the same instant Chambers fired again. The man inside, when he got hurt, let a yell out of him. Chambers thought he was dead, dropped his rifle, went for his horse, and rode down to Sweetwater. The last time I heard of them they were friends again.



*TABAI, THE WIZARD.*

‘MURDER of the Great Wizard, Tabai.’ I saw this heading in a number of the ‘Sarawak Gazette,’ and it stirred my interest, for I remembered the victim. The circumstances of his death reported were by no means satisfying, but the editor of the Gazette seems to have thought that the less said about such a scoundrel the better.

My own acquaintance with Tabai had no uncanny associations ; but it was interesting from another cause. He visited us one day at Muka fort, ostensibly to announce a change of name. Henceforth he would be known as Draman, since he had become a convert to the Moslem faith. Upon the strength of this reformation, he asked the doctor for quinine and blue-pill, as the materials for legitimate practice. The doctor used words needless to repeat ; they would occur to the most guileless on such impudent provocation ; whereupon Tabai withdrew composedly.

He had then passed middle age, an exaggerated specimen of the Dyak type. His eyes were quick of movement, cunning and ironical. Though the face was not thin, it had such breadth across the cheek-bones that one could lay two fingers in the hollow betwixt them and the massive jaw. By that indenting of the cheeks, the lips, broad and full, seemed to be drawn tight, and creased in upward curves. A strange and evil face ! When I heard that this man was by far the most renowned and the most feared of Dyak sorcerers, I was not surprised.

Tabai did not long practise Islam, though he claimed certain of its privileges, which, we may suppose, tempted him to profess the faith. Dyak morality is very lax in the case of young people ; though, in effect, laxity has very seldom such evil consequences among a rude and simple population as it would have with us. But Dyaks do not tolerate unbecoming conduct after marriage, and they think it alike contemptible and hateful in an elder. Individuals whose disposition leads them to revolt against established usage, and who have the courage of their vices, often take refuge in Islam. This is specially the case with Milanows, the tribe to which Tabai belonged. The richest of them are nearly all Muhammadan, and their heathen compatriots have learned that in changing

his creed a man changes his sense of right and wrong. The fact is accepted without cavil or discussion; and acts which would ruin a chief socially are condoned to one who, between night and morning as it were, declares himself a Moslem. Nobody was shocked, therefore, when Tabai, returning to his people, put away his old wife and took her children to Dalat, where he built a new house, and peopled it. Conversion enlarged his business. Dyaks travelled from a long circuit to ask his help, and Malays did not scorn to consult a brother-Moslem. The fees of a successful practitioner in magic are nowhere inconsiderable; for magic is a wide expression, covering all manner of secret practices, from the fantastic to the criminal, and such compromising services must always be well paid. In the course of this narrative we gain glimpses of a scale of fee much larger than might have been expected. Tabai was not liked, of course. The meanest of his profession is distrusted, and the greatest must needs be abhorred. Scandals of various shape arose, and they circulated so widely that the Resident of Muka kept an eye upon the wizard; but he could find no grounds for interference.

Men of this sort must dwell alone. Tabai built his house in the forest, a quarter of a mile or so from Dalat. He constructed it in the Malay fashion, raised but a few feet above the soil, and surrounded it by a fence—everybody knows that Dyak houses stand twenty to forty feet in air, supported on great posts. A couple of stalwart slaves always kept guard in the enclosure, and they admitted no one without the master's consent.

Thither came one day a young Dyak, who announced himself as son to the Orang Kaya of Medong, Igud by name. The village is a colony of the Seribas, and this youth showed the purity of his blood by a frank fearlessness of look and a spirited manner characteristic of his people. He wore only the chowat, or breech-clout, but the ornaments upon his glossy yellow skin would have purchased cloth for a village. A ring of costly shell encircled each arm; his neck, wrists, and legs were adorned with gold and brass. But the glory of his costume was an apron—if an article worn behind may be so described. Agate beads, an inch long and less, were threaded in patterns, and the soft rattle they made as the owner walked, the clash at a sudden movement, the sparkle when a sun-ray caught them, fascinated every beholder.

It was easy to guess what this sort of client wanted. He declared himself in love with Netai, daughter of Tur chief of Dalat.



Difficulties so many and so grave barred his suit that he came to ask aid from the manang. In the first place, Dalat and Medong were not friendly. They had no feud; the inhabitants did not quarrel; but Seribas and Milanows have been fighting for centuries, and they are not yet prepared to marry or give in marriage. Then there was the question of rank. Igud's father had the grade of Orang Kaya, whilst Tur was only a Tuah, chief of a subordinate village. The young man had not even hinted his love at home. Without the Orang Kaya's sanction no subject would dare engage in those negotiations which etiquette demands when people of position contemplate marriage. Such were the problems, in brief, which Igud submitted.

Tabai, of course, suggested a love-charm to begin with, and named his price with the frankness of a recognised authority—twenty-five catties of honey (33½ lbs.). This was not quite the thing Igud wanted; but to obtain the maiden's love would certainly be no disadvantage. Instead of honey he offered a durien covered with fruit. The wizard had trees enough for an orchard, up and down; if honey was inconvenient he would take pigs. The cost was finally arranged in the shape of a sow and litter—for Tabai's Moslem zeal had now quite cooled. He presented the lover with a bit of deerhorn to hang about his neck, a root curiously twisted to burn, and a plantain to share with Netaï. These articles, treated according to prescription, and endued with virtue by secret rites, could not fail to excite a burning love.

Igud did not question their efficacy, but he asked how, under all the circumstances, he could induce the girl to eat a plantain? That, Tabai explained with dignity, was no affair of his. If the client wished him to act as negotiator with the parents, he had but to say so, and to pay. The fee in such cases was a picul of gun-metal (133 lbs.). Igud was shocked. For what should he give such an enormous sum? Briefly, Tabai assured him, for a bride. If he condescended to interest himself, Netaï was won. This argument could not be resisted. Igud consented.

The sow and the brass arrived next morning—that is, gutta percha to its value; for gun-metal is a basis, not in general a currency. The manang prepared to earn his fee, twisted a turban round his head, donned a pair of trowsers, and set out. Dalat is a small village, consisting of one house only, some five hundred feet long. Since it has been occupied for several generations, the constant discharge of rubbish from above, and the industry of pigs

below, have buried the supporting posts nearly two-thirds of their length, and the floor of the house lies not ten feet above the ground in places. The door of the chief's chamber is the middle one in the long row, and opposite, on the broad verandah, roofed in, which is common to the inhabitants, lies the council-fire. Here, beneath a string of human heads suspended on a hoop, so caked with soot that the teeth alone are visible, the elders sit chewing the eternal penang, exchanging the eternal gossip, by night as by day. Tabai climbed the ladder which descends from this airy dwelling, and found the council in session round their Tuah.

He opened his business, as the custom goes, in public. This was no matter for the elders to discuss, and they said not a word whilst Tabai descanted on the wealth, the virtue, and the political importance of his client. He put the case shrewdly, no doubt, and Tur listened without impatience. Upon such missions the envoy is expected to hold forth until some outside incident occurs to break his flow of eloquence. Tabai spoke for an hour or so—he would have scorned to measure time—and he was ready to go on till midnight. The straightening sun-rays began to shoot beneath the eave; the shadow of the penang palms fell heavier and longer on the platform without; women passed to and fro with pitchers; the thud of pounding rice began to sound; working people would soon arrive, eager for their meal after a long day in the paddy-grounds. Tabai reached his peroration. He declared that this match, besides its inherent advantages, would be pleasing to the spirits. They had warned him by many signs that an alliance of great value to the people was reserved for Tur's family. To refuse would be defiance of the tutelary powers.

Tabai had produced a grave effect, when two young girls came down the long house, carrying their field-baskets. They opened the door of Tur's chamber like persons of the family. By the expression of the elders, who looked up, the manang saw that one of these was Netaï. It could only be the taller. Her figure, of course, was perfect; her features irregular, but pleasing; her expression full of life. In the great coils of hair, knotted back to give freedom in working, she had twined a garland of orchid gathered on the homeward path. The beauty of Netaï raised every evil passion in the manang's heart. He broke off and withdrew.

Seven days are commonly allowed for deliberation in such cases, and then the intermediary returns. If the parents have



resolved, provisionally, to accept the offer, they receive him, and he names the dowry, a graceful term for the price which a man pays them for their daughter. But Tabai took no steps to learn what Igud was prepared to give or Tur to accept, and he did not return to Dalat. His slaves refused the young man admission. Igud admitted to himself, however, that a wizard is a personage to whom some eccentricity must be allowed. Pok, his great friend, went to Dalat for news. Few secrets are kept at a Dyak house, and none in matters pertaining to the chief. Everybody knew that Tabai had asked the hand of Tur's daughter for the son of the Medong Orang Kaya, and that Tur entertained the proposal. Under these circumstances Igud took patience.

At this point I should explain, with the utmost brevity, what is the position of a Dyak girl in respect to marriage. If her parents belong to the common class, she is perfectly free, choosing the man she likes, and carrying on her courtship without the slightest interference. Neither father nor mother alludes to her conduct until the young man makes them a proposal. The case of a chief's daughter is otherwise. Light conduct on her part would bring scandal on the community, and her marriage should be advantageous to it, if possible. Therefore she is not allowed the privileges of the humbler sisterhood, and she awaits, in general, the sanction of her parents. But if the husband they approve is not satisfactory to her mind she may refuse him, and very often she does. No form of compulsion may be used, for the Dyak girl has spirit enough, and she does not hesitate to run away if pressed too hard, or even to kill herself; but in such cases, I imagine, there is some stronger motive unavowed.

It was taken for granted that Netaï would accept a gallant young fellow of rank above her own. The village, influenced by Tabai's allusion to the spirits, consented. The parents were favourable. If the Orang Kaya objected to his son's choice, that was no insuperable difficulty. He would certainly give way, for the children are masters in a Dyak household; a father commonly takes his first son's name, with the prefix 'Api.' The only obstacle in Igud's path to happiness was etiquette; but etiquette is an iron barrier with savages. He could not himself wait on Tur, and no one suitable would accept the commission.

Time passed on, making the situation more and more embarrassing. Pok contrived without offence to let the chief of Dalat understand that Igud was dying of impatience to resume the

negotiation. That hint soothed his temper; but the business was not advanced. After waiting a month, Tur pocketed his dignity, and set out, towards evening, for a private interview with the sorcerer. About the same time Igud and Pok paid one of their constant visits, with the usual result. Safe behind their barrier, the slaves refused admittance. After promising and threatening in vain, the friends withdrew, determined to keep guard until Tabai came out. They posted themselves on the edge of the clearing under cover of the forest. After a very few minutes they saw Tur approach and parley at the gate. Igud came to a hasty resolve. Since chance favoured him thus, he would accost the chief point-blank. Leaving Pok to watch, he slipped back through the jungle, found a hiding-place beside the path which Tur would use in returning, and waited.

Small bare feet tread noiseless over that soil, dank with the rot of countless seasons. Igud, looking the other way, did not hear a girl's swift approach until she had almost passed his ambush. It was Netaï, eager but stealthy, dressed in her ornaments as for a feast. Igud shrank back. What could she be doing in the woods at that hour, when girls are making ready the evening meal? In her best clothes, also, as if going to her marriage? Jealousy leaped to flame in Igud's heart.

Netaï approached, went by. A crackle of sticks breaking, a swish of boughs, a patter of hurrying feet from the other side, alarmed her. As a young man came in view, she slipped into the bush, but instantly returned. 'Go back, dayang!' the lad cried breathlessly. 'Master orders you! He sends this, and bids you come to-morrow at the same time.' From a bamboo box at his side the messenger produced a waist-belt, hung with little golden bells that tinkled. Netaï took it, and stood hesitating. 'Your father is on the road, dayang, and those cursed Seribas are hiding somewhere about! Get home quick!' She turned and swiftly fled.

Igud followed the boy quietly till she had gone beyond hearing. 'Tell me all!' he cried, suddenly gripping the slave's throat. 'I know you! What has Netaï to do at your master's house?'

'Take your hands off! Tabai is not my slave, and his secrets are his own. If you're wise, Igud, you will not meddle with him.'

'What was she going to his house for, you dog? Speak!'

'Don't kill me! I swear I don't know! Many girls come to our house!'



‘What is all this?’ said Tur, coming upon them. And Igud, firmly holding the slave, told what he had seen. It was the gift of the waist-belt that roused so much suspicion. A well-conducted girl might wish to consult the manang, though this was no fitting hour, even if she had been properly accompanied. But why should she take a costly present without surprise? Tabai’s repute was bad as it could be, and he had magic arts.

They took the slave a few yards into the jungle, and there, by means comprehensible to the dullest, extracted all he knew. It was little. Netaï had not visited the house to his knowledge. This was his first commission as regarded her. Other slaves had been employed, possibly. It was thought in the household that Tabai intended taking a new wife, since he had prepared the best chamber, sending its occupant to Muka. That was all, but enough, if the facts bore the interpretation put upon them.

Igud’s feelings I need not describe. Tur had many grounds for anger. In the first place, this action of Tabai’s was attempted theft. A girl of marriageable age is property, worth so much in hard money to her father; and the manang had tried to get Netaï without payment. Again, it would be a vile misalliance. Thirdly, Tabai had committed a monstrous crime in seducing the maiden whose hand he had asked for another. Father and lover nursed their wrath, while the slave, released, stood by grinning, rubbing himself, and muttering. When they made up their minds to seek the wizard’s house, he suddenly ran off full speed, turning at a distance to throw all the curses of necromancy at their heads.

Tabai’s door stood open, and he, seated in the verandah, made a courteous movement. Seeing him thus composed, Tur began to falter and to doubt. The shades of night were falling. In a very few moments darkness would close round them, alone with this terrible being, challenged in his own realm. But Igud had bitterer wrongs upon his mind than theft or outraged sentiment, and he loosed his passions.

Tabai interrupted. ‘Does it become your years, Tur, to bring a boy to gossip about women to me? Go, before I lose my temper! It is night! The spirits are abroad!’

Tur shuddered. He said fearfully, ‘Your slave lied to us, manang. I will send you a present when I get home.’

‘That is well! Let it be sixty catties of rice (80 lbs.). What do you give, Igud?’

I paid you a picul of brass for services you did not perform.

Finish that business, and, on the day I marry Netaï, I will give you two piculs.'

'To-morrow I will wait upon you, Tur. An old man is not less eager for two piculs of brass than is a youth for a bride. In the afternoon I will come to Medong, Igud; do you press on your father. He is generous, and Tur is not greedy. You may be married in four days!'

'I ask pardon for the injustice we did you,' said the Tuah. 'Give me a charm for protection on the road home.'

'Take this!' the manang answered, handing him a boar's tusk. 'Keep it in your left hand, the point outwards. You will send me seventy catties in the morning!' They were glad to get away, even into the terrors of the forest. For in the dull glow of the fire Tabai had put on a weird aspect: his misshapen features enlarged, his hands clutched at them, he swayed to and fro as if struggling against the spirits that urged him to take wing for the night's devilry.

Not a word did those two speak until they saw the radiance of Dalat shining hazily through the night-mists and reddening the foliage. Pressed close to one another, holding the charm at full stretch, bathed in the sweat of fear, and starting at every sound, they hurried on. But the sight of human dwellings, the hum of human voices, instantly restored their nerve. They paused beneath the ladder. Tabai had furnished no explanation. Why did he give that waist-belt? Possibly greed and alarm had changed his plans; but Tur resolved that a watch should be kept upon his daughter, and that the marriage should be hastened.

Dalat was excited and anxious, for no man, much more a chief, strays in the woods after nightfall. Public agitation among Dyaks is displayed by crowding closer round the council hearth, and telling more awful stories, whilst consuming an abnormal amount of betel. Nobody thinks of going in search of lost companions before daylight. Igud stayed the night, of course; but he kept as far as possible from Tur. It is not fitting that a man should be on familiar terms with his father-in-law. So long as he lives, the latter is treated with distant reverence, and avoided as much as possible. Netaï moved about, laughing and playing with the other girls after supper. She openly wore the belt, which roused envious curiosity; but a Dyak maiden need not give account of her presents.

In the morning Igud told his mother as much as he thought



fitting of the story. Netaï was in no sort the bride she wished for her only son. The old dame had met her often at feasts, and pronounced the girl vain, flighty, imperious. Not till Igud swore that he would go to Kuching and enlist in the 'Rangers' did she consent unwillingly. Together they waited on the chief, who refused in the strongest terms. The threat of enlistment did not move him; he declared it the right and proper course for a Seribas boy, now that piracy and head-hunting were stopped. Until he fell in love, Igud had always fancied the idea, and his mother knew well that he would be half-consolated for the loss of a wife if it gave him a pretext for donning a uniform. Under this alarm, she used the vigorous arguments which a Dyak matron has at command, and the Orang Kaya, seeing she was in earnest, gave way, grumbling. When Tabai arrived, with a diplomatic suggestion of the price Tur expected for his daughter, he found the way smooth.

The parents met, attended each by a posse of relatives, and settled details—the division of property in case of divorce from incompatibility of temper, the fine for infidelity, if the couple separated for that cause, the custody and the rights of children in the same event. Divorce is such a common incident that the questions which may arise from it are always settled beforehand. Not in one of a hundred cases is the reason such as would leave a stain on the respondent's character if it were proved in our English courts. The grunt of a pig at some unusual time, the cry of a bird or an insect may be enough; as for the bell of a deer, no matrimonial affection could stand that. When these matters were settled, the party chewed betel-nut together. Then Igud's mother sent a plate, covered with a red cloth, to her son's bride. The scarlet canopy followed in due course, to protect her from the sun, or the spirits, in walking to her new home. And then all was ready for the wedding.

During this time Netaï behaved like any other girl in her position. As nobody consulted her, she offered no remarks, accepting presents and congratulations as they came, and going about her business as usual. A chief's daughter is easily watched, and Tur felt certain that she had not met Tabai, nor communicated with him by visible means. But this assurance, on reflection, was not comforting. For the slave had told her to come again next night, an order she had not tried to obey. Why not? And why was she unconcerned about this disobedience? Either Tabai had

been wrongly suspected, or he was directing her by magic arts. And in that case, where was the limit of his power? Every night Tur felt dire alarms, but every day he recovered spirit. It is curious how the Dyak's superstition wanes and waxes with the sun. He is distinctly a Rationalist so long as he can see, barring omens and such signs as are sent by friendly powers for his benefit; but when darkness begins to settle down, his courage oozes, until he is eager to credit the most grotesque horror.

The wedding day arrived without alarm. Dalat was full of visitors, encamped on the verandah. Piles of food had been collected. As soon as one feast is done the Dyak begins to store materials for the next. Thus it happens that on any unforeseen occasion the village can supply eggs and fruit and salted provisions, black, mouldy, and rotten, as they should be for real festivity. Of fresh viands there is always sufficient. Every vessel in the house large enough for hospitable purposes was filled with drink, rice-spirit warmed with pepper, and the fermented juice of fruits. The two iron bars upon which bride and bridegroom were to sit had been placed opposite Tur's door. Basins of rice, dyed yellow, stood around, for sprinkling the happy pair. Fowls of propitious colour were tethered to the door-post, ready for the priest. The heads had been disposed with artistic effect, and wooden birds with a feather at the head and tail, and nowhere else, hung from the rafters. The bride was dressed; after hours of labour her pretty coronet of beads had been adjusted to the satisfaction of everybody. Tur congratulated himself. Surely this hazardous affair was settled at last!

A cruel error. In place of the bridegroom, Pok arrived. With slow, sad step, shaking in agitation, he walked up the house, and sat by the fire. The betel-box was pushed towards him silently, and he helped himself. All the people crowded round; women ran from the chambers. In dead silence Pok declared his news. 'Oh, Tur!' he cried, bursting into fresh tears, 'Igud, my brother, is raving mad!'

Consternation ran through the house. Awful troubles must be heralded by this portent. Igud's death would have been comparatively unimportant, but madness is the work of evil spirits.

Tur stilled the noise, dismissed the women, cleared the council area, and deliberated with his elders. They summoned the village priest to interpret this omen; but he, a cripple and only half-witted, could only stammer and quake. The priest and the manang



are sometimes one amongst Dyaks, but more frequently the sacerdotal office is conferred upon some villager who cannot earn his living otherwise. The elders saw only one course—Tabai must be consulted. Tur formed the same opinion, on different grounds. He took his spear and set out, with Pok and a retinue of friends. He found the Orang Kaya of Medong already in conference with the sorcerer. A man of determination was the Seribas chief, quick of eye, short in word, ready of hand. He said to Tabai: 'They tell me this is your doing! Now, mark! If my son is restored to his senses within six days, I give you six piculs of brass; if not, you shall die!'

'And I give two piculs!' said Tur.

Tabai's face lit up with greed. He answered coolly, 'I told you, Tur, that your daughter would make a great match; but Igud evidently is not a husband whom the spirits regard with favour. They have given a sign, and it is enough. I will appease them. By morning your son will be well, Orang Kaya.'

'Good!' said the Medong chief. 'But make the Umot propitious, manang! For I swear on my blood and my sword that if they visit my house again, you shall die!'

Igud woke in his right senses, but feeble and ill. Not for several days could he get across to Dalat, whence the guests had departed. They had eaten and drunk everything provided, repeating all the time that it was no time for festivity. Igud did not dispute that his sickness was the work of Antus, or Umot, or Mino, but he savagely declared that Tabai had incited them. He persuaded Tur, but the matter had now gone beyond the chief's authority. He dared not think of proposing to his subjects that the marriage ceremonies should be resumed. So Igud bought over to his side the priestesses, a powerful body, who were already jealous of the manang and his fees. And they began to work successfully on public opinion.

One day when the subject was mentioned in council—the village talked of nothing else—several elders spoke bitterly of Tabai and his evil influence upon the neighbourhood. Netaï broke in on them, pale and agitated. 'I am a free girl, father!' she exclaimed, 'and I will never marry a madman! That is what you all mean, and I would rather die!'

Tur was much distressed. Family affection is so strong among this people that angry words are seldom uttered between relatives. He said, 'No one will force you, child! Igud's sickness is transferred to you, we see, and by the same hand!'

She retired, sobbing with excitement, as Igud appeared in the doorway with Pok. They learned the cause of the agitation, and they swore a great oath to settle with the manang that day. While blood was still hot, he entered. Igud and Pok arose, went down the house, and at the further doorway took each a spear from the bundle always leaning ready against the post. They descended the ladder and waited.

Tabai seated himself with compliments, split a plug of betel, wrapped it in a pepper-leaf, and chewed. 'I brought the young man to his senses,' he presently observed. 'The Orang Kaya of Medong is grateful. Have you forgotten already, Tuah?'

Tur had not paid the two piculs, a great sum for him. He said, 'Why should I be grateful, Tabai? If you took the spirit of madness from Igud, you caused it to enter my daughter's brain.'

'Is it so? I will cure her. But pay me for the other service.'

'I owe you nothing! Now, this instant, remove your spells from Netai!' He rose, and Tabai also.

'I have thrown no spells on your daughter, Tur! With one word I can change you all to apes, and the Antus will worry you for ever. Shall I utter it?'

The threat was ill-timed. With hands outstretched to choke him, the elders sprang forward. Tabai eluded them, ran out upon the platform, caught a penang tree, and slid down the trunk. Igud and Pok stood below. Upon the moment's impulse they rushed at him, and thrust him through.

The crimes of the Dyak are guileless. In the evening, Tur, Igud, and Pok embarked to carry the news of their own deed to Muka. The Resident examined them, reported, and forwarded the prisoners to Kuching for trial. The Rajah and the English people there were interested. Witnesses who had been afraid and perplexed while the manang lived bore evidence against him; and their testimony, with men who put the spirits out of court, suggested every sort of crime. Under the circumstances, a fine was thought sufficient punishment for the executioners of such a villain.

Igud did not return with his fellow-prisoners. He found the capital more pleasant than his village, and he enlisted. If he goes back, a spruce, self-confident young soldier, perhaps Netai will regard him differently. For I have formed an explanation of her conduct, which, though it does not account for all, leaves but small space for magic. There are girls even in the jungle who prefer an old and ugly husband, if he have power and force of will, to a country-bred youth, however handsome and however brave.



### AFTERTHOUGHTS.

ONE of the pleasantest stores of reminiscence is Switzerland, which I used to visit every autumn for years before the flood of modern tourists had reached its present height. Not a few indeed went in those early days, but they seldom had any difficulty in finding some lodgment after the day's walk. It is different now. When I was last there, in the height of the season, the pressure for places had become insufferable. People had to sleep in the steamboats (and dream of 'stewards'), on arriving at Lucerne. I was fortunate myself in getting good accommodation, while others were shut out. And I did this by sheer common sense, rather than ingenuity, genius, or coin. . . . I had written my prescription down, but now scratch it out, lest it should spoil the market for such deserving persons as your humble servant. Let my readers use their own wits in getting rooms, while others are peremptorily rejected.

The best way to enjoy Switzerland is not to 'tour' about, but to stop at some mountain inn. Secure your footing there, and keep it. Take walks, make a two or three days' expedition from your mountain nest, if you please, but having once found it and lined it with your 'things,' stick to it. Take plenty of them and settle down. Many are moved by ancient traditional advice to discard luggage. Their eyes are not open to the changes in locomotion and transportation which have come to pass in the last twenty years. So far from deserving to be called 'impedimenta,' portmanteau and bag really facilitate the enjoyment of a holiday. Of course boys of all ages go through the experience of carrying a knapsack, &c., but with sensible men who want rest, 'touring' with a bare change of clothes is miserable work. Moreover, you don't stay long enough in each new region to apprehend its glories. The 'rest' becomes a mere camping ground, and does not deserve the name of even a sleeping place, for after a broken night (being made feverish by unaccustomed toil) you scuffle off early in the morning to speculate all day on the chance of finding a spare bed at its close. Supposing, however, that you do move about much and on foot, of all places Switzerland is one of the best for

having your things sent on. The luggage post is there universal, trustworthy, and prompt.

Even in going to the higher inns, such as the Bel Alp, nothing is easier than to sling two carpet bags (brought by rail to Brieg from Charing Cross) over a horse, and with a portmanteau between them take good store of change, including some books (especially novels) into the room which you have secured, and stop there. Thus only can you digest the delicious dish of Swiss air and scenery. If you scamper round, as many do, there is no time for the true impression to sink into the mind. After the most strenuous circuit by foot and horse, whereby you visit all the 'best places' in a month, there remains a sentiment of gratified perception to such as stay at least for a little while in the same spot. What good times I have had at the Bel Alp! Moreover, thus you better value the pleasantness of 'tourist' acquaintance-ship. I don't wish to boast, but I flatter myself I sometimes had moral courage enough to resent pressure to climb and make expeditions, preferring rather to lounge on a grass plot, and rest with the fire of the sun above and the atmosphere of ice (that of the Great Aletch) below, when the mood came. Not that I didn't ever walk. Once I spent some twenty-eight hours in an effort to reach a high snow peak, and came back legitimately baffled, though I was conscious of a praiseworthy and most unpleasant two and a half hours on the curl of a frozen cornice some 12,000 feet high, with a 'fall' into space on either side. One was about as sharp as that which a jackdaw sees from the top of a steeple, while the other was no more than that which a tabby observes from the ridge of a high-pitched roof. Either way a 'slip' would have been about 3,000 feet down. Of course the view was 'magnificent.' I was in intellectual company, being 'tied' (we were 'in rope') to Mr. Frederic Harrison, but I didn't enjoy it at the time, though I was too great a coward to say so, and only (in my mind) reversed the Frenchman's remark and thought, 'C'est la guerre mais c'n'est pas magnifique.'

In anchoring for a week or two among the mountains, it is, if possible, best to lie just outside the fringe of local excursion streams. These flow down the valleys with short lateral 'climbs,' which fill mountain inns two or three hours' walk off the main track, with a perspiring thirsty and uproarious crowd of 'foreigners' (who, by the way, are then in every sense at home), and who, if you happen not to be out for the day, deafen and obliterate you. May



I be permitted to say that this is one drawback to the Æggischhorn, where crowds arrive for a few hours from Viesch, and disport themselves. It is different at the Bel Alp. There the weary may find refreshment not merely in diverting recreation and laborious exercise, but by sheer placid rest in a perfect and silent atmosphere. Once, however (in my case), this was ruffled for a little while. I had resisted pressure to join some expedition, preferring to enjoy repose by loafing about all day, doing 'nothing.' In this last business I was helped by a distinguished living Professor, and the then Astronomer Royal. We were silently idling, when the Professor's face grew a little longer by reason, he said, of some threatening internal disorder, and he asked me if I happened to have a little laudanum. I had, and he went with me up to my bedroom for it. Now, I possessed only two little bottles exactly alike. One was filled with the desired drug, the other with creosote, which I had brought for my wife, who had some notion of using it to allay sea-sickness. Well, before I knew what he was about, the Professor had poured this into a tumbler of water, and drunk it off. Fact. There was a lot of it. He was undeterred by its making the water as white as milk, as well as by its taste, and steadily emptied the glass. I looked at him as the barbarous people did at St. Paul when he was bitten by the viper, expecting some catastrophe. What was to be done? I knew of no antidote myself, but (happy thought) went to the Astronomer Royal. Says I, 'So and so has been drinking my creosote by mistake. You are the only man of science within ten hours; can you tell me what I had better do?' 'Not in my department,' he replied, and walked off. But the Professor wasn't 'took bad' after all. I watched him. He found an old newspaper, lit a cigar, and settled himself on the bench outside the inn door. I strolled out, with an anxious eye on my gentleman. Presently he said, 'Your dose has done me a world of good,' and when the rest of the party returned he dissipated the remnant of my apprehension by eating as hearty a dinner as the best of them. He ought (I should say) to have been at least half killed.

In turning over old diaries of touring reminiscence, I seem to realise that even in these levelling days there are yet to be found the sharpest contrasts of sensation to anyone who will be at the trouble, say to compare the commonest American with European experience. On both sides of the Atlantic you of course find some unexpected phases of liberty and prohibition, and yet they are

differently mixed or arranged. In the United States, *e.g.*, there is a sort of pervading polite social supervision, whereby a stranger is occasionally set right, to his surprise, by a man who might be, but is not, a detective in plain clothes. You must not do this; you must not do that. I remember once in Sacramento taking a ticket on a Friday for New York. Now, the journey between these two cities consumes four or five days at least, and the clerk, looking at me through the square porthole of his office, said, 'Are you a minister, sir?' I replied that I was. 'Well,' he said, 'I am surprised that you should think of going by a train which must travel on the Sabbath.' As he seemed inclined to argue the matter, I added, 'But I come from a land of liberty, England.' On this he handed me my ticket with an air of pity which trespassed over the borders of contempt. This social criticism and setting right of strangers is, however, no sign of a conceited exclusiveness. In America even the supreme official is curiously accessible. In England he wears double armour, and hides in his office, but there he is, or was, to be seen and heard of all men. I well recollect a wholly unexpected but interesting interview and conversation I had with President Grant, in the White House, about the Mormons. I was prowling around, when General Blank, whom I met, said, 'Come in and see the President.' I demurred, but he took me in, and the great man discussed Utah with a cigar.

The ordinary European, like myself, is indeed perpetually struck not merely with the hospitality, but the interest or attention shown in or to such a waif as himself by kind people in the United States. This must needs arise from sheer courtesy. We are not half so civil to our cousins when they come here as they are to us in their own land. Perhaps with extended intercourse this minute politeness is dying out, undue advantage having been taken of it. I shall, however, never forget the more than civility of the first host I saw on landing at New York some twenty years ago. It is true that Longfellow joined us as we sat down to meat, but that makes my remark all the more just. No doubt the landlord brought a bottle of his best champagne freely out, because the great man spoke to us. But what made the poet do that, and afterwards (though we had no introduction whatever to him) invite my friend and myself to visit him at Boston? He simply went out of his way to be courteous, because we happened to have been for a short time his companions in commonplace travel.



Let me return to Switzerland for a moment before finishing my little say about a tourist's recollections. I am struck as I look back and think of the strength as well as skill of some Alpine climbers. Once I had been out for a long day with Professor Tydall (it was on the memorable occasion when he recovered his watch which had been lost for a fortnight in an avalanche), and on our way back we paused on the top of a stony ridge which jutted out into the sea of ice. There were three or four in our party, which was supposed to be led by 'Jenni,' a well known Engadine guide. 'Let us race down,' some one said, and away we went, easing our descent by the alpenstocks or ice axes which we carried. But the Professor, tying the sleeves of his coat together, quietly stuck the handle of his axe through them over his shoulder, and 'ran' straight down. This, to me, appears more remarkable than many a celebrated feat. The slope was broken, long and steep. I noticed that even Jenni aided or relieved himself with his stick as he descended to the edge of the glacier. But—there—some of these Alpine gentlemen have got the knees of goats, and it is not unpleasant to think or believe that they really lead the world in climbing uphill. There are not many European peaks left to be 'bagged' now. Nevertheless I have an outstanding engagement with my friend Mr. Whymper to make an ascent under conditions which I fancy have never been tested. We propose to climb (inside) the dome of St. Paul's some day, when we have reason to believe that only a thin cloak of fog is laid over London. He says that we shall probably be repaid by an exceptionally interesting view, since the covering of the city will entirely shut it out, and we (standing in sunshine) shall look down on a floor of yellow cloud resonant with the iron hum of a lower world, but pricked with spires and musical with their unseen chime. But we have not found a promising day yet, though there have been fogs.

In recalling many agreeable visits to Switzerland, I have often thought how profoundly unpleasant its 'best' (stoniest, coldest, and most inaccessible) parts must have been to the native who loves money, but made little till the tourist came. Some talk of the home-sickness of the Swiss. Nevertheless, no people have been more ready to sell themselves to strangers in other lands, either as soldiers on the field of battle or servants in hotels. If it were not for the Alpine Club and its following, they would gladly make the Bernese Oberland into cornfields, and greedily

exchange the Matterhorn for its weight in dung. As it is, they fence their picturesque chalets with mountains of muck, and by an insistent closing of their windows manage to corrupt the air they nightly breathe in the sweetest of 'health resorts.' For sour domestic atmosphere commend me to Norway and Switzerland. No wonder the faces of the people are mostly yellow, and often idiotic. But I must not speak evil of Switzerland, though its best known routes are now so frequented that the appetite of the tourist for its scenery and open air is sadly marred by the fear that he may have nowhere to bestow himself at night, except perhaps in some stale saloon or goat-smelling loft over a stable. I much wonder that some sturdy tourists (rebellng against the dressiness and cost of 'hotels'), do not take their *own tents*, and snap their fingers at the highland tyranny of these days. They must combine with this courage a resolute fidelity to shooting jackets, and resistance to the dinner 'toilette' demands which are now too common and insistent. People have no idea how comfortable a tent may be. But perhaps the 'commune' would forbid its use. For liberty don't invariably commend me to a republic. These touring afterthoughts, however, are endless. If out of England, in one direction, among the lees of a past world, memories of Rome when Garibaldi was to the fore, and of Naples when King Bomba's days were numbered, come back freshly to the mind; and in another, on a newly settled Pacific coast, I recall speculations about Californian energy, Chinese perseverance, and opium-smelling theatres.

But these are sheer holiday thoughts, and I want to realise and retouch one or two home impressions received in the 'trivial round and common task' of a London parson. People, I fancy, do not always apprehend that he is sometimes usefully engaged, and that, possibly, a few of the wholesome rivulets of life have been fostered and guided by his care. They are indeed the countless lesser ties which hold society together. When Gulliver was made prisoner in Lilliput, he was so fastened down with small cords that he could not even turn on his side. And in like manner, though the multiplication of irritating restrictions may delay the enjoyment of desirable relief, the restraint of minute and wholesome social bonds may retard or stop a dangerous revolution. People see the parson busied in what they are pleased to call the petty affairs of life, and perhaps think them beneath the august claims of his office, forgetting that if the Almighty



Himself did not (so to speak) look after little things, such as, *e.g.*, drops of rain as well as oceans, and the commonplace application of those laws by which only a kettle can be boiled, a shirt made (involving transatlantic labour, the oceanic voyages of big ships, and the home industry of many looms and needles), and a cabbage grown, the world of men would be in sore straits. The true divine position is filled by him or her who is concerned in the smallest as well as the greatest things. Details govern the cosmos, and though I am as far as possible from claiming any exclusive position or influence for the clergyman, it so happens that it would be difficult to find anyone who had a greater mixture of matters to see to than he who is now a minister of what is called the Establishment. The scale may be small, but it is curiously comprehensive. Of course there are situations in which he is brought into official contact with no corporate life. He may have what is irreverently called little more than a 'preaching shop,' but the 'rector' of a parish is compelled to be affected by as many interests as his parishioners. In many instances his office is inevitably magisterial, as when he presides (as he should) at the vestry, which looks after the civic concerns of perhaps thousands. He is the moving spirit or ultimate appeal in most parochial entertainments. He is probably the chief promoter and director of the educational, sanitary, and charitable machinery of the place. And in all this, so long as the Church is established, he has no choice. He is taken to task by some who carp at him as an arbitrary despot or insidious sacerdotalist, but (unless he shirks his work) he can't help himself. He must needs turn his mind to the worship of the sanctuary and the paving of the streets (for this is brought before him as he sits in the big vestry chair). He gives his best attention to the diocesan conference and the committee of the cricket club. He is anxious about noisy public meetings and the private visitation of the sick. He prepares sermons, and signs orders for the cleansing of some sinner's back yard. He interviews the bishop and the charitable impostor. He teaches in the old school, and inspects the newly made sewer. And the manifold ways in which he is appealed to (not by any means idly or in vain) would exceed the conjectures of those who would sneer at him as a Jack of all trades and master of none.

When I look over my meagre journal (mostly in the shape of entries in successive almanacs), the 'mems' about coming duties become 'memoranda' of the past, and I see a succession of what

might be called respectable failures. One (I might have referred to it while writing of Switzerland) reminds me by its blotted leaves that mountain tourists should not take a stray goatherd as a guide, nor, if they intend crossing any ice, neglect to have nails in their shoes. The diary in question is smudged by reason of my pockets having been filled with snow. I was staying at Mürren, and set off with a friend rather late one day to ascend the Schilthorn. It is a simple business, but as we began to descend we thought we could make a short cut by crossing what is called a 'bastard' glacier, really a great patch of frozen snow, often found beneath the summits of low mountains. Our goatherd said it was quite easy, and we followed him. But we neither of us had nails in our shoes, and had not gone more than a dozen yards on the snow (a sloping sheet of rough white ice) before we lost our footing, and began to slide down. Our 'guide' tried to stop me (he was somewhat below us) by planting his own shod feet firmly on the slippery surface, and making a tripod with his alpenstock. He stood thus somewhat like a 'triangle' at which garotters are flogged, and awaited my descent. By this time I was on my back, and descending at a great pace. The check he calculated on providing was summarily made useless by my (inevitably) striking his feet and staff from beneath him, and going on to the bottom in a tangle of goatherd, sticks, and complicated legs. Fortunately there was no rock at the foot of the 'bastard' glacier, but a level floor of snow. Into this we were shot, and my pockets were filled with it. Hence the diary of that year looks as if it had been dipped in water, for the snow (unappreciated at first) presently melted like the money of a spendthrift. The obvious moral of this mishap is, 'Don't go on any mountain ice without nails in your shoes, and don't trust every volunteer goatherd as a guide.'

But let me say a word about the failures of another sort to which my diary bears different testimony. They are not all empty shells, without the flavour of even dead fish in them; they rather, I am sure, indicate things which still have to be done. Much good work is a succession of experiments and attempts. The missing of a mark is no inevitable disgrace. On the contrary, it sometimes shows that there is a desirable mark to be aimed at. Imperfection is a law of life, while disappointment is the companion of hope. Real progress and righteous movement often bring pain, as the good broom stirs dust. They are the dead who lie still and give no trouble. But the man who always expects



to be immediately thanked for his efforts, or at least for his honest intention to do what he believes to be right, lives in a state of continuous disillusion. Is he a peacemaker? Blessedness is not the immediate result of his endeavours. Both sides probably turn upon him. Now, I am not going, I hope, to be ecclesiastically tiresome, if I give an example of this from clerical experience. Years ago a very distinguished clergyman was about to be prosecuted under the Public Worship Act, which is now being used in the case of the Bishop of Lincoln. Everything was ready. The evidence of the 'aggrieved parishioners' was set in order. Nothing was needed (so to speak) but the cutting of a cord. Then the whole business would have been irrevocably launched into the ocean of law. Fact. It would have been probably the most celebrated case in the whole course of similar modern ecclesiastical litigation. Now, I myself am no 'Ritualist,' though I honour a devoted man, with whatever name he may be ticketed, and when I heard of this ripened prosecution, this hitherto silent, but loaded battery, I was tempted to intervene, for I thought the defendant (I by no means held his views on the points in dispute) was not being treated fairly. How to begin I hardly knew. I had no legal right whatever to act, but I was acquainted with some on both sides of the line (not yet crossed), and was asked to move in the matter. I began by consulting a directory, calling a hansom, and driving to the offices of the Church Association. Arrived there, I requested an interview with their secretary, and saw him. He had the gout, one of his feet being unshod, and tilted up on a 'rest.' Now that I look back on that interview, I fear that I must have made him worse. I forget what I said. I know I was with him some three quarters of an hour, during which time I hit and pleaded as hard as I could. He was most kind and courteous, showing me, in ominous documents covered with legal handwriting and phraseology (these were on the table at his elbow), that the matter had gone too far to be stopped. I stayed as long as I dared, and feeling that I could succeed only by cutting the ground from under his (poor gouty) feet, went next for the aggrieved parishioners (or enough of them) themselves. There were three. One was very tough. But at last I persuaded the other two to reconsider the matter. What did they want me to do? Well, withdraw their names from the prosecution. How? Write what I suggested. So I brought cut pen and paper, and dictated a surrender, which I took to the

bishop of the diocese. Thus the whole thing collapsed, and (now comes my point) I began to hear both sides. One was naturally provoked. Neither officers nor crew like to have their ship sunk just before going into action. Divers of the others, moreover, who were let off, presently remarked that such a prosecution, 'if it had only been allowed to go on,' would have 'worked for the good' of the Church, &c., &c. Perhaps they were right. The case would have been (unquestionably) so conspicuous, the 'parties' were so well known, and then (for several reasons) so pointedly before the secular and ecclesiastical world, that this trial must have brought matters to a head one way or another. And thus, possibly, my peacemaking was a mistake. There were not wanting those on both sides to tell me so. However, anyhow, I had an honestly enjoyable (though short) bout of singlehanded impact with an ironclad and (whatever the victory was worth) it was sent to the bottom.

Talking of the small thanks to be expected from any side when a man tries to intervene, I recall another effort. It was intended to simplify agricultural procedure, and brought no thanks. Indeed, after giving me a world of trouble, it seemingly produced no results whatever. This also illustrates the manifold nature of a parson's work. I was drawn into it by seeing (with prolonged and provoking observation) two features or aspects of agricultural distress. One was a hampering of the producer through the nature and conduct of the market he employed, and the other an undue (so I deemed it) taxing of the peasant consumer's means. I perhaps foolishly thought that something might be done, not only to improve the condition of friends and neighbours in several conditions of life, but towards the setting up of a better public action in the whole matter. I tried and failed, at least for a season. The real stumbling-block came from the 'middleman,' or rather the 'middlemen.' There is a line of these industrious gentry down which the produce of the soil is handed, so that every one of them may take a bite before it reaches the mouth of the consumer. I ventured to suggest that a band of farmers should set up shops of their own, not after a back-street one-horse sort of fashion in the nearest little market, but openly in the largest towns of two or three contiguous counties. Moreover, seeing that the part of the country I knew best was traversed by pedlars' carts selling small goods at large prices, I urged a distribution (at first hand) of butter, poultry, and other small produce



by wheel and axle around each agricultural centre. I also suggested that a store or depôt, common to as wide a district as could be tapped, should be provided close to the nearest railway station, in order to facilitate the collection of produce destined for more distant markets. Of course everybody rightly wanted 'details.' These I could not give, but I felt there was something (or rather a great deal) 'in it.' Well, we had the largest meeting of farmers that had been held for some time in those parts, with a county member in the chair, and a good show of (as I thought only local) reporters. To cut the matter short, like Solomon's 'soul of the sluggard,' who 'desireth and hath nothing,' we formed committees and failed. The air was full of middlemen. Everybody had a middleman as a father, uncle, brother, brother-in-law, or cousin. The middleman sat upon us. The county papers backed me up feebly, *i.e.* uselessly, and the only good and full report of my address reached me at last from Canada, where a Montreal paper did the suggestion justice. My neighbours (capital fellows) looked on me as a (happily harmless) enthusiast, but they thought that I was stepping (as a parson) rather over my line when I was only showing how they might better fulfil the earliest Divine injunction to 'have dominion' over the earth which they tilled, and thus was preaching to them an excellent sermon. Experts in the distribution of food, including Mr. Tallerman, came from London and elsewhere to support me, but the thing passed off almost as soon as the smoke from the pipes which were smoked while we talked.

But I do not despair. We were on the right track, and some day there will be a revision of the needlessly complicated commissariat of England. Now it is almost grotesquely hampered. Even the present weights and measures which (like money) were invented for the purpose of superseding sheer barter and facilitating trade, in some places only confuse it, *e.g.*, I forget how many 'pounds' go to a 'stone' in different English country markets. The simplicity of life associated with this primitive state of things has nevertheless its righteous sides. Men trust one another. Their word is as good as their bond. Once when I lived in the country and did a little farming, I sold some produce to a small local trader, and on his paying me sent him (by post) a receipt for the money. He didn't exactly know what to do with it, and so brought it back to me, countersigned by himself. He intimated moreover that those he commonly dealt with were used to believe one another. But the innocence of country mice is

sometimes matched by that of such city ones as realise no conditions beyond those of brick and mortar. They don't even always apprehend that a rural friend's house is often miles distant from a telegraph office. One summer when I had left London, the 'locum tenens' 'in charge' of my parish 'wired' the unpleasant information that a man was ill of cholera. The messenger came on horseback, and had to be paid liberally. But his horse had no sooner begun to cool than another came (in a lather), saying that, after all, it was only a case of commonplace stomach-ache. My helper was an intensely urban 'locum tenens.' This personage sometimes puzzles the rustic as much as rustic life puzzled my man. I heard of a friend who called on a country parson while he was taking his holiday at Scarborough, and had left a substitute in his house. 'Master in?' said the caller to the page. 'No, sir, but the local demon is.' This youth (son of Hodge) had passed the sixth standard, and overheard conversation imperfectly.

Let me return to my train of failures. Some were, of course, shared by others at the time. I shall not soon forget an effort made by a number of clergy, most of whom are still living, to plead for concurrent endowment, when Mr. Gladstone set about disestablishing the Irish Church. A distinguished nobleman had undertaken to bring our views forward in the House of Lords, and I was charged with the delivery to him of some address we had drawn up. I went by desire to his private address. He contemplated the business warmly, and I said I would take the document to him at his public one, *i.e.* St. Stephen's. No, he would have it at once, and eventually carried it off. Presently we were told that he had delivered his speech upon it before the reporters had settled themselves to their work. Thus our labour was, so far, lost to the world. But it was, after all, a protest rather than a hopeful plea; the thing had gone too far.

Of all prospects of promising personal support, I shall always look back upon the missed co-operation of General Gordon with most regret. He wrote to me (we had common friends), proposing to work with myself in certain social toil, of which my hands were full. I have a letter of his before me now, in which he simply says: 'I am accustomed to visit the sick poor. . . . I like visiting them and comforting them, to the degree that God the Comforter gives me the power.' Then he adds: 'I like to work quietly, and not to be led into the circles of fashionable



religion.' It was a sore disappointment to me, and loss to my needy friends, that he had no sooner settled to join me in those commonplace labours with which every parson is familiar, than he was called off to another part of the world, and England saw him no more.

Letters! I had opened a bundle containing his which had been laid by for a long time, and stopped to read some of them. What a stream of pleasant recollections began to flow as I glanced at one after another! In that same packet, as I turned it over, I came on two which I value much, one from John Brown (Rab and his friends), and another from Barnes (the Dorset poet), whose books I had been reviewing in a well-known magazine long before they were fully appreciated by the world. They are both too personal for quotation, but stir with life. The whole parcel indeed (mostly from well-known though not magnificent personages) refuses to provide extracts. How very soon (in these days) letters grow old! I sometimes fancy, however, that their own late past accounts in some measure for their accelerated age. The penny post was established in 1839, and then that pulse began to beat which has made the last fifty years big with change. What advances have been made in the political condition and procedure of the people during that period! I will not, however, be drawn into setting down a catalogue of these arrivals. Suffice it to say that in the next year 'Punch' was conceived (it was born in 1841), and immediately became a contemporaneous historian of society, rapidly gathering up into itself the isolated 'squib-making' 'caricature-drawing' rivulets of genius which had then appeared, and becoming presently the leader (still far ahead) of a procession of (so called) 'comic' papers. But 'Punch' is no more radically 'comic' than the penny postage. We do not, *e. g.*, 'laugh' at those of its cartoons which we like most, and which we feel to be its truest utterances. Even Leech was never 'funny,' though he might have made a statue chuckle, and stirred those spices of humour and pathos which are happily to be found within many a sad soul. If even 'in laughter the heart is sorrowful,' how often has a gravely troublous mood been visited by a touch of what Mrs. Grundy might think ill-timed, but the sufferer feels to be wholesome and welcome salt. No one of his kind and generation had that power of quickening a depressed or sulky spirit with a smile (and yet without offence) which Leech possessed.

But let that pass. The last half-century has wrought transformations in social conduct which the parson (though he may not

personally be able to apprehend its fulness except by observations taken within its later half) sees to have affected his own business more perhaps than that of any surviving profession or calling. The changes I refer to are chiefly to be seen in that subdividing of obedience which accompanies a multitude of sumptuary rules. These, and the societies which display them (a post seldom passes without depositing the prospectus of some new association in my letter box), are intended in all good faith to promote righteousness, but in some instances inevitably provide fresh occasion for offence. Like the 'mixed multitude' which (according to the sacred record) accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt, an insistent crowd of irregular regulations follow the leading decrees of the Divine Legislator. The moral law is hustled by a mob of importunate ceremonies. It would seem that we are relapsing into the minuteness of Mosaic economy. The social ordinances of these later days put the ten commandments in the shade. The negative character alone of these last seems to be retained. It is now (as of old) not 'Thou shalt,' but 'Thou shalt not.' The ancient law departs, not to make room for a message of Christian freedom and individual responsibility, but because it is smothered under a heap of modern prohibitions. They say that the soldier's 'drill' is being simplified, and if so, I could wish that privates in the Church Militant were as fortunate as Tommy Atkins in this respect.

The spectacle of eagerness to lay fresh sumptuary injunctions upon us (accentuated occasionally by the lamentations of a brat at seeing his father drink half a pint of ale) is, however, sometimes relieved by an incident such as the following, which I can relate from experience:—I was staying with a 'temperate' friend in the West of England, who one day was summoned from his luncheon to see an unexpected 'deputation.' On his return to the dining-room with a smile on his face, I asked him what had caused it. He explained. The leader of the party (which was a teetotal one) had urged upon him that however occasionally it might be permitted, there was no Scriptural 'recommendation' of alcohol. My friend demurred, remarking that St. Paul is recorded to have written to his young friend Timothy, 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities.' 'Oh! sir,' replied the chief speaker, 'excuse me, but the word is "used," and means external application only.' Picture a party sending the wine round in a basin, and a host saying 'Fill your sponges, gentlemen, let's have



another dab.' My friend forgot to ask whether this bidden use of wine barred the 'outward' employment of water.

Let me relate another abstaining anecdote. I have many teetotal friends, and respect their practice though I reject their theories, for I believe that temperance or 'balance' is the true Divine law pervading the economy of the world. Anyhow, extremists are none the worse for being laughed at a little. It often makes them angry, but it helps to dissipate the atmosphere of fictitious sanctity which is apt to gather around any act of self-denial which may be as misleading as it is sincere. The small story I was thinking of is as follows:—Not long ago I met an acquaintance with a rueful face, and asked him what it meant. 'Why this,' said he, 'I've been dining with Canon X——' (not treble), 'and had some wine.' 'How so?' I replied, knowing that the dignitary in question was a distinguished teetotaler, and also a vegetarian. 'Well,' my friend rejoined (he didn't look it), 'we had some meat.' Under the circumstances I thought that this was commendable. 'And some wine. He said it was foreign wine, which sounded odd. . . . Still, . . . I drank a glass. . . and then he said, "It is Not fermented." That,' added my friend, 'was a fortnight ago. But it has fermented ever since.' For nasty liquors commend me to a thirsty and inquiring total abstainer. Did you ever try a bottle of zoedone? It made me think of Thackeray's remark when he had been persuaded to gulp down a particularly large oyster. 'I feel,' he said, 'as if I had swallowed a baby.' One particular 'beverage' is, they say, apt to engender rheumatism, and make the head ache without making the heart glad. Good water is the best abstaining drink. Moderate men laugh at unfermented subterfuges, and wish that prohibitory extremists would better realise effects, and estimate more correctly the value of their witness to the cause they advocate. They do not always apprehend this; *e.g.*, when a vegetarian neighbour lately said to me, 'My digestion is good, and I always have an excellent appetite,' I couldn't help feeling that this last fruit of abstinence, at any rate, was more inevitable than praiseworthy. Perhaps his powers of assimilation would be even better for a little more varied exercise, and he himself, vexed by the social problems of the day, might not be harmed by feeling fully satisfied for once in his life.

This is an age of conferences (I dare say there is one of 'mutes'), and it is to be wished that all justified their name better, for in

some those only 'confer' who look at facts from the same level of life. Take, *e. g.*, a provincial 'diocesan' one. There important questions of the day, social and religious, involving the condition of the people at large, and especially that of the peasant, are set down for consideration. By whom? Chiefly parsons and squires, with a sprinkling of tenant farmers. Now, I hope I shall not be supposed to undervalue the services of these gentry. They are obviously essential elements of the assemblage, and are picked high-minded men, anxious to do right. But among the right things to be done the inclusion of Hodge in the discussion is in most cases virtually omitted. Those who are gathered together talk about him abundantly. They discuss his lodgment, education, religious instruction, and all the rest of it. But they meet and separate without ascertaining from him himself what he thinks about these things. Perhaps some model peasant is induced to be present and say a few words, whereas I should like to know the views of those who are not models, and who (so far as their opinion of the matter is concerned) are really a class apart. It may be said that it is most difficult to get at their minds. Nevertheless they have their own notions about the subjects under discussion, and if these are not elicited the conference (as a true personal interchange of convictions and wishes) either closely approaches a sham, or sends the delegates away more than ever confirmed in their own judgment. It may be urged that the opinions of the working man appear in the publications which are most popular with his class, and that there is therefore no need to bid him to a conference. The others already know what he thinks. But it may be replied that the opinions of the educated might also be gathered from the current and other literature they affect, and that therefore there is no need for them to 'confer.' There is, however, an undefinable interchange of sentiment in a 'conference' which can be realised by no other means. Indeed, it is because the opinions of various classes are supposed to be well known, that their personal meeting is desirable; but no social or religious conference deserves the name when the genuine representatives of any section of society are absent. If the working man met others freely on these occasions, he might discover much that he could have learnt by no private assurance or printed channels. He might also give as well as receive. The educated have divers things to learn from the uneducated whom they glibly lecture. For instance, I am sure that a careless manager who professes to have a difficulty in making ends meet, though he has



an income of some hundreds a year, might get a wrinkle from a ploughman who brings up a healthy and respectable family on twelve or fourteen shillings a week. Hodge is an authority about 'thrift,' and ought to be heard on this head in the discussion of social questions at every diocesan conference.

Take the 'Church Congress' again, which is the same thing on a larger scale. For years this has been either finished up by one 'working man's' meeting, or accompanied by several spread over the week. On these occasions the best popular ecclesiastical authorities are chosen to read papers or speak, and 'working men,' perhaps admitted by tickets given through the clergy and employers of labour, are 'talked to.' Their opinions are measured by the applause evoked. But the congress can never be genuine till its different sections are so far counted on a level as occasionally to change places. I should like to see the platform put sometimes at the disposal of the labourer, and the body of the hall filled with the conventional 'members' of the congress. Turn about is fair play. Let the opening papers or addresses be then furnished by working men who have had time given them to put their thoughts together. I have attended several of these congresses as a 'selected' speaker or reader, and I have always been haunted by the desire and hope that some day this might be done. Working men have plenty to say to one another about the matters on which others hold forth. Why can't arrangements be made for bishops, clergy, and leading educated Church laymen to sit below in turn, and hear the deliberately felt and formulated opinions of the poorer sort of people? With some honest pains on the part of the managers of its meetings, the thing might be done. It would bring a fresh whiff into the traditional atmosphere of the whole business. Even the attempt would give it an air of reality which it now lacks. 'Labour' conferences indicate that there need be no great eventual difficulty in getting labourers to express themselves, and a row of ecclesiastical dignitaries talked to seriously by ploughmen, carpenters, shoemakers, railway porters, and omnibus drivers might be more than a fresh spectacle in the conduct of 'diocesan conferences,' or so-called 'congresses' of the Church. Though the voice of Demos is now heard in the land, it is his real mind about the ecclesiastical situation which the parson should be most concerned to know, and this would be felt with unique effect by means of an outspoken opening address or paper from the lips of a labourer on the platform of a congress. His stammering speech of five minutes at the tail of a meeting (however

invited by the chairman) is only a lame concession to the supposed desire that he should be heard. He should take his turn at leading off, but the slowness with which many men of all views recognise his potential place in the national fabric may come to be remembered as the political puzzle of our day.

As I look back over a generation with a clerical eye, I seem to see too many beggars among my brethren. At least the world is pleased to assume that they are especially pertinacious, but if people only knew how hateful it is to ask for money, even in order to do good, they will wonder why parsons did not hail the advent of, say rate-built schools, the moment their provision was suggested. But in fact the much-abused clerical narrowness and obstinacy is mostly an honest stubborn conscientiousness. The parson has nothing personally to gain by most of his appeals, and sometimes he does an unexpected service by his wakeful insistances, like the man who laid the Cornish ghost. We all know the old story. A clergyman bent on educational progress was invited to visit a hospitable squire, whose old house had a haunted room. He arrived very late at night, and, by the inadvertence of a new and ignorant servant, was shown into this ghost chamber, where he slept. The good squire was vexed the next morning to learn that his guest had been so disposed of, and anxiously expressed a hope that he had had a good night. 'Excellent,' replied the visitor; 'but curiously enough some one came into my room (though I thought I had locked my door) directly after I had put my candle out and got into bed. It was just twelve o'clock, for I heard the hour strike.' (This of course was the ghost.) 'Well,' inquired the host, 'and what did he do?' 'Oh! nothing; hearing him come in, and thinking that he might be wishing to see me about the business which brought me here, I sat up and said, "I have not the pleasure of knowing you, sir." Then I added, "I hope, however, that I shall have the happiness of putting your name down for a donation to my new schools. But he only walked out."' And he has not been heard of again. The forms of exorcism, however, are not always so gentle. I think of the fellow who had terrified a country parish by appearing at such unseasonable hours in white that the most courageous among his neighbours at last stoned the supposed apparition with such effect that he disclosed himself. His plea, however, was unexpected. 'It is hard,' he said, 'that a man cannot put on a clean shirt without having such a fuss made about him.'



*REAL ESTATE IN VOLCANIC REGIONS.*

OF all forms of rash speculation in real estate, it would be difficult to conceive any to exceed that of investing in land riddled with boiling springs, and in the immediate neighbourhood of an active volcano. Nevertheless from divers motives—either the desire of immediate gain to be reaped from wonder-seeking travellers—from the fertility of volcanic soil so soon as wind and rain have accomplished the work of disintegration—or else from idleness, which gladly profits by the saving of domestic labour in a region where nature does all the cooking and all the washing, with small assistance from human hands—such places are almost invariably selected as ‘home’ by a certain number of happy-go-lucky persons; and their children, born and bred amid awful volcanic surroundings, accept them as a matter of course, till some appalling catastrophe occurs, and sudden destruction overwhelms them all.

In most of these regions we find only such simple homes as might readily be replaced should the inmates chance to survive; but the spirit of gambling in volcanic property may certainly be assumed to have reached its height when it leads to the erection of such splendid hotels as have sprung into existence in the Great Yellow Stone (alias Sulphur) region of North America. There at least one large and most luxurious hotel has been erected actually upon the terrace of white silica deposited by a geyser now apparently extinct—an assumption which is so entirely accepted as fact, that the funnel of the geyser is utilised as the very convenient main sewer of the hotel! The results, if that geyser should prove to be only dormant, and should resent having its throat thus tickled, are too terrible to contemplate, and everyone who has studied the habits of these capricious boiling fountains must be aware that such a reawakening is quite within the bounds of probability.

Nor is it necessary that the individual geyser should reassert its claim to the funnel of its own construction. It is even more probable that its injured dignity will be vindicated by some irascible neighbour, either by a steam explosion or by an eruption of molten rock and ashes, according to the wet or dry nature of

the aggressor. Possibly both causes may combine, as in the appalling outburst which two years ago overwhelmed the peaceful Maori villages on the shores of beautiful Lake Tarawera in New Zealand. Some were buried twenty feet deep beneath the showers of red-hot ashes suddenly ejected by the long-dormant mountain, whose summit had for eight hundred years been deemed the most secure resting-place for the dead warriors of the tribe; others were smothered beneath the dense volumes of scalding mud suddenly precipitated far and wide over the country, as with one fearful burst the whole basin of Lake Rotomahana, 'the Hot Lake,' was blown up as if by an appalling boiler explosion.

Never was 'sudden destruction' more vividly illustrated. The sun had set in cloudless glory, and the villagers lay down to rest as free from dread of impending danger as the water-fowl which dwelt securely among the reeds on the sedgy shores of the placid lake, whose waters were warmed by scores of boiling springs rising from the bed of the lake, or pouring into it from the geysers which burst from a thousand fissures on the surrounding hills. Some of these, by their ceaseless deposit through unknown centuries, had built up those fairy-like terraces of snow-white or pale salmon-coloured silica, forming innumerable shell-like baths, each differing from all the others in form and depth, and in the temperature of the exquisitely blue water, which of course gradually cooled as it neared the level of the lake, receding from the boiling geyser.

The clouds of white vapour rising here, there, and everywhere, through the dark scrub which clothed the steaming hills, marked the site of geysers of every conceivable chemical combination, many of which had, by a judicious blending of hot and cold streams, been made to supply *al fresco* baths to which many generations of Maories had brought their sick that they might be healed at nature's free dispensary. So here, sulphur baths, mud baths, and many more offered themselves in endless variety, affording all manner of new sensations in the way of baths to those curious in such matters, and while the comfort of a warm mud bath by moonlight was certainly an unexpected pleasure to those who had the courage to plunge into it, all bathers agreed in awarding the palm of luxury to the lovely blue waters so densely charged with silica as to make the human body feel on emerging as if coated with smoothest satin.

The very limited number of foreigners who visited this Won-



derland generally spent the nights at the village of Wairoa, a village which might surely have been deemed secure, being situated on a green hill at a distance of several miles from any hot springs. Comparatively few visitors went to the expense of hiring tents and pitching their camp on the very brink of the lake, there to spend such days and nights of delight as to me must for evermore remain stamped on memory as altogether unique among the reminiscences of many years of travel in many lands.

But since the acquisition by the British Government of the whole 'Hot Springs' region, and the commencement of a systematic sanatorium on the shores of Lake Rotorua, Europeans have become venturesome in the purchase of volcanic property, and houses and hotels have sprung up on land saturated with the steam of innumerable boiling springs. In truth, the site of the Maori village of Ohinemutu and the new European township of Rotorua seems quite as closely connected with the subterranean laboratory as were the shores of Rotomahana itself, so that it was but a small advance in volcanic gambling which planned the erection of an hotel on the very brink of one of the beautiful white terraces—a site which would assuredly have secured a constant succession of visitors. It is said that the contract for building this hotel had actually been signed ere that awful night on which the lake, with its strangely fascinating shores, was blown clean out of existence, overwhelming even the distant village of Wairoa beneath deep layers of scalding mud, while in the midst of the general chaos builders of a very different order—namely, groups of horrid craters—piled up their own unsightly chimneys on the very site selected for the hotel.

In the immediate presence of such a catastrophe it seems scarcely credible that human beings should be willing again to face the same risks. Yet experience teaches the same lesson in all lands. After a brief period of startled bewilderment, the volcanic gamblers begin to reckon the chances against another outburst in the same place, and notwithstanding such terrible warning as that of the second awful catastrophe at Ischia against attempting to apply any law, even of chance, to agents so utterly capricious as these, the very uncertainty seems to offer an additional fascination to these rash speculators, and so homes and travellers' rest-houses are rebuilt as before, and the old careless life is soon resumed amid pools and localities which only too frequently are distin-

guished by names borrowed from those whereby men of diverse creeds and diverse race describe the infernal regions.

As a matter of course such terms are most forcible and most abundantly scattered where the Anglo-Saxon race have possessed themselves of those awful tracts of country in North America, where countless geysers pour their scalding waters into rivers which rush unseen through the depth of gloomy canyons—regions where of old the reverent Indians scarcely dared to penetrate, but where now scientific men and wonder-seekers in general wander at will. There such names as Hell's Acre, the Devil's Cauldron, the Devil's Porridge Pot, and a thousand similar terms, however expressive, become wearisome by their reiteration in California, Wyoming, and elsewhere in the States.

But much as we must regret the substitution of these coarse epithets for the poetic and almost invariably descriptive Indian names, the bestowing of such is by no means peculiar to our own race. The Buddhist who exhausts all the resources of art and language to illustrate the horrors of the seven Hells is not likely to let slip any natural illustration of such a subject, and so, even in charming Japan, where the most picturesque villages and the daintiest tea-houses attract travellers to numerous natural hot baths in all parts of the group, the source of many of these springs both in the Northern and the Southern Isle bears the suggestive title of Ko-ji-koku or O-ji-goku—*i.e.* the Little or the Great Hell, while one such spot in the neighbourhood of Nagasaki is distinguished as the Chiū-to-Ji-goku, or the Middle-Class Hell. One beautiful geyser in the neighbourhood of the latter is known as the Dai-kiō-kwan, 'the Loud Wailing,' as suggesting the anguish of souls in Purgatory.

The stern reality of such lessons as have in the last few years been taught by the reawakening in awful might of volcanoes which for many centuries have been deemed extinct has effectually disproved the theories which assumed that the existence of thermal springs apart from active volcanic eruption marks the last lingering effort of a dying force. Now we know too well that the fires which still suffice to boil these cauldrons may at any moment produce awful steam explosions, even more horrible than the eruption of clean molten rock and burning ashes (not that there is really much to choose between such terrible alternatives, as our fellow-subjects in New Zealand so dearly proved when simultaneously assailed by both).



The summer of 1888 repeated the lesson in an even more impressive manner, for whereas the doom of the Maori villages was preceded by the sudden eruption of fire and red-hot rock from the summit of Mount Tarawera, nothing whatever was visible on that calm summer morning when, suddenly as the explosion of a cannon, Bandai-san, after slumbering for eleven centuries, suddenly reasserted its claim to a place in the catalogue of the world's destroying forces by blowing off one of its own huge cones, and thereby destroying thirty square miles of country and six hundred human beings.

The only trace of its connection with subterranean fires not yet wholly extinguished had been a group of three solfatara lying at the base of Sho-Bandai-san, one of the subordinate peaks of the mountain, which had so long been at rest that from the base to the summit it was clothed with richest vegetation, in the midst of which nestled the picturesque groups of châteaux which clustered around the boiling springs, forming the spa-villages of Shimonoyu, Kawa-kami, Iwahashi, and Nako-no-yu. These were favourite resorts, not only for invalids who came thither to drink and bathe in the healing waters, but for pleasure-seekers who delighted in lovely scenery and delicious hot baths, finding accommodation in the simple but well-appointed inns which so fascinate travellers in that charming country.

A people who so delight in social bathing naturally make the most of the hot springs which are found in so many parts of the Empire, and surround them with quaint gardens and other pretty and characteristic details. Several of the attractive watering-places lie within such easy reach of Yokohama as to render them familiar to all foreign residents, as a pleasant object for a delightful excursion, and in Japan such excursions imply innumerable minor points of interest.

Thus my own recollections of visiting certain boiling springs near the base of Fuji-yama in the month of August are as a kaleidoscope wherein blend the quaintest medley of processions of pilgrims, tea-house scenes, driving along beautiful sea-coasts, and watching pretty girls devour raw little octopi and other extraordinary food, or passing beneath stately avenues of pine and cryptomeria, past whole fields of lovely tall white lilies, grown as we grow potatoes for the sake of their roots, and then past ponds devoted to the sacred lotus, whose magnificent rose or lemon-coloured blossoms peeped from among the great blue-green leaves,

rising to a height of three or four feet above the water. And on and on, through villages where crowds of children and grown-up folk too were celebrating a quaint mythological festival in such pretty fanciful fashion as seemed to suggest some fairy tale rather than a page of prosaic life.

And then we halted for the night at the charmingly primitive tea-house of Sen-goko-yu in the heart of the beautiful forest, to which water is brought in bamboo pipes from boiling sulphur springs at a higher level, and is cooled in rude but effective baths. One of these was given up to our exclusive use, drained, refilled, and screened in deference to our foreign prejudice, and here we revelled in peace and boiled away all the aches and fatigues of our long day's journey. Then our courteous hostess arrayed us in cool Japanese dresses from her own wardrobe, and treated us to an excellent Japanese supper.

On the following morning we repeated the sulphur bath with full appreciation of its merits, and then climbed through the forest to visit the sulphur springs—a dreary region where in a hollow between dark wooded hills and red bluffs of crumbling rock pools of boiling sulphur, alum, and iron and clouds of steam rise ceaselessly from a bare expanse of red broken ground. It is a desolate spot in curious contrast to the loveliness all around, for no vegetation grows near the sulphurous pool.

This is one of the districts known to the people as O-jigoku, or the Great Hell, while a neighbouring locality is called the Little Hell. But on the occasion of the Mikado's visit to this spot in 1877 he altered the names to Ko-waki-dani, 'the Valley of the Little Boiling,' and O-waki-dani, 'the Valley of the Great Boiling.'

As beseeemed conscientious travellers, we ignored the vile sulphurous smell and cooked our luncheon in one of the boiling springs (as we had done two years previously in similar springs in New Zealand and in Fiji), and then, braving the choking sulphurous fumes, which made us cough violently, we descended to inspect the process by which sulphur rock is pounded to a fine powder, thrown into furnaces where it becomes a gas, and thence passing through rude retorts, drips in a deep orange-coloured fluid into large vessels, where it becomes pure solid sulphur, of a pale chrome colour, and is then tied up in bundles, wrapped in matting, and these are fastened to wooden backboards, and so carried to the low-country on the backs of little Japanese women. Eventually



this sulphur reaches Yokohama, where it is used in the preparation of mineral baths.

Now, seeing that these various groups of thermal springs lie within a day's march of the summit of the mighty Fuji-yama, it would be rash indeed to assume that though its internal fires have been quiescent since the last great eruption in A.D. 1707, they may not at any moment burst forth in renewed energy, either, as heretofore, pouring down the mountain sides in fiery lava streams, or in the form of an awful steam explosion such as that which has so recently occurred in the province of Iwashiro. At present, however, all is quiet, and the boiling pools of the Great Hell submit to be used as domestic cooking-pots for the boiling of eggs and other good things.

Gladly descending from this uncanny region, we took boat at the head of the lovely Lake Ashi-no-midzu-umi, which means 'the Reedy Lake,' and rowed to the charming village of Hakone, which lies on the shore, and is a favourite summer haunt for foreign residents from Tokio or Yokohama. Thence, one lovely morning, leaving the noble avenue of cryptomerias, we ascended a steep hill, and passing a fine rock-hewn image of Buddha, we reached the village of Ashino-yu, which owes its existence to some celebrated boiling sulphur springs which attract many patients suffering from various skin diseases. The horrid sulphurous smell at this place struck us as so singularly different from the clean smell of sulphur at Sen-goko-yu, that we inquired wherein the waters differed, when we were informed that the pleasant waters owe their virtue to the presence of sulphurous acid, while these, which taint the atmosphere with a suggestion of elderly eggs, are charged with sulphuretted hydrogen.

The situation is altogether unattractive, but the patients and other visitors find good accommodation at several large inns, which provide ample bathing arrangements on the usual social system, but private baths are reserved for exclusive foreigners who object to promiscuous bathing among strangers of both sexes. Further up the mountain lies another group of boiling sulphur springs, and those who wish to visit these must follow steep mountain paths winding over grassy hills and through bamboo thickets. But the ground is crumbling and the footing insecure, and the surroundings somewhat bleak and uninviting, in contrast with almost every turn in a district where every walk is a revelation of new beauties, and where the wealth of wild flowers is of itself a joy.

In August I saw real thistles and bluebells growing side by side with pink, white, and blue hydrangea, lilac and white hybiscus, masses of delicate white clematis and creeping ferns hanging in graceful drapery over many a plant of sturdier growth, and all manner of lilies, greenish and lilac, crimson, orange, and pure white. In some places we came on the splendid *lilium auratum*, flowering in such profusion that the air was too heavily perfumed. Friends who knew the district in spring spoke with positive rapture of the loveliness of the blossoming cherry trees, pink azaleas, and lilac wistaria, to say nothing of the abundance of fragrant violets.

A little nearer to Yokohama we came to the charming village of Miya-no-shita, which likewise owes its primary attraction to some celebrated hot springs, so that it ranks as a fashionable spa. There are also hot springs and bathing establishments at Kinga and Dō-ga-shima, which are very pretty villages in the immediate neighbourhood, on the brink of a rushing river enclosed by richly-wooded hills, and with a thousand details of charming scenery enhanced by Japanese art.

The next group of hot springs we visited lie at a considerable elevation above Nikko the beautiful, where on a solemn mountain, clothed with stately cryptomeria and pines, the magnificent tombs of the Shoguns lie embowered amid camellia trees, art and nature combining to produce the most entrancing combination of grandeur with exquisite prettiness of every detail.

Leaving these marvellous creations we started uphill on seven pack ponies, each led by a little Japanese woman at a slow walk, as indeed was essential, seeing how insecure were our seats, perched on the pack saddles, supported on either side by a roll of baggage, a foot on each side of the pony's neck, and holding on to the middle of the saddle, which has a hole in front for the purpose. This our guides insisted on our grasping all the time, setting all rules of drapery at defiance. The ponies were provided with straw cruppers, and were shod with neat little straw shoes on their forefeet. They proved very gentle and sure-footed, walking up and down whole hills of stairs just like cats.

Our procession was headed by a tiny woman barely four feet high, who led the baggage pony. We met other little women coming down the steep paths carrying babies on their backs, and each leading a couple of ponies heavily laden with wood. We also met many companies of pilgrims returning from the summit.



of the sacred Mount Nan-tai-zan, and hastening to acquire more merit by ascending the still holier summit of Fuji-yama—an act of merit so charming in itself that in the following autumn I likewise scaled the Peerless Mount as a true pilgrim, though the task of climbing to a height of 13,600 feet on my own feet was no light undertaking. This, however, is essential, as no beast is allowed to ascend the Holy Mount, nor may luxurious travellers be carried up.

The pilgrims, who, almost without exception, are men and boys, are nearly all dressed in white, with straw hats like huge mushrooms, straw sandals, cloaks of grass matting as sole protection against heavy rain, a wallet, a gourd to act as water-bottle, and a stout staff to assist their flagging steps on many a weary march. One at least of the company carries a small brass bell which he rings continually, and others carry rosaries and rub their beads while reiterating sacred formulas. They come from all parts of the empire, visiting all the most sacred shrines within their reach.

A considerable number followed us up the hill, so we formed a most picturesque procession on a most picturesque path, as we specially observed on reaching a wide open gulch, where five times, on bridges of lightly laid branches, we crossed and re-crossed a mountain stream of purest aqua-marine, turning to white foam as it rushed down among great boulders. On the gravelly banks grew plants of very tall dark blue monkshood, and trailing vines with scarlet leaves. We noted many hazel bushes but no nuts, cherry trees which blossom but bear no fruit, and chestnuts which do so.

Then we came to a steep hill clothed with pine and oak, bearded with long trails of grey moss. The path is cut into about a thousand feet of stairs, and up most of these we deemed it prudent to walk, and presently we turned aside to see a beautiful waterfall which loses itself in a dark pool 300 feet below, while water percolating through the layers of many-coloured rock trickles in countless small falls. Of course a pretty tea-house invites all wayfarers to rest and drink tiny cups of pale tea at the very spot from which the view is most perfect, and of course all pilgrims and travellers avail themselves of the opportunity.

A little farther, having reached a height of 4,375 feet above the sea, we came to the pretty lake of Chiusenge, which is very like a Scotch loch, but the village is essentially Japanese, consisting chiefly of two-storied tea-houses, which exist only for the accommodation of the pilgrims who flock here in July and August, those being the only months suitable for the ascent of Mount

Nan-tai-zan, which rises directly above the lake. During these months the tea-houses are gay with little flags, which are testimonials bestowed by contented travellers, but for the rest of the year all is sleepy and still.

After following the shores of the lake for about three miles, we reached a broad marshy plain of brown and golden grass, encompassed with great mountains. Then entering a wooded gorge we came to another magnificent fall, or rather an almost perpendicular rapid, as the water, forming a transparent veil of silvery white, slides at an angle of about  $60^\circ$  over a bed of polished black rock, and so disappears far below—a beautiful vision seen through a setting of scarlet, deep crimson, and golden maple, and dark green oak.

Still upward, following the lovely river to a height of 5,000 feet, we reached the spot at which it pours from Lake Yu-no-umi—a most exquisite little gem embossed in richly wooded hills, which we saw in all their autumnal glory of colour—mountain ash and maple contrasting with the dark foliage of oaks and pines.

Amid that range of wooded summits one alone stands bare, namely, the cone of Shirane-san, a dormant volcano, whose only recent symptom of life was when, in 1871, it erupted a considerable quantity of boiling water, steam, and ashes, as if to remind its neighbours not to count too much on their security.

Perhaps it is to propitiate volcanic powers that a dark pool at the base of the mountain bears the name of Ma-no-umi, 'the Devil's Lake,' while a cave near the base of Nan-tai-zan is known as Ji-goku-no-kama, 'Hell's Cauldron,' and a river we crossed between the two lakes is Ji-goku-no-kawa, 'the River of Hell.'

Yu-no-umi takes its name from Yu-moto, the boiling sulphur springs which discolour the upper end of the lake. These are surrounded by a most picturesque group of tea-houses and inns very like Pyreneean châteaux, which are further idealised by the misty clouds of white steam ever rising and floating through the dark pine forest from invisible boiling springs, and densest in the chill of early morning.

The village is frequented by many native visitors, who come here for the sake of the baths, which are supplied from springs of different degrees of heat, so as to suit all tastes. There are nine large public baths free to all comers. Some are protected by a wooden roof, but are quite open all round; others are merely open tanks with no covering whatever, and here men and women—total



strangers to one another—bathe together in most primitive simplicity. Evidently in Japan this realistic method of getting into hot water with one's neighbours is greatly appreciated, and these were undoubtedly very chatty and cheery assemblages, judging from the peals of merry laughter that rang out from those great steaming sheds, to which the little maids of the tea-houses carried ceaseless supplies of tiny cups of pale tea.

This sort of gregarious bathing (minus any of those costumes, attractive or otherwise, which reconcile even Mrs. Grundy to the customs of our neighbours across the Channel) may be all very well when you have been brought up from your infancy to consider it quite the thing, as much a matter of course in social life as our daily dinner, but to the unaccustomed foreigner it is startling, and the subsequent process of cooling by taking a stroll around prior to dressing *al fresco* is certainly apt to be somewhat embarrassing to a new-comer.

The attendants at the inns are now, however, accustomed to the exclusive ideas of Europeans, and bring buckets of water from the boiling sulphur springs with which to fill large wooden tubs for those who desire to bathe in such comparative privacy as may be attainable in Japan. Half an hour's stewing in such a tub went a long way towards counteracting the fatigue of our eccentric mode of riding from Nikko, and I for one fully appreciated the luxury of a beautiful new wadded silk quilt shaped like a gigantic dressing-gown lent by our civil hostess, and attired in which I sat in my quiet corner of the verandah enjoying the lovely moonlight, and watching the ghost-like columns of white steam rising silently in the still night, but with as little thought as any of my neighbours of their latent power, or of the possibility that at any moment that lovely lake and village may share the awful fate which last autumn befell equally attractive villages in the next province.

About eighty miles due north of Nikko various groups of hot springs lie around the picturesque old town of Wakamatsu, which is situated in the centre of a fertile and most carefully cultivated plain, beyond which rise successive ranges of hills and mountains, all clothed to the very summit with rich vegetation and fine timber. In the heart of those hills, at a considerable height above this town, lies the large and beautiful Lake Inawashiro, at the base of the now too famous Mount Bandai-san.

As regards the great plain, where the work of irrigation is so

much facilitated by mountain streams and rivers, it follows that most of the level land is devoted to the unpleasantly wet culture of rice. But the soil is also specially suited to the growth of mulberry trees, groves of which are conspicuous among the wealth of persimmon, walnut, and other fruit-bearing trees. This points to the fact that this district is the headquarters of the silkworm industry, and the mulberry trees are grown solely for the support of the hungry worms.

The town of Fukushima, a little farther north, is the centre frequented by silk buyers from Tokio, and here a large trade is carried on in silkworms' eggs and raw silk. But there is scarcely a house in all this part of the country which does not nourish and cherish these revered fat white caterpillars, which claim such incessant care during the feeding season, and require such constant relays of well-dried mulberry leaves.

During the silk-reeling season it is one of the pretty features of country life to see the picturesque women, and indeed men also, sitting on their verandahs with their simple wooden spinning wheels, reeling the silk from the pale yellow cocoons which lie piled beside them. But even here the economy of steam power is asserting itself, and an unlovely silk mill worked by steam power has been established at the town of Shirakawa, to the south-east of Wakamatsu, replacing the hand looms in which from time immemorial have been woven the exquisite fabrics worn by the magnificent nobles of Old Japan.

Of the hot spring villages aforesaid, one of the most romantic is that of Tsuchi-no-yu, above the town of Fukushima, while in the immediate neighbourhood of Wakamatsu lies charming Hagashi-yama, where, along the banks of a fine river rushing through a deep ravine, most picturesque tea-houses are niched, near various hot springs which gush from the rocks—waters which have the charm of being alike free from smell or taste.

But still more attractive to health-seekers were the boiling springs on the flanks of Mount Bandai-san, the sharp main peak of which, as seen looking northward from Wakamatsu, towers conspicuously above the lower ranges of richly wooded hills.

Alas! of those pretty mountain hamlets we must now speak as we do of Herculaneum and Pompeii, so entirely have they been obliterated from the earth's surface—perhaps like them to be discovered and excavated by future generations.

If we may credit Japanese chronicles, eleven hundred years



have elapsed since <sup>1</sup> Bandai-san (*i.e.* 'Bandai the most honourable,' for such is the meaning of the suffix which we find appended to so many of Japan's noblest mountains, as Fuji-san, Cho-tai-san, Adzuma-san, Gan-jiu-san, Iide-san, Haku-san, Taro-san, &c.) last proved itself an active and destructive volcano, and indeed during those long ages not only had the mountain become clothed from base to summit with rich vegetation, but its outward form, with its crown of five peaks, had been so modified by atmospheric action as to have lost all the symmetrical and sweeping curves which we consider so specially characteristic of well-built volcanoes, such as Fuji-yama and Vesuvius.

According to Japanese legend a high mountain once towered from the site now occupied by the beautiful Lake Inawashiro. The mountain disappeared, leaving the great basin about ten miles in diameter, now filled by deep waters. As to Bandai-san, it was not formed till the ninth century, at about the same time as the majestic Fuji-yama, which is said to have been raised to its full height of 13,000 feet in a single night. That was indeed a time of mighty effort on the part of the cyclopean forgers, for it was on that same night that they hollowed the vast basin three hundred miles to the southward—a basin sixty miles long by eighteen broad—wherein the blue waters of Lake Biwa now repose.

Though Krakatoa and its neighbouring isles have done their best to give the world practical illustrations of the possibilities in the way of volcanic changes, there is reason to believe that no land has undergone so many of these within the memory of mankind as Japan, as we may well imagine, seeing that there are still fifty-one active volcanoes (and at least as many more dormant) extending in a mountain-chain from the south-western isle of the group right up to Kamtschatka.

Professor Milne, who is the great authority on Japanese seismology, considers that the presence of hot springs entitles a volcano to be classed as 'active.' Of these he finds twenty-seven in Yeso and the Kurile Isles and twenty-four in other parts of the group. Naturally, therefore, the wayward proceedings of these capricious neighbours claim a very distinct place in the history of the empire, and certainly no other race has kept such careful seismological records, amongst which are preserved very touching details of the means whereby in times of great danger the nation sought to avert the anger of the gods—not, as in some other

<sup>1</sup> In A.D. 807.

volcanic lands, by propitiatory sacrifice, but by deeds of mercy and gentleness.

Thus in A.D. 825, during a very grievous eruption, the Mikado issued a decree that, to the intent that the eruptions might cease, he desired to show to all the kindness of his heart. Therefore he commanded that taxes should not be collected, and that special favour should be shown to the poor, the fatherless, and widows. The efficiency of fasting was recognised, but was to be done by proxy, namely, by the priests, who were ordered to abstain from flesh and fish (whence we may infer that this prohibition was not addressed to Buddhists, for whom such luxuries are at all times contrary to their vows).

These historic records include details of no less than 231 eruptions, some of which were of appalling magnitude, notably one of a mountain in Kiushiu, which, being supplemented in the work of destruction by an awful tidal wave, is said to have caused the death of fifty thousand persons (by no means an improbable fact, as illustrated by the appalling loss of life so recently as A.D. 1883, consequent on a similar combination of forces in the Sunda Straits).

Another volcano near Nagasaki, noted for its hot sulphur baths, and hence known as 'The High Mountain of Warm Springs,' distinguished itself in A.D. 1793 in a fashion similar to that adopted by Bandai, only on a very much larger scale. Its summit fell in, and torrents of boiling water burst forth. In one of its ebullitions it overwhelmed the city of Shima Barra, destroying thirty-five thousand persons. In the same district, a mountain fortress is said to have suddenly subsided, and the place where the hill had stood became a lake.

And in truth no one can visit the various 'Hells' of Onsen, which lies 2,550 feet above Nagasaki (in the Southern Isle), without feeling how natural some awful catastrophe would seem in a district where so much of the crumbling soil is permeated with steam that it rises in clouds from the earth, as well as from the seething sulphur pools and solfataras, of which one group extends over a space about a mile in length at the base of the dark fir-clad hills. Some of these springs are true geysers (*i.e.* 'gushers,' for such is the meaning of the original Icelandic 'geyser'), and spout to a height varying from two to ten feet according to their individual caprice. But neither this evident proof of subterranean activity nor the very suggestive 'Infernal' noises disquiet the inhabitants



of the pretty village, or the pleasure-seekers who come thither to enjoy luxurious baths and the charming scenery all around.

One of the most active volcanoes in the group at the present day is that of Asama-yama, which lies about a hundred miles to the south-west of the mountain which has now so suddenly re-awakened from its long deep sleep. It towers to a height of 8,282 feet, and by night and by day is capped by a cloud of heavy vapour rising from its innermost depths—a cloud which at night glows with the reflection of the red molten matter within the crater, and seems in very truth a pillar of fire—a perpetual memorial to all men of its last appalling eruption, just a hundred years ago.

In the summer of A.D. 1783, while the industrious people of several score of hamlets were gathering the abundant harvest of their well-tilled cornfields, came the awful day of doom, which brought sudden and total destruction to upwards of fifty prosperous villages and hundreds of their inhabitants. These were either suffocated by the dense showers of ashes or crushed by the red-hot boulders and rock-masses which overwhelmed them as they fled. Vast tracts of forest were burnt by the fiery lava-streams which poured down the sides of the mountain, while the whole country for a distance of many miles around was smothered beneath a layer of ashes varying from two to five feet in depth.

Asama-yama did its work of destruction in the ordinary manner of dry volcanoes, by the ejection of molten rock and scoriæ, whereas Bandai-san has accomplished its terrible mission by the agency of steam, which so effectually permeated the whole mass, that when the explosion occurred which suddenly in a moment blew the whole peak as such, out of existence, it fell over thirty square miles of country in an awful shower of scalding mud, burying a dozen villages, and causing the death in agony of six hundred human beings, and of a multitude of animals, besides involving total ruin to at least four times as many survivors, of whom a considerable number are terribly injured.

Owing to the combined attraction of lovely scenery and boiling springs, this neighbourhood has always been greatly appreciated by the Japanese, many of whom look forward to their summer holidays on or near the mountain, after the fatigues and anxieties of planting out the rice in the paddy fields, or bringing the silk harvest to a close. Consequently in summer the usual meagre population of the various villages is augmented to a total of about six or eight thousand persons.

The facilities of modern travel have now brought this district within very easy reach of Yokohama and Tokyô. From the latter, seven hours by comfortable railway land the traveller at Koriyama, whence he is conveyed twenty-eight miles in a *kuruma* (the swiftly-drawn 'Bath-chair' of modern Japan) to the western shore of lovely Lake Inawashiro. An excellent steamer conveys him ten miles across the lake, and deposits him at the foot of Mount Bandai, whence he finds his way to whichever of the dozen villages nestling among the verdant hills, he purposes visiting.

Health-seekers would naturally seek one of the pretty villages which have grown up around the boiling springs on the height of Sho-Bandai-san, which was the lowliest of the five separate cones which crowned the mountain, and which were distinguished as 'Great,' 'Middle,' and 'Small' Bandai, and other local names. The height of the highest peak is about 5,800 feet. Alas! that we should henceforward have to speak in the past tense of all that made the mountain so pleasant! Its flanks and foot hills are no longer verdant, the villages no longer exist, and the mountain crown is blood-stained.

Here for the first fortnight of June 1888 thousands of happy people were living their pleasant summer life, so full of graceful courtesies and pretty customs. Many were enjoying their baths on the mountain, and many more were rejoicing in the loveliness of the valley of the Nakasegawa (the beautiful river which watered the fertile plain), or were making expeditions such as the Japanese so dearly love, up the rocky wooded glens of the tributary streams. All that constitutes the poetry of life was there, and nothing to awaken one passing qualm of possible danger.

It was remembered afterwards that about the 12th or 14th June there had been some slight earth-tremors, and also some unaccountable variations in the temperature of the hot springs and in their flow, both incidents which are often observed to precede a volcanic disturbance. But in a land where sharp earthquakes are so very common, a slight shock would scarcely excite more than a passing comment.

[It is worthy of note that on or about June 14 a severe shock was felt in North China, an event which in that solidly conservative empire is happily a rarity; consequently the inhabitants of Peking were greatly startled; they affirm that fully a hundred years had elapsed since anything of the sort had been experienced. It lasted fully a minute, during which the earth seemed to swing



easily from east to west. Houses creaked and plaster fell, but the only serious disaster seems to have been the fall of part of the tower over one of the city gates—the O'heen Mén—whereby twenty persons were killed and wounded.]

Around Bandai all was calm and peaceful when the day dawned on June 15. Columns of white steam floated dreamily in the cool mountain air, as the invalids repaired to their early bath, and all around was beautiful on that bright summer morning, when at 7.30 there occurred an earthquake shock so violent as to leave no room for doubt that some mischief was brewing. Fifteen minutes later this was followed by a second and yet more severe shock. Another brief interval of about ten minutes, and the earth began to heave like a tossing sea, rising and sinking so that houses collapsed, totally wrecked, and people were violently thrown down and became actively sick, as if at sea. As standing was impossible, they tried to crawl on all-fours to whatever suggested shelter, but they soon realised that all places were alike unsafe.

The earthquake was immediately followed by an appalling and unearthly sound as of the roar of a thousand thunder-claps, blending with the shriek of all the steam-whistles and roaring steam-boilers of earth, and ere the terrified and deafened human beings could recall their bewildered senses, they beheld the whole mighty cone of Sho-Bandai-san blown bodily into the air, where it overspread the whole heaven with a vast dense pall of ashes and mud-spray, blotting out the light of day and turning all to thick darkness.

Ere these had time to fall back to earth, there poured forth dark clouds of vapour and such stifling gases as well-nigh choked all living creatures. Then leaping tongues of infernal flame, crimson and purple, seemed to flash right up to the heavens, and after appalling earth-throes were succeeded by showers of red-hot ashes, sulphur, and boiling water, accompanied by fearful subterranean roaring and rumbling, and by a rushing whirlwind of hurricane-force uprooting great trees and hurling them afar.

Another moment, and there poured forth floods of boiling liquid mud, which swept down the mountain side with such velocity that within a period variously estimated at from ten to fifteen minutes the scalding torrent was rushing past the village of Nagasake, on the brink of the Nagase river, having travelled ten miles from the crater more rapidly than any express train. Probably much of this fluid mud was hurled direct through the air,

as was certainly the case with the many hundreds of millions of tons which were blown up at the first explosion.

Evidently the earthquakes must have rent some subterranean fissure, through which a great volume of waters suddenly poured into the internal fires, generating a stupendous volume of steam, which must have continued to increase and to become more and more compressed as volcanic fires and subterranean waters continued their awful struggle, converting the foundations of the mountain into a cyclopean boiler, which finally exploded, with the result, a million times magnified, of the most awful boiler explosion ever known above ground.

The convulsions of the mountain rent great chasms from which uprose jets of flame, ashes, and boiling water, and many of the wretched fugitives were caught up by these awful fountains, and hurled on high with terrific force to fall back to earth all blackened and boiled. Some of these poor corpses were found caught on the boughs of trees, scalded and mangled beyond recognition. Others were battered and crushed by the red-hot stones and rocks which had been hurled from the crater to the clouds, and fell back to earth with awful violence.

The eruption continued for about two hours. By 10 A.M. its violence was spent, though for hours afterwards the ground trembled and quivered, as well it might after so appalling a fit of passion. But in those two hours the whole face of thirty square miles of country (in the form of a vast fan extending to a radius five miles from the central crater) was totally changed.

Of the mountain cone thus suddenly transformed into a steam boiler, there now remains only the back—a ragged overhanging precipice, rising to a sheer height, variously estimated at 600 or 1,000 feet, above a bottomless crater of about a mile in diameter. Thence with ceaseless roar rise dense clouds of suffocating sulphurous steam, which sometimes clear off sufficiently to allow adventurous climbers a momentary glimpse of the seething mud below.

Those who have ascended that remnant of the mountain from the slope behind it, and so have reached the brink of that precipice, have beheld such a picture of desolation as seems scarcely to belong to this earth. All that was Little Bandai now lies outspread in a thick layer of horrid mud varying in depth from ten to 150 feet—deep enough to efface every accustomed feature in the whole area—and itself partially coated with layers of pale



grey ash and black stones and rocks, which seem to have been ejected to such a height as not to have fallen back to earth until the awful mud-wave had poured itself out. It is now described as a wild chaos of earth, rock, and mud, in some places resembling the concrete blocks of some cyclopean breakwater—in others rather suggesting a raging sea whose gigantic waves have suddenly been congealed.

Of all that made the scene so beautiful and pleasant not a vestige remains—not a blade of grass where lately the mountain was clothed with springy turf, not a green leaf, not a sign of life, nothing but absolute desolation, with a horrid smell rising from stagnant sulphur pools. Great trees with their trunks twisted and split lie uprooted and hurled far from the spot where they have stood perhaps for centuries, while of the villages on the mountain not a trace remains—they and their inhabitants lie buried deep beneath this hideous sea of mud.

At the spa-hamlet of Kawa-kami there are known to have been about sixty visitors; at Iwashashi about thirty; at Shimono-yu about as many more. Not one of these escaped—the baths and the homes where they had spent their last happy days became their graves. Three large villages near Hibara have also disappeared with all their inhabitants.

Perhaps the most pitiful story is that of the people of Nagasake, a picturesque village standing on high ground between the volcano and the Nagase river. The mud torrent poured down in two distinct streams, and passed close by the hamlet on either side. Consequently it was almost unharmed, and if only the inhabitants could have realised how truly 'their strength was to sit still,' all might have been saved. But human nature could not but seek to fly when the appalling roar of the explosion, followed instantly by a rain of scalding sand and ashes, recalled in one moment the well-known stories of devastation wrought by so many mountains throughout the empire. In the first moment of panic the hopelessness of flight was forgotten, and every man, woman, and child who could run (about ninety in all) rushed from the village, and fording the shallow river, about fifty yards wide, started by the narrow paths between the rice-fields, hoping to reach the hills on the farther side of the valley, which at that point is only half a mile in width.

But only a few moments had elapsed ere the heavens were blackened with the dense pall of ashes, and the affrighted people

were enfolded in a thick darkness as of midnight. Dazed and bewildered, they halted, and when the sky cleared, and returning light enabled the poor old men and women (who, being unable to run, had remained to await death in their own homes) once more to strain their sight for a last glimpse of their friends and kinsfolk, they beheld only the awful torrent of liquid mud which, sweeping past the village, had overwhelmed all the valley beyond, and buried every one of the fugitives. So, although the village actually escaped, its whole able-bodied population perished, save one or two men who had gone out early to cut fodder, and had reached a secure position on the opposite hills.

One of these accepted the catastrophe in a characteristic manner curiously illustrative of Japanese superstition. Every traveller and every student of Japanese folklore knows how strange and important a part is played by the Fox-god and his attendant fox-spirits, and how numerous and quaint are the stories and pictures of enchantment wrought by these beings, and how devoutly every peasant worships at the shrine of the Fox-god to secure his protection for the rice-fields. On the present occasion one of the grass-cutters, perceiving the eccentric movements of the ground, at once recalled the fact that on his way to work in the early morning he had met a fox, so he forthwith concluded that he had been bewitched, and, knowing that the first essential was that the person so enthralled should keep perfectly cool, he quietly sat down, lighted his pipe, and watched all the successive stages of the eruption with the calm interest of one beholding a curious vision which he knows to be altogether unreal. Perhaps to this hour he still believes himself to be bewitched! Those who subsequently visited that deserted village noted with pathetic interest the preparations for a simple festival, and the food in the cooking-pots ready for those who might never return. From one home ten had gone forth and not one remained. In another was found a desolate old man who had urged his son and grandson to fly and leave him to his fate, and now he was left alone to face a life far more terrible than death. And yet death, as here exhibited, was ghastly indeed.

One would naturally assume that those who met their doom thus swiftly at least received secure earth burial, and that each body would have been therein preserved as securely as are fossil fish in their clay nodules. It appears, however, that there was no such peaceful rest for those overtaken by the scalding torrent,



for when it cooled sufficiently to enable survivors to dig therein in search of the dead to whom they wished to give burial in spots where they might receive the same reverent care as the Japanese love to bestow on their pretty cemeteries, all were found to be so horribly mutilated as to be past recognition. 'Crushed, dismembered, or decapitated, in the mad whirl of matter, stripped of every shred of clothing.'<sup>1</sup>

From the mud-field below Nagasake twenty bodies were thus exhumed, but only one—that of a little child—was perfect; of the others not one could be identified, so that after all they had to be laid side by side in sixteen nameless graves, over which are erected oblong cairns of stone.

It was, perhaps, well that there should be so little temptation to disinter the dead, for in truth the living had work beyond their capabilities in contriving temporary measures for the irrigation of their land, and especially of the rice-fields. There was no leisure for idle lamentation, the mud-flow having effectually cut off the water-supplies, and as a few days of drought would inevitably involve total ruin and starvation, the villagers had forthwith to rouse themselves from their first stupor, and all hands, both men and women, had to set to work at once to dig trenches so as to conduct water from some newly-formed lakes—a supply so grievously insufficient for the fields that the poor creatures were driven to jealously guard their irrigation works day and night, lest needy neighbours should be tempted to divert the scanty stream.

Hitherto no district has enjoyed a more excellent and abundant water-supply, furnished by crystal streams pouring down many a fern-clad ravine to feed the Nagase river. But now masses of mud have choked the river and the glens down which its tributaries were wont to flow, forming great embankments, one of which is said to be two hundred feet in height. The waters thus dammed are forming a succession of lakes of ever-increasing dimensions, in some places overflowing the carefully cultivated land, and leaving other tracts parched under the midsummer sun.

This once exquisitely verdant valley of the Nakasegawa has, in its awful transformation, been well likened to the valley of the shadow of death, so terrible and so sudden has been the ruin wrought and so wholesale the destruction of its peaceful, prosperous inhabitants. In one brief hour the green rice-fields, the

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the *Times* from Major-General Palmer, R.E.

pleasant homes and pretty gardens, the foot-hills with their luxuriant wealth of summer foliage, had utterly vanished, and in their place there remain only shapeless mounds of brown or red mud, partly coated with grey ash; where the pleasant turf was gemmed with fragrant flowers, now lie stagnant yellow pools of sulphurous water, and in place of happy voices, the absolute silence of desolation and death.

Looking down from the heights around, one sees the sharply defined limits at which the advance of this gruesome mud-flow was stayed. On the one hand stretch the vividly green rice-fields; on the other, on the very brink of the boulder-strewn mud-plain (like solemn sentinels guarding the field of death), stand dark pine trees, the advance guard of the pine forest which clothes the hills beyond.

The most striking illustrations of this line of demarcation are furnished by some of the villages which have partially escaped, such as that of Mine, in which the mud-stream has actually stopped short and solidified alongside of frail house-walls, which, though bent, remain standing, although houses close by have been wrecked by the hurricane. Indeed, some villages, such as Shira-kido, though untouched by the mud, were totally destroyed by the concussion of the earthquakes and the hurricane. Every house was wrecked, unroofed, or tilted over, and utterly unsafe. Till the motive power altogether failed the mud-flow advanced like a wall seven or eight feet in height, so that even the excavation of houses at its very brink has been no easy task.

With regard to the mighty wind generated by the explosion, its force can only be estimated by the wholesale destruction of forests at a distance of five or six miles from Bandai, while those on the mountain itself (on such of the slopes as escaped mud burial) were mown down as effectually as though cut by a scythe, and whether uprooted or snapped by the violence of the gale, hundreds of trees all lay prostrate in one direction, falling away from the crater, their poor naked trunks stripped of the very bark, their branches and leaves having been whirled miles away to fall in a strange shower mingled with scalding rain.

The mountain village of Inawashiro had a very narrow escape, the avalanche of mud and rocks having travelled to within a thousand yards of it and there stopped. In the first shock, when the earth staggered like a drunken man and the rear as of a salvo of a thousand great guns rent the air, the people fled, crawling on



all-fours, pursued by the red artillery (the red-hot earth falling in masses and turning grey as it cooled). The town was deluged with showers of boiling water, leaves, sand, and ashes. Agonising stories are told of how mothers, flying with their children on their backs, discovered when at length they ventured to pause that the poor innocents had been struck by the falling stones, and that the burden they had carried with such loving care was but a mangled corpse.

But when the eruption ceased these villagers were able to return to the semblance of houses, however much damaged, and there received such poor sufferers as arrived to claim their care. These are just such cases as would survive any awful boiler explosion. Some are scalded, some burnt, others cut and maimed. Men, women, children, horses, cattle, and sheep have been par-boiled. The faces of the dead are black.

There is no need to dwell upon scenes so awful, but assuredly they must serve as an appalling warning to all rash mortals inclined to speculate in 'real estate' in the neighbourhood of thermal springs.

*KITTLE CATTLE.*

BY A CATTLE HAND.

MIDSUMMER in New South Wales and a clear blue sky overhead. Under the sun the long brown plains ran to all points of the compass, and, covered with salt and cotton bush, which the hungry sheep left leafless and barren, disappeared at the far horizon without the sign of a single hill or even of rising ground. The landmarks of that vast stretch of country without permanent water, known as Mossgiel sheep station, where I was then at work, were no more than a few isolated clumps of dwarf box-trees, which stood out in the distance like pillars to be seen from afar, or rather like low clouds, for they showed dis severed from the soil, which was then parched and brown by three months of unconcealed and constant sun. I had been on that part of the Willandra Billabong for five months, occupied with some task or another, but on the particular day which now occurs to me I had nothing to do with the two hundred thousand sheep which fed over eleven hundred square miles of country, nor with its seven hundred horses. It was no more than an apparently simple cow and calf that made me rise at dawn, in order that I might leisurely accomplish the distance, some fourteen miles, which lay between me at the home station and Strathavon, where I was then camped. When, therefore, I mounted my horse after our early breakfast, I considered that I had a fairly easy and comfortable day's work before me. But I reckoned without my host, and without the wire fences which cut the whole country into squares some eight or ten miles across, and without my horse, an animal untrained to run stock, which I never rode if I could help myself, for he had neither the alertness of intellect nor the quickness of eye and foot necessary for such work. But surely, I said, with only a cow and calf, neither of which was wild, I might manage to make him do. I uncoiled my fifteen-foot stock-whip, cracked it complacently, and started on my journey.

At first my main charge showed no recalcitrance, and, having the whole day before me, I was in no hurry as I lounged easily in my comfortable saddle, and looked across the long plain towards



distant Strathavon, directing my way first of all towards the Five Mile Clump. We came to a gate, and passing through it entered a smaller paddock some four miles square. Here the road ran by the side of the fence, which was of wire, and a little more than three feet high, and as my own chief work at that time of the year was looking after similar fences, I cast my eye on it every now and again to envy the little trouble it gave the home station boundary rider, for it certainly required little attention, being a strong new fence, well strained up, and without a single bad wire in it, while day by day my own were broken by kangaroos or emus. I did not then think how I should curse those same inoffensive wire threads before I had passed through the paddock they bounded on the northern side, but presently my troubles began, for the cow commenced to show unequivocal signs of a decided disinclination to go any farther as soon as she saw that I was bent upon taking her away from her accustomed pastures and former companions. She lagged so that I was compelled to swing my whip and drop it lightly about her hind quarters until she moved at a more reasonable pace. But this was only the very first of her manœuvres, and much the simplest; the next thing was to drift away from her calf, who apparently had been previously instructed as to the course he was to pursue in such circumstances, for he showed no eagerness to follow in her wake. Then, while I was driving one, the other turned back towards Mossgiel, moving in a nonchalant manner, as though it were out of no evil motive or even quite unconsciously. After zigzagging across the plain for about half a mile, I grew tired of the persistency they showed, and, putting my horse into a gallop, which he resented by a feeble and futile effort to get rid of me, I drove the two together once more, and hurried their lingering pace a little. We were then rather more than a mile from the gate, and suddenly the cow jumped over the fence into the next paddock.

Now some horses will jump wire, and one at least that I constantly rode at Mossgiel never made any bones about it, not even requiring me to strap it down or put my coat on it to show the exact height plainly, but I knew from previous experience that the roan brute I was then blessed with could by no earthly means be persuaded to face it, and therefore I dismounted, climbed the fence, and spent ten hot minutes in vainly endeavouring to make the cow return to her offspring, who in the meantime was slowly wandering back the way we had come. But all my efforts were

useless ; she eluded me in every way, and gradually got farther and farther off, until at last I was perspiring furiously and in a speechless rage, for in the summer season of Australia the heat is intense, even in an hour or two after sunrise. So I returned panting, crossed the fence, mounted my horse, and galloped right back to the gate.

It may be asked why I did not cut the wires and go through, but I think I can offer enough evidence to prove that I was not quite a fool in acting as I did. In the first place, the fence was new, and I might well have got into trouble about it. In the second, I had nothing to cut it with. In the third, being without my wire tools, I could not have mended it again, and as there were sheep on both sides, close at hand, who might have got mixed if I had found a way to cut it and then left it, that would be another excuse, if any were needed after the three I have given.

When the cow caught sight of me coming up the fence on the same side as herself, she instantly crossed it once more and rejoined her calf, who by this time had accomplished about a quarter of a mile on the return journey. I dismounted, drove them well out into the paddock, and then rode back again. That made a four-mile ride for nothing, but I thought little of that when on coming back I found the cow so close to the fence that, in spite of all my efforts, she jumped it once again. It almost makes me angry to think of it now, but then ! I was furiously determined not to go back again, so I wasted half an hour in trying to make my horse jump the fence. I strapped it down with a stirrup leather until it was barely two feet high ; I put my coat on it to make it plain ; but the only result of all my trouble was increased perspiration and loss of temper, as I divided my growing wrath between the cow and my mount, for he was obstinacy itself upon the point that wire was wire even with a coat upon it, and a dangerous thing to have anything to do with.

I took at last to considering whether I could not hit upon some more subtle means of gaining my end, and finally I thought that if I were to go on driving the calf, its mother might follow me on the other side. I tried it, but apparently her maternal affection was not so strong as her desire for the old pasture, for she began to graze towards Mossiel just as placidly as if her offspring were weaned, and had become quite indifferent to her. Then, on finding this fail, I endeavoured to make the calf cross the fence, but as that did not succeed, I myself went over once more, and again



chased the mother on foot. In the end I had to give it up, and rife that terrible two miles again. This time I drove her and the calf fully half a mile into the paddock, and fortunately when I returned I found her still on the right side of the fence. I hoped that she was satisfied with the diversion that she had had, but no—the two recommenced the lagging and separation trick, and so well did it succeed, that it took me about two hours to drive them two miles. By that time we were nearing the gate which led into the big paddock, on the far side of which lay our destination, Strathavon. Unfortunately, this same gate was in the corner of the paddock we were in, and I was perforce obliged to take her near the fence, which she had already jumped twice. I came close to it again with fear and trembling, and my worst fears were realised, for no sooner did she see it within a hundred yards than she rushed at it, and was over once more. If I had been mounted on any kind of a stock-horse, or even an apology for one, it would never have happened, but the blundering brute I rode could not turn until I lugged his head round by force, and he always overshot his mark like an ill-handled boat trying to pick up moorings. I confess to being nearly heart-broken, and quite past swearing, for I was hoarse already, so I sat for a while in despair to take in the situation, which was now worse than ever. The gate behind us which I had used twice was four miles away, and the one in front—the one at least which led into the paddock she now occupied in triumph—more than two. However, there was nothing else for it, and to that gate I went. This means that I rode nearly five miles to reach her. After sending her over with a few extra whipmarks upon her hide, I tried to drive them on foot the remaining distance to the gate leading into Strathavon paddock, but after running until I was tired I had to ride back after all. That made another five miles, and my horse, who had now gone more than sixteen unexpected miles, began to show signs of fatigue. I wondered anxiously what was going to happen—indeed, I made up my mind to leave her if she crossed those wires again, and kept as much as possible between her and the fence. But this time, and at last, I actually got her through the gate, and there were no more to pass. I thought all my troubles were over, since the road went near no fences, although I had still about nine miles to go under the burning sun.

Time passed, and it was now close upon four o'clock, although we were still about five miles from Strathavon, whose corrugated

iron roof I could just see across the level ground. I tried to rouse up the failing energies of my horse, but found him almost dead-beat. Could I have incited him by any means to gallop I would have put the cow into the same pace, which, by the way, should never be done with a milker; but, try as I would, I could not get him to follow her turnings, which even now showed the same obstinate bent towards Mossgiel they had done when she first discovered that I intended taking her away from home. At last we came to a pool, or water-hole, about three feet six inches deep and some forty feet across, and into this she plunged. I went in and she came out, I came out and she went in, like the man and woman in the old-fashioned country predictor of coming weather, and neither by rein nor whip nor spur could I get my jaded horse to exhibit sufficient energy to eject her and keep her ejected. It was a case of merely formal eviction. Finally I grew so wrathful that I struck my horse and broke my stock-whip handle in two pieces, and thus rendered it entirely useless as a means of persuasion. That was the last straw, and the back of my persistence broke. After gazing speechlessly at the whole earth and sky for some *deus ex machinâ* who came not, I turned towards Strathavon leaving the cow in the pool, but meditating as I went along upon the awful surprise I should give her when I returned. When I reached home I did what I might have done at first—rode into the paddock, ran up to the horses, selected a mare called Beeswing, the quickest animal after cattle of any kind on the whole station, put my saddle on her, and after mending my whip went back at a hard gallop, to find the cow still complacently cooling herself in the water. She seemed to look at me with an air of contempt, thinking herself mistress of the entire situation, but she reckoned without her host, being ignorant that my bright bay mare was not cut after the pattern of the roan. I wasted no time, but drove straight at the pool, and taking off from a bank about two feet above the water-level, landed seven yards off with a tremendous splash and a loud yell close by her side. As I struck the water my renewed whip struck her, and made her move with far more alacrity than she had displayed at any time during that tiring and most ridiculous day. In a single moment I had the cow and calf together, and headed them for home. There was never any need to tell that mare what to do—indeed, I could actually have trusted her to accomplish her work without a bridle, for she was first on one side and then on the other



following every motion made, while my stock-whip swung through the dusty air and cracked like rifle shots behind them as they rushed bewildered and terror-stricken at the sudden alteration in affairs through the dry salt bush straight for Strathavon. I know that I drove them harder than I should have done, but I really think that that cow earned, fairly earned, the treat she got and the painful lesson I taught her. At the same time I know that I too learnt a lesson, and that was, never to ride when it can be helped after obstinate or wild cattle upon a horse which has neither knowledge nor instinctive aptitude for his arduous and peculiar business.

That day's adventures were sufficiently comical and irritating, but I fancy that the first time I ever undertook to drive a bullock-waggon I was even more puzzled to know what to do. I am no very great believer in the sagacity of animals, nor do I think that the four beasts I went to work with were any cleverer than the usual run of bullocks, but, nevertheless, the quickness with which they discovered that my knowledge of driving such an outlandish team was practically *nil* really amazed me. I was then among the hills on the Upper Murray, in a beautifully wooded country where red and blue gums were plentiful on the flats by the rapidly flowing river, while upon the higher ranges the shining trunks of the more readily distinguished white gums were to be seen here and there. Innumerable species of the acacia or 'wattle' scented the hillsides in the spring and summer, and the 'stringy bark' was the most pervading and plentiful tree of all. My 'boss,' a man of a somewhat taciturn and uninquiring turn of mind, who often took my knowledge and ability for granted until he discovered by the results that he had overestimated my powers, told me curtly one morning to yoke the bullocks up and haul in some firewood. And with this he rode away, leaving me in about as puzzled a state of mind as I should have put him in had I been in a position to order him, under divers pains and penalties, to translate a portion of Macaulay into immaculate Ciceronian Latin. However, I had my orders, and I meant doing something to show that I had at least attempted what seemed like the impossible. When the four bullocks, who indeed were very worthy and quiet animals, were safely in the yard, I commanded them in such gruff tones and with such oaths as I had heard used in like cases to arrange themselves, and, deceived by my delusive show of experience and authority, the two leaders, Spot and Baldy, placed themselves

meekly in the required juxtaposition. But by the time I had fixed the yoke on the neck of Spot, the off-side bullock, both had discovered by the awkwardness of my movements that I was a most fraudulent novice, and as such to be treated with contempt. In spite of all I could do—and that was little enough—they decided on separating at once, and the yoke was left hanging on Spot's neck as he eyed me with mild contempt, while Baldy, the unencumbered one, who was of a more lively turn of mind, galloped gaily round the yard. I seized the whip, but instead of the loud report which comes from it in a practised hand, my loudest cracks were manifestly feeble. It took me quite half an hour's exercise to reduce Baldy to a more subdued turn of mind, but at last I yoked them together securely. As I was eyeing them with a gentle sense of triumph, born of difficulties subdued and a new feeling of power and accomplishment, they turned their heads together with a quick movement, made a sort of duck, and faced right round with the yoke upside down. They had 'turned the yoke,' a very common and provoking trick among working bullocks, and one which sometimes can only be prevented by tying their tails together. It was a heart-breaking task to have to remove the yoke and replace it, for Baldy was so elated at my inability to flog him in a convincing manner that he was worse to handle the second time than the first. But at last I got the whole four yoked up, and even succeeded in attaching them to the waggon inside of half an hour, and we started off. Presently we came to a gate, which I opened for my slow-moving team to pass through without any particular misgivings. But, unhappily, the road turned short to the left, and as I failed to keep the 'polers' well to the right, the wheel caught the gate-post, and in spite of my frantic objurgations, which probably they took for an exhortation to pull, they bent their necks to the yoke and ripped the post fairly out of the ground. With it about a rod of fencing came to grief. I looked at it wofully enough and set to work at repairs, the team having come to a standstill in the meantime.

When I had made things look a little less forlorn, I started again, wondering very much what was going to happen at the next gate, which was about a quarter of a mile away. On reaching it I halted, made all sorts of very careful calculations about the width of the way in and the distance between the posts, and then—pulled up the one on the off-side, or right hand! I confess to feeling very bad about it. My boss might not think so much



about one gate, but to destroy two looked far too much as if I made a rule of it, and that I knew would not be passed by in silence. As I stared at the devastation I had caused, my four bullocks, whom I now began to hate with a pious and fervent hatred, went boring along with their heads down, as if nothing out of the way had occurred, and I had to run after them, using all sorts of loud language to induce them to stop. By the time I had propped up this second gate it was nearly noon, and noon was my dinner-time. But I determined to bring back some wood if it took me all day, and although my appetite was good, I staved off the pangs of hunger with a pipe, and made a third start for the woods. Up to that time I had at any rate had a clear road save for the two gates, but when I got among the timber I found my real difficulties had commenced, for though I succeeded in uprooting two or three stringy young saplings, and in snapping a young wattle-tree off at the stump, I presently found four bullocks totally insufficient power for me to make my way forward with the same disregard for obstacles I had hitherto displayed. In fact I got the waggon jammed between two large box-trees of about three feet in diameter, and they obstinately refused to be pulled up by the roots or to break short off to please me or anyone else. I tried to back the bullocks, but they scorned me utterly, in spite of the Australian language I used. I might be as gruff as I liked, but I could *not* crack the whip, and their hides seemed as tough as the general situation. However, at last I succeeded in irritating them, which was something at any rate, and just as I had made up my mind to do what I should have done at first—that is, take them out of the waggon and pull it out backwards, they turned short to the right and broke the pole. On finding themselves free they started for home, but before they had gone ten yards hitched themselves to a large sapling by the chain, and got so tangled up that I could hardly tell which was which. And just then I spied my taciturn boss riding up. He would undoubtedly have been justified if he had exhibited some anger, but he only surveyed the scene with a subtle smile that made me far more uncomfortable than the expected volley of oaths, which I should have doubtless returned, but that smile was a weapon I could not match in my armoury of defence. Said he presently, ‘Do you know anything about bullocks?’ ‘Yes, sir,’ I answered meekly. He stared at my presumption. ‘Pray, when did you learn it?’ he inquired. ‘This morning, sir,’ I replied more meekly than

ever, and I really think I had him there. At any rate, he got off his horse, took the whip, disentangled the team, and dislodged the waggon without further words. We went home to dinner in silence, and I spent the afternoon at gate-repairing. That was my first experience in bullock-driving, but it was no means the last, and though I never was very good at it, yet I managed as a general thing to get through eleven gates out of twelve without any very humiliating disaster.

The nomenclature of bullocks is sometimes very curious, and not infrequently brings into prominence the peculiar characters of their owners. One old fellow I heard of possessed four, which he named, with a lingering memory of ancient days when lucifers were not, 'Flint,' 'Steel,' 'Tinderbox,' and 'Strike-a-light.' It was once my lot to work for a squatter who rejoiced in the name of Tinker, and though upon the whole I retain very pleasant recollections of him, he managed in some way to excite the enmity of a neighbouring 'cockatoo,' as the smaller landowners are called, and by way of subtle revenge and irritation this man named one of his bullocks after the object of his aversion. It was done with the sole object of bullying and abusing it when the squatter rode by, and poor 'Tinker,' who certainly was not particularly objectionable, came in for a quantity of blows and dishonouring epithets, which he had not fairly earned, by serving as a whipping-block or scapegoat for the real or imaginary crimes of his human namesake.

I have said nothing in this paper of the more delightful work a stock-rider sometimes has, which redeems the weary rides in the sunlit plains of Australia or the breezier plateaus of Western Texas from utter barrenness and final disgust. There is assuredly nothing more exciting in the wild life of the world, unless it be hunting big and dangerous game, than to ride into and among a herd whose long sharp horns glitter in the sun as they toss their heads half in fear and half in anger, or to stop a stampede when they break away in sudden and perhaps inexplicable panic. The furious pace of the rider's horse, his sudden and almost miraculous turns, the obstinacy which calls for the whip and domination, and the ever-present, ever-varying danger of death make a something to look back upon with feelings which are not unlike regret.



*JOANNA'S BRACELET.*

ON a morning early in the spring of last year, two men stood leaning against the mantelpiece of a room in one of the Government offices. The taller of the two—he who was at home in the room—was a slim, well-dressed man, wearing his hair parted exactly in the middle, and a diamond pin in the sailor knot of his tie. He had his frock-coat open, and his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. The attitude denoted complacency, and the man was complacent.

‘Well, the funny part of it is,’ he was saying lightly, his shoulders pressed against the mantelpiece, ‘that I am dining at the Burton Smiths’ this evening!’

‘Ah?’ his companion answered, looking up at him with eyes of envy. ‘And so you will see her?’

‘Of course. She is to come to them to-day. But they do not know about our engagement yet, and as she does not want to blurt it out the moment she arrives—why, for this evening, it will be a secret. Still I thought I would tell you.’

He stepped away as he spoke, to straighten a red morocco-covered despatch-box, standing on the table behind him. It bore, besides the flaunting gilt capitals ‘I. O.,’ a modest plate with the name ‘Ernest Wibberley’—his name.

The other waited until he resumed his place. Then he answered, holding out his hand, ‘Yes, I am glad you told me, old boy; and I congratulate you most heartily, believe me.’

‘Thank you, Jack,’ Wibberley replied. ‘I knew you would. I rather feel myself that “Fate cannot harm me. I have dined to-day.”’

‘Happy dog!’ said Jack; and presently disappeared.

The Burton Smiths whom we heard them mention are tolerably well known in London. Burton Smith himself is a barrister, with money and many relations—Irish landlords, Scotch members, Indian judges, and the like. His wife is young, gracious, and fond of society. Their drawing-rooms on the top-most flat of Onslow Mansions—rooms with sloping ceilings and a dozen quaint nooks and corners—are seldom empty during the regulation hours.

This particular dinner-party had been planned with some care. 'Lady Linacre will come, no doubt,' Mrs. Burton Smith had said one day at breakfast, conning a list she held in her hand; 'and Mr. May.'

But Burton Smith objected to May. 'He will talk about nothing but India,' he protested, 'and the superiority of Calcutta over London. A little of these Bombay ducks goes a long way, my dear.'

'Well, James,' Mrs. Burton Smith replied placidly—the Hon. Vereker May is a son of Lord Hawthorn—'he will take me in, and I do not mind. Only I must have Mr. Wibberley on the other side to make conversation and keep me alive. Let me see—that will be three. And Joanna Burton—she comes that afternoon—four. Do you know, James, when we were at Temple Rothley for Christmas I thought there was something between your cousin and Mr. Wibberley?'

'Then, for goodness' sake, do not let them sit together!' Burton Smith cried, 'or they will talk to one another and to no one else.'

'Very well,' Mrs. Smith assented. 'They shall sit opposite to one another, and Mr. Wibberley shall take in Mrs. Galantine. She will be sure to flirt with him, and we can watch Joanna's face. I shall soon see if there is anything between them.'

Mr. Wibberley was a young man of some importance, if only in his capacity of private secretary to a Minister. He had a thousand acquaintances, and certainly two friends—perhaps three. He might be something some day—was bound to be. He dressed well, looked well, and talked well. He was a little presumptuous, perhaps even a trifle conceited; but women like these things in young men, and he had infinite tact. At any rate, he had never yet found himself in a place too strait for him.

This evening as he dressed for dinner—as he brushed his hair vigorously, or paused to smile at some reflection—his own, but not in the glass—he was in his happiest mood. Everything seemed to be going well with him. He had no presentiment of evil. He was going to a house where he was appreciated. Mrs. Burton Smith was a great ally of his. And then there would be, as we know, someone else. Happy man!

'Lady Linacre,' said his hostess, as she introduced him to a stout personage with white hair, a double chin, and diamonds. Wibberley bowed, making up his mind that the dowager was one



of those ladies with strong prejudices, who draw their skirts together if you prove a Home Ruler, and leave the room if you mention Sir Charles Dilke. 'Mr. May, you have met before,' Mrs. Smith continued; 'and you know Miss Burton, I think?'

He murmured assent, while she—Joanna—shook hands with him frankly and quietly, with the ghost of a smile, perhaps. He played his part well, too, for a moment; but halted in his sentence as it flashed across his mind that this was their first meeting since she had said 'Yes.' He recovered from his momentary embarrassment, however, before even Mrs. Burton Smith could note it, and promptly offered Mrs. Galantine his arm.

She was an old friend of his—as friends go in society. He had taken her in to dinner, that is, half-a-dozen times. 'Who is that girl?' she asked, when they were seated; and she raised her glasses and stared through them at her *vis-à-vis*. 'I declare she would be pretty if her nose were not so short.'

He seized the excuse to put up his glass too, and take a look. 'It is rather short,' he admitted, gazing with a whimsical sense of property at the deficient organ. 'But some people like short noses, you know, Mrs. Galantine.'

'Ah! And theatres in August!' she replied incredulously. 'And drawing-room games! And conundrums! But, seriously, she would be pretty if it were not for that.'

'Would she?' he questioned gravely. 'Well, I think she would, do you know?'

And certainly Joanna was pretty, though her forehead was too large, and her nose too small, and her lips too full. For her eyes were bright and her complexion perfect, and her face told of wit, and good temper, and freshness. She had beautiful arms, too, for a chit of nineteen. Mrs. Galantine said nothing about the arms—not out of modesty, but because her own did not form one of her strong points. Wibberley, however, was thinking of them, and whether a certain bracelet he had by him would fit them. He saw Joanna wore a bracelet—a sketchy gold thing. He wondered whether he should beg it for a pattern, or whether it might not be more pleasant to measure the wrist for himself.

But Mrs. Galantine returned to the charge. 'She is a cousin, is she not?' she said, speaking so loudly that Joanna looked across and smiled. 'I have never met her before. Tell me all about her.'

Tell her all about her! Wibberley gasped. He saw a

difficulty in telling her 'all about her,' the more as the general conversation at the moment was not brisk, and Joanna could hear every word. For an instant, indeed, his presence of mind failed him, and he cast an appalled glance round the table. But then he bent to his task. 'Mrs. Galantine,' he murmured sweetly, confidentially, 'pray—pray beware of becoming a potato!'

The lady dropped her knife and fork with a clatter. 'How horrid! A potato, Mr. Wibberley? What do you mean?'

'What I say,' he answered simply. 'You see my plate? It is a picture, Mrs. Galantine. You have there the manly beef, and the feminine peas, so young, so tender! And the potato! The potato is the confidante. It is insipid. Do you not agree with me?'

'Bravo, Mr. Wibberley! But am I to apply your parable?' she asked sharply, glancing across the table, with her fork uplifted, and a pea upon it. 'Am I to be the potato?'

'The choice is with you,' he replied gallantly. 'Shall it be the potato? or the peas?'

Mrs. Burton Smith, seeing him so absorbed in his companion, grew puzzled. Look as often as she might at Joanna, she saw no sign of jealousy or self-consciousness in the girl's face. Joanna seemed to be getting on perfectly with her partner; to be enjoying herself to the full, and to be as much interested as anyone at table. Mrs. Burton Smith sighed, if the truth be known. She had the instinct of matchmaking. And she saw clearly now that there was nothing between the two; that if there had been any philandering at Temple Rothley neither of the young people had put out a hand—or a heart—beyond recovery.

But this success of Wibberley's with Mrs. Galantine had its consequences. After the ladies had withdrawn he grew just a trifle presumptuous. By ill-luck, too, the Hon. Vereker May had reached that period of the evening when India—as seen through the glasses of his memory—was accustomed to put on its rosiest tints; and the two facing one another fell to debating on a subject of which the returned Civilian had seen much and thought little, and the private secretary had read more and thought not at all. They were therefore about on a par as to information, and what the younger man lacked of obstinacy he made up by readiness. It was in vain the Nabob blustered, asserted, contradicted—finally grew sulky, silent, stertorous. Wibberley pushed his little triumph, and soon, as we shall see, paid dearly for it.



It happened that he was the last to enter the drawing-room. The evening was chilly. The ladies had grouped themselves about the fire, protected from assault, so to speak, by a couple of gipsy-tables bearing shaded lamps. The incomers, one by one, passed through these outworks—all but Wibberley. He cast a glance of comic despair at Joanna, who was by the fireplace in the heart of the citadel; and then, resigning himself to separation, he took a low chair by one of the tables, and began indolently to turn over the books which lay on the latter. There were but half a dozen. He scanned them all, and then his eyes fell on a bracelet lying by them on the olive-green plush; a sketchy gold bracelet, with one big boss—Joanna's.

He looked up at the party—himself sitting a little aside, as we have said—with a stealthy glance. They were none of them facing his way. They were discussing a photograph on the over-mantel, a photograph of children by Mendelssohn. He stretched his hand out softly and covered the bracelet. He would take it for a pattern, and to-morrow Joanna should ransom it. He tried, as his fingers closed on it, to catch her eye. He would have liked to see her face change and her colour rise. It would have added to the faint charm he felt in the boyish, foolish act he was committing, if she had been privy to it—yet unable to prevent it.

But she would not look; and he was obliged to be content with his plunder. He slid the gold trifle deftly under the fringe of the table, and clasped it round his arm—not a very lusty one—thrusting it as high as it would go that no movement of his shirt-cuff might disclose it. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and he would not for all the world that anyone besides Joanna should know of the act: that doddering old fossil May, for instance, who, however, was safe enough—standing on the rug with his back turned, and his slow mind forming an opinion on the photograph.

Then—or within a few minutes, at any rate—Wibberley began to find the party dull. He saw small chance of a private word with Joanna. Lady Linacre, his nearest neighbour, was prosing on to Mrs. Burton Smith, his next nearest. And he himself, after shining at dinner, had fallen into the background. Hang it, he would go! It was ten o'clock.

He rose, and was stooping across the table, murmuring his excuses to Mrs. Burton Smith, when Lady Linacre uttered an exclamation. He was leaning across her between her head and the lamp at the moment, and he fancied he had touched her head—

dress. 'Pray pardon me, Lady Linacre!' he cried gaily. 'I am just going—I have to leave early—so the encroachment will be but for a moment.'

'It is not that,' the old lady replied. 'But where is my bracelet?' She was feeling about the table as she spoke, shifting with her white, podgy hands the half-dozen volumes that lay on it.

No one on the instant, however, took in the situation. Mrs. Burton Smith had risen, and was listening to Wibberley. The others were talking. But Lady Linacre was used to attention; and when she spoke again her voice was shrill, and almost indecently loud. 'Where is my bracelet?' she repeated. 'The one with the Agra diamond that I was showing you, Mrs. Burton Smith. It was here a moment ago, and it is gone! It is gone!'

Wibberley was still speaking to his hostess. He heard the old lady's words, but did not clearly apply them. He finished his leave-taking almost at his leisure, and only as he turned recollected himself, and said, with polite solicitude, 'What is it, Lady Linacre? Have you dropped something? Can I find it for you?'

He stooped as he spoke, and she drew her skirt aside, and both peered at the floor, while there was quite a chorus from those sitting nearest of, 'What is it, Lady Linacre? Dear Lady Linacre, what have you lost?'

'My Agra diamond!' she replied fussily, her head quivering, her fingers groping about her dress.

'No?' someone said in surprise. 'Why, it was here a moment ago. I saw it in your hand.'

The old lady held out her wrists. 'See!' she said feebly, 'I have not got it!'

'But are you sure it is not in your lap?' suggested Burton Smith. Lady Linacre had rather an ample lap. By this time the attention of the whole party had been drawn to the loss, and one or two of the most prudent were looking slightly uncomfortable.

'No,' she answered; 'I am quite sure that I placed it on the table by my side. I am sure I saw it there. I was going to put it on when the gentlemen came in, and I laid it down just for a minute, and—it is gone!'

She was quite clear about it, and looked mildly at Wibberley for confirmation. The table had stood between them. She thought he must have seen it lying there; Mrs. Burton Smith being the only other person close to the table.



Burton Smith saw that look. 'I say, Wibberley,' he said, appealing to him, half in fun, half in earnest, 'you have not hidden it for a joke, old fellow, have you?'

'I? Certainly not!'

To this day Ernest Wibberley wonders when he first made the disagreeable discovery of what he had done—that he had taken the wrong bracelet! It was not early. It was not until the aggrieved owner had twice proclaimed her loss that he felt himself reddened, and awoke to the consciousness that the bracelet was on his own arm. Even then, if he had had instant presence of mind, he might have extricated himself. He might have said at once, 'By Jove! I think I slipped it on my wrist in pure absence of mind,' or made some other excuse for his possession of it which would have passed muster, though one or two might have thought him odd. But time was everything; such excuses to avail must be made at once; and he hesitated. He hated to seem odd, even to one or two; and he thought that presently he might find some chance of restoring the bracelet without being detected. So he hesitated, peering at the carpet, and the golden opportunity passed him by. Then each moment made the avowal more difficult and less possible; until, when his host appealed to him—'If you have hidden it for a joke, old fellow, out with it!'—he had no choice—or it seemed to his uneasy conscience that he had no choice—but to answer as he did.

He looked up, indeed, with admirably acted surprise, and said his 'I? Certainly not!' somewhat peremptorily.

Half a dozen of the guests were peering stupidly about as if they expected to find the lost article in a flower-vase, or within the globe of a lamp. Presently their hostess stayed these explorations. 'Wait a moment!' she cried abruptly, raising her head. 'I have it!'

'Well?' eagerly, from several.

'John must have moved it when he brought in the tea. That must be it. Ring the bell, James, and we will ask him.'

So it was done. John came in, and the question was put to him.

'Yes, sir,' he said readily; 'I saw a bracelet. On this table, by the lamp.' He indicated the table near Lady Linaere.

'Did you move it?'

'Move it, sir?' the man repeated, surprised by the question, the silence, and the strained faces turned to him. 'No, sir; cer-

tainly not. I only saw it when I was handing the tea to—to Mr. Wibberley, I think it was.'

'Ah, very well,' his master answered. 'That is all. You may go.'

It was not possible, indeed, to doubt the man's face and manner. But when he had left the room, an uncomfortable silence ensued. 'It is very strange,' Burton Smith said at last, looking from one to another, and then, for the twentieth time, groping under the table.

'It *is* very strange,' Wibberley murmured. He felt bound to say something. He could not free himself from an idea that the others, and particularly the Indian Civilian, were casting special looks at him. He appeared calm enough, but he could not be sure of this. He felt rather as if he were each instant changing colour, and betraying<sup>1</sup> himself to every eye. His very voice sounded forced to his ear as he repeated fussily, 'It *is* very odd—very odd! Where can it be?'

'It cost,' Lady Linacre quavered—irrelevantly, but by no means impertinently—'it cost fourteen thousand out there. Indeed it did. And that was before it was set.'

A hush as of awe fell upon the room. 'Fourteen thousand pounds!' Burton Smith said softly, his hair rising on end.

'No, no,' said the old lady, who had not intended this mystification. 'Not pounds; rupees.'

'I understand,' he replied, rubbing his head. 'But that is a good sum.'

'It is over a thousand pounds,' the Indian Civilian put in stonily, 'at the present rate of exchange.'

'But, good gracious, James!' Mrs. Burton Smith said impatiently, 'why are you valuing Lady Linacre's jewellery—instead of finding it for her? The question is, "Where is it?" It must be here. It was on this table fifteen minutes ago. It cannot have been spirited away.'

'If anyone,' her husband began seriously, 'is doing this for a joke, I do hope——'

'For a joke!' the hostess cried sharply. 'Impossible!'

'I say, my dear,' he persisted, 'if anyone is doing this for a joke, I hope he will own up. It seems to me that it has been carried far enough.' There was a chorus of assent, half-indignant, half-exculpatory. But no one owned to the joke. No one produced the bracelet.



'Well, I never!' Mrs. Burton Smith exclaimed. And as the company looked at one another, it seemed as if they also had never known anything quite so extraordinary as this.

'Really, Lady Linacre, I think that it must be somewhere about you,' said the host at last. 'Would you mind giving yourself a good shake?'

She rose, and was solemnly preparing to agitate her skirts, when a guest interfered. It was the Hon. Vereker May. 'You need not trouble yourself, Lady Linacre,' he said, with a curious dryness. He was still standing by the fireplace. 'It is not about you.'

'Then where in the world is it?' retorted Mrs. Galantine. 'Do you know?'

'If you do, for goodness' sake speak out;' Mrs. Burton Smith added indignantly; while everyone turned and stared at the Civilian.

'You had better,' he said, 'ask Mr. Wibberley!'

That was all. But something in his tone produced an electrical effect on everyone. Joanna, in her corner—remote, like the Indian, from the centre of the disturbance—turned red and pale, and flashed angry glances round her. For the rest, they wished themselves away. It was impossible to misunderstand the insinuation. The words, simple as they were, had in a moment put a graver complexion on the matter. Even Mrs. Burton Smith was silenced, looking to her husband. He looked furtively at Wibberley.

And Wibberley? Up to this moment he had merely thought himself in an unpleasant fix, from which he must escape as best he could, at the expense of a little embarrassment, a slight loss of self-respect. Even the latter he might regain to-morrow, if he saw fit, by telling the truth to Mrs. Burton Smith; and in time the whole thing would become a subject for laughter, a stock dinner-party anecdote. But now! now at the first sound of the Indian's voice he recognised his danger; and saw clearly in the hundredth part of a second that ruin, social damnation, perhaps worse, threatened him. His presence of mind seemed to fail him suddenly at sight of the pit opening at his feet. He felt himself reeling, choking, his head surcharged with blood. The room, the expectant faces all turned to him, all with that strange expression on them, swam round before him. He had to lay his hand on a chair to steady himself.

But he did steady himself, so far that those who marked his agitation did not know whether it proceeded from anger or fear. He drew himself up and looked straight at his accuser, holding the chair suspended in his hands. 'What do you mean?' he said hoarsely.

'I should not have spoken,' the Civilian continued, returning his gaze, and speaking in cool measured accents, 'if Mr. Burton Smith had not twice appealed to us—if any joke was being played—to confess to it.'

'Well?'

'Well, only this,' the old gentleman replied; 'that I saw you yourself take Lady Linacre's bracelet from that table a few moments before it was missed, Mr. Wibberley.'

'You saw me?' cried Wibberley. This time there was the ring of honest defiance, of indignant innocence, in his tone. For if he felt certain of one thing it was that no one had been looking at him when the unlucky deed was done.

'I did,' replied the Civilian dispassionately. 'My back was towards you. But my eyes were on this mirror'—he touched an oval glass in a Venetian frame which stood on the mantelpiece—'and I saw clearly, quite clearly. I am bound to say that, judging from the expression of your face, I was assured at the time that it was a trick you were playing—a jest only.'

Ernest Wibberley tried to frame the words, 'And now?'—tried to force a smile. But he could not. The perspiration sprang out in great beads on his face. He shook all over. He felt himself—and this time it was no fancy—growing livid.

'To the best of my belief,' added the Civilian quietly, 'the bracelet is on your left arm now.'

Wibberley tried to master, but could not, the impulse—the traitor impulse—which urged him to glance down at his wrist. The idea that the bracelet might be visible—that the damning evidence might be plain to every eye—overcame him. He looked down. Of course there was nothing to be seen; he might have known it, for he felt the hot clasp of the horrible thing burning his arm inches higher. But when he looked up again—fleeting as had been his glance—he found that something dreadful had happened to him. He faltered, and the chair dropped from his hands. He had never met looks like these before. He read in every face save one suspicion or condemnation. Thief and liar! He read the words in their eyes—the eyes of his quondam friends!



Yet he would, he must, brazen it out; and though he could not utter a word he looked from them to—Joanna.

The girl's face was pale and scared. But her eyes—they answered his right eagerly—were ablaze with indignation. They held doubt, no suspicion. The moment his look fell on her, she spoke. 'Show them your arm!' she cried impulsively. 'Show them you have not got it, Ernest!' with such scorn, such generous passion in her voice, that it did not need the tell-tale name which fell too glibly from her lips to betray her secret—at least to every woman in the room.

'Show them your arm!' Ah, but that was just what he could not do! And as he comprehended this he gnashed his teeth. He saw himself netted and entrapped, and his rage and misery were so written in his face that the best and most merciful of those about him turned from him in shame and pity. Even the girl who loved him shrank back, clutching the mantelpiece in the first spasm of doubt, and fear, and anguish. Her words, her suggestion, had taken from him his last chance. He saw it was so. He felt the Nemesis the more bitterly on that account; and with a wild gesture, and some wilder word, he turned abruptly and hurried from the room, blindly seized his hat, and went down to the street.

His feelings when he found himself outside were such as it is impossible to describe in smooth, passionless sentences. He had wrecked his honour and happiness in an hour. He had lost his place among men through a chance word. We talk and read of a thunderbolt from the blue; but still the thing is to us unnatural. Some law-abiding citizen whom a moment's passion has made a murderer, some strong man whom a stunning blow has left crushed and writhing on the ground, a twisted cripple—only these could fitly describe his misery and despair as he traversed the streets. It was misery he had brought on himself; and yet how far the punishment exceeded the offence! How immensely the shame and exposure exceeded the guilt! He had lied, and the lie had made him a thief!

He went up to his rooms like one in a dream, and, scarcely knowing what he did, tore the bauble from his arm and flung it on the mantel-shelf. By his last act of bringing it away he had made his position a hundred times more serious, but he did not at once remember this. After he had sat a while, however, with his head between his hands, wondering if this really were him—

self—if this really had happened to himself, this dreadful thing!—he began to see things more clearly. Still, he could not at once make up his mind what to do. Beyond some hazy idea of returning the bracelet by the first post, and going on the Continent—of course, he must resign his employment—he had settled nothing, when a step outside made him start to his feet. Someone knocked at the door of his chambers. He stood pallid and listening, struck by a sudden fear.

‘The police!’ he said to himself.

But a moment’s thought satisfied him that it was improbable, if not impossible, that this summons should be theirs; and he went to the door listlessly and threw it open. On the mat stood Burton Smith, in a soft slouched hat, his hands thrust into the pockets of his overcoat. Wibberley just glanced at him, and saw that he was alone; and then, leaving him to shut the door, returned to his chair, and sat down in his old attitude, with his head between his hands. He looked already a broken man.

Burton Smith followed him in, and stood a moment looking down at him uncomfortably enough. It is bad to have had such a scene as has been described at your house, but it is worse, if a man be a man, to face a fellow-creature in his time of shame. At any rate, Burton Smith felt it so. ‘Look here, Wibberley,’ he said at length, as much embarrassed as if he had been the thief. ‘Look here, it will be better to hush this up. Give me this confounded bracelet to hand back to Lady Linacre, and the thing shall go no farther.’

His tone was curiously suggestive both of old friendship and present contempt and pity. But when he had to repeat his question, when Wibberley gave him no answer, his voice grew harsher. Even then the man with the hidden face did not speak, but pointed with an impatient gesture to the mantel-shelf.

Burton Smith stepped briskly to the place indicated, and looked. He was anxious to spare the culprit as far as possible. Yes, there was the bracelet. He seized it, anxious, if the truth be known, to escape from the place with all speed. But he laid it down the next instant as quickly as he had taken it up, and his brows came together as he turned sternly upon his companion.

‘This is not the bracelet!’ he said. There was no smack of old affection in his tone now; it was wholly hostile. His patience was exhausted. ‘Lady Linacre’s was a diamond bracelet of great value, as you know. This is a plain gold thing worth two or three



pounds. For heaven's sake, man!' he added with sudden vehemence, 'for your own sake, do not play the fool now! Where is the bracelet?'

No doubt despair had partially benumbed Wibberley's mind, for still he did not speak, and Burton Smith had to put his question more than once before he got an answer. When Wibberley did at last look up it was with a dazed face. 'What is it?' he muttered, avoiding the other's eyes.

'This is not Lady Linacre's bracelet.'

'It is not?'

'No; certainly not.'

Still confused, still avoiding the other's grave look, Wibberley rose and took the bracelet in his hand, and glanced askance at it. And then Burton Smith saw him start violently.

'It is of the same shape,' repeated the barrister, ice in his voice—he thought the exchange a foolish, transparent artifice. 'But Lady Linacre's has a large brilliant where that has a plain boss. That is not Lady Linacre's bracelet.'

Wibberley turned away, the circlet in his hand, and went to the window, where he stood for quite a moment looking out into the darkness. The curtains were not drawn. As he stood there, otherwise motionless, his shoulders trembled so violently that a certain dreadful suspicion seized his late host; and the latter desisted from watching him and looked about, but in vain, for a phial or glass.

At the end of the minute Wibberley turned. For the first time he confronted his visitor. His eyes were strangely bright, his face very pale; but his mouth was set strong and firm. 'I never said it was!' he answered grimly.

'Was what?'

'I never said it was Lady Linacre's. It was you who said that,' he continued, his head high, a singular change evident in his demeanour, an incisiveness almost harsh in his tone. 'It was you—you who suspected me! I could not show you my arm because I had that bracelet on it.'

'And whose bracelet is it?' Burton Smith murmured doubtfully, shaken as much by the sudden change in the man's demeanour as by his denial.

'It is your cousin's—Miss Burton's. We are engaged,' replied Wibberley sternly—so entirely had the two changed places. 'She intended to tell you to-morrow. I saw it on the table, and secreted

it when I thought that no one was looking. It was a foolish thing to do.'

'And it was Joanna's bracelet that Vereker May saw you take?'

'Precisely.'

Burton Smith said a word about the Civilian which we need not repeat. Then he added, 'But why on earth, old fellow, did you not explain?'

'Firstly,' Wibberley replied with force, 'because I should have had to proclaim my engagement to all those fools; and I had not Joanna's permission to do that. And secondly—well, I did not wish to confess to being such an idiot as I was.'

'Umph!' said Burton Smith, slowly, an odd light in his eyes. 'I think you were a fool, but—I suppose you will shake hands?'

'Certainly, old man.' And they did so, warmly.

'Now, then,' continued the barrister, his face becoming serious again, 'the question is, where is Lady Linacre's bracelet?'

'That is hardly my business,' Wibberley answered. 'I am sure you will excuse me saying so. I have had trouble enough with it—I know that—and, if you do not mind, I am off to bed.'

But though his friend left him on the instant, Wibberley did not go to bed at once. Burton Smith hurrying homeward—to find when he reached Onslow Mansions that Lady Linacre's bracelet had been discovered in a flounce of her dress—would have been surprised, very much surprised indeed, could he have looked into the chambers a minute later—a minute after his own departure. He would have seen his friend cast down on his knees before a great chair, his face hidden, his form shaken by wild hysterical sobbing. For Wibberley was moved for once to the inmost depths of his nature. It is not given to all men to awake and find their doom a dream. Only in dreams, indeed, does the cripple get his strength again, and the murderer his old place among his fellow-men. Wibberley was fortunate.

And the lesson? Did he take it to heart? Well, lessons and morals are out of fashion. Or stay—ask Joanna. She should know.



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*THE BURNT MILLION.*

BY JAMES PAYN,  
AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY' ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A WELCOME.

EVEN the next morning, when those dark thoughts of Death could probably have been swept away by the Light that was to bring love with it—for she knew that Walter was to be asked to the Hall that day—they were fated to still remain with her; for before his arrival she received a letter from Mr. Allerton, of which Lord Cheribert's death was the keynote.

'I have had no time to write to you of late, dear Grace, nor even the heart to write. I have of course been overwhelmed with business in connection with poor Lord Cheribert's affairs, but his loss itself is what has still more occupied it. If I had not been a witness to his poor father's misery, I might have written. I have grieved for the lad as if he had been my own son. I liked him exceedingly, and there was another reason, of which I cannot forbear to speak, why my sympathies were enlisted in his future: his heart was devoted to one whom I love even better. I have no reason to suppose that his attachment was returned—I hope *now* that it was not so—but I know that he was a great favourite of yours, and that you esteemed his noble nature, and perceived those great merits in him of which few persons, save you and me, were cognisant. I confess that I had looked forward to a time when you and he—but, alas, "all these things have ceased to be," and

it is worse than useless to dwell upon them ; but I know that there is at least one genuine mourner for him beside myself and his father. As regards the latter his fate is an awful lesson to us to be patient with the erring, "especially with those of our own household." His wretchedness wrings my heart. I do not, however, write these lines, dear Grace, to make you sorrowful. I would rather remind you that it is not intended that any loss which Providence inflicts upon us should permanently sadden our lives, and least of all when, as in your case, they are but beginning.'

It was a characteristic letter throughout ; a curious blending of kindness and good sense, of Christian teaching and the wisdom of this world. Grace read it with remorse, for, though its expressions of regret came home to her every one, she was conscious of being in an altogether different frame of mind from that in which the writer expected to find her. How could it be otherwise, when she was about to meet the man of her choice, for the first time in that acknowledged relation? She felt that she would be a hypocrite and a dissembler if she did not write that very day to enlighten the good lawyer as to the real state of the case.

Mr. Roscoe had been commissioned by Agnes to send a letter by hand to Dale End that morning to invite Walter to exchange his quarters at the Angler's Rest for a lodging in the cottage, and that young gentleman did not take long in settling his very moderate bill and packing his portmanteau. There was a phrase in the letter, which, though not remarkable for grace of expression, made him think more highly of the writer than he had hitherto done, though, as we know, he had always seemed more sensible of his merits than they deserved.

'We shall all be glad to see you again,' he wrote, 'and one of us (I think between ourselves) particularly so.' It was a little precipitating matters, perhaps, but Mr. Roscoe was personally interested in the dénouement of this idyll, and, as he expressed it to himself, was not going to let there be any shilly-shallying about it, so far as he was concerned.

It so happened that Grace took her walk by the lakeside that morning, and, meeting the dogcart with Mr. Atkinson and Walter in it, the former was directed to drive on to the hall (which he did with his tongue in his cheek, and a world of cunning enjoyment in his eyes), and the latter got out and accompanied Grace home on foot : an equivalent in the way of public notice, as far as mine host of the Angler's Rest was concerned, to the publication



of their banns in the parish church. The young couple, however, never wasted a thought on this—though public notice was just then the last thing they desired—but pursued their way with happy hearts and the most perfect natural understanding.

‘Agnes and Philippa have been both so kind,’ murmured the young lady, *à propos des bottes*, as it would have seemed to most ears.

‘And I must say Roscoe has expressed himself in a very friendly way, my darling,’ returned Walter in the same dove-like tones, and without the slightest difficulty in detecting her meaning.

What a walk that was by the crisp and sparkling lake in the late autumn morning! For them it had no touch of winter, and in the dark and wintry days that fell upon them—but of whose advent they had no suspicion, for we are speaking not of the changes of the seasons but of the cold and gloom that was fated to embitter their near future—it recurred to their memories again and again with sad distinctness. There was no need for the one to woo or the other to be wooed; their hearts were wedded already. They were in paradise, and dreamt not of the flaming sword that was to drive them out of it. Their talk would not perhaps have been very interesting to the outsider; but to themselves every syllable was sweet as the honey of Hybla. When we are reading our own verses aloud, says a great poetess, ‘the chariot wheels jar in the gates through which we drive them forth,’ and something of the sort takes place in love language, but the speakers are unconscious of it, nay, its very imperfections, the breaks and stops, the half-finished sentences (closed perhaps by a kiss), the wild and wandering vows that Love in its intoxication dictates, seem eloquence itself to them.

As they now moved slowly homewards (not arm-in-arm, for somehow Walter’s arm had strayed round Grace’s waist), another couple watched them from an elevation of the road that intervened between them and the Hall. They were not outwardly so demonstrative in their attachment to one another, but to judge by their conversation were nevertheless on very familiar terms.

‘There come the two turtle doves,’ observed Mr. Roscoe (for it was he and Philippa); ‘I am glad to see that they are billing and cooing already. If “happy’s the wooing that’s not long a doing,” they will have something to be congratulated upon.’

‘I hope so, indeed,’ sighed Philippa. ‘Though even then I don’t see the end of our own trouble.’

‘It will be a very satisfactory event in itself at all events,’ observed her companion.

‘You mean in a pecuniary point of view, I suppose,’ returned Philippa gloomily. ‘I sometimes wish that there was no such thing as money.’

‘If you add “or the want of it,” I will agree with you,’ responded her companion drily. ‘But their marriage will do much for us, I hope. It will certainly be one of two obstacles removed from our path.’

‘But how far the lesser one,’ remarked Philippa, with such a deep-drawn sigh that it seemed almost like a groan of despair.

‘That is true enough,’ he answered, with knitted brow, ‘but it is not you, remember, who suffer from Agnes, as I do. *You* are not pestered with her importunities and her impatience. She does not overwhelm *you* with her unwelcome attentions; indeed,’ he added with his grimmest smile, ‘you seem of late to be more free from anything of the sort than ever.’

‘It may be a laughing matter to you, but not to me, Edward,’ she answered angrily. ‘You don’t know what a woman feels who is situated as I am; and it seems to me that you don’t much care.’

‘Nay, nay, do not say that, my dear,’ he replied in his most honeyed tone. ‘I feel for you very much.’

‘To see her coming between me and you,’ continued Philippa vehemently, and without taking notice of this blandishment, ‘as though she had a right to do it, drives me half frantic; to have to set a guard all day upon lip and eye, lest word or glance should betray me to her, is not only irksome to me to the last degree, but humiliating. I give you fair warning that I can’t stand it much longer.’

She was looking straight before her, and did not see the scowl that darkened her companion’s face; for an instant he wore the look of a demon: it vanished, however, as quickly as it came, and when he spoke it was in the same calm persuasive voice—though with perhaps a little more firmness in it—that had served his turn so often.

‘My dear Philippa, you seem to have forgotten that this annoyance, of which you not unnaturally complain, was foreseen by us from the first. You made up your mind, you said, to bear it. Under other circumstances we might even have had to bear



it longer; I need hardly remind you how *that* necessity was put an end to.'

'Great Heaven, how can you speak of it?' cried Philippa, with a low piteous cry. Her face had grown ghastly white to the very lips, and her eyes expressed an unspeakable horror. 'You promised me you never, never would!'

'Pardon me, my dear, I had forgotten,' he murmured penitently; 'I should not have done it.'

But the while she hid her face in her hands and sobbed hysterically, the expression on his own was by no means one of penitence. It was, on the contrary, one of satisfaction, and could it have been translated into words would have run, 'Now I have given her something to think about, which will prevent her dwelling upon these little inconveniences for some time to come.' And indeed it seemed he had, for not a word more did she say concerning them, while the young couple drew nearer and nearer.

'Dry your eyes,' whispered Mr. Roscoe sharply and suddenly, 'Agnes is following us.'

This precaution Philippa had hitherto neglected to take. Perhaps she had concluded that there was no necessity for it, since Grace might naturally enough have ascribed her emotion (for Philippa, unlike her elder sister, was very emotional) to pleasure at seeing her with her lover; but she took it now, and, after pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, fluttered it in the wind, as though she had only taken it out in sign of pleasure to the happy pair.

Then she greeted Walter effusively. 'So glad to see you again amongst us, Mr. Sinclair,' and kissed Grace.

Then Agnes joined them with a smile on her face, but not without an expression on it also that betrayed the recent presence of a frown.

'I had hoped to be the first to bid you welcome to Halswater,' she said, 'but I perceive that I have been anticipated.'

By whom was made clear enough by the angry glance she cast at Philippa.

Before that lady could make what would have probably been no very conciliatory rejoinder, Mr. Roscoe struck in.

'We happened to be walking this way,' he observed apologetically.

That use of the plural pronoun, associating, as it did, himself with Philippa, overcame the slight self-restraint that Agnes was putting upon herself. 'I was not referring to you, Mr. Roscoe,'

she replied; 'you are not the master of the Hall, and therefore not in a position to welcome any of its guests.'

'You are extremely rude and very offensive, Agnes,' exclaimed Philippa furiously.

'Hush, hush,' said Mr. Roscoe reprovingly; 'you are wrong, Miss Philippa, to speak so to your sister, and Miss Agnes is perfectly right. I must have seemed to her, no doubt—though she was mistaken in so thinking—to have taken too much upon myself,' and he removed his hat and bowed to Agnes.

Her face was a spectacle; it was evident that she bitterly regretted having lost her temper, but that the presence of Philippa prevented her from acknowledging it. To have thus humiliated Mr. Roscoe was pain and grief to her, but she could not humiliate herself by saying so; she looked as though she could have bitten her tongue out. It was an unpleasant quarter of a minute for everybody.

Even Walter Sinclair felt that there were crumpled rose leaves—not to say serpents—in the paradise he had pictured himself as being about to enter.

'It is beautiful weather for the end of October,' he observed, with ludicrous inappropriateness; but as any stick does to beat a dog with, so any remark in circumstances of painful embarrassment is seized upon and made use of as a way out of it.

The whole party began talking of autumn tints as though they were peripatetic landscape painters, and had come down to illustrate the neighbourhood.

But in one heart there was such a passion at work—wild rage and cruel hate, and wounded pride, and passionate desire to be even with the cause of his humiliation—that if it could have been laid bare to the eyes of her companions would have frozen the well-meant platitudes upon their lips with the horror of it.

'Philippa is right,' muttered Edward Roscoe to himself, with a frightful oath; 'this state of things shall not go on much longer.'

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

## AT LUNCH.

ON arriving at the Hall, Mr. Roscoe at once took Walter to his quarters at the cottage; he made some excuse about wishing him to take choice of one of two bedrooms, but his real reason was to introduce him to Richard.

Since his brother had been fool enough (as he expressed it to himself) to fall over head and ears in love with the girl, he thought it dangerous that he should have his first meeting with her accepted swain in the young lady's presence; he had confidence in Richard's word, but not in his self-command. He almost feared that he might exhibit some sort of antagonism to the young fellow even as it was. It was, however, a groundless apprehension. So far from showing dislike or embarrassment, Richard received the newly-arrived guest with an excess of friendliness.

'I am glad, indeed,' he said, 'to take the hand of your father's son; it is a pleasure to which I have long looked forward, but which I began to fear I was never again to experience.'

'You knew him well, I know,' returned Walter with reciprocal warmth.

'He was the dearest friend I ever had,' was the other's earnest reply, 'and the best.' He scanned the young fellow from head to feet with curious interest. 'I see a likeness in you, stronger than when last I saw you as a boy, and yet not a strong one. He might have been in youth what you are: but I only knew him in his later years. Not that he was an old man, far from it; nor had fatigue and privation—though he had endured them to the uttermost—weakened his great strength.'

'Yes, he was very strong; and also, as I have heard, a most extraordinary runner,' said Walter.

'Yes, yes,' answered the other hastily; then added, as if to himself, 'Great Heaven, this is horrible!' and sank into a chair with stony eyes and bloodless face.

'My brother is not very well just now,' observed Mr. Roscoe; 'the least emotion excites him strongly. I warned you of this, you know, Richard,' he continued in an earnest, almost menacing tone.

'No, no, it is not *that*,' answered Richard vehemently. 'It is

something of which you know nothing, but which it behoves Walter Sinclair to know. Leave us alone together, Edward.' Then, as his brother shook his head and frowned, he added, 'It is about his father, and his ears alone must hear it.'

'Then you can speak with him another time,' said Edward decisively; 'it will utterly upset you to do so now. Besides there is the luncheon bell, and it would be bad manners to detain Mr. Sinclair from his hostess, just after he has arrived. You know what a stickler she is about such matters.'

Walter had already had an experience of it, and at once hastened to take Mr. Roscoe's view of the matter.

'Nothing will give me greater pleasure,' he said to Richard gently, 'than to speak with you about my father; but, as your brother says, perhaps it will be better to wait for a more favourable opportunity.'

Richard scarcely seemed to hear what the other was saying. 'He would talk of you by the hour,' he said, as if buried in reminiscence. "My poor lad that I shall never see again," he used to call you. And he never did—he never did.' The speaker's chin fell forward on his breast, and he said no more.

'Come,' said Mr. Roscoe, taking the young man by the arm, 'let us leave my brother alone for a little. He is doing himself harm by all this talk.' Then, as they walked away together, he told his companion how tender-hearted his brother was ('it runs in our family,' he said, 'but I have more self-restraint'); and how greatly attached he had been to Walter's father. 'Nevertheless, my brother only knew him (as he told you) in his later years, during which, as I hear, you had no communication with your father.'

'That is quite true,' sighed the young man, 'I never saw him, nor heard of him, after he started to hunt in the prairie, till I got tidings of his death. He was killed by the Indians.'

'So I understand,' said Mr. Roscoe, a little drily for a member of such a tender-hearted family. 'Yonder are the ladies waiting for us, and also for their luncheon. I have noticed that the fair sex do not mind how late their guests are for dinner, but are very particular about the midday meal. It is doubtless because they are always taking little sips and snacks in the afternoon, and have no real appetite for the other.'

To look at Mr. Roscoe's smiling face, however, as it met those of his hostesses, you would have imagined he had just been passing



a eulogium upon all womankind. Nor were they backward in reciprocating his apparent chivalry. Agnes dowered him with an especially gracious look, as if anxious to make amends for her late outbreak; Philippa smiled on him with satisfaction, at the remembrance of that passage of arms, which she well knew, moreover, that he had not forgotten; and Grace was radiant, though it was true not so much on his account as on that of the guest he had brought with him.

‘Where is Mr. Richard?’ inquired Agnes, as they sat down to table.

And before even Mr. Roscoe’s ready tongue could frame an excuse for his brother’s absence, Mr. Richard himself made his appearance. Every trace of his recent emotion had disappeared. *His* face, too, was pleasant and smiling; though to an observant eye (and there was one upon him) his cheerfulness might have seemed a little feigned.

‘I am glad to see you looking so much better, Mr. Richard,’ said Agnes; ‘now our little family circle is quite complete.’ She glanced at Mr. Roscoe for approval, for the word ‘family’ had been put in to please him; partly as a compliment to himself and his brother, partly to carry out his views as respected Grace and Walter.

‘It will certainly not be the fault of our hostess,’ that gentleman returned earnestly, ‘if it is not a happy one, and all does not go as merrily as a marriage bell.’

If a certain lawyer had been there, who was acquainted with the circumstances, he would probably have murmured to himself, ‘What an infernal scoundrel!’ but that individual was not present, and all who were seemed to receive the observation in a proper spirit. Curiously enough, however, the conversation presently reverted to him.

‘Have you seen Mr. Allerton lately?’ inquired Philippa of Walter.

‘Yes; I saw him just before my departure from town, and he charged me with many kind messages to you ladies, which, except as to their general purport, I am very much afraid I have forgotten.’

‘You had something else to think about, I dare say,’ said Agnes, with another conciliatory glance at Mr. Roscoe.

‘Or perhaps it was jealousy,’ observed Philippa, with a sly look at Grace; ‘some people don’t like to give tender messages to ladies which have been entrusted to them by others. Not that

I feel the omission very poignantly on my own account,' she added, 'for my experience of Mr. Allerton is far from tender. In his character of trustee I find him very hard.' Here she suddenly flushed up, and came to a full stop. Mr. Roscoe had (I grieve to say it of one generally so polite to ladies) given her a kick under the table.

'I cannot say that of him,' remarked Agnes coldly. 'He always seems to me to exercise a very proper prudence.'

Mr. Roscoe's face grew livid; Agnes, perhaps purposely, was looking elsewhere and did not perceive it. 'You are a great friend of Mr. Allerton's, I believe, Mr. Sinclair,' she continued.

'He has been very kind to me at all events,' responded the young man warmly. 'Indeed I owe him a great deal, for, thanks to his good offices, when my Cumberland holiday is over, a position has been offered me in a certain firm, better than one so inexperienced as myself could have hoped for.'

'That is very good news,' observed Mr. Roscoe; and he spoke as if he meant it, as indeed he did, for the tidings suited well with his own plans.

'But at present, Mr. Sinclair,' put in Agnes graciously, 'you will have nothing to do, I trust, but to enjoy yourself.'

She really liked the young fellow, but was also very desirous to efface from his mind the impression which her conduct of the morning had only-too probably made upon it.

'Indeed, Miss Tremehere, with the recollection of your late river home in my mind,' he answered gratefully, 'I can imagine nothing but happiness under your roof.'

Walter meant what he said, but his words to those present, and who knew how life went on at Halswater, must have seemed, indeed, a strange stretch of fancy. There was a sudden silence, which he naturally attributed to another cause. 'I do not forget, however,' he continued with feeling, 'that at Elm Place you had a guest whom we shall all miss here.'

'Yes, poor Lord Cheribert,' said Agnes, 'how affable he was, was he not?' She was not generally so maladroit in her observations, but she was in a hurry to say something.

'So full of high spirits, I should rather call him,' observed Philippa decisively. 'One never remembered that he was a lord at all.'

This was not quite true, as regarded herself; for indeed she had never forgotten the fact, which gave her an unreasonable



pleasure, for a single instant; but to 'wipe her sister's eye,' as Mr. Roscoe called it, was a temptation she could never resist. Agnes bit her lip, angry with herself at her mistake, and furious with her reprovcr.

Unhappily, though he did not intend it, Mr. Roscoe's next observation followed Philippa's lead.

'Yes; one forgot his rank,' he said, 'in his attractive qualities; one called him "Cheribert" from the first; he was a capital fellow all round; it was a pity, however, that his great fortune went to the dogs, or rather to the horses.'

'Other people waste their money quite as foolishly,' observed Agnes drily, 'though not on the same follies.'

Again came that livid look on Mr. Roscoe's face which had overspread it by the lakeside that morning. If ever an angry woman could be warned, it should have had a warning in it.

'For my part,' said Grace, speaking for the first time, and with suppressed feeling, 'I shall never think of Lord Cheribert's follies. He had many and great temptations to which others are not exposed. His faults were on the surface; few kinder, nay, even nobler hearts than his ever beat in a human breast.'

'In that I must entirely agree with you,' said Walter earnestly; 'and if he had lived he would have proved it.'

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### RICHARD'S STORY.

THERE was something—'there is always a something'—on Grace's mind, beside the happiness which well-nigh filled it, in the consciousness that it behoved her to write to Mr. Allerton to tell him of her engagement.

Her correspondence with him had been hitherto always of a pleasant kind, but she foresaw that what she had now to say would be far from pleasing to him. She liked the old lawyer very much—more perhaps than any one in the world with one exception—but she knew his weakness. He was liberal even to munificence with his own money; quite understood that the only true value of it lay in its power of doing good; but he set too great store upon it when it belonged to other people. Half his life had been passed in the endeavour to make men come by their own, or

to prevent what was theirs falling into other hands. Money was a sacred trust with him. If she had understood Mr. Allerton's real opinion of her sisters, and especially of Mr. Roscoe, she would have pictured to herself a far more vehement opposition; but, even as it was, she knew that he would oppose her views. She did not fear that he would offer any personal objection—indeed how *could* he, or for that matter could any one else?—but she felt that he would object to the pecuniary loss she would sustain by becoming Walter's wife. She had told Walter that the gulf between them was neither so wide nor so deep as he had imagined; and he had understood her as she knew (and meant him so to understand it) in the literal sense of her words. She had in reality referred to her indifference to the disparity of fortune between them; what he had imagined her to convey was that that disparity was not so very great; he was probably unaware that through her marriage with him she would forfeit her claim to an immense fortune; that nothing in fact would remain to her but the money she had saved since her father's death—much of which had gone in charity—and the 10,000*l.* he had left to her, let her marry whom she might. To what is called a chivalrous mind—but she knew it was not true chivalry; to a quixotic mind then, such as she feared that of Walter to be, the knowledge of all this might be fatal to his hopes. She felt that the longer it was delayed the better: that every day they passed in each other's society would make him more and more her own, and render it more difficult for him to give her up. The wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove (or the love bird) combined to prevent her communicating at present with Mr. Allerton; and she therefore forbore to do it. She had no fear of any one else telling him her secret. She was not so simple but that she perceived her sisters were very willing for their own sakes that she should marry Walter, and would certainly do nothing to obstruct it; and she blessed them for their greed.

In the meantime she had never been so happy.

Love took up the glass of Time and turned it in his glowing hands;  
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

If dear Papa could have only known her Walter and witnessed her happiness, was the only picture her imagination could form of an increase of bliss.

Many an evening by the waters (where, thank Heaven, were no ships)  
Did their spirits meet together at the touching of the lips.



The loneliness of Halswater made it an admirable locality for such proceedings, and Walter Sinclair was no laggard in love: never was an engaged young couple more completely left to their own devices than they were. Walter was a *persona grata* to every one, even including Richard Roscoe. They might have noticed indeed (but they noticed nothing) that he avoided them when together, with even a greater consideration than did the rest of the household, and that he shrank still more from meeting Grace alone; but he not only cultivated Walter's society, but showed a particular kindness for the young fellow.

It was many days, however, before he made that revelation he had promised him on their first acquaintance, respecting his connection with his father.

The three men had been smoking together at the cottage one night as their custom was after they had bidden good-night to the ladies, and Edward Roscoe, feeling tired, had gone to his own room. There had ensued a long silence between the two who remained, Walter's thoughts, as usual, being occupied with Grace, while the other, as he slowly expelled the smoke from his lips, regarded his companion with earnest eyes and an expression which it would have been difficult to analyse, for it was made up of various emotions, and some of them antagonistic to one another—tenderness, remorse, and jealousy.

'Walter, my lad,' he presently said, in low grave tones, 'I hope we shall always be good friends whatever happens.'

'I hope so, indeed, Mr. Richard,' replied the young fellow, with a natural surprise. 'On my side at least it must always be so; not only on your own account but because you were my father's friend. I trust there is no reason why you should look forward, on your part, to any alteration in your feelings towards myself.'

'There will be no alteration, no,' answered the other with a heavy sigh. 'You will never do any harm to *me* more than you have already done.'

'And that is none,' returned Walter, with a light laugh, 'so I think our friendship is secure.'

He had not the least idea to what the other had alluded; but his strange remark had made little impression upon him; he was not easily impressed just now by observations made by any one, save one, and Richard had always seemed to him a queer fellow, who lived more in the past than the present, and who had a way of speaking not always quite to the purpose.

‘Heaven grant that it may be so,’ continued his companion with gentle earnestness, ‘but you, at all events, have something to forgive *me*, my lad; for but for Richard Roscoe, your poor father would have been alive this moment.’

‘What? Did you kill him then?’ cried Walter, starting from his seat.

‘I kill him? *I* who was his dearest friend! No; though in one sense would that I had. From my hand he would have welcomed death rather than—’ He broke off with a shudder, and the whispered words, ‘Ah, how can Heaven permit such things?’

Walter resumed his seat, and waited with patient anxiety for what might be coming. It was obviously useless to press his companion; the difficulty he found in making his communication at all was only too evident. His face was grey and bloodless, and a dew, as of death itself, had fallen on it.

‘There are people, Walter,’ he commenced slowly after a long pause, ‘who will tell you that the American Indians are as other men, with the like feelings and emotions as ourselves, open to gratitude and moved by tenderness, and who can be influenced for good. I have lived among them for years, and can only say that I have never seen such a one. Within my experience, they have been all alike, treacherous, base, and heartless, and whenever the opportunity is offered of proving themselves so, incarnate fiends. They have many evil passions (as Heaven knows have we too), but one overmastering one, that of cruelty; a lust for barbarity more hellish than ever dwelt in a white man’s breast. This they have not in war time only but at all times, and directed not necessarily against their enemies but against all the human race. Your father understood this thoroughly; before he became a hunter, you know, he was attached as a volunteer to a detachment of the United States army; and this, he told me, happened to a little drummer boy of his regiment who chanced to fall into the hands of the Apache Indians. He was but thirteen years old and a pretty boy, and he was given over to the tender mercies of the squaws. Everywhere else in the world almost such a captive would have excited pity in the breasts of women. *These* creatures did this: they stripped the child, tied him to a tree, and for four hours subjected him to every torture which their experience told them would not be fatal to him. Then they took pine knobs, and, splitting them in small splinters, stuck them all over his little body, till (as a spectator, a Mexican half-breed described it)



he looked like a porcupine, and set fire to them. They yelled and danced at his screams of anguish till he slowly died.'

'What a sickening tale!' exclaimed Walter, with marked disgust.

'No doubt,' replied the other drily, 'but if such things are so bad even to hear of, what must they be to endure? If Indians so use a harmless child, you may guess what they are capable of when their enemies are in their power; I say their enemies—though they treat helpless women even more devilishly than they treat men. However, it was an enemy of theirs with whom my story has to do.'

'Did my father fall into the power of such fiends?' exclaimed Walter excitedly.

'Listen. Your father and I were hunters of the plains for years together. He was a man of iron nerve and an excellent shot, but, so far as I know, he never took a human life unless his own was threatened. Many and many a time had we been attacked by these devils, and sent them howling to their hell; but we never sought them out, nor even pursued them. He was a quiet man, neither given to bloodthirstiness nor revenge. So was I at that time, Heaven knows. It is not so now.' Then he paused and poured himself out a glass of water; his hand trembled so violently that he could hardly carry it to his lips. 'I cannot speak of these things as I would wish to do,' he murmured apologetically; 'there is a fever in my heart, and in my brain. They make me mad. Yes; he spared many that he might have slain, though he well understood their natures. We were well armed of course; one night as we were putting by our revolvers, I noticed he had a pistol in his breast-pocket. "What is that for?" I asked. "It is for myself," he answered gravely; "if the worst should come to the worst, I will never fall into Indian hands alive. I know them," he added significantly.

'We had had a good season and were returning to the settlement; we had left the prairie behind us when it became necessary one evening to cross a river. It was in flood and dangerous, but the Sioux were about us, we knew, and there was better and safer camping ground on the other side of it. We rode our horses at the stream, but it proved too strong for us. There were rocks too in the river, and against one of these I was dashed by the current and unhorsed. The animal was carried down the stream, and I myself reached the bank with difficulty; I was much bruised and

had sprained my ankle. Your father with great exertion brought his horse safe to land, but, like myself, at the sacrifice of his weapons; our rifles and revolvers were lost; he had nothing but his pistol. Our situation was desperate indeed, for we felt only too certain that we had been watched by the Sioux. Had we had our arms, we should not have feared them, for they had had experience of their accuracy, and relied on opportunity alone for destroying us. Worthless though they be, these wretches never throw their own lives away. If we had had even our horses we could have escaped from them; but we had but one horse. *That* they knew, but not that we were defenceless, so that for the night we were left in peace, but not to rest. I sometimes think if we could have got rest that night, two lives might have been saved instead of one. The fatigue exhausted our strength. At the dawn of day we saw the Sioux; they had crossed the river, doubtless at some ford, and were coming towards us—some fifty mounted men. One held out a branch of a tree in token of amity. Your father smiled a bitter smile as he saw it. "They must think us in straits indeed," he said, "to suppose us willing to trust to their good faith." Then, turning to me, "There is not a moment to be lost, Richard. You are lame and cannot run a yard. You must take my horse and ride for Railton (the nearest fort)."

"What, and leave you to the tender mercies of these hell-hounds?" I answered.

"Not so," he said, "I have my pistol, remember; it is but death at the worst. Moreover, by taking to the scrub yonder, I hope to keep ahead of them all, and save my scalp. You, of course, must keep to the open. My horse is a better one than was ever crossed by a Sioux. If you reach home with a whole skin, you will come back and look for me."

"But you are throwing away your life for mine?" I cried.

"Mount and ride, man. Every moment of delay is risking both our lives." He helped me on to his horse—for I was so stiff as well as lame that I could hardly move—with his own hands, and off we started, he for the scrub and I for the open. That was the last I saw of your father—alive.'



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## THE STORY CONTINUED.

‘WHY do you not go on?’ inquired Walter, after a long silence, which his companion showed no disposition to break.

‘There is a reason for it,’ answered the other hoarsely; ‘it would spare both of us if I said no more. Nevertheless, you have a right to hear all—if you wish it.’

Walter inclined his head; he felt too sick at heart to speak.

‘Well, the good horse saved me from the Sioux, as he would have saved his master. They followed me for two days and then gave up the chase. On the third morning I reached the post, half dead with hunger and fatigue; but in an hour I was in the saddle again following my own tracks with five-and-twenty mounted volunteers. The fever of my soul sustained me. The thought of your father and of what he had done for me, and of what might have happened to him, filled my veins with fire. I slept at times upon my horse, but the men who were with me never lost the trail. Since your father had been bound for the same post, and we did not meet with him, I felt only too sure that he had not escaped with life. The best that we could look for, as I was well convinced, was to find his dead body, with a pistol bullet in it. But, alas, that was not to be. We searched as well as we could, always, however, moving quickly, till we came upon the scrub which I had seen him enter. To look for him there would have taken too much time, and it would be easy to return to it. The Indians had retired across the river; we found the ford and followed them.’ Here Richard Roscoe paused and wiped his face, on which a ghastly dew was gathering. ‘Shall I go on?’ he murmured.

‘Go on,’ answered Walter, in tones that no one who knew him would have recognised for his own; his voice was frozen with the horror that had seized his companion, though he was ignorant of what was to come.

‘Three miles or so from the river, we found what had once been a man, and your father. His head alone was above the earth, the rest of him they had buried standing. His poor limbs were bound with ropes. They had scalped him; they had cut off his lips, his eyelids, his nose and ears, and had left him then—still alive as we afterwards discovered—to be driven mad by the hot

sun beating on his head, and to be revived for fresh tortures, by the cool air of the morning; Hell only knows for how long.'

Walter groaned.

'A hunter who heard of it from the fiends themselves says "the warrior" who invented this torture was thought very highly of by the tribe. There were not many left before we had done with them to praise him. This hand, palsied as it looks, slew seven of them!'

'Let me take it,' cried Walter hoarsely. He took it and kissed it.

'Yet, but for me, your father might have been alive, lad; and I should have suffered in his stead. Do you indeed forgive me?'

'Yes; if you had been in his place you would have done as he did.'

'I hope so; I think so; but he *did* it. If I ever forget it, I shall deserve to fall into Indian hands. Do you wonder now why I hate Indians?'

'But the pistol?' groaned Walter, unable to entertain any abstract subject in the whirl and horror of his personal feelings. 'Why did he not shoot himself?'

'I suppose the powder had got wet when he crossed the river. What are you doing, lad?'

The young man had passed quickly into his own room, and through the open door could be seen placing things in his port-manteau—a revolver was the first of them.

'I am going away. I leave to-morrow for America!'

Richard rose, went into the other room, and laid his hand upon his arm.

'No,' he said, 'that way madness lies; look at me and do not doubt it.'

Walter looked up and beheld a face he did not know; pallid with hate, distorted with passion: a livid face—and also one in which, it was plain, reason had no longer a place.

'Do you suppose I have not done all that could be done,' shouted this apparition, and then laughed aloud. 'Seven with my own hand, and six times as many more by those of my men. There is not one of them alive: not one, not one. Will you make war against a race with your single arm? Leave that to me. You are not a madman as I am. Can't you see it? Come, come,' he continued, drawing his now unresisting companion back into the smoking-room, and speaking in less vehement tones.



‘You must keep your wits for other things; for you may need them. No. There has been mischief enough already done. Your father’s torments have not been unavenged; the man for whom he sacrificed his life has had his sufferings too—and because of him. Above all things never breathe one word to *her* about your father’s death. Do you hear me?’

‘Whom do you mean by *her*?’

‘Why, Grace, of course; our Grace. It would distress her.’

‘Of course I shall never tell her.’

‘You think so now; but perhaps at some other time; in years to come. Swear to me you will never tell her how I took your father’s horse and rode away from him, and left him to his doom. Swear it.’

‘I swear I never will.’

‘I am satisfied; you are your father’s son, and he never lied to me. Now let us talk of something else.’

The speaker’s face had suddenly changed; the fire had fled from it, and also the remorse and pain; he looked like one exhausted even to the verge of death, but who after a paroxysm of excitement had returned to his right mind. The spectacle in some sort relieved his companion from the distress which the other’s recital had caused him: was it possible, he wondered for the moment, whether the man was not a madman, and had imagined the whole hideous story; though he came to the conclusion that this was not the case, but rather that the recollection of so shocking an incident had affected his brain. The idea turned his thoughts into another channel. If the poor fellow should be subject, as he had himself confessed, to lose his reason, might he not prove dangerous to Grace? She was evidently a subject of regard to his disordered mind. His solicitude that she should not hear the story might be accounted for by the part he had himself played, but what did he mean by that strange expression ‘our Grace’? It was a slight matter, but the least suspicion of danger in connection with so dear a being, alarmed him. There had hitherto not been the slightest kink or hitch in the smooth course of their true love, and he was the more inclined on that account to exaggerate the smallest obstacle to it.

It was with great dissatisfaction, therefore, that he heard his companion presently return to the subject which he had himself spoken of as closed.

‘It may be necessary, my lad,’ said Richard, as if moved by

an afterthought, 'to speak of your father to you once again; but I see how the matter distresses you, as well it may, and I promise you it shall be for the last time.'

'Indeed,' returned the other earnestly, 'I do not wish to hear it. What has been told me is sufficient, and more than sufficient. You were quite right to tell it me, and I thank you for the confidence that has cost you so dearly; but since, as you have justly pointed out, retribution is out of my power to exact, I entreat you to be silent on the matter, which can only cause me more distress and pain.'

'Poor lad,' answered the other with gentle gravity; 'perhaps it may not be necessary for me to speak; let us hope it may not for both our sakes. It is very late; good night; and may you have no such dreams as I have.'

Walter had no dreams that night for he had no sleep. The fate of his father, and the possibility of danger to Grace—or at the best of great distress of mind if she should come to hear of what had been confided to him, divided his waking thoughts. It is true that Richard had himself enjoined upon him silence on the subject; but what trust could be reposed in one so strange and excitable? it was even possible that he might tell the story to her with his own lips by way of penance for what he considered (though such an imputation was itself a proof of a disordered mind) his base behaviour. On the whole he decided to warn her of Richard, but in a way that should not arouse any serious apprehensions. The next day, therefore, he took an opportunity, while walking with her alone, of asking her how she liked her guest at the cottage.

'I like the poor fellow very much,' she replied frankly, 'better, indeed, than his brother, though we have known him so much longer.'

'Then why, since he has won your regard, my dear,' he answered smiling, 'should he be called a poor fellow?'

'Well,' returned Grace, with a little hesitation, 'he is an invalid, you know. One cannot but pity one who, though so far from old age, has lost the activity and strength that he manifestly once possessed. As he once told me with his own lips, he is the mere wreck of his former self. You are not jealous, *are you?*' she added slyly, 'that Mr. Richard has given me his confidences?'

'Not at all,' said Walter with a laugh, which was, however, rather forced, for her reply had chimed in with his apprehensions; 'but is there no other reason why you pity him?'



‘Well, if you compel me to say so, I fear that the fatigues and privations he has endured have affected his mind as well as his body.’

‘But you don’t fear him, I hope,’ inquired Walter anxiously.

‘Certainly not; I believe he has a sincere regard for me. But there is no doubt that his manner is at times exceedingly eccentric.’

‘Yes; some subjects excite him in the strangest manner; he is not himself when he talks about them, and all allusion to them should be discouraged. I want you to be careful, my darling, about that—for his sake, of course.’

‘I will be very careful; but what are the subjects?’

‘Well, there is one, for example, which if he attempt to speak to you upon, I beg that you will decline to listen to him. Would you mind saying at once and peremptorily that it is distasteful to you?’

‘I am quite sure that if I even hinted at it being so, it would be dropped at once. Mr. Richard, despite some drawbacks patent to everybody, is at heart a gentleman, and moreover would, I am convinced, respect any wish of mine.’

‘Very good, then don’t let him talk to you about the American Indians.’

‘The American Indians?’ echoed Grace, with amazement.

‘Yes; it seems ludicrous enough, of course, but he has, not without reason, a great detestation of them. He has doubtless suffered at their hands, but his views upon the subject are exaggerated, and between ourselves by no means trustworthy. You must never be frightened by anything he tells you about them, but what will be much your safest way is to refuse to listen to him. When he gets upon that topic he is in my opinion not a responsible being. I hope I have not alarmed you, my darling,’ for Grace had turned rather pale; ‘there is no danger to be apprehended, of course, but I wish to save you from hearing what may be unpleasant, and which at the same time would be harmful to the poor man himself.’

‘I am not the least afraid, Walter,’ she answered quietly, ‘and will take care to use the precaution you have recommended.’

They went on to talk of other subjects, and Walter, no doubt, thought he had reason to congratulate himself on his skilful diplomacy. But his revelation had filled Grace’s mind with recollections and suspicions of which he little guessed. She was under a promise to Richard, as we know, to be silent about his extra-

ordinary behaviour during their drive in the pony carriage, but the cause of it was no longer inexplicable to her. The strange noise they had heard as they approached the circus was no doubt the war whoop of the Indians, which had probably awakened some dreadful reminiscence in Richard Roscoe's mind. She recalled his look of horror and, as she now understood it, of undying hate when it fell upon his ear. Another thing, too, occurred to her which moved her even more—the attempt which, if his story was to be believed, had been made upon the life of the Indian on the fells. Was it possible that Richard Roscoe was the person who had assaulted him? The man's account of the affair had been received with incredulity, from the total absence of motive for such a crime. But if what she had just heard was true, there *was* a motive, and one that could have actuated one individual only in that neighbourhood; namely, Richard himself. She could not look upon him as a murderer, even in intent; her whole soul shrank from it; but the only alternative was irresistible, and filled her with vague alarms. On one point, at least—and why not on others—their guest at the cottage was a madman.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### A CHANGE OF FRONT.

IN his various characters as friend of the family, confidential adviser, and major domo, at Halswater, Mr. Edward Roscoe exercised a great many rights and privileges which no one ever thought of disputing; and among them was the unimportant but delicate office of opening the letter-bag, of which he kept the key. The post, as has been mentioned, came somewhat late in the day, so that instead of the family correspondence arriving as usual at breakfast time, and being displayed in public, it was brought to Mr. Roscoe, generally alone in his private sitting-room at the time, and distributed subsequently with his own gracious hands. Heaven forbid we should hint that he took any undue advantage of the circumstance, but it naturally happened that he knew who got letters, and also who sent them away. He knew, for example, that Grace had not yet written to Mr. Allerton since Walter's arrival, and secretly applauded her for that maidenly reticence. He had much correspondence of his own, too, which it was highly



undesirable should be laid upon the breakfast-table, and altogether the arrangement was a very convenient one.

On a certain morning, when the bag had been brought to him as usual, and, as usual, before unlocking it, he had locked his door, among its contents was a letter from America, addressed to his brother. 'So it's come at last, has it?' was his muttered observation, as he took the envelope in his hand and examined it attentively. 'What on earth made the fool seal it?'

The observation seemed uncalled for, for though it is now unusual to seal letters, to do so is not a proof of folly; and in some instances indeed the contrary. There was a little kettle on his fire—for he was a man who liked his coffee hot, and at irregular hours—and he now looked at it with an expression of great irritation. The fact was the kettle was useful to him in opening gummed envelopes, but of no use at all in opening sealed ones. Was it worth while to take the impression of this particular seal—which only bore initials on it—before breaking it or not? Considering it was only Richard's letter, a fellow who took no notice of such little matters, he thought it was not worth while; he would melt the wax, and after possessing himself of the contents of the epistle, fasten it down again with a blank seal. It was a simple operation, and one to which he was well accustomed; he melted the seal and opened the envelope. It contained a short official note to his brother, just saying, 'I forward you what you left with me,' with a banker's name attached and the enclosure. This latter was another envelope also sealed, directed 'To my dear son, Walter, to be delivered into his own hands.' 'Not just yet, however,' was Mr. Roscoe's grim remark, as he melted this second seal. Then he read the enclosure. The effect of its perusal was remarkable. What he said cannot be written, because it was an execration of extreme violence, uttered 'not loud but deep,' but what he did was to stamp upon the ground with impotent rage. His countenance was white with the white heat of fury, and the consciousness of baffled schemes. His eyes flashed fire. His first impulse was to burn the letter, but even as he held it over the glowing coals, he hesitated, and at that moment he heard Miss Agnes's voice at the door of the cottage asking if the letters had come.

In an instant he had thrown it into his open desk, and locked the desk, and came out to her, smiling, with the opened bag in his hand.

‘There are no letters for you, Miss Agnes, and I, too, have been neglected by my correspondents; but there is one for Miss Grace—I fancy from Mr. Allerton.’

The word ‘fancy’ was a pretty touch, for the lawyer’s hand was as familiar to him as his own, and many a letter from him had he read, though he had never been one of his correspondents. If he had read this one, which he had had no time to do, it would have given him less dissatisfaction than some others, which, indeed, had spoken of Mr. Edward Roscoe with more freedom than friendship.

Agnes held him in honeyed talk, as was her wont when she got him alone; and to see his eyes and his smile as they replied to her, one would have thought the lady very dear to him, and never have guessed the impatience which her presence evoked, and far less the passion that was consuming him in which she had no part at all. At last he got rid of her and returned to his own room, a different man from him who had last entered it. An hour ago, though there was much to trouble him, and obstacles in his path that would have daunted a less determined spirit, the immediate matter which he had in hand had been going well and prosperously. It was only an initial difficulty in his far-reaching plans, it is true, but to find one impediment in course of removal had been a satisfaction to him; and lo! instead of its being swept away, it had assumed even greater proportions, and all the work he had had with it had now, under far less encouraging circumstances, to be done over again. In vain he pulled at his cigar, not for comfort (comfort even from the soothing weed was not for such as he), but for ideas—how to meet this unexpected blow, and especially how to turn it, as he had often done in the case of such disappointments, to his own profit. For nearly an hour he could find no way out of the maze of difficulty, and only confused himself in his efforts to find it; but at last he hit upon a plan. It was a dangerous, even a desperate one, and, what was worst of all, required the connivance and assistance of others; but, having once grasped it, his hold on it grew more tenacious with every moment of possession. It is a characteristic of men of his class, fertile in schemes, sanguine of success, and confident in their own powers of persuasion, that nothing but total and complete failure can make them doubt of the practicability of their plans. What is also an attribute of theirs is promptness; not an hour, not a minute, do they waste in putting them into



execution. Taking the fateful scroll (or scrawl, for it was written in shaky and ill-formed characters, significant of a tumult of anxieties in the writer's mind) from the desk, he placed it carefully in his breast pocket, and sought the presence of the very person from whom he had of late so gladly parted, Agnes Tremehere.

Each of the elder sisters had, like Grace, her own boudoir, and there was no sort of difficulty—for he had often certain business of a private character to transact with both of them—in seeing his hostess alone. She received him even more cordially than usual, for his business was not always of a welcome character, and as he had had no letters from town that day she justly concluded that it was not on business that he came. It was soon made plain, however, that he had not come on pleasure.

'Agnes,' he said, as soon as he had closed the door behind him, 'a great misfortune has happened to us—or so, at least, it at first seemed to me. Before telling you how I propose to meet it, and even turn it to our advantage, I wish you to be informed exactly of its nature. Read *this*,' and, without more words, he placed the missive that had been sent to his brother in her unfaltering hand.

When not moved by jealousy or wrong, Agnes Tremehere was cold and calculating enough. Her disposition, indeed, though far gentler, was almost as practical as that of Mr. Roscoe himself, and of this he was well aware. He was convinced that of the various persons with whom he was compelled to deal upon the present occasion, Agnes would be the least difficult to manage, and the most likely to fall in with his views. Nevertheless, it was with satisfaction that, as he watched her face attentively as she read, he saw it harden, after the first flush of surprise, and assume an expression of unswerving determination.

'You know what this means, of course, as regards ourselves,' he said, 'and also Philippa' (this he added incidentally), 'if what we once thought so advisable should come to pass?'

'It would be the perpetration of an infamy,' she answered, in a voice hoarse with rage. 'It would be giving effect to a most wicked wrong.'

'No doubt; and therefore we must take measures to put a stop to it.'

'It will be very difficult, Edward, as well as cruel, now that matters have gone so far.'

There was a touch of softness in her tone, and though only a touch it alarmed him.

‘Of course it will be difficult,’ he answered, with grim contempt. ‘As to the cruelty, that is all nonsense; I mean, of course’ (for he saw a flush of indignation glow on his companion’s face), ‘that a girl like Grace is too young to know her own mind, and will not suffer as you and I would do under similar circumstances. For all that she has said, I still believe that she had a tenderness for Cheribert, and if this Sinclair was got rid of, she would find some other man equally to her mind. Let us confine ourselves to the difficulty. It is great, I admit, but not insuperable. The question I have come to ask you is whether you are prepared to see the vast fortune your father left behind him pass out of the family, or into one branch of it——’

‘I am not,’ she put in quickly. ‘I will never submit to such a wrong if I can help it. There is nothing I would not do—provided, of course, that it were not itself a wrong—to prevent its commission.’

‘That is spoken like yourself, Agnes,’ said Mr. Roscoe approvingly. ‘I only hope I shall find others, to whom I must also look for assistance, as just and reasonable.’

‘Others? Do you mean Philippa?’ she answered with knitted brow.

‘Well, you see, my dear, her interests are equally threatened by this document with your own. We must all put our shoulders to the wheel, and work together for once.’

‘We shall hardly have Grace with us, however,’ observed Agnes drily. ‘I am truly sorry to have to treat the dear girl in any way as an antagonist. But she ought to be able to see for herself, how unfair and infamous——’

‘So she would,’ put in Mr. Roscoe hastily; ‘if her eyes were not blinded by her love for Walter she would be the first to see it; we shall be in fact only working in the same interests as herself—namely in those of Truth and Justice—if she were in a position to look at the matter from an unprejudiced standpoint. As it is, however, she must know nothing about this,’ and he tapped the document with his finger.

‘And Richard?’

‘Well, of course, Richard must never know. Why should he? The thing has been lost in the post, and there is no duplicate.’

‘Must it really be so? I hate deceit, Edward.’



‘So do I; but I hate injustice more—to those I love,’ he added tenderly.

‘When you say that, Edward, you make me feel for our poor Grace more than ever,’ said Agnes softly. ‘Yet, as you say, there seems no other way out of it. How is it you propose to break off the match?’

‘Leave that to me, my dear, just for the present; I wish to avoid distressing your tender heart more than is absolutely necessary. When I need your help I will tell you all. But in the meantime you must gradually—very gradually—cease your civilities to Mr. Sinclair. He is sharp enough in taking a hint, so be very careful not to give him an opportunity of asking you the reason of your change of manner. Indeed I am going to take him in hand myself, so that he will probably not think it necessary to put that question. You must drop him as gently as if he was made of glass, but never let Grace herself perceive that you are dropping him. Her too, poor dear, I shall have to deal with, using, however, arguments very different from those in his case. Many difficulties lie before me, as you may suppose, Agnes, but you shall see that they are not insuperable.’

‘You are a wonder, Edward,’ she exclaimed with admiration. ‘It is your marvellous gift of persuasion that makes me sometimes doubt of you myself.’

‘Great Heavens, do you mean that you think I would deceive *you*, Agnes?’ he exclaimed with indignation. ‘This is a poor return indeed for long and loving service.’

‘I only said sometimes, Edward,’ she replied affectionately; ‘you must not be hasty with your Agnes, even though she is sometimes hasty with you.’

‘It is not your haste, my dear, but your impatience that I object to,’ he answered with a smile; ‘the present obstacle, however, will not, as you doubtless fear, delay our happiness, if all goes well with my plan.’

‘I am glad to hear it indeed, for I am sick of delays, Edward,’ she answered, laying her jewelled hand upon his shoulder tenderly.

‘And so am I, dear Agnes,’ and to do him justice he looked sick.

(*To be continued.*)

*A SLAVE-DEALER OF 1690.*

AT a time when the continent of Africa is attracting so much attention, owing to the recent discoveries of that indefatigable explorer, Mr. H. M. Stanley, some letters written at the close of the seventeenth century by a European resident on the Gold Coast, and descriptive of the only portion of Central Africa then known, are of more than ordinary interest, as showing the light in which the continent was regarded at that time, and as affording means for judging how much progress, if any, has been made by the negro races during the two hundred years which have elapsed since that period. The writer of these letters, Bosman, was of Dutch extraction and had peculiar facilities for acquiring a knowledge of the native tribes of that part of Africa. He went out there as clerk to a Dutch trading firm about the year 1686, and lived on the coast for fourteen years. By his superior business abilities he soon rose to be chief agent for his company, in which position he had opportunities of visiting all the principal places which were then in existence in the Gulf of Guinea. Bosman was of observant character, and describes all he saw, and his manner of life, in long and carefully-written letters to a friend in Holland. In these he gives an account of each of the different places, such as Elmina, Cape Coast Castle, Accra, and Badagry—at which he lived; but he devotes by far the most space to a description of Fida, the modern Whydah, which he seems to have preferred to any other place, and as its inhabitants, although, perhaps, a little in advance of them in social customs and manners, are sufficiently characteristic of the others, an examination of this portion of his letters will give a fair idea of the peculiarities of all the tribes of which he writes.

Bosman stayed at Fida on three different occasions, and received on each occasion a very favourable impression of it. The difficulty seems to have been to get to it. The surf was worse at Fida than at any other part of that surf-beaten coast, and from April to July the sea became so violent that any attempt to land was at the imminent risk of life. Bosman states that in one year five Europeans were drowned at this port, and declares that in his time alone it had cost his company several hundred pounds



worth of goods.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the surf there was an easterly current which at times ran so strong that it was impossible to propel a boat or canoe against it, thus forming another obstacle in getting ashore. Once landed, however, the adventurer was fully rewarded for the dangers he had incurred, for he found himself in a most beautiful country, as remarkable for its natural advantages as for the prosperity of its inhabitants.

The country of Fida had ten miles—Dutch miles, presumably—of sea front, and ran inland to an average distance of seven miles. This small area was exceedingly fertile, and so populous that the villages in many places were contiguous. The huts were made of bamboo with round thatched roofs, and enclosed with fencing, while magnificent tropical trees planted with design enhanced the beauty of the prospect: ‘to render which,’ says Bosman, ‘the more charming and perfectly agreeable, not so much as one mountain or hillock interposeth to interrupt the view’—a criticism very characteristic of a Dutchman whose earliest ideas of beauty in natural scenery were drawn from the level expanses of Holland. The land rose, it appears, from the seashore in an ascent so gradual as to be almost imperceptible till after three or four hours’ journey, when, turning round, a magnificent view of the country could be obtained; so enchanting, indeed, that Bosman declares his conviction that no other country in the world could show the like.

With regard to the inhabitants of the country, they are described as being, without exception, civil and obliging to white men, in which they had an excellent example set them by their king. Their bearing, too, towards each other was marked with courtesy, distinctions of rank being observed, and the inferior showing respect to the superior. Deference was paid by the wife to her husband, by the son to his father, and even by the younger brother to his elder brother. If a person of inferior rank met one of a higher rank in the street he would prostrate himself till his superior had passed by. With this regard of ceremony was

<sup>1</sup> The Gold Coast still maintains an unenviable notoriety for danger in this respect. When the writer of this article visited, in the April of 1889, a small place called Grand Bassam, on the same coast, and about three hundred miles west of Whydah, he was informed that, within only the three previous months, no less than eight natives had, on different occasions, lost their lives through the upsetting of the surf-boats. Some three or four years ago, the Chief Justice of the Gold Coast was drowned whilst attempting to land at Accra, and fatal accidents of this character are still of but too frequent occurrence at that place.

mixed a certain amount of superstition. When any one sneezed, all those around him dropped on to their knees, kissed the earth, clapped their hands, and wished him every happiness and prosperity. In a country where the temperature varied so little, it is to be presumed that colds were of comparatively rare occurrence, or there must have ensued grave interruption to state ceremonies and palavers during an epidemic of this common European malady.

The Fidians were a very industrious people, every one being engaged in work, the men in trade and the women in the plantations. Several handicrafts, such as spinning, weaving, and metal-work, were known to them, but by far the larger portion of them were employed in trading for slaves. Their chief failing appears to have been an inability to conceive the essential difference existing between 'meum and tuum' in respect of every kind of property. Bosman relates that in his first interview with the king, his majesty assured him that he would never have any reason to be alarmed for his personal safety among the people of Fida; but with regard to the safety of his goods, that was another matter, and he would have to guard them carefully, for he frankly confessed that his subjects were great thieves, and could keep their hands from nothing which was left within their reach.

For this warning the Dutch trader soon found that there was only too much occasion. The distance from the beach, where the goods were landed, to the king's village, where they had to be stored, was three miles. They were packed in separate bundles and carried that distance by the natives. Although a package often weighed as much as a hundred pounds, the carriers would put them on their heads and run the whole way with them, without any apparent inconvenience. Over such a long route, however, it was impossible to maintain a strict watch, and, at the end of the day, a large percentage of the property would be missing. When Bosman taxed them, during his first visit, with this misappropriation, they did not deny the fact, but quietly asked if the white man thought they would work so hard all day for such small wages—only a few pence—if they did not have the liberty to help themselves as well. To such an extent was this vice a primary instinct of their character, that on the death of their king, taking advantage of the temporary suspension of authority, they would all openly set about stealing from each other, without considering that in a community where all are thieves no one is



likely to be much the gainer. Bosman was robbed consistently the whole of the time he was with them, and says in despair that the only way he could think of to put a stop to it would be to leave the country altogether.

With regard to its supply of the article of commerce in which he dealt, Bosman has nothing to say of Fida, now Whydah, but unqualified praise. He declares that whereas at Little Popo—which he calls a ‘wretched place,’ probably on account of the absence of this class of merchandise—he could only get three slaves in as many days, at Fida he could soon procure a couple of thousand, and fill four ships in five or six weeks. Some of the conditions by which the trade was governed are worth noting. Before a single slave changed masters, the king demanded four hundred pounds down for each ship for the privilege of being allowed to trade with his subjects at all. Considering that fifty ships, on an average, called at Fida in the year, the king must have received no small revenue from this tribute alone, and it fully corroborates the accounts of his great riches and prosperity. The next stipulation imposed on the white slave-dealer was that, before trading with any one else, he should buy all the slaves which the king himself happened to have in stock, for which his majesty used to charge about one-fourth more than the market value. When the king had replenished his exchequer by these two methods of extortion, the trader was at length free to bargain with the other slave-owners at any terms he could arrange.

For the facilitating of these transactions, a regular slave-market was held, to which the slaves—who were mostly prisoners of war—were brought out in chains from the barracoons in which they were confined. Here they were examined by the ship’s surgeon, and all that were defective in sight or limb were set aside, and the rest were bidden for at a certain rate per head, the women being a fourth or fifth part cheaper than the men. When the bargain was satisfactorily concluded they were branded with a red-hot iron with the arms or name of the company by which they had been bought, and were taken off to the ship at once.

In this description, the inveterate slave-dealer, hardened though he must have been by long association with its barbarities, seems to have had some misgivings as to the view which would be taken of the trade by his friend at home in Holland, to whom his letters were addressed. Accordingly, he attempts a half-hearted apology for some of the little details which he thought

might appear in any way revolting. 'I doubt not,' he says, 'but that this trade seems very barbarous to you, but since it is followed by mere necessity, it must go on;' though what the necessity was, beyond the love of making money, does not sufficiently appear. He then puts in a special plea for the humanity of his own firm: 'Yet we take all possible care that they are not burned too hard, especially the women, who are more tender than the men.'

Dismissing the cruel practice of branding with this wholly satisfactory statement, he proceeds in a light-hearted way to give a description of life on board a slave-ship. 'You would really wonder,' he exclaims to his ingenuous correspondent, 'to see how these men live on board!' As many as six or seven hundred were put on each ship—a number which, when the small size of the trading vessels of those days is taken into consideration, gives one some idea of the shocking overcrowding which must have been practised. They were stowed between decks, the men separate from the women, but all in chains, and as close together as it was possible to pack them. Yet everything, he declares, at any rate on the Dutch ships, was clean and orderly, and the slaves well taken care of, being fed as often as three times a day. Under this generous treatment Bosman was at a loss to understand how it was that every now and then revolts occurred amongst them. The only reason he could give was that 'these silly fellows' had got an idea that they had been brought down to the coast to be fattened and eaten by the white men, a belief which would of course sufficiently account for their conduct. He mentions that the Portuguese, who, even at that early date, had acquired a name for mismanagement on the coast, had lost four ships in one year, owing to the rising of the slaves on board of them.

For the King of Fida Bosman entertained a very high opinion. He was about fifty years of age at the time that the trader knew him, but in appearance he was as young and sprightly as a man of thirty-five. In character, Bosman declares that he was the most civil and generous negro that he had ever met, and was never better pleased than when a white man desired a favour of him. 'It would be easy,' the Dutchman continues, 'to obtain whatever we ask of him, if a parcel of rascally flatterers did not continually buzz lessons of good husbandry in his ears, not so much for his good as for their own advancement.'



Among his subjects the king was regarded as a demigod, a belief which he encouraged by never eating in public, and by keeping secret his private quarters in the royal palace. When Bosman first visited Fida he asked one of the king's chief captains in what part of the palace the king slept, and received in reply another question: 'Where doth God lodge?' The king's presence was so awe-inspiring among his people, that with a single word he could make them tremble. This feeling, however, like all others with the happy, careless negro, was only a transitory one, and disappeared with the object that gave rise to it; 'for as soon as his back is turned they forget their fear, not much regarding his commands, and always knowing how to appease and delude him with a lie or two.'

The Fidasians, in proportion as they exceeded other negroes in their love of trade, also surpassed them in their dislike of war, and in their fear of death in any form. To such an extent did this feeling possess them, that the mere mention of that 'last debt to nature' filled them with alarm, and any one who by accident spoke of it in the presence of the king was at once taken out and despatched, to prevent him ruffling again, if only for a few minutes, his royal master's peace of mind. It happened that when Bosman was leaving Fida at the end of his first residence there, the king was in the trader's debt to the amount of one hundred pounds. Bosman did not wish to press him for it then, but, with the provident instinct of a shrewd business man, he asked him to whom he should apply on his return for the payment of the debt, supposing his majesty had in the meantime died. The cool directness of this question in a court where the death of any one, even the king's enemies, was a forbidden subject, produced an indescribable amazement among the chiefs, who were at first so dumbfounded at the white man's audacity that they could not find expression for their horror. But they soon collected their senses, and might have made things very uncomfortable for the rash Dutchman, had not the king, with whom he was a great favourite, come to his rescue, and extricated him from the difficulty by saying, with a smile of confident foreknowledge, 'Be reassured. I shall not die.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During Bosman's subsequent visits, however, when he got to know the natives better, he would rally them with their fear of death, and so far familiarised them with the mention of it, that the king, 'who is a very jolly fellow, would laugh outright about it, especially when I frightened any of his captains with it.'

As we have related, Bosman was much struck by the exceeding denseness of the population which inhabited this small country. On a closer acquaintance with the people he ceased to wonder why there were so many, but rather why there were so few. The least number of wives owned by the lowest class of natives he found to be forty or fifty, while the captains possessed three or four hundred each, and the king reached the grand total of five thousand. In spite of these large numbers, the smallest of which would be beyond the dreams of the most uxorious European, the Fidasian husband was exceedingly jealous about each and every one of his numerous wives. On the slightest suspicion of infidelity the wife was sold into slavery, and the paramour, if discovered, was similarly treated, except when implicated with the wife of a captain or the king, when he was immediately put to death.

The king's wives were objects of special care to himself and of enforced veneration to his people. The favourite ones lived in the palace with him; the others were accommodated in adjoining buildings. No men were employed in the royal household, and the king was served solely by his wives. When visitors came to see the king he received them alone, taking good care that his wives were out of sight. It was, indeed, held a sacrilege to so much as look at any of these royal spouses. When repairs, which could not be done by them, were needed in the palace, they migrated from the affected portion, and the plumbers and glaziers coming in had to keep on shouting out the whole time they were at work, in case any of the wives, not acquainted with the fact of their presence, should happen to pass that way. When the king's wives set out to work in the plantations, which they did every morning in batches of three to four hundred at a time, they used to cry 'Stand clear' as they went, and any men who were in their path prostrated themselves, and did not dare to raise their eyes till they had passed.

On account of the awe in which his wives were held, the king found them a very useful and speedy executive to carry out his commands. If any person was found guilty of a crime the king sent a detachment of his wives round to the man's house in order to strip it of its goods and pull it down. This was usually very soon effected, for on the approach of the king's wives the man was unable to remain and defend his property. One instance, however, is related by Bosman, in which a native was clever and bold



enough to thwart this powerful authority. Hearing that he had been accused before the king, and that a company of the king's wives had been sent to wreck his house, he collected all the gunpowder he possessed, and, placing it in a heap just beneath his doorway, he awaited the arrival of his spoilers, firebrand in hand. When they approached and cried in the usual formula 'Make way for the king's wives,' he replied that he would not stir from the spot on which he stood, and that if they attempted to cross his threshold he would blow himself and all of them up together. This threat brought the good women to a halt, and after a consultation among themselves they determined to return to the king and inform him of the reception they had met. But their intended victim was too quick for them. Slipping round another way, he reached the king first, and cleared himself of the accusation so satisfactorily that the order against him was countermanded. This attempt, Bosman remarks, was a very bold one, requiring great nerve to carry it through successfully, considering that if it had failed a painful death would have been the punishment.

The king's supply of wives was kept up to the full number by three of his chief captains, who had very little else to do than select and procure for him the most beautiful virgins. A fresh wife, after presentation, lived with the king three or four days, after which she was relegated to the quarters occupied by the other wives, and became, practically, a nun for the rest of her life, with the unenviable privilege of working like a slave on the king's estate. Under these circumstances it is not a matter of surprise that the honour of a royal alliance was little coveted among maidens, some of whom had even been known to prefer a speedy death to the distinction. Bosman mentions the story of a young girl who, having been selected for this purpose by the captains, ran away, and on being closely pursued, in her despair jumped down a well and was killed. 'I leave her case,' remarks the sage historian, 'to be determined by the ladies.'

When each man was so well provided in respect of wives, it was but natural that his children should be proportionately numerous. Bosman had heard, in several cases, incredible numbers ascribed to one man; but doubting the truth of the statements, he one day took aside a chief on whose word he could rely, and asked him to tell him candidly how many children he himself possessed. This was evidently a tender point with the chief, for he seemed

pained, and at length with a sigh, apparently of regret, he said: 'I must confess that I have only seventy children now living, but I have had as many more who are dead.' A hundred and forty was evidently a small number in his estimation, and quite unworthy of a captain of his rank, most of his compeers possessing at least two hundred. Indeed, he assured Bosman that there was one man who, with his sons and grandsons alone, rose up and defeated a powerful enemy who was coming against the king. This family numbered two thousand men, besides women and children and many who had died.

With regard to the king's children, the heir to the throne seems to have been the eldest son of a favourite wife, and not necessarily the eldest of all the sons. The king's daughters also took rank from the amount of favour the mother possessed with the king. During Bosman's absence from Fida at the end of his first visit the king's favourite daughter was given in marriage to an English trader. When Bosman returned, as he considered himself more in favour with the king than any other white man, he asked him, in jest, why he had not kept his daughter till he came back. The king replied quite seriously that he did not know that Bosman wished to marry her, but that it was not too late now, and he could give orders for her to be transferred at once. 'What think you, sir?' asks the gay old Dutchman of the silent recipient of his letters. 'Are not this king's daughters very cheap? But the mischief is, marrying a king's daughter in this country is not very advantageous, otherwise I had not failed long since to be happy that way.'

Bosman must have held a very high place in the king's good will, for he was lodged in a portion of the royal buildings, with a suite of seven rooms at his disposal, a beautiful court with a covered gallery, and three warehouses in which to store his goods. The king was very hospitable, and was continually inviting him to dinner, at which he used to provide him with all that was best to eat and drink. So fond was this sable monarch of the white man's company, that he would frequently have him in his palace all day, entertaining him with his conversation, which was full of a shrewd humour, or playing games of chance, of which he was very fond. The stakes were always in livestock—an ox, goat, or sheep—never goods nor money. 'In these games,' remarks the Dutchman, with a quiet satisfaction, 'I always had this advantage of him, that if I won he immediately sent home my



winnings; but, on the contrary, if I lost, he did not desire to receive my losings.' An arrangement which must have been very agreeable to the thrifty trader.

With regard to the principal offences against the laws of the land and the modes of punishing them, Bosman declares that there were very few capital crimes, only those of murder and adultery with one of the king's or his chief captains' wives. At a date when Europe was still hanging for sheep-stealing, this no doubt seemed a very lenient criminal code. But the actual infliction of the penalty was rare in Fida; the natives, owing to their fear of death, being very careful not to lay themselves open to it. Lighter offences were determined by ordeals of varying character and efficiency. One of these was to throw the accused into a certain river which was credited with the wonderful property of drowning all guilty persons, while the innocent escaped unhurt, supposing they were able to save themselves by swimming. 'But all of them being very expert in this,' remarks the sagacious chronicler, 'I never heard that this river ever yet convicted any person, for they all came well out, paying a certain sum to the king, for which end alone I believe this trial to be designed.'

The religious beliefs of the Fidasians opens a much larger field for inquiry and speculation than their civil institutions. The number of deities possessed by them seems to have been beyond all reckoning. Bosman asked one of the chief natives, who was a very intelligent man, how many gods his people acknowledged. The chief laughed, and said that in truth the white man had puzzled him, for no one in the whole country could give an exact account of them. 'For my part,' he confessed with a ready candour, 'I have a very large number of gods, and doubt not that others have as many.' He explained that when starting on any expedition or undertaking, it was their custom to make a god of the first thing they saw, whether a dumb animal, such as a pig, sheep, or dog, or an inanimate object, like a tree or stone. When they returned at the conclusion of the enterprise, if successful, they would give offerings to this deity; if unsuccessful, they deposed it from the pedestal of their veneration, and thought no more about it.

Apart, however, from the numerous deities created in this manner, there were three classes of gods which received universal homage. They were snakes, trees, and the sea. Of these, snakes were by far the most important, and temples or snake-houses,

were erected to them all over the country, while an order of priests was devoted solely to their service.<sup>1</sup> Every species of snake was not included in this worship, the venomous ones being the exception, contrary to what one would expect from the superstitious cast of unreasoning and primitive intelligence, usually more apt to pay homage to a god that could work harm than to one that had no such power. But there may have been a grain of shrewd common-sense underlying this distinction, which would allow the venomous snakes, as not being sacred, to be destroyed, and thus remove a really dangerous enemy.

In connection with snake-worship, the priests had invented a very fruitful source of extracting tribute from the people. The bite of a sacred snake, although not poisonous, was said to have the effect of making people mad. The victims were always women and mostly young girls. When any one of these showed

<sup>1</sup> The worship of the snake still survives on this portion of the coast. When the writer of this article was engaged on the staff of the telegraph ship *Silvertown*—belonging to the *Silvertown Company*—in laying a cable down this coast in August 1886, on arriving at Cutanu, a small trading settlement belonging to the French, about eighty or ninety miles east of Whydah, the surf was running too high to admit of the line for hauling the cable ashore being landed in boats. Accordingly, we had recourse to the rocket apparatus for the purpose. The natives had assembled in large crowds to watch the operations, and when they saw the flash and heard the loud report and then observed those on shore run down and draw a line out of the water, they raised the cry of ‘A snake! A snake!’ and fled away in the utmost panic. When the cable was landed, the *Silvertown* proceeded on its journey, laying down as far as St. Paul de Loanda. On returning to Cutanu some two months after on the homeward voyage, the party who put off from the ship saw a hostile group of natives ashore, who, however, retreated when the party landed, muttering threats and menaces against them. A native who was in the employ of the operators at the telegraph hut then explained that during our absence a large landlocked lagoon, one end of which was close by the hut, had burst its banks and emptied a great quantity of its water into the sea, so that inland villages which before lay on its banks were now some three or four miles from the water. As this lagoon was used for a highway for merchandise from the interior, the sudden subsidence caused a great interruption to the traffic, and the priests at once declared that the mishap was due to the influence of the ‘hissing snakes’ which we had thrown ashore from our ship, and which they denounced as evil fetishes sent to work them harm. Some of them journeyed all the way to Abomey, the capital of Dahomey, to give information to the king, whose dominion reaches down to the coast; and just before we sailed, we received a message from this mighty monarch, saying that if we did not leave his territory at once and take our evil gods with us, he would come down with his army and ‘sweep us off the face of the earth.’ Needless to say that this terrible threat did not precipitate our movements, and that the operators who were left ashore were never molested by a single native, much less by a hostile force from Dahomey.



symptoms of mental derangement, the priests declared that she had been bitten by a snake, and hurried her off at once to a snake-house, where alone it was said she could be cured, and where her relatives had to pay a large sum for her maintenance till her recovery was announced. It was noticeable that a woman was never bitten when any witness was in sight, a circumstance which went to throw discredit on the power attributed to the snakes, and made it appear that those who went mad did so on the persuasion or under the threats of the priesthood. This suspicion was strengthened by a case which happened when Bosman was in the country. The wife of a leading native, the same who had so boldly foiled the errand of the king's wives—being seized with madness, he took her by the hand, as if to lead her to the snake-house, but passing on the way the dwelling of an English trader, he hurried her into it, and offered her for sale as a slave. Directly she perceived what was going to happen to her, she recovered her senses with marvellous rapidity, and falling down on her knees begged her husband to take her back, assuring him with many protestations that she would never go mad again. This was a bold thing to do, and how much he risked by the action can be seen from what happened to a Gold Coast negro who had lately come to Fida. When one of this man's wives went mad, being ignorant of the religious customs of the country, he clapped her into irons instead of sending her to the snake-house. The priests soon heard of it, and without taking any public revenge, they had him secretly poisoned by a drug which brought on death by creeping paralysis. 'From which you may observe,' is the conclusion the Dutch trader draws for the benefit of his friend, 'that throughout the world it is very dangerous to disoblige the ecclesiastics.'

So great was the influence of the priesthood, that the king, although regarded by his subjects almost as a deity, was himself a victim of their extortions. At one time he used to make a yearly progress to the chief snake-house to pay homage to the presiding deity. But the demands of the priests for offerings to the snake on these occasions became so exorbitant, that the king discontinued his personal visits, and found he could do it more cheaply by sending round a batch of his wives instead. That was not, however, the only opportunity which the priests enjoyed of levying contributions from the head of the state. The snakes were supposed to have the power of sending rich or poor crops, according as they wished, and for the purpose of insuring their

goodwill, a large annual tribute was collected. One year the king, who had already given a handsome offering without his crops looking any the better for it, sent to ask the priests what was the reason of the failure. They replied that the deity required a further donation. This was too great a demand on his majesty's forbearance, and he declared in a rage that he would give nothing more that year; 'and if the snake won't bestow a plentiful harvest,' he said, 'he can let it alone, for,' with a glance at the practical side of the question, 'the greater part of my corn is rotten already.' In any case, this unwilling tribute seems to have had very little influence with the deities, and Bosman gives it as his opinion that 'these roguish priests sweep all the offerings to themselves and doubtless make very merry with them.'

The veneration in which the snakes were held was the cause of considerable inconvenience to European residents in the country. The reptiles used to find their way into every corner of the house, even into the beds, and it was as much as a white man's life was worth to attempt to eject them forcibly. The only way to manage it was to induce a native to undertake the removal. After a great deal of hesitation, he would approach the deity with a stick, and inserting it into the centre of his coil would carry him out with all possible care and tenderness.

If, however, the snake was coiled round a bed-post, or the leg of a table, nothing would induce a native to attempt to remove it. In Bosman's house a snake once coiled himself on a rafter immediately above the dinner-table. He seemed to like his lodging, for day after day found him in the same position. When he had been there a fortnight, Bosman happened to be giving a dinner party to some chiefs, and during the dessert he drew their attention to the snake, and remarked that he must be getting rather hungry, as he had not eaten anything for fourteen days. His guests smiled, and in the fulness of their faith replied that he need have no misgivings on the deity's behalf, for he would not starve, but well knew how to provide himself from the stock of provisions in the house. The following day Bosman, in an audience with the king, informed him that he had been entertaining a sacred snake for the last fortnight, and hinted that his keep was becoming rather a heavy item in the household expenses. On hearing this, the king said that he could not think of allowing a foreigner to be at the charge of maintaining one of the country's gods, and that he would at once send round an ox for the snake to go on with; adding, that he would continue to supply the



deity with food as long as he thought proper to remain beneath the white man's roof. This offer was very acceptable to Bosman, who declares that at the same rate he would willingly have boarded all the gods in the land, and not have lost much by the bargain.

If a house was burnt down and it transpired that a snake had perished in the flames, a great commotion ensued. Each man, as he received the news, shut his ears, as if it was something too awful to be told, and ran off as quick as he could to the nearest snake-house with an offering of money to appease the relatives of the luckless deity. This susceptibility for the welfare of their gods would not suffer them to listen to a word said in abuse or contempt of them, a disposition which Bosman did not fail to make use of; for, whenever he was pestered in his own quarters by an importunate trader, or bored by a tedious old gossip, he had merely to speak ill of a snake, and his tormentor would clap his hands to his ears, and rush headlong out of the house.

Deference to the snake was exacted not only from men but from dumb animals. Within Bosman's own experience, a snake which had just killed a rat—their principal article of diet—was about to eat it, when a hog came up and took the dainty morsel from him. On the snake expostulating, the hog, who had by this time swallowed the rat, seized the snake, and proceeded to send him the same way as the rat. Unfortunately for the hog, as the snake's tail was disappearing down his throat, it was seen by some natives and recognised as belonging to one of the sacred species. The horror-stricken witnesses of this desecration were paralysed with fear, but at length summoned up sufficient courage to go and report the appalling sacrilege to the king. The king, no doubt urged on by the priests, forthwith issued an edict to the effect that not only the offending hog but all his innocent brethren throughout the kingdom should be put to death. It was a wonderful sight, says Bosman, to see the natives hurrying from their huts sword in hand and slaughtering the harmless animals in all directions, as though they had been a hostile army who had suddenly surprised and seized their camp.

The trees, which formed the second class of gods, received but a very scant and irregular homage, and had no order of priests attached to their service. The third object of reverence was the sea, which was only appealed to when in a violent mood, as it then interfered with the unloading of the ships. On these occasions the natives brought down to the beach all kinds of property, both

food and clothing, and cast them into the waters. This manner of sacrificing, however, the priests did not much encourage, as all of it went to the deity and none to themselves.

During Bosman's last visit to Fida, an Augustine monk arrived from St. Thomé with the view of persuading the natives to give up the worship of snakes and embrace the doctrines of Christianity. But from the very outset he was met with an insuperable difficulty, the universal practice of polygamy. In a country where the wives of the common people were counted by tens, those of the captains by hundreds, and the king's by thousands, there was little chance of inducing them to be content with only one. The king, indeed, was courteous to the priest, and even consented on one occasion to hear mass. After he had attended it, Bosman asked him what he thought of it, to which he replied, 'It was well enough, but I prefer to keep to my own Fetish for all that.' The priest, however, persisted in his endeavours, and one day, finding that a long exhortation to the king and his captains had produced no effect, he lost his self-control, denounced them in unmeasured terms, and told them that if they continued in their life of sin without repentance, they would surely go to hell. This caused a temporary silence in the assembly, till an aged captain, who was usually the mouthpiece of the court, replied that he was sorry to think that such was the fate in store for them, but that as their fathers and forefathers had lived in the same manner as they did, they would at least have the satisfaction of their company in that place of torment.

Reference has already been made to the excessive fear of death among the Fidasians. With this failing it can be imagined that they did not make very good warriors, and that, although with their teeming population they could put two hundred thousand men in the field, they were so weak and heartless that they would not encounter as many as five thousand of any warlike tribe. It was in accordance with this prevailing weakness that, during a war, their captains should stay at home in safety, while the command of the army was given to one of the common herd. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the general, 'if he was but moderately nimble,' as Bosman puts it, used to get home before his men, being at least as fond of life as they; and the only word the Dutchman has to say in favour of their courage, is that they showed a little more fortitude in defending their own country than in attacking another, thereby confirming the truth of the old proverb that 'every dog will bark in his own kennel.'



### MOUNTAIN STUMPS.

THE fine old crusted American traveller (now, unhappily, becoming extinct before the spread of Culture) used often in the good old days, when he pervaded Europe in six weeks, surveying it from end to end, as per Appleton's 'Guide,' with cheerful promptitude, to astonish one's ears from time to time by his complacent numerical estimate of natural beauties. He carried in his mental pocket an imaginary footrule, by whose aid he meted and compared all European greatness, either physical or spiritual. 'This cataract,' he used to say, with statistical exactness, as he posed himself, supercilious, before the Swallow Fall, or the Linn o' Dee, 'is fifteen feet high by seventeen wide, and runs at the rate of four hundred cubic feet per minute; whereas the Falls of Niagara are sixty feet by half a mile,' or whatever else the particular amount might be, 'and they precipitate each moment a body of water equal to fourteen times the volume of the Thames at London Bridge and at high tide, mean measurement.' From which stupendous facts, poured forth irresistibly, the inferior British intelligence was supposed to draw an immediate inference that the Swallow Fall was scarcely worth looking at, and that Niagara could whip the Linn o' Dee into a cocked hat, if it only seriously made its gigantic mind up to post the stakes for an international contest.

The March of Intellect, however, or else the Zeit-geist, or some other *Deus ex machina* of the epoch, has now perhaps persuaded almost all Americans, except Mr. Andrew Carnegie, that you can't measure scenery by the cubic foot. The leaven of Boston has begun to leaven the whole mass. Florence is not as big a town, it is true, as New York; but even New Yorkers will cheerfully admit at the present day that the Bargello has points not to be observed in the City Hall; that the Pitti Palace contains certain objects not precisely to be equalled in the Metropolitan Museum; and that Giotto's campanile may claim more consideration from the candid tourist than the tower of Trinity Church in Broadway. The trade of Venice is undoubtedly inferior to the trade of Philadelphia; but the Piazza of St. Mark's has attractions scarcely to be met with in any part of Chestnut Street. The

Mississippi is a much bigger river than the Rhine ; but it doesn't take its rise in the heart of Switzerland, or roll its glacier-fed stream past the crags of the Drachenfels. And so forth *ad infinitum*.

It is just the same with mountains. Their essential mountainhood can no more be measured by height above sea level alone, than Salisbury or Lincoln can be measured against the Capitol at Washington by that simple footrule which Mr. Carnegie wields with relentless hand, as the surest means of comparing Texas with the United Kingdom. The intelligent traveller must have observed for himself, indeed, in almost every country of the world to which his native instinct and Mr. Cook's coupons have led his wandering steps, how many undoubted mountains there are which hardly rise above a few hundred feet. On the other hand, he must have noticed long chains of hills or downs which reach in places a highly respectable altitude without ever in the remotest degree suggesting any claim to the mountainous character. Dear old Gilbert White of Selborne (one is always expected to refer to Gilbert White in terms of somewhat supercilious but demonstrative affection) alludes in one of his exquisitely naïve letters to the Sussex South Downs as 'that magnificent range of mountains.' To anybody who knows what a mountain means, the phrase, as applied to Cissbury Hill or the Devil's Dyke, seems little short of grotesque. The Downs have, no doubt, a singular charm and beauty of their own ; no Englishman could ever wish the shadows on their hollow combes to grow less : but theirs is distinctly the beauty of gentle undulating hill country, the idyllic beauty of tender turf and smooth native lawn—as different as possible from anything which the phrase 'a magnificent range of mountains' calls up before the mind's eye of an Alpine climber or a Cook's tourist of the nobler sort.

It would be hard to find anywhere a better example of the short and stumpy mountain here contemplated than the tors of Dartmoor. There you get in full perfection all the mountain characteristics in a square block of country which hardly rises higher than many upland tracts of Central France or Germany. What is it that makes Dartmoor so distinctly mountainous, while Leith Hill is merely a broad sandstone slope, and St. Boniface Down at Ventnor nothing better than a huge boss of overgrown sheepwalk ?

The answer is, because, geologically speaking, Dartmoor is the



last relic of an old prehistoric mountain range. It is what it looks—the worn stump or basal wreck of a huge and ancient Alpine system.

Nor is that all. These remnants of mountains which we find scattered about over the face of the globe everywhere are full of interest from the incidental light they cast upon the history and vicissitudes of continents. We are accustomed to talk about the eternal hills : but these ruins show us how the eternal hills themselves wear out in time as surely as the knees of our boys' knickerbockers. We think of the Alps and the Himalayas as very ancient piles ; and so they are, compared with the Pyramids or the Eiffel Tower : but these older ranges force us to acknowledge in turn that in many cases to be ' as old as the hills ' is to be a great deal older than the highest mountains. In fact, we shall see, when we investigate them in detail, that the greatest existing chains are for the most part of very recent date—mere modern upstarts—while the oldest and most venerable mountains on earth are generally worn away to mere stumps or tail-pieces.

The ancient volcano of Mull in the Hebrides is a splendid typical, middle-aged example of these worn-down peaks ; or, rather, though comparatively young, it exhibits well the phenomena of premature decrepitude. In its present state, the Mull volcano very remotely indeed resembles Etna or Vesuvius : it is only by an act of reconstructive imagination that the tourist who visits it by the Clyde steamer from Glasgow can see it once more raising its snow-capped cone high into prehistoric clouds, and pouring forth floods of liquid lava over the astonished plains of Tertiary Scotland. But if his imagination has undergone the proper scientific education (this kind of thing takes a deal of training) he will be able to perform that difficult feat of second sight (as Sir Charles Russell would say) without a moment's hesitancy. The whole island of Mull, in fact, is nothing more than the mere weatherbeaten base of some vast prehistoric Teneriffe or Stromboli, which once towered into the air with its volcanic cone as high as Etna, and smoked away from its angry crater as vigorously as Chimborazo itself.

At the present day this ruined volcano of Mull is seen, as it were, sliced across its base, so as to lay bare the very centre and ground-plan of the mountain. Geologists find this a great convenience, as sections of active volcanoes at the present day would be both difficult and expensive to obtain. Judging by the breadth

across the foundations now exposed, the peak in its best days must have had a diameter of nearly thirty miles; and by the analogy of its modern sisters elsewhere, we may conclude that in its palmiest and most vigorous period its cone rose some ten or twelve thousand feet above sea level. We can still make out in the rocks of the district the dim story of the various stages by which the great mountain was gradually built up, and still more gradually rubbed down and worn away again. The outer circle of the island consists almost entirely of antique lava currents, now hardened into basalt, or of volcanic tuffs and showers of pebbles. The centre is composed of the once active vents and craters themselves, filled up at present with molten masses of gabbros and dolerite. We can even trace various ages of the lava, some of the streams having flowed from earlier and others from later craters; and the eruptions vary in the character of their composition as modern lavas vary at different periods.

Now the volcano of Mull, though ancient enough as men reckon age in their own history, was, comparatively speaking, quite a recent mountain—a thing of yesterday as we compute time in geology, perhaps little more than a couple of million years old or thereabouts. It was in full blast during either the Miocene or the Eocene age, which I will not insult the intelligence of the present generation by further describing as the early Tertiary period. Even our women nowadays learn geology at High Schools and give points to Macaulay's schoolboy. I may mention, however, that we know this date owing to a very curious accident; for, as a rule, the age of volcanoes is as difficult to determine as that of unmarried ladies, owing to their ashes and lavas naturally enclosing nothing in the way of fossils to guide us to their origin. We can say, of course, that the mountains are later than the beds which they disturb and alter by their intrusion; but how much later has to be left, as a rule, to pure guesswork. In the case of the Mull volcano, however, the lavas have been kind enough to preserve for us a distinct clue somewhat of the same sort as that preserved by the Roman remains at Herculaneum and Pompeii. Between the different layers of basalt which mark the various successive lava-streams there occur in places thin beds of clay, on which fossil impressions of leaves are found in considerable numbers. These clays represent the quiescent periods between one eruption and the next, and the leaves embedded in them are those of the trees that grew upon the slopes of the mountain in



its lucid intervals. They are interesting on many accounts, both because they bear witness to the very mild and almost sub-tropical condition which then prevailed over the whole of Scotland and England, and because they enable us with tolerable certainty to fix the approximate geological date of the days when the volcano was still in full activity. Fossils, indeed, are the true landmarks of geological chronology.

Caledonia in those days, to judge from these remains, far from being stern and wild, enjoyed what its modern hardy natives would probably describe as a 'soft' climate. Huge conifers, like the 'big trees' of California, and belonging to an almost indistinguishable species, then covered the slopes of Mr. William Black's beloved Highlands. Beside them grew ancestral pines and yews, with the parent forms of the plane, the alder, the buckthorn, and the laurustinus. All these plants, with the contemporary cinnamons, figs, and evergreen oaks, bear close likenesses to the modern Mexican types, and show a climate at least as warm as that of Georgia or South Carolina. As to age, the trees belong either to the Eocene or else to the Miocene period (experts, of course, are at daggers drawn over the precise era to which they should be assigned), when scarcely a single quadruped now living on earth had begun to assume its familiar shape. They go back to the days when strange tapirs and crocodiles haunted the flooded banks of some mightier Thames, and when the gigantic deinotherium and the unshapely mastodon shook with their heavy tread the higher hills of Gloucestershire.

Still, geologically speaking, the volcano of Mull is quite a recent and almost historical mountain. How, then, has it come to be reduced so soon, as by some heroic course of Banting, to such small dimensions? Well, the answer doubtless is, because it was a volcano. Had it been a good, solid, rocky mountain, the same through and through, like Somebody-or-other's tea, or like Mont Blanc and Mount Washington, it would doubtless have resisted the wear and tear of ages far more energetically. But what can you expect from a mere frothy volcano? Its cone is mostly built up of loose and spongy materials—ash and lapilli, and scoriac refuse-heaps—which make a great show for the money in the matter of height, but possess very little stability or fixity of tenure. As long as the crater goes on replacing the loss from wear and tear by constant eruptions, the cone continues to present a most imposing appearance to the outer eye; but as soon

as the internal energies cool down, and the mountain sinks into the dormant or extinct condition, rain and storm begin at once to disintegrate the loosely piled mass, and to rub down the great ash-heap into a thousand valleys.

Denudation, indeed, as geologists call it, though slow and silent, is a far more potent destructive force in nature than the noisy, spasmodic earthquakes or eruptions to which ordinary humanity, scared by their bluster, attaches so much undue importance. Wind and rain are mightier than fire. The 'devouring element' is really water. On the High Rocks at Tunbridge Wells some eighteenth-century poetaster has hung a board inscribed with verses moralising on the 'prodigious power' that could rend asunder the living rock. Your modern geologist raises his eyes, and sees with a smile the 'prodigious power' hard at work there before his very face—a tiny, trickling dribble of water, that oozes through the soft sandstone amid moss and liverwort, and slowly carries away, by a grain at a time, or rather by imperceptible atoms in solution, the seemingly coherent mass over which it dribbles. It is the same prodigious power, asserted over some ten thousand or so of our petty centuries, that has worn down the volcano of Mull to its lowest base, and laid bare the very sources and entrails of the great mountain.

Rain, snow, and ice, however, or even the moving glaciers of the terrible Glacial Epoch, have not planed down Mull as yet to an even or level surface. The unequal hardness of the various rocks causes them to resist in very unequal degrees; so that the close crystalline materials filling the central vent, as Mr. Judd (our recognised authority on the habits and manners of volcanoes) justly remarks, stand up in the middle as big hilly groups; while the softer materials around have been largely worn away into corries and hollows. In places, the gradual removal by water-agencies of the ash and tuff has left the large dykes (or masses of igneous rock formed in the fissures of the mountain by the outwelling of fiery materials from below) standing out like gigantic walls; and it is this that gives rise to those curious black inland cliffs, so characteristic of the scenery of Mull. On the other hand, the remnants of the lava-streams, hard and equal in texture, remain for the most part as isolated plateaux. The hills still left behind in the hard crystalline core have even now a height of three thousand feet: but this is a mere fraction of the ten or twelve thousand which the central cone must almost cer-



tainly have attained in the days when it rose majestic to the sky, crowned with wreathing smoke above, and clad below by a dark waving forest of colossal Wellingtonias.

Another one of these 'dissected volcanoes,' as they have been aptly termed, occupies (without prejudice to the claims of the crofters) the entire area of the Isle of Skye. This decrepit mountain has indeed seen better days. When it was young and lusty, in those same fiery, frolicsome Tertiary times, it must have risen as high as Monte Rosa or Mont Blanc, and smoked like ten thousand German professors. To-day nothing remains of all that vast pile, says Mr. Judd, but the crystalline granite that fills up the huge fissures through which the eruption of molten materials once took place. It is these harder portions, sculptured into fantastic shapes by wind or weather, and carved out into domelike masses or wild rugged peaks, that constitute the Red Mountains and Cuchullin Hills of Skye, and now rise some 3,000 feet above sea level. The ignorant Southron who doesn't know the district and its Gaelic tongue may be warned parenthetically that Cuchullin is pronounced Coolin, according to the usual playful orthographic fancy of the Celtic intelligence, which always gives you good weight of extra consonants for your money; but if you can throw a little graceful guttural energy into the middle of the word it will be much appreciated by the friendly gilly. From the central masses of crystalline rock hard dykes radiate everywhere through the surrounding country, while isolated patches of scoriæ and pebbles ejected by the old crater have every here and there, under favourable conditions, escaped removal. The outskirts or fringes of the great mountain mass consist of flat-topped hills, the last undenuded relics of the outlying lava-streams.

In both these cases, owing to their comparatively recent date, it is still quite possible for the reconstructive geologist to trace in detail the history of the mountain, and to observe how large a portion even of the mere circumference has escaped destruction. Older ranges have suffered far more severely. The rain and wind have pounded and pummelled them for far longer periods, and to better effect. They stand to Mull and Skye as Stonehenge or Abury stand to Tintern or Bolton Abbey. Of this intermediate stage, that worn and flattened stump, Dartmoor, is an excellent example. It is older far than the Scotch volcanoes: the wide block of the moor consists entirely of granite, which

was pushed up by internal forces early in the Secondary period of geology, and has altered in character the coal-bearing rocks through which it has burst with eruptive energy. A great many curious little side-indications enable us to trace the history of Dartmoor with moderate certainty through a vastly longer period than either of the big extinct Scotch mountains.

In its earliest state, Dartmoor too was a volcanic range; and Brent Tor seems to occupy the site of its ancient crater. Ashes and cinders in small quantities still survive the wreck of so many ages, and mark out approximately the site of the cone so long removed by centuries of denudation. When the red sandstone cliffs of Devonshire were laid down beneath the Triassic sea, however, Dartmoor had already begun to be the prey of storm, rain, and torrent; for boulders of granite derived from its sides, and rolled down by rivers, are found in the pudding-stones and breccias of that remote age—the hardened masses of sea-beach and pebble which occur so abundantly around Budleigh Salterton and other villages of the coast. Later on, when the blue lias of Lyme Regis and the oolite of the Bath and Oxford hills were slowly accumulating in some antique Mediterranean, the site of England was mainly occupied by a warm basking sea, as Professor Ramsay has shown, surrounding an archipelago of which Dartmoor, Wales, and Cumberland formed the principal islands. In that age, too, fragments of Dartmoor got incorporated here and there in the surrounding sediment. During the long interval while the greensand and chalk were gathering in thick layers on the ocean floor, we get hardly a glimpse of the condition of the Devonian highlands; but in the Tertiary days, when Mull and Skye were in full blast, the little extinct lake of Bovey Tracey once more lets us get a passing hint of what was taking place among the granite shoulders of the antique volcano. For the entire basin of that small Miocene tarn is now filled up with some 300 feet thick of white clay sediment, the waste of the granite crags of Dartmoor. It is of that clay, ready ground by ages of water-action, that the Bovey potters make their well-known stoneware. Among the beds which supply it we still find leaves and other remains of plants essentially similar to those preserved for us beneath the Scotch lavas and basalts; *Wellingtonias*, *cinnamons*, *liquidambars*, and *fig-trees*, with climbing *rotang-palms*, and sub-tropical *lianas*.

Now, it is quite clear that a mountain range, exposed for so many ages to the wear and tear of rain and torrent, can't be as



high to-day as when it was first pushed up to the summer skies of a Permian Britain. If Mull has had time to get worn down to three thousand feet, surely Dartmoor may be forgiven for only just exceeding its bare two thousand. It is highly creditable to the original hardness of its rock that anything at all of it should be left after so vigorous a bombardment of rain and river. Indeed, there are great beds of sand and clay as far off as Poole, in Dorsetshire, which were almost certainly derived from the waste of Dartmoor. Now, any fellow can see at a glance that you can't remove whole square miles of detritus from a mountain range, and yet leave it as high as it was in the beginning. Dartmoor, to begin with, must have been a very massive mountain indeed, or there wouldn't be so much of it left after such continual planing. Hard as is the material of which it is composed, it could scarcely have outlived its long battering by rain and stream had it not risen at the outset to a conspicuous height above the surrounding level. At the present day the moor is worn down to an almost even tableland, from which here and there the very hardest portions rise as *tors* or *clutters* with their weather-beaten boulders above the general plateau. The tors themselves, in fact, consist of the very solid central nodules which have longest resisted the action of water, and they are sometimes perched on the top of the hills as logans or rocking-stones, like the well-known Nutcracker at Lustleigh Cleave. Dartmoor, in fact, gives us an excellent example of an antique mountain now in the second stage of degradation, still preserving its mountain character in its rocks and valleys, but flattened out on top by continuous wear and tear into an undulating tableland.

Far older and far more reduced to a mere stump or relic is that ancient range in Charnwood Forest, in Leicestershire, of which the low granite boss of Mount Sorrel is the most conspicuous modern survival. Here, indeed, we get a mountain in its last feeble state of dotage, sans peak, sans tor, sans glen, sans everything. Charnwood Forest, according to recent geologists, is probably the very oldest piece of land in all England; for it belongs to that very antique formation known as the Archæan, which dates back earlier than the time of any fossiliferous rocks whatsoever. No remains of living beings have ever been found in these very ancient grits, slates, and agglomerates; they seem to antedate the appearance of life upon our globe, at least in any

form capable of being preserved to us as a fossil petrification. (Scientific readers are earnestly requested not to reopen the old and interminable Eozoon controversy. Spare the grey hairs of an unoffending citizen from postcard discussions of that insufferable nuisance.) The Charnwood Forest hills are 'the much-weathered and denuded mountain-peaks of an old pre-Cambrian land,' says Professor Prestwich, 'swamped and nearly hidden by the newer sedimentary strata which encircle it and fill up the depressions between each protruding ridge. It is a good example of the way in which the features of the early land-surfaces have been obliterated by later changes.' That is the cold and unfeeling way in which men of science talk about the backbone of their fatherland!

How strange it is to think that these little hills, rising to some seven or eight hundred feet only, and scarcely known even to the intelligent schoolboy who has passed the sixth standard away from their immediate neighbourhood, are yet immeasurably older than the Alps or the Himalayas, and had been already dry land for countless centuries, while the Pyrenees and the Rocky Mountains slumbered beneath the beds of primæval oceans! Yet even now, unable to keep a secret, they betray to close observers their volcanic origin. Bardon Hill consists entirely of solidified ash; Markfield is built upon a round boss of eruptive syenite; and Mount Sorrel itself stands out from the soft strata around as a worn kernel of hard pink granite. On every side of them the new red sandstone fills up the hollows between their ancient peaks, now worn as flat as an old Indian's teeth; but the remnants of the ancient hills still peep out here and there through the newer sediments, retaining sufficiently their primitive character even now to have gained for the most isolated and abrupt among them the significant name of Mount Sorrel, almost unique in England. Beyond this point it is well-nigh impossible for any mountain to degenerate, unless, indeed, it gets worn quite flat, and merges indistinguishably into the level of the surrounding plain.

And this is pretty much what has happened in places to the very oldest and most venerable mountain chain of all—the Laurentian range of Canada and the Great Lake Basin. At one time, there can be little doubt, this colossal system of ancient peaks, running right across the western continent from Nova Scotia and Labrador to the Missouri River, must have equalled in magni-



tude the Himalayas, the Andes, or the Rocky Mountains. It forms the first rough sketch and axis of America. But as it belongs to a period even earlier than the Primary rocks of ordinary British geology—a period inconceivably and incalculably remote—it has been exposed for countless centuries to the wearing effect of rain, frost, snow, and rivers. In many places, therefore, the Laurentian range is reduced to a mere low plain of very solid gneiss, much scratched in strange hieroglyphics by the vast glaciers of the Great Ice Age, and sometimes even hollowed out into beds of lakes, or traversed by the basins of existing streams. Many parts of it, occupied by great sheets of water, actually fall below sea level. Yet even to this day, in its dishonoured age, the Laurentian country, however flat, preserves certain vague mountain characteristics in the bareness of its rocks, the picturesque detail of its sparse pine-clad slopes, and the number and beauty of its wild torrent cataracts. You feel instinctively you are in a mountain country, though you stand in the midst of a great unvaried plain. The Laurentian region is like Scotland pressed flat, or like the Dolomites or Auvergne with the wrinkles ironed out of them. It has nothing in common with the great plains which have always been plains and nothing more—alluvial silt of river deltas—like Holland, Lombardy, or the flat centre of Russia.

As the oldest mountains are thus the most worn out, so, conversely, the highest chains are those of most geologically recent origin—the *nouveaux riches*, as it were, amongst the orographical aristocracy. From time to time the earth makes itself a new coat; but before long, as with other garments, the nap gets worn off, the elbows crack, and the seams become threadbare. All the higher ranges now known on earth are demonstrably not earlier in origin than the Tertiary times. Compared with venerable pensioners like Mount Sorrel or the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence Basin, the Alps and the Andes are but things of yesterday. Auvergne may well look down upon the Pyrenees. The tops of some of the highest Swiss mountains consist of Miocene rocks; in other words, as late as the Miocene period, the year-before-last of the geological chronologist, the area occupied by the rearing crags of the Jungfrau and the Matterhorn slumbered at peace beneath a deep sea, and received there the muddy or sandy deposits which now figure as rocks on the jagged Alpine summits. The upheaval of the Alpine axis was a very recent event; and most of the

material which forms the snowy ranges was laid down on the ocean bed ages and ages after Dartmoor formed an island like Jamaica in the midst of a basking oolitic ocean.

Why is this? Simply because, in the nature of things, as soon as mountains have reached their highest point and ceased to grow—as soon as the movement of upheaval comes to an end—they must necessarily begin to grow down again rapidly, and to undergo disintegration on every side. There is no such thing, the moralists tell us, as standing still; either you are going up or else you are coming down again. So energetic is the work of denudation in the higher regions of the air, says Professor Judd (regarding the matter rather from the cool, scientific standpoint), that the elevated crags and pinnacles are being constantly broken up by moisture and frost at an exceedingly rapid rate. Glaciers and mountain torrents carry down heaps of boulders, mud, and moraine stuff with ceaseless activity to the valleys below. The rocks crumble away into sand or fine powder, and are washed slowly apart into those rude, angular masses that often strew the slopes and ledges. Landslips and avalanches help in the destructive work; even the sun's heat, the wind, and the roots of plants, all play their part in the constant warfare against the stability of the mountain. Now and then, whole shoulders fall off at once, as at the Rossberg, and later at Naini Tal, but oftener the work proceeds by constant instalments. Where such a high rate of disintegration as this is long maintained, it would be impossible for any mountain chain to exist unimpaired through the immense epochs of geological ages. Accordingly, all the great ranges of the earth at the present day are at the very furthest of Tertiary origin; and wherever we find systems of earlier date still surviving in our midst as hills or ridges, they are always worn down by continuous water action to the condition of the merest stumps or basal relics. In the course of a few million years or so more, the industrious Swiss farmer of the United States of Europe will be driving his electric plough over the low plain of the Mönch and Eiger, or sailing his automatic skiff above the site of Pilatus; while the Leslie Stephens and the Douglas Freshfields (if any) of those remote periods will be gaining deathless glory on the roll of fame by scaling the virgin heights of the Newfoundland banks, or falling headlong over the precipitous cliffs of the vast crags that will rear themselves sheer over the basin of the Baltic.



## FRENCH-ENGLISH.

VOLTAIRE was fond of asserting that he was the first Frenchman who made England and English literature known to France. Unless one insists on absolutely literal accuracy—and when an author is speaking of his own merits it is vain to expect this—Voltaire's boast may very well be allowed to pass. The famous Frenchman had spent nearly three years of the prime of his life in England; he had formed friendships with all the prominent Englishmen of the day, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift among them; he had studied the English language and English literature with indefatigable attention; he had actually published in London a still not uninteresting little book written in the English language; and in a series of brightly-composed letters he had revealed to his own fellow-countrymen the new English world which he had thus discovered for himself. An extraordinary number of the most distinguished Frenchmen of the eighteenth century followed Voltaire in visiting England, and as one of the smaller results of this closer intimacy between the two countries a very considerable number of English words began to find their way into the French vocabulary. This number was very largely increased after the battle of Waterloo, when French aristocrats and other *émigrés* who had passed their years of exile in England returned to France, and took back English words with them. The introduction into France of something which had at least the show of constitutional government made a further opening for such English words as bill, budget, speech, pamphlet, meeting, jury, verdict. The English railway movement contributed to the French language the words coke, rail, wagon, tender, ballast, express, tunnel. Sport, too, supplied a very considerable number. Sometimes the English origin of the word was very thinly concealed by a slight disguise, so that we are all familiar with 'boule-dogue' for bulldog, 'redingote' for riding-coat, and 'bouligrin' for bowling-green. French writers of the present day carry this process very far indeed. One can hardly take up a modern French novel without lighting on such words as 'spleenétique,' 'flairtage,' 'lynchage,' 'snobisme,' 'blackboulage,' 'clownique;' while the number of such infinitives as 'shopper,' 'yachter,' 'toaster,'

'interviewer' is simply endless. But the way in which the modern French writer rushes into a bold and profuse employment of English words without any French disguise at all—and, of course, usually in a ludicrously incorrect way—is really not very far removed from a mild form of literary mania.

'Inglis is spike hier.' So runs, or used to run, in some hostelry in the Pas de Calais, a friendly greeting intended for the delight and information of the wandering Englishman. Really, on the title-page of nine out of ten of French novels of the day the author should give his English readers a similarly honest warning by telling them that 'Inglis is write hier.' Let us see the 'Inglis' as the Frenchman writes it for us.

He is generally very great indeed in all matters connected with sport. Among the commonest of all common words in French books nowadays are 'sport,' 'jockey,' 'groom;' and we are all familiar with 'le boxe,' if 'sportique' and 'turfistes' are not of quite such frequent occurrence. The French novelist knows all about the doings of the English 'sportman' and 'sportwoman,' and when the English national game comes in his way he can tell you that among 'le crikers' the two most important characters are the 'batman' and the 'bowlsman.' He is charmed when he contemplates a young 'mees,' a young English 'sportwoman,' playing at 'lawn-tennis,' or, as he sometimes phrases it, 'un lawn-tennis.' To the Englishman, on the other hand, what can be more delightful than to behold a whole company of cheerful Frenchmen and Frenchwomen abandoning themselves to the irresistible fascinations of a 'rallye-paper'? M. Georges Ohnet, he of the *Maître de Forges* and of the numberless editions, revels in 'rallye-papers.' Hardened garrison-officers, equestrian ladies, dukes on their mail-coaches, young men in their 'bogheys,' and the inevitable huntsman with his horn and hunting-knife and 'knickerbokers'—'knicker-boots' they sometimes are—follow up this sport with intense enthusiasm, and celebrate its conclusion by a 'gigantesque lunch.' The 'rallye-paper' is the French version of the sport dear to English schoolboys as a paper-chase! French readers refuse to be wearied with descriptions of the noble game, till in the current French novel the 'rallye-paper' is as great a nuisance as in the average English novel is the mad bull—which, if you only knew, is really an exceedingly tame and gentle animal, full of nothing but a pleasant playfulness—from which it is always the hero's duty to rescue the heroine.



In a story which very lately appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* one of the characters is a Scotch baronet who invites some French friends to his moors to shoot 'grouses.' In another we are informed that a French gentleman proposed to organise 'des steeple' in the neighbourhood of his country-house. 'Steeple' is of course the French-English for 'steeple-chases.' Doubtless the races in all these 'steeple' were won by what another well-known French novelist, M. Henry Rabusson, oddly enough calls 'hacks de pur sang.' A thoroughbred hack!

With English sport on water the Frenchman is equally familiar. He knows all about the English 'rowigmen;' all about the English 'milord's' yacht with its comfortable 'births' and its crew of eight or ten vigorous 'jacks tar'—descendants of the men who in the old days manned our 'woodens bulwarks;' all about our 'cruising,' the 'squifs' in which we row and the 'warfs' at which we land. The French writer who knows England so well as the man of letters who chooses to call himself M. Philippe Daryl actually speaks about 'the crew which gained the prize at the great regatta between Oxford and Cambridge.' Surely M. Daryl might know that all this is what his French compatriots indifferently call 'humbog' or 'humbugh.'

Let us pass from the world of sport, and observe the French writer's performances when the English world of letters is his theme. We read of such authors as Dean 'Swift' and Charles 'Kinsley,' such characters as 'Peckniff,' such English literary masterpieces as the 'Vicaire of Wackefield' and the 'Bidge of Sighs.' It is delightful to hear our Frenchman talking complacently of Mr. William Morris's poem, 'The Earthen Paradise.' Of course he can speak fluently of Darwin and the 'struggle for life.' M. Daudet, in his latest novel, *L'Immortel*, has wonderfully good times with this famous phrase. Ambitious men, anxious to push their way to the front in the world, are by M. Daudet denominated 'strugforlifeurs.' After this it seems tame to be reminded by another French novelist that among the 'go head' people of the United States, where the women are in large excess of the men, the 'strugforlife' assumes the form of a 'struggle for vedding.' (In the Mormon State, to be sure, this struggle is in abeyance, for here we are in the region of 'spiritual's husband' and 'spiritual's wives.') Returning to literature, it is refreshing to learn that Sir Walter Scott wrote a novel entitled 'The Hearth of Midlotian.' A no less personage than a French count, who in 1887 published

a volume under the style of *L'Écosse jadis et aujourd'hui*, has a chapter on Scott in which, among other oddities, we read of 'Dande Dinmont' and find the following pleasant quotations:—

And far beneath  
Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran:  
Like some tall rock with lichens gray  
Seen'd dimly nuge, the dark abbey.

The corbells were cared grotesque and grim;  
And the pillars, with cluster'd shafts to trim,  
With base and with capital flourish's around.

The same enthusiast is also on familiar terms with the Ettrick Shepherd. Can he not quote from Hogg?

The noble clan Stuart, the bravest of ale.

The native country of Scott and Hogg, the land of 'Salisbury Craigs,' the 'Tolboath' Prison, and the 'Banatym' Club, the country whose native 'Hi-ghlanders' wear the 'kelt' and eat 'very yood herreng,' fares badly at the hands of the distinguished Madame Adam. Skobelev once spent an evening with the two famous war correspondents, Forbes and MacGahan, singing songs for their amusement in French, German, Russian, and Italian. Remembering the nationality of one of his guests, he concluded with something Scotch, and this, as Madame Adam tells us in her pamphlet on Skobelev, was 'Aug Lang Sygne.'

The *Revue des Deux Mondes* very recently contained a critical estimate of Mr. Lecky's historical writings. What, according to the French critic, are the titles of Mr. Lecky's books? 'The Leaders of the Irish Opinion,' 'History of the Rise and Influence of the Rationalism,' and 'History of the European Morals.' Just imagine a prominent English writer criticising, say in the *Nineteenth Century*, the works of one of the most distinguished contemporary men of letters in France, and yet absolutely ignorant of the use of the French definite article! Another English title-page has also recently gone wrong. *Le Siècle*, referring to the late Richard Jefferies, and informing us in passing that he was born in 'the Weltshire,' places among his works one which it speaks of as *Le Patron de Jeu chez-lui*. To turn the *Gamekeeper at Home* into the *Gaming-House-keeper at Home* is hard on an author.

A French dramatic critic recently burst out with enthusiasm: 'Who does not know "The Midnight" of Shakespeare?' This was the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* of the divine William's. M. Georges Ohnet is also acquainted with the 'Schylock' of the



same author. Longfellow, we are told, was the author of 'Hiacutha.' The reader of Anthony Trollope's Autobiography will doubtless remember that Trollope's first published story brought in to its author 'douze cents francs, six shillings, et neuf pences.' The Mrs. Frances Trollope of the same very literary family is known to the Frenchman as 'Mistress Trollops.' M. Alphonse Daudet gets a shade nearer correctness when in *L'Évangéliste* he alludes to this lady as 'Mistress Trollope.' M. Catulle Mendès, translating a story by Edgar Allan Poe, speaks about 'Myster' Blackwood, and 'le Blackwood Magazine.' English magazines and reviews, indeed, fare almost exceptionally ill at the hands of the literary Frenchman. The 'Edinburg' Review is a mere peccadillo. A canon of Clermont Cathedral, and member of many learned societies, writes about 'le Gentleman Magazine.' The *Foreign Review* appears as 'le Foreing Review,' just as the Frenchman insists on talking of the 'Foreing Office,' and we have such curiosities as 'le Macmillian magazine' and 'The English woman's Rewiew.'

Indeed, proper names of every kind are a constant stumbling-block. There is one initial difficulty in this department with which the French writer has terrible times. He cannot manage the abbreviations. 'Mrs.' is always 'Mistress' when it is not 'mistress' or 'missis,' and the word, as M. Max O'Rell in one of his little books is careful to inform us, is to be pronounced 'missise.' If a French writer ever does venture on the 'Mrs.' the result is almost always a mockery. A volume written by a French visitor to England in 1886 contained various references to, let us say, 'Mrs. Black and Jones.' This, if not altogether satisfactory, was at least an improvement on the unhappy 'mistress.' But the grateful English reader had not gone far before he discovered that 'Mrs. Black and Jones' were bank-directors, and it very soon became evident that 'Mrs.' was only the ingenious Frenchman's way of writing 'Messrs.'

An English gentleman is always 'mister' when he is not 'myster.' One French author is careful to tell us how to use this word in really good and idiomatic English. Suppose, says he, one should wish to translate into English the following French sentence:—

MONSIEUR,—*Je vous annonce l'arrivée de M. votre fils, William Johnson, à Paris.*

This is the correct English version:—

SIR,—I inform you of the arrival of your mister son William Johnson at Paris.

The famous M. Cherbuliez, in one of his novels, makes an English lady sign her letters as 'Lady Aurora Rovel.' In a story in last year's *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Mr. E. A. Bond, late chief librarian of the British Museum, figures as 'sir Francis Bound.' Another French writer tells us that short, pet names for English girls and boys are, for instance, 'Bettesy,' 'Enry,' 'Cary,' 'Tomy,' 'Samy.' The correct way to speak of Mr. Young, Junior, is to call him 'Young-Younger.' In the estimation of the French novelist, ordinary English proper names are such as 'Holophern Rush,' 'mister Higglingbottom,' and 'M. Jasper Stiffneckham.' M. Armande Silvestre revels in such appellations as 'le révérend Jack Botum,' 'mylord Humphrey Littleboob,' and 'Lord Doublebeett.' Another writer gives us 'Colonel Cowentry' and 'Sir Hug,' who also appears as 'sir Hug Esquire.' Rich Americans are of course represented as men of title; while the only correct and really English way of addressing a 'baronnet' is to call him 'milord.' 'Milord Chatam' is as correctly as a patriotic Frenchman could be expected to spell the name of the first Pitt. Whether 'sir J. Bright' is or is not a 'baronnet' does not appear; perhaps he is only an instance of 'knighthood.' Mr. Chamberlain, it seems, was lately 'le home secretary.' It is also well to remember that a common parliamentary title is 'the righthonourable,' when, indeed, it is not 'honourables sirs.'

But let us pass on; for, as the Frenchman reminds us, 'times is money.' Let us wander into the department of 'highlif.' A party in very 'highlif' indeed is spoken of as a 'house-party extra cream.' This is the world that is 'ob-or-nob' with princes and dukes; that goes to the selectest 'pique-niques;' that, as one authority tells us, takes 'lunch à cinq heures,' or, as a more knowing hand has it, drinks tea at 'fiveoclocque;' that rides in 'breaks' or 'breacks' that are always arriving 'au grand trot;' the world for which 'the season opens by the University Boat-races;' the world in which the woman's duty is 'shopper,' the man's 'yachter,' and everyone's 'luncher' and 'flirter.' This is the world where the lord says to his visitor, '*Gentleman*, asseyons-nous et causons;' where, say at the 'Gaity's' theatre, one young blood addresses another with 'Aoh! my old fellow!' and where ladies, gentlemen, 'clubmans'—free from any vulgar mixture of 'goody-gaudy' persons—accost one another with 'un vigoureux shakehand.' These are the delightful people who flock to the



play to see a 'Scrape of Paper,' neither can Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan ever weary them with 'Her Majesty's Pinafore.' Whether they care so much for the performances of the 'Solfatonic' College or of the 'Musical Antiquarium Society' does not appear. It is not probable, however, that they would be much exhilarated by the doings of the 'Christi' Minstrels, or, as the same company figures elsewhere, the 'Christian' Minstrels; but they would certainly flock in crowds to 'Saint-James-Hall' to hear the tenor who is known indifferently as 'Seems-Reeve' or 'Seems-Rews.' In May you are sure to meet them all, with a fair sprinkling of 'clergymans' among them, gazing at themselves (and at the pictures) at 'Burlington Academy,' which seems like the name of some suburban educational establishment. It was for all these rich and distinguished persons that in 1867, when the Exhibition filled Paris with foreigners, of whom the English were not the fewest, a French writer sat down to produce a guide-book. He meant it exclusively for 'highlif' and the fashionable world, but his mastery over the English language was hardly equal to his daring in the use of it. In his preface he cheerfully announced himself and his guide-book as the 'vademecum de tous les snobs.' This indeed is, as a contemporary French baron curiously remarks, 'Oh! quite!! too!!! utter!!!!'

With the everyday life of our streets and the ways of the London 'cokneys' the Frenchman is just as familiar as with 'highlif extra cream.' In the old days he used to know all about 'Wauxhall,' or 'Faxhall,' and 'Ranelash;' now he is equally at home in 'Saint-John-Wood,' 'Cambden Town,' 'Saint-Gilles,' or the 'Hay-Marbret.' He studies our public charities and can tell us all about our 'alm'shouses;' he investigated the doings of the defunct Board of Works, and is great upon the 'metropolitain-building-sact.' He knows that the Londoner travels on the 'metropolitain' or other railway with 'trough-tickets' or 'thought-tickets;' that he escapes from London altogether by 'excursions-trains,' or travels by night in 'slee-ping cars;' that he buys the flower for his button-hole from the 'flower's girls,' and his newspaper from the 'new-boys,' or the 'paper's boys.' For his evening paper the 'skilld woorkman' need not pay more than a 'demi-penny.' If he wants 'a grog,' or 'a wiskey,' can he not go to the 'spirits shops,' or to the 'ciders cellars,' or to the 'cole-hole' Tavern in the Strand, or to the 'bar du Wapping'? With his 'breeakfast' egg the Londoner

eats some 'toasts;' he can consume a couple of 'sandwichs' at any odd moment; he can do wonders in the way of consumption of 'beefstecks,' 'bifteks,' 'beefteaks,' 'beefsteacks,' and 'rumsteacks.' If he dines with 'le lor-maire' he of course eats 'a turtle-soup;' if he cares to drink in the American fashion, he can have 'coktels' and 'sherry-gobler.' In Ireland, as we read in a Home-Rule story by M. Elie Poirée, he will doubtless be able to find the hostelry kept by 'Michael Snyderden, licensed to sell wines, bier, and spirits, no licenseds sundays.'

The device of the Yankee, a French writer assures us, is, 'Catch money, my son, honestly if you can, but catch money.' The device of the modern French novelist is, 'Catch English, my pen, correctly if you can, but catch English.' Let him persevere, and the correctness may come in time. On this linguistic side, we will apply to him his own felicitous quotation: 'Cheer, boy, cheer, you will see better days.' Meanwhile, we will readily admit to him that the laugh is by no means all on our side. Our novelists, and especially our lady novelists, far too often find their native English insufficient for them, and boldly plunge into French with the most extraordinary results. But a consideration of this side of the subject would be more interesting to French than to English readers.



## *ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON.*

It is characteristic, perhaps, of English feeling, that the patron saint of England, alone among all the saints of the Church, should be mounted on horseback. Yet that noble equestrian martyr, who still appears in all his panoply upon our half-crowns and our sovereigns, careering gaily over the body of his supernatural foe, began life, there is every reason to suppose, not on the Yorkshire moors, but, in quite another sense than that intended by Mrs. Malaprop, as an allegory on the banks of Nile. For the early history and evolution of St. George, indeed, we have to look far back into the mists of ages, and far away from that horse-loving land where the mythical and redoubtable saint now tramples so fearlessly on the still more mythical and redoubtable dragon.

‘Once upon a time,’ says the Mock Turtle in ‘Alice,’ with a deep-drawn sigh, ‘I was a real turtle.’ ‘And once upon a time,’ the dragon upon whom St. George is trampling might remark, ‘I was a realistic crocodile.’ Strange as it seems, every step in the metamorphosis by which the old Egyptian god Horus became transformed into an orthodox Christian saint, while the Egyptian crocodile beneath his feet became simultaneously transfigured into his vanquished reptilian enemy, has now been worked out in full by historians or antiquaries: and the holy man whom Gibbon so cruelly accused of being a fraudulent pork-contractor of heretical views has had his good fame vindicated from that irreverent charge only to be identified by more modern criticism with the hawk-headed heathen deity of some forgotten Nile village in the days of the Pharaohs.

To get down to the very first foundations of St. George we must go back to the earliest religion of the Egyptian people, which consisted of an equal and impartial admixture of totemism and ancestor-worship. Now, totems have become so exceedingly fashionable of late years, through the assiduous efforts of Mr. Andrew Lang and others, that it behoves every pure and blameless ratepayer, at the present day, however naturally averse to such abstruse studies, to know something about them, lest he should blush for his ignorance in the circles of esoteric culture: so I shall make no

apology for briefly explaining that a totem is an animal or plant—most often an animal—which the members of a particular clan or tribe, alike among Red Indians, early Asiatic races, and Australian black-fellows, consider themselves bound to respect and venerate. As a rule, the clan is called by the name of the animal it adores, being known as Crows or Jackals, Wolves or Bears, Kangaroos or Wombats, as the case may be. However, every member of the Bear tribe pays the greatest deference to a bear, wherever found, and particularly abstains from eating bear's flesh. Every Kangaroo worships kangaroos, and would far sooner eat his fellow creatures of the Bear or Wombat totem than indulge in kangaroo-meat, which would be considered indeed as rank cannibalism. The totem is regarded as one flesh with the clan, and to harm the totem is to do evil, as it were, to the embodied clan-spirit.

In Egypt totemism at a very early period formed the prevalent cult of a large part of the people. In later days, to be sure, as creeds grew more refined, it developed into the worship of animal-headed gods: of Apis, who represented the original sacred bull; of Anubis, who recalled the primitive holy jackal; of Pasht, the cat-goddess, and Sekhet, the lion-goddess; and of Thoth, the recorder, with the ibis-head. But in earlier times, when religion was more naïve, it was probably the actual animals themselves that were considered sacred on their own account; and till a very late date this original sanctity continued to attach to the holy beasts and birds, as the immense number of mummied hawks, cats, ibises, and bulls brought to light in every excavation among the Nile-side cemeteries sufficiently shows. Holy hawks, in particular, are a perfect nuisance to tourists in Upper Egypt: the fellaheen seem to imagine that every member of Mr. Cook's personally conducted parties must be animated with but one insatiable desire in life, the passion for possessing a perfect necropolis of mummified and malodorous birds of prey.

But totemism is a creed that necessarily leads at times to slight misunderstandings among its various votaries. As each village or town had its own special totem in early times, and as some of these totems were natural enemies one of the other, it followed perforce that the god of one district was often the hereditary foe and utter abomination of another. When all your religious feelings, for example, are centred upon a cat, your attitude towards dogs must almost necessarily be one of strong



theological prejudice. People who revered the ibis, or the heron, could hardly fail to regard with bitter aversion the kites and kestrels that killed and ate their tribal god; people who offered up prayers to the bat or the asp were scarcely likely to admire and respect the jackal or the owl who waged war against their own living and multiple deities. Hence it arose that religious feuds of a somewhat exasperated character often existed between adjacent villages, whose gods were at strife one with the other; or whose deities, as Juvenal bluntly puts it, grew in their own gardens for others to devour. Among all these feuds, none was more celebrated than that which smouldered on ceaselessly between the worshippers and the enemies of the divine crocodile. It must be frankly admitted that to anybody who did not regard crocodiles as sacred beings the temptation to take pot-shots at them as they basked on a sandbank in the muddy Nile must have been almost irresistible. At any rate, it is matter of historical fact that there were crocodile-worshipping and crocodile-hating towns all along the river highway; and the latter frequently behaved in a most unfeeling and irreverent way towards the deities of the former. Party spirit sometimes ran so high on these occasions that, if we may believe Juvenal, a late but well-informed and travelled authority, pitched battles were fought over the religious differences, and the victors went so far in their pious zeal as to kill and eat, with every expression of joy, the enemies of their ancestral totem.

The district of the Fayoum, to the west of Nile, was one of those where the sacred reptile was most particularly venerated: for in early times crocodiles, whose contemplative noses are now seldom seen projecting from the water below the First Cataract, were common objects of the country all along the great river, and are represented in such mural paintings as those on the well-known tomb of Tih at Sakkara as swarming in the backwaters about Memphis itself, almost as far north as the modern town of Cairo. The scaly beast was so holy an object in the old Fayoum, indeed, that he gave his name to the *nome* or district, and to the city of Crocodilopolis: while the famous Labyrinth, that wonder of the world, which Herodotus regarded as even a more gigantic piece of work than the Pyramids themselves, contained as its main title to sanctity the magnificent tombs of the sacred mummified reptiles. On the other hand, the adjacent province of Heracleopolis was 'death on crocodiles,' as an American archæologist irreverently

phrases it; and it was the hatred of the Heracleopolitans for the unmannerly god of their next-door neighbours that led at last to the destruction of the Labyrinth itself, of which hardly any remains now exist in a recognisable condition. Nor were these strained relations without a due cause: for the sacred animal of Heracleopolis happened to be the ichneumon; and, as the ichneumon ekes out a precarious livelihood by stealing and eating the crocodile's eggs, it was natural enough that diplomatic difficulties should occasionally arise between the devotees of the eater and the partisans of the eaten.

The people of Tentyris, the modern Denderah, where you land for the great Ptolemaic temple, were also professed enemies of the crocodile, which was the ancestral god of their rivals at Omboo. They figured as professional crocodile-killers, and in later days gave exhibitions at Rome of the courage and skill with which they dragged from the water their hereditary enemy. Naturally such displays were little to the taste of those pious souls in other places who excavated the crocodile mummy-pits of Maabdeh, and filled them with the dried and perfumed remains of innumerable defunct reptilian deities. Nor could the crocodiles themselves have enjoyed these brusque geographical variations of popularity. It must undoubtedly have been rough upon a contemplative reptile, with a fine sense of continuity, to be treated with divine honours in one village, and chivied for his life by a roaring and bloodthirsty mob in the next.

This native antagonism between the various gods of various Nile-side regions made the construction of a national Egyptian pantheon, it may readily be believed, a matter of some delicacy and difficulty of adjustment. How to include in the common mythology the crocodile himself and the crocodile's deadliest foe was a problem of constructive religion that tasked all the most abstruse resources of the priestly intellect. Still, in the end, the thing got done somehow. After Upper and Lower Egypt, with all their nomes, were firmly united under a single, strong, centralised government, a sort of *modus vivendi* was established at last between the hostile local gods of the different villages, and a few of those belonging to the largest towns or most prominent families were elevated into the front rank in the national Walhalla as first-class deities. Among them, three of the most famous were those Upper Egyptian gods of the mystic triad—Osiris, Isis, and the boy Horus.



Who or what Horus was precisely in his very earliest beginnings it is happily no part of my present task to decide offhand. Heaven forbid that I should so trench on the private preserves and happy hunting-grounds of the orthodox Egyptologists, each of whom is prepared to write a long and mystical volume on the origin, development, and interpretation of the Horus-myth. He may, for aught I know to the contrary, have been the rising sun, the god of light, the avenger of Osiris in his battle with the powers of darkness, or he may only have been the heir-general and later representative of some early hawk-totem, worshipped in primitive times by the good folk of Abydos, his sacred city. It is enough for my present purpose that he is often represented with a hawk's head, and that he frequently stands upon a vanquished crocodile, the first rough draft or rudimentary form of the mediæval dragon.

In most of the pretty little bronze figures of Horus that adorn the cabinets of the Boulak Museum at Cairo the god merely poises himself solidly upon a squat, flat crocodile, which lies still under his feet, and appears to accept its fate in very good part, with true reptilian apathy. But in certain other statuettes of a more vigorous type the character of the sculpture approaches the modern conception of St. George, both in the triumphant attitude of the god and the recalcitrant struggles of the conquered beast; and there is one little group in the Louvre to which M. Clermond-Ganneau has called particular attention, which at once gives us the clue to the origin of the mediæval champion saint. It is a bas-relief sculptured in Egypt in the late Roman period, and it represents the hawk-headed god in full armour on horseback, in the act of killing a very respectable and developed dragon of most properly draconian ferocity and vigour. Had the head been wanting, in fact, the Egyptian deity would unhesitatingly have been taken by all observers for an early representation of the Christian saint.

When Christianity first began to spread in the East, it is well known that the Oriental peoples often eagerly adapted symbols or emblems of their familiar religion to the ideas and mysteries of the new and purer faith. Thus the Tau, or *crux ansata*, that odd handle-bearing symbol, which Egyptian deities held in their hands as a mark of their divine nature, got curiously mixed up in early Coptic monuments with the Christian cross; and the figures of the saints were readily adapted to the pre-existing types

of heathen gods or goddesses, as one can clearly see in the Ghizeh collection. Each town or district during this transitional period was likely to choose for its special patron the Christian martyr or virgin who most nearly approached its own earlier local god in character or attributes. The transition in this way became less abrupt and startling; the people would worship the new saints at the old-accustomed shrines, and under the guise of images that closely recalled their antique deities. In Egypt this feeling was even stronger than elsewhere, as might be expected from the eminently conservative character of the Egyptian mind, and indeed for some centuries the Christianity of the Nile valley was little more than a veiled heathenism, with the old gods worshipped under new names, though still almost identical in form and feature.

Now, during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods Horus had long grown to be almost the most conspicuous god of the popular pantheon, and it was not strange, therefore, that the Egyptian people should choose for their patron saint under the new creed a sort of Christianised and etherialised version of their hawk-headed deity. They found in St. George—that mystic Cappadocian St. George—the very saint they wanted: a saint dim, obscure, characteristically mysterious; a conqueror of the powers of darkness; a victorious dragon-hunter; a mere ancient god, thinly sprinkled with holy water, but still retaining in his white horse, green dragon, and other quaint accessories the later fashionable emblems of the old divine Egyptian crocodile-tamer.

Who the real historical St. George was, or whether even there was ever a live St. George at all, is one of those moot questions of hagiology on which it ill becomes the general anthropological inquirer to have any opinion of any sort in the present state of our knowledge. The correct belief upon the subject is that the original Georgios was a Cappadocian saint and martyr, who had been a soldier of the Empire, and who was massacred for his faith in the last heathen persecution under Diocletian. However that may be, the cult of Georgios spread rapidly in the East. He suited exactly the Oriental mind. To put it briefly, he was an allegorical saint, and the mystic East always loves allegory. So, in the first flush of the new Imperial faith, Constantine built a church in his honour at Byzantium, the parent church of all those San Giorgios and St. Georges which still abound throughout the whole of Christendom. Thence St. George spread by degrees to all



parts of the world, though his vogue was greatest at first—and indeed always—in the Greek or Greek-speaking provinces of the Christianised empire.

It was in Egypt itself, no doubt, that the allegory of St. George first took definite shape. 'The warrior saint, contending with the dragon,' as Miss Yonge puts it, 'and delivering the oppressed Church,' was quite in the very best style of Egyptian allegory and Egyptian mysticism. The personification of the powers of darkness in the old serpent of the Nile reproduced in full the local tone of thought. During those early ages of half-heathen Gnosticism, while the faith of Christ and the faith of Osiris lived on in strange confusion side by side, St. George gradually took the place of Horus, as St. Theodore seems also to have done in the curious image trampling on a crocodile which balances the Lion of St. Mark on the Piazzetta at Venice. Gibbon indeed has tried to show, with some acerbity of tone, that St. George was originally an Arian saint, and that the dragon whom he successfully resisted was indeed no other than the orthodox Athanasius, the pillar of faith in Alexandria. But in Gibbon's time the real connection of ideas between the ancient and modern creeds was but little understood, and a certain personal bias in favour of believing any evil of any saint whatsoever most probably misled the historian of the 'old, familiar Decline and Fall,' as Mr. Silas Wegg affectionately called it, into unjust aspersions on the character of the Cappadocian martyr. It was his resemblance to Horus rather than his resistance to Athanasius that seized and impressed the Egyptian fancy. Or rather, may we not hold that George himself was but a Christianised form of Horus in person, and that the dragon on which he tramples was the ecclesiastical and allegorical counterpart of the subdued crocodile?

To this very day St. George is still the patron saint of the Coptic Church in Egypt. That is natural enough. The descendants of Horus-worshippers would stick by preference to the Christianised Horus-saint. But how on earth did he come to be also the patron saint of far Western Britain? 'It is difficult,' says Mr. Loftie, 'to persuade a Copt Christian that his guardian saint, with the same white horse, green dragon, and other accessories, holds a similar tutelary post in England. The most credulous as well as the most reasonable Copt immediately rejects this statement as a glaring impossibility; and the question, "What can our

St. George have to do with England?" might perplex the most plausible or the most pious of the Crusaders.'

Nevertheless there *is* a connection, and it was the Crusaders themselves to whom we owe it. During the early ages of the Church St. George remained an essentially Eastern and Greek saint, who never, I believe, made any excursions westward into the uncertain domains of Latin Christendom. I have nowhere met with him in early Western literature or Church dedications. But all over Greece and the Levant the equestrian martyr was a prime favourite, and Venice, when she stole the body of St. Mark from the monks of Alexandria, completed her theft by borrowing San Giorgio as her second patron saint from Corfu and her other Ionian possessions. When the Crusaders went east to fight for the Holy Sepulchre against the dragon of Islam they found St. George in full possession of the field; and it was no wonder that those mailed and horse-loving knights chose the warrior saint for their especial veneration. He was the sort of holy man a Crusader could thoroughly understand and sympathise with. Their fancy beheld him sometimes in the thick of the fray, heading their forces on his fiery white horse, as Santiago had headed the Galician army in its onslaught against the Paynim Moors of Granada. From that time forth St. George's fortune as a patron saint was fairly made. Burgundy and Aquitaine were the first to adopt him as the model of chivalry; and when Richard Cœur de Lion, the son of Eleanor of Aquitaine, went crusading on his own account, he left his island realm under St. George's protection, as it has ever since remained, in spite of Protestants or Puritans. 'St. George for merry England!' was the mediæval battle-cry that rang with such effect upon a thousand fields, and in the legend of the Seven Champions of Christendom St. George was chosen as the special representative of the English nation in its ecclesiastical capacity.

Being himself a mighty horseman, the warrior saint naturally developed into the great patron of British and foreign knight-hood. 'In the name of St. Michael and St. George I dub thee knight,' was the common formulary of investiture throughout half Europe; and, as Miss Yonge justly remarks, no saint in the calendar had half so many orders of chivalry instituted in his honour as the unknown Cappadocian, who by gradual steps had usurped the outer signs and prerogatives of Horus, superannuated. Even in our own day St. George remains the patron saint of the



Order of the Garter, and St. George's Chapel at Windsor recalls the ancient connection alike by its name, its banners, and its knightly stalls. For the colonies and dependencies (out of special compliment, I believe, in the first instance, to Malta and the Ionian Islands) the Order of St. Michael and St. George combines in one breath both the fighting saints, each of them victors over his own particular dragon, on earth or in heaven. From the most noble of these two bodies, the 'George and Garter' has become a common sign for village inns, and a standing subject for the local painter's imaginative efforts. To such base uses do we come at last! Horus and the Crocodile end their days finally as sprawling antagonists on the daubed signboard of the 'George' at Little Peddlington or Giggleswick Episcopi.

Strange to say, though St. George was the patron saint of England from the Crusades onward, George was never a favourite Christian name in our island till a very recent period, and had hardly a representative in the royal family who built St. George's Chapel at Windsor till an elector of Hanover brought it over, as it were, by accident, to the land of his adoption. To be sure, there was just once a George of Clarence, brother of Edward IV., to uphold the dignity of the great English saint; but, as *he* got drowned, according to popular belief, in a butt of malmsey, whatever that may be, the experiment was hardly of a kind to provoke imitation, and the Georges retired thenceforth into the obscurity of private life, till 'the glorious House of Hanover and Protestant succession' once more dragged them forth into the fierce light that, according to the official poet of their dynasty, beats upon a throne. Up till 1700 Georges were almost unknown in our parish registers; after that date, out of compliment to the Faith's Defender, they began to appear in shoals, side by side with the Augustuses, Fredericks, Charlottes, and Sophias whom the new royal family made so popular with our essentially snobbish British parents—a tendency that culminated at last in the famous Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs, the apotheosis, as it were, of fashionable and loyal Georgian nomenclature.

The comparatively modern vogue of George as an English Christian name, however, is well marked in the absence of any common patronymic surname derived from it or its abbreviations. True old English personal names of mediæval date, like John and William, yield us innumerable surnames in general use—such as Johnson and Williamson, Jackson and Wilson, Jones and Williams,

Jenkins and Wilkins, Jenkinson and Wilkinson, all formed on certain known and regular analogies. But we have no Georgesons, no Geordiesons, no Georgekineses, no Georgekinsons; and even Judson, which has been claimed by some authors as due to a diminutive of George, is really the offspring of the mediæval Judde (a name mentioned by Gower), whose alternative forms we get in our Judds and Judkineses. To be sure, Mr. Henry George shows us that George as a surname is a genuine reality; but then, names like his, or that of Mr. Henry Richard, or Mr. Mitchell Henry, are really Celtic—mostly Welsh or Cornish—and of very late historical origin. The Richardsons, Dicksons, Hendersons, and Harrisons bear the true old English forms of the patronymic: whenever, as in these other instances, the Christian name stands alone as a surname, without the sign of the possessive case or the addition of the significant word *son*, it is always of recent Cymric adoption. I need hardly add that the made-up name of Fitz-George, in spite of its affectation of Norman antiquity, is an equally recent coinage to cover a special instance. As a whole, St. George, with all his natural advantages as patron saint to the Kingdom of England, has left but a shallow mark upon our English nomenclature, not to compare with those of St. Andrew, St. Patrick, or even poor little sturdy St. David. The Georgias and Georgetowns all belong to the very latest age of British local nomenclature.

Finally, I do not mean dogmatically to assert that every St. George everywhere can be ultimately traced back, by direct descent, to Horus and the Crocodile. There are so many local gods all the world over who fight successfully with dragons or serpents, from Apollo and the Python downward, that various causes may in various places have had special effects in ensuring the vogue of the warrior saint. In certain instances, for example, there can be little doubt that dedications to St. George cover a Christianisation of the same dragon-conquering Celtic deity who elsewhere receives baptism under the guise of St. Michael, and to whom all airy sites and high mountain-peak chapels are apt to be consecrated. In Greece, once more, there is actually a 'Drunken St. George,' before the platform of whose church, as Mr. Bent has told us, a wild orgy of intoxication takes place once a year, under the auspices of the priests, on the day after the wine-pressing; and this most disreputable member of the Eastern calendar can hardly be any other than the modern representative of our abandoned old Hellenic friend Dionysus,



turned by a verbal juggle from a wicked heathen to an equally wicked Christian. Elsewhere, too, there are legends about St. George which seem to show him as more or less related in local imagination to the Scandinavian Odin, the Teutonic Woden, and the mystic Wild Huntsman of mediæval fancy. But as a whole, when we consider the peculiar connection of St. George with Egypt, and the slow course of his gradual westward diffusion through Alexandria, Venice, Constantinople, and the Crusaders, I think there can be very little doubt, in view of the facts here detailed, that the saint himself in his central features reproduces the hawk-headed god of the Nile valley, while the dragon is but an elongated and mythical form of the vanquished crocodile upon which Horus tramples. And, if anybody wishes to know how much Egyptian mysticism still clings unsuspected to the familiar image of St. George and the Dragon on the obverse of our every-day metallic currency, he has only to transmute, by a well-known alchemistic process, a few half-crowns at any bookseller's into the alternative form of Mr. Hargrave Jennings's wierd and fantastic treatise on the Rosicrucians; and there he may read, in the very profound and absurd chapter on the Order of the Garter, more astonishing nonsense about this simple subject than I should care to transcribe in black and white on the blushing face of my innocent foolscap. For whenever Egypt has had a hand in anything it seems somehow to breed a sort of mystical madness, of its own mere motion, from Piazzì Smyth on the Great Pyramid to the myth of Osiris or the legend of Horus-St. George and the Crocodile-dragon.

## 'THE 'BUS.'

THE thrifty and the needy, the sempstress with scantily-lined purse, the actress coming from Camden Town to old Drury, the pinched and ever-pinching curate, oppressed by his boys at school, should all think kindly of the worthy Shillibeer, who, on July 4 in the year 1829, started the first 'harmless, necessary' 'bus seen in London. Shillibeer was not, as might be expected, a livery-stable keeper or job-master, but an undertaker on an extensive scale in the City Road; thus carrying his fellow-citizens in life and in death—to the Bank, and to the grave. So lately as the time of the first Exhibition, in 1851, the firm was still pursuing its more lugubrious department; witness their inviting appeal to foreign visitors to the great show: 'Aux étrangers! Pompes funèbres sur le système de la Compagnie Générale des Pompes Funèbres à Paris, à Shillibeer's, City Road, near Finsbury, où l'on parle Français. Catholic fittings from Paris.' It is not unlikely that the peculiar form of the professional vehicle, the mutes, on the journey home, seated aloft, as on a 'knife-board,' may have suggested our now familiar 'bus. The 'germ' of the omnibus was of course an old one, and was to be found in the various 'stages,' coaches, and diligences, where a number of persons were conveyed long distances in one common vehicle. Mr. Charles Knight, indeed, recalls some experiments made in the year 1800, when a lumbering vehicle, running on six wheels and drawn by four horses, was plying in London for short distances, but was not very successful. An old Irish reminiscence also 'minded the time' when a stage of similar character, on eight wheels, worked in 1792 between Dublin and Seapoint, a suburb about four miles off. There was here a hotel or boarding-house of some fashion, where Charles Matthews was fond of staying.

The truth is, however, that we owe the invention to our so-called 'lively neighbours.' A retired officer named Baudry, living at Nantes, had established baths at Richebourg, which, he found, were patronised not so extensively as he desired. He accordingly in 1827 started a sort of general car to transport his customers, which plied between the baths and the centre of the town. Baudry, later, set up his vehicle at Bordeaux and also at



Paris; but, as in so many other cases where the community is benefited, the invention flourished, though at the expense of the inventor. In 1829 forage was dear, the roads bad; the undertaking ruined the luckless Baudry, who is said to have died of disappointment. It was in this year that the enterprising undertaker sent out the first London 'bus, which, according to a now defunct Dublin newspaper, 'Saunders' Newsletter,' 'excited considerable notice, from the novel form of the carriage and the elegant manner in which it is fitted out. We apprehend it would be almost impossible to make it overturn, owing to the great width. It is drawn by three beautiful bays abreast, after the French fashion. It is a handsome machine.' It then describes how 'the new vehicle, called the omnibus, commenced running this morning from Paddington to the City.' It started from the 'Yorkshire Stingo' and carried twenty-two passengers inside at a charge of a shilling or sixpence according to distance. To carry eleven passengers on each side it must have been nearly double the length of the present form of vehicle, and of the size and appearance of one of the large three-horse Metropolitan Railway 'buses. An odd feature of the arrangement was that the day's newspaper was supplied for the convenience of the passengers! There must have been some fixed limit for the time of perusal, otherwise the gentleman who had it 'in hand' might have continued his studies during the whole journey. The worthy Shillibeer, it may be added, was an inventor also, in his own special line, and to him we—or his generation—owe a 'Patent Funeral Carriage.' He was examined before the Board of Health, not on the wonderful improvement which revolutionised locomotion, but on the question of 'extra-mural interment.'

The name given to this useful and popular vehicle was certainly a happy one. It has been suggested with some ingenuity that the French inventor borrowed it from a Bordeaux grocer named Omnez, living opposite his office, and who had set up the inscription, 'Omnes omnibus.' This suggests the happy jest of a London wit, who translated the hearse by *Mors omnibus!* In the palmy days of the opera there was the large 'omnibus' box, close to the stage, which held a number of noble amateurs who each paid for their seat. All over the Continent the word 'omnibus' is accepted; but in England the independent crowd, disdaining the unfamiliar outlandish term, fashioned a convenient term for itself, and among the middle and lower classes 'bus'

is the universal term, though 'omnibus' is well understood. This short, smart, and useful word has perhaps contributed to the popularity of the vehicle itself. Grant the vulgarity of the sound to ears too polite, and the shock it would be to delicate lips constrained to utter such a note; still, 'the 'bus waits,' or 'is coming round,' or 'is full,' or, worst of all, 'the last 'bus'—actually the title of a pleasant music-hall ditty, chorussed by the whole house—are familiar terms that will always be in vogue, and do useful service.

Further, the 'bus betokens a form of social life and even discipline. It signifies the independence of women, for girls and single ladies may travel safely under its sacred ægis. They enjoy an almost vestal sanctity; and though we read of strange familiar acquaintances formed at street crossings, or 'picked up' at exhibitions, shops, &c., we never hear of such irregularities in the 'bus. There reigns an almost frozen reserve; even the most familiar respects its unwritten law. Perhaps the other passengers, all eyes and ears, their hands on their umbrellas, and with nothing else to do, act as a self-appointed police. It is a school also for the elementary courtesies. If coin has to be passed down to the conductor a dozen hands eagerly compete for the office. The familiar phrase 'to oblige a lady' has its origin in the appeal to some one to give up his seat and go outside aloft in the rain. These may seem trifles, but he who has travelled long and often in the 'bus must be, if not a better, at least a more courteous man. It is curious that that acute observer Dickens has in his novels made little or no use of the machinery, the reason possibly being that in his day it had not developed to any serious proportions. On the other hand, imitators who came after him, such as Albert Smith, made large use of the omnibus, which formed part of the 'properties' in their pictures of middle-class life. 'The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury' really supplies an interesting view of a now vanished form of life and manners. When Clapham and Islington were really suburbs, and when people had 'to go to London' much as persons at Norwood or Surbiton have now, the 'bus passed the door every morning, taking up the head of the house, going into the City. The numberless 'Paragons,' and 'Circuses,' and 'Terraces,' now so forlorn and run to seed, were then centres of life and flourished exceedingly: and the 'bus, as the medium of communication, held a high and important position.



There is a curious contrast between the London simple, if rough and ready, omnibus system, and that in vogue at Paris, where it is elaborated with all the precision of a railway. At fixed points there are stations, where tickets must be taken which admit according to the order of the numbers. There is, or used to be, the 'Correspondence,' the one ticket carrying you over various cross lines. But this can only be done effectively when tickets are issued at a *bureau*. The French public seems always helpless in the hands of a company, who in all cases have the air of doing their clients a favour. It is only reasonable that they should be entitled to adopt effectual precautions against fraud, even at the cost of some inconvenience. Not a penny, it is believed, is lost through this dishonest form of leakage. Again, the system of railway omnibuses is far more developed with our neighbours than it is with us; and every one will recall the long line of such vehicles that wait at every station, and which most prudent persons with much luggage invariably use when going to hotels. The private 'bus is a necessary adjunct to every hotel abroad, and these vehicles with their clamorous attendants are found waiting for every train. The Metropolitan Railway has its great three-horse railway omnibus, said to have been introduced from Manchester, and whose driver, by some mysterious law, is exceptionally and oddly protected from the rain by a strange mechanical umbrella, fixed, penthouse like, over his head. His brethren disdain such shelter.

It was only a few years ago that omnibuses were established by the English railway companies for the convenience of their passengers. The first, as well as the most wholesale of these *entrepreneurs* was the North-Western, which started with a large number, some forty or fifty. The well-to-do family has taken heartily to the system, with a genuine 'for this relief much thanks.' The anxious father, with wife, little ones, and maids to move, together with appropriate luggage, despatches a postcard the day before and finds at his door betimes, sometimes to the instant, the useful vehicle, with its civil, responsible driver, and will find himself quit for a few shillings: quit also of angry discussion and extortion.

A great change in the London omnibus organisation took place at the end of the year 1855, when a vast financial scheme was prepared for the purpose of buying up the various 'lines' of vehicles and of forming one large company. There was much

astonishment when it was discovered that this scheme had been matured in Paris, where also the large sums necessary had been subscribed. It was called 'La Compagnie Générale et Anglo-Française des Omnibus.' There was, indeed, then no lack of opportunity for reform in every point of view. The 'bus at this time was a low-class vehicle, small, ill-ventilated and ill-smelling, with plenty of damp straw for the feet, a door and a window, both generally kept closed. The 'knife-board' aloft, a painful seat, was reached with risk, and required skill to attain. All the various lines, or 'Times' as they were called, were in the hands of some fifty proprietors; some of a larger species, such as the Wilsons, were owners of the well-known 'Favourites,' a name borrowed from Paris in the early days, where there was a line known as *Les Favorites*. The Wilsons had omnibuses in Dublin and other leading towns, and they employed some fifty 'buses with 500 horses. The new company had a delicate and difficult task before them in securing these lines; not only had they to take the stock and vehicles, but they had also to buy up what was more valuable, the 'Times,' or goodwill, of that particular road, there being an understanding that such became a monopoly for the proprietor who was in possession of the route. When it was known that the company had to buy, the price naturally rose. Before starting the new system, they succeeded in purchasing about thirty of the leading lines, leaving about twenty who were certain to come in later.

At this moment there are some half-a-dozen such proprietors—the most notable of whom run the familiar 'Royal Blue,' the green and useful 'Atlas,' the red 'Paddington,' the yellow 'Camden Town'; these, however, are survivals, and have rather an old-fashioned air. The new company promised lavishly; fares were to be reduced, speed increased, new and more roomy vehicles built, and the French system of 'correspondence' introduced. A prize of 100*l.* was offered for a plan of a new omnibus, and the late Mr. George Godwin adjudicated. But this brought no result, and the 'correspondence' system was not found satisfactory. The men, too, were all to wear uniform, with numbers, &c., an idea soon given up. In course of time the undertaking seemed to go on much as it did before, and later nearly all the French directors appear to have 'got out' of the concern. Two only remain at the present time. For a year or two saloon omnibuses of a better class, divided into compartments, were run by the company, but they were withdrawn.



The real and substantial change, that may be said to have revolutionised omnibus travelling, took place a few years ago, when the spirited London Road Car Company was established. We remember the astonishment and ridicule with which their chocolate-coloured cars, drooping down in front on a pair of tiny wheels, with an entrance beside the driver, and, most bizarre of all, rows of chairs on the top! were hailed. Loud was the laughter and sharp the ridicule of the old-established Jehus. The cars were roomy, handsomely upholstered inside, and offered much room and general comfort with an abundance of glass and light. A marvellous change from the straw and hard seats of previous vehicles. These convenient cars were designed by an army captain, who showed much skill in securing balance, lightness, &c. They were 'horsed' in capital style, with fine, strong-quartered, artillery-looking animals, driven at a high speed. In these vehicles there is no longer the old pleasant sociality found in the seats by the driver. That individual is perched aloft in a hutch alone, and is left to commune with his own thoughts; his passengers sit as it were 'on deck,' behind him, and do not speak to the man at the wheel.

By-and-by these vehicles were freshly reformed, the entrance by the driver was found dangerous, a convenient staircase with banisters led up to the roof, and the garden chairs grew into high favour with the fair. Struggling through many difficulties, the Road Car Company has found its reforms adopted by the other lines, which have followed suit in lining their interior with Utrecht velvet, or other handsome material, suggesting the comfort, in some instances, of a first-class railway carriage. One result of this competition has been found in the reduction of fares. Thirty years ago it was thought prodigiously cheap to be taken from Charing Cross to the Bank for threepence, and the tariff was then, roughly, about a penny a mile. Now the passenger is taken to Liverpool Street for a penny! It is astonishing how profit can be made at such rates. It has been explained, however, that the passengers are constantly getting out and changing, many only going a short distance. In Paris it is still threepence for any distance. Since the foundation of the Road Car Company another competitor has appeared in the shape of the London Carriage Company which offer some further novelties in their construction. The wheels are placed under, and not outside, the body of the vehicle, by which it is claimed much more width is

found for the interior. There is more glass, and they also have garden-seats, which is indeed a pleasant, airy mode of seeing London street life. There is gaiety, and even amusement, found in such a jaunt.

Yet another result of these handsome reforms is the abundant patronage of what may be called the higher classes. We know of peeresses and others of high degree who often indulge in an omnibus ride. Ladies and gentlemen, officers, members of 'first-class' clubs even, all patronise the once despised 'bus; nay, meet each other there without shame or shrinking. But the working man is rarely seen on the upholstered cushions, he feels himself uncomfortable and *de trop*. The tram-car is *his* familiar vehicle, and he can ensconce himself there in his mortar-splashed clothes without restraint. We have little doubt that in time the superior class will swoop down on the tram-cars, which will be upholstered and *Utrecht-velveted* up to their taste. The same process is taking place with the third class on the railway—with the Peabody lodging-houses, &c.

The latest development is the light one-horse, conductorless, 'cab-bus,' as it might be called, which for the ridiculous sum of a halfpenny carries the passenger over short distances, such as that between Charing Cross and Waterloo Station. The ingenious transparent collecting box—an American invention—enables the driver to control his fares without the aid of a conductor. The system enjoys much favour, and even Mr. Mantalini must, in this case, withdraw his finical contempt of the humble coin, which he was so willing should be 'demd.' The new pattern of omnibus that now ranges our streets is really a most thoughtful and ingenious work of design, from the economy of weight and material, and perfect adaptation to the ends sought for. It is also what may be called 'a glass coach,' all the sides forming one continuous window, which supplies airiness and general gaiety. Doors are altogether dispensed with, and stoppage is produced by brakes. Many have been the devices tried—and vain as many—for securing the honesty of the *employés*, and checking the receipts. The pristine, rude method of confiding in the probity of those who receive the cash soon broke down before the irresistible temptation to defraud, and the total deficit of sums kept back soon grew to alarming proportions. The conductors themselves, black-mailed as they were, by the drivers and ostlers, who knew what gains could be made without detection, became helpless; as the demands



On them increased, so did their peculation. The spoliation of 'the yard' was enormous. A system of tickets was tried and found as useless as it was troublesome. The Road Car Company introduced the highly ingenious 'alarm-punch,' still in use on the tramways. Every ticket was punched by a little machine, with a reservoir, in which the pieces thus cut were secured, while a chime sounding at the same moment assured the passenger that his fare had been registered. Habit soon accustomed the passenger to this process, and its omission would be noticed. Fraud, however, is not to be thus baffled; tickets already issued were punched a second time; the inexperienced did not require, and did not receive a ticket, and the 'alarm-punch' came to be abandoned. This company has now adopted tickets in a numbered series, which have to be shown to an inspector, who visits the vehicle at intervals. The 'London General' has a sort of tabulated way-bill affixed to the door, on which the conductor must inscribe each fare in a column denoting its amount. These, however, are all found to be but partial checks, though it is stated that part of the machinery for detection are innocent-looking, apparent 'fares,' who pay with the rest, and who take note of the official's proceedings. But *quis custodiet custodes?* is the main difficulty.

As may be conceived, the business of the largest omnibus company in the world, the 'London General,' has increased steadily. It now 'runs' about nine hundred vehicles, and maintains some nine thousand horses. Each 'bus is served by eleven animals, and the average number of men employed is three thousand. The receipts taken in the last half year amounted to 321,000*l.* The advertisements, which decorate or disfigure the interior, are farmed out to a contractor, and bring in nearly 8,000*l.* a year. Forty-six millions of passengers were carried during six months, and the amount of pennies taken during the working day by each 'bus amounted to between two pounds five and two pounds nine shillings. Twelve thousand tons of food are consumed in each half year, and the cost of each horse is about 23*l.*

## SEFTON'S SERVANT.

## I.

'Do you know, it does seem odd,' said Mrs. Walton, setting down her cup, and folding her hands. 'Do not you think so?'

'Odd? What, Jane?' Her husband spoke briskly, with a faint note of challenge in his tone. We were sitting, six of us, these two and their four guests, in the courtyard at Bagot Court, taking tea—some of us, I am afraid, taking it cold in the shape of whisky and Apollinaris water. But then the day was hot.

'Mr. Sefton's conduct, James,' Mrs. Walton answered, 'in sending Fred here in this way. It is not that I grudge the man his food and bed, Mrs. Lingard. You know that. In a house like this one or two extra mouths make literally no difference. But I do not understand why he is here. Can you think, Mrs. Lingard, why Mr. Sefton has sent him?'

Sefton, a middle-aged bachelor, had been one of us until a day or two before this—a guest at the Court. Then he had gone to visit the Featherstones near Exeter, taking his valet with him. We had all liked him. There had been no mystery about his movements whatever, and, consequently, our surprise had been great when, twenty-four hours later, his servant had returned, bearing a note from him; in which he asked Mr. Walton to take the man in for a week, and explained that Fred had fallen out with the Featherstones' butler, and found the house uncomfortable. Some would have thought the explanation insufficient, but the Squire was the least suspicious of men, and, without taking counsel, he had wired an affirmative.

Mrs. Lingard, a particular friend of Sefton's, did not hasten to answer; so I said, 'It certainly seems queer to me. Sefton has chambers in London. Why did he not send the man to town, which is nearer to Exeter than Worcestershire? Surely it would have been more natural, as well as more easy, to send him home.'

'Of course it would!' Delves Bagot assented indolently. He was leaning back in his chair, with his eyes on the lawn, which verges on the one open side of the courtyard. 'Or into lodgings at Exeter, where he might have made some use of him. Or to an



hotel—he is rich enough,' Delves added with a sigh, 'to pay for his board.'

'And it is not,' Mrs. Walton said, 'as if Mr. Sefton were an intimate friend of ours, though I like him very much. This was his first visit. If Mr. Walton did not know his handwriting, I should be tempted to think the letter a forgery.'

'It is his letter, safe enough,' said the Squire brusquely.

Mrs. Lingard ceased drawing patterns on the pavement with the handle of her sunshade and looked up. 'Sefton is a fool!' she said airily. 'Fred can do anything with him—turn him round his finger, Mrs. Walton. He always could. That is so, Lingard, isn't it?'

'You ought to know, my dear,' said the gentleman placidly.

'Well, he can!' she answered, with some show of temper. 'I dare say he has got Sefton under his thumb. You have all got weak places, you men! And your servants know them.' And Madame finished her whisky and Apollinaris very much as if she liked it. Mrs. Lingard was no favourite with most of us. She was well connected. She had a rich husband. But she had also a villa at Pau, in which she spent half the year, and French polish had long ago hidden any natural good qualities the woman may have possessed. Almost the same might be said of her husband, a lazy, over-fed man, rarely without a French novel in his hand.

'But,' said Mr. Walton impatiently, 'why should Fred wish to be here? You do not think he has come to rob the house, Jane?'

'To kiss the maids, more likely!' suggested some one.

'That is Lingard all over!' retorted Madame contemptuously. 'You were walking with my maid this morning, my man! I saw you, and blushed for your taste. She has——'

'Pooh, pooh!' from the Squire.

'No more figure than a backboard!' triumphantly.

'Pooh, pooh!' cried the Squire, still more impatiently; 'this is all nonsense.'

'No, James, it is not nonsense,' said Mrs. Walton placidly. 'I met Mr. Sefton's servant on the stairs near the sewing-room very late last night, and he hurried by me in a way I did not at all like. He is a good-looking man, a little above his situation, and I dare say Mr. Sefton has spoiled him. He will set our servants by the ears.'

'Has it occurred to you,' I asked, 'that he may have got into

some slight trouble with the police? And Sefton wants him safe out of the way for a bit?'

'Nothing more likely,' quoth Madame, with an evil smile.

'Well,' said Mr. Walton, with sudden decision, 'I will not have him in the house after Saturday.'

I was inwardly making merry and congratulating Mrs. Walton on the cleverness with which she had reached her ends—I had seen them all along—when Mr. Lingard said, 'Here comes the gentleman in question! And you will see I am right. It is the girls he is after. He has one of them in tow now, the young jackanapes!'

I saw Bagot's face flush all over. He, as well as Lingard, was sitting facing the lawn. I turned, and, to be sure, there was Fred, a good-looking, slim young fellow, dressed in a tweed suit, which I suppose he thought he might wear, being in mufti. He was crossing the lawn from the gardens with a girl at his side. As I looked the girl—taking from him a basket—left him, and came towards us. It was Bessie—Miss Walton.

Mr. Lingard, in fine, had made a slip. 'You have made a bad shot this time,' I said to him coolly. I was not going to help him out of his difficulty.

But, with French airiness, he saw no difficulty, or he had not the grace to apologise. 'Miss Walton, is it? Well, Mademoiselle is no doubt amusing herself.'

Bagot got up with such violence that his chair went over like a ninepin. Luckily, it was only a wicker one. 'Come and knock the balls about,' he said to me, his head very high.

'All right,' I assented, and, rising more gently, went with him.

'Coarse beast!' he cried, as soon as the door of the billiard-room was closed behind us. 'I have a good mind to kick him. If that be French politeness, hang French politeness, say I.'

'With all my heart,' I answered, choosing a cue.

'And that woman! After Sefton left she followed me about the place a whole day, wanting to tell my fortune. Pah! it made me sick. She is old enough to be my mother.'

'She flatters herself,' I said, pausing upon a cannon, 'that Master Fred has been sent back to keep an eye upon her—in Sefton's interest. That is her reading of the riddle.'

'Rubbish!' retorted Bagot—he was in a contradictory mood. 'Sefton is as tired of her as her husband is. What on earth he ever saw in her affectations I cannot imagine.'



'You do not think that Fred is here on her account?'

'Not he! It is some intrigue of his own with the maids. Or—or—oh! I don't know,' he concluded fretfully, striking his ball over the cushion, and grumbling as he sought for it under the fender.

I put down my cue. Delves Bagot and I were old friends. I liked the boy, liked his boyish impulsiveness and frank bearing, and even the obstinacy and self-confidence that were well enough in a Bagot. 'Look here, Delves,' I said, 'why do you not speak to Walton? About Bessie, I mean. You are wretched company at present—in pain yourself, and a cause of pain to others.'

He looked at me angrily; but, seeing me unmoved, relented. 'Well, I intended to speak to him to-day, Brett. And then I heard the old boy talking of the doctor at Ashley who wants to marry Mary Young, and—and about fortune-hunters generally, you know, slanging them up hill and down dale. And I funked, that is the truth. You know, except my pay and the three hundred a year rent for this place, I have absolutely nothing.'

'Thanks to old Squire Courtenay.'

'Well, thanks to him and one or two others,' Delves said gloomily.

It was a proverb in the family that a certain Squire Courtenay had started the Bagots downhill by raising money at ruinous interest in the '45. His descendants resented it the more that he had brought his enterprise to a most ignominious end. His twenty thousand guineas had done no one any good, for the old gentleman, riding by night to join the Prince at Derby, had been waylaid and murdered along with his servant, and robbed, of course.

'Well, you may make your mind easy, Delves,' I said. 'Walton would much rather that Bessie married a Bagot with Squire Courtenay for a great-grandfather, to say nothing of the gunpowder gentleman—Bagot rhymes with faggot, you know—than a Snooks with the twenty thousand in hand.'

'Possibly,' replied Delves drily. 'But a Bagot with the coin would be still more welcome.'

'You cannot eat your cake and have it, young man,' I retorted. And we played a game of fifty up, and then went to dress for dinner.

I never felt any doubt myself of the success of Delves's suit. If I had, a glance at Bagot Court would have removed it. The

Court, quaint at all times, and beautiful in summer, formed three sides of a hollow square. A great stone tower, latticed, so to speak, by wide mullioned windows, formed the principal side; and this time and lichens had mellowed to a deep orange tint. The wings were of still older date. They ran back from the front at right angles—long, many-gabled buildings of brick and timber, masked by rough-cast and veiled by westerias. Like all houses built in this shape, the Court was a rambling pile. It was a day's journey from the one end to the other. On the ground-floor a single long passage, following the exterior lines of the building, simplified matters for the stranger, but above he had no such assistance. There were at least six staircases. The rooms were on as many levels, and often the only way to reach a next-door neighbour was to go downstairs and ascend another corkscrew flight, past a fresh series of Bagots, who seemed, by the faint gleam of the candle, to be smirking in their frames.

Delves and I were more lucky. We occupied rooms adjoining one another in the west wing, with a tiny dark staircase, most suggestive of midnight murder, all to ourselves. Above us slept some of the servants. Underneath was the billiard-room, one of the handsomest rooms in the house, lined with bookshelves, and well warmed on winter nights by a great open fireplace, flanked by oak settles.

As I lay in bed that night I heard something: a crisp, sharp sound as easily recognised by an educated ear as any. It was the click of one billiard ball striking another. I fancy I must have lain some time listening to it, apprehending what it was, but not the time and place, until at last I grew less drowsy, and began to put one and one together. Then I started up in bed, remembering that it must be two o'clock at least; that all the men had come to bed at the same time with myself; and that therefore this sound needed explanation.

Could it be merely the echo in my ears of the day's play? No. Click! click! it came, at regular intervals. There could be no doubt. Some one in this still house, wrapped in slumber, this house in which early hours were kept, was playing billiards at two in the morning. And I had put out the billiard-room lights with my own hand two hours before, at least; and seen every one start to bed.

'It is Bagot,' was my first thought. 'He cannot sleep, and has gone downstairs. But Walton will not like it.'



Getting out of bed, I put on a dressing-gown, and softly felt my way to Bagot's room. The door was unlocked. The room was in darkness, but I heard him breathing, made my way to him, and awoke him.

'Hallo!' he cried, grasping me, 'who is it?'

'I, Brett. Do not make a noise,' I whispered. 'There is something wrong downstairs—something very queer, at any rate.' I made him listen. The sound of the balls was quite audible here.

'All right!' he said, briskly lighting his candle and getting up. 'It is Lingard, for a sovereign. We will go down and give him a fright.'

'He sleeps in the other wing,' I objected.

'Well, at any rate we will go and see who it is,' replied the young fellow, thoroughly wide awake now. And accordingly we silently opened the door, and with a guarded light apiece crept down the narrow staircase which had its foot within a few paces of the billiard-room door.

Pheugh! I nearly dropped the candle. Some one swiftly and silently scudded by me. A woman it seemed to be, coming from the billiard-room door; a woman startled by our approach. 'Who was it, Bagot?' I whispered; for all I had seen was a tall form in a blue robe. 'Who was it, old man?'

Delves did not answer. He was standing gazing down the now empty passage which led through the main building to the far wing, as if he thought by long looking he could conjure back the apparition or whatever it was. When I repeated my question he looked blankly at me, then dropped his eyes. 'I do not know who it was,' he muttered, speaking in a way unusual with him. 'Let us see who is here.'

For, listening, we could still hear the click of the billiard balls.

'What the dickens is up?' I said nervously, as he grasped the handle of the door. 'Who is it, do you think?'

The start which the woman had given me had shaken my nerves, and as for Bagot, his manner had changed strangely. He no longer seemed to look on the affair as a lark and our share in it as a joke. He spoke with savage emphasis as he answered, 'Who? The devil knows! But we will soon see!' and he flung the door wide open. I went in behind him.

Well, I had not looked for this. Leaning over the table in the full glare of the lights was Sefton's man. His face, scared out of all handsomeness, peered at us over his shoulder. One

hand—it shook—rested on the extended cue; a ball, even while we stood at gaze, slid with a soft thud—audible in the silence—the dead silence of the place—into a pocket. The man's jaw fell.

My first impulse was to laugh, but I checked it. In the bright quiet room I felt a sudden presence as of thunder in the air. Perhaps the man's terror struck me as strange; perhaps Bagot's dumbness. He, usually so frank and ready of speech, a first favourite with the servants and never without a merry word for them, stood tongue-tied now, devouring the interloper with his eyes. It was I who spoke first, who moved first. 'Fred!' I said, putting on all the sternness I could, 'what is the meaning of this? Will you explain, if you please.'

Pah! The fellow *was* frightened. He stuttered an inarticulate something; then recovered his voice and fell to abject entreaties. He had come down to use the table. He was fond of the game. He could not play in the day. He would not do it again, if we would overlook it, and not report him to Mr. Walton.

It struck me that his fear exceeded the occasion. But when I turned and saw Bagot's freezing face, I wondered no longer.

'Why, Bagot!' I said, thinking he was ill, for he was the last person to take an escapade of this kind seriously, 'what is the——'

He did not let me finish. He shocked and astonished me by his violence. He put me aside and faced the servant. 'You lie!' he exclaimed, addressing him in a voice trembling with passion, while he stretched out one hand as if he would grasp and shake him. 'You lie, man! You have not come down to use the table! You have not come down to play! You have come down to—to——' He broke off choked by his anger. For a moment he glared round wildly. Then exclaiming, I cannot say it! I cannot say it! You villain!' he turned and absolutely ran from the room.

For me, I was dazed. I was still looking from him to the servant in inexpressible wonder, when I found him gone. A moment's hesitation, and I hurried after him, in alarm, and some anger and more confusion, and heard him stumble up the narrow stairs like one blind. But when I reached the landing at the top he had locked his door behind him.

To go down to the billiard-room—and find it dark and the man vanished—this was my first impulse. Then I went to my own room and sat on the bed and pinched my arm. What had



passed must be a dream. The short interview, Delves's passion, the valet's fear, had left the imperfect impressions of a dream. But no, the pinch bit home, and I sat erect, listening until I was sure that all was quiet next door. This I did more than once, and so hung between troubled sleep and waking until morning. When I finally opened my eyes Bagot was at my bedside.

'Brett,' he began abruptly, as though he were afraid to let the resolution he had taken stand the test of an instant's delay, 'I have made up my mind to tell you. I must tell some one, or I shall go mad.'

'If I can do anything to help you,' I said, much concerned for him, 'go on, my dear boy.'

'You cannot. No one can,' he replied, in a cold impassive manner very unlike his usual way. 'Lingard, curse him! was right.'

'How do you mean? In what, Bagot?'

He had gone to the window, and spoke with his back to me. 'He said that man had come after one of—of the women. He told me which. He was about right. Clever fellow, Lingard,' with a bitter laugh.

I am pretty sharp at taking hints. I saw already at what he was driving. 'Do you mean,' I said, shocked that Bagot of all people should entertain such a thought—'that he is here on account of Miss Walton—of Bessie?'

'Aye, I do,' he answered drearily. 'Strange, is it not? But women are strange, Brett.'

'For shame!' I cried.

'Aye, shame indeed!' he said in the same tone.

I was befogged. I did not know how to take him, what to say to him. An idea so preposterous, and when entertained by him so abhorrent, shook my everyday reason. 'But, Bagot,' I asked feebly, 'you do not insinuate that she—Bessie—encourages him?'

'Look here,' he said, 'I must tell you all or nothing. That is just what I do mean. You know Lingard noticed her walking with him yesterday?'

'Why, you jealous fool!' I cried, springing out of bed, 'there was no harm in that. She had been picking fruit, and he carried the basket for her as any servant might.'

'Wait!' he answered, quite unmoved by my indignation. 'Did you notice that man's hand last night? You did not. I

did, Brett. He was wearing on his little finger Miss Walton's pearl ring—the one her father gave her last Christmas. I should know it among a hundred.'

'But she may have lost it. He may have found it,' I said, somewhat staggered by this.

'It was on her finger when I said good-night to her,' Bagot answered gloomily. 'Of that I am certain. It changed hands after midnight. And that is not all. You did not see who it was whom we all but caught coming out of the billiard-room this morning—at two o'clock this morning, Brett? I did. It was Miss Walton.'

'Impossible!' I cried, aghast, remembering that she slept in the other wing.

'It was. You shake your head. I tell you,' he repeated bitterly, 'it was. Do you think I should not know her anywhere—everywhere, man! And for that fellow's tale, do you believe it yourself? Who ever heard of a servant going down alone to use the billiard-table in the middle of the night?'

I found a difficulty there myself. I did not believe Delves's suspicions had any basis. I repudiated them stoutly in my own mind. But it was so difficult to explain Fred's conduct otherwise. His own story was improbable, and the more improbable the more closely I scanned it. On the other hand, if Delves were right, Fred's strange return and his vigil in the billiard-room became intelligible. So did his peculiar fear at sight of Bagot, whom all the household knew to be courting Miss Bessie.

I remembered, too, with a sinking of the heart a word which the butler had said to me before dinner the previous evening. He was an old servant, in Mrs. Walton's confidence, and meeting him on the stairs I had not scrupled to ask him if he could account for the reappearance of Mr. Sefton's servant. He could not; and on my asking him between jest and earnest if Fred was courting one of the maids, he had answered, 'No, sir. He keeps himself very stiff. I think he considers himself a cut above them.'

A cut above them! Umph! Could it be that Lingard was right?

'I shall leave to-day,' said Delves, preparing to go.

'No, you must do nothing of the kind,' I answered firmly. 'You must stay twenty-four hours at least.' And I made him promise this. Now that he had told his story, I could see how



white and heart-broken he looked. Yet while I pitied him I was angry with him. It was hard to remember that a lover is the most volatile creature in the world; and that for him from implicit confidence to degrading suspicion is but a step—a step taken in a moment.

Rather it seemed natural to think he should have been the last to harbour the thought. The thought! Oh, the pity of it, if he were right. I had heard of things like this before. I knew they happened—sometimes in places the least likely. But hitherto they had befallen my friends' friends, and I could shrug my shoulders.

A few days before we had taken tea on a small island in the river. And one of the boys had made a song of fair women—wretched doggrel it was—about the ladies, giving each a verse. I remembered Bessie's:

My next is tall and plump and free  
As Elizabeth's self at Tilbury,  
And cream and roses  
And milk and posies  
Are all in her face, that is fair to see.

She had been vexed in a good-humoured way by the word 'free,' and the minstrel had suffered no little. Could it be, I wondered now, that he had seen aright—that his more delicate insight, cynical young dog that he was! had read in that unaffected frankness which I found so charming a fatal lack of reserve—an odious facility?

No! a hundred times no! I would believe in Bessie, though all these gay young fellows should desert her. I sat next her at breakfast in the seat usually occupied by Bagot. He had quietly taken one by her father at the other corner. As he did so a shade crossed her pleasant grey eyes. I saw it though she dropped them quickly. She was visibly hurt and surprised. But she made no remark, and I strove by chatting volubly to cover his silence and draw off the Lingards' attention from his pallor. If there was one thing which could add to the wretched imbroglio impending, it was that that dreadful woman opposite should get an inkling of it.

No! a hundred times no! And yet something which happened presently sent a cold shiver down my back. Wilkins, the butler, while handing the toast to my neighbour, whispered, 'Your ring, miss.'

Perforce, as he was between us, I heard as well as she did. But the words were nothing. It was the vivid blush which instantly crimsoned her cheeks, the frightened glance she cast in Bagot's direction, that chilled me. 'Thank you,' she answered nervously; and her fingers hurriedly closed on the trinket and conveyed it beneath the table.

'Mr. Sefton's man gave it me, miss,' added the butler. But, though he moved away slowly, as if looking to be questioned, she asked him nothing. She did not inquire how Sefton's man came to have it or to send it to her, nor say a word about it to the butler or to me. Strange! Very strange!

I could not talk after that, and had scarce courage to answer Mrs. Lingard when she said with a thinly-veiled sneer, 'Well, Mr. Brett, have you got to the bottom of Master Fred's mystery yet?'

Confound her! 'Possibly, Mrs. Lingard, and possibly not,' I said, as coolly as I could.

'Why do you not take counsel with Miss Walton?' she continued in the same mocking tone. 'She was not with us when we discussed it yesterday. Perhaps she can solve the riddle for you. But you have other fish to fry,' she went on, turning to Bessie, 'have you not, my dear? I dare say you hardly know that such a person as Mr. Sefton's Fred exists.'

I dashed in with something. I could not bear to see the woman's cold eyes enjoying the girl's confusion. For, confused, red, and perhaps angry, Bessie was—whether at the mention of Sefton's servant or at the other insinuation, the covert reference to her tolerably public love affair with Delves—I could not determine. Only after this I hated Mrs. Lingard more than ever.

As a party we were more at odds than ever that day. We loitered about the house and grounds, alone or in pairs, killing time as we best might. Delves did not speak to Bessie save in the most formal manner—did not invite her to go in the boat or take a lesson at billiards, as had been his custom after breakfast. But the two went, so far as I could make out, and severally moped through the morning like broken-winged chickens. Every one saw that something was wrong; but as Fred had not 'spoken to papa' the affair had scarcely reached the stage at which one might interfere. I was in two minds whether I should not tell Mr. Walton of Fred's escapade in the billiard-room and



make the servant explain it. But Bagot had shown so strong a desire—foolish, but natural perhaps—not to meddle, that I determined to keep silence for a few hours at least.

Father Glyn came in to lunch, and caused a diversion very welcome to one of us. In old Mr. Bagot's time he had been an inmate of the house. Now, the Waltons being Protestants, he occupied a tiny parsonage in the garden. In person he was a short, white-bearded, slightly infirm man; most simple, courteous, kindly, liking the Waltons, who were good to him, but loving the old family, and Delves in particular, with a passionate love, surpassing, I really believe, that of a father.

He sat by Mrs. Lingard, by ill luck, for her bump of veneration was wanting, and the only views she held that savoured of the immaterial were connected with magic and palmistry. Her first instinct was to make fun of the old man. 'You should be good at explaining mysteries, Father Glyn,' she said; 'that is a main part of your business, is it not?'

I shuddered. But a round of quiet duties, perhaps age itself, had rendered his mind slow to work. 'I do not think I quite understand,' he said meekly. Her flippant manner was something new and formidable to him, but he did not dream that she could be deriding his office; and his very innocence baffled her.

'You must know a great many secrets, father, I mean,' she repeated, inviting us by a look to join in the sport—the precious sport!

'There are secrets in all lives, lady,' he said gravely.

'I think you had better take care, Mrs. Lingard,' I suggested softly, but so that all might hear.

'I wish you would mind your own business, Mr. Brett,' she cried rudely, losing her temper; there was her weak spot. 'I can take care of myself without your help. And for Father Glyn's secrets, I should think there are not many in this little village that are worth much. Mr. Brett is for making mysteries where there are none, father.'

'Strange things happen everywhere,' he answered quite eagerly. 'An old place has always its mysteries, its old stories and riddles, lady. There are some, for instance, who say that Mr. Courtenay Bagot—Delves has no doubt told you his story'—he ran on garrulously, 'never was robbed or murdered, but got safe to Derby, and died abroad in the Pretender's service, and that the tale was set about to save the estates. You know that, Delves?'

'To save the estates? From what?' Madame asked obtusely.

'From confiscation,' Delves answered, speaking for the old gentleman. 'But you do not believe the story, father?'

He shook his head, smiling at the lad. It was pleasant to see how proud he was of the tradition, and how he looked at Delves while he dwelt upon it. Bagot had often told me that the old gentleman would talk to him by the hour of this or that ancestor, pointing out their portraits, and detailing their virtues, and showing solicitude that he should know what marriages they had made and how they fared.

'Well,' said Mrs. Lingard weightily—she had about as much romance in her composition as may be extracted from a flat-iron—'I do not think much of your story or riddle, or whatever you call it, especially as wherever the old gentleman went there seems to be no doubt he took the money with him. It is not half so interesting—to Mr. Brett, at any rate—as the mystery of Fred.'

'Fred?' murmured the priest, puzzled and uncertain, the light gone from his face. 'I do not think I know him.'

'Well, there he is! Look!' cried the lady, touching the old gentleman's sleeve not too ceremoniously. Fred, as it chanced, had come within the room to take a dish from a servant, and, being inside, stood waiting a moment. Father Glyn had a good view of him. 'You do not see much mystery about him, I dare say,' continued Mrs. Lingard, casting a spiteful glance in my direction. 'Commonplace enough, is he not?'

The priest passed his hand across his forehead. 'I think I know his face,' he murmured thoughtfully, looking from one to another of us all with a puzzled expression. Fred had gone out again. 'Yes, I have seen his face before. But not lately. No, not for a long time. It was when your father was here, dear lad.'

Mrs. Lingard laughed. 'Nonsense!' she cried. 'Fred is but a boy of twenty now—or little more!'

And even Bagot said gently, 'I think you must be mistaken, father.'

But the priest did not give way. 'No,' he replied, in some excitement, 'I am right—and yet wrong. I remember now. His face put me in mind of a servant of your father's, a butler who died here suddenly many years ago. His name was Aston. I knew him well—very well indeed.'

In the pause which followed, Wilkins, who was standing



behind Mr. Walton's chair, stooped to his ear. 'Fred's name is Aston, sir,' he said in a low tone, but one which we all heard.

'What?' cried our host, turning sharply. 'Are you sure of that, Wilkins?'

'Quite sure, sir,' was the answer; 'Frederick Aston, sir.' And Wilkins fixed his eyes on the priest's face, much impressed, it was clear, by his sagacity.

'But does the man come from this part?' asked the Squire. And it may be imagined how heedfully we were listening. 'I thought he was a stranger—that he was not a Worcestershire man at all.'

'He gave himself out for a stranger, sir,' answered the butler cautiously. The other servants had left the room.

'Humph! It is rather odd!' commented the Squire, turning again to the table and looking round upon us, his glass between his fingers.

'It is, James,' Mrs. Walton agreed. 'Very odd! However, he goes to-morrow. And, Wilkins, you will not mention this downstairs, please. I always thought that there was something in the man's return that would not quite bear looking into.'

Bagot sat silent, his eyes cast down. Bessie's thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. For the rest of us, we started various theories, with this new light upon the subject, to account for Fred's presence. But as there were at least as many theories as persons at table, no one could make even a single convert; and we soon broke up in disorder. Mr. Walton disappeared in the direction of the stables. Bagot and I went off together to the keeper's. And the last I saw of Mrs. Lingard, she was working desperately to get up a flirtation with—*faute de mieux*—the old priest.

The sight of those two remained with me all day; more, I dreamed of them that night. I fancied I saw her amid shrieks of laughter dragging the old priest towards the altar, while Sefton's servant—casting a sinister backward glance at them and me—lit one by one the score of candles below the altar-piece—a faded San Sebastian. The bright light presently dazzled me. My eyes smarted and grew dim. I awoke, the smart in them still.

What was this? A red glow flickered on the walls of my room, and now rose, now sank irregularly. A puff of white smoke—and yet another—darted snake-like through the open window. I watched them lazily, lying with my face that way. But a third followed.

Ha! I sprang out of bed wide awake, at the same moment that a voice outside screamed shrilly, 'Fire!' Huddling on a few clothes, and snatching up my watch—a keepsake—I ran to Bagot's door. 'Delves!' I cried, bursting it in, for it was bolted, 'get up! The Court is on fire!'

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## II.

ONCE assured that Bagot had taken the alarm, I made all haste to the Courtyard. The fire was in the opposite wing, and had as yet made little way. Though flames were bursting through two of the lower windows, and beginning to lick the woodwork of the upper ones, the rest even of that wing was untouched. But the scene as I took it in at a glance was exciting enough. In the middle of the Courtyard a score of men and women, some of them only half-dressed, were huddled together, a mass of silhouettes, of high lights and deep shadows. One was sunk in stupor, another was in frantic action. Above and around, the glow fell ruddily on the tall face of the tower and the sharp peaks of gables, and picked out as with gold the thousand diamond panes of the windows.

'Let all the women go into the west wing!' I heard Walton say in a cool collected way, his sharp voice rising crisply above the hubbub. 'They will be safe there, and they are doing no good here! Brett, take Bessie in, please.'

I obeyed. When I returned I found things looking better. A number of servants, with Bagot in command, were already in line passing buckets. Others were throwing water on the nearer parts of the building, for much of the danger to the rest of the house lay in the falling sparks; but apart from this there was every chance that we should save the old place, despite its age. The fire was mainly in the great kitchen, one of the oldest parts of the Court, built of stone and paved with the same; so that, after licking up some surface material, the flames found little to feed upon, and were slow in spreading.

'Look!' said Walton to me—I had taken my turn, but was soon tired, and we were standing somewhat in the rear, directing operations—'how that fellow works! Bagot has done his best to save his own place, but that man beats him hollow!'



He pointed to the man who had taken Bagot's place at the head of the line, and who now, stripped to his jersey and trousers, was standing with one foot on a reversed tub, the other on the sill of the window, discharging the buckets into the room as fast as they could be handed to him. To see him take them full and toss them back empty, like so many toys, was a sight for sore eyes. Sometimes the smoke and steam which eddied about him hid him from view; but when the wind dispersed the cloud he was always there. More than once a cheer from the gathering crowd of villagers rewarded him. His face was black with smuts, his hair was singed, his port was that of a hero. No wonder that I did not recognise him, that I took him for one of the stablemen or gardeners, and answered, 'Yes, he is working like a giant! Who is he?'

'Don't you know?' exclaimed the Squire. 'It is Sefton's man. He shall have a five-pound note to-morrow! Aye, and stay here as long as he likes. Jane will have nothing to say against him after this, I will lay a penny!'

Bagot had joined us, and, hearing the last words, stood frowning by my side. No doubt it was unpleasant to stand by and see a rival—and such a rival—distinguish himself. But he said nothing. And I said nothing; for what was there to be said?

Yet I was greatly astonished. The finicking, supercilious young fellow whom we had known as Fred was the last person I should have expected to be of use in such an emergency. Handling buckets at a fire and fighting the flames—these were not things I had pictured him doing. Yet here he was doing them, manfully and well. Either we had been much mistaken in him, or he had some very strong inducement to act in this way. Was it the knowledge that Bessie was at one of the windows, watching the scene? or merely a desire to put her father under an obligation? or both combined?

Anyway, his exertions proved successful. The fire was as good as out; and many of the helpers falling back and standing round us, the talk naturally reverted to its origin. 'There is not very much damage done, sir, I think,' said Wilkins.

'No,' replied the Squire genially—his relief was great. 'For a wonder there is not. But if the fire had broken out anywhere else, the house must have gone. Why, half the walls are of timber, and as dry as touchwood.'

'How did it come to break out at all?' asked Bagot queru-

lously. 'And in the kitchen! The fires in this hot weather would be out hours ago, would they not?'

'Ten to one the cook was making jam, or something of that kind,' said the Squire confidently.

But the cook repudiated the jam-making, asserting roundly that she had let the fires go out after dishing up the dinner. The servants had taken a cold supper. The butler, too, had been through the kitchen at half-past ten and locked the doors. The fires were out then. He had carried a guarded lamp, as usual, and was certain that he had dropped no sparks.

'Well,' said the Squire on this, 'we will go into it to-morrow.' And he led the way to the billiard-room, where the ladies were sitting. For a few moments after our entrance, what with the hubbub of congratulations, inquiries, and offers of refreshment, and some badinage on our dirty faces, it was hard to see who was in the room and who was not. Mr. Walton was the first to note that one was missing. 'Where is Bessie?' he cried loudly. 'Where is the girl gone?'

She came in at the moment, and answered for herself. 'Here I am, father,' she said quietly.

'Where have you been, child?' asked Mrs. Walton, making room for her on the settle. 'What have you been doing?'

'Doing? Thanking Fred for his gallantry,' she answered, her colour rising, her tone animated. 'And I think there are some others who should have done it too, instead of leaving him without a word! He has behaved nobly, I think!'

'Bravo! He shall have a five-pound note to-morrow!' answered the Squire.

But she was not looking at her father. Her eyes were turned full on Bagot, with a meaning in them I could not fathom. It might be appeal, or sympathy, or defiance—either. But whatever it was, his eyes returned no answer, and hers quickly dropped. Some one remarked that he looked haggard and tired; and leaving Mrs. Lingard in the middle of her tenth recital of the manner in which she had been aroused, and of all that she had said, and all that Lingard had said, I took him away with me.

'This is likely to put our old puzzle into the background,' I said, eying him stealthily as we plodded upstairs together.

'What? The fire?'

'To be sure. What else?'

'It is all one,' was his curious answer.



'You do not mean,' I said, 'that you think——'

'Sefton's servant was at the bottom of it? Yes, I do,' he rejoined.

'But come, come!' I urged, turning into his room. 'This is a nasty thing to lay at any man's door, Bagot. You know nothing.'

'Nothing at all,' he answered coldly, 'except that he did it—intentionally or by accident. I know nothing. Or—see here, Brett. The fire broke out about half-past one—from that to two. Who was so likely to be about then as the man who lit up the billiard-room at two o'clock the morning before? What would Walton say to this if he knew of that? Oh, no doubt,' he added, with a bitter, jeering laugh, cut short in the middle by a sort of shudder, 'he is a regular Don Juan! In the drawing-room one evening, and the kitchen the next!'

'Bagot,' I said deliberately, the sneer was so vile, 'you are either out of your mind or a brute!' And I left him without another word, thinking how strange a lover's eyes are. They know no colours. His mistress is always purest white or foulest black. There is no betwixt and between. If he one day invests his Dulcinea with qualities rather angelic than of the earth, he is as prone the next, on the slightest provocation, to say, 'Vice, thy name is woman!' and tilt at a windmill. It is so, and it is strange.

At the late breakfast which followed our troubled night Bagot talked loudly and at random with the Lingards, seeming to avoid me, and I saw nothing of him until about noon. Then, turning the corner of a walk in the shrubbery, I came upon him—and Fred with him. They were having an altercation—I might have expected it. As I came up I heard Bagot exclaim, 'No! I want to hear nothing, my man! Nothing! Will you be good enough to go your way, and let me go mine.'

'It is for your own sake, sir,' urged the servant respectfully enough.

'Hallo!' thought I, 'this is a new development.' And I noted the contrast the two men presented as they stood together: Bagot, with his tall, heavy form and cropped black hair, his lips curling with scorn, his head in the air; the other, tall also, but slim and fair, with a small pale moustache—more handsome, even in the larger lines of more aristocratic type, but stamped by custom and education with the bearing of an inferior. 'What is it, Bagot?' I interposed.

He did not answer, and Fred appealed to me volubly. 'Mr. Bagot will not listen to me. He does not give me a hearing, sir,' he cried. 'You are his friend. Might I beg a hearing from you, sir?'

'What is it you want with him?' I asked civilly.

'Something that is for his advantage. In the main, I mean, sir. And a bit for mine too.'

'Oh, rubbish!' Bagot exclaimed savagely. 'Come along, Brett.' But I did not move, and the man after a slight pause continued, 'It is about Miss Walton, sir—in a way.'

I took tight hold of Bagot's arm, and kept him there almost by main force. I felt queer myself, hearing those words; but I had such confidence in Bessie that I was determined he should hear the fellow out now. 'About Miss Walton?' I repeated as carelessly as I could. 'About her ring, is it?'

'The ring I found? Oh, no, sir,' readily enough.

'Then what is it?' I asked. He had paused again, and was shifting his feet and looking about him uneasily, while I was burning with impatience.

'It is about Mr. Bagot and her, sir,' he blurted out. 'It is common talk in the servants' hall that Mr. Bagot—speaking without offence, sir—is sweethearting the young lady. And I think—well, I can give him a leg up, sir. That is the point—give him a leg up, sir, for a consideration.'

Bagot, I regret to say, swore violently. But I had his arm as in a vice. 'Indeed?' I replied smoothly. 'And how?'

'Well, I know something—he would like to know, sir.'

'Ah! About Miss Walton?'

'It has to do with her in the way I have said,' he answered doggedly; afraid of letting out his secret—for some secret I now gathered he had to dispose of—and yet finding it difficult without doing so to indicate its value. 'I mean he could marry her more pleasant-like, if he knew it, sir. I overheard a word or two he said to you about his means in the billiard-room—it is two days ago now—and can benefit the young gentleman if he will let me. I know something that is worth money to him, which I am ready to tell him for a consideration.'

'You may go to the deuce for me!' cried Bagot hotly.

'Steady a minute!' I said smiling—and my heart laughed if my lips did but smile. He had suspected Bessie, had he?—the dolt! the idiot! 'I think I understand, though you are not very



plain with us, my friend. Perhaps your price may be more definite. What do you want for your secret?’

‘A thousand pounds,’ he answered, blinking with his eyes.

Bagot had been whistling contemptuously. He stopped in astonishment.

I laughed aloud. ‘Do you think any sane man would give a thousand pounds for a pig in a poke?’ I said.

He reddened with anger, and broke out violently with, ‘If it is not worth a thousand pounds—ten times a thousand pounds to him, may I——’ and he added the usual formula.

‘Stop!’ said I. ‘If it be not worth ten times a thousand pounds to Mr. Bagot, will you let him off his bargain?’

‘I will,’ he replied.

‘Now,’ and I turned to Bagot, ‘what do you say to that?’

‘Say?’ he cried. ‘That I will have nothing whatever to do with him or his infernal nonsense! Let him go to the deuce with his secret. I will have none of it!’

‘I speak in your own interest,’ said Fred sullenly. ‘A thousand to me if my information be worth ten thousand to you. If less to you, nothing to me. Hang me! that is straight enough.’

‘Straight or not, I will have no dealings with you!’ replied Bagot haughtily.

‘Go down the walk a few yards, Fred,’ I interposed, ‘and I will speak to Mr. Bagot.’

When he had obeyed me—he did not go far, but moved round to the lawn on the other side of the hedge, and kept his eye upon us suspiciously—I took Delves by the button. ‘Look here,’ I said. ‘There is hanky-panky of some kind going on, no doubt. But you ought to be thankful it is not of the kind you thought. Yes, you ought!’ I resumed angrily, for he shook his head as if not assured upon that point yet. ‘You have been a dolt and a fool, my lad, and deserve to suffer for it. Act sensibly now if you can.’ And I did my best to persuade him to accept Fred’s conditions. ‘A hundred chances to one,’ I argued, ‘it is all rubbish. Very well, you are no worse. If, on the other hand, the information he gives be worth the ten thousand, ten per cent. is not too high a price to pay for it.’

But he was not listening to me. And, seeing this, I was going to speak unpleasantly to him, when, following his eyes, I saw that some one passing down the lawn had stopped, and was speaking to Fred. Some one—a girl—Bessie. We could hear what she

said, and we listened shamelessly. Why not? I, for one, knew that she could have nothing to say to Sefton's servant which we might not hear.

'You are leaving to-day, are you not?' Her clear silvery tone came crisply through the air; his answer we could not hear. 'Indeed?' it came again. How could any one have suspected a woman with such a voice? 'I am much indebted to you for taking the trouble to return my ring to me yesterday. I left it on the cushion of the billiard-table. I do not mind telling you,' she went on pleasantly, 'that my father was very angry with me for mislaying it a few weeks ago, and I was anxious not to be scolded this time. I went down to the room myself, but I found the gentlemen were still up.'

A few more words passed about her father wishing to see him, and some money clinked. Then she flitted on, little recking what she had effected.

But we stood there—stood still looking different ways. Bagot did not dare to raise his eyes or meet mine. I in sheer mercy and pity did not look at him. What had he done? Or rather, what had he not done? Vulcan had called Venus smirched! Bottom had dubbed Titania ass! An English gentleman had slandered his own sweetheart! All this Master Delves had done. But if Bessie was not avenged in that moment—if her pride—could she have known of the offence, as Heaven forbid she should—had not found solace enough in his humiliation then—she was not the girl I took her for, but a very merciless vixen indeed.

I could not say anything to him about that. I dared not. I merely proposed to him with affected carelessness—as assuming his consent—that we should accept Fred's terms.

But he said 'No!' still. 'I will have nothing to do with his secrets! You are all too clever for me. Arrange what you like, but I will have no act or part in it, nor pay him anything.' All this with a dull red flush on his face and averted eyes.

His prejudice against the man was invincible, and, seeing I could not prevail, I let him go back to the house, and returned alone to Fred.

'It is of no use,' I said brusquely—between them they were enough to spoil any man's temper. 'Mr. Bagot will have nothing to say to your offer. If you take my advice you will make a clean breast of it, and trust to his generosity. It is not likely you can sell your knowledge elsewhere—honestly.'



‘That is part of my secret, sir,’ he said coolly.

‘Oh, very well. Only be careful what you are doing,’ I replied, somewhat nettled. ‘Mr. Bagot and I shall of course put our heads together. We know one or two queer things of you already. Why are you here, Fred? What were you doing in the billiard-room the night before last? What were you doing in the east wing last night when you set the house on fire?’

His jaw fell. I saw the perspiration start out and stand gleaming on his forehead; and I knew, notwithstanding his hasty denials, that my chance shot had told. But I appeared to accept his statements, and said, ‘Very well, you say you did not set the house on fire. But why have you made a secret of the fact that your father was butler here in old Mr. Bagot’s time?’

My turn again. He stood silent, disconcerted, doubtful how much I knew, how much it would be safe for him to deny. ‘Do you not think you had better be candid, my man, and tell me your secret?’ I said.

He recovered himself. ‘No, sir, I think not,’ he replied grimly.

Going back to the house after this, I came, as I crossed the courtyard, upon Bagot and Father Glyn. They were standing outside the shattered empty casements of the kitchen, looking in at the mischief done by the fire; and I joined them. The bare smoke-stained walls seemed dreary enough after the sunshine and trees, but the stone floor of the room—tradition said it had once been the banqueting hall—was chaos itself, littered a foot deep with plaster and rubbish, fragments of half-burned furniture, and charred beams which had fallen from the chimneypiece. Pots and pans lay about, and pools of water stood among the débris.

‘Dear, dear!’ cried the priest, ‘what a sad sight!’

‘Particularly in a kitchen,’ I suggested cheerfully. Bagot stood between us, leaning his elbows on the sill and looking in.

‘Very true. Yet I have seen as sad a sight in this room before,’ rejoined the father, ‘a very sad sight. It was in your father’s lifetime, Delves. His butler died suddenly. I suppose it is the sight of this room brings it so freshly to my mind to-day, for he was found dead here, in that corner, when the servants came down one morning.’

He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, searching his memory as old men will; and he had clean forgotten his recognition of Aston the day before, as old men will forget: it was curious. I turned slightly to see if Bagot noticed the lapse; and then I forgot it all.

Beyond him, at the next casement, stood Fred, apparently looking in idly as people had been doing all day, and as we were doing now, but really, or so I suspected, listening to us. 'You were living here then, Father Glyn,' I said, suddenly minded to pursue the subject. Neither of my companions had seen our new neighbour.

'Yes. They brought me to him at once to see if there was any life in him. Ah, me! In the midst of life—— You know the rest, my children.' And the old gentleman crossed himself and muttered piously, 'It was a sad thing, and strange too.'

If my own curiosity had not led me to question him further, Fred's face, upon which I was able to keep watch without attracting his notice, would have induced me to do so. It was strangely pale, I thought, and his lips were pressed together. He was gazing into the empty room, and seemed unconscious of our presence; but I knew by some instinct that his every sense was on the alert, that he was not losing a word. 'What was the cause of death, Father Glyn?' I said carelessly. 'You were saying that there was something strange about it.'

'He died of heart-complaint. There was nothing strange in that,' the priest explained. 'It was what he had been doing was strange.'

'And what was that?'

'Well,' replied the priest in his slow, meditative way, 'there were people who said he had been digging his own grave.'

'Good gracious! In that corner?' I cried, startled.

'Yes. Some said it was a penance, and some that he had had a warning. He had certainly lifted up one of the square stones, and scraped out a little earth, just as it might be that rubbish there now. He was lying dead and cold by the side of it, with the tool in his hand. Doubtless he was out of his mind.'

I stole a look at Fred. His eyes met mine. His face was livid. I stood silent a moment, during which my mind was working as fast as at any time in my life. Then I called to Fred. 'Fred!' I said, 'would you fetch the key of the kitchen for me? Wilkins has it.'

He seemed to hesitate. Perhaps he had not heard clearly. But in the end he said, 'Yes, sir,' and walked away.

Bagot became aware of the servant for the first time. 'What on earth do you want to go inside for?' he asked discontentedly. 'Cannot you see all you want to see from here?'

'A whim, a mere whim, my dear fellow,' I answered. And I



waited with patience until Fred, after a rather long interval, returned.

'Wilkins says he cannot find the key, sir,' he reported. 'He thinks Mr. Walton, who has gone to the magistrates' meeting, has taken it with him.'

'Ah! Then please to reach me that chair,' I said. There were two or three chairs standing, as usual, in the courtyard, not far from us. While he was bringing one I took off my coat.

'What are you going to do now?' Bagot asked.

'Get in through the window,' I answered, suiting the action to the word, and boldly stepping from the chair to the sill, where I stood clinging to the perpendicular bars. But there I came to a full-stop. Struggle as I would, I stuck fast between them, while the priest clutched one of my ankles, and affectionately begged me to be careful, and Delves prodded my calves with the point of his stick, and cried that Mrs. Lingard was coming.

Well, I am a trifle stout. I cannot say I like to be found by the enemy in a ridiculous position. I was on the point of stepping back, when turning to see if the alarm were well founded, I caught sight of Fred's face. It expressed no amusement, but a great deal of grim, silent interest. 'Don't, Delves!' I gasped, nerved by the sight to a last effort; which proved successful. I was down, and my coat on, when the Lingards reached the window. They chose to be funny, compared me to a bear in a pit, and Madame threw me a ball of paper by way of a bun; but I cared nothing for their ridicule now. I picked my way over the rubbish to the far corner of the kitchen. Here the fire had probably begun, for the walls and ceiling were completely ruined, and quite a pile of débris—the same to which Father Glyn had pointed—lay here: more of it, I had thought, looking from the window, than was natural. I was stooping over this, amid a volley of questions, when the voice of a new-comer caused me to look up.

'Got through the window, did he?' the Squire was saying. 'Why, Brett, what are you up to? Why did you not send for the key? Wilkins has it.'

'Not he,' I answered. 'He sent word that you had it.'

'I? Certainly not.' And thereupon Walton, anxious, I fancy, to show how light and slight and springy he still was, stepped on to the sill, and in five seconds stood beside me. Bagot, Father Glyn, and Mrs. Lingard remained at one of the low wide Elizabethan windows, Lingard and the servant at the other. Fred's

face glared in at me, pale, pinched, menacing—the index to the situation, or I was much mistaken.

I kicked aside two or three pieces of charred wood. ‘Look here,’ I said to Walton; ‘how does this earth come here?’

‘Earth? Why, so it is!’ he exclaimed, stooping down. ‘Perhaps some one tried to put out the fire with it before we came on the scene.’

‘Not likely,’ I said. I looked about for a tool with which to carry on my researches. I picked up a saucepan at last, and with it scraped away some of the rubbish. The Squire asked questions, but I paid no heed to them until I found what I wanted, and what I had looked to find. Then I stood up, and made a sign to Fred—a sign imperative. ‘Fred,’ I cried, ‘come in here, please! And Bagot,’ I continued, turning to Delves, ‘you had better come too. Do not play the fool, but come!’ I added sharply, seeing that he hesitated.

While they were obeying me, neither of them very willingly, I begged Lingard to call one of the gardeners, and bid him bring his spade. Then, directing Fred to stand aside a moment, I showed the Squire and Delves that one of the flat stones which formed the floor was not in its place. Apparently it had been raised, and hastily thrown back. Bagot, in a few seconds, had it up again. Its removal disclosed a shallow hole, perhaps a foot deep, from which, no doubt, the earth I had noticed had been taken.

‘Who has done this?’ cried the Squire, looking into it open-eyed and open-mouthed, while great beads of perspiration stood upon Master Fred’s brow. ‘And how did you discover it, Brett?’

‘That remains to be seen,’ I replied oracularly. I bade the gardener, who had just climbed into the room with a couple of spades on his shoulder, dig deeper. ‘And, Fred,’ I added with politeness, ‘perhaps you will take a spade and lend a hand.’

Rage, fear, and perplexity struggled for the mastery in his face. I wondered that the others did not see that something was wrong. When he did not stir, but looked at me as though he could kill me, I made as if I did not notice it, and went on speaking to the Squire. ‘Who did it? The man who set your house on fire last night, I expect,’ I said.

‘Ho! ho! Sits the wind in that quarter?’ cried Walton. ‘Then he had better let me catch him! I promise you, he will be in Worcester gaol in a very short time.’



'Come, Fred,' I said sweetly, 'take a spade.' And this time Fred took one, and began to dig feverishly, with his face hidden from me.

Bagot whistled, understanding at last something of what was afoot. The Squire asked me what I expected to find.

'That remains to be seen,' I said, repeating my old formula. 'Dig away, men!'

And for a few minutes they worked steadily. Then Fred threw down his shovel, and turned to Bagot. 'I have a word to say to you, sir,' he exclaimed.

'No,' replied Delves coldly. 'Not alone, at any rate. If you have anything to say to me, you can say it before these gentlemen.'

'Freddy would a wooing go, Whether his Bagot would let him or no,' hummed Mrs. Lingard at the window, while the old priest raised his hand to his ear. Every one could see the servant's agitation now. Every face was turned to him.

'You had better make a clean breast of it,' I said to him, not unkindly. 'We are on the track, Fred. Take my advice, and make a virtue of necessity.'

'No!' he replied, confronting us all with pallid defiance. Sefton would scarcely have known his dandified servant. 'He has treated me like a dog, and he may find it for himself!'

'Hear, hear!' cried Mrs. Lingard, clapping her gloved hands, as the man turned on his heel, strode to the window, and disappeared through it. My sympathies were with her for once. As for Bagot, he shrugged his shoulders and looked on with hard eyes.

'Heaven send me rest!' said the Squire in amazement, 'if I understand this at all.'

'Sefton's man could have explained it,' I replied ruefully. 'But Bagot's confounded pride has upset the cart. All I know for certain is that some one has been digging here; and, as people do not dig for pleasure merely, I presume there is something underneath worth the trouble.'

'That is it, is it?' he answered; and he promptly sent the gardener to fetch two of his fellows. The luncheon-bell rang; but we had breakfasted late, and the *auri sacra fames* overcame what appetite we had. Mrs. Walton and Bessie joined the party, having heard what was going on. Wilkins came too—to keep the other servants at a distance. Rapidly the men threw out the

earth ; the eyes of the lookers-on, bent greedily on the hole, or respectfully on me, grew larger and larger.

But presently an uncomfortable change fell upon us ; little by little, very gradually, a change becoming more apparent as the excavation gained depth. A titter here, a suppressed laugh there, a smile, it seemed to me, everywhere. When the men at last threw down their tools, having raised a heap of soil that almost crowded us out of the room, and not found so much as a penny piece, the laughter could no longer be repressed. No wonder I looked foolish ; I felt foolish. I had made all this to-do, and found nothing ! I, a middle-aged, unromantic man ! I believe I blushed.

‘Come to lunch,’ cried the Squire, good-naturedly drawing me away. ‘Come to lunch, and say no more about it.’

But at lunch others were not so good-natured. ‘What did you expect to find there, Mr. Brett ?’ Madame asked.

‘Ten thousand pounds,’ I confessed, when she had pressed me a little.

‘Gad !’ cried the Squire, surprised out of his politeness. ‘I did not think that you were such a fool, Brett !’

How they laughed ! Even Bessie, who was sitting by me, very quiet and still, laughed with the rest ; and Bagot, the ungrateful wretch, was as loud as any.

‘How did you think it came there ?’ Walton asked.

But I was too sore to offer any explanation. ‘How it came there,’ I said hotly, ‘is of no consequence now.’

‘How it did not come to be there is more to the point, is it not ?’ said Mrs. Lingard quaintly. And everybody, even my old friend Mrs. Walton, laughed anew.

‘Possibly,’ I said, still more nettled, ‘and possibly not. But come, I will do this. I will bet any gentleman here fifty guineas that I find not ten, but one thousand pounds, within twenty-four hours.’

‘Treasure-trove ?’ cried Lingard briskly.

‘Yes, treasure-trove.’

‘Then, done with you !’ he answered. And he booked the bet. His wife asked if I would do it in gloves, and I did—to five dozen pairs ; while Mrs. Walton looked much annoyed, and the Squire muttered something about not making fools of ourselves. And then Bessie changing the subject, and lunch being nearly at an end, I escaped, and sought the butler.



The afternoon passed uneventfully. But at dinner a surprise awaited us. There appeared six chairs instead of seven. 'Who is away?' asked Walton, looking round as he sat down. 'Oh, it is Bessie.'

'Where is she?' Mrs. Lingard asked.

'I must apologise for her,' Mrs. Walton answered very graciously. 'Mary Young came over this afternoon and carried her off to The Chafers, to a little dance they are having this evening. She was going there on Saturday to stay a week—did she not mention it to you?—and as you were leaving us to-morrow, she thought she might run away to-day, under the circumstances.'

'Lucky girl, to be going to a dance!' said Madame, with feeling. 'Do you not wish you were going too, Mr. Bagot?'

Oh, the jade! And yet I could not pity him, not a whit, although I knew that Mrs. Walton's quiet announcement—not addressed to him, oh, dear no, it had nothing to do with him—had robbed his sky of the sun, and left him a prospect dull, cloudy, miserable. She was gone, and he had not made it up with her! He had felt secure in her presence. He had dreaded the moment when he must abase himself. And so he had put off the day, and now she was gone! 'Ha! ha! Master Delves,' thought I, as he stammered some answer to Mrs. Lingard's question, and went on eating dust and ashes from a plate which his hostess had heaped with Severn salmon. Ha! ha! my friend. This will do you good! This will teach you a lesson!' And I silently drank Bessie's health in a glass of chablis.

Presently the talk turned on Sefton's servant. 'You thought you had got to the bottom of that mystery, Mr. Brett,' Madame said, with a smirk. 'You had better have taken counsel with my husband. He is up to most of the moves on the board—especially the zig-zag ones.'

'You know, you are too romantic, Brett,' he chimed in, heavy, conceited beast! 'You let your fancy run away with you. And fancy carries you to the devil!'

'Underground, at any rate,' from his wife.

'There, there, do not be too hard upon him,' said the Squire. 'What is it, Wilkins?' For the butler had entered hastily.

But I did not wait for Wilkins to speak. His face was enough for me. I rose and threw down my napkin—the dessert was on—and lifted my glass with an irrepressible gesture of triumph. 'Bagot,' I said solemnly, 'I wish you joy!' And I drank his

health. He turned very red. He was thinking of something else.

‘What do you mean?’ he stammered.

‘Come and see,’ I replied. ‘Come and see.’ And that was all I would tell them. Wilkins went before, beaming with importance. I marshalled the party after him down the stairs and across the courtyard to the kitchen. The butler let us in with the key, which had been found—I could guess where. The room seen in the twilight was in a state of horrible disorder, piled almost to the ceiling with loose soil and stones. Three or four men leaning on their spades were standing near the fireplace. ‘Why,’ cried Mrs. Walton as I helped her over the rubbish, ‘you have dug another hole, I see.’

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘we have, and with better success. We searched on the wrong side of the hearth before, that was all. Bagot, this is your business, if Walton will permit me to say so. Will you come forward and see what they have found.’

He did so. Under his eyes the men removed from the hole three small wooden cases bound with iron; old—very old—and very heavy. ‘Gad!’ cried the Squire, amid exclamations of astonishment from all, ‘the Crown will have something to say to this.’

‘I think not,’ I replied, bearing my triumph as modestly as I could. ‘The money can be identified. I believe there are five thousand guineas or sovereigns in each case. Old Squire Courtenay has made restitution at last.’

‘How do you mean?’ cried several.

‘He never took away the money,’ I answered.

Then tools and lights were brought, and the cases were burst open. I was right. They contained guineas, chiefly of the two earlier Georges, in rouleaux. We did not stay to count them, but had them carried at once to the strong room, and locked up for the night. Then we went back to the dinner table, and there before the old coat of arms which had seen one Bagot dine with the Gunpowder Plot in his mind, and a list of Catesbys, Winters, and Throckmortons in his pocket, and another sit brooding over the vileness of Hanover rats and the chances of the Pretender, we drank—not I alone, but all, this time—Delves Bagot’s health.

‘And now,’ said the Squire, ‘tell us all about it.’

‘I bought the secret from Fred this afternoon,’ I explained willingly, ‘giving him fifty pounds down, which Lingard here



will have the pleasure of paying—and promising him another fifty in case of success. The last, I am sure, Bagot will not grudge.'

'If he does I will pay it myself!' cried Walton.

Then I told them Fred's story. His father, butler to old Mr. Bagot, had by some chance found a memorandum in a book in the library. He had read it, and learned a stupendous secret. Old Courtenay Bagot had, as tradition said, raised twenty thousand guineas for the Pretender's service, and, along with his servant, been waylaid and murdered on his night-ride to Derby. But the thieves had not got all the money, for with a last instinct of prudence the old Jacobite had left fifteen thousand guineas buried under the kitchen floor, not doubting but that a few days would see the rightful king's troops in the neighbourhood.

The butler was sure that the money still lay there, and, his cupidity aroused, he said nothing to his master, but, confiding only in his wife, tried to possess himself of the treasure. How the wretched man died with his hand upon it has been told by Father Glyn.

'And the wife?'

'Kept the secret, but shrank from using it. From her it passed to Fred. He was a stranger to the place, however, his mother having left the village, and he was more than half inclined to think the story a fiction. It was only when Sefton's chance visit brought him to the very house, that Fred's interest awoke; and then, owing to the presence of so many visitors and their servants, he could find no opportunity for search. He persuaded his master in some way to let him return; and it was while he was searching the books in the billiard-room to find the memorandum that Bagot and I surprised him; he had been imprudent enough, having found what he wanted, to take up a cue. That gave me a clue to the author of the fire last night.'

Mr. Walton whistled. 'He did not do it on purpose?'

'Oh, dear, no. While he was digging he upset his lamp over the wood laid ready to light the fires next morning. The oil flamed up, and he had just time to replace the stones at random and give the alarm. But this accident, happening to him at that moment, and coinciding so strangely with the facts of his father's death, frightened him; and he tried this morning to sell the secret to Bagot, through me.'

'Why did he not go to Bagot himself?' some one asked.

But I did not answer that—then or ever; and Delves had dis-

appeared. Madame, I think, nosed a rat, and promised herself to put the question to the young gentleman next day. But she was doomed to disappointment, for next day he did not appear at breakfast; and Mrs. Walton placidly explained that she had found it necessary to send a note to Bessie, and he had been good enough to breakfast early, and ride over to The Chafers with it.

The Lingards left after lunch, their curiosity on that point still unsatisfied, and an hour later Delves and Bessie were with us. At tea we were the merriest party in the world, though I felt a little old too. I wondered at times, then and afterwards, how Delves had satisfactorily explained his coolness to his sweetheart; and it was Bessie herself who enlightened me at last. 'Why, you dear old man,' she whispered, with a charming blush, 'do you not know that he was jealous of *you*?'

'Of me? Oh, the villain! the unmitigated rascal!'



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*THE BURNT MILLION.*

BY JAMES PAYN,  
AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY,' ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

MR. ROSCOE had certainly no reason to be dissatisfied with the result of his interview with the head of the house. Agnes had agreed with his views, confessed herself as willing to assist his plans, and had almost forborne to question him about them. She had been content to leave matters in his hands, without even asking him what he had meant by saying that he had hoped to turn this misfortune that had happened to them to their own advantage. He would have told her if she had pressed him, but it was a relief to his mind—already so heavily weighted—that she had not done so. He was not grateful to her, however, because he knew that she had something to gain by her forbearance, and was also desirous to make up to him for the insolence (as he termed it) of her recent behaviour. Philippa he foresaw would not be so easily won over. She had not so much to gain by pleasing him, and nothing to atone for. He would have to explain his scheme to her, and it would be much more distasteful to her than it would have seemed to her sister; she was more sentimental and soft-hearted, or, as he put it to himself with his usual frankness, in all things that concerned the feelings a greater fool. On the other hand, there were reasons why he could 'say things' to Philippa which he could not venture upon with her

elder sister. He could be more masterful with her, if need were, and also, strange to say, more tender without compromising himself. Indeed his very first act on entering her boudoir was to put his arm round her waist and kiss her.

'Goodness gracious!' she exclaimed, 'what is the matter, Edward?'

It was such a strange remark to make upon such an occurrence, had it been an unprecedented one, that we must take it for granted it had happened before; indeed, it was not his caress at all, but the expression of his face, which was very grave and sad, which had evoked it.

'A letter, my dear Philippa, has come to my brother to-day, which brings very bad news to you and me, and will require all your philosophy to bear it. Instead of an obstacle to our happiness being, as we fondly thought, removed, it threatens us with ruin.'

'With *ruin*?'

'Yes; with nothing less. It is no use deceiving ourselves upon that point, nor will it help us to reproach me for follies, as you have called them, of which I have been guilty. I will own I have been a fool at once, and so save time, which has become indeed an object to us. It is no longer a question of patience with us, but of now or never. Read *that*.' And he put the document into her hand with a deep-drawn sigh.

She read it with a frightened face, and none of the fury her sister had shown.

'This is indeed most cruel and unexpected,' she said.

'Unexpected? Why, of course it is,' he answered with irritation; 'but as to cruel, you refer, I suppose, to the measures which it will be necessary to take with Grace; you can hardly imagine that I intend it to take effect as regards ourselves.'

'But how is it possible to avert it?'

'Well, for one thing this marriage of course must be broken off.'

'Grace's marriage? Break off dear Grace's marriage with Walter? Oh, Edward, you could surely never have the heart to do it!'

'I mean to try, at all events,' he answered curtly. 'You must be a born idiot, Philippa, if you do not see the absolute necessity of it. A girl of her age is not so grievously to be pitied because she has made a false start in her first love venture. Women don't break their hearts about men whom they have only known for a few months.'



‘I will never consent to parting them,’ cried Philippa, bursting into tears.

‘What? You prefer beggary, do you? Fortunately for you, I have an equal interest with yourself in this matter, and beggary will not suit *me*.’

‘But why should there be anything of the kind, Edward? I know dear Grace’s noble nature, and am very sure that when she comes to hear of this—for I conclude Walter has not told her——’

‘I conclude so too,’ interrupted Mr. Roscoe with bitter scorn, ‘for I have good reason to believe that Walter does not know it himself. You may also be assured that he never will know it.’

‘You have opened his letter then?’

‘Most certainly I have. If you should ever dare to dream of telling him so, I would throw it in the fire, and have you locked up for a mad woman for having imagined such a story. Scruples indeed! *You* to have scruples! Have you forgotten how your father died?’

‘Oh, Heaven have pity upon me, since man has none!’ cried the wretched woman, throwing herself into a chair and bursting into a torrent of tears.

‘I am sorry to have been compelled to allude to so painful an incident,’ observed Mr. Roscoe coldly, ‘but I cannot stand hypocrisy. You strain at a gnat after having swallowed a camel, hump and all. I really must decline to listen to such folly. I came here for your advice and assistance——’

‘*My* advice!’ she interrupted bitterly. ‘When did you ever ask for my advice, or take it when it was offered?’

‘What I understand you to propose, madam, is that we should throw ourselves upon the generosity of Mr. Walter Sinclair *per* Grace, his wife, and accept whatever terms he may in his magnanimity offer us. For my part I absolutely refuse to accept his charity. It would be too humiliating, and also, I am very sure, too limited. If *that* be your advice, you are correct in supposing that I think it worthless. Let me confine myself then to asking your assistance. I can get on without it, and as to any opposition on your part it would be fruitless, and you would repent it to the last hour of your life, though it would not perhaps be a very long one. Lives have been cut short in domestic circles before now——’

‘Oh, spare me, spare me!’ groaned the unhappy woman.

‘By all means. I wish not only to spare you but to benefit

you all I can, if you will only be a reasonable being. Though your help is not indispensable, it would be very welcome, and would certainly be of service in breaking the blow which necessity compels me to inflict upon your sister. I regret it as much as yourself, but I have a plan in my head which in the end may not only turn this seeming misfortune to our advantage, but console Miss Grace for the loss of her lover.'

'Console her?' answered Philippa with amazement. 'What can ever console a girl for such a loss?'

'Another lover.'

The suggestion was offered in all good faith, and without the least touch of sarcasm, but had the speaker guessed its effect upon his hearer he would have given a good deal to have recalled its utterance. There are some subjects on which it is very dangerous for a man to confess his cynicism to one of the other sex. Philippa made no answer, which gratified her companion, since it bespoke submission to his will, but what he had said had fallen upon the little spark of respect for him that was still alive in her breast, and extinguished it for ever. Love still survived there, as it will do long after respect is dead; but it was not the love it had been. Passion had long fled from it, Trust had well-nigh vanished too, and even Hope itself was on the wing.

'Yes, Philippa,' he continued after a long pause, 'it is my intention that Grace shall marry my brother Richard.'

Numb and dulled as the poor woman's feelings had become under the weight of that inevitable will, his words still evoked a shrill note of astonishment.

'Richard!'

'Yes; you women plume yourselves on your sagacity in such matters, but I'll wager that the notion of Richard being in love with your sister has never entered into your mind. I have perceived it, however, for many a day; it is only with the utmost difficulty that he can conceal his passion for her.'

The tidings interested while it shocked her; no matter how cramped and crushed may be a woman's heart, there is one subject to which it never ceases to vibrate with sympathy.

'He has concealed it,' she observed. 'I am certain that Grace knows nothing of it.'

'Of course not—not a word, not a whisper, thanks to me; any hint of it would have been most inconvenient, perhaps even detrimental to our plans. I persuaded him that his suit would be



the maddest folly. It will be much easier to persuade him of the contrary. And if—as will as surely happen as I am a living man—these second nuptials shall be accomplished, instead of her having a husband of whose nature we know little, and who might have given us trouble in a hundred ways, she will have one who in my hands will be as clay to the potter, and so out of this nettle Danger we shall pluck the flower Safety.'

'And Grace?'

'Well, Grace of course will be our difficulty, although the only one. I have a plan, however, which, sooner or later, will succeed even with Grace. We cannot of course expect that she will transfer her affections from one to the other so quickly as would be desirable. In love affairs a girl is never reasonable; but still I have reasons, I think, that will not only persuade her to give Walter up, but will at least clear the way for Richard. She is well inclined to him already in a sisterly way. You don't think much of that, and I don't wonder; I use the phrase of course in its common acceptation, and she is *not* his sister. We all know what comes of such Platonic attachments, when no nearer one can be got. A woman who has been "disappointed," as she calls it, will marry out of pique rather than not marry at all. She feels the need of "something to cling to," and one stick will serve her turn as well as another.'

He paused, but there was no reply.

'Do you hear me, madam? Are you favouring me with your attention?' he inquired passionately.

'Oh, yes, I hear you!' answered Philippa despairingly, 'and alas! I understand you very well.'

'Then also heed. The help that I require from you is simply this: to cease from expressing any of that morbid sympathy which you have lavished—as it now turns out, have wasted—upon this interesting young couple. Without being rude to Walter, be cold and discouraging to him. Let him understand, but without giving him a pretext for asking for an explanation, that something has caused you to change your views of his pretensions. If he does ask, refer him to me. The task I set you is an easy one enough.'

'It is not easy,' she answered in broken tones, 'but since needs must, I will perform it.'

'There's a good girl!' He patted her cheek—it was as cold as marble—as if she had been a child. 'You are about to do what

is very distasteful to you, I know, and as you believe solely for my sake; but it is for both our sakes. We shall be stronger—you and I—when this has come to pass, against the common enemy. Grace's husband—and therefore Grace—will be on our side. Again I say that this document, which now seems so harmful to us, will prove beneficial to our interests.'

'What are you going to do with it?' she inquired in a faint voice.

'Well, that is my business. I shall probably put it in the fire. Now I am going to Grace.'

'With that in your pocket?' she murmured apprehensively.

'Why not? She can no more read it through this cloth'—and he tapped his breast—'than she can read my heart on the other side of it. It will be the hardest morning's work that I have ever had to do; but "men must work and women must weep," is the sentence that Fate has passed upon us. Good-bye, my dear, and wish me well through with it,' and once more he touched her cheek with his false lips.

She forced a smile as he left her, but it vanished as the door closed behind him, and was succeeded by a look of misery and despair.

'Wish him well!'—no, she did not even wish herself well. It was blasphemy to hope that good would come to anybody from what he was about to do. She pitied Grace from the bottom of her soul, but she pitied herself too. If Grace were doomed to lose her lover, she too had lost faith in the man to whom she had given her love. "'She cannot read my heart," he said,' she moaned piteously; 'how should she when he has no heart to read?'

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## CHAPTER XL.

### THE NAKED TRUTH.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Roscoe had the *entrée* to Grace's bower, as he had to her sisters', a visit from him, in her case, was by no means such a matter of course. His knock at her boudoir door, with the announcement of his name, in reply to a somewhat severe 'Who is that?'—in a tone that is used by one who is engaged in some occupation not agreeable, but in which he does not wish to be disturbed—did not receive the ready 'Pray come in,' that he



had been favoured with on the two previous instances. He was kept waiting at the door time enough to note the circumstance moreover, when the permission to enter was given, it did not escape him that it was in a despondent voice. Grace indeed had been crying, as he saw at a glance, and also the reason of it, for although she had put away Mr. Allerton's letter, its envelope still lay on the table.

'I wish to have a few words with you, Grace, if you please.' He never addressed her thus familiarly unless the subject was of an importance that seemed to excuse it.

She bowed, and motioned him to a chair. Her silence, as he rightly judged, was compulsory; she could not trust herself to speak.

'I am afraid you have had bad news this morning,' he murmured sympathetically.

'Nothing to speak of,' she answered coldly—so coldly indeed that the tone seemed almost to imply, 'nothing to speak of to you; it is my own affair.'

'I deeply regret it,' he answered gently, 'and the more so since I am myself—most unwillingly, as you may be sure—the bearer of evil tidings. But perhaps I have been anticipated,' and he looked significantly at the envelope.

'You mean the letter I have just received from Mr. Allerton? No, there is nothing in it of which I was not aware before.'

'He has heard, I suppose, of your proposed engagement' (she looked up indignantly at that word 'proposed,' as he had known she would, and he kept his own eyes upon the floor), 'and has written to express his dissatisfaction with it. He takes a lawyer's view of it, no doubt; points out you are throwing yourself (by which he means your fortune) away in marrying one forbidden by your father's will. If he has no argument to use but that, he might have saved his time, and you your six and eightpence. It was my impression that he had written of a more serious obstacle.'

'I do not understand you, Mr. Roscoe—what other obstacle? Not that it matters; nothing that Mr. Allerton or any other person could say could affect the matter of which you speak. Indeed, I would not even listen to it.'

'Quite so,' he answered gravely; 'no one has a right to interfere with your private affairs. Your regard for Mr. Sinclair is a sacred matter—I feel that myself. Let us suppose that what has come to my knowledge—and must needs come to his—affects

some one else, not him. If any thing I am obliged to tell you seems to chime in with anything he has told you of his previous history, put that aside: judge the whole matter from without, as a mere looker-on, and decide upon it without favour or prejudice. That will be the honestest way of coming to a right decision.'

She looked up at him, less in alarm than scorn, though she *was* alarmed, he saw; what her face expressed besides its fear was a doubt of his being the sort of person to recommend what was right, and especially upon the ground of honesty. The suggestion of this rather assisted him in his present purpose, because it set him against her, and stifled the feeble pity he had felt for her.

'I must go back a little,' he continued, 'to start with, into what to you must seem ancient history—to what happened years ago, when you were a little child.

'A certain man of business in the City, very wealthy, but whose only desire in the world was to increase his store, had a poor cousin in the country, who, with the exception of his own family, was his only relative. They had been boys together at school, and he had perhaps as much regard for him as he was capable of feeling for anything outside his money bags. This cousin applied to him respecting the investment of a few thousands—almost all he had in the world—and the other gave him his advice. It was the most that he was ever known to give to anybody, and indeed it was generally of value. When I say "gave," however, it was never given for nothing. He was by trade a money-lender—a skinflint, or rather a skin-diamond, for he seldom concerned himself with any client who could not directly or indirectly (though more often the latter) repay him handsomely for his services. In the case of his cousin, however, he charged him nothing (at first), and recommended him an investment which, though speculative, he had every reason to believe would turn out to be exceedingly profitable. It was, if I remember right (but this can be easily certified), a certain mine in Cornwall. The money-lender indeed thought so well of it that he had placed a sum to which the other's subscription (though it was, as I have said, his all) was a mere bagatelle in the speculation himself. As time went on the mine ceased to perform the promise it had given, and its shares fell lower and lower in the market till they almost became valueless. Then the man in the country, grievously alarmed, as he well might be, wrote to his kinsman for his advice again. 'I am sure you did the best for me you could,' he



said, 'and indeed must have lost your own money. Of course I have not a word of reproach to write, but I am well-nigh ruined, so be so good as to dispose of these unhappy shares for me at whatever they realise. I am resolved to go to America, there to endeavour to make a livelihood for my wife and son, which is denied them here.' It was a pathetic letter (I read it with my own eyes), and almost touched the money-lender, but not quite. He knew more about the mine than anyone else, except its manager, who was in his pay, and had privately given him news that a lode of great extent had just been discovered in it. Without an expenditure of sixpence, and by merely telling his cousin to "hold on," he could have made a fortune for him; but the temptation of adding some thousands, at the price of a few pounds, to his ill-gotten gains, was too strong for him; he wrote to the poor cousin, saying that the shares were unsaleable, but that for the sake of old times, and because the same blood ran in his veins (for there was nothing on earth that the man did not make subservient to his own aggrandisement), he would purchase them himself for, I think (but this also can be ascertained, no doubt), for 300%. The offer was accepted; the cousin emigrated with his wife and son on the proceeds of the transaction, and the money-lender within twelve months made 20,000% by it.'

'What has this hateful act by this wicked man to do with me?' inquired Grace defiantly.

'Nothing. You hear of it of course for the first time; but let me conclude my story. The cousin by some means or other learnt how he had been cheated, and told the story to his son, without, however (as I have good reason to believe, though I cannot understand this reticence), revealing the name of the relative who had robbed him. The result of that robbery was that the mother, succumbing to fatigues and privations, died soon after, and the father, after a hard and wretched life, was slain by Indians; the son——'

He paused, and looked at Grace with keen significance. Her face was white as death; but there was a fire in her eyes and in her tone, as she exclaimed, 'Go on.'

'The son, I am grieved to say, Grace, is Walter Sinclair, and the man who robbed his father was *your* father.'

'You lie!' she thundered. 'My father was the best and kindest of men.'

‘Was he Ask your friend, Mr. Allerton—*he* knows. Ask Lord Morella who was the money-lender who caught his son, Lord Cheribert, in his meshes, and stripped him of thousands. Ask your sisters, and they will tell you what everybody else is aware of except yourself, that the man who thus made gold his idol, and sacrificed his kinsman to it (as he had sacrificed hundreds of others), was no other than Joseph Tremehere.’

Of the last part of this speech Grace had no knowledge; she had thrown up her arms before it was concluded, and with a piteous cry of desolation and despair had fallen on the ground in a dead faint. Under such circumstances man, unless he is medical, is generally useless and inclined to run away, but Mr. Roscoe was not an ordinary specimen of his sex; moreover, even had he preferred ‘absence of body to presence of mind,’ the apprehension of what she might say to other ears on coming to herself kept him in the path of duty. He lifted her up in his strong arms and placed her on the sofa, from which he removed the pillow, and sprinkling a little water on her face from the jug in the next room, which he did not scruple to enter, awaited events with a philosophical mind. Grace did not come to herself for some minutes, and when she did so still remained with closed eyes, only too conscious doubtless of whom she would behold should she open them.

‘Does Walter know?’ were her first words.

‘No, dear Grace, of course not,’ answered her companion comfortingly. ‘I came here to spare you that; but of course he must be put in possession of the facts sooner or later. From what I have heard of his devotion to the memory of his father, what has come to light is a thing that he can never forget or forgive. Of course you had nothing to do with it, but there is the sentiment, you see.’

She put up her hand as if in appeal for silence.

‘You feel that yourself, I’m sure. It is only too obvious that all between you and him must be over. There is no need to mention the real cause to anybody—not to Mr. Allerton, for instance; but only to your sisters, and even that is only as you please. Trust to me to arrange this unhappy matter so as to give you—and indeed Walter also—as little pain as possible. You will find no doubt in the letter you received this morning an excuse that will satisfy the outside world.’ Her hand moved feebly in the direction of the door. ‘You wish to be left alone. No doubt



that is your wisest course. This is a thing to be thought about and not talked about, even with one who has your interests so near at heart as I have. But I need scarcely impress upon you that there is only one course to be pursued. If you could make the effort, it would save a world of distress and pain to both of you if you would give me a few words in writing just to authorise me to act for you as regards Walter. Write, for instance, "Seek not to see me; Mr. Roscoe will tell you all," and sign it. That will be quite sufficient.' He pushed the writing materials that lay upon the table close to her hand, and she feebly raised herself, and with a dazed, despairing look obeyed him.

'That's a brave girl. Do not hate me, Grace, for the part I have been obliged to play in this miserable business,' and with that he left her.

She tottered to the door, locked it, and then sank into a chair. Except that her position was one of utter misery, for the moment she hardly realised it. She had fallen from the highest rung of the ladder of human happiness on the stones of blank despair. An hour ago she had possessed everything that fortune could give her, and now she was a beggar whose wretchedness no alms could repair. She had already lost her father, and it had been a bitter trial to her, but she had now lost him again in a far more dreadful manner. Would she had never known him at all! To think how she had loved him—yes, and he her; had she not been his 'pet,' his 'joy,' his 'little fairy'?—and all in vain—or as it seemed in vain; for she had in truth been loving another father, shaped out of her own childish imagination, and with whom this real one had nothing in common. She had no doubt now of her wretched and irretrievable error. A hundred evidences of what had been his calling, though not one of them had witnessed against him before, crowded on her mind. And even still—there was the pity of it—she loved him. An oppressor of the needy, one who took advantage of the necessities of his fellow-creatures, and an unfair advantage—a thief, a thief, a thief!—and yet she loved him still.

Her Walter too was lost for ever—a thought sufficient of itself to make death a boon (ah! if she could but die!); but for the moment even that thought was overwhelmed by the spectacle of what had been the idol of her life shattered in fragments before her, with its front of brass and feet of clay!

## CHAPTER XLI.

## RICHARD TO THE RESCUE.

'As easy as lying,' is a common proverb, but it must have been invented by an optimist; one might just as well say 'As easy as writing fiction,' which is not such a facile thing as those who have not tried it are apt to imagine. Mr. Edward Roscoe was a past master in the art of 'making the thing that is not as the thing that is,' but now and then even he found it a difficult job. When he left Grace Tremehere's boudoir, the perspiration stood upon his brow, so severe had been his exertion in that way, though indeed he had not been exactly lying, but only what doctors and prize-fighters call 'putting on flesh' as regarded what was a very genuine skeleton of fact. The task that lay before him now seemed simple in comparison with that severe operation, for it is so much easier to deal with a man, where the affections are concerned, than with a woman, and his next 'call'—as ruinous as that of a broken bank on its unhappy shareholders—was on Walter Sinclair. Most men in his position would at least have taken that stolen document out of his breast-pocket, and either destroyed it or put it in some place of safety, before seeking an interview with its rightful owner; but Mr. Roscoe's heart was furnished with the triple brass of the poet, and indeed there was a great amount of the same material in the whole of his composition.

He found Walter at his desk busily engaged on some subject connected with his future work, 'plan, elevation, and section,' drawn by rule and line; a miracle of mechanical neatness to which Mr. Roscoe paid his little tribute of admiration before entering on the matter in hand.

'How I envy you your dexterity!' he observed. 'I am so clumsy with my fingers myself that such work as yours looks like magic. I am sorry to interrupt it, but the fact is I have got some bad news for you, which does not admit of delay.'

'Bad news!' exclaimed Walter, throwing down pencil and compass, and looking up at him with some suspicion as well as alarm, which the other did not fail to note.

'Yes; it is bad news, but, believe me, I am only the unwilling bringer of it, and not the cause.'

'From whom do you come then?'

'From Miss Grace. Here are my credentials.'



Walter took the strip of paper, and read in what he knew was her hand—though the writing was blurred and trembling—‘Seek not to see me. Mr. Roscoe will tell you all.—Grace Tremenhere.’

‘Great heaven!’ he said, ‘what is the meaning of this?’

‘The meaning is that she bids you farewell—that all is over between you.’

‘It is false!’ cried Walter passionately.

Mr. Roscoe shrugged his shoulders. ‘It is her writing, not mine,’ he said. ‘She chose me for the duty I am compelled to perform. You may add to its unpleasantness by insulting me, but I shall perform it all the same.’

‘Say what you have got to say, sir, though I will never believe that she told you to say it.’

‘That’s a matter which—if you don’t mind her breaking her heart—you can learn from her own lips, but she was in hopes that for the sake of all that has passed between you you would spare her.’

‘Go on!’ exclaimed the young man fiercely.

‘The person against whom your passion should be directed, if it must have an object,’ continued Mr. Roscoe, ‘is your friend, Mr. Allerton. He has discovered, I know not how, that you have been paying your attentions to Miss Grace, and a letter has come to her from him this morning. So much I know of myself. What the letter contains I have learnt only from her. He is her guardian and trustee, you know.’

‘I know *that*,’ put in the other impatiently.

‘Well, since that is the case, he has a right, not indeed to dispose of her hand, but to see the disposal of it does not involve the loss of her fortune. It is his simple duty, and one in aid of which he could, and would, invoke the law.’

‘That is not true,’ replied Walter; ‘I mean as regards the loss of her fortune. She told me so with her own lips.’

‘I think you must be mistaken there,’ said Mr. Roscoe mildly. ‘She could not have said that, because she is acquainted with the terms of her father’s will.’

‘She did not say so in so many words; but she told me, when I spoke of the gulf that existed between us as regards disparity of fortune, that there was no such gulf.’

Mr. Roscoe smiled a pitying smile.

‘She was right there, my poor fellow. If she married you there would indeed be no such disparity, because by doing so she

would have lost her fortune. It was love that caused her so to express herself; I do not deny for a moment that she loves you. We all know it, and in our love for her we were all willing that she should sacrifice her all, because we felt that in that sacrifice she would find her happiness. We are not lawyers, nor her trustees and guardians, as Mr. Allerton is. It is just possible (though I have a better opinion of you) that even now, in the teeth of his opposition (which, however, will be very formidable, I promise you), you may press your suit. But would it be honourable, would it become anyone calling himself a man, to take advantage of the simplicity and affection of a young girl under such circumstances, even if she were prepared to give up what is nothing less than a huge fortune, and to accept a life of poverty for your sake—and I honestly tell you that she is not so prepared, and sends me here to tell you so? Would you take her on such terms? If I know you, Walter Sinclair, as the son of an honest man, and an honest man yourself, you would not so take her.'

Walter turned from his companion, and with his elbows on the desk, and his face hidden in his hands, uttered one solitary groan, the knell of his bright hopes.

'Of course it is a terrible trial to you; but it was a worse one to her. The struggle between love and duty is always a cruel one; but Grace is duty itself. She idolised her father, and what he expressly forbid (as Mr. Allerton pointed out to her) she repents of having been about to do. You loved and respected *your* father, Walter; would *you* not hesitate to disobey his last solemn injunctions? I think you would.'

'Stop! there is something wrong here,' exclaimed the young man suddenly, rising slowly from his seat, and confronting his companion with so keen a glance that it needed all his hardihood to meet it coolly. 'When we were on the river this summer Lord Cheribert was with us. He was himself in love with Grace (how indeed could he help it, poor fellow!) Everyone knows it as well as I, except perhaps Grace herself; Mr. Allerton knew it, and if, as you say—but I forgot, he was a wealthy man.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Roscoe persuasively. ('Thank heaven, this fool has never looked at Josh's will for himself,' was his inward reflection.) 'Or, if he was not wealthy, he had vast expectations. He would have brought as much as he found. There were not the same objections to him as in your case, though there *were* objections.'



‘Nevertheless I must see her,’ exclaimed Walter desperately. ‘There may be some way of escape, some loophole. Or the whole thing may be a mistake, a plot. You villain, you dog!’ he cried, seizing the other by his coat-collar (within an inch of where the secret lay), ‘if this is any plan of yours to part us, I will have your heart’s blood.’

‘Be so good as to unhand me, sir, for my own temper is somewhat short,’ said Mr. Roscoe resolutely. ‘This is scarcely the reward one looks for for breaking bad news to a fellow-creature. Go to Grace then, by all means, and put the finishing stroke to Mr. Allerton’s morning’s work. Only if it kills her, sir, it will be no less than murder.’

‘Go, go, or there will be murder *here!*’ exclaimed the young man furiously, and throwing open the door he thrust the other from the room, slammed the door behind him, and locked himself in. The whole thing did not take a minute, but it was full of ‘action.’ The impression on Mr. Roscoe’s mind, though not upon his body, was that he had been *kicked* out.

‘I will be even with you for this, my man,’ was what he muttered to himself with lips pale with rage, though, if he could have looked at matters with an unprejudiced eye, the obligation still lay upon the other side.

Left to his own maddening thoughts, Walter Sinclair sat at his desk, with that scrap in Grace’s handwriting spread out before him, ‘Seek not to see me. Mr. Roscoe will tell you all,’ examining it with the anxious scrutiny one might have bestowed upon a cryptogram, who is conscious of a lack of clearness in his mind necessary for its elucidation. The words indeed were plain enough, and their meaning had been explained to him with sufficient distinctness, but was it the true meaning? Upon the whole he was forced to the conclusion that it was. If it was a lie, one line from Allerton, not to mention one word from Grace’s lips, would, as Roscoe must be well aware, have confuted it. His arguments indeed had from a worldly point of view been overwhelming. Curst be the gold that is weighed in the scales with true love, but it kicks the beam. To Grace’s guardian and trustee it could not seem otherwise, nor did he blame him; he only blamed the gold. With Grace herself he knew it had no such weight; but that very fact, as Roscoe had pointed out, should prevent him from pressing his suit. Her simplicity and ignorance, her girlish contempt for the gifts of fortune were only apparent allies; it would be

cowardly to take advantage of those means if he could bring himself to do so; there were her father's last injunctions which in her new-found love she had perhaps forgotten till the lawyer had reminded her of them. He had vaguely heard that Mr. Tremenhere had made his fortune as a money-lender, a circumstance that had in no way affected him. He might have been a good man for all that; that he had been a loving father to Grace was certain, and she had reciprocated his love with all the warmth of her nature. He was himself devoted to his father's memory, and, as Roscoe had cunningly surmised, that circumstance had great weight with him; he put himself in Grace's place, and sided with her, as it were, against himself.

Still to part with him without a word of farewell seemed unnatural, hard, and cruel, and utterly foreign to Grace's nature. True there was her handwriting before him, 'Seek not to see me.' The question was, by what process had those words been wrung from her? If she had written them of her own free will, his duty was plain: he must pack up his things and leave Halswater Hall at once.

When he had gone away—whither he could not tell; all places seemed alike to him, and all hateful—he would write and wish her farewell. She could reply to him or not, as she pleased. He staggered into his bedroom, and began putting his clothes together with blind haste. While thus occupied he heard a violent knock at his sitting-room door.

'Who is it?' he asked hoarsely.

'It is I, Richard Roscoe. Open.'

To see anyone just then was a trial he was ill-fitted to undergo; the thought of an interview with this man, half mad as he believed him to be, and wholly unfitted to sympathise with such a calamity as had befallen him, was especially distasteful to him.

'I am busy,' he called out.

'No matter,' was the impatient reply, 'I must see you.' And again came the loud summons at the door.

Fearing that the servants would be alarmed, and a disturbance created, when it was so necessary that anything of the kind should be avoided, he opened the door, and a moment afterwards repented of it.

Richard Roscoe stood before him, his face white and wet, his hair dishevelled, his eyes rolling in what seemed like frenzy,



and, in a word, more like a madman than he had ever seen him. He entered hastily, and at once relocked the door.

‘Don’t be afraid of me,’ he said in breathless tones, as though he had perceived what was passing through the other’s mind; ‘I am not mad, though I have heard enough to make me so. What are you doing here? Packing up? I thought so. What is that paper in Grace’s hand?’

In one stride he had reached the desk and read her words.

‘How dare you?’ exclaimed Walter passionately.

‘Sir, I dare anything for Grace’s sake,’ was the unexpected rejoinder. “Mr. Roscoe will tell you all,” she says, but she does not know the man as his brother does. “Seek not to see me.” But you *shall* see her. Sit down, Walter Sinclair, and listen to *me.*’

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE BROTHERS.

AFTER the unpleasant parting Mr. Edward Roscoe had had with Walter Sinclair, it might have seemed probable that he would have had enough of interviews for the day; but not only was his brother Richard, to whom he had also a word or two to say, under the same roof and close at hand, but the very violence with which he had been treated in the one case was a spur to him in the other. His anger against the young man was very great, and, as it happened, the communication he had to make to Richard comprehended in it the greatest blow to Walter’s hopes that could possibly be struck, ‘which,’ as a greater hypocrite than even Mr. Roscoe has observed before him, ‘was very soothing.’ He had no doubt, in spite of the self-restraint his brother had used in his relations with Grace, that his feeling towards her remained unchanged, and also that, notwithstanding his apparent friendship with her lover, he in reality regarded him with all the disfavour of an unsuccessful rival. Though far from falling into the error of less sagacious scoundrels in judging his fellow-creatures by himself, Mr. Roscoe was incapable of understanding such a virtue as magnanimity.

It was, in fact, in a tone which honestly expressed his convictions that as soon as he had entered his brother’s room he observed with cheerful gravity:

‘Richard, my lad, I have got some good news for you!’

‘Indeed!’ answered Richard bitterly, as he rose from his seat to greet him, and put down the book he had been reading, ‘then it must be very strange news.’

‘It *is* strange news, my good fellow—stranger than anything you can have imagined, better than anything you can have dreamt of! Sit down and listen to it, for it will make your limbs tremble under you with joy. The engagement between Grace and Walter Sinclair has been broken off.’

‘What?’ Only a word, only a monosyllable, but what a tumult of emotions—hope and love and pity and amazement—did it express! The very face of the man was transfigured with them.

‘Yes, it is as true as death. The whole thing is over; Grace is now fancy free—is at all events free to have a fancy for someone else. There is now a chance for *you*, man!’

Richard looked at him with wondering eyes; he was so full indeed of astonishment that he was unable to take in the whole situation as it was thus suddenly presented to him. He did not even catch the meaning of his brother’s words, which could certainly not have been from their want of distinctness. His mind could hardly grasp the stupendous fact that had been disclosed to him, far less its probable consequences.

‘Have they quarrelled?’ he inquired in a hoarse whisper.

‘I am happy to say they have not, for we all know what lovers’ quarrels end in. The thing goes far deeper than that. You may take my word for it that they will never see each other again.’

Mr. Edward Roscoe’s word was a guarantee beyond suspicion to almost everybody at Halswater Hall, but (doubtless because of the eccentricity of Richard’s character) his brother seemed to doubt it; nay, with a frankness that, however common in the western wilds, is unusual in polite society, he coldly replied, ‘I don’t believe you, Edward. It is only because you have some end of your own to serve that you wish to make me credit such an incredible statement.’

‘A very natural supposition, my dear Dick,’ answered the other cheerfully, ‘and one that does honour to your intelligence; but you have only to step across the passage into Walter’s room to get the matter certified. I wouldn’t do it just now, if I were you, because he’s rather upset about it; there will be plenty of time before he starts, though I suppose he will be off this afternoon.’

‘Do you mean to say he is leaving Halswater?’



‘Well, I conclude he is. From what I have told you you will see for yourself that no other course is open to him.’

‘How did it come about?’ inquired Richard.

‘Well, it was all through Mr. Allerton. He is her guardian, and has forbidden the banns, as he has the power to do. If she had had any sense she would have married Walter at once, and then written to the lawyer to say so; but he has somehow discovered her engagement, and put his foot down on it. She will be wiser next time, Dick, you may take your oath of that.’

‘And she has given him up because the lawyer tells her to do so?’

‘I don’t say that exactly; there are other reasons I am bound in honour not to go into, and which you must not press me about. But what is the main thing—as concerns yourself—the match is broken off.’

‘Poor lad, poor lad!’

‘Well, of course one is sorry for him, but one must look after oneself in this world. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and without your having any hand in it, without your having the least thing to reproach yourself with, a good opportunity has opened to you. I suppose, though you did what you could to smother your affection for the young woman, the cinders of it are still alive?’

‘I love Grace—oh, yes, I love her still!’ murmured Richard softly.

‘That’s right. You have a faithful heart, I know, Dick. So have I, though the object of its desire may be a little different. We both stick to our views. It runs in the family. Well, you know what I told you of the reason that first caused me to write you to come home from America. Circumstances did away with that reason for the time, but it has now sprung to life again. I had a matrimonial engagement for you in my mind, which I must confess is a merely practical one; the idea never entered into it that the young woman I designed for you would become the girl of your heart, but fortunately it has so turned out. A few hours ago she was altogether out of your reach, now she has come within it; you have only to put your arms about her, though I need not say that must be done in a most cautious and delicate fashion. At first of course she will be inconsolable for the loss of her first love; but little by little the gilt of sentiment will be rubbed off, and half a loaf—if I may say so without offence, for you

are really neither so young nor so good-looking as Sinclair—will seem better than no bread.’

‘I see,’ said Richard gently (he had his hands before his eyes, and seemed lost in thought), then added with effort, like one rousing himself from sleep, ‘What would you have me do?’

‘Just now, nothing. What I would recommend for the present is a “masterly inaction”; bide your time, by which of course I mean your opportunity; sooner or later it is sure to come. Be as gentle and sympathising with the girl as you please, but do not drop a word of love. She will want something to cling to, and in due course that should be you. There will be objections to you, as there were to Sinclair, on the lawyer’s part, no doubt, but she will not sacrifice her happiness a second time for a mere sentiment, which by then moreover will have grown weaker. Upon the whole,’ concluded Mr. Roscoe cheerfully, ‘I really believe this misfortune, as it first seemed to us, will turn out but a blessing in disguise.’

‘It is very good of you to take such an interest in my affairs,’ observed Richard.

His brother glanced up at him very sharply, but there was nothing to be read on the other’s face but a settled gloom.

‘Blood is thicker than water, my lad,’ answered Edward. ‘It will give me unfeigned pleasure to see you comfortably settled in life; but I must frankly add that it will be also advantageous to myself. As Grace’s husband you will be one of the family, and I shall be able to arrange matters with you much more easily than with a stranger—such as Sinclair for example. I shall feel easier in my mind, by the bye, when that young gentleman is out of the house.’

‘You are sure that he will not insist upon seeing Grace before he takes his departure?’

‘That is quite settled. To do him justice, he acknowledged when I pointed it out to him that it would be a most selfish act, and only give her unnecessary pain: it would also (which I did not point out to him) be a most dangerous experiment.’

‘You mean to our interests?’

‘Well, of course in the presence of the once beloved object she might lose sight of her obvious duty. She has made up her mind to perform it, and it would be madness to give him the chance of shaking her resolution. He too has come to the same decision. But if he could be persuaded to be off, without seeing



any member of the family, it would be a great point gained. He is attached to you, and has not the least suspicion of your feelings towards Grace; it would be well if you could persuade him to leave at once. You can tell him that I will gladly explain matters for him to Agnes and Philippa.'

'I will,' said Richard decisively.

'That's a good fellow. In the mean time, while you are getting him away, I will see that all is safe in the other quarter. Use all the arguments you can think of, and remember that you are now taking the first step on the road to your happiness. When I next see you I hope we shall have the cottage to ourselves,' and with that he left the room.

Notwithstanding the readiness with which he had fallen in with his brother's suggestion, Richard did not at once proceed upon his promised errand. He stood with his eyes closed and his hands clasped tightly before him; his lips moved as if in prayer, and the words, 'Deliver us from temptation,' fell from them in broken tones. If his brother could have seen him, he would certainly have said, 'This man is mad,' yet even so perhaps would not have deemed him too mad to marry. 'Walter, Walter!' he murmured to himself pitifully, and then in still tenderer tones, 'Grace, Grace!' The struggle within him, as it showed itself in his face, was terrible to witness; now his better nature and now his worse seemed to be getting the upper hand; at last the former triumphed, but with so great difficulty, with such a dead lift of all his powers for good, that he could not trust himself to let the debate begin again. He ran out of the room and knocked at Walter's door, crying 'Open, open!' Despair was in his heart, but from every thought of baseness it had been swept clean.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### METHOD IN HIS MADNESS.

ALTHOUGH the look and manner of Richard Roscoe were so strange and wild, there was a fervour and earnestness in the tone in which he said, 'Sit down and I will tell you all,' that commanded Sinclair's attention; even a madman may have a story to tell that has nothing to do with his own state of mind, and may have pith and moment in it.

'You see before you an unfortunate man,' he began, 'but not

a rogue and a liar; you may trust me—yes, you may trust me now—as your father trusted me before; you may say indeed to his own undoing, but that was owing to no fault of mine, but to human weakness, and you have heard the worst of it from my own lips.’

‘I do not think you were to blame in that matter,’ said Walter gently; ‘if you were so, though it was a dreadful business, you have my full forgiveness, as I am sure you had that of my poor father.’

‘I thank you for saying so, my lad, with all my heart. With such words in my ears I should be a villain indeed were I to play you false. It is not a pleasant thing to have to say that one’s own mother’s son is a rascal, but there is no help for it but to confess as much; my brother Edward is one of that sort. He has been so from his cradle. Yes, Heaven knows I have tried to think otherwise, though I have had proof enough to the contrary. It seems an unnatural and ungrateful thing to speak, when I am at this moment sharing the roof and eating the bread that his good offices have obtained for me. And let me tell you, Walter Sinclair, he has promised me much more—a reward so great that I dare not even think of it—if I will only join him in his cursed plans and help to accomplish your ruin!’

‘My ruin?’ cried Walter in astonishment.

‘Yes, what else? To tear you from her you love, to take away the only object from you that serves to make life worth the living, to drive you out of Paradise into a barren land, where not a flower grows nor a bird sings, and the sun itself only rises to show you your own wretchedness—is not *that* ruin?’

‘It is indeed,’ groaned Walter; ‘I have been face to face with it for what seems an eternity, the last hour.’

‘Well, that shall not be. Had I been in your case no power on earth would have made me believe that those words written by Grace’s hand came from her heart.’

‘But your brother——’

‘Still less would I have believed *his* words,’ broke in the other contemptuously. ‘You did not know him, it is true, as I know him, but you knew *her*, and how could you think even for an instant that the advice of a lawyer or the reflection that she should lose money by it—were it millions—would cause that angelic nature to break her plighted word and forsake the man she loves?’



‘It is not the money, Richard—though that has weight with me, though not with her—nor the arguments of her guardian; it is “the dead hand” that has turned her from me, the last junction of a loving father.’

‘That is what Edward told you, did he?’ answered Richard bitterly. ‘He said there were other reasons for which I must not press. His delicacy of mind was always extraordinary, though he forgot it for a moment in taking it for granted that I was even a greater scoundrel than himself. I don’t believe his story. There is at all events some huge lie at the bottom of his mountain of words; there always is, if you dig deep enough. I am here to help you to dig.’

‘I am infinitely obliged to you,’ said Walter hoarsely; ‘only show me where to put the spade in.’

‘Well, to begin with, stop where you are till you find there are real grounds for your departure, and, above all, take no dismissal save from Grace’s own lips.’

‘She says, “Seek not to see me,”’ answered Walter piteously. ‘I love her too dearly to disobey her.’

‘She does *not* say it, she *writes* it,’ answered Richard confidently, ‘which is a very different thing. I have known men, captive in Indian hands, compelled to write things to their friends quite other than what their hearts dictated, yet their end, poor souls, was all the same; and so it will be with Grace, if you give way to this wretched scruple. When he has his point to gain Edward is an Indian—subtle, treacherous, and, though not delighting, as they do, in the torture they inflict, utterly callous to it. Somehow or other—I have not his wits, and cannot read his brain, but I know *the man*—somehow or other Grace Tremehere has become his captive; his net is round her—she is beating her tender wings against it, poor soul, poor soul!—but his will is her will, and these words his words. If such a stake were worth speaking of, I would lay my life upon it.’

The rude eloquence of his words was backed by an earnestness and conviction that would have made their way to any heart, even had it harboured no such desire to be convinced as Walter’s did.

‘I will stay here till Grace tells me to go,’ he said. ‘How can I ever thank you enough for bringing me this ray of hope?’

‘You never can,’ was the grave rejoinder. ‘Thank Heaven that sent me here instead. Remain in your room, whatever happens, till I come back with tidings of how the land lies.’

Budge for nobody, and least of all for my brother ; he has no more right to give you notice to quit the Hall than I have. No one has any right to do it save Grace only.'

It was strange to see one so eccentric thus dictating a course of action to another of sane mind, and so it struck Walter himself ; but when we desire anything very much we are not solicitous to inquire closely into the capacity or the motives of those who volunteer their assistance to us. The notion of any plot having been devised against him had never entered Walter's head, but, once there, it filled him with an indignation that would have astonished the plotter. A generous and impulsive nature is easily imposed upon, but having discovered that it has been so, it often becomes more dangerous to deal with than a more calculating one. It has a wrong to humanity to avenge as well as its private wrong—a sentiment which is absolutely unintelligible to the mere scoundrel. It was fortunate perhaps for all parties, but certainly for Mr. Edward Roscoe, that his impatience to see Walter out of the house did not urge him to pay that young gentleman another visit till some time had elapsed after Richard's revelation to him. When he did come, 'Bradshaw' in hand, Walter had cooled down, and was found, though with a somewhat trembling hand, engaged as before upon his plan-drawing.

'You have not much time to lose, my good fellow,' said his visitor with friendly solicitude, 'if you want, as I conclude, to catch the night mail. I have ordered the dogcart to be round in twenty minutes.'

'I am sorry that you should have troubled yourself, Mr. Roscoe, but if I go to-day it will only be to my old quarters at the head of the lake, and I should not go even so far as that without saying good-bye to Grace.'

'Not surely after her expressed wish that you should not seek to see her, Mr. Sinclair?' answered the other, in a tone of mild astonishment that suited ill with his knitted brow.

'Yes, I remember what she wrote perfectly well, but I intend to hear that wish from her own lips. It is possible that I may have given you a contrary impression. I have also heard all your brother had to say upon the subject ; but I have been thinking over the matter since, and that is the resolution to which I have come. And it is not to be broken.'

'Nothing, Mr. Sinclair, but your youth and inexperience can excuse such a conclusion,' observed the other calmly. 'It is an



outrage upon hospitality, to say the least of it. You will compel me to ask Miss Agnes herself to give you your *congé*.'

'I shall not take it even from her, but only from Grace herself.'

'Then you will at least take the consequences,' exclaimed Mr. Roscoe furiously, 'for in that case I will have you turned out by the servants.'

'You have dropped your mask, however,' replied Walter coolly—though indeed the other's face had lost its natural expression and become a mask, with rage and malignity painted upon it—that saves me all further circumlocution, at which I am at such a disadvantage with you. As for turning me out, I possess a revolver, and if any violence is offered to me I shall look upon you as the instigator, and give you its contents. You will have the "first chance," as the lawyer said to the mortgagee.'

As the other stood silent for a moment, and menacing, as a volcano before its outbreak, Agnes was seen to hurry by, crying out, 'Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Roscoe!'

He threw open the door at once—not sorry, perhaps, to have his interview cut short. 'I am here; what is the matter?'

'I am afraid Grace is very ill,' she answered excitedly. 'Phillippa and I can do nothing with her.'

Walter came forward to the door. The flush of anger had passed from his face, which now only showed anxiety and alarm.

For the moment Agnes forgot his changed relations with her sister, and with womanly sympathy observed:

'Yes, indeed, she is very ill, Walter. The doctor should be sent for at once, Mr. Roscoe.'

'To be sure. I will order Saltfish to be saddled at once; she will do the five miles in twenty minutes. Perhaps Mr. Sinclair himself would like to go.'

'By all means,' Walter was about to say, but a glance at the other's Mephistophelean face prevented it; he remembered too Richard's last injunction, 'Budge for nobody, and least of all for Edward,' and was not this Edward's advice?

'No, no!' put in Agnes quickly. 'The mare is queer-tempered and must have one she knows for her rider. Tell Charles to go.'

Mr. Roscoe turned away at once to obey her.

Having received no instructions from her domestic adviser as to giving him his *congé*, Agnes would, as Walter sagely judged, be open to reason.

‘With sickness in a house, Miss Agnes,’ he said softly, ‘it is generally advisable for the “stranger within its gates” to depart. But being at the cottage here, it is impossible that I should be in anybody’s way. Under the circumstances, therefore, I must ask your leave to remain where I am till I am assured of dear Grace’s safety.’

Perhaps Walter’s youth and good looks pleaded for him, though she had a suspicion that his presence would be unwelcome to Mr. Roscoe, or perhaps Grace’s illness touched her woman’s heart. She hesitated, and looked round as if for advice, but Mr. Edward was in the stable yard and out of reach, and in the end nature had her way.

‘Your request does not appear to me unreasonable, Mr. Sinclair,’ she replied—then added more doubtfully, ‘So far as I am concerned, of course you are very welcome to my hospitality.’

‘Then no one else has a right to deny it to me,’ said Walter quickly.

This was imprudent, because it suggested the very obstacle Agnes had in her mind.

‘That is so,’ she answered; ‘still, circumstances may arise—What is it, Mr. Richard?’

Richard Roscoe was approaching from the Hall, evidently in a state of great excitement. ‘What is it?’ he echoed vehemently. ‘Merely that you are, amongst you, trying to send to heaven before her time the sweetest soul that ever dwelt in human form. Philippa tells me that Grace is in a high fever, and does not recognise you as her sisters—not, Heaven knows, that *that* is any proof of madness!’

‘You must be mad yourself to say so,’ exclaimed Agnes with indignation. ‘I shall certainly acquaint your brother with the language you have thought fit to use to me.’

‘He may murder me if he likes, but he shall not murder Grace,’ cried Richard. ‘I know the temptation is very great to all of you. You want to divide by two instead of by three.’

‘What, in Heaven’s name, does the man mean?’ asked Agnes, addressing herself to Walter.

‘*He* doesn’t know,’ continued Richard scornfully; ‘but my cunning brother knows, and I think *you* know. You will tell him what I say, and get the house cleared of me as well as of Sinclair. Then you will have Grace all to yourselves to do as you please with, and there will be murder done.’



‘If there is enough sanity in this man to make it worth while to note his words at all,’ said Agnes with dignity, ‘I call upon you, Mr. Sinclair, to tell him what I have just said to you: “that you are free to stay here as long as you please.”’

‘That is so, is it?’ said Richard, as Walter bowed in confirmation; ‘then here we remain together to keep watch and ward over the innocent, and to take vengeance, if they work their wicked will upon her, against the guilty.’

‘There is no one, Richard, who means any harm to dear Grace, I am sure,’ said Walter soothingly. ‘The doctor has been sent for, and let us hope his report may be more favourable than you imagine.’

‘You don’t know Indians as I know them,’ observed Richard laconically, and with that he entered the cottage and retired to his own room.

‘Permit me, Miss Agnes,’ said Walter gently, ‘to express my sorrow that I should have been compelled, in your presence, to listen to such wild and wandering words. If I might venture to advise you, I would say, “Let them be forgotten.” It is clear that poor Mr. Richard is not himself, though I cannot imagine what has caused him to entertain the monstrous idea to which he has given expression.’

‘Nor I,’ said Agnes coldly; her anger had not left her, but was rather subsiding. The charge Richard had made against her was most unjust, but it was not absolutely groundless, for that division by two instead of three was a sum Mr. Roscoe had often spoken of to her. Nor was the cause of Richard’s excitement, since she knew of his secret love for Grace, so inconceivable to her as she pretended.

*(To be continued.)*

*NATURE AT NIGHT.*

I WELL remember what, as a country lad, impressed me most upon my first visit to London. It was the recollection of the fact that, during the small hours of the morning, I stood alone in the Strand. I had walked into the City from a suburban house, and as I paced rapidly along the pavement my footsteps echoed, and I listened to them until, startled, I came to a dead stop. The great artery of life was still; the pulse of the City had ceased to beat. Not a moving object was visible. Although bred among the lonely hills, I felt for the first time that this was to be alone—that this was solitude. I experienced a sense such as Macaulay's New-Zealander may experience when he sits upon the ruins of London Bridge; and then, for the first time, I knew whence the inspiration, and felt the full force and realism of Wordsworth's 'O God! the very houses seemed to sleep.' Than this I could detect no definite sound, only that vague and distant hum which for ever haunts and hangs over a great city.

Such a time of quiet as this can never be observed in the country. It matters not as to time or season; there seems to be no absolute and general period of repose. There is always something abroad—some creature of the fields and woods, which by its voice or movements is betrayed. Just as in an old rambling house there are always strange noises that cannot be accounted for, so in the by-paths of nature there are innumerable sounds which can never be localised. To those, however, who pursue night vocations in the country—gamekeepers, poachers, and others—there are always calls and cries which bespeak life as animate under the night as that of the day. This is attributable to various animals and birds, to night-flying insects, and even to fish. Let us track some of these sounds to their source.

'When comes still evening on, and twilight grey hath in her sober liv'ry all things clad'—then it is that the white owl comes abroad. Passing the remains of an old baronial hall, its piercing screech comes from the dismantled tower. Here the owls have lived time out of mind, and we have seen and heard them, asleep and awake, through every hour of the day and night. It is unnatural history to assert—as Mr. Gray asserts—that the



barn-owls ever mope, or mourn, or are melancholy. Neither are they grave monks, nor anchorites, nor pillared saints. A boding bird or a dolorous! Nonsense; they are none of these. They issue forth as very devils, and, like another spirit of the night, sail about seeking whom they may devour. The barn-owl is the 'screech' owl of the bird literature; the brown owl the true hooting owl. This species is found in old and heavily timbered districts, and it particularly loves the dark and sombre gloom of resinous pine woods. But the barn-owl is only the precursor of new life—life as animate under the night as that of the birds and butterflies under the day. We follow the path by the river, and on through the meadows. Among the nut-bush tops a bat is hawking for night-flying insects. Great white moths get up from the grass, and go looming away through the darkness. A bend in the stream brings us to a quiet river reach with brown pebbles and a shallow. A sentinel heron, that has been standing watchful on one leg, rises and flaps languidly away down the river reach. The consumptive figure of the gaunt bird stands by the stream through all weathers. He knows not times nor seasons, and is a great poacher. In the wind, when he takes his lone stand, his loose fluttering feathers look like driftwood caught in the bushes. He reminds one of the consumptive; but, unlike him, has wonderful powers of digestion, and, withal, an immense capacity for fish. Woe to the luckless mort or trout that comes within reach of his formidable pike, or to the attacking peregrine that he attempts to impale on his bill. The heron is essentially a wanderer, and, like Wordsworth's immortal leech-gatherer, he roams from pond to pond, from moor to moor. Herons come and go by the same routes; and night after night have we flushed our fisher from the selfsame shallow.

The peculiarly wild whistle of the curlew comes from out the night sky, and swifts screech for an hour after darkness has fallen. We are now by the covert side, and a strange 'churring' sound comes from the glades; it approaches nearer and nearer, until a loud flapping is heard in the bushes. The object approaches quite closely, and it is seen that the noise is produced by a large bird striking its wings together as they meet behind. Even in the darkness it may be detected that each wing is crossed by a definite white bar. The bird is the goatsucker or nightjar. Had we it in our hand, we should see that it was a connecting link between the owls and the swallows, having the soft plumage and

noiseless flight of the one, and the wide gape of the other. The object of the noise it produces is probably to disturb from the bushes the large night-flying moths upon which it feeds. The name 'goatsucker' the bird has from a superstitious notion that it sucks goats and cows—a myth founded probably upon the fact of its wide gape. It is certain that these birds may be seen flitting about the bellies of cattle as they stand knee-deep in the summer pastures. The reason of this is obvious, as there insect food is always abundant. Unless disturbed, the nightjar rarely comes abroad during the day, but obtains its food at twilight and dusk. Upon the limestone-covered fells it conforms marvellously to its environment, it being almost impossible to detect its curiously mottled plumage as the bird basks upon the grey stones, not more still than itself. Here it lays its two eggs, often without the slightest semblance of a nest, frequently upon the bare rock. Quite a peculiar interest attaches to this bird, inasmuch as it is furnished with a remarkable claw, the use of which is guessed at rather than known. This claw is serrated on its inner edge, and from actual experiments made upon nightjars in captivity we should surmise that its use is to free the long whiskers from the soft silvery dust which usually covers the bodies of night-flying moths. Certain it is that this substance gets upon the whiskers of the bird, and that the long hairs referred to are combed through the serrated claw. About the mouth the goatsucker is very swallow-like. It has a bullet-shaped head, large eyes, and a wide gape. Like the swallows, too, it has a weak ineffective bill and weak feet. This is explained by the fact that the bird, except when nesting, is rarely seen on the ground, and that it captures its insect prey on the wing. From twilight till grey does the fern-owl 'churr' and fly through the night.

As we proceed a splash comes from the river, and some large-winged fly has been sucked under. The night food comes on, and the reach boils. Water-rats, voles, and shrews are busy among the stones searching for insect larvæ, or gnawing the stalks of water-plants. The wafting of wings overhead betokens a curlew flying through the darkness to its feeding-grounds. The peculiarly lonely wail of the summer-snipe comes down stream, and a teal stretches her neck low over the sand. The river here resolves itself into a gorge, and runs darkly deep betwixt shelving rocks. The water ceaselessly moans and chafes down there in the darkness. Badgers have their haunt deep in the brambles, their tortuous



burrows running far out among the boulders. From the tree-tops we may watch them digging for roots and wasps' nests, and now and then snapping at flies. In a month the young ones will appear at the mouth of their burrow, and accompany their dam on her evening rambles. Passing the deep dub by the 'Force,' we find old Phil, the fisher, plying his silent trade even thus into the night. Phil leads his own life, and is contemplative as becomes his craft. Nature's every sight and sound he has, as it were, by heart, and he makes friends even with the creeping things. As we watch, a salmon, fresh from the sea, leaps from the silvery foam and flashes in the moonlight. One of the greatest night helps to the gamekeeper in staying the depredations of poachers is the lapwing. It is the lightest sleeper of the fields, starting up from the fallows and screaming upon the slightest alarm. Poachers dread the detection of this bird, and the keeper closely follows its cry. A hare rushing wildly past will put the plover away from its roost; and when hares act thus in the darkness, there is generally some good cause for it. The skylark and woodlark are both occasional night-singers, and it is quite common to hear cuckoos calling in the densest darkness. Still we follow on. Rabbits have made pitfalls in the loose yellow sand, and we see their white scuts as vanishing points in the darkness. These rustle away, and a hedgehog comes to the pool to drink. One of the latter we saw just now taken in the keeper's trap, the latter baited with a pheasant's egg. The squeal of a fowmart comes from the loose stones. Later he will feed on the frogs now croaking from the ditch; these he kills by piercing their skulls.

If the cuckoo tells her name to all the hills, so does the sedge-warbler to the fluted reeds. And, like that wandering voice, our little bird seems dispossessed of a corporeal existence, and on through summer is 'still longed for, never seen'; and this though common enough, for you may wander long among the willows, with a bird in every bush, without one showing outside its corral of boughs. Wherever vegetation grows tall and luxuriant there the 'reed-wren' may be found. It travels in the night; you go out some May morning, and the rollicking intoxication of the garrulous little bird comes from out the selfsame bush from which you missed it in autumn. From the time it first arrives it begins to sing louder and louder as the warm weather advances, especially in the evenings. Then it is that it listens to the loud swelling bird-choir of the woods, selecting a

note from this and another from that; for the sedge-warbler is an imitator, a mocking bird, and reproduces in fragments the songs of many species. The little mimic runs up and down the gamut in the most riotous fashion, parodying not only the loud clear whistle of the blackbird, but the wholly differing soft sweet notes of the willow-wren. This is kept up through the night, and the puzzle is when the little musician sleeps. Our angler friends call it the 'fisherman's nightingale.' If the sedge-warbler ceases its song through any hour of the day or night, a clod thrown into the bushes will immediately set it going again. Yet what can be said of a song that a clod of earth will produce? Sometimes for a moment it is sweet, but never long sustained. In the north, where there are few ditches, the species frequents river-banks and the sides of tarn; in the south, it abounds everywhere in marshy places. Here the rank grass swarms with them; the thicker the reed-patch or willow the more birds are there. With perfect silence, a distant view of the bird is sometimes obtained at the top of the bushes, as it flits after an insect. As it runs up and clings to the tall grass stalks, it is pleasing both in form and colour. Among the grasses and water-plants it has its game preserves. Water-beetles, ephemerae, and the teeming aquatic insects constitute its food. To watch through a glass the obtaining of these is most interesting. 'Reed-sparrow' and 'reed-wren' are pretty provincial names of the bird, each expressive enough.

A powerful perfume rises from the ground-weeds, and stooping low we detect dame's violet. The purple *Hesperis matronalis* emits its sweet smell only at night, and is fertilised by moths. This, too, holds good of the evening campion (*Lychnis vespertina*), only its scent is fainter. For this, however, the colour of its white petals amply compensates, as they are more easily seen in the darkness. Farther on we detect *Orchis bifolia*, which is also particularly sweet, and with the same object. All these emit fragrance at night, and are fertilised *only* by night-flying insects.

A crash—the underwood is rudely torn and a form disappears in the darkness. The crackling of boughs and of dead sticks marks on the stillness of night the poacher's sinuous path through the woods. Soon his old black bitch slinks by the hedge, clears the fence at a bound, and doggedly follows her master's footsteps. Crake answers crake from the meadows, as they have done through the night. Now they are at our feet—now far out



yonder. The night call of the partridge comes from the gorse, and the first pheasant crows from the larch branches. On the hill we wade through a herd of recumbent heifers, their sketchy forms sharply outlined in the darkness; these are quietly chewing the cud, and turn upon us their great soft eyes; some even press their dewy noses against us. The sweet breath of kine is wafted on the night, and the drone of many insects.

It is wonderful how lightly the creatures of the fields sleep. The faintest rustle brings chirping from the bushes, and in the densest darkness wood-pigeons coo. Jays screech in the glade, and the wood-owls hoot. One of the essentially night-singers is the grasshopper-warbler. Shy and retiring in its habits, it is rarely found far distant from aquatic vegetation. Moist situations are most congenial, as among the plants that affect them it finds its winged food. Although generally frequenting such spots as indicated, it sometimes seeks out considerable elevations. These are covered with coarse grass, bents, furze, and heather; and here, far into the night, it reels out its continuous cricket-like song. It returns to the same spot year after year, and although from these the particular notes may often be heard, the singer itself is nowhere to be seen. At the least noise it drops from the support on which it depends into the grass beneath, then is silent. The song is long continued, but the sounds are constantly shifting, marking the restless track of the singer on the night. It needs no stretch of imagination to detect in the notes of this species the similarity to the grasshopper, and the 'monotonous whirr like the spinning of a fishing reel' is fairly expressive of the bird's song. Perfect master of intricate maze and covert, it is never far from them. Even though it has ventured beyond its accustomed limits, its vigilance sends it back at the least noise, though its retreat is rarely observed, for instead of flying it creeps closely, never rising when alarmed. Again we pass into the darkness. Moles have thrown up ridges of loose light soils, and these cross us again and again. The short, sharp bark of a fox comes from the scrub, and soon dog and vixen answer each other across the dale.

Now we enter the park. The deer, disturbed in the darkness, get up and walk quietly away. A white fawn is outlined against the dark herd. Whenever an owner dies, say the menials at the Hall, a great bough is riven from the giant oak; whenever a new heir comes to the estate a white fawn is born.

Under the dark slabs by the river the otters breed; but it is impossible to dislodge them. Iron-sinewed, shaggy otter-hounds have tried, but never with success. The fishermen complain of the quantity of fish which the otter destroys. Trout are found dead on the rocks; salmon are there bitten in the shoulder, but only partially eaten. The evolutions of the otter in its native element are the poetry of motion minus only the metre. We take our place by a stream-side and breathlessly wait. A faint whistle, unlike that of any bird, comes up stream, and the dark still water is moved. Trout cease to rise, the whistle comes nearer, and some long dark object makes its way between the parted stems. The rustle among the withy wands is repeated again and again; and now we know that the young otters have left their impregnable rocky bank, and are following their dam. She has reconnoitred, and all is safe. Paddling down stream come two objects, and, arriving at the pool, stop, tumble and frolic, rolling over and over and round and round, performing the most marvellous evolutions. They swing on a willow spray, and dash with lightning rapidity at a piece of floating bark—tumble with it, wrestle with it, and go through a hundred graceful movements; then are motionless, then begin to play, and so continue for nearly an hour, when, as if suddenly alarmed, they rush down stream to their feeding-grounds. Fishing is continued through the darkness, until in the dewy meadow another sound comes up the wind, and the deep sonorous voice of an otter-hound breaks into the fairy-like dawn scene. . . .

When almost the whole of the insect world has folded its wings in sleep, there is a class of night-flyers whose hours of activity are those of darkness. Among the more interesting of these is the male Glow-worm—the English lantern-fly—whose light may be plainly seen as it flits past, pale and ghostly against the dark background of some deeply foliated bank or shadowy wood. Then there is the great army of night-flying moths, whose nocturnal wanderings present such a weird appearance in the darkness, and whose life-history contrasts so sharply with the sunny dalliance of their butterfly cousins. As moths have to contend with the night winds, their constitution is more robust than that of the *Rhopolocera*, or day-flyers. Their bodies are thicker, their wings narrower and more strongly nerved. As they settle on corrugated bark or grey stones to their deep diurnal sleep, their sober and inconspicuous colouring invariably



saves them even from detection. In many species this daily trance is so profound that a slumbering insect may be transfixed and never detect the occurrence until twilight again comes round. But if the closely folded upper wings are quiet and sober in colouring, this is only for protective reasons; for brilliant toilets are presented when twilight falls and affords its dewy veil. Under the closely folded wings of dusky grey are bright bodices of red, scarlet, crimson, and orange. What an admirable chapter would 'The Hues of the Night-flyers' afford by one who has fondly watched the fairy things through the dewy hours of a short summer night!

The twilight-flyers form a distinct class from the night-flyers, and have several well-marked characteristics. They are termed hawk-moths, and have long, sharp, scythe-like wings. The death's-head moth, the largest and most interesting of the British species, belongs to this group. It seldom comes abroad before darkness has fallen, and is always conspicuous in its nocturnal flight. Linnæus, following his habitual system of picturesque nomenclature, placed this insect in the 'sphinx' family on account of the form of its magnificent caterpillar, and gave it the specific name of *Atropos*, in allusion to the popular superstition, Atropos being, according to Hesiod, the one of the Fates whose office it was to cut the thread of human life, spun by her sisters Clotho and Lachesis. Modern entomologists have preserved the idea of Linnæus, giving to the new genus the name of *Acherontia*—pertaining to Acheron, one of the streams which, in the Greek mythology, have to be passed before entering the infernal regions. A low wailing sound which this insect emits has greatly added to the terror which its appearance inspires among ignorant rustics. The death's-head moth is a really splendid insect. Its stretched wings cover four and a half inches, and it is the largest of the British Lepidoptera. As is well known, it has its popular name from a marvellously good representation of a skull and crossbones upon the upper part of the thorax—a mark which has caused it to be an object of dread in every country which it inhabits. Fluttering at the window in the darkness, or entering the house by the open door just after the close of twilight, it is considered a certain omen of death. Like the hoarse croak of the raven and the 'boding' hoot of the owl, the appearance of the death's-head is said to be followed by disease and death. The power possessed by this insect of emitting a shrill creaking sound is

thought to be unique among British Lepidoptera; each time the sound is emitted the whole body gives a convulsive sort of start. The insect can be induced to utter this strange note by being irritated.

Another especially interesting night-flyer is the ghost-moth. Just as the twilight of a summer evening is deepening into darkness, and a soft warm wind stirs the foliage of the woods, the ghost-moth comes abroad. The observer sees a fitful apparition which suddenly vanishes into space. First a large insect with long wings is seen advancing; it comes straight on, then flutters in the air, and is gone. Whilst endeavouring to discover the mysterious retreat of the moth, it will suddenly reappear, and even whilst the eye closely follows its flight will again vanish. This effect is produced by the different colour of the wings on their upper and under sides—above they are snowy-white, and consequently visible even in the deep twilight; but on the lower side they, as well as the whole body, are of a deep dusky brown, so that when that side is suddenly turned towards the spectator it becomes invisible. As the male flies in the night, the white shining upper surface of the wings glitters luminously, almost appearing as if giving out their own light.

Standing in one of the rides of a woodland glade just as day is departing, one is pierced and thrilled by a perfect storm of song. This loud-swelling volume of song softens as the darkness deepens, and then only the polyglot wood-thrush is heard. The stem of the silver birch has ceased to vibrate to the blackbird's whistle, and as darkness comes a new set of sounds take possession of the night. But passing down through the meadows we have other thoughts than listening to these.

A silent river reach shaded by trees. Darkness has fallen, and the heavy dew stands on the grass. We know that the poachers have lately been busy knitting their nets, and have come to intercept them. The 'alder-dub' may be easily netted, and contains a score nice trout. Poachers carefully study the habits of fishes as well as those of game, both winged and furred. To the alder-dub they know the trout make when the river is low. The poachers have not noted signs of wind and weather and of local migrations for twenty years past to be ignorant of this. And so here, in the dew-beaded grass, we lie in wait. It is two o'clock, and a critical time. A strange breaking is in the east—grey, half light, half mist. If they come they will come now. In an hour the darkness will not hide them. We lie close to the



bank thickly covered with bush and scrub. Two sounds are heard and have been all night—the ceaseless call of the crane and the not less ceaseless song of the sedge-bird. A lapwing gets up in the darkness and screams—an ominous sound, and we are all ear. Three forms descend the opposite bank and on to the gravel bed. They empty the contents of a bag and begin to unroll its slow length. The breaking of a rotten twig in a preparatory movement for the dash sufficiently alarms them, and they rush into the wood as we into the water—content now to secure their cumbersome illegal net, and thus effectually stop their operations for three weeks at least. The grey becomes dawn and the dawn light as we wade wearily home through the long wet grass. Still the sedge-warbler sings.

Another night-singer is the blackcap. The lute-like mellowness and wild sweetness of its song give it a high place among British warblers—next only to the nightingale. The blackcap has neither the fulness nor the force, but it has all and more than the former's purity. This little hideling, with its timid obtrusiveness, never strays far from cultivation. One provision it requires, and that is seclusion. Its shy and retiring habits teach it to search out dense retreats, and it is rarely seen. If observed on the confines of its corral of boughs, it immediately begins to perform a series of evolutions, until it has placed a dense screen between itself and the observer.

Many times have we heard the round, full, lute-like plaintiveness of the nightingale—sounds that seem to seize and ingrain themselves in the very soul, that 'make the wild blood start in its mystic springs.' To us the delicious triumph of the bird's song is in its utter *abandon*, the lute-like sweetness, the silvery liquidness, the bubbling and running over, and the wild gurgling 'jug, jug, jug!' To say this, and more—that the nightingale is a mad sweet polyglot, that it is the sweetest of English warblers, the essence and quintessence of song, that it is the whole wild-bird achievement in one—these are feeble, feeble! This 'light-winged dryad of the trees' is still 'in some melodious spot of beechen green and shadows numberless, singing of summer in full-throated ease'—and here she will remain. Unlike the songs of some of our warblers, hers can never be reproduced. Attempt to translate it, and it eludes you; only its meagre skeleton remains. Isaac Walton, in his quaint eloquence, tries to say what he felt. 'The nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that

it might make mankind to think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight . . . should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet decants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and re-doubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, "Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth?"

Although Britain can show no parallel, either in number or brilliance, to the living lights of the tropics, we are not without several interesting phosphorescent creatures of our own. Those whose business leads them abroad in the fields and woods through the short summer nights are often treated to quite remarkable luminous sights. Last night the writer was lying on a towering limestone escarpment, waiting to intercept a gang of poachers. The darkness was dead and unrelieved, and a warm rain studded every grass-blade with moisture. When the day and sun broke, this would glow with a million brilliant prismatic colours, then suddenly vanish. But the illumination came sooner and in a different way. The rain ceased, and hundreds of tiny living lights lit up the sward. In the intense darkness these shone with an unusual brilliancy, and lit up the almost impalpable moisture. Every foot of ground was studded with its star-like gem, and these twinkled and shone as the fire-flies stirred in the grass. The sight was quite an un-English one, and the soft green glow only paled at the coming of day. One phase of this interesting phenomenon is that now we can have a reproduction of it nightly. The fire-flies were collected, turned down on the lawn, and their hundred luminous lamps now shed a soft lustre over all the green.

Why our British fire-flies are designated 'glow-worms' is difficult to understand. *Lampyrus noctiluca* has nothing worm-like about it. It is a true insect. The popular misconception has probably risen in this wise. The female glow-worm, the light-giver, is wingless; the male is winged. The latter, however, has but little of the light-emitting power possessed by the female. Only the light-givers are collected, and being destitute of the first attribute of an insect, wings, are set down in popular parlance as worms. Old mossy banks, damp hedgerows, and shaded woods are the loved haunts of the fire-flies, and the warm nights of the soft summer months most induce them to burn their soft lustre. Some widowed worm or fire-fly may shed her luminous self on the darkness even on into dying summer or autumn. But this is unusual. It is not definitely known what purpose is served by the emission of the soft green light, but it has long been suspected



that the lustre was to attract the male, and this seems reasonable. Gilbert White found that glowworms were attracted by the light of candles, and many of them came into his parlour. Another naturalist by the same process captured as many as forty male glowworms in an evening. Still another suggestion is that the phosphorescence serves as a protection or means of defence to the creatures possessing it, and an incident which seems to support this view has been actually witnessed. This was in the case of a carabus which was observed running round and round a phosphorescent centipede, evidently wishing but not daring to attack it. A third explanation of the phenomenon is that it serves to afford light for the creature to see by. A somewhat curious confirmation of this is the fact that in the insect genus to which our British fireflies belong, the *Lampyris*, the degree of luminosity is exactly in inverse proportion to the development of vision. Fireflies glow with greatest brilliancy at midnight. Their luminosity is first seen soon after dark :—

The glowworm shows the matin to be near,  
And 'gins to pale his ineffectual fire.

As the insects rest on the grass and moss, the difference in the amount of light emitted is most marked. While the luminous spot indicated by a female is quite bright, the males show only as the palest fire. When on the wing the light of the latter is not seen at all. Heavy rain, so long as it is warm, serves only to increase the brightness. The seat of light in the glowworm is in the tail, and proceeds from three luminous sacs in the last segment of the abdomen. The male has only two of these, and the light proceeding from them is comparatively small. During favourable weather the light glows steadily, but at other times is not constant. The fireflies of the tropics—those composing the genus *Lampyris*—vary to the extent that while certain species control their light, others are without this power. The light of our English glowworm is undoubtedly under its control, as upon handling the insect it is immediately put out. It would seem to take some little muscular effort to produce the luminosity, as one was observed to move continually the last segment of the body as long as it continued to shine. The larva of the glowworm is capable of emitting light, but not to be compared to that of the developed insect. Both in its mature and immature forms *Lampyris noctiluca* plays a useful part in the economy of nature. To the agriculturist and fruit-grower it is a special friend. Its

diet consists almost wholly of small-shelled snails, and it comes upon the scene just when these farm and garden pests are most troublesome. British fireflies probably never yet figured as personal ornaments to female beauty. This is, and has always been, one of their uses to the dusky daughters of the tropics. They are often studded in the coiled and braided hair, and perform somewhat the same office as the diamond for more civilised belles. Spanish ladies and those of the West Indies enclose fireflies in bags of lace or gauze, and wear them amid their hair, or disposed about their persons. The luminosity of our modest English insect is far outshone by several of its congeners. Some of these are used in various ways for illumination, and it is said that the brilliancy of the light is such that the smallest print can be read by that proceeding from the thoracic spots alone, when a single insect is moved along the lines. In the Spanish settlements fireflies are frequently used in a curious way when travelling at night. The natives tie an insect to each great toe, and on fishing and hunting expeditions make torches of them by fastening several together. The same people have a summer festival at which the garments of the young people are covered with fireflies, and being mounted on fine horses similarly ornamented, the latter gallop through the dusk, the whole producing the effect of a large moving light.

Another phosphorescent little creature found commonly in Britain is a centipede with the expressive name *Geophilus electricus*. This is a tiny living light which shows its luminous qualities in a remarkable and interesting fashion. It may not uncommonly be seen on field and garden paths, and leaves a lovely train of phosphorescent fire as it goes. This silvery train glows in the track of the insect, sometimes extending to 20 inches in length. In addition to this its phosphorescence is exhibited by a row of luminous spots on each side of its body, and these points of pale fire present quite a pretty sight when seen under favourable circumstances. It was stated that the light-giving qualities of the fireflies might be designed to serve them to see by; but this fails to apply to the little creature under notice, as it is without eyes.

There are still other British insects which have the repute of being phosphorescent, though the evidence is not yet quite satisfactory. Among them are the male cricket and 'daddy-long-legs,' both of which are reported to have been seen in a phosphorescent condition.



MORE CIRCUIT NOTES.

*Aylesbury*: November 19.—A court like a Georgian chapel, pillared and galleried in black oak, with an ancient weary clock that has ticked through many a famous trial and many a famous speech, forensic and political. Here was tried Quaker Tawell, who poisoned a woman at Slough, and earned for his advocate the sobriquet of Applepip Kelly, the advocate making the hopeless effort to explain the presence of prussic acid by the evidence of a large number of apples and their pips eaten by the deceased; Tawell, the first criminal captured by the electric telegraph, and properly and duly hanged. That is the court-house window, with a high light like an artist's in Charlotte Street, out of which he stepped to die, dropping (as I am informed) into a tea-chest below. You see in these quiet country places, where executions are scarce, one must do the best one can and is sometimes driven to shifts. And here Disraeli delivered himself of many a gay prophetic utterance in the days when *Punch* drew him in a smock-frock or cheap-jack's dress, playing protection and other tricks with the open-mouthed electors of Bucks.

Now in the crowded court, white faces against the black oak and the polished steel halberts of the police glinting in the gas, stands a young architect in the dock, educated above his capacity or the chances of honestly exercising it, into crime, and charged with sending a threatening letter to his aunt. A very bad, fluent, dangerous type, easily to become a Casanova; and immediately, much to his furious surprise, to receive a sentence of six years' penal servitude. His lips move, he grows dead white and quivers; then, turning to the gallery, shakes his fist and yells 'I'll be revenged on you when I'm out,' and is hurried below amidst what newspaper reporters call a sensation. Poor old lady, his aunt; imagine her terrified calculation of the expiry of the boy's sentence, her horrors as the winter evenings draw in and faces are fancied at the window in November mirk, her shudders as the garden-gate slams and steps come up the path. Family quarrels, family vengeance, depend upon it the young villain will know best how to terrify and harm her; why, what

are our relatives for if it be not to know very well all that we like and all that we particularly hate ?

Poachers follow, tattered hawthornbuds, old soldiers in trouble many a time before for desertion and assault and trespass, and now caught with nets and bludgeons and stones (which they swear were apples), by the three velvetens who give cheerful evidence, and display the guns and caps taken, with a satisfaction they don't attempt to disguise. The father of one of the prisoners with the most scrupulous stupidity proves an alibi on the wrong day, and they are all convicted. That is the explanation of most of these alibis that seem so conclusive ; they are the incidents of the wrong day, only you can't always make it clear to the jury ; so alibis are mostly successful. Hence Mr. Weller's wail for the use of one by Samivel ; he had often, no doubt, heard their efficacy discussed at assize time by attorneys in the bar.

*Bedford : November 21.*—I just went down below the court to look at the cells, and finding one of them locked, asked who was inside. In reply the jailor opened the door, and in the dingy grey light I recognised an old man, Salvation Army, who had that morning been sentenced to eight years' penal servitude for a very gross crime ; and now, with his head on his hands, spectacles pushed up and cap on the back of his rough grey hair, was quietly eating bread and meat. 'What have you got there ?' I asked him. 'Eight years,' he replied, with his mouth full. 'No, no ; what are you eating ?' 'Oh, bread and meat.' 'Good ?' 'Very good.' 'You were sentenced this morning.' 'Aye.' 'Are you sorry ?' 'Nowhere to go, no home,' the old man said, pushing down his spectacles to look at me, and then picking at the brown bread while he talked, much as an old woman knits. 'Only got a sister, she's got enough to do to look after herself, don't want me ; no wife, no child, may as well be in prison. I'm sixty-four years of age.' 'You don't mean to give any trouble, eh ? You're going to behave yourself ?' 'Look here,' said he, laying a couple of knubbly fingers on my arm, I was sitting beside him, 'I'm one of the quietest old men ever stepped, don't give nobody any trouble. Ask the police at Bastow, they'll tell you I'm one of the quietest you ever saw in your life ; always was and always mean to be.' A kindly light gleamed over his goatish old face, while the policeman laughed and nodded his head. 'You're all right,' he said.



We were talking last night of juries, and as to how often their verdicts are wrong. Everyone knows they often acquit wrongfully; no one could give of his own experience an instance of a wrongful conviction. One of our party who had been present at the trial, in York Castle in 1861, gave a curious example of that indefinite something, instinct or whatever it may be, on which (in default of actual evidence) juries often act, and which as often seems to lead them right as wrong. A man was being tried for a Trades Union outrage; he was charged with having thrown a bomb into a house where a workman lived who had refused to join them; he had mistaken the house, thrown the bomb into a bedroom where an old woman was asleep, the bomb had exploded and killed her. The evidence against the prisoner was not conclusive, but seemed tolerably strong. A girl living opposite had heard the crash, had looked out and seen a man she believed to be the prisoner running away; would not swear positively, but to the best of her belief that was the man. Another witness swore to him more positively; for, running away along the side of the wall, his coat had caught in a hook outside a butcher's shop, this happening in a low quarter of Sheffield, and turning to disengage it the moon fell full on his face, and that was the man, she was sure, the man in the dock. Moreover, in his lodgings was found a coat, admittedly the prisoner's, with just such a tear. Notwithstanding, the jury acquitted him, and with a shout he threw his cap up to the gallery and was carried off in a carriage and pair by his rejoicing Trades Union brethren. Now, in 1864 these outrages were examined into by a committee sitting at Sheffield, and an indemnity was given to anyone giving evidence before them; when not only was it proved that the prisoner of 1861 had not thrown the bomb, by the man coming forward who had, but it was also clear that the witnesses at his trial were right; he had been in the street at the time, and hearing the explosion and running away, just as anyone else might have done, had been seen, and had torn his coat exactly in the manner described. The jury were right, though there wasn't probably another soul in court except themselves and the prisoner who thought them so.

One hears a good many tales on circuit and can't tell how many of them are known outside the profession, or are worth reproducing. Here's an instance. A prisoner was being tried for his life in the days when horse-stealing was a capital offence;

the evidence was all against him and he had no defence but an alibi ; swore it was a case of mistaken identity, that he was a sailor and was away in the West Indies on some cutting-out expedition at the time when the affair happened ; thousands of miles away and knew nothing whatever about it. Just before the vital, or lethal, moment of sentence, prisoner catches sight of a bluff sailor-like gentleman dozing in the magistrates' seats. 'Lieutenant Maintop, ahoy,' he shouts, 'the man who can prove my innocence.' Sailor-like man wakes with a start, rubs his eyes, is requested by the judge to recognise the prisoner, who excitedly calls to him that he is Jack Bowline of H.M.S. 'Thunder,' one of the boat's crew who cut out the French frigates in Porto Rico bay. Sailor-like man, flustered at being so suddenly woke and finding all eyes fixed on him, declares in his hearty honest fashion that though there certainly was a Jack Bowline in his watch, and one of the aforesaid crew, he does not recognise him in the prisoner. Increasing, overpowering excitement of the prisoner, who like all men 'will give all that he hath for his life'; sailor-like distress of the lieutenant, torn between the determination to say nothing but the absolute truth and the desire to save a fellow creature's life. At last, says he, 'if the man *is* Bowline he will be easily identified by a cut on the back of his head from a French cutlass which he got under my very nose in that very expedition, and fell back into my arms.' Prisoner's head examined, just such a cut ; triumphant acquittal ; Bowline and the lieutenant leave the town together in a chaise and pair ; cheers and subscription of thirty guineas for the poor ill-used sailor prisoner. Three months later they were both hanged for highway robbery, prisoner and witness. Lieutenant Maintop and Jack Bowline were old accomplices in crime, the alibi and business of recognition was a well-arranged plant. *Vivent les gueux !*

*Northampton : November 26.*—It is half-past eight at night and we have been sitting since nine this morning. How sombre and dramatic justice seems at such an hour ; the moisture running down the black windows, a hard frost outside, candles guttering on the bench, yellow gas ponderously hanging from the heavy stuccoed Jacobean ceiling, and, lurking everywhere in the dark and crowded court, vengeful shadows, as though shapes demanding sentence on the wretched men in the dock. The governor of the gaol grasps the spikes and begs and prays for mercy ; he seems, poor creature, absolutely to writhe with terror and apprehension ; the herbalist, with his bad Japanese head, sticks his



hands in his hideous astrakan market-place-lecturer's coat, and assumes an aspect of vicious defiance. Provincial vice, is there anything in the world so loathly? Why is it people, even men so sensible as poets, are always chanting country virtue and city vice. In my experience, not altogether small, crime is infinitely worse at an ordinary assize than at the Old Bailey. And as for your *Rosière* or reputable Queen of the May, I will engage to get you one a good deal sounder in the Tottenham Court Road or Westbourne Grove than in any of these midland villages or towns.

The governor and herbalist get ten years' penal servitude each, and the court filters away. When I return in a few minutes to get a book I left, I hear them in the emptiness from outside yelling the evening papers. A court attendant is picking up pieces of paper and another putting the chairs straight on the bench. Below the dock, crushed and vacant, still sits the prisoner's son. I saw him when his father was being sentenced sitting so, his hand covering his face. Now he stares straight in front of him. The shadows seem to be closing in upon him where he sits under the solitary gas. Presently one of the attendants will touch him on the shoulder and tell him he is going to lock up the courts, and he will stagger out into the bitter cold of the world with a frozen heart.

It is often strange, as one saunters among the shops in these circuit towns, to come upon the witnesses, or even the prisoner just acquitted, as often one does, going about their ordinary business, buying note-paper or sausage rolls, just as we all have to do, however much of tragedy there may be in our lives. Here's a man coming towards me across the market-place eating something out of a paper bag, whom I left just now in the dock being tried for his life; it was a question whether he shot his sweetheart or she shot herself, and the jury have given him the benefit of the doubt. Here's a stout puce-faced man considering with his pretty daughter whether he'll buy a tin of salmon outside the grocer's, who were both of them just now the chief witnesses in a trial that will be one of the traditions of the country-side. Here's the doctor getting quietly into his gig, who just this moment was piecing the fragments of a broken skull on the ledge of the witness-box and tracing the course of the bullet for us; and a mother taking her daughter to the station who but for some mysterious good fortune might have had penal servi-

tude for life for killing her child. And so, whether one knows it or not, everywhere and every day we are rubbing shoulders in the streets and theatres with tragedy; as I in Kensington Gardens often meet a strolling vague old lady who drank of all the horrors of the Indian mutiny; hid for months, disguised as a native, in groves and ruined temples, and now goes to the Stores and afternoon performances just as any other old Bayswater dame whose greatest trouble has been a burst water-pipe, or an infectious sickness at the seaside.

*Leicester, Nov. 29.*—*Tête de visionnaire*, a sort of minor prophet, a Leicestershire Habakkuk, mumbling and moaning; with his shock colourless hair and beard, his great hooked white nose and thin cheeks; farmer, used to lie in bed all day, imagining himself dying, roused himself late one evening to get the gun out of the parlour and shoot at his brother-in-law saying good-night in the dining-room; brother-in-law, all plastered and starred about the head and neck, says there had been no quarrel; Habakkuk plainly mad. It appears he believed himself to have heart disease, due to lifting a sack three years ago, since when he has been mainly in bed, eating and drinking, moaning and dozing. The little servant of the farm tells us he always kept his hand over his heart, had worn quite a place there in his clothes, rubbed off all the buttons of his coats and waistcoats; was always complaining of himself and life, and very rightly. There are more of such lives being lived than one would imagine; poor creatures drifting into madness between the sheets. I knew an old lady who for years turned absolutely night into day; breakfasted at half-past eight in the evening, dined at one, tea at five and supper at seven in the morning; then to bed again. The servants were told of it when they were engaged, and seem rather to have enjoyed it. They got into the habit of sleeping between mealtimes and had the whole day to themselves. The old lady used to write her letters, read a good deal and walk out about the grounds, moon or not.

As for Habakkuk the jury find him mad and he stumbles moaning below, shortly to become violent and encased in a strait-waistcoat.

A village quarrel next; gossip Tib charges gossip Joan with breaking and entering and stealing a ham, one of two but recently cured. She produces the fellow to it, and the jury are called upon to compare it with the remains found in the prisoner



Joan's cottage. They turn it this way and that and pronounce unanimously that the two do not belong to the same pig. Discomfiture of Tib, who wraps the ham in her apron, rubs her nose and leaves the court talking virulently to herself.

*The Castle, Nov. 30.*—The grey court, with its fragments of ancient Norman work peering in, waits the judge. A far flourish of trumpets, another nearer—*The King drinks to Hamlet!*—the judge enters, bows; crime shuffles up to be tried and sentenced. First, the farm-girl, with swollen crying face, who shamefully hid her child. While she mops her poor shapeless cheeks, the judge with a few kindly sentences hands her over to her father to look after; she is to come up for judgment when called upon. And next a City Miss who did much the same, and looks as though it were not the first time she had been in such a position. Was lodging quietly in a respectable house when a watch was missed; box in her room searched for it, body of a child found there, might have been dead some weeks; truly, from that box the death-watch might have been heard and directed their search. She gets three months and appears to have expected more.

And now tragedy, veritable tragedy, as I understand it. The prisoner, a young surgeon, bends his head over the edge of the dock while the counsel for the prosecution, emotionless and even, reads the letters and unfolds the melancholy, nay, terrible story. How flat and bald the *darling sweetheart, faithful lover, I worship you, I adore you, with all my love for ever and ever*, sound in that horsehair voice. The prisoner listens as though he had never heard them before; I can see (shall I ever forget?) his young face, his dusty hair, his pincenez, his chestnut moustache, drawn cheeks and unshaven chin. You may see such young fellows at the seaside with the girls they are engaged to marry; they are going to wait a little, to get an appointment, to buy a practice, then to marry and live happy ever after. They come of what are called 'nice people,' of the best middle-class and suburban types. You may see them in the dress circle at the Haymarket and merry at the German Reed's, and laughing in the underground after afternoon performances; they read and think a little for themselves and throng the Academy in June; if tragedy lurk anywhere you do not think of it with them, nor ever conceive them as now the young fellow sits in that stained dock, desperately fighting for his liberty.

It is the young Lord Hamlet who hath betrayed the fair

Ophelia, in the country rectory, amid all the pleasant throng of tennis parties and village concerts and cheerful neighbourly at-homes; there being no shrewd Polonius to warn her tender inexperience—she was only eighteen—

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows;

nothing but the light of her great and constant love, poor soul, to lead her wrong. *O Rose of May!* the fair Ophelia goes mad; acute mania, the doctor tells me; and Laertes brooding in the lonely rectory, all dark now to her happy laughter and bright face, lights on all the horrors of the story among the letters in her desk, and the young Lord Hamlet is arrested. What he must be suffering as he sits there, I dare not think; from ten in the morning till six at night, he sits with folded arms watching his liberty beaten like a shuttlecock back from counsel to counsel, now high, now low. How sublime the mercy it seems to me, that has clouded the poor Ophelia's wits that she knows nothing of it; she thinks herself happy, I am told, away in the asylum, runs to the window and claps her hands, believes her lover with her; her mind has grown bird-like, leaping and twittering; how will they keep from her, when she grows sane, the tragedy of its interval?

I stand in her father's church, against the organ which she always played on Sunday; for, moved to profound pity, I paid a melancholy pilgrimage to rectory and village, of which I seem to know so much from reading so many of her letters to her lover. It is a day of black and bitter frost, and I have walked four miles from the station across a silent country to a silent village. The blacksmith has the key of the church and lets me in. She was a fine singer, he says, and always had a kind word for everyone. He wonders who I am who want to see so unpretentious a place of worship, and ask so many questions about Miss May. The house-door of the rectory opens on to the churchyard; yes, that's Miss May's dog. I was sure it was, he comes to me when I call his name. That is her room, with the blinds half down and the bulrushes showing in the corner. I recognise the lime tree outside, in which she tells her lover of the nightingale that sang on the topmost boughs on the night of her new-found happiness, when they were first engaged. The bird was singing to her only, she was sure, and so she would not wake her little sister to listen. Never was a brighter, better nature wrecked



upon the shoals of passion; in all the letters I read, extending over many months, breathing so devoted and unselfish a love, there was not one word in them one would not have wished one's sister to write; not one word of pretence or affectation, but the beating of a great heart through them all, beating like a bird against the meshes of a net. And most pitiful of all, when insanity begins and the poor writing begins to get hurried and shapeless, when she breaks into incoherent passages of Scripture and speaks of her mother who died when she was a child—'there is the door banging again,' she writes, 'they never think of poor mother's head;' and describes her, pale and worn, as she sees her, dead so many years, working at a sewing-machine. She cannot sleep and she gets up early to write a novel—'The Farewell of Love.' Her hands are so hot, she must take off her rings and wash them again. The wind is crying round the angle of the house; it cried so when she lay here ill, and induced her greatly to self-pity. 'Come to me, Jack,' she moans; 'the last time I saw you, the firelight was shining on your glasses and something snapped at my heart when you looked back at me from the door;' and 'come to me,' she moans, when they take her to the sea to try what that will do, 'come to me and I will show you my mother's grave; I have not been there since I was a little one in black.'

The young surgeon is acquitted, after an obstinate fight among the jury. He steps out of the dock a free man, gaunt and haggard, so marked with that long agony that by those marks alone I should know him. He is only four-and-twenty, and as yet not altogether corrupt. His youth, as with other diseases, is in his favour.

A word in thine ear, Lord Hamlet. If, when the fair Ophelia grows sane again, ceases the singing of her pitiful little songs, thou art not at her side, thy whole life hers, thine only endeavour to make her forget the sorrowful past, thou shouldst be cast headlong from the platform of Elsinore, the prey of every obscene bird that cares for carrion. Look to it.

*Warwick: December 16.*—Murder, quiet and inoffensive, in a white slop; killed an old woman with a coal hammer, because she was always 'hagging' him, and charged him finally with stealing a pair of her stockings. He's sixty-three, scavenger, employed by the corporation of Birmingham, and is described by all the witnesses as a peaceable hard-working old soul, except when he's

got the beer in him, and then he's nasty. It is murder reduced to its simplest elements, and there's no way out but death. He stands up to receive sentence and I see no sign of fear in him except just one catch of the breath; the white slop just heaves once and with all submission he walks below. He will have three weeks in which to prepare for the great change, and with a firm step he will walk to the scaffold. These men always die with great fortitude, or insensibility, whichever it may be. The fact is I think they are dead, have died, long before they came into the hands of the executioner.

In the old days condemned men were generally hanged the day after sentence. They used to pray for a 'long day,' which meant eight-and-forty hours; it was the most they got. Captain John Donellan, who was sentenced in this very court for the poisoning of his brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton, with laurel water in 1781, was condemned late on a Friday night and hanged on the Monday. No doubt his position secured him the respite, that and Sunday intervening. A flashy scoundrel, I imagine, for he was known as Diamond Donellan.

It is a relief to get a couple of 'smashers' in the dock, male and female makers and issuers of false coin. The detective, who is quite young and looks like the most youthful of the clerks in the Bank of England, displays all their paraphernalia just as he swooped down on them; mould in the oven with a florin baking in it, files, battery, bottles of nitric and sulphuric acid, and ground glass that is mixed with the pewter to give the coins a proper metallic ring. A very unfortunate moment for the police to pay a morning call, just as the male smasher was spooning the metal into a mould and the female polishing up the edges of a duffing shilling with a file. Asked for an explanation, the prisoner declares they are all the property of one Crowley, whom only that morning he had discovered to be 'a crooked man'; had, in consequence, ordered out of his place, but who had begged just to be allowed to remain till night, till he could find another home for his nefarious trade. In the meantime, Crowley out looking for another place, enter the police, and the prisoner, most innocent and unfortunate of men, is apprehended. On looking over his record I find he's been a smasher for years, is only just out of penal servitude for it, into which he returns for another five years. The woman is mercifully acquitted and resumes her business of selling paper flags. The cruelty of the smasher lies in



his passing the coin among the poor ; he goes and buys a bottle of gingerbeer for a penny and leaves the unhappy widow to do the best she can with the base shilling with which he pays for it.

One sees glimpses of droll interiors in these circuit trials, at which one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. That determined-looking woman of five-and-forty is a charwoman who tried to poison her mistress, the wife of a doctor at Leamington. It sounds tragic enough, but there's a good deal of comedy mingled with it. The doctor looks like the white knight in 'Alice in Wonderland,' and begins by informing the Court that his views of the oath are precisely similar to those of Mr. Matthew Arnold, and that he is equally ready to swear or to affirm. When the corrosive sublimate is produced he asks for the bottle, puts it in his coat-tail pocket and acts (in a manner to kill you laughing) the whole scene in which he suddenly charged the woman with the crime. It appears she made up her mind that when her mistress was out of the way her position in the household would be improved. She gave it her first in tea, too much, so she was only violently sick ; then, perhaps doubtful of its properties, notwithstanding the label, tried it on a favourite white rat whose happiness it was to breakfast with her mistress in bed, and, the rat dying at once, tried it again in brandy and water. 'Oh, dear!' says the lady, 'that tastes like the tea.' Furthermore, like all embyro poisoners, she goes about saying her mistress is on the point of death, and tells the milkman she has heard death-tokens, steps about the house which cannot be traced to anyone. She gets fifteen years' penal servitude and starts back as if you had slapped her face. The man who shaves me tells me the sentence is considered very severe, but can give no other reason than that public opinion does not think very highly of the doctor's household. The truth is they are as strange a trio, father, mother, and son, as ever were seen, with their odd clothes and odd manners ; but that is no reason why any one of them should be removed by poison.

I asked the governor of the gaol afterwards if the woman had spoken, had in any way confessed her guilt and the justice of her sentence. Sometimes prisoners confess and show their contrition strangely enough. I knew a man in the service who was shot by one of the men in his company. The murderer had a grudge against the sergeant and meant to kill him, but the sergeant not appearing that morning at the butts, the man shot the superior

officer, having no sort of grudge against him. 'Just before he was executed he wrote to the father of my poor friend to ask his forgiveness, said that he knew that nothing he could say or do could atone for such a crime, but that if he would only accept from him a white bull-terrier pup that had always been to him his dearest possession, he should at least die tolerably happy.

Again, how odd a confession sometimes escapes them, a *cri du cœur* that a few moments earlier would have effectually knotted the rope! Prisoner was being tried for murder: evidence against him purely circumstantial; part of it, a hat found near the scene of the crime; an ordinary round black hat, but sworn to as the prisoner's. Counsel for the defence, of course, made much of the commonness of the hat. 'You, gentlemen, no doubt each of you possess such a hat, of the most ordinary make and shape. Beware how you condemn a fellow creature to a shameful death on such a piece of evidence,'—and so on. So the man was acquitted. Just as he was leaving the dock, with the most touching humility and simplicity he pulled his hair and said, 'If you please, my lord, may I 'ave my 'at?'



*A SET OF CHESSMEN.*

I.

‘*BUT, Monsieur, perceive how magnificent they are! There is not in Finistère, there is not in Brittany, nay, it is certain there is not in France so superb a set of chessmen. And ivory! And the carving—observe, for example, the variety of detail.*’

They certainly were a curious set of chessmen, magnificent in a way, but curious first of all. As M. Bobineau remarked, holding a rook in one hand and a knight in the other, the care paid to details by the carver really was surprising. But two hundred and fifty francs! For a set of chessmen!

‘*So, so, my friend. I am willing to admit that the work is good—in a kind of a way. But two hundred and fifty francs! If it were fifty, now?*’

‘*Fifty!*’ Up went M. Bobineau’s shoulders, and down went M. Bobineau’s head between them, in the fashion of those toys which are pulled by a string. ‘*Ah, mon Dieu! Monsieur laughs at me!*’

And there came another voluble declaration of their merits. They certainly were a curious set. I really think they were the most curious set I ever saw. I would have preferred them, for instance, to anything they have at South Kensington, and they have some remarkable examples there. And, of course, the price was small—I even admit it was ridiculously small. But when one has only five thousand francs a year for everything, two hundred and fifty being taken away—and for a set of chessmen—do leave a vacancy behind.

I asked Bobineau where he got them. Business was slack that sunny afternoon—it seemed to me that I was the only customer he ever had, but that must have been a delusion on my part. Report said he was a warm man, one of Morlaix’s warmest men, and his queer old shop in the queer old Grande Rue—Grande Rue! what a name for an alley!—contained many things which were valuable as well as queer. But there, at least, was no other customer in sight just then, so Bobineau told me all the tale.

It seemed there had been a M. Funichon—Auguste Funichon—no, not a Breton, a Parisian, a true Parisian, who had come and settled down in the commune of Plouigneau, over by the *gare*. This M. Funichon was, for example, a little—well, a little—a little *exalted*, let us say. It is true that the country people said he was stark mad, but Bobineau, for his part, said no, no, no! It is not necessary, because one is a little eccentric, that one is mad. Here Bobineau looked at me out of the corner of his eye. Are not the English, of all people, the most eccentric, and yet is it not known to all the world that they are not, necessarily, stark mad? This M. Funichon was not rich, quite the contrary. It was a little place he lived in—the merest cottage, in fact. And in it he lived alone, and, according to report, there was only one thing he did all day and all night long, and that was, play chess. It appears that he was that rarest and most amiable of imbeciles, a chess-maniac. Is there such a word?

‘What a life!’ said M. Bobineau. ‘Figure it to yourself! To do nothing—nothing!—but play chess! They say’—M. Bobineau looked round him with an air of mystery—‘they say he starved himself to death. He was so besotted by his miserable chess that he forgot—absolutely forgot, this imbecile—to eat.’

That was what M. Bobineau said they said. It required a vigorous effort of the imagination to quite take it in. To what a state of forgetfulness must a man arrive before he forgets to eat! But whether M. Funichon forgot to eat, or whether he didn’t, at least he died, and being dead they sold his goods—why they sold them was not quite clear, but at the sale M. Bobineau was the chief purchaser. One of the chief lots was the set of ivory chessmen which had caught my eyes. They were the dead man’s favourite set, and no wonder! Bobineau was of opinion that if he had had his way he would have had them buried with him in his grave.

‘It is said,’ he whispered, again with the glance of mystery around, ‘that they found him dead, seated at the table, the chessmen on the board, his hand on the white rook, which was giving mate to the adversary’s king.’

Either what a vivid imagination had Bobineau, or what odd things the people said! One pictures the old man, seated all alone, with his last breath finishing his game.

Well, I bought the set of ivory chessmen. At this time of day I freely admit that they were cheap at two hundred and fifty



francs—dirt cheap, indeed; but a hundred was all I paid. I knew Bobineau so well—I dare say he bought them for twenty-five. As I bore them triumphantly away my mind was occupied by thoughts of their original possessor. I was filled by quite a sentimental tenderness as I meditated on the part they had played, according to Bobineau, in that last scene. But St. Servan drove all those thoughts away. Philippe Henri de St. Servan was rather a difficult person to get on with. It was with him I shared at that time my apartment on the *place*.

‘Let us see!’ I remarked when I got in, ‘what have I here?’

He was seated, his country pipe in his mouth, at the open window, looking down upon the river. The Havre boat was making ready to start—at Morlaix the nautical event of the week. There was quite a bustle on the quay. St. Servan just looked round, and then looked back again. I sat down and untied my purchase.

‘I think there have been criticisms—derogatory criticisms—passed by a certain person upon a certain set of chessmen. Perhaps that person will explain what he has to say to these.’

St. Servan marched up to the table. He looked at them through his half-closed eyelids.

‘Toys!’ was all he said.

‘Perhaps! Yet toys which made a tragedy. Have you ever heard of the name of Funichon?’ By a slight movement of his grisly grey eyebrows he intimated that it was possible he had. ‘These chessmen belonged to him. He had just finished a game with them when they found him dead—the winning piece, a white rook, was in his hand. Suggest an epitaph to be placed over his grave. There’s a picture for a painter—eh?’

‘Bah! He was a Communist!’

That was all St. Servan said. And so saying, St. Servan turned away to look out of the window at the Havre boat again. There was an end of M. Funichon for him. Not that he meant exactly what he said. He simply meant that M. Funichon was not Legitimist—out of sympathy with the gentlemen who met, and decayed, visibly, before the naked eye, at the club on the other side of the *place*. With St. Servan not to be Legitimist meant to be nothing at all—out of his range of vision absolutely. Seeing that was so, it is strange he should have borne with me as he did. But he was a wonderful old man.

## II.

We played our first game with the ivory chessmen when St. Servan returned from the club. I am free to confess that it was an occasion for me. I had dusted all the pieces, and had the board all laid when St. Servan entered, and when we drew for choice of moves the dominant feeling in my mind was the thought of the dead man sitting all alone, with the white rook in his hand. There was an odour of sanctity about the affair for me—a whiff of air from the land of the ghosts.

Nevertheless, my loins were girded up, and I was prepared to bear myself as a man in the strife. We were curiously well matched, St. Servan and I. We had played two hundred and twenty games, and, putting draws aside, each had scored the same number of wins. He had his days, and so had I. At one time I was eleven games ahead, but since that thrice blessed hour I had not scored a single game. He had tracked me steadily, and eventually had made the scores exactly tie. In these latter days it had grown with him to be an article of faith that as a chess player I was quite played out—and there was a time when I had thought the same of him!

He won the move, and then, as usual, there came an interval for reflection. The worst thing about St. Servan—regarded from a chess-playing point of view—was, that he took such a time to begin. When a man has opened his game it is excusable—laudable, indeed—if he pauses to reflect, a reasonable length of time. But I never knew a man who was so fond of reflection before a move was made. As a rule, that absurd habit of his had quite an irritating effect upon my nerves, but that evening I felt quite cool and prepared to sit him out.

There we sat, both smoking our great pipes, he staring at the board, and I at him. He put out his hand, almost touched a piece, and then, with a start, he drew it back again. An interval—the same pantomime again. Another interval—and a repetition of the pantomime. I puffed a cloud of smoke into the air, and softly sighed. I knew he had been ten minutes by my watch. Possibly the sigh had a stimulating effect, for he suddenly stretched out his hand and moved queen's knight's pawn a single square.

I was startled. He was great at book openings, that was the



absurdest part of it. He would lead you to suppose that he was meditating something quite original, and then would perhaps begin with fool's mate after all. He, at least, had never tried queen's knight's pawn a single square before.

I considered a reply. Pray let it be understood—though I would not have confessed it to St. Servan for the world—that I am no player. I am wedded to the game for an hour or two at night, or, peradventure, of an afternoon at times; but I shall never be admitted to its inner mysteries—never! not if I outspan Methuselah. I am not built that way. St. Servan and I were two children who, loving the sea, dabble their feet in the shallows left by the tide. I have no doubt that there are a dozen replies to that opening of his, but I did not know one then. I had some hazy idea of developing a game of my own, while keeping an eye on his, and for that purpose put out my hand to move the queen's pawn two, when I felt my wrist grasped by—well, by what felt uncommonly like an invisible hand. I was so startled that I almost dropped my pipe. I drew my hand back again, and was conscious of the slight detaining pressure of unseen fingers. Of course it was hallucination, but it seemed so real, and was so unexpected, that—well, I settled my pipe more firmly between my lips—it had all but fallen from my mouth, and took a whiff or two to calm my nerves. I glanced up, cautiously, to see if St. Servan noticed my unusual behaviour, but his eyes were fixed stonily upon the board.

After a moment's hesitation—it was absurd!—I stretched out my hand again. The hallucination was repeated, and in a very tangible form. I was distinctly conscious of my wrist being wrenched aside and guided to a piece I had never meant to touch, and almost before I was aware of it, instead of the move I had meant to make, I had made a servile copy of St. Servan's opening—I had moved queen's knight's pawn a single square!

To adopt the language of the late Dick Swiveller, that was a staggerer. I own that for an instant I was staggered. I could do nothing else but stare. For at least ten seconds I forgot to smoke. I was conscious that when St. Servan saw my move he knit his brows. Then the usual interval for reflection came again. Half unconsciously I watched him. When, as I supposed, he had decided on his move, he stretched out his hand, as I had done, and also, as I had done, he drew it back again. I was a little startled—he seemed a little startled, too. There was a momentary

pause ; back went his hand again, and, by way of varying the monotony, he moved—king's knight's pawn a single square.

I wondered, and held my peace. There might be a gambit based upon these lines, or there might not ; but since I was quite clear that I knew no reply to such an opening I thought I would try a little experiment, and put out my hand, not with the slightest conception of any particular move in my head, but simply to see what happened. Instantly a grasp fastened on my wrist ; my hand was guided to—king's knight's pawn a single square.

This was getting, from every point of view, to be distinctly interesting. The chessmen appeared to be possessed of a property of which Bobineau had been unaware. I caught myself wondering if he would have insisted on a higher price if he had known of it. Curiosities nowadays do fetch such fancy sums—and what price for a ghost ? They appeared to be automatic chessmen, automatic in a sense entirely their own.

Having made my move, or having had somebody else's move made for me, which is perhaps the more exact way of putting it, I contemplated my antagonist. When he saw what I had done, or what somebody else had done—the things are equal—St. Servan frowned. He belongs to the bony variety, the people who would not loll in a chair to save their lives—his aspect struck me as being even more poker-like than usual. He meditated his reply an unconscionable length of time, the more unconscionable since I strongly doubted if it would be his reply after all. But at last he showed signs of action. He kept his eyes fixed steadily upon the board, his frown became pronounced, and he began to raise his hand. I write 'began,' because it was a process which took some time. Cautiously he brought it up, inch by inch. But no sooner had he brought it over the board than his behaviour became quite singular. He positively glared, and to my eyes seemed to be having a struggle with his own right hand. A struggle in which he was worsted, for he leant back in his seat with a curiously discomfited air.

He had moved queen's rook's pawn two squares—the automatic principle which impelled these chessmen seemed to have a partiality for pawns.

It was my turn for reflection. I pressed the tobacco down in my pipe, and thought—or tried to think—it out. Was it an hallucination, and was St. Servan the victim of hallucination too ?



Had I moved those pawns spontaneously, actuated by the impulse of my own free will, or hadn't I? And what was the meaning of the little scene I had just observed? I am a tolerably strong man. It would require no slight exercise of force to compel me to move one piece when I had made up my mind that I would move another piece instead. I have been told, and I believe not altogether untruly told, that the rigidity of my right wrist resembles iron. I have not spent so much time in the tennis-court and fencing-room for nothing. I had tried one experiment. I thought I would try another. I made up my mind that I would move queen's pawn two—stop me who stop can.

I felt that St. Servan in his turn was watching me. Preposterously easy though the feat appeared to be as I resolved on its performance, I was conscious of an unusual degree of cerebral excitement—a sort of feeling of do or die. But as, in spite of the feeling, I didn't do, it was perhaps as well I didn't die. Intending to keep complete control over my own muscles, I raised my right hand, probably to the full as cautiously as St. Servan had done. I approached the queen's pawn. I was just about to seize the piece when that unseen grasp fastened on my wrist. I paused, with something of the feeling which induces the wrestler to pause before entering on the veritable tug of war. For one thing, I was desirous to satisfy myself as to the nature of the grasp—what it was that seemed to grasp me.

It seemed to be a hand. The fingers went over the back of my wrist, and the thumb beneath. The fingers were long and thin—it was altogether a slender hand. But it seemed to be a man's hand, and an old man's hand at that. The skin was tough and wrinkled, clammy and cold. On the little finger there was a ring, and on the first, about the region of the first joint, appeared to be something of the nature of a wart. I should say that it was anything but a beautiful hand, it was altogether too attenuated and clawlike, and I would have betted that it was yellow with age.

At first the pressure was slight, almost as slight as the touch of a baby's hand, with a gentle inclination to one side. But as I kept my own hand firm, stiff, resolved upon my own particular move, with, as it were, a sudden snap, the pressure tightened and, not a little to my discomfiture, I felt my wrist held as in an iron vice. Then, as it must have seemed to St. Servan, who, I was aware, was still keenly watching me, I began to struggle with

my own hand. The spectacle might have been fun to him, but the reality was, at that moment, anything but fun to me. I was dragged to one side. Another hand was fastened upon mine. My fingers were forced open—I had tightly clenched my fist to enable me better to resist—my wrist was forced down, my fingers were closed upon a piece, I was compelled to move it forward, my fingers were unfastened to replace the piece upon the board. The move completed, the unseen grasp instantly relaxed, and I was free, or appeared to be free, again to call my hand my own.

I had moved queen's rook's pawn two squares. This may seem comical enough to read about, but it was anything but comical to feel. When the thing was done I stared at St. Servan, and St. Servan stared at me. We stared at each other, I suppose, a good long minute, then I broke the pause.

'Anything the matter?' I inquired. He put up his hand and curled his moustache, and, if I may say so, he curled his lip as well. 'Do you notice anything odd about—about the game?' As I spoke about the game I motioned my hand towards my brand-new set of chessmen. He looked at me with hard suspicious eyes.

'Is it a trick of yours?' he asked.

'Is what a trick of mine?'

'If you do not know, then how should I?'

I drew a whiff or two from my pipe, looking at him keenly all the time, then signed towards the board with my hand.

'It's your move,' I said.

He merely inclined his head. There was a momentary pause. When he stretched out his hand he suddenly snatched it back again, and half started from his seat with a stifled execration.

'Did you feel anything upon your wrist?' I asked.

'Mon Dieu! It is not what I feel—see that!'

He was eyeing his wrist as he spoke. He held it out under the glare of the lamp. I bent across and looked at it. For so old a man he had a phenomenally white and delicate skin—under the glare of the lamp the impressions of finger-marks were plainly visible upon his wrist. I whistled as I saw them.

'Is it a trick of yours?' he asked again.

'It is certainly no trick of mine.'

'Is there anyone in the room besides us two?'

I shrugged my shoulders and looked round. He too looked round, with something I thought not quite easy in his glance.



‘Certainly no one of my acquaintance, and certainly no one who is visible to me!’

With his fair white hand—the left, not the one which had the finger-marks upon the wrist—St. Servan smoothed his huge moustache.

‘Someone, or something, has compelled me—yes, from the first—to move, not as I would, but—bah! I know not how.’

‘Exactly the same thing has occurred to me.’

I laughed. St. Servan glared. Evidently the humour of the thing did not occur to him, he being the sort of man who would require a surgical operation to make him see a joke. But the humorous side of the situation struck me forcibly.

‘Perhaps we are favoured by the presence of a ghost—perhaps even by the ghost of M. Funichon. Perhaps, after all, he has not yet played his last game with his favourite set. He may have returned—shall we say from—where?—to try just one more set-to with us! If, my dear sir—I waved my pipe affably, as though addressing an unseen personage—‘it is really you, I beg you will reveal yourself—materialise is, I believe, the expression now in vogue—and show us the sort of ghost you are!’

Somewhat to my surprise, and considerably to my amusement, St. Servan rose from his seat and stood by the table, stiff and straight as a scaffold-pole.

‘These, Monsieur, are subjects on which one does not jest.’

‘Do you, then, believe in ghosts?’ I knew he was a superstitious man—witness his fidelity to the superstition of right divine—but this was the first inkling I had had of how far his superstition carried him.

‘Believe!—In ghosts! In what, then, do you believe? I, Monsieur, am a religious man.’

‘Do you believe, then, that a ghost is present with us now—the ghost, for instance, of M. Funichon?’

St. Servan paused. Then he crossed himself—actually crossed himself before my eyes. When he spoke there was a peculiar dryness in his tone.

‘With your permission, Monsieur, I will retire to bed.’

There was an exasperating thing to say! There must be a large number of men in the world who would give—well, a good round sum, to light even on the trail of a ghost. And here were we in the actual presence of something—let us say apparently curious, at any rate, and here was St. Servan calmly talking about

retiring to bed, without making the slightest attempt to examine the thing! It was enough to make the members of the Psychological Research Society turn in their graves. The mere suggestion fired my blood.

'I do beg, St. Servan, that you at least will finish the game.' I saw he hesitated, so I drove the nail well home. 'Is it possible that you, a brave man, having given proofs of courage upon countless fields, can turn tail at what is doubtless an hallucination after all?'

'Is it that Monsieur doubts my courage?'

I knew the tone—if I was not careful I should have an affair upon my hands.

'Come, St. Servan, sit down and finish the game.'

Another momentary pause. He sat down, and—it would not be correct to write that we finished the game, but we made another effort to go on. My pipe had gone out. I refilled and lighted it.

'You know, St. Servan, it is really nonsense to talk about ghosts.'

'It is a subject on which I never talk.'

'If something does compel us to make moves which we do not intend, it is something which is capable of a natural explanation.'

'Perhaps Monsieur will explain it, then?'

'I will! Before I've finished! If you only won't turn tail and go to bed! I think it very possible, too, that the influence, whatever it is, has gone—it is quite on the cards that our imagination has played us some subtle trick. It is your move, but before you do anything just tell me what move you mean to make.'

'I will move'—he hesitated—'I will move queen's pawn.'

He put out his hand, and, with what seemed to me hysterical suddenness, he moved king's rook's pawn two squares.

'So! Our friend is still here then! I suppose you did not change your mind?'

There was a *very* peculiar look about St. Servan's eyes.

'I did not change my mind.'

I noticed, too, that his lips were uncommonly compressed.

'It is my move now. I will move queen's pawn. We are not done yet. When I put out my hand you grasp my wrist—and we shall see what we shall see.'

'Shall I come round to you?'



‘No, stretch out across the table—now!’

I stretched out my hand; that instant he stretched out his, but spontaneous though the action seemed to be, another, an unseen hand, had fastened on my wrist. He observed it too.

‘There appears to be another hand between yours and mine.’

‘I know there is.’

Before I had the words well out my hand had been wrenched aside, my fingers unclosed, and then closed, then unclosed again, and I had moved king’s rook’s pawn two squares. St. Servan and I sat staring at each other—for my part I felt a little bewildered.

‘This is very curious! Very curious indeed! But before we say anything about it we will try another little experiment, if you don’t mind. I will come over to you.’ I went over to him. ‘Let me grasp your wrist with both my hands.’ I grasped it, as firmly as I could, as it lay upon his knee. ‘Now try to move queen’s pawn.’

He began to raise his hand, I holding on to his wrist with all my strength. Hardly had he raised it to the level of the table when two unseen hands, grasping mine, tore them away as though my strength were of no account. I saw him give a sort of shudder—he had moved queen’s bishop’s pawn two squares.

‘This is a devil of a ghost!’ I said.

St. Servan said nothing. But he crossed himself, not once, but half a dozen times.

‘There is still one little experiment that I would wish to make.’

St. Servan shook his head.

‘Not I!’ he said.

‘Ah but, my friend, this is an experiment which I can make without your aid. I simply want to know if there is nothing tangible about our unseen visitor except his hands. It is my move.’ I returned to my side of the table. I again addressed myself, as it were, to an unseen auditor. ‘My good ghost, my good M. Funichon—if it is you—you are at liberty to do as you desire with my hand.’

I held it out. It instantly was grasped. With my left hand I made several passes in the air up and down, behind and before, in every direction so far as I could. It met with no resistance. There seemed to be nothing tangible but those invisible fingers which grasped my wrist—and I had moved queen’s bishop’s pawn two squares.

St. Servan rose from his seat.

‘It is enough. Indeed it is too much. This ribaldry must cease. It had been better had Monsieur permitted me to retire to bed.’

‘Then you are sure it is a ghost—the ghost of M. Funichon, we’ll say.’

‘This time Monsieur must permit me to wish him a good night’s rest.’

He bestowed on me, as his manner was, a stiff inclination of the head, which would have led a stranger to suppose that we had met each other for the first time ten minutes ago, instead of being the acquaintances of twelve good years. He moved across the room.

‘St. Servan, one moment before you go! You are surely not going to leave a man alone at the post of peril.’

‘It were better that Monsieur should come too.’

‘Half a second, and I will. I have only one remark to make, and that is to the ghost.’

I rose from my seat. St. Servan made a half-movement towards the door, then changed his mind and remained quite still.

‘If there is any other person with us in the room, may I ask that person to let us hear his voice, or hers? Just to speak one word.’

Not a sound.

‘It is possible—I am not acquainted with the laws which govern—eh—ghosts—that the faculty of speech is denied to them. If that be so, might I ask for the favour of a sign—for instance, move a piece while my friend and I are standing where we are.’

Not a sign; not a chessman moved.

‘Then M. Funichon, if it indeed be you, and you are incapable of speech, or even of moving a piece of your own accord, and are only able to spoil our game, I beg to inform you that you are an exceedingly ill-mannered and foolish person, and had far better have stayed away.’

As I said this I was conscious of a current of cold air before my face, as though a swiftly moving hand had shaved my cheek.

‘By Jove, St. Servan, something has happened at last. I believe our friend the ghost has tried to box my ears!’

St. Servan’s reply came quietly stern.

‘I think it were better that Monsieur came with me.’



For some reason St. Servan's almost contemptuous coldness fired my blood. I became suddenly enraged.

'I shall do nothing of the kind! Do you think I am going to be fooled by a trumpery conjuring trick which would disgrace a shilling séance? Driven to bed at this time of day by a ghost! And such a ghost! If it were something like a ghost one wouldn't mind; but a fool of a ghost like this!'

Even as the words passed my lips I felt the touch of fingers against my throat. The touch increased my rage. I snatched at them, only to find that there was nothing there.

'Damn you!' I cried. 'Funichon, you old fool, do you think that you can frighten me? You see those chessmen; they are mine, bought and paid for with my money—you dare to try and prevent me doing with them exactly as I please.'

Again the touch against my throat. It made my rage the more. 'As I live, I will smash them all to pieces, and grind them to powder beneath my heel.'

My passion was ridiculous—childish even. But then the circumstances were exasperating—unusually so, one might plead. I was standing three or four feet from the table. I dashed forward. As I did so a hand was fastened on my throat. Instantly it was joined by another. They gripped me tightly. They maddened me. With a madman's fury I still pressed forward. I might as well have fought with fate. They clutched me as with bands of steel, and flung me to the ground.

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### III.

When I recovered consciousness I found St. Servan bending over me.

'What is the matter?' I inquired, when I found that I was lying on the floor.

'I think you must have fainted.'

'Fainted! I never did such a thing in my life. It must have been a curious kind of faint, I think.'

'It was a curious kind of faint.'

With his assistance I staggered to my feet. I felt bewildered. I glanced round. There were the chessmen still upon the board, the hanging lamp above. I tried to speak. I seemed to have lost the use of my tongue. In silence he helped me to the door.

He half led, half carried me—for I seemed to have lost the use of my feet as well as that of my tongue—to my bedroom. He even assisted me to undress, never leaving me till I was between the sheets. All the time not a word was spoken. When he went I believe he took the key outside and locked the door.

That was a night of dreams. I know not if I was awake or sleeping, but all sorts of strange things presented themselves to my mental eye. I could not shut them from my sight. One figure was prominent in all I saw—the figure of a man. I knew, or thought I knew, that it was M. Funichon. He was a lean old man, and what I noticed chiefly were his hands. Such ugly hands! In some fantastical way I seemed to be contending with them all through the night.

And yet in the morning when I woke—for I did wake up, and that from as sweet refreshing sleep as one might wish to have—it was all gone. It was bright day. The sun was shining into the great, ill-furnished room. As I got out of bed and began to dress, the humorous side of the thing had returned to me again. The idea of there being anything supernatural about a set of ivory chessmen appeared to me to be extremely funny.

I found St. Servan had gone out. It was actually half-past ten! His table d'hôte at the Hôtel de Bretagne was at eleven, and before he breakfasted he always took a *petit verre* at the club. If he had locked the door overnight he had not forgotten to unlock it before he started. I went into the rambling, barn-like room which served us for a *salon*. The chessmen had disappeared. Probably St. Servan had put them away—I wondered if the ghost had interfered with him. I laughed to myself as I went out—fancy St. Servan contending with a ghost.

The proprietor of the Hôtel de Bretagne is Legitimist, so all the aristocrats go there—of course, St. Servan with the rest. Presumably the landlord's politics is the point, to his cooking they are apparently indifferent—I never knew a worse table in my life! The landlord of the Hôtel de l'Europe may be a Communist for all I care—*his* cooking is first-rate, so I go there. I went there that morning. After I had breakfasted I strolled off towards the Grande Rue, to M. Bobineau.

When he saw me M. Bobineau was all smirks and smiles—he *must* have got those chessmen for *less* than five-and-twenty francs! I asked him if he had any more of the belongings of M. Funichon.



‘But certainly! Three other sets of chessmen.’

I didn’t want to look at those, apparently one set was quite enough for me. Was that all he had?

‘But no! There was an ancient bureau, very magnificent, carved——’

I thanked him—nor did I want to look at that. In the Grande Rue at Morlaix old bureaux carved about the beginning of the fifteenth century—if you listen to the vendors—are as plentiful as cobble-stones.

‘But I have all sorts of things of M. Funichon. It was I who bought them nearly all. Books, papers, and——’

M. Bobineau waved his hands towards a multitude of books and papers which crowded the shelves at the side of his shop. I took a volume down. When I opened it I found it was in manuscript.

‘That work is unique!’ explained Bobineau. ‘It was the intention of M. Funichon to give it to the world, but he died before his purpose was complete. It is the record of all the games of chess he ever played—in fifty volumes. Monsieur will perceive it is unique.’

I should think it was unique! In fifty volumes! The one I held was a large quarto, bound in leather, containing some six or seven hundred pages, and was filled from cover to cover with matter in a fine, clear handwriting, written on both sides of the page. I pictured the face of the publisher to whom it was suggested that *he* should give to the world such a work as that.

I opened the volume at the first page. It was, as Bobineau said, apparently the record, with comments, of an interminable series of games of chess. I glanced at the initial game. Here are the opening moves, just as they were given there:—

*White.*

*Black.*

Queen’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.

Queen’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.

King’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.

King’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.

Queen’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.

Queen’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.

King’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.

King’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.

They were exactly the moves of the night before. They were such peculiar moves, and made under such peculiar circumstances, that I was scarcely likely to mistake them. So far as we had gone, St. Servan and I, assisted by the unseen hand, had reproduced M. Funichon’s initial game in the first volume of his fifty—and a very peculiar game it seemed to be. I asked Bobineau what he would take for the volume which I held.

‘Monsieur perceives that to part them would spoil the set,

which is unique. Monsieur shall have the whole fifty'—I shuddered. I imagine Bobineau saw I did, he spoke so very quickly—'for a five-franc piece, which is less than the value of the paper and the binding.'

I knew then that he had probably been paid for carting the rubbish away. However, I paid him his five-franc piece, and marched off with the volume under my arm, giving him to understand, to his evident disappointment, that at my leisure I would give him instructions as to the other forty-nine.

As I went along I thought the matter over. M. Funichon seemed to have been a singular kind of man—he appeared to have carried his singularity even beyond the grave. Could it have been the cold-blooded intention of his ghost to make us play the whole contents of the fifty volumes through? What a fiend of a ghost his ghost must be!

I opened the volume and studied the initial game. The people were right who had said that the man was mad. None but an imbecile would have played such a game—his right hand against his left!—and none but a raving madman would have recorded his imbecility in black and white, as though it were a thing to be proud of! Certainly none but a criminal lunatic would have endeavoured to foist his puerile travesty of the game and study of chess upon two innocent men.

Still the thing was curious. I flattered myself that St. Servan would be startled when he saw the contents of the book I was carrying home. I resolved that I would instantly get out the chessmen and begin another game—perhaps the ghost of M. Funichon would favour us with a further exposition of his ideas of things. I even made up my mind that I would communicate with the Psychical Research Society. Not at all improbably they might think the case sufficiently remarkable to send down a member of their body to inquire into the thing upon the spot. I almost began to hug myself on the possession of a ghost, a ghost, too, which might be induced to perform at will—almost on the principle of 'drop a coin into the slot and the figures move'! It was cheap at a hundred francs. What a stir those chessmen still might make! What vexed problems they might solve! Unless I was much mistaken, the expenditure of those hundred francs had placed me on the royal road to immortality.

Filled with such thoughts I reached our rooms. I found that St. Servan had returned. With him, if I may say so, he had brought his friends. Such friends! Ye Goths! When I opened



the door the first thing which greeted me was a strong, not to say suffocating, smell of incense. The room was filled with smoke. A fire was blazing on the hearth. Before it was St. Servan, on his knees, his hands clasped in front of him, in an attitude of prayer. By him stood a priest, in his robes of office. He held what seemed a pestle and mortar, whose contents he was throwing by handfuls on to the flames, muttering some doggerel to himself the while. Behind him were two acolytes,

With nice clean faces, and nice white stoles,

who were swinging censers—hence the odour which filled the room. I was surprised when I beheld all this. They appeared to be holding some sort of religious service—and I had not bargained for that sort of thing when I had arranged with St. Servan to share the rooms with him. In my surprise I unconsciously interrupted the proceedings.

‘St. Servan! Whatever is the meaning of this?’

St. Servan looked up, and the priest looked round—that was all the attention they paid to me. The acolytes eyed me with what I conceived to be a grin upon their faces. But I was not to be put down like that.

‘I must ask you, St. Servan, for an explanation.’

The priest turned the mortar upside down, and emptied the remainder of its contents into the fire.

‘It is finished,’ he said.

St. Servan rose from his knees and crossed himself.

‘We have exorcised the demon,’ he observed.

‘You have what?’ I asked.

‘We have driven out the evil spirit which possessed the chessmen.’

I gasped. A dreadful thought struck me.

‘You don’t mean to say that you have dared to play tricks with my property?’

‘Monsieur,’ said the priest, ‘I have ground it into dust.’

He had. That fool of a St. Servan had actually fetched his parish priest, and his acolytes, and their censers, and between them they had performed a comminatory service made and provided for the driving out of demons. They had ground my ivory chessmen in the pestle and mortar, and then burned them in the fire. And this in the days of the Psychological Research Society! And they had cost me a hundred francs! And that idiot of a ghost had never stretched out a hand or said a word!

*AN EXCAVATOR'S EXTRACTS.*

THE search for traces of an old world takes an excavator now and again into strange corners of the new. Out of the ground he may extract treasures, or he may not—that is not our point here; out of the inhabitants and their strange ways he is sure, whether he likes it or not, to extract a great deal; and it is with this branch of an excavator's life we are now going to deal.

We—that is to say, two excavators, male and female—were in the Persian Gulf last winter. We were on two islands off the north coast of Arabia. We thought we were on the track of Phœnician remains, and our interest in our work was like the fingers of an aneroid, subject to sudden changes, but at the same time we had perpetually around us a quaint unknown world of the present more pleasing to most people than anything pertaining to the past.

The two Bahrein islands can distinctly be seen on any map of repute in their hollow bay close to the Arabian coast. The sea around them is shallow, the happy hunting-ground of the pearl-fishers—so shallow that even the smallest boats cannot approach the shore, and from the craft which rowed us as far as it could we were in mid-ocean transferred, bag and baggage, to asses—those lovely white asses of Bahrein, with tails and manes dyed yellow with henna, and grotesque patterns illuminating their flanks; we had no reins, no stirrups, and the asses, though more intelligent than our own, will not unfrequently show obstinacy in the water, and the rider, firmly grasping his pommel, reaches with thankfulness the slimy, oozy beach of Bahrein.

The islands are low-lying and sandy, but with wavy palm-groves, which relieve the monotony of the desert and produce dates inferior to none in the Gulf. Manamah is the name of the town at which you land; it is the commercial capital of the islands—just a streak of white houses and bamboo huts, extending about a mile and a half along the shore. A few mosques with low minarets may be seen, with stone steps up one side for the priest to ascend for the call to prayer. These mosques and the towers of the richer pearl-merchants show some decided architectural features, having arches of the Saracenic order, with



fretwork of plaster and quaint stucco patterns. On landing we were at once surrounded by a jabbering crowd of nigger slaves, and stately Arabs with long flowing robes and twisted camel-hair cords (akkals) around their heads. Our home was one of the best of the battlemented towers, and consisted of a room 16 feet square, on a stone platform. It had twenty-six windows with no glass in them, but pretty lattice of plaster. Our wooden lock was highly decorated, and we had a wooden key to close our door, which pleased us much. Even though we were close upon the tropics we found our abode chilly enough after sunset, and our nights were rendered hideous, firstly, by the barking of dogs; secondly, by cocks, which crowed at an inordinately early hour; and, thirdly, by pious Mussulmans hard at work praying before the sun arose.

From our elevated position we could look down into a sea of bamboo huts, the habitations of the pearl-fishers, neat abodes enough, with courtyards paved with helix shells. In these courtyards stood quaint large water-jars, which women filled from goat-skins carried on their shoulders from the wells, wabbling like live headless animals when full, and cradles, like hencoops, for their babies. They were a merry idle lot of folk just then, for it was not their season of work, perpetually playing games, of which tip-jack and top-spinning seemed the favourite for both young and old. Staid Arabs, with turbans and long flowing robes, spinning tops formed a sight of which we never tired.

The bazaars of Manamah are narrow shaded alleys with an infinite number of smells, but they are quaint; at every corner sits a coffee-vendor—the publican of the Bahreinee. His series of coffee-pots are peculiar to the locality, and very picturesque: they are of brass, adorned with quaint patterns in concentric circles, and possessing long beaks like flamingoes, and in the lid small stones are kept to rattle and attract the attention of the passer-by. Every other stall has dates to sell in thick masses, the chief food of the islanders. Then, you may see locusts, pressed and pickled in barrels; the poorer inhabitants are very fond of this diet, and have converted the curse of the cultivator into favourite delicacies. As for weights, the stall-holders would appear to have none but stones and whelk shells, which must be hard to regulate.

The Bahrein Islands have been likened to a sheet of silver in a sea of pearl. I must admit that we never saw the resemblance, but before proceeding inland let us say a word or two about the

inhabitants. They are chiefly Arabs, Bedouins of a sedentary turn of mind, governed by an independent Sheikh, whose court is held at the town of Moharrek, situated on the smaller of the two islands, and separated from Manamah by a narrow strait, which can be crossed at low tide on donkey-back, so shallow is the sea. The royal family is a numerous one, a branch of the El Kaleefahs, who ruled over El Hasa, on the mainland of Arabia, until their country was appropriated by the Turks a few years ago. Sheikh Esau is the name of the present Prince of Bahrein. He is most subservient to British interests, inasmuch as his predecessors, who loved not England, were shipped off to India, and still languish there in exile. Most of the Bahreinee, if not actually belonging to that strict sect of Arabians known as Wahabee, have strong puritanical proclivities. Our total-abstinence men are nothing to them in bigotry. If a vendor of intoxicating liquor started a shop on Bahrein, they would burn his house down, so that the wicked who want to drink have to buy the material secretly from ships in the harbour. Many think it wrong to smoke, and spend their lives in prayer and fasting. Church decoration is an abomination to the Wahabee; hence in Bahrein the mosques are little better than barns with low minarets, for the long tall ones of other Mohammedan sects are forbidden. The Wahabees are fanatics of the deepest dye; 'there is one God, and Mohamed is his prophet,' they say with the rest of the Mohammedan world, but the followers of Abdul Wahab add, 'and in no case must Mohamed and the Imams be worshipped lest glory be detracted from God.' All titles to them are odious; no grand tombs are to be erected over their dead, no mourning is allowed; hence the cemetery at Manamah is but a pitiful place—a vast collection of circles set with rough stones, with a small uninscribed headpiece, and the surface sprinkled with helix shells.

The Wahabee would wage, if they dared, perpetual war, not only against the infidel, but against such perverted individuals as those who go to worship at Mecca and other sacred shrines. The founder of this revival is reported to have beaten his sons to death for drinking wine, and to have made his daughters support themselves by spinning, but at the same time he felt himself entitled to give to a fanatical follower, who courted death for his sake, an order for an emerald palace, and lots of female slaves in the world to come.



Sheikh Esau and the royal family are of strong Wahabee tendencies. We went to visit him one day at Moharrek, and for our penance we had to drink the bitterest coffee imaginable, followed by cups of sweet syrup flavoured with cinnamon. His majesty's dress was exceedingly fine. He and his family are entitled to wear their camel's-hair bands bound round with gold. These looked very regal over the red turban, and his long black coat, with his silver studded sword by his side, made him look every inch a king. The courtyard of his palace, a good specimen of Arabian architecture, was filled with sheikhs of royal and inferior birth, forming his retinue. We photographed a line of them, for their dress and bearing seemed to give us a wonderful picture of the court life of an Arabian chieftain.

Sheikh Esau's representative at Manamah—his prime minister, or viceroy, we should call him, though he is usually known there by the humble-sounding title of the 'Bazaar-master'—is by name Saed Ben Omar, a very stout and nearly black individual with a European cast of countenance. He looked exceedingly grand when he came to see us, in his under-robe of scarlet cloth, with a cloak of rustling and stiff white wool with a little red woven in it. Over his head floated a white cashmere shawl, with the usual camel's-hair rings to keep it on, and sandals on his bare feet. He was deputed by his sovereign to look after us, and during the fortnight we were on the island he never left us for a single day. Though outwardly very strict in his asceticism, and constantly apt to say his prayers, with his nose in the dust, at inconvenient moments, I found him by no means averse to a cigarette in the strictest privacy, and I learnt that his private life would not bear European investigation. He is constantly getting married. Though sixty years of age he had a young bride of a few weeks' standing. I was assured that he would soon tire of her and put her away. Even in polygamous Arabia he is looked upon as a much-married man.

Of course the pearl-fishery is the great occupation of the Bahreinee. The pearls of their seas are celebrated for their firmness, and do not peel. They are commonly reported to lose one per cent. annually for fifty years in colour and water, but after that they remain the same. They have seven skins, whereas the Cingalese pearls have only six. The merchants generally buy them wholesale by the old Portuguese weight of the *Chao*. They divide them into different sizes with sieves and sell them in

India, so that—as is usually the case with specialities—it is impossible to buy a good pearl on Bahrein.

Diving here is exceedingly primitive; all the necessary paraphernalia are a loop of rope and a stone to go down with, a curious horn thing to hold the nose, and oil for the orifice of the ears. Once a merchant brought with him a diving-apparatus, but the divers were highly indignant, and, leaguings against him, refused to show the best banks. In this way the fisheries suffer, for the best pearls are in the deeper waters, which can only be visited late in the season. The divers are mostly negro slaves from Africa; they do not live long, poor creatures, developing awful sores and weak eyes, and they live and die entirely without medical aid.

Very curious boats ply in the waters between Manamah and Moharrek; the huge ungainly buggalows can only sail in the deeper channels; they have very long pointed prows elegantly carved and decorated with shells; when the wind is contrary they are propelled by poles or paddles consisting of boards of any shape tied to the end of the poles with twine, and the oarsman always seats himself on the gunwale. Sheikh Esau has a very fine buggalow of his own, and also a war-pinnace, which, since British rule has put down piracy in the Gulf, is not of much use. Then there are the bamboo skiffs with decks almost flush with the side, requiring great skill in working. We crossed over to Moharrek in a small buggalow, and had to be poled for a great distance with our keel perpetually grating on the bottom. We were glad when the donkeys came alongside, and we performed what was left of our voyage on their backs. Boats are really of but little use immediately around the islands. You see men walking in the sea quite a mile out collecting shellfish and seaweeds, which form a staple diet for both man and beast on Bahrein.

Moharrek is aristocratic, being the seat of government; Manamah is essentially commercial; and between them in the sea is a huge dismantled Portuguese fort, now used as Sheikh Esau's stables. Moharrek is dependent for its water supply on a curious well beneath the sea; they sink skins and jars below the salt water with extraordinary skill, and bring up delightful fresh drinking-water from the depths of the ocean. I never saw so curious a phenomenon before; they tell me that the spring comes up with such force that it drives back the salt water and never gets impregnated. All I can answer for is that the water is excellent to drink.



Behold the excavators on the way to the scene of their labours. Six camels convey their tent, a seventh carries goatskins full of water. Four asses groan under their personal effects; hens for consumption ride in a sort of lobster-pot by the side of pickaxes and chairs; six policemen, or *peons*, are in their train, each on a donkey. One carries a paraffin lamp in his hand, another a basket of eggs; and as there are no reins and no stirrups, the wonder is that these articles ever survive. As for themselves, the excavators who ride sideways hold on like grim death before and behind, especially when the frisky Bahrein donkeys galloped at steeplechase pace across the desert.

For some distance around Manamah all is arid desert, on which a few scrubby plants grow, which women cut for fodder with sickles like saws, and carry home in large bundles on their backs. Sheikh Esau's summer palace is in the centre of this desert—a fortress hardly distinguishable from the sand around, and consisting, like Eastern structures of this nature, of nothing but one room over the gateway for his majesty, and a vast courtyard, 200 feet long, where his attendants erect their bamboo huts and tents. Around the whole runs a wall with bastions at either corner, very formidable to look upon. Passing this, the palm-groves are soon reached, which are exceedingly fine, and offer delicious shade from the burning sun. Here amongst the trees were women working in picturesque attire, red petticoats, orange-coloured drawers down to their heels, and a dark-blue covering over all this, which would suddenly be pulled over the face at our approach, if they had not on their masks, or *buttras*, which admit of a good stare. On their heads would be baskets with dates or citrons, and now and again a particularly modest one would dart behind a palm-tree until that dangerous animal man had gone by.

About half way to the scene of our labours we halted by the ruins of the old Arab town of Beled-al-Kedim, with its lovely mosque with minarets decorated with Kuphic patterns and inscriptions, but now in ruins, which tell of an age long gone by, when the Wahabee fanatics did not rule on Bahrein. Here on Thursday is held a market, and the place is now known only as Suk-al-Khamis, or 'Thursday's market.' Later on we visited this curious gathering of Bahreinee, but on our journey out not a living soul was near.

Sheikh Esau has here a tiny mosque, just an open loggia, where he goes every morning in summertime to pray and take

his coffee. Beneath it he has a bath of fresh but not over-clean water, where he and his family bathe. Often during the summer heats he spends the whole day here, or else he goes to his glorious garden about a mile distant near the coast, where acacias, hibiscus, and almonds fight with one another for the mastery, and form a delicious jungle. Near this spot is a very large Portuguese fort, with bastions in ruins, but well preserved, and there is also a large and curious well in the palm-groves, 50 feet across and 3 fathoms deep, of clear but brackish water, with ruins of a bath-house close to, and lovely prismatic colours in its depths. Undoubtedly in bygone ages Beled-al-Kedim was the capital of Bahrein, a flourishing and well-favoured spot.

For miles we passed through palm-groves, watered by their little artificial conduits, and producing the staple food of the island. Saed Ben Omar talked to us much about the date. 'Mohamed said,' he began, 'honour the date-tree, for she is your mother,'—a true enough maxim in parched Arabia, where nothing else will grow. When ripe the dates are put into a round tank, called the *madibash*, where they are exposed to the sun and air, and throw off excessive juice which collects below; after three days of this treatment they are removed and packed for exportation in baskets of palm-leaves. The Bahreinee, for their own consumption, love to add sesame seeds to their dates, or ginger-powder and walnuts pressed with them into jars. These are called *seerah*, and are originally prepared by being dried in the sun and protected at night, then diluted date-juice is poured over them. The fruit which does not reach maturity is called *salang*, and is given as food to cattle, boiled with date-stones and fish-bones. This makes an excellent sort of cake for milch cows, and the green dates, too, are given to the donkeys, to which the Bahreinee attribute their great superiority. The very poor also make an exceedingly unpalatable dish out of green dates mixed with fish for their own table, or, I should say, floor.

Nature here is not strong enough for the fructification of the palm, so at given seasons the pollen is removed by cutting off the male spathes when ready; these they dry for twenty hours, and then they take the flower twigs, and deposit one or two in each bunch of the female blossom. Just as we were there they were very busy with the spathes, and in Thursday's market huge baskets of the male spathes were exposed for sale. The palm-groves are surrounded by dikes to keep the water in, and the fins of a species



of ray-fish, after being put in tanks to decompose, is the most approved form of manure.

The date-tree is everything to a Bahreinee. He beats the green spadix with wooden implements to make fibre for his ropes; in the dry state he uses it as fuel; he makes his mats, the only known form of carpet and bedding here, out of it; his baskets are made of the leaves; from the fresh spathe, by distillation, a certain stuff called Tara water is obtained, of strong but agreeable smell, which is much used for making sherbet of. Much legendary lore is connected with the date. The small round hole at the back is said to have been made by Mohamed's teeth, when one day he foolishly tried to bite one; and in some places the expression 'at the same time a date and a duty' is explained by the fact that in Ramazan the day's fast is usually broken by first eating a date.

Amongst all these date-groves are the curious Arab wells with sloping runs, and worked by donkeys; the tall poles to which the skins are attached are date-tree trunks; down goes the skin as the donkey comes up its run, and then up it comes again full of water as the donkey descends, to be guided by a slave into the water-channel which fertilises the trees. Day after day in our camp we heard the weird creaking of these wells, very early in the morning and in the evening, when the sun had gone down, and we felt as we heard them what an infinite blessing is a well of water in a thirsty land.

The excavators' camp was a sight to see, all amongst the tumuli of a departed race, which extend for miles and miles over the arid desert of Bahrein; their own tent occupied a conspicuous and central place, their servants' tent was hard by, liable to be blown down by heavy gusts of wind, which event happened the first night after their arrival, to the infinite discomfiture of the Bazaar-master, who, by the way, had left his grand clothes at home, and appeared in the desert clad in a loose coffee-coloured dressing-gown, with a red band round his waist. Around the tents swarmed turbaned diggers, who looked as if they had come out in their night-gowns, dressing-gowns, and bath-sheets. These lodged at night in the bamboo village of Ali hard by, a place for which we developed the profoundest contempt, for the women thereof refused to pollute themselves by washing the clothes of infidels, and our dirty garments had to be sent all the way to Mamamah to be cleansed. A bamboo structure formed a shelter for the kitchen, around which, on the sand, lay curious coffee-pots,

bowls, and cooking utensils, which would have been eagerly sought after for museums in Europe. The camel, which fetched the daily supply of water from afar, grazed around on the coarse desert herbage; also the large white donkey, which went into the town for marketing by day, and entangled himself in the tent ropes by night, was left to wander at his own sweet will. It was a very peculiar sight indeed, this desert camp; and no wonder that for the first week of their residence there, the excavators were visited by all the inhabitants of Bahrein who could find time to come so far.

The first day came five camels with two riders apiece and a train of donkeys, bringing rich pearl merchants from the capital; these sat in a circle and complacently drank our coffee and ate our mixed biscuits, without in any way troubling us, having apparently come for no other object than to get this slender refreshment. But next day came Prince Mohamed, a young man of seventeen, a nephew of Sheikh Esau, who is about to wed his uncle's daughter, and is talked of as the heir-apparent to the throne; he was all gorgeous in a white embroidered robe, red turban, and head rings bound in royal gold; he played with our pistols with covetous eyes, ate some English cake, having first questioned the Bazaar-master as to the orthodoxy of its ingredients, and then he promised us a visit next day. He came on a beautifully caparisoned horse, with red trappings and gold tassels. He brought with him many followers on the morrow, and announced his intention of passing the day with us, rather to our distress; but we were appeased by the present of a fat lamb with one of those large bushy tails, which remind one forcibly of a lady's bustle, and suggest that the ingenious milliner who invented these atrocities must have taken for her pattern an Eastern lamb. This day Prince Mohamed handled the revolver more covetously than ever, and got so far as exchanging his scarlet embroidered case with red silk belt and silver buckle for my leathern one.

That afternoon a great cavalcade of gazelle huntsmen called upon us. The four chief men of these had each a hooded falcon on his arm, and a tawny Persian greyhound with long silken tail at his side; they wore their sickle-like daggers in their waistbands; their bodies were enveloped in long cloaks, and their heads in white clothes bound round with the camel's-hair straps; they were accompanied by another young scion of the El Kaleefah family, who bestrode a white Arab steed with the gayest possible



trappings. Thus was the young prince attired: on his head a cashmere kerchief with gold *akkals*, he was almost smothered in an orange cloth gown trimmed with gold and lined with green, the sleeves of which were very long, cut open at the end and trimmed; over this robe was cast a black cloth cloak trimmed with gold on the shoulders, and a richly inlaid sword dangled at his side, almost as big as himself, for he was but an undersized boy of fifteen.

In the desert of Bahrein there are many gazelles, which they hunt with falcons and greyhounds; when let loose and unhooded the falcon skims rapidly along the ground till it reaches the gazelle, then it pounces on its victim's head and so injures it that it falls an easy prey to the pursuing hounds. Our sportsmen made a very nice group for our photography, as did almost everything around us on Bahrein.

Any excavator would have lost patience with the men of Bahrein with whom he had to deal; tickets had to be issued to prevent more working than were wanted, and claiming pay at the end of the day; ubiquity was essential, for they loved to get out of sight and do nothing; with unceasing regularity the pipe went round and they paused for a 'drink' at the hubble-bubble, as the Arabs express it; morning and evening prayers were, I am sure, unnecessarily long; accidents would happen, which alarmed us at first, until we learnt how ready they were to cry wolf; one man was knocked over by a stone, we thought by his contortions some limb must be broken, and we applied vaseline, our only available remedy, to the bruise; his fellow-workmen then seized him by the shoulders, shook him well 'to put the bones right again,' as they expressed it, and he continued his work as before. The Bazaar-master and the policemen would come and seize frantically a tool and work for a few seconds with herculean vigour by way of example, which was never followed. 'Yallah!' ('hurry on'); 'Marhabbah!' ('very good'), the men would cry, and they would sing and scream with vigour that nearly drove us wild. But for the occasional application of a stick and great firmness, we should have got nothing out of them but noise.

One day we had a mutiny because I dismissed two men who came very late; the rest refused to work, and came dancing round us and shouting and brandishing spades: one had actually got hold of a naked sword, which weapon I did not at all like, and I was thankful Prince Mohamed had not yet got my revolver. For some time they continued this wild, weird dance, consigning us

freely to the lower regions as they danced, and then they all went away, so that the Bazaar-master had to be sent in search of other and more amenable men. Evidently, Sheikh Esau when he entrusted us to the charge of the Bazaar-master and sent policemen with us was afraid of something untoward happening. Next day we heard that his majesty was coming in person with his tents to encamp in our vicinity, and I fancy we were in more danger from those men than we realised at the moment, fanned as they are into hatred of the infidel by the fanatical Wahabee; and thirty years ago I was told no infidel could have ventured into the centre of Bahrein with safety.

Another important visitor came on Saturday in the shape of Sheikh Khallet, a cousin of the ruling chief, with a retinue of ten men from Roufaa, an inland village. We sat for a while on our heels in rows, conversing and smiling, and finally accepted an invitation from Sheikh Khallet to visit him at his village, and make a little tour over the island. Accordingly, on Sunday morning we started, accompanied by the Bazaar-master, for Roufaa, and we were not a little relieved to get away before Sheikh Esau was upon us, and the formalities which his royal presence in our midst would have necessitated.

We had an exceedingly hot ride of it, and the wind was so high that our position on our donkeys was rendered even more precarious; the sandy desert whirled around us, we shut our eyes, tied down our hats, and tried to be patient; for miles our road led through the tumuli of those mysterious dead, who once in their thousands must have peopled Bahrein; their old wells are still to be seen in the desert, and evidences of a cultivation which has long ago disappeared. As we approached the edge of this vast necropolis the mounds grew less and less, until mere heaps of stones marked the spot where a dead man lay, and then we saw before us the two villages of Roufaa, one called 'mountainous Roufaa,' a sort of castellated village built on a cliff, fifty feet above the lowest level of the desert; from here there is a view over a wide bleak expanse of sand, occasionally relieved by an oasis, the result of a well and irrigation, and beyond this the eye rests on Jebel Dukhan, 'the mountain of mist,' which high-sounding name has been given to a mass of rocks in the centre of Bahrein, rising 400 feet above the plain, and often surrounded by a sea mist. Bahrein, with its low-lying land, is often in a mist. Some mornings on rising early we looked out of our tent to find ourselves



enveloped in a perfect London fog, our clothes were soaking, the sand on the floor of our tent was soft and adhesive: then in an hour the bright orb of heaven would disperse all this, for we were very far south indeed, on the coast of Arabia. 'Mountainous Roufaa' is the property of young Prince Mohamed.

Then there is 'South-Western Roufaa,' quite a big place, inhabited by many members of the Kaleefah family, including Sheikh Khallet, and their dependents. As our arrival became known all the village turned out to see us: the advent of an English lady amongst them was something too excessively novel; even close-veiled women forgot their prudery, and peered out from their blue coverings, screaming with laughter, and pointing, as they screamed, to the somewhat appalled object of their mirth. 'Hadi Beebee!' ('there goes the lady') shouted they again and again. No victorious potentate ever had a more triumphant entry into his capital than the English 'Beebee' had on entering South-Western Roufaa.

Sheikh Khallet was ready to receive us in his *kahwa* or reception-room, furnished solely by strips of matting and a camel's-hair rug with coarse embroidery on it; two pillows were produced for us, and Arabs squatted on the matting all round the wall; for it was Sheikh Khallet's morning reception, or *majilis*, just then, and we were the lions of the occasion. Our host, we soon learnt, rather to our dismay, was a most rigid ascetic, a Wahabee to the backbone; he allows of no internal decorations in his house, no smoking is allowed, no wine, only perpetual coffee and perpetual prayers; our prospects were not of the most brilliant. After a while all the company left, and Sheikh Khallet intimated to us that the room was now our own. Two large pillows were brought, and rugs were laid down; as for the rest we were dependent on our own very limited resources.

Sheikh Saba, who had married Sheikh Khallet's sister, was a great contrast to our host; he had been in Bombay, and had imbibed in his travels a degree of worldliness which ill became a Wahabee; he had filled his house, to which he took us, with all sorts of baubles—gilt looking-glasses, coloured glass balls in rows and rows up to the ceiling, lovely pillows and carpets, Zanzibar date baskets, Bombay inlaid chests, El Hasa coffee-pots, and a Russian tea-urn—a truly marvellous conglomeration of things, which produced on us a wonderful sense of pleasure and repose after the bareness of our host's abode. Sheikh Saba wore only his long white

shirt and turban, and so unconventional was he that he allowed his consort to remain at one end of the room whilst I was there.

My wife penetrated into many of the harems at Roufaa, followed by such a crowd of gazers that one good lady grew enraged at the invasion and threw a cup of coffee in an intruder's face. In the afternoon we rode over to 'Mountainous Roufaa,' but alas! our young friend Sheikh Mohamed was out, for he had to be in attendance on his uncle, Sheikh Esau, who had just arrived at his tent near our encampment, and he had to provide all his uncle's meals; and we saw a donkey with a cauldron on its back large enough to boil a sheep in, large copper trays and many other articles despatched for the delectation of the sovereign and his retinue. Sheikh Mohamed's mother, quite a queenly-looking woman, was busying herself about the preparation of these things, and when she had finished she invited us to go into the harem. I felt the honour and confidence reposed in me exceedingly, but, alas! all the women were veiled, all I could contemplate was their lovely hands and feet dyed yellow with henna, their rich red skirts, their aprons adorned with coins, their gold bracelets and turquoise rings; my wife assured me that with one solitary exception I had no loss in not seeing their faces. In one corner of the women's room was the biggest bed I ever saw; it had eight posts, a roof, a fence, a gate and steps up to it; it is a sort of daïs, in fact, where they spread their rugs and sleep.

Half-way between the two Roufaas we halted at a well, the great point of concourse for the inhabitants of both villages. It was evening, and around it were gathered crowds of the most enchanting people in every possible costume; women and donkeys were groaning under the weight of skins filled with water; men were engaged in filling them, but it seems against the dignity of a male Arab to carry anything. With the regularity of a steamer crane, the well creaked and groaned as the donkeys toiled up and down their slope, bringing to the surface the skins of water. It was a truly Arab sight, with the desert all around us, and the little garden hard by which Sheikh Saba cultivates with infinite toil, having a weary contest with the surrounding sand which invades his enclosure.

The sun was getting low when we returned to our bare room at Sheikh Khaled's, and to our great contentment we were left alone, for our day had been a busy one, and a strain on our con-



versational powers. Our host handed us over to the tender mercies of a black slave, Zamzam by name, wonderfully skilled at cooking with a handful of charcoal on circular pots coloured red, and bearing a marked resemblance to the altars of the Parsee fire-worshippers; he brought us in our dinner: first he spread a large round mat of fine grass on the floor, in the centre of this he deposited a washing basin filled with boiled rice and a bowl of *ghee* or rancid grease to make it palatable; before us were placed two tough chickens, a bowl of dates, and for drink we had a bowl of milk with delicious fresh butter floating in it. Several sheets of bread about the size and consistency of bath towels were also provided, but no utensils of any kind to assist us in conveying these delicacies to our mouths. With pieces of bread we scooped up the rice, with our fingers we managed the rest, and we were glad no one was looking on to witness our struggles save Zamzam with a ewer of water with which he washed us after the repast was over, and then we put ourselves away for the night.

Very early next morning we were on the move for our trip across the island; the journey would be too long for donkeys, they said, so Sheikh Khamlet mounted us on three of his best camels, with lovely saddles of inlaid El Hasa work. We, that is to say my wife and I and the Bazaar-master, ambled along at a pretty smart pace across the desert in the direction of a fishing village called Asker, on the east coast of the island, near which were said to exist ancient remains; these of course turned out to be myths, but the village was all that could be desired in quaintness: the houses were all of bamboo, in one of which we were regaled with coffee, and found it delicious after our hot ride; then we strolled along the shore and marvelled at the bamboo skiffs, the curiously-fashioned oars and water casks, the stone anchors, and other primitive implements used by this seafaring race. The Bazaar-master would not let us tarry as long as we could have wished, for he was anxious for us to arrive before the midday heat at a rocky cave in the 'mountain of mist,' in the centre of the island. Here, in delicious coolness, yet another Sheikh of the El Kaleefah family was introduced to us, by name Abdullah; he owns the land about here, and having been advised of our coming, had prepared a repast for us, much on the lines of the one we had had the evening before. From the gentle elevation of the misty mountain one gets a very fair idea of the extent and character of Bahrein; it looked to us anything but silvery, but for all the

world as like one of their own sheets of bread—oval and tawny. It is said to be twenty-seven miles long and twelve wide at its broadest point. From the clearness of the atmosphere and the distinctness with which we saw the sea all around us, it could not have been much more. There are many tiny villages dotted about here and there, recognisable only by their nest of palm-trees and their strips of verdure. In the dim distance, to our left, arose the mountains of Arabia, beyond the flat coast line of El Hasa encircling that wild, mysterious land of Nejd, where the Wahabee dwell,—a land forbidden to the infidel globetrotter.

We much enjoyed our cool rest and repast in Abdullah's cave, and for two hours or more our whole party lay stretched on the ground courting slumber, whilst our camels grazed around. The Sheikh was anxious to take us to his house for the night, but we could not remain, as our work demanded our return to our camp that night, so we compromised matters by taking coffee with him on a green oasis near his house, under a blazing sun, without an atom of shade, and without a thing against which to lean our tired backs. Then we hurried back to Roufaa, took leave of our friends, and started off late in the evening for our home.

Soon we came in sight of Sheikh Esau's tent; his majesty was evidently expecting us, for by his side in the royal tent were placed two high thrones covered with sheepskins for us to sit upon, whilst his Arabian majesty and his courtiers sat in a long loop which extended for some yards outside the tent. Here were all his nephews and cousins assembled. That gay boy Sheikh Mohamed, on ordinary occasions as full of fun as an English schoolboy, sat there in great solemnity, incapable of a smile though I maliciously tried to raise one. When he came next morning to visit us he was equally solemn, until his uncle had left our tent; then his gaiety returned as if by magic, and with it his covetousness for my pistol. Eventually an exchange was effected, he producing a coffee-pot and an inlaid bowl which had taken our fancy as the price.

Two days later our camp was struck, and our long cavalcade, with Saed Ben Omar, the Bazaar-master, at its head, returned to Manamah. He had ordered for us quite a sumptuous repast at his mansion by the sea, and having learnt our taste for curiosities he brought us as presents a buckler of camel's skin, his eight-foot long lance, and a lovely bowl of El Hasa work,—that is to say, minute particles of silver inlaid in wonderful patterns in wood; it



is quite a distinctive art of the district of Arabia along the north-eastern coast known as El Hasa ; curious old guns, saddles, bowls, and coffee-pots, in fact everything with an artistic tendency, coming from that country.

The day following was the great Thursday's market at Beled-al-Kedim, near the old minarets and the wells. Mounted once more on donkeys, we joined the train of peasants thither bound, my wife being as usual the object of much criticism, and greatly interfering with the business of the day. One male starrer paid for his inquisitiveness by tumbling over a stall of knick-knacks and precipitating himself and all the contents on the ground.

The minarets and pillars of the old mosques looked down on a strange scene that day. In the half-ruined domed houses of the departed race, stall-holders had pitched their stalls, lanes and cross lanes of closely-packed vendors of quaint crockery, newly-cut lucerne, onions, fish, and objects of European fabric such as only Orientals admire, formed a compact mass of struggling humanity ; but it was easy to see that the date-palm and her produce formed the staple trade of the place. There were all shapes and sizes of baskets made of palm-leaves, dates in profusion, fuel of the dried spathes, and vendors of the male spathes for fructifying the palm, and palm-leaf matting,—the only furniture, and sometimes the only roofing of their comfortless huts.

The costumes were dazzling in their brilliancy and quaintness. It was a scene never to be forgotten, and one of which our photograph, taken from a gentle eminence, gives but a faint idea. It was our last scene on Bahrein, a fitting conclusion to our sojourn thereon.

*FISTICUFFS IN FICTION.*

THE sentiment of Lucretius as to the delight of witnessing a violent tempest from some place of shelter has been often quoted with appreciation of its selfish spirit of philosophy. Somewhat akin to it is the feeling by force of which the most peaceably disposed amongst us, amid the security of our own surroundings, are not averse to hearing the details of a fight. Scenes descriptive of any personal encounter, especially of the pugilistic sort, are apt to have an unusual attraction, even when occurring in the shadowy realms of fiction.

Who has not experienced a thrill of enjoyment when Mr. Tupman, under the threefold aggravation of having been called 'old,' and 'fat,' and 'a fellow' by his too hasty chief, proceeds to tuck up his wristbands with the regretful though determinedly expressed resolve to inflict vengeance on Mr. Pickwick's venerated person? And is not the thrill followed by a glow of positive rapture when that heroic man, not to be outdone, throws himself into a 'paralytic attitude' with the ready response, 'Come on, sir!' Nor is it altogether to our satisfaction (though we would not have had it otherwise) that the contest, thus happily introduced, is checked before a blow is struck by the somewhat impertinent interference of Mr. Snodgrass, who, at the imminent risk of damage to his own temples, rushes between the belligerents and recalls them to a sense of the dignity they had for a moment lost sight of. A similar interest attends on Mr. Pickwick's adventure with the cabman into whose business, with his customary genial inquisitiveness, he had attempted to pry. With what exhilarating effect on his calmly unconscious mood comes the sudden bellicose manifestation of the outraged Jehu, when, flinging his fare on the pavement, he offers to fight Mr. Pickwick for the amount, following up the proposal with 'one' on that gentleman's eye, another on his nose, and a third on his chest (Mr. Snodgrass, who on this occasion had signally failed in his attempts at conciliation, coming in—together with the rest of the Pickwickians—for something on his own account)—all, and a great deal more, in half-a-dozen seconds.

Of equally delightful suddenness in the manner of its coming



off was Pip's affair with the 'pale young gentleman' in 'Great Expectations.' The spirits rise to the startling abruptness of the challenge when, after their unceremonious exchange of greeting in Miss Havisham's garden, 'Come and fight,' says 'the pale young gentleman,' at once proceeding to give the bewildered Pip 'a reason for fighting' (as he put it) by clapping his hands violently together, pulling Pip's hair, and butting his head into his stomach—a particularly unpleasant manœuvre considering that Pip had just been dining. The eye follows him as if fascinated as he dances wildly to and fro, skipping from one leg to the other in accordance with the 'laws of the game,' divests himself of the greater part of his attire with an air at once 'light-hearted, businesslike, and bloodthirsty,' and gives Pip the greatest surprise of his life by going down like a ninepin at the first blow, looking up with an ensanguined countenance at his amazed antagonist, who had expected nothing less than annihilation from his previous show of dexterity. And when, after some dozen rounds or so, during the course of which he never once hits hard, is invariably knocked down, is always up again in a moment, and finally spins round, drops on his knees and throws up the sponge, panting out, 'That means you have won,' the touch of pathos that steals in upon our mirth imparts to it a peculiar charm.

'There is something peculiarly hostile,' says Bulwer Lytton, 'in the relationship between boy and boy when their backs are once up and they are alone on a quiet bit of green'—the remark leading to the description of the fight, in 'My Novel,' between the country lout, young Leonard, and Randal Leslie, Etonian, beside the Squire's new stocks, and on which considerably more ill-will was brought to bear than on that so lightly carried on by Master Herbert Pocket. Lenny, as may be remembered, was mounting guard over the village ornament (by order of the Squire's factotum) when Randal, bruised and shaken by a recent fall into a ditch, drew near and, all innocent of offence (in this particular at least), seated himself on the by no means formidable-looking structure. Lenny, in pursuance, as he thinks, of his duty, remonstrates in no very conciliatory manner, and the next moment the boys are at it hammer-and-tongs. After the first blind onslaught, the heavy blundering blows of young Rusticus come in nowhere against the Etonian's swift effective strokes, and he is soon left bruised and bleeding on the field, the still wrathful victor flinging him a half-crown in compensation for his injuries.

Of a fuller flavour is the account of the combat between one of Bulwer's later heroes, Kenelm Chillingly, and the fear-inspiring, if radically good-hearted, bully of the neighbourhood, Tom Bowles. 'Providence,' says the serious-minded Kenelm, without a thought of irreverence, 'sent me to this village for the express purpose of licking Tom Bowles.' And his manner of accomplishing this purpose is full of sweet surprises. Lightly parrying blows that might have felled an ox, he inflicts a few playful taps on nose and mouth in return; gets Tom's head into a mill, and, instead of pounding it after approved fashion out of all recognisable shape, lets it go unscathed with the apologetic remark to the onlookers, 'He has a handsome face; it would be a shame to spoil it'—a method of treatment that goads the unappreciative Tom to frenzy; when, all at once, the other brings his trained skill to bear on the untutored strength of his opponent, and, roused to the necessity of checking the blows that sound on his chest 'as on an anvil,' lets out in earnest. At the first blow, 'crash between the eyes,' Tom reels and staggers; at the second, he throws up his hands, jumps into the air as if shot, and falls heavily forward; on which satisfactory result the victor turns, with admirable *sang-froid*, yet humbly withal, and as if in deprecation of their horror, to the crowd and assures them that if Tom had been 'a less magnificent creature' he would never have ventured the second blow. 'The first would have done for any man less splendidly endowed by nature'—a compliment unfortunately thrown away on its unconscious object, who, in compliance with his conqueror's commands, is tenderly lifted up and carried home to his mother.

The tone of muscular Christianity about this combat recalls the figure, familiar to novel readers, of the fighting parson who is as ready to thrash the black sheep of his flock as to baptise its lambs, and through this all-round power of ministry ends by reclaiming the whole parish from its evil ways into the paths of righteousness and peace. No such benevolent spirit is present in the encounter that forms so prominent a feature in novels of the Guy Livingstone type. When the hero of this school stands forth in the impromptu ring, in all the pride of his glorious young manhood, his muscles standing out like whipcord, his 'Norman blood' in full tide, we know by the 'evil light' in his eyes, the 'stern and pitiless' set of his mouth, that there is a bad time coming for his opponent. Nor is the expectation disappointed, though the Game Chicken, Bendigo Bill, the Big



'Un, or whatever his attractive designation may be—a bullet-headed, iron-fisted champion of the ring, with a ferocious grin of anticipation on his face—appears the very incarnation of brute force. The hero's 'fatal left' is sure to 'swing out,' in its accustomed deadly fashion, with the rapidity and precision of a rifle-ball; the final smashing blow from the right is sure to fall once—if not twice—with a 'dull sickening thud' that is 'bad to hear,' and the victim, for all his sledge-hammer blows and bull-like rushes, will inevitably drop at his victor's feet, from the height to which, as a finishing-touch, he has been whirled, a heap of 'blind, senseless, bleeding humanity.'

There is a fight of a yet grimmer type wherein, though the flavour of the shambles may be missing, we have the more than equivalent sensation of the bearlike hug, in which body and bones are like to be crushed into one coagulated mass. The aggressor in this case is most probably a burly garotter, steeped to the lips in deeds of crime and violence, and with a previous grudge against his 'murdered man' (as in anticipation he fondly deems him), some delicate-handed, immaculately got-up aristocrat. But the tables are turned on him in the most unexpected manner. His first vigorous onslaught having been coolly put aside, to his mingled astonishment and horror he finds himself clasped in an embrace from which it is as impossible to get free as it would be from the encircling folds of a boa. His struggles are vain, the grasp still tightens, and he gasps for air, while his tormentor looks calmly down upon him, his brow untroubled, his hue unchanged, his breath coming no quicker than if it were his partner in the dance he was thus clasping to him; and perchance a gleam of amusement in his cold bright eyes. The garotter has caught a tartar this time, and lucky for him if that merciless grip relaxes before it be too late, and he is allowed to sneak off in the gloaming a sadder and a sorer man.

Another of these surprise-fights is that of which the hero is some slender, golden-haired Adonis who disguises his herculean strength beneath a semblance of almost feminine mildness, whose soft blue eyes seem made but for the glance of love, whose hand might be a woman's envy (the white hand, by the way, seems to be a *sine quâ non* in these encounters), in whose voice there is a pathetic tone or else a lazy drawl—unless it be an infantine lisp. We all know by experience how ill it fares with the unhappy wretch who, beguiled by his harmless exterior, may chance to

rouse the ire of this languid being. A startling metamorphosis is apt to ensue. Up leaps the devil into those sleepy eyes; the fingers that were wont to stray so listlessly through their owner's curly locks form themselves into a fist under which the unwary one goes down like a log; and the gentle-seeming fraud stands revealed a veritable 'terror:' as bad in his way as that personage dear to the American humorist—the small mild-looking 'stranger' out West, who, strolling in an absent-minded manner past some rowdy saloon, unwittingly gets into trouble with the biggest man in the crowd, and, after meekly, but vainly, protesting his innocence of offence, ends by 'mopping the sidewalk' with him, in the suddenly revealed character of a professor of pugilism.

In these fictitious fights it is not always the man of humble birth that gets smashed by the patrician. Occasionally we are treated to a victory on the other side; and it cannot be denied that there is a zest of its own in the situation when the gallant captain or the trim civilian falls prone beneath the well-planted blow of one of the grimy-handed sons of toil, who, yielding to an impulse of righteous wrath (for the wrath in this case is generally righteous), thus takes vengeance for some injury wrought on him or his. Little pity is felt for the prostrate sinner as he sprawls in the mud, his shirt-front 'steeped in gore,' his smooth face 'one mask of bruises,' by which tokens we may safely infer that it will be many a long day before he can lord it around him with his usual swagger. In the melodramatic scene amongst the beech-trees in the twilight between Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede, it was Arthur that went down before the workman's brawny arm. Ladies have their own way of managing these things. Few will have forgotten how eager Adam was for the fight with his slippery rival; how tenderly solicitous over him when his longed-for blow had taken effect; and how like a sick fractious child Arthur behaved after his punishment, finally using the arm which had thrown him to support his shattered frame on the way home.

A woman is supposed to be a prime instigator in every mischief: she certainly forms an important element in the fight in fiction, whether innocently or of malice prepense. Many of these belligerent scenes would lack their crowning charm without the feminine business in the background—the agonised sobs, the wringing of hands, the supplicatory appeals of the gentle, timid maiden; or else the self-satisfied smile of the selfish beauty,



glorying in her power, though it be for evil, over the masculine species. The fight takes on a more perilous aspect when there is no spectator—if one may except the moon, who, from time immemorial, has appeared as interested in these proceedings as in lovers' meetings, and who looks down with cold dispassionate gaze on the dear struggle for life; for in these lonely contests—on barren heath or rocky shore—it generally means nothing less. If the encounter takes place on the side of a precipice (a favourite situation—that is, with the author), so much the better for the effect. The villain of the occasion has an awkward knack of working his reluctant adversary nearer and nearer, inch by inch, toward the edge of the yawning abyss, and ends by precipitating him over, going about with an uneasy conscience ever after, till the Abel of his dreams turns up to confront him at the most momentous crisis of his life: for things seldom turn out so badly as they might have done in these fights. Fiction here is sometimes stranger than truth.

The fight is dying out of fiction; if we except those hand-to-hand encounters between white man and savage, with which we have been regaled of late, and which take place a very long way from home. On the rare occasions in which the exigencies of plot may still force a fight upon the novelist, the affair is slurred over in a perfunctory style, with nothing of that gusto of detail that animated his predecessor. Whether or not a worse element has crept into his (or her) pages may be a doubtful question.

*SISTER ROSE GERTRUDE.*

PREFATORY NOTE.

SISTER ROSE GERTRUDE, who has sailed to be the Superior of the Lepers' Hospital at Kalawao, on the Island of Molokai, the home of the late Father Damien, is the daughter of the Vicar of Combe Down, sometime chaplain of the Union and H.M. prison at Bath.

A member of the Roman Catholic Church, and of one of its 'nursing' sisterhoods, she feels that 'suffering is her vow and her profession.' 'Love which cannot suffer is unworthy of the name of love.'

For years past it has been her desire to go forth and tend the lepers in their lonely island home, and she has equipped herself for the work by study in the hospitals and at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

'It had always been,' she said to a lady who interviewed her on the eve of her departure, 'my wish and my desire to do some of God's work on earth into which I could throw my whole being, where there was scope for the fullest self-sacrifice, and where I could follow Him who said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."'

She handed shyly a little old prayer-book to the lady, and continued:

'I don't know whether I ought to tell you, but unless I do I shall not have explained one of the reasons of my great wish to go, and live with, and help the lepers.'

In Miss Fowler's small, clear handwriting, a prayer was written on the leaf—the touching, pathetic prayer which is said to have been found on the chest of the Prince Imperial when he was carried dead from the battle-field in Zululand.

Miss Fowler pointed to the passage: 'If Thou only givest on this earth a certain sum of happiness, take, O God! my share and bestow it on the most worthy . . . . If Thou seekest vengeance on man, strike me!'



If, Lord, Thy hand to each a sum doth give  
Of joy, take mine to be on others shed.  
And if Thou seekest vengeance, strike me dead  
So others live.

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Sister Rose with the clear blue eye,  
And the Dominic dress, and the milk-white hood,  
You have long resolved: you have crossed the flood;  
You have out-faced death, and the leper's ban,  
For the glory of God and the love of man;  
At least, you can never die.

It is true you sat in your sombre gown  
And waved a hand to the twilit shore;  
It is true, when the funnels began to roar  
And the stern to lash in the Mersey tide,  
You looked back over the vessel's side  
And thought of the Combe and the Down.

But your soul had long ago crossed the seas  
To the tall dark cliffs with their ladders of sun,  
To the beach where the pitiless breakers run,  
Where the lepers wail on the prisoning strand;  
And the Christ alone with His loving hand  
Can lessen the sore disease.

Sister Rose, there the roses glow,  
The wild convolvulus shines like fire,  
The air is as soft as heart can desire,  
The honey-bird gleams, and the fern-trees wave,  
But the ocean moans round an island grave,  
And death is above and below.

Sister Rose, you will land in a bay  
Where like jewels the fish will swim or sleep;  
But the shark's fierce fin sails out of the deep.  
Fair is the noon, but all night in the south  
The dread volcano flames from its mouth  
Anguish and sore dismay.

One can bear to sit down by a corpse awhile,  
 To see the face-cloth drawn from a face  
 Which has won from death a renewal of grace;  
 But how will it be when the face that is death  
 Still breathes and heaves through its knots with breath  
 And counterfeits still a smile?

One can wait and watch by a coffin, when  
 The lid is closed, and the cry unheard;  
 But what if the dead man called or stirred?  
 And what if the pain of our agony  
 Were to tend the dead, and to hear the cry  
 Of the still uncoffined men?

One can love and pity the wounded and weak,  
 The mangled body whose face is whole,  
 Whose eyes look forth with the look of a soul;  
 But ah, when the body has ceased to be  
 The thing God made it, no eyes to see,  
 No ears, and no lips to speak!

Sister Rose, when saw you the Lord?  
 Did you gaze at Him coming from off the hill  
 When the leper cried, and He said, 'I will:  
 Be clean!' Or when did the angels meet  
 And strew the lilies about your feet,  
 And press your hands to the sword?

Sword of the spirit and lilies of life,  
 Flower of the heart and weapon of fire,  
 Tender and keen with the soul's desire  
 To dare this deed, and to face disease  
 With the flush of your health; in the Southern Seas  
 To be unto Death for wife.

When you were a child did the angels come,  
 That day that you gave your cowslip ball  
 To the crippled boy? Did you hear the call  
 When the birds were crying about their nest  
 In the copse, and you carried with beating breast  
 The wounded pigeon home?



When your life with the birds and the flowers was filled,  
With the sun and the dew of the Somerset lane,  
Did you go to the prisoner's house of pain,  
Or take your little white heart of pity  
Into the grim and the sorrowing city,  
And feel that God's will had willed?

Had you read of Siena's Saint and the dove  
That hovered above the maiden's head?  
Or of her who, giving the leper a bed,  
Found Christ? Or of him who learned to die  
That the dying might live at Molokai,  
That thus you are sworn to Love?

Or was it a faded leaf with a prayer,  
They found on a fallen soldier's breast,  
Which has sent you forth on your holy quest  
To beat down death, and if God must give  
The blow, to bear it, so brothers may live,  
And sisters your sunlight share?

It matters little: the angels came,  
Passed through the streets of the troubled town  
To the quiet village beneath the Down;  
They touched your soul and they opened your eyes,  
They fired an altar of sacrifice  
And cast your heart in the flame.

And ever since then your grey hills gleamed  
As grey as the native hills He knew,  
Who loved his friends to the death, and drew  
The whole world after: yea, yonder mill,  
With its arms outstretched on the top of the hill,  
Like a cross in the darkness seemed.

Sister Rose Gertrude, the Gates of Heaven  
Are open for you; and your heart that was small  
Is wide to embrace the world at the call  
Of Love at the gates. Let England prove  
At the height of its power, its power to love:  
To you is the high task given.

*MARIE.*

## CHAPTER I.

SOME years ago I, with my half-reluctant husband, went down to the Isle of Wight to pay a visit to one of the oldest and dearest of my friends, Mrs. Calhoun.

Two or three days after my arrival we were sitting together in the evening under the verandah which goes round two sides of Marine Villa, the house Mrs. Calhoun had taken for the season. We had dined, and our two husbands had, in masculine fashion, gone off to the club to find the amusement men never seem able to dispense with, and we were quite content to sip our coffee alone together. It was at the beginning of August, and the day had been extremely hot. It was very pleasant to sit out of doors and feel the cool evening air. Pleasant to me, then fresh from London, was the view of the garden, the big trees, the flowers, the lawn sloping down to the water's edge. Away at sea two yachts could be indistinctly seen in the gathering twilight, and right before us Mrs. Calhoun's youngest child, a boy between four and five years old, was running about the garden with his nurse and chattering to her volubly in French. Mrs. Calhoun was looking on with maternal pride, watching the little fellow's gambols, listening, with a smile, to his artless prattle with his nurse. Soon it was time for him to go to bed, and he came up to give his mother his good-night kiss. Then, for the first time, I noticed the nurse particularly. She was a woman of about twenty-five, tall and very handsome. Her features were large but regular; her hair was of the deepest black, and twisted in large masses round her well-shaped head. Her eyes were dark, and as she turned them for a moment on me, I was almost startled by the strange, mournful look they had. There was something, too, in the woman's attitude that struck me as she stood waiting for her charge, looking at him, but not smiling, her head a little drooping, her hands clasped across her bosom.

When they were both gone I turned to my friend impatiently.

'What banished princess or queen have you got as nurse for your little boy?' I cried.

'You think Marie looks sad?' she replied.

'Sad! There is more than sadness in her look—there is



dignity grown weary, and pride changing to resignation. Lady Macbeth might have looked like that if she had repented of her crimes.'

'You see a good deal in poor Marie's face,' said my friend. 'She is a very good nurse, and devoted to Bertie. Even I hardly love him more. But it is true she has a story.'

'Ah!' I said, 'I can guess it. Marie was the village belle somewhere in her country of France. But she was proud, and rejected the homage of her rustic admirers. Then came the seductive stranger—she loved—she was tempted—she fell—she was betrayed. She left her native village never to return, and hid her shame among strangers. That was years ago; but she has never got over it, and never will. Somewhere or other, perhaps, there is a child that can bear no father's name.'

Mrs. Calhoun did not reply at first. Then she said:

'You are quite wrong, entirely wrong. I think the sort of thing you describe happens more often in books than in real life. However that may be, it doesn't concern Marie—she has nothing to blush for. There is no reason why you shouldn't know her story. But first get something to throw over your shoulders, for I may be some time before I have finished, and it is beginning to be a little cool.'

When this had been arranged Mrs. Calhoun began:

'It was at Lausanne, or rather at Ouchy, that I first saw Marie. We had a little villa on the lake not far from the Hôtel Beau-Rivage, and it was there that Bertie was born. It was necessary that some one should be found to bring him up, and it was no easy task to find the right sort of person, for the doctor was very particular, and a great many peasant women came and were sent away again. But at last he found one in every way suitable, and that was Marie. The girl was herself very reluctant to leave her own infant, but the high wages we offered tempted the husband and he persuaded her. Marie hadn't then the sad and melancholy expression you noticed just now; though she was not one of those persons who are for ever laughing and talking, she was always cheerful and good-tempered. I daresay she used to shed a few tears about her own baby, whom she used to see once a week; but if she did, I didn't see them, and I'm sure she was, on the whole, very happy. Otherwise, you know—the doctor was very particular.

'When I got a little better I used to talk a good deal with

Marie, and bit by bit I got from her her whole history. There was not much to tell. Her father had been a peasant, not very far from Lausanne. He was a widower, and Marie was his only child. Once he had been pretty well off, but times had changed, and he had to sell little bits of his land to keep himself afloat. When Marie was about fifteen he died, leaving her everything he had. But that wasn't much when all outstanding debts were paid, and Marie's *dot* was accordingly only a small one. You guessed just now that Marie was the belle of her village. I have no doubt she was, for Swiss girls are not, as a rule, very beautiful, and I fancy there were not many girls of her class for leagues round as fine-looking as she was, and is. But the rural wooers of those parts do not think very much about beauty when they are choosing a wife. Money is more important. Our Belgravian papas and mammas might smile approvingly on the prudence with which these horny-handed peasants manage their matrimonial arrangements. And all the eligible suitors round about Marie's village knew exactly how many five-franc pieces she had in her *dot*, and turned their attention to girls of coarse complexion but well-to-do parents. Marie was then living with an aunt, a widow, not very well off. This aunt was disgusted that her brother had not left his daughter better provided for, and used to prophesy that the poor girl would have to *coiffer Sainte Catherine*; but Marie was not much more than nineteen when a suitor did come forward, and one whom the aunt thought decidedly eligible. I think it was really a love-match, for the man could easily have found a wealthier bride. He was a native of a neighbouring village, but had been away from his home for some time. He had been a waiter—chiefly, I think, in London. At any rate, he spoke English fluently. Marie, I think, liked him from the first. He had a great deal to talk about—stories of foreign countries, of Paris, of London; tales of sights and scenes that might easily dazzle the village girl.

‘But the course of his wooing was not at first very successful. His parents objected strongly; they had chosen a more suitable wife for him. But he was faithful; he would marry the girl of his choice and settle down in the neighbourhood, or he would go back to London and forsake the Pays de Vaud for ever. His parents were very averse to this also. He got them finally to give their consent to his marriage, and to give it in a friendly and ungrudging manner. I think Marie's heart was really touched by the man's constancy, and that there was plenty of love on both sides



when the wedding was celebrated and she became Mme. Poteau. At any rate, I am sure she loved her husband very sincerely when she first came to nurse my little Bertie. She never spoke of her own feelings, but it was easy to see that she was proud of her husband, of his cleverness and his knowledge, and that she was happy in the thought of his constant kindness, and that altogether the *ménage* was a very happy one. He had, a little before the wedding, bought a *café* at Morges. You may remember that is on the lake between Lausanne and Geneva. This purchase swallowed up all his savings, and he had to borrow a little money from his father. All Marie's *dot* was expended in carrying out some alterations which he had made and in providing some extra furniture. And the only trouble of their married life was that the *café* didn't at first pay, or didn't pay as well as had been expected. M. Poteau was hopeful, and certain that it would ultimately be a great success, but for the present he was short of money, and his father either couldn't or wouldn't advance him any. Then his baby was born, and soon after Marie came to be with me. That was his idea, as I have said. He had schemed it all out, and saw his way to continue the improvements he wanted made at his *café*. A certain sum was to be borrowed to be repaid in monthly instalments. Marie's wages were to pay these sums, and so the whole affair was settled. He used to come over and see his wife every week, and sometimes his mother would come with him and bring the baby, a rosy, healthy-looking little fellow. I saw M. Poteau several times, and spoke to him once or twice. He was a neat, dapper little man with sharp eyes, quick in his movements and voluble of speech. He was extremely deferential in his manner to me, thanking me profusely for my "most remarkable kindness to his wife." At the same time he somehow contrived to let me understand that he was sorry she had to leave her home, and that by-and-by circumstances would be very different with them—very different, indeed. Then the time came when we left Ouchy, and Marie had to say good-bye to her husband and her baby. Her husband, poor man, seemed really quite distressed—you see they had not been married very long—but he assured me that he had been careful not to let Marie see him in his downcast condition. "I kept it up before her," he said. "She mustn't be worried about anything, I know."

' Marie herself was not so doleful as I expected. The prospect of travelling, I think, kept her spirits up. She had never been

even so far as Geneva before, and now she was delighted to count over the number of kilomètres she would go. And she was enchanted with Paris, where we made a long stay; the shops, the animation of the streets, of the boulevards, were so novel, so fresh to the dweller in the Pays de Vaud, and she was especially fond of the gardens—the Tuileries and the Luxembourg—where there were so many of her profession with their long streamers always perambulating about. And then we crossed to England at this time, and Marie was uniformly cheerful and contented. She had a great many letters from her husband, always giving the best of news. The alterations at the *café* were finished, and people were beginning to come in. They would find out how comfortable it was, and how all the *consommations* were of the best! And at first there was a great deal about the baby. By-and-by the news came down to a simple announcement that he was quite well. She always read me these letters, though there were parts, I fancy, very strictly personal, which she did not read. I think she wrote to complain that so little was said about the dear baby. The remonstrance, if it was really made, had some effect, though not much. There was a paragraph in the next letter saying that baby had been very good and hadn't cried at all, and then that he had grown and was rosy and getting fat; but generally there was only a brief statement that all was well—"Bébé va bien;" "Bébé se trouve à merveille," and the like. So the time came round when Marie was to return home, and though even then she was not very demonstrative, I could see with what delight she was looking forward to the meeting with her baby and her husband. "Mon bébé et mon mari"—that was her cry. But she was distressed at the thought of leaving Bertie, and when she did say good-bye to him she broke down and cried. She went away rather suddenly at the last, for some other foreign nurse, whom she had got to know when walking in Kensington Gardens, was going back, and she could have her company as far as Pontarlier. So she left two days before the time she had fixed on, and sent a telegram to her husband to tell him of her change of plans. On the morning she went away a letter arrived from Morges for my husband, who was then in Leicestershire hunting. I thought it was from M. Poteau, and showed it to Marie, who recognised the handwriting. I thought of opening it, but Herbert is a little fussy sometimes about these things, and I didn't think there could be anything which would concern Marie's journey or he would have



written to her. So she started tearful, smiling, immensely grateful for the little present I had made her, and begging me to let her hear about Bertie now and then.

‘When my husband came back and read the letter, which was, as we supposed, from M. Poteau, he asked if nurse had actually gone, and was then quite disturbed when he found she had. But he would not tell me why. He thinks worry is bad for me, and doesn’t understand our sex well enough to know that the worry of unsatisfied curiosity is one of the worst we have. On the morning of the fourth day after that I was startled in my dressing by the message—“Nurse has come back and wants to see you.”

‘When I went down Marie was there, looking very pale and with swollen eyes, which told of nights passed without sleep. The new nurse had brought down the baby to show her. She came forward as I entered the room, and burst into wild supplicating speech.

“Take me back, madame! take me back, dear madame! Let me live with you and with the dear baby! Let me be his nurse always!”

“Marie!” I said, “what is this? Has your husband——”

‘Her eyes blazed out into sudden fury.

“My husband is a villain and a liar. He has cheated me and betrayed me. I will never see him again if I can help it—never! never!”

‘Just then Bertie began to cry, and she turned to him. He put out his little pudgy hands to her.

“See!” she cried triumphantly, “he knows me, he is fond of me! He wants me—let me stop with him, dear, dear madame. He is all I have in the world now.”

At this point my friend’s narrative was interrupted by the return of our husbands. They had found nothing going on in the club—wouldn’t we come in the drawing-room and give them some music? We complied with wifely obedience, and sang a duet, during which they yawned with marital indifference. Then they thought they would go out again and smoke a cigar in the garden, or—they might stroll down to the pier.

When they were gone I begged Mrs. Calhoun to resume her narrative.

## CHAPTER II.

‘M. POTEAU’s letter to my husband,’ she went on, ‘is the quickest solution to what I see you are finding rather enigmatic. In this letter M. Poteau communicated a sad piece of intelligence. Their baby was dead—had been dead for more than three months. He had kept back the news from his wife, knowing how dreadfully distressed she would be, and fearing the consequences. One possible consequence he stated with perfect simplicity. And if Marie was no longer of use as a nurse, if she had to return home before the time, if the remittance came to an end, all his plans would be deranged. So he had kept back the sad tidings, and sent false news of the baby being well and having grown, and so on. And at last he had written to my husband to beg him to get me to let Marie know the real state of the case. I would break the news to her gently (would I not?), and explain that he had acted for the best.

‘Well, that was his letter. On the other side there was Marie almost crushed by the death of her little boy, and yet furious against her husband for having deceived her. She had his letters, and she showed me the passages—“Bébé va bien; bébé est à merveille.”

“And all the while he was dead, and I never knew it!” she cried out. “Guess, madame, how I felt when I got home. All the journey I was thinking of my poor innocent, and I was so happy expecting to see him again. I wondered if he was much changed, if he was grown. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how I thought about the *pauvre petit!* Then, when my husband met me at the station and kissed me, cheerful and smiling, just as if he had not been deceiving me all along, the first thing I asked him was why baby was not there at the station too. I don’t know what he said, I was in such a hurry to get home and see my child. Then, when I got to the house, I found his father and his mother there, *tout endimanchés*, madame, and the table set out for a feast—they were going to make a *fête* to celebrate my return. *Mon Dieu! une fête!* Yes, madame, I was to be told that my dear baby was dead, and then I was to sit down and eat and drink with him and his father and mother, who always hated me.

“When I got into the house I asked at once, ‘Where’s baby?’ and no one of the three would answer. They stood



looking at each other and at me. 'Where's my baby?' I called out again. And still no one said anything. Then I knew there was something wrong, and I cried out, 'Oh, he is ill, I know, and you won't tell me! Tell me where he is at once—at once.'

"I was furious, madame, and I rushed upstairs to look for him, and there was his little cradle, empty. Empty, with the clothes folded neatly. Madame, I shall never forget how I felt when I saw that. I did not weep or cry out. I went downstairs again where the three were, and walked right to my husband, and said, 'You have sent my baby away. Where is he?' And he didn't speak a word, but looked at his mother, who didn't speak either. Then I guessed the whole truth, and I cried out, 'He is dead! I know it!' And my husband said, 'Yes, he has been dead three months.' And then they all began to speak together, but I didn't hear a word they were saying. Those words, 'dead three months,' seemed to go round and round in my head and prevent me from hearing anything else. I don't know how long I stood there like that; only when my husband came forward and took me by the hand I knew where I was and what I had to do. I started away, and I told him that he was a villain, that I would never be his wife any more, that I would never eat his bread—never, if I could help it, see him again. And I took off my wedding-ring and threw it down on the ground before him, and the last month's wages with it. Only *le cadeau de madame*—that I kept so that I might be able to come back."

'That was Marie's story, told me two days after she came back, and I need not say how I felt for her—we are mothers too.

'But what was I to do? I tried to calm the poor woman, to give her good advice. I told her that a wife's place was always and for ever with her husband; that nothing but the worst wrongdoing could set her free from that duty; that she couldn't at her own will cancel the bond between them; that she ought to be forgiving, and so on.

'To all this she hardly listened. "He deceived me," she said only; "he let my baby die, and wrote me lies. I will never trust him again." There was no moving her from that. And when I represented that I had no need for her services, that I had a nurse and couldn't send her away without some reason, she cried and implored me to let her stop with her dear child.

"He is all I have in the world now."

'She repeated that several times.

‘Before many days the new nurse gave me notice, and said she wished to leave at once. I believe there was some arrangement between her and Marie, though I never knew. However, I told Marie that she might stop with me a month or so, and that at the end of that time I hoped she would be in a better frame of mind and be willing to go back to her husband. And so she came, and she has been with me ever since.’

Mrs. Calhoun paused.

‘Is that where the story stops?’ I asked.

‘That is nearly all, but not quite,’ she went on. ‘After she had been with me about two months she told me something which at first rather startled me. It was in the nursery; we had been talking for some time of Bertie, who was not quite well, when she suddenly said :

“Madame, I have seen him. He is here, in London.”

“You mean your husband?” I said.

“Yes, madame. I saw him in the Park to-day, and he tried to speak to me, but I would not hear. I walked past as if he had not been there.”

‘A few days after M. Poteau called on me himself. He was still as neat and spruce as he had been by the shores of Lake Geneva; but his quick bright look was gone, though he was as voluble as ever. He apologised very much for the liberty he had taken; he hoped I would listen to him and would try to help him; he was sure I could be of the greatest use. Marie would listen to me, though not to him. I said I would do what I could to persuade his wife, but had he not been wrong in deceiving her?’

“Ah, madame,” he replied, “listen to me, and you will see that it is not I who am in the wrong now. She is cruel to me—to me, who love her so well. Think of it altogether, dear madame, from the first. You may think that I was too ambitious, but it is not for my own sake only that I want to be rich. It is for hers, too—quite as much for her as for me. I wanted to be able by-and-by to give her comforts and luxuries, that she would have silk to wear and even jewels, that she should drink good wine, and have something to ride in if she wanted to go anywhere. And I would have done it all—more and better, perhaps, than you think, madame; more than she ever had any idea of. Then, you know, I was disappointed with the *café*, the expenses were so heavy. It was sure to come all right after a while, but meantime—and my father would not help me. He thought my ideas were foolish;



he thought that I should take a small farm, and that Marie should work as my mother had worked when she was first married. Madame, I say again, it was for her I acted as I did. You know what she is—how beautiful, how like a queen; and I couldn't bear to think that she should toil as our peasant women do, and be bent and worn and broken with the constant work. If I had been a rich man, madame, she should have had anything she could want. As it was, I could only think for her and plan and scheme for her. And then it seemed that my schemes were going wrong through no fault of mine. And then there came the chance of her going with you, and that put everything right again. I know you think I was rather avaricious about the terms, but I could not help it, and Marie agreed with me that it was right that she should go. And I was glad to think that she was so comfortable, with plenty of good food, and every day *de bon vin de Bourgogne*. All that time I was living like a dog. I wouldn't spend a sou if I could help it. I am ashamed to say how I lived. And then, when the baby died, I saw at once what might take place. I knew she would cry and cry, and then fret and grieve, and then—you know, madame. And it might not be good for madame's little boy if one had to find another nurse. I thought of that too; madame had been so kind. And then was I to lose all I had been working for, as I might do if I didn't pay the last instalment? No, madame; I think I acted rightly, and I would do the same again. It is she who is wrong, to be so cruel and unforgiving."

"I can't give you much idea of how poor M. Poteau said all this—of his rapid gestures and appealing tones. When he spoke of the death of the baby he almost broke down.

"It is there that she is so cruel, madame; she seems to think that I didn't grieve for its death. It was a dreadful day for me when the poor innocent died. I cannot tell you how I felt it, and I had to bear it alone too."

"I was touched too by his description of what had been done to celebrate Marie's return—the flag from the front window, the festoons carefully cut out of coloured paper, and the dinner that was got ready—the bottle of best wine from his father's cellar. You and I, who know something of the life of these people, can easily picture the scene. By inquiry I learned that he had sold his business. For some weeks he had had the hope that Marie would return to him; but when at last he could hope no longer,

then he felt that he must get away from Morges. Even in the midst of his distress he had been astute enough to get a good price for his *café*. He had divined that Marie had taken refuge with me, and he had come to London to be near her at least. He expected to find work as waiter in a hotel restaurant or club.

‘In a week or so he called on me again. In the meantime I had spoken to his wife, and found her quite obstinate. She cried when I pressed her hard, but there was no moving her. Her husband had sent her away, and had let her baby die and had deceived her shamefully, and she would never speak to him again. There was no changing her from that.

‘And she implored me not to separate her from Bertie—her dear child—all she had to love.

‘I had told my husband the whole story, and he was strongly of opinion that I ought not to keep Marie in the house—that I was acting wrongly in encouraging her. Whether I should ever have had resolution enough to tell her she must go, and to withstand her entreaties, I don’t know; but I wasn’t put to the test, for M. Poteau himself begged me not to send her away. By-and-by she would relent, he said, and he must wait.

‘And the poor fellow has been waiting ever since. He has kept himself a good deal in the background, but he has called on me once or twice. Once he brought some trinkets which she had left, and I remember too one Sunday morning that he paid me a visit. He was very respectful and polite, but after a little while he broke out into bitter complaints against his wife. She could never have cared for him. She really wanted to be free from him—perhaps she wanted some one else; his having deceived her about the baby was only an excuse to get away from him. I let him run on in this wild way for some time, and then at last he produced a little packet.

‘“It is for her, madame. To-day is her *jour de fête*, and she always liked these dried fruits; and this cheese is from her own village.”

‘This was the last time I saw him—that is where the story stays now. Marie has not softened; she is only more silent and more mournful. I think I should be angry with her if I didn’t see how much she suffers, and if she were not so fond of Bertie, for she idolises that child.’

This was Marie’s story, as Mrs. Calhoun told it me; and we talked it over for some time till it was quite late, and our



husbands returned from the club, whither they had gravitated a second time.

‘You have been telling Mrs. Leyton about Marie,’ said Mr. Calhoun, with an air of profound insight. ‘Now I can add a later chapter to the story. Poteau is here, and not two hundred yards off.’

We were both interested, curious, interrogative.

‘Yes,’ he continued, ‘he’s the new waiter at the club. He brought me my whisky and soda.’

‘He can’t bear to let her out of his sight,’ said Mrs. Calhoun. ‘What devotion! I pity the poor fellow.’

‘The poor fellow is a fool,’ said Mr. Calhoun decisively. ‘Women don’t care for that dog-like devotion; they despise it, and perhaps they’re not far wrong. He should go away and leave her alone; or let him pick up with some one else, or make a pretence of doing so. That would bring her round sooner than any amount of what you call devotion, and what I think is downright folly.’

Mr. Calhoun made a prompt exit after these words, perhaps being doubtful of their effect. For fully five minutes I indulged in the luxury of hating him secretly. In justice to my sex I detested him with all my might. But perhaps he was right after all.

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### CHAPTER III.

I STAYED with Mrs. Calhoun for about a month after that. During this time I had ample opportunity of becoming closely acquainted with Marie. When she was walking with Bertie in the garden I would often be there; and little by little I broke through her reserve, and got her to talk about herself and her native village, for I was pretty familiar with the shores of Lake Geneva and with the Canton Vaud, and Marie seemed pleased to talk to anyone who knew the places where she had lived. It was with set purpose that I put myself in Marie’s way, and tried to win her confidence. I hoped to be able to heal the breach, and bring the divided couple together again, and in all I said I was really leading up to that subject; but I made little progress. Marie was very silent and sombre. Even when the discourse was of her dear country she preferred listening to talking, and at the least

reference or remote allusion to her domestic affairs she froze into absolute dumbness.

I was not altogether discouraged, and one day she said, in reply to something I had been inquiring, 'Madame, I see you have been told my story, and you think I am wrong and want to put me right. But no, my dear lady, you cannot do it. I am only an ignorant woman, and madame is learned as well as good and kind; but I know what is right for me. I feel it, and I cannot do otherwise. Think, madame!' she broke out, with blazing eyes. 'He wrote to me, "Baby is very well," and the poor child was lying dead in the house—in the very house he was writing in; and just when he had buried it he writes, "Baby is quite well, and you will find him grown." Look, madame! if he had written the whole truth, and if I was then obliged to go home—I believe, madame, my mistress, who is an angel, would have paid me my wages all the same; but if not, if he must sell his *café* and start work again, I should have worked with him and borne all patiently, for what would all be beside the death of my sweet baby? And there is one thing more, though I am perhaps too bold in saying it. As madame knows, my mistress has spoken to me about this, and tried to persuade me; but when she could not do it, why should madame, whom I hardly know, hope to succeed? But I am grateful to you, madame,' she added afterwards, in a changed voice.

Those who are energetically anxious to benefit others have often to console themselves for the mischief they do by reflecting on the excellence of their intentions. I was glad to think that my superfluous zeal had not probably done any harm. I didn't approach the subject again, but a few days afterwards Marie brought it up of her own accord.

'You know my husband is here, madame?' she said to me.

I assented.

'He has wanted to see me, and has called here once or twice, but I have always refused. Now he has sent me this letter.'

M. Poteau commenced his letter by saying that it was the last he would write. His long patience had at last been tired out by his wife's obstinacy. When his time was up at the club he should go away to America, and Marie would be troubled with him no more. She had never loved him, and now at last he had ceased to love her. Before he went he would send her some money. All the wages she had sent him from Mrs. Calhoun



would be returned to her, and her *dot*—all she had brought with her—should be given back; and then everything would be over between them. He would sail away to America, and they would never see each other again.

This was the purport of the letter which Marie gave me to read. I perused it very carefully, went through it three times to see if I could discover any last hope of a reconciliation latent in it. Had M. Poteau really decided to leave his wife, or was the letter written merely to frighten her into forgiveness? I handed the letter back to Marie, and looked at her inquiringly.

‘For me,’ she said, ‘he may do as he likes, madame. I do not mind. But it is base of him to go to America, and say he has no wife, and deceive some girl worse than he deceived me.’

‘And you will let him go, Marie?’

‘Certainly, madame. I could not stop him now, but I would not if I could. What he says is just. We are now free from each other, and I am glad he will now leave me alone.’

But her mouth quivered as she said it.

Marie asked me not to mention the letter to Mrs. Calhoun. ‘It might trouble her,’ she said.

But it was not easy to refrain; and that evening after dinner we were discussing the question in the drawing-room, three of us, for my husband was on the Scotch moors. I hoped Marie would yield and all be arranged amicably at last, but Mrs. Calhoun thought not.

‘I know the poor girl’s obstinacy too well,’ she said.

Her husband took the opposite view.

‘She’ll come round,’ he prophesied. ‘That letter’s the most sensible thing the poor fellow has done yet.’

‘And if she doesn’t?’ said I.

‘Then,’ he replied, ‘I hope Poteau will do as he says. I think he will. The mention of America shows that he is thinking of the facilities for divorce which that great country affords.’

And then Mr. Calhoun bethought himself of his evening rubber, and departed to the club.

The days went by, and we both watched Marie, but she made no sign; only looked paler, and was more sad and silent than ever. Except to her darling Bertie she hardly spoke.

Then one day M. Poteau called to make his respectful adieux to Mrs. Calhoun, and to thank her for what she had done and had tried to do; and he brought too the money he had spoken

of for Marie, which he begged Mrs. Calhoun would keep for her. The interview did not last five minutes, and when Mrs. Calhoun told me of it I asked her if she had not tried to persuade him to stop a little longer.

‘No,’ she said; ‘I don’t see that it would be of any use.’

‘And you will say nothing to Marie?’

‘Nothing more. All that I could say has been already said, and to no purpose. It is very, very sad; but we cannot prevent them drifting hopelessly apart. There is no help now.’

The next afternoon I was driving with Mrs. Calhoun in her small basket chaise. She had alighted to pay a call, and I was waiting for her when I saw Marie turn the corner of the street and come towards me. The little boy was with her; but he had a hoop, and he was trundling it up and down the street—not very skilfully, but to his own evident satisfaction. A man came out of a neighbouring house, and I noticed while he was yet some distance off Marie’s face became rigid and hard, and her eyes assumed a fixed stare. Just as he passed a carriage dashed round the corner at full speed. Marie turned to look for her little charge, whom for the first time she had allowed to lag behind out of her sight. He, intent on his hoop, was crossing the street right before the carriage, when he stumbled and fell in the direct path of the carriage. Marie uttered a scream and dashed forward; but she was too far off to do any good to the little fellow, who lay there unable to rise quickly. But the man I have mentioned darted out into the street, picked him up, and literally threw him into the arms of his nurse. Then the rescuer himself reeled and fell, and was trampled under the hoofs of the horse, which could not be stopped till one wheel had passed over the poor man. He was picked up unconscious, dreadfully bruised and bleeding. I called to the bystanders to bring him to the pony chaise.

‘Put him on the seat,’ I said, ‘and take him to the doctor.’

They lifted him up carefully—he was still unconscious. Then I noticed Marie—she was pale and trembling.

‘Madame,’ she said, ‘that is my husband.’

The wounded man opened his eyes, and for some seconds they rested on her; then he said slowly:

‘Have I pleased you at last? I am dying now,’ and relapsed into unconsciousness.

Bertie was standing by Marie, pulling at her dress, but she did not notice him. Her gaze was riveted on her husband.



Slowly the chaise drove off, a man leading the horses. Marie followed. Then the other carriage drove off, and when Mrs. Calhoun came out from her friend's house there was no sign of the accident but the little knot of those who remained to talk over the affair. Bertie had not been hurt and had left off crying. As we walked back slowly together I told her what had happened. Marie did not return to the house till the evening of the next day. Then she came into the drawing-room where we were sitting.

‘Madame,’ she cried, ‘he will live, he will live! The doctor says so. And he will forgive me. I loved him all along, I am sure of it now—it was only pride that made me cruel and wicked. And now, when he is better, I will be his slave, I will——’

She burst into tears; sobs checked her utterance.

‘Perhaps he may not get better,’ she said at length, and broke down completely.

Marie's fears were not realised—her husband did recover. I had left the Island, but Mrs. Calhoun's letters brought me constant news of him. And finally I heard of his complete convalescence and departure with his wife.

‘Their leave-taking,’ she wrote, ‘was most touching. I insisted on their having lunch with me, and I sent my husband out and had them to myself. It was beautiful to see Marie with all her simple stateliness, but now tender and loving, her radiant happiness softened and subdued by penitence and deep regret for the past. I quite understood why she wanted to take leave of Bertie alone. She did not wish her husband to see that she was sacrificing anything in returning to him. And when she had left the room I expressed to M. Poteau my gratitude for his having saved Bertie's life, and I gave him an envelope which contained a cheque—the expression of my husband's thankfulness.

“Don't open it now,” I said, “but to-morrow, or the day after.”

‘But for once his volubility deserted him. He limped about the room—he will always be a little lame—but didn't manage to say anything, and Marie came down and they set out for the station.

“Oh, madame!” he said, “now we make a fresh start—*c'est un second voyage de nocés que nous commençons*. And when it is over I have some plans. Marie will see that it is good to have a husband who can make his way in the world.”

‘And so they went away, hand in hand, and Marie’s story is now complete.’

So wrote Mrs. Calhoun. But I can add another incident, for four years afterwards I saw Marie again. I was at Vevey, where I had gone to leave my eldest daughter at school, and walking slowly down the quay I observed the name Poteau on a corner house. There was an awning in front, and little tables at which one or two persons were drinking vermouth. The house was inscribed ‘Hôtel et Restaurant Poteau,’ and there were a good many other inscriptions written over its front. I stood for a little time and read: ‘Déjeuners et dîners à la carte ou à prix fixe. Table d’hôte, 6.30, 2 fr. 50 c. Salon de lecture.’ I had not perused the whole house-front when a man came out and begged me to enter.

‘I am M. Poteau,’ he said. ‘My wife has seen you. You are the friend of Madame Calhoun.’

And then Marie came forward and greeted me warmly. She was not changed, except that she looked cheerful and happy. She had a great deal to ask about Mrs. Calhoun and Bertie, and it was long before her curiosity was satisfied. M. Poteau meantime was impatient to show me his hotel—the *salle-à-manger*, large and airy; the *salon de lecture*, small, but with a piano and an English paper, the garden at the back, shady and cool, were all pointed out to me with enthusiasm.

‘The hotel begins to march, madame; we have had several English people, and now we have two ladies from Boston who have been here more than a month, and they are all well satisfied, and say they will recommend me. And’—M. Poteau sank his voice to a whisper—‘I have my eye on a hotel in Montreux which will soon be for sale—*un hôtel du premier rang*, madame.’

Then Marie took me upstairs to a room where, in a child’s cot, a rosy infant of about two years old was sleeping.

‘God has been very good to me,’ she said, ‘and I am very happy. Only I think sometimes how wretched and miserable I was through all those years, and how it was my own fault.’

M. Poteau came in and glanced at his wife and then at the child. He pointed out to me the lace with which the baby’s frock was fringed.

‘*Un peu de luxe, n’est-ce pas, madame?* But that hurts not; *c’est pour monsieur mon fils*, and she likes it too. *La reine le veut*, you know, madame.’



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*THE BURNT MILLION.*

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY,' ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DIFFICULTIES.

THAT nothing happens for certain except the unexpected is a dogma that all of us have to subscribe to. It is proved in small matters as well as in large ones, alike in the case of those who have dramatic experiences, or who lead homely and uneventful lives. The inmates of Halswater Hall were no exception to this rule. After the painful scenes and violent quarrels that had lately taken place among them, it would have hardly seemed possible that a week, far less a month, hence would have found them all living together under the same roof, and, outwardly at least, in the same fashion as before. Yet so it was. The result was brought about by the dangerous illness of Grace Tremehere. When, after her interview with Mr. Roscoe, her sisters, alarmed by her absence from the family circle, went to her room, they found her, as has been said, in sad case, and when the doctor arrived he gave a most serious report of her.

'Your sister,' he said, 'is suffering from the effect of some severe shock to her system. I do not wish to be intrusive, but it is absolutely necessary for the proper treatment of her case that I should know what has happened.'

Dr. Gardner (as he was always called, though he was only a general practitioner) was by no means of the ordinary type of

country doctor. He had an independence of his own, and practised medicine because he liked it. He was highly esteemed in the county, and, what is very rare with men of his profession, was on the bench of magistrates. It is probable that Mr. Roscoe would not have sent for him if the services of a more pliant practitioner could have been procured on equally short notice, but there was no time to pick and choose. Moreover, it was not Mr. Roscoe, but the two ladies, to whom he was addressing himself. His countenance, a fine florid one, looked so grave behind his moon-shaped spectacles, that they did not venture to deny the conclusion to which his professional observation had led him. Philippa indeed was so frightened that if she had been alone she would probably have given him every detail; but when the two sisters were together the elder was always the speaker.

‘The engagement between my sister and Mr. Sinclair, of which you have doubtless heard,’ said Agnes, ‘has been suddenly broken off.’

‘Oh! that’s it, is it?’ said the Doctor. ‘Um! ha! And not, I suppose, by the young lady’s own desire?’

‘Yes; the disruption is her own act entirely. It is in no respect a family arrangement, if you mean that,’ was the brusque reply.

‘Nay, I meant nothing of the kind, madam, but only to get at the facts,’ returned the Doctor dryly. ‘I may take it, I suppose, that her determination, however necessary and unrepented of, has given her pain?’

‘No doubt,’ exclaimed Philippa, glancing with tearful eyes towards the bed, where Grace was lying with flushed cheeks and wandering speech, ‘that is what has done the mischief.’

‘To minister to a mind diseased is beyond my skill, Miss Philippa,’ observed the doctor gently, ‘but we must do what we can.’ He wrote out certain prescriptions, and then said, ‘I will send Miss Grace a good nurse.’

‘My sister and I are surely the proper persons to attend upon her,’ observed Agnes.

‘No. Relations are too sympathetic. In a case like this it is most important that there should be nothing to excite the patient. She will be here to-night. I will pay an early visit to-morrow morning.’

There was only one way, it was said in Westmoreland, of evading Dr. Gardner’s prescriptions—by dismissal, and Miss



Agnes was not prepared to go that length. She noticed, however, with great displeasure that for the future he preferred to address himself, when giving orders about his patient, to Philippa instead of herself; and though she had had no idea in her mind other than a kind one in preferring to nurse Grace with her own hands, the Doctor's refusal of her request made Richard's wild accusations especially hateful to her.

'That woman's as hard as nails,' was the Doctor's reflection as he rode away. 'My objecting to her tending the poor girl because she was too sympathetic was a good one,' by which, as he rolled his head and winked his eye in evident enjoyment of his own humour, it is reasonable to suppose that he meant 'a good joke.'

As he mounted his horse at the Hall door, Mr. Roscoe had a few words with him in his self-assumed character of head of the house. The Doctor spoke with much greater plainness to him respecting his patient than he had done to the ladies. 'The case is a very serious one, sir, in my opinion, and not the less that its origin is an affair of the heart.'

So far was the idea from Mr. Roscoe's mind that the two sisters could have been so imprudent as to acquaint the Doctor with family affairs, that he actually imagined him to refer to Grace's having heart disease. 'I have never heard that she was so affected,' he replied.

The observation, though so artless, by no means impressed the Doctor with his simplicity; he only leapt to the right conclusion at once. 'This gentleman,' he said to himself, 'takes it for granted that I have been told nothing, and has no wish to enlighten me.'

Mr. Roscoe instantly perceived his mistake, and began speaking of Grace's change of views with great freedom.

'It is a resolution she has come to from the arguments of her trustee and guardian,' he said; 'none of us have had anything to do with it. Her conclusion, however, is in my opinion a just one; but of course the sentiment remains. Under such circumstances (and since her intention is unalterable), I conclude it would be well, to avoid any risk of excitement, that the late object of her affections should leave the house as soon as possible?'

His tone was as indifferent as he could make it, though the having the Doctor's opinion on such a matter upon his side struck him as of great importance.

'It is impossible for me, Mr. Roscoe,' answered the Doctor gravely, 'to say either "yes" or "no" to that question at pre-

sent. It is only too likely that it may make no difference to the poor girl whether the young man goes or stays; she is on the brink of brain fever. But should she survive it, it would in my opinion be the wiser course to keep Mr. Sinclair—and from what I gather from her sisters I conclude he has no wish to go—within reach. His presence may be of the greatest service; and if the worst comes to the worst, it may be a comfort to her to wish him farewell.'

'With brain fever?' inquired Mr. Roscoe cynically, his disappointment at the other's reply getting the better of his usual self-restraint.

'I am supposing that she comes to herself again,' answered the Doctor harshly, for he too had a temper of his own; 'if not, I presume Miss Tremenhere will not grudge the hospitality she will have thrown away upon him. Good afternoon, sir,' and with a curt nod he put spurs to his cob and rode away.

'An impudent apothecary!' was Mr. Roscoe's comment as he turned to enter the house; but, however he may have despised the man, he felt that a spoke had been put into the wheel of his plans, which, for a time at least, would interfere with its working. Even in his anger, however, he clearly perceived the source of this mischance. 'This all comes of the senseless frankness with which that old busybody's questions have been answered upstairs,' he muttered to himself. 'Agnes I can trust not to lose her head, but Philippa, where sentiment is concerned, is always a fool.' He did not feel any especial resentment towards Walter, as a less practical schemer would have done, but, since it was now probable that the young fellow would stay on, resolved to treat him with civility. And thus it happened that things went on at the Hall with tolerable smoothness, notwithstanding late events. There was a difference of course, however, in the manner of their going. In spite of their dread of the sick room, Agnes and Philippa were a good deal, by turns, in their sister's room, and scarcely ever appeared together in public, even at meals. These were always melancholy affairs; for many days the Angel of Death hovered over the household and laid its finger on every lip. The Doctor, indeed (none of your despairing ones), could at one time only say, 'I do not yet give up all hope.' It may be imagined, therefore, how Walter's spirits sank to zero, and the gloom darkened on Richard Roscoe's brow; they found a melancholy consolation in each other's company, but seldom interchanged a word. Walter



knew that he had Richard's sympathy, but never guessed the sufferings—so blind is love to others as well as to its object—that he endured upon his own account. Agnes was genuinely grieved, and Philippa passionately so; her soul was wrung with remorse as well as pity. Mr. Roscoe alone was resigned to the obstruction that interfered with his plans, and looked confidently to nature to remove it. He had no ill-will to Grace, he confessed to himself, but it would be a great relief to him if she went to heaven. *Dis aliter visum*, or, as he expressed it, 'this business turned out as badly as every other infernal thing that he had put his hand to.' Grace got better; it was not the worst thing that could have happened to him, but it complicated matters that were already in a very serious tangle. The rejoicings of the household jarred upon him in a manner that, looking at himself from the outside as it was his habit to do, almost alarmed him.

Disappointment and delay he had hitherto borne with wonderful equanimity, considering the dangers they brought with them, but he felt that he was now losing his patience and his temper. As there is nothing so successful as success, so he was well aware there is nothing that precipitates calamity like desperation, and yet he was growing desperate. He knew it and fought against it, but, though slowly, despair was gaining the upper hand of him. Perils environed him on every side of which no one knew, or knew all, except himself. As Josh had foreseen, and even taxed him with that folly, Edward Roscoe was a gambler to the core; he could perceive the rashness of it in others, with whom it took other directions, and he had often profited by it. He was not even blind to it in his own case, but his overpowering egotism and confidence in his own sagacity had led him into enormous speculations, which had turned out ill, and involved him in liabilities which he had no means of meeting, except by dribblets and fair words. He was furious, not so much with his ill luck, as with the failure of his own forecasts. He had been taken in by inferior scoundrels. If he had had any, one might almost have said that his self-respect was wounded. What helped to drive him to despair was the atmosphere of hate—his own hate, and of his own making—with which he was surrounded. He had never cared for anyone but himself, but that very solicitude had hitherto prevented him from indulging in animosities which are always disadvantageous; he had had, at the worst, only a cold contempt for those who stood in his way or thwarted his

schemes. But now he began to hate them. Even his brother, though Agnes had never revealed his conduct to her, had become an object of suspicion to him. He resented his familiarity with Walter, and felt that he was not to be depended upon for carrying out his scheme with respect to Grace. If the girl had died this would not have mattered, but she was getting better. If she got well, and was reconciled, in spite of all that had come and gone, with Walter, it would not matter; but he was none the less angry with Richard. He now repented that he had made a confidante of either of the sisters with respect to the document that he had intercepted; women were not fit to be trusted with secrets, though at the time it had seemed to him the safest course to take. It was not likely that they would reveal it, since it would be the destruction of their own expectations. If Grace should ever marry Walter, she should never know but that she did so otherwise than to her own detriment; he would be always Sinclair to her and never Vernon; though Roscoe now wished that he had kept that matter to himself. But he hated Sinclair because there lay in him—though he knew it not and should never know it—the potentiality of seizing the whole Tremenhere estate for himself or his offspring.

Philippa, indeed, Mr. Roscoe could hardly be said to hate; but he was exasperated with her for her weakness about the young people, which had enlisted the Doctor on their side, and also for a certain obstinacy which she still occasionally exhibited in opposing his wishes. The person he hated most of all was the lady whose hospitality he was enjoying, and who had done him a hundred good offices, Agnes Tremenhere. It is said that the very wickedest of us have a tender spot in our hard hearts for those who love us, that even a Sykes has a weakness for his Nancy. But this is not only not the case, but in some instances their very liking for us aggravates our dislike for them. Perhaps if Agnes had always been subservient to him he would have had the same contemptuous tolerance for her as he had for Philippa, but her occasional fits of fondness found no favour with him; while her opposition, which was much more frequent and resolute than that of her sister, now inspired him with a feeling that was little short of fury. Mr. Edward Roscoe felt, in short, that he was becoming dangerous; a thing which would not have troubled him much had he not been aware that such a frame of mind was likely to be hurtful not only to others but to himself.



## CHAPTER XLV.

## 'EDWARD'S QUEEN.'

GRACE TREMENERE had survived the crisis of what had been a most dangerous illness, and was on the road to recovery; she had returned to consciousness, but yet could hardly be said to have 'come to herself.' Her condition resembled that of some would-be suicide who, having been rescued from the fate she has sought, says to herself, 'Am I alive, or am I dead?' and then comes suddenly to the sad knowledge that it is the Present—and the Past—that she is confronting, and not the Future.

But the Grace Tremenerere whom we knew she was no longer. Her beautiful hair is shorn, her eyes are caverns, her cheeks are shrunk and pale; but all that is nothing compared with the hopeless void within. The consciousness of the full extent of her misery has come back to her. When she awoke first with a sane mind, it so happened that only the nurse and the Doctor were in the room.

'Is he here still?' she inquired feebly.

'Yes, my dear, he has not gone yet,' said the nurse consolingly. 'Miss Grace is asking for you, sir.'

The Doctor took her place by the bedside. He knew that he was not in the girl's thoughts at all, but that did not wound his *amour propre*. His weather-beaten face was full of the keenest sympathy, yet cheery too; of all his medicines Dr. Gardner was, his patients said, the most wholesome tonic.

'Yes, my dear, he is still here,' he said.

'Then he does not know,' she moaned, and closed her eyes.

The Doctor's position was an embarrassing one. He was not in his patient's confidence, nor, indeed, after that first visit of his, had he been in that of her sisters. Mr. Roscoe was a book clasped and locked to him, or, as he himself expressed it, like a railway company of whose time-table *Bradshaw* scornfully remarks, 'No information.'

With Walter Sinclair, however, the doctor had had some talk, and was thoroughly acquainted with that young gentleman's sentiments, as well as with his views of the situation.

'It doesn't much signify, my dear, what he knows, or what he does not know,' answered the Doctor dryly; 'he cares for nothing except to hear about you. If he has any regard for me, it is as for

one of his old Indian friends, and Mr. Richard's, because I am the "Medicine Man," and in attendance upon you. Every morning it is "How is Grace?" and never "How do *you* do?"

Her eyes were lit up for a moment with an intense delight, which slowly died away as she replied with a sigh :

'I can't see him—I *daren't* see him.'

'Of course not, my dear. The thing is not to be dreamt of at present—or perhaps, as you were about to say, even at all. Still he will remain here till you are well and strong. Now tell me, is there anything you can think of that will give you pleasure?'

'Nothing, *nothing!*' she moaned despairingly.

'A friend of yours has been writing almost every day to me, one who loves you very much in a fatherly sort of way; when you get a little stronger, don't you think you would like to see *him*?'

'Yes. I should like to see Mr. Allerton very much.'

Dr. Gardner nodded, and put no more questions. He was more than satisfied with the state of his patient. He had the reputation of leaving those he attended upon too soon upon the road to recovery, not so much because he shrank from the least imputation of making the most of them as from his horror of humbug; but Grace Tremehere's case was an exceptional one in his eyes. He knew that he should soon see her convalescent in its ordinary sense, but he wanted to see her cured, which would, he felt, be a very different thing. So interested had he been in the matter that he had taken the unusual step of communicating with Mr. Allerton, by whom his good intentions had been thoroughly appreciated. It is possible for two honest men to understand one another, even upon paper; and it would have amazed the Council of the Law Association to know how many letters—and those long ones—one of its most eminent members had written without charging his correspondent sixpence for them. He had readily promised that in case of Grace's recovery he would come down to Halswater and see her, though he detested the country in winter, and long journeys—unless at so much per foot—at all times.

Grace was not, however, in a condition to bear such an interview, and in the meanwhile Dr. Gardner discouraged the presence of her sisters about his patient as much as possible. He saw that she shrank from them, though he could not guess the cause; which was no slur on his sagacity, for she could



hardly have explained it herself. What troubled her almost as much as her estrangement from her lover was the new and terrible light which Mr. Roscoe had thrown upon her father's character; and though she had accepted it to a certain extent, she was, strangely enough, more apprehensive now than she had been before of hearing anything from their lips to his disadvantage. She need not have been so, for they had both something else to think about much more pressing than their father's memory, but from Mr. Allerton she felt she would get the truth, without the alloy of disappointment or resentment. She had little hope but that Mr. Roscoe's account of the manner in which Walter's father had been tricked and ruined was correct; the more her mind dwelt upon it—and it shared her mind with that other wretchedness which was its consequence—the more she felt that he could not have invented a story so capable of refutation, but still he might have exaggerated it for his own purposes. If it was true, in its disgraceful entirety, would Walter be still staying on under the same roof with her? She was obliged, alas! to answer for him—because she knew he loved her so—that that might be the case. For her sake he would forgive all, perhaps, and be content to wed with shame, for it was with her father's shame that she identified herself; and it rested with her to prevent the sacrifice.

To the mind, not only of the man of the world, but of any person of average common sense who has over-lived those social superstitions, which are to the full as monstrous as our spiritual ones, this sensitiveness of feeling may seem ridiculous. If one has done nothing wrong oneself, how can one be smirched by another's wrong? But even otherwise honest and good men are found to be so cruel and unjust as to think ill of a person because of his illegitimacy, and Grace was no more illogical than they—indeed, had her case been another's she would have taken a just view of it, but to some sensitive and delicate natures injustice loses its wrong when they are themselves its victims.

In those days of growing convalescence there was at least one comfort to Grace, that Mr. Roscoe did not come near her. She dreaded beyond everything to see the man that had destroyed the edifice both of her faith and of her love, and she wondered at her immunity from this infliction. Agnes wondered also; it seemed so strange that Edward, who always did exactly what was right, should not have seized the first opportunity to congratulate

the girl upon her recovery, but she did not make any observation to him on the matter; the relations between them had become strained on account of her refusal to assist him with a loan of larger amount than usual. She was not fond of lending her money even to him, and perhaps she reflected that his finding himself short of it would hasten his movements in the direction which she still wished him to take as much as ever. She was tired of waiting for this laggard lover, and at the same time resented his making use of her property without having established the right to do so. Moreover his application had been couched in much less loving and seductive tones than he had hitherto given himself the trouble to use. He was getting impatient and reckless. Philippa, on the other hand, was not surprised that he was loth to intrude himself upon the presence of one whom his revelations had made so miserable; but that was not in fact the cause of Mr. Roscoe's failure in what Agnes termed 'a natural attention.' His position had become too perilous, his temper was too severely tried, to admit of his conforming even to the most ordinary conventions. If either sister had remonstrated with him for his neglect of their invalid, he would probably have said that he did not care one farthing whether she was dead or alive.

Neither of them did so, though for very different reasons, and what affected Agnes much more than his brutal indifference to Grace was his growing familiarity with Philippa. This had become very marked; for though his behaviour towards her was in no respect more tender than it had been, he was constantly in her company and alone. They walked together in the garden and in particular on the cliff terrace above the lake, at the end of which a tower, or 'Folly,' as it was called by the neighbours, had been erected. It was scarcely used even in warm weather, though it had been designed as a summer-house, and it was strange indeed that it should have attractions for anybody at the present time when the mountains were covered with snow and the waters sealed by frost. No one but a woman who has felt jealousy could understand the rage that filled the heart of Agnes Tremenhare when she first saw her sister and Edward Roscoe leave the garden and climb the steps that led to the cliff terrace together. It was not love that took him there, but only the desire of speaking with his companion—on a very different subject—without fear of interruption; but Agnes thought it was love, or rather the pretence of it, which was almost as bad. And Philippa knew that she thought it, and



was not displeased. She had often made her sister jealous, but never with such apparently good reason, for Edward's caution had hitherto restrained her; but now he did not seem to care for prudence. So Philippa took her revenge in feminine fashion for many a snub and slight she had received at her sister's hands.

One afternoon Agnes was in the sick room paying a more perfunctory visit to 'her dear Grace' even than usual; there was no longer any cause for anxiety on the patient's account, and her thoughts were just now dwelling upon other things—the fact that Roscoe and Philippa were walking together in the garden below for one thing. She was not even talking with Grace, upon whom at the moment the nurse was attending, but idly engaged in turning over the leaves of a school history she had taken down from its shelf. It had been one of Grace's lesson-books, not so long ago, when Philippa had been her governess, and was divided into portions with a note here and there in Philippa's hand. On some occasion when she had taken up that book, it is probable that her mind, like that of Agnes at the present moment, was astray from the subject before her, and had dwelt on other things. One historic passage had the phrase 'Philippa, Edward's queen' in it, and the blue pencil in some wandering moment had underscored the words. The writer had doubtless merely wished to see 'how it looked,' with the intention of rubbing it out again, but she had forgotten to do so, and there it stood, 'Philippa, Edward's queen,' *in italics*. The writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace could scarcely have filled those who saw it with deeper emotion than that which the sight of that blue line evoked in its reader, but the meaning in her case had nothing of mystery in it; it was its very plainness that drove the colour from her cheek and turned her heart to stone. She wondered that Philippa had dared to indulge in a day-dream such as this, but she tore out the leaf and placed it in her bosom—a proof indeed of the treachery she had long suspected. As she did so, her eyes chanced to glance at the window, and through it perceived her sister and her companion ascending the winding steps that led to the terrace. With a wild cry which startled Grace in her pillowed chair she rushed from the room.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## 'SHE IS MY WIFE.'

THE shades of early evening were already falling, and the day had been bitterly cold, but Agnes Tremenhere delayed only long enough to throw on her bonnet and shawl before taking her way to the terrace. There was a fire in her blood that prevented her from feeling the fog that was rising from the mere, or the wintry air upon the hill-top. We cannot hold a fire in our hand by thinking of the frosty Caucasus, but passion is stronger than imagination, and can for a time ignore all physical inconveniences; she trembled in every limb, but it was not with cold. As she hurried up the winding steps that led to the cliff-top she had no definite purpose in view, she had not thought of what to say or what to do; a blind instinct of rage and hate impelled her to seek out the treacherous pair, and tax one of them at least with her perfidy. The proof of it, that lay in her bosom and seemed to burn it, was slight indeed; but coming as it did upon the top of a hundred corroborating circumstances, and, above all, at a moment when her jealousy was at its height, it brought conviction with it. Philippa, 'Edward's queen.' She tried to think of the shameless woman only, and not of her companion; she could not bear to picture *him* as yielding to temptation. It was impossible that for all these years he could have paid court to her, given her, tacitly but unmistakably, to understand that his life was bound up in hers, and of late that nothing but mere pecuniary details prevented their becoming one in the eyes of all as they had long been in their inmost hearts, and yet have been deceiving her. These are things common enough with lovers, but of which no woman believes her lover capable. Her rival in his affection is, on the other hand, capable of anything. She will tell Philippa what she thinks of her, and in Edward's presence, so that hereafter he shall have no excuse for being deceived.

Those she is in search of are not on the terrace, but in the 'Folly,' a roomy and solid structure, with a stone chamber below, intended to be used as a kitchen for the accommodation of picnic parties, and above, a well-lighted apartment commanding an extensive view. The windows are of parti-coloured glass, through which the landscape is supposed to be seen under the aspects of the four seasons. Unlike the seasons of the soul, wherein it is more



difficult to recall our hours of adversity when we are happy than to picture our happiness when we are miserable, it is an easier task to portray winter in summer than summer in winter. There is no pane, however brightly hued, that can now bring back the hour 'of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower.' At this time of year, even at noonday, the room with its spare summer furniture looks bare and melancholy, in unison with the fog and frost without. Its tenants, too, are wretched-looking; they are standing by one of the windows, and fix their gaze upon it, not because the wintry scene has any attraction for them, but because each prefers it to looking into the other's face. They have not exactly quarrelled, but they have disagreed, and are very dissatisfied, though not in the same degree, with one another. It is not without difficulty that Roscoe can conceal his exasperation against his companion for her obstinacy in refusing his request for a sum of money which he has told her is necessary for the re-establishment of his fortunes. It is necessary, indeed, for him to obtain it, though not for that purpose; it is wanted to stave off the impending ruin, but that he dares not tell her. He can only use the same arguments he has often used before on less pressing occasions.

'Five thousand pounds is such a monstrous sum,' she pleads. 'To give you money is like pouring water into a sieve. Not that I grudge you, Edward. Hush, what's that?'

The door at the top of the short flight of stairs is open, but they have no fear of interruption, and do not sink their voices as they speak. Mr. Roscoe, indeed, speaks loudly and vehemently, his habits of caution, great and small, having alike disappeared in these later days. He pays no attention to his companion's interpolated inquiry, but answers scornfully:

'Grudge me? I hope not indeed. I think I have some claim upon you, Philippa.'

'You have indeed, dear Edward, every claim, but——'

'What claim?' cries a terrible voice, at which Philippa shrieks aloud, and even Roscoe for a moment trembles.

Agnes is standing in the doorway, her flaming eyes fixed upon her sister, her hand pointing to her companion. 'What claim can you have on Edward Roscoe? Your treacherous and lying tongue is silent. Edward, I appeal to *you*.'

There was a moment of painful and embarrassed silence, and then the man doggedly replied: 'She is my wife.'

‘Your wife! Philippa your wife? Then if you are not a liar you are a thief. You have been drawing her money—*my* money—under false pretences. Five thousand pounds! why that is half her fortune! Mr. Allerton shall know of this. So you are a rogue and a fool in one.’

‘He is neither the one nor the other,’ exclaimed Philippa. ‘You would never had called him so had he married you instead of me.’

‘You viper!’

‘You offcast!’

‘Hush, hush!’ interrupted Roscoe imperiously. ‘Go home, Philippa, and leave me to deal with her.’

‘Home! She will have no home after to-morrow,’ cried Agnes furiously. ‘You have wasted her miserable fortune for her before you began to steal what is mine by rights. And as for you who have beggared her, you will go to gaol.’

Her injurious words, spoken too in another’s presence, would at any time have chafed Edward Roscoe’s spirit beyond endurance, but now, in that moment of despair, with the consciousness that his long-cherished plans were futile and their object known, his face was like that of a baffled tiger.

‘Go home, Philippa,’ he repeated, with angry vehemence.

‘One would think you were speaking to a dog,’ said Agnes, with a grating laugh; ‘and like a dog she sneaks away. I am glad to see it.’

Philippa’s exit, indeed, was far from dignified. Notwithstanding her last brave words she was frightened at her sister, and reassured only by the knowledge that she had her husband to back her. Now that he had ordered her away, her turkey-like exhibition of wrath was over; she felt like a boned turkey. She tottered downstairs, and hurried along the bleak terrace, where the evening fog was thickening, towards the house. Its lights were already lit, and offered for the present at least a welcome. Was it really true, as Agnes had told her, that she had no longer a right to share its shelter? It was quite true that she had already given to Edward the whole sum, and more, that she had inherited under her father’s will, in case she should marry in defiance of its restrictions. Had he indeed brought himself within the grasp of the law? That Agnes would show them no mercy she was well convinced. And did she deserve mercy? Had she not by her own misconduct hurried her father, though undesignedly,



to his death? The thought had often occurred to her, and always with a remorseful shock, but never with greater force than now. When she reached the house, fortunately unseen by anyone, and locked the door of her own room behind her, that did not shut out this reflection. She threw herself into a chair, and covered her eyes with her hands, but the awful scene presented itself to her with greater distinctness than ever. It was the sight of the conflagration at the theatre. Grace had come home in safety, and her father had not been aroused. The least shock, the doctor had said, might prove fatal, but the news of her peril had been spared to him, and she rejoiced at it, though she was well aware that her husband was calculating on the old man's death. Edward and she had been married many months, and were only waiting for it to announce the fact. The terms of his will were unknown to them.

It was very late, and Edward was bidding her good night in the corridor. She had been dreadfully upset by the events of the evening, and his manner was unusually tender and comforting; he had his arm round her waist, and was giving her a farewell kiss, when a door was suddenly opened, and her father stood before them in his dressing-gown.

'What is this?' he cried, addressing his confidential assistant. 'How dare you? And you, you shameless slut?'

'Father dear, he is my husband,' pleaded Philippa.

Those were the last words that passed between them. Poor 'Josh' fell forward on his face and never spoke again. They carried him back into his room, but even if they had dared to send for help it would have availed him nothing. In a few minutes he was a dead man. It was no wonder that Mr. Allerton had found Philippa the next day agitated by such unexpected emotion. Though she had got over the dreadful experience in time, and, as we have seen, could even join with Agnes in her denunciations of her father's memory, she never forgot that it was her own conduct which had cut short his life. It was a string that Mr. Roscoe had often played upon, and it had always vibrated to his touch. Sometimes she even said to herself, 'I am a murderess.' At others, when it was her husband's *rôle* to make light of her part in the matter, she took it less to heart; but just now remorse was gripping her. Oh! why did Edward not come? Why did he leave her alone with these awful thoughts? What could he have to say to Agnes that had so long delayed him? At last there was

a knock at the door she knew, for they had many such secret signs, these two; and Edward stood before her, pale, wild-looking, and breathless.

‘What did Agnes say? What do you think she will do?’ she inquired anxiously. ‘Have you made it up in any way?’

‘Yes,’ he answered in a hollow voice. ‘I think she is somewhat pacified.’ He sank into a chair, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. ‘Have you any brandy? No, don’t go down for it,’ he put in sharply, for she was moving quickly towards the door. She pitied his condition, which, indeed, was easily to be accounted for. What an interview must he have had, poor fellow, and all through his own boldness in confessing that he was married to her! Notwithstanding its probable consequences she admired him for that. It was a declaration which she had long desired to make herself, at all hazards.

‘Agnes keeps a little brandy in her room, but perhaps she came home with you, and I dare not meet her.’

‘She did not come back,’ he answered, ‘but the brandy is no matter. Stay where you are. Let us be together,’ and he looked round him apprehensively.

‘Dear Edward, that is what we shall now always be,’ she replied caressingly. ‘Out of this seeming harm, as you have often told me, good may, perhaps will, come to us. For my part I am sick of our long career of secrecy and deception. Money is not everything after all.’

She rather expected an outburst from him against her ‘sentimental folly,’ but there was none. His face showed no trace of anger, but wore a listening air, as though he was willing to hear her speak on. He even suffered her to take his hand and fondle it.

‘There may be trouble before us, Edward, but it cannot be so hard to bear, so far as I am concerned, as what I have suffered of late. To live under the same roof with Agnes was getting insupportable; and, even if you had not spoken out as you did just now, it could not have lasted much longer. However she may behave to us, dear Grace will, I know, be our friend, though I fear we have not deserved it. Is it not possible, now that things have happened as they have done, that we may do her a good turn?’

What she felt, but did not say, was, ‘Now that your own plan has miscarried, there can be no reason for making her unhappy,



and I think you could make matters straight between her and Walter if you chose.' She had still great faith in his cleverness, though, alas, but little in his sense of right.

He nodded, as she hoped in approval, and she went on with rising spirits :

'Mr. Allerton, though he is no friend of yours, is devoted to Grace, and has some influence even with Agnes; I am sure that he will effect some kind of settlement. It would be quite contrary to his wish that there should be any public disruption of the family. We must leave Halswater, of course, but it need not be under a cloud.'

'Yes, Allerton is the man,' he murmured, with a sigh of relief; 'he will patch things up for Grace's sake. What's that?' he cried, suddenly springing to his feet. 'Why are they tolling the church bell?'

'My dear Edward, what is the matter with you?' she exclaimed apprehensively. 'That is not the church bell; it is the gong for afternoon tea.'

'To be sure, I had forgotten,' he answered moodily, and sat down again.

'But what am I to do, Edward? I daren't go down alone to meet her. You *must* come down with me. Do you think it possible that she will break out again before Walter and your brother?'

'No.'

'Then I will go down and pour out the tea as usual. It will be best to treat her, for the present, even if we go to-morrow, as if nothing had happened.'

He did not answer her, though he still wore that listening look. The beating of the gong had ceased, but the wind was rising, and howled without like some unhappy disembodied spirit.

'Did anyone see you return to the house, Philippa?' he suddenly inquired with great earnestness.

'No one.'

'Nor me. That is so far fortunate. Now listen; we two came in together, leaving Agnes on the terrace.'

'But we didn't, Edward.'

'Hush, you fool! I say we *did*. She said she wanted a bracing walk, and we left her there, pacing up and down. There was no quarrel between us of any kind. Do you understand?'

She did not understand, but she began to suspect. She stared

at him with horrified eyes; her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth.

‘You can keep a secret, I know,’ he went on in a menacing tone. ‘You have kept more than one of your own. Keep mine.’

‘Great heaven, what have you done?’ she cried.

‘Nothing. I left her there—we left her there; there is no parapet—she may have fallen over into the lake for all I know. Come down to tea. There is no fear of meeting Agnes. Come.’ He offered his hand, but she drew back, and kept him at arm’s length. Her face expressed horror and disgust, nay, even hate.

‘You don’t feel well enough—a severe headache? Very well, I’ll say so. Do as you please. Only remember we two came in together.’ He was gone.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

### ON THE SPOT.

WHEN Mr. Roscoe went downstairs he found both his brother and Walter Sinclair in the drawing-room. They were neither of them much devoted to the institution of five o’clock tea, but they were generally present at it, because from one or other of the two sisters they learnt news from the sick room. The absence of both Agnes and Philippa on the present occasion made them not a little anxious.

‘Have you any news?’ inquired Walter of Mr. Roscoe.

‘No,’ he answered; ‘she has not come in yet.’ The instant the words had passed his lips he owned his folly. Was he becoming an idiot because of what had happened, that he could not get it out of his thoughts for an instant, and must imagine that everybody else was equally occupied with the subject? ‘I thought you were referring to the absence of Miss Agnes,’ he continued carelessly, in reply to the others’ look of amazement. ‘She is still out of doors; and unfortunately Miss Philippa, I am informed, has one of her bad headaches, and will not be here to do the honours of the tea-table, so we must help ourselves.’

As they did not seem inclined to do this, Mr. Roscoe poured out the tea for them, and not with his usual neatness of hand; he was thinking of something else—listening again—and spilt it.



Walter noticed his preoccupation, and guessed its cause—or a part of it.

‘Miss Agnes cannot surely be out of doors in this weather; it is snowing.’

‘Thank heaven!’ exclaimed Mr. Roscoe mechanically.

We often do thank heaven for strange things, even for things that would appear to have their origin in quite another place; just as we often, alas! pray to heaven for gifts that are far from celestial in their nature, and which can only be secured at the expense of our fellow-creatures. Still the strangeness of Mr. Roscoe’s exclamation attracted the attention of both his hearers.

‘What on earth should you want snow for?’ inquired his brother.

Richard’s manner, like his own, had undergone some change of late. He had never been so subservient to Edward as it was his obvious duty (or at all events his interest) to be; but he had now become irritable and antagonistic. He took little pains to conceal the opinion he entertained of his nature and projects. Edward had come to the conclusion that it would be necessary to get rid of this relative, who had the insolence to ban what he had been sent for to bless, and so far from being a helpmate was a hinder-mate; only just now much more serious matters than his dismissal were on his mind.

‘Well, you don’t understand agricultural matters in England, my good fellow,’ he answered, ‘but the country wants snow. When that has fallen the frosts will probably break up.’

‘At present, though the snow *is* falling,’ replied Richard curtly, ‘it is colder than ever.’

‘It is strange indeed that in such inclement weather Miss Agnes should still be out of doors,’ observed Walter, going to the window and throwing back its gilded shutter. ‘The lights in the garden are lit, so that she must know it’s late; where has she gone?’

‘Miss Philippa and I left her walking on the terrace,’ said Mr. Roscoe, speaking with great distinctness. ‘I told her it was near tea-time, but she said she felt in need of exercise, having been in attendance on her sister this afternoon, and would take a turn or two more.’

‘The steps are very slippery this weather,’ observed Walter; ‘I think some one should go and look after her.’

There was no reply to this remark, so Walter left the room,

put on his great coat, and went out. It was already dark, and the snow was falling heavily, so that it was not easy, even by help of the garden lamps, to find one's way to the winding steps that led to the terrace, though Walter had keen eyes, which had been used to heavier snows than ever fall in Westmoreland. It was certainly no evening for a delicate woman to be abroad in. He thought it possible that Miss Agnes might be snow-bound or fog-bound in the summer-house, and afraid to venture back along the unprotected walk, with its cliff descending down into the lake, so for the summer-house he made. Its door was standing open, which corroborated his view of the matter, and he went upstairs crying 'Miss Agnes, Miss Agnes!' in order not to alarm her by his sudden entrance. It was an unnecessary precaution. The room which had of late been the scene of such a stormy interview was empty, and in place of those voices of passion there was only the shrill cry of the wind, and the soft crush of the snow as it huddled against the window-pane. 'Miss Agnes, Miss Agnes!' Heaven only knows whether she heard him, but there was no response. Walter was now seriously alarmed. It was next to impossible that she could have wandered off the terrace on the landward side, because she would have had the lights from the Hall to guide her, but it *was* possible that in keeping too near them she had fallen over the cliff. On his way back he met both the Roscoes with servants and lanterns, and they made what search they could, but the whirling snow hid everything. Before that began to fall the marks of the passage of any heavy body down the friable steep would have been discernible, but it was now hopeless to detect them. The lake beneath had become unapproachable, for while no boat could be put on it on account of its icy covering, the ice was not thick enough—it seldom was in 'fathomless Halswater'—to bear the weight of a human being. There was nothing for it but to wait for the morning, and in the meantime to hope. It was just possible that even now Agnes had reached home by some other route.

It was a terrible night for the whole household—sickening to those who suffered from suspense, and far worse to those who knew. Agnes was not popular, but as they thought of her, lost in the whirling snow or drowned in the frozen lake, it was not her defects that were dwelt upon. She had been a hard woman, but not an unjust one; prudent, but not close-fisted; a good but



not over-exacting housekeeper. If this is not much to say in her favour, and yet all hearts (save one) bled for her for pity's sake, think what suspense must mean to households (there are thousands of them) whose breadwinner is at sea, 'given up' at Lloyd's, but not at home, or whose darling is reported 'missing' in the wars! Heaven shield us, reader, from such miseries! A score of times the doors were opened to the night, and anxious faces peered into the white gloom; a score of times there was heard, or seemed to be heard, a knocking, a tap, a voice, and they said 'Hush!' or 'That is she!' But she came not. Grace, of course, knew nothing of her absence; she had sorrows of her own enough, and was spared that awful watch. But Philippa—Philippa was more to be pitied than even Agnes. She knew, though she tried to persuade herself that she knew not; or at all events she knew that her husband knew. With that knowledge all love for him—the last relics of it—had fled from her bosom; nay, the very fact that it had ever filled it increased her loathing for the man. The recollection even of her own antagonism to Agnes increased it. In cutting short her sister's life he had deprived herself (oh cruel and remorseless wretch!) of the hope of reconciliation.

'I did not kill her,' Roscoe said to his wife that night, 'so help me heaven! It was her own fault. As we were walking home together she stepped backward and fell over the cliff.'

Philippa answered nothing, but her face said, 'You lie.'

He felt that all was over between them as regarded affection—as, indeed, it had long been on his side; one foe the more, one would have thought, could not have made much difference. He was now an outcast from his kind, without one single tie to them save that of self-interest. We know what comes of the 'solitary system' in gaol, *at first*—how the heart of the prisoner is filled with hatred and malice against the whole world, which he accuses of having devised, or permitted, his punishment. Something of this feeling took possession of Edward Roscoe. He would revenge himself on humanity—or at all events on all those to whom he owed a grudge, or who were obnoxious to him—on the first opportunity; but in the meantime there was a more pressing matter to be attended to, his own personal safety. Though Philippa was not to be trusted, in any gracious sense of the word, he felt he could rely on her, whatever might be her suspicions, not to denounce him. If she had resolved not to assist him with that statement of their having come home

together from the terrace, she would have said so. He saw that she was no longer afraid of him, that hate had cast out fear, but her silence in this connection meant consent. Even if she did witness against him, her evidence would be valueless in law, for was she not his wife? But that was a revelation, unless pushed to it very hard, he would certainly not make at such a juncture.

Throughout that night to no inmate of the Hall, save the invalid girl, came balmy sleep. Anxiety for Agnes, or at least a wild excitement, agitated every bosom. At last on the blank scene rose the blank day; the snow shroud was over all things, and the snow still falling with silent persistence. There was no trace of the lost woman to be seen anywhere, but all the probabilities pointed to one direction. The narrow dangerous footway that could just be followed in summer, on the margin of the steep side of Halswater, was of course invisible, and the only means of approach to the lake was by letting down men by ropes from the terrace, who at great risk of immersion swept the snow away from its ice-bound surface.

At last was found, not indeed what they sought, for that was impossible, but a spot where the ice was very thin, and round it signs of fracture. Some heavy body had evidently fallen through with great force on the previous evening, and though the night's frost had sealed up the hole, and the snow in its turn had covered it, the fate that had befallen Agnes Tremehere was sufficiently revealed. Any attempt to rescue the body was for the present useless; there it lay 'full fathom five,' and deeper yet, and must needs lie until the ice melted and the water could be dragged. It was no wonder that Edward Roscoe had said 'Thank heaven!' when he had heard that the snow was falling, for it concealed all evidence, if evidence there was, of what had happened on land, while the lake could be trusted to keep its own secret. There could be no inquest, so he had nothing to fear from Philippa's weakness; he told his own story, and, as he had calculated, she did not gainsay it.

They had left her sister walking by herself upon the terrace, in her usual health and spirits, and there was no reason for doubt how, in that dangerous spot, she had come by her end.

To everyone else, however, these circumstances greatly added to the horror of the catastrophe. It is no matter to ourselves, when our spirit has fled, what becomes of its poor human tenement, but to



those belonging to us it makes a difference. It is far worse to us, 'the fools of habit,' as the poet tells us, that 'hands so often clasped in ours should toss with tangle and shell'—and that 'the vast and wandering grave' of ocean should environ one familiar to us—than that he should lie 'neath the churchyard sod. In Agnes's case, so near her home and yet so far from it, the circumstances were even more painful, yet not even Philippa thought of leaving the Hall; it seemed to be an act of desertion towards one whom she had already wronged enough. She would wait there until the last rites could be paid to her sister.

Nor did Edward attempt to dissuade her. One would have thought he would have been eager to leave a scene which, whatever part he had played in it, must have been at least an awful one to look back upon. On the contrary, he often sought the terrace alone, though never after nightfall. It is possible that with some return of his old caution he did so to make assurance sure that there was nothing left there of a compromising character, or perhaps there was some morbid attraction for him in the place such as is said to coerce those who have the guilt of blood upon their souls to revisit the scene of their crime. But in my opinion it was the former reason. Just as a good man will entertain no scruple about having killed some cruel wretch in the act of attempting the murder of some innocent girl, so it is probable Edward Roscoe experienced no remorse in the contemplation of the fate of one who had always been as a millstone about his neck, and whose last act had been to denounce and threaten him with punishment. My belief is that after the first few hours of terror and excitement, when he was certainly far from being himself, he thought of it no more (except for its possible consequences) than a chess-player who sweeps a piece from his adversary's board. What had happened, though there was doubtless danger in it, was so far of great advantage to him. To a certain extent it even strengthened his hands, not only by its leaving fewer adversaries to deal with, but by increasing that courage of despair which he had of late experienced. He felt that his masterful nature would now stick at nothing, and drew from it the conclusion that nothing—in the way of defeat—could stop him. Indeed, he had already reaped some material benefit. Though his wife showed the utmost loathing for him when they chanced to be alone together, and would even remain stubbornly silent when he addressed her upon any subject in

connection with her lost sister, he found her unexpectedly subservient in pecuniary matters. She signed certain documents—the very ones she had hitherto refused to sign—which enabled him to tide over his more pressing difficulties. ‘What is money to me *now*?’ she said in despairing tones. ‘Take what you will of it, since you have taken all besides’—a state of mind which, in a wife with a large banking account of her own, seemed to him laudable and meritorious in the highest degree.

Mr. Allerton, however, whose visit to Halswater this catastrophe to its mistress had naturally precipitated, was coming to the Hall at once, a circumstance that was by no means so welcome. There was nothing, he knew, to discover, but there were persons under that roof, Mr. Roscoe was aware, who regarded him with unfavourable eyes, and he did not wish their wits to be sharpened by contact with those of the family lawyer.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### A COMFORTER.

WHEN Mr. Allerton arrived at Halswater he was pleurably disappointed, as our English ‘bull’ runs, in not being made welcome, as usual, by the *de facto* master of the house. It had hitherto been Mr. Edward Roscoe’s custom to receive all guests that visited the Tremenhere ladies as if they had been his own, but on the present occasion he did not even give himself the trouble to depute that office. So it strangely enough happened that Mr. Allerton was received by Walter Sinclair—a person who, so far from having any authority to welcome him to the Hall, had himself, as we know, but a precarious footing there. Moreover the last letter in which the lawyer had mentioned his name had been by no means a letter of recommendation; it had been that which he had written to Grace, remonstrating with her on the encouragement she had given to the young man, and pointing out how very undesirable from a practical point of view he would be as a husband, and Walter knew that he had written it. So fair and honest was the young man’s character, however, that he felt no spark of resentment against the lawyer on that account—he was Grace’s guardian, he reflected, and simply doing his duty—but only remembered the kindnesses he had personally received at the other’s hands.



‘I am so glad you are come, Mr. Allerton,’ he exclaimed as they shook hands warmly; ‘things are all going on here as in a ship without a rudder.’

He took him to his room, which was in ‘the Cottage,’ next his own, and the two had a long talk together, but without touching on the subject which had placed them in antagonism to one another.

‘First, about poor Miss Agnes?’ said the lawyer. ‘Tell me frankly, what is your view?’

Walter raised his eyes in some astonishment.

‘There is nothing to tell but what has been told you. Mr. Roscoe and Miss Philippa left her on the terrace. It is a dangerous spot except in the daytime for anybody, as you will see for yourself. It was evening, and snowing heavily; there is not a doubt that the poor lady fell into the lake.’

‘A ghastly catastrophe, indeed,’ observed the other gravely. ‘And of course Miss Grace knows nothing about it?’

‘Nothing. It would be madness to tell her. Dr. Gardner will give you an account of her condition; he comes here this afternoon instead of the morning on purpose to do so. We have every confidence in him.’

‘Whom do you mean by “we”?’

Walter flushed up to his eyes. ‘It was an expression I own I had no right to use,’ he said apologetically. ‘I am quite aware that I have no recognised position here, but everything, as I have hinted, is topsyturvy.’

‘It was always that,’ observed the lawyer dryly; ‘or at least the person who had the least right to be there was at the head of affairs. He is so still, I suppose, and more than ever.’

‘In a sort of way, yes; but, on the other hand, he does not take so much upon himself; he seems to care little how things go.’

‘What has happened—as indeed it well may do—monopolises his thoughts, I conclude?’

The lawyer’s words were indifferent, but not his tone. He seemed to be awaiting some reply from his companion and with anxiety, though there hardly seemed occasion for a reply.

‘No doubt; this terrible event has unhinged us all, and brought us into new relations. That is why I used the word “we” just now, for Miss Philippa takes me a good deal into her confidence.’

‘And not Mr. Roscoe?’ inquired the lawyer sharply.

‘I can’t say about that, but she certainly seems to avoid his

society, which, as you know, she did not use to do. There are many changes here,' replied the young fellow.

'I suppose so; that was to be expected. There is one change for the better, however, I am glad to find from Dr. Gardner's letters. Have you seen her?'

'I? Certainly not, sir. She has forbidden me—that is, before she was taken ill, and as I was given to understand in consequence of some communication from yourself, she forbade me to see her.'

'Indeed. Who told you that?'

'She told me herself—that is, in her own handwriting.'

'Let me see it.'

Walter went into his own room and produced the slip of paper she had written to him: 'Seek,' &c.

The lawyer examined the manuscript very carefully.

'Mr. Roscoe brought you that communication?' he remarked.

'Yes. But it is Grace's handwriting,' replied Walter in response to an expression on the other's face. 'Miss Philippa corroborates the fact—so far. Still the affair is unintelligible to me, in some respects—though perhaps not to you?' he added with a touch of bitterness.

To this question the lawyer made no rejoinder; he shifted his chair and gazed absently before him, evidently in deep thought.

'What sort of a person is this Mr. Richard Roscoe?' he inquired presently.

'A very honest fellow, but eccentric. He has had troubles—perhaps has them now—which I sometimes fear has affected his mind.'

'Is he on good terms with his brother?'

'There is no open quarrel between them, but there is certainly no love lost. He mistrusts Mr. Edward very much, I think.'

'He must be mad indeed if he didn't,' was Mr. Allerton's cynical reply. 'If that man was an American, he would be called "the Champion Scoundrel." Does he see much of Grace?'

'He has never seen her, I understand, since the interview in which she gave him that writing. So at least Miss Philippa tells me.'

'Who does see her?'

'Only Miss Philippa, the Doctor, and the nurse—Here *is* the Doctor.'

Dr. Gardner in his high boots and with his riding-whip in



hand was at 'the Cottage' door. Walter introduced the two men to one another, and left them together. When they came out after a protracted talk, they had both very serious faces.

'I will just look to my patient, Mr. Allerton, and if she is well enough she shall then see *you*.'

The lawyer nodded: a complete understanding seemed to have been arrived at by these two men.

In due course Mr. Allerton was summoned to the sick room. Grace was sitting up in her chair, but still too weak to rise to welcome him. It was a sad meeting, and at first, to his great distress, she gave way to tears.

'That won't hurt her,' said the old Doctor with a wise brutality. 'She would have been better by now had there been more tears.'

He left the room, taking the nurse with him.

'I have been wanting to see you, dear Mr. Allerton, these many weeks,' said Grace, placing her thin hand on his. 'You are the only person in whom I have any trust.'

'I am sorry to hear you say that, my dear.'

'Yes; you are the only person I now see (except, indeed, the good Doctor, who cannot help me) in whom I have any confidence. Agnes never comes near me; Philippa is kind, but strangely altered in other respects. They are the only two persons who can answer the question I have to put to you, and I would not apply to them in any case. Mr. Allerton, tell me truly, what was dear papa?'

The lawyer had come down to Halswater prepared to hear strange things, and with stranger things in his own mind than he was likely to hear, but this inquiry was wholly unlooked for, and his face showed it. For the moment he was silent.

'Do not deceive me,' she said plaintively; 'let me know the whole truth.'

'Your father, my dear girl, as everybody knew except yourself, was a money-lender. It is not a calling that is thought highly of, but he was at the head of it; moreover, it does not follow that a money-lender——'

'Was he an honest man?' she interrupted vehemently.

'Yes. For a money-lender, as I have always said, exceptionally honest.'

'Money is the root of all evil,' observed Grace with a sigh and a shudder.

'It is so stated in the copybooks, my dear, and no doubt

there is truth in it. It is bad to beg and bad to borrow, and the trade of lending it is not what one calls a liberal education; still there are money-lenders and money-lenders, and your father was the best specimen of his trade I have ever known.'

'Why did he hide it from me? Why did everybody hide it from me?' she murmured reproachfully.

'Well, for the very reasons I have mentioned. Your father was so passionately fond of you——'

'His little Fairy,' she interrupted, in a trembling voice. 'Heaven knows how I loved him!'

'And also how he loved you, my dear. He always wished you to think the best of him, as we all do. I never should have told you I was a lawyer if I could have helped it. It was weakness in him to conceal the fact, but it was love that made him weak. The same sentiment in a less degree actuated your sisters; they had a grudge against your father, and did not spare his memory so far as they were themselves concerned, but they never strove to disturb your faith in him, and that is to their credit. For my part, I cannot imagine how you could have been ignorant of his profession.'

'I knew he lent his friends money, of course, and not for nothing. But I thought he did them good, and not harm. I did not know that he was'—she sank her voice to a whisper—'a usurer.'

'Who told you he was a usurer? But I need not ask. There is only one man in the world who could have done it.'

'But was it *true*?'

Her pleading eyes looked straight into the lawyer's face. His heart melted within him, but his composure remained outwardly firm.

'You need not answer,' she said despairingly. 'I see it was so; now tell me this. Did gold so weigh with him that kith and kin, justice and compassion were nothing compared with it? Was he such a slave to greed that he could cheat one of his own blood of all he had, and thrive upon his ruin?'

'No! A thousand times, no!' replied the lawyer confidently; 'it is a lie, whoever told you so. In the first place he had no kith or kin except yourselves; in the second, in my judgment he was incapable of such conduct.'

'Are you sure of this?'

Even while she spoke he remembered that her father had



mentioned to him when making his will that he had some far-away cousin; but the matter seemed to have no reference to the subject on hand, and he yearned to put that torn and tender heart at rest. 'I am quite sure,' he answered.

'In my father's papers, in which you told me every business transaction of his was noted down, was there any word of one with my—with Walter Sinclair's father? It was in connection with some mine in Cornwall.'

'Certainly not. The name would certainly have struck me had it been otherwise. You may set your mind quite at ease, my dear, upon that point.'

'Thank heaven!' she murmured fervently; 'you have brought me from death to life, dear Mr. Allerton;' and rising feebly from her chair she kissed him.

*(To be continued.)*

### DINNER-TABLES.

Is the diner-out of to-day better or worse treated, as regards the quality and quantity of his fare, than his predecessor of twenty, thirty, or forty years ago? It is an interesting question, but one to which, unfortunately, the answer is not readily forthcoming; for our few surviving gourmets of a past generation are, by reason of advanced years, impaired digestions, and the unconquerable habit of referring regretfully to the days when Plancus was consul, scarcely to be depended upon for a fair estimate of the relative merits of the earlier and later Victorian *cuisine*.

One thing is certain—that whether we get more or less, or better or worse, to eat than formerly, we certainly have a great deal more to look at. The hospitable board that once, in the language of the reporter of olden days, ‘groaned’ under the weight of saddles and sirloins, barons and chines, now simpers under the imposition of satin and plush, gilt cupids and butterfly nets, French toys and American favours, orchids of price and common field-flowers, combined with enough greenery to furnish forth the material for a respectable May-day festival.

The desire to gratify two senses at one and the same time probably first inspired men to eat their dinners at a flower-decked table, as it has led others mistakenly to spoil their feasts with music, or their music with feasting, whichever way one likes to put it. The floral dinner is, however, a graceful and pleasant fancy, a survival from the Golden Age, a reminiscence of the perpetual picnic of Eden itself. It is hallowed by the associations of a respectable antiquity. Horace, who affected a simplicity he did not always practise, objected to ‘Persian fripperies,’ and, unlike the modern hostess, having no desire for ‘various garlands,’ was indifferent to securing ‘the latest blooming rose’ to deck his banquets; yet even he affected ‘the fragrant myrtle bough,’ the decorative effect of which is, after all, not easily to be beaten, even when arranged on the table-cloth instead of being twined around the classic brow. Heliogabalus, a gourmet of the first water, if we may trust Mr. Alma Tadema, carried his taste in floral table-decoration to a degree of exaggeration which it has been left to the hostesses of to-day only to rival,



What appears most striking in the decorative methods now in vogue is a certain failure in the sense of proportion, which is becoming more pronounced each season, and is hurrying people into extravagances that are bound sooner or later to bring about a reaction in favour of simplicity. It was one thing to adorn a dinner-table artistically with flowers and fruit—although fruit on the table is hardly now permissible—but it is another thing altogether to build up with infinite pains and expense a colossal decorative trophy, with birds and butterflies, squirrels aloft and rabbits below, burrowing under flower-covered faggots, around which space is barely left here and there for the plate of an unfortunate diner, who struggles with trails of ivy dabbling in his soup, and sprays of maidenhair and mimosa bending into his wine-glass, like weeping-willows round a duck-pond, while he gets through his dinner with as uncomfortable a premonition of earwigs and creeping things as if he were assisting at that most decomposing of social entertainments, a genuine picnic.

The evil does not seem likely to end here, however. We are warned of further developments in the immediate future. The scheme of decoration is to undergo expansion, and to rise above the table and to take in its surroundings. The covering ceilings with blooms fixed in wooden frames was practised with considerable effect at some entertainments last season. Recently a young lady arranged a dinner-table above which, as part of the decoration, floated gauze clouds within whose folds birds and butterflies were imprisoned.

If this fancy endure until next summer, we may expect many strange metamorphoses to take effect in London dining-rooms, and the liberty of the subject is likely to be interfered with by arbitrary restrictions being imposed upon the colour and fashion of the ladies' dresses. Not long ago the introduction of a new form of menu card, in the shape of a ship in full sail, inspired a dinner-giver to carry out the idea in its integrity, by making the centre ornament of her table a blue satin ship with the rigging outlined with button-roses, the lady-guests being requested to attire themselves in blue satin dresses, made in nautical fashion, with wreaths of roses perched on one side of the head. In this case only the daughters of the house, whose style the costume probably suited, were sufficiently impressed with the solemnity of the farce to think it necessary to dress up to the menu card.

This sounds like an American story, but it is not. Many of our most admired eccentricities, however, are imported from 'the

other side.' The abominable fashion of discarding the white tablecloth altogether in favour of red or other coloured silk is distinctly Yankee. In New York, coloured entertainments—'pink teas,' 'blue luncheons,' &c.—are very much in fashion. Not only the service and the decorations, but the dresses of the guests are supposed to reproduce the dominant note of colour decided upon by the hostess, who is doubtless influenced in her choice more by the consideration of what suits her complexion than by that of what will be becoming to her visitors.

An English lady, a victim to this queer mania, gave 'a red luncheon' some months ago, the foundation of which was the bare mahogany table, upon which the meal was served without a cloth—in truth, a chilly and comfortless innovation.

The average American, although a colossal eater, does not at present know how to dine. This is a home truth which he resents extremely, and contradicts with vigour; indeed he is apt to introduce comparisons between the restaurants of his own and other lands which invariably leave a large balance in favour of Delmonicos. Still, spite of an occasional exception, the American-born gastronome is as rare a bird as the American-born chef of any serious pretensions.

This is not the biassed opinion of the envious Britisher. What says the native bard?

I've dined with painted savages in regions most remote;  
 I've seen—and heard—the boarders eat at a German *table d'hôte*;  
 I've leaped from off of flying trains, and seized, when 'on the run,'  
 The *lignum-vitæ* sandwich and the patent-leather bun.  
 I've fondled, when by impecuniosity accursed,  
 On corners in the dead of night, the fragrant 'Wiener Wurst.'  
 The gastronomic gamut I have run 'mid varied scenes—  
 From Pommery to lager beer, from terrapin to beans.

In fair New England have I dwelt, to quite dyspeptic feel,  
 Because the doughnut and the pie usurped the morning meal.  
 In sylvan Philadelphia, too, where, at the break of day,  
 The scrapple and the pepper-box hold undisputed sway.  
 Oh, retrospective vision of various *cuisines*!  
 The demon of dyspepsia reigns o'er thy shadowy scenes;  
 But they can all be laughed to scorn, in Gotham's cosiest nooks,  
 Where his satanic majesty sends neither food nor cooks!

It is probably the inability to appreciate the real subtleties of the art of dining that hurries the American, eager for distinction, into curious and often puerile experiments in cookery, service, and decoration.



An eccentric and wealthy New-Yorker attempted, a few years ago, to realise a feast after the manner of the ancients—a more palatable one, it is to be hoped, than the one immortalised by Smollet. The guests, attired in chitons and other classic garments, reclined on ivory couches and crowned themselves with rose-garlands, the while they laid foundation for much future discomfort by imbibing wines prepared after the formula of the Roman butler, and wearied their brains in the vain endeavour 'to give a name' to the articles in the menu, which, whether written in Attic Greek or Augustan Latin, were certainly Greek to them.

This effort to introduce variety into the national cuisine was hardly successful, although the feast was probably not more provocative of dyspepsia than the average American breakfast, with its concomitants of hot bread and tea, baked pork and beans, pickles and iced water, with other unconsidered trifles.

But this is taking us far from the English dinner-table. It is an American lady, domiciled in London and moving in its 'hupper suckles,' to whom, I believe, we are indebted for the introduction of dolls into the decoration of the dinner-table—quaint automatic figures, artistically dressed in silks and satins, propelling wheelbarrows full of flowers or jumping through hoops of roses. A brilliant conception was to represent a flower-market on the table, each stall being filled with a different flower, and presided over by muslin-capped and aproned dolls with Pompadour skirts looped up over pink satin.

This is terribly childish, but Paris has originated follies as puerile, the novelty of the season which has just been imported thence being artfully contrived cardboard imitations of antique armour, helmets, and gauntlets, handcuffs, caskets, swords, and spears. These are made to open to hold sweets or flowers, and, being disposed about the table, interspersed with holly and mistletoe, produce, it is said, an effect never seen before, which, whether it be graceful or not, appears to be the object most held in view by hostesses.

Thus do Wardour Street and the Lowther Arcade enter into competition with Covent Garden in the adornment of the festive board.

Very little indication of the extreme length to which the decoration of the most fashionable tables is carried is afforded by the competitions that still take place at the principal flower-shows of the summer season; indeed, the competing parties at these

contests are hopelessly out of the running, and know little or nothing of the latest vagaries of fashion : while their displays are often pretty and artistic, they are invariably destitute of the element of novelty so eagerly sought after in society. These are occasions which afford opportunities for a few glass and china firms to advertise themselves by the exhibition of new and expensive services, set off by flowers arranged by a professional decorator ; while provincial young ladies try their prentice hands at simple and effective arrangements, not differing in essentials from what have been shown any time the last twenty years.

The great guns of the table-decorating business—for it is a business nowadays—naturally hold aloof. Novelty, novelty, novelty, however *bizarre* and incongruous, is the incessant demand of their customers, and both the florists and the ladies who have taken up decorating professionally are so exercised in their ingenuity to invent new combinations and appliances that they are not likely to give themselves away by wasting the efforts of their genius upon the public which goes to flower-shows at Regent's Park.

The question still remains to be answered how far the expenditure of energy in making a toy-shop of the dinner-table reacts upon the character of the repast provided. The Varus of our Latin Grammar days, who excited the wrath of the satirist by feasting the eye rather than the stomach of his guest, has doubtless his many counterparts in modern society. Yet it would be unreasonable to believe that the greater interest displayed in culinary science of late years has been entirely without effect in the reformation of the average *cuisine*. Schools of cookery count for something, doubtless, in the reforming influences, although, in many cases, their efforts seem rather to be directed towards the turning out of lecturers on cookery than of cooks.

On the whole, it seems as if our modern dinners, while less bulky than those of our grandfathers, may be credited with showing more art in minor details. It is possible, and most old gourmands will insist upon it, that we do not get such noble joints as in the olden days, before the baking-oven usurped the place of the spit and the roasting-jack, and the importation of New Zealand mutton and American beef rendered it a difficult matter to ensure obtaining the genuine product of the Southdown wether and the Scotch ox ; yet the kickshaws, the sweets and side-dishes, which people did not call *entrées* in those days—which then generally



came from the pastrycook's round the corner, and were avoided of prudent people and laughed at by Thackeray and other social satirists—have assuredly been improved out of recognition in the art of their preparation.

We do not, certainly, eat as much as we used to do; or, at any rate, we do not deem it necessary to overpower the guest at our table with the number and the vastness of the dishes which we force upon his notice. The City is always a criterion of high living, and the change which has gradually come about in City dinners is significant of the general reformation. There is a certain club in the neighbourhood of the Royal Exchange which has long enjoyed a unique reputation for its dinners, which are as well esteemed now as in the far-off days of the fifties, although their composition shows a considerable difference. A comparison of recent *menus* with those of thirty or forty years ago, which are preserved in the album—something of a gastronomic curiosity—which is kept under lock and key by the secretary, is instructive. Dining *was* dining in those days, and, when a House Dinner was toward, the City fathers would have thought themselves hardly treated if their bill of fare had not provided at least four soups—two thick and two clear; of fish, six or eight items, at the lowest reckoning; of haunches of venison, saddles of mutton, sirloins of beef, enough for half a dozen dinners of these degenerate days; while of *entrées*, sufficient, so far as numbers go at least, to fill a week's *menus* of the Savoy and Métropole.

We have changed all that, and it is as well, for we probably still eat a great deal more than is good for us; and it is to be hoped that, in course of time and enlightenment, we may come with satisfaction to the luxurious simplicity of 'original' Walker's ideal Christmas dinner—crimped cod, woodcock, and plum-pudding: In the meantime, while we have yet to run the gauntlet of many courses, it is well to bear in mind that the dinner is *the* thing, and that a lavish expenditure in orchids, French dolls, and Palais Royal frivolities, is not inconsistent with economy in the wine-bill and a low standard of achievement in the matter of ices and *entremets*.

THE LION'S TALE.

NEXT time you happen to be passing through Venice, with a sunny afternoon on your hands to spare, just call a cab from the steps at Danieli's, and ask the driver to whisk you round by the back road to the gates of the Arsenal.

I say a cab, not by misadventure, but of malice prepense; for if a late distinguished statesman might import a little poetry into Piccadilly by calling a hansom 'the gondola of London,' why may not an enterprising private citizen, humbly toiling after him at a respectful distance, import a little Western civilisation into the Grand Canal by calling a gondola the hansom of Venice? Similarly, has not what we know as a four-wheeler in dear, dirty old London 'suffered a sea-change' into the form of a *barca* by the banks of the city on the Adriatic? And indeed the quick-witted Venetians themselves have not been slow to perceive the obvious analogy; for the popular humour of the Riva degli Schiavoni has nicknamed the little noiseless screw steamers that ply with passengers between the Piazzetta and (*proh pudor!*) the railway station not only as 'omnibuses' but even as 'tramways.' Such is the march of intellect in these latter times, that Venice has nowadays a mounted police in gondolas, and when a fire breaks out in the labyrinth of canals behind the Frari, the fire-engine on duty is rowed to the spot by a crew of stout boatmen in appropriate uniform.

Once in your gondola, on the lion-hunt intent, you must leave behind the golden glories of St. Mark and the Doge's Palace—leave behind the great red and yellow sails of the calm Lagoon—leave behind the bustling crowd and the pigeons of the Piazza, and plunge at once into the narrow waterways that lead into the heart of the people's Venice. The most striking way to approach the Arsenal indeed is to let your gondolier take you round by the church of St. John and St. Paul—'San Zanipolo' your true-bred Venetian calls it for short—the Westminster Abbey of defunct dogedom, where thirty generations of most illustrious oligarchs sleep in peace with serene dignity under becoming catafalques of solid marble. But to adopt this route you should provide yourself beforehand with a plentiful stock of



moral courage and eau-de-Cologne, for thirty generations of Venetian dirt likewise repose in layers on the muddy bottom, and the air is redolent with the accumulated perfume of fifteen centuries of very imperfect sanitation. The sluggish tide of the Lagoon, and the oars of those poetical but extortionate gondoliers, stir up the festering mass afresh at every turn; so that the romance of the waterways suffers somewhat in real life by the prosaic interposition of that irrepressible sewage question, which all the ingenuity of the most cultured ages has never been able satisfactorily to burke for us. From the banks, young Italy, regenerated Italy, avid of *soldi* as in the days of the Oppressor, swarms forth from narrow dingy lanes and stretches out its imperfectly washen hands, in a clamorous chorus for the copper coinage of good king Umberto. Regardless of whom, with set face and stern, you still pursue the even tenor of your way along those noiseless streets, to an occasional chorus of 'Stali' or 'Premè,' till a sudden swirl of the whishing tide brings the gondola unexpectedly round with a jerk from the Canal della Celestia face to face with the wall of the Arsenal.

A crab-catcher on the bank will hold your boat (and his hat for a sou) as you alight by the door of the famous naval station. At the outer entrance of that sleepy old dock stands the veritable lion whose tale I desire to-day to unfold to you. A marble lion, of antique, not to say archaic, workmanship, he has stood there on guard for two hundred years, with three companions dozing by his side, to watch over the navy of the dead republic and the nascent kingdom of united Italy. But he is by no means by birth a stone of Venice; his origin points to far other days and other manners. As everybody knows, and as an elegant Latin inscription on his base in fact sets forth—I almost scorn to translate it in these latter days, when even ladies lisp to their babes in the purest Ciceronian—he was brought with his three companions from the Piræus in 1687 by the victorious fleet of Doge Francesco Morosini. One of the big beasts mounted guard over the harbour itself; his companion stood beside the Sacred Way that led from Piræus to the city of Athens. But what is oddest of all about this particular lion—the first to the left in front of the massive old fifteenth century gateway—is the fact that his body is covered irregularly with strange inscriptions, some of them running in a circle round his shoulders, and others sprawling at irregular distances along his lordly flanks and magnificent haunches.

And what is the language, ancient or modern, in which these casual and extremely serpentine inscriptions are couched? Ah, there's the rub. There comes the point which throws at once such a lurid glamour of romance and mystery about that grim archaic beast, once the foremost ornament of the harbour of the Piræus, and now the guardian of King Umberto's new-born navy. The letters, if letters indeed they be, are rude and weather-worn; time and rain have almost obliterated them; scarce a single form stands out clear and definite; only a general vague sense of something written now remains of what was once, no doubt, to somebody somewhere a legible and highly valuable inscription. But to modern science and modern archæology the lion's story was for many long years a dead *secret*. Every key was tried in vain. The rude marks on the stone obstinately displayed their native rudeness by refusing to answer any polite inquiries as to their origin and meaning: 'What's that to you?' they retorted mutely. They declined to come out as Egyptian hieroglyphics; they refrained from exhibiting themselves as Babylonian cuneiform; they wouldn't even permit themselves to be dexterously twisted, after the fashion of philologists—for we must all admit that in philology much can be done by ingenious twisting—into Accadian ideograms or Chinese metaphysics. Read forward or backward or upside down they were equally incorrigible. They listened not to the voice of the polyglot charmer, charmed he never so conjecturally and wisely. At last one day a wandering Scandinavian scholar passed that way—one Rafn of Copenhagen—and, casting a glance at the mysterious marks, thought he recognised some familiar touch about their curves and angles. He went to work at them with zeal and discretion, and, lo, in the end, it turned out to everybody's immense surprise that the writing on the lion—that Athenian lion, the glory of the Piræus, the brother beast of the guardian of the Sacred Way—was in good Norse runes of the eleventh century!

Now it is this that to my mind gives the lion of the Arsenal such a special and very peculiar interest among all the storied stones of Venice. That he should have come originally from Athens indeed is in itself nothing very remarkable; the noble Venetians of the days of the most serene Republic were such an unmitigated set of thieves and robbers that nothing artistic anywhere came amiss to them. All was fish to the net of the Doges. Since the days when that exemplary noble Roman Mummius



stripped Corinth of its marble statues, the flower of Greek art, and then informed the bargees whom he hired to carry his plunder to Rome that if they broke any by the way they must replace them themselves with others of equal value, there were never surely such desperate spoilers and robbers of churches as those pious Venetians. All Venice, in fact, is one vast museum of stolen property. A self-righteous inscription over the gateway of St. Mark's informs the visitor, with much show of conscious probity, that the four famous antique bronze horses above the portal, 'removed by the rapacity of the enemy to Paris' under Napoleon I., were again restored to their proper place by that incorruptible champion of strict international morality, the Emperor Francis. But that glorious team, a work of the sculptors of the Neronian age, had previously been stolen in the thirteenth century by the Doge Dandolo from Constantinople, whither they had been carried from Rome, for his own glorification, by Constantine the Great, who had filched them himself from the triumphal arch of Trajan, who in turn had borrowed them, as seems probable, from the similar monument of his predecessor Nero. Such are the humours of the world and the whirligigs of time. Indeed, if every man had his own again, one might almost say there would be no Venice. The column of St. Mark with its winged lion would go back to Syria; the square pillars by the Doge's Palace would return once more to St. Saba, at Ptolemais; the alabaster supports of the inner canopy would find their way back, men say, to Solomon's temple; and even the mouldering body of the Evangelist itself, which reposes beneath its pall of gold and jewels below the high altar, would have to migrate to the community from whom it was first filched, the Coptic Christians of Alexandria.

But apart from the common epic of conquest and robbery which every Venetian relic thus encloses in itself, as of ordinary custom, there is something exceptionally and specifically impressive, to my mind at least, in the marvel of this lion of the Arsenal door—a sculptured figure that thus brings together for a moment, in incongruous juxtaposition on the shores of the Adriatic, the highest culture of Periclean Athens and the rude barbarism of the Danish invaders. Surely such a singular combination as this—the names of Harold and Ulf and other fierce rovers of the stormy Baltic cut deep on a carved work of the pre-Phidian Greek period on the bays of the Ægean—may give us pause for a moment in our gondola on

the mud-banks of the Brenta, and cause us to wonder, as the poet wondered of the flies in amber, 'how the dickens they got there.'

Let us try to answer this curious question.

The lions of the Arsenal were originally carved, as the grain of the stone clearly indicates, from two solid blocks of the marble of Pentelicus. The place itself from which they came is not without interest in the history of their wanderings, for to the marble of Pentelicus, I verily believe, the world owes in no little degree the artistic development of the Athenian people. 'It was a gift of the gods to men,' says Mr. Andrew Lang, with poetic vagueness, speaking of the marvellous development of the Athenian intellect and the Athenian æsthetic faculties in the age immediately preceding the era of Pericles. Well, perhaps so; on that point we have no specific information; but, as far as art is concerned, at least, I think it was also, in great part, a gift of the neighbouring quarries of Pentelicus. It did not count for nothing in the history of their culture that just outside their city walls the Athenians had that mass of metamorphosed crystalline limestone, altered by the earth's internal heat into pure white marble. As Egypt based herself upon granite, and Babylon upon brick, so Athens based herself upon the Pentelican quarries. Now granite is not precisely what a man might call a plastic material. I doubt if even Phidias himself could have carved a satisfactory Zeus or Aphrodite from the red rock of Syene that gave us so many stark, stiff Pashts and Memnons. But with marble men may do almost anything they like, and it was on marble of Pentelicus that Athens raised all the countless glories of the Theseum and the Acropolis.

Some day or other, then, presumably about the fifth or sixth century before Christ, some nameless Athenian sculptor carved out of that stone this identical lion, which his countrymen placed at the gate of the Piræus to guard the harbour against the Spartan fleet and all other outlanders. For twenty-two centuries, more or less, those twin lions kept guard over Athens, one at the Piræus, one on the Sacred Way that led from the port to the City of the Violet Crown. All through the Middle Ages, indeed, the Piræus itself was known to the Italian traders who frequented it as the Porto Leone, the Lion's Harbour; and as such the Frankish merchants knew it almost to the beginning of the present century, when antiquarian zeal for Hellenic tradition revived once more the older name. But what changes did not the lion see



meanwhile! The fall of the Athenian Empire, the Spartan supremacy, the hegemony of Thebes, the Macedonian dominion, Philip and Alexander, the reigns of the Successors, the Achæan league, the Roman conquest, the empire of the Cæsars, the advent of new creeds, the Parthenon turned into a Christian church, the seat of civilisation transferred from Rome to a brand-new metropolis on the Byzantine Strait! And then, the long decline of the Empire, the growth of Islam, the inroads of the barbarian, the pressing danger from the Saracen and the Turk. It was in these later days that the romance of the runes was imposed upon the lion of the Piræus mouth, and that Harold Hardrada, who finally lost his life fighting against our own English Harold at Stamford Bridge, piloted his piratical Norse long-boats on another man's quarrel to the port of Athens.

And how strange was the fate that thus brought a Norwegian rover of the age of William the Conqueror into personal contact with Periclean Athens! Harold the Tall, son of Sigurd, nicknamed Hardrada—he of the hard rede, or the stern counsel—was a typical Norse viking of the Berserker order—a man after Carlyle's own heart, I should fancy. A soldier of fortune of the rollicking, buccaneering Danish mould, a Drake or Hawkins of the eleventh century, Harold went round the world in his hot youth in quest of adventure, seeking whom he might devour, killing impartially heathen or Christian, and for conscience' sake asking no questions. In the year of our Lord 1040 this doughty leader found himself in the Mediterranean on one of his usual marauding expeditions. Those were the days when the Scandinavian corsairs played on all seas the selfsame game played later round the southern shores of Europe by their Paynim successors, the Barbary pirates. In all the churches of Christendom the strange litany then went daily up to heaven from thousands and thousands of frightened lips, 'A furore Normannorum libera nos, Domine,' 'From all savage assaults of the Northmen, good Lord, deliver us.' Everywhere the Northern pirate was busily poking his obtrusive nose. A century earlier Rolf the Ganger had walked over Neustria, and turned the fairest provinces of the Frankish king into his dukedom of Normandy, the Northman's land. At that very moment in England itself the descendants of Swegen the Dane had superseded the old native West-Saxon line, and another Harold of the Danish stock was ruling over the citizens of London and Winchester. Before long the Norman was to lord it over Sicily, to

humble the pride of the Moor in Spain, and to wrest Apulia from the feeble grasp of the Byzantine empire. The Scandinavian then, in short, was bullying the world, as the filibustering Englishman bullies it now in Australasia and South Africa, in the Pacific Islands and the forests of New Guinea.

So Harold Hardrada, like some prototypical Stanley, or Drake, or Wakefield, was cruising about in search of adventure on his own account in the eastern seas. Just at that moment, as chance would have it, the Athenian people, ever in search of some new thing, had revolted from the sway of their liege lord, the Emperor Michael IV., at Constantinople, and the astute Byzantine, playing the familiar old imperial game of utilising the barbarian against insurgent subjects, bethought him of employing the Berserker chief to bring back the Athenians to their obedience to Cæsar. The runes on the lion of the Venetian Arsenal tell the story of what followed in their own simple piratical way. The tale is short, but, like all that the Northmen wrote, it is very pithy.

'Hakon, with Ulf, Asmund, and Orm, conquered this port,' says the brief inscription on the lion's left shoulder. 'By command of Harold the Tall they levied a contribution on the Greek people, on account of their revolt. Dalk has been detained in outlandish parts. Egil, with Ragnar, was dealing war in Roumania and Armenia.'

The sinuous lines on the left shoulder tell an equally simple and graphic story. 'Asmund engraved these runes,' it says, 'with the help of Asgeir, Thorleif, Thord, and Ivar, by command of Harold the Tall, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the Greeks.'

Could anything be more delightfully concise and natural? How we see the whole picture called up in vivid colours before our very eyes—the savage Norse seadogs, with their short, sharp swords, brought face to face by the irony of fate with the last degenerate descendants of the Athenian freemen; the battle in the port; the defeat of the Greeks; the levying of the Danegeld; the submission of the conquered. Then the easy-going pirates, good Philistine souls—ancestors doubtless of our British 'Arry—unconscious of the desecration of art they are so lightly committing, insist in the innocent pride of their hearts upon scrawling the record of their grand achievement on the shoulders of the antique lion himself, the immemorial guardian of the ancient Piræus. Fancy the speechless horror and futile remonstrances of



the scandalised Greeks, with the businesslike determination of Asmund and Thorleif to carve their names in very choice Norwegian on the sculptured stone, whether the Athenians would or whether they would not! The entire scene breathes fresh and lively before us. We can see the breathless alarm and horror of the art-loving Hellenes, contrasted with the bland and childlike persistence of the triumphant barbarian to do as he liked in a conquered country. If I were a great painter—say, for example, Mr. Alma Tadema—I would paint that episode in deathless colours; as I'm not, I'm glad at any rate that Asmund gained himself a 'cheap immortality' by painting it for us in good Scandinavian letters.

When the deed of vandalism was finally done, Harold the Tall sailed away from Piræus in due time, and two years later, after the wont of the barbarian, deposed his employer, the Emperor Michael V., from his *fainéant* throne, and (having an eye for the ladies) set up in his place Zoe and Theodora as joint empresses of the Eastern Empire. It was not till twenty-six years afterwards that the tough old pirate fell at last at Stamford Bridge, a few weeks before the battle of Hastings, fighting hard against Harold of England in favour of his traitor brother Tostig. But men might come and men might go; the disfigured lion, with the usual immortality of sculptured stone, still kept its place by the Lion's Port, with the runes that Asmund, Thord, and Thorleif had carved so well scored deep for ever upon its dishonoured shoulders.

Meanwhile, strange things were happening in the world. On the tidal sandbanks and mudbanks of the Adriatic, where the silt of Po, Adige, and Brenta had been washed by the waves into a long narrow barrier, enclosing a shallow and interrupted lagoon, with its attendant archipelago of low alluvial islands, this city of Venice, in a deserted palace on whose Grand Canal I am this moment inditing this present article, had already risen a few hundred years earlier, by slow and tentative steps, to local sovereignty. When Attila the Hun invaded Italy, and wiped out Aquileia, Padua, and Altinum, the terrified people of the neighbouring coast fled in panic from the barbarian who boasted that where his horse had once set its hoof no blade of grass grew afterwards. But they fled where no horse could ever tread or has ever trodden; and they founded that city, whose bride is the sea, whose streets are streams, and whose carriages are gondolas. Here, in

later times, at the open gate between the Frankish and Byzantine empires, the most serene Republic slowly grew great and prospered exceedingly. Circumstances early brought the inhabitants of the mudbanks into close connection with the Piræus and the Lion. From the very first, indeed, the Venetians lived under the most exalted protection of the Byzantine empire; and though they early made themselves independent, in fact, of that phantom control, they continued still to trade with the Levant and to keep on the very best of terms with their old masters, till the time came when they conquered them in turn, and 'held the gorgeous East in fee' for so many centuries of commercial splendour.

Even after blind Doge Dandolo conquered Constantinople, however, and his successors annexed the Morea and a large part of continental Greece, the lion of the Piræus still remained undisturbed on its ancient pedestal. The Turk had now appeared upon the scene and completed the downfall of the tottering empire; but still the lion, with its runic scars, watched on unmolested by the deserted harbour. At last, in 1687, while Newton at Cambridge was publishing his 'Principia,' and King James at Oxford was carefully preparing his own downfall by expelling the fellows of Magdalen from their comfortable cloisters, far away in the gorgeous East Doge Francesco Morosini, fighting those ancestral enemies of his race, the Turks, for the temporary lordship over that shuttlecock of Levantine strategy, the Morea, successfully defeated the Moslem fleets, and made the Peloponnesus once more for a time a Venetian possession. Coming then to the Piræus with his victorious ships, the enterprising Doge, like a true Venetian, with the honour of St. Mark nearest his heart, kept his eyes open for what treasures of art he could lay his hands upon most conveniently and convey to Venice. Thus employed, his inquiring glance fell naturally on the twin lions of the Piræus and the Sacred Way. The Doge, being human, immediately appropriated those glories of the past, and sent them off by sea to Venice. There they were set up by the gate of the arsenal, where whoso lists may see them to-day, and spell out the inscription legibly for himself, if he happens to be acquainted with the polite language of the eleventh century Scandinavian corsairs.

To me, no story that ever was told points more plainly to the unity and continuity of history than this curious story of the lion of the Arsenal. It has such a weird touch of mystery and uncanniness about it. That in the midst of Venice, mediæval



Venice, with its Byzantine churches and its Gothic palaces, its Italian mosaics and its Lombard sculptures, one should suddenly come across a piece of genuine Athenian statuary, scratched over with Norse runes by fierce marauders from the banks of the Baltic, is in itself to my mind little short of a living miracle. That the runes should have been deciphered at all at last, and should have yielded up to later man the story of their origin, while it detracts a trifle perhaps from the sense of mystery, adds surely to the romantic picturesqueness of the story. If you have never yet visited the lion of the Arsenal, visit it now, next time you are in Venice, for its own sake; if you have seen it already, but only knew in part its strange history, visit it afresh by this new light, and look upon its shoulders with the eye of faith for those very words carved deep into its weather-worn Pentelican marble by the rough graving tools of the Scandinavian pirate.

*THE LAST OF THE CALVERTS.*

I REMEMBER hearing at first hand a characteristic story of the famous Mrs. Fletcher of Lancrigg, whose beautiful face the readers of her autobiography will remember as immortalised at the age of eighty by the elder Richmond.

She had been very ill, but was recovering, when she heard that Mazzini was in London; and against the counsel of her friends, who feared the journey and the excitement for her, she determined to go up to London and to be present at a public breakfast given in his honour. 'But you have no bonnet; you cannot appear in that hood!' they urged. 'I will have a bonnet for the occasion,' was her rejoinder; and straightway word was despatched to a milliner in London to have a bonnet, 'suitable for an old lady of eighty,' made and forwarded to Euston Station to meet her on arrival by the night train. The bonnet was made and despatched, and the brave old lady, whose heart never grew old, travelled up to town to find her bonnet in waiting. 'And,' said Mrs. Fletcher, 'what do you think, my dear, I found when I opened the bonnet-box; a bright yellow satin bonnet with a yellow lancer's plume in it! I was determined not to miss Mazzini, so I put it on, never looked in the glass, went to the breakfast, and forgot all about my bonnet for the time being; but after breakfast I drove straight to the milliner's and said, I dare say a little angrily, "How could you send me such a thing as this? I asked for a bonnet for an old lady of eighty!" "Madam," replied the milliner, "we have no old ladies of eighty in London."' "

The moral of the story is plainly this, that it is not in the rush and crush of town that such a beautiful old age as Mrs. Fletcher's was can be found, but in the quiet of just such a house as she made for herself at our English Lakes.

It is thanks to the same beneficent quietude of hill and vale, that until a few weeks ago there were still living in the Keswick and Ambleside valleys two ladies whose lives linked us to the days of the historic Lake school of poets and philosophers.

Black February of 1890 will be remembered by many as the month that broke those links. Those who cared to speak face to face with hearts that had known and honoured the family circles



at Greta Hall and Rydal Mount henceforth are debarred the privilege.

Mrs. Joshua Stanger, of Fieldside, Keswick, and Mrs. Harrison, of Green Bank, or Scale How, Ambleside, were the last of their generation.

And if the former, in actual mental activity and intellectual sympathy with the Lake poets of old, was the more remarkable, there were in both of them, to the end, wonderful vitality, clear memory, and that kind of genial response to the sympathies for the times that are gone, that made them in their several ways most interesting repositories of a memorable past. They each of them felt that to them, as the last survivors in the locality who had been admitted to the arcana of the Greta Hall and Rydal Mount history, a younger generation might naturally turn for reminiscences, and they neither of them allowed those recollections to grow dim.

They had been schoolfellows in the olden times together, and whether under Miss Fletcher or Miss Dowling, of Bellevue, the little Mary Calvert and the elder Dorothy Wordsworth had learnt lessons of geniality and benevolence I know not, but this I know, that for the past half-century and more the towns of Keswick and Ambleside have felt that no public work could go forward for the good of the people that did not at once commend itself to these ladies and obtain their aid; while in them the deserving poor knew ever would be found a very present help in time of trouble.

It was a day of exceptional beauty, when Mrs. Stanger lay breathing painlessly to sleep in that beautiful home, high-lifted above her native valley, to which she had entered in the year that her old friend Robert Southey died.

Helvellyn was absolutely snowless and shadowless, one long ridge of tawny yellow and sunshine; the Lonscale Fell was clad in purple puce of heather waking into life; the larches on Latrigg—her father's Latrigg—were visibly turning into the amber glow that heralds the spring; snowdrops and crocuses and aconite were bright upon the terrace beds; tits and finches were busy in the garden grounds; rooks cawed from the sycamores; a thrush sang loud, and down below in its wooded gorge the Greta sounded cheerily towards 'the Forge.' But Mrs. Stanger lay dying.

And from the 'Druid Circle' above her house, as far as one could see, whether one looked southward by the Vale of St. John's, or north and west by wild Blencathra's steeps and the spring of

Thorold the Dane, or gazed out west over the wide expanse of the Keswick Valley, one felt that not 'glad' but 'sad' 'were the vales and every cottage hearth'—with a sadness no light on laughing Derwentwater could disavow, no happy cockcrow in the distant farms or busy murmur of the little town below could charm away. The friend of the poor was passing from the earth.

Just now we spoke of the Greta sounding towards 'the Forge.' That Forge, until the 'Roundhead' cavaliers laid it in ashes, was one of the principal 'blomaries' or smelting furnaces for copper ore in the Keswick Vale.

And we are not a little indebted to its existence. Had there been no Forge set up there in the mining times of great Elizabeth, we should have had no family of Calverts to bless the Vale; no little Mary Calvert whose memory we think of fondly as we write.

For in 1565, on the application of Thomas Thurland, and one Daniel Hechstetter, a German, the Queen granted a warrant by which three hundred Almain or German miners should be brought over into Cumberland to work the mines in the Lake district. The analysts of that date were not over skilful; they assured the Queen that the black mica schist Frobisher brought from the Arctic regions was rich in gold, and here in the Keswick Vale they were probably not much more correct in asserting that there was more gold and silver than copper and lead in the stuff that was smelted at 'the Forge.' They did assert it, with the result that the Queen claimed the mines in the valley as hers, against the Earl of Northumberland, and won her suit; and we still speak of the Goldscope mine of Newlands, though precious little gold has ever been scooped therefrom. This by the way. Meanwhile, the much ill-treated and little welcomed colony<sup>1</sup> of German and Dutch miners, Hechstetters, Pughbargers, Clockers, Mosers, Tiffers, Beyrnparkers, Sanningers, Hedglers, Norspalmer, Torvers, Sinogles, Cayruses, and the rest, settled down by the River Greta and hewed away the Hammer Hole above 'the Forge' for the mill-race, and occupied the banks for a smelting station (perhaps pre-occupied by the Romans and Vikings aforetime)—right away from 'the Forge' to the present Calvert Bridge.

Amongst 'the rest' spoken of above came Stangers, Ritselers,

<sup>1</sup> *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Archaeological Society*, vol. vi., Pt. II., p. 344. 'The Colony of German miners at Keswick,' by J. Fisher Crosthwaite, F.S.A.



and Calverts. The former German certainly; I have doubts about the nationality of the latter, for at Whitby and elsewhere in Yorkshire the name appears unassociated with German mining operations.

The old Crosthwaite registers of 1567 and onwards show us that these Ritselers became Rystlers, Raysells, Raysings, Raisleys, in a very swift change. The Cumbrian could not in parlance cope with 'Ritseler,' and could easily pronounce the word 'Raisley.'

At the end of last century we find that Mr. William Calvert, a steward of the Duke of Norfolk, is resident at the old farmhouse beneath Latrigg, on the banks of the Greta, Windybrow—Greta Bank of to-day. He had held the post of ensign in the Duke of Norfolk's Regiment, a militia regiment, in which the Duke threw up his commission because the Government called attention to certain toasts at a military dinner. It is possible that Calvert after that laid his sword and epaulettes aside and devoted himself heart and soul to agriculture. At any rate, he is at Keswick, and has taken to experimental farming on his own account. His younger brother, Raisley, at this period seems to have stayed sometimes at Penrith, sometimes at Windybrow with him.

It is more than probable that friendship with the Wordsworth family had been contracted in the former generation. The poet's father, as Lord Lonsdale's agent, would surely often come across old Mr. Raisley Calvert, the agent of the Duke of Norfolk and steward of his property at Greystoke. Be that as it may, we find Wordsworth in the Calverts' company as fellow traveller in the Isle of Wight and over Salisbury Plain in 1793. Young Raisley has left Cambridge, is in a decline, and on the look-out for milder air, and has already found in Wordsworth a friend after his own heart.

In the next year, 1794, we find Wordsworth at the farmhouse of Windybrow, anxiously writing to his friend Mathews to see if there is any chance of his obtaining work in connection with a London newspaper. He has resolved not to become a clergyman, he has neither money nor will to become an attorney, and the young poet, with all the burning desire to give his whole soul to the service of man as a poet, is at his wits' end to know how to earn sufficient bread for himself and his 'dear, dear sister's' simple needs, to enable him to pursue the vocation which he feels Heaven has designed for him.

The young man, Raisley Calvert, with whom Wordsworth had had but little connection before, but whom now he dared to call his friend, was at Windybrow, and evidently worsening. If only he can go to the south, and get a whiff of Lisbon air and bask in Lisbon sunshine, surely he feels strength may be re-born and his days may be lengthened! Will Wordsworth accompany him?

One of the most memorable letters in Wordsworth's handwriting it has been my privilege to see, sets forth to his (Raisley's) elder brother, William, the ensign in the militia, then in quarters at Newcastle, the project of this journey to the south.

He writes from Keswick on October 1, 1794, and speaks of Raisley's illness. He asks William Calvert 'whether it will not raise him in his own estimation' if he shall see his way to make such an allowance as would permit him—Wordsworth—to accompany young Raisley, the invalid, to Portugal; and then in very manly and courteous language he goes on to tell him that, in event of Raisley's decease, Raisley has so arranged his money matters as to bequeath him 600*l.*, and he trusts that neither the leaver of the legacy nor the interested recipient of it will fall in William Calvert's estimation by reason of the fact which he thinks it only right to make thus known to him. Nay, he makes it known at Raisley's request, 'who, reflecting that his return from the projected journey to Lisbon is uncertain, had drawn out his will, which he intends to get executed in London.'

Wordsworth, in the month following, writes to Mathews from Keswick under date November 7, 1794: 'My friend has every symptom of a confirmed consumption, and I cannot think of quitting him in his present debilitated state.' It is quite plain that the project of the trip to the south was given up, and we find Wordsworth back again in the spring of 1795, still tenderly nursing the young Raisley. He writes on January 5 from Mrs. Sowerby's lodgings, at the sign of the 'Robin Hood' at Penrith: 'I have been here for some time: I am still much engaged with my sick friend; and sorry am I to add that he worsens daily—he is barely alive.'

When Raisley Calvert's will was opened, it was found he had bequeathed 900*l.*, not 600*l.* as promised, to the friend of his life's eventide—the friend who he believed would be a 'morning star' of song for the days that were to be.



For the next eight years the poet and his sister lived secured from want, till such time as Lord Lowther repaid to his father's estate the 8,500*l.* borrowed by the old Lord Lonsdale years before. And, in a letter to Mrs. Stanger's husband in 1842, Wordsworth says: 'It may be satisfactory to your wife for me to declare that my friend's bequest enabled me to devote myself to literary pursuits independent of any necessity to seek out pecuniary emolument, so that my talents, such as they might be, were free to take their natural course.'

I had often wondered what it was that attracted the death-stricken young Raisley Calvert to the serious-minded, solemn-natured elder man whom he seems to have chosen as companion for the last few years, or months rather, of his life. That wonder ceased when I read in Raisley's strongish, boldish hand, a letter to his brother William, from Cambridge, giving him his reason for refusing to remain at Cambridge longer than for the first few weeks of his first term, and setting forth his determination to pass over to the Continent, and there educate himself by travel, rather than waste his money and his time in the idle dissipation and swagger of dress that passed for education in his day at the great University.

He was not only disgusted at the sham and the show, but he had also gauged his own powers. A degree worth the name was not, he thought, attainable with such proficiency as was his in certain lines of study. He would ask for a draft to pay his tailor's bill and his tutor's fee, and would shake the dust of Cambridge from off his feet for ever, and that speedily.

I may be wrong, but I fancied I saw beneath that young lad's rugged, forcible handwriting a feeling that the world men should strive to live in was reality, sincerity, simplicity. I suspect he recognised, as those foredoomed to early death seem able to recognise, by a wisdom that cometh from above, that life worth the name was a life of usefulness to one's fellows. He found in Wordsworth the serious earnestness he believed in, and, not being himself a poet, he could still see how true poesy, and tender thought, and earnest endeavour in fields of philosophic musing might help his time; and so he determined to make it possible for Wordsworth to realise his aim. 'The act' of Raisley's benefaction, wrote Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont in 1805, 'was due entirely from a confidence on his part that I had powers and attainments which might be of use to mankind.' Had it not been

for that act, England might never have known her Wordsworth, for truly sang the poet with heartfelt gratitude :

Calvert ! it must not be unheard by them  
 Who may respect my name, that I to thee  
 Owed many years of early liberty.  
 This care was thine when sickness did condemn  
 Thy youth to hopeless wasting, root and stem,  
 That I, if frugal and severe, might stray  
 Where'er I liked, and finally array  
 My temples with the Muses' diadem.

William Calvert must have married, soon after his brother Raisley's death, a Miss Mitchinson, of an honoured and well-known Cumbrian family, and we find him rebuilding the old farmhouse high up above the sounding river, in sight of the Forge at which his Elizabethan ancestor may have laboured with honour and profit. Already he is the good genius of the whole place—fast friend with Coleridge, lately domiciled at Greta Hall, and determined to turn the dreamy philosopher into a practical chemist.

In 1801 Coleridge writes to Humphry (afterwards Sir Humphry) Davy for instructions as to the fitting up of a chemical laboratory for Calvert.

In the same year we read in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal that Wordsworth and his sister go over to Calvert's ; and Calvert no doubt did his best to persuade them to take up their abode in perpetuity with him and study electrical forces and hydraulics. Wordsworth cared for chemistry, a less passionate pursuit than poetry, and was doubtless not a little attracted to Windybrow, that happy ' Castle of Indolence,' where, with Calvert and the ' noticeable man with large grey eyes,' he might ' banish listlessness and irksome care ' by mechanical devices and toys, for certes Calvert ' had inventions rare.' Amongst them were a water-clock and an instrument for measuring the height of mountains by triangulation. ' Whether Wordsworth come or no,' said Coleridge, ' Calvert and I have determined to begin and go on. Calvert is a man of sense and some originality, and is, besides, what is well called a handy man.'

No sooner had Southey come to Greta Hall, as he did in 1803, than we find him friends with Calvert ; and interesting it is to trace, as one may through Southey's life and letters, how on any great political emergency the friends are closeted to discuss the affairs of the nation. Now Calvert will come down to Greta Hall to crack a bottle with Southey over some unexpected bit of good



news from the Peninsula ; now Southey will go up to Windybrow to meet Mr. Curwen and Lord Lonsdale to arrange the terms of an address from the electors of Cumberland, or to spar with James Brougham over questions of Whig impudence and Tory morality. But I think one gets the best picture of Calvert from Shelley.

Shelley, without a penny in his pocket and plenty of pride in his heart, had accepted an invitation to Greystoke Park, December 1, 1811. He had been at Mr. Dare's house, Chesnut Hill, for about a fortnight, having removed thither from Mr. D. Crossthaite's, of Town Head. As yet he knew nobody in the district ; Southey had not called, nor Mr. Calvert, though I expect that if only Calvert had heard of those terrible goings on and the will-o'-the-wisp dances with thistle-tubes and hydrogen gas that took place in Mr. Dare's garden after dark, he would have already claimed the young poet for his chemic brotherhood at Windybrow. But Calvert had been seen ; his 'particular look' had struck 'Harriet' Shelley when they met him in the mountains. And now, among the Duke of Norfolk's guests at Greystoke, this same Calvert made an indelible impression. 'He knows everything that relates to my family and to myself—my expulsion from Oxford, the opinions that caused it, are no secrets to him,' writes Shelley to Miss Hitchener on December 26, 1811. 'He is an elderly man, and the expression of his face, whenever I held the arguments, which I do everywhere, was such as I shall not readily forget. I shall have more to tell of him.'

Shelley soon had more to tell of him, it was a tale of benevolence. 'The rent of our cottage was two guineas and a half a week, with linen provided ; he has made the proprietor lower it to one guinea, and has lent us linen himself.'

Calvert not only showed him kindness, but, acting on the Duke of Norfolk's hint, got others in the neighbourhood to call on the runaway couple, who played like kittens round the garden plots of Chesnut Hill by day, and made hydrogen gas in retorts on the lawn at night.

He did more, he invited Shelley to Windybrow, and there introduced him to Robert Southey. 'We first,' writes Shelley, 'met Southey at his house.'

We must take leave of Shelley and think of Mr. Calvert, now busy with his chemicals, now with politics, and interested beyond other matters in experimental farming. There was a famine in the land. It behoved every good man and true to grow corn for

the people, and, availing himself for a very public-spirited purpose, of the 'Commons Enclosure Act,' he obtained the right to enclose Lathrigg Common, and, in 1814, ran a plough over its barren top and strove, though unavailingly, to reap a harvest from the lofty burial-place of Briton and Norseman of old time.

The corn ripened slowly, growing as it did at the height of 1,200 feet above the sea, and ere it could be harvested winter rains set in.

But the generations since that time, to the memorable 'Right of Way' case of our day, have blessed Calvert for the good and easy path he made to the marvellous panorama as seen from the ridge of Lathar the Dane; and generations yet unborn who travel the same road may think of the benevolence which prompted the Lathrigg tiller's deed, and may mourn for the loss of fortune that that experiment and others of an agricultural kind, undertaken in the name of science and the public good, caused the worthy man.

Of Mrs. Calvert one hears little; but she, too, had a heart for her neighbours' weal. The most amusing of all Southey's 'Cat' letters to Grosvenor Bedford describes the advent to Greta Hall of 'The Zombi,' whose sudden screams from Wilsey's cellar in the early morning so terrified the household that it obliged Southey to inquire of his friend, who 'knew more of cat nature than had ever been attained by the most profound naturalist,' whether Zombi had seen the devil, or was he making love to himself, or was he engaged in single combat with himself, or was he attempting to raise the devil by invocation, or had he heard him—Southey—sing, and was he attempting vainly to imitate him.

'Othello' had died at Greta Hall. Since that lamented event the house was cat-less, 'till on Saturday, March 24, 1821, Mrs. Calvert, knowing how grievously we were annoyed by rats, offered me what she described as a fine full-grown black cat, who was moreover a Tom. She gave him an excellent character in all points but one, which was that he was a most expert pigeon-catcher; and as they had a pigeon-house, this propensity rendered it necessary to pass sentence upon him either of transportation or of death. 'Moved,' continues Southey in his solemnest strain, 'by compassion (his colour and his Tomship also being taken into consideration), I consented to give him an asylum, and on the evening of that day here he came in a sack. . . .'

At the unanimous desire of the children, I took upon myself the charge of providing him with a name, for it is not proper that



a cat should remain without one. Taking into consideration his complexion, as well as his sex, my first thought was to call him Henrique Diaz, a name which poor Koster would have approved, had he been living to have heard it; but it presently occurred to me that 'the Zombi'—the title of the chief of the Palmares negroes—would be an appellation equally appropriate and more dignified. 'The Zombi,' therefore, he was named.'

Mrs. Calvert was a clever housewife, and as she was blessed with an ingenious husband, whose motto was 'never do to-day what can be put off till to-morrow,' one can guess what comfort, in matters domestic, she found in intercourse with the methodical go-by-clock-work household at Greta Hall.

But the ties that bound the Greta houses in closest alliance were neither politics, nor chemistry, nor cats—they were the young children. The Greta Hall children and the Windybrowites were inseparable; and what a remarkable company they were. Edith Southey, with her lithe figure, her round rosy face, and her fair hair; Isabel, the fiery; Kate, the dark-eyed and garrulous; Bertha, the brave and the bluff; Sara Coleridge, with her delicate pale beauty and her marvellous eyes; and Dora Wordsworth, from over the Raise—for she often came for a visit—Dora with her swift impetuous movements, her flashing eye and her heavy yellow locks; and last, but not least noticeable, the grey-eyed, merry little only daughter of Greta Bank, Mary Calvert.

While the boys were quaint Job or Hartley Coleridge, the thinker; plumpy Derwent, the brother, with his solemn lisp; Herbert Southey, the adorable, too soon to pass away; and then the young Calverts—John, and Raisley, and William.

Of these latter, alas! with his birth in one must have been born the seeds of that same fatal disorder that had carried off his uncle Raisley Calvert. But what a fine nature had been thus born to languish and pass away in the prime of manhood we may gather from Sterling's letter to Charles Barton, dated Funchal, Madeira, March 3rd, 1838, as quoted in Carlyle's life of Sterling: 'I have now come to live with a friend, a Dr. Calvert, in a small house of our own. He is about my age, an Oriel man, and a very superior person.'

'Among the English,' says Carlyle, 'in pursuit of health, or in flight from fatal disease, that winter, was this Dr. Calvert; about Sterling's age, and in a deeper stage of ailment, this not being his first visit to Madeira, he, warmly joining himself to Sterling, as

we have seen, was warmly received by him ; companionship in incurable malady, a touching bond of union, was by no means purely or chiefly a companionship in misery in their case. The sunniest, inextinguishable cheerfulness shone, through all manner of clouds, in both. Calvert had been a travelling physician in some family of rank (the Spencers and the Falklands), who had rewarded him with a pension, shielding his own ill-health from one sad evil. Being hopelessly gone in pulmonary disorder, he now moved about among friendly climates and places, seeking what alleviation there might be ; often spending his summer in the house of a sister' (her of whom we are writing), 'in the environs of London ; an insatiable rider on his little brown pony ; always, wherever you might meet him, one of the cheeriest of men. He had plenty of speculation too, clear glances of all kinds into religious, social, moral concerns ; and pleasantly incited Sterling's outpourings on such subjects. He could report of fashionable persons and manners in a fine human Cumberland manner ; loved art, a great collector of drawings ; he had endless help and ingenuity' (we know where that came from) ; 'and was in short every way a very human, loveable, good and nimble man. The laughing blue eyes of him, the clear cheery soul of him, still redolent of the fresh northern breezes and transparent mountain stream.' (Alas ! that the Greta should know transparency no more !) 'With this Calvert, Sterling formed a natural intimacy ; and they were to each other a great possession, mutually enlivening many a dark day during the next three years.'

In 1840 the sick friends were at Falmouth ; Sterling himself tells us from thence of Calvert, his companion down the way to death : 'Calvert is better than he lately was. He shoots little birds, and dissects and stuffs them ; while I carry a hammer, and break flints and slates to look for diamonds and rubies inside.'

Dr. Calvert, the blue-eyed breezy man who found such commonalty of soul with Sterling, died, as the tablet in the old church of St. Kentigern's, Crosthwaite, tells us, at Falmouth, in January of 1842. Writing to Hare, Sterling says of him : 'I have lost Calvert ; the man with whom, of all others, I have been during late years the most intimate. Simplicity, benevolence, practical good sense, and moral earnestness were his great unfailing characteristics ; and no man, I believe, ever possessed them more entirely.'

These words are worth quoting ; we find in them evidence of the same serious earnestness and transparent simplicity in this



later death-stricken Calvert which had been part of his uncle Raisley's possession of soul. The old Quaker stock is still in him; with the desire that was at bottom of Raisley's heart when he made it possible for Wordsworth to help his age; the desire which was, as Carlyle tells us, at the root of Sterling's being, to know 'by what means is a noble life still possible for us here.'

What Sterling found to be the characteristic of John Calvert, till 1842, all those who have known John Calvert's sister, Mrs. Stanger, of Fieldside, till 1890, have found to be hers also. If one wanted words to paint the character of that venerable friend whose loss we now deplore, one would surely say that 'simplicity, benevolence, practical good sense, and moral earnestness' were her unailing characteristics also.

To return to that little happy child community that blessed the Keswick Valley in the first decade of this century.

We must remember that the same year that the guns were heard roaring off the Isle of Man, and Southey and the apothecary and the eighteen sworn men were like to have stood to arms in the Keswick market-place, for fear of the French—if only the poet had not been too sorely busy in his newly plastered library, correcting the proofs of 'Madoc'—there was born, as the April night faded into May, a little daughter into the home of Greta Hall. 'I had a daughter, Edith, hatched last night, for she came into the world with not much more preparation than a chicken, and no more beauty than a young dodo,' wrote Robert Southey to Miss Barker on March 1, 1804. And thus Sara Coleridge, sixteen months the senior, for she was born at Greta Hall, December 22, 1802, had a baby cousin for her playmate. In the following August, the two Keswick infants were to be blessed with a tiny friend, from over the Raise, by the birth of Dora Wordsworth, which took place on August 16th.

On the 11th of October of the same year, at Greta Bank or Windybrow, the baby cousins, Edith Southey and Sara Coleridge, and the tiny Dora, had given to them another companion and friend for life by the birth of Mary Calvert.

If we wish to know more about this little lady we must go to Sara Coleridge's journal, and there we shall read how 'the last event' of Sara's earlier childhood 'which abided with her' was a visit to the seaside at Allonby, when she was nine years old, with Mrs. Calvert and the Windybrow bairns.

‘Of the party beside John and Raisley Calvert, and Mary, their sister, were Tom and William Maude, the sons of Mrs. Calvert’s sister. We used to gallop up and down the wide sands on two little ponies. Mary and I sometimes quarrelled with the boys. I remember Raisley and the rest bursting angrily into our bed-room and flinging a pebble at Mary, enraged at our having dared to put crumbs into their porridge; not content with which inroad and onslaught, they put mustard into ours next morning, the sun having gone down upon their boyish wrath without quenching it. One of them said it was all that little vixen, Sara Coleridge; Mary was quiet enough by herself.’

‘In those early days we used to spend much of our summer time in trees, greatly to the horror of some of our summer visitors’—and here the autobiography of Sara Coleridge’s childhood abruptly ceases.

Yet until February of this present year the story from living lips of that childhood ceased not.

The little climber of the trees at Greta Hall had here on earth a living testimony in the person of one who was as fond of arboreal gymnastics as she was, as fearless as herself, or, to use Mrs. Stanger’s own words, ‘as great a tom-boy as any of them.’

It was my privilege to see her often latterly—this little playmate of Sara Coleridge and Edith Southey and Dora Wordsworth—and to talk much of those old times, and to feel as one talked her love of the days of old and loyalty to the Southey and Coleridge family grow into one’s very being. On this matter I almost received her heart into my own.

There she sat in her easy chair, the grey eyes of her laughing with all the fun of those days of romp and frolic at Greta Hall, or filled with tears at the thoughts, almost too deep for tears, that a memory from out of the storehouse of the past would bring. What a storehouse truly it was! Not only could Mrs. Joshua Stanger keep in mind from day to day the thousand interests of the time, the large questions of the nation, or the little questions of her native place—she not only knew, as we say in Cumberland, ‘aw that was stirrin’,’ the last great speech in the House of Commons, the last book of worth published—but in her mind she had never let any of the long years go to sleep. She spoke of events in the fifties, as in the tens and twenties, and one felt that a truly human heart had beaten beneath the lifelong drama that had been hers from beginning to end.



‘The first thing I can distinctly remember,’ she used to say, was my christening in the old Church. For some reason unknown to me—perhaps because of the Quaker blood in the family—I was not christened till I was three years old, and brother Raisley and I were taken to Crosthwaite Church together. I distinctly remember thinking a great deal of the blue frock I wore on that occasion.’ This was, as the Baptismal Register testifies, on the last day of 1806. That this baptism was considered a memorable event in the eyes of the person who made the entry is clear from the fact that he gives a whole page of parchment to it. It gives us the name of the father and the maiden name of the mother of the two children thus baptised, tells us the dates of birth of Raisley and Mary, and is interesting as showing that at this early time the old name of their house, ‘Windybrow,’ had given way to the more modern name of ‘Greta Bank.’

The next thing she remembered clearly was Shelley’s visit to Keswick. I once repeated the question—

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain?  
And did he speak to you?  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems and new!

‘Yes, to be sure, dear sir, I did see Shelley plain, and I remember his eyes and his hair, and how troubled he was because, when he came to unfold the packet, the workbox he had brought for Mr. Calvert’s little girl, as he used to call me, was not to be found. But I think I remember best the sort of look that came upon my father’s and upon Southey’s face when he talked, and how I and my brothers were hurried out of the room, lest we should hear the conversation.’

The next memorable day was the occasion of Southey’s return home in November of 1813 as Poet Laureate. ‘I remember the excitement we were all in at the Hall, waiting for his return, and next day we had a great tea-party and made a wreath of ever-green, and Edith Southey and I put it upon his head and crowned him.’

As late as last Easter Day, 1889, the faithful hands that helped to weave the Laureate’s crown sent down a laurel-wreath to lay upon his tomb.

‘Dear sir,’ she would say, ‘from the days when it was part of my evening task to read aloud Wordsworth’s poems to my father, I honoured him; but I think I never quite got over my childish

fear of Wordsworth. I loved Southey; there never breathed a gentler, kinder-hearted man!’

It was, I suspect, the want of twinkle and fun in Wordsworth that lay like a weight upon that merriest of young girls. For Mrs. Stanger was full of fun, radiant and sparkling with wit to the last. If in her younger days her swift repartee had made her sometimes seem brusque, in her mellow old age the swift, keen sense of the ridiculous served her in good stead, and gave a piquancy and a freshness to her words that made one feel as though in the presence of perpetual youth.

Just behind her, where she sat in her ruby-coloured chair, hung the portrait of brother John, Sterling’s friend—his large clear eyes, his delicate mouth, the seriousness of his open face, showing above the ample stock of neckcloth that he wore; on her left, a more notable pencil drawing of Wordsworth by Nash.<sup>1</sup> She would point at it and say, ‘I think that is the best portrait of Wordsworth I have seen.’ The poet is seated, leaning his solemn, rather heavy and large-featured face upon his right hand; his left hand is, like Napoleon’s, in his waistcoat.

‘That was his favourite attitude when he was reciting his poems; and, because he would always then place his hand into his flannel vest, the flannel vest tapes would give way, and as a little girl, scarce able to reach so high, it was my duty to replace those tapes when he stayed at Windybrow. I remember now the kind of terror with which my poor little trembling fingers stitched away after breakfast to repair the disaster wrought by that trick of the poet’s hand.

It was doubtless a relic of that alarm of the old vest-tape sewing days that had kept so clear in her mind the impressions of the difference in matters of dress between the two poets. ‘Wordsworth,’ she used to say, ‘would fling his cloak and things round him as if he didn’t care whether they fitted him or not, and hardly ever seemed to give a thought to his dress; but Southey was prim and spruce and neat from head to toe—cravat spotless, and coat, however old, neatly fitting and carefully brushed: a man of order every inch of him.’

Once she most amusingly, but quite good-naturedly, spoke of the different way in which the Greta Hall and Rydal Mount breakfast was got through. Here the poet talked and was waited on hand and foot as a matter of course. The toast was spread,

<sup>1</sup> Nash died January 1821. Wordsworth was born 1770. The portrait is of a man nearer fifty than forty years old.



the cream was poured into the tea, the notebook was near, and the women, with love and devotion unparalleled, hovered as it were in continual attendance—of their own wants oblivious. There no one seemed to think about the Bard; he seemed to think about all—the aunt, the children, the very tabbies. Was the milk as they liked it, was the porridge right? And then Mrs. Southey, she had no appetite, she must be coaxed—and such coaxing, it was as pretty as a play—such happy, lover-like ways. This little piece of bread thus toasted, that cup of tea so sugared. But Southey? Oh let them send him a cup of tea up to the great study presently—never mind for him, so that the mother and the aunts and the bairns were breakfasted.

Enthusiastically would Mrs. Stanger speak of Dorothy and Mrs. Wordsworth, and always with deepest reverence of Wordsworth's poems; but the awe of the vest-tape days was heavy upon her. I suspect as a child she would no more have jumped upon Wordsworth's knees than on the King's. But on the genial knees of Southey of course she had clambered. Southey's knees were the common property of all the children of Greta Bank or Greta Hall; and what a length of knee it was!

'Dear sir,' Mrs. Stanger would say with a smile, 'I remember as a little girl thinking that Southey when he rose from the table was never going to finish getting up.'

Those dark eyes and the heavy curls of hair upon the Poet's brow she too remembered, and spoke of the high voice of the man, and of the quaint way in which, when he was going to read a poem or when he addressed a friend that he met, he would look up, as a short-sighted man looks up beneath his eye-glasses; not that Southey's eyes were ever dim—it was just a trick, and as Mrs. Stanger spoke of it I recalled that I had noticed it in his son Cuthbert.

The joyous days of the bluebell gathering by the Greta; of the primrosing at Armathwaite and Mirehouse; of the 'daffy' getting on Lord's Isle; and the picnics in Lord William Gordon's woods—of these too would she speak. Southey was always the leader of the picnic band. One of the happiest times on which I remember seeing her, if one might judge by her face, was just such a picnic and water-party as she had enjoyed when a child, on the bank of Derwentwater five years ago, when the little Mary Calvert, now an aged lady of eighty summers, in the sunny quiet of a summer day, was the presiding genius of a band of picnickers, and

from beneath the ample brim of a satin poke-bonnet poked her fun at us who made such bungling work at the fire for the gipsy kettle. It was, I believe, on this occasion that a watcher approached to warn the party from landing; but, hearing who was the queen of the party, he said: 'Ow, if t'auld laädy is Mistress Stanger o' Fieldside she mud gang whariver she need,' and so saying strode off.

Once she told me of the school-days at Bellevue, Ambleside, where she met a former scholar of the school in the person of the daughter of Wordsworth's Whitehaven cousin Richard, Dorothy Wordsworth, who was domiciled at Rydal Mount about 1813, and who with Dora came daily to the classes. Mary Calvert, being of Dora Wordsworth's own age, was naturally attracted to 'bright-minded Dora,' of whom she ever spoke with love; but the fresh beauty of that elder Dorothy struck her girlish fancy, and only last year she asked me for news of beautiful Mrs. Harrison, of Green Bank, then in her eighty-seventh year.

It was at this school-day time that she saw much on half-holidays of Rydal Mount ways and manners, and saw only to revere.

The dancing days of the olden time were fresh in her mind. As Sara Coleridge remembered the minuet with Charlie Denton, the Vicar's little lad—which Master Youdale, the fiddler and dancing-master, put them through—so did Mrs. Joshua Stanger remember the Keswick dancing-school. The annual dancing display that ended the winter's session of Master Youdale's teaching was a great event. The quiet serenity of Mrs. Southey upon this occasion, contrasted with the fidget of Mrs. Coleridge, as to the white frocks and sashes for the young folk, had struck Mrs. Stanger.

In those days, and still in some parts of Cumberland, dancing was a serious part of the education of the youth. The fiddler came round, and school, except for his class, ceased. There are still living in Keswick men and women past the shady side of sixty who, if they hear the old-fashioned 'Jack my laddie' played, put their hands upon their hips and fall to the three-cornered reel with all the spirit and 'lishness' of young things. The Greta Hall and Greta Bank children were to be properly educated, and this meant among other things that they should learn to dance.

Mrs. Stanger would speak of the grace of Edith Southey as she moved through the minuet.

'You know, dear sir, Sara Coleridge had the intellect in her face. You can get from the portrait Laurence painted for me no



idea of the pathos and the feeling in it, nor the azure-grey depth of those wonderful meditative eyes of Sara's—eyes into which it was said her father had looked and left behind the colour of his own. But for figure and grace and perfect movement Edith Southey bore away the palm; I can only describe her movements as swan-like.'

I was glad to hear from living lips the truth of that description of Edith, which caused such quizzing when, in 1824, Amelia Opie wrote in Mrs. Waters' album some washy lines commemorative of her seeing Southey and the graceful Edith:

'Twas pleasant to meet  
And see thee, fam'd Swan of the Derwent's fair tide,  
With the elegant Cygnet that floats by thy side.

and when Southey, much tickled by the description, began a letter to his daughter thus:

'My elegant Cygnet,—By this time your elegancy will be looking for some news of the Swan and the Swan's nest,' &c.

Those dancing classes, though they could not turn geese into swans, at any rate taught grace and easy motion and manners to Master Youdale's pupils.

There was a delightful levelling-up about those parties. The children of poor and rich alike, if only they had learned the minuet step and were provided with the necessary gloves and pumps, met on terms of absolute equality when on the last great day, and in the eyes of their parents, they were put through their paces. 'And you know, dear sir,' said Mrs. Stanger, 'it rather took the pride out of us to find that our clogger's boy and our schoolmaster's little girl knew their steps and made their bows and curtses better than we did.'

But dancing days were to come to an end at last, and first of the Keswick coterie to fly away was little Mary Calvert.

In the Parish Register of Crosthwaite Church, under date 3rd of August, 1824, appears the entry:

'Joshua Stanger, bachelor, of the parish of Crosthwaite, and Mary Calvert, spinster, of the same parish, married in the Church by license, with consent of parents.'

The hand that tied the knot was the hand of Mrs. Lynn Linton's father, the stately Vicar, James Lynn. The witnesses to the wedding were Sterling's friend, John M. Calvert, Sara Coleridge, and Sara Maude.

It was a remarkable wedding, if only for the fact that Southey

spoke at the wedding breakfast, and two of the famous triad whom Wordsworth has immortalised were bridesmaids. Mere chance was it that the full triad were not present. Edith Southey was away on a visit in the south of England. Writing to a widowed friend on the sixty-first anniversary of that wedding-day, Mrs. Stanger says: 'I can enter into your recollections of the past, the happy days of union with the beloved one. So it has been with me. Last Monday, August 3rd, was the sixty-first anniversary of the wedding-day. I need not enlarge on this matter. The bridesmaids were Dora Wordsworth, Sara Coleridge, my cousin, Sara Maude Miss Moorsome's aunt, and Isabella Curwen, Dora W.'s aunt. A very pretty group, though not costumed as is the fashion nowadays.'

Speaking of that day, more than two generations ago, Mrs. Stanger told me that Dora Wordsworth journeyed back to Rydal in their coach, and was all the way miserable, as fearing she was *de trop*. 'But you know, dear sir,' she said with a twinkle, 'newly married people are so stupid that I always should recommend a third person to ride bodkin—and we were quite sorry to part with her, as we did at the bottom of Rydal Hill, where her father was waiting to receive her and to wish us joy.'

Happy union was that with the worthy Doughty Street merchant. Sorrowful in this, with a lifelong sorrow, that a fair child was given them, another little Mary—given but taken away from them in 1829, to leave a scar upon their hearts till death.

What Herbert's death was to Southey, the death of that little girl, whose bust used to stand in the Fieldside study, was to Mrs. Stanger. She never spoke of any children without a sigh. If, as she walked round the room to point out the portraits upon the walls to strangers, her attention was called to the medallion of that bust, she would say, 'That is a closed chapter;' and so late as last year I saw her eyes fill with silent but eloquent tears as she passed the little picture of the child.

The child's death left a tenderness for every living thing upon her heart. We have only to turn to Sara Coleridge's memoirs and letters to see how, inasmuch as she felt the loss of dear ones deeply herself, she was able in her real sympathy to speak comfort to those that mourned. 'Your last kind note was written in a strain that harmonised well with my feelings,' says Sara Coleridge in answer to Mrs. Stanger's letter of condolence on the death of Sara's infant daughter.



'Faith in a world beyond this vale of tears,' linked with the sure and certain hope of reunion with the beloved, was Mrs. Stanger's; and throughout the correspondence alluded to above one notices that it was not on intellectual problems that Sara Coleridge wrote to Mrs. Stanger, so much as on the realities of deep feeling, the problems of the heart; and that it was specially in the cloudy days of grief that she turned to Mrs. Stanger, the sunny Mary Calvert of her youth, who remained the sunny Mary Calvert to the end, for sympathy and help.

Ah! how much at such a time brave hands had to do and brave hearts to bear she had learnt when death came suddenly upon him whom she loved, and with her warm hand within his cold one she found strength to drive a weary eighteen miles, across the lonely moor, beneath dark Blencathra and by the wailing Greta's stream, back to the home upon the hill in which for thirty-six years she should wait and watch alone.

It was a fair spot, that Fieldside of her husband's making—their happy choice when feeling the irresistible charm of their native valley they returned from Wandsworth, after nineteen years' absence, to dwell amongst their own people, because they loved the Greta Bank and Dovecot and Greta Hall. The light has gone out of it, its windows are darkened, but it is a fair spot still, with its daffodils ablaze on the slopes, its sycamore between it and the saffron sky. Fair from thence is the dawn when the far-off vale from Bassenthwaite to Derwentwater is swathed in mist; fair there is the noon when the little town in the hollow lies silently beneath the opal, gauzy veil of its hearthstone smoke; fair is Fieldside at the sunset, when over Newlands Hawse the sun that burns 'upon the waters to the west' sends showers of silver down the hills, and with reflected glories lights the Lake; and fairest when, between the sunset and the stars, the lamplight stars come out in the Keswick streets, and the jewels of the far-off railway lamps flicker into being against the azure-blue background of Grisedale and Barf. It is a house of ancient hospitalities and old-fashioned country ways. I never climbed the hill and passed beneath the sturdy portal, with its date 1843 upon it—sacred for that in that year Southey died—without being sure that many spirit guests would be summoned by the venerable old lady from out the past, and there would be much talk of the present.

'Have you seen my new experiments in ensilage? Thomas

(he was the *fidus Achates* of her farm) says the cows never took to food so well in their lives, and though I confess to believing it has left a taste in the cream, it certainly has thickened it; do go and see it. My legs won't let me go to-day; I saw the process yesterday.' That was a little startling query, perhaps, from an old lady of eighty summers. But as an old lady of eighty-three she rose early on the morning of the Show day to review her fat-stock ere it went to the Show; and none more proudly spoke of the blue ribbons and cards of honour that her cattle won than she.

No talk came amiss to her if it was not mere chatter. 'Dear sir, you have been to London; well, what pictures am I to look at? For I intend to stay a day on my way through to Lyme Regis. And did you see the play? How did Irving acquit himself in the "Merchant of Venice"? I hear such different reports.' And her eyes would sparkle as one vainly endeavoured to set forth what one had seen.

To London? Did she go to London? Ay, verily, to London; and through London to Lyme on the Dorset coast every summer would she travel, and that too with a bright heart and a merry.

A loyalist was she. 'God bless the Queen! I knew another reign, you know, and I feel we English people owe a deep debt of gratitude to her for the example she has set to wives and mothers,' she once said. What she said she meant. On that proud day in 1887 when Her Majesty Victoria, by the grace of God still Queen, passed in triumphal show to Westminster, there was no loyaller-hearted woman as witness of the Jubilee than the little Mary Calvert of old time—the aged lady who in her enthusiasm refused to sit, but would stand up straight upon the box-seat of the coach, near Apsley House, to see Her Majesty pass.

She was in her eighty-third year when she sat with the old people of more than sixty winters who partake of a common meal each Christmas-tide in the little Keswick town.

I do not think that Mrs. Stanger ever was seen to better advantage than when she mixed with the simple folk. The deference, almost to veneration, paid her by her tenantry, as by her humbler neighbours—the devotion shown to her by her servants—never made her for a moment forget that they had all a common human heart.

She had the power of being on familiar terms with them, and setting them perfectly at their ease; and yet always she was the Squiress, the lady to be treated with natural respect, the



mistress whose will was law. 'Niver could be a better mistress in t'whole warld, 'niver a kinder friend,' was the saying of one who had attended upon her for twenty years. 'Not an ounce of pride about her,' was another saying of an old retainer. And they who remember how she would drive over to see her tenants at Wallthwaite, and partake of the simple hospitalities in the far-off Fellside farm, knew this was literally true.

Yet it was as landowner that she most shone. She had inherited an instinctive love for the management of land. She knew the ins and outs of legal and law-agency lore, in connection with the occupation of land; but the interest her estate had for her was the human interest of the folk who lived upon it. I have never come across anyone who more truly entered into the feeling of a landowner's duty to the tenantry. She often spoke of it. 'Land has its privileges, but it has its burdens; it has its rights, but it has its duties, dear sir, also.' And her care to enter into and help the friendly life of her own tenants showed she meant what she said. The question of 'rights of way' once came up, and after a little conversation she laid down her spectacles and said in a decided tone:

'Parliament, dear sir, ought not to leave it to private individuals to defend public rights of way; they are matters of too great importance, especially in such a land as ours.' But the fair-minded old lady would always add: 'Nevertheless, the public should respect the land they pass over. There is a great deal of needless damage done by thoughtless people, and I dare say landowners receive much provocation.' How pleased would the Lady of Fieldside have been to have heard that Mr. Buchanan's resolution for making the County Council responsible maintainers of rights of way had obtained a majority, and that members of all parties had voted for it!

It is not often that we hear of a lady of eighty-three writing a letter of congratulation to a friend who has attempted to keep open a public path, but before me lies just such a letter, in which she characterises the attempt to keep open old paths as 'a noble effort.' To my way of thinking, the noble effort is a letter so written with such spirit from one so just, so true, and such a lover of the land of her birth.

There had been a most unfortunate attempt to close Latrigg-top against the people; the hands that would have closed it were the hands of her old friends. I do not think any act of later days

so troubled her. It was her father's Latrigg. She remembered eating the baked potatoes made by the turf bonfires they lit when they made the road to the top in 1814. She remembered her father saying that the people were free to use the path for ever, and that he would get a road leading to it declared a right of way by the justices. Every Sunday all through the years had she gazed across the gorge between her and that mountain height, and seen with joy the people clear against the sky—and to think that this never more could be! The people who had claimed the right of way were pushed into a court of law; there was absolute refusal to settle it out of court. The evidence of the little girl of Windybrow was important, as showing implied dedication, and sorely as it troubled her to go against her personal friends, she gave evidence. I spoke afterwards with one of the Commissioners who examined her on oath previous to the trial, and he said, 'A marvellous old lady! she absolutely refused to be puzzled in cross-examination. Her evidence,' he added, 'is invaluable.' And what he said proved to be so when read in court.

The visitors to, and residents in Keswick, who rejoice their hearts with the marvellous view from the top of Latrigg, if they let their eyes wander back along the ridge across the valley from near the Druid's Circle to the town, may gaze a moment upon Fieldside among its trees and flowers, and thank a brave old lady for her public spirit shown in years beyond the fourscore that are ours.

But her vitality was as great as her memory was good. Never a lecture of importance in the little town below the hill but she would attend; she sat through a three hours' recital of the 'Messiah,' given in the evening in the Mother Church, only last Eastertide. Last May she watched the May-show procession, and drove into the Fitz Park to laugh at the fun and enjoy the sight of the little girls in their white frocks dancing the old-fashioned Maypole dance and skipping for the prizes that the May Queen gave.

And this vitality enabled her to be the best of hostesses to the last. She would each year preside at a bountiful supper-party given at her house to the choir of her parish church. And the old-fashioned cheer was not one whit less memorable than the old-fashioned cordiality with which she welcomed her guests of all degrees.

Once a week she held an 'At-home' in simple wise; and



touching enough was it to see how those who felt years heavy upon them would make the Saturday walk up the great hill, to chat with the venerable lady of Fieldside, almost a religious exercise. I fancy they all came away feeling that old age was a better thing and a brighter thing than they had thought it on the way up, and that a heart need never grow old.

The friends of old Greta Hall days had passed away one by one, but Mrs. Stanger had such power of swift sympathy with the young and the new, that hers was no friendless old age; nor did she ever seem to forget the thousand 'little unremembered acts of constant kindness' which her own kindness called forth. I remember that, having attended the funeral of her friend, the last of the Southneys of Greta Hall days, I had written her some simple account of the dead man as I saw him peacefully sleeping there in his coffin; of the bearing of the body by the stalwart yeomen to the little church below Askham Vicarage; of the burial service beside the rushing Lowther stream. And this was the note, dated December 28, 1888: 'Many kind acts are *registered in my memory* that Mr. — has done, but none that has gone so *straight* to my heart as his last act of reverence towards my old friend, Cuthbert Southey. I am deeply interested in what I hear.' What a full register of kind deeds, thought I, must that old heart verily be that can thus feel and think! But they who watched the tender, almost solemn care with which she would label and paste into permanent albums the Christmas and birthday cards that came with greetings, year in year out, knew the heart was as mindful as it was warm in its recollections of the tiny proofs of love and reverence those Christmas cards or birthday greetings intended.

She helped also with wisest generosity others than those of the poorest of the poor—her friends whose circumstances had been less fortunate than her own. The very soul of unostentatious charity, none knew through what ever-widening circles her benevolence moved. But the poor in the Crosthwaite Vale felt that 'theer nivver wad be another Mrs. Joshua, nivver could be,' and they honoured her, one and all. She was, as Derwent Coleridge, in a little poem dedicated to her and printed for private circulation in 1879, put it:

In humblest homes a helpful visitor;  
Homes too a little humbler than thine own,  
Where pleasant words and looks are needed most,  
Oft seconded by kindly courteous acts—  
Far rarer proof of Christian charity.

Her home had been for the past half-century the rendezvous of lovers of the English Lake poets. How many a time did she graciously delight the stranger whom a friend would bring, at a request to call upon her—have her autograph album brought and show the famous letters therein from great men. Not the least famous those from young Raisley and from Wordsworth to William Calvert. And with what a solemn way would she repeat the ‘Raisley Sonnet’ and its close: ‘It gladdens me, O worthy short-lived youth! to think how much of this will be thy praise!’ as she laid the letter back into its resting-place.

She always poohpoohed the idea that Wordsworth was describing her father in the latter verse of the ‘Castle of Indolence.’ ‘My father’s eyes certainly were fine, but nothing compared to Coleridge’s,’ she would say; ‘and then his lip was not down-hung.’ The little pencil sketch of her father certainly bore out her contention; and she would agree to the suggestion that Wordsworth was really conjuring up a face from the recollections of the two friends, her father and Coleridge, and adding a touch from a memory of his own to the picture.

Never so did Mrs. Stanger seem to glow as when a real Coleridge and a real Wordsworth were beneath her kindly roof-tree.

It was at her house I saw for the first and last time Derwent Coleridge, and heard him speak of what Mrs. Stanger had been to him from early Greta Hall days.

In the touching poem by Derwent Coleridge before referred to, entitled ‘The Vale of Crosthwaite,’ he describes Fieldside and the view of mountain and vale and lake from the high lawn from where

- we look

Down the steep cleft through which the Greta flows,  
 Across to Brundholme’s over-hanging wood.  
 How shall I paint the scene on which I gaze,  
 Year after year thy favoured guest, so fondly  
 Seated, or pacing the trim terrace walk  
 That fronts the high-placed cottage, shall I call it,  
 Decked as it is with all that graces life?’

Fieldside needs no picturing. Other houses as fair may be built among its trees and flower-beds; but the lady, the genius of Fieldside—

in whose dear hands were gathered  
 The various strings of grateful memory,  
 To pluck them at our bidding one by one—



she whom Derwent Coleridge speaks of thus :

Friend of my childhood ! whom to see and hear  
Is to renew the springtide of my youth.

Friend and companion ! trained for serious speech  
By early converse with the good and wise,  
Earnest for truth, with heart and eye attuned  
To Nature's . . . . .  
Ever intent on charitable deeds—

has gone from Fieldside for ever.

Mrs. Stanger's natural force seemed unabated—her eye, that grey, merry Calvert eye, was undimmed—but she felt at times the sorrow of old age. Her very swiftness of thought must have often made her wish, as she quaintly put it, 'to have another pair of legs.' This same vigour of mind she prayed would be continued to the last. Of death she had no fear, only of life prolonged beyond clearness of brain and mind. Writing to a friend in February 1887, upon the death of Mrs. Coleridge, she says :

'Yes, the death of dear Mrs. Coleridge has made its mark upon my heart and memory. To me it must be a more impressive event than for those of the same age and standing. She was my friend. The affectionate intercourse that I had with the dear couple, both so interesting, was a passage in my life ever to be remembered. I am very aged myself ; I pray that the mind, feeble though it is, may by God's mercy hold out as long as the case—the body does.

'Ever your affectionate friend,

'MARY S.

'Pray keep indoors ; your cold must not be neglected.'

God preserved that mind to the last. Within eight weeks of her death we had a talk about hymnology. Her nephew, Mr. M——, had just compiled a very interesting collection of the originals of the 'Hymns Ancient and Modern,' and she urged the good and glory of true hymn-writing as helps to souls in doubt and sorrow, and spoke of her own favourites. But God's finger in the same great mercy and in the fulness of time touched her, and she slept. Through the quiet sunshine of a February day (February 10)—rare in its brightness and its beauty, clear though cold—they bore her body down the hill to the Church of good St. Kentigern in the valley. The people came to their doors and stood and gazed after the sad procession ; the tradesmen darkened their windows and followed

out of the town. They passed the old Hall garden on the hill by the Greta, where she had played with the Coleridges and Southneys in her youth, and so over the river by whose banks she had gathered bluebells for the birthday wreath in the days of auld lang syne. And the Greta sang and sparkled at the bridge, and Skiddaw sloped down towards the vale in happy smiling pomp of February gold. But the dark procession sadly went on its way.

They entered the Church of the Cross in the Thwaite itself, in its solid repair, a monument of the generous care and piety of her husband's brother. The organ moaned forth majestic music; slowly they bore the coffin heaped with flowers past the font, whereby she had stood a startled child to feel the chrismal rain in the long years gone. Solemnly they laid it down before the altar rails where she had knelt a happy bride; and some heads turned to the double tablet of white marble upon the southern wall, and sighed to think that the last of the Calverts had come to her long rest. The lesson was read, the organ wailed again; out to the clear cold sunshine they went, past the plot of ground where the Southneys sleep, and laid her near, in a grave where the roses bloom the last in summer and forget-me-nots will never surely die, by the side of the husband she had so loved and honoured until death.

Then the bells broke the silence that fell upon the dark crowd round the grave, and to the sound of a muffled peal the mourners, not a little comforted, came back from the quiet churchyard to the little town beneath the hills, and as they passed the bridge they felt that the roll of Greta Hall and Greta Bank memories had been folded up, and that a friend, both of rich and poor, high and low, had gone from among them; a friend who had left behind in the Keswick Vale a name of honour, of simplicity, of wit and wisdom, of love and goodwill to all, of moral earnestness and sincerity, of sympathy and faith—that would outlive the grave and keep the name of the last of the Calverts fragrant and ever green.



## THE MATCH OF THE SEASON.

It was beastly weather. It had been raining, pretty well without cessation, for, I should say, quite three weeks on end. It was raining then; coming down in regular bucketsful. And the ground! You should have seen the ground! Put one foot down, and lean all your weight on it for sixty seconds, and you wanted two strong men to pull you out again. But, you know, I don't call that a bad state of the ground for football—not for Rugby Union. Nobody minds a little mud; some men like it. Heavy forwards, for instance. The year the Pantaloons carried all before them—only lost one match—they owed it all to the mud. That was before the passing game came in. They had a lot of heavy men in front, regular weight-carriers. When they formed the scrummages—and they managed that there should be nothing else but scrummages—and they had their feet well planted in the mud, you couldn't move them. Upon my word, you couldn't. You might as well have run your head against the Monument. Even at the worst, mud *is* soft falling. When there's a frost, and you come down—you do come down. You're in luck if you don't get up in pieces.

I didn't play this year; it was a disappointment, I can tell you. Early in the season I had a bad eye. Poulter gave it me—in the Engineer match. The ball was near their goal. I stooped to pick it up. Somehow I tripped. Of course, Poulter didn't know what I was going to be up to. He kicked at the ball, and instead of the ball he kicked my eye. I was a sight! And then, hardly was I able to show again when, in the match with the St. Galen's men, Thistlethwaite, a great giant, over six feet high, picked me up when I was running, and pitched me on my head against one of the iron posts on which we hang the rope to enclose the ground. Of course he didn't mean it, but I thought that game had seen the last of me. It was all I could do, a month afterwards, to toddle down to the ground to see the match with Biddleham. Play, worse luck, was out of the question. My brother didn't play either. Miss Blake objected. She used to be awfully fond of the game before she became engaged to him, but since that event she seems to have

cooled off a bit. She says that when a man is going to be married she thinks he ought to stop that kind of thing. There's something in it. Jack Hill, two days before his marriage, got compound fracture in both his legs. It was to be his last match—and it was. But the wedding was postponed.

I don't suppose there were more than five hundred people there, all told. The weather kept them away. I've seen over ten thousand on a sunny afternoon. But it isn't everybody who cares to stand for a couple of hours in a shower-bath, out in the open, in the middle of January. They missed something, though, those who didn't go. I never saw a better game of the kind. There wasn't any science; when it was as much as a man could do to keep on his feet, there couldn't be. And as for passing! When the ball is as heavy as lead, and so greasy that you can't keep hold of it, you try what passing comes to then. But there was pluck. Talk about 'mimic warfare'—there was precious little 'mimic' about the 'warfare' there.

The Biddleham men kicked off. Ricketts, their captain, sent a long rocketter flying into touch well inside our twenty-five. The ball was dry, and it was about as good a kick as there was that afternoon. But Gilkes, our right three-quarters, was on the ball. He ran it down about a dozen yards, then punted it well back again. One of their three-quarters had it, but muffed it rather, and was downed. His was the first baptism of mud. Burrowes got behind him, dropped him on to his face, and just fell down on the top of him. You might have made a plaster cast of his figure in the place on which he fell. I could see from the expression of his face—that is, from what there was of it to be seen—that he didn't like it. He seemed to think that Burrowes needn't have fallen all his length on top of him. That was balderdash. But there are some men like that, you know. I remember myself once, when I was playing against the Finches—the Fulham Finches; the club is extinct now; they say, as a joke, that the members all got killed—I knocked a man's two front teeth right down his throat. He turned quite nasty. However, I did hear afterwards that he also belonged to the engaged brigade; and, no doubt, a man doesn't like to go toothless to meet his bride. Still, he ought to keep his temper, especially in the middle of a game.

Nowadays loose play is all the rage. I remember when they used to pack a scrummage, and keep it packed. Now the game



is, directly a scrummage is formed, to break it up again. But that style of play don't pay always. Directly Burrowes had downed their man, a scrummage was formed.

'Play loosely! Play loosely!' cried Staines, our captain.

They did play loosely. The consequence was that they all fell flat, face foremost, in the mud. Before they were up, Staines was off with the ball. He passed the halves; the forwards were still making inquiries into the constitution of top soils. Then that man whom Burrowes had downed got hold of him. He must have been a vicious sort of chap. He ran at Staines just like a bull, sent him flying backwards, and fell bang on top of him. I thought the ball had burst, not to mention Staines. When the scrummage formed again he didn't say much about loose play. He seemed to want his breath to cool his porridge.

'Go it, Biddleham!' cried a man who stood by me. 'You've got them now. Loose! Loose! Let them have another taste of their noses; then you'll be able to carry the ball right through.'

That is the way in which some people talk at football matches. If I hadn't taken it for granted that he had paid his money at the gate, I should have asked him to leave the ground. But I could see at a glance that in the scrummages the Biddleham forwards were more effective than ours on ground like that. They were a heavy lot of men, and very fond of falling; and every time they fell they took care that our men were underneath to fall upon. It might not have been intentional, but it did look odd, for no man likes to be *always* fallen on, especially by a lot of fellows each of whom would turn the scale at a good twelve stone. I suppose they must have fallen on our fellows quite half-a-dozen times before the ball was brought into play again. Then they took it through with a rush, leaving our chaps staggering about as though they were stuck in the mud. Over went our halves like ninepins, and I thought they were going to take it right behind. But they let it get a little bit too far in front of them, and Gilkes had hold of it, and was off like a flash. He is a flyer—Gilkes. He ran through their forwards, and cannoned into Ricketts, letting him have the ball in the face—which, I should say by the look of it—the ball, I mean, not the face—was already beginning to weigh about a ton. Down sat Ricketts to think it over. But, before he began to think it over, he stretched out his arm and caught hold of Gilkes by the leg. And

down went Gilkes. Possibly the ball was too greasy for anyone to get firm hold of it. Anyhow, when Gilkes went down, the ball went off in front of him. Crookshanks, their left three-quarters, got hold of it, and tried to pass to Knight, their centre. But by this time a lot of our men were up, and they sat down on Knight in a heap. This was hard on the beggar, for he had muffed the ball, and it had gone behind him. Their back had picked it up; and, while our men were still sitting upon Knight, he punted it into touch.

From the throw-out another scrummage was formed.

'Pack the scrummage!' I cried. 'Don't let them rush it through.'

But it was plain that in six inches of mud the Biddleham men were better than us at scrummages. Our men went in gamely, and they pushed. There is a lot of art in scrummaging. Watch an old hand, and see how he sticks to the ball, never letting it get six inches from his feet. I've seen a man screw through a scrummage single-handed. But to show that kind of skill there are two things needed. You want ground on which you can get some kind of a footing, and you don't want *all* the weight to be upon the other side. Those Biddleham men played a game of their own, and it was not a game which I should call good form. They gave way, judiciously, at unexpected moments, and our men fell down, and then, if the ball was underneath, they fell on top of them. You hadn't time to sing out 'Man down!' before they were burying the Biddleham fellows in the mud. It was all very well to say it was accident, but after the first dozen accidents of that sort our men got wild. They lost their heads. They went in anyhow, having had about as much mud down their throats as they cared to swallow. And so the Biddleham men, who by that time had hustled the leather right down the field, rushed the ball clean through. Staines fell on it, or tried to; but, somehow, he just managed to miss it, and all he got was the mud. What made it worse was that one of their forwards, thinking that he hadn't got the mud, but the leather, plumped on top of him. I could see that Staines didn't like it at all. But it was no good saying anything, for Parker, our left three-quarters, had got the ball and tried to pass, and had passed to one of their men instead of to one of ours. And off went the Biddleham man like a bull of Bashan. You should have heard them screech! Before the ball was held he was within twelve yards of the goal line.



‘Go it, Biddleham!’ cried the man who had stood by me, and who had made himself obnoxious before. ‘One good shove, all together, and you’re in.’

And they were in, all in a heap, and the ball at the bottom. They didn’t wait for our men to come up, so that the scrummage might be properly formed, but rushed it in like blazes. And the touch was scored. Didn’t they bellow! But one thing was certain, our men couldn’t score a goal; they had touched-down close to the boundary. The man who could kick a goal at that distance against the wind, in a pouring rain, with the ground like a bog, and the ball as heavy as lead, has yet to be born. However, Ricketts had a try at it; but he got as near to the goal as he got to the moon.

‘Play up, Riddleham!’ I cried.

‘They’ll have to do a lot of playing first,’ said the man, who was still sticking himself beside me.

Of course I said nothing. A man who could make to a perfect stranger gratuitous remarks like that is a sort of man I never could get fond of.

Staines was on the ball before it had even got behind. He tried a drop. He might as well have tried to drop his head. The thing was waterlogged. From where I stood I could hear it squash as it touched his foot. It was an awful failure. The Biddleham forwards were down on him like a cartload of bricks. Then things grew lively. I couldn’t follow the details, but, so far as I could judge, a faction fight wasn’t halfway near it. Men were going down all over the place—singly, and in heaps. Scrummages were formed only to go to pieces. It was a regular riot. Suddenly someone broke away. It was Gilkes, with the leather tucked under his arm. Staines was after him, and so was Parker. Then we saw the first bit of play we had seen that afternoon. They closed on Gilkes, who passed to Staines, who passed to Parker. It was a beautiful bit of passing. Parker ran off to the left; Staines tripped in the mud. But Gilkes backed up in style. One of their three-quarters collared Parker, but not before he had passed again to Gilkes, who took it as well as ever I saw him take it yet. And there was nothing but the Biddleham back between Gilkes and the Biddleham goal.

Of course, under ordinary circumstances, he would have tried to drop it over. A better hand at a running drop-kick never lived than Gilkes. But let any man try to drop a ball which is full of

water, and which weighs a ton. He seemed to think that there was nothing for it but to carry it in. I thought he had done it, too; and all that was left was the shouting. But the Biddleham back was a man named Ashton, and he is about one of the few backs who is a back. Instead of waiting, he went for Gilkes. Gilkes tried to dodge; but dodging is not easy in the middle of the mire. He almost pulled it off; but, just as he was past, Ashton spun right round, and caught him a back-hander which knocked him down as neat as ninepence. Our fellows claimed a foul, but I don't think rightly. Ashton tried to grab at him, but, missing, knocked him down instead. Anyhow, the claim was disallowed. But Gilkes was spun. Ashton had caught him fairly on the nose. The blood came out of him in quarts. He had to retire to see if he couldn't stop the bleeding.

In the scrummage which followed, the Biddleham forwards played the same old game. They kept the ball in scrummage, and they kept falling down on top of us. Some of our men got riled. Blackmore, whose temper is not to be relied on, pretty nearly came to fighting one of theirs. He said that the man did nothing else but fall on him, which, if true, was certainly not nice. But I do hate to see a man lose his temper in a game. Try how they would, our fellows couldn't get the ball into play. Scrummage followed scrummage, and they were still scrummaging when the whistle blew half-time.

'Play loosely! Don't form scrummages at all! Directly the ball is down, try to rush it through. Or, if you can't do that, make them rush it through at once. Let those behind have a chance. I should think you've had enough of the mud.'

They had. Our blood was up. Well it might be! A more ragged regiment I never saw. There was scarcely a whole jersey among the lot, and they were so plastered with mud that I could hardly tell one from the other.

Directly ends were changed, there was a row—in consequence, I suppose, of our fellows' blood being up. Some people might have said there had been nothing but rows all through, and play had certainly been a little rough—but this was a regular row.

When the kick-off was returned, Blackmore, picking up the leather, tried a run. One of the Biddleham men, to collar him, caught him by the jersey, and, in so doing, ripped it off, and left Blackmore without a rag upon his back. That was not pleasant, and it is not supposed to be good form to try to collar a man by



snatching at his jersey. Still, that didn't justify Blackmore in doing what he did. He went for that Biddleham man, and snatched at his jersey, and tore it off his back.

'There,' he said, holding a fragment of the trophy in his hand, 'I think we're even.'

The Biddleham man didn't seem to think they were. He looked at Blackmore as though he would have liked to murder him. And his language, what I could hear of it, was not—I mean quite parliamentary. Of course play was stopped; and I thought that that would finish up the game as well. But Staines managed to smooth things over. Two fresh jerseys were brought, and play went on. But it didn't seem as though the incident had made either side much cooler—at least, so far as the lookers-on could judge.

Our men went in for loose play with a vengeance—I never saw much looser. Directly the ball was down they started kicking.

'No kicking in scrummages!' cried the Biddleham men.

'It's out of scrummage!' replied our fellows.

I didn't see myself how that could be, unless it was because it hadn't yet been in. But the Biddleham men didn't press the point, and nobody interfered. When they saw that our men *couldn't* be got to form a scrummage, they started free kicking too. To see the forwards on both sides hacking at the ball, and now and then at each other, anyhow, as they floundered about in the mud, gave the spectators an excellent idea of the science of the game.

Of course that sort of thing couldn't go on for long without there being another little shindy.

'You did that on purpose!' screamed out a voice. Play was stopped, and there was a Biddleham man nursing one leg and hopping about on the other, as though, instead of being stuck in the mud, he was dancing on red-hot plates. 'He did it on purpose!' he yelled again.

He didn't say who had done it on purpose, but he pulled down his stocking and showed as pretty a leg as I remember to have seen. The skin had been scraped off, and the shin-bone all laid bare. He sat down in the mud to look at it, and the men crowded round to sympathise. The referee came up and spoke to them. I didn't catch what it was he said, but I suspect he dropped a hint that if there wasn't just a little less hacking he'd stop the game.

Then play began again. That man with the scraped leg must have been a game one. He just tied his handkerchief round the place, and pulled his stocking up, and went on playing as though that sort of thing was not worth mentioning. That's how I like to see a man behave, especially when he's playing a game.

The fresh start was followed by a lot more scrummaging—about as loose scrummaging as ever I saw. It was all inside their twenty-five. And talk about handling! Each side was always claiming hands; and when the free-kick was got the ball could only be induced to travel a dozen feet or so. And tempers! There's not a better-tempered chap in the world than our old Staines, but even he got riled when one of their men continued to sit on his head a good half-minute after the ball had gone away.

'I'll trouble you not to do that again!' he remarked, as he staggered to his feet.

'How was I to know the ball had gone away?' cried the Biddleham man. There was a thing to say!

'I don't know if you're aware,' said Staines, who seemed half choked, 'that you've made me swallow a peck of mud?'

The Biddleham fellow laughed.

'Never mind, old fellow, you'll get it out again.'

But I could see that, if Staines didn't hate, quite as much as I do, to see a fellow lose his temper in a game, he would have set about that Biddleham beggar there and then. There can be no doubt that the play was rough—too much like the Cup Tie sort of thing for me.

Still, there were some lively episodes. And it isn't, necessarily, bad fun to look on at a row. Almost as good fun as being in it, if you listen to what some men say. And it certainly is the case that, since scientific play was out of the question on such an afternoon as that, there was some excuse for the fellows for trying to make things lively. When a man is tired of being trampled on, he's sure to try to trample on some other man, just by way of a little change. It's human nature. But I do hate to see men lose their tempers, even in a row. And a general row is what that game wound up with. I must own that I think the referee did let things go a little far. Perhaps, since he saw that there was no chance of sport, he, too, had no objection to seeing a little fun. I don't say that it was so, but on no other hypothesis can I understand why neither of the umpires, nor the referee, gave the signal for the row to cease. But what annoyed me



was this. After it was all over, and the match ended in a draw—for neither side scored more than the single try—as the men were going up to the pavilion I heard Blackmore say to the Biddleham man who had torn his jersey, ‘Next time you pull a man’s jersey off his back, I hope that man will teach you manners.’

The Biddleham man stopped short.

‘You can have a try at teaching me manners now, if you like.’

‘Can I? Then, just to oblige you, I think I will.’

And there was Blackmore making ready to fight the fellow there and then. Of course they interfered, and stopped the thing. But I do hate to see fellows lose their tempers, especially in a game.

I enjoyed that match uncommonly—almost as much as if I had played in it myself. No doubt there wasn’t much science shown, if any. What could you expect with the mud six inches deep, and the rain coming down in water-spouts? But there was something almost as good as science, and that is pluck. But there are people who can see nothing in Rugby Union football at all; to discuss the thing with folks like that is simply to throw your time away.

## RATS.

RATS are as plentiful on the earth as sparrows in the air, and there is scarcely a corner of the globe to which they have not penetrated. Their wide distribution is to a great extent accounted for by the liking they evince towards ship stores; indeed, scarcely a vessel leaves our shores without its contingent of these four-footed passengers. In this manner rats have found their way to every part of the earth, for their eagerness to obtain water often leads them to leave ships in which this precious fluid is scarce. On such occasions they will not hesitate to swim to the shore if there is no way of reaching it dry-footed; or the mooring-rope sometimes serves them as a bridge, along which they crawl in Indian file. They frequently board ships in the same way, and it is a common habit with sailors to fill up the hawser-holes, or run the cable through a broom, the projecting twigs of which bar the ingress of the mischievous visitants. It is said that the only inhabitants of some islands of the Pacific are land-crabs and rats which have effected a landing there and have found themselves left behind. We do not propose, however, to attempt to follow the rat in its wanderings to different parts of the earth, but rather to deal with a few of the most noteworthy habits and characteristics of those members of the species which are to be found among us.

Two kinds of rats are met with in these islands: the black English rat, which is the original inhabitant of our drains and cellars, and the brown Norway rat, which came to our shores at a comparatively recent date, but which has made such good use of its opportunities that it outnumbered the smaller and longer-tailed black rat by a hundred to one. The latter is not a native of Britain, and report says that it came in the conquering train of William of Normandy. Before that date rats do not appear to have been known on this side of the Channel, but allusions to them are numerous since then. That charming naturalist, Mr. Waterton, makes the advent of the brown usurper contemporary with the arrival of the first representatives of the House of Hanover. He says: 'Though I am not aware that there are any minutes in the zoological archives of this country which point



out to us the precise time at which this insatiate and mischievous little brute first appeared among us, still there is a tradition current in this part of the country (Yorkshire) that it actually came over in the same ship which conveyed the new dynasty to these shores. My father, who was of the first order of field naturalists, was always positive upon this point, and he maintained firmly that it did accompany the House of Hanover in its emigration from Germany to England.' Cuvier, however, gives a different version of the story, saying that the brown rat, or surmulot, came in the first instance from Persia, where it lived in burrows, and whence it was induced to journey by an earthquake, entering Europe by way of Astrachan. Goldsmith varies the tale by the assurance that Ireland was the point from which the invasion started, and that the invaders were brought thither by ships which carried provisions between Gibraltar and the Emerald Isle. He further adds that the term 'Norway rat' is a misnomer, as in reality this wandering rodent found its way to Norway from our country. Whatever the exact manner of its arrival may have been, there is no question that the brown rat first showed itself among us in the last century, and that it was sufficiently well pleased with its new quarters to commence forthwith a murderous war upon the older settlers. Its fierce nature and superior size, combined with its wonderful powers of productiveness, soon gave it the upper hand, and nowadays a black rat is comparatively speaking a rarity. Where one black rat is found there are sure to be plenty, for the weaker rodents have learnt that union is strength, and that the only chance they have of carrying on their race lies in combined resistance to the attacks of their savage relatives. It is but fair to the reputation of the brown rats to give them the benefit of the milder theory advanced by some naturalists, which is to the effect that they have attained their superior position by the blandishments of love rather than by mere brute force, the stronger males among them carrying off the black females, and thus merging the weaker race gradually into the stronger. This hypothesis is, however, scarcely a probable one, for, if an equal number of brown and black rats are put into a box together, the annihilation of the latter will be only a matter of a few hours. There must be something in our rugged climate that makes the two varieties so distasteful to one another, for in France they live together in perfect good feeling, mating freely and producing a curiously parti-coloured offspring.

The mischief that rats are capable of doing must be seen to be believed. If by any means they are able to gain access to a rick of corn, there is little chance of the owner ever obtaining enough grain from it to repay him for the trouble of thrashing. Though the rick may be perfectly sound to all outward appearance, its heart will be literally eaten away. But so long as care is exercised that the rick is properly built upon 'straddles,' these ever hungry animals need not be feared; for even if, as is often the case, they are thrown up, concealed in the sheaves, the want of water will soon compel them to evacuate the otherwise excellent quarters in which they find themselves. Mice can manage to quench their thirst by licking the drops of rain and dew from the eaves of the rick, but the more eager desire of rats for water is not to be met by such a measure as this, and they have little time for eating before a move becomes imperative. The mention of mice recalls the curious fact that when the same stack is occupied by them together with rats, the two never mix, but keep quite distinct, the mice in the upper, the rats in the lower parts of the stack.

The sins of the rat are often laid to the account of others, especially the weasel and the fox; indeed, its peccadilloes are so numerous that it is hard to believe one creature capable of them all. The rat has its useful side, however, and acts the part of a most valuable scavenger in large centres of population. The animal and vegetable refuse which finds its way into the sewers of London and other great towns would in all probability become a source of serious evil but for the efforts of the rats which still abound in these subterranean regions, though the habit of flushing sewers has, by washing them away, seriously diminished their numbers there. The difficulty is to keep them where they are wanted. Their sharp teeth and untiring powers of work carry them through almost every barrier, including brickwork. Cement with which powdered glass is mixed proves too hard a nut for them to crack, and when their holes are stopped it should always be with this compound. The cunning of rats makes attempts to catch them in traps almost futile, their keen scent recognising the place where a hand has been, and warning them to avoid so dangerous a locality. The use of gloves smeared with aniseed may lull the suspicions of the animal, but traps will never be the means of greatly diminishing its numbers in places where it has fairly established itself. Poisoned food is sometimes resorted to when



traps are found to fail, but its use cannot be recommended, as domestic animals are likely to eat it; and besides this objection there is always the likelihood of rats which have been tempted by it crawling away to some inaccessible spot and dying there, to become a source of even more serious annoyance dead than when alive.

The best course to take, when the extermination of a colony of rats becomes a necessity, is to make them help to destroy one another in the following manner. A number of tubs, proportionate to the quantity of rats in the place which it is desired to rid of them, should be placed about, the middle of each occupied by a brick standing on end. The bottom of these tubs should be covered with water to such a depth that about an inch of the brick projects above it. The top of the tub should be covered with stout brown paper, upon which a dainty meal of bacon-rind and other scraps dear to the rat palate figures—a sloping board giving the rodents facilities for partaking of it. The feast should be renewed for several nights, so that all the rats in the neighbourhood may get to know of the good food which is placed within such easy reach. When it is judged that this policy has been pursued long enough, the centre of the brown paper should be cut in such a manner that any rat venturing upon it will be precipitated into the cold water below. It might be thought that the result of this would be to capture a rat, or at the most two, for every tub prepared; but no such meagre reward for the trouble that has been taken need be feared. The first rat to find his trust abused and himself struggling in the water at the bottom of a tub, soon recovers sufficiently from the shock to ascertain that there is a little island of refuge, on to which he clambers, and squeals his loudest for help. Now, the squeal of a rat in trouble attracts every one of his kind within hearing, and very few moments will elapse before the victim of misplaced confidence is joined by one of his friends. The new-comer is as quick to discover the chance of escape from a watery grave that the brick offers as was the original victim; but when he attempts to avail himself of its presence, it becomes apparent that there is not room for more than one upon it. The first-comer resists with tooth and nail the efforts of his companion in trouble to dispossess him of his coign of vantage, and the squeals which form an accompaniment to the fight for a footing upon the brick attract more rats to the scene of the tragedy. The conflict waxes more and more

furious as rat after rat topples into the water, and, by morning, bedraggled corpses in plenty will gladden the eyes of the man whose losses at the teeth of rats have induced him to adopt this means of thinning their numbers. Some years ago the plan described above was tried in a City warehouse, with the result that more than three thousand rats were destroyed in a single night.

The rat is one of the pluckiest animals in existence when it is obliged to defend itself; a bulldog even has been seen to stand irresolute for a moment when confronted with one of these little animals, which, advancing to attack its powerful foe with tail erect, will often inflict the most severe wounds before being overcome. The bites of sewer-rats are very dangerous, and valuable dogs have often died from their effects. The garbage they eat affects their teeth, and transforms them into as deadly weapons as poisoned daggers. A large rat will more than hold its own even with one of its declared enemies, the ferrets. A gentleman, who wished to satisfy himself as to the truth of stories he had heard of the bold front presented by rats when cornered by a ferret, secured a strong specimen of each species and turned them loose in an empty room lighted by a single window. The rat, after running round the walls and satisfying itself that there was no means of escape, took up its position under the window, and there waited the enemy's attack with the advantage of the light behind it. The ferret, after sniffing about for a while, advanced, with head erect, towards the point where the scent of the other was strongest; and, though evidently puzzled by the glare of the light in his eyes, prepared to seize his foe. The rat waited until the ferret had approached within a couple of feet of the spot where it had taken its stand, and then, with a shrill squeal, rushed upon its adversary, inflicted a severe wound upon his neck, and retired to its former position. The ferret seemed very much taken aback at this sudden onslaught, and retreated some feet, but, after a moment's pause, again erected his head and made another advance, which was attended by precisely the same results as the first had been. He seemed more prepared for the rat's rush, but was not able to grapple with his active opponent, who gave him another bite, the severity of which was shown by the blood drawn. The contest continued in this manner for a couple of hours. The rat was careful to retain the position it had at first assumed, while the ferret was evidently fighting at a disad-



vantage from the light falling full on his eyes whenever he advanced to the attack. The gentleman, who had remained in the room all the time, thought he would see whether the rat's choice of position was accidental or designed, and walked over to the window, stationing himself close to the animal, which was acting on the defensive. Its natural alarm at his approach was, however, quite overcome by its unwillingness to leave that part of the floor, and it awaited the ferret's next advance standing actually between the legs of the interested spectator of this duel. Eventually the rat was driven to another part of the room; it seemed to lose courage when it found itself dispossessed of the advantage the light had given it, and met the attacks of the ferret in so half-hearted a manner that the latter was soon able to close with it and put an end to the struggle. Another fight of a similar nature was witnessed, in which the rat adopted precisely the same tactics, and, being undisturbed in the position it had taken up, eventually beat off the ferret, which was bitten so badly that it succumbed. These instances exemplify well the cunning of the rat; probably no other course would be so favourable for it in a fight with a ferret, whose object is to obtain a good grip of his antagonist and hang on until the latter is exhausted, a course which the obligation to face the light made as difficult as it could well have been.

Though the rat can be fierce when called upon to defend its life, there is a softer side to its character which is often brought out by contact with man. Many instances of this could be adduced similar to that of the omnibus-conductor's tame rat, which used to mount guard over its master's dinner and fly savagely at anyone who ventured to come near it. This animal had been caught during the removal of some hay, and spared because of its piebald coat. It was very attached to its owner's children, and would play about with them as merrily as a kitten. On cold nights it slept in its master's bed, nestling as closely to him as a chicken to its mother. In his memoirs, M. de la Tude, a Frenchman who fell under the displeasure of Madame de Pompadour in 1749, and was consequently imprisoned in the Bastille and other fortresses for thirty-five years, tells how he alleviated the tedium of his captivity by making companions of some rats. He was much annoyed for years by the rats, which at nightfall swarmed into his cell, hunting about for scraps of food, and sometimes biting his face when he was asleep. They entered by a hole which ventilated his dungeon; it

was about two feet above the floor, and under it were two steps on which he used to sit and breathe the fresh air as it entered. While seated there one day he noticed a large rat at the other end of the hole, and threw it a fragment of bread. This was snatched up, and was followed by more pieces until his supply was exhausted. The next day, at the same time, the rat was there again, and by throwing bread-crumbs so that they fell nearer and nearer to him the prisoner gradually induced his visitor to approach, until it finally took a piece from his hand. In a few days' time it was so tame that it would sit on his knee, washing its face and eating what scraps were given to it. One day it brought a companion, which became friendly almost at once, and after a little while the two rats took up their permanent residence in the dungeon. They occasionally went out through the hole, generally returning with another rat, and each new-comer made itself at home, until eventually M. de la Tude's cell was peopled by a family of ten of these rodents. He taught them all to recognise the names he gave them, and used to play with them for hours together. They learnt from him a number of tricks, and showed quite a spirit of rivalry in the way they went through their performances. The pleasure the captive found in this companionship is shown by the following extract from his memoirs: 'With these simple and innocent occupations I contrived for two years to divert my mind from constantly brooding over my miseries; and now and then I surprised myself in a sensation of positive enjoyment. A bountiful Deity had no doubt created this solace for me; and when I gave myself up to it, in those happy moments the world disappeared, I thought no longer of men and their barbarities, but was as in a dream. My intellectual horizon was bounded by the walls of my prison; my senses, my reason, and my imagination were bounded by that narrow compass. I found myself in the midst of a family who loved and interested me; why then should I wish to transport myself back into another hemisphere, where I had met with nothing but oppression and cruelty?'

The attainments of the rat are not confined to the acquirement of mere tricks, for abroad troupes of these little creatures have been trained to go through theatrical performances. Dressed as men and women, they walked about the stage on their hind legs, and showed that they were capable of being educated to a far greater extent than is commonly supposed. The cleverness displayed by rats in their thieving shows them to possess great capabilities. It



is well known that they will extract oil from the most narrow-necked phial by dipping their tails into it and licking them, repeating the process until there is not a drop left. They show astonishing judgment in their predilection for eggs. If the theft is to be accomplished by a single rat, it stretches one of its fore-paws beneath the egg, steadies the burden above with its cheek, and hops gingerly away on three legs. Eggs have even been carried by rats from the top of a house to the bottom, though in such cases the thieves have to work in couples. An eye-witness of the removal of an egg by a pair of rats down a flight of stairs, states that when they got it to the top step the larger of the marauders jumped down and reared itself on its hind legs, so that its chin and fore-paws rested on the step above. The other then rolled the egg with the utmost care to the edge of the step, within reach of its confederate, who clasped the treasure firmly, lifted it down on to the step on which it stood, and held it there until the smaller one jumped down and assumed charge of it, when the larger descended a step lower and the process was repeated. In this manner these clever animals safely conveyed the egg down a long flight of stairs. The onlooker was so charmed at their adroitness that he had not the heart to prevent their making off with it completely. Rats have also been known to carry off eggs by transforming one of their number into a kind of sledge, and dragging it away by the tail, as it clasped the toothsome burden with all four paws, and bore without a dissentient squeal the discomfort of having its tail pulled and its back rasped along the floor. When tempting food is discovered on a shelf to which access is difficult, one rat will climb up and push sugar or candles over the edge to its expectant comrades waiting below.

The consideration shown by the rat for the aged and infirm members of its species speaks highly of its mental qualities. Several observers have witnessed a venerable blind rat guided in the migrations which these animals affect by a straw connecting its mouth with that of a younger member of the tribe. Mr. Purden, a surgeon's mate on board the 'Lancaster,' once, while lying in his berth, saw a rat emerge from a hole, peer cautiously round and retire, to presently reappear leading a grey old rodent by the ear. A third rat soon joined these two and assisted the one which had acted the part of guide to pick up scraps of biscuit and place them before the apparently blind old rat.

The Post Office was once saved considerable expense by the

assistance of a rat. As most people know, the main telegraph wires in London run through the subways in which the gas-pipes and sewers are placed. The principal arteries are so large that it is easy enough for men to work in them, but the pipes through which the side-wires branch off are much smaller, and great care has to be taken to preserve the connection between the main and the lateral wires. Some years ago men were repairing one of these latter, and carelessly omitted to attach it to a leading-line by which it could be drawn to its place when mended. The blunder seemed likely to have serious consequences, for it was thought that the whole of the lateral pipe would have to be dug up in order to get at the broken wire. But one of the men came to the rescue with a happy thought, suggesting that a rat should be procured, and, with a fine piece of wire attached to it, sent through the pipe. This was done; but, to the dismay of the workmen, the new hand came to a stop after it had gone a few yards. The inventor of this idea was not yet, however, at the end of his resources, and by his advice a ferret was procured and started on the dilatory rat's track. There was a moment of suspense before it was settled whether the rat would show fight or run away, but this was soon ended by the paying-out of the wire, and in a short time the latest addition to the staff of the Post Office appeared at the other end of the pipe. It was caught, the wire detached, and then it was set free in recognition of the service it had rendered. By means of the wire the telegraph line was secured, and a long and laborious piece of work saved.

Having said a good word for the rat, it will not be out of place to mention a generally unsuspected piece of evil which is frequently done by it. Rats can, and often do, fill the most healthy house with drain gases by making a passage from drain or cess-pool with their never-resting teeth. When planning the drainage of a house, the possibility of this should not be overlooked, and steps should be taken to prevent it by the use of such concrete as we have already described. The destructive and ceaseless gnawing of rats is, however, to a great extent a matter of necessity with them, for the construction of their teeth forces them to continually gnaw or perish. The rat's cutting instruments consist of four long and very sharp teeth, two in the upper and two in the lower jaw. The shape of these resembles that of a wedge, and they are always kept sharp by a wonderful provision of nature. The inner part of them is of a soft composition, resembling ivory,



which wears away easily, but which is protected by a covering of particularly hard enamel. In the act of gnawing, the upper teeth fit exactly into the lower, so that the soft part of each is perpetually worn away, while the enamel preserves a hard chisel-like edge. The growth of these teeth continues during the whole lifetime of the animal, with the result that they are renewed as fast as they are worn down. In consequence of this arrangement, if one of the four is broken off, the corresponding one continues to grow unchecked, in time protruding from the mouth, and turning upon itself until its luckless owner's jaws are completely locked. Cases have been known where a rat's under-tooth has run into the skull of the animal. In the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons there is a rat's incisor-tooth which has developed to such an enormous extent that it forms a complete circle and a segment of another, the diameter being sufficiently large to permit the insertion of the thumb. The rat emulates the fox in his skill at 'playing 'possum' when occasion arises. One has been taken up by the tail after having been apparently worried to death by a dog, carried about for some time with limbs motionless and muscles perfectly inactive, and, on being thrown down, has scampered away, seeming as full of life and energy as ever it was.

For some reason, which has never been satisfactorily explained, male rats outnumber their companions of the gentler sex by at least two to one. Were it not for the check placed upon their increase by this disparity in the numbers of the sexes, the spread of the species would be unendurably rapid. The cannibalistic habits of the rat are thought by some observers to be responsible for this incongruity, as the flesh of the female is more tender than that of the male. In times of scarcity, the weaker rats are invariably sacrificed to the appetites of the stronger, and, like wolves, these little savages will fall upon and devour any of their number that may be wounded. Rats execute their marauding raids with a rapidity which is simply wonderful. The writer was made unpleasantly aware of this by the suddenness with which a promising family of ducklings were carried off one morning. At eight o'clock the brood of fourteen was fed and counted; at ten minutes past the hour one little black duckling was the sole survivor. Spots of blood along the ground showed that the rats had dragged their victims down some holes in an outhouse, and on digging there the thirteen ducklings were found, none of them

more than a foot or two under ground. A regular troop of rats must have been on the watch to attack the little fluffy balls when their food was claiming all their attention; and considerable promptness must have been required to despatch the thirteen, drag them over ten or twelve yards of ground, and out of sight down the holes, in the short space of ten minutes.

In common with other animals, rats appear to possess a marvellous prescience of coming misfortune. Their desertion of doomed ships has passed into a proverb, and they have been known to show the same power of second-sight in the case of buildings. In October, 1853, a mill at Peebles was burnt down, and several hours before the catastrophe a body of rats, amounting in number to at least a hundred, were seen to leave the building and make their way to some wheat-stacks in the neighbourhood.

Commercially, the rat is usually considered valueless, though it is said that fine gloves are in some places made out of its skin. At the Siege of Paris this animal was looked upon as a luxury, and plump specimens fetched good prices. Indeed, if we are to believe the statements made by the Rev. J. G. Wood, whose death has left so great a blank in the ranks of naturalists, and those of one who was in his day scarcely less popular—the late Frank Buckland—‘rat-pie’ is a delicacy which has claims to the attention of the most fastidious epicure. Not long before his decease Mr. Wood said, during a course of lectures, that there was literally no kind of food of which he was more fond than ‘rat-pie,’ adding that the dish frequently appeared at his table, and was highly appreciated by the members of his family and those of their friends who had overcome their first repugnance to it.



*THE COLONEL'S BOY.*

A STRANGER, coming upon the Colonel as he sat in the morning-room of the club regarding his newspaper with an angelic smile, would have sought out another copy of the paper and searched its columns with pleasant anticipations. But I knew better. I knew that the Colonel, though he had put on his glasses and was pretending to cull the news, was really only doing what I verily believe he did after lunch and after dinner, and after he got into bed, and indeed at every one of those periods when the old campaigner, with a care for his digestion and his conscience, selects some soothing matter for meditation. He was thinking of his boy; and I went up to him and smacked him on the shoulder. 'Well, Colonel,' I said, 'how is Jim?'

'Hullo! Why, it's Jolly Joe Bratton!' he replied, dropping his glasses and gripping my hand tightly—for we did not ride and tie at Inkerman for nothing. 'The very man I wanted to see.'

'And Jim, Colonel? How is the boy?' I asked.

'Oh, just as fit as a—a middy on shore!' he answered, speaking jollily, yet, as it seemed to me, with an effort, so that I wondered whether there was anything wrong with the boy—a little bill or two, or some small indiscretion, such as might well be pardoned in as fine a lad as ever stepped, with a six-months-old commission, a new uniform, and a station fifty minutes from London. 'But come,' the Colonel continued before I could make any observation, 'you have lunched, Joe? Will you take a turn?'

'To be sure,' I said; 'on one condition—that you let Kitty give you a cup of tea afterwards.'

'That is a bargain!' he answered heartily; and we went into the hall. Everyone knows the 'Junior United' hall. I had reached my hat down, and was in the act of stepping back from the rack, when someone coming down stairs two at a time—that is the worst of having anyone under field rank in a club—hit me sharply with his elbow. Perhaps my coat fits a bit tightly round the waist nowadays, and perhaps not; any way, I particularly object to being poked in the back—it may be a fad of mine, or it may not—and I turned round sharply, muttering, 'Confound——'

I did not say any more, seeing who had done it; but my gentleman stammered some confused apology, and taking from the Colonel, who had politely picked it up, a letter which it seemed I had knocked out of his hand, he passed into the morning-room with a red face. 'Clumsy scoundrel!' I said, but not so loudly that he could hear it.

'Hullo!' the Colonel exclaimed, standing still, and looking at me with undisguised wonder.

'Well?' I said, perhaps rather testily. 'What is the matter?'

'You are not on good terms with young Farquhar, then?'

'I am not on any terms at all with him,' I answered grumpily.

The Colonel whistled. 'Indeed!' he said, looking down at me with a kind of wistfulness in his eyes; Dick is tall, and I am—well, I was up to standard once. 'I thought—that is, Jim told me—that he was a good deal about your house, Joe. And I rather gathered that he was making up to Kitty, don't you know.'

'You did, did you?' I grunted. 'Well, perhaps he was, and perhaps he wasn't. Any way, she is not for him. And he would not take an answer, the young whipper-snapper!' I continued, giving my anger a little vent, and feeling all the better for it. 'He came persecuting her, if you want to know, and I had to show him the door.'

I think I never saw a man—certainly on the steps of the 'Junior United'—look more pleased than did the Colonel at that moment. 'Gad!' he said, 'then Jim will have a chance?'

'Ho! ho!' I answered, chuckling. 'So the wind sets in that quarter, does it? A chance? I should think he would have a chance, Colonel!'

'And you do not object?'

'Object?' I said. 'Why, it would make me the happiest man in the world, Dick. Are we not the oldest friends? And I have only Kitty and you have only Jim. Why it is—it is just Inker-man over again!'

Really it was, and we stumped down the steps in high delight. Only I felt a little anxious about Kitty's answer, for though I had a strong suspicion that her affections were inclined in the right direction, I could not be sure. The gay young soldier might not have won her heart as he had mine: so that I was still more pleased when the Colonel informed me that he believed Jim intended to put it to the test this very afternoon.

'She is at home,' I said, standing still.



'Ha! ha! ha!' he responded, taking my arm to lead me on.

But I declined to move. 'I'll tell you what,' I said—'it is a quarter to four; if Jim has not popped the question by now, he is not the man I think him. Let us go home, Colonel, and hear the news.'

He demurred a little, but I had him in a hansom in two shakes, and we were bowling along Piccadilly in half-a-dozen more. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation, and, following the direction of his hand, I was just in time to catch a glimpse of Jim's face—no other's—as he shot past us in a cab going eastwards. It left us in no doubt, for the lad's cheeks were flushed and his eyes shining, and as he swept by and momentarily saw us, he raised his hat with a gesture of triumph.

'Gad!' exclaimed the Colonel, 'I'll bet a guinea he has kissed her! Happy dog!'

'Tra! la! la!' I answered. 'I dare swear we shall not find Kitty in tears.'

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when the cab swerved suddenly to one side, throwing me against my companion. I heard our driver shout, and caught sight of a bareheaded man mixed up with the near shaft. The next moment we gave a great lurch and stopped, and a little crowd came round us. The Colonel was the first out, but I joined him as quickly as I could. 'I do not think he is much hurt, sir,' I heard the policeman say. 'He is drunk, I fancy. Come, old chap, pull yourself together,' he continued, giving a slight shake to the grey-haired man whom he and a bystander were supporting. 'There, hold up now. Here is your hat. You are all right.'

And sure enough the man, whose red nose and shabby attire seemed to lend probability to the policeman's accusation, managed when left to himself to keep his balance—with some wavering. 'Hullo!' he muttered, looking uncertainly upon the crowd round him. 'Is my son here to take me home? Isaac? Where is Isaac?'

'He is a bit shaken,' said the policeman, viewing him with an air of experience. 'And three parts drunk besides. He had better go to the station.'

'Where do you live?' said the Colonel.

'Greek Street, Soho, number twenty-seven, top floor'—this was answered glibly enough. 'And I'll tell you what,' the man added with a drunken hiccough and a sudden reel which left him on the

policeman's shoulder—'if any gentleman will take another gentleman home, I will make him rich beyond the dreams of avarice. I'll present him his weight in gold. That I will. His weight in gold!'

'I think——' the Colonel began, turning and meeting my eye.

'His weight in gold!' murmured the drunken man.

'Quite so!' I said, accepting the Colonel's unspoken suggestion. 'We will see him home all right, policeman.' And paying our cabman, I hailed a crawling four-wheeler, into which the officer promptly bundled our man. We got in, and in a moment were jolting eastwards again at a snail's pace.

'Perhaps we might have sent someone else with him,' said the Colonel, looking at me apologetically.

'Not at all!' I answered. I have no doubt that we both had the same feeling, that being happy ourselves it would not ill become us to do a good turn to this poor old wretch, whose shaking hands and tattered clothes showed that he had almost reached the bottom of the hill. I have seen more than one brother officer, once as gallant a lad as Jim, brought as low, and perhaps, but for Providence, old Joe Bratton himself—— But there, it may have been some such thought as this, or it may have been an extra glass of sherry at lunch, made us take the man home. We did it; and the Lord only knows why fellows do things—good or bad.

Hauling out our charge at the door of twenty-seven, we lugged him up the dingy stairs, the gibberish which he never ceased to repeat about the dreams of avarice and our weight in gold sounding ten times as absurd on the common staircase of this dirty tenth-rate lodging-house. The attic gained, he straightened himself, and, winking at us with drunken gravity, laid his hand upon the latch of one of the doors. 'You shall see—what you shall see!' he muttered, and throwing open the door he stumbled into the room. The Colonel raised his eyebrows in a protest against our folly, but entered after him, and I followed.

There was only one person in the garret, which was as miserable and poverty-stricken as room could well be; and he rose and confronted us with an exclamation of anger. He was a young fellow, twenty years old perhaps, of middle size, sallow and dark-eyed, and to my thinking half-starved. The drunken man seemed unaware of his feelings, however, for he balanced himself on the floor between us, and waved his hand towards him.



'Here you are, gentlemen!' he cried. 'I'm a man of my word! Allow me to introduce you! My son, Isaac Gold. Did not I tell you? Present you—your weight in gold—or nearly so.'

'Father!' said the lad, eyeing him gloomily, 'go and lie down.'

'Ha! ha! Your weight in gold, gentlemen!'

'Your father was knocked down by a cab,' the Colonel said quietly, 'and finding that he was not able to take care of himself we brought him home.'

The young man looked at us furtively, but did not answer. Instead, he took his father by the arm and forced him gently to a mattress which lay in one corner, half hidden by a towel-rail—the latter bearing at present a shirt, evidently home-washed and hung out to dry. Twice the old fool started up muttering the same rubbish; but the third time he went off into a heavy sleep. There was something pitiful to my eyes in the boy's patience with him: so that when the lad at last turned to us and, with eyes which fiercely resented our presence, bade us begone if we had satisfied our curiosity, I was not surprised that the Colonel held his ground. 'I am afraid you are badly off,' he said gently.

'What's that to you?' was the other's insolent answer. 'Do you want to be paid for your services?'

'Steady! steady, my lad!' I put in. 'You get nothing by that.'

'I think I know you,' the Colonel continued, regarding him steadily. 'There was a charge preferred against you, or someone of your name, at a police-office a few weeks ago, of personating a candidate at the examination for commissions in the army. The charge failed, I know.'

The young man's colour rose as the Colonel spoke; but his manner indicated rather triumph than shame, and his dark eyes sparkled with malice as he retorted: 'It failed? Yes, you are right there. You have been in the army yourself, I dare say?'

'I have,' said the Colonel gravely.

'An honourable profession, is it not?' the lad continued in a tone of biting mockery. 'How many of your young friends, do you think, passed in honestly? It is a competitive examination, too, mind you. And how many do you think employed me—me—to pass for them?'

'You should be ashamed to boast of it,' said the Colonel. 'even if you are not afraid.'

‘And what should they be? Tell me that!’

‘They are low, mean scoundrels, whoever they are.’

‘So! so! You think so!’ laughed the young fellow triumphantly. And then all at once the light seemed to die out of his keen, clever face, and I saw before me only a half-starved lad, with his shabby clerk’s coat buttoned up to his throat to hide the want of a shirt. The same change was visible, I think, to the Colonel’s eye, for he looked at me and muttered something about the cab; and understanding that he wanted a word with the young fellow alone, I went to the window and for a moment or so pretended to gaze through its murky panes. When I turned, the two men were talking by the door; the drunken father was snoring behind his improvised screen; and on a painted deal table beside me I remarked the one and only article of luxury in the room—a small soiled album. With a grunt I threw it open. It disclosed the portraits of two lads, simpering whiskerless faces, surmounting irreproachable dog-collars and sporting pins. I turned a page and came on two more bearing a family resemblance in features, dog-collars, and pins to the others. I turned again, with a pish! and a pshaw! and found a vacant place, and opposite it—a portrait of Jim!

I stared at it for a moment in unthinking wonder, and then in a twinkling it flashed across me what these portraits were, and above all, what this portrait of Jim placed in this scoundrel’s album meant. I remembered how anxious the Colonel had been as the lad’s examination drew near; how bitterly he had denounced the competitive system, and vowed a dozen times a day that, what with pundits and crammers and young officers who should have been girls and gone to Girton, the service was going to the dogs—‘To the dogs, do you hear me, sir!’ And then I recalled his great relief when the boy came out quite high up; ay, and the vast change which had at once taken place in his sentiments: ‘We must move with the times, sir; it is no good running your head against a brick wall,’ and so forth. And—well, I let fall a pretty strong word, at which the Colonel turned sharply.

‘What is it, Major?’ he said. But, seeing me standing still by the window, he turned again and added to the young man beside him, ‘Well, you think about it, and let me know at that address. Now,’ he continued, advancing towards me, ‘what is it, Joe?’



‘What is what?’ I said grumpily. I had shut the album by this time, and was standing between him and the table on which it lay. I do not know why—perhaps it came of the kindness he had just been doing—but I noticed in a way I had never noticed before what a fine figure of a man, tall and straight and noble, my old comrade still was. And a bit of a dimness, such as I have experienced once or twice lately when I have taken a third glass of sherry at lunch, came over my sight. ‘Confound it!’ I said.

‘What is it?’ he asked.

‘Something in my eye!’

‘Let me get it out,’ he said—always the kindest fellow under the sun.

‘No! I’ll get it out myself!’ I snarled like a bear with a sore head. And on that, without stopping to explain, I plunged out of the room and down the stairs. The Colonel, wondering no doubt what was the matter with me, followed more leisurely, pausing to say a last kindly word to that young rascal at the door, whom I had not had the patience to speak to: so that I had already closed a warm dispute with the cabman, by sending him off with a flea in his ear and his fare to a sixpence, when he overtook me.

‘What is up, Joe?’ he asked, laying his hand on my shoulder.

‘That d——d dizziness—but there, I have always said the ’73 sherry at the club is not sound—came over me again. I do not feel quite up to the mark,’ I continued with perfect truth. ‘I think I will go home alone, Colonel, if you do not mind.’

‘I do mind,’ said he, stoutly. ‘You may want an arm.’ But somehow I made it clear to him that I would rather be alone, and that the walk would do me good, and he got at last into a hansom and drove off, his grey moustache and fine old nose peering at me round the side of the cab, until a corner hid him altogether.

I had walked on a few paces, waving my umbrella cheerfully; but there I stopped, and, retracing my steps, mounted the staircase of twenty-seven, and without parley opened the door. The young fellow we had left was pacing the floor restlessly, turning over in his mind, I suspected, what the Colonel had said to him. He stood still on seeing me, and then glanced round the room. ‘Have you forgotten anything?’ he said.

‘Nothing, young man,’ I answered. ‘I want to ask you a question.’

'You can ask,' he replied, eyeing me askance.

'That album,' I said, pointing to it—'it contains, I suppose, the photographs of the people you have been employed to personate?'

'Possibly.'

'But does it?'

'I did not know,' he said slowly, in the most provoking manner, 'that I had to do with a detective. What is the charge?'

'There is no charge,' I answered, keeping my temper really admirably. 'But I have seen the face of a friend of mine in that book, and I'll—in a word, I'll be hanged, young man, if I don't learn all about it!' I continued. 'All—do you hear? So there! Now, out with it, and do not keep me waiting, you young rascal!'

He only whistled and stared; and finding I was perhaps getting a little warm, I took out my handkerchief, and wiping my forehead, sat down, the thought of the Colonel's grief taking all the strength out of me. 'Look here,' I said in a different tone, 'I'll take back what I have just said, and I give you my word of honour I do not want to harm the young man. But I have seen his portrait, and, if I know no more, must think the worst. Now I will give you a ten-pound note if you will answer three questions.'

He shook his head; but I saw that he hesitated. 'I did not show you the portrait,' he said. 'If you have seen it, that is your business. But I will name no names.'

'I want none,' I answered hurriedly. I threw open the album at the tell-tale photograph, and laid my trembling finger on the face. 'Was this sent to you that you might personate the original?'

He nodded.

'From what place?'

He considered a moment. Then he said reluctantly: 'From Frome, in Somerset, I think.'

'Last year?'

He nodded again. Alas! Jim had been at a crammer's near Frome. Jim had passed his examination during the last year. I took out the money and gave it to the man; and a minute later I was standing in the street with a sentence heard more than once at mess in the old days ringing in my ears: 'Refer it to the Colonel! He is the soul of honour.'

The soul of honour! Umph! What would he think of this?



The soul of honour!—and his son, his son Jim, had done this! I walked through the streets in a kind of amaze. I had loved the boy right well myself, and was ready to choke on my own account when I thought of him. But his father—I knew that his father was wrapped up in him. His father had been a mother to him as well, and that for years—had bought him toys as a lad, and furnished his quarters later with things of which only a mother would have thought. It would kill his father.

I wiped my forehead slowly as I thought of this and put my latch-key into the door in Pont Street. I walked in with a heavy sigh—I do not know that I ever entered with so sad a heart—and the next moment, with a flutter of skirts, Kitty was out of the dining-room, where I do not doubt she had been watching for me, and in my arms. Before Heaven! until I saw her I had not thought of her—I had never considered her at all in connection with this matter, or how I should deal with her, until I heard her say with her face on my shoulder, and her eyes looking up to mine: ‘Oh, father, father, I am so happy! Please, wish me joy.’

Wish her joy! I could not. I could only mutter, ‘St! wait, girl—wait, wait!’ and lead her into the dining-room, and, turning my back on her, go to the window and look out—though for all I saw I might have had my head in a soot-bag. She was alarmed of course—but to save her that I could not face her—and came after me and clung to my arm, asking me again and again what it was.

‘Nothing, nothing,’ I said. ‘There—wait a minute; don’t you know that I shall lose you?’

‘Father,’ she said sharply, trying to look into my face, ‘it is not that. You know you will not lose me! There is something else the matter. Ah! Jim went in a cab, and——’

‘Jim is all right,’ I answered roughly, feeling her hand fall from my arm. ‘In that way at any rate.’

‘Then I am not afraid,’ she answered stoutly, ‘if you and Jim are all right.’

‘Look here, Kitty,’ I said, making up my mind, ‘sit down, I want to talk to you.’

And she did sit down, and I told her all. With some girls it might not have been the best course; but Kitty is not like most of the girls I meet nowadays—one half of whom are blue stockings, with no more aptitude for the duties of wives and mothers

than the statuettes in a shop window, and the other half are misses in white muslin, who are always either giggling pertly or sitting with their thumbs in their mouths. Kitty is a companion, a helpmeet, God bless her! She knows that Wellington did not fight at Blenheim, and she does not think that Lucknow is in the Crimea. She knows no Greek and she loves dancing—her very eyes dance at the thought of it. But she would rather sit at home with the man she loves than waltz at Marlborough House. And if she has not learned a little fortification on the sly, and does not know how many men stand between Jim and his company—I am a Dutchman! Lord! when I see a man marry a girl for a pretty face—not that Kitty has not a pretty face, and a sweet one too, no thanks to her father—I wonder whether he has considered what it will be to sit opposite my lady at, say, twenty thousand nine hundred meals on an average! Phauh! That is the test, sir.

So I told Kitty all, and the way she took it showed me that I was right. 'What!' she exclaimed, when I had finished the story, to which she had listened breathlessly, with her face half turned from me, and her arm on the mantel-piece, 'is that all, father?'

'My dear,' I said sadly, 'you do not understand.' I remembered how often I had heard—ay, and sometimes noticed—that women's ideas of honour differ from men's.

'Understand!' she retorted, fiery hot. 'I understand that you think Jim has done this thing—this mean, miserable, wretched thing. Father,' she continued, turning with sudden earnestness and laying both her hands on my shoulders, so that her brave grey eyes looked into my eyes, 'if three people came to you and told you that I had gone into your bedroom and taken money from the cash-box in your cupboard to pay some bill of mine, and that when I had done it I had kept it from you, and told stories about it—if three, four, five people told you that they had seen me do it, would you believe them?'

'Never, Kitty,' I said, smiling against my will, 'not though five angels told me so, my dear. It would be absurd. I know you too well.'

'And this is absurd—absurd, do you hear, father? Do you think I do not know him—and love him?'

And the foolish girl, who had begun to waltz round the room like a mad thing, stopped suddenly and looked at me with tears in her eyes and her lips quivering.



I could not but take some comfort from her confidence.

'Certainly,' I said. 'The Colonel brought him up, and it seems hardly possible that the lad should turn out so bad. But the photograph, my girl—the photograph? What do you say to that? It was Jim, I can swear. I could not be mistaken. There could not be another so like him.'

'There is no one like him,' she answered softly.

'Very well. And then I have noticed that he has been in bad spirits lately. A bad conscience, I fear.'

'You dear old donkey!' she answered, shaking me with both her little hands. 'That was about me. He has told me all that. He thought Mr. Farquhar—Mr. Farquhar, indeed!'

'Oh, that was it, was it?' I said. 'Well, that may account for his depression of spirits. But look you here, Kitty; was he not rather nervous about his examination?'

'A little,' she answered with reluctance.

'And, nevertheless, did he not come out tolerably high?'

'Seventeenth. Thirteen thousand four hundred and twenty-six marks,' Kitty replied glibly.

'Umph! And if he had failed he would have suffered in your eyes?'

'Not a scrap. And, besides, he did not fail,' she retorted.

'But he may have thought he would suffer,' I answered, 'if he failed. That would be a sharp temptation, Kitty.'

She did not reply at once. She was busy rolling up some ribbon of her frock into the smallest possible compass, and unrolling it again. At last she said:

'I know he did not do it, but that is all I do know. I cannot prove to you that white is not black, but it is not, and I know it is not.'

'Well, my dear, I hope you are right,' I answered. And it cheered me to find that she at least was worthy of confidence.

She promised readily to let me have the first word with the lad when he called next day; and as for undertaking to have nothing more to do with him if the charge should prove to be true, she made nothing of that—because, as she said, it really meant nothing.

'A Jim who had done that would not be my Jim at all,' she explained gaily, 'but quite a different Jim—a James, sir.'

Certainly, a girl's faith is a wonderful thing. And hers so far affected me that I regretted I had not taken a bolder course, and,

showing the photograph to the Colonel, had the whole thing threshed out on the spot. Possibly I might have saved myself a very wretched hour or two. But no, on second thoughts I could not see how the boy could be innocent. I could not help piecing the evidence together—the damning evidence, as it seemed to me—the certain identity of Jim with the original of the photograph, the arrival of the latter from Frome, where the lad had spent the last weeks previous to his examination, the fears he had expressed before the ordeal, and his success beyond his hopes at it; these things seemed almost conclusive. I had only the boy's character, his father's training, and his sweetheart's faith, to set against them.

His sweetheart's faith, did I say? Ah, well! when I came down to breakfast next morning, whom should I find in tears—and she, as a rule, the most equable girl in the world—but Kitty.

'Hullo!' I said. 'What is all this?'

At the sound of my voice she sprang to her feet; she had been kneeling by the fireplace groping with her hands inside the fender. Her cheeks were crimson, and she was crying—yes, certainly crying, although she had tried by a hasty dab of the flimsy thing she calls a pocket-handkerchief to remove the traces.

'Well!' I said, for she was dumb. 'What is it, my dear?'

'I have—torn up a letter,' she answered, a little sob dividing the sentence into two.

'So I see,' I answered dryly. 'And now, I suppose, you are sorry for it.'

'It was a horrid letter, father,' she cried, her eyes shining like electric lamps in a shower—'about Jim.'

'Indeed,' I said, with a very nasty feeling inside me. 'What about Jim? And why did you tear it up, my dear? One half of it, I should say, has gone into the fire.'

'It was from—a woman!' she answered.

And presently she told me that the letter, which was unsigned, accused Jim of having played with the affections of the writer, and warned Kitty to be on her guard against him, and not to be a party to the wrong he was doing an innocent girl.

'Pooh!' I said, with a contemptuous laugh. 'That cock will not fight, my dear. It has been tried over and over again. You do not mean to say that that has made you cry? Why, if so, you are—you are just as big a fool as any girl I ever knew.' And,



indeed, I was surprised to find that Kitty's faith in her lover, which had been proof against a charge made on good evidence, failed before an uncorroborated, unsigned accusation, because, forsooth, it mentioned a woman. 'What postmark did it bear?' I asked.

'Frome,' she murmured.

This was certainly odd—very odd. Pretty devilments I knew those fellows at crammers' were up to sometimes. Could it be that we were all mistaken in Master Jim, as I have once or twice known a lad's family and home friends to be mistaken in him? Was he all the time an out-and-out bad one? Or had he some enemy at Frome plotting against his happiness? This seemed a romantic notion, and absurd besides, since we had lit upon Isaac Gold by a chance, and on the portrait by a chance within a chance, and no enemy, however acute—not Machiavelli himself—could have foreseen the *rencontre* or arranged the circumstances which had led me to the photograph. Therefore, though the anonymous letter might be the work of an ill-wisher, I did not see how the other could be. However, I gathered up the few fragments of writing which had escaped the fire, and put them carefully aside, to serve, if need be, for evidence.

Indeed, I had just made up my mind sternly and sorrowfully that I must put an end to all matters between Jim and my girl unless he should clear himself of these suspicions—when what should I hear but his voice, and his father's, in the hall. There is something in the sound of a familiar voice which so recalls our past knowledge of the speaker that I can think of nothing which pierces the cloud of doubt more thoroughly. At any rate, when the two came in, I jumped up and gave a hand to each. Behind Jim's back one might suspect him; confronted by his laughing eyes, and his brown, honest, boyish face—well, by the Lord! I would as soon have suspected my old comrade, God bless him!

'Jim,' I found myself saying, his hand in mine, and every one of my prudent resolutions gone to the wind, 'Jim, my boy, I am a happy man. Take her and be good to her, and God bless you! No, Colonel, no,' I continued in desperate haste, 'I do not ask a question. Let the lad take her. If your son cannot be trusted no one can. There, I am glad that is settled.'

I verily believe I was almost blubbering; and though I meant to say only what I should have said if this confounded matter had never arisen, I let drop, it seems, enough to set the Colonel ques-

tioning, for in five minutes I had told him the whole story of the photograph.

It was pleasant to observe his demeanour. Though he never for a moment lost his faith in Jim—mind, he had not seen the portrait—and his eyes continued to shoot little glances of confidence at his son, he drew back his chair and squared his shoulders, and altogether assumed a judicial air.

‘Now, sir,’ he said, with his hands on his knees, ‘this must be explained. We are much obliged to the Major for bringing it to our notice. You will be good enough to explain, my lad.’

Jim did explain; or rather, when he answered frankly that he had never heard Isaac Gold’s name before, and certainly had never given him a photograph, I believed him; and when he jumped up with his usual impetuosity and proposed to go at once to Gold’s house and see the photograph, I was delighted. In half a minute we were in a cab, and in ten more had the good luck to discover only old Gold at home. A five-shilling-piece slipped into the drunkard’s hand sufficed to obtain for us the view we desired.

‘I suppose it *is* a likeness of me,’ Jim murmured, looking hard at the photograph.

‘Certainly it is!’ replied the Colonel rather curtly. Up to this moment he had thought me deceived by some chance resemblance.

‘Then let us see who took it, and where it was printed,’ Jim answered in a matter-of-fact tone. ‘I do not believe I have ever been taken in this dress. See, it bears no photographer’s name; probably an amateur has taken it. Let me think.’

While he thought, old Gold potted about the open door of the room on the watch for Isaac’s return. ‘Yes,’ said Jim at last, ‘I think I have it. I was photographed in this dress as one of a group before a meet of the hounds at old Bulcher’s.’

‘At Frome?’

‘Yes. And this has been enlarged, I have no doubt, from the head in the group. But why, or who has done it, or how it comes to be here, I know no more than you do.’

At this moment young Gold’s footsteps were heard outside. He seemed to have some suspicion that his secrets were in danger, for he came up the stairs three at a time, and bounced into the room, looking for a moment, as his eyes lit on us and the open album, as if he would knock us all down. When his glance fell



on Jim, however, a change came over him. It was singular to see the two looking at one another, Jim eyeing him with the supercilious stare of the boy-officer, and he returning the look with a covert recognition in his dark defiant eyes. 'Well,' said Jim, 'do you know me?'

'I have never seen you before to my knowledge.'

'Perhaps you will explain then how you came by this photograph?'

'That is my business!' said Gold sternly.

'Oh, is it?' retorted Jim with fire. 'We will see about that.' I think it annoyed him, as it certainly did me, to detect in the other's glance and tone a subtle meaning—a covert understanding. 'If you do not explain, I'll—I will call in the police, my man.'

But here the Colonel interfered. He told me afterwards that he felt some sympathy for Gold. He summarily silenced Jim, and, telling the other that he should hear from him again, led us downstairs. I noticed that, as we passed out into the street, he slipped his arm through his son's, and I have no doubt he managed to convey to the young fellow as plainly as by words that his faith in him was unshaken.

Very naturally, however, Jim was not satisfied with this or with the present position of things, which was certainly puzzling. 'But, look here!' he said, suddenly standing still in the middle of the pavement, 'what is to be done, sir? That fellow believes or pretends to believe, though he will not say a word, that I have used him to do my dirty work. And I have not! Then why the deuce should he parade my photograph?—Do you think—by George! I believe I have got it—do you think it is a case of blackmail?'

'No,' said the Colonel with decision, 'it cannot be. We came upon the photograph of ourselves and by the purest accident. It was not sent to us, or used against you. No! But look here, I say!' The Colonel in his turn stopped suddenly in the middle of the pavement and struck the latter with his stick. He had got his idea. His eyes sparkled.

'Well?' we said.

'Suppose some other fellow employed Gold to pass the examination, and, having this very fear of being blackmailed in his mind, got a photograph of a friend tolerably like himself, and sent it up instead of his own? What then?'

'Ho! ho! What then? Precisely!' I said. We all nodded

to one another like so many Chinese mandarins, and the Colonel looked proudly at his son, as though saying, 'Now what do you think of your father, my boy?'

'I think you have hit it, sir!' said Jim, answering the unspoken question. 'There were nearly thirty fellows at Bulcher's.'

'And among them there was a low rascal—a low rascal, sir,' replied the Colonel, his eyes sparkling, 'who did not even trust his own companion in iniquity, but arranged to have an answer ready if his accomplice should turn upon him! "I suborned him?" he would say when charged—"I deny it. He has my name pat enough, but has he any proof? A photograph? But that is not my photograph?" Do you see, Major?'

'I see,' I said. 'And now come home with me, both of you, and we will talk it over with Kitty.'

By this time, however, it was two o'clock. Jim, who had only arranged for a flying visit, found he must resign all hope of seeing Kitty to-day, and take a cab to Charing Cross if he would catch his train back. The Colonel had a luncheon engagement—for which he was already late—and so we separated then and there in somewhat of a hurry. When I got back the first question Kitty—who, you may be sure, met me in the hall—asked me was: 'Where is Jim, father?' The second: 'And what does he say about the letter?'

'God bless my soul!' I exclaimed, 'I never gave a thought to it. I am afraid I never mentioned it, my dear. I was thinking about the photograph. I fancy we have got nearly to the bottom of that.'

'Pooh!' she said. And, upon my word, she pretended to take very little interest in the explanation I gave her, though—the sly little cat!—when I dropped the subject, she was quite ready to take it up again, rather than not talk about Jim at all.

I am sometimes late for breakfast; she rarely or never. But next morning on entering the dining-room I found the table laid for one only, and Matthews the maid waiting modestly before the coffee-pot. 'Where is Miss Bratton?' I said grumpily, taking the 'Times' from the fender. 'Miss Kitty had a headache,' was the answer, 'and was taking a cup of tea in bed.' 'Ho, ho!' thought I, 'this comes of being in love! Confound the lads! Sausage? No, I won't have sausage. Who the deuce ordered sausages at this time of year? Bacon? Umph!—seems half done. This coffee is thick. There, that will do. Don't rattle those



cups and saucers all day! Confound the girl!—do you hear? You can go!’ The way women bully a man when they get him alone is a caution.

When I returned from my morning stroll, I heard voices in the dining-room, and looked in to see how Kitty was. Well, she was—in brief, there was just a scene going on. Miss Kitty, her cheeks crimson and her eyes shining, was standing with her back to the window; and facing her, half angry and half embarrassed, was Jim. ‘Hoity toity, you two!’ I said, closing the door behind me. ‘These are early times for this kind of thing. What is up?’

‘I’ll be hanged if I know, sir!’ said Jim, looking rather foolish.

‘What have you got there, my dear?’ I continued, for Kitty had one hand behind her, and I was not slow to connect this hand with the scornful expression on her pretty face.

‘He knows,’ she said, trembling with anger—the little vixen.

‘I know nothing!’ returned Jim sheepishly. ‘I came in, and when I—Kitty flew out and attacked me, don’t you see, sir?’

‘Very well, my dear,’ I answered, ‘if you do not feel able to explain, Jim had better go. Only, if he goes now, of course I cannot say when he will come back.’

‘I will come back, Kitty, whenever you will let me,’ said the young fool.

‘Shut your mouth, sir,’ I replied. ‘Now, Kitty, attend to me. What is it?’

‘Ask him—to whom he gave his photograph at Frome!’ she said, in a breathless sort of way.

‘His photograph? Why, that is just what we were talking about yesterday,’ I replied sharply. ‘I thought it did not interest you, my girl, when I told you all about it last night.’

‘That photograph!’—with withering contempt—‘I do not mean *that*! Do you think I suspect him of *that*?’ She stepped forward as though to go to him, and her face altered wonderfully. Then she recollected herself and fell back. ‘No,’ she said coldly, ‘to what woman, sir, did you give your photograph at Frome?’

‘To no woman at all,’ he said emphatically.

‘Then look at this!’ she said. She held out as she spoke a photograph, which I identified at once as the portrait we had seen at Gold’s, or a copy of that one. I snatched it from Jim with an exclamation. ‘Where did you get this, my girl?’ I asked briskly.

'It came this morning, with another letter from that woman,' she murmured.

I think she began to feel ashamed of herself, and in two minutes I got the letter also from her. It was written by the same hand as the letter of the day before, and was, like it, unsigned. Its purport was merely that the writer, in proof of her good faith, enclosed a photograph which Master Jim—that gay Lothario! if the lady was to be believed—had given her. We were still looking at the letter, when the Colonel came in. I explained the matter to him, and I will answer for it, before he at all understood it, Kitty was more ashamed of herself than ever.

'This photograph and the one at Gold's are facsimiles,' said he thoughtfully. 'That is certain. And both come from Frome. My conclusion is that the gentleman who obtained Jim's photograph for his own purpose last year—to send to Gold, I mean—printed off more than one copy; and having this one by him, and wishing for some reason to cause mischief between Kitty and Jim, he thought of this and used it. The sender is, therefore, someone who passed his examination last year and is still at Frome.'

Jim shook his head.

'If he passed, sir, he would not be at Bulcher's now,' he said.

'On second thoughts he may not be,' replied the Colonel. 'He may have sent the two letters to Frome to some confidential friend with orders to post them. Wait—wait a minute,' my old chum added, looking at me with a sudden light in his keen eyes. 'Where have I seen a letter addressed to Frome—within the last day or two? Eh? Wait a bit.'

We did wait; and presently the Colonel announced his discovery in a voice of grim triumph.

'I have it,' he said. 'It is that scoundrel, Farquhar!'

'Farquhar!' I said. 'What do you mean, Colonel?'

'Just that, Major. Do you remember him knocking against you in the hall at the club the day before yesterday? He dropped a letter, and I picked it up. It was addressed—I could not help seeing so much—to Frome.'

'Well,' said Jim slowly, 'he was at Bulcher's, and he passed last year. And I remember now that no one else from Bulcher's went up at the same examination.'

'And the letter,' continued the Colonel in his turn, 'was in a large envelope—one that would contain a cabinet photograph.'



There was a dead silence in the room. Kitty's face was hidden. Jim moved at last—towards her? No, towards the door. He had his hand on it when the Colonel observed him.

'Stop!' he said sharply. 'Come back, my boy. None of that. The Major and I will deal with him.'

Jim still lingered.

'Well, sir,' he said, 'I will only——'

'Come back!' roared the Colonel, imperiously, but with the most gracious smile in his eyes as he looked at his boy. 'You will stop here, you lucky dog, you. And I hope this will be a lesson to you not to give your photograph to young ladies at Frome.'

If Kitty squirmed a little in her chair at that, well she deserved it. I said before that a woman's faith is a wonderful thing. But when there is another woman in the case—umph!

'Mr. Farquhar, sir? Yes sir, he is in the house,' said the club porter, turning in his glass case to consult his book. 'I believe he went upstairs to the drawing room, sir.'

'Thank you,' the Colonel replied, and he glanced at me and I at him; and then, fixing our hats on tightly, and grasping our sticks, we went upstairs.

We were in luck, as it turned out, for not only was Farquhar in the drawing-room, but there was no one else in the long, stiff, splendid room. He looked up from his writing, and saw us piloting our way towards him between the chairs and tables, and I think he turned green. At any rate, my last doubt left me at sight of his conscience-stricken face.

'A word with you, Mr. Farquhar,' said the Colonel grimly, keeping a tight hand on my arm, for I confess I had been in favour of more drastic measures. 'It is about a photograph.'

'A photograph?' said the startled wretch, his mouth ajar.

'Well, perhaps I should have said two photographs,' replied the Colonel gravely; 'photographs of my son which are lying, one in the possession of Major Bratton, and one in the album of a certain friend of yours, Mr. Isaac Gold.'

He tried to frame the words, 'A friend of mine!' and to feign astonishment and stare us down; but it was a pitiable attempt, and his eyes sank. He could only mutter, 'I do not know him. There is some mistake.'

'Perhaps so,' said the Colonel smoothly. 'I hope there is

some mistake. But let me tell you this, Mr. Farquhar. Unless you apply within a week for leave to resign your commission in Her Majesty's service, I shall lay certain facts concerning these photographs before the Commander-in-Chief and before the mess of your regiment. You understand me, I think? Very well. That is all I wish to say to you.'

Apparently he had nothing to say to us in return, and we were both glad, I think, to turn our backs on that baffled, spiteful face, in which the horror of discovery strove with the fear of ruin. It is ill striking a man when he is down, and I was glad to get out of the house and breathe a purer air.

We had no need to go to the Commander-in-Chief. Lieutenant Farquhar applied for leave to resign within the week, and Her Majesty obtained, I think, a better bargain in Private Isaac Gold, who, following the Colonel's advice, enlisted about this time. He is already a corporal, and, aided by an education rare in the ranks, bids fair to earn a sergeant's stripes at an early date. He has turned over a new leaf—the Colonel always maintained that he had a keen sense of honour; and I feel little doubt that if he ever has the luck to rise to Farquhar's grade, and bear the Queen's commission, he will be a credit to it and to his friend and brother officer—the Colonel's boy. Not, mind you, that I think he will ever be as good a fellow as Jim! No, no.



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*THE BURNT MILLION.*

BY JAMES PAYN,  
AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY,' ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MR. ROSCOE'S CONGRATULATIONS.

It is probable that Grace's guardian had come down to Halswater in no very exacting mood towards his ward and favourite. The letter he had had from the Doctor had no doubt gone far to convince him that her complete recovery would be dependent upon the course of true love, which had been so cruelly interrupted, running for the future smoothly; and though it was both his duty and his desire to preserve her fortune for her, he felt that her health and happiness were still more important things; moreover, the fact, now patent to him, that Mr. Roscoe had by foul means broken the bond between the young couple, no doubt inclined him to mend it, and, above all, Grace had kissed him. (Of course it was foolish of him to allow that last little matter to influence his conduct, but as a matter of fact it did, and he would have been worse than a fool had it been otherwise. The remembrance of how the girl he loved as though she had been his own daughter, weak and ill, and the mere shadow of her former self, had tottered out of her chair to thank him for his good tidings with a kiss, compelled him to obey her wishes as though they had been a decree of the Court of Chancery. After all, he had saved a little money for her in spite of her large charities, and she would have the ten thousand pounds which

Josh had left—though less in love than to make his testament secure—to any of his daughters that should go counter to the provisions of his will ; and Walter had a little money of his own, and a profession to follow.

Upon the whole, therefore, one may say that Mr. Allerton, instead of being an opponent of the young people, had accepted a retainer (from himself) on the other side. He did not grudge Philippa the good luck which would now make her for life, and possibly for ever, the inheritress of her father's colossal fortune ; it was better so, at all events, than if Agnes (because she had been less kind to Grace) had been in her place, though if he had known Philippa's secret his views might have altered altogether. To have found himself outwitted by Mr. Roscoe, and *that* man the master of Josh's million, would have been intolerable to the lawyer. In the present relations, however (so far as he understood them), between her and him, no such result seemed possible ; and he could so far afford to treat his enemy with great politeness. What puzzled him was why Mr. Roscoe had endeavoured to stop Grace's marriage. So long as he kept on good terms with the other two sisters, as had until lately seemed to be the case, there was every reason why he should have encouraged it. The person over whom he exercised so great an influence would have been far the richer by it ; and indeed there had been a time when he had certainly wished Grace to marry. However, it was obvious, whatever his reason, that he did not wish it now, and therefore Mr. Allerton could not resist the temptation of telling him with his own lips that the young couple were in a fair way of being reconciled.

'There has been some unfortunate misunderstanding, it seems,' he said, 'upon the part of Miss Grace ; but you will be happy to hear that it has now been cleared away.'

It was in the garden, where, just after he left Grace's room, he found Mr. Roscoe walking to and fro, that the lawyer made this innocent communication to him.

Mr. Roscoe gave him such a look as, if looks could wither, would have left him a skeleton, but answered indifferently enough, 'That is good news indeed.'

That he did not ask for any explanation of such unexpected tidings was proof positive to the lawyer that he did not dare to do so. This he did not need, however, as a corroboration of his view of Mr. Edward Roscoe's character, which had long been



formed ; of late days it had taken a dark tinge indeed, and if the other could have peeped into the lawyer's mind he would have been startled at the picture of himself he would have found there.

'Is Miss Grace sufficiently well to receive visitors?' inquired Mr. Roscoe, presently.

'That depends; she has just seen *me*,' observed Mr. Allerton.

'Oh, of course; you are her guardian and her friend—which last, indeed,' he added hastily, 'we all are. But I suppose any thing liable to evoke excitement is still forbidden her.'

'The Doctor tells me Sinclair may be permitted to see her for a few minutes.'

'Oh!'—only a monosyllable, but it seemed to say a good deal; 'things have gone so far on the way of reconciliation as *that*, have they?'

'She will not, however, be able to see any one else to-day, I should say,' continued Mr. Allerton, significantly.

He would have forbidden him the sick-room altogether if he could have done so with reason.

'That seems judicious,' observed the other, coldly. 'Perhaps to-morrow she may be strong enough to receive my poor congratulations.'

In the meantime Walter had been permitted an interview with Grace, which was positively to last but a few minutes. Under such circumstances they were sure not to waste it in mere explanations which could be entered upon at any time if it was worth while; moreover, Walter had been warned against them by the Doctor. The great point was that they were in each other's arms again.

'Heaven is very good to me,' murmured Grace in his ear. Walter smiled a little deprecatingly, as though he would have said, 'So it ought to be, for are you not one of its own angels?'

'I never thought to see you again, Walter, my darling! Oh, what have I not suffered!'

'No matter, sweetheart, it is all over now; you have only to get well.'

'I *am* well,' she answered; which was not quite true, but very pretty. The Beautiful and the True are not always the same thing, notwithstanding what the poets tell us.

'How could you, *could* you, bid me go away from you?' he whispered, not reproachfully, but with the air of one who asks for information.

‘You may well ask; I must have been mad to believe them.’

‘*Them?* What was it they said against me?’ inquired Walter.

‘Nothing. Do you think I should have believed them if they had?’ she answered indignantly.

‘Of course not,’ he said. It sounded like complacency, but he had suddenly remembered that this was a forbidden subject. ‘As soon as you are strong enough you are to go south, to the sea-side,’ he added hastily.

‘What! away from you?’

‘How could that be possible, darling? Where thou goest I will go.’ He was about to continue the quotation with ‘My people shall be thy people,’ but felt it far from apposite and checked himself—not, however, as it appeared, in time.

‘Do my sisters know that you are with me?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ he said unhesitatingly; the subject of Agnes was not of course to be discussed, but on the other hand reticence itself might provoke suspicion. ‘Philippa was most kind in her congratulations; I believe she is genuinely fond of you.’

‘It is sad to have to make exceptions,’ she answered with a sigh. ‘I wish to be at peace with all the world. I suppose Agnes will come to see me presently.’

The Doctor had entered the room as she was speaking.

‘Not to-day, Miss Grace,’ he observed cheerfully; ‘you have had visitors enough. This one, indeed, flattered himself that you would not wish to see another after him—like leaving a pleasant taste in the mouth, which one is averse to lose by taking anything afterwards.’

‘The Doctor is professional, even in his metaphors,’ said Grace with a pleasant smile.

‘I like to see my patients impudent,’ returned the kindly old fellow. ‘It may, however, be the result of intoxication; I think you have had enough of this stimulant, my dear,’ he added, looking towards Walter. ‘His five minutes are up.’

The young man rose at once. Though he had said so little, he felt that there had been no loss of time. He was another man already, or rather two beings in one. His heart was filled with love and gratitude, and had no room for ignoble thoughts. He had even forgiven his enemies since all their plans had failed. In the library he found the brothers, apparently in far from amicable discourse. In reply to their inquiries after Grace, he gave them all particulars save those which concerned himself. He knew



that Richard's sympathy was genuine, and he could not believe just then that even Mr. Roscoe could be indifferent to his news. Nor did that gentleman seem indifferent; he was quite interested, indeed, in some parts of the narrative, and put several questions.

'Did she really look as if she had "turned the corner"? Was she in good spirits? Was the nurse always in her room? That Doctor, who dispensed his own medicines, gave her plenty of them, no doubt.'

Walter stood up for the Doctor, of whom Grace had spoken very warmly, and thought there had been nothing to complain of in that respect. 'She took no medicines now,' he said, 'except a strong tonic—strychnine.'

'A very dangerous thing,' observed Mr. Roscoe.

'It doesn't lie about,' said Walter, 'but is kept in the medicine chest in Miss Agnes's room, and administered only by the Doctor himself. He is a very careful fellow.'

Mr. Roscoe was glad to hear it, glad to hear such a good report of the dear invalid, glad to find (from Mr. Allerton) that the cloud that had shadowed the young people's prospects of late had given way to sunshine.

It would have seemed, in short, strange to Walter that Mr. Roscoe, in his effusiveness, had not shaken hands with him, but that he reflected that his offering to do so would have seemed too much like 'making up,' and it was evidently the other's endeavour to show that there was no need for that, nor ever had been. The young fellow was willing enough to find things on this footing. He was in Eden, and did not wish to be reminded of the existence of the serpent: he, too, wished to be at peace with everybody.

Curiously enough, Richard had manifested less concern in what he had to say than Edward, on whom he kept his eyes throughout with no very fraternal expression.

'I am afraid, Richard, you have been having some unpleasantness with your brother?' said Walter, when they found themselves alone together.

'Well, yes,' replied Richard reluctantly, 'we have each been telling the other what we thought of him.'

'That is bad,' answered Walter, though, in truth, nothing seemed bad, or at least unendurable, to him at that moment. 'It is like two women telling one another that they are ugly.'

‘Well, we didn’t say that,’ replied Richard gravely; ‘but let me tell you one thing: my brother is never so ugly as when he smiles, and he has been smiling on you. It is a bad sign.’

‘Come, come, that is a jaundiced view indeed,’ remonstrated Walter. ‘Of course he is not pleased at the failure of his plans, though he pretends to be; but, like a gambler who has lost, he has made up his mind to pay up and look pleasant. Do not let us be hard upon him, when everything has turned out well. Oh, Richard, I am so happy.’

‘You deserve to be,’ sighed Richard. ‘You are a good fellow. But do not let generosity to a fallen enemy carry you too far—to trust him, for instance. The Indian is never so dangerous as when he has received a mortal wound. I have seen a man kneel down by the side of one to give him a cup of water, and get a knife driven into his heart for his pains.’

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## CHAPTER L.

### HIS LAST THROW.

GOOD news is the best of tonics, and the day after her interview with Walter, Grace felt that she had made great progress on the road to convalescence. The Doctor, who had hitherto come twice a day, was not to visit her in the afternoon; but in the morning, finding her both able and willing to receive visitors, he gave her permission to do so after the midday meal. He would have preferred such excitement to be postponed still a little longer, but his patient was nervously desirous to get both visits over—especially that of Mr. Roscoe, who had made tender application to see her. It was the less easy to refuse it since Agnes could not come, for a reason that they did not as yet dare tell her, but ascribed her absence to indisposition. If Grace felt equal to receiving two visitors, she could certainly see one. In reality, she was neither so strong, nor so brave, as she represented herself to be. The last time she had seen Mr. Roscoe he had almost driven her into her grave with his falsehoods and insinuations; and though she had no fear of their being repeated, and was willing enough to let bygones be bygones, she could not forget them; but having once said, ‘I will see him,’ she had not the courage to own herself a coward.



Philippa's tone, when she brought his message to her, had not been reassuring; she repeated it like a parrot, yet with an air of distress which to Grace was unaccountable.

'You must not be astonished,' she said, 'if you see some change in Mr. Roscoe. He has had his troubles like the rest of us.'

In the case of any other person Grace would have inquired, 'What troubles?' Her silence and want of sympathy spoke volumes, but awoke no surprise in her sister. Her wonder was that no one but herself seemed to have any suspicion of Edward Roscoe in connection with the disappearance of her sister. To her mind his very face—for she had spoken less than the truth when she said, 'You will see some change in him'—was a self-accusation of crime. His hollow eyes illumined by strange fires (like natural caverns shown to visitors), his sunken cheeks, his listening and distracted air, were to her fancy so many witnesses against him; yet, ghost of his former self as he was, she did not pity him, and felt as if she never should. In this last conviction she was, however, mistaken. She had gone to him at his desire that morning to acquaint him with the result of his application to see Grace.

'She will see you at half-past two,' she said. 'You must not talk to her on any exciting subject. The interview must not last beyond five minutes. The nurse will be in the next room, and will come in at the expiration of that time.'

All this was said mechanically, as if learned by rote and spoken to a stranger; but she was satisfied with the performance of her task. She had at least shown no sign of the horror and loathing with which she regarded him. And he, too, had seemed satisfied, for indeed he now expected little from her. It was something that she could command herself, which, when they were alone together, was by no means always the case. She would give way to remorse, despair, and hysterical sobbings, to stop which neither menace nor arguments—blandishments he dared not use, she shrank from them as though he were a leper—were of any avail.

'I will come to you,' he said, 'at the appointed time, if you will be my usher.'

But she saw him before that.

She had been despatched by the doctor to administer Grace's tonic to her that forenoon, and was on her way to Agnes's room

to fetch it, when she met her husband face to face at the very door. He was coming out as she was going into the room, and they both started back in amazement and alarm. It was not a place in which either of them was likely to find the other, for it was hateful to both of them; but Philippa, as has been said, had business there.

‘I came for a book,’ he said, in dry, hoarse tones, in answer to her wondering glance, ‘but could not find it.’ It was strange that he could not also find a less transparent excuse for what he had not been accused of, but Edward Roscoe was not himself. Nor, even of late days, had he ever looked so unlike himself. His face was livid, his eyes were wild and bloodshot.

‘What is the matter?’ inquired Philippa, terrified for the moment by his appearance out of the utter indifference to his well-being or otherwise that had taken possession of her.

‘Nothing. You had better ask no questions. All you have henceforth to do is to hold your tongue. Forget everything else and remember *that*.’

The words were spoken like the flick of a whip, and there had been a time when they would have silenced her; but her fear of him, strangely enough, was half overcome by her fear *for* him. She was convinced that he was about to do something desperate, and, as she thought, to himself. This man was after all her husband.

‘Edward, what are you thinking of? Do not look at me like that. It is possible to make matters even worse than they are.’

‘They must be worse before they are better,’ he answered coldly. ‘Leave *me* alone, and I will leave *you* alone.’ She was moving after him as fast as her trembling limbs would permit her; he turned round and faced her with a mocking smile. ‘You had better not; I am going somewhere where you would not like to follow me.’ He passed through the door that shut off the corridor from the narrow staircase and locked it behind him.

A few minutes afterwards Philippa, with head uncovered, was running through the thick falling snow to the ‘Cottage,’ crying, ‘Richard! Richard!’

Richard Roscoe met her in the lobby.

‘Your brother has left the house,’ she cried in pitiful tones. ‘For heaven’s sake, follow him; I fear he will do himself a mischief.’



‘I think not,’ he answered drily. ‘Let me know exactly what has happened.’

She told him what had actually taken place, for, indeed, she had no wits left to conceal, far less to invent, anything. ‘I met him coming out of Agnes’s sitting-room, looking like a madman; he said he was going somewhere where I dared not follow him—and he is gone.’

‘Was that all?’ inquired the other cynically, when Philippa stopped for want of breath.

‘Alas! no, it was not all. When I opened the medicine chest in Agnes’s room to get her tonic, as the doctor had told me to do—it is strychnine, you know—the bottle was gone.’

‘The strychnine!’ cried Richard, with sudden excitement; ‘what did he want that for?’

‘Ah! what indeed? It could only be for one purpose.’

‘Which way did he go?’ inquired Richard, hurriedly. ‘Is he upstairs or down?’

‘He is gone out, I tell you. I saw him, through the window, going towards the lake.’

Richard reached down his wideawake from the peg in the lobby.

‘You must not go out like that in this snow,’ cried Philippa, with nervous carefulness; ‘you will catch your death of cold. Let me help you with your great-coat.’

‘Are you *sure* he went out of doors?’ asked Richard, as he drew it on.

‘I am quite sure.’

‘Well, well, I’ll follow,’ said the other. But he was no longer in such hot haste. His apprehensions, which had seemed so keen, had unaccountably subsided. ‘Perhaps he is in the summer-house on the terrace.’

‘Oh, no, I should think not,’ she answered faintly.

‘Why not? It is the only place under cover. Well, I’ll find him. In return, however, promise me *this*—that until I come back again the nurse shall never leave your sister’s room.’

‘She never does leave it.’

‘She left it yesterday,’ he answered bluntly, ‘when Sinclair was with her.’

‘Walter is different, you know,’ said Philippa, with a feeble smile. ‘Nobody else would be admitted unless the nurse were present. Those were the Doctor’s orders.’

‘Never mind his orders; I want your promise that it shall be so.’ His tone was fierce; his manner for the first time reminded her of his brother crossed.

‘Indeed, I will see to that, Mr. Richard,’ she answered humbly and amazed, ‘upon my honour.’

He nodded, and, pressing his cap over his brows, went out into the whirling snow.

Philippa returned at once to Grace’s room. She had resolved to stay there herself till she should have news from Richard. His words had added a vague alarm to her fears on Edward’s account, notwithstanding that the two were somehow incompatible. Though in perfect health, and with wealth, as her husband had assured her for her comfort (though it had given her none), beyond the dreams of avarice, there was no more miserable woman in all the world. How infinitely to be envied was her sister, though enervated by sickness, and with no brilliant prospect before her! She was about to marry the man of her choice; ignorant of evil schemes and plans, far less of crime; full of hope and trust; grateful even for ministrations from a hand that had helped to harm her.

‘What is the matter, Philippa?’ for with returning health her eye had resumed its keenness for the signs of unhappiness in others.

‘Nothing, dear; that is, I am a little anxious because Mr. Roscoe and his brother are out in this dreadful snow.’

‘That is surely very imprudent of Mr. Richard,’ observed Grace. Her sympathies, it seemed, did not extend to his brother. Then presently, ‘I hope Agnes is really better; I have not seen her for so many days. Sometimes I fear that she does not want to see me.’

‘She would come if she could, dear Grace—of that you may be certain,’ said Philippa, earnestly.

‘Have you seen her this morning?’

‘I had only just left her room when I came into yours.’ To have to give such replies to such questions had been long the duty of those who attended Grace’s sick-room. They had got used to the practice of duplicity; though it was always dreadful to Philippa to have to speak of Agnes, there was just now another weight upon her mind even more oppressive. Her words were mechanical, and gave her little pain.

‘There is the luncheon gong, dear Philippa; I must insist on your going downstairs to the others; you are moping yourself to



death up here. Nurse will take good care of me—though indeed I now hardly want anyone.'

Philippa was very willing to go, for anxiety to know whether the brothers had returned consumed her; but before doing so she laid strict injunctions on the nurse not to leave the invalid till she returned.

'I am not in the habit of leaving my patients, madam,' was the tart reply. Sick nurses are angels nowadays, but their wings are of a delicate texture, and they must not be 'sat upon.'

'My sister had a reason, nurse,' interposed Grace sweetly, 'and I am grateful to her, though you are quite right too. You would not leave me alone with any visitor, I know.'

Then the other two understood that the idea of the interview with Mr. Roscoe was weighing on her mind.

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## CHAPTER LI.

### PHILIPPA SPEAKS OUT.

THE luncheon-table at Halswater Hall had of late been but sparsely patronised, but the guests were now few indeed; Mr. Allerton and Walter were the only ones that Philippa found there. Places, indeed, were laid for the two brothers, but they had not yet come in, though none but herself entertained any serious apprehensions on their account.

'Why people in the country go out in weather that they would not dream of exposing themselves to in town,' remarked the lawyer, helping himself to pigeon pie, 'is always a riddle to me without an answer. It can't be for appetite, for though I have been writing all the morning I am quite as hungry as if I had been wet through or frozen. Why *do* they do it?'

'There is no harm in it if one is strong and well,' observed Walter; 'but for Mr. Richard to have gone out on such a day as this is certainly very imprudent. Don't you think so, Miss Philippa?'

'No doubt it is; and I am sorry to say it is I who was the cause of it,' was the unexpected reply.

Remorse, or perhaps the 'late beginnings' of a resolve to be frank and open in the future in all things permissible, had moved her to the confession, yet no sooner was it made than she repented of it. She perceived too late that her words required

an explanation ; her companions, indeed, were obviously waiting for it.

‘I had seen Mr. Roscoe in the garden, and I begged his brother to fetch him in,’ she added, after a pause.

‘In the garden, in a snowstorm!’ ejaculated the lawyer. ‘You should have sent him out a strait-waistcoat with “Miss Philippa’s compliments, and the padded room was being prepared for him.” What on earth can they be doing, do you suppose? Gardening?’

There was a look on Philippa’s face that checked Walter’s answering smile.

‘If they do not return in five minutes,’ he said gravely, ‘I will go out and seek for them.’

‘Madman No. 3,’ observed the lawyer.

There really seemed no possibility of their having come to harm, though it must be admitted that if there had been the speaker would have borne it with equanimity. He detested Edward, and knew nothing of Richard except that he was Edward’s brother.

‘There is the front door bell!’ cried Philippa, starting to her feet. ‘They have come back.’ And with that she hurried from the room.

‘Everybody is mad to-day!’ - exclaimed the lawyer. ‘If Roscoe has come back, why should Miss Philippa suppose he would ring the bell? It is not his way in his own house.’

‘I am really afraid there is something wrong,’ said Walter ; ‘I know what a snowstorm is in this region.’

‘And yet you are going out in it?’

‘I have promised,’ was the other’s quiet reply, as he rose from the table.

‘Very good,’ answered the lawyer, grudgingly ; ‘only remember there is some one interested in your welfare, which, as far as I know, is not the case with the other two gentlemen.’

The visitor turned out to be the Doctor, who had come long before his time because of the snowstorm.

‘It was a case of now or never,’ he said to Philippa, who received, though it could hardly be said welcomed, him. Her anxiety about the brothers was getting overwhelming. What *could* have happened?

‘Every hour makes travelling more difficult. It is weather in which one would not turn out a curlew ; nobody could stand it



but a country doctor. Well,' as Philippa led the way upstairs, 'how is your sister?'

'Progressing, I think, though she seemed a little depressed this morning.'

'Depressed! That should not have been. She had her tonic, I suppose, as I directed?'

'No, she did not.'

In spite of her new-born resolutions Philippa would have evaded the question had it been possible; but to have been caught out in a falsehood about the matter—which was almost certain to happen—would have been dangerous indeed.

'She did not? And why not?'

The Doctor had stopped short in his march along the corridor, and put the question with some energy. He was a great stickler for medical authority, and especially his own authority.

'I could not find the bottle,' she murmured.

'Not find the bottle? This must be inquired into at once, Miss Philippa. It contained, as I told you, strychnine, a deadly poison, and should be always kept under lock and key.'

They were standing opposite the door of Agnes's room, and the Doctor entered it at once. The medicine-chest, a highly ornamented affair, stood on a bracket, with the key in it.

'You surely never left it like that?'

'I am not sure,' she murmured faintly. 'The key ought to have been in my own drawer; but not finding it there when the hour came for giving Grace her tonic, I thought it might be where you now see it. It was there, but the bottle was gone.'

'Yes, madam,' said the Doctor, looking at her with great severity; 'and I perceive that you know who has taken it. It is I who will be held responsible in this matter, and I must insist upon knowing it too.'

'Mr. Roscoe took it.'

'Mr. Roscoe!' The Doctor's face turned suddenly pale; perhaps he had had already his suspicions of Mr. Roscoe, or they had been aroused by Mr. Allerton's views of that gentleman.

'This is a very serious affair, Miss Philippa. I do not leave the house until that bottle is placed in my possession. Where is Mr. Roscoe?'

'Would to heaven I knew!' she answered earnestly. 'He has gone out, taking the bottle with him. He has been away for hours in this pitiless snow.'

‘Better out than in,’ was the Doctor’s reflection. The knowledge that the man was absent soothed certain immediate apprehensions that had seized his mind; the sight of Philippa’s terror-stricken face filled him with pity for her.

‘You think he meant mischief—I mean, of course, to himself—do you? But why should he have gone out of doors?’

‘I do not think he knew what he was doing, Doctor. If anything has happened to him, which Heaven forbid, he was not responsible for his actions. He has had much to trouble him of late.’

‘Did he go out before lunch?’

‘Oh, yes! Long before.’

The question was not asked for the reason that Philippa supposed. The fact has been well ascertained that people do not commit suicide upon empty stomachs.

‘Well, well, we must wait and see; your sister, of course, must know nothing of this. Her tonic, if she asks about it, has been intermitted.’

Grace did not ask about it. She was not one of those invalids who are solicitous about their medicine.

‘Am I very bad to-day?’ she inquired, smiling, noticing the Doctor’s serious looks.

‘No, miss, you are better, but you must have change of air. The sooner you can get away from this place the better.’

‘And poor Agnes, too. She must need change as much as I, by all accounts.’

The Doctor nodded assent. ‘When she hears the truth,’ he was saying to himself, ‘it is probable she will have a relapse.’

True to his promise, he remained at the Hall, and not unwillingly, perhaps, considering the state of the weather, accepted the offer of a bed for the night.

After some hours Walter returned, looking like a snow-man. He had seen nothing of the brothers; they were not in the grounds, nor had any one the least idea where they could be. Some one had seen them walking together, he said, towards the head of the lake, and thither Walter had gone, but there was no trace of them in that direction. If they had been seen at all, they must have been going the opposite way, towards the post-town. The dinner-party that day included the Doctor, the lawyer, and Walter only, Philippa having declined to appear. The meal was a very silent one till the servants had withdrawn,



when the conversation, though gloomy, did not flag. The three men, being of one mind in the main, talked openly with one another.

‘The absence of these gentlemen is getting very serious,’ said the Doctor. ‘Is there any possible explanation of it?’ The story of the strychnine, which after all could only affect one of them, he kept to himself.

‘I have none,’ said Walter. ‘I can only say that if they have have not been housed somewhere long ere this I fear it will go hard with them.’

‘I will say more than that: in that case they are dead men,’ said the Doctor. ‘You do not take so serious a view of it, Mr. Allerton?’ For, indeed, there was a half-smile on the lawyer’s face. ‘You do not know what Cumberland is in a snow-storm!’

‘I don’t know the scene of this drama so well as you do, Doctor,’ answered the other drily; ‘but, perhaps, I know one of the characters better. He may have his own reasons for disappearing; but he will have taken care (of that I am certain) of his precious skin.’

‘But why should he want to disappear in such an unaccountable fashion?’

‘It is one way of settling with one’s creditors—and, unless rumour does him wrong, he has a good many. Between ourselves, he has been very hard hit indeed; and as to the fashion, nothing could be better chosen. It makes a clean sweep of the slate. It would never have done, if he meant going, to go away in a carriage and pair. His position here is not what it was; perhaps he felt that the game was up. And if he has gone, I shall be very much surprised if he has gone empty-handed. What you are saying to yourself, I know, Doctor, is, “This is a lawyer’s view of his fellow-creatures”; but I know the man I am talking about.’

‘But, my dear Mr. Allerton,’ said Walter, ‘we have to account for the absence of two men, and not of one.’

‘They are two men who are brothers, however; to leave Richard behind him would have been to leave a witness against him who could never stand cross-examination. It is my opinion that they have laid their plans beforehand, and that it is a family affair.’

‘There, I would stake my life upon it, Mr. Allerton, you are wrong!’ exclaimed Walter, earnestly. ‘Edward Roscoe may be

all you think him to be, but Richard is an honest fellow. He would never be mixed up in anything disgraceful. Moreover, he has not the least sympathy with his brother, and hates his wicked ways.'

'Well, well, we shall see,' said the lawyer, cracking his walnuts. 'There is no one like your scoundrel for putting a fancy value upon his existence, and I have the greatest confidence in Mr. Roscoe's taking care of himself.'

'I agree with you so far,' said the Doctor; and indeed he was quite of opinion that Mr. Roscoe had not taken Miss Grace's tonic for his own use; 'but I have grave fears for the safety of both these gentlemen, nevertheless.'

As time went on and nothing was heard of the missing men that apprehension became general. The household was plunged in the same state of grim uncertainty that it had been on the occasion of the disappearance of Miss Agnes, but it lasted much longer. There was no key to it, as there had been in the former case.

It was noticed with surprise that Miss Philippa was even more affected by it than she had been at the loss of her sister, but this was in reality because she was seen to be affected. On the other occasion she had withdrawn herself from the rest, whereas she was now always about the house, looking through every window on the snow that still covered the cold earth, and always on the watch for she knew not what. She suffered from insomnia, and began to give the Doctor more anxiety than his other patient, who, indeed, was making rapid progress towards recovery. She had a better tonic than Mr. Roscoe was supposed to have deprived her of, in the visits of her lover, and she took them twice a day. Mr. Allerton never wavered in his opinion that the brothers had gone away for reasons of their own; and when their return seemed out of the question he ventured to express his views to Philippa herself.

'It grieves me,' he said, 'to see you so distressed about your missing friends. Dr. Gardner tells me you are fretting about them day and night. I am convinced in my own mind that an explanation is to be found for it.'

'What explanation?' she inquired eagerly.

'Well, it is not a pleasant thing to say of an absent man but I happen to know that Mr. Roscoe has for a long time been in difficulties; he is unable to meet his engagements, which are very



heavy, and has therefore probably run away from them. That is the plain truth.'

He looked for an outburst of indignation, but she shook her head, and answered gently: 'No, it is not that; I know all about his difficulties.'

Mr. Allerton stared. 'The deuce you do!' was what he was saying to himself.

'You are a wise man. Think, think, of some other solution,' she went on in despairing tones. 'Have you no hint, no clue? This suspense is more than I can bear.'

The lawyer looked sharply up at her; he had never had so high an opinion of Mr. Roscoe's talents as at that moment, nor thought so badly of him.

'We have no clue because we have no data,' he answered. 'If his brother had been left behind we could have examined Mr. Roscoe's papers; but, as it is, we have no authority to meddle with them.'

'Then I give you that authority, for I am his wife!'

'Good heavens, madam! and how long has that been?'

'We were married before my father's death.'

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## CHAPTER LII.

### THE BURNT MILLION.

In the revelation made by Philippa gave the lawyer no immediate clue to the mystery in hand, it made clear another matter which had always puzzled him. Hitherto he could never understand why Mr. Roscoe had not incited the sisters to dispute their father's will. The reason was now plain. Whatever view a judge might have taken against restraint of marriage and in favour of religious liberty, he would certainly have stretched no point for a man who, living under the same roof with her, had clandestinely married his employer's daughter. That Mr. Roscoe had enjoyed—or, at all events, spent—an income to which neither he nor his wife had had any right would, under other circumstances, have been a serious consideration, but just now there were things more pressing. Poor Josh's million would, after Grace's marriage, now belong to the representatives of his far-away cousins, or, failing them, to the national exchequer. It is not

possible to describe how the honest old lawyer resented this fact. He almost regretted that he had given his consent to the union of those two young people, for whom he nevertheless felt more affection than for any other of his fellow-creatures. It was really throwing money away—and such a heap of money!

Nevertheless, he not only set to work upon this distasteful matter, but took Walter into his confidence. He was a little disappointed at the lack of interest which the young fellow showed in Philippa's revelation. 'You seem hardly to understand, my young friend, that but for this mad marriage of hers—about which I fear there is little doubt; it was done at the register-office in Kensington, within half a mile of Cedar Lodge—she would have been the richest woman in England; nay, sir—for I must needs be frank with you—I have pointed out to Grace that if she chooses to give you up she may be herself that richest woman.'

'So she told me,' observed Walter drily.

'Oh, she did, did she? Then I call it a distinct breach of confidence as between ward and guardian.'

'But she also said that you were afraid matters had gone too far between us to admit of her giving me up,' continued Walter, smiling.

'I said I thought you would have ground for an action for breach of promise,' growled the lawyer, 'and that perhaps she would not like to appear in the witness-box; but I wish you to know what she is giving up for you.'

'Indeed, Mr. Allerton,' said Walter gravely, 'I put that matter before her as forcibly as my heart would let me; though, in giving me herself, she had already given what is worth more than all the wealth in the world. The fact is that she detests the very name of money. Through it, as I gather, she believes her father became the man he was—and indeed, from all I hear, he worshipped it; through it this unhappy man Roscoe has been tempted to do all sorts of dirty tricks; through it, and the jealousies and disappointments arising from it, her home, which might otherwise have been such a happy one, has been made a hell; through it, and the plots and plans to secure it, she was almost separated from the man she loves for ever. It is no wonder that Grace hates money.'

The lawyer listened in silence; it was not his way to hear money run down (as it often is by those who are very willing to



experience its temptations) without pointing out that it may be a blessing instead of a curse, but he had nothing to say for poor Josh's million. In his heart of hearts he suspected that much worse had come of it than even Grace gave it credit for; and besides, it was now passing out of the hands of his clients into those of a stranger.

'I give you my word, Mr. Allerton,' continued Walter, 'that I had a hard matter to persuade her that even the 10,000*l.* her father left her ought not to be given up, because it might originally have been wrung from the widow and the orphan.'

'What infernal nonsense!' ejaculated the lawyer; 'if Josh had not got it, it would have been lost at cards or on the race-course. Upon my life, even the best of women—but pray go on.'

'I was only going to say that what seems to me the worst thing about Roscoe was his setting poor Grace against her father's memory; to tell her the truth was bad enough, but it seems he invented some hateful lie about his having defrauded my father, which, if, as I understand, you had not set right, would have kept us apart for ever.'

'Yes; that falsehood of Roscoe's puzzles me still; he had generally *something* to go upon, but that must have been pure invention. Well, I want you to be with me while I examine his papers, which may be very queer reading. He was a methodical fellow—a good man of business in his way—and if he has not burnt them, we may find some clue to his disappearance. It's a nasty thing to do, but we shall have to break open his desk.'

'That is rather a strong measure, is it not?'

'No doubt it is; but desperate diseases require desperate remedies. I have his wife's authority to do it.'

Mr. Roscoe's sitting-room was the very abode of neatness. Everything that a man of business could want was there, and in its place. Here the weekly bills of the household were audited and settled, and the tenants came to pay their rents. Huge MS. books with clasps and keys, with letters painted on them, were on the shelves; their proprietor was a man who could have given an account of his stewardship—though it was never demanded of him—down to the last penny. The desk, which Mr. Allerton recognised as having originally belonged to the late Mr. Tremenhere, was an immense structure, as big as a wardrobe. It had held secrets in Josh's time, which the lawyer would have

given much to have got hold of; and it doubtless held secrets now. The middle part of it—the desk proper—was that to which he first gave his attention. It was locked, of course, and with no ordinary key; and it took some minutes with hammer and chisel to force it open. It was full of papers, all docketed and arranged with admirable neatness.

‘I was wrong,’ exclaimed Mr. Allerton, as he cast his eyes over them. ‘The man is dead. He would never knowingly have left these proofs behind him.’ There were statements of accounts with the two Miss Tremenhers—some of them were memoranda, but all expressed in the most concise and careful manner—which almost made his hair stand on end: huge sums of money, varying from 500*l.* to 5,000*l.*, which had been received from them at different times, and all, no doubt, lost in speculation. On one of them borrowed from Agnes not many weeks before was written in pencil the words, ‘Very difficult’; there was no such note to Philippa’s loans, which were much more numerous and larger. ‘What an insatiable scoundrel!’ muttered the lawyer; ‘and I have no doubt that he spent every shilling on himself.’

‘There is a letter to Richard with an American post-mark,’ observed Walter, who was looking over the other’s shoulder; ‘I wonder how *that* came into Mr. Roscoe’s desk.’

‘I am afraid we have no business with it,’ said the lawyer doubtfully.

‘I am quite sure Mr. Roscoe had none,’ replied Walter. ‘Richard has had no letter, as he told me himself, poor fellow, bitterly enough, since he came to England; and his brother keeps the bag.’

‘Judas!’ muttered Mr. Allerton, and tore open the document. ‘Great heavens! this is news indeed!’

‘What have you found?’

For a moment the lawyer was unable to answer him. His ordinary impassive face was full of excitement; his hands trembled as he read.

‘This concerns you, my lad; do you know the handwriting?’

‘Indeed I do,’ cried Walter, greatly moved; ‘it is my poor father’s.’

It was the document addressed to Walter which Richard had left for safety in America, and had been forwarded to him by his correspondent; it was duly witnessed, and set forth in a simple style that for certain reasons the writer had changed his name



of Vernon for Sinclair, and how he had been cheated of his property by his cousin, Joseph Tremehere. 'I have no wish that you should resume your name, dear boy,' it went on to say, 'and far less nourish animosity against him who wronged me, but I have thought it right that you should know who you really are in case I may not live to tell you, and to acquaint you with my unfortunate history. The man to whom I have entrusted this paper is my dearest friend, and may be thoroughly relied on.'

The frown that had at first settled on Walter's face was now succeeded by a look of the profoundest dejection.

'Then Roscoe spoke the truth to Grace after all,' he sighed.

'Only just as much of it as suited his purpose. I know something you do not know. Walter, I have great news for you. Mr. Tremehere, no doubt repentant of the wrong he had done your father, made him, under certain conditions, the heir of his whole fortune. These conditions, by the death of one daughter and the marriage of another, have been fulfilled, except as far as Grace is concerned, and now in marrying you she will lose nothing, for the money which she thereby forfeits will revert to yourself. It was the knowledge of this fact thus conveyed that no doubt caused Roscoe, who was previously in favour of your marriage, to oppose himself to it; why he kept such a dangerous secret in his possession it is impossible to tell, but we may be sure he never intended to disclose it, save for reason good. However, it has now fallen into the proper hands. My dear Walter, I congratulate you sincerely; you are as rich as Cræsus.'

'You mean to say that, thanks to this document, I can become so?'

'Certainly; it will only be necessary to prove its correctness.'

'And without it?'

'Well, of course nothing could be proved——Madman! what have you done?'

Walter had suddenly thrown the paper into the fire and set his heel upon it.

'You have burnt a million of money!'

'I have burnt the only evidence of Mr. Tremehere's fraud,' answered Walter coolly. 'Do you suppose that the ignorance of that miserable fact will not be a greater comfort to her than the reflection that she had all the money in the world? Has her experience of what money can do been likely to induce her to value it?'

The lawyer stared at him with astonishment and horror; he hardly knew what he said; his moral nature—or that second one with which his profession had supplied him—had suffered a serious shock.

‘It was too great a sacrifice,’ he muttered, as if in protest, ‘to be made for any man.’

‘At all events,’ returned Walter, smiling, ‘it was not an unselfish one, since, if Grace knew that her father had robbed mine, I verily believe she would have shrunk from me. She will now never know it. The memory of her father, if it cannot be what it once was to her, will at least be free from disgrace, and she will not, through conscientious (however foolish) scruples, be ashamed to take her husband.’

‘There is something in that,’ admitted the lawyer ruefully. ‘Walter Sinclair—for Sinclair is what you must still be called—you are a fine fellow, and I am proud to call myself your friend. It was a fond and foolish act, but it was a noble one; and, since the mischief is done, perhaps you will be interested to learn that you are a public benefactor: failing your father’s heirs, Mr. Tremenhere’s money was to go to the Commissioners for the reduction of the National Debt, and now they will have it without even saying “thank you.” But at all events we can make them wait. Every week your marriage is postponed Grace will be putting by a thousand pounds or so; of course your engagement will now be a very long one.’

‘It will seem so, no doubt,’ said Walter, sighing. ‘We are to be married in the spring.’

‘A very appropriate time, if we are to believe the poets,’ said Mr. Allerton cheerfully; ‘but of course you don’t mean *next* spring?’

‘My good sir, if I had my way, and dear Grace was herself again,’ said Walter, ‘we should be married to-morrow.’

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## CHAPTER LIII.

### PEACE AT LAST.

NOTWITHSTANDING Walter’s lover-like impatience, or, as Mr. Allerton termed it, his stark, staring madness, his marriage with Grace did not come off till a considerable sum had accumulated for the



young people. Events of a very grave nature interposed between the cup and the lip. It had been foreseen, indeed, by Dr. Gardner that the intelligence of the loss of her sister, which had sooner or later to be communicated to her, would have a retarding effect on Grace's recovery, and this turned out to be the case; but there were other circumstances that helped to depress and distress her, and had she not had Walter's love to comfort her and the prospect of a happier future to look forward to, there is little doubt but that their cumulative effect would have proved fatal to a constitution already severely tried.

No news had come to hand of either Mr. Roscoe or his brother; the lake still held the remains of Agnes in its icy grasp; and while it was imperative that Grace should be removed from a spot so full of melancholy association as Halswater, it was arranged that she should leave home with Philippa (who needed change of scene at least as much as herself) for the Isle of Wight, but this could not be done without awakening suspicions and anxieties that compelled some explanation. Where were those three members of the little household—the sister for whom she still entertained affection, however ill-deserved; the friend of the family, whose absence was felt, if not deplored, in all domestic arrangements; and his brother for whom she had entertained so genuine a regard? It was absolutely necessary to tell her why none of them were present to wish her good-bye, and the consequence was that she left home a mourner, and more of an invalid than ever. A house had been secured for the sisters at Ventnor with a large garden overlooking the sea, while Walter took up his quarters in a neighbouring hotel. Notwithstanding what Mr. Allerton persisted in calling his 'gigantic sacrifice' (as if it had been a sale of goods), the course of true love was by no means running smooth. Indeed, at one time Grace's state of health became so serious that it seemed possible that the Burnt Million had been burnt for nothing—an apprehension which, if it did not move him to tears, brought the drops out on the good lawyer's brow.

The land agent at Halswater, whose place it had been Mr. Roscoe's intention that his brother should fill, was instructed to have the lake dragged as soon as the disappearance of the ice permitted, and the first result of that operation at the foot of the terrace walk was startling indeed. The grappling hooks brought to land—not one body, but two, and neither of them that which

they sought. They were those of the two brothers, 'clasped,' as the newspaper reports expressed it, 'in one another's arms.' It was supposed to be an affecting incident of fraternal love. Those who knew them well knew better. Mr. Allerton's explanation of the matter, at all events—and I think it was a shrewd one—founded on his own suspicions and on what Philippa and Walter told him, was as follows.

Driven to his wits' end by the failure of his plans and the concealment of a terrible crime, Roscoe had desperately conceived another—the murder of Grace herself; for that purpose, and not for that of self-slaughter, he had obtained the bottle of strychnine which was found in his breast pocket; this conclusion was the very one that Richard arrived at on hearing Philippa's story, and, furious at the danger that threatened Grace, he had sought his brother with the intention of taxing him with this intention and also of obtaining possession of the bottle. He had found him on the terrace walk, on the very spot where a similar catastrophe had occurred to Agnes, and a struggle had ensued in which both brothers had fallen over the cliff. The coroner's jury, however, returned a verdict of 'accidental death' in their case, as in that of Agnes, whose body was found a day or two afterwards, it having drifted for some distance down the lake.

The newspapers were studiously kept from Philippa, but the news had to be told her, and in due time she broke it to Grace. It was no wonder that the poor girl's convalescence was retarded; but in the end youth and love brought her forth from the valley of death.

Walter Sinclair was never suspected of having borne the name of Vernon, nor did that circumstance, since Grace was ignorant of it, affect the legality of their marriage. The transference of her father's fortune to the Commissioners of the National Debt was not even a nine days' wonder—for who heeds a drop in the ocean?—except with Mrs. Linden. That lady never ceased to have an imaginative interest in Josh's million, and to express her astonishment that no heirs to Mr. Vernon of Cockermonth were ever discovered. If she had been informed on affidavit that any human being had sacrificed such a sum, on the altar of Hymen or anywhere else, she would certainly have refused to believe it; but he who had done the deed never repented of it for an instant. The young couple have quite as much money as is good for them, and Grace can think of him who had been wont to call her 'his



little Fairy,' if not with the old trust and tenderness, at all events without the flush of shame. Mr. Allerton, who is a frequent guest of theirs, and has had many opportunities of contemplating their happiness, is compelled to own that in surrendering his place among the millionaires of England Walter has found ample compensation.

Philippa—a changed woman, and greatly for the better—resides within a stone's-throw of her married sister in the Isle of Wight, for Halswater Hall, with its sombre memories, has long passed into other hands.

In a fair garden by the sea there is a little toddler who has as yet but a single playmate, one who never quarrels with her or envies her the possession of her many toys. He is almost as great a favourite with her as he is with her father and mother; there is a tender association between them and him of which the child knows nothing. He passes his days on the sunny lawn and his nights in a well-lined basket at the foot of their bed, and, though he knows no more of the Burnt Million than the rest of the world, enjoys his master's fullest confidence and affection. On what slight causes hinge our poor human affairs! 'But for you, Rip,' says Walter gratefully, as he caresses the little creature, 'I should, perhaps, never have won your mistress.'

THE END.

*THE FARMER'S FEATHERED FRIENDS.*

FIRST on the list stands that much-abused friend, the rook. Forty years ago he had a rough time of it in some counties: from morning to night there was little peace for rooks on any farmer's ground. In the flat counties they are called crows. Very few of the rising generation have ever seen a pair of the old-fashioned 'crow-clappers,' or heard their deafening din. I was very familiar with them in my youth, and have often played on them.

A 'crow-clapper' was a long-handled machine like a small shovel, the broad part of it about the size of a schoolboy's slate. To this was looped loosely a second piece of the same size. When this instrument was flourished vigorously the music (?) could be heard at a great distance; the greater the distance the better for the ears of the listener. Nor was this all: there was a vocal part besides, which it was expected the 'crow-keeper' or rather rook-scarer, should sing most lustily.

These simple country functions are almost things of the past; many of them have gone, never to return. Those of them that belonged to our boyhood are apt to recur to the memory as life advances, when much that occurred in our early manhood is forgotten.

That doggrel verse sung by the crow-keeper I remember well, having shouted it myself hundreds of times :

Fly crow, eat your spoil, (spile)  
While I sit down and rest awhile,  
For you know if master happens to come,  
You must fly and I must run !  
Away crow ! away crow !

Now as this, when properly done, was sung to a quick march tune, the clappers marking the time most energetically, we leave the reader to imagine for himself the uproar. What rook with any self-respect could eat his meal within sound of such a combination? He was fain to quit those large fields, forty acres though they measured, and betake himself to the less guarded upland pastures, although even there he had an uncertain footing.

No weak-chested lad had the least chance of getting that musical post of crow-frightener.



'Dang them warmints!' old Farmer Wills was wont to exclaim, 'they pulls the turf up. If some on 'em aint settled, there wunt be no feed fur the sheep. Go an' git the old double, an' kill some on 'em off.'

The worthy man had not the faintest notion that the birds were feeding on the larvæ of the cockchafer that was devouring the roots of the herbage. 'Give a dog a bad name,' &c. Thanks, however, to the writings of recent field naturalists, these creatures that have been so long unjustly treated, now enjoy—many of them, at least—comparative security.

The rook is a specially industrious bird; he is up early and he does not roost until dusk; and when we consider that from his first flight in the morning until he roosts at night, he is continually clearing the fields and pastures from insects that would injure the farmer's produce, we must recognise him as one of the greatest unpaid benefactors of man. He steals some fruit, it is true. Nearly all wild creatures take a small tithe from man; it is only their due, for by their unwearied exertions they destroy those enemies, whose name is legion, that he could not combat without their aid. Only those who have lived with the birds all their lives, roaming about in the woods, over the fields and the waste lands, can form any opinion how much man is indebted to his feathered friends for his welfare and comfort.

Next to the rook comes the jackdaw, the shepherd's assistant. Whenever a farmer shoots one of these bright little fellows, he kills a sanitary inspector of, we might say, two or three sheep. The woolly creatures are his particular charge. Where you see rocks you will most likely see or hear jackdaws not far from them; not invariably, but generally. With the jackdaws you will find the beautifully-marked starlings. 'That is never a starling,' exclaimed a friend of ours, on being shown the faithful portrait of one of these birds; 'I thought starlings were all black.' And so think many who have not noticed them closely. If they were not such common birds they would be highly prized on account of their beauty and their aptness in acquiring various accomplishments. No British bird, not even the kingfisher, surpasses in its plumage the metallic beauty of a cock starling at his best. He is a glorious fellow, as he puffs out the feathers of his throat, drops his fluttering wings, and sings a love-song to his mate. His yellow bill is almost as bright as a blackbird's. A mimic of the first order, too, he is.

For several consecutive years a pair of starlings built in a corner of a room, in one of my homes. It was wonderful to hear the fine fellow sing to his mate in that corner, unheeding me, as I often sat quite near, busy at my easel. Apart from his own melodious whistling, he would run over parts of the songs of other birds for her delight, giving now some of the flute-like notes of the blackbird, as he sings in the spring evenings after a shower, just before the sun sinks low; and then again two or three notes of the storm-cock or missel-thrush would ring out, just as they come from his throat as he sits on the top twig of some wind-tossed tree, shouting in glee when the gale is at its highest and other creatures are hushed in fear.

After that would follow the 'spink-pink-pink!' of the chaffinch, and next the winter-song of the robin, his farewell to the dying year. All sung truly, without one false note. And then the odd bird would finish up by mewling like a cat. This was, of course, a wild bird; the starling in a state of nature is a thorough mocking-bird, as all know who have made a study of him in the country. The young ones are dull brown at first, of a peculiar shade. In spite of their vast numbers, and the very easy opportunities of observing them, some ornithologists have described them as solitary thrushes.

A large flock of starlings comes as a blessing to farm-lands where the stock are pastured. They delight to be on the backs of the animals, on their heads, round their feet, pecking and dibbling round about their muzzles as they feed. Here, there, and everywhere are the starlings; as the insects come in sight they have them, running on the ground or flying! I have often watched these birds hawking for insects in mid-air. The amount they destroy in a single night when they have young ones to provide for must be enormous; as one watches them come to their nests their mouths and bills appear to be crammed full. A nest of young starlings will keep both parents very busy from morning till night. When the cherries are ripe the starling will certainly have them if he has the chance, as indeed will blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows, chaffinches, and others. Insect and grain-eaters, all like cherries more or less. If you look at the bunch of birds a cherry-minder has in his hand when he leaves the orchard at night, you will be surprised to see what different species visit the trees. Those that are not able to swallow a cherry whole peck at it; the starling is not alone in this matter.



Looking at the matter all round, and weighing the harm these fruit-stealers do against the services they render in our fields and orchards, I say confidently the good outweighs the evil ten times.

Thank God! the woods and the fields are open to the poorest working naturalist to study in; so is the high road. Printed books are good, and helpful too; but the three greatest books given by God to man are free and accessible to the poorest student—the book of nature, the book of humanity, and one other book. And in them a man may read freely, as he has leisure, and be earning his daily bread at the same time.

To return to our feathered friends. You will see scattered about at various distances, wagtails—or dish-washers, as they are locally termed—the inseparable companions of the cattle and starlings. The common black and white, or pied wagtail, it is, as a rule, that you see in the pasture lands. Occasionally you may come across the beautiful yellow-breasted species, but not often; you will see fifty of the former for one of the latter. These pretty, nimble little creatures, so ‘peart,’ as our country folks would say, and lively in their motions, are fly-catchers. They trip and run in all directions round about the great helpless cattle, catching their small tormentors on their legs, bellies, and even from about their heads and ears. The stock would suffer tortures if the birds did not clear their ears out. Many of us know how a poor pony’s ears will be sometimes literally black with winged blood-suckers.

The wagtails brush and flick about with their wings as the creatures graze, and snap the flies that come out in all directions. Sometimes half a dozen busy wagtails will gather round about one cow or horse. Birds and animals understand each other, without a shadow of doubt. The friendly and practical little wagtail generally builds his nest in the farmer’s faggot-stack.

The wild pigeons come next on our list. These include the common ring-necked wood-pigeon, stock-pigeon or stock-dove, rock-dove or pigeon, also the turtle-dove. All four visit the cultivated lands more or less. I have heard men grumble about the harm done by these; but if you ask what definite mischief there was to complain about, you will fail to elicit anything worth listening to. I have kept close records, for many years, of their comings and goings in the heavily-timbered and well-cultivated southern counties, more particularly Surrey and Sussex, and have noted little harm done by them worth speaking of.

‘They cums tu the fields, they gits in the corn, they gits all over the place, an’ they spile the turmits.’ This the farmer tells you as he stands inside the copse waiting for a shot at the pigeons. He knows where they come; but he is very far astray as to their behaviour.

Two of the wild plants that are the farmer’s worst foes, as weeds, are charlock—by him called chadlock—and the wild mustard plant. The pigeons search out and feed on these and on other ill weeds; but ‘they cums to my fields,’ and that is enough. So do the butterflies and other beautiful creatures, but not to feed on the produce of his labour. The bill of a pigeon is weak compared to that of other woodland birds; not at all fitted for digging or pecking to any great extent. Their swallowing power is very great, but most of their food is picked up from the ground. Of course the true reason so many are shot is because they are good birds to eat.

The turtle-dove is a bird of passage; he is common enough in some parts of Surrey. I have seen from ten to thirty of them rise from the standing oats, or from the long grass in the hay-field, at one flight. One of my friends shot a couple as they were rising from the oats, and opened their crops. Not a single grain of oat did he find in them. They were full of a little vetch that grew abundantly at the roots of the oats, or, to express it in true rustic agricultural phrase, ‘at the stam o’ the whuts.’ I was with the man at the time; after that examination of the birds’ crops he declared he would never shoot another pigeon.

Facts are stubborn things to deal with. Any one fond of wild creatures can soon form a most accurate and impartial estimate as to the amount of good and harm they may do, although the knowledge may not be gained in a year. Of course one would not say no harm at all is done. The amount varies according to circumstances over which the poor bird has no control—weather, or shortness of food, such as acorns and beech-mast. The trees do not always bear equally well, and then the creatures are driven to fill their crops with any green food that is not absolutely injurious. But wild pigeons, as a rule, get their living in the woods and on the outskirts of the fields. They form one of the most pleasing and familiar sights in our rural districts; and to many of us, as to one of our best women poets, the ‘cushat’s cry’ is dear.

The white rumped rock-dove, or rock-pigeon, is not a common



bird in the southern counties. In the rocks by the sea they have their favourite homes. In the north, where the land in some places only grows oats in scanty patches, pigeons may do harm, for the very reason that they can get oats or nothing; but in the south of England it is different.

The sparrow, or 'spadger,' is a friend to the farmer, although he has from time immemorial done his best to exterminate that small bird. Happily for his lands, he has not succeeded in doing this. Although the commonest of our common birds, his ways of getting a living are still not very clearly understood.

He is caught in thousands for sparrow shooters, and by the trap. Then the farmers' sparrow clubs claim their hosts of victims. Besides which, sparrow pie, sparrow pudding, and roast sparrows, spitted closely on long sticks or skewers, are farm-house delicacies long remembered by those who have enjoyed them. It is not very often that the good dame can be persuaded to give her men folk a treat of this kind; for she very justly observes, 'Drat the little things! it do take such a lot o' time to get 'em ready.' But if once she makes up her mind for the job, all hands have to set to work to help her, both men and maids; and when the pie, with its light golden crust well bulged up with sparrows, tender and juicy, is placed on the table, eyes are wont to glisten and mouths to water and twitch in a state of delightful expectancy.

The town and country sparrow are the same species, but there is as much difference between the plumage of the two as there is in the outward appearance of the chimney-sweep and the well-to-do mechanic. Philip Sparrow's surroundings in town smirch and blacken his plumage. As to his habits—to begin with, he picks up almost any small trifle he comes across, nothing seems to come amiss with him. The hardy little fellow knows well how to take care of himself and to make himself comfortable. During severe winters in past years I have seen many birds that have been starved to death or perished with cold, but never a single house-sparrow. He attaches himself most pertinaciously to man, and, badly though he is treated, he will not leave him and his surroundings. 'Them there sparrers rewins things; them guseberries wunt hev' a pint o' fruit on 'em, the cussed things hev' pulled off every fruit bud as showed, mother wunt hev' no jam this year, cuss them!' Such were the sentiments expressed by one of our farmer acquaintances in my hearing. Strange to say, when the

fruit season came round, that particular year, he had a much heavier crop and larger fruit on his gooseberry bushes than he had gathered for years. When I twitted him with the fact, he simply replied that 'he couldn't mek it out, no how.'

Philip Sparrow bears no malice and sticks to the farmer. He even builds in his thatch or under the tiles of his house. If you have ever lived in one of those old farm homesteads, very early in the morning, if it is summer time, almost before the dawn, you will have heard him begin his monotonous and exasperating conversation—'Chip-chip-chip! chisic-chisic-chisic! chip-chip-chip!' By degrees the whole colony joins in. In the stillness of early dawn, when the farm is dead still, the noise to one unused to it is most irritating.

When they have their young the sparrows are most persevering insect hunters. All the day through, from morning till night, the cock bird continues bringing his mouth full of insects to feed his mate as she sits on her nest, or their young ones. For them he hunts the fields, the hedges, and the gardens. At the time they most need it, insect life in all stages, mature and immature, forms food for himself and his family. The aphides, those garden pests, he diligently hunts for, and he carries off a mouthful at a time. In the hay-fields he forages before the grass is mown; and when the long swathes lie there on the ground is the time to see the sparrows at their best. They go to the fields in flocks to capture the insects that swarm in and about the newly-cut grass. There is a small chubby brown beetle, locally known as the hay-chaffer, that they seem remarkably fond of; they will not leave the hay-fields so long as there is a chance of getting one.

When the corn is ready for cutting the farm lads are shooting all day long round about the outskirts of the fields, to kill the sparrow and keep him off the wheat, as they say. Now, one harvest time I owned a falcon and two owls; to keep these birds is a matter of care and no small expense, if you wish to see them as they ought to be, in full health and perfect plumage. My pets were not caged ones. To one of those sparrow-killing, or sparrow-scaring lads I applied, and I struck a bargain with him. He undertook to supply me with shot birds at so much a dozen, and to deliver them to me every evening at the feeding time. He brought me bunches of birds regularly enough, but there was never a sparrow in the whole lot. Nearly all were insect-feeding birds—a wheat-field swarms with insects at all times—but not



one of them was in any way injurious to the wheat. There is air, sunshine, and great warmth in a large corn-field—things which all insects need to bring them to perfection. The flocks of birds that rise from it are not there after the corn; it is the insect life that attracts them. Fly-catchers and willow-warblers do not eat corn; and yet, with the exception of one or two young chaffinches, it was of those two species the bunches of birds were composed.

Is it not possible for the beings that have been created with man as his companions to have fair play in God's world?

The sparrows, with other birds, throng the fields in hosts just before and after the corn is cut. They pick up the unnumbered grains that drop from the ears in the field. That is their opportunity and they make use of it. If the Jews of old were forbidden to muzzle the great ox that treads the corn, shall boys be allowed to wantonly or unreasonably destroy the little creatures whose fall we are told the Allfather notes?

Even after a month or six weeks have been passed by them in picking up the scattered grains, sharp as are those thousands of eyes, they do not pick up all, as you may prove by looking at any wheat-field that has lain fallow for any length of time after it has been reaped; the blades will be springing up in all directions.

And so we think we have made out a fair case for persecuted Philip Sparrow.

The green plover, or lapwing, is another of the farmer's good friends. He not only forms a beautiful and interesting feature in the landscape, running over the fields and meadows, but, by his incessant search for those creatures that infest some lands, he confers on their cultivators more benefits than they appreciate. Being very wide-awake birds, happily for themselves, they do not get interfered with as a rule. To get the blind side of a flock of pewits wants, as they say, 'a lot of o' nooverin' (manœuvring); nine times out of ten the experiment ends in failure. So much the better for those on whose lands they come at various seasons. Plovers are largely affected in their movements by the weather.

The kestrel, the mouse-killing falcon, not only gets shot, but insult is added to injury, for he is nailed up to the end of the barn. The falcon glides and hovers all the day, and until late in the evening, catching mice and other small deer. The numbers of large short-tailed field mice, or voles, in some chalky upland pastures are simply startling. They are vegetable feeders, and when full grown are as large as a half-grown rat; if you examine

the mouth of one you will see it is like that of the hare. These, with the fawn-coloured long-tailed field or wood-mouse, work sad havoc in farm gardens. The kestrel kills them day by day, as he hovers and fans over field after field. For this service he is made heartily welcome to a charge of shot. I have a dim recollection of a sage warning that formed a copy-slip in my school days, 'Put not temptation in the way of youth.' It applies to all ages, I fancy. If the farmer's wife had not placed her brood of chicks with their mother under the coop in the short mown grass in the paddock away from the house, the kestrel would not have spied them out, running to and fro, as he fanned over his mouse-hunting. The sight rouses his hunting instincts at once, and they are too strong to be held in check, choice Dorking chicks though these be. And if he is seen in the act it is enough to doom him and all his race for years to come; one chick that might never have attained maturity weighs down the balance of slain field-mice in hundreds.

There is one thing to be said, if one of the raptors gets killed another takes up his beat very quickly; so that in spite of himself the farmer has his winged mouse-hunter over his fields as usual. We have yet much to learn about bird life.

To the owls—the farmer's feathered cats we might call them—after all, we give the palm for usefulness and intelligence, although we have purposely put them last on our list. Without them all his efforts might be useless, for they prey on those creatures that work him harm in the night time. Besides what they kill and eat on the spot, or take to their young, they set by a store for some future time. By watching any pair that have settled on some farm you will find that from sunset to sunrise they go to and fro continually; and they never come to the nest without a quarry of some kind. The tide of public opinion is, I believe, turning in favour of the owl at last; let us hope it will bring protection to other creatures also.



*MY PALACE.*

HIGH over the lamp-post, high over the street,  
Remote from the traffic, its rush and its beat,  
'Neath a sky now o'erclouded, now sunny and blue,  
I dwell in the stillness, my dear one, with you.

My windows are grimy, my walls they are bare,  
A wreck is my table, a ruin my chair !  
Yet I prize them far better than if they were new,  
For they tell me, my dear one, they tell me of you !

Untroubled by visitors, tranquil I brood,  
At the chimney-top's level folk seldom intrude ;  
And I heed them but little if ever they do,  
For I'm talking, my dear one, still talking to you.

Then as dusk over gable and roof hovers near,  
And the first star is faintly beginning to peer,  
Half a song, half a sigh, the dim casement steals thro',  
And the angel who breathes it, my dearest, is you.

## TRISTIANE.

## THE WOMAN WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH.

‘WE are merrymakers on our way to the capital, whither we are betaking us for the Coronation feasts. I am Triflor,’ said the leader to the host, who stood still hesitating in the door-way. ‘Surely you have heard of jolly Triflor—blithe Triflor. And these (come forward, my children!)—my lord, the host of this fine inn is going to give us all a shelter for the night, because he knows that it is cold sleeping under the stars in the decline of the year, and he is a good gentleman who would not have the harmless amusing folks suffer—and these, sir, are—(forward, children!)—Hatto, who eats knives and smacks his lips over them, who can balance straws on the end of his nose, and make faces so droll, the sober water on reflecting them is forced to break into a laugh. Jael—who can hurl the big rocks, whom you may bind with new ropes if you will, and—cric! crac!—a little stiffening of his massive thews—he is free again. Kahilde and Kabiong, the matchless dancers—so light of foot, you can afterwards cook in their sound shells the eggs upon which they have trodden. Tristiane—the woman who tells the truth—and Ib, tamer of wild beasts——’

As he spoke their names the members of that motley company stepped into the large, low, smoky room, lighted by pine boughs that were burning fiercely on the rough stone-hearth: Hatto, the juggler, slim as an ill-conditioned reed, with a long, pointed, humorous nose, and a hungry expression that lent verisimilitude to the leader’s report of his appetite for such food even as knives; the strong man, short and bow-legged, with hairy wrists and a warlike demeanour, yet with eyes more mild than a calf’s; the dancing sisters, pretty, and travel-stained, and weary, huddled together in a single cloak to keep one another warm; Tristiane, the woman who told the truth—the host looked wonderingly, as she entered, at the great form in the dull scarlet garb, with the black wolf-skins hanging from her shoulders.

‘But what is *that*?’ he asked doubtfully of the new apparition on the threshold.



‘That,’ explained Triflor, ‘is the tamer, and that which he leads is the *tamed*.’

The host leaped backwards in the air as he recognised for a lion the strange animal staring at him with stern yellow eyes from the dusk beyond the door-way.

‘Out of my house!’ he cried, possessed with a wild dismay. ‘Away from my door! Hold on to the beast—chain him up!’

‘Oh, he is very, *very* tame, is it not so, Ib?’ said Triflor with a smile calculated to disarm. ‘Do not get angry; Hatto might tickle his nose with his straw, and he would only waggle his tail. Ib, put your hand in the beast’s mouth—you see, he is as gentle as a lamb. He *was*, indeed, very wild, but our brave Ib has entirely subdued him. He will lie quietly under the table whilst we eat our supper.’

‘There is a solid iron ring out in the empty ox-stall,’ said the host, firmly unheeding of Triflor’s demonstrations, ‘he must go there. The tamer must keep guard over him, and the door must be safely barred. Snorro, show the man into the stall,’ and with anxious precision he shut the door upon lion-tamer and lion.

Ib turned dully from the door, without a murmur.

The warm red glare of the pine-logs suddenly cut off from the twilight air made it seem darker and colder than before. He could hardly distinguish where he stood—that dark outline somewhat resembled the old baggage-waggon they took turns at dragging through the day; that yonder might be a well; and that other a horse-trough—where was the ox-stall?

‘This way!’ he heard a young voice at a little distance from him. He stumbled in the direction whence came the sound, drawing the lion after him.

He came to a covered enclosure that had long, wide openings at about the height of his shoulder. By contrast with the pitchy darkness of the stall those spans of open night appeared a milky blue-grey.

‘The ring is on your right,’ said the voice, still distant, but in another direction. ‘Fasten the door, and I will bring you some hay to lay on the ground.’

In a few minutes an armful of hay came down upon his head. Looking up, he was able to distinguish against the sky a wild-haired, boyish outline.

‘What is his name?’ said the voice in a tone of deep interest.

‘He has no name.’ Then, with a sudden bitter vehemence :

‘It is a mortification of the spirit to be called by a name not yours, and, as I do not know what those other fierce kings, his brothers, used to call him in their language, I leave him unsulted by a lesser appellation.’

‘Now, me,’ said the boy, not quite understanding, ‘when they want me they say: “Snorro! Snorro!” they say; “get up, Snorro, go to work!” What I ask you is, when you want him to come——’

‘No need to want. I have him at the end of a chain. Go, child. Leave us alone. The lion wishes to sleep.’

‘I will bring him a marrow-bone.’ He scrambled down the wall, and the sound of his footsteps died away in the night.

Ib spread the straw on the cold ground and sat down upon it, so that the lion’s great, heavy head rested upon his knees. The yellow eyes glowed at him in the darkness. He passed his thin hands through the thick, rough mane, clutching at it with a fierce caress. ‘They have turned us away,’ he said, talking in incoherent murmurs to the brute, ‘because we look so dangerous and so bad, my friend. They are afraid of us. They do not know how cold and sad and sick we are. They say, “See the treacherous eye; see,” they say, “the gleaming fangs.” It would seem they wished to mock us—but they cannot know that, with the will, we have scarcely the power to attack the meanest cur that lives, we are so weary, so cold, so home-sick, so fallen—alas! so fallen. Ugh, the loathsome world! the loathsome people! How they laugh and shout at us when we come before them in fool’s gear, led in derision by a slender flower-chain, poor, despised, discrowned royalty! They cannot see it burn, then, in the once proudly flashing eye—blear to-day—the remembrance of times when their faces had blanched with terror at the sound of a mighty voice, when their feet had been so bound with fear, they could not have stirred from the path. Now they say to us, “Come,” and we come; “Go,” and we go. They lift an impatient hand to strike us, and we lower our lessened heads, submitting—we are so frozen and so forlorn. We have not strength now, no, nor spirit to resist——’

He put his arms round the lion, who was shivering with cold, and buried his face on the shaggy head. He felt a warm, moist touch repeated slowly again and again on his cheek, streaked with burning tears. Thus they cowered silently together.

The dark ether kindled slowly with tremulous points of fire. But what dim light entered the stall scarcely served to distinguish



the formless mass of man and lion closed in a monstrous embrace. Heavy, broken sighs alone interrupted the silence, and occasionally peals of distant laughter ringing from the inn, or a few notes, louder than the rest, from Triflor's shrill instrument.

'He is piping for the wenches to dance,' said Ib to himself, and at the sound arose in his mind a clear image of the whole scene—Triflor sweating over the music, with cheeks expanded to bursting, beating the measure with one flat foot; the girls dancing with slender arms intertwined, weariness lending a certain languid grace to their movements; Hatto looking on, leaning against the wall in his favourite attitude, one spindle leg across the other, his elbows pointed out jauntily from his hips, his head thrown back, his face distorted in a gleeful grimace, that exposed all his sharp, uneven teeth; Jael in a corner, diligently pulling at his stiff beard to keep himself awake, and nodding notwithstanding; the host and inn-people in ecstasies of delight over the unusual entertainment; Snorro, quite forgetful of marrow-bones and the like, holding his sides at Hatto's facial pranks; and Tristiane—the woman from the mountains?—he could not place her in the scene his vivid imagination painted. He had not known her long enough to be sure, without seeing, what her part would be in the merry gathering. Perhaps she was watching the fun and dancing, listening to Triflor's jests, without smiling. He had not yet seen her smile, and could only picture her face as wearing a look of calm wonder, or less than wonder—perhaps, calm curiosity; her eyes, used to resting upon dark mountain outlines and deep fir-forests swaying in the north wind, and turbulent mountain streams, expressing wild interest, but scarcely amusement, at such antics. Or yet, perhaps, with as calm disregard of the noisy proceedings, she had turned from them and sat gazing at the fire that flung her great majestic shadow upon wall and ceiling.

Ib drew from his satchel a piece of dark bread and offered it to the lion, who sniffed at it languidly and refused it. He bit at it himself, but it seemed too bitter food. He restored it to the satchel, and once more pillowed his head on the lion's.

Gradually, with the course of hours, the merry sounds from the inn became less, then ceased altogether, and a deep stillness held the night.

Ib, wearied out with a long day's march, slumbered restlessly, waking every now and then with a start, and wondering wildly where he might be. Was that a dungeon in which he lay, await-

ing death? At the relief, remembrance brought beads of cold sweat out on his brow. He tried to keep awake to avoid the horror of dreams, but the weight of excessive physical fatigue drew down his lids in spite of his endeavour. He had finally fallen into a deeper sleep, and was wholly unconscious when a soft golden light dawned and grew slowly upon the upper portion of the wall and the rough beams over his head, lending each jutting edge a distinct dark shadow. A cock somewhere, mistaking the sudden light for the dawn, crowed lustily. At the shrill sound Ib started guiltily, as Peter may have done, and lay motionless, trembling. His fears had somewhat subsided, and he dared to stir a little—the rustling of the straw comforted him—as he lay wondering at the dim glory overhead, when he thought to hear a voice speaking his name: ‘Ib! Ib!—’

He did not answer. His heart burned and quivered within him.

‘Ib,’ said the voice once more. Then again, after a pause, ‘Ib, are you cold?’

Reassured, he rose to his feet and looked out into the night.

A late half-moon had just risen above the low level of the horizon, and hung there a great, dull, golden jewel. Its rays touched and brightened faintly one side of the figure that was standing without, but the face of it was completely in the shade. Still, from their great shadowy sockets Ib could feel the unseen eyes of Tristiane fixed upon him.

‘I came to bring you that’—she reached him the black wolf-skins.

‘You are thanked,’ said Ib, receiving them. ‘Ib is not ungrateful.’

‘Why do you tell me,’ she asked quietly, ‘that your name is Ib? Ib is not your name.’

At the unexpected words Ib fell back a pace, paling in the dark. ‘You are mistaken,’ he said, with dry lips that almost refused their office, ‘I am indeed so called.’

‘Why will you lie?’ said Tristiane.

There was a pause, during which Ib heard nothing but his heart hammering in his ears. ‘Do you know,’ he asked finally in a hoarse, tremulous whisper, ‘what my name is? Speak low—in charity.’

‘No,’ said Tristiane. ‘I know only this, that you are not what you would appear. I know, poor soul, how wretched and heavy-laden you are. Your shifting eyes and hood drawn closely



over your ashen face have told their story to me—and your heavy footsteps, and voice without ring. You are too humble, too patient of blows, to be merely the low churl you seem. The sorrow I read in your eyes is too great for a contemptible soul. What have you to hide? My heart has cried out for pity at sight of you. I have yearned to assist you. Ease your soul of its secret to me. Tristiane, who never lies, gives you her faith, in face of all the holy stars, that no harm shall come to you through her, but that the burden that crushed you shall be made lighter by her helping you to bear.'

'Go your way,' cried Ib, in hot, frightened excitement. 'What have you to do with me? I did not call you—you are a stranger. You do not even seem one like me, but of a greater and goodlier race—go your way, go your way.'

And then, unaccountably, as he looked at her, it seemed as though on the utter darkness of his soul a door had been suddenly opened beyond which shone a little light. Bewildered with a tremulous joy at the bare thought of even such partial release from the tenebrous desolation that surrounded him, 'Wait, wait!' he cried, as she turned slowly to go. With wonderful agility he climbed the wall and leapt over it, and stood at her side. He clung to her hand. 'Your pity has prevailed,' he said. 'There is something in your face that calls for perfect trust. I am impelled to tell you, woman known one day, what through the changes of many moons I have jealously hidden from the very air of heaven——'

Then, struck by a sudden torturing thought, he broke short and dropped her hand. 'Alas!' he cried dolorously, 'but even you will shrink away from me when I tell you of the blood upon my hands.'

'No,' said Tristiane. 'I knew of it.'

'Then'—he again seized her hand—'come with me out of the moon.' He drew her hurriedly towards the shadow of the ox-stall. As they crossed the moon-lit space their shadows fell in strange contrast on the dark earth, one so simply drawn and large, the other so small and bent, with crooked knees and a fantastic head sunk deep between the shoulders.

'My name,' said Ib, almost in her ear, 'is not Ib, as you, who carry out the prophecy of ancient sagas, were aware as soon as my lying lips pronounced the word. I—am Magnus Magnusson——' He stopped, breathing hard. Then he went on more rapidly. 'That name, all unknown to you, is not so in the capital to

which our steps bring us daily nearer. When you are there you will, no doubt, hear it often enough, spoken—I do not know whether more in horror or contempt. Some one will point out to you the splendid lions hewn in stone on the steps of the King's palace and say: "Those were made by Magnus, son of Magnus," then, turning from them, will tell you a story of fame turned to infamy. But you will not believe me as evil as they make me—only so weak, so much weaker than they could conceive.

'You see, I was poor, obscure, cutting stone for miserable bread, when there rose in me, a low-born youth with nothing but a high-sounding name, a passionate thirst for honour and ease and the companionship of the great, to whom I looked up as to bright stars. Looking back on those days of my earliest dreams of glory, I try to think there was something generous, something not wholly ignoble, in me—but I do not know. I do not know. Inch by inch, steadily I rose, by the bare strength of a sleepless ambition. It was not easy for me, but I never ceased one hour from the whole effort of body and soul. From the common stone, finally, I made the perfect things you shall perhaps see. I gazed through the bars at the King's lions in their den, then formed their shapes in marble, gloriously idealised. I gained reverence through the hard-won skill of my right hand. I arrived at the greatness I had coveted. The King himself begged me to adorn his house with shapes of strength and beauty. Admiring men came to me and said humbly, "Master, teach us!" Clad in my new robes of dignity, I tried to forget, disown, the days when I had hungered unsatisfied.

'Among those who came to learn of me was one, a foster-brother to the young prince whose coronation we are going to see; he put his sharp chisel carelessly to the stone, and lo! it lived. What I had spent my youth and health in acquiring, some god had flung to him in reckless lavishness. A burning bitterness surged in my heart at sight of his work—a slow, consuming hatred of him. For I discovered in his eye a lurking contempt of me. It seemed to say, "The world knows you not, but I know you." It seemed somehow he was aware of the low origin I concealed, and the old struggles I denied as though they had been ignominious. He found nothing to respect in the long effort by which I had lifted myself from the level sea of insignificance, only something to laugh at in my petty weaknesses. I felt, though I never saw him do it, that he mocked, with the



strange cruelty of youth, the peculiarities of my person : my gait, that I had studied to make grave and dignified—my low stature had always been a vexation to me, but by my sternly erect carriage I had arrived at appearing almost tall ; my manner of speech, that I had not succeeded in rendering soft and polished as that of the inhabitants of the Court where I now figured as an honoured guest. He spoke to me as to a slave, that a freeborn man, out of his own nobility, refrains from calling “slave” ! I knew by some subtle sense, the property of morbidly sensitive vanity, that he held me up to the laughter of his companions and the women of the palace. I thought I caught sneering side-glances from their eyes, yet never anything I could complain of or appeal from. My life was poisoned. I was too small to rise above the intangible offence of their ridicule.

‘The King said to me one day, “Make me two bold lions to support my throne.” Then my enemy, who stood by, spoke—the dastard—from his high advantage, “Let the son of Magnus make one lion, and I will make the other.” The King laughed at his audacity, and said, “So let it be.” My hair was growing prematurely white with the toils of a storm-beaten life ; his face was blooming with its first golden down. There was a deep, refined cruelty to me in letting us vie together, whatever the issue of our emulation. I could not work well with so much stifled, corroding hatred in my heart. My mallet grew heavy, my chisel unsure ; the glory had gone out of my work. It was a botch. When I was forced to own that, I shed tears wrung from the bitterest humiliation. Then, like a thief, I slipped into the room where his statue stood, finished, as I had heard. Yes, his was all that could be wished. Now it would shine beside mine, my young pupil’s ! How every one would turn from mine to admire the perfection of his, and speak of it aloud before me ! In an access of uncontrollable rage I lifted my mallet—but no ! I was not so base—it was only the momentary evil suggestion of monstrous vanity. As I lowered my arm I suddenly perceived him standing in the door, beneath the half-drawn curtain. He stood there, the stripling, in all the insolent beauty of his youth, looking at me from between his half-closed golden lashes, his lips slightly curled in a smile. His face said plainly, “I looked to find him here, the peacock who hides his feet ! Fortunately, I am here in person to defend my work from his felonious hands. How amused the world will be to-morrow when I shall

tell of this: the great master who sneaks in at night to mar a rival's labour!" In an instant, before he could cry out, he was stretched on the ground at my feet, the scorn transfixed on his lips, my hammer driven so deep in his skull, I had afterwards not strength to withdraw it.'

The son of Magnus hid his face in his hands; his whole miserable frame shook with horrified shuddering at the remembrance of that scene. 'But the worst was not that,' he went on; 'not that I found myself a murderer; the worst was when, the deed accomplished, I found myself to be a coward. I, to whom the respect of others, the esteem of myself, was more than food or air, found myself trembling with abject fear of the consequences of what I had done. They would be fatal, I knew; for I had never been truly beloved, only borne with and respected for the sake of my talents; and now, who would find the least excuse for me, who conceive any motive in me but meanest jealousy of the gifts of that youth whose very faults had been as bright and bewitching as my only virtues were sombre and unattractive? No one would understand or feel the least poor pulse of pity for one whose sun had so suddenly gone down for ever. And then, unexpectedly, vile physical fear, such as I had, to that day, unproved, thought my nature incapable of, surged in on me and discoloured my lips at the thought of pangs the flesh can be made to suffer. Veiling my eyes from the sight of my victim, I slunk from the palace and fled into the night. From the moment I took on that vesture of fear I seemed to shrink in stature; and when, as part of my disguise, having shaved my worshipful beard, my face appeared to men as my internal nature had suddenly appeared to my own inner eyes, stripped of all charitable veils, my face showed the weak, mean mouth of a coward, I had worn hidden beneath the dense hair, even as my soul revealed the shameful weakness I had striven to cover and ignore. Homeless vagabond from that hour, unrecognisable in my humble guise, I wandered as far as possible from the scene of my fall, suspicious and afraid of every shadow by day, hag-ridden by night.

'And lo! the strange colours my life takes on! When I had reached a place that seemed safe, comes across my path the lion that, from a seeming likeness to myself, my starving heart clings to—for is not he too an exile, he, too, debased from a high estate, a mockery of himself, weak and early old from the inclemency of Fate? And I must stay with him—a man cannot live wholly loveless!—and



with him a servant's servant to Triflor—no condition too vile for me now. And suddenly dies the old King, and Triflor sees good to be present at the coronation of the young Prince, and a horrible attraction draws me, too, back to the old haunts I have shunned—a strange excess of fear. For the habit of fear has grown on me. When I tremble now, it is with the accumulated terror of months. It seems to me that, if some one now in my presence were to speak of Magnus, in a very ecstasy of fright I should be forced to leap up and cry, "I am Magnus!" All else in me has been degraded and lost in that feeling, all the lofty qualities I boasted of in the days of my pride. Sometimes in the still of the night I try to remember what little good I, who thought myself not a bad man, really did in those days—and, alas! it seems so little that I doubt if I was ever good at all. And do you know what is my greatest torment now? That in thinking of the man I killed I always see his face as it was at his best and brightest. In his eye that persecutes me is no hatred, his lips wear no scorn, till I almost doubt he ever wronged me, and none of the justice, only the blackness, of my deed remains.'

Ib ceased, staring at the visionary face. The moon had gained on the shadow in which they had stood. Tristiane was full in the silvery light, but Ib still in the dark.

'And now,' he said, turning to her once more, and there was a wild appeal in his voice, 'I have told you what manner of man I am, I have placed my life in your hands—what will you do with my life? How will you, who have never done wrong, deal with me whose whole life has been evil?'

Then Tristiane said slowly, 'I will be your friend. I will love you. I will shield you in all the days of your danger. I am strong. Oh, my wounded, way-worn brother, lean upon me and rest!' She held out her hands to him.

Ib did not take them, but stopped, startled and hesitating, as though suddenly in a dream something of peace and joy and promise of redemption had come into the night of his life and he feared to move lest he should wake; then, as his slow brain seized the value of her words, he fell forward at her feet, and clasped his arms about her knees, and hid his face in her garment, sobbing like a little child.

At dawn the strange caravan moved on southwards over the saddening land—beginning to wither and turn brown in the

autumnal air. Last of all in the fantastic procession came Ib, leading the lion, his eyes turning for ever through the weary marches upon the great figure of Tristiane, whether distinguished far ahead, seeming to help, with one careless hand, Jael with his waggon-load, or lingering behind with the foot-sore Kabiong. The unswerving devotion of his gaze still followed her when the light failed and she seemed but a shadow within the shade; and when at last they had reached a resting-place for the night and they might talk softly together a while, and his face rest a little upon her hands, the world seemed less a foe, and life less wholly accursed.

Day by day the little troupe neared the capital. At last, one evening at sunset, they came in sight of its towers glowing faintly far away in the dying red light. Triflor clapped his hands and shouted with wild delight. Ib felt himself grow cold to the heart. A black mist hid the distant prospect from his eyes. He stopped, overcome, and would have sunk upon the earth but that he felt the strong hand of Tristiane. He looked up at her. They walked on together without speaking.

The merry-makers came constantly in contact with other travellers approaching the capital by the same road. Now splendid companies of horsemen passed them—now groups of peasants in their holiday clothes.

The Feasts of the Coronation, which were to last seven days, were within one day of beginning, when Triflor, in his tinsel, for the first time stood on his little platform, clashing his cymbals to attract the passers' attention, and in the pauses of the deafening music inviting them to enter his booth and enjoy for a small consideration the wonders therein to be displayed. The crowd flocked in under the old curtain, eager to be amused—a lazy, happy, holiday crowd that laughed heartily at Hatto's tricks, and wondered with wide eyes at the ease with which Jael lifted huge weights and held them balanced in one knotty hand. The girls in spangled kirtles danced daintily before their admiring eyes, waving their long, bright scarves. Ib, with a faint show of trepidation, led forward the lion—who, worn out and impotent and half-blind as he was, still looked rather formidable—and astonished the lookers-on by placing his hand in the terrible red mouth of the beast, and making him leap through a hoop and perform other clown's feats. Then Kahilde led him around, the fierce desert king, by a flower-chain, to symbolise the



triumph of Love, Ib following her at a few steps' distance with a drawn sword to impress the people with a sense of her risk. The pallor of his strange, hollow face as he stood up before the many eyes, and the drops of sweat that appeared on his forehead as at a sudden wild wave of the lion's tail the crowd broke out in a loud cry, lent a touch of reality to his acting. The crowd gave a sigh of relief when he finally led the lion out of their sight.

Tristiane had been standing apart, idly leaning against one of the roof-supporting shafts, half hidden by the evergreens that for ornament had been twined about them, intermingled with bright berries. Carelessly, when Ib had vanished, she let her eyes stray over the heads of the spectators. They had been fastened for a few seconds on one, the only one there whose face, rising above the rest, was on a level with her own, when Triflor came up to her and suddenly drew the attention of the whole crowd upon her. He pointed at her with the end of his wand: 'This,' he said, 'is the Woman who tells the truth.'

Tristiane stood composed and unembarrassed under the scrutiny of so many eyes.

Suddenly some one at the further end of the booth broke out laughing. Triflor caught up the laugh. 'Ha! the gentleman laughs. He thinks such a woman should indeed be set up at a show like a strange and very rare animal. The manner of Tristiane, this truthful woman, however, is perhaps different from what the gentleman has supposed.' Then, addressing the whole community, 'Do you know the saying in the legend of long ago—that one who in all his days has not lied shall surely be able to tell falsehood from truth in others? That does my Tristiane. That her presence may not seem a reproach to the ladies here who cannot do as much,' he added apologetically, 'I will confess that she has lived, deep among the unpopulous mountains, a life of perhaps enforced innocence. To account for her superior size we must suppose her to have fed on strange fruits. Her fame as a seer reached me as I was passing through those parts, and, taking advantage of a sudden awakened instinct of curiosity in her concerning the world of smaller and less truthful beings, I was enabled to bring her thus far.'

From the statuesque repose of her face one might have supposed Tristiane quite unconscious of Triflor's words.

'Approach, approach, and put her to the test,' pursued

Triflor ; ‘ approach—however clever you may be, you cannot hope to baffle her.’

The crowd came a little nearer, laughing faintly in wonder, not knowing exactly what to say to her.

‘ Come,’ said Triflor encouragingly, ‘ see for yourselves. Tell me, Tristiane, is it not so that I had some excellent sausages and cabbages for my early meal ? ’

Tristiane shook her head.

‘ No more did I. You see, ladies and gentlemen, she does not know that I had bacon and onions, but is sure I ate no cabbage.’

‘ My name is Knut—is that not so ? ’ asked a voice at her right hand.

She looked around at a strong sunburnt fellow with gold rings in his ears.

‘ Yes ; Knut.’

‘ And I peddle earthen pipkins in a great basket about town for a living ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ But I plough and dig the earth, watering it with sweat, for a harvest ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ Then, perhaps, I am a cook of my great Lord Sweyn’s, and fashion dainty dishes for his tooth ? ’

‘ No.’

The crowd showed signs of interest. Several broke in with questions. But Tristiane fixed her attention only on the man with the ear-rings.

‘ Then I tell you finally. I live by water—carrying it in jars as it is wanted for the luxurious bath of some fair Court-lady.’

‘ No.’

‘ No ? Should you say that I was a seaman, then ? ’

Tristiane nodded assent. The man started. ‘ A murmur of wonder passed through the crowd.

‘ And my ship, the *Viking*, reached land last night ? ’

‘ Your ship ? Not the *Viking*.’

‘ And we are not to spread sails again until the feasts are over, and young Erik established king over us.’

‘ Erik the glove, and Sweyn the hand ! ’ said a voice somewhere in the crowd, that, however, no one heeded. ‘ Erik the mask, and Sweyn the face.’



And now Tristiane was assailed with questions from all sides. Something of awe came into the faces of the people as she answered them one after the other; no question trivial enough to make her quiet eyes disdainful, nor so cunning and clever as to make her hesitate in answering. She stood looking over their heads with far-seeing eyes that seemed scarcely aware of them. Gradually the questions, asked at first with light, eager curiosity, grew fewer, and it came to seem a rather solemn thing to stand under those deep eyes and have untruth read in your face.

‘Tristiane,’ said a voice just near her, when finally silence had fallen on the people, ‘now heed me awhile.’

She turned to the speaker, the tall man who had arrested her attention before; the only one whose eyes met hers from an equal height. He was dressed in a common garb, and, judging from that, might have been a common peasant. A fierce red beard hid the lower part of his face. There was a keen brightness in the light of his steadfast eye.

Tristiane returned his firm, large-eyed gaze; then, as he was beginning to speak, interrupted him.

‘Why will you speak? Your garb is a lie. Your conduct is a lie. Those clothes do not belong to you, nor does the character you assume. You have no need to speak to be told by me that you are lying.’ And then, more gently, as she looked at him whose eyes were on hers as steadfastly as before, unabashed by her reproach, ‘What need have you to demean yourself? You are brave enough to keep true, and strong enough, and great-hearted and noble enough, as I can see.’

The booth was finally deserted; Triflor and Hatto and Jael went forth to seek what amusement or interest the city might afford them. The little dancers, weary, retired to rest. Tristiane remained with Ib, who had been left to keep guard over Triflor’s possessions.

‘I am crushed with the weight of memories,’ he said to her. ‘It seems but a day since I passed through these streets at night, a trembling shadow. I can still feel the blood upon my clothes. It had come to seem a little like the past, to have a little the dimness of a dream; but now again I feel the beat of my heart I felt in my earliest remorse, and I cannot free myself of the thought he must be still lying undiscovered beside his blood-bespattered masterpiece.’

Tristiane comforted him with her hand, laid gently on his

head in the dumb eloquence of pity too deep for words. He lifted his head from between his knees, and looked up at her.

‘Your face dispels the vision,’ he said, after intent gazing. ‘Your touch makes my head cool. I can almost think sometimes that I have been forgiven, for your sake, because you have cared about my misery. When I look at you long—long—there seems to come to me a voice from somewhere far away that whispers to my heart a promise of peace, to be fulfilled some time—before I die, perhaps, or after. Surely it was a token of some relenting in Heaven towards me that you should come to me at the time of my most hopeless pain. You have lifted me a little out of the slough where I am fallen. From your complete courage I have gained this little strength: that I do not pity myself any more, but exult with a savage gladness that I have suffered so much, suffer so much, and can perhaps, at length, with my exquisite torture hope to pay my just debts and stand up a free soul again. Tristiane—Tristiane’—seizing hold of her, like a frightened child—‘say again that you will not leave me. Sometimes, in dreams, my suspicious soul tells me that you have gone; and then when I awake, though it is still black night, it seems like the dear dawn when the thought returns to me, “I have you yet.” You are the last spar to which a desperate man is clinging, who but for you must sink in a sea whence is never a re-aring.’

He clung to her arms as though indeed to save himself from death, his haunted eyes straining from their orbits. She soothed him as a mother her delirious child.

He grew quiet again at her words; and, being full of memories, went on in a rambling way to talk half to her, half to himself, of his old home and old friends, and old acts and thoughts.

‘I wonder who now lives in the quiet house at the end of the street—the quiet street. I had a little garden enclosed by high walls. There was a fig-tree. There was a dark pool by which I used to sit and meditate. I could watch in it the reflection of the sky. I remember a little rosy sunset-cloud I saw melt away there one night. Swallows had built under my roof. I used to water a rose-tree. Oh, how could I love such simple things as I did, and yet be a bad man? How could it be, Tristiane? And my old brown volumes I used to read when I was tired of wielding the mallet; and my shapely lions that I made! Oh! if it could be,’ he groaned, and



tears of yearning homesickness crowded in his eyes, 'that I might find myself once more watching the rosy cloud float in the well of my own garden; that I should stand in my own walls, about each stone of which a thousand memories wreathed, and hew into beauty the spotless marble, humming, perhaps, as I used; that men like myself might take me again by the hand and converse with me pleasantly of arts and dreams and destinies! I never loved my fellow-beings very warmly; there seemed to be an insuperable barrier between us, somehow. I was still a solitary soul when I lived in intimate communion with them; but now, how I could faithfully love the least among them—if I were only as I used to be—if I were just worthy to touch their hands!'

Tristiane led him gradually to forget as he answered her questions concerning the city and its inhabitants and customs. She listened attentively.

'And Sweyn? Who is Sweyn? I have heard that name twice to-day.'

'He,' said Ib, 'is the captain of the king's guards. We were not friends. I never liked him, by reason of the difference between us, and now I think I could love him for that same reason. He is in high favour with young Erik; an idle, ease-loving boy, Erik, beloved mostly for the sake of his father. I have heard say that Sweyn, no doubt, will wield the sceptre whilst the other wears the crown. He is worshipped by the people for his daring deeds in battle. He is great in body as in soul. The glamour of glory is about his name. He is a hero.'

Tristiane could not sleep that night for the many new thoughts that fermented in her brain. The long hours of darkness for her were painted with ever-shifting figures and scenes, through which shone one starlike idea, and illumined them all with clear, unvarying rays.

At sight of her on the following day, Ib was impressed with the set purpose in her face.

'What are you going to do, Tristiane?' he asked, in wonder at it.

'Do not ask me, Ib. It is true that I have a deed to perform. I think, maybe, it was because I forefelt dimly that I was impelled to leave the quiet shepherd-folk and mingle with this strange great world.'

Ib looked at her with troubled, anxious eyes.

'Where are you going, Tristiane?' he cried, seizing hold of her

hand when in the evening she was about to go forth on her secret mission. 'Do not go, Tristiane.'

Tristiane turned back with a smile that reassured him.

'It is for the best,' she said, and departed.

He walked up and down—up and down like a caged lion—as long as her absence lasted. Weak tears of relief came to his eyes as she stood before him again.

'Oh, you must not leave me,' he pleaded. 'I feel as if I had lost you for ever each time you go from my sight. It is like suffering death over and over again. And to have you go, not being able to follow you with my persistent thought—I was all afloat in a black sea, Tristiane. Say you will not go again.'

But Tristiane shook her head.

'I must, Ib. It is best.'

'Oh, why have you secrets from me who have shown you all my heart? But no; forgive me, Tristiane. I will not complain. No, I am content; only say you will always surely, surely come back to me, and I will hold my peace.'

But his anxious eyes dogged her every least movement on the days that followed, and an unconquerable pain convulsed his face at her repeated absences. At her return each time, with redoubled silent fervour, he clung to the blessing of her presence.

'You look so happy, Tristiane,' he said once. 'Your face wears a hopeful, expectant look. For what pleasant thing are you waiting?'

And another time he said with a sharp, sorrowful voice:

'Do not look at me like that, Tristiane—as if you did not see me at all, but some one else beyond—as if some great person stood behind me, and I were too small and insignificant to conceal him in the least, and the sound of my voice were lost to you in rapt contemplation of him. Ah, Tristiane?'—with sudden anguish—'what has come between us? Sometimes now, though I hold your hand and see your face, I feel as though you were far away and lost to me utterly.' But at the pained, startled look she gave him he went on penitently: 'No—no, Tristiane, do not have any care of what I say. You know I am never quite in my right mind nowadays. Make allowances for me. No, nothing is true but that you have been good to me and are not going to forsake me.'

One morning she found him labouring under a terrible agitation.



‘Tristiane, I cannot hide from you what I have seen,’ he said. ‘Silence would strangle me. You must tell me what is the gold ring fastened around your neck.’

Tristiane instinctively lifted her hand to her neck, and felt the gold ring there stirred with the sudden wild pulsation of her heart.

‘I was waiting for you to return last night, and as I waited sleep overtook me. When I woke, the first pale glimmer of dawn lighted the sky. I had not heard your footsteps as you came back, and for my peace I must make sure with my eyes that you were near. So I crept to where you slept, and was satisfied, and about to retire, when I distinguished by the faint light a glitter on your bare neck that could scarcely be a stray lock of your hair. I came nearer—I could not help it—and—whose ring is that great, golden, strangely-chiselled ring, that might fit the hand of Thor? For whom are you leaving me, Tristiane? Why are you deceiving me?’

There was that in her face when she said, ‘Will you not trust me, Ib?’ that made his anger vanish as mist.

‘Yes, I will—I will!’ he cried, with a passionate revulsion of feeling. ‘You shall never hear another murmur from me. How dare I question you! I will trust you as far as death, and further. I will trust you as the true and steadfast stars that return every night for ever, and that it would be a stupid, blasphemous thought to doubt.’

‘How your face shines, Tristiane!’

The great day had finally arrived. The whole population had flocked to the chief streets of the city to see the new king borne in triumph foremost in the glittering procession.

From where they had stayed quietly at home in the old booth Ib and Tristiane could hear faintly the joyous acclamations of the people, and the noises of pipes and drums. Ib had not dared to venture forth.

‘How your face shines, Tristiane!’ he had said innumerable times that day. Whenever he looked at her it struck him anew. ‘Why does your face shine?’

But she had not told him. When he grew restless and excited at the noises without, she took his hand quietly in her own, and made him tell her about his old home, and the fir-tree, and the well, and the swallows under the roof. It always seemed he could never stop when he began talking of them.

‘How would it be with you,’ said Tristiane, turning her shining face away as if her secret must appear written there, ‘if one should say to you, “You may go back to the old house. The past shall be forgiven, the dark days forgotten. You shall sit again under your own trees and watch the peaceful sky reflected in the well of your own garden?”’

‘Do not say such things to me,’ cried out Ib, in anguish. ‘You were never cruel before. Do you not see that you are torturing me to death?’

Tristiane was silent, but she pressed his hand hard to her side to keep from speaking.

‘How your face shines, Tristiane!—how your face shines!’

It seemed to her the light had never been so long in fading away before. She came to the door and lifted the curtain certainly a hundred times to see how much the sun had declined. Finally the red glow began to narrow in the clouds, and left them grey. The streets were again full of the people that had before been massed together in the heart of the city. The merry-makers got home, Triflor bursting with food for conversation. The lights were lit in the booth; everything was made ready for the nightly performance, sure to be attended by great crowds on such a holiday.

Finally, that too was over.

‘Do not leave me to-night,’ said Ib, holding Tristiane by the hem of her garment. ‘I am so filled with strange fears and forebodings. My heart stops at every sound. I need to know that you are near to live through the night.’

‘I will be back in a little while. Do not ask me where I am going. I cannot tell you—not yet. It may be, you too will be glad to-morrow. Good-night.’

The sky was full of stars. Tristiane walked on hurriedly. The streets were still alive with people; it was too great a holiday to go to bed. She proceeded without hesitation, as going over well-known ground. Finally she came to the King’s dwelling. She showed a ring at the palace-door, and was led in unquestioned. Passing through the corridors, her ears were met with mingled sounds of music, and wassail, and laughter. They grew less as she approached a well-known chamber far apart, and when she had entered it, and the heavy bearskin curtain had dropped behind her, she found herself again in perfect stillness. Her heart was beating loud with emotion. She held her glad eyes fixed



upon the door opposite the one through which she had come. She had not waited long, though it seemed long to her impatient spirit, when the curtain was suddenly lifted.

Tristiane moved one quick step forward—then stopped short and stared in dumb, pleased wonder at the man who had entered.

She had seen him before: once, the first time, in peasant's attire, for it was the tall man with the red beard, and many times since in plain soldier's garb; but never him nor any one arrayed with similar magnificence.

A long mantle lined with costly furs, snowy and soft, fell in stately folds from his shoulders. His purple tunic was bordered with gold. A heavy roll of twisted gold, the two meeting ends of which were beaten in similitude of lions' heads, curled around his powerful neck and betokened his exalted rank.

His face, in unison with his apparel, that night had assumed a sudden splendour. His vigorous head and crisp long hair shone like burnished metal. His eyes had the steady gleam of jewels; his great brow the purity and polish of some precious marble; his lips a more vivid purple than his garment. An inward fire of gladness, a mighty purpose, seemed to have lent his heroic stature almost god-like proportions.

'Welcome, Tristiane,' he said to her, approaching.

'And is it Sweyn?' asked Tristiane, abashed, for he scarcely seemed the same man she had importuned so many days with her insistent prayers.

'Even Sweyn.'

'You wear such a glad visage to-night. I know that you have gained of the King the pardon I have asked. Is it not so? The son of Magnus may return to his home, and have restored to him his wealth and his work, and something of the old peace and the dignity that is more to him than air to breathe? Is it not so? Ah, you are good—good—good.' Tristiane, with impulsive gratitude, seized his hand and bent to kiss it. Sweyn withdrew it quickly.

'I am glad to-night, but not for that, Tristiane,' he said.

Tristiane uttered a faint cry of sorrow, and the shining light went out of her face. 'You have not obtained it yet? And I must come again, and still again and again! Do you know how many times you have said "Come to-morrow" to me? How many times I have come here burning with hope and gone away chilled with disappointment? I thought that this should be the last.'

You promised to aid me. I saw in your face that you had truly that intention. Are you not so powerful with the young king as they say? Ah, surely I thought to hold his pardon in my hands to-night, written out fair and clear. I thought to have taken it home, and to have wakened him where he slept with the lion, and have shown it to him. How he would have wept for joy on my shoulder! O Sweyn—oh mighty, magnificent Sweyn—how long must I wait for that? One day would be so much gained from desperate wretchedness! Why do you dally?—of whom they say that but to ask of the King is to obtain?’

Sweyn smiled slowly, fixing his strangely bright eyes upon her as he spoke. ‘Tristiane, you of the wise, truthful eyes, are after all the simplest woman in all the world. The first silly wench from the street could answer that question of yours. You can see men’s spoken lies in their faces, but have not, it appears, the gift of divining evident truths left unuttered. Why am I slow to answer your petition, and eager to let you come here night after night to learn from my lips how your suit is advanced? What is the fate of Magnus to me? But your presence within my doors is more than the interests of this vast realm.’

Tristiane stared at him blankly, not understanding. ‘But you are going to get Ib’s pardon for me?’ she faltered; ‘you are going to do as you have promised!’

Sweyn laughed. ‘Ah, how simple you are! how simple you are! You are like the great pine-trees of your mountains, and the grand grey rocks, and the pure cold wind, and the deep-blue mighty elements! What an ever-renewed delight you are to me, Tristiane!’—the laughter passed from his face, and his eyes were intensely earnest. ‘Now forget for a moment that petty coward, not worth the breath we use to speak his name, whom out of your own generosity you would wish to save, and listen to me a little. I am Sweyn. I have fought many battles. I have seen death close in the face and smiled at it. My name is one that makes the enemy’s blood stand still in his chilled veins. I am a king in all but the name. There are thousands who will do my will at a sign. I can choose to-morrow a bride among the most beautiful and noblest in the land—and yet, until I saw you, I was as lonesome as a creature of which kind only one has been placed upon the earth. I have been friends with men, and yet not of them. I have led, commanded, made use of them, been above them. And so my life has been



cursed with a hidden want. But when I saw you first—when to satisfy the young king's freak we had gone forth on a merry-making time—something in me cried out at the sight: "You have found your peer." Your frank eyes looked straight into mine, used to looking down into others' eyes, and your soul shone out from them in its fearless, stainless attitude. A simple majesty breathed from your quiet lineaments. I distinguished an awful beauty in them—you are so greatly, strangely beautiful; the common herd, too dull and blind to recognise gods when they walk among them, do not even suspect your beauty! I said, before leaving you, "She shall be Sweyn's bride"—and yet I had not resolved what my next movement towards you should be, when I learned that you had urged to see me. I wondered what you would want of me. There was something sublimely laughable in your petition—you cannot be aware of it, being unlike any one else; I was staggered by the touch of greatness in your simplicity, that made you come and trust the cowering lamb to the generosity of a bloodthirsty lion, relying upon a bare word of his not to harm it, but to save it from the other lions. There was something unanswerable in the high reasons given by you for mercy and pardon—something fatal to argument in your complete ignorance of mean and revengeful motives. Ah, you are not cunning like other mortals. You say exactly what is in your mind—you either have no knowledge, or else a noble disdain for sinuous courses—and my soul bows to you, Tristiane!

Tristiane stood like a statue, and listened to his words without averting her puzzled face, that had turned by one faint shade paler as he spoke.

'Tristiane,' pursued Sweyn more hotly, and coming nearer to her, 'you shall never leave me now. You do not understand. Sweyn loves you. Sweyn has chosen you for his bride, for it is fit a lion should have a lioness for his mate. Sweyn has despised for you all the artful, accomplished beauties of the Court—for you, grown like a perfect tree among the wind-blown hills. The proudest in the land shall bow to you, the mistress of Sweyn, who is prouder than any, and yet himself bows before you. Oh, beloved—your lashes are like a line of sunlight across the great august eyes, darkly blue and deep like the sea. In possession of you, my goddess, I am myself uplifted and made a god. I am joyous as they, transcending all human powers of gladness, since I can hold your great and gracious body in my longing arms, and

call you Tristiane—*my* Tristiane—my beautiful, beloved Tristiane.’

The young warrior came towards her with outstretched arms, his eyes shining with a wonderful brilliancy, not far from the fervour of passionate tears, his firm lips trembling for once with an unspeakable, perfect tenderness.

Tristiane watched him with troubled, fascinated eyes. A sudden beautiful softness, even as a reflection from his, came into her face. She did not seem able to move—but when she felt the first slight touch of his hand, as though suddenly awakening, she cried out, ‘No, no, you must leave me, I must go to Ib.’

‘Never again, Tristiane. You shall forget Ib. What is Ib? I hate him. He shall have his pardon, the cur, but you shall never see him again. I will teach you to forget him. We will be happier together than mortals had dreamed to be. We will live in more than human splendour: I in the divine radiance of your face, you in the light of my tremendous love—that will force from you a similar love in return. Do you think you will not love me as I love you? To-morrow, I tell you, Tristiane, you will give me throb for throb—because we were made for one another. I recognised you, marked you mine, as soon as my eyes met yours. You are my own by right of the stars, of my birth, of my strength. Sweyn has always conquered! And he holds you now, and you are his for ever—but you have turned pale—you have become so cold.’

‘Let me go,’ said Tristiane. ‘I am standing in the dark, all in the dark. Only this is clear. I must go back to Ib. I have promised never to leave him. He cannot live without me. His life has been so sad! Let me go.’

‘No, no,’ cried Sweyn, vehemently, ‘I abhor the very thought of your past contact with that man. He shall never lift his base eyes upon you again. Is it not enough that he shall be pardoned for your sake?’

‘Let me go. You must let me go. He will die if I leave him. He needs me. He has only me in all the world. I am true to him for ever.’

‘You will forget him, I say. I will *make* you forget him. How dull you are, Tristiane, and ignorant and cold! Do you not know, Tristiane, that you shall love me? That it is not possible for an immense love like mine to awaken no answering love in the beloved? That your only home is my arms, your resting-place my heart?’



'No, no, no!' cried Tristiane, in strenuous protest, shuddering away from him. 'I do not know what you are saying. But I am going. I am going back to Ib.'

She moved to go, but he caught her without a word before she could reach the door.

'Stay,' he said, in a command that was still an appeal.

'I am going back to Ib.'

'You shall stay,' he said fiercely, between set teeth, losing his head.

His terrible strong arms were around her. Their faces were within an inch of one another. Her eyes glowered sternly into his beneath her stormy, gathered brows. Each could feel the other's quick, angry breath fanning his hot face.

Then began a mighty struggle. It was a contest as between two lions of equal powers and courage. Without a sound from their lips, but occasionally a sharply drawn breath, they strove together for a few seconds, she for freedom, he for mastery. Suddenly, with a cry of triumph, she broke from his arms and made a step for the door. He overtook her, and held her fast again with a burst of hoarse laughter. She felt a death-like sense of cold creep over her, realising the uselessness of her efforts.

Sweyn stared for a moment in her fierce, unyielding blue eyes, then with a sudden impulse he flung her from him. 'Go—go back to your son of Magnus!' he cried, out of his mind with blind wrath. 'I renounce you. What have I to do with a woman rigid as stone with resistance of me? I demeaned myself to strive with a woman—but you have driven me mad. Go, go back to your shameful lover!' he shouted with an increase of unreasoning rage. 'You would have saved him, but I tell you that you have sold him. Mark me in this. He shall be taken and put to some terrible death before your eyes. I myself will tear him limb from limb, yes, with my own hands. Do not imagine that he shall escape justice—or revenge call it now more properly. There is no hole on earth so small he can hide in it from me. Go, go now, if you will,' and he dashed from the room.

Tristiane stood still, stunned. Her arms dropped at her sides. The room swam before her eyes, then all grew blank before them, and she reeled stupidly to the door.

She knew not how she reached the open air, but suddenly she found the stars above her head. The keen, cold wind restored her to her senses, that had seemed failing. With labouring heart

and trembling feet she hurried on in the direction of Triflor's booth. Everything was hopelessly confused in her mind. She seemed walking in utter darkness. Only this was clear to her: that she must hurry—hurry—and take Ib away somewhere and hide him. As the thought of his danger pressed harder upon her she started to run. An occasional drunken song met her ear. Once or twice she missed the way and had to retrace her steps. The night made everything look unfamiliar.

It seemed to her she had been wandering about the city for many hours, when she finally reached what she thought to be the street she was looking for. Yes, she remembered it. The booth was at the other end. She hurried as much as it was possible into the almost utter darkness, for the torch placed in an iron ring at the corner had burnt itself out, and the starlight was dim. Now she stood on familiar ground. There was the booth. All might yet be well.

She felt her hair rise on her head with a sudden mortal fear as she entered the enclosure. For in advancing she stumbled over disorderly masses lying about the ground. Then she became aware of the stars above her head peeping in through the broken roof.

'Ib! Ib!' she cried out, and began groping madly about among broken, ruined things. Suddenly her hand met something soft and warm—the lion. Ib, then, must be near.

He lay by the lion—quite still. She shook him and called to him.

He drew a long sigh. 'Tristiane?' he asked faintly, as though awaking from a deep slumber. Tristiane fell on her knees beside him. 'What has happened, Ib?'

'Ah, is it you? Thank God it is you!'

'What is it, Ib? What has happened?'

'What know I?' he said feebly. 'A brawl—a drunken mob. They set out to tear down the place—for fun. All fled. I was afraid to go at first, and then something fell across my legs and I could not, because I was so faint. It is there now, and holds me down. Can you lift it?'

She lifted the beam; he crawled from under it.

'Can you stand, Ib?' she asked. 'Can you walk? Oh, Ib!' she cried out in a voice of most piercing anguish, 'we are in danger; we must fly—to-night—this minute—and I have brought this upon you! Oh, do not ask me—I cannot tell you. For



the sake of pity, do not ask me. Only this: we must fly. Whither? I do not know—only away from this city filled with our enemies. Come, come, Ib.'

But Ib had sunk again to the ground. 'I am hurt, Tristiane. I cannot walk. We cannot fly. No matter, Tristiane. I have long expected it. Don't be so distressed. I was lying in a stupor a little while ago, that seemed like death, and it was such peace as I have never known. I think I could lie still here to-night and let them come that seek me, and kill me if they would—and call it a relief. A beautiful, grand denial of all the past it would be—would it not, Tristiane?—to meet my death like a man in the end, after having shunned it so long like a hunted hare,' he asked; and then, in a whisper, 'Are they looking for me?' And through an exquisite sympathy she could feel the fever of fear that had come back upon him in spite of his courageous words. Tristiane did not answer.

'Are they looking for me?' he asked again.

'Oh, Ib, I will save you yet,' she cried out, 'I will save you yet.' There was not a moment to lose. She stooped and gathered him in her arms—a light weight, scarcely more than a child's, he was so wasted away with sorrow and pain and fear. With a sigh of relief he let his head drop on her shoulder. He felt so safe in those strong kind arms.

She stood still a moment, hesitating—where should she go? Then, as a sudden light came back to her mind, the thought of Knut and his boat, that was to sail as soon as the Coronation feasts were over, the last day of which was about to dawn. Knut, for the sake of Kabiong's sweet eyes, had been a frequent visitor at the booth; and Tristiane, scarcely listening, had heard long accounts of his boat, anchored at the mouth of the river. In a rapid whisper she told Ib of it. They could not venture to follow the fertile, populous river road, but must travel to their destination over unfrequented downs along the desolate sea-coast.

'You know the ways: direct me,' said Tristiane. She moved to the door, and came again under the open sky. 'The lion!' said Ib, sorrowfully. Without a word she turned back. The lion was standing straining his chain after Ib. She unfastened him and led him along. The three went forth into the darkness.

At daybreak the city was far behind them. They had reached unimpeded the verge of the sea. When the light made things

distinct, Tristiane, who from the first dim glimmer of dawn had been glancing anxiously behind her, to make sure they were not followed, stopped and let Ib softly on the ground. They dared not travel in the daylight on the exposed bare high-land; one least mischance would be fatal, Tristiane felt, and she would not risk it. In a little hollow, veiled by a few ragged bushes, they lay all day, Ib with heroic forbearance refraining from questions concerning their flight; for which her eyes rendered him grateful praise.

When the darkness had come on again Tristiane arose and resumed her burden. Ib seemed heavier than before, for she was faint with hunger and consuming agitation. She had not dared to beg for bread; they must vanish from the land like shadows, leaving no trace of their passage. Ib, exhausted, slept fitfully in her arms. She plodded on and on, unwearied and watchful. Now and then, at some least unaccountable sound, she felt a tremor pass over his body, and her heart beat wildly against her breast for pity.

‘Oh, be not afraid, Ib. I am with you. I am strong. Indeed, I will save you. No one can reach you but through me.’

Over the desolate downs they went by the faint light of stars. She carried him tenderly as a mother might, having a care of his hurt limb. A little late moon gave them its light for a few hours. Tristiane set her face to the wind, and progressed rapidly, rapidly in the direction of the river-mouth. Occasionally for a minute she felt the numbness of extreme fatigue creep over her, and her foot dragged; but there arose in her mind the memory of Sweyn’s infuriate face and threatening words, and she went along more rapidly than ever, with quickening breath, a grim determination in her face that frowned darkly on the darkness. Glows of painful heat swept through her frame at the ghastly image of what must follow their being overtaken. But no. She would save Ib—Ib, whom she had betrayed! And at the thought of her fond treachery—alas! how she had striven to do the very best for him!—a great yearning to make compensation to him made her cry out again, ‘I will never leave you, Ib. I am your slave. I will watch over you every hour. I will be with you until death. Oh, have you not told me of some beautiful storied place where there are more flowers than here, and the air is balmy, and the sun shines in a sky continually serene and more deeply blue than ours? Have you not, Ib? We will go there;



we will travel, travel, travel until we reach it. The boat will take us as far, perhaps. We will not rest until we have touched that shore. I will carry you so in my untiring arms. Then, when we are once there, we will lie down on the soft grass and listen to the birds without speaking. We will remember the past only as a troubled dream. Oh, Ib, Ib, say that it shall be so! Say that you can still be happy!’

Ib looked at her long with his grateful eyes. The dream was too beautiful.

‘Among these people that speak another language we shall be alone as in an enchanted place. Tristiane will have to be your world at first as well as your servant. I will strive to be enough, indeed, Ib. I will heap up pleasant leaves for you to sleep on; all that shall be when we have reached the boat—if we can just reach the boat we shall see this shore fade away like smoke. We will say good-bye for ever to this old house, and begin life all over again, turning our eyes to a new and fairer, that will hold great peace for us two poor pilgrims!’

She felt a tear from Ib’s eyes fall upon her neck. A strange flood of tears blinded her own eyes—the first she had ever wept.

‘Oh, Ib,’ she cried out in great torment, ‘forgive me! forgive me! No! spare me—do not ask me for what. Hush!’

She stopped short and dropped to the ground.

A noise of horses’ feet. A group of horsemen came in sight, their bright torches flaring in the wind, and shedding about them a strong bloody light. They stood still not far from the place where the three had cowered down in the shadow of a stunted tree. They seemed to consult together for a minute. They held their torches high aloft to light the downs, and gazed anxiously about. Tristiane held her breath, choked by her heart. Then they galloped on, and were soon lost to sight behind the unevenness of the ground.

Tristiane arose and took up Ib and moved onwards again, walking with set teeth. The strain was beginning to tell upon her. Her even breath was drawn deep and hard. Ib, weak and sick, slept. She knew not what thanks to make for that unexpected blessing of sleep that had fallen upon him. He was saved the agony of uncertainty that racked her as they went, went, went along the high cliff overhanging the sounding sea. They must be nearing the mouth of the river now. In a little they should be safe. An anticipated exultation curved her lips.

Suddenly she heard again the trampling of hoofs. She bowed down over the earth, shielding Ib with her body. Another troop of horsemen rode by holding high their torches. They were evidently in search of some fugitives. An overpowering feeling of intensest hatred made Tristiane grind her teeth. How he had kept his word! how cruel to the core he was! with what joy he would do all he had threatened, and more! how he would hound them to death with his bloodhounds, and laugh when he had them at bay! with what keen vindictiveness he would relish her horrible pain, in the slow, hard death he would inflict on the shrinking body of Ib!

She put her arms protectingly around him, and all the fierceness and doggedness of a lioness aroused in defence of her young fired her blood. By all that was holy in heaven and on earth, he should be baffled yet! She arose again and went on along the unresting sea, dragging the tired lion.

A feeling of despair, the first yet known, came over her when another troop of horsemen rode by. She bit the ground for rage and sorrow as she lay on it waiting for them to get out of sight. The enforced delay might be fatal; already the sky was paling.

When they had passed she went on stolidly: she *would* save him! But a feeling of cold was in her heart on account of the thousand ghastly suspicions that dimly crowded about her brain, and that she had not the courage to face and consider. Ib was heavy as lead; a dull stupor had come over him from pain and weariness; his head hung helplessly on her arm. All at once, the whole weight of the truth coming upon her, she halted. Of course they would be taken. His people—for they must be his people—would lie in wait at all the ways. They should be cut off from the port, and driven to the sea. With the courage of desperation she shook herself free from the fear that was about to paralyse her, and walked on bravely, for the sake of one possible chance of safety—for she must do something.

The stars went out one by one; the dread dawn came on relentlessly; slowly it whitened in the East.

They must be quite near the river now. The boat, no doubt, would leave on the high tide; the tide, she judged, was about half in. On the high cliff, against a palely roseate sky, appeared the great form of the woman, burdened with the wounded man, leading the lion—the great, gracious, generous form.



Suddenly, far ahead, her keen eye caught sight of men on horseback standing still. She shaded her eyes and gazed fixedly at them. Yes, his men! He had done his worst; he had cut off the way to the ship. Then she looked behind and thought to perceive more men coming on from there. Then, suddenly, in the far distance at her right hand she caught the movement of many vague shapes. So it had all been in vain—the long march, the almost unendurable strain, the trembling hope! Fool, to have thought to escape *him*! Had he not warned her? ‘Sweyn was never conquered; Sweyn never sues; Sweyn seizes his own.’ So, they were in Sweyn’s hands at last!

She turned her face to the sea. There was no place to hide now from the broadening day. She laid Ib on the ground, and sat down beside him, with his head on her lap. The doting old lion crouched by him, and licked his hand, very feebly, once or twice. Tristiane watched the sky slowly deepening in colour where the sun was going to rise. All was over now—they had only to wait. Her eyes falling on Ib’s face, they filled again with those unfamiliar human tears. As it lay, turned to the dawn, the soft light seemed to alter and ennoble it; the large, intelligent brow wore a look of almost seraphic beauty; the weak mouth showed only an excessive tenderness in its pale lines; the hollow eyes were filled with peace; the wind that blew in his soft thin hair, pure white now at the temples, made it look like rays of light. A great hot tear from Tristiane’s eyes fell upon his cheek. His eyes opened and looked up into the gloom of hers. ‘Ah, we are resting,’ he said vaguely. ‘It is good to rest—good to rest.’

His eyelids, weighed down with somnolence, opened and closed again a few times, then finally opened wide, and were fixed upon her with infinite love. ‘I have been dreaming beautiful things. I had forgotten what we were about. Are we nearly there, Tristiane? But no, I do not care. I feel like a little child again. I am quite, quite safe wherever you are. You said once, “Rest upon me.” You see I have, Tristiane. You are so strong—so great and strong.’

Not strong nor great then as she sat looking away from him, far out to sea, forcing back the stream of her tears to its burning bed. Her dust-tarnished, dew-drenched head had a dreary, disordered look. The old god-like calm of her face had given place to an expression of simple suffering humanity.

‘Tristiane,’ said Ib finally, after a long pause, ‘I have thought just lately that maybe my life was not made all wrong for me after all. I call back my curses against fate. Maybe it was best for me that I should be hurled off my high pedestal of self-righteousness, and, finding myself in reality so much less than the stature of a man, should strive to gain a manly height. Surely striving, whether a man succeed or not, will count for something in the end. I think that as I am now—I think—I hope—and yet cannot altogether touch myself—if I were put back where I stood when I for the first time discovered myself wanting, I could stand up and pay willingly the penalty of a crime.’ They both gazed silently at the sky for awhile. ‘And then I have you,’ he went on. ‘Without all that pain and horror I should not have had you, Tristiane. I think you have made up for it all. It was worth such suffering to find such pity under the skies. I think perhaps for you I would live it all over again—the pain, the horror, and—yes, the crime.’ And with more love and gratitude in his face than could ever be conveyed by words, he said softly, ‘How shall I ever thank you, Tristiane! O my patient, compassionate Tristiane!’

His eyelids dropped; he dozed again before Tristiane, who was searching her mind for some little word to say, could speak at all. Thank Heaven that he slept!

She turned and looked around. The party from the right had come nearer. She could now distinguish the mounted men one from another. The light was so bright they must be able to see her now, and Ib, and the lion. Yes, evidently they had been spied. The men came on quite rapidly over the uneven, difficult ground. One great horseman led the rest. She knew him even from so far away. He threw his bridle to the wind and advanced at headlong speed. Turning again to the sea, she saw a little ship flying over the dark waves with full white sails—the same, no doubt, in which they were to have escaped.

And now the great rider was within hearing. She could not bear to turn and see him advancing with his conquering mien—to watch the massive outline growing more distinct, and the terrible revengeful face and the unfaltering eye.

How sweetly Ib slept! Suddenly she stretched her hand to his throat—one slight effort of the strong, merciful hand and he need not fear Sweyn. Not pain, not death, ever any more—one effort of that hand and—— But no, she could not do it,



No, there was nothing to do—nothing.

With her last strength she rose to her feet and confronted the rider; then the sense of the approaching danger and death for her sleeping friend overpowered her. She threw up her arms and sank down beside him, vanquished, and buried her blanching face in her knees, for there was nothing to do—nothing. The steel might pass through her body first, but Ib would be reached in the end, even as Sweyn had said. No, there was no hole so small on the face of the earth in which they might have hidden from him.

A voice like a clarion rang through the misty morning air. ‘Magnus, son of Magnus! Magnus, son of Magnus!’

Tristiane felt Ib tremble violently. She looked up. Ib was half-raised on his knees staring with starting eyes at the rider, now quite near. His face was ashen and quivering.

The great voice rang out again clear and sonorous. ‘Magnus, son of Magnus! The ban against thee is called in. Thou art pardoned of King and country. Thy goods are restored to thee. Thy rank is thine own again. Praise to the King who sees that mercy is good!’

Ib stared at him, still quivering. Then slowly, slowly, a great smile irradiated his face, at the same time glorified by the newly risen sun. He stretched his hands out uncertainly, and groped in the air a moment, and fell backward on the ground with a sigh, his face smiling vaguely up at the suddenly illumined sky—the face of one who has died of a joy too great.

And Tristiane and Sweyn, who had arrived on the spot and leapt from his saddle, stood gazing at one another over the frail, miserable liberated body with the joy-lit face. Her eyes were ringed with shadows dark and sad like death. His too were sleepless and feverishly bright, staring from a haggard face. All the world lay steeped in the sweet red colour of the new day. They gazed—gazed, without words, till Sweyn cried out in a voice harsh and broken with emotion, ‘Oh, why did you think the very worst of me? Why did you believe all that I said? I have been seeking you all over the land ever since.’

And across the broken barriers of hatred and injustice, Tristiane, her face full of unutterable prayers, held out her hand to him.

*CONCERNING THOMAS.*

THE reflective mind must often have been puzzled, in the fitful intervals of a mazy existence, by the gigantic problem—How is it that, while Tom is so common an object of the country in England, France should be so comparatively rare in representatives of Thomas, and even Spain, Portugal, and Italy should have so scanty a crop of Tomas's, Thomé's, and Tomaso's? This grave doubt must so long have agitated the public conscience of Europe that I feel no compunction in saying the moment has at length arrived to relieve the world from any further tension on so painful a subject. In order to put an end to such a lamentable state of international uncertainty, I come forward with confidence to throw myself into the breach, like a modern Marcus Curtius, as the historian of Thomas.

For even the Christian names we all bear so lightly are none of them mere fortuitous collocations of chance syllables. Every one has a history and a meaning, often important, and always full of unsuspected interest. Take Thomas itself, for example, as a characteristic case. How curious that the name of the doubting Apostle should have become a favourite designation for men and boys through a considerable fraction of united Christendom! At the present day, to be sure, in this age of agnosticism, Thomas is a very natural choice indeed for the parents of such doubters as Professor Huxley, who happens to bear it, or even for such lukewarm Laodicean philosophers as Henry Thomas Buckle and Thomas Carlyle. But how, in the ages of faith, did any good Churchman ever come to bestow upon his innocent offspring the name of that incredulous saint who insisted upon the production of some sort of evidence before accepting the account of a most tremendous occurrence? The wonder, after all, is not that Thomases should be so comparatively rare upon the Continent nowadays, but that any Thomases at all should ever have been permitted to grow up anywhere. We shall see hereafter, however, that the anomaly has itself its sufficient explanation. As usual, there is reason in the roasting of eggs. For the present, I shall content myself with pointing out the simple fact that there were no Thomases in England, at any rate, before the date of the Norman Conquest.

That in itself is not very remarkable. Everybody must have



noticed that there were no 'English' Christian names, as we would call them nowadays, anywhere in English history before the Battle of Hastings. John, Robert, Henry, Thomas, Richard, Roger, Guy, and Peter—in fact, the common assemblage of English society generally—all came over, as might naturally have been expected from gentlemen of such high respectability, with William the Conqueror. Before the Conquest, the true-born Englishmen bore without exception those uncouth and unpronounceable crack-jaw names which we now condescendingly describe as Anglo-Saxon. To be sure, these are the only true English names in existence—the only ones formed directly from English roots, and smacking of the soil, where those roots grow as naturally as dandelions or daisies: while all the rest that we bear nowadays are in the lump High German or else Hebrew by origin, as much aliens in the land as the Carolines and Augustuses, the Alexanders and Dagmars, that have come over in later times with Teutonic or Scandinavian princes and princesses. Most of these true old English names were ugly enough in all conscience; take *Ælfthryth*, for example, as a charming title for the heroine of a novel, or *Godgifu* as the original of our modern *Lady Godiva*. But, pretty or ugly, they all went down together as soon as the Normans came: the native Englishman, with genuine British snobbery, no sooner felt the heel of the Williams and the Henrys pressed firm upon his neck than he took his revenge—how? Why, by christening his own ignoble Saxon brats William and Henry, just like their Norman overlords. Even so the despiser of our bloated aristocracy in the East-end at the present day sends Percy and Bertie to the Board School round the corner, while Gwendoline takes out Leopold in the broken go-cart, and Gladys stops at home in the general living room to mind Algernon and peel the potatoes.

Wherever a name of this first and genuinely English crop did struggle through somehow into the middle ages, it was in virtue of being attached to some saint's personality. Thus we owe the existence of Edward and Edmund in our midst to-day to the casual accident that those particular names happened to be borne by the two sainted early English kings—St. Edmund, of Bury St. Edmund's, the martyr of East Anglia, and St. Edward the Confessor, enshrined in state in his own great Norman Abbey of Westminster. Henry III., the saintliest of our Angevin princes, had a great respect for these two beatified kings, his predecessors; and besides rebuilding Westminster as we now know it in honour of one of them, he bestowed their names respectively on his own

royal imps, Edward I. and Edmund Crouchback, Duke of Lancaster. Thus the two got enrolled in the royal circle, and were eagerly adopted, as usual, now that royalty patronised them, by the English people who had so long discarded them as so awfully common. Wherever else, and that is but rarely, an old English name of the sort survived in the middle ages, it was for a similar reason; as when St. Æthelthryth, the patron princess of Ely, after undergoing Latinisation in the form of Etheldreda, declined at last into the vulgar village Awdrey. Tawdry finery still keeps up the memory of the gewgaws bought at St. Awdrey's fair.

I fear, however, that, like the original possessor of the gross of green spectacles, I begin to digress. This discussion on the fate of the good old English name of pre-Norman days seems to bear at first sight but little relation to the veracious history of our special subject, Thomas. Nevertheless, I hope to arrive at that more modern personage all in good time. When William and company invaded England, Thomas also came over in their train. By remote descent, of course, he was a good Syrian, for Thomas the Apostle took his name from the Arimaic tongue: in which abstruse language, as I am credibly informed—for I don't myself speak it with any approach to fluency—the word Thomas, like its Greek equivalent, Didymus, means simply a twin. In fact, tradition has it that the Apostle's original name was Judas, but that, to avoid confusion with two others of the same name, he was more generally known, like Peter, by his conventional sobriquet. Legend further relates that in later life the doubting saint atoned for his early scepticism by carrying the Cross to India, where he underwent martyrdom in due course, as in duty bound, and became the founder of the little outlying island of the faith whose representatives are known as the Christians of St. Thomas. Nor was his tomb forgotten. Alfred the Great sent an envoy to the shrine of St. Thomas in India in the ninth century. Long after, when the Portuguese found their way to Malabar round the Cape of Good Hope, they discovered the body of the Apostle at Meliapore, and transferred his relics to Goa, where the doubtful bones of the doubter now repose in high honour under a costly canopy. San Tomas is accordingly the patron saint of Portuguese India.

But, in Europe, the sceptical Apostle long remained exceedingly unpopular. The Johns, the Jameses, and the Pierses outnumbered him by the dozen. Still, as a saint and martyr, he had necessarily his day—the 21st of December: and children born



upon that day were always liable to be named by devout parents after its patron. Hence it was, no doubt, that three great mediæval saints happened to be called Thomas, and that after them, in one country or another, such a crop of Thomases gradually sprang up to occupy the soil. Those three, in chronological order, were Thomas à Becket, Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas à Kempis; the first of whom is both most important in his effect upon nomenclature in general, and most personally interesting to Englishmen in particular.

The great English saint was the son of Gilbert, portreeve of London, and his wife Rohese; and his being christened Thomas gives us one more example of the rapid way in which the native English nomenclature was supplanted wholesale by foreign types or saints' names after the Conquest had rendered the Æthelstans and Godrics of an earlier day as unfashionable or even ridiculous as Sophia and Jenima in modern Britain. His surname of Becket, à Becket, or atte Becket (that is to say, 'by the streamlet'), he derived from some little beck or diminutive brook that flowed near his father's house in London. During his life he was probably the most popular man in England; and after his brutal murder in Canterbury Cathedral he blossomed out at once into a saintly martyr, the representative to the down-trodden English race of the cause of the people against their kings and nobles. It was that democratic sentiment that made the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury the focus of so many pilgrimages 'from every shire's end of England,' as Chaucer phrases it. It was that, too, that turned the old British tin-track along the ridge of the North Downs into the Pilgrims' Way, and that caused thousands of votaries to hurry along it annually, 'the holy blissful martyr for to seek,' at the very spot where the king's minions had slaughtered in cold blood the helpless champion of the Church and the people.

With such a saint to recommend it, no wonder that the name Thomas spread apace, like Jonah's gourd, in every part of England. Most of the churches of St. Thomas scattered up and down through the country are under the invocation of the archbishop, not of the Apostle, as Miss Yonge rightly remarks: and St. Thomas's Hospital was originally founded on the site of the house in which the great Churchman was born. How early Thomas had become a familiar Christian name in our midst we can gather from the fact that Tom was already its recognised diminutive in the days of Piers Plowman, who talks of 'Tomme Trewe-tonge' as a proverbial personage; whence it may be inferred that the

designation, 'Truthful Thomas,' was not first invented to suit the idiosyncrasy of the Sage of Chelsea. Gower, too, in his curious description of Wat Tyler's rebellion, which contains a perfectly charming collection of mediæval English nicknames, writes in the delicious dog-Latin of his period :

Wattë vocat, cui Thoma venit, neque Symmë retardat  
Batque et Gibbë simul Hikkë venire jubent.

A passage in which the acute reader will not fail to distinguish the remote progenitors of Watson, Thomson, Simpson, Batson, Gibson, Hicks, Watts, Simms, Gibbs, and many other pure and blameless ratepayers of the modern metropolis.

Nor will it have escaped his attention, in like manner, that Thomas, in the act of passing into Tom, has dropped his 'h,' which is at least written, if not pronounced, in the fuller and official form of his designation in most modern languages. This may excite surprise on the part of those who imagine that a weakness in the matter of aspirates is a purely modern and Britannic peculiarity. Nothing could really be further from the truth. That unoffending letter has puzzled the vocal organs of all nations and ages. Even Catullus's Arrius, the lineal predecessor of our familiar 'Arry, stuck on ornamental aspirates with heedless profusion where they were least needed : and the middle ages, which turned Theodore into Teodoro and Hadrian into Adrian, took their revenge by writing Antony as Anthony, and by transforming Esther into the more euphonious but less correct Hester. Let us remember that France, though it still writes its 'h's,' never really pronounces them at the present day, even when they are by courtesy called aspirate ; and that Italy has got rid of them altogether, in writing as in speech, so that it realises already the wildest cockney ideal of progress in the English language. Therefore do we praise Italian for its soft and pure liquidity, while we pour out the vials of our wrath and scorn on 'Arry when he faithfully imitates its rigid avoidance of 'arsh and 'ard consonantal gutturals.

So, at any rate in mediæval England, while people wrote Thomas they said Tommas ; and when they shortened the name down to its first syllable, in accordance with the true genius of the English language, they allowed it to emerge as the simple familiar Tom. Italian, oddly enough, does the exact opposite, cutting it down to Maso ; whence by further diminution Masaccio, as who should say Tommy, and Masaniello for Tomaso Agnello.

Tom's descendants are fairly frequent in the land. As



Thomasons, to be sure, they run scarce, though I have met with that form; but as Thomsons and Thompsons, Tomsons and Tompsons they abound like blackberries. Had it not been for Tom, in fact, the seasons might still have gone unsung; electricity would lack some of the brightest jewels in its scintillating crown; surgery would be deprived of its deftest hand; and the ingenious Count Rumford, *né* plain Benjamin Thompson, of Massachusetts, would never have founded the Royal Institution. Then Tom itself gets further diminished by the addition of *kin*, and becomes Tomkin; as John becomes Jenkin, Simon Simkin, Walter Watkin, and William Wilkin. Hence Tompkins, Tomkins, Thompkins, and Tomkinson. Once more, there was a politer diminutive, Thomsett, which survives as Tompssett in Essex and some other adjacent counties. Tomlin, Thomlins, and Tomlinson are also 'on my list:' while Mr. Thoms, who invented centenarians, with many other Thommses, Tomses, and Toms, shows a still simpler form of the identical patronymic.

Occasionally, Thomas by itself is a whole surname, as in the case of John Thomas, the sculptor of 'Una and the Lion,' or Ambrose Thomas, the well-known musical composer. But in Britain at least these simple forms of surname, consisting of the Christian name alone without alteration or addition, are invariably Celtic in origin, that is to say, either Welsh, Cornish, or Highland Scotch. For, in Wales, a man generally bore till very recently but a single Christian name, as Evan or Owen, and was further distinguished from others of the same mark by the distinguishing addition of his father's name, as Evan ap Rhys or Owen ap Llewelyn. Owing to this cause we have almost always four alternative forms of almost every Welsh surname: simple, as Evan; possessive and Anglicised, as Evans; truly native, as ap Evan; and corrupted, as Bevan. Similarly with Owen, Owens, ap Owen, Bowen; Rhys, Reece, ap Rhys, Price; Hugh, Hughes, ap Hugh, Pugh; Richard, Richards, ap Richard, Pritchard; Howell, Howells, ap Hoel, Powell. Prodger stands in like manner for ap Roger; Pumphrey for ap Humphrey; Bethell, for ap Ithell; and Probert for ap Robert. George, Henry, William, Williams, and Harry are common surnames everywhere in Wales and Cornwall. Their prevalence and their very simple modern form proves the late introduction of the English surname system into Celtic Britain.

I have only once, however, met with Ap-Tommas as a modern surname, and that is in the case of the gentleman who is

known as the Queen's harper. I confess I view this picturesque name with some covert suspicion, as being a trifle too theatrical, like Fitz-James and Fitz-Edward: but it certainly has Apjohn, Upjohn, and Agriffin to keep it in countenance.

As for Tommy, I consider him a vulgar little modern boy, wholly beneath the dignity of philological inquiry: and I have so often heard him requested, in the English of Stratford-*atte*-Bow, to 'make room for his uncle,' that I think he may now be fairly regarded as quite unfit for the society of ladies and gentlemen. Whether he was the same unpleasant child who afterwards grew up into that most objectionable creature, Tommy Dodd, the rival and contemporary of Champagne Charlie, history informs us not. Still, I must admit that Tommy occurs as early as the fifteenth century, though even then the company he kept was indicated by the common conjunction of Tom, Dick, and Harry, who have ever since been faithful companions. Little Tommy Tucker, who sang for his supper, may probably go back at least as far as the age of the Tudors.

And that reminds me that in Scotland, too, Thomas went over the border with the first Norman adventurers, and was early naturalised as Thomas of Ercildoune, alias Thomas the Rhymer. North of Tweed, however, he generally shortened himself into plain Tam, under which form he achieved a notable popularity as Tam o' Shanter—now the milliner's name for a flat broad hat, based originally on the blue bonnet of Scotland. His introduction into Ireland was more directly dependent upon the immediate relations of the martyred archbishop. One of Becket's sisters, in fact—a nice girl—married a De Boteler, and receiving large grants of land in the newly conquered Pale (I suppose as a solace to her wounded feelings), became the ancestress of all those sturdy Thomas Butlers who ultimately rose to fame as the Ormonde family. It is seldom indeed that an historical Christian name can be traced so clearly to its origin in saint or ancestor.

A further proof of the popularity of Tom in early times is afforded by the large stock of words and phrases he has indirectly contributed to the wealth of the language, and of which tom-cat, tom-boy, and tomfoolery may be taken as fair examples. In this respect, to be sure, he cannot for a moment enter into competition with the ubiquitous Jack, who has supplied us with jack-boots, jackdaws, jackasses, and jackanapes, as well as with boot-jacks, screw-jacks, meat-jacks, and bubbly-jocks, not to speak of jockeys, jackets, jack-snipes, and jack-of-all-trades. Still, in a fair



Civil Service examination, Tom, I think, would make a good second. It may be worth while, perhaps, to glance briefly for a moment at two or three of these his many secondary avatars.

Why Tom should have been particularly selected by our amiable ancestors as the name of a fool nobody on earth now knows. 'Poor Tom's a-cold,' says Edgar in 'King Lear': but then, Tom-fools were well known long before Shakespeare's day, and Edgar's use of the title is merely his practical way of showing that he accepts the position of fool in sober earnest. In Chaucer's time it was Jack-fool, not Tom-fool; while the French equivalent, Pierrot, passes the compliment on to the devoted head of Peter, who is thus once more openly robbed to pay Paul. It must surely have been in Scotland that a somewhat similar character assumed the name of merry-Andrew, a gentleman who still frequents country fairs, where he is often to be seen in the congenial society of cheap-Jack. Tom-fool, once well established, gave rise to tom-foolery; though, since the days of Grimaldi at least, the person in the pantomime who deals out that commodity has been more commonly known by the sobriquet of Joey. In the Elizabethan drama, however, the clown or rustic is most often William—whence, perhaps, Tom-fool's more recent counterpart, Silly Billy, who has replaced Simple Simon in the fickle affections of British childhood. Still, even in the spacious days of great Elizabeth herself, we come at least once upon Tom Snout, the tinker. And Tom, Tom, the tailor's son—who, in open defiance of both morals and grammar, stole a flute and away he run—must be a person of considerable antiquity in the annals of our language. At the present day, Tom's place in nature has for the most part been unjustly usurped by Hodge, who was once Roger, when 'writ large,' and whose surname is popularly supposed to be Chawbacon. But sound the trumpets, beat the drums; hark! the conquering hero comes! For sure enough, as soon as Hodge accepts the Queen's shilling, he reappears once more, transfigured and transmogrified, in full regimentals, as Tommy Atkins. *Sic itur ad astra.* Tom-fool enlists, and goes where glory waits him: and, lo, he returns as Sir Thomas Atkinson, K.C.B.—while Thomas Babington Macaulay inscribes his name with much dignified eulogy upon the page of history!

Tom-cat introduces us into very different society. He belongs to a large group of animals who have adopted the Christian names of their betters, often only in the end to roll them in the mire.

In the donkey tribe, the respective sexes are Jack and Jenny; but a jackass is understood by philologists to be a term of opprobrium in use among costermongers. In the case of goats, we get the curious variant of Billy and Nanny: to butt like a billy-goat is a familiar accomplishment, perhaps allied in origin to the other graces of Silly Billy, to whom I have alluded already in another connexion. But cats are either Toms or Tabbies, the latter epithet being derived from Tabitha, a name supposed to be peculiarly suitable to the patroness of cats, the spinster lady of a certain age, without whose benign intervention, as Professor Huxley has shown, cats would become extinct, harvest mice would multiply, bumble-bees would be devoured by thousands, and purple clover would cease to set its seed in England.

Tom-tits are so called, I believe, because of their diminutive size: for Tom-Thumb sufficiently shows us that stature is not the strong point in the descendants of Thomas. But this view is difficult to reconcile, I confess, with 'Great Tom of Lincoln,' or that other big bell which gives its name to 'Tom Quad' at Christ Church, and rings one hundred and one times at nine o'clock every evening, to recall the truant undergraduate to the shelter of his college. Perhaps, however, 'Tom of Christ Church' derives his name from his pious founder, the great cardinal, whose hat is still the emblem of the house. On the other hand, the noisy bell of Westminster is known as 'Big Ben,' the modern form of which name betrays that tinge of vulgarity that so often accompanies recent nomenclature, in contradistinction to the fine robust manliness of the old English nicknames.

As for Tom Noddy, he was already famous long before Barham conferred upon him a courtesy title and put him into the Peerage as the Lord Tom Noddy who went to see a man die in his shoes—in the lilting verse of Mr. Thomas Ingoldsby. Peeping Tom of Coventry, who looked through his lattice as Lady Godiva rode down the street 'to take away the tax,' must belong by his name to a late mediæval version of the city's ancient legend; for, of course, no contemporary of the real historical Leofric and Godgifu could possibly have borne such a cognomen as Thomas. Rather would the churl of that remote period have been called by one of the euphonious and melodious names we get in the pedigrees of the 'boors' who were serfs on an estate in Hertfordshire—Dudda, or Wulfsige, or Alfstan, or Dunne; with their wives Deorwyn, and Golde, and Tate, and Deorswith—all of whom were 'inborn at Hatfield,' though 'Aethelbeorh, Seoloe's son, sat at Walden.'



That is the sort of person, if anybody, who, compact of thankless clay, would have lost his eyesight in the vain attempt to spy upon Lady Godiva's spotless purity. A Tom could only have come to Coventry in the generation after St. Thomas of Canterbury was murdered. But, as you may see his effigy, even unto this day, peeping out of a sham window in a street of Lady Godiva's own town, the fact if not the name must be above suspicion.

To say the truth, the vogue of Thomas as an English Christian name came in with Becket, and to a great extent went out with the Reformation. Henry VIII. did everything in his power to obliterate the memory of the great rebellious saint, before whose altar Henry II. had been compelled publicly to humiliate himself in a ceremonial scourging. But the Tudors were not made of the stuff that goes to Canossa. Henry regarded St. Thomas of Canterbury in the light of an enemy of the royal prerogative. The Defender of the Faith, who first proclaimed himself Supreme Head of the Church in England, was hardly likely to admit the claims to martyrdom of an archbishop who had died in defence of his order against the aggression of the Angevins. Becket has therefore no place in the reformed Calendar, which scrupulously recognises all royal holiness, giving a day not only to the Translation of King Edward the Confessor, and to St. Edmund of East Anglia, but even also to that made-up saint, Edward, King of the West Saxons, whose so-called martyrdom at Corfe Gate in Dorsetshire was wholly due to political and personal motives. Nevertheless, it is a curious coincidence that Henry's principal instrument in pulling down the fabric of Papal power in England should have been Thomas Cromwell, and that the chief victim of his sanguinary policy should have been that noblest of English Churchmen, Thomas Wolsey.

From that day to this, in spite of Tom Hood and many other worthies, the name Thomas has steadily declined in relative popularity. Perhaps the reason for this may partly be that, unlike John and William, Henry and Edward, no Thomas has ever sat upon the throne of England. Nor have Thomases flourished very largely either in the Royal Family or in the higher nobility. At the present day we know John Thomas mainly as the aristocratic flunkey, whose alias of Tummas, immortalized by Mr. Punch, has probably cast the last stone on the cairn that will hide, ere long, the mortal remains of an extinct but once ancient and honourable appellative.

## TO MY CANARY.

O LADY BETTY, pert and bold,  
 In dainty gown of palest gold,  
 And fine pink stockings showing;  
 To me your eyes so round and bright  
 Recall some other eyes to-night,  
 Black eyes, too, just as knowing.

You eat and drink with mincing geste,  
 But only of the very best,  
 With waste of seed unlawful;  
 And though forsooth you think you sing,  
 Your voice is but a sorry thing—  
 And *her* top notes were awful!

You treat your mate with proud disdain,  
 Although he tries your love to gain  
 In simple honest fashion.  
 Your prototype was just as stern,  
 But trodden worms, you know, *will* turn,  
 And love outlive its passion.

Ah! Lady Betty, take your ease,  
 And flirt and twitter as you please;  
 Your life is brief and sunny.  
 I sit alone and watch you here;  
 The other Betty? Ah! my dear,  
 She married—and for money!



### *LIFE IN DAMASCUS.*

A RESIDENCE of some years in Damascus made me realise in a peculiar manner the force of the words used by the sweet psalmist of Israel when he said in the twenty-third Psalm, 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.' Here, in our own favoured country, we are accustomed to the almost continued aspect of green hill and dale. Our winters are seldom so cold or our summers so hot as to deprive us for a long time of the sight of green lawns and trees, and the running rivulet and silvery lake form generally a pleasing accompaniment to the scene. 'Oh,' said a young lady to me on the deck of a P. and O. steamer as we neared the shores of England, 'how glad I shall be to see dear old England again! It is two years since I have seen a green hill or a green lawn, or any bit of green-covered ground. You cannot imagine how much I am longing for a sight of it.' I could well understand her sensations, for she had been for two years in India.

I have been on the glorious mountains of Lebanon, and among the far-famed gardens of Damascus, and while doing full justice to the varied and picturesque scenery that meets the eye at almost every step on the tops and slopes of the former, and to the rich beauty and fragrance of the masses of roses and flowers and flowering trees in the latter, which, once seen, are never forgotten, I can still say that I have never seen anything to equal a bit of green lawn or hill in England. But the frequency of the sight in our own country prevents our wishing and longing for it, and in everyday conversation, as well as in verse and prose, speaking of it as if it were almost the very greatest boon in life, which is very often done in Damascus.

During my residence there, which extended over some years, I had much opportunity for studying the private habits and customs, and inner home-life, of the people, and, being able to converse with them in their own language, I have spent many hours with them in their own homes by the side of the running water in the bahra, and under the shadow of the lemon tree and oleander bush found in almost every court; for poor indeed must that man

be, and wretchedly poor is his house considered, if neither bahra nor lemon tree graces the little court around which his rooms are built. As I go on I will describe one day in the life of a Christian artisan. I say Christian, for the Mohamedans, who compose the greater part of the population of Damascus, lead a life of their own, and are most fanatical and bigoted, and too little fitted to enjoy the simple pleasures of nature. The Greek, Roman Catholic, and Latin Christians, who since the fearful massacres of 1860-1 have dwindled down to not more than six or seven thousand, are a hard-working people, and it is in the daily life of one of this class of everyday workers that the love of green pastures and still waters is a part and parcel of his nature.

The houses in Damascus are built with the doors opening into a court or hall; in the large and grand houses of the rich there are several courts, all but the outer one paved with marble. In the middle of each court is a large basin, or bahra, into which the water flows continually. Around the court or courts are built the reception and living rooms of the family. Above these are the frankat, or sleeping apartments. One room on the lower floor, between the two grandest reception rooms, has the whole side towards the court open. Cool mats cover the floor; divans covered with chintz, and these again covered with snow-white covers, grace the three sides of the room; a large lantern is suspended from the roof, and this is *par excellence* the family room during the greater part of the year. Climbing vines, roses, and jessamines cover the walls; large trees—not bushes—of oleander (red and white), lemon, citron, and orange trees, covered with flowers and fruit in all their different stages, flowering geraniums, sweet-scented verbenas, and other flowers too numerous to mention, filling up the narrow beds that line the court around the trees and near the walls. The view is beautiful from the terrace, which is a delightful place for an evening promenade. I remember while walking with a friend on one of those terraces one lovely moonlight evening, as we looked down into the court, he turned and said to me, 'Well, I never could have imagined anything more fairylike and picturesque! How could any one bear the poky houses in England after this?'

The very poorest houses have their little single court paved with stone, their little lewan, or room open to the court, which almost invariably has its bahra of stone or marble, its fragrant creepers climbing the walls, and at least one lemon, or orange, or



citron tree, so as always to have the pleasant shade of green before their eyes and the soothing sound of cool sparkling running water in their ears. They are almost invariably early risers; the class to which our family of artisans belong are generally on their feet before dawn. Their ablutions are freely performed around the bahra, or basin, as within two inches of it there are holes perforated in the pavement to let off the dirty water. Hands, face, and feet are freely washed, but anything more than that is left for the privacy of the public baths, of which there are many in Damascus. I have known an English gentleman dive into the bahra in his house and take his matutinal bath every morning, but this is never done by Easterns, although the water is always running, and they drink only from a sabha, or fountain, through which the water flows into the basin, as they love to keep it pure and sparkling just for the sense of pleasure it gives to the eye.

I will single out one day in the month of May 1877. The morning rises bright and clear, and the air is laden with the rich perfume of the many gardens which environ Damascus. One thousand and three hundred is, if I mistake not, about their number, taken in a round sum. The view of the city of Damascus from the old road which comes over the hill behind the Saliheyeh (a village on the outskirts of it) is most beautiful, as the white houses, domes, and minarets, lying in the form of a great kite, the thoroughly Mohamedan suburb of the Meidan supplying the tail, and all surrounded by the ever-green verdure of the gardens, with the rivers Barada and Nahr-el-Awaj (the ancient Abana and Pharpar of old, to which Naaman the Leper in Bible history so proudly alluded), fully justify what the prophet Mohamed is reported to have said of it. He, no doubt, saw it first from the top of the hill, as that was the only road in existence before the French road was made, and four-footed animals were the only means of conveyance. The legend says that being arrived at the summit of the hill (no doubt on the back of a camel, for he was a Bedouin of the desert), he arrested his animal and looked for some time in silence and wonder on the scene; then, turning to his followers, said, 'There is fardose (paradise) on earth; but as to man only one fardose is permitted, and I prefer to enjoy the heavenly one, let us go hence, for I will not enter it.' Thus, according to the Mohamedan legend, notwithstanding the long and weary journey, well known to all who have

visited Damascus some forty years ago, the Prophet was too dazed by its beauties to venture upon a nearer acquaintance with it. The people of Damascus are, as I have said, an essentially pleasure-loving race, and though they may have little else besides dry bread to eat, as long as their eye rests on green verdure and their ear is saluted with the sound of running water they are satisfied.

Their greatest delight is to spend the whole (if a feast day; the part, if a working one) of each day in the open fields, around a sparkling stream of water, where, under the shade of the lemon or orange or kharoub tree, they enjoy their simple meal of bread and fruit. A stroll at early dawn presents to the eye a pretty picture of many of these groups dotted here and there and everywhere, taking their simple *al fresco* breakfast. I only describe what I myself have assisted at, for, with true patriarchal hospitality, the passing stranger is invited to come and take a share of whatever is being eaten, whether it be simple or whether it be sumptuous.

The children frisk around the older people, but happily keep out of mischief in obedience to repeated injunctions of 'Rasheed, take care what you do,' 'Milhim, look after your little sister,' &c. A peasant passes with his cow, and for a trifle willingly fills the large tin coffee-pot with milk. Khaleel, the eldest son, gathers a few dry sticks and lights them, while Fareeda, his sister, attends to the coffee, made by throwing a few spoonfuls of it into the milk just before it boils, and then watching it attentively, and raising it off the fire each time it threatens to bubble over, until it becomes quite clear on the top, after which it is taken off the fire and left to stand on one side for a few minutes with the cover off. The mother brings out a small jar of honey; Zahra, another daughter, lays out the piles of freshly gathered purple mulberries or fragrant apricots on their own green leaves instead of plates; Naseef, another son, brings out the flat cakes of native home-made bread, the cups and plates (either of tin or of the cheapest delf), and then folding up his jacket, which he had thrown off on account of the heat, and laying it down for his mother to sit upon, he begins serving the coffee by carefully attending first to his father, if that worthy man has been able to accompany his family, in which case he has been sitting during these preparations gravely smoking his pipe, and throwing in a good-natured observation or suggestion now and then to one or other of the



party. Many of these breakfasts are over by sunrise, as the men, being mostly artisans, are obliged to hie away to their shops at an early hour. When the father and the elder sons have gone, and the little ones are packed off to school, the mother and daughters set to the making of beds, the sweeping of rooms, the sponging of the cool mats that cover the floors.

The midday meal is now carefully prepared, to be ready on the return of the bread-winners, which will be soon after the muezzin has uttered his call to the faithful at the hour of noon. The skemla, or small low table, is brought out and placed near the masnad, or low divan, where the father usually sits when at home ; on it is placed the sooddur, or tray, usually made of brass, and kept bright and shining, and the little meal is tastefully arranged. The plates are very small, but clean ; one contains a few olives, another a little toorshi, or home-made pickles, another a small piece of white native cheese and a few daintily washed radishes, and in the middle a loaf of bread and an earthenware goolah of water, which has been hung out all night in the open air and is deliciously cool.

The mother and daughters then sit down to their work ; for if the daughters are over fourteen they are expected to do their share towards their own maintenance, and accordingly one brings out her sewing, which she does for the tailors and is paid by piece-work ; another brings out her cushion and bobbins for the making of cords and trimmings, which are largely used in Eastern costumes ; and the mother brings out her stand for reeling off the coarse undyed silk and preparing it for the loom.

The midday call to prayer is no sooner sounded from the minaret than the pattering of little feet is heard. 'Take care and wipe your feet carefully before you come in,' calls out the mother anxiously, as she cranes her neck to get a glimpse of them from the open door, and trembles for her clean hall, but unwilling to cease her work even for a moment if she can help it. She calls the steadiest of the little group to her, gives him a small flat loaf, which she opens and fills with fruit if she has it in the house, or with an onion or small bit of cheese, and, telling him to eat his lunch as he goes along, sends him to his father to carry anything his father may have to bring home, as on his way to or from his shop the father has somehow managed to purchase the materials for the evening meal, which are now safely placed in a small kooffa,

or marketing basket, and consigned to the little boy, who proudly walks along in front of his father towards home.

On reaching home the frugal meal is quickly eaten, while family affairs are cheerfully discussed. It is a bright and busy scene and quickly got over, and all return to their labours—the men to their shops, the children to the school, and the girls to their work, while the mother opens the kooffa to see what her husband has brought home to be cooked for the dinner, which is always taken after the labour of the day is over. On working days this is something that requires but little preparation. If a fasting day, probably it will be a little fish, in which case it is carefully cleaned from scales and all inside impurities, well washed, and carefully salted and laid by in a cool place where no flies can come near it; or a small quantity of rice and lentils is made into the appetising dish of moojadra. If meat is brought it will most likely be mutton, as—in Syria, that is—the meat most preferred, one English pound of which, with the addition of vegetables, is considered amply sufficient for four or five persons. We will, then, presume that the dinner is to be one of kebabs. The good mother cuts up the lean meat into pieces of the size of a walnut, the fat into pieces half as large, and small onions into pieces as large as the pieces of fat, sprinkles the whole with salt and pepper, or instead of the pepper she may use a mixture of spices, mixes the whole together freely, and puts it on skewers in alternate slices of lean, fat, and onion, and then lays it by carefully covered up in a cool place.

The lettuce, &c., brought for the salad—for without a salad of some sort the kebab is seldom eaten—is placed on the bahra, or basin of running water, to keep cool till needed.

If a stew is to be prepared instead of kebab, a handful of charcoal is thrown into the little clay tubach, or stove, used alike by rich and poor, and kindled with a few tiny sticks; the meat and vegetables, always including one or more onions, are carefully browned in clarified butter and placed in a cooking-pot on the fire, the vegetables uppermost; the seasoning is added, and just enough water to cover the whole. The pot is covered up and left to simmer slowly all the afternoon, while mother and daughters go on steadily and busily plying their fingers. Visitors drop in. The daily news is discussed. The little coffee-pot on the brass mongal, always kept hot by its tiny bit of fire, is called into requisition again and again, as to each person dropping in is handed



about two thimblefuls of its contents in a tiny finjan, or cup resting in its yurrf, or holder, which among the poorer classes is made of brass.

As sunset draws near one of the daughters gets up and lays her work in its place, and busies herself with the remainder of the preparations for dinner. The kebab, which have already been put on the skewers, are carefully broiled on a clear fire; or the stew is turned over to see if the meat is tender and the gravy is reduced to its proper consistency and quantity. A few drops of lemon-juice are always added to both these dishes. With the latter is generally an accompaniment of rice cooked in clarified butter and boiling water. The evening meal passes cheerily, and is taken in the lewan, or room with one side open to the court, which is now a merry scene. Work and household cares are apparently forgotten. The meal over, the nargheely carefully prepared for father and mother, and a tiny finjan of coffee handed to each of them, preparations are made for the crowning pleasure and relaxation of the day, which is nothing else than the favourite stroll by the river-side. Close to Bab Tooma (Gate of Thomas) is the part of the river called the Soofaniyeh, and farther on, about a quarter of an hour's distance, is another part called the Hudaashariyeh. These are favourite spots. The latter is the prettiest; but the former, owing to its nearness to the city gates, is the chosen resort of those who are attended by wife and children. The gatherings of family circles in this place are innumerable and indescribable. I shall never forget the scene which presented itself on one of the occasions when I acceded to the wishes of some friends and accompanied them to the Soofaniyeh. Each family group sat together and apart from the rest, and yet they were so close together that it was impossible to count them or to see what they were sitting on—the women with their white eezars, or large cotton veils which only allowed their faces and hands to be seen; the men with their long pipes in their mouths, and their jubbas, or long jackets, thrown carelessly on their shoulders; the sellers of roasted nuts, almonds, and melon seeds calling out their wares; the vendor of coffee, who has set up his little stall and is going about with his tiny coffee-pot and tinier finjan. There, at a little distance from the 'hareem,' or fanailies, is a group of young men who take it upon themselves to supply the music; one draws a tambour from his pocket, another a flute, another the ood, a native instrument; a fourth

begins a well-known song. All listen eagerly, and give signs that if the music has been unsolicited it is not unappreciated. Between each song the finjan of coffee goes round, while the gurgling of the water between the stones and the soothing sound of the wind as it plays among the branches give the sense of pleasure, or kief, that a Syrian loves. In about an hour the first make a movement homeward; in two hours none remain, and the coffee-vendor and his associates take their flight. All, all is perfect silence, and the river and trees are deserted, for all go early to bed, that they may get up early in the morning.



THE GREAT VALDEZ SAPPHIRE.

I KNOW more about it than any one else in the world, its present owner not excepted. I can give its whole history, from the Cingalese who found it—the Spanish adventurer who stole it—the cardinal who bought it—the Pope who graciously accepted it—the favoured son of the Church who received it—the gay and giddy duchess who pawned it—down to the eminent prelate who now holds it in trust as a family heirloom.

It will occupy a chapter to itself in my forthcoming work on 'Historic Stones,' where full details of its weight, size, colour, and value may be found. At present I am going to relate an incident in its history which, for obvious reasons, will not be published—which in fact I trust the reader will consider related in strict confidence.

I had never seen the stone itself when I began to write about it, and it was not till one evening last spring, while staying with my nephew, Sir Thomas Acton, that I came within measurable distance of it. A dinner-party was impending, and, at my instigation, the Bishop of Northchurch and Miss Panton, his daughter and heiress, were amongst the invited guests.

The dinner was a particularly good one, I remember that distinctly. In fact, I felt myself partly responsible for it, having engaged the new cook—a talented young Italian, pupil of the admirable old *chef* at my club. We had gone over the *menu* carefully together, with a result refreshing in its novelty, but not so daring as to disturb the minds of the innocent country guests who were bidden thereto.

The first spoonful of soup was reassuring, and I looked to the end of the table to exchange a congratulatory glance with Leta. What was amiss? No response. Her pretty face was flushed, her smile constrained, she was talking with quite unnecessary *empressement* to her neighbour Sir Harry Landor, though Leta is one of those few women who understand the importance of letting a man settle down tranquilly and with an undisturbed mind to the business of dining, allowing no topic of serious interest to come on before the *relevés*, and reserving mere conversational brilliancy for the *entremets*.

Guests all right? No disappointments? I had gone through the list with her, selecting just the right people to be asked to meet the Landors, our new neighbours. Not a mere cumbrous county gathering, nor yet a showy imported party from town, but a skilful blending of both. Had anything happened already? I had been late for dinner and missed the arrivals in the drawing-room. It was Leta's fault. She has got into a way of coming into my room and putting the last touches to my toilette. I let her, for I am doubtful of myself nowadays after many years' dependence on the best of valets. Her taste is generally beyond dispute, but to-day she had indulged in a feminine vagary that provoked me and made me late for dinner.

'Are you going to wear your sapphire, Uncle Paul!' she cried in a tone of dismay. 'Oh, why not the ruby?'

'You *would* have your way about the table decoration,' I gently reminded her. 'With that service of Crown Derby *repoussé* and orchids, the ruby would look absolutely barbaric. Now if you would have had the Limoges set, white candles and a yellow silk centre——'

'Oh, but—I'm so disappointed—I wanted the Bishop to see your ruby—or one of your engraved gems——'

'My dear, it is on the Bishop's account I put this on. You know his daughter is heiress of the great Valdez sapphire——'

'Of course she is, and when he has the charge of a stone three times as big as yours what's the use of wearing it? The ruby, dear Uncle Paul, *please!*'

She was desperately in earnest I could see, and considering the obligations which I am supposed to be under to her and Tom it was but a little matter to yield, but it involved a good deal of extra trouble. Studs, sleeve-links, watch-guard, all carefully selected to go with the sapphire, had to be changed, the emerald which I chose as a compromise requiring more florid accompaniments of a deeper tone of gold; and the dinner-hour struck as I replaced my jewel-case, the one relic left me of a once handsome fortune, in my fire-proof safe.

The emerald looked very well that evening, however. I kept my eyes upon it for comfort when Miss Panton proved trying.

She was a lean, yellow, dictatorial young person with no conversation. I spoke of her father's celebrated sapphires. '*My sapphires,*' she amended sourly; 'though I am legally debarred from making any profitable use of them.' She furthermore



informed me that she viewed them as useless gauds, which ought to be disposed of for the benefit of the heathen. I gave the subject up, and while she discoursed of the work of the Blue Ribbon Army among the Bosjesman I tried to understand a certain dislocation in the arrangement of the table. Surely we were more or less in number than we should be? Opposite side all right. Who was extra on ours? I leaned forward. Lady Landor on one side of Tom, on the other who? I caught glimpses of plumes pink and green nodding over a dinner-plate, and beneath them a pink nose in a green visage with a nutcracker chin altogether unknown to me. A sharp grey eye shot a sideway glance down the table and caught me peeping, and I retreated, having only marked in addition two claw-like hands, with point-lace ruffles and a mass of brilliant rings, making good play with a knife and fork. Who was she? At intervals a high acid voice could be heard addressing Tom, and a laugh that made me shudder; it had the quality of the scream of a bird of prey or the yell of a jackal. I had heard that sort of laugh before, and it always made me feel like a defenceless rabbit.

Every time it sounded I saw Leta's fan flutter more furiously and her manner grow more nervously animated. Poor dear girl! I never in all my recollection wished a dinner at an end so earnestly so as to assure her of my support and sympathy, though without the faintest conception why either should be required.

The ices at last. A *menu* card folded in two was laid beside me. I read it unobserved. 'Keep the B. from joining us in the drawing-room.' The B.? The Bishop, of course. With pleasure. But why? And how? *That's* the question, never mind 'why.' Could I lure him into the library—the billiard-room—the conservatory? I doubted it, and I doubted still more what I should do with him when I got him there.

The Bishop is a grand and stately ecclesiastic of the mediæval type, broad-chested, deep-voiced, martial of bearing. I could picture him charging mace in hand at the head of his vassals, or delivering over a Dissenter of the period to the rack and thumb-screw, but not pottering amongst rare editions, tall copies and Grolier bindings, nor condescending to a quiet cigar amongst the tree-ferns and orchids. Leta must and should be obeyed I swore nevertheless, even if I were driven to lock the door in the fearless old-fashion of a by-gone day, and declare I'd shoot any man who left while a drop remained in the bottles.

The ladies were rising. The lady at the head of the line smirked and nodded her pink plumes coquettishly at Tom, while her hawk's eyes roved keen and predatory over us all. She stopped suddenly, creating a block and confusion.

'Ah, the dear Bishop! You there, and I never saw you! You must come and have a nice long chat presently. Bye-bye—!' She shook her fan at him over my shoulder and tripped off. Leta, passing me last, gave me a look of profound despair.

'Lady Carwitchet!' somebody exclaimed. 'I couldn't believe my eyes.'

'Thought she was dead or in penal servitude. Never should have expected to see her *here*,' said some one else behind me confidentially.

'What Carwitchet? Not the mother of the Carwitchet who——'

'Just so. The Carwitchet who——' Tom assented with a shrug. 'We needn't go further, as she's my guest. Just my luck. I met them at Buxton, thought them uncommonly good company—in fact, Carwitchet laid me under a great obligation about a horse I was nearly let in for buying—and gave them a general invitation here, as one does you know. Never expected her to turn up with her luggage this afternoon just before dinner, to stay a week, or a fortnight if Carwitchet can join her.' A groan of sympathy ran round the table. 'It can't be helped. I've told you this just to show that I shouldn't have asked you here to meet this sort of people of my own free will; but, as it is, please say no more about them. The subject was not dropped by any means, and I took care that it should not be. At our end of the table one story after another went buzzing round—*sotto voce*, out of deference to Tom—but perfectly audible.

'Carwitchet? Ah yes. Mixed up in that Rawlings Divorce case, wasn't he? A bad lot. Turned out of the Dragoon Guards for cheating at cards, or picking pockets, or something—remember the row at the Cerulean Club? Scandalous exposure—and that forged letter business—Oh, that was the mother—prosecution hushed up somehow. Ought to be serving her fourteen years—and that business of poor Farrars, the banker—got hold of some of his secrets and blackmailed him till he blew his brains out——'

It was so exciting that I clean forgot the Bishop, till a low gasp at my elbow startled me. He was lying back in his chair, his mighty shaven jowl a ghastly white, his fierce imperious eyebrows drooping limp over his fish-like eyes, his splendid figure



shrunk and contracted. He was trying with a shaking hand to pour out wine. The decanter clattered against the glass and the wine spilled on the cloth.

‘I’m afraid you find the room too warm. Shall we go into the library?’

He rose hastily and followed me like a lamb.

He recovered himself once we got into the hall, and affably rejected all my proffers of brandy and soda—medical advice—everything else my limited experience could suggest. He only demanded his carriage ‘directly,’ and that Miss Panton should be summoned forthwith.

I made the best use I could of the time left me.

‘I’m uncommonly sorry you do not feel equal to staying a little longer, my lord. I counted on showing you my few trifles of precious stones, the salvage from the wreck of my possessions. Nothing in comparison with your own collection.’

The Bishop clasped his hand over his heart. His breath came short and quick.

‘A return of that dizziness,’ he explained with a faint smile. ‘You are thinking of the Valdez sapphire, are you not? Some day,’ he went on with forced composure, ‘I may have the pleasure of showing it to you. It is at my banker’s just now.’

Miss Panton’s steps were heard in the hall. ‘You are well known as a connoisseur, Mr. Acton,’ he went on hurriedly. ‘Is your collection valuable? If so, *keep it safe; don’t trust a ring off your hand, or the key of your jewel-case out of your pocket till the house is clear again.*’ The words rushed from his lips in an impetuous whisper, he gave me a meaning glance, and departed with his daughter. I went back to the drawing-room, my head swimming with bewilderment.

‘What! The dear Bishop gone!’ screamed Lady Carwitchet from the central ottoman where she sat, surrounded by most of the gentlemen, all apparently well entertained by her conversation. ‘And I wanted a talk over old times with him so badly. His poor wife was my greatest friend. Mira Montanaro, daughter of the great banker, you know. It’s not possible that that miserable little prig is my poor Mira’s girl. The heiress of all the Montanaros in a black lace gown worth twopence! When I think of her mother’s beauty and her toilettes! Does she ever wear the sapphires? Has any one ever seen her in them? Eleven large stones in a lovely antique setting, and the great Valdez sapphire

—worth thousands and thousands—for the pendant.’ No one replied. ‘I wanted to get a rise out of the Bishop to-night. It used to make him so mad when I wore this.’

She fumbled amongst the laces at her throat, and clawed out a pendant that hung to a velvet round her neck. I fairly gasped when she removed her hand. A sapphire of irregular shape flashed out its blue lightning on us. Such a stone! A true, rich, cornflower blue even by that wretched artificial light, with soft velvety depths of colour and dazzling clearness of tint in its lights and shades—a stone to remember! I stretched out my hand involuntarily, but Lady Carwitchet drew back with a coquettish squeal. ‘No! no! You mustn’t look any closer. Tell me what you think of it now. Isn’t it pretty?’

‘Superb!’ was all I could ejaculate, staring at the azure splendour of that miraculous jewel in a sort of trance.

She gave a shrill cackling laugh of mockery.

‘The great Mr. Acton taken in by a bit of Palais Royal gimcrackery! What an advertisement for Bogaerts et Cie.! They are perfect artists in frauds. Don’t you remember their stand at the first Paris Exhibition? They had imitations there of every celebrated stone; but I never expected anything made by man could delude Mr. Acton, never!’ And she went off into another mocking cackle, and all the idiots round her haw-hawed knowingly, as if they had seen the joke all along. I was too bewildered to reply, which was on the whole lucky. ‘I suppose I mustn’t tell why I came to give quite a big sum in francs for this?’ she went on, tapping her closed lips with her closed fan, and cocking her eye at us all like a parrot wanting to be coaxed to talk. ‘It’s a queer story.’

I didn’t want to hear her anecdote, especially as I saw she wanted to tell it. What I *did* want was to see that pendant again. She had thrust it back amongst her laces, only the loop which held it to the velvet being visible. It was set with three small sapphires, and even from a distance I clearly made them out to be imitations, and poor ones. I felt a queer thrill of self-mistrust. Was the large stone no better? Could I, even for an instant, have been dazzled by a sham, and a sham of that quality? The events of the evening had flurried and confused me. I wished to think them over in quiet. I would go to bed.

My rooms at the Manor are the best in the house. Leta will have it so. I must explain their position for a reason to be



understood later. My bed-room is in the south-east angle of the house; it opens on one side into a sitting-room in the east corridor, the rest of which is taken up by the suite of rooms occupied by Tom and Leta; and on the other side into my bath-room, the first room in the south corridor, where the principal guest-chambers are, to one of which it was originally the dressing-room. Passing this room I noticed a couple of housemaids preparing it for the night, and discovered with a shiver that Lady Carwicheet was to be my next-door neighbour. It gave me a turn.

The Bishop's strange warning must have unnerved me. I was perfectly safe from her ladyship. The disused door into her room was locked, and the key safe on the housekeeper's bunch. It was also undiscoverable on her side, the recess in which it stood being completely filled by a large wardrobe. On my side hung a thick sound-proof *portière*. Nevertheless I resolved not to use that room while she inhabited the next one. I removed my possessions, fastened the door of communication with my bed-room, and dragged a heavy ottoman across it.

Then I stowed away my emerald in my strong-box. It is built into the wall of my sitting-room, and masked by the lower part of an old carved oak bureau. I put away even the rings I wore habitually, keeping out only an inferior cat's-eye for work-a-day wear. I had just made all safe when Leta tapped at the door and came in to wish me good-night. She looked flushed and harassed, and ready to cry. 'Uncle Paul,' she began, 'I want you to go up to town at once, and stay away till I send for you.'

'My dear——!' I was too amazed to expostulate.

'We've got a—a pestilence amongst us,' she declared, her foot tapping the ground angrily, 'and the least we can do is to go into quarantine. Oh, I'm so sorry and ashamed! The poor Bishop! I'll take good care that no one else shall meet that woman here. You did your best for me, Uncle Paul, and managed admirably, but it was all no use. I hoped against hope that what between the dusk of the drawing-room before dinner, and being put at opposite ends of the table, we might get through without a meeting——'

'But, my dear, explain. Why shouldn't the Bishop and Lady Carwicheet meet? Why is it worse for him than any one else?'

'Why? I thought everybody had heard of that dreadful wife of his who nearly broke his heart. If he married her for her

money it served him right, but Lady Landor says she was very handsome and really in love with him at first. Then Lady Carwicheet got hold of her and led her into all sorts of mischief. She left her husband, he was only a rector with a country living in those days, and went to live in town, got into a horrid fast set, and made herself notorious. You *must* have heard of her.'

'I heard of her sapphires, my dear. But I was in Brazil at the time.'

'I wish you had been at home. You might have found her out. She was furious because her husband refused to let her wear the great Valdez sapphire. It had been in the Montanaro family for some generations, and her father settled it first on her and then on her little girl—the Bishop being trustee. He felt obliged to take away the little girl, and send her off to be brought up by some old aunts in the country, and he locked up the sapphire. Lady Carwicheet tells as a splendid joke how they got the copy made in Paris, and it did just as well for people to stare at. No wonder the Bishop hates the very name of the stone.'

'How long will she stay here?' I asked dismally.

'Till Lord Carwicheet can come and escort her to Paris to visit some American friends. Goodness knows when that will be! Do go up to town, Uncle Paul!'

I refused indignantly. The very least I could do was to stand by my poor young relatives in their troubles and help them through. I did so. I wore that inferior cat's eye for six weeks!

It is a time I cannot think of even now without a shudder. The more I saw of that terrible old woman the more I detested her, and we saw a very great deal of her. Leta kept her word, and neither accepted nor gave invitations all that time. We were cut off from all society but that of old General Fairford, who would go anywhere and meet any one to get a rubber after dinner; the doctor, a sporting widower; and the Duberlys, a giddy, rather rackets young couple who had taken the Dower House for a year. Lady Carwicheet seemed perfectly content. She revelled in the soft living and good fare of the Manor House, the drives in Leta's big barouche and Domenico's dinners, as one to whom short commons were not unknown. She had a hungry way of grabbing and grasping at everything she could—the shillings she won at whist, the best fruit at dessert, the postage-stamps in the library ink-stand—that was infinitely suggestive. Sometimes I could have pitied her, she was so greedy, so spiteful, so friendless. She



always made me think of some wicked old pirate putting into a peaceful port to provision and repair his battered old hulk, obliged to live on friendly terms with the natives, but his piratical old nostrils a-sniff for plunder and his piratical old soul longing to be off marauding once more. When would that be? Not till the arrival in Paris of her distinguished American friends, of whom we heard a great deal. 'Charming people, the Bokums of Chicago, the American branch of the English Beauchamps, you know!' They seemed to be taking an unconscionable time to get there. She would have insisted on being driven over to Northchurch to call at the palace, but that the Bishop was understood to be holding confirmations at the other end of the diocese.

I was alone in the house one afternoon sitting by my window, toying with the key of my safe, and wondering whether I dare treat myself to a peep at my treasures, when a suspicious movement in the park below me caught my attention. A black figure certainly dodged from behind one tree to the next, and then into the shadow of the park-paling instead of keeping to the footpath. It looked queer. I caught up my field-glass and marked him at one point where he was bound to come into the open for a few steps. He crossed the strip of turf with giant strides and got into cover again, but not quick enough to prevent me recognising him. It was—Great Heavens!—the Bishop! In a soft hat pulled over his forehead, with a long cloak and a big stick, he looked like a poacher.

Guided by some mysterious instinct I hurried to meet him. I opened the conservatory door, and in he rushed like a hunted rabbit. Without explanation I led him up the side staircase to my room, where he dropped into a chair and wiped his face.

'You are astonished, Mr. Acton,' he panted. 'I will explain directly. Thanks.' He tossed off the glass of brandy I had poured out without waiting for the qualifying soda, and looked better.

'I am in serious trouble. You can help me. I've had a shock to-day—a grievous shock.' He stopped and tried to pull himself together. 'I must trust you implicitly, Mr. Acton, I have no choice. Tell me what you think of this.' He drew a case from his breast pocket, opened it. 'I promised you should see the Valdez sapphire. Look there!'

The Valdez sapphire! A great big shining lump of blue crystal—flawless and of perfect colour—that was all. I took it up, breathed on it, drew out my magnifier, looked at it in one light

and another. What was wrong with it? I could not say. Nine experts out of ten would undoubtedly have pronounced the stone genuine. I, by virtue of some mysterious instinct that has hitherto always guided me aright, was the unlucky tenth. I looked at the Bishop. His eyes met mine. There was no need of spoken word between us.

‘Has Lady Carwitchet shown you her sapphire?’ was his most unexpected question. ‘She has? Now, Mr. Acton, on your honour as a connoisseur and a gentleman, which of the two is the Valdez?’

‘Not this one.’ I could say naught else.

‘You were my last hope.’ He broke off, and dropped his face on his folded arms with a groan that shook the table on which he rested, while I stood dismayed at myself for having let so hasty a judgment escape me. He lifted a ghastly countenance to me. ‘She vowed she would see me ruined and disgraced. I made her my enemy by crossing some of her schemes once, and she never forgives. She will keep her word. I shall appear before the world as a fraudulent trustee. I can neither produce the valuable confided to my charge nor make the loss good. I have only an incredible story to tell,’ he dropped his head and groaned again. ‘Who will believe me?’

‘I will, for one.’

‘Ah, you? Yes, you know her. She took my wife from me, Mr. Acton. Heaven only knows what the hold was that she had over poor Mira. She encouraged her to set me at defiance and eventually to leave me. She was answerable for all the scandalous folly and extravagance of poor Mira’s life in Paris—spare me the telling of the story. She left her at last to die alone and uncared for. I reached my wife to find her dying of a fever from which Lady Carwitchet and all her crew had fled. She was raving in delirium, and died without recognising me. Some trouble she had been in which I must never know oppressed her. At the very last she roused from a long stupor and spoke to the nurse. ‘Tell him to get the sapphire back—she stole it. She has robbed my child.’ Those were her last words. The nurse understood no English, and treated them as wandering; but I heard them, and knew she was sane when she spoke.’

‘What did you do?’

‘What could I? I saw Lady Carwitchet, who laughed at me, and defied me to make her confess or disgorge. I took the pen-



dant to more than one eminent jeweller on pretence of having the setting seen to, and all have examined and admired without giving a hint of there being anything wrong. I allowed a celebrated mineralogist to see it; he gave no sign——'

'Perhaps they are right and we are wrong.'

'No, no. Listen. I heard of an old Dutchman celebrated for his imitations. I went to him, and he told me at once that he had been allowed by Montanaro to copy the Valdez—setting and all—for the Paris Exhibition. I showed him this, and he claimed it for his own work at once, and pointed out his private mark upon it. You must take your magnifier to find it; a Greek Beta. He also told me that he had sold it to Lady Carwitchet more than a year ago.'

'It is a terrible position.'

'It is. My co-trustee died lately. I have never dared to have another appointed. I am bound to hand over the sapphire to my daughter on her marriage, if her husband consents to take the name of Montanaro.'

The Bishop's face was ghastly pale, and the moisture started on his brow. I racked my brain for some word of comfort.

'Miss Panton may never marry.'

'But she will!' he shouted. 'That is the blow that has been dealt me to-day. My chaplain—actually, my chaplain tells me that he is going out as a temperance missionary to Equatorial Africa, and has the assurance to add that he believes my daughter is not indisposed to accompany him!' His consuming wrath acted as a momentary stimulant. He sat upright, his eyes flashing and his brow thunderous. I felt for that chaplain. Then he collapsed miserably. 'The sapphires will have to be produced, identified, revalued. How shall I come out of it? Think of the disgrace, the ripping up of old scandals! Even if I were to compound with Lady Carwitchet, the sum she hinted at was too monstrous. She wants more than my money. Help me, Mr. Acton! For the sake of your own family interests, help me!'

'I beg your pardon—family interests? I don't understand.'

'If my daughter is childless, her next-of-kin is poor Marmaduke Panton, who is dying at Cannes, not married, or likely to marry; and failing him, your nephew, Sir Thomas Acton, succeeds.'

My nephew Tom! Leta, or Leta's baby, might come to be the possible inheritor of the great Valdez sapphire! The blood rushed to my head as I looked at the great shining swindle before

me. 'What diabolic jugglery was at work when the exchange was made?' I demanded fiercely.

'It must have been on the last occasion of her wearing the sapphires in London. I ought never to have let her out of my sight.'

'You must put a stop to Miss Panton's marriage in the first place,' I pronounced as autocratically as he could have done himself.

'Not to be thought of,' he admitted helplessly. 'Mira has my force of character. She knows her rights, and she will have her jewels. I want you to take charge of the—thing for me. If it's in the house she'll make me produce it. She'll inquire at the banker's. If *you* have it we can gain time, if but for a day or two.' He broke off. Carriage wheels were crashing on the gravel outside. We looked at one another in consternation. Flight was imperative. I hurried him downstairs and out of the conservatory just as the door-bell rang. I think we both lost our heads in the confusion. He shoved the case into my hands, and I pocketed it, without a thought of the awful responsibility I was incurring, and saw him disappear into the shelter of the friendly night.

When I think of what my feelings were that evening—of my murderous hatred of that smirking, jesting Jezebel who sat opposite me at dinner, my wrathful indignation at the thought of the poor little expected heir, defrauded ere his birth; of the crushing contempt I felt for myself and the Bishop as a pair of witless idiots unable to see our way out of the dilemma; all this boiling and surging through my soul, I can only wonder—Domenico having given himself a holiday, and the kitchen-maid doing her worst and wickedest—that gout or jaundice did not put an end to this story at once.

'Uncle Paul!' Leta was looking her sweetest when she tripped into my room next morning. 'I've news for you. She,' pointing a delicate forefinger in the direction of the corridor, 'is going! Her Bokums have reached Paris at last, and sent for her to join them at the Grand Hotel.'

I was thunderstruck. The longed-for deliverance had but come to remove hopelessly and for ever out of my reach Lady Carwitchet and the great Valdez sapphire.

'Why, aren't you overjoyed? I am. We are going to celebrate the event by a dinner-party. Tom's hospitable soul is vexed by the lack of entertainment we had provided her. We must ask the Brownleys some day or other, and they will be



delighted to meet anything in the way of a ladyship, or such smart folks as the Duberly-Parkers. Then we may as well have the Blomfields, and air that awful modern Sèvres dessert-service she gave us when we were married.' I had no objection to make, and she went on, rubbing her soft cheek against my shoulder like the purring little cat she was, 'Now I want you to do something to please me—and Mrs. Blomfield. She has set her heart on seeing your rubies, and though I know you hate her about as much as you do that Sèvres china——'

'What! Wear my rubies with that! I won't. I'll tell you what I will do, though. I've got some carbuncles as big as prize gooseberries, a whole set. Then you have only to put those Bohemian glass vases and candelabra on the table, and let your gardener do his worst with his great forced, scentless, vulgar blooms, and we shall all be in keeping.' Leta pouted. An idea struck me. 'Or I'll do as you wish, on one condition. You get Lady Carwitchet to wear her big sapphire, and don't tell her I wish it.'

I lived through the next few days as one in some evil dream. The sapphires, like twin spectres, haunted me day and night. Was ever man so tantalised? To hold the shadow and see the substance dangled temptingly within reach. The Bishop made no sign of ridding me of my unwelcome charge, and the thought of what might happen in case of a burglary—a fire—an earthquake—made me start and tremble at all sorts of inopportune moments.

I kept faith with Leta, and reluctantly produced my beautiful rubies on the night of her dinner-party. Emerging from my room I came full upon Lady Carwitchet in the corridor. She was dressed for dinner, and at her throat I caught the blue gleam of the great sapphire. Leta had kept faith with me. I don't know what I stammered in reply to her ladyship's glib remarks; my whole soul was absorbed in the contemplation of the intoxicating loveliness of the gem. *That* a Palais Royal deception. Incredible! My fingers twitched, my breath came short and fierce with the lust of possession. She must have seen the covetous glare in my eyes. A look of gratified spiteful complacency overspread her features, as she swept on ahead and descended the stairs before me. I followed her to the drawing-room door. She stopped suddenly, and murmuring something unintelligible hurried back again.

Everybody was assembled there that I expected to see, with an addition. Not a welcome one by the look on Tom's face. He stood on the hearth-rug conversing with a great hulking high-

shouldered fellow, sallow-faced, with a heavy moustache and drooping eyelids, from the corners of which flashed out a sudden suspicious look as I approached, which lighted up into a greedy one as it rested on my rubies, and seemed unaccountably familiar to me, till Lady Carwitchet tripping past me exclaimed :

‘He has come at last! My naughty, naughty boy! Mr. Acton, this is my son, Lord Carwitchet!’

I broke off short in the midst of my polite acknowledgments to stare blankly at her. The sapphire was gone! A great gilt cross, with a Scotch pebble like an acid drop, was her sole decoration.

‘I had to put my pendant away,’ she explained confidentially; ‘the clasp had got broken somehow.’ I didn’t believe a word.

Lord Carwitchet contributed little to the general entertainment at dinner, but fell into confidential talk with Mrs. Duberly-Parker. I caught a few unintelligible remarks across the table. They referred, I subsequently discovered, to the lady’s little book on Northchurch races, and I recollected that the Spring Meeting was on, and to-morrow ‘Cup Day.’ After dinner there was great talk about getting up a party to go on General Fairford’s drag. Lady Carwitchet was in ecstasies and tried to coax me into joining. Leta declined positively. Tom accepted sulkily.

The look in Lord Carwitchet’s eye returned to my mind as I locked up my rubies that night. It made him look so like his mother! I went round my fastenings with unusual care. Safe and closets, and desk and doors, I tried them all. Coming at last to the bath-room, it opened at once. It was the housemaid’s doing. She had evidently taken advantage of my having abandoned the room to give it ‘a thorough spring cleaning,’ and I anathematised her. The furniture was all piled together and veiled with sheets, the carpet and felt curtain were gone, there were new brooms about. As I peered around a voice close at my ear made me jump. Lady Carwitchet’s!

‘I tell you I have nothing, not a penny! I shall have to borrow my train-fare before I can leave this. They’ll be glad enough to lend it.’

Not only had the *portière* been removed, but the door behind it had been unlocked and left open for convenience of dusting behind the wardrobe. I might as well have been in the bedroom.

‘Don’t tell me,’ I recognised Carwitchet’s growl. ‘You’ve not been here all this time for nothing. You’ve been collecting for a Kilburn cot or getting subscriptions for the distressed Irish landlords. I know you. Now I’m not going to see myself ruined



for the want of a paltry hundred or so. I tell you the colt is a dead certainty. If I could have got a thousand or two on him last week we might have ended our dog-days millionaires. Hand over what you can. You've money's worth, if not money. Where's that sapphire you stole?'

'I didn't. I can show you the receipted bill. All I possess is honestly come by. What could you do with it, even if I gave it you? You couldn't sell it as the Valdez, and you can't get it cut up as you might if it were real.'

'If it's only bogus, why are you always in such a flutter about it? I'll do something with it, never fear. Hand over.'

'I can't. I haven't got it. I had to raise something on it before I left town.'

'Will you swear it's not in that wardrobe? I dare say you will. I mean to see. Give me those keys.'

I heard a struggle and a jingle, then the wardrobe-door must have been flung open, for a streak of light struck through a crack in the wood of the back. Creeping close and peeping through I could see an awful sight. Lady Carwitchet in a flannel wrapper, minus hair, teeth, complexion, pointing a skinny forefinger that quivered with rage at her son, who was out of the range of my vision.

'Stop that, and throw those keys down here directly, or I'll rouse the house. Sir Thomas is a magistrate, and will lock you up as soon as look at you.' She clutched at the bell-rope as she spoke. 'I'll swear I'm in danger of my life from you and give you in charge. Yes, and when you're in prison I'll keep you there till you die. I've often thought I'd do it. How about the hotel robberies last summer at Cowes, eh? Mightn't the police be grateful for a hint or two? And how about——'

The keys fell with a crash on the bed, accompanied by some bad language in an apologetic tone, and the door slammed to. I crept trembling to bed.

This new and horrible complication of the situation filled me with dismay. Lord Carwitchet's wolfish glance at my rubies took a new meaning. They were safe enough, I believed—but the sapphire! If he disbelieved his mother, how long would she be able to keep it from his clutches? That she had some plot of her own of which the Bishop would eventually be the victim I did not doubt, or why had she not made her bargain with him long ago. But supposing she took fright, lost her head, allowed her son to wrest the jewel from her, or gave consent to its being mutilated, divided. I lay in a cold perspiration till morning.

My terrors haunted me all day. They were with me at breakfast-time when Lady Carwitchet, tripping in smiling, made a last attempt to induce me to accompany her and keep her 'Bad, bad boy!' from getting amongst 'those horrid betting-men!'

They haunted me through the long peaceful day with Leta and the *tête-à-tête* dinner, but they swarmed around and beset me sorest when, sitting alone over my sitting-room fire, I listened for the return of the drag party. I read my newspaper and brewed myself some hot strong drink, but there comes a time of night when no fire can warm and no drink can cheer. The Bishop's despairing face kept me company, and his troubles and the wrongs of the future heir took possession of me. Then the uncanny noises that make all old houses ghostly during the small hours began to make themselves heard. Muffled footsteps trod the corridor, stopping to listen at every door, door-latches gently clicked, boards creaked unreasonably, sounds of stealthy movements came from the locked-up bathroom. The welcome crash of wheels at last, and the sound of the front-door bell. I could hear Lady Carwitchet making her shrill *adieux* to her friends and her steps in the corridor. She was softly humming a little song as she approached. I heard her unlock her bedroom-door before she entered—an odd thing to do. Tom came sleepily stumbling to his room later. I put my head out. 'Where is Lord Carwitchet?'

'Haven't you seen him? He left us hours ago. Not come home, eh? Well, he's welcome to stay away. I don't want to see more of him.' Tom's brow was dark and his voice surly. 'I gave him to understand as much.' Whatever had happened, Tom was evidently too disgusted to explain just then.

I went back to my fire unaccountably relieved, and brewed myself another and a stronger brew. It warmed me this time, but excited me foolishly. There must be some way out of the difficulty. I felt now as if I could almost see it if I gave my mind to it. Why—suppose—there might be no difficulty after all! The Bishop was a nervous old gentleman. He might have been mistaken all through, Bogaerts might have been mistaken, I might—— No. I could not have been mistaken—or I thought not. I fidgeted and fumed and argued with myself, till I found I should have no peace of mind without a look at the stone in my possession, and I actually went to the safe and took the case out.

The sapphire certainly looked different by lamp-light. I sat and stared, and all but over-persuaded my better judgment into giving it a verdict. Bogaerts's mark—I suddenly remembered it.



I took my magnifier and held the pendant to the light. There, scratched upon the stone, was the Greek Beta! There came a tap on my door, and before I could answer the handle turned softly, and Lord Carwitchet stood before me. I whipped the case into my dressing-gown pocket and stared at him. He was not pleasant to look at, especially at that time of night. He had a dishevelled, desperate air, his voice was hoarse, his red-rimmed eyes wild.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he began civilly enough. ‘I saw your light burning, and thought, as we go by the early train to-morrow, you might allow me to consult you now on a little business of my mother’s.’ His eyes roved about the room. Was he trying to find the whereabouts of my safe? ‘You know a lot about precious stones, don’t you?’

‘So my friends are kind enough to say. Won’t you sit down? I have unluckily little chance of indulging the taste on my own account,’ was my cautious reply.

‘But you’ve written a book about them, and know them when you see them, don’t you? Now my mother has given me something, and would like you to give a guess at its value. Perhaps you can put me in the way of disposing of it?’

‘I certainly can do so if it is worth anything. Is that it?’ I was in a fever of excitement, for I guessed what was clutched in his palm. He held out to me the Valdez sapphire.

How it shone and sparkled like a great blue star! I made myself smile a deprecating smile as I took it from him, but how dare I call it false to its face. As well accuse the sun in heaven of being a cheap imitation. I faltered and prevaricated feebly. Where was my moral courage, and where was the good honest thumping lie that should have aided me! ‘I have the best authority for recognising this as a very good copy of a famous stone in the possession of the Bishop of Northchurch. His scowl grew so black, that I saw he believed me, and went on more cheerily: ‘This was manufactured by Johannes Bogaerts—I can give you his address, and you can make inquiries yourself—by special permission of the then owner, the late Leone Montanaro.’

‘Hand it back!’ he interrupted (his other remarks were outrageous, but satisfactory to hear); but I waved him off. I couldn’t give it up. It fascinated me. I toyed with it, I caressed it. I made it display its different tones of colour. I must see the two stones together. I must see it outshine its paltry rival. It was a whimsical frenzy that seized me—I can call it by no other name.

‘Would you like to see the original? Curiously enough, I have it here. The Bishop has left it in my charge.’

The wolfish light flamed up in Carwicket’s eyes as I drew forth the case. He laid the Valdez down on a sheet of paper, and I placed the other, still in its case, beside it. In that moment they looked identical, except for the little loop of sham stones, replaced by a plain gold band in the Bishop’s jewel. Carwicket leant across the table eagerly, the table gave a lurch, the lamp tottered, crashed over, and we were left in semi-darkness.

‘Don’t stir!’ Carwicket shouted. ‘The paraffin is all over the place!’ He seized my sofa-blanket, and flung it over the table while I stood helpless. ‘There, that’s safe now. Have you candles on the chimney-piece? I’ve got matches.’

He looked very white and excited as he lit up. ‘Might have been an awkward job with all that burning paraffin running about,’ he said quite pleasantly. ‘I hope no real harm is done.’ I was lifting the rug with shaking hands. The two stones lay as I had placed them. No! I nearly dropped it back again. It was the stone in the case that had the loop with the three sham sapphires!

Carwicket picked the other up hastily. ‘So you say this is rubbish?’ he asked, his eyes sparkling wickedly, and an attempt at mortification in his tone.

‘Utter rubbish!’ I pronounced, with truth and decision, snapping up the case and pocketing it. ‘Lady Carwicket must have known it.’

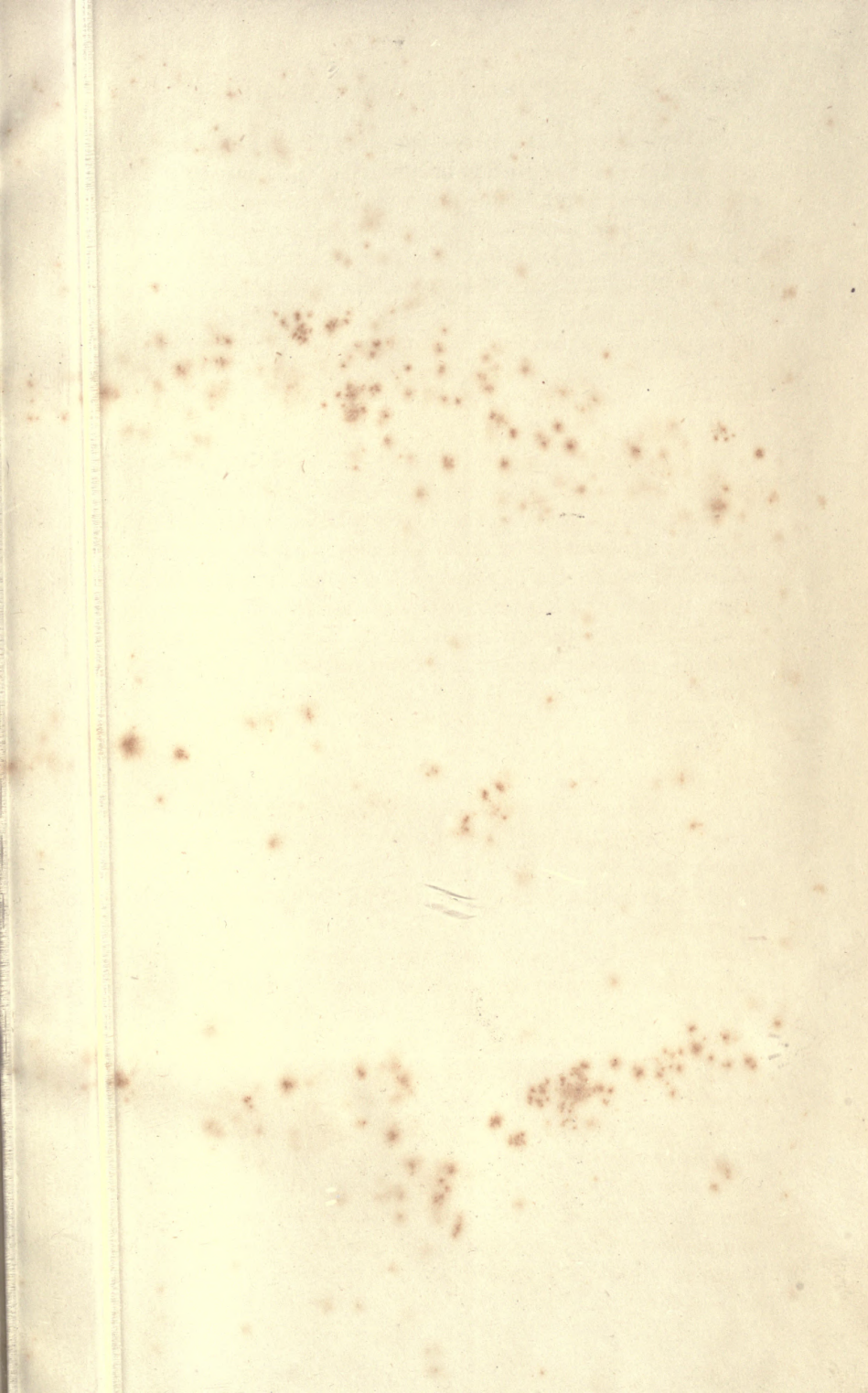
‘Ah, well, it’s disappointing, isn’t it? Good-bye, we shall not meet again.’

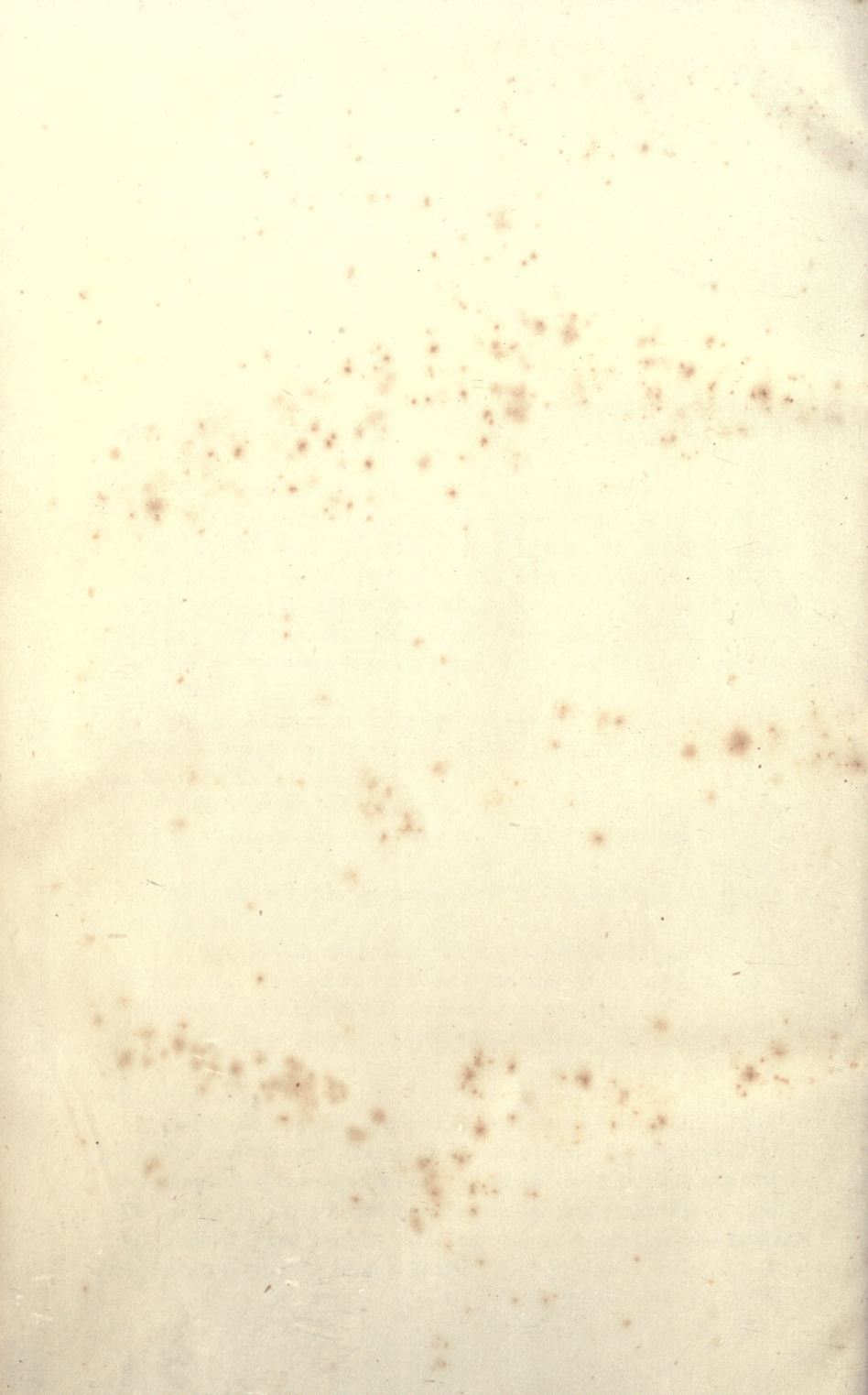
I shook hands with him most cordially. ‘Good-bye, Lord Carwicket. So glad to have met you and your mother. It has been a source of the *greatest* pleasure, I assure you.’

I have never seen the Carwickets since. The Bishop drove over next day in rather better spirits. Miss Panton had refused the chaplain.

‘It doesn’t matter, my lord,’ I said to him heartily. ‘We’ve all been under some strange misconception. The stone in your possession is the veritable one. I could swear to that anywhere. The sapphire Lady Carwicket wears is only an excellent imitation, and—I have seen it with my own eyes—is the one bearing Bogaerts’s mark, the Greek Beta.’

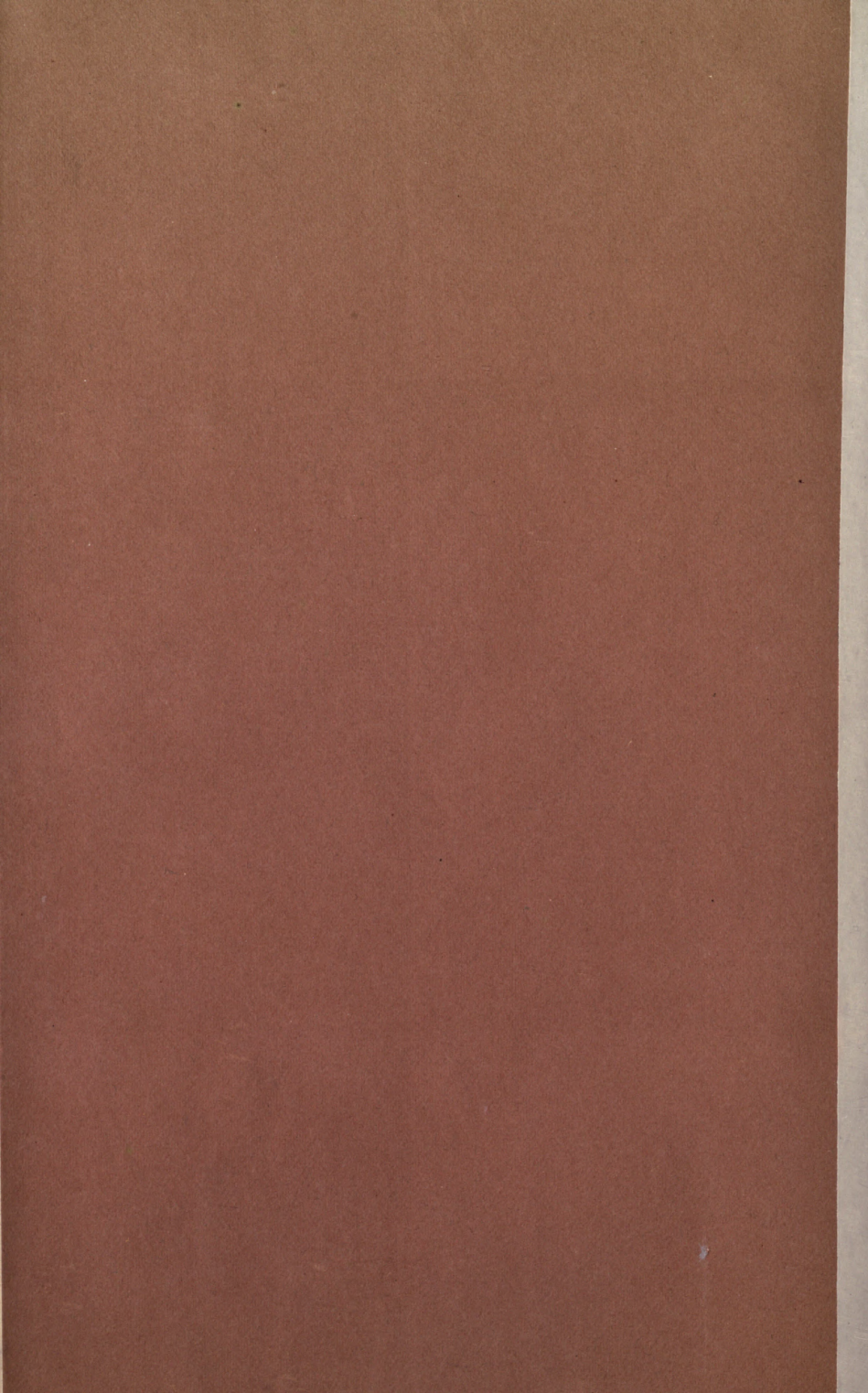














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