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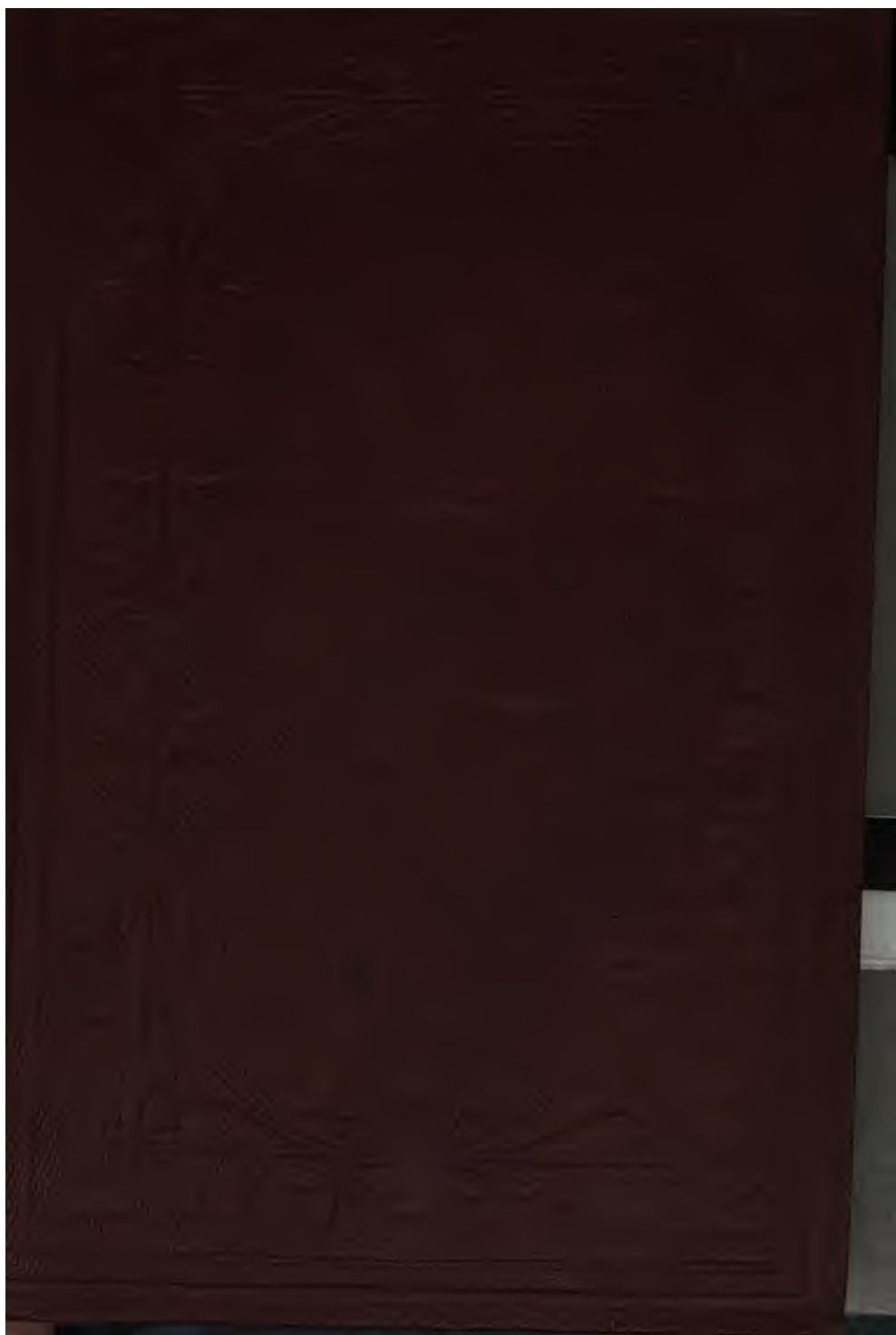
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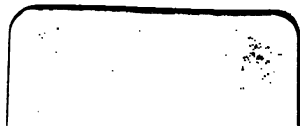
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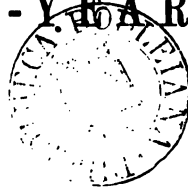


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Vcl. 1. Results of the Cyanochaitanthropoioion p. 103

TEN
THOUSAND A-YEAR.



BY

SAMUEL WARREN,

D.C.L., F.R.S.

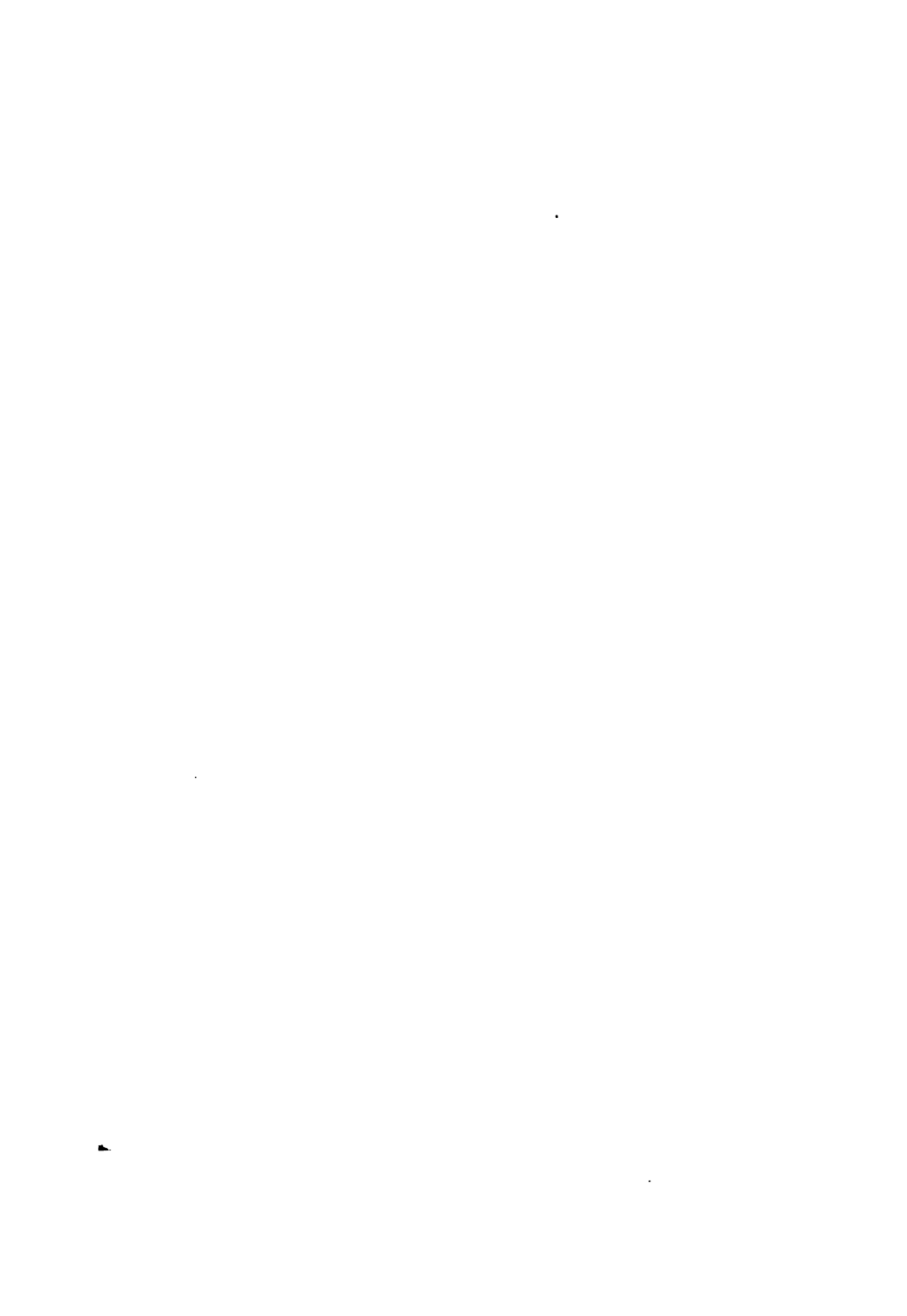
A NEW EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED, WITH NOTES
AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS,
EDINBURGH AND LONDON.
MCCCCLIV.

249. p. 124.



WORKS

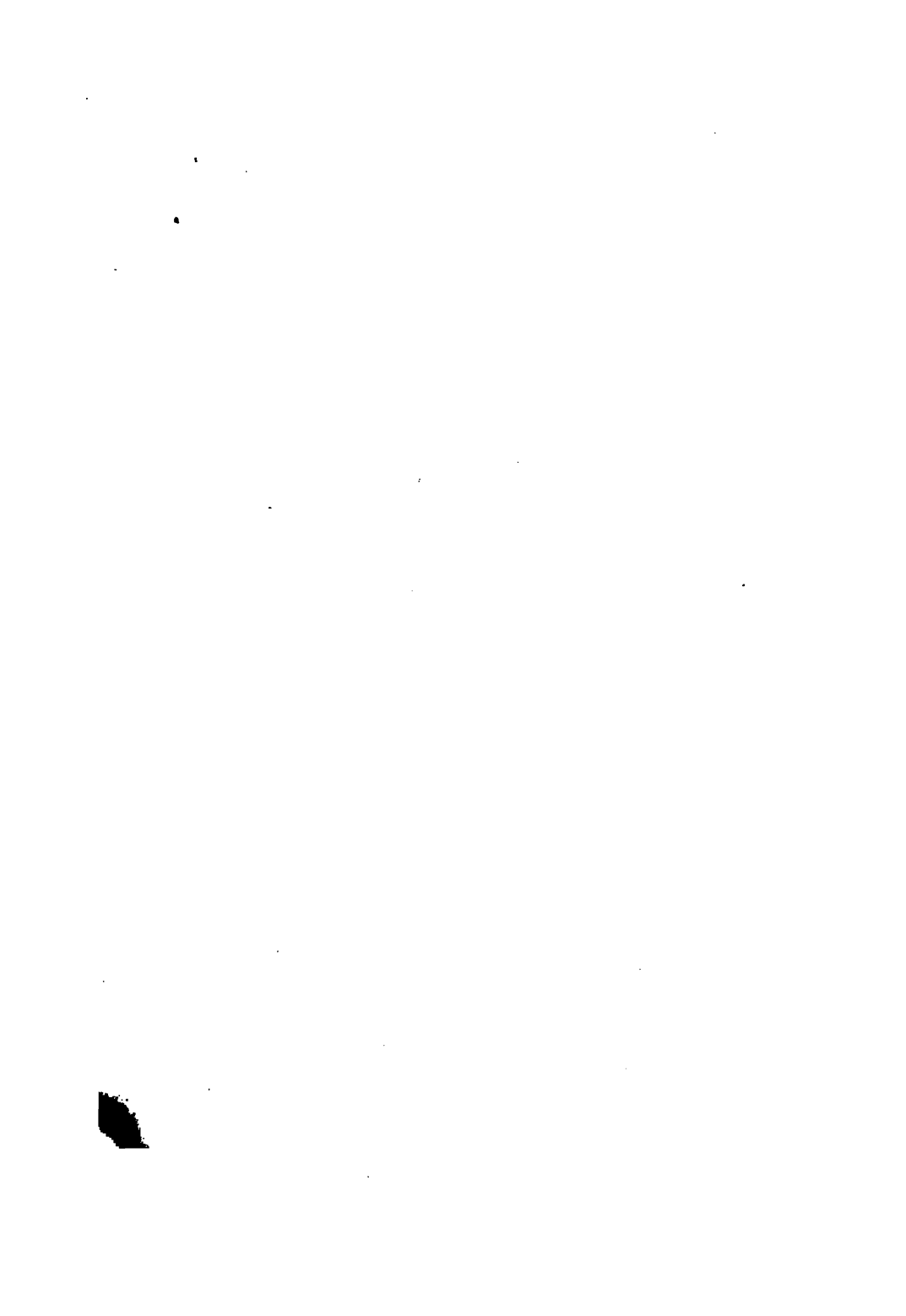
OF

SAMUEL WARREN

D. C. L. F. R. S.

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLIV



PREFACE.

THE Author, having now bestowed upon this work a rigorous and final revision, hopes he may be allowed to say a word to the reader, before it leaves his hand for ever, to take its chance of appearing before posterity.

Ten Thousand a-Year is a fiction, the plot of which was contrived with great care, for the purpose at once of exciting and sustaining, as far as possible, the reader's interest, and exhibiting, in a course of natural events, and by the agency of natural characters, the aspect, socially, professionally, politically, and religiously, of English society in the nineteenth century. For this reason the tale travels over a great space of ground, and deals with almost every class of society. Without sharing the opinion attributed to Mr Titmouse,* that "the only real distinction between mankind is that effected by *money*"—the Author considers it an enormous engine for developing and testing the character of man, individually and collectively. With this view, having called up before his mind's eye a considerable number of widely dissimilar characters, in different positions in life, he devised the sudden loss of a splendid fortune by one, and its acquisition and subsequent loss by another, with all their agitating and vividly illustrative incidents; his object being to teach, by the force of action and events, important moral lessons. How this is brought about, and how far the attempt may be deemed successful, must now be determined by a candid and competent reader.

Some parts of *Ten Thousand a-Year* have been written with a pen dipped freely and deeply into satire; but never with any other object than to discriminate between virtue and vice, between sincerity and hypocrisy. Every institution has its defects, every order of men its unworthy members; and that writer deserves no serious attention, and

* Vol. i. page 9, col. 1.

will produce no salutary effect on his reader's mind, who confounds individuals with the class to which they belong, and exhibits derogatory views of a system or institution, instead of tracing out, as with a caustic pencil, what are deemed the faulty parts.

The Author hopes that he will not be judged in too harsh and exacting a spirit, in respect of anything to be found in this work ; but that some licence may be allowed one whose aim is not alone to instruct, but to amuse. He has received, from time to time, a great number of letters, one or two of them suggesting that he has sinned in respect of some of the matters above referred to. A Peer wrote to him to complain of his having intended to ridicule the aristocracy, by the character, sayings, and doings, attributed to the Earl of Dreddington and Lady Cecilia ; and some months afterwards, he received an extremely violent letter from a linen-draper, accusing him of an intention to render that respectable calling odious. To charges such as these he is not concerned to give an answer. As reasonably might members of either House of Parliament, or of either branch of the legal profession, deem themselves wronged and misrepresented, because certain unworthy and contemptible individuals belonging to them, are placed in unfavourable contrast to those constituting the great body of worthy and honourable members of these classes. The Author lately, however, received an earnest and courteous remonstrance from an eminent Dissenting minister, against the alleged tendency of *Ten Thousand a-Year* to exhibit disparaging views of Dissenters generally. The Author solemnly disclaims having ever been actuated by such unjust and unchristian feelings and intentions. He knows much, and greatly to the honour of Dissenters ; and would consider himself acting unworthily as a member of the Church of England, if he presumed to speak, or leave on record, a single disrespectful word concerning any denomination whatsoever of professing Christians. If "the Reverend Dismal Horror" and "the Reverend Smirk Mudflint" typify bad specimens of Dissenting ministers, surely the "Reverend Morphine Velvet" and "the Reverend Gideon Fleshpot," are by no means desirable representatives of the Church of England clergy.

Amongst many letters of a different character, the Author received one, a few years ago, from a town in the State of Kentucky, U. S., of which the following, with the suppression of several enthusiastic expressions, is an exact copy. The letter is subscribed with the writer's name, and found its way addressed simply—"To the Author of *Ten Thousand a-Year*, London, England." He lately discovered the writer to be a gentleman now occupying a high position in American society, and who recently filled an important and responsible office in the state :—

“ ———, KENTUCKY, U. S.

“ SIR,—Permit an humble individual, and a stranger, to express to you the gratification and delight your instructive work, *Ten Thousand a-Year*, has afforded him. Instructive it was; for at the time I had the pleasure of perusing it, misfortune had laid her heavy hand upon me, and sometimes, when those who instead of aiding rather assisted in oppressing me, my heart would fail me; but when I thought of Charles Aubrey, as portrayed by you, who, though born to affluence, and reared in luxury, how he bore his misfortunes, I felt ashamed that I, but a mechanic, one of the toiling millions to whom God had given health and strength, should so far forget His goodness as to despair; so I put my shoulder to the wheel right manfully, and turned neither to the right nor to the left, and with a firm reliance on His providence, determined to extricate myself from the pecuniary embarrassments I was surrounded with, and have succeeded.

“ As to glorious Kate, I cannot tell you how I appreciate her character more than by saying that I hope sincerely the little stranger born to me some few nights ago, whom I have taken the liberty of naming *Kate Aubrey*, will take her namesake as a pattern of excellence, and follow it.

“ You will please accept these few lines in the spirit they are sent, from one who may never see your face, and has no motive in addressing you but the pleasure of paying homage, not to kings, or to high birth, but where it is due.

“ Believe me, Sir,

“ I wish you happiness and prosperity,

“ ——— ———.”

If the writer of this letter should see these pages, he is assured that the Author of this work has been perhaps more gratified by the foregoing communication, than by any that have hitherto reached him with reference to *Ten Thousand a-Year*.

INNER TEMPLE, LONDON,
April 1854.

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TO

EMILY,

A LITTLE BLUE-EYED LAUGHING IMAGE OF PURITY AND HAPPINESS,

THESE VOLUMES ARE INSCRIBED,

AS A SLIGHT MEMORIAL OF A FATHER'S AFFECTION FOR

AN ONLY DAUGHTER.

October 1841.

Fortuna sevo laeta negotio, et
Ludum insolentem ludere pertinax,
Transmutat incertos honores,
Nunc mihi, nunc alii benigna.
Laudo manentem. Si celeras quatit
Pennis, resigno quas dedit, et mea
Virtute me involvo, probamque
Pauperiem sine dote quero.
Hos.

THUS RENDERED BY DRYDEN.

Fortune, that with malicious joy,
Doth man her slave oppress,
Proud of her office to destroy,
Is seldom pleased to bless !
Still various, and inconstant, still,
But with an inclination to be ill,
Promotes, degrades, delights in strife,
And makes a lottery of life.
I can enjoy her, when she's kind :
But when she dances in the wind,
And shakes her wings, and will not stay—
I puff the prostitute away.
Content with poverty, my soul I arm,
And VIRTUE, though in rags, shall keep me warm !

TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

WHILE MR TITTLERAT TITMOUSE ADORNS HIS OUTER MAN, THE READER GETS A GLIMPSE OF HIS INNER MAN, SUCH AS IT IS.

ABOUT ten o'clock one Sunday morning, in the month of July 18—, the dazzling sunbeams, which had for several hours irradiated a little dismal back attic in one of the closest courts adjoining Oxford Street, in London, and stimulated with their intensity the closed eyelids of a young man—one TITTLERAT TITMOUSE—lying in bed, at length awoke him. He rubbed his eyes for some time, to relieve himself from the irritation occasioned by the sudden glare they encountered; and yawned and stretched his limbs with a heavy sense of weariness, as though his sleep had not refreshed him. He presently cast his eyes towards the heap of clothes lying huddled together on the backless chair by the bedside, where he had hastily flung them about an hour after midnight; at which time he had returned from a great draper's shop in Oxford street, where he served as a shopman, and where he had nearly dropped asleep, after a long day's work, in the act of putting up the shutters. He could hardly keep his eyes open while he undressed, short as was the time required to do so; and on drop-

ping exhausted into bed, there he had continued, in deep unbroken slumber, till the moment of his being presented to the reader.

He lay for several minutes, stretching, yawning, and sighing, occasionally casting an irresolute glance towards the tiny fireplace, where lay a modicum of wood and coal, with a tinder-box and a match or two placed upon the hob, so that he could easily light his fire for the purposes of shaving, and breakfasting. He stepped at length lazily out of bed, and when he had felt his feet, again yawned and stretched himself. Then he lit his fire, placed his bit of a kettle on the top of it, and returned to bed, where he lay with his eye fixed on the fire, watching the crackling blaze insinuate itself through the wood and coal. Once, however, it began to fail, so he had to get up and assist it, by blowing, and bits of paper; and it seemed in so precarious a state that he determined not again to lie down, but sit on the bedside: as he did, with his arms folded, ready to resume operations if necessary. In this posture

he remained for some time, watching his little fire, and listlessly listening to the discordant jangling of innumerable church-bells, clamorously calling the citizens to their devoutness. The current of thoughts passing through his mind, was something like the following!—

“Heigho!—Lud, Lud!—Dull as ditch water!—This is my only holiday, yet I don’t seem to enjoy it!—for I feel knocked up with my week’s work! (A yawn). What a life mine is, to be sure! Here am I, in my eight-and-twentieth year, and for four long years have been one of the shopmen at Tag-rag & Co.’s, slaving from half-past seven o’clock in the morning till nine at night, and all for a salary of thirty-five pounds a-year, and my board! And Mr Tag-rag—eugh! what a beast!—is always telling me how high he’s raised my salary!! Thirty-five pounds a-year is all I have for lodging, and turning out like a gentleman! ‘Pon my life! it *can’t* last; for sometimes I feel getting desperate—such strange thoughts come into my mind!—Seven shillings a-week do I pay for *this* cursed hole—(he uttered the words with a bitter emphasis, accompanied by a disgustful look round the little room)—that one couldn’t swing a cat in without touching the four sides!—Last winter, three of our gents (i. e. his fellow-shopmen) came to tea with me one Sunday night; and bitter cold as it was, we four made this cussed dog-hole so hot, we were obliged to open the window!—And as for accommodation—I recollect I had to borrow two nasty chairs from the people below, who on the next Sunday borrowed my only decanter, in return, and, hang them, cracked it!—and then swore it was so when they had it!—Curse me, say I, if this life is worth having! It’s all the very vanity of vanities, as it’s said somewhere in the Bible, and no mistake! Fag, fag, fag, all one’s days, and—what for? Thirty-five pounds a-year, and ‘*no advance!*’ (Here occurred a pause and reverie, from which he was roused by the clangour of the church-bells). Bah, bells! ring away till you’re all crack-

ed!—Now, do you think *I’m* going to be mewed up in church on this the only day out of the seven I’ve got to sweeten myself in, and sniff fresh air, and see a bit of life? A precious joke that would be! (A yawn). Whew!—after all, I’d almost as lieve sit here; for what’s the use of my going out? Everybody I see out is happy, excepting me, and the poor chaps that are like me!—Everybody laughs when they see me and know that I’m only a tallow-faced counter-jumper—I know that’s the odious name we gents go by!—for whom it’s no use to go out—for one day in seven can’t give one a bloom! Oh, Lord! what’s the use of being good-looking, as *some* chaps say I am?”

—Here he instinctively passed his left hand through a profusion of bright sandy-coloured hair, and cast an eye towards the bit of fractured looking-glass which hung against the wall, and had, by faithfully representing to him a by no means ugly set of features (despite the inflamed hue of his hair) whenever he chose to appeal to it, afforded him more enjoyment than any other object in the world, for years. “Ah, by Jove! many and many’s the fine gal I’ve done my best to attract the notice of, while I was serving her in the shop—that is, when I’ve seen her get out of a carriage! There has been luck to many a chap like me, in the same line of speculation: look at Tom Tarnish—how did he get Miss Twang, the rich pianoforte-maker’s daughter?—and *now* he’s out the shop, and lives at Hackney, like a regular gentleman! Ah! that *was* a stroke! But somehow it hasn’t answered with *me* yet; the gals don’t take! How I have set my eyes to be sure, and ogled them!—*All* of them don’t seem to dislike the thing—and sometimes they’ll smile, in a sort of way that says I’m safe—but it’s been no use yet, not a bit of it!—My eyes! catch me, by the way, ever nodding again to a lady on the Sunday, that had smiled when I stared at her while serving her in the shop—after what happened to me a month or two ago in the Park! Didn’t I feel like dar-

aged goods, just then? But it's no matter, women are so different at different times!—Very likely I mismanaged the thing. By the way, what a precious puppy of a chap the fellow was that came up to her at the time she stepped out of the carriage to walk a bit! As for good looks—cut me to ribbons (another glance at the glass)—no; I a'n't afraid *there*, neither—but—heigho!—I suppose he was, as they say, born with a golden spoon in his mouth, and had never so many a thousands a-year, to make up to him for never so few brains!—for people seldom have both money and brains. He was uncommon well-dressed, though, I must own. What trousers!—they stuck so natural to him, he might have been born in them. And his waistcoat, and satin stock—what an air! And yet, his figure was nothing *very* out of the way! His gloves, as white as snow; I've no doubt he wears a pair of them a-day—my stars! that's three-and-sixpence a-day; for don't I know what *they* cost?—Whew! if I had but the cash to carry on that sort of thing!—And when he'd seen her into the carriage—the horse he got on!—and what a tip-top groom;—that chap's wages, I'll answer for it, were equal to my salary! (Here was another pause). Now, just for the fun of the thing, only suppose luck was to befall *me*! Say that somebody was to leave me lots of cash—many thousands a-year, or something in that line! My stars! wouldn't I go it with the best of them? (Another long pause). Gad, I really should hardly know how to begin to spend it!—I think, by the way, I'd buy a *title* to set off with—for what won't money buy? The thing's often done; there was a great pawnbroker in the city, the other day, made a baronet of, all for his money—and why shouldn't I? He grew a little heated with the progress of his reflections, clasping his hands with involuntary energy, as he stretched them out to their fullest extent, to give effect to a very hearty yawn. Only think how it would sound!—

“SIR TITTLERBAT TITMOUSE, BARONET;”
OR, “LORD TITMOUSE!!”

“The very first place I'd go to, after I'd got my title, and was rigged out in Tight-fit's tip-top, should be—our cursed shop! to buy a dozen or two pair of white kid. Ah, ha! What a flutter there would be among the poor pale devils as would be standing, just as ever, behind the counters, at Tag-rag and Co.'s, when my carriage drew up, and I stepped, a tip-top swell, into the shop! Tag-rag would come and attend to me himself! No, he wouldn't—pride wouldn't let him. I don't know, though: what wouldn't he do to turn a penny, and make two and ninepence into three and a penny? I shouldn't *quite* come Captain Stiff over him, I think, just at first; but I should treat him with a kind of an air, too, as if—hem! 'Pon my life! how delightful! (A sigh and a pause). Yes, I should often come to the shop. Gad, it would be half the fun of my fortune! Poor chaps! How they would envy me, to be sure! How one should enjoy it! I wouldn't think of *marrying* till—and yet I won't say either; if I got among some of them out-and-outers—those first-rate articles—that lady, for instance, the other day in the Park—I should like to see her cut me as she did, with ten thousand a-year in my pocket! Why, she'd be running after *me*!—or there's no truth in novels, which I'm sure there's often a great deal in. Oh, of course, I might marry whom I pleased! Who couldn't be got by a gent with his ten thousand a-year? (Another pause). I think I should go abroad to Russia directly; for they tell me there's a man lives somewhere there, who could dye this cursed hair of mine any colour I liked—and—egad! I'd come home as black as a crow, and hold up my head as high as any of them! While I was about it, I'd have a touch at my eyebrows!—Crash here went all his castle-building, at the sound of his tea-kettle, hissing, whizzing, sputtering, in the agonies of boiling over; as if the intolerable heat of the fire had driven desperate the poor creature placed upon it, which instinctively tried thus to extinguish the cause of its anguish. Having taken it off, and

placed it upon the hob, and put on the fire a tiny fragment of fresh coal, he began to make preparations for shaving, by pouring some of the hot water into an old tea-cup, which was presently to serve for the purposes of breakfast. Then he spread out a bit of crumpled whity-brown paper, in which had been folded up a couple of cigars, bought over-night for the Sunday's special enjoyment—and as to which, if he supposed them to have come from any place beyond the four seas, I imagine him to have been slightly mistaken. He placed this bit of paper on the little mantelpiece; drew his solitary well-worn razor several times across the palm of his left hand; dipped his brush, worn, within half an inch, to the stump, into the hot water; presently passed it over so much of his face as he intended to shave; then rubbed on the damp surface a bit of yellow soap—and in less than five minutes Mr Titmouse was a shaved man. But mark—don't suppose that he had performed an extensive operation. One would have thought him anxious to get rid of as much as possible of his abominable sandy-coloured hair. Quite the contrary! Every hair of his spreading whiskers was sacred from the touch of steel; and a bushy crop stretched underneath his chin, coming curled out on each side of it, above his stock, like two little horns or tusks. An imperial—*i. e.* a dirt-coloured tuft of hair, permitted to grow perpendicularly down the under-lip of puppies—and a pair of promising mustaches, poor Mr Titmouse had been compelled to sacrifice some time before, to the tyrannical whimsies of his vulgar employer, Mr Tag-rag, who imagined them not to be exactly suitable appendages for counter-jumpers. Thus will it be seen that the space shaved over on this occasion was somewhat circumscribed. This operation over, he took out of his trunk an old dirty-looking pomatum pot. A modicum of its contents, extracted on the tips of his two forefingers, he stroked carefully into his eyebrows; then spreading some on the palms of his

hands, he rubbed it vigorously into his stubborn hair and whiskers for some quarter of an hour; afterwards combing and brushing his hair into half-a-dozen different dispositions—so fastidious in that matter was Mr Titmouse. Then he dipped the end of a towel into a little water, and twisting it round his right forefinger, passed it gently over his face, carefully avoiding his eyebrows, and the hair at the top, sides, and bottom of his face, which he then wiped with a dry corner of the towel; and no further did Mr Tittlebat Titmouse think it necessary to carry his ablutions. Had he, however, been able to “see himself as others saw him,” in respect of those neglected regions which lay somewhere behind and beneath his ears, he might not, possibly, have thought it superfluous to irrigate them with a little soap and water; but, after all, he knew best; it might have given him cold: and besides, his hair was very thick and long behind, and might perhaps conceal anything that was unsightly. Then Mr Titmouse drew from underneath the bed a bottle of “incomparable blacking,” and a couple of brushes; with great labour and skill polishing his boots up to a wonderful degree of brilliancy. Having replaced his blacking implements under the bed and washed his hands, he devoted a few moments to boiling about three tea-spoonfuls of coffee (as it was styled on the paper from which he took, and in which he had bought, it—whereas it was, in fact, *chicory*). Then he drew forth from his trunk a calico shirt, with linen wristbands and collar, which had been worn only twice—*i. e.* on the preceding two Sundays—since its last washing—and put it on, taking great care not to rumple a very showy front, containing three rows of frills; in the middle one of which he stuck three “studs,” connected together with two little gilt chains, looking exceedingly stylish—especially when coupled with a spannew satin stock, which he next buckled round his neck. Having put on his bright boots (without, I am really sorry to say, any stockings), he care-

fully insinuated his legs into a pair of white trousers, for the first time since their last washing; and what with his short straps and high braces, they were so tight that you would have feared their bursting on his sitting down hastily. I fear that I shall hardly be believed; but it is a fact, that the next thing he did was to attach a pair of spurs to his boots;—but, to be sure, it was not *impossible* that he might intend to ride during the day. Then he put on a queer kind of under-waistcoat, which in fact was only a roll-collar of rather faded pea-green silk, and designed to set off a very fine flowered damson-coloured silk waistcoat; over which he drew a massive mosaic-gold chain (to purchase which he had sold a serviceable silver watch), which had been carefully wrapped up in cotton wool; from which soft depository, also, he drew his ring (those must have been sharp eyes which could tell, at a distance, and in a hurry, that it was not diamond), which he placed on the stumpy little finger of his red and thick right hand—and contemplated its sparkle with exquisite satisfaction. Having proceeded thus far with his toilet, he sat down to his breakfast, spreading upon his lap the shirt which he had taken off, to preserve his white trousers from spot or stain—his thoughts alternating between his late waking vision and his purposes for the day. He had no butter, having used the last on the preceding morning; so he was fain to put up with dry bread—and very dry and teeth-trying it was, poor fellow—but his eye lit on his ring, and he bore it! Having swallowed two cups of his *quasi*-coffee, (eugh! such stuff!) he resumed his toilet, by drawing out of his other trunk his blue surtout, with embossed silk buttons and velvet collar, and an outside pocket in the left breast. Having smoothed down a few creases, he put it on;—then, before his little vulgar fraction of a looking-glass, he stood twitching about collar, sleeves, and front, so as to make them sit well; concluding with a careful elongation of the

wristbands of his shirt, so as to show their whiteness gracefully beyond the cuff of his coat-sleeve—and he succeeded in producing a sort of white boundary line between the blue of his coat-sleeve and the red of his hand. At that useful member he could not help looking with a sigh, as he had often done before—for it was not a handsome hand. It was broad and red, and the fingers were thick and stumpy, with very coarse deep wrinkles at every joint. His nails also were flat and shapeless; and he used to be continually gnawing them till he had succeeded in getting them down to the quick—and they were a sight to set one's teeth on edge. Then he extracted from the first-mentioned trunk a white pocket-handkerchief—an exemplary one, that had gone through four Sundays' show (not *use*, be it understood), and yet was capable of exhibition again. A pair of sky-coloured kid gloves next made their appearance: which, however, showed such barefaced marks of former service as rendered indispensable a ten minutes' rubbing with bread crumbs. His Sunday hat, carefully covered with silver-paper, was next gently removed from its well-worn box—ah, how lightly and delicately did he pass his smoothing hand round its glossy surface! Lastly, he took down a thin black cane, with a gilt head, and full brown tassel, from a peg behind the door—and his toilet was complete. Laying down his cane for a moment, he passed his hands again through his hair, arranging it so as to fall nicely on each side beneath his hat, which he then placed upon his head, with an elegant inclination towards the left side. He was really not so very bad-looking, in spite of his sandy-coloured hair. His forehead, to be sure, was contracted, and his eyes were of a very light colour, and a trifle too protuberant; but his mouth was rather well-formed, and being seldom closed, exhibited beautiful teeth; and his nose was of that description which generally passes for a Roman nose. His countenance wore generally a smile, and was expressive of—self-satisfac-

tion: and surely any expression is better than none at all. As for there being, however, the slightest trace of *intellect* in it, I should be misleading the reader if I were to say anything of the sort.—In height he was about five feet and a quarter of an inch, *in his boots*, and he was rather strongly set, with a little tendency to round shoulders;—but his limbs were pliant and his motions nimble.

Here you have, then, Mr Tittlebat Titmouse to the life—certainly no more than an average sample of his kind; but, as he is to go through a considerable variety of situation and circumstance, I thought you would like to have him as distinctly before your mind's eye as it was in my power to present him.—Well—he put his hat on, as I have said; buttoned the lowest two buttons of his surtout, and stuck his white pocket-handkerchief into the outside pocket in front, anxiously disposing it so as to let a little appear above the edge of the pocket, with a sort of careful carelessness—a graceful contrast to the blue; drew on his gloves; took his cane in his hand; drained the last sad remnant of infusion of chicory in his coffee-cup; and, the sun shining in the full splendour of a July noon, and promising a glorious day, forth sallied this poor brainless sinner, an Oxford Street Adonis, going forth conquering and to conquer! Petty finery without, a pinched and stunted stomach within; a case of *Back versus Belly* (as the lawyers would have it), the plaintiff winning in a canter! Forth sallied, I say, Mr Titmouse, as also, doubtless, sallied forth that day some five or six thousand similar simpletons, down the narrow, creaking, close staircase, which he had no sooner quitted than he heard exclaimed from an opposite window, “My eyes! *a'n't* that a swell!” He felt how true the observation was, and that at that moment he was somewhat out of his element; so he hurried on, and soon reached that great broad disheartening street, apostrophised by the celebrated Opium-Eater, with bitter feeling, as—“Oxford Street!—stony-hearted step-mother! Thou that listenest to the sighs

of orphans, and drinkest the tears of children!” Here, though his spirits were not just then very buoyant, our poor little dandy breathed more freely than when he was passing through the wretched crowded court (Closet Court) which he had just quitted. He passed and met hundreds who, like himself, seemed released for a precious day's interval from miserable confinement and slavery during the week; but there were not very many of them, he conceived, who could vie with him in elegance of appearance—and that was indeed a luxurious reflection! Who could do justice to the air with which he strutted along! He felt as happy, poor soul, in his little ostentation, as his Corinthian rival in tip-top turnout, after twice as long, and as anxious, and fifty times as expensive, preparations for effective public display! Nay, *my* poor swell was in some respects greatly the superior of such an one as I have alluded to. Mr Titmouse *did*, to a great degree, bedizen his back—but at the expense of his belly; whereas, the Corinthian exquisites, too often taking advantage of station and influence, recklessly both pampers his luxurious appetite within, and decorates his person without, at the expense of innumerable heart-aching creditors. I do not mean, however, to claim any real merit for Mr Titmouse on this score, because I am not sure how he would act if he were to become possessed of his magnificent rival's means and opportunities for the perpetration of gentlemanly frauds on a splendid scale.—But we shall perhaps see by and by.

Mr Titmouse walked along with leisurely step; for haste and perspiration were vulgar, and he had the day before him. Observe, now, the careless glance of self-satisfaction with which he occasionally regards his bright boots, with their martial appendage, giving out a faint clinking sound as he heavily treads the broad flags; his spotless trousers, his tight surtout, and the tip of white handkerchief peeping *accidentally* out in front! A pleasant sight it was to behold him in a chance rencontre with some one

genteel enough to be recognised—as he stood, resting on his left leg; his left arm stuck upon his hip; his right leg easily bent outwards; his right hand lightly holding his ebon cane, with the gilt head of which he occasionally tapped his teeth; and his eyes, half closed, scrutinising the face and figure of each “*pretty gal*” as she passed, and to whom he had a delicious consciousness that he appeared an object of interest! This was indeed HAPPINESS, as far as his forlorn condition could admit of his enjoying happiness.—He had no particular object in view. A tiff over-night with two of his shop-mates, had broken off a party which they had agreed the Sunday preceding in forming, to go that day to Greenwich; and this trifling circumstance had a little soured his temper, depressed as had been his spirits before. He resolved, on consideration, to walk straight on, and dine somewhere a little way out of town, by way of passing the time till four o’clock, at which hour he intended to make his appearance in Hyde Park, “to see the swells and the fashions,” which was his favourite and instructive Sunday occupation.

His condition was, indeed, forlorn in the extreme. To say nothing of his *prospects* in life—what was his present condition? A shopman with thirty-five pounds a-year, out of which he had to find his clothing, washing, lodging, and all other incidental expenses—the chief item of his board—such as it was!—being found him by his employers. He was five weeks in arrear to his landlady—a corpulent old termagant, whom nothing could have induced him to risk offending, but his overmastering love of finery; for I grieve to say, that this deficiency had been occasioned by his purchase of the ring he then wore with so much pride! How he had contrived to pacify her—lie upon lie as he must have had recourse to—I know not. He was indebted also to his poor washerwoman in five or six shillings for at least a quarter’s washing; and owed five times that amount to a little old tailor, who, with huge spectacles on his nose, turned up to him, out of

a little cupboard which he occupied in Closet Court, and which Titmouse had to pass whenever he went to or from his lodgings, a lean, sallow, wrinkled face, imploring him to “settle his small account.” All the cash in hand which he had, to meet contingencies between that day and quarter-day, which was six weeks off, was about twenty-six shillings, of which he had taken one for the present day’s expenses!

Revolving these somewhat disheartening matters in his mind, he passed easily and leisurely along the whole length of Oxford Street. No one could have judged from his dressy appearance, the constant smirk on his face, and his confident air, how very miserable that poor little dandy was; but three-fourths of his misery were really occasioned by the impossibility he felt of his ever being able to indulge in his propensities for finery and display. Nothing better had he to occupy his few thoughts. He had had only a plain mercantile education, as it is called, *i. e.* reading, writing, and arithmetic: beyond an exceedingly moderate acquaintance with these, he knew nothing whatever; not having read anything except a few inferior novels, and plays, and sporting newspapers. Deplorable, however, as were his circumstances—

Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

And probably, in common with most who are miserable from straitened circumstances, he oftened conceived, and secretly relied upon, the possibility of some unexpected and accidental change for the better. He had heard and read of extraordinary cases of LUCK. Why might he not be one of the LUCKY? A rich girl might fall in love with him—that was, poor fellow! in his consideration, one of the least unlikely ways of luck’s advent; or some one might leave him money; or he might win a prize in the lottery;—all these, and other accidental modes of getting rich, frequently occurred to the well-regulated mind of Mr Tittlebat Titmouse; but he never once thought of one thing, *viz.* of determined, unwearying

industry, perseverance, and integrity in the way of his business, conducing to such a result!

Is his case a solitary one?—Dear reader, *you* may be unlike poor Tittlebat Titmouse in every respect except *one!*

On he walked towards Bayswater; and finding that it was yet early, and considering that the further he went from town the better prospect there would be of his being able, with little sacrifice of appearances, to get a dinner consistent with the aforesaid pecuniary means he carried about with him, viz. one shilling, he pursued his way a mile or two beyond Bayswater; and, sure enough, came at length upon a nice little public-house on the roadside, called the Squaretoes Arms. Very tired, and very dusty, he first sat down in a small back-room to rest himself; and took the opportunity to call for a clothes-brush and shoe-brush, to relieve his clothes and boots from the heavy dust upon them. Having thus attended to his outer man, as far as circumstances would permit, he bethought himself of his inner man, whose cravings he presently satisfied with a pretty substantial mutton-pie and a pint of porter. This fare, together with a penny (which he felt forced to give) to the little girl who waited on him, cost him tenpence; and then, having somewhat refreshed himself, he began to think of returning to town. Having lit one of his two cigars, he sallied forth, puffing along with an air of quiet enjoyment. Dinner, however humble, seldom fails, especially when accompanied by a fair draught of tolerable porter, in some considerable degree to tranquillise the animal spirits; and that soothing effect began soon to be experienced by Mr Titmouse. The sedative *cause* he erroneously considered to be the cigar he was smoking; whereas, in fact, the only tobacco he had imbibed was from the porter. But, however that might be, he certainly returned towards town in a calmer and more cheerful humour than that in which he had quitted it an hour or two before.

As he approached Cumberland Gate,

it was about half-past five; and the Park might be said to be at its *acme* of fashion, as far as that could be indicated by a sluggish stream of carriages, three and four abreast—coroneted panels in abundance—noble and well-known equestrians of both sexes, in troops—and some hundreds of pedestrians of the same description. So continuous was the throng of carriages and horsemen, that Titmouse did not find it the easiest matter in the world to dart across to the footpath in the inner circle. That, however, he presently safely accomplished, encountering no more serious mischance than the muttered “D—n your eyes!” of a haughty groom, between whom and his master Mr Titmouse had presumed to intervene. What a crowd of elegant women, many of them young and beautiful (who but such, to be sure, would have become, or been allowed to become, pedestrians in the Park?) he encountered, as he slowly sauntered on, all of them obsequiously attended by brilliant beaux! Lords and ladies were here manifestly as plentiful as plebeians in Oxford Street. What an enchanted ground!—How delicious this soft crush and flutter of aristocracy! Poor Titmouse felt at once an intense pleasure, and a withering consciousness of his utter insignificance. Many a sigh of dissatisfaction and envy escaped him; yet he stepped along with a tolerably assured air, looking everybody he met straight, and I must own, even impudently, in the face, and occasionally twirling about his little cane with an air which seemed to say—“Whatever opinion *you* may form of me, I have a very good opinion of myself.” Indeed, was he not as much a man—an Englishman—as the best of them? What was the real difference between Count Do-’em-all and Mr Tittlebat Titmouse? Only that the Count had dark hair and whiskers, and owed ten thousand times more money than Mr Titmouse’s creditors could be persuaded to allow *him* to owe! Would to Heaven—thought Titmouse—that any *one* tailor would patronise *him* as half-a-dozen patronised the Count! If

pretty ladies of quality did not disdain a walking advertisement of a few first-rate tailors, like the Count, why should they turn up their noses at an assistant in an extensive wholesale and retail establishment in Oxford Street, conversant with the qualities and prices of the most beautiful articles of female attire? Yet alas, they *did* so! — He sighed heavily. Leaning against the railing in a studied attitude, and eyeing wistfully each gay and fashionable equipage, with its often lovely, and sometimes haughty enclosure, as it rolled slowly past him, Mr Titmouse became more and more convinced of a great practical truth, viz., that the only real distinction between mankind, was that effected by money. Want of money alone had placed him in his present abject position. Abject indeed! By the great folk, who were passing him on all sides, he felt, well-dressed as he believed himself to be, that he was no more noticed than as if he had been an ant, a blue-bottle fly, or a black beetle! He looked, and sighed—sighed, and looked—looked, and sighed again, in a kind of agony of vain longing. While his only day in the week for breathing fresh air, and appearing like a gentleman in the world, was rapidly drawing to a close, and he was beginning to think of returning to the dog-hole he had crawled out of in the morning, and to the shop for the rest of the week; the great, and gay, and happy folk he was looking at, were thinking of driving home to dress for their grand dinners, and to lay out every kind of fine amusement for the ensuing week: and that, moreover, was the sort of life they led every day! He heaved a profound sigh. At that moment a superb cab, with a gentleman in it dressed in great elegance, and with very keen dark eyes, and striking hooked nose, and well-oiled, expanding whiskers, came up with a cab of still more exquisite structure and appointments, and at which Titmouse was gazing with unutterable feelings of envy—in which sat a young man, evidently of consequence; but with a shockingly dissipated look; very

handsome, with splendid mustaches; perfectly well-dressed; holding the reins and whip gracefully in hands glistening in straw-coloured kid gloves—and between the two gentlemen ensued the following low-toned colloquy, which it were to be wished that every such sighing simpleton (as Titmouse must, I fear, by this time, appear to the reader) could have overheard.

“Ah, Fitz!” said the former-mentioned gentleman to the latter, who suddenly reddened when he perceived who had addressed him. The manner of the speaker was execrably familiar and presumptuous—but how could the embarrassed *swell* help himself?—“When did you return to town?”

“Last night only”——

“Enjoyed yourself, I hope?”

“Pretty well—but—I—suppose you”——

“Sorry for it,” interrupted the first speaker in a lower tone, perceiving the vexation of his companion; “but can’t help it, you know.”

“When?”

“To-morrow at nine. Monstrous sorry for it—’pon my soul, you really must look sharp, Fitz, or the thing won’t go on much longer.”

“Must it be, really?” inquired the other, biting his lips—at that moment kissing his hand to a very beautiful girl, who slowly passed him in a coroneted chariot—“must it really be, Joe?” he repeated, turning towards his companion a pale and bitterly chagrined countenance.

“Poz, ’pon my life. Cage clean, however, and not very full—just at present”——

“Would not *Wednesday!*”——inquired the other, leaning forward towards the former speaker’s cab, and whispering with an air of intense earnestness. “The fact is, I’ve engagements at C——’s on Monday and Tuesday nights with one or two country cousins, and I *may* be in a condition—eh? you understand?”

His companion shook his head distrustfully.

“Upon my word and honour as a gentleman, it’s the fact!” said the other in a low vehement tone.

"Then—say Wednesday, nine o'clock, A.M. You understand? No mistake, Fitz!" replied his companion, looking him steadily in the face as he spoke.

"None—honour!"—After a pause—"Who is it?"

His companion took a slip of paper out of his pocket-book, and in a whisper read from it—"Cab, harness, &c., £297, 10s."

"A villain! It's been of only three years' standing," interrupted the other, in an indignant mutter.

"Between ourselves, he is rather a sharp hand. Then, I'm sorry to say there's a Detainer or two I have had a hint of"—

The swell uttered an execration which I dare not convey to paper—his face distorted with an expression of mingled disgust, vexation, and hatred; and adding, "Wednesday—nine"—drove off, a picture of tranquil enjoyment!

I need hardly say that he was a fashionable young spendthrift, and the other a sheriff's officer of the first water—the genteel *beak* that ever was known or heard of—who had been on the look-out for him several days, and with whom the happy youngster was doomed to spend some considerable time at a cheerful residence in Chancery Lane, bleeding gold at every pore the while:—his only chance of avoiding which, was, as he had truly hinted, an honourable attempt on the purses of two hospitable country cousins, in the meanwhile, at C——'s! And if he did not succeed in that enterprise, so that he *must* go to cage, he lost the only chance he had for some time of securing an exemption from such annoyance, by entering

Parliament to protect the liberties of the people—an eloquent and resolute champion of freedom in trade, religion, and everything else; and an abolitionist of everything, including, especially, negro slavery and—imprisonment for debt—two execrable violations of the natural rights of mankind.

But I have, for several minutes, lost sight of the admiring Titmouse.

"Why," thought he, "am I thus spited by fortune?—The only thing she's given me is—nothing!—*D—n everything!*" exclaimed Mr Titmouse aloud, at the same time starting off, to the infinite astonishment of an old peer, who had been for some minutes standing leaning against the railing, close beside him; who was master of a magnificent fortune; "with all appliances and means to boot;" with a fine grown-up family, his eldest son and heir having just gained a Double First, and promising wonders; possessing splendid mansions in different parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland; a reputation for exquisite taste and accomplishment; and being the representative of one of the oldest families in England; but who at that moment loathed everything and everybody, including himself, because the minister had the day before intimated to him that he could not give him a vacant ribbon, for which he had applied, unless he could command two more votes in the Lower House, and which at present his lordship saw no earthly means of doing. Yes, the Earl of Cheviotdale and Mr Tittlebat Titmouse were both miserable men: both had been hardly dealt with by fortune; both were greatly to be pitied; and both quitted the Park, about the same time, with a decided misanthropic tendency.

CHAPTER II

A SINCERE FRIEND; A WONDERFUL ADVERTISEMENT; AN IMPORTANT EPISTLE.

MR TITMOUSE walked along Piccadilly with a truly chopfallen and disconsolate air. He very nearly felt dissatisfied even with his personal appearance! Dress as he would, no one seemed to care a curse for him; and, to his momentarily jaundiced eye, he seemed equipped in only second-hand and shabby finery: and then he was really such a *poor* devil! —Do not, however, let the reader suppose that this was an unusual mood with Mr Titmouse. No such thing. Like the Irishman who “married a wife for to make him *un-aisy*,” and also not unlike the moth that *will* haunt the brightness which is her destruction; so poor Titmouse, Sunday after Sunday, dressed himself out as elaborately as he had done on the present occasion, and then always betook himself to the scene he had just again witnessed, and which had once more excited only those feelings of envy, bitterness, and despair, which I have been describing, and which, on every such occasion, he experienced with, if possible, increased intensity.

What to do with himself till it should be time to return to his cheerless lodgings he did not exactly know; so he loitered along at a snail’s pace. He stood for some time staring at the passengers, their luggage, and the coaches they were ascending and alighting from, and listening to the strange medley of coachmen’s, guards’, and porters’ vociferations, and passengers’ greetings and leavetakings—always to be observed at the White Horse Cellar. Then he passed along, till a street row, near the Haymarket,

attracted his attention and interested his feelings; for it ended in a regular set-to between two watermen attached to the adjoining coach-stand. Here he conceived himself looking on with the easy air of a swell; and the ordinary penalty (paying for his footing) was attempted to be exacted from him; but he had nothing to be picked out of any of his pockets except that under his very nose, and which contained his visible white handkerchief! This over, he struck into Leicester Square, where, (he was in luck that night), hurrying up to another crowd at the further end, he found a man preaching with infinite energy. Mr Titmouse looked on, and listened for two or three minutes with apparent interest; and then, with a countenance in which pity struggled with contempt, muttered, loud enough to be heard by all near him, “poor devil!” and walked off. He had not proceeded many steps, before it occurred to him that a friend—one Robert Huckaback, much such another one as himself—lived in one of the narrow, dingy streets in the neighbourhood. He determined to take the chances of his being at home, and if so, of spending the remainder of the evening with him. Huckaback’s quarters were in the same ambitious proximity to heaven as his own; the only difference being, that they were a trifle cheaper and larger. He answered the door himself, having only the moment before returned from his Sunday’s excursion,—i. e. the Jack Straw’s Castle Tea-Gardens, at Highgate, where, in company with several of his friends, he had, he said, “spent a jolly

afternoon." He ordered in a glass of negus from the adjoining public-house, after some discussion, which ended in an agreement that he should stand treat that night, and Titmouse on the ensuing Sunday night. As soon as the negus had arrived, accompanied by two sea-biscuits, which looked so hard and hopeless that they would have made the nerves thrill within the teeth of him that meditated attempting to masticate them, the candle was lit; Huckaback handed a cigar to his friend; and both began to puff away, and chatter pleasantly concerning the many events and scenes of the day.

"Anything stirring in to-day's 'Flash?'" inquired Titmouse, as his eye caught sight of a copy of that interesting and instructive Sunday newspaper, the "SUNDAY FLASH," which Huckaback had hired for the evening from the news-shop on the ground-floor of his lodgings.

Mr Huckaback removed his cigar from his mouth, and holding it between the first and second fingers of his right hand, in a knowing style, with closed eyes and inflated cheeks, very slowly ejected the smoke which he had last inhaled, and rose and got the paper from the top of the drawers.

"Here's a mark of a beastly porter-pot that's been set upon it, by all that's disgusting! It's been at the public-house! Too bad of Mrs Coggs to send it me up in this state!" said he, handling it as though its touch were contamination.—(He was to pay only a halfpenny for the perusal of it). "Faugh! how it stinks!"

"What a horrid beast she must be!" exclaimed Titmouse, after, in like manner as his friend, expelling his mouthful of smoke. "But, since better can't be had, let's hear what news is in it. Demmee! it's the only paper published, in my opinion, that's worth reading!—Any fights astirring?"

"Haven't come to them yet; give a man time, Titty!" replied Huckaback, fixing his feet on another chair, and drawing the candle closer to the paper. "It says, by the way, that the Duke of Dunderhead is certainly making up to Mrs Thumps, the rich cheese-

monger's widow;—a precious good hit that, isn't it? You know the Duke's as poor as a rat!"

"Oh! *that's* no news. It's been in the papers for I don't know how long. Egad, 'twill quite set him up—and no mistake. Seen the Duke ever?"

"Ye—es! Oh, several times!" replied Huckaback. This was a lie, and he knew that it was.

"Deuced good-looking, I suppose?"

"Why—middling; I should say middling. Know *some* that needn't fear to compare with *him*—eh! Tit?"

—and Huckaback winked archly at his friend, meaning him, however, to consider the words as applicable to the speaker.

"Ah, ha, ha!—a pretty joke! But come, that's a good chap!—You can't be reading both of those two sheets at once—give us the other sheet, and set the candle right betwixt us!—Come, fair's the word among *gens*, you know!"

Huckaback, thus appealed to, did as his friend requested; and the two gentlemen read and smoked for some minutes in silence.

"Well—I shall spell over the advertisements now," said Titmouse very emphatically; "there's a pretty lot of them—and I've read everything else—(though precious little there is, *here*, besides!)—So, here goes!—One *may* hear of a prime situation, you know—and I'm quite sick of Tag-rag!"

Another interval of silence ensued. Huckaback was deep in the ghastly but instructive details of a trial for murder; and Titmouse, after having glanced listlessly over the entertaining first sheet of advertisements, was on the point of laying down his half of the paper, when he suddenly started in his chair, turned very pale, and stammered, "Hollo!—hollo, Hucky!—Why!"

"What's the matter, Tit?—eh?" inquired Huckaback, greatly astonished.

For a moment Titmouse made no answer, but, dropping his cigar, fixed his eyes intently on the paper, which began to rustle in his trembling hands. What occasioned this outbreak, with its subsequent agitation, was the follow-

ing advertisement, which appeared in the most conspicuous part of the "SUNDAY FLASH":—

"NEXT OF KIN—Important.—The next of kin, if any such there be, of GABRIEL TITTLERAT TITMOUSE, formerly of WHITEHAVEN, cordwainer, and who died somewhere about the year 1793, in London, may hear of something of the GREATEST POSSIBLE IMPORTANCE to himself, or herself, or themselves, by immediately communicating with Messrs QUIRK, GAMMON, and SNAP, Solicitors, Saffron Hill. No time is to be lost. 9th July 18.—*The third advertisement.*"

"By George! Here is a go!" exclaimed Huckaback, almost as much flustered as Titmouse, over whose shoulder he had hastily read the above paragraph.

"We aren't dreaming, Hucky—are we?" inquired Titmouse, faintly, his eyes still glued to the newspaper.

"No—by George! Never was either of us fellows so precious wide awake in our lives before! that I'll answer for!" Titmouse sat still, and turned paler even than before.

"Read it up, Huck!—Let's hear how it sounds, and then we shall believe it!" said he, handing the paper to his friend.

Huckaback read it aloud.

"It sounds like something, don't it?" inquired Titmouse tremulously, his colour a little returning.

"Uncommon!—If this isn't something, then there's nothing in anything any more!" replied Huckaback solemnly, at the same time emphatically slapping the table.

"No!—Pon my soul! but do you really think so?" said Titmouse, seeking still further confirmation than he had yet derived from his senses of sight and hearing.

"I do, by jingo!" repeated Huckaback—"What a go it is!—Well, my poor old mother used to say, 'depend on it, wonders never will cease; and curse me if she ever said a truer word!'"

Titmouse again read over the advertisement; and then picking up and re-lighting his fragment of cigar, puffed earnestly in silence for some moments.

"Such things never happens to such a poor devil of a chap as me!" exclaimed Huckaback, with a sigh.

"What is in the wind, I wonder?" muttered Titmouse. "Who knows?—hem!—who knows?—But now, *really*" — he paused, and once more read over the pregnant paragraph.—"It can't—no, curse me, it *can't* be"—he added, looking very serious.

"What, Tit? *What* can't be?" interrupted Huckaback eagerly.

"Why, I've been thinking—but what do *you* think, eh?—it can't *hardly* be a cursed hoax of the chaps in the premises at Tag-rag's?"

"Bo!—Is there any of 'em flush enough of money to do the thing? And how should they think it would ever come to be seen by you?—Then, besides, there isn't a chap among them that could come up to the composing a piece of composition like that—no, not for all a whole year's salary—there isn't, by George! You and I couldn't do it, and, of course, *they* couldn't!"

"Ah! I don't know," said Titmouse doubtfully. "But—honour!—do you really now think there's anything in it?"

"I do—I'm blown if I don't, Tit!" was the sententious answer.

"Tol de rol, de rol, de rol, de rol—diddl'em—daddl'em—bang!" almost shouted Titmouse, jumping up, snapping his fingers, and dancing about in a wild ecstasy, which lasted for nearly a minute.

"Give me your hand, Hucky," said he presently, almost breathless. "If I am a made man—tol de rol, lol de rol, lol de rol, lol!—you see, Huck!—if I don't give you the handsomest breastpin you ever saw! No paste! real diamond!—Hurrah! I will, by jingo!"

Huckaback grasped and squeezed his hand. "We've always been friends, Tit—haven't we?" said he affectionately.

"My room won't hold me to-night!" continued Titmouse; "I'm sure it won't. I feel as if I was, as you may say, swelling all over. I'll walk the streets all night: I couldn't sleep a wink for the life of me! I'll walk

about till the shop opens. Oh, faugh! how nasty! Confound the shop, and Tag-rag, and everything and everybody in it! Thirty-five pounds a-year? See if I won't spend as much in cigars the first month!"

"Cigars! Is that your go? Now, I should take lessons in boxing, to begin with. It's a deuced high thing, you may depend upon it, and you can't be fit company for swells without it, Tit! You can't, by Jove!"

"Whatever you like, whatever you like, Hucky!" cried Titmouse—adding, in a sort of ecstasy, "I'm sorry to say it, but how *precious* lucky that my father and mother's dead, and that I'm an only child—too-ra-laddy, too-ra-laddy!" Here he took such a sudden leap, that I am sorry to say he split his tight trousers very awkwardly, and that sobered him for a moment, while they made arrangements for cobbling it up as well as might be, with a needle and thread which Huckaback always had by him.

"We're rather jumping in the dark a-bit, aren't we, Tit?" inquired Huckaback, gravely, while his companion was repairing the breach. "Let's look what it all means—here it is." He read it aloud again—"'*greatest possible importance!*'—what *can it mean?* Why the deuce couldn't they speak out plainly?"

"What! in a newspaper? Lord, Hucky! how many Titmouses would start up on all sides, if there isn't some already indeed!—But I *do* wonder what '*greatest possible importance!*' can mean, now!"

"Some one's left you an awful lot of money, of course"——

"It's too good to be true"——

"Or you may have made a *smite*; you a'n't such a bad-looking fellow, when you're dressed as you are now—you a'n't indeed, Titty!" Mr Titmouse was quite flustered with the mere supposition, and also looked as sheepish as his features would admit of.

"E-e-eh, Hucky! how ve-ry silly you are!" he simpered.

"Or you may be found out heir to some great property, and all that kind

of thing.—But when do you intend to go to Messrs What's-their-name? I should say, the sooner the better. Come, you've stitched them trousers well enough, now; they'll hold you till you get home, (but you do brace up uncommon tight!) and I'd take off my straps, if I was you. Why shouldn't we go to these gents now? Ah, here they are—Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, solicitors."

"I wonder if they're great men? What's the *use* of solicitors? Did you ever hear of these chaps before?"

"Haven't I! Their names is always in this same paper; they are every day getting people off out of all kinds of scrapes—they're the chaps I should nat'rally go to if I anyhow got wrong—ahem!"

"But, my dear fellow—*Saffron Hill!*—Low that—devilish low, 'pon my soul! Never was near it in my life."

"But they live there to be near the thieves. Lud, the thieves couldn't do without 'em! But what's that to you! You know 'a very dirty ugly toad has often got a jewel in his belly,' so Shakespeare or some one says. Isn't it enough for *you*, Tit, if they can make good their advertisement? Let's off, Tit—let's off, I say; for you mayn't be able to get there to-morrow—your employers!"——

"My employers! Do you think, Hucky, I'm going back to business after this?"

"Come, come, Titty—not so fast—suppose it all turns out moonshine, after all"—quoth Huckaback, seriously.

"Lord, but I *won't* suppose anything of the sort!" said Titmouse alarmedly. "It makes me sick to think of nothing coming of it!—Let's go off at once, and see what's to be done!"

So Huckaback put the newspaper into his pocket, blew out the candle, and the two started on their important errand. It was well that their means had been too limited to allow of their indulging to a greater extent than a glass of port-wine negus (that was the name under which they had drunk the "*publican's port*"—i. e. a warm sweetened decoction of oak bark, logwood

shavings, and a little brandy) between them; otherwise, excited as were the feelings of each of them by the discovery of the evening, they must in all probability have been guilty of some piece of extravagance in the streets. As it was, they talked very loudly as they went along, and in a tone of conversation pitched perhaps a little too high for their present circumstances, however in unison it might be with the expected circumstances of *one* of them.

In due time they reached the residence of which they were in search. It was a large house, greatly superior to its dingy neighbours; and on a bright brass plate, a yard long at least, and a foot wide, stood the awe-inspiring words, "QUIRK, GAMMON, & SWAP, SOLICITORS."

"Now, Tit," whispered Huckaback, after they had paused for a second or two—"now for it—pluck up a sperrit—ring!"

"I—I—'pon my life—I feel all of a sudden uncommon funky—I think that last cigar of yours wasn't"—

"Stuff, Tit—ring! ring away! Faint heart never wins!"

"Well, it *must* be done; so—here goes at any rate!" he replied; and with a short nervous jerk, he caused a startling clatter within, which was so distinctly audible without, that both of them instinctively *hemmed*, as if to drown the noise which was so much greater than they had expected. In a few moments they heard some one undoing the fastenings of the door, and the gentlemen looked at one another with an expression of mingled expectation and apprehension. A little old woman at length, with a candle in her hand, retaining the heavy door-chain in its fastening, peered round the edge of the door at them.

"Who are you?" she exclaimed, crustily.

"Is this Messrs—What is it, Huck?—Oh! Messrs Quirk & Co.'s?" inquired Titmouse, tapping the end of his cane against his chin, with a desperate effort to appear at his ease.

"Why, where's your eyes?" she replied angrily, "I should think you

might have seen what was wrote on the plate—outside there—it's large enough, one should have thought, to be read by them as *can* read—Is your's Newgate business? Because if"—

"We want—Give us the paper, Hucky"—he added, addressing his companion, who produced it in a moment; and Titmouse would have proceeded to possess the old lady of all his little heart, when she cut him short by saying, snappishly—"They aren't none on 'em in; nor never is on Sundays—so you'll just call to-morrow if you wants 'em. What's your names?"

"Mr Tittlebat Titmouse," answered that gentleman, with a very particular emphasis on every syllable.

"Mr *who*?" exclaimed the old woman, opening her eyes, and raising her hand to the back of her ear. Mr Titmouse repeated his name more loudly and distinctly.

"Tippetytippety!—what's that?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Titmouse peevishly; "I said, Mr Tit-el-bat Titmouse!—will that suit you?"

"Tick-a-tick-a-tick?—Well, gracious! if ever I heard such a name. Oh!—I see!—you're making a fool of me! Get off, or I'll call a constable in!—Get along with you, you couple of jail-birds! Is this the way?"

"I tell you," interposed Mr Huckaback angrily, "that this gentleman's name is Mr Tittlebat Titmouse; and you'd better take care what you're at, old woman, for we've come on business of *vital consequence*!"

"I dare say it'll keep, then, till to-morrow," she tartly subjoined.

The friends consulted for a moment, and then Titmouse asked if he might come in and write a letter to Messrs Quirk and Co.

"No indeed!" said she; "how do I know who you are, or what you'd do? There's a public-house close by, where you may write what you like, and bring it here, and put it through that hole into this here letter-box, and they'll get it the first thing in the morning. So that's what you may take away with you!"—with which the complaisant old janitrix shut the door in their faces.

"Huck, 'pon my life, I am afraid

there's nothing in it," said Titmouse, despondingly, to his friend—both of them remaining rooted to the spot.

"Oudacious old toad!" muttered Huckaback indignantly.

"Hucky—I'm *sure* there's nothing in it!" exclaimed Titmouse after a long pause, looking earnestly at his friend, hoping to draw from him a contrary opinion.

"I—I own I don't half like the looks of it," replied Huckaback, putting his newspaper into his pocket again; "but we'll try if we can't write a letter to sound 'em, and so far take the old creature's advice. Here's the public-house she told us of. Come, let's see what's to be done!"

Titmouse, greatly depressed, followed his friend; and they soon provided themselves with two glasses of stout, and after a little difficulty, with implements for writing. That they made good use of their time and materials, let the following epistle prove. It was their joint composition, and here is an exact copy of it:—

"To Messrs QUIRK, GAMON, and SNAPF.

"SIR,

"Your Names being Put In an Advertisement in This present *Sunday Flash*, Newspaper of To Day's Date, Mr T. T. Begs To inform Your respectable House I feel Uncommon anxious To speak with them On This *truly interesting subject*, seeing It mentions The Name Of Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse, which Two last Names Of That Deceased Person *my Own Name Is*, which can *Any Day* (As soon As Possible) call and *prove* To you, By telling you The Same, *truly*. He being Engaged in Business During the week Very close, (for The Present,) I hope that If they Have Anything particular To say To Him, they will write To me without The least Delay, and please address T. T., At Tag-rag and Co.'s, No. 375, Oxford Street, Post-Paid, which will insure Its Being duly

Taken In By my Employers, and am,

"Gents,

"Your's to Command,

"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE.

"P.S.—My Friend, which Is With me writing This, (Mr Robert Huckaback), can prove who I am If necessiated so to do.

"N.B.—Shall have no objections to do the Liberal Thing if anything suitable Turns Up Of It. "T. T.

"(*Sunday Evening*, 9/7/18—.

"Forgot to Say, am The only Child of my Honoured Parents, one of which (my Mother) Died; before I knew them In Lawful Wedloc, and Was 27 last Birth Day, Never having Seen your Advertisement Till This Night, wh, if Necessary can Prove.)"

This perspicuous and truly elegant performance having been thrice subjected to the critical examination of the friends (the paragraph concerning Huckaback having been inserted at the instance of that gentleman, who wished to be mixed up from the beginning with so promising an affair), was then folded up, and directed to "Messrs Quirk and Co.," a great stragglng wet wafer having been first put upon it. It was safely deposited, a few minutes afterwards, in the letter-box at Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's; and then the two West-End gentlemen hastened away from that truly plebeian part of the town! Under three different gas-lights did they stop, take out the newspaper, and spell over the advertisement; by which ingenious processes they at length succeeded in satisfying themselves that there *was* something in it—a fact of which, upon the old woman's shutting the door in their faces, it may be recollected that they had had grievous misgivings. They parted, however, with a considerable abatement of the excitement with which they had set out on their voyage of discovery.

CHAPTER III.

A SNAKE APPROACHES AN APE ; WHICH SIGNIFIES, MR GAMMON'S
INTRODUCTION TO TITMOUSE.

MR TITMOUSE did not, on reaching his room, take off and lay aside his precious Sunday apparel with his accustomed care and deliberation. On the contrary, he peeled it off, as it were, and threw himself on the bed as quickly as possible, in order that he might calmly revolve the immense event of the day in his little mind, which it had agitated like a stone thrown into a stagnant pool by the road-side. Oh, how restless was he!—not more so could he have been had he lain between horse-hair sheets. He repeatedly got up and walked about two or three little steps, which were all that his room admitted of. At the very first peep of daylight he started out of bed, got out of his pocket the newspaper which Huckaback had lent him, strove to decipher the advertisement, and then sunk into bed again—but not to sleep, till four or five o'clock; having nevertheless to rise at half-past six, to resume his detested duties at Tag-rag and Co.'s, whose shop he assisted in opening at seven o'clock, as usual. When he and his shopmates were sitting together at breakfast, he could not for the life of him help letting out a little, vaguely and mysteriously, about "something that *might* happen in the course of the day;" and thereby succeeded in satisfying his experienced companions that he expected the visit of a policeman, for some affair he had been concerned in over-night.—Well!—eight, nine, ten o'clock wore away heavily, and nothing occurred, alas! to vary the monotonous duties in which Mr Tit-

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mouse was engaged; bale after bale, and package after package, he took down and put up again, at the bidding of pretty, capricious customers; silk, satin, bombasins, crapes, muslins, ribbons, gloves, he assisted in displaying, disposing of, or replacing as usual; but it was clear that his powerful understanding could no longer settle itself, as before, upon his responsible and arduous duties. Every other minute he cast a feverish furtive glance towards the door. He almost dropped, at one time, as a postman crossed from the opposite side of the street, as if to enter their shop—then passing on immediately, however, to the next door. Not a person, in short, entered the premises, whom he did not scrutinise narrowly and anxiously, but in vain. No—buying and selling was the order of the day, as usual—Eleven o'clock struck, and he sighed. "You don't seem well," said a pretty young woman, to whom, in a somewhat absent manner, he was exhibiting and describing the qualities of some cambric. "Oh—ye—es, uncommon!" he replied; "never better, ma'am, than when so well employed!" accompanying the latter words with what he conceived to be a very arch, but which was in fact a very impudent, look at his fair customer. At that moment, a voice called out to him from the further end of the shop, near the door—"Titmouse! Wanted!" "Coming!" he shouted, turning white as the cambric he held in his hands—which became suddenly cold; while his heart went thump, thump,

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as he hastily exclaimed to the astonished lady, "Excuse me, ma'am, if you please—Jones," addressing the shopman next him, "will you attend to this lady?" and he hastened whither he had been called, amidst a prevalent grin and "hem!" from his companions on each side, as he passed along the shop, till he reached the spot where stood the stranger who had inquired for him. He was of a slight and gentlemanly figure, above the average height. His countenance was very striking: he was dressed with simplicity—somewhat carelessly perhaps; and appeared about thirty-six or thirty-seven years of age. He bowed slightly as Titmouse approached him, and an air of serious surprise came over his expressive countenance.

"Mr Titmouse?" he inquired, blandly, but gravely.

"Ye-e-s, sir, at your service," replied Titmouse, trembling involuntarily all over. The stranger again slightly inclined towards him, and—still more slightly—touched his hat; fixing on him, at the same time, an inquisitive penetrating eye, which really abashed, or rather perhaps alarmed him.

"You left—you favoured us by leaving—a note at our office last night, sir, addressed to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap?" he inquired, lowering his voice to a whisper.

"Yes, sir, hoping it was no offence"—

"Pray, Mr Titmouse, can we be alone for about five or ten minutes?"

"I—I—don't exactly know, *here*, sir; I'm afraid—against the rules of the house—but I'll ask. Here is Mr Tag-rag.—May I step into the cloak-room with this gentleman for a few minutes, sir?" he continued, addressing his imperious employer, who, with a pen behind his right ear, his left hand in his breeches pocket, and his right hand impatiently tweedling about his watch-seals, had followed Titmouse, on hearing him inquired for in the manner I have described, and stood at a yard or two's distance, eyeing the two with a truculent dissatisfied look, wondering what on earth

any one *could* want with one of *his* young men.

As Mr Tag-rag will be rather a prominent figure on my canvass, I may as well here give the reader a slight preparatory sketch of that gentleman. He was about fifty-two years old; a great tyrant in his little way; a compound of ignorance, selfishness, cant, and conceit. He knew nothing on earth except the price of his goods, and how to make the most of his business. He was of middle size, with a tendency to corpulence; and almost invariably wore a black coat and waist-coat, a white neck-handkerchief very primly tied, and grey trousers. He had a dull, grey eye, with white eyelashes, and no eyebrows; a forehead which seemed ashamed of his face, it retreated so far and so abruptly back from it; his face was pretty deeply pitted with the smallpox; his nose—or rather semblance of a nose—consisted of two great nostrils looking at you—as it were, impudently—out of the middle of his face; there was a perfect level space from cheekbone to cheekbone; his grey whiskers, trimly and closely cut, came in points to each corner of his mouth, which was large, shapeless, and sensual-looking. This may serve, for the present, to give you an idea of the man who had contrived to excite towards himself the hatred and contempt of everybody over whom he had any control—with whom, in fact, he had anything to do.

"You know quite well, sir, we never allow anything of the sort," was his short reply, in a very disagreeable tone and manner, to Titmouse's modest request.

"May I beg the favour of a few minutes' private conversation with Mr Titmouse," said the stranger, politely, "on a matter of the last importance to him? My name, sir, is Gammon, and I am a solicitor of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap"—

"Why, sir," answered Tag-rag, somewhat cowed by the calm and gentlemanly, but at the same time decisive manner of Mr Gammon—"it's really very inconvenient, and decidedly against the rules of the house, for any

of my young men to be absent on business of their own during *my* business hours; but—I suppose—what must be must be—I'll give him ten minutes—and he'd better not stay longer," he subjoined fiercely—looking significantly first at his watch, and then at Titmouse. "It's only for the sake of my other young men, you know, sir. In a large establishment like ours, we're obliged, you know, sir," &c. &c. &c., he added, in a low cringing tone, deprecatory of the contemptuous air with which he felt that Mr Gammon was regarding him.

That gentleman, with a slight bow, and a sarcastic smile, presently quitted the shop, accompanied by Titmouse, who scarce knew whether his head or heels were uppermost.

"How far do you live from this place, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Mr Gammon, as soon as they had got into the street.

"Not four minutes' walk, sir: but—hem!"—he was flustered at the idea of showing so eminent a person into his wretched room—"Suppose we were to step into this tavern here, sir—I daresay they have a room at our service"—

"Pray, allow me to ask, Mr Titmouse—have you any private papers—family writings, or things of that sort, at your rooms?"

Titmouse seemed considering.

"I—I think I have, sir," he replied—"one or two—but they're of no consequence."

"Are you a *judge* on that point, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Mr Gammon, with a smile; "pray let us, my dear sir, at once proceed to your rooms—time is very short and valuable. I should vastly like to look at these same insignificant papers of yours!"

In less than two minutes' further time, Mr Gammon was sitting at Titmouse's little rickety round table, at his lodgings, with a sheet of paper before him, and a small pencil-case in his hand, asking him a number of questions concerning his birth and family connections, and taking down his answers very carefully. Mr Titmouse was surprised at the gentle-

man's knowledge of the family history of the Titmouses. As for papers, &c., Mr Titmouse succeeded in producing four or five old letters and memoranda from the bottom of his trunk, and one or two entries, in faded ink, on the fly-leaf of a Bible of his father's, which he did not recollect having opened before for very many years, and of which said entries, till pressed on the subject by Mr Gammon, he had been hardly aware of even the existence. With these several documents Mr Gammon was so much struck that he proposed to take them away with him, for better and more leisurely examination, and safer custody, at their office; but Mr Titmouse, with a sudden exercise of sense and spirit, significantly hinted at his very recent acquaintance with Mr Gammon, who, he intimated, was, however, at liberty to come and make exact copies of them whenever he pleased, in his (Mr Titmouse's) presence.

"Oh, certainly—yes," replied Mr Gammon, slightly colouring at the very reasonable distrust implied by this observation; "I applaud your caution, Mr Titmouse. By all means keep these documents, and most carefully; because, (I do not say that they *are*), but it is quite possible that they may become rather valuable—to *you*."

"Thank you, sir; and now, hoping you'll excuse the liberty," said Titmouse, with a very anxious air, "I should most uncommonly like to know what all this means—what is to turn up out of it all?"

"The law, my dear sir, is proverbially uncertain"—

"Oh, Lord! but the law can surely give one a *hint*!"—

"*The law never hints*," interrupted Mr Gammon impressively, with a bland smile.

"Well then, how did you come, sir, to have a hint that there ever was such a person as Mr Gabriel Titmouse, my father? And what can come from *him*, seeing he was only a bit of a shoemaker—unless he's *heir* to something?"

"Ah, yes—exactly; those are—or I ought to say, perhaps, may possibly

become—very interesting questions, Mr Titmouse—very!”—

“Yes, sir; and them and many more I was going to ask long ago, but I saw you were”——

“Sir,” quoth Gammon, suddenly, having looked at his watch, “I perceive that we have positively been absent from your place of business nearly an hour—your employers will be getting rather impatient.”

“Meaning no offence, sir,” replied Titmouse, somewhat vehemently,—“bother *their* impatience! *I’m* impatient, I assure you, to know what all this means. Come, sir, ’pon my life I’ve told *you* everything—and you’ve told *me* nothing!—It isn’t quite fair!”

“Why, certainly, you see, Mr Titmouse,” said Gammon, with an agreeable smile—(it was that smile of his which had been the making of Mr Gammon)—“it is only candid in me to acknowledge that your curiosity is perfectly reasonable, and your frankness very obliging; and I see no difficulty in admitting at once, that *I have* had a motive”——

“Yes, sir—of course you had—and all that—*I* know, sir,”—hastily interrupted Titmouse, but without irritating or disturbing the placid speaker.

—“And that we waited with some anxiety for the result of our advertisement”——

“Ah, you can’t escape from *that*, you know, sir!” interposed Titmouse, with a confident air.

“But it is a maxim with us, my dear sir, never to be premature in anything, especially when it may be—very prejudicial; you’ve really no idea, my dear Mr Titmouse, of the world of mischief that is often done by precipitancy in legal matters; and in the present stage of the business—the *present* stage, my dear sir—I really do see it necessary not to—do anything premature, and without consulting my partners.”

“Law, sir, what *does* all that mean? I can’t make head nor tail of it!” exclaimed Titmouse, getting more and more irritated and impatient as he reflected on the length of his absence from Tag-rag & Co’s.

“I quite feel for your anxiety—so perfectly natural”—replied Gammon, feelingly.

“Oh, dear sir! if you’d only tell me the *least bit*”——

“If, my dear sir, I were to disclose just now the exact object we had in inserting that advertisement in the papers”——

“How did you come to know of it at all, sir? Come, there can’t be any harm in telling me *that*, anyhow”——

“Not the least, my dear sir. It was in the course of business—in the course of business.”

“Is it money that’s been left me—or—anything of that sort?”

“It quite pains me, I assure you, Mr Titmouse, to suppose that our having put this advertisement into the papers may have misled you, and excited false hopes—I think, by the way”——added Gammon suddenly, as something occurred to him of their previous conversation, which he was not quite sure of—“you told me that that Bible had been given you by your father.”

“Oh yes, sir! yes—no doubt of it; surely *that* can’t signify, seeing he’s dead, and I’m his only son?” asked Titmouse, quickly and eagerly.

“Oh, ’tis only a circumstance—a mere circumstance; but in business, you know, Mr Titmouse, every little helps—and you really, by the way, have no recollection of your mother, Mr Titmouse?”

“No, sir, I said so! And—meaning no offence, sir—I can’t abide being put off in this kind of way,—I must own!—See what I have told you—you’ve told *me* nothing at all. I hope you haven’t been only making me a cat’s-paw of? ’Pon my soul, I *hate* being made a cat’s-paw of, sir!”

“Good heavens, Mr Titmouse! how can you imagine it? Matters in some degree connected with one or two former members of your family, are at this moment the object of some little of our anxiety”——

“Not meaning it rudely, sir—please to tell me at once, plainly, am I to be the better for anything you’re now about, or was that advertisement all

fudge, and only to serve somebody else?"

"That may or may not be, sir," answered Mr Gammon, in the same imperturbable manner, drawing on his gloves, and rising from his chair. "In justice to yourself, and other parties concerned"—

"Oh!—Why!—Is anybody to *share* in it?" exclaimed Titmouse, alarmedly.

"I am sure," said Gammon, with a very dignified bearing, "that you will give us credit for consulting your best interests, if they should prove to be in any degree concerned in our present inquiries! We should, in that event, sincerely desire to advance your best interests. But—it is *really*," looking at his watch, "upwards of an hour since we quitted your place of business,—I fear I shall get into disgrace with that respectable gentleman, your employer. Will you favour us with a call at our office to-morrow night, when the business of the day is over? When do you quit at night?"

"About half-past nine o'clock, sir; but really—to-morrow night! Couldn't I come to-night, sir?"

"Not to-night, I fear, my dear sir. We have a very important engagement. Let us say to-morrow night, at a quarter past ten—shall we say that hour?" inquired Mr Gammon, with an imperative smile.

"Well, sir, if not before—yes—I'll be with you. But I *must* say"—quoth Titmouse, with a sulky disconcerted air.

"Good-day, Mr Titmouse," said Mr Gammon—they were by this time in Oxford Street again.—"Good-day, my dear sir—good-day—to-morrow night, as soon after ten as possible—eh? Good-by."

This was all that Mr Titmouse could get out of Mr Gammon, who, hailing a coach off the stand beside them, got in, and it was soon making its way eastward. What a miserable mixture of doubts, hopes, and fears, had he left Titmouse! He felt as if he were a squeezed orange; he had somehow or other been induced to tell everything he knew about himself, and had

got nothing in return out of the smooth, imperturbable, impenetrable Mr Gammon, but empty civilities.—"Lord, Lord!" thought Titmouse, as Mr Gammon's coach turned the corner; "what would I give to know half about it that that gent knows! But Mr Tag-rag! by Jove! what *will* he say? It's struck twelve. I've been more than an hour away—and he gave me ten minutes! Sha'n't I catch it?"

And he did. Almost the very first person whom he met, on entering the shop, was his amiable employer; who, plucking his watch out of his fob, and, looking furiously at it, motioned the trembling Titmouse to follow him to the further end of the long shop, where there happened to be then no customers.

"Is this your ten minutes, sir, eh?"

"I am sorry"—

"Where may you have been, sir, all this while?"

"With that gentleman, sir, and I really did not know"—

"You didn't know, sir! Who cares what you know, or don't know? *This*, at any rate, you know—that you ought to have been back fifty-five minutes ago, sir. You do, sir! Isn't your time my property, sir? Don't I pay for it, sir? Don't I feed you, sir?—An hour!—in the middle of the day! I've not had such a thing happen this five years! I'll stop it out of your salary, sir."

Titmouse did not attempt to interrupt him.

"And pray what have you been gossiping about, sir, in this disgraceful manner?"

"Something that he wanted to say to me, sir."

"You low puppy!—do you suppose I don't see your impertinence? *I insist*, sir, on knowing what all this gossiping with that fellow, during my service hours, has been about?"

"Then you *won't* know, sir, that's flat!" replied Titmouse doggedly, and desperately too; returning to his usual station behind the counter.

"*I sha'n't!*!" exclaimed Mr Tag-rag, almost aghast at the presumption of his inferior.

"No, sir, you *sha'n't* know a single word about it."

"Sha'n't know a single word about it!!—Vastly good, sir!!—Do you know whom you're talking to, sir? Do you really know in whose presence you are, sir?" inquired Mr Tag-rag, nearly trembling with rage.

"Mr Tag-rag, I presume, of the firm of Tag-rag and Co.," replied Titmouse, looking him full in the face.—One or two of his companions near him, almost turned pale at the audacity he was displaying.

"And who are *you*, sir, that dare to presume to bandy words with *me*, sir?" inquired Tag-rag, his deeply pitted face having gone quite white, and his whole body quivering with rage.

"Tittlebat Titmouse, at your service," was the answer, in a glib tone, and with a sufficiently saucy air; for Titmouse then felt that he had passed the Rubicon.

"You heard that, I hope?" inquired Tag-rag with forced calmness, of a pale-faced young man, the nearest to him.

"Ye—es, sir," was the meekly reluctant answer.

"This day month you leave, sir!" said Mr Tag-rag solemnly—as if conscious that he was passing a sort of sentence of death upon the presumptuous delinquent.

"Very well, Mr Tag-rag—anything that pleases you pleases your humble servant. I *will* go this day month, and welcome—I've long wished—and now, p'r'aps," he added significantly—"it's rather convenient for me, than otherwise"——

"Then you *sha'n't* leave, sir," said Tag-rag furiously.

"But I will, sir. You've given me warning; and, if you haven't, now I give *you* warning," replied Titmouse; turning, however, very pale, and experiencing a certain sudden sinking of the heart—for this was a serious and most unlooked-for event, and for a while put out of his head all the exciting thoughts of the last few hours. He had by-and-by enough to bear. What with the delicate rillery and

banter of his refined companions for the rest of the day, and the galling tyranny of Mr Tag-rag (who dogged him all day, setting him about the most menial and troublesome offices he could, and constantly saying mortifying things to him before customers), and the state of miserable suspense in which Mr Gammon had thought fit to leave him;—I say that surely all this was enough for him to bear, without having to encounter, at night, as he did, on his return to his lodgings, his blustering landlady; who vowed that if she sold him out and out she would be put off no longer;—and his pertinacious and melancholy tailor, who, with sallow unshaven face, told him of five children at home, all ill of the smallpox, and his wife in an hospital—and he *implored* a payment on account. This sufferer succeeded in squeezing out of Titmouse seven shillings on account, and his landlady extorted ten; which staved off a distress—direful word!—for some week or two longer; and so they left him in the possession of eight shillings or so, to last till next quarter-day—six weeks off! He sighed heavily, barred his door, and sat down opposite his little table, on which was nothing but a solitary thin candle, and on which his eyes rested unconsciously, till the stench of it, burning right down into the socket, roused him from his wretched reverie. Then he unlocked his box, and took out his Bible and the papers which had been produced to Mr Gammon, and gazed at them with intense but unproductive scrutiny. Unable to conjecture what bearing they could have upon himself or his fortunes, he hastily replaced them in his box, threw off his clothes, and flung himself on his bed, to pass a far more dismal night than he had known for years.

He ran the gauntlet at Messrs Tag-rag and Co.'s all Tuesday, as he had done on the day preceding. One should have supposed that when his companions beheld him persecuted by their common tyrant, whom they all equally hated, they would have made common cause with their suffering

companion, or at all events given no countenance to his persecution; yet it was far otherwise. Without stopping to analyse the feeling which produced it (and which the moderately reflective reader may easily analyse for himself if so disposed), I am grieved to have to say, that when all the young men saw that Tag-rag would be gratified by their "*cutting*" poor Titmouse,

who, with all his little vanities, fooleries, and even selfishness, had never personally offended or injured any of them—they did "cut" him; and when Tag-rag observed it, his miserable mind was unspeakably gratified with what they had done: and he spoke to all of them with unusual blandness; to the sinner, Titmouse, with augmented bitterness and sternness.

CHAPTER IV.

QUIRK, GAMMON, AND SNAP, AND MR TITMOUSE; WHO ASTONISHES THEM WITH A TASTE OF HIS QUALITY.

A FEW minutes after ten o'clock that night, a gentle ringing at the bell of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's office, announced the arrival of poor Titmouse. The door was quickly opened by a very fashionably dressed clerk, who seemed in the act of quitting for the night.

"Ah—Mr Titmouse, I presume?" he inquired, with a kind of deference in his manner to which Titmouse had never been accustomed.

"The same, sir—Tittlebat Titmouse."

"Oh! allow me, sir, to show you in to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; I know they're expecting to see you. It's not often they're here so late! Walk in, sir"—With this he led the way to an inner room, and opening a green-baize door in the further side of it, announced and showed in Mr Titmouse, and left him—sufficiently flustered. Three gentlemen were sitting at a large table, on which he saw, by the strong but circumscribed light of two shaded candlesticks, were lying a great number of papers and parchments. The three gentlemen rose when he entered, Mr Quirk and Mr Snap involuntarily starting on first catching sight of the figure of Tit-

mouse: Mr Gammon came and shook hands with him.

"Mr Titmouse," said he, with a very polite air, "let me introduce you to Mr Quirk"—(This was the senior partner, a short, stout elderly gentleman, dressed in black, with a shining bald crown fringed with white hair, and sharp black eyes, and who looked very earnestly, nay, with even a kind of dismay, at him)—"and Mr Snap"—(This was the junior partner, having recently been promoted to be such after ten years' service in the office, as managing clerk: he was about thirty, particularly well dressed, slight, active, and with a face like a terrier—so hard, sharp, and wiry!) Of Mr Gammon himself, I have already given the reader a slight notion. He appeared altogether a different style of person from both his partners. He was of most gentlemanly person and bearing—and at once acute, cautious, and insinuating—with a certain something about the eye, which had from the first made Titmouse feel uneasy on looking at him.

"Take a seat, sir," said Mr Quirk rising, and placing a chair for him, on which he sat down, they resuming theirs.

"You are punctual, Mr Titmouse!" exclaimed Mr Gammon kindly; "more so than, I fear, you were yesterday, after our long interview, eh? Pray what did that worthy person, Mr Rag-bag—or whatever his name is—say on your return?"

"Say, gents?"—(he tried to clear his throat, for he spoke somewhat more thickly, and his heart beat more perceptibly, than usual)—"Meaning no offence—I'm ruined by it, and no mistake! Clean ruined, gents, I assure you!"

"Ruined! I'm sorry to hear it," interposed Mr Gammon, with a concerned air.

"I am ruined, sir, and it's no lie I'm telling you! Such a towering rage as Mr Tag-rag has been in ever since! and he's given me warning to go on the 10th of next month." He thought he observed a faint smile flit over the faces of all three. "He has, indeed!"

"Bless me, Mr Titmouse!—Did he allege any reason for dismissing you?" keenly inquired Mr Quirk.

"Yes, sir"—

"What might it have been?"

"Stopping out longer than I was allowed, and refusing to tell him what this gentleman and I had been talking about."

"Don't think that'll do; sure it won't!" briskly exclaimed Mr Snap; "no just cause of dismissal that," and he jumped up, whisked down a book from the shelves behind him, and eagerly turned over the leaves.

"Never mind that now, Mr Snap," said Mr Quirk, rather petulantly; "surely we have other matters to talk about to-night!"

"Asking pardon, sir, but I think it *does* matter to me, sir," interposed Titmouse; "for on the 10th of next month I'm a beggar—being next door to it *now*."

"Not quite, we trust," said Mr Gammon, with a benignant smile.

"But Mr Tag-rag said he'd make me as good as one."

"That's evidence to show malice," again eagerly interjected Mr Snap, who was a second time tartly rebuffed

by Mr Quirk; even Mr Gammon turning towards him with a surprised—"Really, Mr Snap!"

"So Mr Tag-rag said he'd make you a beggar!" inquired Mr Quirk, rubbing his chin with his right hand, and evidently deep in thought.

"He vowed he would, sir!—He did, as true as the gospel, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr Quirk and Mr Gammon—but such a laugh!—not careless or hearty, but subdued, and with a dash of deference in it. "Well—it perhaps *may* not signify much, by that time;" said Mr Quirk, and laughed again, followed by the soft laugh of Mr Gammon, and a kind of sharp quick sound, like a bark, from Mr Snap.

"But, gents, you'll excuse me if I say I think it *does* signify to me, and a'n't any laughing matter, by any means!" quoth Titmouse earnestly, and colouring with anger. "Without being rude, I'd rather come to business, if there's any to be done, without so much laughing at one."

"Laughing at you! my dear sir,—no, no!" exclaimed all three in a breath—"laughing *with* you," said Mr Quirk!—"By the time you mention, you may perhaps be able to laugh at Mr Rag-bag, and everybody else, for"—

[—"No use mincing matters?" he whispered, in a low tone, to Mr Gammon, who nodded, but in apparently very reluctant acquiescence, and fixed his eyes earnestly on Titmouse.]

"I really think we are warranted, sir, in preparing you to expect by that time—that is, you will understand, sir, if our efforts are successful in your behalf, and if you yield yourself implicitly in all things to our guidance—that is *absolutely essential*—a prospect—we say at present, you will observe, *only* a prospect—of a surprising and splendid change in your circumstances!" Titmouse began to tremble violently, his heart beat rapidly, and his hands were bedewed with a cold moisture.

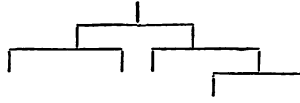
"I hear, gents," said he thickly; and he also heard a faint ringing in his ears.

"It's not impossible, sir, in plain English," continued Mr Quirk, himself growing a little excited with the important communication which trembled on the tip of his tongue, "that you may at no distant time (if you really turn out to be the person we are in search of) be put into possession of an estate of somewhere about Ten Thousand a-year"—

The words seemed to have struck Titmouse blind—as he saw nothing for some moments; then everything appeared to be swimming around him, and he felt a sort of faintness or sickness stealing over him. They had hardly been prepared for their communication's affecting their little visitor so powerfully. Mr Snap hastened out, and in again, with a glass of water; and the earnest attentions of the three soon restored Mr Titmouse to his senses. It was a good while, however, before he could appreciate the little conversation which they now and then addressed to him, or estimate the full importance of the astounding intelligence which Mr Quirk had just communicated. "Beg pardon—but may I make free to ask for a little brandy and cold water, gents? I feel all over in a kind of tremble," said he, some little time afterwards.

"Yes—by all means, Mr Titmouse," replied Mr Quirk—"Mr Snap, will you be kind enough to order Betty to bring in a glass of cold brandy-and-water from the Jolly Thieves, next door?"—Snap shot out, gave the order, and returned in a trice. The old woman in a few minutes' time followed, with a large tumbler of dark brandy-and-water, quite hot, for which Mr Gammon apologised, but Mr Titmouse said he preferred it so—and soon addressed himself to the inspiriting mixture. It quickly manifested its influence, reassuring him wonderfully. As he sat sipping it, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap being engaged in an earnest conversation, of which he could not comprehend a word, he had leisure to look about him, and observed that there was lying before them a large sheet of paper, at which they all of

them often and earnestly looked, filled with marks, so—



with writing at the ends of each of them, and round and square figures. When he saw them all bending over and scrutinising this mysterious object, it puzzled him (and many a better head than his has a pedigree puzzled before) sorely, and he began to suspect it was a sort of conjuring paper!—

"I hope, gents, that paper's all right—eh?" said he, supported by the brandy, which he had nearly finished. They turned towards him with a smile of momentary surprise, and then—

"We hope so—a vast deal depends on it," said Mr Quirk, looking over his glasses at Titmouse. Now what he had hinted at, as far as he could venture to do so, was a thought that glanced across his as yet unsettled brain, that there might have been invoked more than *mere earthly assistance*; but he prudently pressed the matter no further—that was all Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's look-out; he had been no party to anything of the sort, nor would he knowingly. He also observed the same sheets of paper, written all over, which Mr Gammon had filled up at his (Titmouse's) room, the night before; and several new, and old-looking, papers and parchments. Sometimes they addressed questions to him, but found it somewhat difficult to keep his attention up to anything that was said to him, for the wild visions which were chasing one another through his heated brain; the passage of which said visions was not a little accelerated by the large tumbler of brandy-and-water which he had just taken.

"Then, in point of fact," said Mr Quirk, as Messrs Gammon and Snap simultaneously sat down, after having been for some time standing poring over the paper before Mr Quirk. "This

Titlebat Titmouse's title is clear from *that* point. That's it—eh, Gammon?"

"Precisely so," said Mr Gammon calmly.

"To be sure," confidently added Snap; who, having devoted himself exclusively all his life to the very sharpest practice of the criminal law, knew about as much of real property law as a snipe—but it would not have done to appear ignorant, or taking no part in the matter, in the presence of the heir-at-law, and the future great client of the House.

"Well, Mr Titmouse," at length said Mr Quirk with a sort of grunt, laying aside his glasses—"if you turn out to be the Titmouse we have been speaking of, you are likely, through our immense exertions, to become one of the luckiest men that ever lived! We may be mistaken, but it appears to us that we shall by-and-by be able to put you into possession of a very fine estate in Yorkshire, worth some £10,000 or £12,000 a-year at the least!"

"You—don't—say—so!" exclaimed Titmouse, elevating his hands and opening his eyes with amazement—"Oh, gents, I do believe we're all dreaming! Is it all true, indeed?"

"It is, Mr Titmouse—and we are very proud and happy indeed to be the honoured instruments of establishing your rights, my dear sir," said Mr Gammon, in a most impressive manner.

"Then all the money that's been spent this ten or twelve years has been *my* money, has it?"

"If we are right, it is undoubtedly as you say," answered Mr Quirk, giving a quick apprehensive glance at Mr Gammon.

"Then there'll be a jolly reckoning for some one, shortly—eh? My stars! I hope he can cash up!"

"My dear Mr Titmouse," said Mr Gammon, gravely, "you have no more than a just regard for your own interests. There *will* be a reckoning, and a very terrible one, ere long, for somebody—but we've a vast deal to go through, and a great sum of money

must be spent, before we come to discuss *that* matter! Only let us have the unspeakable happiness of seeing you once fairly in possession of your estates, and our office shall know no rest till you have got all you may be entitled to, even to the uttermost farthing!"

"Oh, never fear our letting them rest!" said Mr Quirk, judiciously accommodating himself to the taste and apprehension of his excited auditor—"Those that must give up the goose, must give up the giblets also—ha, ha, ha!" Messrs Gammon and Snap echoed the laugh—but how differently!—duly tickled with the joke of the head of the firm.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr Titmouse, immensely excited by the conjoint influence of the brandy, and the news of the night; "capital! capital! hurrah! Such goings on there will be! You're all of the right sort, gents, I see! 'Pon my life, law for ever! There's *nothing* like it! Let's all shake hands, gents! Come, if you please, all together! all friends to-night!" And the excited little fellow grasped each of the three readily-proffered right hands of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, with an energy that was likely to make all the high contracting parties to that quadruple alliance remember its ratification.

"And is it all a *ready-money* affair, gents?—Or *rent*, and all *that* kind of thing?" he inquired, after many eloquent expressions of delight.

"Why, almost entirely the latter," answered Mr Quirk, "except the accumulations."

"Then, 'pon my soul—I'm a great landlord, am I?"

"Indeed, my dear Mr Titmouse, you are—(that is, unless we have made a blunder such as—I will say—our house is not *often* in the habit of making)—and have two very fine houses, one in town and the other in the country."

"Capital! delightful! I'll live in both of them—we'll have *such* goings on!—And is it—poz—*quite* up to the mark of £10,000 a-year?"

"We really entertain no doubt at present that it is"——

"And such as that I can spend all of it, every year?"

"Certainly—no doubt of it—not the least. The rents are paid with most exemplary punctuality—at least," added Mr Gammon, with a captivating, an irresistible smile, and placing his hand affectionately on his shoulder—"at least they *will* be, as soon as we have them fairly in *our* management."

"Oh, *you're* to get it all in for me, are you?" he inquired briskly. The three partners bowed, with the most deprecatingly disinterested air in the world; intimating that, for *his* sake, they were certainly ready to take upon themselves even *that* troublesome responsibility.

"Capital! couldn't be better! couldn't be better! Ah, ha, ha—you've caught the goose, and must bring me its eggs! Ah, ha, ha! that's a touch in *your* line, old gent!" said he, slapping Mr Quirk's knee!

"Ha, ha, ha! excellent! ah, ha, ha!" laughed the three partners at the humour of their new client. Mr Titmouse joined them, and snapped his fingers in the air! Then he added, suddenly—

"My stars!—by the way—I've just thought of Tag-rag and Company's—I seem as if I hadn't seen or heard of those gents for Lord knows how long! Only fancy old Tag-rag making me a beggar on the 10th of next month—ha, ha, ha!—I sha'n't see *that* infernal hole any more, anyhow!"

"There!" whispered Mr Gammon, suddenly and apprehensively, in the ear of Mr Quirk, "you hear that? A little wretch! We have been perfectly insane in going so far already with him! Is not this what I predicted?"—"I don't care," said Mr Quirk stubbornly. "Who first found it out, Mr Gammon? and who's to be at the expense and responsibility? Pshaw! I know what I'm about—I'll make him knuckle down—never fear me! Caleb Quirk a'n't a man to be trifled with!"

"*That*," continued Titmouse, snapping his fingers with an air of defiance—"for Mr Tag-rag! *That* for Mother Squallop—Ah, ha, gents! It won't

do to go back to that—ugh!—eh? will it?—you know what I mean! Fancy Mr Tittlebat Titmouse—or Mr Tittlebat Titmouse, *Esquire*—standing behind"——

The partners looked rather blank at this unexpected sally.

"We would venture to suggest, Mr Titmouse," said Mr Gammon seriously, "the *absolute necessity* there is for everything on your part, and our parts, to go on as quietly as before, for a little time to come: to be safe and successful, my dear sir, we must be very—very *secret*."

"Oh, I see, gents! I see; mum—mum's the word, for the present! But I *must* say, if there is any one whom I want to hear of it, sooner than another, it's"——

"Rag-bag and Co., I suppose! ha, ha, ha!" interrupted Mr Gammon, his partners echoing his gentle laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! Cuss the cats—that's it—ha, ha, ha!" echoed Mr Titmouse; who, getting up out of his chair, could not resist capering to and fro, sticking his hands on his hips, in something of the attitude of a hornpipe dancer, whistling and humming by turns, and indulging in various other wild antics: the partners regarding them as those of a little monkey that had tossed off a glass of gin-and-water.

"And now, gents—excuse me, but, to do a bit of business—when am I to *begin* scattering the shiners, eh?" he inquired, interrupting a low-toned, but somewhat vehement conversation, between the two senior partners; while Snap sate silently eyeing him like a terrier a rat coming within his reach!

"Oh, of course, sir!" replied Mr Gammon, rather coldly, "very—considerable—delay is unavoidable. All we have done, as yet, is to discover that, as far as we are advised, and can judge, you will turn out to be the right owner; but—as we've already intimated—very extensive and expensive operations must be immediately commenced, before you can be put into possession. There are some who won't be persuaded to *part* with £10,000 a-year, Mr Titmouse, for the

mere asking!" added Mr Gammon with an anxious and bitter smile.

"The deuce there are! *Who* are they that want to keep me any longer out of what's my own?—what's justly mine? Eh? I want to know! Haven't they kept me out long enough?—hang 'em! Put 'em in prison directly—don't spare 'em—the villains!"

"They'll probably, ere long, find their way in that direction—for how," replied Mr Quirk, "he's ever to make up, poor wretch, the mesne profits"—

"*Mean* profits?—is that all you call them, gents? 'Pon my life, it's rogue's money—villain's profits! So don't spare him—d—n him!—he's robbed the fatherless, which I am, and an orphan. Keep me out of what's mine, indeed! Curse me if he shall, though!"

"My dear Mr Titmouse," said Gammon very gravely, "we are getting on too fast—dreadfully too fast. It will never do: matters of such immense importance as these cannot be hurried on, or talked of, in this way"—

"I like that, sir!—I do, by Jove!"—exclaimed Titmouse, scornfully.

"You will really, if you go on in this wild way, Mr Titmouse, make us regret the trouble we have taken in the affair, and especially the promptness with which we have communicated to you the extent of your *possible* good fortune."

"Beg pardon, I'm sure, gents, but mean no offence: am monstrous obliged to you for what you've done for me—but, by Jove, it's taken me rather a-back, I own, to hear that I'm to be kept so long out of it all! Why can't you offer him, whoever he is that has my property, a slapping sum to go out at once? Gents, I'll own to you I'm most uncommon low—never so low in my life—devilish low! Done up, and yet, it seems, a'n't to get what's justly mine! What am I to do in the meanwhile? Consider *that*, gents!"

"You are rather excited just now, Mr Titmouse," said Mr Quirk, somewhat sternly; "suppose we now break up, and resume our conversation to-morrow, when we are all in better and calmer trim?"

"No, sir, thanking you all the same;

but I think we'd better go on with it now," replied Titmouse impetuously. "Do you think I can stoop to go back to that nasty, beastly shop, and stand behind that odious counter?—I'd almost as lieve go to the gallows!"

"Our *decided* opinion, Mr Titmouse," said Mr Quirk, emphatically—his other partners getting graver and graver in their looks—"that is, if our opinion is worth offering"—

"That, by Jove! remains to be seen," said Titmouse, with a pettish shake of the head.

"Well, such as it is, we offer it you; and it is, that for many reasons you must continue, for a little while longer, in your present situation"—

"What! own Tag-rag for my master—and I worth £10,000 a-year?" interrupted Titmouse, furiously.

"My dear sir, you've not *got* it yet," said Mr Quirk with a grisly smile.

"Do you think you'd have told me what you have, if you weren't sure that I *should*, though? No, no! you've gone too far, by Jove!—But I shall burst, I shall! Me to go on as before!—they use me worse and worse every day. Gents, you'll excuse me—I hope you will; but business is business, gents—it is; and if you won't do mine, I must look out for them that will—'pon my soul, I must, and"—If Mr Titmouse could have seen, or, having seen, appreciated, the looks which the three partners interchanged, on hearing this absurd, ungrateful, and insolent speech of his—the expression that flitted across their shrewd faces; that was, of intense contempt for him, hardly overmastered and concealed by a vivid perception of their own interest, which was, of course, to *manage*, to soothe, to conciliate him!

How the reptile propensities of his mean nature had thriven beneath the sudden sunshine of unexpected prosperity!—See already his selfishness, truculence, rapacity, in writhing activity.

"So, gents," said he, after a long and keen expostulation with them on the same subject, "I'm really to show myself again to-morrow morning at Tag-rag and Co.'s, and go on with the

cursed life I led there to-day, all as if nothing had happened—ha, ha, ha!—I do so like that!”

“In your present humour, Mr Titmouse, it would be in vain to discuss the matter,” said Mr Quirk sternly. “Again I tell you that the course we have recommended is, in our opinion, the proper one; excuse me if I add, that you are entirely in our hands—and if I ask you—what *can* you do but adopt our advice?”

“Why, hang me if I won’t employ somebody else—that’s flat! S’elp me, Heaven, I will! So, good-night, gents; you’ll find that Tittlebat Titmouse isn’t to be trifled with!” So saying, Mr Titmouse clapped his hat on his head! bounced out of the room! and, no attempt being made to stop him, he was in the street in a twinkling!

Mr Gammon gazed at Mr Quirk with a look, the significance of which the astounded old gentleman thoroughly understood—’twas compounded of triumph, reproach, and apprehension.

“Did you ever see such a little beast!” exclaimed Mr Quirk, at length, with an air of disgust, turning to Mr Snap.

“Beggars on horseback!” exclaimed Snap, with a bitter sneer.

“It won’t do, however,” said Mr Quirk, with a most chagrined and apprehensive air, “for him to go at large in his present frame of mind—he may ruin the thing altogether”——

“As good as £500 a-year out of the way of the office,” quoth Snap.

“It cannot be helped *now*,” said Mr Gammon, with a sigh of vexation, turning to Mr Quirk, and seizing his hat—“he must be managed—so I’ll go after him instantly, and bring him back at all hazards; and we must really try and do something for him in the meanwhile, to keep him quiet till the thing’s brought a little into train.” So out went after Titmouse, Mr Gammon, from whose lips dropped persuasion sweeter than honey; * and I should not be surprised if he were to succeed in bringing back that little stubborn piece of conceited stupidity.

* “Τὴν καὶ ἀπὸ γλυκύων μέλιτος γλυκίον ἴσιν αὐτῆ.”—L. α.

As soon as Mr Titmouse heard the street door shut after him with a kind of *bang*, he snapped his fingers once or twice, by way of letting off a little of the inflammable air that was in him, and muttered disdainfully, “Pretty chaps those, upon my soul! I’ll expose them all! I’ll apply to the lord-mayor—they’re a pack of swindlers, they are! This is the way they treat *me*, who’ve got a title to £10,000 a-year! To be sure!”—He stood still for a moment—and another moment—and another—and then dismay came quickly over him; for the thought suddenly occurred to his partially obfuscated intellect—what *hold* had he got on Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap?—what *could* he do?—or rather, what *HAD* he done?

Ah—the golden vision of the last few hours was fading away momentarily, like a dream! Each second of his deep and rapid reflection, rendered more impetuous his desire and determination to return and make his peace with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. By submission for the present, he could get the whip-hand of them hereafter! He was in the act of turning round towards the office, when Mr Gammon gently laid his hand upon the shoulder of his repentant client.

“Mr Titmouse! my dear sir,” said Mr Gammon softly, “what is the matter with you? How could we so misunderstand each other?”

Titmouse’s small cunning was on the *qui vive*, and he saw and followed up his advantage. “I’m going,” said he, in a resolute tone, “to speak to some one else in the morning.”

“Ah, to be sure!” replied Mr Gammon, with a smile of utter unconcern—“I supposed as much—’tis a matter which of course, however, signifies nothing to any one—but yourself. You will take any steps, my dear sir, that occur to you, and act as you may be advised!”

“Monstrous kind of you, ’pon my life! to come and give me such good advice!” exclaimed Titmouse with a sneer—but consciously baffled.

“Oh, don’t mention it!” said Gammon coolly; “I came out of pure good-

nature, to assure you that our office, notwithstanding what has passed, entertains not the slightest personal ill feeling towards you, in thus throwing off our hands a dreadfully expensive, and most harassing enterprise—which we have feared from the first had been too rashly undertaken”——

“Hem!” exclaimed Titmouse involuntarily, once or twice.

“So good-night, Mr Titmouse — good-night! God bless you! and think hereafter of all this as a mere idle dream—as far as *we* are concerned!” Mr Gammon, in the act of returning to the door, extended his hand to Mr Titmouse, whom he instantly perceived to be melting rapidly.

“Why, sir,” quoth Titmouse, with a mixture of embarrassment and alarm, “if I thought you all meant the correct thing—hem! I say, the *correct* thing by me—I shouldn’t so much mind a little disappointment for the time; but you must own, Mr Gammon, it is very hard being kept out of one’s own so long—honour, now! isn’t it?”

“True,—very true, Mr Titmouse. Very hard it is, indeed, to bear, and we all felt deeply for you, and would have set everything in train”——

“*Would have!* oh my stars!”——

“Yes, my dear Mr Titmouse, we *would* have done it, and believed we could have brought you through every difficulty—over every obstacle, prodigious though they are, and almost innumerable.”

“Why—you—don’t—hardly—quite—mean to say you’ve given it all up?—What, already! ‘Pon my life!” exclaimed Titmouse, in evident trepidation.

Mr Gammon had triumphed over Mr Titmouse! whom, nothing loth, he brought back, in two minutes’ time, into the room which that worthy had just before so insolently quitted. Mr Quirk and Mr Snap had now *their* parts to perform in the little scene which they had determined on enacting. They were in the act of locking up desks and drawers, evidently on the move; and received Mr Titmouse with an air of cold surprise.

“Mr Titmouse again!” exclaimed Mr Quirk, taking his gloves out of his hat. “Back again!—This, sir, is quite an unexpected honour!”

“Leave anything behind?” inquired Mr Snap, affecting to look about him—“don’t *see* anything”——

“Oh no, sir! No, sir!” exclaimed Titmouse, with eager anxiety. “This gent, Mr Gammon, and I, have made it all up, gents! I’m not angry any more—not the least, ‘pon my soul I’m not—and quite forgive you—and no mistake!”

“*Angry!*—*Forgive!* Mr Titmouse!” echoed Mr Quirk, with an air sternly ironical. “We are under great obligations to you for your forbearance!”

“Oh, come, gents!” said Titmouse, more and more disturbed. “I *was* too warm, I daresay, and—and—I ask your pardon, all of you, gents! I won’t say another word if you’ll but buckle to business again—quite exactly in your own way—because you see”——

“It’s growing *very* late,” said Mr Quirk coldly, and looking at his watch; “however, after what you have said, probably at some future time, when we’ve *leisure* to look into the thing”——

Poor Titmouse was near dropping on his knees, in mingled agony and fright.

“May I be allowed to say,” interposed the bland voice of Mr Gammon, anxiously addressing himself to Mr Quirk, “that Mr Titmouse a few minutes ago assured me, outside there, that if you, as the head of the firm, could only be persuaded to permit our house to take up his case again”——

“I did—I did indeed, gents! so help me ——!” interrupted Mr Titmouse, eagerly backing with an oath the ready lie of Mr Gammon.

Mr Quirk, with a stern countenance, drew his hand across his chin musingly, and stood silently for a few moments, apparently irresolute.

“Well,” said he at length, but very coldly, “since that is so, probably we may be induced to resume our heavy labours in your behalf; and if you will favour us with a call to-morrow night, at the same hour, we may, by that time, have made up our minds as

to the course we shall think fit to adopt."

"I'll be here as the clock strikes, and as meek as a mouse; and pray, have it all your own way for the future, gents—do!"—cried Titmouse, clasping his hands together on his breast.

"Good-night, sir—good-night!" exclaimed the partners, stiffly—motioning him towards the door.

"Good-night, gents!" said Titmouse, bowing very low, and feeling himself at the same time being—*bowed out!* As he passed out of the room, he cast a lingering look at their three frigid

faces, as if they were angels sternly shutting him out from Paradise. What misery was his, as he walked slowly homeward, with much the same feelings (now that the fumes of the brandy had somewhat evaporated, and the reaction of excitement was coming on, aggravated by a recollection of the desperate check which he had received) as those of a sick and troubled man, who, suddenly roused out of a delicious dream, drops into wretched reality, as it were out of a fairyland, which, with all its dear innumerable delights, is melting overhead into thin air—*disappearing, for ever!*

CHAPTER V.

HUCKABACK CHOOSES TO CALL UPON QUIRK, GAMMON, AND SNAP, TO STIR THEM UP; AND WHAT IT LED TO.

CLOSET COURT had never looked so odious to him as it did on his return from this memorable interview. Dreadfully distressed and harassed, he flung himself on his bed for a moment, directly he had shut his door, intending presently to rise and undress; but Sleep, having got him prostrate, secured her victory. She waved her black wand over him, and—he awoke not completely till about eight o'clock in the morning. A second long-drawn sigh was preparing to follow its predecessor, when he heard the clock strike eight, and sprang off the bed in a fright; for he ought to have been at the shop an hour before. Dashing a little water into his face, and scarce staying to wipe it off, he ran down stairs, through the court, and along the street, never stopping till he had found his way into—almost the very arms of the dreaded Mr Tag-rag; who, rarely making his appearance till about half-past nine, had, as the deuce would have it, happened to come down an hour and a half earlier than

usual on that particular morning, the only one out of several hundreds on which Titmouse had been more than ten minutes beyond his time.

"Yours ve-ry respectfully, Mr Titmouse—Thomas Tag-rag!" exclaimed that personage with mock solemnity, bowing formally to his astounded and breathless shopman.

"I—I—beg your pardon, sir; but I wasn't very well, and overslept myself," stammered Titmouse.

"Ne-ver mind, Mr Titmouse! ne-ver mind!—it don't much signify, as it happens," interrupted Mr Tag-rag bitterly; "you've just got an hour and a half to take this piece of silk, with my compliments, to Messrs Shuttle and Weaver, in Dirt Street, Spital-fields, and ask them if they aren't ashamed to send it to a West-end house like mine; and bring back a better piece instead of it? D'y'e hear, sir?"

"Yes, sir—but—am I to go before my breakfast, sir?"

"Did I say a word about breakfast,

sir? You heard my orders, sir; you can attend to them or not, Mr Titmouse, as you please!"

Off trotted Titmouse *instanter*, without his breakfast; and so Tag-rag gained one object he had had in view. Titmouse found this rather trying: a four-mile walk before him, with no inconsiderable load under his arm; having, moreover, had nothing to eat since the preceding evening, when he had partaken of a delicate repast of thick slices of bread, smeared slightly over with somewhat high-flavoured salt butter, and moistened with a most astringent decoction of *quasi* tea-leaves sweetened with brown sugar, and discoloured with sky-blue milk. He had not even a farthing about him wherewith to buy a penny roll! As he went disconsolately along, so many doubts and fears buzzed impetuously about him, that they completely darkened his little soul, and bewildered his petty understanding. *Ten Thousand a-Year!*—it could never be meant for the like of *him!* He soon worked himself into a conviction that the whole thing was infinitely too good to be true; the affair was desperate; it had been all moonshine; for some cunning purpose or another, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap had been—ah, here he was within a few yards of their residence, the scene of last night's tragic transactions! As he passed Saffron Hill, he paused, looked up towards the blessed abode,

Where centred all his hopes and fears,—

uttered a profound sigh, and passed slowly on towards Smithfield. The words "*Quirk, Gammon, and Snap*" seemed to be written over every shop-window which he passed—the images of those gentlemen filled his mind's eye. What could they be at? They had been all very polite and friendly at first—and of their own seeking: but he had affronted them. How coldly and proudly they had parted with him over-night, although they had professed themselves reconciled to him! It was evident that they would stand no nonsense—that they were great lawyers: so he must (if they

really would allow him to see them again) eat humble pie cheerfully till he had got all that they had to give him. How he dreaded the coming night! Perhaps they intended civilly to tell him that, since seeing him, they would have nothing more to do with him; they would get the estate for themselves, or some one else who would be more manageable! They had taken care to tell him nothing at all about the nature of his pretensions to this grand fortune. Oh, how crafty they were—they had it all their own way!—But what, after all, had he really done? The estates were his, if they were really in earnest—his, and no one's else; and why should he be kept out of them at their will and pleasure? Suppose he were to say he would give them all he was entitled to for £20,000 down, in cash? Oh no; on second thoughts, that would be only two years' income! But on the other hand—he dared hardly even propose it to his thoughts—still, suppose it *should* really all turn out true! Goodness gracious!—that day two months he might be riding about in his carriage in the Parks, and poor devils looking on at *him*, as he now looked on all those who now rode there! There he would be, holding up his head with the best of them, instead of slaving as he was that moment, carrying about that cursed bundle—ough! how he shrank with disgust as he changed its position, to relieve his aching right arm! Why was his mouth to be stopped—why might he not tell his shopmates? What would he not give for the luxury of telling it to the odious Tag-rag? If he *were* to do so, Mr Tag-rag, he was sure, would ask him to dinner the very next Sunday, at his country house at Clapham!—Ah, ha!—Thoughts such as these so occupied his mind, that he did not for a long while observe that he was walking at a rapid rate towards the Mile-end road, having left Whitechapel church nearly half a mile behind him! The possible master of £10,000 a-year was nearly dropping with fatigue, and sudden apprehension of the storm he should

have to encounter when he first saw Mr Tag-rag after so unduly prolonged an absence on his errand. He was detained for a cruel length of time at Messrs Shuttle and Weaver's; who, not having the exact kind of silk required by their imperious customer at that moment on their premises, had some difficulty in obtaining it, after having sent for it to one or two neighbouring manufactories; by which means it came to pass that it was two o'clock before Titmouse, completely exhausted, had returned to Tag-rag and Company's. The gentlemen of the shop had finished their dinners.

"Go up-stairs and get your dinner, sir!" exclaimed Tag-rag sternly, after having received Messrs Shuttle and Weaver's obsequious message of apologies and hopes.

Titmouse, having laid down his heavy bundle on the counter, went up-stairs hungry enough, and found himself the sole occupant of the long close-smelling room in which his companions had been recently dining. His dinner was presently brought to him by a slatternly slipshod servant-girl. It was in an uncovered basin, which appeared to contain nothing but the leavings of his companions—a savoury intermixture of cold potatoes, broken meat, chiefly bits of fat and gristle, a little hot water having been thrown over it to make it appear warm and fresh—faugh! His plate, with a small pinch of salt upon it, had not been cleaned after its recent use, but evidently only hastily smeared over with a greasy towel, as also seemed his knife and fork, which, in their disgusting state, he was fain to put up with—the table-cloth, on which he might have wiped them, having been removed. A hunch of bread that seemed to have been tossing about in the pan for days, and half a pint of turbid table-beer, completed the luxurious fare set before him; opposite which he sat for some minutes, too much occupied with his reflections to commence his repast. He was in the act of scooping out of the basin some of its inviting contents, when—"Tit-

mouse!" exclaimed the voice of one of his shopmates, peering in at him through the half-opened door, "Mr Tag-rag wants you! He says you've had plenty of time to finish your dinner!"

"Oh, tell him, then, I'm only just beginning my dinner—ugh! such as it is," replied Titmouse, sulkily.

In a few minutes' time Mr Tag-rag himself entered the room, stuttering with fury—"How much longer, sir, may it be your pleasure to spend over your dinner, eh?"

"Not another moment, sir," answered Titmouse, looking with unaffected loathing and disgust at the savoury stuff before him; "if you'll only allow me a few minutes to go home and buy a penny roll instead of all this"—

"Ve—ry good, sir! Ve—ry parti—cu—larly good, Mr Titmouse," replied Tag-rag with ill-subdued rage; "anything else that I can make a *leettle* memorandum of—against the day of—your leaving us?"

This hint of twofold terror,—i. e. of withholding on the ground of misconduct the wretched balance of salary which might be then due to him, and of also giving him a damning character—dispelled the small remains of Titmouse's appetite, and he rose to return to the shop, involuntarily clutching his fist as he brushed close past the tyrant Tag-rag on the stairs, whom he would have been delighted to pitch down head-foremost. If he *had* done so, none of his fellow-slaves below, in spite of their present sycophancy towards Tag-rag, would have shown any particular alacrity in picking up their common oppressor. Poor Tittlebat resumed his old situation behind the counter; but how different his present, from his former, air and manner! With his pen occasionally peeping pertly out of his bushy hair over his right ear, and his yard-measure in his hand, no one, till the previous Monday morning, had been more cheerful, smirking, and nimble than Tittlebat Titmouse; alas, how chopfallen now! None of his companions could make

him out, or guess what was in the wind; so they very justly concluded that he had been doing something dreadfully disgraceful, the extent of which was known to Tag-rag and himself alone. Their jeers and banter were giving place to cold distrustful looks, far more trying to bear. How he longed to be able to burst upon their astounded minds with the pent-up intelligence that was silently racking and splitting his little bosom! But if he did—the terrible firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—Oh! the very thought of them glued his lips together. There was *one*, however, of whom he might surely make a confidant—the excellent Huckaback, with whom he had had no opportunity of communicating since Sunday night. That gentleman was as close a prisoner at the establishment of DIAPER and SARGENT, in Tottenham-court Road, as Titmouse at Messrs Tag-rag's, of which said establishment he was, by the way, quite as great an ornament as Titmouse of Messrs Tag-rag's. They were of about the same height, and equals in vulgar puppyism of manners, dress, and appearance; but Titmouse was certainly the better-looking. With equal conceit apparent in their faces, that of Huckaback, square, flat, and sallow, had an expression of ineffable impudence which made a lady shudder, and a gentleman feel a tingling sensation in his right toe. About his small black eyes there was a glimmer of low cunning;—but he is not of sufficient importance to be painted any further. When Titmouse left the shop that night, a little after nine, he hurried to his lodgings, to make himself as imposing in his appearance before Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, as his time and means would admit of. Behold, on a table lay a letter from Huckaback. It was written in a flourishing mercantile hand; and here is a *verbatim* copy of it:—

“Dear Tit,

“Hope you are well, which is what I can only middling say in respect of *me*. Such a row with my governors as I have had to-day! I thought that,

as I had been in the House near upon Eighteen Months at £25 per annum, I might nat'rally ask for £30 a-year (which is what my Predecessor had), when, would you believe it, Mr Sharp-eye (who is going to be taken in as a Partner), to whom I named the thing, ris up in rage against me, and I were had up into the counting-house, where both the governors was, and they gave it me in such a way that you never saw nor heard of; but it wasn't all on their own side, as you know me too well to think of. You would have thought I had been a-going to rob the house. They said I was most audacious, and all that, and ungrateful, and what would I have next? Mr Diaper said times was come to such a pitch!! since when he was first in the business, for salaries, says he, is ris to double, and not half the work done that was, and no gratitude—(cursed old curmudgeon!) He said if I left them just now, I might whistle for a character, except one that I should not like; but if he don't mind I'll give him a touch of law about that—which brings me to what happened to-day with *our* lawyers, Titty, the people at Saffron Hill, whom I thought I would call in on to-day, being near the neighbourhood with some light goods, to see how affairs was getting on, and stir them up a bit”—

This almost took Titmouse's breath away—

—“feeling most *interested* on your account, as you know, dear Tit, I do. I said I wanted to speak to one of the gentlemen on business of wital importance; whereat I was quickly shown into a room where two gents was sitting. Having put down my parcel for a minute on the table, I said I was a very partic'lar friend of yours, and had called in to see how things went on about the advertisement; whereat you never saw in your life how struck they looked, and stared at one another in speechless silence, till they said to me, what concerned me about the business? or something of that nature, but in such a way that *ris a rage* in me directly, all for your sake, (for I did not like the looks of things;) and

says I, I said, we would let them know we were not to be *gammoned*; whereat up rose the youngest of the two, and ringing the bell, he says to a tight-laced young gentleman with a pen behind his ear, 'Show this fellow to the door,' which I was at once; but, in doing so, let out a little of my mind to them. They're no better than they should be, you see if they are; but when we touch the property, we'll show them who is their masters, which consoles me. Good-bye, keep your sperrits up, and I will call and tell you more about it on Sunday. So farewell (I write this at Mr Sharpey's desk, who is coming down from dinner, directly, the beast!)—Your true friend,
"R. HUCKABACK.

"P.S.—Met a young Jew last night with a lot of prime cigars, and (knowing he *must* have stole them—betwixt you, and I, and the Post—they looked so good at the price), I bought one shilling's worth for me, and two shillings' worth for you, your salary being higher, and to say nothing of your chances."

All that part of the foregoing letter which related to its gifted writer's interview with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, Titmouse read, as well he might, in a perfect spasm—he could not draw a breath, and felt a choking sensation coming over him. After a while, "I may spare myself," thought he, "the trouble of rigging out—Huckaback has done my business for me with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap!—Mine will only be a walk in vain!" And this accursed call of Huckaback's, too, to have happened after what had occurred last night between Titmouse and them!! and so urgently as he had been enjoined to keep the matter to himself! Of course, Huckaback would seem to have been sent by him; seeing he appeared to have assumed the hectoring tone which Titmouse had tried so vainly over-night, and now so bitterly repented of; and he had no doubt grossly insulted the arbiters of Titmouse's destiny (for he knew Huckaback's impudence)—he

had even said that he (Titmouse) would not be "GAMMONED" by them!!—But time was pressing—the experiment must be made; and with a beating heart he scrambled into a change of clothes—bottling up his wrath against the unconscious Huckaback till he should see that worthy. In a miserable state of mind he set off soon after for Saffron Hill at a quick pace, which soon became a trot, and often sharpened into a downright run. He saw, heard, and thought of nothing, as he hurried along Oxford Street and Holborn, but Quirk, Gammon, Snap, and Huckaback, and the reception which the last-mentioned gentleman might have secured for him—if, indeed, he was to be received at all. The magical words, *Ten Thousand a-Year*, had not disappeared from the field of his troubled vision; but how faintly and dimly they shone!—like the Pleiades coldly glistening through intervening mists far off—oh! at what a stupendous, immeasurable, and hopeless distance! Imagine those stars gazed at by the anguished and despairing eyes of the bereaved lover, madly believing one of them to contain ~~HE~~ who has just departed from his arms, and from this world, and you may form a notion of the agonising feelings—the absorbed contemplation of one dear, dazzling, but distant object, experienced on this occasion by Mr Titmouse. No, no; I don't mean seriously to pretend that so grand a thought as this *could* have been entertained by his little optics intellectual; you might as well suppose the tiny eye of a black beetle to be scanning the vague, fanciful, and mysterious figure and proportions of Orion, or a kangaroo to be perusing and pondering over the immortal *Principia*. I repeat, that I have no desire of the sort, and am determined not again foolishly to attempt fine writing, which I now perceive to be entirely out of my line. In language more befitting me and my subject, I may be allowed to say that there is no getting the contents of a quart into a pint pot; that Titmouse's mind was a half-pint—and it was brimful. All the while that I have been going on thus,

however, Titmouse was hurrying down Holborn at a rattling rate. When at length he had reached Saffron Hill, he was in a bath of perspiration. His face was quite red; he breathed hard; his heart beat violently; he had got a stitch in his side; and he could not get his gloves on his hot and swollen hands. He stood for a moment with his hat off, wiping his reeking forehead, and endeavouring to recover himself a little, before entering the dreaded presence to which he had been hastening. He even fancied for a moment that his eyes gave out sparks of light! While thus pausing, St Andrew's Church struck ten, half electrifying Titmouse, who bolted up Saffron Hill, and was soon standing opposite the door. How the sight of it smote him, as it reminded him of the way in which, on the preceding night, he had bounced out of it! But that could not now be helped; so *ring* went the bell; as softly, however, as he could; for he recollected that it was a very loud bell, and he did not wish to offend. He stood for some time, and nobody answered. He waited for nearly two minutes, and trembled, assailed by a thousand vague fears. He might not, however, have rung loudly enough—so—again, a little louder did he venture to ring. Again he waited. There seemed something threatening in the great brass plate on the door, out of which "QUIRK, GAMMON, AND SNAP" appeared to stare at him ominously. While he thought of it, by the way, there was something very serious and stern in all their faces—he wondered that he had not noticed it before. What a drunken beast he had been to go on in their presence as he had! thought he; then Huckaback's image flitted across his disturbed fancy. "Ah!" thought he, "that's the thing!—that's it, depend upon it: this door will never be opened to *me* again—he's done for me!" He breathed faster, clenched his fist, and involuntarily raised it in a menacing way, when he heard himself addressed—"Oh! dear me, sir, I *hope* I haven't kept you waiting," said the old woman whom he had before seen, fumbling in her pocket for the

door-key. She had been evidently out shopping, having a plate in her left hand, over which her apron was partially thrown. "Hope you've not been ringing long, sir!"

"Oh dear! no ma'am," replied Titmouse with anxious civility, and a truly miserable smile—"Afraid I may have kept *them* waiting," he added, almost dreading to hear the answer.

"Oh no, sir, not at all—they've all been gone since a little after nine; but there's a letter I was to give you!" She opened the door, Titmouse nearly dropping with fright. "I'll get it for you, sir—let me see, where did I put it?—Oh, in the clerk's room, I think."

Titmouse followed her in. "Dear me—where can it be?" she continued, peering about, and then snuffing the long wick of the candle which she had left burning for the last quarter of an hour, during her absence. "I *hope* none of the clerks has put it away in mistake! Well, it isn't *here*, anyhow."

"Perhaps, ma'am, it's in their *own* room," suggested Titmouse, in a faint tone.

"Oh, p'r'aps it is!" she replied. "We'll go and see"—and she led the way, followed closely by Titmouse, who caught his breath spasmodically as he passed the green-baize door. Yes, there was the room—the scene of last night was transacted there, and came crowding over his recollection—there was the green-shaded candlestick—the table covered with papers—an arm-chair near it, in which, probably, Mr Quirk had been sitting only an hour before to write the letter they were now in quest of, and which might be to forbid him their presence for ever! How dreary and deserted the room looked, thought he, as he peered about it in search of the dreaded letter!

"Oh, here it is!—well, I never!—who could have put it here, now? I'm sure I didn't. Let me see—it was, no doubt"—said the old woman, holding the letter in one hand and putting the other to her head.

"Never mind, ma'am, *please*," said Titmouse, stretching his hand towards her—"now we've got it, it don't much signify." She gave it to him. "Seem

particularly anxious for me to get it—did they, ma'am?" he inquired, with a strong effort to appear unconcerned—the dreaded letter quite quivering, the while, in his fingers.

"No, sir—Mr Quirk only said I was to give it you when you called. B'lieve they sent it to you, but the clerk said he couldn't find your place out;—by the way, (excuse me, sir), but yours is a funny name! How I heard 'em laughing at it, to be sure! What makes people give such queer names? Would you like to read it here, sir?—you're welcome."

"No, thank you, ma'am—it's of not the *least* consequence," he replied, with a desperate air; and tossing it with attempted carelessness into his hat, which he put on his head, he very civilly wished her good-night, and departed—nearly inclined to sickness, or faintness, or something of the sort, which the fresh air might perhaps dispel. He quickly espied a lamp at a corner, which promised to afford him an uninterrupted opportunity of inspecting his letter. He took it out of his hat. It was addressed—simply, "Mr Titmouse, *Cocking Court*, Oxford Street," (which accounted, perhaps, for the clerk's having been unable to find it); and having been opened with trembling eagerness, thus it read, and awfully—as a very death-warrant of all his dear delicious hopes and aspirations :—

"Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, present their compliments to Mr Titmouse, and are anxious to save him the trouble of his intended visit this evening.

"They exceedingly regret that obstacles (which it is to be hoped, however—though Messrs Q. G. and S. are by no means sanguine—may not prove *ultimately* insurmountable) exist in the way of their prosecuting their intended inquiries on behalf of Mr Titmouse.

"Since their last night's interview with him, circumstances, which they could not have foreseen, and over which they have no control, have occurred, which render it unnecessary

for Mr T. to give himself any more anxiety in the affair,—at least, not until he shall have heard from Messrs Q. G. and S.

"If anything of importance *should* hereafter transpire, it is not improbable that Mr T. may hear from them.

"They were favoured, this afternoon, with a visit from an alleged friend of Mr T.'s—a Mr Hucklebottom.

"*Saffron Hill, Wednesday Evening,*
12th July 18—"

When poor Titmouse had finished reading over this vague, frigid, and disheartening note a second time, a convulsive sob or two pierced his bosom, indicative of its being indeed swollen with sorrow; and at length, overcome by his feelings, he cried bitterly—not checked even by the occasional exclamations of one or two passers-by. He could not at all control himself. He felt as though he could have almost relieved himself by banging his head against the wall! A tumultuous feeling of mingled grief and despair prevented his thoughts, for a long while, from settling on any one idea or object. At length, when the violence of the storm had somewhat abated, on concluding a third perusal of the blighting document, which he held in his hand, his eye lit upon the strange word which was intended to designate his friend Huckaback; and it instantly changed both the kind of his feelings, and the current in which they had been rushing. Grief became rage; and the stream foamed in quite a new direction—namely, towards Huckaback. That accursed fellow he considered to be the sole cause of the direful disaster which had befallen him. He utterly lost sight of one circumstance, which one might have imagined likely to have occurred to his thoughts at such a time—viz. his own offensive and insolent behaviour over-night to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. Yet so it was :—yes, upon the devoted (but unconscious) head of Huckaback was the lightning rage of Tittlebat Titmouse doomed to descend. The fire

that was thus quickly kindled within, soon dried up the source of his tears. He crammed the letter into his pocket, and started off at once in the direction of Leicester Square, breathing rage at every step. His hands kept convulsively clenching together as he pelted along. Hotter and hotter became his rage as he neared the residence of Huckaback. When he had reached it, he sprang up-stairs; knocked at his *quondam* friend's door; and on the instant of its being—doubtless somewhat surprisedly—opened by Huckaback, who was undressing, Titmouse sprang towards him, let fly a goodly number of violent blows upon his face and breast—and down fell Huckaback upon the bed behind him, insensible, and bleeding profusely from his nose.

"There! there!"—gasped Titmouse, breathless and exhausted, discharging a volley of oaths and opprobrious epithets at the victim of his fury. "Do it again! You will, won't you! *You'll go*—and meddle again in other people's—you—cu-cu-cursed officious"—but his rage was spent—the paroxysm was over; the silent and bleeding figure of Huckaback was before his eyes; and he gazed at him, terror-stricken. What had he done! He sank down on the bed beside Huckaback—then started up, wringing his hands, and staring at him in an ecstacy of remorse and fright. It was rather singular that the noise of such an assault should have roused no one to inquire into it; but so it was. Frightened almost out of his bewildered senses, he closed and bolted the door; and addressed himself, as well as he was able, to the recovering of Huckaback. After propping him up, and splashing cold water into his face, Titmouse at length discovered symptoms of restoration to consciousness, which he anxiously endeavoured to accelerate, by putting to the lips of the slowly-reviving victim of his violence some cold water, in a tea-cup. He swallowed a little; and soon afterwards, opening his eyes, stared on Titmouse with a dull eye and bewildered air.

"What's been the matter?" at length he faintly inquired.

"Oh, Hucky! so glad to hear you speak again. It's I—I—Titty! I did it! Strike me, Hucky, as soon as you're well enough! Do—kick me—anything you choose! I won't hinder you!" cried Titmouse, sinking on his knees, and clasping his hands together, as he perceived Huckaback rapidly reviving.

"Why, what is the matter?" repeated that gentleman, with a wondering air, raising his hand to his nose, from which the blood was still trickling. The fact is, that he had lost his senses, probably from the suddenness, rather than the violence, of the injuries which he had received.

"I did it all—yes. I did!" continued Titmouse, gazing on him with a look of agony and remorse.

"Why, I can't be awake—I can't!" said Huckaback, rubbing his eyes, and then staring at his wet and blood-stained shirt-front and hands.

"Oh yes, you are—you are!" groaned Titmouse; "and I'm going mad as fast as I can! Do what you like to me! Kick me if you please! Call in a constable! Send me to jail! Say I came to rob you—anything—blow me if I care what becomes of me!"

"Why, what does all this jabber mean, Titmouse?" inquired Huckaback sternly, apparently meditating reprisals.

"Oh, yes, I see! Now you are going to give it me! but I won't stir. So hit away, Hucky."

"Why—are you mad?" inquired Huckaback, grasping him by the collar rather roughly.

"Yes, quite! Mad!—ruined!—gone to the devil all at once!"

"And what if you are? What did it matter to me? What brought you here?" continued Huckaback in a tone of increasing vehemence. "What have I done to offend you? How dare you come here? And at this time of night, too? Eh?"

"What, indeed! Oh lud, oh lud, oh lud! Kick me, I say—strike me! You'll do me good, and bring me to

my senses. *Me* to do all this to you! And we've been such precious good friends always. I'm a brute, Hucky—I've been mad, stark mad, Hucky—and that's all I can say!"

Huckaback stared at him more and more; and began at length to suspect how matters stood—namely, that the Sunday's incident had turned Titmouse's head—he having also, no doubt, heard some desperate bad news during the day, smashing all his hopes. A mixture of emotions kept Huckaback silent:—astonishment—apprehension—doubt—pride—pique—resentment. He had been *struck*—his blood had been drawn—by the man there before him on his knees, formerly his friend; now, he supposed, a madman.

"Why, curse me, Titmouse, if I can make up my mind what to do to you!" he exclaimed. "I—I suppose you are going mad, or gone mad, and I must forgive you. But get away with you—out with you, or—or—I'll call in!"

"Forgive me—forgive me, dear Hucky! Don't send me away—I shall go and drown myself if you do."

"What the d—l do I care if you do? You'd much better have gone and done it before you came here. Nay, be off and do it *now*, instead of blubbing here in this way."

"Go on!—go on!—it's doing me good—the worse the better!" sobbed Titmouse.

"Come, come," said Huckaback roughly, "none of this noise here. I'm tired of it!"

"But, pray, don't send me away from you. I shall go straight to the devil if you do! I've no friend but you, Hucky. Yet I've been such a villain to you!—But it quite put the devil into me, when all of a sudden I found it was *you*."

"Me!—Why, what *are* you after?" interrupted Huckaback, with an air of angry wonder.

"Oh dear, dear!" groaned Titmouse; "if I've been a brute to you, which is quite true, *you've* been the *ruin* of me, clean! I'm clean done for, *Huck*. Cleaned out! You've done

my business for me; knocked it all on the head!—I shan't never hear any more of it—they've said as much in their letter—they say you called to-day"——

Huckaback now began to have a glimmering notion of his having been, in some considerable degree, connected with the mischief of the day—an unconscious agent in it. He audibly drew in his breath, as it were, as he more and more distinctly recollected his visit to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and adverted more particularly to his *threats*, uttered, too, in Titmouse's name, and as if by his authority. Whew! here was a kettle of fish.

Now, strange and unaccountable as, at first thought, it may appear, the very circumstance which one should have thought calculated to assuage his resentment against Titmouse—namely, that he had really *injured* Titmouse most seriously (if not, indeed, irreparably), and so *provoked* the drubbing which had just been administered to him—had quite the contrary effect. Paradoxical as it may seem, matter of clear mitigation was at once converted into matter of aggravation. Were the feelings which Huckaback then experienced, akin to that which often produces hatred of a person whom one has injured? May it be thus accounted for? That there is a secret satisfaction in the mere consciousness of being a sufferer—a martyr—and that, too, in the presence of a person whom one perceives to be aware that he has wantonly injured one; that one's bruised spirit is soothed by the sight of his remorse—by the consciousness that he is punishing himself infinitely more severely than *we* could punish him; and of the claim one has obtained to the *sympathy* of everybody who sees, or may hear of one's sufferings, that rich and grateful balm to injured feeling. But when, as in the case of Huckaback, feelings of this description—in a coarse and small way, to be sure, according to his kind—were suddenly encountered by a consciousness of his having *deserved* his sufferings; when the martyr felt himself quickly sink-

ing into the culprit and offender; when, I say, Huckaback felt an involuntary consciousness that the gross indignities which Titmouse had just inflicted on him, had been justified by the provocation—nay, had been far less than his mischievous and impudent interference had deserved;—and when feelings of this sort, moreover, were sharpened by a certain tingling sense of physical pain from the blows which he had received—the result was, that the sleeping lion of Huckaback's courage was very nearly awakening.

"*I've half a mind, Titmouse*"—said Huckaback, knitting his brows, fixing his eyes, and appearing inclined to raise his arm. There was an ominous pause for a moment or two, during which Titmouse's feelings also underwent a slight alteration. His allusion to Huckaback's ruinous insult to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, unconsciously converted his remorse into rage, which it rather, perhaps, resuscitated. Titmouse rose from his knees. "Ah!" said he, in quite an altered tone, "you *may* look fierce! you may!—you'd better strike me, Huckaback—do! Finish the mischief you've begun this day! Hit away—you're quite safe"—and he secretly prepared himself for the mischief which—did not come. "You *have* ruined me! you have, Huckaback!" he continued with increasing vehemence; "and I shall be cutting my throat—nay," striking his fist on the table, "I will!"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Huckaback, apprehensively. "No, Titmouse, don't—don't think of it; it will all come right yet, depend on't; you see if it don't!"

"Oh, no, it's all done for—it's all up with me!"

"But *what's* been done?—let us hear," said Huckaback, as he passed a wet towel to and fro over his ensanguined features. It was by this time clear that the storm, which had for some time given out only a few faint fitful flashes or flickerings in the distance, had passed away. Titmouse, with many grievous sighs, took out the letter which had produced the paroxysms I have been describing, and

read it aloud. "And only see how they've spelled your name, Huckaback—look!" he added, handing his friend the letter.

"How *partic'lar* vulgar!" exclaimed Huckaback, with a contemptuous air, which, overspreading his features, half-closed as was his left eye, and swollen as were his cheek and nose, would have made him a queer object to one who had leisure to observe such matters. "And so *this* is all they say of me," he continued—adding suddenly, "How do you come to know that I've been doing you mischief? All I did was just to look in, as respectful as possible, to ask how you was, and they very civilly told me you was very well, and we parted"——

"Nay, now, that's a lie, Huckaback, and you know it!" interrupted Titmouse.

"It's true, so help me——!" vehemently asseverated Huckaback.

"Why, perhaps you'll deny that you wrote and told me all you said," interrupted Titmouse indignantly, feeling in his pocket for Huckaback's letter, which that worthy had at the moment quite forgotten having sent, and on being reminded of it, he certainly seemed rather nonplussed. "Oh—ay, if you mean *that*—hem!"—he stammered.

"Come, you *know* you're a liar, Huck—but it's no good now: liar or no liar, it's all over."

"The pot and kettle, anyhow, Tit, as far as that goes—hem!—but let's spell over this letter; we haven't studied it yet; I'm a hand, rather, at getting at what's said in a letter!—Come"—and they drew their chairs together, Huckaback reading over the letter slowly, alone; Titmouse's eyes travelling incessantly from his friend's countenance to the letter, and so back again, to gather what might be the effect of its perusal.

"There's a glimpse of daylight yet, Titty!" said Huckaback, as he concluded reading it.

"No! But is there really? Do tell me, Hucky"——

"Why, first and foremost, how uncommon polite they are (except that

they haven't manners enough to spell my name right) "—

"Really—and so they are!" exclaimed Titmouse, rather elatedly.

"And then, you see, there's another thing—if they'd meant to give the thing the go-by altogether, what could have been easier than to say so?—but they haven't said anything of the sort, so they don't *mean* to give it all up!"

"Lord, Huck! what would I give for such a head as yours! What you say is quite true," said Titmouse, still more cheerfully.

"To be sure, they do say there's an *obstacle*—an obstacle, you see—nay, it's obstacles, which is several, and that" — Titmouse's face fell.

"But they say again, that it's—it's—curse their big words—they say it's—to be got over in time."

"Well—that's something, isn't it?"

"To be sure it is; and a'n't anything better than nothing? But then, again, here's a stone in the other pocket—they say there's a *circumstance*!—Don't you hate circumstances, Titty?—I do."

"So do I!—What does it mean? I've often heard—isn't it a *thing*? And that may be—anything, bad as well as good!"

"Oh, there's a great dif—hem! And they go on to say it's happened since you was there" —

"Curse me, then, if that don't mean *you*, Huckaback!" interrupted Titmouse, with returning anger.

"No, that can't be it; they said they'd no control over the circumstance;—now they *had* over me; for they ordered me to the door, and I went; a'n't that so, Titty?—Lord, how my eye *does* smart, to be sure!"

"And don't I smart all over, inside and out, if it come to that?" inquired Titmouse dolefully.

"There's nothing particular in the rest of the letter—only uncommon civil, and saying if anything turns up you shall hear."

"I could make that out myself—so there's nothing in that"—said Titmouse quickly.

"Well—if it is all over—what a pity! Such things as we could have

done, Titty, if we'd got the thing—eh?"

Titmouse groaned at this glimpse of the heaven he seemed shut out of for ever.

"Can't you find anything—nothing at all comfortable-like, in the letter?" he inquired with a deep sigh.

Huckaback again took up the letter and spelled it over. "Well," said he, striving to give himself an appearance of thinking, "there's something in it that, after all, I don't seem quite to get to the bottom of—they've seemingly taken a deal of pains with it!"

[And undoubtedly it *was* a document which had been pretty well considered by its framers before being sent out; though, probably, they had hardly anticipated its being so soon afterwards subjected to the scrutiny of such acute intellects as were now engaged upon it.]

"And then, again, you know they're lawyers; and do *they* ever write anything that hasn't got more in it than anybody can find out? These gents that wrote this, they're a trick too keen for the thieves even—and how can *we*—hem!—but I wonder if that fat, old, bald-headed gent, with sharp eyes, was Mr Quirk?"

"To be sure it was," interrupted Titmouse, with a half shudder.

"Was it? Well, then, I'd advise Old Nick to look sharp before he tackles that old gent, that's all!"

"Give me Mr Gammon for my money," said Titmouse sighing, "such an *uncommon* gentlemanlike gent—he's quite taken to me" —

"Ah, that, I suppose, was him with the black velvet waistcoat, and pretty white hands! But *he* can look stern, too, Tit! You should have seen him ring, when—hem!—But what was I saying about the letter? Don't you see they say they'll be sure to write if anything turns up?"

"So they do, to be sure! Well—I'd forgot that!" interrupted Titmouse, brightening up.

"Then, isn't there their advertisement in the *Flash*? They hadn't their eye on anything when they put it there, I dare say!—They can't get out of *that*, anyhow!"

"I begin to feel all of a sweat, Hucky; I'm sure there's something in the wind yet!" said Titmouse, drawing nearer still to his astute comforter. "And more than that—would they have said half they did to me last night?"

"Eh! hollo, by the way! I've not heard of what went on last night! So you went to 'em? Well—tell us all that happened—and nothing but the truth, be *sure* you don't; come, Titty!" said Huckaback, snuffing the candle, and then turning eagerly to his companion.

"Well—they'd such a number of queer-looking papers before them, some with old German-text writing, and others with zigzag marks—and they were so uncommon polite—they all three got up as I went in, and made me bows, one after the other, and said, 'Yours most obediently, Mr Titmouse,' and a great many more such things."

"Well—and then?"

"Why, Hucky, so help me —! and 'pon my soul, that old gent, Mr Quirk, told me"—Titmouse's voice trembled at the recollection — "he says, 'Sir, you're the real owner of Ten Thousand a-year, and no mistake!'"

"Lawks!" ejaculated Huckaback, opening wider and wider his uninjured eye, and his ears, as his friend went on.

"And a title—a *lord*, or something of that sort—and you've a great many country seats; and there's been £10,000 a-year saving up for you ever since you was born—and heaps of interest besides!—'pon my soul he did!"

"Titty! Titty! you take my breath away," gasped Huckaback, his eyes fixed intently on his friend's face.

"Yes; and they said I might marry the most beautifulest woman that ever my eyes saw, for the asking."

"You'll forget poor Bob Huckaback, Tit!" murmured his friend despondingly.

"Not I, Huckaback—if I get my rights, and you know how to behave yourself!"

"Have you been to Tag-rag's to-day, after hearing all this?"

[The thermometer seemed to have been here plunged out of hot water into cold—Titmouse was down at zero in a trice.]

"Oh!—that's it! 'Tis all gone again! What a fool I am! We've clean forgot this cursed letter—and that leads me to the end of what took place last night. That cursed shop was what we split on!"

"Split on *the shop*? eh? What's the meaning of that?" inquired Huckaback, with eager anxiety.

"Why, that's the thing," continued Titmouse, in a faltering tone, and with a depressed look—"That was what I wanted to know myself; for they said I'd better go back! So I said, 'Gents,' said I, 'I'll be — if I'll go back to the shop any more;' and I snapped my fingers at them—so! (for you know what a chap I am when my blood's up). And they all turned gashly pale—they did, upon my life—you never saw anything like it! And one of them said then, in a humble way, 'Wouldn't I please to go back to the shop, just for a day or two, till things is got to rights a bit.' 'Not a day nor a minute!' says I, in an immense rage. 'We think you'd better, really,' said they. 'Then,' says I, 'if that's your plan, curse me if I won't cut with you all, and I'll employ some one else!' and—would you believe me?—out I went, bang! into the street!!"

"You *did*, Tit!!" echoed Huckaback, aghast.

"They shouldn't have given me so much brandy-and-water as they did; I didn't well know what I was about, what with the news and the spirits!"

"And you went into the street?" inquired Huckaback, with a kind of horror.

"I did, by Jove, Hucky!"

"They'd given you the sperrits to see what kind of chap you'd be if you got the property—only to try you, depend on it!"

"Lord! I—I dare say they did!" exclaimed Titmouse, elevating his head with sudden amazement, totally

forgetting that that same brandy-and-water he had asked for—"and me never to think of it at the time!"

"Now are you quite sure you wasn't in a *dream* last night, all the while?"

"Oh, dear, I wish I had been—I do, indeed, Hucky!"

"Well—you went into the street—what then?" inquired Huckaback, with a sigh of exhausted attention.

"Why, when I'd got there, I could have bitten my tongue off, as one may suppose; but, just as I was a-turning to go in again, who should come up to me but Mr Gammon, saying, he humbly hoped there was no offence."

"Oh, glorious! So it was all set right again, then—eh?"

"Why—I—I can't quite exactly say that much, either—but—when I went back (being obligated by Mr Gammon being so pressing) the other two was sitting as pale as death; and though Mr Gammon and me went on our knees to the old gent, it wasn't any use for a long time; and all that he could be got to say was, that perhaps I might look in again to-night—but they first made me swear a solemn oath on the Bible never to tell any one anything about the fortune)—and then—you went, Huckaback, and you did the business; they, of course, concluding I'd sent you!"

"Oh, bother! that can't be. Don't you see how civilly they speak of me in their letter? They're afraid of me, you may depend on it. By the way, Tit, how much did you promise to come down, if you got the thing?"

"Come down!—I—really—by Jove, I didn't think of such a thing! No—I'm sure I didn't"—answered Titmouse, as if new light had burst in upon him.

"Why, Tit, I never see'd such a goose! That's it, depend upon it—it's the whole thing! That's what they're driving at, in the note!—Why, Tit, where *was* your wits? D'ye think such gents as them—great lawyers, too—will work for nothing?—You must write at once and tell them you will come down handsome—say a couple of hundreds, besides expenses—Gad! 'twill set you on your pins

again, Titty!—Rot me! now I think of it, if I didn't dream last night that you was a Member of Parliament or something of that sort."

"A Member of Parliament! And so I shall, if all this turns up well—I shall be *that* at least!" replied Titmouse exultingly.

"You see if my dream don't come true! You see, Titty, I'm *always* a-thinking of you, day and night. Never was two fellows that was such close friends as we was from the very beginning of knowing each other!"

[They had been acquainted with each other about half a year.]

"Hucky, what a cruel scamp I was to behave to you in the way I did—curse me, if I couldn't cry to see your eye bunged up in that way!"

"Pho! dear Titty, I knew you loved me all the while"—whined Huckaback, "and meant no harm; you wasn't yourself when you did it—and besides, I deserved ten times more! If you had killed me I should have liked you as much as ever!"

"Give us your hand, Hucky! Let's forgive one another!" cried Titmouse excitedly; and their hands were quickly locked together.

"If we don't mismanage the thing, we shall be all right yet, Titty; but you won't do anything without speaking to *me* first—will you, Titty?"

"The thoughts of it all going right again is enough to set me wild, Hucky—But what shall we do to set the thing going again?"

"*Quarter past one!*" quivered the voice of the paralytic watchman beneath, startling the friends out of their exciting colloquy; his warning being at the same time silently seconded by the long-wicked candle, burning within half an inch of its socket. They hastily agreed that Titmouse should immediately write to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, a proper [*i. e.* a most abject] letter, solemnly pledging himself to obey their injunctions in everything for the future, and offering them a handsome reward for their exertions, if successful.

"Well—good-night, Huck! good-night," said Titmouse rising. "I'm

not the least sleepy—I sha'n't sleep a wink all night long! I shall sit up to write my letter—you haven't got a sheet of paper here, by the way?—I've used all mine." [That was the solitary sheet which he had bought some months before.]

Huckaback produced one, somewhat crumpled, from a drawer. "I'd give a hundred if I had them!" said he; "I sha'n't care a straw for the hiding I've got to-night—though I'm a *leetle* sore after it, too—and what the deuce am I to say to-morrow to Messrs Diaper about my precious black eye —"

"Oh, you can't hardly be at a loss for a lie that'll suit *them*, surely!—So good-night, Hucky—good-night!"

"Huckaback wrung his friend's hand, and was in a moment or two alone. "Haven't my fingers been itching all the while to be at the fellow!" exclaimed he, as he shut the door. "But, somehow, I've got too soft a sperrit, and can't bear to hurt any one;—and then—if the chap gets his £10,000 a-year—why—hem! Titty a'n't such a bad fellow, in the main, after all."

If Titmouse had been many degrees higher in the grade of society, *he would still have met with his Huckaback*;—a trifle more polished, perhaps, but hardly more quicksighted or effective than, in his way, had been the vulgar being he had just quitted.

Titmouse hastened homeward. How it was he knew not; but the feelings of elation with which he had quitted Huckaback did not last long; they rapidly sunk, in the cold night-air, lower and lower, the further he got from Leicester Square. He tried to recollect *what it was* that had made him take so very different a view of his affairs from that with which he had entered Huckaback's room. He had still a vague impression that they

were not desperate; that Huckaback had told him so, *and somehow proved it*; but how, he now knew not—he could not recollect. As Huckaback had gone on from time to time, Titmouse's little mind seemed to himself to comprehend and appreciate what was being said, and to gather encouragement from it; but *now*—found it!—he stopped—rubbed his forehead—what the deuce was it! By the time that he had reached his own door, he felt in as deplorable and despairing a humour as ever. He sat down to write his letter at once; but, after many vain efforts to express his meaning—his feelings being not in the least degree relieved by the many oaths he uttered—he at length furiously dashed his pen, point-wise, upon the table, and thereby destroyed the only implement of the sort which he possessed. Then he tore, rather than pulled off, his clothes; blew out his candle with a furious *puff!* and threw himself on his bed—but in so doing banged the back of his head against the back of the bed—and which of the two suffered more, for some time after, probably Mr Titmouse was best able to tell.

Hath, then—oh, Titmouse! fated to undergo much!—the blind jade, Fortune, in her mad vagaries—she, the goddess whom thou hast so long foolishly worshipped—at length cast her sportful eye upon thee, and singled thee out—in spite of adverse appearances—to become the envy of millions of admiring fools, by reason of the pranks she will presently make thee exhibit for her amusement? If this be indeed, as at present it promises, her intent, she truly, to me calmly watching her movements, appears resolved first to wreak her spite upon thee to the uttermost, and make thee pass through intense sufferings! Oh me! Oh me! Alas!

CHAPTER VI.

GREAT LAWYERS COME ON THE SCENE; A GLIMPSE OF DAYLIGHT; AND
A VERY MOVING LETTER.

THE means by which Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, became possessed of the important information which had put them into motion, as we have seen, to find out by advertisement one yet unknown to them, it will not be necessary for some time to explain. Theirs was a keen house, truly, and dealing principally in the criminal line of business; and they would not, one may be sure, have lightly committed themselves to their present extent, namely, in inserting such an advertisement in the newspapers, and, above all, going so far in their disclosures to Titmouse. Their prudence in the latter step, however, was very questionable to themselves even; and they immediately afterwards deplored together the precipitation with which Mr Quirk had communicated to Titmouse the nature and extent of his possible good fortune. It was Mr Quirk's own doing, however, and after as much expostulation as the cautious Gammon could venture to use. I say they had not *lightly* taken up the affair; they had not "acted unadvisedly." They were fortified, first, by the opinion of Mr MORTMAIN, an able and experienced conveyancer, who thus wound up an abstrusely learned opinion on the voluminous "case" which had been submitted to him:—

" * * Under all these circumstances, and assuming as above, I am decidedly of opinion that the title to the estates in question is at this moment not in their present possessor (who represents the younger branch of the Dreddlington family), but in the

descendants of Stephen Dreddlington, through the female line; which brings us to Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse. This person, however, seems not to have been at all aware of the existence of his rights, or he could hardly have been concerned in the pecuniary arrangements mentioned at fol. 33 of the case. Probably something may be heard of his heir by making careful inquiry in the neighbourhood where he was last heard of, and issuing advertisements for his heir-at-law; care, of course, being taken not to be so specific in the terms of such advertisements as to attract the notice of A. B. (the party now in possession). If such person should, by the means above suggested, be discovered, I advise proceedings to be commenced forthwith, under the advice of some gentleman of experience at the common-law bar.

"MOULDY MORTMAIN.

"*Lincoln's Inn, January 19, 18—.*"

This was sufficiently gratifying to the "house;" but, to make assurance doubly sure, before embarking in so harassing and expensive an enterprise—one which lay a good deal, too, without the sphere of their practice, which, as already mentioned, was chiefly in criminal law—the same *case* (without Mr Mortmain's opinion) was laid before a young conveyancer, who, having much less business than Mr Mortmain, would, it was thought, "look into the case fully," though receiving only one-fifth of the fee which had been paid to Mr Mortmain. And Mr Fussy FRANKPLEDGE—that was his name—*did* "look into the case

fully;" and in doing so, turned over two-thirds of his little library;—and also gleaned—by note and verbally—the opinions upon the subject of some half-dozen of his "learned friends;" to say nothing of the magnificent air with which he indoctrinated his eager and confiding pupil upon the subject!—At length his imp of a clerk bore the precious result of his master's labours to Saffron Hill, in the shape of an "opinion," three times as long as, and indescribably more difficult to understand than, the opinion of Mr Mortmain; and which, if it demonstrated anything beyond the prodigious *crum* which had been undergone by its writer for the purpose of producing it, demonstrated this—namely, that neither the party indicated by Mr Mortmain, nor the one then actually in possession, had any more right to the estate than the aforesaid Mr Frankpledge; but that the happy individual so entitled was some third person. Messrs Quirk and Gammon, a good deal flustered hereat, hummed and hawed on perusing these contradictory opinions of counsel learned in the law; and the usual and proper result followed—i. e. a "CONSULTATION," which was to solder up all the differences between Mr Mortmain and Mr Frankpledge, or, at all events, strike out some light which might guide their clients on their adventurous way.

Now, Mr Mortmain had been Mr Quirk's conveyancer (whenever such a functionary's services had been required) for about twenty years; and Quirk was ready to suffer death in defence of any opinion of Mr Mortmain. Mr Gammon swore by Frankpledge, who had been at school with him, and was a "rising man." Mortmain belonged to the old school—Frankpledge steered by the new lights. The former could point to some forty cases in the Law Reports, which had been ruled in conformity with his previously given opinion, and some twenty which had been overruled thereby; the latter gentleman, although he had been only five years in practice, had written an *opinion* which had led to a

suit—which had ended in a difference of opinion between the Court of King's Bench and the Common Pleas; the credit of having done which was, however, some time afterward, a little bit tarnished by the decision of a Court of Error, without hearing the other side, *against* the opinion of Mr Frankpledge. But—

Mr Frankpledge quoted *so* many cases, and went to the bottom of everything, and gave *so* much for his money—and was *so* civil!—

Well, the consultation came off, at length, at Mr Mortmain's chambers, at eight o'clock in the evening. A few minutes before that hour, Messrs Quirk and Gammon were to be seen in the clerk's room, in civil conversation with that prim functionary, who explained to them that *he* did all Mr Mortmain's drafting—pupils were *so* idle; that Mr Mortmain did not score out much of what he (the aforesaid clerk) had drawn; that he noted up Mr Mortmain's new cases for him in the reports, Mr M. having *so* little time; and that the other day the Vice-Chancellor called on Mr Mortmain—with several other matters of that sort, calculated to enhance the importance of Mr Mortmain; who, as the clerk was asking Mr Gammon, in a good-natured way, how long Mr Frankpledge had been in practice, and where his chambers were—made his appearance, with a cheerful look and a bustling gait, having just walked down from his house in Queen's Square, with a comfortable bottle of old port on board. Shortly afterwards Mr Frankpledge arrived, followed by his little clerk, bending beneath two bags of books (unconscious bearer of as much law as had well-nigh split thousands of learned heads, and broken tens of thousands of hearts, in the making of, being destined to have a similar but far greater effect in the applying of), and the consultation began.

As Frankpledge entered, he could not help casting a sheep's eye towards a table that glistened with *such* an array of "papers" (a tasteful arrangement of Mr Mortmain's clerk before every consultation); and down sat

the two conveyancers and the two attorneys. I devoutly wish I had time to describe the scene at length; but greater events are pressing upon me. The two conveyancers fenced with one another for some time very guardedly and good-humouredly: pleasant was it to observe the conscious condescension of Mortmain, the anxious energy and volubility of Frankpledge. When Mr Mortmain said anything that seemed weighty or pointed, Quirk looked with an elated air, a quick triumphant glance, at Gammon; who, in his turn, whenever Mr Frankpledge quoted an "old case" from Bendboe, Godbolt, or the Year Books (which, having always piqued himself on his almost exclusive acquaintance with the *modera* cases, he made a point of doing), gazed at Quirk with a smile of placid superiority. Mr Frankpledge talked almost the whole time; Mr Mortmain, immovable in the view of the case which he had taken in his "opinion," listened with an attentive, good-natured air, ruminating pleasantly the while upon the quality of the port he had been drinking (the first of the bin which he had tasted), and upon the decision which the Chancellor might come to on a case brought into court on his advice, and which had been argued that afternoon. At last Frankpledge unwittingly fell foul of a favourite crotchet of Mortmain's—and at it they went, hammer and tongs, for nearly twenty minutes (it had nothing whatever to do with the case they were consulting upon). In the end, Mortmain of course adhered to his points, and Frankpledge intrenched himself in his books; each slightly yielded to the views of the other on immaterial points, or what would have appeared the use of the consultation? but did that which both had resolved upon doing from the first, *i. e.* sticking to his original opinion. Both had talked an amazing deal of deep law, which had at least one effect, *viz.* it fairly drowned both Quirk and Gammon, who, as they went home, with not, it must be owned, the clearest perceptions in the world of what had been going on, though, before going to the

consultation, each had really known something about the case—stood each stoutly by his conveyancer's opinion, protesting that he had never been once misled—Quirk by Mortmain, or Gammon by Frankpledge—and each resolved to give *his* man more of the conveyancing business of the house than he had before. I grieve to add, that they parted that night with a trifle less of cordiality than had been their wont. In the morning, however, this little irritation had passed away; and they agreed, before giving up the case, to take the final opinion of Mr TRESAYLE—the great Mr Tresayle. He was, indeed, a wonderful conveyancer—a perfect miracle of real-property law-learning. He had had such an enormous practice for forty-five years that for the last ten he had never eaten his dinner, except when forced by his white-headed clerk, nor put his nose out of chambers for pure want of time, and at last of inclination; and had been so conversant with Norman French and Law Latin, in the old English letter, that he had almost entirely forgotten how to write the modern English character. His opinions made their appearance in three different kinds of handwriting. First, one that none but he and his old clerk could make out; secondly, one that none but he himself could read; and thirdly, one that neither he, nor his clerk, nor any one on earth, could decipher. The use of any one of these styles depended on—the difficulty of the case to be answered. If it were an easy one, the answer was very judiciously put into No. I; if rather difficult, it, of course, went into No. II.; and if exceedingly difficult (and also important), it was very properly thrown into No. III.; being a question that really ought not to have been asked, and did not deserve an answer. The fruit within these uncouth shells, however, was precious. Mr Tresayle's law was supreme over everybody's else. It was currently reported that Lord Eldon even (who was himself slightly acquainted with such subjects) reverently deferred to the authority of Mr Tresayle; and

would lie winking and knitting his shaggy eyebrows half the night, if he thought that Mr Tresayle's opinion on a case, and his own, differed. This was the great authority to whom, as in the last resort, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap resolved to appeal. To his chambers they, within a day or two after their consultation at Mr Mortmain's, despatched their case (making no mention of the opinion which had been previously taken), with a highly respectable fee, and a special compliment to his clerk, hoping to hear from that awful quarter within a month—which was the earliest average period within which Mr Tresayle's opinions found their way to his patient but anxious clients. It came at length, with a note from Mr Prim, his clerk, intimating that they would find him, *i. e.* the aforesaid Mr Prim, at his chambers the next morning, prepared to explain the opinion to them; having just had it read over to him by Mr Tresayle, for it proved to be in No. II. The opinion occupied about two pages; and the handwriting bore a strong resemblance to Chinese or Arabic, with a quaint intermixture of the uncial Greek character—it was impossible to contemplate it without a certain feeling of awe! In vain did old Quirk squint at it, from all corners, for nearly a couple of hours (having first called in the assistance of a friend of his, an old attorney of upwards of fifty years' standing); nay—even Mr Gammon, foiled at length, could not for the life of him refrain from a soft curse or two. Neither of them could make anything of it—as for Snap, they never showed it to him; it was not within his province—*i. e.* the Insolvent Debtors' Court, the Old Bailey, the Clerkenwell Sessions, the Police Offices, the inferior business of the Common Law Courts, and the worrying of the clerks of the office—a department in which he was perfection itself).

To their great delight, Mr Tresayle took Mr Mortmain's view of the case. Nothing could be more terse, perspicuous, and conclusive than the great man's opinion. Mr Quirk was in raptures, and that very day sent to pro-

cure an engraving of Mr Tresayle, which had lately come out, for which he paid 5s., and ordered it to be framed and hung up in his own room, where already grinned a quaint resemblance, in black profile, of Mr Mortmain, cheek by jowl with that of a notorious traitor who had been hanged in spite of Mr Quirk's best exertions. In special good-humour, he assured Mr Gammon, who was plainly somewhat crestfallen about Mr Frankpledge, that everybody must have a beginning; that even he himself (Mr Quirk) had been once only a beginner.

Once fairly on the scent, Messrs Quirk and Gammon soon began, secretly but energetically, to push their inquiries in all directions. They discovered that Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse, having spent the chief portion of his blissful days as a cobbler at Whitehaven, had died in London, somewhere about the year 1793. At this point they stood for a long while, in spite of two advertisements, to which they had been driven with the greatest reluctance, for fear of attracting the attention of those most interested in thwarting their efforts. Even that part of the affair had been managed somewhat skilfully. It was a stroke of Mr Gammon's to advertise not for "Heir-at-Law," but "*Neat of Kin*," as the reader has seen. The former might have challenged the notice of unfriendly curiosity, which the latter was hardly calculated to attract. At length—at the "third time of asking"—up turned Tittlebat Titmouse, in the way which we have seen. His relationship with Mr Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse was indisputable; in fact, he was (to adopt his own words) that "deceased person's" son and heir-at-law.

The reader may guess the chagrin and disgust of Mr Gammon at the appearance, manners, and character of the person whom he fully believed, on first seeing him at Messrs Tag-rag's, to be the rightful owner of the fine estates held by one who, as against Mr Titmouse, had no more real title to them than had Mr Tag-rag; and for

whom their house was to undertake the grave risk and expense of instituting such proceedings as would be requisite to place Mr Titmouse in the position which they believed him entitled to occupy—having to encounter a hot and desperate opposition at every point, from those who had nine-tenths of the law—to wit, *possession*—on their side, on which they stood as upon a rock; and with immense means for carrying on the war defensive. That Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap did not contemplate undertaking all this, without having calculated upon its proving well worthy their while, was only reasonable. They were going voluntarily to become the means of conferring immense benefits upon one who was a total stranger to them—who had not a penny to spend upon the prosecution of his own rights. Setting aside certain difficulties which collected themselves into two awkward words, MAINTENANCE and CHAMPERTY, and stared them in the face whenever they contemplated any obvious method of securing the just reward of their enterprise and toils—setting aside all this, I say, it might turn out, only after a ruinous expenditure had been incurred, that the high authorities which had sanctioned their proceedings in point of law, had expressed their favourable opinions on a state of facts, which, however satisfactorily they looked on paper, could not be substantiated, if keenly sifted, and determinedly resisted. All this, too—all their time, labour, and money, to go for nothing—on behalf of a vulgar, selfish, ignorant, presumptuous, ungrateful puppy, like Titmouse!—Well indeed, therefore, might Mr Gammon, as we have seen he did, give himself and partners a forty-eight hours' interval, between his interview with Titmouse and formal introduction of him to the firm, in which to consider their position and mode of procedure. The taste of his quality which that first interview afforded them all—so far surpassing all that the bitter description of him given to them by Mr Gammon had prepared

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them for—filled the partners with inexpressible disgust, and would have induced them to throw up the whole affair—so getting rid both of it, and of him, together. But then, on the other hand, there were certain very great advantages, both of a professional and even directly pecuniary kind, which it would have been madness indeed for any office lightly to throw away. It was really, after all, an unequal struggle between feeling and interest. If they should succeed in unseating the present wrongful possessor of a very splendid property, and putting in his place the rightful owner, by means alone of their own professional ability, perseverance, and heavy pecuniary outlay (a fearful consideration, truly, but Mr Quirk had scraped together some thirty thousand pounds!) what recompense could be too great for such resplendent services? To say nothing of the *éclat* which it would gain for their office, in the profession and in the world at large, and the substantial and permanent advantages to the firm, if, as they ought to be, they were intrusted with the general management of the property by the new and inexperienced and confiding owner—ay, but there was the rub! What a disheartening and disgusting specimen of such new owner had disclosed itself to their anxiously-expecting but soon recoiling eyes—always, however, making due allowances for one or two cheering indications, on Mr Titmouse's part, of a certain rapacious and litigious humour, which might hereafter right pleasantly and profitably occupy their energies! Their professional position, and their interests, had long made them sharp observers; but when did ever before low and disgusting qualities force themselves into revolting prominence, as those of Mr Titmouse had done, in the very moment of an expected display of the better feelings of human nature—such as enthusiastic gratitude? They had, in their time, had to deal with some pleasant specimens of humanity, to be sure; but when with any more odious and

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impracticable than Tittlebat Titmouse threatened to prove himself? What bold could they get upon such a character as his? Beneath all his coarseness and weakness, there was a glimmer of low cunning which might suffice to keep their superior and practised astuteness at its full stretch. These were difficulties, cheerless enough in the contemplation, truly; but, nevertheless, the partners could not bear the idea of escaping from them by throwing up the affair altogether. Then came the question—How were they to manage Mr Titmouse?—how acquire an early and firm hold of him, so as to convert him into a *capital client*? His fears and his interests were obviously the engines with which their experienced hands were to work; and several long and most anxious consultations had Messrs Quirk and Gammon had on this important matter. The first great question with them was—To what extent, and when, they should acquaint him with the nature of his expectations.

Gammon was for keeping him comparatively in the dark, till success was within reach: during that interval (which might be a long one), by alternately stimulating his hopes and fears; by habituating him to an entire dependence on them; by persuading him of the prodigious extent of their exertions and sacrifices on his behalf—they *might* do something; mould him into a shape fit for their purposes; and persuade him that his affairs must needs go to ruin but in their hands. Something like this was the scheme of the cautious, acute, and placid Gammon. Mr Quirk, however (with whom, as will be hereafter shown, had originated the whole discovery), thought thus:—tell the fellow at once the whole extent of what we can do for him, viz. turn a half-starving linen-draper's shopman into the owner of £10,000 a-year, and of a great store of ready money. This will, in a manner, stun him into submission, and make him at once and for all what we want him to be. He will immediately fall prostrate with

reverent gratitude—looking at us, moreover, as three gods, who, at our will, can shut him out of heaven. “*That’s* the way to bring down your bird,” said Mr Quirk; and Mr Quirk had been forty years in practice—had made the business what it was—still held half of it in his own hands (two-thirds of the remaining half being Gammon’s, and the residue Snap’s): and Gammon, moreover, had a very distinct perception that the funds for carrying on the war would come out of the tolerably well-stored pockets of the august head of the firm. So, after a long discussion, he openly yielded his opinion to that of Mr Quirk—cherishing, however, a very warm respect for it in his own bosom. As for Snap, that distinguished member of the firm was very little consulted in the matter: which had not yet been brought to that stage where his powerful energies could come into play. He had of course, however, heard a good deal of what was going on; and knew that ere long there would be the copying out and serving of the Lord knows how many copies of declarations in ejectment, motions against the casual ejector, and so forth—so far at least as he was “up to” all those quaint and anomalous proceedings. It had, therefore, been at length agreed that the communication to Titmouse, on his first interview, of the full extent of his splendid expectations, should depend upon the discretion of Mr Quirk. The reader has seen the unexpected turn which matters took upon that important occasion! and if it proved Quirk’s policy to be somewhat inferior in point of discretion and long-sightedness to that of Gammon, still it must be owned that the latter had cause to admire the rapid generalship with which Mr Quirk had obviated the consequences of his false move—not ill seconded by Snap. What could have been more judicious than his reception of Titmouse, on the occasion of his being led in again by the subtle Gammon?

The next and greatest matter was, how to obtain any hold upon such a person as Titmouse had shown him-

self, so as to secure to themselves, in the event of success, the remuneration to which they considered themselves entitled. Was it so perfectly clear that, if he felt disposed to resist it, they could compel him to pay the mere amount of their bill of costs?

Suppose he should turn round upon them, and have their BILL TAXED—Mr Quirk grunted with fright at the bare thought. Then there was a slapping *quiddam honorarium* extra—undoubtedly for *that* they must, they feared, trust to the honour and gratitude of Mr Titmouse; and a pretty taste of the quality of that animal they had already experienced! Such a disposition as *his*, to have to rely upon for the prompt settlement of a bill of thousands of pounds of costs! and, besides that, to have it to look to for the payment of at least some five or perhaps ten thousand pounds *douceur*—nay, and this was not all. Mr Quirk had, as well as Mr Gammon, cast many an anxious eye on the following passages from *Blackstone's "Commentaries"*:—

"MAINTENANCE is an officious intermeddling in a suit that no way belongs to one, by 'maintaining' or assisting either party with money, or otherwise, to prosecute or defend it. * * It is an offence against public justice, as it keeps alive strife and contention, and perverts the remedial process of the law into an engine of oppression. * * The punishment by common law is fine and imprisonment, and by statute 32 Hen. VIII. c. 9, a forfeiture of £10!

"CHAMPERTY—(*campi partitio*)—is a species of Maintenance, and punished in the same manner; being a bargain with a plaintiff or defendant '*campum partiri*, to divide the land, or other matter sued for, between them, if they prevail at law; whereupon the champertor is to carry on the suit at his own expense. * * These pests of civil society, that are perpetually endeavouring to disturb the repose of their neighbours, and officiously interfering in other men's quarrels, even at the hazard of their own fortunes, were severely animadverted on by the Roman law; and they were punished by the

forfeiture of a third part of their goods, and perpetual infamy."*

These were pleasant passages surely!—

Many were the conversations and consultations which the partners had had with Messrs Mortmain and Frankpledge respectively, upon the interesting question, whether there were any mode of at once securing themselves against the ingratitude of Titmouse, and protecting themselves against the penalties of the law. It made old Mr Quirk's bald head, even, flush all over whenever he thought of their bill being taxed, or contemplated himself the inmate of a prison (above all, at his advanced time of life), with mournful leisure to meditate upon the misdeeds that had sent him thither, to which profitable exercise the legislature would have specially stimulated him by a certain *fine* above mentioned. As for Gammon, he knew there *must* be a way of doing the thing somehow or another; for his friend Frankpledge felt infinitely less difficulty in the way than Mortmain, whom he considered a timid and old-fashioned practitioner. The courts, said Mr Frankpledge, were now setting their faces strongly against the doctrine of Maintenance, as being founded on a bygone state of things: *cessante ratione cessat et ipsa lex*, was his favourite maxim. There was no wrong without a remedy, he said; and was there not a *wrong* in the case of a poor man wrongfully deprived of his own? And how could this be *remedied*, if the old law of Maintenance stood like a bugbear in the way of humane and spirited practitioners? Was no one to be at liberty to take up the cause of the oppressed, encouraged by the prospect of an ample recompense? It might be said, perhaps—let the claimant sue *in formâ pauperis*: but then he must swear that he is not worth five pounds; and a man may not be able to take that oath, and yet be unequal to the commencement of a suit requiring the outlay of thousands. Moreover, a pretty prospect it was for such a suitor (*in formâ pauperis*), if he should happen to be non

* *Blackstone's Commentaries*, vol. iv. pp. 134-5

suited—to be “put to his election, whether to be whipped or pay the costs.”* Thus reasoned within himself that astute person, Mr Frankpledge; and at length satisfied himself that he had framed an instrument which would “meet the case”—that “would hold water.” To the best of my recollection, it was a BOND, conditioned to pay the sum of ten thousand pounds to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, within two months of Titmouse’s being put into possession of the rents and profits of the estate in question. The condition of that bond was, as its framer believed, drawn in a masterly manner; and his draft was lying before Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, on the Wednesday morning (*i. e.* the day after Titmouse’s interview with them), and had succeeded at length in exciting the approbation of Mr Quirk himself; when—whew!—down came a note from Mr Frankpledge, to the effect that, “since preparing the draft bond,” he had “had reason *slightly to modify* his original opinion,” owing to his “having lit upon a LATE CASE,” in which an instrument precisely similar to the one which he had prepared for his admiring clients, had been held “totally ineffectual and void both at law and in equity.” I say, Mr Frankpledge’s note was to that effect; for so ingeniously had he framed it—so effectually concealed his retreat beneath a little cloud of contradictory authorities, like as the ink-fish, they say, eludeth its pursuers—that his clients cursed the law, not their draftsman: and, moreover, by prudently withholding the *name* of the “late case,” he, at all events for a while, had prevented their observing that it was *senior* to some eight or ten cases which (indefatigable man!) he had culled for them out of the legal garden, and arrayed on the back of his draft. Slightly disconcerted were Messrs Quirk and Gammon, it may be believed, at this new view of the “result of the authorities.” “Mortmain is always right!” said Quirk, looking hard at Gammon; who observed simply that one

* *Blackstone*, vol. iii. p. 400, where it is stated, however, that “that practice is now disused.”

day Frankpledge would be as old as Mortmain then was—by which time (thought he) I also know where—please God—you will be, my old friend, if there’s any truth in the Scriptures! In this pleasant frame of mind were the partners, when the impudent apparition of Huckaback presented itself, in the manner which has been described. Huckaback’s commentary upon the disgusting text of Titmouse overnight (as a lawyer would say, in analogy to a well-known term, “Coke upon Littleton”), produced an effect upon their minds which may be easily imagined. It was while their minds were under these two soothing influences, *i. e.* of the insolence of Huckaback and the vacillation of Frankpledge, that Mr Gammon had penned the note to Titmouse (surely, under the circumstances, one of extraordinary temper and forbearance), which had occasioned him the agonies I have been attempting faintly to describe;—and that Quirk, summoning Snap into the room, had requested him to give orders for denial to Titmouse if he should again make his appearance at the office; which injunction Snap forthwith delivered in the clerk’s room, in a tone and manner that were a very model of the *imperative mood*.

A day or two afterwards, Mr Quirk (who was a man that stuck, like a limpet to a rock, to any point which occurred to him), in poring over that page in the fourth volume of Blackstone’s Commentaries, where were to be found the passages which have been already quoted (and which both Quirk and Gammon had long had off by heart), as he sat one day at dinner, at home, whither he had taken the volume in question, fancied he had at last hit upon a notable crotchet, which, the more he thought of, the more he was struck with; determining to pay a visit in the morning to Mr Mortmain. The spark of light that had twinkled till it kindled in the tinder of his mind, was struck by his hard head out of the following sentence of the text in question:—

“A man *may*, however, maintain the suit of his near kinsman, servant,

OR POOR NEIGHBOUR, out of *charity and compassion*, with impunity; *otherwise, the punishment is,*" &c. &c.*

Now, it seemed to Mr Quirk, that the words which I have placed in italics and small capitals, met the case of poor Tittlebat Titmouse to a T! He stuck to that view of the case, till he *almost* began to think that he really had a kind-of a sort-of a charity! and compassion! for poor Tittlebat—kept out of his rights—tyrannised over by a vulgar draper in Oxford Street—where, too, no doubt, he was half-starved.—“It’s a great blessing that one’s got the means—and the inclination, to serve one’s poor neighbours”—thought Quirk, as he swallowed glass after glass of the *wine that maketh glad the heart of gods and men*—and also *softens* it;—for the more he drank, the more and more pitiful became his mood—the more sensitive was he to compassionate suggestions; and by the time that he had finished the decanter, he was all but in tears! These virtuous feelings brought their own reward, too—for, from time to time, they conjured up, as it were, the faint rainbow image of a sound bond conditioned for the payment of TEN THOUSAND POUNDS!

To change the metaphor a little—by the time that old Quirk had reached his office in the morning, the heated iron had cooled. If his heart *had* retained any of the maudlin softness of the preceding evening, the following pathetic letter from Titmouse might have made a very deep impression upon it, and fixed him, in the benevolent and disinterested mind of the old lawyer, as indeed his “poor neighbour.” The following is an exact copy of that lucid and eloquent composition. It had been written by Mr Titmouse, all out of his own head; and with his own hand had he left it at the office, at a late hour on the preceding evening.

“To Messrs QUERK, GAMON, and SNAPE.

“GENTS,

“Y^r Esteem’d Favour lies now before Me, which *must Say* have Given

* *Blackstone’s Commentaries*, vol. iv. p. 185.

me Much Concern, seeing I Thought it was All Made up betwixt us That was of Such an *Unpleasant Nature* on Tuesday night (ultimo) w^h I most humbly Own (and Acknowledge) was all alone and *intirely* of My Own Fault, and Not in the Least Your’s which behaved to me, Must say, In the most Respectful and superior manner that was possible to think Of, for I truly Say I never was In the Company of Such Imminent and Superior Gents before In my Life w^h will take my Oath sincerely Of, Gents. Please to consider the Brandy (w^h *do* think was *Uncommon Stiff*) such a flustrum As I Was In before, to, w^h was Evident to All of Us there then Assemblid and very natral like to be the Case Seeing I have never known what Peas of Mind was since I behaved in Such a *Oudacious* way w^h truly was the case I can’t Deny to Such Gents as Yourselfs that were doing me such Good Fortune And Kindness to me as it would Be a Dreadful *sin and shame* (such as Trust I can never be Guilty of) to be (w^h am not) and never Can Be insensible Of, Gents do Consider all this Favouably because of my humble Amends w^h I here Make with the greatest Trouble in my Mind that I have Had Ever Since, it was all of the Sperrits I Tooke w^h made me Go On at such a Rate w^h was always (beg to Assure y^r most resp^e house) the Case Since my birth when I took Sperrits never so little Since I had the Meazles when I was 3 Years Old as I Well Recollect and hope it will be Born in Mind what is Often Said, and I’m Sure I’ve read it Somewhere Else that People that Is Drunk Always speaks the *Direct Contrarywise* of their True and Real Thoughts. (w^h am Certain never was any Thing Truer in my case) so as I get the Money or What not, do whatever you Like w^h are quite welcome to Do if you please, and No questions Asked, don’t Mind saying by The Way It shall Be As Good as £200 note in The way of your Resp^e House if I Get the Estate of w^h am much in Want of. Mr Gamon (w^h is the most Upright gent that ever I came across in All my Life)

will tell you that I Was Quite Cut up when he came After me in that kind Way and told him Then how I loved y^r Respect^o House and would do all In My power to Serve You, which see if I Don't, I was in Such a rage with that Fellow (He's only in a *Situation* in Tottenham C^t Road) Huckaback which is his true name it was an *oudacious* thing, and have given him such a Precious Good hiding last Night as you never saw when on his Bendid Knees He asked the pardon of your Respectable House, says nothing of Me w^a w^d not allow because I said I would Not Forgive Him because he had not injured me: But you, w^a I wonder at his *Impudence* in Calling on Professional Gents like you, if I get the Estate shall never cease to Think well of you and mean While how full of Trouble I am *Often Thinking Of Death* which is the End of Every Thing And then in that Case who will the Property Go to Seeing I Leave never a Brother or Sister Behind me. And Therefore Them That w^d Get it I Feel Sure of w^d Not do So well by you (if You will Only believe Me) So Gents. This is All at present That I will Make so Bold to trouble you With About my Unhappy Affairs Only to say That am *used* most Intolerably Bad now In The Shop quite Tyranicall And Mr Tag-Rag as Set Them All Against Me and I shall Never Get Another Situatⁿ for want of a Char^t which he will give me says noth^s at Present of the Sort of Victules w^a give me Now to Eat Since Monday last, For Which am Sure the Devil must have Come In to That Gentleman (Mr Tag-rag, he was only himself in a *Situation* in Holborn once, gets the Business by marry^s the widow w^a wonder At for he is nothing Particular to Look At). I am y^r

Humbly to Command Till Death (always Humbly Begging pardon for the bad Conduct w^a was guilty of when In Liquor Especially On an Empty Stomach, Having Taken Nothing all that Day excepting what I could not Eat),

"Your's most Respy

"TITTLERAT TITMOUSE.

"P.S. Will Bring That young Man with Tears In his Eyes to Beg y^r pardon Over again If You Like w^a will Solemnly Swear if Required That he did It all of His *own* Head And that Have given It him For it in the Way That is Written Above And humbly Trust You Will make Me So happy Once more by writing To Me (if it is only a Line) To say You Have Thought No more of it. T. T. No. 9 Closet C^t. Oxford Street. 14/7/18—"

This exquisitely skilful epistle might indeed have brought tears into Mr Quirk's eyes, if he had been *used* to the melting mood, which he was not; having never been seen actually to shed a tear but once—when five-sixths of his little bill of costs (£196, 15s. 4d.) were taxed off in an action on a Bill of Exchange for £13. As it was, he tweedled the letter about in his hands for about five minutes, in a musing mood, and then stepped with it into Mr Gammon's room. That gentleman took the letter with an air of curiosity, and read it over; at every sentence (if indeed a sentence there was in it) bursting into soft laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed on concluding it—"a comical gentleman, Mr Titmouse, upon my honour!"

"Funny— isn't it rather?" interposed Mr Quirk, standing with his hands fumbling about in his breeches' pockets.

"What a crawling despicable little rascal!—ha, ha, ha!"

"Why—I don't quite say that, either," quoth Quirk, doubtfully—"I—don't exactly look at it in *that* light!"

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Gammon, leaning back in his chair, and laughing rather heartily (at least for him).

"You can't leave off that laugh of yours," said Quirk a little tartly; "but I must say I don't see anything in the letter to laugh at so particularly. It is written in a most respectful manner, and shows a proper feeling towards the House!"

"Ay! see how he speaks of me!"

interrupted Gammon, with such a smile!—

“And doesn't he speak so of me? and all of us?”

“He'll let the house tread on him till he can tread on the house, I dare say.”

“But you must own, Mr Gammon, it shows we've licked him into shape a bit—eh?”

“Oh, it's a little vile creeping reptile now, and so it will be to the end of the chapter—of our proceedings; and when we've *done* everything—really, Mr Quirk! if one *were* apt to lose one's temper, it would be to see such a *thing* as that put into possession of such a fortune.”

“That may be, Mr Gammon; but I really—hem!—trust—I've—a higher feeling!—To right—the injured!”—He could get no further.

“Hem!” exclaimed Gammon.

The partners smiled at one another. A touch, or an attempted touch at *disinterestedness*!—and at Quirk's time of life!

“But he's now in a humour for *training*, at all events—isn't he?” exclaimed Quirk—“we've something now to go to work upon—gradually.”

“Isn't that a leaf out of *my* book, Mr Quirk?—isn't that exactly what?”—

“Well, well—what does it signify?” interrupted Quirk, rather petulantly—“I've got a crotchet that'll do for us, yet, about the matter of law, and make all right and tight—so I'm going to Mortmain.”

“I've got a little idea of my own of that sort, Mr Quirk,” said Gammon—“I've got an extract from Co-Litt—. I can't imagine how either of them could have missed it; and, as Frank-pledge dines with me to-day, we shall talk it all over. But, by the way, Mr Quirk, I should say, with all deference, that we'll take no more notice of this fellow till we've got some screw tight enough.”—

“Why—all that may be very well; but you see, Gammon, the fellow seems the real heir, after all—and if he don't get it, *no one can*; and if he don't—*we* don't! eh?”

“There's a very great deal of force

in that observation, Mr Quirk—it gives one another view of the subject!”—said Gammon emphatically: and, tolerably well pleased with one another, they parted. If Quirk might be compared to an old file, Gammon was the *oil*—so they got on, in the main, very well together. It hardly signifies what was the result of their interviews with their two conveyancers. The two partners met the next morning on ordinary business; and, as each made no allusions whatever to the “crotchet” of the day before, it may be safely inferred that each had been satisfied by his conveyancer of having found out a mare's nest.

“I think, by the way,” said Mr Gammon to Mr Quirk, before they parted on the previous evening, “it may be as well, all things considered, to acknowledge the receipt of the fellow's note—eh?—*Can't* do any harm, you know, and civility costs nothing—hem!”

“The very thing I was thinking of,” replied Quirk, as he always did, on hearing any suggestion from Mr Gammon. So by that night's post was despatched (post-paid) the following note to Mr Titmouse:—

“Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of Mr Titmouse's polite letter of last night's date; and earnestly beg that he will not distress himself about the little incident that occurred at their office on Tuesday night, and which they assure him they have quite forgotten. They made all allowances, however their feelings suffered at the time. They beg Mr T. will give them credit for not losing sight of his interests, to the best of their ability; obstructed as they are, however, by numerous serious difficulties. If they should be hereafter overcome, he may rest assured of their promptly communicating with him; and till then they trust Mr T. will not inconvenience himself by calling on, or writing to them.

“*Saffron Hill, 15th July 18—.*”

“P.S.—Messrs Q. G. and S. regret

to hear that any unpleasantness has arisen (Gammon could hardly write for laughing) between Mr Titmouse and his friend Mr Hicklebag, who, they assure him, manifested a very warm interest in behalf of Mr T., and conducted himself with the greatest propriety on the occasion of his calling upon Messrs Q. G. and S. They happened at that moment to be engaged in matters of the highest importance; which will, they trust, explain any appearance of abruptness they might have exhibited towards that gentleman. Perhaps Mr Titmouse will be so obliging as to intimate as much to Mr Hickerbag."

There was an obvious reason for this polite allusion to Huckaback. Gammon thought it very possible that that gentleman might be in Mr Titmouse's confidence, and exercise a powerful influence over him hereafter; and that influence Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap might find it well worth their while to secure beforehand.

The moment that Titmouse, with breathless haste, had read over this mollifying document, which, being directed to his lodgings correctly, he obtained as soon as he had got home, after quitting Mr Tag-rag, about ten o'clock, he hastened to his friend Huckaback. That gentleman (who seemed now virtually recognised by Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap as Titmouse's confidant) shook his head ominously, exclaiming — "Blarney, blarney!" and a bitter sneer settled on his disagreeable features, till he had read down to the postscript; the perusal of which effected a sudden change in his feelings. He declared, with a great oath, that Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap were "perfect gentlemen," and would "do the right thing after all—Titmouse might depend upon it;" an assurance which greatly cheered Titmouse, to whose keen discernment it never once occurred to refer Huckaback's altered tone to the right cause, viz., the lubricating quality of the postscript; and since Titmouse did not allude to it, no more

did Mr Huckaback, although his own double misnomer stuck not a little in his throat. So effectual, indeed, had been that most skillful postscript upon the party at whom it had been aimed, that he exerted himself unceasingly to revive Titmouse's confidence in Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and so far succeeded, that Titmouse returned to his lodgings at a late hour, a somewhat happier, if not a *wiser* man than he had left them. By the time, however, that he had got into bed, having once more spelled over the note in question, he felt as despondent as ever, and thought that Huckaback had not known what he had been talking about. He also adverted to an *apparently* careless allusion by Huckaback to the injuries which had been inflicted upon him by Titmouse on the Wednesday night: and which, by the way, Huckaback determined it should be no fault of his if Titmouse easily forgot! He hardly knew why—but he disliked this particularly.—Whom had he, however, in the world, but Huckaback? In company with him alone, Titmouse felt that his pent-up feelings could discharge themselves. Huckaback had certainly a wonderful knack of keeping up Titmouse's spirits, whatever cause he fancied he might really have for depression. In short, he longed for the Sunday morning—ushering in a day of rest and sympathy. Titmouse would indeed then have to look back upon an agitating and miserable week, what with the dismal upsetting of his hopes in the manner I have described, and the tyrannical treatment which he had experienced at Tag-rag and Co.'s. His tormentor there, however, began at length, in some degree, to relax his *active* exertions against Titmouse, simply because of the exertion requisite for keeping them up. He attributed the pallid cheek and depressed manner of Titmouse entirely to the discipline which had been inflicted upon him at the shop; and was gratified at perceiving that all his other young men seemed, especially in his presence, to have imbibed his hatred of Titmouse. What produced in Tag-

rag this hatred of Titmouse? Simply what had taken place on the Monday. Mr Tag-rag's dignity and power had been doggedly set at nought by one of his shopmen, who had since refused to make the least submission, or offer any kind of apology. Such conduct stuck at the root of subordination in his great establishment. Again, there is perhaps nothing in the world so calculated to enrage a petty and vulgar mind to the highest pitch of malignity, as the cool persevering defiance of an inferior, whom it strives to *despise*, while it is only *hating*, feeling at the same time such to be the case. Tag-rag now and then, when he looked towards Titmouse, as he stood behind the counter, felt as though he could have killed the little ape. Titmouse attempted once or twice, during the week, to obtain a situation elsewhere, but in vain. He could expect no character from Tag-rag; and when the 10th of August should have arrived, what was to become of him? These were the kind of thoughts often passing through his mind during the Sunday, which he and Huckaback spent together in unceasing conversation on the one absorbing event of the last week. Titmouse, poor little puppy, had dressed himself with just as much care as usual; but, as he was giving the finishing touches at his toilet, pumping up grievous sighs every half minute, the sum of his reflections might be stated in the miserable significance of a quaint saying of Poor Richard's—"How hard is it to make an empty bag stand upright!"

CHAPTER VII.

TITMOUSE AND HUCKABACK THINK IT RIGHT TO GO TO CHURCH; AND THE FORMER RECEIVES A LESSON ON LANDLORD-AND-TENANT-LAW, FROM MRS SQUALLOP.

ALTHOUGH the sun shone as vividly and beautifully as on the preceding Sunday, to Titmouse's saddened eye there seemed a sort of gloom everywhere. Up and down the Park he and Huckaback walked, towards the close of the afternoon; but Titmouse had not so elastic a strut as before. He felt empty and sinking. Everybody seemed to know what a sad pretender he was: and the friends quitted the magic circle much earlier than had been usual with Titmouse. What with the fatigue of a long day's saunter, the vexation of having had but a hasty, inferior, and unrefreshing meal, which did not deserve the name of dinner, and their unpleasant thoughts, both seemed depressed as they walked along the streets. At length they arrived at the open doors of a gloomy-looking building, into which two or three sad and prim-looking people were entering. After walking a few paces past the door—"Do you know, Huck," said Titmouse, stopping, with an embarrassed air—"I've often thought that—that—there's something in *Religion*." "To be sure there is, for those that like it—who doubts it? It's all very well in its place, no doubt," replied Huckaback with much surprise, which increased, as he felt himself being slowly swayed round towards the building in question. "But what of that?" "Oh, nothing; but—hem! hem!" replied Titmouse, sinking his voice to a whisper—"a touch of—religion—eh?—would not be so much amiss, just now! I feel—uncommon inclined that way, somehow, 'pon my soul!"

"Religion's all very well, Titty, dear!—for them that has much to be thankful for; but devil take me! what have either you or me to be"—

"But, Huck—how do you know but we might *get* something to be thankful for, by praying?—I've often heard of great things in that line—but—*do* come in with me, Huck!"

Huckaback stood for a moment irresolute, twirling about his cane, and looking rather distastefully towards the dingy building. "It won't answer," said he, faintly. Titmouse drew him nearer; but he suddenly started back—"No! oh, 'tis only a meeting-house, Tit! Curse Dissenters, how I hate 'em! Isn't your precious governor one in that line? Give me a regular-like, respectable church, with a proper steeple, and parson, and prayers, and an organ, and all that!"

Titmouse secretly acknowledged the force of these observations; and the intelligent and piously disposed couple, with perhaps a just, but certainly a somewhat sudden regard for orthodoxy, were not long before they had found their way into a church where evening service was being performed. They ascended the gallery stair; and seeing no reason to be ashamed of being at church, down they both went, with loud clattering steps, and a bold air, into the very central seat, which happened to be vacant, in the front of the gallery. Titmouse paid a most exemplary attention to what was going on, kneeling, sitting, and standing with exact propriety, in the proper places; joining audibly in the responses, and keeping his eyes pretty steadily on the prayer-book, which he found lying there. He even rebuked Huckaback for whispering, during one of the most solemn parts of the service, that "there was an uncommon pretty gal in the next pew!"—He thought that the clergyman was a remarkable fine preacher, and said some things that he *must* have meant for him, Titmouse, in particular!

"Curse me, Hucky!" said he heatedly, as soon as they had quitted the church, and were fairly in the street—

"Curse me if—if—ever I felt so comfortable-like in my mind before, as I do now—see if I don't go again next Sunday!"

"Lord, Tit, you don't *really* mean—eh?—it's deuced dull work! I could hardly keep my eyes open!"

"Hang me if I don't, though! and if anything should come of it—if I *do* but get the estate—(I wonder, now, where *Mr Gammon* goes to church. I should like to know!—I'd go there regularly)—But if I *do* get the thing—you see if I don't!"

"Ah, I don't know; it's not much use praying for money, Tit; I've tried it myself, once or twice, but it didn't answer!"

"I'll take my oath you was staring at the gals all the while, Hucky!"

"Ah, Titty!" exclaimed Huckaback; and winked his eye, and put the tip of his forefinger to the tip of his nose, and laughed.

Titmouse continued in what he doubtless imagined to be a devout frame of mind, for several minutes after quitting the church. But close by the aforesaid church, the devil had a thriving little establishment, in the shape of a cigar-shop; in which a showily dressed young Jewess sat behind the counter, right underneath a glaring gas-light—with a narrow stripe of greasy black velvet across her forehead, and long ringlets resting on her shoulders—bandying slang with two or three other such creatures as Titmouse and Huckaback. Our friends entered and purchased a cigar a-piece, which they lit on the spot; and after each of them had exchanged an impudent wink with the Jewess, out they went, puffing away—all the remains of their piety! When they had come to the end of their cigars they parted, each speeding homeward. Titmouse, on reaching his lodgings, sank into profound depression. He felt an awful conviction that his visit to the cigar-shop had entirely spoiled the effect of his previous attendance at the church; and that, if so disposed (and it would serve him right), he might now sit and whistle for his ten thousand a-year! Thoughts such as

these drove him nearly distracted. If, indeed, he had foreseen having to go through such another week as the one just over, I think it not impossible that before the arrival of the ensuing Sunday, he might have afforded a little employment to that ancient and gloomy functionary, a coroner, and his jury. At that time, however, inquests of this sort were matter-of-fact and melancholy affairs enough; which I doubt not would have been rather a *dissuasive* from suicide, in the estimation of one who might be supposed ambitious of the *éclat* of a modern inquest; where, indeed, such strange antics are played by certain new performers as would suffice to revive the corpse (if it were a corpse that had ever had a spark of sense or spirit in it), and make it kick the coroner out of the room. But to one of so high an ambition as Tittlebat Titmouse, how delightful would it not have been to anticipate becoming (what had been quite impracticable during life) the object of public attention after his death—by means of a flaming dissertation by the coroner on his own seal and spirit—the nature and extent of his rights, powers, and duties;—when high doctors are brow-beaten, the laws set at defiance, and public decency plucked by the beard, and the torn and bleeding hearts of surviving relatives still further agonised by an exposure, all quivering under the recent stroke, to the gaping vulgar! Indeed, I sometimes think that the object of certain coroners, nowadays, is twofold; first, public—to disgust people with suicide, by showing what horrid proceedings will take place over their carcasses; and secondly, private—to get the means of studying anatomy by *post-mortems*, which the said coroner never could procure in his own practice; which enables us to account for some things one has lately seen, viz. that if a man come to his death by means of a wagon crushing his legs, the coroner institutes an exact examination of the structure of the *lungs* and *heart*. I take it to be getting now into a rule—the propriety whereof, some people

think, cannot be doubted—namely, that bodies ought now to be opened only to prove that they ought not to have been opened; an inquest must be held, in order to demonstrate that it need not have been held, except that certain fees thereby find their way into the pocket of the aforesaid coroner, which would otherwise not have done so. In short, such a coroner as I have in my eye may be compared to a great ape squatting on a corpse, furiously chattering and spitting at all around it; and I am glad that it hath at last had wit enough first to *shut the door* before proceeding to its horrid tricks.

Touching, by the way, the *moral* of suicide, it is a way which some have of *cutting* the Gordian knot of the difficulties of life; which having been done, possibly the very first thing made manifest to the spirit, after taking its mad leap into the dark may be—how very easily the said knot might have been UNTIED; nay, that it was *on the very point* of being untied, if the impatient spirit had stayed only a moment longer!

I said it was not *impossible* that Mr Titmouse might, under the circumstances alluded to, have done the deed which has called forth the above very natural and profound reflections; but, upon the whole, it is hardly *probable*; for he knew that by doing so he would, first, irreparably injure society, by depriving it of an enlightened and invaluable member; secondly, inflict great indignity on his precious body, of which, during life, he had always taken the most affectionate care, by consigning it to burial in a cross road, at night-time, with a stake run through it, and moreover peril the little soul that had just leaped out of it, by not having any burial-service said over his aforesaid remains; and, lastly, lose all chance of enjoying Ten Thousand a-Year—at least upon earth. I own I was a little startled, as I daresay was the pensive reader, at a passage of mournful significance in Mr Titmouse's last letter to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, viz.—“How full of trouble I am, *often thinking of death*,

which is the end of everything;" but, on carefully considering the context, I am disposed to think that the whole was only an astute device of Titmouse's, either to rouse the fears, or stimulate the feelings, or excite the hopes of the three arbiters of his destiny to whom it was addressed. Mr Gammon, he thought, might be thereby moved to pity; while Mr Quirk would probably be operated upon by fears, lest the sad contingency pointed at might deprive the house of one who would richly repay their exertions; and by hopes of indefinite advantage, if they could by any means prevent its happening. That these gentlemen really *did* keenly scrutinise, and carefully weigh every expression in that letter, ridiculous as it was, and contemptible as, I fear, it showed its writer to be, is certain; but it did not occur to them to compare with it the spirit, at least, and intention of their own answer to it. Did the latter document contain less cunning and insincerity, because it was couched in somewhat superior phraseology? They could conceal their selfish and over-reaching designs, while poor Titmouse exposed all his little mean-mindedness and hypocrisy, simply because he had not learned how to conceal it effectually. 'Twas indeed a battle for the very same object, but between unequal combatants. Each was trying to *take in* the other. If Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap despised and loathed the man to whom they exhibited such anxious courtesy, Titmouse hated and feared those whom his interests compelled him for a while to conciliate. Was there, in fact, a pin to choose between them—except perhaps that Titmouse was, in a manner, excused by his necessities? But, in the meanwhile—to proceed—his circumstances were becoming utterly desperate. He continued to endure great suffering at Mr Tag-rag's during the day—the constant butt of the ridicule and insult of his amiable companions, and the victim of his employer's vile and vulgar spirit of hatred and oppression. His spirit, such as it was in short, was

very nearly broken. Though he seized every opportunity that offered, to inquire for another situation, he was unsuccessful; for all whom he applied to spoke of the *strict character* they should require, "before taking a new hand into their establishment." His occupation at nights, after quitting the shop, was twofold only—either to call upon Huckaback, whose sympathy, however, he was exhausting rapidly, or solace his feelings by walking down to Saffron Hill, and lingering about the closed office of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—for there was a kind of gratification even in that! He once or twice felt flustered even on catching a glimpse of the old housekeeper returning home with a pint of porter in her hand. How he would have rejoiced to get into her good graces, and accompany her into even the kitchen—when he would be on the premises, at least, and conversing with one of the establishment, of those who, he believed, could, with a stroke of their pens, turn this wilderness of a world into a paradise for him! But he dared not make any overtures in that quarter, for fear of their getting to the notice of the dreaded Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.

At length, no more than three or four shillings stood between him and utter destitution; and the only person in the world to whom he could apply for even the most trivial assistance, was Huckaback—whom, however, he knew to be really little better off than himself; and whom, moreover, he felt to be treating him more and more coldly, as the week wore on, without his hearing of any the least tidings from Saffron Hill. Huckaback evidently felt now scarcely any interest or pleasure in the visits of his melancholy friend, and was plainly disinclined to talk about his affairs. At length he quite turned up his nose with disgust, whenever Titmouse took out the well-worn note of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, which was almost dropping in pieces with being constantly carried about in his pocket, taken in and out, and folded and un-

folded, for the purpose of conning over its contents, as if there might yet linger in it some hitherto undiscovered source of consolation. Poor Titmouse, therefore, looked at it on every such occasion with as eager and vivid an interest as ever; but it was glanced at by Huckaback with a half-averted eye, and a cold drawling, yawning "Ya—a—as—I see—I dare—say!" While his impressions of Titmouse's bright prospects were thus being rapidly effaced, his smarting recollections of the drubbing he had received became more distinct and frequent, his feelings of resentment more lively, nor the less so because the expression of them had been stifled, while he had considered the star of Titmouse to be in the ascendant, till the time for setting them into motion and action had gone by. In fact, the presence of Titmouse, suggesting such thoughts and recollections, became intolerable to Huckaback; and Titmouse's perceptions, dull as they naturally were, but a little quickened by recent suffering, gave him more and more distinct notice of this circumstance, at the precise time when he meditated applying for the loan of a few shillings. These feelings made him as humble towards Huckaback, and as tolerant of his increasing rudeness and ill-humour, as he felt abject towards Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; for, unless he could succeed in wringing some trifling loan from Huckaback, if he really had it in his power to advance him *anything*, Titmouse really could not conjecture what was to become of him. Various faint but unadroit hints and feelers of his had been thrown away upon Huckaback, who did not, or would not, comprehend them. At length, however, a sudden and fearful pressure compelled poor Titmouse to squeak out. Gripe, the collector, called one morning for the poor's rates due from Mrs Squallop, and drained her of almost every penny of ready money which she had by her. This threw the good woman upon her resources, to replenish her empty pocket—and down she came

upon Titmouse—or rather, up she went to him; for his heart sank within him, one night on his return from the shop, having only just taken off his hat and lit his candle, as he heard the fat old termagant's well-known heavy step ascending the stairs, and approaching nearer and nearer to his door. Her loud imperative single knock vibrated through his very heart.

"Oh, Mrs Squallop! How d'ye do, Mrs Squallop?" commenced Titmouse faintly, when he had opened the door; "Won't you take a chair?" with trepidation offering to the panting dame almost the only chair he had.

"No—I a'n't come to stay, Mr Titmouse, because, d'ye see, in course you've got a pound, *at least*, ready for me, as you promised long ago—and never more welcome; there's old Gripe been here to-day, and had his hodie rates—('drat the poor, say I! them as can't work should starve!—rates is a robbery!)—but howsomedever he's cleaned *me* out to-day; so, in coorse, I come up to *you*. Got it, Mr Titmouse?"

"I—I—I—pon my life, Mrs Squallop, I'm uncommon sorry!"

"Oh, bother your sorrow, Mr Titmouse!—out with the needful, for I can't stop palavering here."

"I—I can't, so help me—!" gasped Titmouse, with the calmness of desperation.

"You can't! And marry, sir, why not, may I make bold to ask?" inquired Mrs Squallop after a moment's pause, striving to choke down her rage.

"P'r'aps you can get blood out of a stone, Mrs Squallop; it's what I can't," replied Titmouse, striving to screw his courage up to the sticking place, to encounter one who was plainly bent upon mischief. "I've got two shillings—there they are," throwing them on the table; "and cuss me if I've another rap in the world; there, ma'am! take 'em, do: and drive me desperate!"

"You're a liar, then, that's flat!" exclaimed Mrs Squallop, slapping her hand upon the table, with a violence that made the candle quiver on it, and

almost fall down. "You have the *himperance*," said she, sticking her arms a-kimbo, and commencing the address she had been preparing in her own mind ever since Mr Gripe had quitted her house, "to stand there and tell me you've got nothing in the world but them *two shillings*! Heugh! Out on you, you oudacious fellow!—you jack-a-dandy! You tell me you haven't got more than them two shillings, and yet turns out every Sunday morning of your life like a lord, with your pins, and your rings, and your chains, and your fine coat, and your gloves, and your spurs, and your dandy cane—ough! you whipper-snapper! You're a cheat—you're a swindler, jack-a-dandy! You're the contempt of the whole court, you are—you jack-a-dandy! You've got all my rent on your back, and so you've had every Sunday for three months, you cheat!—you low fellow!—you ungrateful chap! You're a-robbing the widow and fatherless! Look at me, and my six fatherless children down there, you good-for-nothing, nasty, proud puppy!—eugh! it makes me sick to see you. You dress yourself out like my lord mayor! You've bought a gold chain with my rent, you rascally cheat! You dress yourself out!—Ha, ha!—you're a nasty, mean-looking, humpty-dumpty, carrot-headed!"

"You'd better not say *that* again, Mrs Squallop," quoth Titmouse, with a fierce glance.

"Not say it again!"—she echoed, furiously snapping her fingers in his face, "ha, ha! Hoighty-toighty, carrot-haired jack-a-dandy!—Why, you hop-o'-my-thumb! d'ye think I won't say whatever I choose, and in my own house, and to a man that can't pay his rent? You're a Titmouse by name and by nature; there a'n't a cockroach crawling in our kitchen that a'n't more harmless than you!—You're a himperant cheat, and dandy, and knave, and a liar, and a red-haired rascal—and *that* in your teeth!—(again snapping her fingers). Ough! Your name stinks in the court. You're a-taking of everybody in as will trust you to a penny's

amount. There's poor old Cox, the tailor, with a sick wife and five children, whom you've cheated this many months, all of his not having sperrit to summons you! But I'll set him upon you; you see if I don't—and I'll have my own, too, or I wouldn't give *that* for the laws!" shouted Mrs Squallop, once again furiously snapping her fingers in his face; and then pausing for breath after her eloquent invective.

"Now, what *is* the use," said Titmouse gently, being completely cowed—"now, what good *can* it do to go on in this way, Mrs Squallop?"

"Missus menomissus, Mr Titmouse, but pay me my rent, you jack-a-dandy! You've got my rent on your back, and on your little finger; and I'll have it off you before I've done with you, I warrant you. I'm your landlady, and I'll sell you up; I'll have old Thumb-screw here the first thing in the morning, and distrain everything, and you, too, you jackdaw, if any one would buy you, which they won't! I'll have my rent at last: I've been too easy with you, you ungrateful chap; for, mark, even Gripe this morning says, 'Haven't you a gentleman lodger up above? get him to pay you your own,' says he; and so I will. I'm sick of all this, and I'll have my rights! Here's my son, Jem, a far better-looking chap than you, though he *hasn't* got hair like a sandy mop all under his chin, and he's obligated for to work from one week's end to another, in a paper cap and fustian jacket; and you—you painted jackanapes! But now I have got you, and I'll turn you inside out, though I know there's nothing in you! But I'll try to get at your fine coats, and spurs, and trousers, your chains and pins, and make something of them before I've done with you, you jack-a-dandy!"—and the virago shook her fist at him, looking as though she had not yet uttered even half that was in her heart towards him.

[Alas, alas, unhappy Titmouse, much-enduring son of sorrow! I perceive that you now feel the sharpness of an angry female tongue; and indeed to me, not in the least approving of the many coarse and heart-splitting

expressions which she uses, it seems, nevertheless, that she hath not gone exceeding far off the mark in much that she hath said; for, in truth, in your conduct there is not a little that to me, piteously inclined towards you as I am, yet appeareth obnoxious to the edge of this woman's reproaches. But think not, O bewildered and not-with-sufficient-distinctness-discerning-the-nature-of-things Titmouse! that she hath only a sharp and bitter tongue. In this woman behold a mother, and it may be that she will soften before you, who have plainly, as I hear, neither father nor mother. Oh me!]

Poor Titmouse trembled violently; his lips quivered; and the long pent-up tears forced their way at length over his eyelids, and fell fast down his cheeks.

"Ah, you may well cry!—you may! But it's too late!—it's my turn to cry now! Don't you think that I feel for my own flesh and blood, which is my six children? And isn't what's mine theirs? And aren't you keeping the fatherless out of their own? It's too bad of you—it is! and you know it is," continued Mrs Squallop, vehemently.

"*They've* got a mother—a kind—good—mother—to take—care of them," sobbed Titmouse; "but there's been no one in the—the—world that cares a straw for *me*—this twenty—years!" He fairly wept aloud.

"Well, then, more's the pity for you. If you had, they wouldn't have let you make such a puppy of yourself—and at your landlady's expense, too. You know you're a fool," said Mrs Squallop, dropping her voice a little; for she was a *MOTHER*, after all, and she knew that what poor Titmouse had just stated was quite true. She tried hard to feed the fire of her wrath, by forcing into her thoughts every aggravating topic against him that she could think of; but it became every moment harder and harder to do so, for she was consciously softening rapidly towards the weeping and miserable little object, on whom she had been heaping such violent and bitter abuse. He was a great fool, to be sure

—he was very fond of fine clothes—he knew no better—he had, however, paid his rent well enough till lately—he was a very quiet, well-disposed lodger, for all *she* had known—he had given her youngest child a pear not long ago. Really, thought Mrs Squallop, I may have gone a *little* too far.

"Come—it a'n't no use crying in this way," she began, in an altered tone. "It won't put money into your pocket, nor my rent into mine. You know you've wronged me, and I *must* be paid," she added, but in a still lower tone. She tried to cough away a certain rising disagreeable sensation about her throat; for Titmouse, having turned his back to hide the extent of his emotions, seemed half-choked with suppressed sobs.

"So you won't speak a word—not a word—to the woman you've injured so much?" inquired Mrs Squallop, trying to assume a harsh tone; but her eyes were a little obstructed with motherly tears.

"I—I—*can't* speak," sobbed Titmouse—"I—I feel ready to drop into a cold early grave!—everybody hates me"—here he paused; and for some moments neither of them spoke. "I've been kept on my legs the whole day about the town by Mr Tag-rag, and had no dinner. I—I—wish I was *dead*! I do!—you may take all I have—here it is," continued Titmouse, with his foot pushing towards Mrs Squallop the old hair trunk that contained all his little finery. "I sha'n't want them much longer, for I'm turned out of my situation."

This was too much for Mrs Squallop, and she was obliged to wipe her full eyes with the corner of her apron, without saying a word. Her heart smote her for the misery she had inflicted on one who seemed quite broken down. Pity suddenly flew, fluttering his wings—soft dove!—into her heart, and put to flight in an instant all her enraged feelings. "Come, Mr Titmouse," said she, in quite an altered tone, "never mind *me*; I'm a plain-spoken woman enough, I daresay—and often say more than I mean—for I know I a'n't over particular when

my blood's up—but—lord!—I—I—I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, poor chap!—for all I've said—no, not for double the rent you owe me. Come! don't go on so, Mr Titmouse—what's the use?—it's all quite—over—I'm so sorry—Lud! if I had *really* thought"—she almost sobbed—"you'd been so—so—why, I'd have waited till to-morrow night before I'd said a word. But, Mr Titmouse, since you haven't had any dinner, won't you have a mouthful of something—a bit of bread and cheese?—I'll soon fetch you up a bit, and a drop of beer—we've just had it in for our suppers."

"No, thank you—I can't—I can't eat!" sobbed Titmouse.

"Oh, bother it, but you *shall!* I'll go down and fetch it up in half a minute, as sure as my name's Squallop!" And out of the room and down stairs she bustled, glad of a moment to recover herself.

"Lord-a-mercy!" said she, on entering her room, to her eldest daughter and a neighbour who had just come in to supper—and while she hastily cut a thick hunch of bread, and a good slice of cheese—"there I've been a-rating that poor little chap, up at the top room (my dandy lodger, you know), like anything—and I really don't think he's had a morsel of victuals in his belly this precious day; and I've made him cry, poor soul! as if his heart would break. Pour us out half a pint of that beer, Sally—a *good* half pint, mind!—I'm going to take it up-stairs directly. I've gone a deal too far with him, I do think; but it's all of that nasty old Gripe; I've been wrong all the day through it! How I hate the sight of old Gripe! What *hodious*-looking people they do get to collect the rates and taxes, to be sure!—Poor chap," she continued, as she wiped out a plate with her apron, and put into it the bread and cheese, together with a knife—"he offered me a chair when I went in, so uncommon civil-like, it took a good while before I could get myself into the humour to *give* 'û him as I wanted. And he's no father nor mother (half of which has happened to *you*, Sal,

and the rest will happen one of these days, you know—so you mind me while you have me!) and he's not such a very bad lodger, after all, though he *does* get a little behind-hand now and then, and though he turns out every Sunday like a lord, poor fool—as your poor dear father used to say, 'with a shining back and empty belly.'"

"But that's no reason why honest people should be kept out of their own, to feed his pride," interposed her neighbour, a skinny old widow, who had never had chick nor child, and was always behind-hand with her own rent; but whose effects were not worth distraining upon. "I'd get hold of some of his fine crincum-crancums and gimcracks, for security like, if I was you. I would, indeed."

"Why—no, poor soul—I don't hardly like: he's a vain creature, and puts everything he can on his back, to be sure; but he a'n't quite a *rogue*, neither."

"Ah, ha, Mrs Squallop—you're such a simple soul!—Won't my fine gentleman make off with his finery after to-night?"

"Well, I shouldn't have thought it! To be sure he may! Really, there *can't* be much harm in asking him (in a proper kind of way) to deposit one of his fine things with me, by way of security—that ring of his, you know—eh?—Well, I'll *try* it anyhow," said Mrs Squallop, as she set off up-stairs.

"I know what I should do, if so be he was a lodger of *mine*, that's all," said her visitor significantly (as Mrs Squallop quitted the room), vexed to find her supper so considerably and unexpectedly diminished, especially as to the pot of porter, which she strongly suspected would not be replenished.

"There," said Mrs Squallop, setting down on the table what she had brought for Titmouse, "there's a bit of supper for you; and you're welcome to it, I'm sure, Mr Titmouse."

"Thank you, thank you—I can't eat," said he, casting, however, upon the victuals a hungry eye, which belied what he said, while in his heart he

longed to be left alone with them for about three minutes.

"Come, don't be ashamed—fall to work—it's good wholesome victuals," said she, lifting the table near to the edge of the bed, on the side of which he was sitting, and taking up the two shillings lying on the table—"and capital good beer, I warrant me; you'll sleep like a top after it."

"You're uncommon kind, Mrs Squallop; but I sha'n't get a wink of sleep to-night for thinking!"

"Oh, bother your thinking! Let me begin to see you eat a bit. Well, I suppose you don't like to eat and drink before me, so I'll go." [Here arose a sudden conflict in the good woman's mind, whether or not she would act on the suggestion which had been put into her head down stairs. She was on the point of yielding to the impulse of her own good-natured, though coarse feelings; but at last—] "I—I—daresay, Mr Titmouse, you mean what's right and straightforward," she stammered.

"Yes, Mrs Squallop—you may keep those two shillings; they're the last farthing I have left in the whole world."

"No—hem!—hem!—ahem! I was just suddenly a-thinking—now can't you guess, Mr Titmouse?"

"What, Mrs Squallop?" inquired Titmouse, meekly but anxiously.

"Why—suppose now—if it were only to raise ten shillings with old Balls, round the corner, on one of those fine things of yours—your ring, say!" [Titmouse's heart sank within him.] "Well, well—never mind—don't fear," said Mrs Squallop, observing him suddenly turn pale again. "I—I only thought—but never mind! it don't signify—good-night! we can talk about that to-morrow—good-night—a good night's rest to you, Mr Titmouse!" and the next moment he heard her heavy step descending the stairs. Some little time elapsed before he could recover from the agitation into which he had been thrown by her

last proposal; but within five minutes of her quitting the room, there stood before him, on the table, an *empty* plate and jug.

"The beast! the fat old toad!" thought he, the instant that he had finished masticating what had been supplied to him by real charity and good-nature—"the vulgar wretch!—the nasty canting old hypocrite!—I saw what she was driving at all the while!—she had her eye on my ring!—She'd have me pawn it at old Balls's—ha, ha!—Catch me! that's all—Seven shillings a-week for this nasty hole!—I'll be bound I pay nearly half the rent of the whole house—the old cormorant!—out of what she gets from me! How I hate her! More than half my salary goes into her greasy pocket! Cuss me if I couldn't have kicked her down stairs—porter, bread and cheese, and all—while she was standing canting there!—A snivelling old beldam!—Pawn my ring!—Lord!!"—Here he began to undress. "Ha! I'm up to her; she'll be coming here to-morrow, with that devil Thumbscrew, to distrain, I'll be sworn. Well—I'll take care of *these*, anyhow;" and, kneeling down and unlocking his trunk, he took out of it his guard-chain, breast-pin, studs, and ring, carefully folded them up in paper, and depositing them in his trousers' pockets, resolved that henceforth their nightly resting-place should be—under his pillow; while during the day they should accompany his person whithersoever he went. Next he bethought himself of the two or three important papers to which Mr Gammon had referred; and, with tremulous eagerness, read them over once or twice, but without being able to extract from them the slightest clue to their real character and bearing. These he folded up in a half sheet of writing-paper, and proceeded to stitch them carefully beneath the lining of his waistcoat: after which he blew out his slim candle, and with a heavy sigh got into bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISION OF BEAUTY UNSEEN BY MR TITMOUSE; WHO IS IN THE MIDNIGHT OF DESPAIR, AND WRITES A LETTER WHICH STARTLES MR QUIRK.

FOR some moments after Titmouse had blown out the candle the image of it remained on his aching and excited retina; and just so long did the thoughts of *ten thousand a-year* dwell on his fancy, fading, however, quickly away amid the thickening gloom of doubts, and fears, and miseries, which oppressed him. There he lies, stretched on his bed, a wretched figure, lying on his breast, his head buried beneath his feverish arms. Anon, he turns round upon his back, stretches his wearied limbs to their uttermost, folds his arms on his breast, then buries them beneath the pillow, under his head. Now he turns on his right side, then on his left—presently he starts up, and with muttered curse shakes his little pillow, flinging it down angrily. He cannot sleep—he cannot rest—he cannot keep still. Bursting with irritability, he gets out of bed, and steps to the window, which opening wide, a slight gush of fresh air cools his hot face for a moment or two. His wearied eye looks upward and beholds the moon shining overhead in cold splendour, turning the clouds to gold as they flit past her, and shedding a softened lustre upon the tiled roofs and irregular chimney-pots—the only objects visible to him. No sound is heard, but occasionally the dismal cry of disappointed cat, the querulous voice of the watchman, and the echo of the rumbling hubbub of Oxford Street. O miserable Titmouse! of what avail is it for thee thus to fix thy sorrowful lack-lustre eye upon the cold Queen of Night!

* * * * *

At that moment there happened to be also gazing at the same glorious object, but at some two hundred miles' distance from London, a very different person, with very different feelings, and in very different circumstances. It was one of the angels of the earth—a pure-hearted and very beautiful girl; who, after a day of peaceful, innocent, and charitable employment, and having just quitted the piano, where her exquisite strains had soothed and delighted the feelings of her brother, harassed with political anxieties, had retired to her chamber for the night. A few moments before she was presented to the reader, she had extinguished her taper, and dismissed her maid without her having discharged more than half her accustomed duties—telling her that she should finish undressing by the light of the moon, which then poured her soft radiance into every corner of the spacious but old-fashioned chamber. Then she drew her chair to the window-recess, and pushing open the window, sat before it, only partially undressed as she was, her hair dishevelled, her head leaning on her hand, gazing upon the scenery before her with tranquil admiration. Silence reigned absolutely. Not a sound issued from the ancient groves, which spread far and wide on all sides of the fine old mansion in which she dwelt—solemn solitudes, nor yet less soothing than solemn! Was not the solitude enhanced by a glimpse she caught of a restless fawn, glancing in the distance across the avenue, as he silently changed the tree under which he slept?

—Then the gentle breeze would enter her window, laden with sweet scents of which he had just been rifling the coy flowers beneath, in their dewy repose, tended and petted during the day by her own delicate hand!—Beautiful moon!—cold and chaste in thy skyey palace, studded with brilliant and innumerable gems, and shedding down thy rich and tender radiance upon this lovely seclusion—was there upon the whole earth a more exquisite countenance then turned towards thee than hers?—Wrap thy white robe, dearest Kate, closer round thy fair bosom, lest the amorous night-breeze do thee hurt, for he groweth giddy with the sight of thy charms! Thy rich tresses, half uncurled, are growing damp—so it is time that thy blue eyes should seek repose. Hie thee, then, my love!—to yon antique couch, with its quaint carvings and satin draperies dimly visible in the dusky shade, inviting thee to sleep: and having first bent in cheerful reverence before thy Maker—to bed!—to bed!—sweet Kate, nothing disturbing thy serene slumbers, or agitating that beautiful bosom.—Hush! hush!—now she sleeps! It is well that thine eyes are closed in sleep; for behold—see!—the brightness without is disappearing; sadness and gloom are settling on the face of nature; the tranquil night is changing her aspect; clouds are gathering, winds are moaning; the moon is gone:—but sleep on, sweet Kate—sleep on, dreaming not of dark days before thee—Oh, that thou couldst sleep on till the brightness returned!

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After having stood thus leaning against the window for nearly half an hour, Titmouse, heavily sighing, returned to bed—but there he tossed about in wretched restlessness till nearly four o'clock in the morning. If he now and then sank into forgetfulness for a while, it was only to be harassed by the dreadful image of Mrs Squallop, shouting at him, tearing his hair, cuffing him, flinging a pot of porter in his face, opening his boxes, tossing his clothes about, taking out

his invaluable ornaments; by Tag-rag kicking him out of the shop; and Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap dashing past him in a fine carriage, with six horses, and paying no attention to him as he ran shouting and breathless after them; Huckaback following, kicking and pinching him behind. These were the few little bits of different coloured glass in a mental kaleidoscope, which, turned capriciously round, produced those innumerable fantastic combinations out of the simple and ordinary events of the day, which we call *dreams*—tricks of the wild sisters Fancy, when sober Reason has left her seat for a while. But this is fitter for the Royal Society than the bedroom of Tittlebat Titmouse; and I beg the reader's pardon.

About six o'clock, Titmouse rose and dressed himself; and, slipping noiselessly and swiftly down stairs, and out of the court, in order to avoid all possibility of encountering his landlady or his tailor, soon found himself in Oxford Street. Not many people were stirring there. One or two men who passed him were smoking their morning's pipe, with a half-awakened air, as if they had only just got out of a snug bed, in which they always slept every moment that they lay upon it. Titmouse almost envied them! What a squalid figure he looked, as he paced up and down, till at length he saw the porter of Messrs Tag-rag & Co. opening the shop-door. He soon entered it, and commenced another jocular day in that delightful establishment. The amiable Mr Tag-rag continued unaltered.

"You're at liberty to take yourself off, sir, this very day—this moment, sir; and a good riddance," said he, bitterly, during the course of the day, after demanding of Titmouse how he dared to give himself such sullen airs; "and then we shall see how charming easy it is for gents like you to get another situation, sir! Your looks and manner is quite a recommendation, sir! If I was you, sir, I'd raise my terms! You're worth double what I give, sir!" Titmouse made no reply. "What do you mean, sir,

by not answering me—eh, sir?” suddenly demanded Mr Tag-rag, with a look of fury.

“I don’t know what you’d have me say, sir. What am I to say, sir?” inquired Titmouse, with a sigh.

“What, indeed! I should like to catch you! Say, indeed! Only say a word—and out you go, neck and crop. Attend to that old lady coming in, sir. And mind, sir, I’ve got my eye on you!” Titmouse did as he was bid; and Tag-rag, a bland smile suddenly beaming on his attractive features, hurried down towards the door, to receive some lady-customers, whom he observed alighting from a carriage; and at that moment you would have sworn that he was one of the kindest-hearted sweetest-tempered men in the world.

When at length *this* day had come to a close, Titmouse, instead of repairing to his lodgings, set off, with a heavy heart, to pay a visit to his excellent friend Huckaback, whom he knew to have received his quarter’s salary the day before, and from whom he faintly hoped to succeed in extorting some trifling loan. “If you want to learn the value of money, *try to borrow some*,” says Poor Richard—and Titmouse was now going to learn that useful but bitter lesson. Oh, how disheartening was Mr Huckaback’s reception of him! That gentleman, in answering the modest knock of Titmouse, suspecting who was his visitor, opened the door but a little way, and in that little way, with his hand on the latch, he stood, with a plainly repulsive look.

“Oh! it’s you, Titmouse, is it?” he commenced, coldly.

“Yes. I—I just want to speak a word to you—only a word or two, Hucky, if you aren’t busy?”

“Why, I was just going to go—but what d’ye want, Titmouse?” he inquired, in a freezing manner, not stirring from where he stood.

“Let me come inside a minute,” implored Titmouse, feeling as if his little heart were really dropping out of him: and, in a most ungracious manner, Huckaback motioned him in.

“Well,” commenced Huckaback, with a chilling distrustful look.

“Why, Hucky, I know you’re a good-natured chap—you *couldn’t*, just for a short time, lend me ten shill’”—

“No, curse me if I can: and that’s flat!” briskly interrupted Huckaback, finding his worst suspicions confirmed.

“Why, Hucky, wasn’t you only yesterday paid your salary?”

“Well!—suppose I was?—what then? You’re a monstrous cool hand, Titmouse! I never!! So I’m to lend to you, when I’m starving myself! I’ve received such a lot, too, haven’t I!”

“I thought we’d always been friends, Hucky,” said Titmouse faintly; “and so we shouldn’t mind helping one another a bit! Don’t you remember, I once lent you half-a-crown?”

“Half-a-crown!—and that’s nine months ago!”

“Do, Hucky, do lend me a few shillings. ’Pon my soul, I’ve not a sixpence in the whole world.”

“Ha, ha! A pretty chap to borrow! You can pay so well! By George, Titmouse, you’re a cool hand!”

“If you won’t lend me, I must starve.”

“Go to *my* uncle’s.” [Titmouse groaned aloud.] “Well—and why not? What of that?” continued Huckaback, sharply and bitterly. “I dare say it wouldn’t be the first time you’ve done such a trick no more than me. I’ve been obligated to do it. Why shouldn’t you? A’n’t there that ring?”

“Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! that’s just what Mrs Squallop said last night!”

“Whew! *She’s* down on you, is she! And you have the face to come to me!! *You*—that’s a-going to be sold up, come to borrow! Lord, that’s good, any how! A queer use that to make of one’s friends;—it’s a taking them in, I say!”

“Oh, Hucky, Hucky, if you only knew what a poor devil”——

“Yes, that’s what I was a saying; but it a’n’t ‘poor devils’ one lends money to so easily, I warrant me; though you a’n’t such a poor devil—you’re only shamming! Where’s your guard-chain, your studs, your breast-

pin, your ring, and all that? Sell 'em! if not, anyhow, *pawn* 'em. Can't eat your cake and have it; fine back must have empty belly with us sort of chaps."

"If you'll only be so uncommon kind as to lend me—this once—ten shillings," continued Titmouse in an imploring tone, "I'll bind myself, by a solemn oath, to pay you the very first moment I get what's due to me from Tag-rag & Co."—Here he was almost choked by the sudden recollection that he had next to nothing to receive.

"You've some property in the moon, too, that's coming to you, you know!" said Huckaback with an insulting sneer.

"I know what you're driving at," said poor Titmouse; and he continued eagerly, "and if anything *should* ever come up from Messrs Quirk, Gam"—

"Yough! Faugh! Pish! Stuff!" burst out Huckaback, in a tone of contempt and disgust; "*never* thought there was anything in it, and now *know* it! It's all my eye, and all that! You've been only humbugging me all this while!"

"Oh, Hucky, Hucky! You don't say so!" groaned Titmouse, bursting into tears; "you did not *always* say so."

"It's enough that I say it *now*, then; will that do?" interrupted Huckaback, impetuously.

"Oh, Lord, Lord! what is to become of me?" cried Titmouse, with a face full of anguish.

[At this moment, the following was the course of thought passing through the mind of Mr Huckaback:—It is not *certain* that nothing will come of the fellow's affair with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. It was hardly likely that they would have gone as far as Titmouse represented (lawyers as they were), unless they had seen very substantial grounds for doing so. Besides, even though Titmouse might not get ten thousand a-year, he might yet succeed in obtaining a very splendid sum of money; and if he (Huckaback) could but get a little slice out of it, Titmouse was now nearly desperate, and would promise anything; and if he could but

be wheeled in to giving anything in writing—Well, thought Huckaback, I'll try it, however!]

"Ah, Titmouse, you're civil enough *now*, and would *promise* anything," said Huckaback, appearing to hesitate; "but supposing I were to do what you want, when you got your money you'd forget everything about it"—

"Forget my promise! Dear Hucky! only try me—do try me but once, that's all! 'Pon my precious life, ten shillings is worth more to me now than a hundred pounds may be by-and-by.

"Ay, so you say *now*; but d'ye mean to tell me, that in case I *was* now to advance you ten shillings out of my small salary," continued Huckaback, apparently carelessly, "you'd, for instance, pay me a hundred pounds out of your thousands?"

"Oh, Lord! only you try me—do try me!" said Titmouse, eagerly.

"Oh, I daresay!" interrupted Huckaback, smiling incredulously, and chinking some money in his trousers' pocket. Titmouse heard it, and (as the phrase is) his teeth watered; and he immediately swore such a tremendous oath as I dare not set down in writing, that if Huckaback would that evening lend him ten shillings, Titmouse would give him one hundred pounds out of the very first monies he got from the estate.

"Ten shillings is a slapping slice out of my little salary—I shall have, by George, to go without lots of things I'd intended getting; it's really worth ten pounds to me, just now."

"Why, dear Hucky! 'pon my life, 'tis worth a hundred to me! Mrs Squallop will sell me out, bag and baggage, if I don't give her something to-morrow!"

"Well, if I really thought—hem!—would you mind giving me, now, a bit of black and white for it—just (as one might say) to show you was in earnest?"

"I'll do anything you like; only let me feel the ten shillings in my fingers!"

"Well, no sooner said than done, if you're a man of your word," said Huckaback, in a trice producing a bit of paper, and a pen and ink. "So,

only just for the fun of it; but—Lord! what stuff!—I'm only bargaining for a hundred pounds of moonshine. Ha, ha! I shall never see the colour of your money, not I; so I may as well say two hundred when I'm about it, as one hundred"—

"Why, hem! Two hundred, Huck, is rather a large figure; one hundred's odds enough, I'm sure!" quoth Titmouse meekly.

"P'r'aps, Tit, you forget the *licking* you gave me the other day," said Huckaback with sudden sternness. "Suppose I was to go to an attorney, and get the law of you, what a sight of damages I should have—three hundred pounds at least!"

Titmouse appeared even yet hesitating.

"Well, then!" said Huckaback, flinging down his pen, "suppose I have them damages yet"—

"Come, come, Hucky, 'tis all past and gone, all that"—

"Is it? Well, I never! I shall never be again the same man I was before that ere licking. I've a sort of a—a—of a—feeling inside, as if—my breast was—I shall carry it to my grave—curse me if I shan't!"

[It never once occurred to Titmouse, not having his friend Mr Gammon at his elbow, that the plaintiff in the action of *Huckaback v. Titmouse* might have been slightly at a loss for a *witness* of the assault; but something quite as good in its way—a heaven-sent suggestion—*did* occur to him.]

"Ah," said Titmouse suddenly, "that's true; and uncommon sorry am I; but still, a hundred pounds is a hundred pounds, and a large sum for the use of ten shillings, and a licking; but never you think it's all moonshine about my business with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap! I didn't intend to have said a word—but—you should only have heard what I've heard to-day from those gents; hem! but I won't split *again* either!" he added, mysteriously.

"Eh? What? Heard from those gents at Saffron Hill?" interrupted Huckaback briskly; "come, Titty, out

with it—out with it; no secrets between friends, Titty!"

"No, I'll be hanged if I do—I won't spoil it all again; and now, since I've let out as much, which I didn't mean to do, I'll tell you something else—ten shillings is no use to me, I must have a pound."

"Titty, Titty!" exclaimed Huckaback, with unaffected concern.

"And won't give more than fifty for it when I get my property either"—[Huckaback whistled aloud, and with a significant air buttoned up the pocket which contained the money; intimating that now the negotiation was all at an end, for that Titmouse's new terms were quite out of the question;] "for I know where I can get twenty pounds easily, only I liked to come to a *friend* first."

"You aren't behaving much like a friend to one as has always been a fast friend of yours, Titty! A *pound*!—I haven't got it to part with, that's flat; so, if that's really your lowest figure, why, you must even go to your other friend, and leave poor Hucky!"

"Well, I don't mind saying only ten shillings," quoth Titmouse, fearing that he had been going on *rather* too fast.

"Ah, that's something reasonable-like, Titty! and to meet you like a friend, I'll take fifty pounds instead of a hundred; but you won't object now to—you know—a deposit; that ring of yours—well, well! it don't signify, since it goes against you: so now, here goes, a bit of paper for ten shillings, ha, ha!" and taking a pen, after a pause, in which he called to mind as much of the phraseology of money securities as he could, he drew up the following stringent document, which I give *verbatim et literatim* :—

"*Know all Men* That you are Bound to *Mr R. Huckaback* Promising the Bearer (on *Demand*) To Pay Fifty Pounds in cash out of the estate, *if you Get it.* (Value received.)

"(Witness), 22d July 18—.

"R. HUCKABACK."

"There, Titty—if you're an honest man, and would do as you would be done by," said Huckaback, after signing his own name as above, handing

the pen to Titmouse, "sign that; just to show your honour, like—for, in course—bating the ten shillings I've lent you—I sha'n't ever come on you for the money—get as much as you may."

A blessed thought occurred to poor Titmouse in his extremity, viz. that there was *no stamp* on the above instrument (and he had never seen a promissory-note or bill of exchange without one); and he signed it instantly, with many fervent expressions of gratitude. Huckaback received the valuable security with apparently a careless air; and after cramming it into his pocket, as if it had been in reality only a bit of waste paper, counted out ten shillings into the eager hand of Titmouse; who, having thus most unexpectedly succeeded in his mission, soon afterwards departed—each of this pair of worthies fancying that he had succeeded in cheating the other. Huckaback, having very cordially shaken Titmouse by the hand, heartily damned him upon shutting the door on him; and then anxiously perused and reperused his "security," wondering whether it was possible for Titmouse at any time thereafter to evade it, and considering by what means he could acquaint himself with the progress of Titmouse's affairs. The latter gentleman, as he hurried homeward, dwelt for a long while upon only one thought—how fortunate was the omission of his friend to have a stamp upon his security! When and where, thought he, was it that he had heard that nothing would do without a stamp? However, he had got the ten shillings safe; and Huckaback might wait for his fifty pounds till—but in the meanwhile he, Titmouse, seemed to stand a fair chance of going to the dogs; the ten shillings, which he had just obtained with so much difficulty, were to find their way immediately into the pockets of his landlady, whom it might pacify for a day or two, and to what quarter was he now to look for the smallest assistance? What was to become of him? Titmouse was a miserable fool; but thoughts such as these, in such circumstances as his, would

have forced themselves into the mind of even a fool! How could he avoid—oh, horrid thought!—soon parting with, or at least pawning, his ring and his other precious trinkets? He burst into a perspiration at the mere thought of seeing them hanging ticketed for sale in the window of old Balls! As he slowly ascended the stairs which led to his apartment, he felt as if he were following some unseen conductor to a dungeon.

He was not aware that all this while, although he heard nothing from them, he occupied almost exclusively the thoughts of those distinguished practitioners in the law, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. They, in common with Huckaback, had an intense desire to share in his anticipated good fortune, and determined to do so according to their opportunities. The excellent Huckaback (a model of an usurer on a small scale) had promptly and adroitly seized hold of the very first opportunity that presented itself, for securing a little return hereafter for the ten shillings, with which he had so generously parted when he could so ill afford it; while Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap were racking their brains, and, from time to time, those of Messrs Mortmain and Frankpledge, to discover some instrument strong and large enough to cut a fat slice for themselves out of the fortune they were endeavouring, for that purpose, to put within the reach of Mr Titmouse. A rule-of-three mode of stating the matter would be thus; as the inconvenience of Huckaback's parting with his ten shillings and his waiver of damages for a very cruel assault, were to his contingent gain, hereafter, of fifty pounds; so were Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's risk, exertions, outlay, and benefit conferred on Titmouse, to their contingent gain of ten thousand pounds. The principal point of difference between them was—as to the mode of *securing* their future recompense; in which it may have been observed by the attentive reader, with respect to the precipitancy of Huckaback and the hesitating caution of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, that

—“*thus fools*” (e. g. Huckaback) “*rushed in where angels*” (i. e. Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap) “*feared to tread.*” Let me not, however, for a moment, insinuate that both these parties were actuated by only one motive, i. e. to make a prey of this little monkey *millionaire* that was to be. ’Tis true that Huckaback appears to have driven rather a hard bargain with his distressed friend (and almost every one who, being similarly situated, has occasion for such services as Titmouse sought from Huckaback, will find himself called upon to pay, in one way or another, pretty nearly the same price for them); but it was attended with one good effect;—for the specific interest in Titmouse’s future prosperity, acquired by Huckaback, quickened the latter gentleman’s energies and sharpened his wits in the service of his friend. But for this, indeed, it is probable that Mr Huckaback’s door would have become as hopelessly closed against Titmouse as was that of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. Some two or three nights after the little transaction between the two friends which I have been describing, Huckaback called upon Titmouse, and, after greeting him rather cordially, told him that he had come to put him up to a trick upon the Saffron Hill people, that would tickle them into a little activity in his affairs. The trick was—the sending a letter to those gentlemen, calculated to—But why attempt to characterise it? I have the original document lying before me, which was sent by Titmouse the very next morning to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and here follows a *verbatim* copy of it:—

No. 9 Closet Court, Oxford Street.

“To Messrs QUEEK & Co.

“Gents,—Am Sorry to Trouble You, But Being *Drove quite desperate* at my Troubles (which have brot me to my Last Penny a Week ago) and Mrs Squallop my Landlady w^d distrain on Me only that There Is nothing to distrain on, Am Determined to Go Abroad in a Week’s Time, and shall

Never come Any More back again with Great Grief w^h Is What I now Write To tell You Of (Hoping you will please Take No notice of It) So Need give Yourselves No Further Concern with my Concerns Seeing The Estate is Not To Be Had and Am Sorry you Sh^d Have Had so Much trouble with My Affairs w^h c^d not Help. Sh^d have Much liked The Thing, only it Was Not worth Stopping For, or Would, but Since It Was not God’s Will be Done *which it Will*. Hav^s raised a Trifle On my Future Prospects (w^h am Certain There is Nothing In) from a *True Friend*” [need it be guessed at whose instance these words had found their way into the letter?] “w^h was certainly uncommon inconvenient to That Person But He w^d do Any thing to Do me good As he says Am going to raise A Little More from a Gent That does *Things of That Nature* w^h will help me with Expense in Going Abroad (which place I Never mean to Return from). Have fixed for the 10th To Go on w^h Day Shall Take leave Of Mr Tag-rag (who on my Return Shall be glad to See Buried or in the Workhouse). Have wrote This letter Only to Save Y^r Respectable Selves trouble w^h Trust You w^d not have Taken.

“And Remain,

“Gents,

“Y^r humble Unworthy servant,
“T. TITMOUSE.

“P. S.—Hope you will Particularly Remember me to Mr Gammon. What is to become of me, know nothing, being so troubled. Am Humbly Determined not to employ any Gents in This matter except y^r most Respectable House, and sh^d be most Truly Sorry to Go Abroad w^h am *really Often thinking of in Earnest*. (Unless something Speedily Turns Up, favourable, T. T.—Sh^d like (By the way) to know if you sh^d be so Disposed what y^r resp^e house w^d take for my Chances Down (*Out and out*) In a Round Sum (*Ready money*) And hope if they Write It will be by Next Post or Shall be Gone Abroad.”

CHAPTER IX.

HOW GAMMON USED TO WIND ROUND QUIRK; AND THE SUBTLE MEANS HE TOOK TO FIND OUT WHAT TITMOUSE WAS ABOUT.

OLD Mr Quirk, as soon as he had finished the perusal of the foregoing skilful document, started, a little disturbed, from his seat, and bustled into Mr Gammon's room with Mr Titmouse's open letter in his hand.—“Gammon,” said he, “just cast your eye over this, will you? Really, we must look after Titmouse, or, by Jove! he'll be gone!” Mr Gammon took the letter rather eagerly, read deliberately through it, and then looked up at his fidgety partner, who stood anxiously eyeing him, and smiled.

“Well, Gammon, I really think—eh? Don't you?”—

“Upon my word, Mr Quirk, this nearly equals his last letter; and it also seems to have produced on you the effect desired by its gifted writer!”

“Well, Gammon, and what of that? Because my heart don't happen to be quite a piece of flint, you're always”—

“You might have been a far wealthier man than you are but for that soft heart of yours, Mr Quirk,” said Gammon with a bland smile. (!)

“I know I might, Gammon—I know it. I thank my God I'm not so keen after business that I can't feel for this poor soul—really, his state's quite deplorable!”

“Then, my dear sir, put your hand into your pocket at once, as I was suggesting last night, and allow him a weekly sum.”

“A—hem! hem! Gammon”—said Quirk, sitting down, thrusting his hands into his waistcoat pockets, and looking very earnestly at Gammon.

“Well, then,” replied that gentleman, shrugging his shoulders, in an-

swer to the mute appeal—“write and say you *won't*—'tis soon done, and so the matter ends.”

“Why, Gammon, you see, if he goes abroad,” said Quirk, after a long pause—“we lose him for ever.”

“Pho!—go abroad! He's too much for you, Mr Quirk—he is indeed, ha, ha!”

“You're fond of a laugh at my expense, Gammon; it's quite pleasant—you can't think how I like that laugh of yours!”

“I beg your pardon, Mr Quirk—but you really misunderstand me; I was laughing only at the absurd inconsistency of the fellow: he's a most transparent little fool, and takes us for such. Go abroad! Ridiculous pretence!—In his precious postscript he undoes all—he says he is only often *thinking* of going—pshaw!—That the wretch is in great distress, is very probable; but it must go hard with him before he either commits suicide or goes abroad, I warrant him: I've no fears on *that* score—but there *is* a point in the letter that may be worth considering—I mean the fellow's hint about borrowing money on his prospects.”

“Yes, to be sure—the very thing that struck *me*.” [Gammon faintly smiled.] “I never thought much about the *other* part of the letter—all stuff about going abroad—pho!—But to be sure, if he's trying to raise money, he may get into keen hands.—Do you really think he *has* been trying on anything of the sort?”

“Oh no—of course it's only a little lie of his—or he must have found out some greater fool than himself, which

I had not supposed possible. But however that may be, I really think, Mr Quirk, it's high time that we should take some decided step."

"Well,—yes, it may be," said Quirk slowly,—"and I must say that Mortmain encouraged me a good deal the day before yesterday."

"Well, and you know what Mr Frankpledge?"

"Oh, as to Frankpledge—hem!"

"What of Mr Frankpledge, Mr Quirk?" inquired Gammon, rather tartly.

"There! there!—Always the way—but what does it signify? Come, come, Gammon, we know each other too well to quarrel!—I don't mean anything disrespectful to Mr Frankpledge, but when Mortmain has been one's conveyancer these twenty years, and never once—hem!—but, however, he tells me that we are now standing on sure ground, or that he don't know what sure ground is, and sees no objection to our even taking preliminary steps in the matter, which indeed I begin to think it high time to do!—And as for securing ourselves in respect of any advances to Titmouse—he suggests our taking a bond, conditioned—say for the payment of £500 or £1000 on demand, under cover of which one might advance him, you know, just such sums as, and when we pleased; one could stop when one thought fit; one could begin with three or four pounds a-week, and increase as his prospects improved—eh!"

"You know I've no objection to such an arrangement; but consider, Mr Quirk, we must have patience; it will take a long while to get our verdict, you know, and perhaps as long to secure it afterwards; and this horrid little wretch all the while on our hands; what the deuce to do with him, I really don't know!"

"Humph, humph!" grunted Quirk, looking very earnestly and uneasily at Gammon.

"And what I chiefly fear is this,—suppose he should get dissatisfied with the amount of our advances, and, knowing the state and prospects of the cause, should then turn restive?"

"Ay, confound it, Gammon, all that should be looked to, shouldn't it?" interrupted Quirk, with an exceedingly chagrined air. "I always like to look a long way a-head!"

"To be sure," continued Gammon thoughtfully; "by that time he may have got substantial friends about him, whom he could persuade to become security to us for further and past advances."

"Nay, now you name the thing, Gammon: it was what I was thinking of only the other day:" he dropped his voice—"Isn't there one or two of our own clients, hem!"

"Why, certainly, there's old Fang; I don't think it impossible he might be induced to do a little usury—it's all he lives for, Mr Quirk; and the security is good in reality, though perhaps not exactly marketable."

"Nay; but, on second thoughts, why not do it myself, if anything can be made of it?"

"That, however, will be for future consideration. In the meantime, we'd better send for Titmouse, and manage him a little more—discreetly, eh? We did not exactly hit it off last time, did we, Mr Quirk?" said Gammon, smiling rather sarcastically. "We must keep him at Tag-rag's, if the thing can be done for the present, at all events."

"To be sure; he couldn't then come buzzing about us, like a gad-fly; he'd drive us mad in a week, I'm sure."

"Oh, I'd rather give up everything than submit to it. It can't be difficult for us, I should think, to bind him to our own terms—to put a bridle in the ass's mouth? Let us say that we insist on his signing an undertaking to act implicitly according to our directions in everything."

"Ay, to be sure; on pain of our instantly turning him to the right-about. I fancy it will do now! It was just what I was thinking of!"

"And, now, Mr Quirk," said Gammon, with as much of peremptoriness in his tone as he could venture upon to Mr Quirk, "you really must do me the favour to leave the management of this little wretch to me. You see,

he seems to have taken—Heaven save the mark!—a fancy to me, poor fool!—and—and—it must be owned, we miscarried sadly, the other night, on a certain grand occasion—eh?”

Quirk shook his head dissentingly.

“Well, then,” continued Gammon, “upon one thing I am fixedly determined; one or the other of us shall undertake Titmouse, solely and singly. Pray, for Heaven’s sake, tackle him yourself—a disagreeable duty! You know, my dear sir, how invariably I leave everything of real importance and difficulty to your very superior tact and experience; but *this* little matter—pshaw!”

“Come, come, Gammon, that’s a drop of sweet oil”——

Quirk might well say so, for he felt its softening, smoothing effects already.

“Upon my word and honour, Mr Quirk, I’m in earnest. Pshaw!—and you must know it. I know you too well, my dear sir, to attempt to”——

“Certainly,” quoth Quirk, smiling shrewdly, “I must say, those must get up *very* early that can find Caleb Quirk napping.”—Gammon felt at that moment that for several years *he* must have been a very early riser! And so the matter was arranged in the manner which Gammon had from the first wished and determined upon, *i. e.* that Mr Titmouse should be left entirely to his management; and, after some little discussion as to the time and manner of the meditated advances, the partners parted. On entering his own room, Quirk, closing his door, stood for some time leaning against the side of the window, with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes instinctively resting on his banker’s book, which lay on the table. He was in a very brown study: the subject on which his thoughts were busied, being the prudence or imprudence of leaving Titmouse thus in the hands of Gammon. It might be all very well for Quirk to *assert* his self-confidence when in Gammon’s presence; but he did not really feel it. He never left Gammon after any little difference of opinion, however friendly, without a secret

suspicion that somehow or another Gammon had been too much for him, and always gained his purposes, without giving Quirk any handle of dissatisfaction. In fact, Quirk was thoroughly afraid of Gammon, and Gammon knew it. In the present instance, an undefinable but increasing suspicion and discomfort forced him presently back again into Gammon’s room.

“I say, Gammon, you understand, eh?—*Fair play*, you know,” he commenced, with a shy embarrassed air, ill concealed under a forced smile.

“Pray, Mr Quirk, what may be your meaning?” inquired Gammon with unusual tartness, with an astonished air, and blushing violently, which was not surprising; for, ever since Quirk had quitted him, Gammon’s thoughts had been occupied with only one question, *viz.*, how he should go to work with Titmouse to satisfy him that he (Gammon) was the only member of the firm that had a real disinterested regard for him, and so acquire a valuable control over him! Thus occupied, the observation of Quirk had completely taken Gammon aback; and he lost his presence of mind, of course in such case his *temper* quickly following. “Will you favour me, Mr Quirk, with an explanation of your extraordinarily absurd and offensive observation?” said he, reddening more and more as he looked at Mr Quirk.

“You’re a queer hand, Gammon,” replied Quirk, with almost an equally surprised and embarrassed air, for he could not resist a sort of conviction that Gammon had fathomed what had been passing in his mind.

“What did you mean, Mr Quirk, by your singular observation just now?” said Gammon calmly, having recovered his presence of mind.

“Mean? Why, that—we’re *both* queer hands, Gammon, ha, ha, ha!” answered Quirk, with an anxious laugh.

“I shall leave Titmouse entirely—*entirely*, Mr Quirk, in your hands; I will have nothing henceforth whatever to do with him. I am quite sick of him and his concerns already; I

cannot bring myself to undertake such an affair, and that was what I was thinking of,—when”——

“Eh? indeed! Well, to be sure! Only think!” said Quirk, dropping his voice, looking to see that the two doors were shut, and resuming the chair which he had lately quitted, “What do you think has been occurring to *me* in my own room, just now? Whether it would suit us better to throw this monkey overboard, put ourselves confidentially in communication with the party in possession, and tell him that—hem!—for a—eh? You understand? a con-si-de-ra-tion—a *suitable* con-si-de-ra-tion!”

“Mr Quirk! Heavens!” Gammon was really amazed.

“Well? You needn’t open your eyes so very wide, Mr Gammon—why shouldn’t it be done? You know we wouldn’t be satisfied with a trifle, of course. But suppose he’d agree to buy our silence with four or five thousand pounds, really, it’s well worth considering! Upon my soul, Gammon, it is a hard thing on him when one makes the case one’s own!—no fault of his, and it is very hard for him to turn out, and for such a—eugh!—such a wretch as Titmouse; you’d feel it yourself, Gammon, if you were in his place, and I’m sure you’d think that four or five thous”——

“But is not Titmouse our Poor *Нелюбовъ*?” said Gammon, with a sly smile.

“Why, *that’s* only one way of looking at it, Gammon! Perhaps the man we are going to eject does a vast deal of good with the property; certainly he bears a very high name in the county—and fancy Titmouse with ten thousand a-year!”——

“Mr Quirk, Mr Quirk, it’s not to be thought of for a moment—not for a moment,” interrupted Gammon seriously, and even somewhat peremptorily—“nothing should persuade *me* to be any party to such”——

At this moment Snap burst into the room with a heated appearance, and a chagrined air——

“*Pitch v. Grub*——” he commenced, breathlessly—

[This was a little pet action of poor Snap’s: it was for slander uttered by the defendant (an ostler) against the plaintiff (a waterman on a coach stand), charging the plaintiff with having *the mange*, on account of which a woman refused to marry him.]

“*Pitch v. Grub*—just been tried at Guildhall. Witness bang up to the mark—words and special damage proved; slapping speech from Sergeant Shout. Verdict for plaintiff—but only one farthing damages; and Lord Widdrington said, as the jury had given one farthing for damages, *he* would give him another for costs, and that would make a halfpenny; on which the defendant’s attorney tendered me—a halfpenny on the spot. Laughter in court—move for new trial first day of next term, and tip his lordship a rattler in the next Sunday’s *Flash!*”

“Mr Quirk,” said Gammon sternly, “once for all, if this sort of low business is to go on, I’ll leave the firm, come what will!” [It flickered across his mind that Titmouse would be a capital client to start with on his own account.] “I protest our names will quite stink in the profession.”

“Good, Mr Gammon, good!” interposed Snap, warmly; “your little action for the usury penalties the other day came off so uncommon well! the judge’s compliment to you was *so* nice”——

“Let me tell you, Mr Snap,” interrupted Gammon, reddening——

“Pho! Come! Can’t be helped—fortune of the war,”—interrupted the head of the firm,—“there’s only one thing to be looked to,—*Is Pitch solvent?*—of course we’ve security for costs out of pocket—eh, Snap?”

Now the fact was, that poor Snap had picked up Pitch at one of the police offices, and, in his zeal for business, had undertaken his case on pure speculation, relying on the apparent strength of the plaintiff’s case—Pitch being only a waterman attached to a coach stand. When, therefore, the very ominous question of Mr Quirk met Snap’s ear, he suddenly happened (at least, he chose to appear to think

so) to hear himself called for from the clerk's room, and bolted out of Mr Gammon's room rather unceremoniously.

"Snap will be the ruin of the firm, Mr Quirk," said Gammon, with an air of disgust. "But I really must get on with the brief I'm drawing: so, Mr Quirk we can talk about Titmouse to-morrow!"

The brief he was drawing up was for a defendant who was going to nonsuit the plaintiff (a man with a large family, who had kindly lent the defendant a considerable sum of money), solely because of the *want of a stamp*.

Quirk differed in opinion with Gammon, and, as he resumed his seat at his desk, he could not help writing the words, "*Quirk and Snap*," and thinking how well such a firm would sound and work—for Snap was verily a chip of the old block!

There will probably never be wanting those who will join in abusing and ridiculing attorneys and solicitors. Why? In almost every action at law, or suit in equity, or proceeding which may, or may not, lead to one, each client conceives a natural dislike for his opponent's attorney or solicitor. *If the plaintiff succeeds*, he hates the defendant's attorney for putting him (the said plaintiff) to so much expense, and causing him so much vexation and danger; and, when he comes to settle with his own attorney, there is not a little heart-burning in looking at his bill of costs, however reasonable. *If the plaintiff fails*, of course it is through the ignorance and unskilfulness of his attorney or solicitor! and he hates almost equally his own, and his opponent's attorney!—Precisely so is it with a successful or unsuccessful *defendant*. In fact, an attorney or solicitor is almost always obliged to be acting *adversely to some one* of whom he at once makes an enemy; for an attorney's weapons must necessarily be pointed almost invariably at our pockets! He is necessarily, also, called into action in cases when all the worst passions of our nature—our hatred and revenge, and our self-

interest—are set in motion. Consider the mischief which might be constantly done on a grand scale in society, if the vast majority of attorneys and solicitors were not honourable and able men! Conceive them, for a moment, disposed everywhere to stir up litigation, by availing themselves of their perfect acquaintance with almost all men's circumstances—artfully inflaming irritable and vindictive clients, kindling, instead of stifling, family dissensions, and fomenting public strife;—why, were they to do only a hundredth part of what it is thus in their power to do, our courts of justice would soon be doubled, together with the number of our judges, counsel, and attorneys; new jails must be built to hold the ruined litigants—and the insolvent court enlarged, and in constant session throughout the year.

But not *all* of this body of honourable and valuable men are entitled to this tribute of praise. There are a few *QUIRKS*, several *GAMMONS*, and many *SNAPS*, in the profession of the law—men whose characters and doings often make fools visit the sins of individuals upon the whole species; nay, there are far worse, as I have heard—but I must return to my narrative.

On Friday night, the 28th July 18—, the state of Mr Titmouse's affairs was this: he owed his landlady £1, 9s.; his washerwoman, 6s.; his tailor, £1, 8s.—in all, three guineas; besides 10s. to Huckaback (for Tittlebat's notion was, that on repayment at any time of 10s., Huckaback would be bound to deliver up to him the document or voucher which he had given that gentleman), and a weekly accruing rent of 7s. to his landlady, besides some very small sums for coffee (*alias* chicory), tea, bread, and butter, &c. To meet these serious liabilities, he had literally—*not one farthing*.

On returning to his lodgings that night, he found a line from Thumbscrew, his landlady's broker, informing him that, unless by ten o'clock on the next morning his arrears of rent were paid, he should distrain, and she would also give him notice to quit at

the end of the week: that nothing could induce her to give him further time. He sat down in dismay on reading this threatening document; and, in sitting down, his eye fell on a bit of paper lying on the floor, which must have been thrust under the door. From the marks on it, it was evident that he must have trod upon it in entering. It proved to be a summons from the Court of Requests, for £1, 8s. due to Job Cox, his tailor. He deposited it mechanically on the table; and for a minute he dared hardly breathe.

This seemed something really like a crisis.

After a silent agony of half an hour's duration, he rose trembling from his chair, blew out his candle, and, in a few minutes' time, might have been seen standing with a pale and troubled face before the window of old Balls, the pawnbroker, peering through the suspended articles—watches, sugar-tongs, rings, brooches, spoons, pins, bracelets, knives, and forks, seals, chains, &c.—to see whether any one else than old Balls were within. Having at length watched out a very pale and wretched-looking woman, Titmouse entered to take her place; and, after interchanging a few faltering words with the white-haired and hard-hearted old pawnbroker, produced his guard-chain, his breast-pin, and his ring, and obtained three pounds two shillings and sixpence on the security of them. With this sum he slunk out of the shop, and calling on Cox, his tailor, paid his trembling old creditor the full amount of his claim (£1, 8s.) together with 4s., the expense of the summons—simply asking for a receipt, without uttering another word, for he felt almost choked. In the same way he dealt with Mrs Squalop, his landlady—not uttering one word, in reply to her profuse and voluble apologies, but pressing his lips between his teeth till the blood came from them, while his little heart seemed splitting within him. Then he walked up-stairs, with a desperate air—having just eighteenpence in his pocket—all his ornaments gone—his

washerwoman yet unpaid—his rent going on—several other little matters unsettled; and the 10th of August approaching, when he expected to be dismissed penniless from Mr Tagrag's, and thrown on his own resources for subsistence. When he had regained his room, and, having shut the door, had reseated himself at his table, he felt for a moment as if he could have yelled. Starvation and Despair, two fiends, seemed sitting beside him in shadowy ghastliness, chilling and palsying him—petrifying his heart within him. WHAT WAS HE TO DO? Why had he been born?

Why was he so much more persecuted and miserable than any one else? Visions of his ring, his breast-pin, his studs, stuck in a bit of card, with their price written above them, and hanging exposed to his view in old Balls' window, almost frenzied him. Thoughts such as these at length began to suggest others of a dreadful nature. * * * The means were at that instant within his reach. * * * A sharp knock at the door startled him out of the stupor into which he was sinking. He listened for a moment as if he were not certain that the sound was a real one. There seemed a ton-weight upon his heart, which a mighty sigh could lift for an instant, but not remove; and he was in the act of heaving a second such sigh, as he languidly opened the door—expecting to encounter Mr Thumbscrew, or some of his myrmidons, who might not know of his recent settlement with his landlady.

"Is this Mr—Tit—Titmouse's?" inquired a genteel-looking young man.

"Yes," replied Titmouse, sadly.

"Are you Mr Titmouse?"

"Yes," he replied, more faintly than before.

"Oh—I have brought you, sir, a letter from Mr Gammon, of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, solicitors, Saffron Hill," said the stranger, unconscious that his words shot a flash of light into a little abyss of grief and despair before him. "He begged me to give this letter into your own hands, and said he hoped you'd

send him an answer by the first morning's post.

"Yes—oh—I see—certainly—to be sure—with pleasure—how is Mr Gammon?—uncommon kind of him—very humble respects to him—take care to answer it," stammered Titmouse in a breath, hardly knowing whether he were standing on his head or his heels, and not quite certain where he was.

"Good evening, sir," replied the stranger, evidently a little surprised at Titmouse's manner, and withdrew. Titmouse shut his door. With prodigious trepidation of hand and flutter of spirits, he opened the letter—an enclosure meeting his eyes in the shape of a bank-note.

"Oh Lord!" he murmured, turning white as the sheet of paper he held. Then the letter dropped from his hand, and he stood as if stupefied for some moments; but presently rapture darted through him; a five-pound bank-note was in his hand, and it had been enclosed in the following letter:—

"35, *Thavies' Inn*, 20th July 18—.

"MY DEAR MR TITMOUSE,

"Your last note addressed to our firm, has given me the greatest pain, and I hasten, on my return from the country, to forward you the enclosed trifle, out of my own personal resources—and I sincerely hope it will be of temporary service to you. May I beg the favour of your company on Sunday evening next, at seven o'clock, to take a glass of wine with me? I shall be quite alone and disengaged; and may have it in my power to make you some important communications, concerning matters in which, I assure you, I feel a very deep interest on your account. Begging the favour of an early answer to-morrow morning, I trust you will believe me, ever, my dear sir, your most faithful humble servant,

"OILY GAMMON.

"TITTLERAT TITMOUSE, ESQ."

The first balmy drop of the long-expected golden shower had at length fallen upon the panting Titmouse. How polite—nay, how affectionate and respectful—was the note of Mr Gam-

mon! and, for the first time in his life, he saw himself addressed

"TITTLERAT TITMOUSE, ESQUIRE."

If his room had been large enough to admit of it, he would have skipped round it again and again in his frantic ecstasy. Having read over several times the blessed letter of Mr Gammon, he hastily folded it up, crumpled up the bank-note in his hand, clapped his hat on his head, blew out his candle, rushed down stairs as if a mad dog were at his heels, and in three or four minutes' time might have been seen standing breathless before old Balls, whom he had almost electrified by asking, with an eager and joyous air, for a return of the articles which he had only an hour before pawned with him; at the same time laying down the duplicates and the bank-note. The latter old Balls scrutinised with most anxious exactness, and even suspicion—but it seemed perfectly unexceptionable; so he redelivered to Titmouse his precious ornaments, and the change out of his note, *minus* a trifling sum for interest. Titmouse then started off at top speed to Huckaback; but it suddenly occurring to him as possible that that gentleman, on hearing of his good fortune, might look for an immediate repayment of the ten shillings he had recently lent to Titmouse, he stopped short—paused—and returned home. There he had hardly been seated a moment, when down he pelted again, to buy a sheet of paper and a wafer or two, to write his letter to Mr Gammon; which having obtained, he returned at the same speed, almost overturning his fat landlady, who looked after him as though he were a mad cat scampering up and down stairs, and fearing that he had gone suddenly crazy. The note he wrote to Mr Gammon was so exceedingly extravagant, that, candid as I have (I trust) hitherto shown myself in the delineation of Mr Titmouse's character, I cannot bring myself to give the aforesaid letter to the reader—making all allowances for the extraordinary excitement of its writer.

Sleep, that night and morning, found

and left Mr Titmouse the assured exulting master of TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR. Of this fact, the oftener he read Mr Gammon's letter, the stronger became his convictions. 'Twas undoubtedly rather a large inference from small premises; but it secured him unspeakable happiness, *for a time*, at a possible cost of future disappointment and misery, which he did not pause to consider. The fact is that logic (according to Dr Watts, but not according to Dr Whately, *the right use of reason*) is not a practical art. No one regards it in actual life; observe, therefore, folks on all hands constantly acting like Tittlebat Titmouse in the case before us. His *conclusion* was—that he had become the certain master of ten thousand a-year; his *premises* were—what the reader has seen. I do not, however, mean to say, that if the reader be a youth hot from Oxford, he may not be able to prove, by a very refined and ingenious argument, that Titmouse was, in what he did above, a fine natural logician; for I recollect that some great philosopher hath demonstrated, by a famous argument, that there is NOTHING ANYWHERE: and no one that I have heard of, hath ever been able to prove the contrary.

By six o'clock the next morning, Titmouse had, with his own hand, dropped his answer into the letter-box upon the door of Mr Gammon's chambers in Thavies' Inn; in which answer he had, with numerous expressions of profound respect and gratitude, accepted Mr Gammon's polite invitation. A very happy man felt Titmouse, as he returned to Oxford Street; entering Messrs Tag-rag's premises with alacrity, just as they were being opened, and volunteering his assistance in numerous things beyond his usual province, with singular briskness and energy; as if conscious that by doing so he was greatly gratifying Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, whose wishes upon the subject he knew. He displayed such unwonted cheerfulness and patient good-nature throughout the day, that one of his companions, a serious youth, in a white neckerchief, black clothes, and

with a blessed countenance—the only professing pious person in the establishment—took an occasion to ask him, in a mysterious whisper, “whether he had not got *converted* :” and whether he would, at six o'clock in the morning, accompany the speaker to a room in the neighbourhood, where he (the youth aforesaid) was going to conduct an exhortation and prayer meeting! Titmouse refused—but not without a few qualms; for luck certainly seemed to be smiling on him, and he felt that he ought to be grateful for it; but then, he at length reflected, the proper place for that sort of thing would be a regular *church*—to which he accordingly resolved to go. This change of manners Tag-rag, however, looked upon as assumed only to affront *him*; seeing nothing but impertinence and defiance in all that Titmouse did—as if the nearer Titmouse got to the end of his bondage—i. e. the 10th of August—the lighter-hearted he grew! Titmouse resolved religiously to keep his own counsel; to avoid even—at all events for the present—communicating with Huckaback.

On the ensuing Sunday he rose very early, and took nearly twice as long a time as usual to dress—by reason of his often falling into many delicious and momentarily intoxicating reveries. By eleven o'clock he might have been seen entering the gallery of St Andrew's Church, Holborn; where he considered that doubtless Mr Gammon, who lived in the neighbourhood, might have a seat. He asked three or four pew-openers, both below and above stairs, if they knew which was Mr Gammon's pew—Mr Gammon of Thavies' Inn; not dreaming of presumptuously going to the pew, but of sitting in some place which commanded a view of it. Mr Gammon, I need hardly say, was quite unknown there—no one had ever heard of such a person: nevertheless Titmouse (albeit a little galled at being, in spite of his elegant appearance, slipped into a back seat in the gallery) remained to the close of the service—but his thoughts wandered grievously the whole time. Having quitted the

church in a buoyant humour, he sauntered in the direction of Hyde Park. How soon might he become, instead of a mere spectator as heretofore, a partaker in its glories! The dawn of the day of fortune was on his long-benighted soul; and he could hardly subdue his excited feelings. Having eaten nothing but a couple of biscuits during the day, as the clock struck seven he made his punctual appearance at Mr Gammon's, with a pair of span-new white kid gloves on; and, somewhat flurried, was speedily ushered, by a comfortable-looking elderly female servant, into Mr Gammon's room. Mr Titmouse was dressed just as he had been when first presented to the reader, sallying forth into Oxford Street. Mr Gammon, who was sitting reading the *Sunday Flash* at a table on which stood a couple of decanters, several wine-glasses, and one or two dishes of fruit, rose and received his distinguished visitor with the most delightful affability.

"I am most happy, Mr Titmouse, to see you in this friendly way," said he, shaking him cordially by the hand.

"Oh, don't name it, sir!" quoth Titmouse rather indistinctly, and hastily running his hand through his hair.

"I've nothing, you see, to offer you but a little fruit, and a glass of fair port or sherry. You see I am a very quiet man on Sundays!"

"Particular fond of *them*, sir," replied Titmouse, endeavouring to clear his throat; for, in spite of a strong effort to appear at his ease, he was unsuccessful; so that, when Gammon's keen eye glanced at the bedizened figure of his guest, a bitter smile passed over his face, without having been observed by Titmouse. "*This*," thought he, as his eye passed from the ring glittering on the little finger of the right hand, to the studs and breast-pin in the shirt front, and thence to the guard-chain glaring entirely outside a damson-coloured satin waistcoat, and the spotless white glove which yet glistened on the left hand—"This is the writer of the dismal epistle of

the other day, announcing his desperation and destitution!"

"Your health, Mr Titmouse!—help yourself!" said Mr Gammon, in a cheerful and cordial tone. Titmouse, pouring out a glass only three quarters full, raised it to his lips with a slightly tremulous hand, and returned Mr Gammon's salutation. When had Titmouse tasted a glass of wine before? a reflection occurring not only to himself, but also to Gammon, to whom it was a circumstance that might be serviceable.

"You see, Mr Titmouse, mine's only a small bachelor's establishment, and I cannot put my old servant out of the way by having my friends to dinner"—[quite forgetting that the day before he had entertained at least six friends, including Mr Frankpledge—but, the idea of going through a dinner with Mr Titmouse!]

And now, O inexperienced Titmouse! unacquainted with the potent qualities of wine, I warn you to be cautious how you drink many glasses, for you cannot calculate the effect which they will have upon you; and, indeed, methinks that with this man you have a game to play which will not admit of much wine being drunk. Be you, therefore, on your guard; for wine is like a strong serpent, who will creep unperceivedly into your empty head, and coil himself up therein, until at length he begins to move about—and all things are as naught to you!

"Oh, sir, 'pon my honour, beg you won't name it—all one to me, sir!—Beautiful wine this, sir."

"Pretty fair, I think—certainly rather old;—but what fruit will you take—raspberries or cherries?"

"Why—a—I've so lately dined," replied Titmouse, alluding to the brace of biscuits on which he had luxuriated several hours before. He would have preferred the cherries, but did not feel quite at his ease how to dispose of the *stones* nicely—gracefully—so he took a very few raspberries upon his plate, and eat them slowly, and with a modest and timid air.

"Well, Mr Titmouse," commenced

Gammon with an air of concern, "I was really much distressed by your last letter!"

"Uncommon glad to hear it, sir—knew you would, sir—you're so kind-hearted;—all quite true, sir!"

"I had no idea that you were reduced to such straits," said Gammon in a sympathising tone, but settling his eye involuntarily on the ring of Titmouse.

"Quite dreadful, sir—'pon my soul, dreadful; and such usage at Mr Tag-rag's!"

"But you mustn't think of going abroad—away from all your friends, Mr Titmouse."

"Abroad, sir!" interrupted Titmouse with anxious but subdued eagerness; "never thought of such a thing!"

"Oh! I—I thought"——

"There isn't a word of truth in it, sir; and if you've heard so, it must have been from that audacious fellow that called on you—he's *such* a liar—if you knew him as well as I do, sir!" said Titmouse with a confident air, quite losing sight of his piteous letter to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—"No, sir—shall stay, and stick to friends that stick to me."

"Take another glass of wine, Mr Titmouse," interrupted Gammon cordially, and Titmouse obeyed him; but while he was pouring it out, a sudden recollection of his letter flashing across his mind, satisfied him that he stood detected in a flat lie before Mr Gammon, and he blushed scarlet.

"Do you like the sherry?" inquired Gammon, perfectly aware of what was passing through the little mind of his guest, and wishing to divert his thoughts. Titmouse answered in the affirmative: and proceeded to pour forth such a number of apologies for his own behaviour at Saffron Hill, and that of Huckaback on the subsequent occasion, as Gammon found it difficult to stop, over and over again assuring him that all had been entirely forgiven, and even forgotten. When Titmouse came to the remittance of the five pounds——

"Don't mention it, my dear sir," interrupted Gammon very blandly;

"it gave me, I assure you, far greater satisfaction to send it, than you to receive it. I hope it has a little relieved you?"

"I think so, sir! I was, 'pon my life, on my very last legs."

"When things come to the worst, they often mend, Mr Titmouse! I told Mr Quirk (who, to do him justice, came at last into my views) that, however premature, and perhaps imprudent it might be in us to go so far, I could not help relieving your present necessities, even out of my own resources."

[Oh, Gammon, Gammon!]

"How uncommon kind of you, sir!" exclaimed Titmouse.

"Not in the least, my dear sir—(pray fill another glass, Mr Titmouse.) You see Mr Quirk is quite a man of business—and our profession too often affords instances of persons whose hearts contract as their purses expand, Mr Titmouse—ha! ha! Indeed, those who make their money as hard as Mr Quirk, are apt to be slow at parting with it, and *very* suspicious!"

"Well, I hope no offence, sir; but really I thought as much, directly I saw that old gent."

"Ah—but *now* he is embarked, heart and soul, in the affair."

"No! *Is* he really, sir?" inquired Titmouse, eagerly.

"That is," replied Gammon quickly, "so long as I am at his elbow, urging him on—for he wants some one who—hem! In fact, my dear sir, ever since I had the good fortune to make the discovery, which happily brought us acquainted with each other, Mr Titmouse," [it was old Quirk, as the reader will by-and-by find, who had made the discovery, and Gammon had for a long time thrown cold water on it,] "I have been doing all I could with him, and I trust I may say, have at last got the thing into shape."

"I'll take my oath, sir," said Titmouse excitedly, "I never was so much struck with any one in all my born days as I was with you, sir, when you first came to my emp—to Mr Tag-rag's, sir—Lord, sir, how uncommon sharp you seemed!" Gam-

mon smiled with a deprecating air, and sipped his wine in silence; but there was great sweetness in the expression of his countenance. Poor Titmouse's doubts, hopes, and fears, were rapidly being sublimed into a reverence for Gammon! * * * *

"I certainly quite agree with Mr Quirk," said Gammon presently, "that the difficulties in our way are of the most serious description. To speak, for an instant only, of the risk we ourselves incur personally—would you believe it, my dear Mr Titmouse?—in such a disgraceful state are our laws, that we can't gratify our feelings by taking up your cause, without rendering ourselves liable to imprisonment for Heaven knows how long, and a fine that would be ruin itself, if we should be found out!"

Titmouse continued silent, his wine-glass in his hand arrested in its way to his mouth; which, together with his eyes, were opened to their widest extent, as he stared with a kind of terror upon Mr Gammon.—"Are we, then, unreasonable, my dear sir, in entreating you to be cautious—nay, in insisting on your compliance with our wishes, in all that we shall deem prudent and necessary, when not only your own best interests, but our characters, liberties, and fortunes are staked on the issue of this great enterprise? I am sure," continued Gammon, with great emotion, "you will feel for us, Mr Titmouse. I see you do!" Gammon put his hand over his eyes, in order, apparently, to conceal his emotion, but really to observe what effect he had produced upon Titmouse. The conjoint influence of Gammon's wine and eloquence not a little agitated Titmouse, in whose eyes stood tears.

"I'll do anything—anything, sir," he almost sobbed.

"Oh! all we wish is to be allowed to serve you effectually; and to enable us to do that"—

"Tell me to get into a soot-bag, and lie hid in a coal-hole, and see if I won't do it!"

"What! a coal-hole? Would you, then, even stop at Tag-rag and Co.'s?"

"Ye-e-e-s, sir—hem! hem! That

is, till the tenth of next month, when my time's up."

"Ah!—ay!—oh, I understand! Another glass, Mr Titmouse," said Gammon, pouring himself out some more wine; and observing, while Titmouse followed his example, that there was an unsteadiness in his motions of a very different description from that which he had exhibited at the commencement of the evening—at the same time wondering what the deuce they should do with him after the tenth of August.

"You see, I have the utmost confidence in you, and had so from the first happy moment when we met; but Mr Quirk is rather sus—in short, to prevent misunderstanding (as he says), Mr Quirk is anxious that you should give a *written* promise." (Titmouse looked eagerly about for writing materials.) "No, not now, but in a day or two's time. I confess, my dear Mr Titmouse, if I might have decided on the matter, I should have been satisfied with your verbal promise; but I must say, Mr Quirk's grey hairs seem to have made him quite—eh! you understand? Don't you think so, Mr Titmouse?"

"To be sure! 'pon my honour, Mr Gammon!" replied Titmouse; not very distinctly understanding, however, what he was so energetically assenting to.

"I dare say you wonder why we wish you to stop a few months longer at your present hiding-place at Tag-rag's?"

"Can't, possibly!—after the tenth of next month, sir," replied Titmouse eagerly.

"But as soon as we begin to fire off our guns against the enemy—ah, my dear sir, if they could only find out, you know, where to get at you—you would never live to enjoy your ten thousand a-year! They'd either poison or kidnap you—get you out of the way, unless you keep out of their way: and if you will but consent to keep snug at Tag-rag's for a while, who'd suspect where you was? We could easily arrange with your friend Tag-rag that you should"—

"My stars! I'd give something to hear you tell Tag-rag—why, I wonder what he'll do!"

"Make you very comfortable, and let you have your own way in everything—that you may rely upon!"

"Go to the play, for instance, whenever I want, and do all that sort of thing?"

"Nay, try! anything!—And as for money, I've persuaded Mr Quirk to consent to our advancing you a certain sum per week, from the present time, while the cause is going on,"—(Titmouse's heart began to beat fast),—"in order to place you above absolute inconvenience; and when you consider the awful sums we shall have to disburse—cash out of pocket—(the tongues of counsel, you know, are set on gold springs, and only gold keys open their lips!)—for court-fees, and a thousand other indispensable matters, I should candidly say that four thousand pounds of hard cash out of pocket, advanced by our firm in your case, would be the very lowest." (Titmouse stared at him with an expression of stupid wonder).

"Yes—four thousand pounds, Mr Titmouse, at the very least—the *very* least." Again he paused, keenly scrutinising Titmouse's features by the light of the candles, which just then were brought in. "You seem surprised, Mr Titmouse."

"Why—why—where's all the money to come from, sir?" exclaimed Titmouse, aghast.

"Ah! that is indeed a fearful question,"—replied Gammon, with a very serious air; "but at my request, our firm has agreed to make the necessary advances; and also (for *I* could not bear the sight of your distress, Mr Titmouse!) to supply your necessities liberally in the mean time, as I was saying."

"Won't you take another glass of wine, Mr Gammon?" suddenly inquired Titmouse, with a confident air.

"With all my heart, Mr Titmouse! I'm delighted that you approve of it. I paid enough for it, I can warrant you."

"Cuss me if ever I tasted such wine! Uncommon! Come—no heel-taps, Mr Gammon—here goes—let's drink—success to the affair!"

"With all my heart, my dear sir—with all my heart. Success to the thing—amen!" and Gammon drained his glass; so did Titmouse. "Ah! Mr Titmouse, you'll soon have wine enough to float a frigate—and indeed what not—with ten thousand a-year?"

"And all the back-rents, you know—ha, ha!"

"Yes—to be sure!—the back-rents! The sweetest estate that is to be found in all Yorkshire! Gracious, Mr Titmouse!" continued Gammon, with an excited air—"what may you not do? Go where you like—do what you like—get into Parliament—marry some lovely woman of high rank!"

"Lord, Mr Gammon!—you a'n't dreaming? Nor I? But now, in course, *you* must be paid handsome for your trouble!—Only say how much—Name your sum! What you please! You only get me all you've said—and I'll"—

"For my part, I wish to rely entirely on your mere word of honour. Between gentlemen, you know—my dear sir"—

"You only try me, sir."

"But you see, Mr Quirk's getting old, and naturally is anxious to provide for those whom he will leave behind him—and so Mr Snap agreed with him—two to one against me, Mr Titmouse—of course they carried the day—two to one."

"Never mind that!—only say the figure, sir!" cried Titmouse, eagerly.

"A single year's income, only—ten thousand pounds will hardly"—

"Ten thousand pounds! By jingo, but that *is* a slice out of the cake! Oh, Lord!" quoth Titmouse, looking aghast.

"A mere crumb, my dear sir!—a trifle! Why, *we* are going to give *you* that sum at least every year—and indeed it was suggested to our firm, that unless you gave us at least a sum of twenty-five thousand pounds—in fact, we were recommended to look out for some other heir."

"Oh dear! oh Mr Gammon," cried Titmouse, hastily—"it's not to be thought of, sir."

"So I said; and as for throwing it up—to be sure we shall have ourselves to borrow large sums to carry on the war—and unless we have your bond for at least ten thousand pounds, we cannot raise a farthing."

"Well—curse me, if you shan't do what you like!—Give me your hand, and do what you like, Mr Gammon!"

"Thank you, Mr Titmouse! How I like a glass of wine with a friend in this quiet way!—you'll always find me rejoiced to show"—

"Your hand! By George—Didn't I take a liking to you from the first? But to speak my mind a bit—as for Mr Quirk—excuse me—but he's a cur—cur—cur—mudg—mudg—mudg—eeon—hem!"

"Hope you've not been so imprudent, my dear Titmouse," threw in Mr Gammon, rather anxiously, "as to borrow money—eh?"

"Devil knows, and devil cares! No stamp, I know—bang up to the mark"—here he winked an eye, and put his finger to his nose—"wide awake—Huck—uck—uck—uck! how his name sti—sticks. Your hand, Mr Gammon—here—this, this way—what are you bobbing your head about for? Ah, ha!—The floor—'pon my life!—how funny—it's like being at sea—up, down—oh dear!"—he clapped his hand to his head.

[Pythagoras has finely observed, that a man is not to be considered dead drunk till he lies on the floor, and stretches out his arms and legs to prevent his going lower.]

See-saw, see-saw, up and down, up and down, went everything about him. Now he felt sinking through the floor, then gently rising towards the ceiling. Mr Gammon seemed getting into a mist, and waving about the candles in it. Mr Titmouse's head swam, his chair seemed to be resting on the waves of the sea.

"I'm afraid the room's rather close, Mr Titmouse," hastily observed Gam-

mon, perceiving from Titmouse's sudden paleness and silence, but too evident symptoms that his powerful intellect was for a while paralysed. Gammon started to the window, and opened it. Paler, however, and paler became Titmouse. Gammon's game was up much sooner than he had calculated on.

"Mrs Brown! Mrs Brown!" he called out, opening the sitting-room door—"order a coach instantly, and tell Tomkins"—that was the inn porter—"to get his son ready to go home with this gentleman—he's not very well." He was quickly obeyed. It was, in truth, "all up" with Titmouse—at least for a while.

As soon as Gammon had thus got rid of his distinguished guest, he ordered the table to be cleared of the glasses, and tea to be ready within half an hour. He then walked out to enjoy the cool evening; on returning, sat pleasantly sipping his tea, now and then dipping into the edifying columns of the *Sunday Flash*, but oftener ruminating upon his recent conversation with Titmouse, and speculating upon certain possible results to himself personally; and a little after eleven o'clock, that good man, at peace with all the world—calm and serene—retired to repose. He had that night rather a singular dream; it was of a snake encircling a monkey, as if in gentle and playful embrace. Suddenly tightening its folds, a crackling sound was heard; the writhing coils were then slowly unwound—and, with a shudder, he beheld the monster licking over the motionless figure, till it was covered with a viscid slime. Then the serpent began to devour its prey; and, when gorged and helpless, behold, it was immediately fallen upon by two other snakes. To his disturbed fancy, there was a dim resemblance between their heads and those of Quirk and Snap—they all three became intertwined together—and writhed and struggled till they fell over the edge of a dark and frightful precipice—he woke—thank God! it was only a dream.

CHAPTER X.

GAMMON TACKLING TAG-RAG.

WHEN, after his return from Mr Gammon's chambers, at Thavies' Inn, Titmouse woke at an early hour in the morning, he was labouring under the ordinary effects of unaccustomed inebriety. His lips were parched; his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth; there was a horrid weight pressing on his aching eyes, and upon his throbbing head. His pillow seemed undulating beneath him, and everything swimming around him; but when, to crown the whole, he was roused from a momentary nap by the insupportable—the loathed impurities of Mrs Squallop, that he would just sit up and partake of three thick rounds of hot buttered toast, and a great basin of smoking tea, which would do him so much good, and settle his stomach—at all events, if he'd only have a thimbleful of gin in it—poor Titmouse was fairly overcome!

* * * * He lay in bed all that day, during which he underwent severe sufferings; and it was not till towards night that he began to have anything like a distinct recollection of the events of the evening which he had spent with Mr Gammon; who, by the way, had sent one of the clerks, during the afternoon, to inquire after him. He did not get out of bed on the Tuesday till past twelve o'clock, when, in a somewhat rickety condition, he made his appearance at the shop of Messrs Tag-rag and Co.; on approaching which he felt a sudden faintness, arising from mingled apprehension and disgust.

"What are you doing here, sir?—You're no longer in my employment, sir," exclaimed Tag-rag, attempting to

speak calmly, as he hurried down the shop, white with rage, to meet Titmouse, and planted himself right in the way of his languid and pallid shopman.

"Sir!"—faintly exclaimed Titmouse, with his hat in his hand.

"Very much obliged, sir—very! by the offer of your valuable services," said Tag-rag. "But—*that's* the way out again, sir—that!—there!—good-morning, sir—good morning, sir!—*that's* the way out"—and he egged on Titmouse, till he had got him fairly into the street—with infinite difficulty restraining himself from giving the extruded sinner a parting kick! Titmouse stood for a moment before the door, trembling and aghast, looking in a bewildered manner at the shop: but Tag-rag again making his appearance, Titmouse slowly walked away and returned to his lodgings. Oh that Mr Gammon had witnessed the scene—thought he—and so have been satisfied that it had been Tag-rag who had put an end to his service, not he himself who had quitted it!

The next day, about the same hour, Mr Gammon made his appearance at the establishment from which Titmouse had been expelled so summarily, and inquired for Mr Tag-rag, who presently presented himself—and recognising Mr Gammon, whose presence naturally suggested the previous day's transaction with Titmouse, changed colour a little.

"What did you please to want, sir?" inquired Mr Tag-rag, with a would-be resolute air, twirling round his watch-key with some energy.

"Only a few minutes' conversation, sir, if you please," said Mr Gammon, with such a significant manner as a little disturbed Mr Tag-rag; who, with an ill-supported sneer, bowed very low, and led the way to his own little room. Having closed the door, he, with an exceedingly civil air, begged Mr Gammon to be seated; and then occupied the chair opposite to him, and awaited the issue with ill-disguised anxiety.

"I am *very* sorry, Mr Tag-rag," commenced Gammon, in his usual elegant and feeling manner, "that any misunderstanding should have arisen between you and Mr Titmouse!"

"You're a lawyer, sir, I suppose?" Mr Gammon bowed. "Then you must know, sir, that there are always two sides to a quarrel," said Mr Tag-rag, anxiously.

"Yes—you are right, Mr Tag-rag; and, having already heard Mr Titmouse's version, may I be favoured with *your* account of your reasons for discharging him? For he tells us that yesterday you dismissed him suddenly from your employment without giving him any warn!"

"So I did, sir; and what of that?" inquired Tag-rag, tossing his head with a sudden air of defiance. "Things are come to a pretty pass indeed, when a man at the head of such an establishment as mine, can't dismiss a drunken, idle, impertinent—abusive vagabond." Here Mr Gammon somewhat significantly took out his tablets—as if to note down the language of his companion.

"Do you seriously," inquired Mr Gammon, "charge him with being such a character, and can you *prove* your charges, Mr Tag-rag?"

"Prove 'em! yes, sir, a hundred times over; so will all my young men!" replied Tag-rag, vehemently.

"And in a court of justice, Mr Tag-rag?" said Mr Gammon, emphatically.

"Oh! he is going to *law*, is he? Ah, ha! Bless my soul!—So *that's* why you're come here—ah, ha!—when you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, you may get your bill

out of Mr Tittlebat Titmouse!—ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tag-rag, hoping thereby to conceal how much he was really startled.

"Well—that's *our* look-out, Mr Tag-rag: to Mr Titmouse, his character is as valuable as Mr Tag-rag's is to him. In short, Mr Titmouse has placed himself in our hands, and we are resolved to go on with the case, if it cost us a hundred pounds—we are indeed, Mr Tag-rag."

"Why—he's not a penny in the world to go to law with!" exclaimed Tag-rag, with an air of mingled wonder, scorn, and alarm.

"But you forget, Mr Tag-rag, that if Mr Titmouse's account of the business should turn out to be correct, it will be *your* pocket that must pay all the expenses, amounting probably to twenty times the sum which the law may award to him!"

"*Law*, sir?—It's not justice!—I hate law.—Give me common sense and common honesty!" said Mr Tag-rag, with a little agitation.

"Both of them would condemn your conduct, Mr Tag-rag; for I have heard a full account of what Mr Titmouse has suffered at your hands—of the cause of your sudden warning to him, and your still more sudden dismissal of yesterday. Oh, Mr Tag-rag! upon my honour, it won't do—not for a moment—and should you go on, rely upon what I tell you, that it will cost you dear."

"And suppose, sir," said Tag-rag, in a would-be contemptuous tone—"I should have witnesses to prove all I've said—which of us will look funny *then*, sir?"

"Which, indeed! However, since that is your humour, I can only assure you that it is very possible we may be, by the time of the trial, possessed of some evidence which will surprise you: and that Mr Titmouse defies you to prove any misconduct on his part. We have, in short, taken up his cause, and, as you may perhaps find by-and-by, to your cost, we shall not easily let it drop."

"I mean no offence, sir," said Tag-rag, in a mitigated tone; "but I must

say, that ever since you first came here, Titmouse has been quite another person. He seems not to know who I am, nor to care either—and he's perfectly unbearable."

"My dear sir, what has he said or done?—that, you know, is what you must be prepared to prove, when you come into court!"

"Well, sir! and which of us is likely to be best off for witnesses?—Think of that, sir—I've eighteen young men!"

"We shall chance that, sir," replied Gammon, shrugging his shoulders, and smiling very bitterly; "but again, I ask, what did you dismiss him for? and, sir, I request a plain, straightforward answer."

"What did I dismiss him for?—Haven't I eyes and ears?—First and foremost, he's the most odious-mannered fellow I ever came near—and—he hadn't a shirt to his back when I first took him—the ungrateful wretch!—Sir, it's at any rate not against the law, I suppose, to *hate* a man;—and if it isn't, how I *hate* Titmouse!"

"Mr Tag-rag"—said Gammon, lowering his voice, and looking very earnestly at his companion—"can I say a word to you in confidence—the strictest confidence?"

"What's it about, sir?" inquired Tag-rag, apprehensively.

"I daressay you may have felt, perhaps, rather surprised at the interest which I—in fact our office, the office of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, in Saffron Hill—appear to have taken in Mr Titmouse."

"Why, sir, it's *your* look-out to see how you're to be paid for what you're doing—and I daressay lawyers generally keep a pretty sharp look out in that direction!"

Gammon smiled, and continued—"It may, perhaps, a little surprise you, Mr Tag-rag, to hear that your present (ought I to say, your *late*?) shopman, Mr Tittlebat Titmouse, is at this moment probably the very luckiest man—ay, and one among the richest, too—in this kingdom."

"Why—you don't mean to say he's drawn a prize in the lottery?"—

exclaimed Tag-rag, pricking up his ears, and manifestly changing colour.

"Pho! my dear sir, *that* is a mere bagatelle compared with the good fortune which has just fallen to his lot. I solemnly assure you, that I believe it will very shortly turn out that he is at this moment the undoubted owner of an estate worth at least ten thousand a-year, besides a vast accumulation of ready money!"

"Ten thousand a-year, sir!—My Titmouse!—Tittlebat Titmouse!—Ten thousand a-year! it's quite impossible!" faltered Tag-rag, after a pause, having gone as pale as death.

"I have as little doubt of the fact, however, sir, as I have that you yesterday turned him out of doors, Mr Tag-rag!"

"But"—said Mr Tag-rag in a low tone—"who could have dreamt it?—How was—*really*, Mr Gammon!—how *was* I to know it?"

"That's the fact, however," said Gammon, shrugging his shoulders. Tag-rag wriggled about in his chair, put his hands in and out of his pockets, scratched his head, and continued staring open-mouthed at the bearer of such astounding intelligence. "Perhaps, however, all this is meant as a joke, sir,"—said he—"And if so—it's—it's—a very"—

"It's one of his solicitors who were fortunate enough to make the discovery, that tells you all this, sir," interrupted Gammon, calmly. "I repeat what I have already told you, Mr Tag-rag, that an estate of ten thousand a-year is the very least"—

"Why, that's two hundred thousand pounds, sir!"—exclaimed Tag-rag with an awe-struck air.

"At the very least!"—

"Lord, Mr Gammon!—Excuse me, sir, but how *did* you find it out?"

"Mere accident—a mere accidental discovery, sir, in the course of other professional inquiries!"

"And does Mr Titmouse know it?"

"Ever since the day, Mr Tag-rag, after that on which I called on him here!"—replied Gammon pointedly.

"You—don't—say—so!"—exclaimed Tag-rag, and then continued

silent for nearly half a minute, evidently amazed beyond all power of expression.

"Well,"—at length he observed—"I *will* say this—with all his few faults—he's the most amiable young gentleman—the *very amiablest* young gentleman I—ever—came near. I always thought there was something uncommon superior-like in his looks."

"Yes—I think he is of rather an amiable turn," observed Gammon, with an expressive smile—"very gentlemanlike—and so intelligent"——

"Intelligent! Mr Gammon! you should only have known him as I have known him!—Well, to be sure!—Lord! His only fault was, that he was above his business; but when one comes to think of it, how could it be otherwise? From the time I first clapped eyes on him—I—I—knew he was—a superior article—quite superior—you know what I mean, sir?—he couldn't help it, of course!—to be sure—he never was much liked by the other young men; but that was jealousy!—all jealousy! I saw that all the while." Here he looked at the door, and added in a very low tone, "Many sleepless nights has their bad treatment of Mr Titmouse cost me!—Even I, now and then, used to look and speak sharply to him—just to keep him, as it were, down to the mark of the others—he was so uncommon handsome and genteel in his manner, sir. I remember telling my good lady the very first day he came to me, that he was a gentleman born—or ought to have been one."

Now, do you suppose, acute reader, that Mr Tag-rag was insincere in all this? By no means. He spoke the real dictates of his heart, unaware of the sudden change which had taken place in his feelings. It certainly has an ugly look of improbability—but it was the *nature of the beast*; his eye suddenly caught a glimpse of the golden calf, and he instinctively fell down and worshipped it. "Well—at all events," said Mr Gammon, scarcely able to keep a serious expression on his face—"though he's not lived much like a gentleman hitherto,

yet he will live for the future like a *very great gentleman*—and spend his money like one, too."

"I—I—daresay—he will!—I wonder how he *will* get through a quarter of it:—what do *you* think he'll do, sir?"

"Heaven only knows—he may very shortly do just what he likes! Go into the House of Commons, or—perhaps—have a peerage given him"——

"Lord, sir!—I feel as if I shouldn't be quite right again for the rest of the day!—I own to you, sir, that all yesterday and to-day I've been on the point of going to Mr Titmouse's lodgings to apologise for—for—Good gracious me! one can't take it all in at once—Ten thousand a-year!—Many a lord hasn't got more—some not half as much, I'll be bound;—Dear me, what will he do!—Well, one thing I'm *sure* of—he'll never have a truer friend than plain Thomas Tag-rag, though I've not always been a-flattering him—I respected him too much!—The many little things I've borne with in Titmouse, that in any one else I'd have—But why didn't he tell me, sir? We should have understood one another in a moment."—Here he paused abruptly; for his breath seemed suddenly taken away, as he reviewed the series of indignities which he had latterly inflicted on Titmouse—the kind of life which that amiable young gentleman had led in his establishment.

Never had the keen Gammon enjoyed anything more exquisitely than the scene which I have been describing. To a man of his practical sagacity in the affairs of life, and knowledge of human nature, nothing could appear more ludicrously contemptible than the conduct of poor Tag-rag. How differently are the minds of men constituted! How Gammon despised Tag-rag! And what opinion has the acute reader by this time formed of Gammon?

"Now, may I take for granted, Mr Tag-rag, that we understand each other?" inquired Gammon.

"Yes, sir," replied Tag-rag meekly. "But do you think Mr Titmouse will

ever forgive or forget the little misunderstanding we've lately had? If I could but explain to him how I have been acting a part towards him—all for his good!"

"You may have opportunities for doing so, if you are really so disposed, Mr Tag-rag; for I have something seriously to propose to you. Circumstances render it desirable that for some little time this important affair should be kept as quiet as possible; and it is Mr Titmouse's wish and ours—as his confidential professional advisers—that for some few months he should continue in your establishment, and apparently in your service as before."

"In my service!—my service!" interrupted Tag-rag, opening his eyes to their utmost. "I sha'n't know how to behave in my own premises! Have a man with ten thousand a-year behind my counter, sir? I might as well have the Lord Mayor! Sir, it can't—it can't be. Now, if Mr Titmouse chose to become a *partner* in the house—ay, there might be something in that—he needn't have any trouble—be only a sleeping partner." Tag-rag warmed with the thought. "Really, sir, that wouldn't be so much amiss—would it?" Gammon assured him that it was out of the question; and gave him some of the reasons for the proposal which he (Mr Gammon) had been making. While Gammon fancied that Tag-rag was paying profound attention to what he was saying, Tag-rag's thoughts had shot far a-head. He had an only child—a daughter, about twenty years old—Miss Tabitha Tag-rag; and the delightful possibility of her by-and-by becoming Mrs Titmouse, put her aspiring parent into a perspiration. Into the proposal just made by Mr Gammon, Tag-rag fell with great eagerness, which he attempted to conceal—for what innumerable opportunities would it not afford him for bringing about the desire of his heart—for throwing the lovely young couple into each other's way,—endearing them to each other! Oh, delightful! It really looked almost as if it

had been determined by the powers above, that the thing should come to pass! If Mr Titmouse did not dine with him, Mrs, and Miss Tag-rag, at Satin Lodge, Clapham, on the very next Sunday, it should, Tag-rag resolved, be owing to no fault of *his*.—Mr Gammon having arranged everything exactly as he had desired, and having again enjoined Mr Tag-rag to absolute secrecy, was about to take his departure. "But—by the way, sir"—said Tag-rag, suddenly and anxiously—"I suppose the little matter we first talked about—eh?—I hope we *now* understand one another too well for Mr Titmouse to go on with an action against me for"—

"Oh, Mr Tag-rag," replied Gammon, with a delicious smile—"I think you may make your mind easy on that score!—We stand now on a very different footing."—Mr Tag-rag, in his excitement, thrust out his hand, and grasped that of Gammon, which was extended towards him somewhat coldly and reluctantly. Tag-rag attended him with extreme obsequiousness to the door; and on his departure, walked back rapidly to his own room, and sat down for nearly half an hour in a sort of turbid but delicious reverie. Abruptly rising, at length, he clapped his hat on his head, and saying, as he passed along the shop, that he should soon be back, hurried out to call upon his future son-in-law, full of affectionate anxiety concerning his health—and vowing within himself, that henceforth it should be the study of his life to make his daughter and Titmouse happy! There could be no doubt of the reality of the event just communicated to him by Mr Gammon; for he was one of a well-known firm of solicitors; he had had an interview on "important business" with Titmouse a fortnight before, and that *could* have been nothing but the prodigious event just communicated to himself. Such things had happened to others—why not to Tittlebat Titmouse? In short, Tag-rag had no doubt on the matter; and his heart really yearned towards Titmouse.

Finding that gentleman not at

home, Mr Tag-rag left a most particularly civil message, half-a-dozen times repeated, with Mrs Squalop, to whom also he was specially civil, to the effect that he, Mr Tag-rag, would be only too happy to see Mr Titmouse at No. 375 Oxford Street, whenever it might suit his convenience; that Mr Tag-rag had something very particular to say to him about the unpleasant and *unaccountable* [!] occurrence of yesterday; that Mr Tag-rag was most deeply concerned to hear of Mr Titmouse's indisposition, and anxious to learn from himself that he had recovered, &c. &c. &c.;—all which, together with one or two other little matters, which Mrs Squalop could not help putting together, satisfied that shrewd lady that "something was in the wind about Mr Titmouse;" and made her reflect rather anxiously on one or two violent scenes she had had with him, and which *she* was now ready entirely to forget and forgive. Having thus done all that at present was in his power to forward the affair, the anxious and excited Tag-rag returned to his shop; on entering which, one Lutestring, his principal young man, eagerly apprised him of a claim which he had, as he imagined, only the moment before, established to the thanks of Mr Tag-rag, by having "bundled off, neck and crop, that hodious Titmouse," who, about five minutes before, had, it seemed, had the "impudence" to present himself at the shop-door, and walk in as if nothing had happened!! [Titmouse had so presented himself, in consequence of a call from Mr Gammon, immediately after his interview with Tag-rag.]

"You—ordered—Mr Titmouse—off!!" exclaimed Tag-rag, starting back aghast, and almost petrifying his voluble and officious assistant.

"Of course, sir," at length exclaimed that person, meekly—"after what happened yester"—

"Who authorised you, Mr Lutestring?" inquired Tag-rag, striving to choke down the rage rising within him.

"Why, sir, I *really* supposed that"—

"You supposed!! You're a meddling, impertinent, disgusting!"— Suddenly his face was overspread with smiles, as three or four elegantly dressed customers entered, whom he received with profuse obeisances. But when their backs were turned, he directed a lightning look towards Lutestring, and retreated once more to his room, to meditate on the agitating events of the last hour. The extraordinary alteration in Mr Tag-rag's behaviour was attributed by his shopmen to his having been frightened out of his wits by the threats of Titmouse's lawyer—for such it was clear the stranger was; and more than one of them stored it up in their minds as a useful precedent against some future occasion.

Twice afterwards during the day did Tag-rag call at Mr Titmouse's lodgings—but in vain; and on returning the third time he felt not a little disquieted. He determined, however, to call the first thing on the ensuing morning; if he should then fail of seeing Mr Titmouse, he was resolved to go to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—and besides, address a very affectionate letter to Mr Titmouse. How totally changed had become all his feelings towards that gentleman within the last few hours. The more that Tag-rag reflected on Titmouse's conduct, the more he saw in it to approve of. How steady and regular had he been in his habits! how civil and obliging! how patient of rebuke! how pleasing in his manners to the customers! Surely, surely, thought Tag-rag, Titmouse can't have been four long years in my employ without getting a—sort of a—feeling—of attachment to me—he'd have left long ago if he hadn't! It was true there *had* now and then been tiffs between them; but who could agree always? Even Mrs Tag-rag and he, when they were courting, often fell out with one another!—Tag-rag was now ready to forget and forgive all—he had never meant any harm to Titmouse. He believed that poor Tittlebat was an orphan, unhappy soul! alone in the wide world—*now* he would become

the prey of designing strangers and adventurers. Tag-rag did not like the appearance of Gammon. No doubt that person would try and ingratiate himself as much as possible with Titmouse! Then Titmouse was remarkably good-looking. "I wonder what Tabby will think of him when she sees him!" How anxious Tittlebat must be to see her—*his* daughter! How could Tag-rag make Tittlebat's stay at his premises (for he could not bring himself to believe that on the morrow he could not set all right,

and disavow the abominable conduct of Lutestring) agreeable and delightful? He would discharge the first of his young men that did not show Titmouse proper respect.—What low lodgings poor Tittlebat lived in! Why could he not take up his quarters at Satin Lodge? They always had a nice spare bedroom. Ah! *that* would be a stroke! How Tabby could endear herself to him! What a number of things Mrs Tag-rag could do to make him comfortable!

CHAPTER XI.

SATIN LODGE, AND ITS REFINED INMATES; WHO ALL PAY THEIR DUTY TO TITMOUSE; AND HE VERY NEARLY FALLS IN LOVE WITH MISS TAG-RAG.

ABOUT seven o'clock P.M., Tag-rag quitted his premises on Oxford Street, for his country house; and, occupied with these and similar delightful and anxious thoughts and speculations, hurried along Oxford Street on his way to the Clapham stage, without thinking of his umbrella, though it rained fast. When he had taken his place on the coach-box, beside old Crack (as he had done almost every night for years), he was so unusually silent that Crack naturally thought his best passenger was going to become bankrupt, or compound with his creditors, or do something in that line, shortly. Mr Tag-rag could hardly keep his temper at the slow pace old Crack was driving at—just when Mr Tag-rag would have wished to gallop the whole way. Never had he descended with so much briskness, as when the coach at length drew up before the little green gate, which opened on the tidy little gravel walk, which led up to the little green wooden porch, which sheltered the little door which admitted you into little Satin Lodge. As Tag-rag stood for a mo-

ment wiping his wet shoes upon the mat, he could not help observing, for the first time, by the inward light of ten thousand a-year, how *uncommon* narrow the passage was; and thinking that Satin Lodge would never *do*, when he should be the father-in-law of a man worth ten thousand a-year—but he could easily let that house then, and take a large one. As he hung his hat upon the peg, the perilous insolence of Lutestring occurred to him; and he deposited such a prodigious, but half-suppressed execration upon that gentleman's name, as must have sunk a far more buoyant sinner many fathoms deeper than usual into a certain hot and deep place that shall be nameless.

Mrs and Miss Tag-rag were sitting in the front parlour, intending to take tea as soon as Mr Tag-rag should have arrived. It was not a large room, but sweetly furnished—according, at least, to the taste of the owners. There was only one window, and it had a flaunting white summer curtain. The walls were ornamented with three pictures, in ponderous gilt frames, being por-

traits of Mr. Mrs. and Miss Tag-rag; and I do not feel disposed to say more concerning the aforesaid pictures, than that in each of them the dress was done with elaborate exactness—the faces seeming to have been painted in, for the purpose of setting off and completing the picture of the dress. The skinny little Miss Tag-rag sat at the worn-out, jingling pianoforte, causing it to utter—oh, horrid and doleful sound!—"The battle of Prague." Mrs Tag-rag, a fat, showily dressed woman of about fifty, her cap having a prodigious number of artificial flowers in it, sat reading a profitable volume, entitled "*Groans from the Bottomless Pit to Awaken Sleeping Sinners,*" by the Rev. DISMAL HORROR—a rousing young dissenting preacher lately come into that neighbourhood, and who had almost frightened into fits half the women and children, and one or two old men, of his congregation; giving out, amongst several similarly cheering intimations, that they must all necessarily be damned unless they immediately set about making themselves as miserable as possible in this world. Only the Sunday before, he had pointed out, with awful force and distinctness, how cards and novels were the devil's traps to catch souls; and balls and theatres short and easy cuts to —!

He had proved to his trembling female hearers, in effect, that there was only one way to heaven, *i. e.* through his chapel: that the only safe mode of spending their time on earth was reading such blessed works as that which he had just published, and going daily to prayer-meetings. When, however, a Sunday or two before he had the assurance to preach a funeral sermon, to "improve the death"—such being his impressive phrase—of a Miss Snooks (who had kept a circulating library in the neighbourhood, but had not been a member of his congregation; and who, having been to the theatre on the Thursday night, was taken ill of a bowel attack on the Friday, and was a "*lifeless corpse*" when the next Sabbath dawned)—you might have heard a beetle sneeze within any of the walls, all over the crowded cha-

pel. Two-thirds of the women present, struck with the awful judgment upon the deceased Miss Snooks, inwardly made solemn vows never again to enter the accursed walls of a theatre or concert-room;* many determined no longer to subscribe to the circulating library, ruining their precious souls with light and amusing reading; and almost all resolved forthwith to become active members of a sort of religious tract society, which "dear Mr Horror" had just established in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of giving the sick and starving poor *spiritual* food, in the shape of tracts (chiefly written by himself), which might "wean their affections away from this vain world," and "fix them on better things," rejoicing, in the meanwhile, in the bitter pangs of destitution—and able to bear them! All this sort of thing Mr Horror possibly imagined to be calculated to advance the cause of real religion! In short, he had created a sort of spiritual fever about the place, which was then just at its height in worthy Mrs Tag-rag.

"Well, Dolly, how are you to-night?" inquired Tag-rag, with unusual briskness, on entering the room.

"Tolerable, thank you, Tag," replied Mrs Tag-rag mournfully, with a sigh, closing the cheerful volume she had been perusing—it having been recommended the preceding Sunday from the pulpit by its pious and gifted author, to be read and prayed over every day by every member of his congregation!

"And how are *you*, Tabby?" said Tag-rag, addressing his daughter. "Come and kiss me, you little slut—come!"

"No, I sha'n't, pa! Do let me go on with my practising," said Miss Tag-rag—and *twang! twang!* went those infernal keys.

* "Can the author of Ten Thousand a-Year," asked some anonymous person during its original appearance—"point out any class of Dissenters who allow their members to frequent theatres?" The author believes that this is the case with Unitarians—and also with many of the members of other Dissenting congregations—especially the younger members of even the staunchest Dissenting families.

"D'ye hear, Tab? Come and kiss me, you little minx!"

"Really, pa, how provoking—just as I am in the middle of the *Cries of the Wounded!* I sha'n't—that's flat."

The doating parent could not, however, be denied; so he stepped to the piano, put his arm around his dutiful daughter's neck, kissed her fondly, and then stood for a moment behind her, admiring her brilliant execution of *The Trumpet of Victory*. Having changed his coat, and put on an old pair of shoes, Mr Tag-rag was comfortable for the evening.

"Tabby plays wonderful well, Dolly, don't she?" said Tag-rag, as the teachings were being brought in, by way of beginning a conversation, while he drew his chair nearer to his wife.

"Ah! I'd a deal rather see her reading something serious—for life is short, Tag, and eternity's long."

"Botheration!—Stuff!—Tut!" exclaimed Tag-rag!

"You may find it out one day, my dear, when, alas! it's too late!"

"I'll tell you what, Dolly," said Tag-rag angrily, "you're doing a great deal too much in this line of business—my house is getting like a Methodist meeting-house. I can't bear it—I can't! What the deuce is come to you all in these parts, lately?" Mr Tag-rag, I should apprise the reader, had been induced, some three years before, to quit the Church of England and take up with Mr Dismal Horror; but his zeal had by no means kept pace with that of his wife.

"Ah, Tag-rag," replied his wife, with a sigh, "I can only pray for you—I can do no more!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tag-rag, with an air of desperate disgust, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and stretching his legs to their utmost extent under the table. "I'll tell you what, Mrs T.," he added, after a while, "I like religion well enough—but too much of it no one can stand. Too much of one thing is good for nothing; you may choke a dog with pudding;—I sha'n't renew my sittings at Mr Horror's."

"Oh, dear, dear pa, do! That's a love of a pa!" interposed Miss Tag-

rag, twirling round on her music-stool. "All Clapham's running after him—he's quite the rage! There's the Duggines, the Pips, the Jones, the Maggots—and, really, Mr Horror does preach such dreadful things, it's quite delightful to look round and see all the people with their eyes and mouths wide open—and ours is such a good pew for seeing—and Mr Horror is such a bee-yeautiful preacher—isn't he, ma?"

"Yes, love, he is—but I wish I could see you profit by him, and preparing for death!"

"Why, ma, how can you go on in that ridiculous way? You know I'm not twenty yet, however old you and pa may be!"

"Well, well! poor Tabby!" here Mrs Tag-rag's voice faltered—"a day will come, when!"

"Play me the *Devil among the Tailors*, or *Copenhagen Waltz*, or something of that sort, Tabby," said her father furiously, "or I shall be sick—I can't bear it! Curse Mr Hor!"

"Well!—Oh, my!!—I never!—Mr Tag-rag!" exclaimed his astounded wife.

"Play away, Tab, or I'll go and sit in the kitchen! They're cheerful there! The next time I come across Mr Horror, if I don't give him a bit of my mind"—here he paused, and slapped his hand with much energy upon the table. Mrs Tag-rag wiped her eyes, sighed, and resumed her book. Miss Tag-rag began to make tea, her papa gradually forgetting his rage, as he fixed his dull grey eyes fondly on the pert skinny countenance of his precious daughter.

"By the way, Tag," exclaimed Mrs Tag-rag suddenly, but in the same mournful tone, addressing her husband, "you haven't of course forgot the flowers for my new bonnet?"

"Never once thought of it," replied Tag-rag, doggedly.

"You haven't! Good gracious! what am I to go to chapel in next Sunday?" she exclaimed, with sudden alarm, closing her book, "and our seat in the very front of the gallery!—bless me! I shall have a hundred eyes on me!"

"Now that you're coming down a bit, and dropped out of the clouds—or p'raps I should say—come up from beneath!—Dolly," said her husband, much relieved, "I'll tell you a bit of news that will, I fancy, rather"—

"Come! what is it, Tag?" she inquired with a sort of languid curiosity.

"What should you say of a chance of a certain somebody" (here he looked unutterable things at his daughter) "that shall be nameless, becoming mistress of ten thousand a-year?"

"Why"—Mrs Tag-rag changed colour—"has any one fallen in love with Tab?"

"What should you say, Mrs T., of our Tab marrying a man with ten thousand a-year? There's for you! Isn't *that* better than all your rel—hem!"

"Oh, Tag, don't say that; but"—here she hastily turned down the leaf of *Groans from the Bottomless Pit*, and tossed that inestimable work upon the sofa—"do tell me, lovey! what *are* you talking about?"

"What indeed, Dolly!—I'm going to have him here to dinner next Sunday."

Miss Tag-rag having been listening with breathless eagerness to this little colloquy between her prudent and amiable parents, unconscious of what she was about, had poured almost all the contents of the tea-pot into the sugar-basin, instead of her papa's and mamma's tea-cups!

"Have *who*, dear Tag?" inquired Mrs Tag-rag impatiently.

"Who? why, whom but my Tittlebat Titmouse!! You've seen him, and heard me speak of him often, you know!"

"What!—*that* odious, nasty!"

"Hush, hush!" involuntarily exclaimed Tag-rag, with an apprehensive air—"That's all past and gone—I was always a little too hard on him. Well, anyhow, he's turned up all of a sudden master of ten thousand a-year. He has indeed—may this piece of toast choke me if he hasn't!"

Mrs Tag-rag and her daughter sat in speechless wonder.

"Where did he see Tab, Taggy?" inquired at length Mrs Tag-rag.

"Oh—I—I—why—you see," said her husband, with a sudden qualm—"I don't exactly think *that* signifies so much—He *will* see her, you know, next Sunday."

"So, then, he's positively coming?" inquired Mrs Tag-rag with a fluttered air.

"Y—e—s—I've no doubt."—(I'll discharge Lutestring to-morrow, thought Tag-rag with a sharp inward spasm.)

"But aren't we counting our chickens, Taggy, before they're hatched? If Titmouse is all of a sudden become such a catch, he'll be snapped up in a minute, you know, of course!"

"Why, you see, Dolly—we're first in the market, I'm sure of that—his attorney tells me he's to be kept quite snug and quiet under my care for months, and see no one!"

"My gracious!" exclaimed Mrs Tag-rag, holding up both her hands—"if *that* don't look like a special interposition of Providence, now!"

"So I thought, Tabby, while Mr Gammon was telling me!" replied her husband.

"Ah, Tag, there are many of 'em, if we were only to be on the look-out for them!" said Mrs Tag-rag, excitedly.

"I *do* see it all! It's designed by Providence to get them soon together! When once Mr Titmouse gets sight of Tabby, and gets into her company—eh! Tab, lovey! *you'll* do the rest, hem!" said Tag-rag, fondly.

"La, pa! how you *do* go on!" simpered Miss Tag-rag, blushing, and trembling from head to foot.

"You must do your part, Tab," said her father—"we'll do ours. He'll bite, you may depend on it, if you manage well!"

"What sort of a looking young man is he, dear pa?" inquired Miss Tag-rag faintly, and her heart fluttering fast.

"Oh, you *must* have seen him, sweetest!"

"How should I ever notice any one of the lots of young men at the shop, pa?—I don't at all know him."

"Well," quoth Tag-rag desperately, trying to choke down a sense of the lies he was telling—"he's the—the—handsomest, most genteel-looking young fellow I ever came across; he's long been an ornament to my establishment, for his good looks and civil and obliging manners—quite a treasure! You should have seen how he *took* with ladies of rank always!"—

"Dear me," interrupted Mrs Tag-rag, anxiously addressing her daughter, "I hope, Tabby, that Miss Nix will send home your lilac-coloured frock by next Sunday!"

"If she *don't*, ma, I'll take care she never makes anything more for *me*, that's poz!" replied Miss Tag-rag, slapping her hand on the tea-table with a little energy.

"We'll call there to-morrow, love, and hurry her on," said her mother; and from that moment until eleven o'clock, when the amiable and interesting trio retired to rest, nothing was talked of but the charming Titmouse, and the good fortune he so richly deserved, and how long the courtship was likely to last. Mrs Tag-rag, who, for the last month or so, had always remained on her knees before getting into bed, for at least ten minutes, on this eventful evening compressed her prayers, I regret to say, into one minute and a half's time (as for Tag-rag, a hardened heathen, for all he had taken to hearing Mr Horror, he always tumbled prayerless into bed, the moment he was undressed); while, for once in a way, Miss Tag-rag, having taken only five minutes to put her hair into papers, popped into bed directly she had blown the candle out, without saying *any* prayers—or even thinking of finishing the novel which lay under her pillow, and which she had got on the sly from the circulating library of the late Miss Snooks. For several hours she lay in a delicious reverie, imagining herself become Mrs Tittlebat Titmouse, riding about Clapham in a handsome carriage, going to the play every night; and what would the three Miss Knippeses say when they heard of it?—they'd burst. And such a handsome man, too!

She sank, at length, into unconsciousness, amidst a soft confusion of glistening white satin—favours—bridesmaids—Mrs Tittlebat Tit—Tit—Tit—Tit—mouse.

* * * * *

Titmouse, about half-past nine o'clock on the ensuing morning, was sitting in his little room in a somewhat troubled humour, musing on many things, and little imagining the intense interest he had excited in the feelings of the amiable occupants of *Satin Lodge*, when a knock at his door startled him out of his reverie. Guess his amazement to see, on opening it, Mr Tag-rag!

"Your most obedient, sir," commenced that gentleman, in a subdued and obsequious manner, plucking off his hat the instant that he saw Titmouse. "I hope you're better, sir!—Been very uneasy, sir, about you."

"Please to walk in, sir," replied Titmouse, not a little flustered—"I'm better, sir, thank you."

"Happy to hear it, sir!—But am also come to offer humble apologies for the rudeness of that upstart that was so uncommon rude to you yesterday, at my premises—know whom I mean, eh?—Lutestring—I shall get rid of him, I do think!"

"Thank you, sir—But—but—when I was in your employ!"

"*Was* in my employ!" interrupted Tag-rag with a sigh, gazing earnestly at him—"It's no use trying to hide it any longer! I've all along seen you was a world too good for—in fact, quite above your situation in *my* poor shop! I *may* have been wrong, Mr Titmouse," he continued diffidently, as he placed himself on what seemed the only chair in the room (Titmouse sitting on a common wooden stool)—"but I did it for the best—eh?—don't you understand me, Mr Titmouse?" Titmouse continued looking on the floor incredulously, sheepishly, and somewhat sullenly.

"Very much obliged, sir," at length he answered—"but must say you've rather a funny way of showing it, sir. Look at the sort of life you've led me for this!"—

"Ah! knew you'd say so! But I can lay my hand on my heart, Mr Titmouse, and declare to God—I can, indeed, Mr Titmouse"—Titmouse preserved a very embarrassing silence.—"See I'm out of your good books—But—won't you forget and forgive, Mr Titmouse? I *meant* well. Nay, I humbly beg forgiveness for everything you've not liked in me. Can I say more? Come, Mr Titmouse, you've a noble nature, and I ask forgiveness!" cried Tag-rag softly and earnestly: you would have thought that his life depended on his success in what he was doing!

"You—you ought to do it before the whole shop, if you're in earnest," replied Titmouse, a little relenting—"for they've all seen your goings on."

"Them!—the brutes!—the vulgar fellows, eugh!—you and I, Mr Titmouse, are a *leettle* above such cattle as them! D'ye think we ought to mind what *servants* say?—Only you say the word, and I make a clean sweep of 'em all; you shall have the premises to yourself, Mr Titmouse, within an hour after any of those chaps shows you the least glimmer of disrespect.

"Ah! I don't know—you've used me most uncommon bad, 'pon my soul!—far worse than they have—you've nearly broke my heart, sir! You have!"

"Well, my womankind at home are right, after all! They told me all along I was going the wrong way to work, when I said how I tried to keep your pride down, and prevent you from having your head turned by knowing your good looks! Over and over again, my little girl has said, with tears in her dear eyes, 'you'll break his spirit, dear papa—if he is handsome, wasn't it God that made him so?'" The little frostwork which Titmouse had thrown around his heart, began to melt like snow under sunbeams. "Ah, Mr Titmouse, Mr Titmouse! the women are always right, and *we're* always wrong," continued Tag-rag earnestly, perceiving his advantage. "Upon my soul I could

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kick myself for my stupidity, and cruelty too!"

"Ah, I should think so! No one knows what I've suffered! And now," added Titmouse, suddenly, "that I'm—I suppose you've heard it all, sir?—what's in the wind—and all that?"

"Yes, sir—Mr Gammon (that most respectable gentleman) and I have had a long talk yesterday about you, in which he did certainly tell me everything—nothing like confidence, Mr Titmouse, when gentleman meets gentleman, you know! Oh, Lord! the news is really delightful! delightful!"

"Isn't it, sir?" eagerly interrupted Titmouse, his eyes glistening with sudden rapture.

"Ah! ten thous—I *must* shake hands with you, my dear Mr Titmouse;" quoth Tag-rag, with affectionate excitement—and, for the first time in their lives, their hands touched, Tag-rag squeezing that of Titmouse with energetic cordiality; while he added, with a little emotion in his tone—"Thomas Tag-rag may be a plain-spoken and wrong-headed man, Mr Titmouse—but he's a warm heart, I assure you!"

"And did Mr Gammon tell you *all*, sir?" eagerly interrupted Titmouse.

"Everything—everything; quite confidential, I assure you, for he saw the interest I felt in you!"

"And did he say about my—hem!—eh? my stopping a few weeks longer with you?" inquired Titmouse, chagrin overspreading his features.

"I think he did, indeed, Mr Titmouse! He's quite bent on it, sir! And so would any true friend of yours be—because you see!"—here he dropped his voice, and looked very mysteriously at Titmouse—"in short, I quite agree with Mr Gammon!"

"Do you indeed, sir?" exclaimed Titmouse, with rather an uneasy look.

"I do, i' faith! Why, they'd give thousands and thousands to get you out of the way—and what's *money* to *them*? But they must look very sharp that get at you in the premises of Thomas Tag-rag, I warrant 'em!—

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Talking of that, ah, ha!—it *will* be a funny thing to see you, Mr Titmouse—Squire Titmouse—ah, ha, ha!”

“You won’t hardly expect me to go out with *goods*, I suppose, sir?” inquired Titmouse somewhat anxiously.

“Ha, ha, ha!—Ha, ha, ha!—Might as well ask me if I’d clean that beast Lutestring’s shoes! No, no, my dear Mr Titmouse, you and I have done with each other as master and servant; it’s only as friends that we know each other now!—You may say and do whatever you like, and come and go when and where you like!—It’s true it will make my other hands rather jealous, and get me into trouble; but what do I care? Suppose they *do* all give me warning for your sake? Let em go, say I!” He snapped his fingers with an air of defiance. “*Your* looks and manners would keep a shop full of customers—one Titmouse is worth a hundred of them.”

“Pon my soul, you speak most uncommon gentlemanlike, sir, certainly!” said Titmouse, with a little excitement—“and if you’d only *always*—but that’s all past and gone; and I’ve no objections to say at once, that all the articles I may want in your line I’ll have at your establishment, pay cash down, and ask for no discount. And I’ll send all my friends, for, in course, sir, you know I shall have lots of them!”

“Don’t forget your oldest, your truest, your humblest friend, Mr Titmouse,” said Tag-rag, with a cringing air.

“That I won’t!” replied Titmouse heatedly.

[It flashed across his mind that a true and old friend would be only too happy to do him some such trifling service as to lend him a ten-pound note!]

“Hem!—Now, *are* you such a friend, Mr Tag-rag?” cried he, sheepishly.

“Am I?—Can you doubt me? Try me? See what I would not do for you! Friend, indeed!” and he looked quite fondly at Titmouse.

“Well, I believe you, sir! And the fact is, a—a—a—you see, Mr Tag-

rag, though all this heap of money’s *coming* to me, I’m precious low just *now*”——

“Ye—e—e—s, Mr Titmouse,” quoth Tag-rag, with a horrid inward spasm; his dull grey eye fixed on that of Titmouse miserably.

“Well—if you’ve a mind to prove your words, Mr Tag-rag, and don’t mind advancing me a ten-pound note”——

“Hem!” involuntarily uttered Tag-rag, so suddenly and violently, that it made Titmouse start. Then Tag-rag’s face flushed over; he twirled about his watch-key rapidly, and wriggled about in his chair with visible agitation.

“Oh, you aren’t going to do it! If so, you’d better say it at once,” quoth Titmouse, rather cavalierly.

“Why—*was* ever anything so unfortunate?” stammered Tag-rag. “That cursed lot of French goods I bought only yesterday, to be paid for this very morning—and it will drain me of every penny!”

“Ah—yes! True! Well, it don’t much signify,” said Titmouse carelessly, running his hand through his bushy hair. “In fact, I needn’t have bothered an old friend at all, now I think of it—Mr Gammon says he’s my banker to any amount. I beg pardon, I’m sure”——

Tag-rag was in a horrid dilemma. He felt so flustered by the suddenness and seriousness of the thing, that he could not see his way plain in any direction.

“Let me see,” at length he stammered; and pulling a ready-reckoner out of his pocket, he affected to be consulting it, as if to ascertain merely the state of his banker’s account, but really desiring a few moments’ time to collect his thoughts. ’Twas in vain, however; nothing occurred to him; he saw no way of escape; his old friend the devil had deserted him for a moment—not supplying him as usual with a ready lie to meet an exigency. He must, he feared, cash up! “Well,” said he—“it certainly is rather unfortunate, just at this precise moment; but I’ll step to the

shop, and see how my ready-money matters stand. It sha'n't be a trifle, Mr Titmouse, that shall stand between us. But—if I *should* be hard run—perhaps—eh? Would a five-pound note do?"

"Why—a—a—certainly, if it wouldn't suit you to advance the ten!"

"I daresay," interrupted Tag-rag, a trifle relieved, "I shall be able to accommodate you so far. Perhaps you'll step on to the shop presently, and then we can talk over matters!—By the way, did you ever see anything so odd? forgot the main thing! Do come and take your mutton with me at Clapham next Sunday—my woman-kind will be quite delighted. Nay, 'tis *their* invitation—ha, ha!"

"You're uncommon polite," replied Titmouse, colouring with pleasure. Here seemed the first pale primrose of the coming spring—an invitation to Satin Lodge!

"The politeness—the favour—will be yours, Mr Titmouse! I'm uncommon proud of your coming! We shall be quite alone! have you all to ourselves; only me, my wife, and daughter—an only child, Mr Titmouse—*such* a child! She's really often said to me, 'I wonder'—but,—I won't make you vain, eh? *Shall* I call it, a fixture?"

"Pon my life, Mr Tag-rag, you're monstrous uncommon polite. It's true, I was going to dine with Mr Gammon!"

"Oh! pho! (I mean no disrespect, mind!) he's only a bachelor—I've got ladies in the case, and all that—eh, Mr Titmouse? and a *young* one!"

"Well, thank you, sir. Since you're so pressing!"

"That's it! An engagement, poz!—Satin Lodge—for Sunday next," said Tag-rag, rising and looking at his watch. "Time for me to be off. See you soon at the shop? Soon arrange that little matter of business, eh? You understand? Good-by! good-by!" and shaking Titmouse cordially by the hand, Tag-rag took his departure. As he hurried on to his shop he felt in a most painful perplexity about

this loan of five pounds. It was truly like squeezing five drops of blood out of his heart. But what was to be done? Could he offend Titmouse? Where was he to stop, if he once began? Dare he ask for security? Suppose the whole affair should after all turn into smoke?

Now, consider the folly of Tag-rag. Here was he in all this terrible pucker about advancing *five pounds* on the strength of prospects and chances which he had deemed safe for adventuring *his daughter* upon—her, the only object on earth (except money) that he regarded with anything like sincere affection. How was this? The splendour of the future possible good fortune of his daughter, might, perhaps, have dazzled and confused his perceptions. Then, again, *that* was a *remote* contingent venture; but this sudden appeal to his pocket—the demand of an immediate outlay and venture—was an instant pressure, and he felt it severely. Immediate profit was everything to Tag-rag—'twas his very life's blood! He was, in truth, a *tradesman to his heart's core*. If he could have seen the immediate *quid pro quo*, or could, at all events, have got, if only by way of earnest, as it were, a bit of poor Titmouse's heart—if there were such a thing—and locked it up in his desk, he would not have cared so much; it would have been a little in his line;—but here was a FIVE-POUND NOTE going out forthwith, and nothing immediate, visible, palpable, replacing it. Oh! Titmouse had unconsciously pulled Tag-rag's very heart-strings!

Observe, discriminating reader, that there is all the difference in the world between a TRADESMAN and a MERCHANT; and, moreover, that it is not every *tradesman* that is a Tag-rag.

All these considerations combined to keep Tag-rag in a perfect fever of doubt and anxiety, which several hearty curses (I regret to say) failed in effectually relieving. By the time, however, that Titmouse had made his appearance at Mr Tag-rag's shop, with a sufficiently sheepish air, and was beginning to run the gauntlet of

grinning contempt from the "gents" on each side of the shop, Tag-rag had determined on the course he should pursue in the very embarrassing matter above referred to. To the inexpressible amazement of all present, he bolted out of a little counting-house or side-room, hastened to meet Titmouse with outstretched hand and cordial speech, drew him into his little room, and shut the door. There Tag-rag informed his flurried young friend that he had made arrangements (with a little inconvenience, which, however, between friends, signified nothing) for lending Titmouse five pounds.

"And, as life's uncertain, my dear Mr Titmouse," said Tag-rag, as Titmouse with ill-disguised ecstasy, put the five-pound note into his pocket—"even between the dearest friends—eh? Understand? It's not *you* I fear, nor you me, because we've confidence in each other. But if anything should happen, those we leave behind us"—Here he took out of his desk an "I. O. U. £5," ready drawn up and dated—"a mere slip—a word or two—is satisfaction to both of us."

"Oh yes, sir! yes, sir!—anything!" said Titmouse; and hastily taking the pen proffered him, signed his name, on which Tag-rag felt a little relieved.

Lutestring was then summoned into the room, and thus (not a little to his disgust and astonishment) addressed by his imperious employer. "Mr Lutestring, you will have the goodness to see that Mr Titmouse, while he may do me the honour to condescend to be here, is treated by every person in my establishment with the utmost possible respect. Whoever treats this gentleman with the slightest disrespect isn't any longer a servant of mine. D'ye hear me, Mr Lutestring?" added Tag-rag sternly, observing a very significant glance of mingled hatred and wonder which Lutestring directed towards Titmouse. "D'ye hear me, sir?"

"Oh, yes, sir! yes, sir! your orders shall be attended to," he replied, in as insolent a tone as he could venture upon, leaving the room with a half audible whistle of contempt, while a grin overspread his features. Within five minutes he had filled the mind of every shopman in the establishment with feelings of mingled wonder, hatred, and fear towards Titmouse. What, thought they, could have happened? What was Mr Tag-rag about? This was all of a piece with his rage at Lutestring the day before. "Cuss Titmouse! and Tag-rag, too!" said or thought every one of them.

CHAPTER XII

QUANOCHAITANTHROPOFOION; DAMASCUS CREAM; AND TETARAGMENON ABRACADABRA: WITH THEIR AMAZING EFFECTS ON MR TITMOUSE'S HAIR.

TITMOUSE, for the remainder of the day, felt, as may be imagined, but little at his ease; for—to say nothing of his insuperable repugnance to the discharge of any of his former duties—his uneasiness under the oppressive civilities of Mr Tag-rag; and the evident disgust towards him entertained by his companions; many important

considerations arising out of recent and coming events—his altering circumstances—were momentarily forcing themselves upon his attention. The first of these was his *hair*; for Heaven seemed to have suddenly given him the long-coveted means of changing its detested hue; and the next was an *eye-glass*, without which



he had long felt his appearance and appointments to be painfully incomplete. Early in the afternoon, therefore, on the readily admitted plea of important business, he obtained the permission of the obsequious Mr Tag-rag to depart for the day; and instantly directed his steps to the well-known shop of a fashionable perfumer and perquier, in Bond Street—well known to those, at least, who were in the habit of glancing at the enticing advertisements in the newspapers. Having watched through the window till the coast was clear—for he felt a natural delicacy in asking for a hair-dye before people who could in an instant perceive his urgent occasion for it—he entered the shop, where a well-dressed gentleman was sitting behind the counter reading. He was handsome; and his elaborately curled hair was of a heavenly black—so at least Titmouse considered it—which was better than a thousand printed advertisements of the celebrated fluid which formed the chief commodity there vended. Titmouse, with a little hesitation, asked this gentleman what was the price of their article “for turning *light* hair black”—and was answered—“only seven and sixpence for the smaller-sized bottle.” One was in a twinkling placed upon the counter, where it lay like a miniature mummy, swathed, as it were, in manifold advertisements. “You’ll find,” said the black-haired gentleman, with bland glibness, “the fullest directions within, and testimonials from the highest nobility to the wonderful efficacy of the ‘CYANOCHAITANTHROPOION.’”*

“Sure it will do, sir?” inquired Titmouse anxiously.

* This fearful-looking word, I wish to inform my lady readers, is an original and monstrous amalgamation of three or four Greek words—*κυανος*—*χαιρι*—*ανθρωπινο*—*ποιον*—denoting a fluid “which can render the human hair black.” Whenever a barber or perfumer determines on trying to puff off some villanous imposition of this sort, strange to say, he goes to some starving scholar, and gives him half-a-crown, or so, to coin a word like the above; one which shall be equally unintelligible and unpronounceable, and therefore attractive and popular.

“Is *my* hair dark enough to your taste, sir?” echoed the gentleman, with smiling confidence—“Such as you see it, I owe it entirely to this invaluable specific.”

“Do you, indeed, sir?” inquired Titmouse: adding with a sigh, “but, between ourselves, look at mine!”—and, lifting off his hat for a moment, he exhibited a great crop of bushy, carrot hair.

“Whew! rather ugly that, sir!”—exclaimed the gentleman, looking very serious—“What a curse it is to be born with such hair, isn’t it?”

“’Pon my life I think so, sir!” answered Titmouse mournfully; “and do you really say, sir, that this what’s-its-name turned *yours* of that beautiful black?”

“Think? ’Pon my honour, sir—certain; no mistake, I assure you! I was fretting myself into my grave about the colour of my hair! Why, sir, there was a nobleman in here (but it’s against our system to mention names) the other day, with a head that seemed as if it had been dipped into water, and then powdered with brick-dust; but—I assure you, the Cyanochaitanthropoion was too much for it:—his hair turned black in a very short time. You should have seen his lordship’s ecstasy—[the speaker saw that Titmouse would swallow anything; so he went on with a confident air]—and in a month’s time he had married a beautiful woman whom he had loved from a child, but who had vowed she could never bring herself to marry a man with such a head of hair.”

“How long does it take to do all this, sir?” interrupted Titmouse eagerly, with a beating heart.

“Sometimes two—sometimes three days. In four days’ time, I’ll answer for it, your most intimate friend would not know you. My wife did not know me for a long while, and wouldn’t let me salute her—ha, ha!” Here another customer entered; and Titmouse, laying down the five-pound note he had squeezed out of Tag-rag, put the wonder-working bottle into his pocket, and on receiving his change,

departed, bursting with eagerness to try the effects of the Cyanochaitanthropoion. Within half an hour's time he might have been seen driving a hard bargain with a pawnbroker for a massive-looking eye-glass, upon which, as it hung suspended in the window, he had for months cast a longing eye; and he eventually purchased it (his eyesight, I need hardly say, was perfect) for only fifteen shillings. After taking a hearty dinner in a little dusky eating-house in Rupert Street, frequented by fashionable-looking foreigners, with splendid heads of curling hair and mustaches, he hastened home, eager to commence the grand experiment. Fortunately, he was undisturbed that evening. Having lit his candle, and locked his door, with tremulous fingers he opened the papers enveloping the little bottle; and glancing over their contents, got so inflamed with the numberless instances of its efficacy, detailed in brief but glowing terms—as—the “Duke of * * * *”—the Countess of * * * *—the Earl of, &c. &c. &c. &c.—the lovely Miss _____, the celebrated Sir Gosamer Goosegiblets (who was so gratified that he allowed his name to be used)—all of whom, from having hair of the reddest possible description, were now possessed of raven-hued locks”—that he threw down the paper, and hurriedly got the cork out of the bottle. Having turned up his coat-cuffs, he commenced the application of the matchless Cyanochaitanthropoion, rubbing it into his hair, eyebrows and whiskers, with all the energy he was capable of, for upwards of half an hour. Then he read over again every syllable on the papers in which the bottle had been wrapped; and about eleven o'clock, having given sundry curious glances at the glass, got into bed, full of exciting hopes and delightful anxieties concerning the success of the great experiment he was trying. He could not sleep for several hours. He dreamed a rapturous dream—that he bowed to a gentleman with coal-black hair, whom he fancied he had seen before—and suddenly discovered that he was only looking

at *himself* in a glass!—This awoke him. Up he jumped—sprang to his little glass breathlessly—but ah! merciful Heavens! he almost dropped down dead! Would you have believed it?—His hair was perfectly *green*—there could be no mistake about it! He stood staring in the glass in speechless horror, his eyes and mouth distended to their utmost, for several minutes. Then he threw himself on the bed, and felt fainting. Out he presently jumped again, in a kind of ecstasy—rubbed his hair desperately and wildly about—again looked into the glass—there it was, rougher than before; but eyebrows, whiskers, and head—all were, if anything, of a more vivid and brilliant green. Despair came over him. What had all his past troubles been to this?—what was to become of him? He got into bed again, and burst into a perspiration. Two or three times he got into and out of bed, to look at himself—on each occasion deriving only more terrible confirmation than before, of the disaster which had befallen him—and the hideous spectacle he was doomed thenceforth to present to gods and men! After lying still for some minutes, he got out of bed, and kneeling down, tried to say his prayers; but it was in vain—and he rose half choked. It was plain he must have his head shaved, and wear a wig, which would be making an old man of him at once. Getting more and more disturbed in his mind, he dressed himself, half determined on starting off to Bond Street, and breaking every pane of glass in the shop window of the infernal impostor who had sold him the liquid which had so frightfully disfigured him. As he stood thus irresolute, he heard the step of Mrs Squalop approaching his door, and recollected that he had ordered her to bring up his tea-kettle about that time. Having no time to take his clothes off, he thought the best thing he could do, would be, to pop into bed again, draw his nightcap down to his ears and eyebrows, pretend to be asleep, and turning his back towards the door, have a chance

of escaping for the present the observation of his landlady. No sooner thought of, than done. Into bed he jumped, and drew the clothes over him—not aware, however, that in his hurry he had left his legs, with boots and trousers on, exposed to view—an unusual spectacle to his landlady, who had, in fact, scarcely ever known him in bed at so late an hour before. He lay as still as a mouse. Mrs Squallop, after glancing with surprise at his legs, happening to direct her eyes towards the window, beheld a small bottle standing there—only half of whose dark contents were remaining. Oh gracious!—of course it must be poisons, and Mr Titmouse must be dead!—In a sudden fright she dropped the kettle, plucked the clothes off the trembling Titmouse, and cried out—“Oh, Mr Titmouse! Mr Titmouse! what *have* you been”——

“Well, ma'am, what the devil do you mean? How dare you”——commenced Titmouse, suddenly sitting up, and looking furiously at Mrs Squallop. An inconceivably strange and horrid figure he looked!—He had all his day-clothes on; a white cotton nightcap was drawn down to his very eyes, like a man going to be hanged; his face was very pale, and his whiskers were of a bright green colour.

“Lard a-mighty!” exclaimed Mrs Squallop faintly, the moment that this strange apparition had presented itself; and, sinking on the chair, she pointed with a dismayed air to the ominous-looking object standing on the window shelf. Titmouse thence, somewhat rapidly, inferred that she had found out the true state of the case. “Well—*isn't* it an infernal shame, Mrs Squallop?” said he, getting off the bed; and, plucking off his nightcap, exhibited the full extent of his misfortune. “What d'ye think of *that!*” he exclaimed, staring wildly at her. Mrs Squallop gave a faint shriek, turned her head aside, and motioned him away.

“I shall go mad—I *SHALL!*” cried Titmouse, tearing his green hair.

“Oh law!—oh lawks!” groaned Mrs Squallop, evidently expecting him

to leap upon her. Presently, however, she a little recovered her presence of mind; and Titmouse, stuttering with fury, explained to her what had taken place. As he went on, Mrs Squallop became less and less able to control herself, and at length burst into a fit of convulsive laughter, and sate holding her hands to her fat shaking sides, and appearing likely to tumble off her chair. Titmouse was almost on the point of striking her! At length, however, the fit went off; and, wiping her eyes, she expressed the greatest commiseration for him, and proposed to go down and fetch up some soft soap and flannel, and try what “a good hearty wash would do.” Scarce sooner said than done—but, alas, in vain! Scrub, scrub—lather, lather, did they both; but, the instant that the soap-suds had been washed off, there was the head as green as ever!

“Oh murder, murder! what *am* I to do, Mrs Squallop?” groaned Titmouse, having taken another look at himself in the glass.

“Why—really I'd be off to a police-office, and have 'em all taken up, if as how I was *you!*” quoth Mrs Squallop, indignantly.

“No—See if I don't take that bottle, and make the fellow that sold it me swallow what's left—and I'll smash in his shop front besides!”

“Oh, you won't—you mustn't—not on no account! Stop at home a bit, and be quiet; it may go off with all this washing, in the course of the day. Soft soap is an uncommon strong thing for getting colours out—but—a—a—excuse me now, Mr Titmouse”——said Mrs Squallop, seriously—“why wasn't you satisfied with the hair God Almighty had given you? D'ye think He didn't know a deal better than you what was best for you? I'm blest if I don't think this is a judgment on you, when one comes to consider!”

“What's the use of your standing preaching to me in this way, Mrs Squallop?” said Titmouse, first with amazement, and then with fury in his manner—“A'n't I half mad without it? Judgment or no judgment—where's the harm of my wanting

black hair, any more than black trousers? That a'n't *your own* hair, Mrs Squalop—you're as grey as a badger underneath—'pon my soul! I've often remarked it—I *have*, 'pon my soul!"

"I'll tell you what, Mr Himperance!" furiously exclaimed Mrs Squalop, "you're a liar! And you deserve what you've got! It is a judgment, and I hope it will stick by you—so take *that* for your sauce, you vulgar fellow!" snapping her fingers at him. "Get rid of your green hair if you can! It's only carrot *tops* instead of carrot *roots*—and some likes one, some the other—ha! ha! ha!"

"I'll tell you what, Mrs Squ"—he commenced, but she had gone, having slammed the door behind her with all her force; and Titmouse was left alone in a half frantic state, in which he continued for nearly two hours. Once again he read over the atrocious puffs which had overnight inflated him to such a degree, and he now saw that they were all lies. This is a sample of them:—

"This divine fluid, as it was enthusiastically styled to the inventor, by the lovely Duchess of Dunder-whistle, possesses the inestimable and astonishing quality of changing hair, of whatever colour, to a dazzling jet-black; at the same time imparting to it a rich glossy appearance, which wonderfully contributes to the imposing *tout-ensemble* presented by those who use it. That well-known ornament of the circle of fashion, the young and lovely Mrs F * * * *, owned to the proprietor that to this surprising fluid it was that she was indebted for those unrivalled raven ringlets which attracted the eyes of envying and admiring crowds," and so forth. A little further on:—"This exquisite effect is not in *all cases* produced instantaneously; much will of course depend, as the celebrated M. Dupuytren, of the Hôtel Dieu, at Paris, informed the inventor, on the physical idiosyncrasy of the party using it, with reference to the constituent particles of the colouring matter constituting the fluid in the capillary vessels. Often a single application suffices to change the most

hopeless-looking head of red hair to as deep a black; but, not unfrequently, the hair *passes through intermediate shades and tints*—all, however, ultimately settling into a deep and permanent black."

This passage not a little revived the drooping spirits of Titmouse. Accidentally, however, an asterisk at the last word in the above sentence, directed his eye to a note at the bottom of the page, printed in such minute type as would have baffled any but the strongest sight and most determined eye to read, and which said note was as follows: that is to say—

"Though cases *do*, undoubtedly, occasionally occur, in which the native inherent indestructible qualities of the hair defy all attempts at change, or even modification, and resist even *this* potent remedy: of which, however, in all his experience," the wonderful specific has been invented for about *six months*, "the inventor has known but very few instances." But to this exceedingly select class of unfortunate incurables, poor Titmouse, alas! entertained a dismal suspicion that *he* belonged!

"Look, sir! Look! Only look here what your-cussed stuff has done to my hair!" said Titmouse, on presenting himself soon afterwards to the gentleman who had sold him the infernal liquid; and plucking off his hat, exposed his green hair. The gentleman, however, did not appear at all surprised, or discomfited.

"Ah—yes! I see—I see. You're in the intermediate stage. It differs in different people"—

"Differs, sir! I'm going mad! I look like a green monkey—Cuss me if I don't!"

"In *me*, now," replied the gentleman, with a matter-of-fact air, "the colour was a strong *yellow*. But have you read the explanations that are given in the wrapper?"

"Read 'em?" echoed Titmouse furiously—"I should think so! Much good they do *me*! Sir, you're a humbug!—an impostor! I'm a sight to be seen for the rest of my life! Look

at me, sir! Eyebrows, whiskers, and all!"

"*Rather* a singular appearance, just at present, I must own," said the gentleman, his face turning suddenly red all over with the violent effort he was making to prevent an explosion of laughter. He soon, however, recovered himself, and added coolly—"If you'll only persevere"—

"Persevere be d—d!" interrupted Titmouse, violently clapping his hat on his head, "I'll teach you to *persevere* in taking in the public! I'll have a warrant out against you in no time!"

"Oh, my dear sir, I'm accustomed to all this!" said the gentleman coolly.

"The—devil—you—are!" gasped Titmouse, quite aghast.

"Oh, often—often, while the liquid is performing the first stage of the change; but, in a day or two afterwards, the parties generally come back smiling into my shop, with heads as black as crows!"

"No! But really—do they, sir?" interrupted Titmouse, drawing a long breath.

"Hundreds, I may say thousands, my dear sir! And one lady gave me a picture of herself, in her black hair, to make up for her abuse of me when it was in a puce colour—Fact, honour!"

"But do you recollect any one's hair turning *green*, and then getting black?" inquired Titmouse with trembling anxiety.

"Recollect any? Fifty at least. For instance, there was Lord Andrew Adlehead—but why should I mention names? I know hundreds! But everything is honour and confidential *here!*"

"And did Lord what's-his-name's hair go green, and then black; and was it at first as light as mine?"

"His hair was redder, and in consequence it became greener, and now is blacker than ever yours will be."

"Well, if I and my landlady have this morning used an ounce, we've used a quarter of a pound of soft soap in"—

"Soft soap!—soft soap!" cried out the gentleman with an air of sudden alarm—"That explains all" (he forgot how well it had been already explained by him). "By Heavens, sir!—soft soap! You may have ruined your hair for ever!" Titmouse opened his eyes and mouth with a start of terror, it not occurring to his astute mind that the intolerable green had preceded, not followed, the use of the soft soap. "Go home, my dear sir! Lord bless you—go home, as you value your hair; take this small bottle of DAMASCUS CREAM, and rub it in before it's too late; and then use the remainder of the"—

"Then you don't think it's already too late?" inquired Titmouse faintly; and, having been assured to the contrary—having asked the price of the Damascus cream, which was "*only* three-and-sixpence" (stamp included)—he purchased and paid for it with a rueful air, and took his departure. He sneaked homeward along the streets with the air of a pickpocket, fearful that every one he met was an officer who had his eye on him. He was not, in fact, very far off the mark; for many a person smiled, and stared, and turned round to look at him as he went along.

He slunk up-stairs to his room in a sad state of depression, and spent the next hour in rubbing into his hair the Damascus cream. He rubbed till he could hardly hold his arms up any longer, from sheer fatigue. Having risen at length to mark, from the glass, the progress he had made, he found that the only result of his persevering exertions had been to give a greasy shining appearance to the hair, which remained green as ever. With a half-uttered groan he sunk down upon a chair, and fell into a sort of abstraction, which was interrupted by a sharp knock at his door. Titmouse started up, trembled, and stood for a moment or two irresolute, glancing fearfully at the glass; and then, opening the door, let in—Mr Gammon, who started back a pace or two, as if he had been shot, on catching sight of the strange figure of Titmouse. It was useless for Gam-

mon to try to check his laughter; so, leaning against the door-post, he yielded to the impulse, and laughed without intermission for nearly a couple of minutes. Titmouse felt desperately angry, but feared to show it; and the timid, rueful, lackadaisical air with which he regarded the dreaded Mr Gammon, only prolonged and aggravated the agonies of that gentleman. When at length he had a little recovered himself, holding his left hand to his side, with an exhausted air, he entered the little apartment, and asked Titmouse what in the name of heaven he had been doing to himself: "*Without this*" (in the absurd slang—lately, alas! [1851] abolished!—of the lawyers) that he suspected most vehemently, all the while, what Titmouse had been about; but wished to hear Titmouse's own account of the matter!—Titmouse, not daring to hesitate, complied—Gammon listening in an agony of suppressed laughter. He looked as little at Titmouse as he could, and was growing a trifle more sedate, when Titmouse, in a truly lamentable tone, inquired, "What's the good, Mr Gammon, of ten thousand a-year with such a horrid head of hair as this?" On hearing which Gammon jumped off his chair, started to the window, and laughed for one or two minutes without ceasing. This was too much for Titmouse, who presently cried aloud in a lamentable manner; and Gammon, suddenly ceasing his laughter, turned round and apologised in the most earnest manner; after which he uttered an abundance of sympathy for the sufferings which "he deplored being unable to alleviate." He even restrained himself when Titmouse again and again asked if he could not "have the law" of the man who had so imposed on him. Gammon diverted the thoughts of his suffering client, by taking from his pocket some very imposing packages of paper, tied round with red tape. From time to time, however, he almost split his nose with efforts to restrain his laughter, on catching a fresh glimpse of poor Titmouse's emerald hair. Mr Gammon was a man of

business, however, and in the midst of all this distracting excitement contrived to get Titmouse's signature to sundry papers of no little consequence; amongst others, first, to a bond conditioned for the payment of £500; secondly, another for £10,000,—both to Caleb Quirk, gentleman; and lastly, an agreement (of which he gave Titmouse an *alleged* copy) by which Titmouse, in consideration of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap using their best exertions to put him in possession of the estate, &c. &c., bound himself to conform to their wishes in everything, on pain of their instantly throwing up the whole affair, looking out for another heir-at-law (!) and issuing execution forthwith against Titmouse for all expenses incurred under his retainer. I said that Gammon gave his confiding client an *alleged* copy of this agreement;—it was not a real copy, for certain stipulations appeared in each, which were not intended to appear in the other, for reasons which were perfectly satisfactory to—Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. When Gammon had got to this point, he thought it the fitting opportunity for producing a second five-pound note. He did so, and put Titmouse thereby into an ecstasy, which pushed out of his head for a while all recollection of what had happened to the outside of it. He had at that moment nearly eleven pounds in hard cash! Gammon easily obtained from him an account of his little money transactions with Huckaback—of which, however, all he could tell was—that for ten shillings down, he had given a written engagement to pay fifty pounds on getting the estate. Of this Gammon made a careful memorandum, explaining to Titmouse the atrocious villainy of Huckaback—and, in short, that if he, Titmouse, did not look very sharply about him, he would be robbed right and left; so that it was of the utmost consequence to him early to learn how to distinguish between false and—Gammon added with a heavenly air—true friends. Gammon went on to assure him that the instrument which he had given to Huckaback, was pro-

bably, in point of law, not worth a farthing, on the ground of its being both fraudulent and usurious; and intimated something, which Titmouse did not very distinctly comprehend, about the efficacy of a bill in equity for a *discovery*; which—merely to expose villany—at a very insignificant expense, not exceeding £100, would enable the plaintiff in equity to put the defendant in equity, *i. e.* Huckaback, in the way of declaring, on his solemn oath, that he had advanced the full sum of £50; and having obtained this important and satisfactory result, Titmouse would have the opportunity of disproving the statement of Huckaback—if he could: which of course he could not. By this process, however, a little profitable employment would have been afforded to a certain distinguished firm in Saffron Hill—and that was *something*—to Gammon.

“But, by the way, talking of money,” said Titmouse suddenly, “you can’t think how surprising handsome Mr Tag-rag has behaved to me!”

“Indeed, my dear sir!” exclaimed Gammon, with real curiosity, “what has he done?”

“Advanced to me five pounds—all of his own head!” (Oh Mr Titmouse!)

“Are you serious, Mr Titmouse?” inquired Gammon.

Titmouse produced the change which he had obtained for Tag-rag’s five-pound note, *minus* only the prices of the Cyanochaitanthropoipoion, the Damascus cream, and the eye-glass. Gammon merely stroked his chin in a thoughtful manner. So occupied, indeed, was he with his reflections, that though his eye was fixed on the ludicrous figure of Titmouse, which so shortly before had occasioned him such paroxysms of laughter, he did not feel the least inclination even to a smile. Tag-rag advance Titmouse five pounds! A-hem!—Throwing as much smiling indifference into his manner as was possible, he asked Titmouse the particulars of so strange a transaction. Titmouse answered—how truly the reader can judge—that

Mr Tag-rag had, in the very handsomest way, volunteered the loan of five pounds; moreover offering him any further sum he might require!

“What a charming change, Mr Titmouse!” exclaimed Gammon, with a watchful eye, and anxious smile.

“Most delightful, ‘pon my soul!” “Rather sudden, too!—eh?—Mr Titmouse?”

“Why—no—no; I should say, ‘pon my life, certainly not. The fact is, we’ve long misunderstood each other. He’s had an uncommon good opinion of me all the while—people *have* tried to set him against me; but it’s no use, he’s found them out—he told me so! And he’s not only said, but *done* the handsome thing! He’s turned, up by Jove, a trump all of a sudden—though it’s long looked an ugly card, to be sure!”

“He, ha, ha!—very!—how curious!” exclaimed Mr Gammon mechanically; revolving several important matters in his mind.

“I’m going, too, to dine at Satin Lodge, Mr Tag-rag’s country house, next Sunday.”

“Indeed! It will be quite a change for you, Mr Titmouse!”

“Yes, it will, by Jove; and—a—a—what’s more—there’s—hem!—you understand?”

“Go on, I beg, my dear Mr Titmouse”——

“There’s a lady in the case—not that she’s *said* anything; but a nod’s as good as a wink to a blind horse—eh? Mr Gammon?”

“I should think so—Miss Tag-rag will have money, of course?”

“You’ve hit it! Lots! But I’ve not made up my mind.”

[I’d better undeceive this poor devil at once, as to this sordid wretch Tag-rag, thought Gammon, otherwise the cunning old rogue may get a very mischievous hold upon him! And a *lady in the case!* The old scamp has a daughter! Whew! this will never do! The sooner I enlighten my young friend the better—though at a little risk.]

“It’s very important to be able to tell who are real and who false friends,

as I was saying just now, my dear Titmouse," said Gammon seriously.

"I think so. Now look for instance, there's that fellow Huckaback. I should say *he*!"

"Pho! pho! my dear sir, a mere beetle—he's not worth thinking of, one way or the other. But can't you guess another sham friend, who has changed so suddenly?"

"Do you mean Mr Tag-rag—eh?"

"I mention no names; but it's rather odd, that when I am speaking of hollow-hearted friends, *you* should at once name Mr Tag-rag—ah, ha, Mr Titmouse! Your natural acuteness!"

"The proof of the pudding—handsome is that handsome does; and I've got £5 of his money at any rate!"

"Of course he took no *security* for such a trifle, between such *very* close friends?"

"Oh—why—now you mention it—But 'twas only a line—one line—a mere *mem.* betwixt two gents—and I noticed it had no stamp!"

"I guessed as much, my dear sir," interrupted Gammon calmly, with a significant smile—"Tag-rag and Huckaback are quite on a par—a brace of worthies—ah, ha, ha! My dear Titmouse, you are too honest, and confiding!"

"What keen eyes you lawyers have, to be sure! Well—I never"—said Titmouse, looking very grave—for he was evidently somewhat staggered. "I—I—must say," he presently added, looking gratefully at Gammon, "I think I *do* now know of a true friend, that sent me two five-pound notes, and never asked for any security."

"My dear sir, you really pain me by alluding to such a matter!"

[Oh, Gammon, Gammon! is not this too bad! What are the papers which you know are now in your pocket, signed only this very evening by Titmouse?]

"You are not a match for Tag-rag, Mr Titmouse; because he was *made* for a tradesman—you are not. Do you think he would have parted with his £5 but for value received? Oh, Tag-rag! Tag-rag!"

"I—I really begin to think, Mr Gam-

mon—'pon my soul, I do think you're right."

"Think!—why—for a man of your acuteness—how could he imagine you could forget the long course of insult and tyranny which you have endured under him: that he should change all of a sudden—just now, when?"

"Ay, by Jove! just when I'm coming into my property," interrupted Titmouse quickly.

"To be sure—to be sure! just now, I say, to make this sudden change! Bah! bah!"

"I hate Tag-rag, and always did. Now he's trying to take me in, just as he does everybody; but I've found him out; I won't lay out a penny with him!"

"Would you, do you think, ever have seen the inside of Satin Lodge, if you hadn't?"

"Why, I don't know; I really think—hem!"

"*Would* you, my dear sir?—But now a scheme occurs to me—a very amusing idea indeed! Ah, ha, ha!—Shall I tell you a way of proving to his own face how insincere and interested he is towards you? Go to dinner by all means, eat his good things, hear all that the whole set of them have to say, and just before you go (it will require you to have your wits about you), pretend, with a long face, that our affair is all a bottle of smoke: say that Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap have told you the day before that they had made a horrid mistake, and you were the wrong man!"

"'Pon my life, I—I—really," stammered Titmouse, "daren't—I couldn't—I couldn't keep it up—he'd half kill me. Besides, there will be Miss Tag-rag—it would be the death of her, I know."

"Miss Tag-rag! Gracious Heavens! What on earth can you have to do with *her*? *You*—why, if you really succeed in getting this fine property, she might make a very suitable wife for one of your grooms—ah, ha!—But for *you*—absurd!"

"Ah! I don't know—she may be a devilish fine girl, and the old fellow will have a tolerable penny to leave

her—and a bird in the hand—eh? Besides, I know what she's all along thought—hem!—but that doesn't signify.”

“Pho! pho! Ridiculous! Ha, ha, ha! Fancy Miss Tag-rag Mrs Titmouse! Your eldest son—ah, ha, ha! Tag-rag Titmouse, Esq. Delightful! Your honoured father a draper in Oxford Street!” All this might be very clever, but it did not seem to *tell* upon Titmouse, whose little heart had been reached by a cunning hint of Tag-rag's, concerning his daughter's flattering estimate of Titmouse's personal appearance. The reason why Gammon attacked so seriously a matter which appeared so chimerical and preposterous, was this—that according to his present plan, Titmouse was to remain for some considerable while at Tag-rag's, and might, with his utter weakness of character, be worked upon by Tag-rag and his daughter, and get inveigled into an engagement which might be productive hereafter of no little embarrassment. Gammon succeeded, however, at length, in obtaining Titmouse's promise to adopt his suggestion, and thereby discover the true nature of the feelings entertained towards him at Saffin Lodge. He shook Titmouse energetically by the hand, and left him perfectly certain that if there was one person in the world worthy of his esteem, and even reverence, that person was **OLLY GAMMON, Esq.**

As he bent his steps towards Saffron Hill, he reflected rather anxiously on several matters which had occurred to him during the interview which I have just described. On reaching the office, he was presently closeted with Mr Quirk, to whom, first and foremost, he exhibited and delivered the documents to which he had obtained Titmouse's signature, and which, the reader will allow me to assure him, were of a somewhat different texture from a certain legal instrument or security which I laid before him some little time ago.

“Now, Gammon,” said the old gentleman, as soon as he had locked up in his safe the above-mentioned documents—“Now, Gammon, I think we

may be up and at 'em; load our guns, and blaze away,” and he rubbed his hands.

“Perhaps so, Mr Quirk,” replied Gammon; “but we must, for no earthly consideration, be premature in our operations! Let me, by the way, tell you one or two little matters that have just happened to Titmouse!”—Then he told Mr Quirk of the effects which had followed the use of the potent Cyanochaitanthropopoion, at which old Quirk almost laughed himself into fits. When, however, Gammon, with a serious air, mentioned the name of Miss Tag-rag, and his grave suspicions concerning her, Quirk bounced up out of his chair, almost startling Gammon out of *his*. If Mr Quirk had just been told that his banker had broke, he could scarce have shown more emotion.

The fact was, that he, too, had a **DAUGHTER**—an only child—Miss Quirk—whom he had destined to become Mrs Titmouse.

“A designing old villain!” he exclaimed at length, and Gammon agreed with him; but, strange to say, with all his acuteness, never adverted to the real cause of Quirk's sudden and vehement exclamation. When Gammon told him of the manner in which he had opened Titmouse's eyes to the knavery of Tag-rag, and the expedient he had suggested for its complete demonstration to Titmouse, Quirk could have worshipped Gammon, and could not help rising and shaking him very energetically by the hand, much to his astonishment. After a long consultation, they determined to look out fresh lodgings for Titmouse, and remove him presently altogether from the company and influence of Tag-rag. Some time after they had parted, Mr Quirk came with an eager air into Mr Gammon's room, with a most important suggestion; viz. whether it would not be possible for them to get Tag-rag to become a surety to them, by-and-by, on behalf of Titmouse? Gammon was delighted!—He heartily commended Mr Quirk's sagacity, and promised to turn it about in his thoughts very carefully. Not having been let entirely into Quirk's policy, (of which the reader has, how-

ever, just had a glimpse), Mr Gammon did not see the difficulties which kept Quirk awake almost all that night; viz. how to protect Titmouse from the machinations of Tag-rag and his daughter, and yet keep Tag-rag sufficiently interested in, and intimate with, Titmouse, to entertain, by-and-by, the idea of becoming surety for him to them, the said Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and—withal—how to manage Titmouse all the while, so as to forward their objects, and also succeed in turning his attention towards Miss Quirk; all this formed really rather a complex problem!—Quirk looked down on Tag-rag with honest indignation, as a mean and mercenary fellow, whose unprincipled schemes, thank Heaven! he already saw through, and from which he resolved to rescue his innocent and confiding client, who was made for better things—to wit, Miss Quirk.

When Titmouse rose the next morning (Saturday), behold—he found his hair had become of a variously shaded purple or violet colour! Astonishment and apprehension by turns possessed him, as he stared into the glass, at this unlooked-for change of colour; and hastily dressing himself, after swallowing a very slight breakfast, off he went once more to the scientific establishment in Bond Street, to which he had been indebted for his recent delightful experiences. The distinguished inventor and proprietor of the Cyanochaitanthropoipoion was behind the counter as usual—calm and confident as ever.

“Ah! I see—as I said! as I said,” quoth he, with a sort of glee in his manner. “Isn’t it?—Coming round quicker than usual—Really, I’m selling more of the article than I can possibly make.”

“Well,”—at length said Titmouse, as soon as he had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the sudden volubility with which he had been assailed on entering—“then is it really going on tolerable well?” taking off his hat, and looking anxiously into a glass that hung close by.

“Tolerable well, my dear sir! De-

lightful! Perfect! Couldn’t be better! If you’d studied the thing, you’d know sir, that purple is the middle colour between green and black. Indeed, black’s only purple and green mixed, which explains the whole thing!” Titmouse listened with infinite satisfaction to this unanswerable and truly philosophical account of the matter.

“Remember, sir—my hair is to come like yours—eh? you recollect, sir? Honour—that was the bargain, you know!”

“I have very little doubt of it, sir—nay, I am certain of it, knowing it by experience.”

[The scamp had been hired expressly for the purpose of lying thus in support of the Cyanochaitanthropoipoion; his own hair being a *natural* black.]

“I’m going to a grand dinner tomorrow, sir,” said Titmouse, “with some devilish great people at the west end of the town—eh? you understand! will it do by that time? Would give a trifle to get my hair a shade darker by that time—for—hem!—most lovely gal—eh? you understand the thing?—devilish anxious, and all that sort of thing, you know!”

“Yes—I do,” replied the gentleman of the shop in a confidential tone; and opening one of the glass doors behind him, took out a bottle considerably larger than the first, and handed it to Titmouse. “This,” said he, “will complete the thing; it combines chemically with the purple particles, and the result is—generally arrived at in about two days’ time”——

“But it will do *something* in a night’s time—eh?—surely.”

“I should think so! But here it is—it is called the TETARAGMENON AB-RACADABRA.”

“What a name!” exclaimed Titmouse with a kind of awe. “’Pon honour, it almost takes one’s breath away”——

“It will do more, sir; it will take your red hair away! By the way, only the day before yesterday, a lady of high rank, between ourselves, Lady Caroline Carrot, whose red hair always seemed as if it would have set her

bonnet in a blaze—ha, ha!—came here, after two days' use of the Cyanochait-anthropoion, and one day's use of this Tetaragmenon Abracadabra—and asked me if I knew her. Upon my soul I did not, till she solemnly assured me she was really Lady Caroline!”

“How much is it?” eagerly inquired Titmouse, thrusting his hand into his pocket, with no little excitement.

“Only nine-and-sixpence.”

“Oh, my stars, what a price! Nine-and-six”——

“Ah, but would you have believed it, sir? This extraordinary fluid cost a great German chemist his whole life to bring to perfection; and it contains expensive materials from all the four corners of the world! It's ruined the proprietor long ago!”

“That may be—but really—I've laid out a large figure with you, sir, this day or two! Couldn't you say eight sh”——

“We never abate, sir; it's not *our* style of doing business,” replied the gentleman, in a manner that quite overawed poor Titmouse, who at once bought this, the third abomination; not a little depressed, however, at the heavy prices which he had paid for the three bottles, and the uncertainty he felt as to the ultimate issue. That night he was so well satisfied with the progress which he was making with his hair, for, by candle light, it really looked much darker than could have been expected,—that he resolved—at all events for the present—to leave well alone; or at the utmost, to try the effects of the Tetaragmenon Abracadabra only upon his eyebrows and whiskers. Into them he rubbed the new specific; which, on the bottle being opened, surprised him in two respects: first, it was perfectly colourless; secondly, it had a most infernal smell. It was, however, no use hesitating: he had bought and paid for it; and the papers in which it was folded gave an account of its success that was really irresistible and unquestionable. Away, therefore, he rubbed; and when he had finished, got into

bed, in humble hope as to the result, which would be disclosed by the morning's light. But, alas! would you have believed it? When he looked at himself in the glass, about six o'clock on the ensuing morning, at which hour he awoke, I protest it is a fact, that his eyebrows and whiskers were as white as snow; which, combined with the purple colour of the hair on his head, rendered him one of the most astounding objects, in human shape, that the eye of man had ever beheld. There was the wisdom of age seated in his white eyebrows and whiskers, unspeakable youthful folly in his features, and a purple crown of WONDER on his head.

Really, it seemed as if the devil were wreaking his spite on Mr Titmouse; nay, perhaps it was the devil himself who had served him with the bottles in Bond Street. Or was it a mere ordinary servant of the devil—some greedy, impudent, unprincipled speculator, who, desirous of acting on the approved maxim—*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili*—had pitched on Titmouse, seeing the sort of person he was, as a godsend, quite reckless what effect might be produced on his hair, so as the stuff were paid for, and its effects noted? It might possibly have been sport to the gentleman of the shop, but it was near proving death to poor Titmouse, who might possibly have resolved on throwing himself out of the window, only that he saw it was not big enough for a baby to get through. He turned aghast at the monstrous object which his little glass presented to him; and sank down upon the bed with the feeling that he was now fit for death. As before, Mrs Squallop made her appearance with his kettle for breakfast. He was sitting at the table dressed, and with his arms folded, with a reckless air, not at all caring to conceal the new and still more frightful change which he had undergone since she saw him last. Mrs Squallop stared at him for a second or two in silence; then, stepping back out of the room, suddenly drew to the door, and tood outside, laughing vehemently.

"I'll kick you down stairs!" shouted Titmouse, rushing to the door, pale with fury, and pulling it open.

"Mr—Mr—Titmouse, you'll be the death of me—you will—you will!" gasped Mrs Squallop, almost black in the face, and the water running out of the kettle, which she was unconsciously holding aslant. After a while, however, they got reconciled. Mrs Squallop had fancied he had been but rubbing chalk on his eyebrows and whiskers; and seemed dismayed, indeed, on hearing the true state of the case. He implored her to send out for a small bottle of ink; but as it was Sunday morning none could be got;—she knew that no one in the court used ink, and she teased him to

try a little *blacking*! He did—but it was useless!—He sat for an hour or two, in an ecstasy of grief and rage. What would he now have given never to have meddled with the hair with which Heaven had thought fit to send him into the world? Alas, with what mournful force Mrs Squallop's words, on a former occasion, again and again recurred to him! To say that he ate breakfast would be scarcely correct. He drank a single cup of cocoa, and ate a small fragment of roll, and then put away his breakfast things on the window shelf. If he had been in the humour to go to church, how could he? He would have been turned out as an object involuntarily exciting everybody to laughter!

CHAPTER XIII

TITMOUSE'S LEVEE AT CLOSET COURT; MR TAG-RAG'S ENTERTAINMENT TO HIM AT SATIN LODGE; AND ITS DISGUSTING ISSUE.

YET, poor soul, in this extremity of misery, Titmouse was not utterly neglected; for he had that morning quite a little levee. First came Mr Snap, who, having quite as keen and clear an eye for his own interest as his senior partners, had early seen how capable was an acquaintance with Titmouse of being turned to his (Snap's) great advantage. He had come, therefore, dressed very stylishly, to do a little bit of toadying on the sly, on his own exclusive account; and had brought with him, for the edification of Titmouse, a copy of that day's *Sunday Flash*, which contained a long account of a bloody fight between Birmingham Bigbones and London Littlego, for £500 a-side—showing how sixty rounds had been fought, both men killed, and their seconds had "*bolled*" to Boulogne. Poor Snap, however, though he had come with the best intentions, and the most

anxious wish to evince profound respect for the future master of ten thousand a-year, was quite taken by storm by the very first glimpse he got of Titmouse, and could not for a long while recover himself. He had come to ask Titmouse to dine with him at a tavern in the Strand, where there was to be capital singing in the evening; and also to accompany him, on the ensuing morning, to the Old Bailey, to hear "a most interesting trial" for bigamy, in which Snap was concerned for the prisoner—a miscreant, who had been married to five living women!! Snap conceived, and very justly, that it would give Titmouse a striking idea of his (Snap's) importance, to see him so much, and apparently so familiarly concerned with well-known counsel. In his own terse and quaint way, he was explaining to Titmouse the various remedies he had against the Bond Street im-

postor, both by indictment and action on the case, nay, getting a little, however, beyond his depth, he assured the eager Titmouse, that a bill of discovery would lie in equity, to ascertain what the Tetragrammon Abracadabra was composed of, with a view to his preferring an indictment against its owner; at which point his learned display was interrupted by a double knock, and—oh, mercy on us!—enter Mr Gammon. Whether he or Snap felt more disconcerted, I cannot say; but Snap looked the more confused and sneaking. Each told the other a lie, in as easy, good-natured a way as he could assume, concerning the object of his visit to Titmouse. Thus they were going on, when—another knock—and, “Is this Mr Titmouse’s?” inquired a voice, which brought a little colour into the face of both Gammon and Snap; for it was absolutely old Quirk, who bustled breathless into the room, on his first visit, and seemed completely confounded by the sight of both his partners. What with this, and the amazing appearance presented by Titmouse, Mr Quirk was so overwhelmed that he scarce spoke a syllable. Each of the three partners felt (in his own way) exquisite embarrassment. Huckaback, some time afterwards, made his appearance; but *him* Titmouse unceremoniously dismissed in a twinkling, in spite of a vehement remonstrance. Behold, however, presently yet another arrival—Mr Tag-rag! who had come to announce that his carriage—*i. e.* a queer, rickety, little one-horse chaise, with a tallow-faced boy in it, in faded livery—was waiting to convey Mr Titmouse to Satin Lodge, and take him a long drive in the country! Each of these four worthies could have spit in the other’s face; first, for *detecting*, and secondly, for *rivalling* him in his schemes upon Titmouse. A few minutes after the arrival of Tag-rag, Gammon, half-choked with disgust, and despising himself even more than he despised his fellow-visitors, slunk off, followed almost immediately by Quirk, who was dying to consult him on this

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new aspect of affairs which had presented itself. Snap, who, ever since the arrival of Messrs Quirk and Gammon, had felt like an ape on hot irons, very shortly followed in the footsteps of his partners, having made no engagement whatever with Titmouse; and thus the enterprising and determined Tag-rag was left master of the field. He had in fact come to *do business*, and business he determined to do. As for Gammon, during the short time he had stayed, how he had endeared himself to Titmouse, by explaining, not aware that Titmouse had confessed all to Snap, the singular change in the colour of his hair to have been occasioned simply by the intense mental anxiety through which he had lately passed! The touching anecdotes he told of sufferers, whose hair a single night’s agony—he said—had changed to all the colours of the rainbow! Though Tag-Rag outstaid all his fellow-visitors, in the manner which has been described, he could not prevail upon Titmouse to accompany him in his “carriage,” for Titmouse pleaded a pressing engagement—*i. e.* a desperate attempt he purposed making to obtain some ink—but pledged himself to make his appearance at Satin Lodge at the appointed hour, half-past three, for four o’clock. Away, therefore, drove Tag-Rag, delighted that Satin Lodge would so soon contain such a resplendent visitor—indignant at the cringing, sycophantic attentions of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, against whom he resolved to put Titmouse on his guard, and infinitely astonished at the extraordinary change which had taken place in the colour of Titmouse’s hair. Partly influenced by the explanation which Gammon had given of the phenomenon, Tag-rag resigned himself to feelings of simple wonder. Titmouse was doubtless passing through stages of physical transmogrification, corresponding with the marvellous change that was taking place in his circumstances; and for all he (Tag-rag) knew, other and more extraordinary changes were going on; Titmouse might be

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growing at the rate of half an inch a-day, and soon stand before him a man more than six feet high! Considerations such as these invested Titmouse with intense and overpowering interest in the estimation of Tag-rag; how could he make enough of him at Satin Lodge that day? If ever that hardened sinner felt inclined to utter an inward prayer, it was as he drove home that day—that Heaven would array his daughter in angel hues to the eyes of Titmouse!

My friend Tittlebat made his appearance at the gate of Satin Lodge, at about a quarter to four o'clock. Merciful Powers! how he had dressed himself out! so as very considerably to exceed his appearance when first presented to the reader.

Miss Tag-rag had been before her glass ever since the instant of her return from chapel, up to within ten minutes' time of Titmouse's arrival. An hour and a half at least had she bestowed on her hair, disposing it in little corkscrew and somewhat scanty curls, which quite glistened in bear's grease, hanging on each side of a pair of lean and sallow cheeks. The colour which ought to have distributed itself over her cheeks, in roseate delicacy, had, two or three years before, thought fit to collect itself into the tip of her sharp little nose. Her small grey eyes beamed with the gentle and attractive expression perceptible in her father's; and her projecting under-lip reminded everybody of that delicate feature in her mother. She was very short, and her figure rather skinny and angular. She wore her lilac-coloured frock; her waist being pinched in to a degree which made you think of a fit of the colic when you looked at her—and gave you a dim vision of a coroner's inquest on a case of death by tight lacing! A long red sash, tied in a most elaborate bow, gave a very brilliant air to her dress generally. She had a thin gold chain round her neck, and wore long white gloves; her left hand holding her pocket-handkerchief, which she had so suffused with bergamotte that it scented the whole room. Mrs Tag-

rag had made herself very splendid, in a red silk gown and staring head-dress; in fact, she seemed on fire. As for Mr Tag-rag, whenever he was dressed in his Sunday clothes, he looked the model of a dissenting minister; witness his black coat, waistcoat and trousers, and primly-tied white neckerchief, with no shirt-collar visible. For some quarter of an hour had this interesting trio been standing at their parlour window, in anxious expectation of Titmouse's arrival; their only amusement being the numberless dusty stage-coaches driving every three minutes close past their gate (which was about ten yards from their house), at once enlivening and ruralising the scene. Oh, that poor laburnum—laden with dust, drooping with drought, and evidently in the very last stage of a decline—that was planted beside the little gate! Tag-rag spoke of cutting it down; but Mrs and Miss Tag-rag begged its life a little longer, because none of their neighbours had one!—and then *that* subject dropped. How was it that, though both the ladies had sat under a thundering discourse from Mr Dismal Horror that morning—they had never once since thought or spoke of him or his sermon—never even opened his exhilarating "*Groans?*" The reason was plain. They thought of Titmouse, who was bringing "airs from heaven;" while Horror brought only "blasts from —!" and *those* they had every day in the week (his sermons on the Sunday, his "*Groans?*" on the weekday). At length Miss Tag-rag's little heart fluttered violently, for her papa told her that Titmouse was coming up the road—and so he was. Not dreaming that he could be seen, he stood beside the gate for a moment, under the melancholy laburnum: and, taking a dirty-looking silk handkerchief out of his hat, slapped it vigorously about his boots—from which circumstance it may be safely inferred that he had walked—and replaced it in his hat. Then he unbuttoned his sur-tout, adjusted it nicely, and disposed his chain and eye-glass just so as to let the tip only of the latter be seen peep-

ing out of his waistcoat; twitched up his shirt collar, plucked down his wristbands, drew the tip of a white pocket-handkerchief out of the pocket in the breast of his surtout, pulled a white glove halfway on his left hand; and, having thus given the finishing touches to his toilet, opened the gate, and—Tittlebat Titmouse, Esquire, the great guest of the day, for the first time in his life—swinging a little ebony cane about with careless grace—entered the domain of Mr Tag-rag.

The little performance which I have been describing, though every bit of it passing under the eyes of Tag-rag, his wife, and his daughter, had not excited a smile; their anxious feelings were too deep to be reached or stirred by light emotions. Miss Tag-rag turned very pale and trembled.

"La, pa!" said she faintly, "how could you say he'd got white eyebrows and whiskers? Why—they're a beautiful black!"

Tag-rag was speechless: the fact was so—for Titmouse had fortunately succeeded in obtaining a little bottle of ink, which he had applied with great effect. As Titmouse approached the house, Tag-rag hurrying out to open the door for him, he saw the two ladies standing at the windows. Off went his hat, and out dropped the dusty silk handkerchief, not a little disconcerting him for the moment. Tag-rag, however, soon occupied his attention at the door with anxious civilities, shaking him by the hand, hanging up his hat and stick for him, and then introducing him to the sitting-room. The ladies received him with the most profound curtsies, which Titmouse returned with a quick embarrassed bow, and an indistinct—"Hope you're well, mem?"

If they had had presence of mind enough to observe it, the purple colour of Titmouse's hair must have surprised them not a little; all *they* could see standing before them, however, was—the angelic owner of ten thousand a-year.

The only person tolerably at his ease, and he *only* tolerably, was Mr Tag-rag; and he asked his guest—

"Wash your hands, Titmouse, before dinner?" But Titmouse said he had washed them before he had come out. [The day was hot, and he had walked five miles at a slapping pace.] In a few minutes, however, he felt a little more assured; it being impossible for him not to perceive the awful deference with which he was treated.

"Seen the *Sunday Flash*, mem?" he presently inquired, very modestly, addressing Mrs Tag-rag.

"I—I—that is—not *to-day*," she replied, colouring.

"Vastly amusing, isn't it?" interposed Tag-rag, to prevent mischief—for he knew his wife would as soon have taken a cockatrice into her hand.

"Ye-e-s," replied Titmouse, who had not even glanced at the copy which Snap had brought him. "An uncommon good fight between Birmingham Big"—

Tag-rag saw his wife getting redder and redder. "No news stirring about things in general, is there?" said he, with a desperate attempt at a diversion.

"Not that I have heard," replied Titmouse. Soon he got a little further, and said how cheerful the stages going past must make the house. Tag-rag agreed with him. Then there was a little pause. None of the party knew exactly which way to look, nor in what posture to sit. Faint "hems" were occasionally heard. In short, no one felt *at home*.

"Been to church, mem, this morning, mem?" timidly inquired Titmouse of Miss Tag-rag—the first time of his daring to address her.

"Yes, sir," she replied, faintly colouring, casting her eyes to the ground, and suddenly putting her hand into that of her mother—with *such* an innocent, engaging simplicity—like a timid fawn lying as close as possible to its dam!*

"We always go to *chapel*, sir," said Mrs Tag-rag confidently, in spite of a

* "Vitas hinnuleo me similia, Chloë,
Quærenti pavidam —
Matrem.
— et corde et genibus tremitt."
Hœc. i. 23.

deadly look from her husband; "the *vespel* a'n't preached in the Church of England! We sit under Mr Horror—a heavenly preacher! You've heard of Mr Horror?"

"Yes, mem! Oh, yes! Capital preacher!" replied Titmouse, who, of course (being a true churchman), had never in his life heard of Mr Horror, or any other dissenter.

"When *will* dinner be ready, Mrs T.?" inquired Tag-rag abruptly, and with a very perceptible dash of sternness in his tone; but dinner was announced the very next moment. He took his wife's arm, and in doing so, gave it a sudden vehement pressure, which, coupled with a furious glance, explained to her the extent to which she had incurred his anger!

Titmouse's proffered arm the timid Miss Tag-rag scarcely touched with the tip of her finger, as she walked beside him to dinner. He soon got tolerably composed and cheerful at dinner (which, contrary to their usual custom—which was to have a cheerless *cold* dinner on the Sabbath—consisted of a little piece of nice roast beef, with plenty of horse-radish, Yorkshire pudding, a boiled fowl, a plum-pudding made by Mrs Tag-rag, and custards which had been superintended by Miss Tag-rag herself), and, to oblige his hospitable host and hostess, ate till he was near bursting. Miss Tag-rag, though really very hungry, could be prevailed upon to take only a very small slice of beef and a quarter of a custard, and drank a third of a glass of quasi sherry, *i. e.* Cape wine, after dinner. She never once spoke, except in hurried answers, to her papa and mamma; and sitting exactly opposite Titmouse, with a big plate of greens and a boiled fowl between them, was continually colouring whenever their eyes happened to encounter one another, on which occasions, hers would suddenly drop, as if overpowered by the brilliance of his. Titmouse began to love her very fast.

After the ladies had withdrawn, you should have heard the way in which Tag-rag went on with Titmouse!—I can liken the two to no-

thing but an old fat spider, and a little fly.

Will you come into my parlour?
Said the spider to the fly;

—in the old song: and it might have been well for Titmouse to have answered, in the language of the aforesaid fly:—

No, thank you, sir, I really feel
No curiosity.

Titmouse, however, swallowed with equal facility Mr Tag-rag's hard port and his soft blarney; but *all* fools have large swallows. When, at length, Tag-rag with exquisite skill and delicacy alluded to the painfully evident embarrassment of his "poor Tabby," and said he had "all of a sudden found out what had been so long the matter with her,"—ay, even this went down—and hemmed, and winked his eye, and drained his glass, Titmouse began to get flustered, blushed, and hoped Mr Tag-rag would soon "join the ladies." They did so, Tag-rag stopping behind for a few moments to lock up the wine and the remains of the fruit, not wishing to subject the servant-boy to temptation by the rare opportunity afforded by fruit left on the table. Miss Tag-rag presided over the tea-things. There were muffins, and crumpets, and reeking-hot buttered toast; and hospitable Mrs Tag-rag would hear of no denial, "things had been got and must be *eat*," she thought within herself; so poor Titmouse, after a most desperate resistance, was obliged to swallow a round of toast, half a muffin, an entire crumpet, and four cups of hot tea; after which *they* felt that *he* must feel comfortable; but he, alas, in fact, experienced a very painful degree of turgidity, and a miserable conviction that he should be able neither to eat nor drink anything more for the remainder of the week!

After the tea-things had been removed, Tag-rag, directing Titmouse's attention to the piano, which was open (with some music on it, ready to be played from), asked him whether he liked music. Titmouse, with great eagerness, hoped Miss T. would give

them some music; and she, after holding out a long and vigorous siege, at length asked her papa what it should be.

"*The Battle of Prague*," said her papa.

"*Before Jehovah's awful throne*, my dear!" hastily and anxiously interposed her mamma.

"The Battle," sternly repeated her papa.

"It's Sunday night, Mr T.," meekly rejoined his wife.

"Which will you have, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Tag-rag, with *The Battle of Prague* written in every feature of his face. Titmouse almost burst into a state of perspiration.

"A little of both, sir, if you please."

"Well," replied Tag-rag, slightly relaxing, "that will do. Split the difference—eh? Come, Tab, down with you. Titmouse, will you turn over the music for my little girl?"

Titmouse rose, and having sheepishly taken his station beside Miss Tag-rag, the performances commenced with *Before Jehovah's awful throne!* But, mercy upon us! at what a rate she rattled over that "pious air!" If its respectable composer, whoever he may be, had been present, he must have gone into a fit; but there was no help for it—the heart of the lovely performer was in *The Battle of Prague*, to which she presently did most ample justice. So much were her feelings engaged in that sublime composition, that the bursting of one of the strings—twang! in the middle of the "*canonading*," did not at all disturb her; and, as soon as she had finished the exquisite "finale," Titmouse was in such a tumult of excitement, from a variety of causes, that he could have shed tears. Though he had never once turned over at the right place, Miss Tag-rag thanked him for his services with a smile of infinite sweetness. Titmouse vowed he had never heard such splendid music—beggared for more; and away went Miss Tag-rag, hurried away by her excitement. Rondo after rondo, march after march, she rattled over for at least half an hour upon those hideous jingling keys; at the end of which old Tag-rag sud-

denly kissed her, with passionate fondness. Though Mrs Tag-rag was horrified at the impiety of all this, she kept a very anxious eye on the young couple, and interchanged with her husband, every now and then, very significant looks. Shortly after nine, spirits, wine, and hot and cold water, were brought in. At the sight of them Titmouse looked alarmed—for he knew that he must take something more, though he would have freely given five shillings to be excused—for he felt as if he could not hold another drop! But it was in vain. *Willy-nilly*, a glass of gin-and-water stood soon before him; he protested he could not touch it unless Miss Tag-rag would "take something"—whereupon, with a blush, she "thought she *would*" take a wine-glassful of sherry-and-water. This was provided her. Then Tag-rag mixed a tumbler of port-wine negus for Mrs Tag-rag, and a great glass of mahogany-coloured brandy-and-water for himself; and then he looked round the elegant little apartment, and felt perfectly happy. As Titmouse advanced with his gin-and-water, his spirits got higher and higher, and his tongue more fluent. He once or twice dropped the "Mr," when addressing Tag-rag; several times smiled, and once even winked at the embarrassed Miss Tag-rag. Mr Tag-rag saw it, and could not control himself—for he had got to the end of his first glass of braudy-and-water, and, a most unusual procedure with *him*, mixed himself a second quite *as strong* as the former.

"Tab! ah, Tab! what *has* been the matter with you all these months?" said he, chucking her under the chin—and then winked his eye at her, and then at Titmouse.

"Papa!" exclaimed Miss Tag-rag, looking down, and blushing up to her very temples.

"Ah, Titmouse—Titmouse—give me your hand," said Tag-rag; "you'll forget us all when you're a great man—but we shall always remember you!"

"You're very good—very!" said Titmouse, cordially returning the pressure of Tag-rag's hand. At that instant it suddenly occurred to him to adopt the

suggestion of Mr Gammon. Tag-rag was going on very fast, indeed, about the disinterested nature of his feelings towards Titmouse; towards whom, he said, he had always felt just as he did at that moment—'twas in vain to deny it.

"I'm sure your conduct shows it, sir," commenced Titmouse, feeling a shudder like that with which a timid bather approaches the margin of the cold stream. "I could have taken my oath, sir, that when you had heard what has happened, you would have refused to let me come into your house!"—

"Ah, ha!—that's *rather* an odd idea, too!" said Tag-rag, with good-humoured jocularity. "If I felt a true friendship for you as plain Titmouse, it's so likely I should have *cut* you just when—ahem! My dear sir! it was *I* that thought *you* wouldn't have come into *my* house! A likely thing, indeed!"

Titmouse was puzzled. His perceptions, never very quick or clear, were now undoubtedly somewhat obfuscated with what he had been drinking. In short, he did not understand that Tag-rag had not understood *him*; and felt rather baffled.

"What surprising ups and downs there are in life, Mr Titmouse!" said Mrs Tag-rag respectfully—"they're all sent from above, you may depend upon it, to *try* us! No one knows how they'd behave, if as how (in a manner) they were turned upside down!"

"I—I hope, mem, I haven't done anything to show that *I*"—

"Oh! my dear Titmouse," anxiously interrupted Tag-rag, inwardly cursing his wife, who, finding she always went wrong in her husband's eyes whenever she spoke a word, determined for the future to stick to her negus—"The fact is, there's a Mr Horror here that's for sending all decent people to ——. He's filled my wife there with all sorts of —, nay, if she isn't bursting with cant—so never mind her! *You* done anything wrong! *I will* say this for you—you always was a pattern of modesty and propriety—your hand, my dear Titmouse!"

"Well—I'm a happy man again," resumed Titmouse, resolved now to go

on with his adventure. "And when did they tell you of it, sir?"

"Oh, a few days ago—a week ago," replied Tag-rag, trying to recollect.

"Why—why—sir—a'n't you mistaken?" inquired Titmouse, with a depressed, but at the same time a surprised air. "It only happened this morning, after you left"—

"Eh?—eh?—ah, ha!—What *do* you mean, Mr Titmouse?" interrupted Tag-rag, with a faint attempt at a smile. Mrs Tag-rag and Miss Tag-rag also turned exceedingly startled faces towards Titmouse, who felt as if a house were going to fall down on him.

"Why, sir" (he began to cry—an attempt which was greatly aided by the maudlin condition to which drink had reduced him), "till to-day, I thought I was heir to ten thousand a-year, and it seems I'm not; it's all a mistake of those cursed people at Saffron Hill!"

Tag-rag's face changed visibly, and showed the desperate shock he had just sustained. His inward agony was forcing out on his slanting forehead a dew of perspiration.

"What—a—capital—joke—Mr—Titmouse—ah, ha!"—he gasped, hastily passing his handkerchief over his forehead. Titmouse, though greatly alarmed, stood to his gun pretty steadily.

"I—I wish it was a joke! It's been no joke to *me*, sir. There's another Tittlebat Titmouse, it seems, in Shore-ditch, that's the right!"—

"Who told you this, sir? Pho, I don't—I can't believe it," said Tag-rag, in a voice tremulous between suppressed rage and fear.

"Too true, though, 'pon my life! It *is*, so help me —!" asseverated Titmouse, in the most earnest and solemn manner.

"How dare you swear before ladies, sir? You're insulting them, sir!" cried Tag-rag, trembling with rage. "And in *my* presence, too, sir? You're not a gentleman!" He suddenly dropped his voice, and, in a trembling and almost beseeching manner, asked Titmouse whether he was really joking or serious.

"Never more serious in my life, sir; and enough to make meso, sir!" replied Titmouse, in a lamentable manner.

"You really mean, then, to tell me it's all a mistake, then—and that you're no more than what you always were?" inquired Tag-rag, with a desperate attempt to speak calmly.

"Oh yes, sir! Yes!" cried Titmouse mournfully; "and if you'll only be so kind as to let me serve you as I used—I'll serve you faithfully! You know it was no fault of *mine*, sir! They *would* tell me it was so!"

'Tis impossible to conceive a more disgusting expression than the repulsive features of Tag-rag wore at that moment, while he gazed in ominous and agitated silence at Titmouse. His lips quivered, and he seemed incapable of speaking.

"Oh, ma, I do feel *so* ill!" faintly exclaimed Miss Tag-rag, turning deadly pale. Titmouse was on the verge of dropping on his knees and confessing the trick, greatly agitated at the effect unexpectedly produced on Miss Tag-rag; when Tag-rag's heavy hand was suddenly placed on his shoulder, and he whispered in a fierce undertone—"You're an impostor, sir!" which arrested Titmouse, and made something like a MAN of him. He was a fearful fool, but did not want for mere *pluck*; and now it was roused. Mrs Tag-rag exclaimed, "Oh, you *shocking* scamp!" as she passed Titmouse, with much agitation, and led her daughter out of the room.

"Then an impostor, sir, a'n't fit company for *you*, of course, sir!" said Titmouse rising, and trembling with mingled apprehension and anger.

"Pay me my five-pound note!" almost shouted Tag-rag, furiously tightening the grasp by which he held Titmouse's collar.

"Well, sir, and I will, if you'll only take your hand off! Hollo, sir—What the de— Leave go, sir! Hands off! Are you going to murder me? I'll pay you, and have done with you, sir," stammered Titmouse:—when a faint scream was heard, plainly from Miss Tag-rag, overhead: she was evidently in hysterics. Then the seething caldron boiled over. "You *infernal* scoundrel!" exclaimed Tag-rag, almost choked with fury; and suddenly seizing Titmouse by the collar, scarce giving him time, in passing, to get hold of his hat and stick, he urged him along through the passage, down the gravel walk, threw open the gate, thrust him furiously through it, and sent after him such a blast of execration as was almost strong enough to drive him a hundred yards down the road! Titmouse did not fully recover his breath or his senses for a long while afterwards. When he did, the first thing he experienced, was a dreadful disposition towards sickness; but gradually overcoming it, he felt an inclination to fall down on his knees in the open road, and worship the sagacious and admirable GAMMON, who had so exactly predicted what had come to pass!

And now, Mr Titmouse, for some little time I have done with you. Away!—give room to your betters. But don't think, my young friend!—that I have yet "rifled *all* your sweetness," or am *yet* about to "fling you like a noisome weed away."

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE READER IS NOW INTRODUCED TO QUITE A DIFFERENT SET OF PEOPLE, IN GROSVENOR STREET; AND FALLS IN LOVE WITH KATE AUBREY.

WHILE the lofty door of a house in Grosvenor Street was yet quivering under the shock of a previously announced dinner-arrival, one of the two servants standing behind a carriage which approached from the direction of Piccadilly, slipped off, and in a twinkling, with a thun-thun-thunder-under-under, thunder-runder-runder, thun-thun-thun! and a shrill thrilling *Whir-r-r* of the bell, announced the arrival of the Duke of —, the last guest. It was a large and plain carriage, but perfectly well known; and before the door of the house at which it had drawn up had been opened, displaying some four or five servants standing in the hall, in simple but elegant liveries, half-a-dozen or more passengers had stopped to see get out of the carriage an elderly, middle-sized man, with a somewhat spare figure, dressed in plain black clothes, with iron-grey hair, and a countenance which, once seen, was not to be forgotten. That was, indeed, a great man; one, the like of whom many previous centuries had not seen; whose name shot terror into the hearts of all the enemies of old England all over the world, and fond pride and admiration into the hearts of his fellow-countrymen.

"A quarter to eleven!" he said, in a quiet tone, to the servant who was holding open the carriage door—while the bystanders took off their hats; a

courtesy which he acknowledged, as he slowly stepped across the pavement, by touching his hat in a mechanical sort of way with his forefinger. The house door then closed upon him; the handful of onlookers passed away; off rolled the empty carriage, and all without was quiet as before. The house was that of Mr Aubrey, one of the members for the borough of YARROX, in Yorkshire—a man of rapidly rising importance in Parliament. Surely his was a pleasant position—that of an independent country gentleman, a member of one of the most ancient noble families in England, and presumptive successor to one of its oldest peerages,—with a clear unencumbered rent-roll of ten thousand a-year, and already, in only his thirty-fourth year, the spokesman of his class, and promising to become one of the ablest debaters in the House! Parliament having been assembled, in consequence of a particular emergency, at a much earlier period than usual, the House of Commons, in which Mr Aubrey had the evening before delivered a well-timed and powerful speech, had adjourned for the Christmas recess, the House of Lords being about to follow its example that evening: an important division, however, being first expected to take place at a late hour on the evening on which his friends were assembling to dinner. He was warmly complimented on his success by seven-

ral of the select and brilliant circle then surrounding him; and who were all in high spirits—on account of a considerable triumph just obtained by their party, and to which Mr Aubrey was assured, by even the Duke of —, his exertions had certainly not a little contributed. While his Grace was energetically intimating to Mr Aubrey his opinion to this effect, there were two lovely women listening to him with intense eagerness—they were the wife and sister of Mr Aubrey. The former was a very interesting and handsome woman, with raven hair, and a complexion of dazzling fairness, and nearly eight-and-twenty years old; the latter was a beautiful girl, somewhere between twenty and twenty-one. Both were dressed with the utmost simplicity and elegance. Mrs Aubrey, doatingly fond of her husband, and a blooming young mother of two as charming children as were to be met with in a day's walk all over both the parks, was, in character and manners, all pliancy and gentleness; while about Miss Aubrey there was a dash of spirit which gave an infinite zest to her beauty. Her blue eyes beamed with the richest expression of feeling—in short, Catherine Aubrey was, both in face and figure, a downright English beauty; and she knew—truth must be told—that such she appeared to the Great Duke, whose cold aquiline eye she often *felt* to be settled upon her with satisfaction. The fact was, that he had penetrated, at a first glance, beneath the mere surface of an arch, sweet, and winning manner, and detected a certain strength of character in Miss Aubrey which gave him more than usual interest in her, and spread over his iron-cast features a pleasant expression, relaxing their sternness. It might indeed be said, that before her, in his person, Grim-visaged war had smooth'd his wrinkled front.

"Twas a subject for a painter, that delicate and blooming girl, her auburn hair hanging in careless grace on each side of her white forehead, while her eyes,

That might have sooth'd a tiger's rage,
Or thaw'd the cold heart of a conqueror,

were fixed with absorbed interest on the stern and rigid countenance which, she reflected, had been, as it were, a thousand times darkened with the smoke of the grisly battle-field.—But I must not forget that there are others in the room; and amongst them, standing at a little distance, is Lord De la Zouch, one of Mr Aubrey's neighbours in Yorkshire. Apparently he is listening to a brother peer talking to him very earnestly about the expected division; but Lord De la Zouch's eye is fixed on you, lovely Kate—and how little can you imagine what is passing through his mind! It has just occurred to him that his sudden arrangement for young Delamere—his only son and heir, come up the day before from Oxford—to call for him about half-past ten, and take his place in Mrs Aubrey's drawing-room, while Lord De la Zouch goes down to the House—may be attended with certain consequences! He is, in truth, speculating on the effect of your beauty bursting suddenly on his son, who has not seen you for nearly two years! all this gives him anxiety—but not painful anxiety—for, dear Kate, he knows that your forehead would wear the ancient coronet of the De la Zouches, with grace and dignity. But Delamere is as yet too young—and if he get the image of Catherine Aubrey into his head, it will, fears his father, instantly cast into the shade and displace all the stern visages of those old geometers, poets, orators, historians, philosophers, and statesmen, who ought, in Lord De la Zouch and his son's tutor's judgment, to occupy exclusively the head of the aforesaid Delamere for some five years to come. That youngster—happy fellow!—frank, high-spirited, and enthusiastic—and handsome to boot—was heir to an ancient title, and very great estates; and all that his father had considered, in looking out for an alliance, was—youth, health, beauty, blood—here they all were;—and *fortune*, too—bah! what did it signify to his son—but at any

rate 'twas not to be thought of for some years.

"Suppose," said he aloud, though in a musing manner, "one were to say—twenty-four!"—

"*Twenty-four!*" echoed his companion with amazement; "my dear De la Zouch, what the deuce do you mean? *Eighty-four* at the very lowest!"

"Eh? what? oh—yes of course"—"stammered Lord De la Zouch, smiling, but colouring a little—"I should say ninety—I mean—hem!—*they* will muster about twenty-four only."

"Ah—I beg your pardon!—*there* you're right, I daresay."—Here the announcement of dinner put an end to the colloquy of the two statesmen. Lord De la Zouch led down Miss Aubrey with an air of the most delicate and cordial courtesy; and felt almost disposed, in the heat of the moment, to tell her that he had arranged all in his own mind!—that if *she* willed it, she had *his* hearty consent to become the future Lady De la Zouch! He was himself the eleventh who had come to the title in direct descent from father to son; 'twas a point he was not a little nervous and anxious about—he detested collateral succession—and, in short, he made himself infinitely agreeable to Miss Aubrey, as he sat beside her at dinner! The great Duke ——— sat on the right-hand side of Mrs Aubrey, seemingly in high spirits, and she appeared proud enough of her supporter. 'Twas a delightful dinner-party, elegant without ostentation, and select without pretence of exclusiveness. All were cheerful and animated, not merely on account of the over-night's parliamentary victory, which I have already alluded to, but also in contemplation of the coming Christmas; how, where, and with whom, each was to spend that "righte merrie season," in old England, being the chief topic of conversation. As there was nothing peculiar in the dinner, and as I have no turn for describing such matters in detail—the clatter of plate, the jingling of silver, the sparkling of wines, and so forth—I shall request the

reader to imagine himself led by me quietly out of the dining-room into the library—thus escaping from all the bustle and hubbub attendant upon such an entertainment as is going on in front of the house. We shall be alone in the library—here it is; we enter it, and shut the door. 'Tis a spacious room, all the sides covered with books, of which Mr Aubrey is a great collector—and the clear red fire, which we must presently replenish, or it will go out, is shedding on all the objects in the room a subdued ruddy light, very favourable for our purpose. The ample table is covered with books and papers; and there is an antique-looking arm-chair drawn opposite to the fire, in which Mr Aubrey has been indulging in a long reverie till the moment of quitting it to go and dress for dinner. This chair I shall sit in myself; you may draw out from the recess for yourself one of two little sloping easy-chairs, which have been placed there by Mrs and Miss Aubrey for their own sole use, considering that they are excellent judges of the period at which Mr Aubrey has been long enough alone, and at which they should come in and gossip with him! We may as well, perhaps, draw the dusky green curtains across the window, through which the moon shines at present rather too brightly.—So now, after coaxing up the fire, I will proceed to tell you a little bit of pleasant family history.

The Aubreys are a Yorkshire family—the younger branch of the ancient and noble family of the Dreddlingtons. Their residence, YARROW, is in the north-eastern part of the county, not above fifteen or twenty miles from the sea. The hall is one of those old structures, the sight of which throws you back a couple of centuries in our English history. It stands in a park, crowded with trees, many of them of great age and size, and under which two or three hundred head of deer perform their capricious and graceful gambols. In approaching from London, you strike off from the great north road into a broad by-way; after going down which for about a mile,

you come to a straggling pretty little village called Yatton, at the further extremity of which stands a small aged grey church, with a tall thin spire; an immense yew-tree, with a kind of friendly gloom, overshadowing, in the little churchyard, nearly half the graves. Rather in the rear of the church is the vicarage-house, snug and sheltered by a line of fir-trees. After walking on about eighty yards, you come to old-fashioned high iron park-gates, on the two stone posts of which stand antique figures of storks, and see a lodge just within, on the left-hand side, sheltered by an elm-tree. Having passed through these gates, you wind your way for about two-thirds of a mile along a gravel walk, amongst the thickening trees, till you come to a ponderous old crumbling-looking red brick gateway of the time of Henry VII., with one or two deeply set stone windows in the turrets, and mouldering stone-capped battlements peeping through high-climbing ivy. There is an old escutcheon immediately over the point of the arch; and as you go underneath, if you look up, you can plainly see the groove of the old portcullis still remaining. Having passed under this castellated remnant, you enter a kind of court, formed by a high wall completely covered with ivy, running along, in a line, from the right hand turret of the gateway, till it joins the house. Along its course are a number of yew-trees. In the centre of the open space is a quaintly disposed grass-plot, dotted about with stunted box, and the central object is a weather-beaten stone sun-dial. The house itself is a large irregular pile of dull red brickwork, with great stacks of chimneys in the rear; and the body of the building has evidently been erected at different times. Some part is evidently in the style of Queen Elizabeth's reign, another in that of Queen Anne: and it is plain that on the site of the present structure has formerly stood a castle. There are, indeed, traces of the old moat still visible round the rear of the house. One of the ancient towers, with small

deep stone windows, still remains, giving its venerable support to the right hand extremity of the building, as you stand with your face to the door. The long frontage of the house consists of two huge masses of dusky-red brickwork, which you can hardly call wings, connected together by a lower building in the centre, which contains the hall. There are three or four rows of long thin deep windows, with heavy-looking wooden sashes. The high-pitched roof is of red tiles, and has deep projecting eaves, forming, in fact, a bold wooden cornice running along the whole length of the building, which is some two or three storeys high. At the left extremity stands a clump of ancient cedars of Lebanon, feathering in evergreen beauty down to the ground. The hall is large and lofty; the floor is of polished oak, almost the whole of which is covered with thick matting; it is wainscoted all round with black oak; some seven or eight full-length pictures, evidently of considerable antiquity, being let into the panels. Quaint figures these are, to be sure; and if they resembled the ancestors of the Aubrey family, those ancestors must have been singular and startling persons! The faces are quite white, and staring—all as if in wonder; and they have such long thin legs! some of them ending in sharp-pointed shoes, the toes of which are connected, by slight chains, with the knees! On each side of the ample fireplace, stands a figure in full armour; and there are also ranged along the wall old helmets, cuirasses, swords, lances, battle-axes, and cross-bows, the very idea of wearing, wielding, and handling which, makes your arms ache. On one side of this hall, a door opens into the dining-room, beyond which is the library; on the other, a door leads you into a noble room, now called the drawing-room, where stands a fine organ. Out of both the dining-room and drawing-room you pass up a staircase contained in an old square tower; two sides of each, opening on the quadrangle, lead into a gallery running round it, into which all the bedrooms open.—But I

need not go into further detail. Altogether it is truly a fine old English mansion. Its only constant occupant is Mrs Aubrey, the mother of Mr Aubrey, in whose library we are now seated. She is a widow, having survived her husband, who twice was one of the county members, about fifteen years. Mr Aubrey is her first-born child, Miss Aubrey her last; four intervening children rest prematurely in the grave—and the grief and suffering consequent upon all these bereavements have sadly shaken her constitution, and made her, both in actual health, and in appearance, at least ten years older than she really is—for she has, in point of fact, not long since entered her sixtieth year. What a blessed life she leads at Yatton! Her serene and cheerful temper makes every one happy about her; and her charity is unbounded, but dispensed with a just discrimination. One way or another, almost a fourth of the village are direct pensioners upon her bounty. You have only to mention the name of Madam Aubrey, the lady of Yatton, to witness involuntary homage paid to her virtues. Her word is law—but how gentle!—and well indeed it may be. While Mr Aubrey, her husband, was, to the last, *somewhat* stern in his temper, and reserved in his habits, bearing withal a spotless and lofty character, *she* was always what she still is, meek, gentle, accessible, charitable, and pious. On his death she withdrew from the world, and has ever since resided at Yatton—never, indeed, having quitted it for a single day. There are in the vicinity one or two stately families, with ancient name, sounding title, and great possessions; but for ten miles round Yatton, old Madam Aubrey, the squire's mother, is the name that is enshrined in people's kindest and most grateful feelings, and receives their readiest homage. 'Tis perhaps a small matter to mention, but there is at the hall an old white mare, Peggy, that for these twenty years, in all weathers, hath been the bearer of Madam's bounty. Thousands of times hath she carried Jacob Jones, now a

pensioned servant, whose hair is as white as Peggy's, all over the estate, and also oft beyond it, with comfortable matters for the sick and poor. Most commonly there are a couple of stone bottles filled with cowslip, currant, ginger, or elderberry wine, slung before him over the well-worn saddle—to the carrying of which Peggy has got so accustomed, that she does not go comfortably without them. She has so fallen into the habits of old Jones, who is an inveterate gossip (Madam having helped to make him such by the numerous inquiries she makes of him, every morning, as to every one in the village and on the estate, and which inquiries he *must* have the means of answering), that, slowly as she jogs along, if ever she meets or is overtaken by any one, she stops of her own accord, as if to hear what they and her easy rider have to say to one another. She is a great favourite with all, and gets a mouthful of hay or grass at every place where she stops, either from the children, or the old people. When poor Peggy comes to die, and she is getting feeble now, she will be missed by all the folk round Yatton! Madam Aubrey, growing fast, I am sorry to say, less able to exert herself, does not go about as much as she used, betaking herself, therefore, oftener and oftener, to the old family coach; and when she is going to drive about the neighbourhood, you may almost always see it stop at the vicarage for old Dr Tatham, who generally accompanies her. On these occasions she always has in the carriage a black velvet bag, containing Testaments and Prayer-books, which are principally distributed as rewards to those whom the parson can recommend as deserving of them. For these five-and-twenty years she has never missed giving a copy of each to every child in the village and on the estate, on its being confirmed; and the old lady looks round very keenly every Sunday, from her pew, to see that these Bibles and Prayer-books are reverently used. I could go on for an hour and longer, telling you these and other such matters of this exemplary

lady; but we shall by-and-by have some opportunities of seeing and knowing more of her personally. Her features are delicate, and have been very handsome; and in manner she is calm and dignified. She looks, in short, all that you would expect from what I have told you. The briskness of youth, the sedate firmness of middle-age, have, years since, given place, as you will see with some pain, to the feebleness produced by ill health and mental suffering—for she mourned grievously after those whom she had lost. Oh! how she doats upon her surviving son and daughter! And are they not worthy of such a mother! You shall by-and-by judge for yourself.

Mr Aubrey, as I have said, is in his thirty-fourth year; and inherits the mental qualities of both his parents—the demeanour and person of his father. He has a reserve which is not cynical, but only diffident; yet it gives him, at least at first sight, and till you have become familiar with his features, which are of a cast at once refined and aristocratic, yet full of goodness—an air of hauteur, which is very—very far from his real nature. He has in truth the soft heart and benignant temper of his mother, joined with the masculine firmness of character which belonged to his father; which, however, is in danger of being seriously impaired by *inaction*. Sensitive he is, perhaps to a fault. There is a tone of melancholy in his composition, which has probably increased upon him from his severe studies, ever since his youth. He is a man of superior intellect; a capital scholar; took the highest honours at Oxford: and has since justified the expectations which were then entertained of him. He has made several really valuable contributions to historic literature—indeed, I think he is even now engaged upon some researches calculated to throw much light upon the obscure origin of several of our political institutions. He has entered upon *politics* with uncommon—perhaps with an excessive—ardour. I think he is likely to make an eminent figure in Parliament; for he is a man of very clear head, very pa-

tient, of business-like habits, ready in debate, and, moreover, has at once an impressive and engaging delivery as a public speaker. He is generous and charitable as his admirable mother, and careless, even to a fault, of his pecuniary interests. He is a man of perfect simplicity and purity of character. Above all, his virtues are the virtues which have been sublimed by Christianity—as it were, the cold embers of morality warmed into religion. He stands happily equidistant from infidelity and fanaticism. He has looked for light from above, and has heard a voice saying, “*This is the way, walk thou in it.*” His piety is the real source of that happy consistent dignity, content, and firmness, which have earned him the respect of all who know him, and will bear him through whatever may befall him. He who standeth upon this rock cannot be moved, perhaps not even touched, by the surges of worldly reverses—of difficulty, and distress! In manner Mr Aubrey is calm and gentleman-like; in person rather above the middle height, and of slight make. From the way in which his clothes hang about him, a certain sharpness at his shoulders catching the eye of an observer—you would feel an anxiety about his health, which would be increased by hearing of the mortality in his family; and your thoughts are perhaps pointed in the same direction, by a glance at his long, thin, delicate, white hands. His countenance has a serene manliness of expression when in repose, and great acuteness and vivacity when animated. His hair, not very full, is black as jet, his forehead ample and marked; and his eyes are the exponents of perfect sincerity, and also acuteness.

Mr Aubrey has been married about six years. His was a case of love at first sight. Chance (so to speak) threw him in the way of Agnes St Clair, within a few weeks after she had been bereaved of her only parent, Colonel St Clair, a man of old but impoverished family, who fell in the Peninsular war. Had he lived only a month or two longer, he would have succeeded to a

cooled down into contempt for a very considerable portion of it, trusted and loved almost every one whom he saw. At that moment there was only one person in the whole world that he hated, viz. the miserable individual—if any such there were—who might have happened to forestall him in the affections of Miss Aubrey. The bare idea made his breath come and go quickly, and his cheek flush. Why, he felt that he had a sort of *right* to Kate's heart; for, had they not been born, and had they not lived almost all their lives, within a few miles of each other? Had they not often played together?—were not their family estates almost contiguous?—Delamere advanced into the room, assuming as unconcerned an air as he could; but he felt not a little tried when Miss Aubrey, on seeing him, *gaiky* and frankly extended her hand to him, supposing him to have only the moment before entered the house. Poor Delamere's hand slightly quivered as he felt it clasping the soft lily fingers of her whom he had thus resolved to make his wife: what would he not have given to carry them to his lips! Now, if I were to say that in the course of that evening Miss Aubrey did not form a kind—of a sort—of a faint—notion of the possible state of matters with young Delamere, I should not be treating the reader with that eminent degree of candour for which I think he, or she, is at present disposed to give me credit. But Kate was deeply skilled in human nature, and promptly settled the matter by one very just reflection, viz. that Delamere was, in contemplation of law, a mere *infant*—i. e. he wanted yet several weeks of twenty-one! and, therefore, that it was not likely that, &c. &c. &c. And, besides—pooh!—pooh!—'tis a mere *boy*, at College—how ridiculous!—So she gave herself no trouble—as she thought, sweet soul!—about the affair; exhibited no symptoms of caution or coyness, but conducted herself just as if he had not been present.

He was a handsome young fellow, too!—

During the evening, Mr Delamere

took an opportunity of asking Miss Aubrey who wrote the verses to which he pointed, as they lay on the piano. The handwriting, she said, was hers, but the verses were composed by her brother. He asked for the copy, with a slight trepidation. She readily gave it to him—he receiving it with, as he supposed, a mighty unconcerned air. He read it over that night, before getting into bed, at least six times; and it was the very first thing he looked at on getting out of bed in the morning. Now Miss Aubrey certainly wrote an elegant hand—but as for *character*, of course it had none. He could scarce have distinguished it from the writing of any of his cousins or friends;—How should he? All women are taught the same hard, angular, uniform style—but good, bad, or indifferent, this was *Kate Aubrey's* handwriting—and her pretty hand had rested on the paper while writing—that was enough. He resolved to turn the verses into every kind of Greek and Latin metre he knew of—

In short, that here was a “course of true love” *opened*, seems pretty evident; but whether it will “run smooth” is another matter.

Their guests having at length departed, Mr Aubrey, his wife, and sister, soon afterwards rose to retire. He went, very sleepy, straight to his dressing-room; they to the nursery—a constant and laudable custom with them—to see how the children were going on, as far as could be learned from the drowsy attendants of the aforesaid children. Little Aubrey would have reminded you of one of the exquisite sketches of children's heads by Reynolds or Lawrence, as he lay breathing imperceptibly, with his rich flowing hair spread upon the pillow, in which his face was partly hid, and his arms stretched out. Mrs Aubrey put her finger into one of his hands, which was half open, and which closed as it were instinctively upon it, with a gentle pressure. “Look—only look—Kate!” softly whispered Mrs Aubrey. Miss Aubrey leaned forward and kissed his little cheek with an ardour which almost awoke

him. After a glance at a tiny head partly visible above the clothes, in an adjoining bed, and looking like a rose-bud almost entirely hid amongst the leaves, they withdrew.

"The little loves!—how one's heart thrills with looking at them!" said Miss Aubrey as they descended. "Kate!" whispered Mrs Aubrey, with an arch smile, after chatting about various matters, as they stood at their respective chamber doors, which adjoined, "Mr Delamere is improved—is not he?—Ah, Kate! Kate!—I understand!"

"Agnes, how can you"—hastily answered Miss Aubrey, with cheeks suddenly crimsoned. "Of course I

understand you,—but—I never heard such nonsense"—

"Well, night, night, Kate! think over it!" said Mrs Aubrey, and kissing her beautiful sister-in-law, the next moment the blooming wife had entered her bed-room. Miss Aubrey slipped into her dressing-room, where Harriet, her maid, was sitting asleep before the fire. Her lovely mistress did not for a few minutes awake her; but placing her taper on the toilet table, stood in a musing attitude.

"It's so perfectly *ridiculous*," at length she said aloud; and up started her maid. Within half an hour Miss Aubrey was in bed, but by no means asleep.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY; YATTON; MADAM AUBREY; THE REVEREND DOCTOR TATHAM; AND OLD BLIND BESS.

THE next morning, about eleven o'clock, Mr Aubrey was seated in the library, in momentary expectation of his letters; and a few moments before the postman's *rat-tat* was heard, Mrs and Miss Aubrey made their appearance, as was their wont, in expectation of anything which might have upon the cover, in addition to the address—

"CHARLES AUBREY, Esq., M.P.,"

&c. &c. &c.,

the words, "Mrs Aubrey," or "Miss Aubrey," in the corner. In addition to this, 'twas not an unpleasant thing to skim over the contents of *his* letters! as one by one he opened them, and laid them aside; for both these fair creatures were daughters of Eve, and inherited a *little* of her curiosity. Mr Aubrey was always somewhat nervous and fidgety on such occasions, and wished them gone; but they only laughed at him, so he was fain to put

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up with them. On this morning there were more than the usual number of letters; and, in casting her eye over them, Mrs Aubrey suddenly took up one that challenged attention; it bore a black seal, had a deep black bordering, and bore the frank of Lord Alkmond, at whose house in Shropshire they had for months been engaged to spend the ensuing Christmas, and were intending to set off on their visit the very next day. The ominous missive was soon torn open; it was from Lord Alkmond himself, who in a few hurried lines announced the sudden death of his brother; so that there was an end of their visit to the Priory.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey calmly, rising after a pause, and standing with his back to the fire, in a musing posture.

"Has he left any family, Charles?" inquired Mrs Aubrey with a sigh, her eyes still fixed on the letter.

"I—I really don't know.—Poor fellow! By the way, we lose a vote by this—the Glenthams will get the seat," he added, absently, with an air of chagrin visibly stealing over his features.

"How politics harden the heart, Charles! Just at *this* moment to be" — quoth Mrs Aubrey, with a sigh.

"It is too bad, Agnes, I own—but you see," said Mr Aubrey affectionately; suddenly, however, he broke off—"stay, I don't know either, for there's the Grassingham interest come into the field since the last"—

"Charles, I do really almost think," exclaimed Mrs Aubrey with sudden emotion, stepping to his side, and throwing her soft arms round him affectionately, "that if I were to die, I should be forgotten in a fortnight, if the House were sitting"—

"How *can* you say such things, love?" inquired Mr Aubrey, kissing her forehead.

"When Agnes was born, you know," she murmured inarticulately. Her husband folded her tenderly in his arms in silence. On the occasion she alluded to, he had nearly lost her; and they both had reason to expect that another similar season of peril was not *very* distant.

"Now, Charles, you *can't* escape," said Miss Aubrey, presently, assuming a cheerful tone; "now for dear old Yatton!"

"Yes, Yatton! Positively you must!" added Mrs Aubrey, smiling through her tears.

"What! Go to Yatton?" said Mr Aubrey, shaking his head and smiling. "Nonsense! I—i—t ca—n't—be—done!—Why, we must set off to-morrow! They've had no warning!"

"What warning does mamma require, Charles?" inquired his sister eagerly. "Isn't the dear old place always in apple-pie order?"

"How you love the 'dear old place,' Kate!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, in such an affectionate tone as brought his sister in an instant to his side, to urge on her suit; and there stood the lord of Yatton embraced by these two beautiful women, his own heart

(*inter nos*) seconding every word they uttered.

"How my mother would stare!" said he at length irresolutely, looking from one to the other, and smiling at their eagerness. As for himself—he that hesitates, is lost!

"What a bustle everything will be in!" exclaimed Kate. "I fancy I'm there already! The great blazing fires—the holly and misletoe. We must all go, Charles, children and all!"

"Why, really, I hardly know"—said Mr Aubrey, faintly.

"Oh! I've settled it all," quoth Kate, seeing that she had gained her point, and resolved to press her advantage, "and, what's more, we've no time to lose; this is Tuesday,—Christmas-day is Saturday,—we must of course stop a night on the way; but hadn't we better have Griffiths in to arrange all?" Mr Aubrey laughed—and—rang the bell.

"Request Mr Griffiths to come to me," said he to the servant who answered the summons.

Within a very few minutes that respectable functionary had made his appearance and received his instructions. The march to Shropshire was countermanded—and hey! for Yatton!—for which they were to start the next day about noon. Mr Griffiths' first step was to pack off Sam, Mr Aubrey's groom, by the Tally-ho, the first coach to York, starting at two o'clock that very day, with letters announcing the immediate arrival of the family. These orders were received by Sam (who had been born and bred at Yatton), while he was bestowing, with vehement sibilation, his customary civilities on a favourite mare of his master's. Down dropped his curry-comb; he jumped into the air; snapped his fingers; then he threw his arms round Jenny, and tickled her under the chin. "Dang it," said he, as he threw her another feed of oats, "I wish thee were going wi' me—dang'd if I don't!" Then he hastily made himself "a *bit* tidy;" presented himself very respectfully before Mr Griffiths, to receive the wherewithal to pay his fare; and having obtained

it, off he scampered to the Bull and Mouth, as if it had been a neck-and-neck race between him and all London which should get down to Yorkshire first. A little after one o'clock his packet of letters was delivered to him; and within another hour Sam was to be seen (quite comfortable, with a draught of spiced ale given him by the house-keeper, to make his hasty dinner "sit well") on the top of the Tally-ho, rattling rapidly along the great north road.

"Come, Kate," said Mrs Aubrey, entering Miss Aubrey's room, where she was giving directions to her maid, "I've ordered the carriage to be at the door as soon as it can be got ready; we must go off to Coutts—see!" She held in her hand two slips of paper, one of which she gave Miss Aubrey. 'Twas a check for one hundred pounds—her brother's usual Christmas-box—"and then we've a quantity of little matters to buy this afternoon. Come, Kate, quick! quick!"

Now, poor Kate had spent nearly all her ready money; which circumstance, connected with another that I shall shortly mention, had given her not a little concern. At her earnest request, her brother had, about a year before, built her a nice little school, capable of containing some eighteen or twenty girls, on a slip of land between the vicarage and the park wall of Yatton, and old Mrs Aubrey and her daughter maintained a resident schoolmistress, and, in fact, supported the little establishment, which, at the time I am speaking of, contained some seventeen or eighteen of the villagers' younger children. Miss Aubrey took a prodigious interest in this little school, scarce a day passing without her visiting it when she was at Yatton; and what Kate wanted was, the luxury of giving a Christmas present to both mistress and scholars. That, however, she would have had some difficulty in effecting but for this her brother's timely present, which had quite set her heart at ease. On their return, the carriage was crowded with the things they had been purchasing—articles of clothing for the feebler old villagers; work-boxes, samplers, books,

testaments, prayer-books, &c. &c. &c., for the school; the sight of which, I can assure the reader, made Kate far happier than if they had been the costliest articles of dress and jewellery.

The next day was a very pleasant one for travelling, "frosty, but kindly." About one o'clock there might have been seen standing before the door the roomy yellow family carriage, with four post-horses. All was in travelling trim. In the rumble sat Mr Aubrey's valet and Mrs Aubrey's maid, —Miss Aubrey's, and one of the nursery-maids, going down by the coach which had carried Sam—the Tally-ho. The coach-box was piled up with that sort of luggage which, by its lightness and bulk, denotes lady-travelling: inside were Mrs and Miss Aubrey, muffled in furs, shawls, and pelisses; a nursery-maid, with little Master and Miss Aubrey, equally well protected from the cold; and the vacant seat awaited Mr Aubrey, who at length made his appearance, having been engaged till the latest moment in giving and repeating specific instructions concerning the forwarding of his letters and papers. As soon as he had taken his place, and all had been snugly disposed within, the steps were doubled up, the door was closed, the windows were drawn up—crack! crack! went the whips of the two postillions, and away rolled the carriage over the dry hard pavement.

"Now that's what I calls doing it uncommon comfortable," said a pot-boy to one of the footmen at an adjoining house, where he was delivering the porter for the servants' dinner; "how werry nice and snug them two looks in the rumble behind!"

"We goes to-morrow," carelessly replied the gentleman whom he had addressed.

"It's a fine thing to be gentlefolk," said the boy, taking up his pot-board.

"Pretty well—but one tires of it in time!" drawled the footman, twitching up his shirt collar.

On drawing up to the posting-house, which was within about forty miles of Yatton, the Aubreys found a carriage and -four just ready to start, after

changing horses; and whose should this prove to be, but Lord De la Zouch's, containing himself, his lady, and his son, Mr Delamere! His lordship and his son both alighted on accidentally discovering who had overtaken them; and coming up to Mr Aubrey's carriage windows, exchanged surprised and cordial greetings with its occupants—whom Lord De la Zouch imagined to have been by this time on their way to Shropshire. Mr Delamere manifested a surprising eagerness about the welfare of little Agnes Aubrey, who happened to be lying fast asleep in Miss Aubrey's lap; but the evening was fast advancing, and both the travelling parties had yet before them a considerable portion of their journey. After a hasty promise on the part of each to dine with the other before returning to town for the season—a promise which Mr Delamere, at all events, resolved should not be lost sight of—they parted. 'Twas eight o'clock before Mr Aubrey's eye, which had been for some time on the look-out, caught sight of Yatton woods; and when it did, his heart yearned towards them. The moon shone brightly and cheerily, and it was pleasant to listen to the quickening clattering tramp of the horses upon the dry hard highway, as the travellers rapidly neared a spot endeared to them by every early and tender association. When they had got within half a mile of the village, they overtook the worthy vicar, who had mounted his nag, and been out on the road to meet the expected comers, for an hour before. Mr Aubrey roused Mrs Aubrey from her nap, to point out Dr Tatham, who by that time was cantering along beside the open window. 'Twas refreshing to see the cheerful old man—who looked as ruddy and hearty as ever.

"God bless you all! All well?" he exclaimed, riding close to the window.

"Yes; but how is my mother?" inquired Mr Aubrey.

"High spirits—high spirits! Was with her this afternoon! Have not seen her better for years! So surprised! Ah! here's an old friend—Hector!"

"Bow-wow-wow-wow! Bow—bow-wow!"

"Papa! papa!" exclaimed the voice of little Charles, struggling to get on his father's lap to look out of the window, "that is Hector! I know it is! He is come to see *me*! I want to look at him."

Mr Aubrey lifted him up as he desired, and a huge black-and-white Newfoundland dog almost leaped up to the window, at sight of him clapping his little hands, as if in eager recognition, and then scampered and bounded about in all directions, barking boisterously, to the infinite delight of little Aubrey. This messenger had been sent on by Sam, the groom; who, having been on the look-out for the travellers for some time, the moment he had caught sight of the carriage, pelted down the village through the park, at top speed, up to the Hall, there to communicate the good news of their safe arrival. The travellers thought that the village had never looked so pretty and picturesque before. The sound of the carriage dashing through it called all the cottagers to their doors, where they stood bowing and curtsying. It soon reached the park-gates, which were thrown wide open in readiness for its entrance. As they passed the church, they heard its little bells ringing a merry peal to welcome their arrival. Its faint chimes went to their very hearts.

"My darling Agnes, here we are again in the old place," said Mr Aubrey, in a joyous tone, affectionately kissing Mrs Aubrey and his sister, as, after having wound their way up the park at almost a gallop, they heard themselves rattling over the stone pavement immediately under the old turreted gateway. On approaching it, they saw lights glancing about in the Hall windows; and before they had drawn up, the great door was thrown open, and several servants (one or two of them grey-headed) made their appearance, eager to release the travellers from their long confinement. A great wood fire was crackling and blazing in the ample fireplace in the hall opposite the door, casting a right

pleasant and cheerful light over the various antique objects ranged around the walls; but the object on which Mr Aubrey's eye instantly settled was the venerable figure of his mother, standing beside the fireplace with one or two female attendants. The moment that the carriage door was opened, he stepped quickly out (nearly tumbling, by the way, over Hector, who appeared to think that the carriage door had been opened only to enable him to jump into it, which he prepared to do).

"God bless you, madam!" said Mr Aubrey tenderly, and bare-headed, as he received his mother's fervent but silent greeting, and imagined that the arms folded round him were somewhat feebler than when he had last felt them embracing him! With similar affection was the good old lady received by her daughter and daughter-in-law.

"Where is my pony, grandmamma?" quoth little Aubrey, running up to her (he had been kept quiet, from time to time, during the last eighty miles or so, by the mention of the aforesaid pony, which had been sent to the Hall as a present to him some weeks before). "Where is it? I want to see my little pony directly! Mamma says you have got a little pony for me with a long tail; I *must* see it before I go to bed; I must, indeed—is it in the stable?"

"You shall see it in the morning, my darling—the very first thing," said Mrs Aubrey, fervently kissing her beautiful little grandson, while tears of joy and pride ran down her cheek. She then pressed her lips on the delicate but flushed cheek of little Agnes, who was fast asleep; and as soon as they had been conducted towards their nursery, Mrs Aubrey, followed by her children, led the way to the dining-room—the dear delightful old dining-room, in which all of them had passed so many happy hours of their lives. It was large and lofty; and two antique branch silver candlesticks, standing on sconces upon each side of a strange old straggling carved mantelpiece of inlaid oak, aided by

the blaze given out by two immense logs of wood burning beneath, thoroughly illuminated it. The walls were oak-paneled, containing many pictures, several of them of great value; and the floor also was of polished oak, over the centre of which, however, was spread a thick richly-coloured Turkey carpet. Opposite the door was a large mullioned bay-window, then, however, concealed behind an ample flowing crimson curtain. On the further side of the fireplace stood a high-backed and roomy arm-chair, almost covered with Kate's embroidery, and in which Mrs Aubrey had evidently, as usual, been sitting till the moment of their arrival—for on a small ebony table beside it lay her spectacles, and an open volume. Nearly fronting the fireplace was a recess, in which stood an exquisitely carved black ebony cabinet, inlaid with white and red ivory. This Miss Aubrey claimed as her own, and had appropriated it to her own purposes ever since she was seven years old. "You dear old thing!" said she, throwing open the folding-doors—"Everything just as I left it! Really, dear mamma, I could skip about the room for joy! I wish Charles would never leave Yatton again!"

"It's rather lonely, my love, when *none* of you are with me," said Mrs Aubrey. "I feel getting older"—

"Dearest mamma," interrupted Kate quickly, and embracing her mother, "I won't leave you again! I'm quite tired of town—I am indeed!"

Though fires were lit in their several dressing-rooms, of which they were more than once reminded by their respective attendants, they all remained seated before the fire in carriage costume (except that Kate had thrown aside her bonnet, her half-uncurled tresses hanging in negligent profusion over her thickly-furred pelisse), eagerly conversing about the little incidents of their journey, and the events which had happened at Yatton since their last quitting it. At length, however, they retired to perform the refreshing duties of the dressing-room, before

sitting down to supper. Of that comfortable meal, within twenty minutes' time or so, they partook with hearty relish. What mortal, however delicate, could resist the fare set before them? The plump capon, the grilled ham, the poached eggs, the floury potatoes, home-baked bread, white and brown—custards, mince-pies, home-brewed ale, soft as milk, clear as amber—mulled claret—and so forth? The travellers had evidently never relished anything more, to the infinite delight of old Mrs Aubrey; who observing, soon afterwards, irrepressible symptoms of fatigue and drowsiness, ordered them all off to bed—Kate betaking herself to the same chamber in which she was sitting when the reader was permitted to catch a moonlight glimpse of her.

They did not make their appearance the next morning till after nine o'clock, Mrs Aubrey having read prayers before the assembled servants, as usual, nearly an hour before—a duty her son always performed when at the Hall; but on this occasion he had overslept himself. He found his mother in the breakfast-room, where she was soon joined by her daughter and daughter-in-law, all of them being in high health and spirits. Just as they were finishing breakfast, little Aubrey burst into the room in a perfect ecstasy—for old Jones had taken him round to the stables, and shown him the little pony which had been recently presented to him. He had heard it neigh—had seen its long tail—had patted its neck—had seen it eat—and now his vehement prayer was, that his papa, and mamma, and Kate would immediately go and see it, and take his little sister also.

Breakfast over, they separated. Old Mrs Aubrey went to her own room to be attended by her housekeeper; the other two ladies retired to their rooms—Kate principally engaged in arranging her presents for her little scholars; and Mr Aubrey repaired to his library—as delightful an old snuggerly as the most studious recluse could desire—where he was presently attended by his bailiff. He found that everything was going on as he could have wished.

With one or two exceptions, his rents were paid most punctually, and the farms and lands kept in capital condition. To be sure an incorrigible old poacher had been giving a little trouble, as usual, and stood committed for trial at the ensuing Spring Assizes; and a few trivial trespasses had been committed in search of firewood, and other small matters; which, after having been detailed with great minuteness by his zealous and vigilant bailiff, were despatched by Mr Aubrey with a "pooh, pooh!"—Then there was Gregory, who held the smallest farm on the estate, at its southern extremity—he was three quarters' rent in arrear—but had a sick wife and seven children—so he was at once forgiven all that was due, and also what would become due, on the ensuing quarter-day.—"In fact," said Mr Aubrey, "don't ask him for any more rent. I'm sure the poor fellow will pay when he's able."

A few rents were to be raised; others lowered; and some half-dozen of the poorer cottages were to be forthwith put into good repair, at Mr Aubrey's expense. The two oxen had been sent, on the preceding afternoon, from the home-farm to the butcher's, to be distributed on Christmas eve among the poorer villagers, according to orders brought down from town, by Sam, the day before. Thus was Mr Aubrey engaged for an hour or two, till luncheon time, when good Dr Tatham made his welcome appearance, having been engaged most of the morning in touching up an old Christmas sermon.

He had been vicar of Yatton for about thirty years, having been presented to it by the late Mr Aubrey, with whom he had been intimate at college. He was a delightful specimen of a country parson. Cheerful, unaffected, and good-natured, there was a dash of quaintness or roughness about his manners, that reminded you of the crust in very fine old port. He had been a widower, and childless, for fifteen years. His parish had been ever since his family, whom he still watched over with an affectionate vigilance. He was respected and beloved by all.

Almost every man, woman, and child that had died in Yatton, during nearly thirty years, had departed with the sound of his kind and solemn voice in their ears. He claimed a sort of personal acquaintance with almost all the gravestones in his little churchyard; he knew the names of all who slept beneath them; and when he looked at those gravestones, his conscience bore him witness, that he had done his duty by the dust of whom they spoke. He was at the bedside of a sick person almost as soon, and as often, as the doctor—no matter what sort of weather, or at what hour of the day or night. Methinks I see him now, bustling about the village, with healthy ruddy cheek, a clear, cheerful eye, hair white as snow! with a small, stout figure, clothed in a suit of somewhat rusty black (knee-breeches and gaiters all round the year), and with a small shovel-hat. No one lives in the vicarage with him but an elderly woman, his housekeeper, and her husband, whose chief business is to look after the Doctor's old mare and the little garden; in which I have often seen him and his master, with his coat off, digging for an hour or two together. He rises at five in the winter, and four in the summer, being occupied till breakfast with his studies; for he is an excellent scholar, and has not forgotten, in the zealous discharge of his sacred duties, the pursuits of literature and philosophy, in which he had gained no inconsiderable distinction in his youth. He derives a very moderate income from his living; but it is even more than sufficient for his necessities. Ever since Mr Aubrey's devotion to politics has carried him away from Yatton for a considerable portion of each year, Dr Tatham has been the right-hand counsellor of old Mrs Aubrey, in all her pious and charitable plans and purposes. Every New-year's day, there come from the Hall to the vicarage six dozen of fine old port wine—a present from Mrs Aubrey; but the little Doctor (though he never tells her so) drinks scarce six bottles of them in a year. Two dozen of them go, within a few days' time, to a poor

brother parson in an adjoining parish, who, with his wife and three children, all in feeble health, can hardly keep body and soul together, and who, but for this generous brother, would probably not taste wine throughout the year, except on certain occasions when the very humblest may moisten their poor lips with wine, when participating in the sublime and solemn festival instituted by One who doth not forget the poor and destitute, however in their misery they may sometimes think to the contrary!—The remainder of his little present Dr Tatham distributes in small quantities amongst such of his parishioners as may require it, and may not happen to have come under the immediate notice of Mrs Aubrey. Dr Tatham has known Mr Aubrey ever since he was about five years old. 'Twas the Doctor that first taught him Greek and Latin; and, up to his going to college, gave him the frequent advantage of his learned experience.—But surely I have gone into a very long digression, and must return.

While Miss Aubrey, accompanied by her sister-in-law, and followed by a servant carrying a great bag, filled with articles brought from London the day before, went to the school which I have before mentioned, in order to distribute her prizes and presents, Mr Aubrey and Dr Tatham set off on a walk through the village.

"I must really do something for that old steeple of yours, Doctor," said Mr Aubrey, looking up, and shading his eyes with his hands, as, arm in arm, they approached the church; "it looks crumbling away in many parts!"

"If you'd only send a couple of masons to repair the porch, and make it weather-tight, it would satisfy me for some years to come," said the Doctor, with exceeding earnestness, "and we'll make shift with the steeple for the present."

"Well—we'll look at it," replied Aubrey; and, turning aside, they entered the little churchyard.

"How I love this old yew-tree!" he exclaimed, as they passed under it;

"it casts a kind of tender gloom around, that always makes me pensive, not to say melancholy!" A sigh escaped him, as his eye glanced at the family vault, almost in the centre of the yew-tree shade, where lay his father, three brothers, and a sister, and where, in the course of nature, a few short years would see the precious remains of his mother deposited. But the Doctor, who had hastened forward alone for a moment, finding the church door open, called out to Mr Aubrey, who soon stood within the porch. It certainly required a little repairing, which Mr Aubrey said should be looked to immediately. "See—we're all preparing for to-morrow," said Dr Tatham, leading the way into the little church, where the grizzle-headed clerk was busy decorating the old-fashioned pulpit, reading-desk, and altar-piece, with the cheerful emblems of the season.

"I never see these," said the Doctor, taking up one of the sprigs of mistletoe lying on a form beside them, "but I think of your own Christmas verses, Mr Aubrey, when you were younger and fresher than you now are—don't you recollect them?"

"Oh—pooh!" quoth Aubrey, somewhat hastily.

"But I remember them," rejoined the Doctor; and he began with great emphasis and solemnity—

Hail! silvery, modest mistletoe,
Wreath'd round winter's brow of snow,
Clinging so chastely, tenderly:
Hail holly, darkly, richly green,
Whose crimson berries blush between
Thy prickly foliage, modestly.
Ye winter-flowers, bloom sweet and fair,
Though Nature's garden else be bare—
Ye vernal glistening emblems, meet
To twine a Christmas coronet!

"That will do, Doctor," interrupted Aubrey, smiling—"what a memory you have for trifles!"

"Peggy! Peggy!—you're sadly overdoing it," said the Doctor hastily, calling out to the sexton's wife, who was busy at work in the squire's pew—a large square one, in the nave, near the pulpit. "Why, do you want to hide the squire's family from the congregation? You're putting quite a holly hedge all round!"

"Please you, sir," quoth Peggy, "I've got so much I don't know where to put it—so, in course, I put it here!"

"Then," said the Doctor, with a smile, looking round the church, "let Jonas get up and stick some of it into those old hatchments; and," looking up at the clerk, busy at work in the pulpit, "don't you put quite so much up there into my candlesticks! I shall indeed be 'like to an owl in ivy bush'"—he added with a smile, turning to Mr Aubrey.

With this the parson and the squire took their departure. As they passed slowly up the village, which already wore a sort of holiday aspect, they met on all hands with a cordial, respectful, and affectionate greeting. The quiet little public-house turned out some four or five stout steady fellows—all tenants of Mr Aubrey's, pipes in hand, and who took off their hats, and bowed very low. Mr Aubrey went up and entered into conversation with them for some minutes. Their families and farms, he found, were well and thriving. There was quite a little crowd of women about the shop of Nick Steele, the butcher, who, with an extra hand to help him, and blowing with bustle and excitement, was giving out the second ox which had been sent from the Hall, to the persons whose names had been given in to him from Mrs Aubrey. Further on, some were cleaning their little windows, others sweeping their floors, and sprinkling sand over them; most were displaying holly and mistletoe in their windows, and over their mantelpieces. Everywhere, in short, was to be seen that air of quiet preparation for the solemnly-cheerful morrow, which fills a thoughtful English observer with feelings of pensive but exquisite satisfaction.

Mr Aubrey returned home towards dusk, cheered and enlivened by his walk. His sudden plunge into the simplicity and comparative solitude of country life—and that country Yatton—had quite refreshed his feelings, and given a tone to his spirits. Of course Dr Tatham was to dine at the Hall on

the morrow; if he did not, indeed, it would have been for the first time during the last five-and-twenty years that he had not been present to bless, and partake of, Christmas dinner at the Hall! Christmas eve passed pleasantly and quietly enough. After dinner the merry little ones were introduced, and their prattle and romps occupied an hour right joyously. As soon as, smothered with kisses, they had been dismissed to bed, old Mrs Aubrey composed herself in her great chair, to her usual after-dinner's nap; while her son, his wife and sister, sitting fronting the fire—a decanter or two, and a few wine-glasses and dessert, remaining on the table behind them—sate conversing in a subdued tone, now listening to the wind roaring in the chimney—a sound which not a little enhanced their sense of comfort—then criticising the disposition of the evergreens with which the room was plenteously decorated, and laying out their movements during the ensuing fortnight. Mrs Aubrey and Kate were, with affectionate earnestness, contrasting to Aubrey the peaceful pleasures of a country life with the restless excitement and endless anxieties of a London political life, to which they saw him more and more addicting himself; he all the while playfully parrying their attacks, but secretly acknowledging the truth and force of what they said, when—hark!—a novel sound from without, which roused the old lady from her nap. What do you think, dear reader, it was? The voices of very little girls singing what seemed to be a Christmas hymn: yes, they caught the words—

Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild—

"Why, surely—it must be your little school girls," said old Mrs Aubrey, looking at her daughter, and listening.

"I do believe it is!" quoth Kate, her eyes suddenly filling with tears, as she sate eagerly inclining her ear towards the window.

"They must be standing on the

grass plot just before the window," said Mr Aubrey: the tiny voices were thrilling his very heart within him. His sensitive nature might have been compared to a delicate Æolian harp which gave forth, with the slightest breath of accident or circumstance,—

The still, sad music of humanity.

In a few moments he was almost in tears—the sounds were so unlike the fierce and turbulent cries of political warfare to which his ears had been latterly accustomed! The more the poor children sang, the more was he affected. Kate's tears fell fast, for she had been in an excited mood before this little incident occurred. "Do you hear, mamma," said she, tremulously, "the voice of the poor little thing that was last taken into the school? The little darling!" Kate tried to smile away her emotion; but 'twas in vain. Mr Aubrey gently drew aside the curtain, and pulled up the central blind—and there, headed by their matron, stood the little singers exposed to view, some eighteen in number, ranged in a row on the grass, in the bright moonlight, all in snug grey woollen hoods effectually protecting them from the cold. The oldest seemed not more than ten or twelve years old, while the younger ones could not be more than five or six. They seemed all singing from their very hearts. Aubrey stood gazing at them with a swelling heart and quivering lip.

As soon as they had finished their hymn, they were conducted into the housekeeper's room, according to orders sent for that purpose from Mrs Aubrey, and each of them received a little present of money, besides a full glass of Mrs Jackson's choicest raisin wine, and a currant bun; dear Kate slipping half-a-guinea into the hand of their mistress, to whose wish to afford gratification to the inmates of the Hall was entirely owing the little incident which had so pleased and surprised them.

"Happy Christmas, dear papa and mamma!" said little Aubrey, about eight o'clock the next morning, push-

ing aside the curtains, and trying to clamber up on the high bed where Mr and Mrs Aubrey were still asleep. Soon, however, they were awoke by the dear welcome voice!—The morning promised a beautiful day. The air, though cold, was clear; and the branches of the trees visible from their windows, were all covered with hoarfrost, which seemed to line them with silver fringe. The bells of Yatton church were ringing a merry peal; but how different in tone and strength from the clangour of the London church-bells!—Christmas was indeed at last arrived—and cheerful were the greetings of those who soon after met at the bountiful breakfast table. Old Mrs Aubrey was going to church with them—in fact, not even a domestic who could be possibly spared was to be left at home. By the time that the carriage, with the fat and lazy-looking grey horses, was at the Hall door, the sun had burst out in beauty from an almost cloudless sky. The three ladies rode alone; Aubrey preferring to walk, accompanied by his little son, as the ground was dry and hard, and the distance short. A troop of some twelve or fourteen servants, male and female, presently followed; and then came Mr Aubrey, leading along the heir of Yatton—a boy of whom he might well be proud, as the future possessor of his name, his fortune, and his honours. When he had reached the church, the carriage was returning home. Almost the whole congregation stood collected before the church door, to see the Squire's family enter; and reverent were the curtsies and bows with which old Mrs Aubrey and her lovely companions were received. Very soon after they had taken their places, Mr Aubrey and his son made their appearance; objects they were of the deepest interest, as they passed along to their pew. A few minutes afterwards little Dr Tatham entered the church in his surplice (which he almost always put on at home), with a face, composed and serious to be sure, but yet overspread with an expression even more bland and benignant than usual. He knew there was not a soul

among the little crowd around him that did not really love him, and that did not know how heartily he returned their love. All eyes were of course on the Squire's pew. Mrs Aubrey was looking well—her daughter and daughter-in-law were thought by all to be by far the most beautiful women in the world—what must people say of them in London? Mr Aubrey looked, they thought, pleased and happy, but rather paler, and even a little thinner; and as for the "little Squire," with his bright eyes, his rosy cheeks, his arch smile, his curling auburn hair—and so like his father and mother—he was the pride of Yatton!

Dr Tatham read prayers, as he always did, with great distinctness and deliberation, so that everybody in the church, young and old, could catch every syllable; and he preached, considerably enough, a very short sermon—pithy, homely, and affectionate. He reminded them that he was then preaching his thirty-first Christmas-day sermon from that pulpit! The Communion ended, on Mr Aubrey and the ladies from the Hall making their appearance outside the door, they were greeted with silent respect and delight by at least two-thirds of the villagers, who lined the way from the church door to the gate at which the carriage stood; receiving and answering a hundred kind inquiries concerning themselves, their families, and their circumstances.

Mr Aubrey stayed behind, desirous of taking another little ramble with Dr Tatham through the village, for the day was indeed bright and beautiful, and the occasion inspiring. There was not a villager within four or five miles of the Hall who did not sit down that day to a comfortable little relishing dinner, at least one-third of them being indebted for it directly to the bounty of the Aubreys. As soon as Dr Tatham had taken off his surplice, he accompanied Mr Aubrey in cheerful mood, in the briskest spirits. 'Twas delightful to see the smoke come curling out of every chimney, while few folk were visible out of doors; whence you reasonably concluded that they

were all housed, and preparing for, or partaking of, their roast-beef and plum-pudding! Now and then the bustling wife would show her heated red face at the door, and hastily curtsy as they passed, then returning to dish up her little dinner.

"Ah, ha; Mr Aubrey!—isn't such a day as this worth a whole year in town?" exclaimed Dr Tatham.

"Both have their peculiar advantages, Doctor; the pleasure of the contrast would be lost if"—

"Contrast! Believe me, in the language of"—

"Ah! by the way, how goes on old blind Bess, Doctor?" interrupted Aubrey, as they approached the smallest cottage in the village—in fact the very last.

"She's just the same as she has been these last twenty years. Shall we look in on the old creature?"

"With all my heart. I hope, poor soul! that *she* has not been overlooked on this festive occasion."

"Trust Mrs Aubrey for that! I'll answer for it, we shall find old Bess as happy, in her way, as she can be."

They were speaking of a stone-blind old woman, who had been bedridden for the last twenty years. She had certainly passed her hundredth year—some said two or three years before—and had lived in her present little cottage for nearly half a century, having grown out of the recollection of almost all the inhabitants of the village. She had long been a pensioner of Mrs Aubrey's, by whom alone, indeed, she was supported. Her great age, her singular appearance, and a certain rambling style of talking, had long earned her the reputation, in the village, of being able to say strange things; and one or two of the old gossips knew of things coming to pass according to what—poor old soul—she had predicted!

Dr Tatham gently pushed open the door. The cottage consisted, in fact, of but one room, and that a small one, lit by only one little window. The floor was clean, and evidently just fresh sanded. On a wooden stool, opposite a fireplace, on which a small

saucepan was placed, sat a girl about twelve years old (a daughter of the woman who lived nearest), crumbling some bread into a basin, with some broth in it. On a narrow bed against the wall, opposite the window, was to be seen the somewhat remarkable figure of the solitary old tenant of the cottage. She was sitting up, resting against the pillow, which was placed on end against the wall. She was evidently a very tall woman; and her long, brown, wrinkled, shrivelled face, with prominent cheekbones and bushy white eyebrows, betokened the possession, in earlier days, of a masculine expression of features. Her hair, white as snow, was gathered back from her forehead, under a spreading plain white cap; and her sightless eyes, wide open, stared forward with a startling and somewhat sinister expression. She was wrapped round in a clean white bedgown; and her long thin arms lay straight before her on the outside of the bed-clothes. Her lips were moving, as if she were talking to herself.

"She's a strange-looking object, indeed!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, as he and Dr Tatham stood watching her for a few moments in silence.

"Ay, indeed, she is!—Dame! dame!" said the Doctor loudly, approaching her bedside, "how are you to-day? It's Christmas-day—I wish you a merry Christmas."

"Ay, ay—merry, merry!" echoed the old woman with a half groan. "More the merrier! I've seen a hundred and nine of them!"

"You seem comfortable enough, dame," said Mr Aubrey kindly. "I hope you are?"

"They won't give me my broth—my broth," said she peevishly.

"It's coming, granny," called out the shrill voice of the girl sitting before the fire, quickening her motions.

"Here's the Squire come to see you, dame, and he wishes you a happy Christmas," said Dr Tatham, loudly.

"What! the Squire? Alive yet? Ah, well-a-day! well-a-day!" said she, in a feeble, mournful tone, slowly rubbing together her long, skinny, wrin

kled hands, on the backs of which the veins stood out like knotted whipcord. She repeated the last words several times, in a truly doleful tone, gently shaking her head.

"Granny's been very sad, sir, to-day, and cried two or three times," said the little girl, stirring about the hot broth.

"Poor Squire! doth he not look sad?" inquired the old woman.

"Why should I, dame? What have I to be sad about?" said Mr Aubrey, somewhat quickly.

"Merry in the Hall! all, merry! merry! But no one has heard it except old blind Bess. Where's the Squire?" she added, suddenly turning full towards the spot where they were standing—and her face seemed to indicate inward emotion. Her staring eyes were settled on Mr Aubrey's face, as if she saw him distinctly, and were reading his very soul.

"Here I am, dame," said he, with considerable curiosity, to say the least of it.

"Give me your hand, Squire," said she, stretching out her left arm, and working about her talon-like fingers, as if in eagerness to grasp Mr Aubrey's hand, which he gave her.

"Never fear! never, never! Happy in the Hall! I see all! How long!"

"Why, dame, this is truly a very pleasant greeting of yours," interposed Dr Tatham with a smile.

"Short and bitter! long and sweet! Put your trust in God, Squire."

"I hope I do, granny," replied Mr Aubrey seriously.

"I see! I hear!—my broth! my broth!—where is it?"

"Here it is, granny," said the girl—"It's all ready!"

"Good-day, dame," said Mr Aubrey, gently disengaging his hand from hers; and before they had left the cottage, she began to swallow very greedily the broth with which the little girl fed her.

"This is the sort of way in which this old superannuated creature has frightened one or two of"—

"Is it indeed?" inquired Mr Aubrey, with a sort of mechanical smile. Dr

Tatham saw that he was in a somewhat serious humour.

"She's alarmed you, I protest!—why, positively, she has!" exclaimed the Doctor, with a slight laugh, as they walked along. Now, he knew the disposition and character of Aubrey intimately; and was well aware of a certain tendency which he had to superstition.

"My dear Doctor, I assure you that you are mistaken—I am indeed not *alarmed*—but at the same time I will tell you something not a little singular. Would you believe that a month or two ago, when in town, I dreamed that I heard some one uttering something very much like the words which we have just heard from this old woman?"

"Ah! ha, ha!" laughed the Doctor; and, after a second or two's pause, Aubrey, as if ashamed of what he had said, echoed the laugh, and their conversation passed on to political topics, which kept them engaged for the remainder of their walk, Mr Aubrey quitting his companion at the door of the vicarage, to be rejoined by him at five o'clock, the dinner hour at the Hall. As Mr Aubrey walked along the park, the shades of evening casting a deepening gloom around him, his thoughts involuntarily recurred to the cottage of old blind Bess, and he felt vague apprehensions flitting with darkening shade across his mind. Though he was hardly weak enough to attach any definite meaning or importance to the gibberish he had heard, it still had left an unpleasant *impression*, and he was vexed at feeling a wish that the incident—trifling as he was willing to believe it—should not be mentioned by Dr Tatham at the Hall; and still more was he excited when he recollected that he had *purposely abstained* from requesting the good Doctor not to do so. All this undoubtedly implied that the matter had occupied Mr Aubrey's thoughts to a greater extent than he secretly relished. On reaching, however, the Hall door, this brief pressure on his feelings quickly ceased; for on entering, he saw Mrs Aubrey, his sister,

and his two children, at high romps together in the hall, and he heartily joined in them.

By five o'clock the little party was seated at the cheerful dinner-table, glistening with the old family plate, and that kind of fare, at once substantial and luxurious, which befitted the occasion. Old Mrs Aubrey, in her simple white turban and black velvet dress, presided with a kind of dignified cheerfulness delightful to see. Kate had contrived to make herself look more lovely even than usual, wearing a dress of dark blue satin, trimmed with blonde, and exquisitely comporting with her beautiful complexion. Oh that Delamere had been sitting opposite to, or beside her! The more matured proportions of her blooming sister-in-law appeared to infinite advantage in a rich green velvet dress, while a superb diamond glistened with subdued lustre in her beautiful bosom. She wore no ornaments in her dark hair, which was, as indeed might be said of Kate, "when unadorned, adorned the most." The greyheaded old butler, as brisk as his choicest champagne, and the two steady-looking old family servants, going about their business with quiet celerity—the delicious air of antique elegance around them—the sense of profound seclusion—of remoteness from the exciting hubbub of the world—in every respect this was a Christmas dinner after one's own heart! Oh the merry and dear old Yatton! And as if there were not loveliness enough already in the room, behold the door suddenly pushed open, as soon as the dessert is arrayed on the table, and run up to his gay and laughing mother, her little son, his simple snowy collar resting gracefully on his crimson velvet dress. 'Tis her hope and pride—her first-born—the little squire; but where is his sister?—where is Agnes? 'Tis even as Charles says—she fell asleep in the very act of being dressed, and they were obliged to put her to bed; so Charles is alone in his glory. You may well fold your delicate white arm around him, mamma!—

His little gold cup is nearly filled

to join in the first toast: are you all—dear little circle!—are you all ready? The worthy Doctor has poured old Mrs Aubrey's, and young Mrs Aubrey's, and Kate's glass full up to the brim:—"Our next Christmas!" quoth he, cheerily elevating his glass.

Yes, your next Christmas! The vigilant eye of Dr Tatham alone perceived a faint change of colour in Mr Aubrey's cheek as the words were uttered; and his eye wandered for an instant, as if tracing across the room the image of old blind Bess; but 'twas gone in a moment; Aubrey was soon in much higher spirits than usual. Well he might be. How could man be placed in happier circumstances than he was? As soon as the three ladies had withdrawn, together with little Aubrey, the Doctor and Mr Aubrey drew their chairs before the fire, and enjoyed a long hour's pleasant conversation on matters domestic and political. As to the latter, the Doctor and the Squire were stout Tories; and a speech which Aubrey had lately delivered in the House, on the Catholic claims, had raised him to a pitch of eminence in the Doctor's estimation, where Aubrey had very few men in the country to keep him company. The Doctor here got on very fast indeed; and was just assuring the Squire that he saw dark days in store for Old England from the machinations of the Papists; and that, for his part, he should rejoice to "seal his testimony with his blood," and would go to the stake not only without flinching, but rejoicing—(all which I verily believe he verily believed he would have done)—and coveting the crown of martyrdom—when Aubrey caught the sound of his sister playing on the organ, a noble instrument, which a year or two before, at her urgent request, he had purchased and placed in the drawing-room, whither he and the Doctor at once repaired. 'Twas a spacious and lofty room, well calculated for the splendid instrument which occupied the recess fronting the door. Miss Aubrey was playing Handel, and with an exquisite perception

of his matchless power and beauty. Hark! did you ever hear the grand yet simple recitative she is now commencing?

"In the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying—Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him!"

The Doctor officiated as chaplain that evening. The room was almost filled with servants, many of whose looks very plainly showed the merry

doings which must have been going on in the servants' hall. Some could scarce keep their eyes open; one or two sat winking at each other! and others were fairly asleep, and snoring! Under the circumstances, therefore, the Doctor, with much judgment, read very short prayers, and immediately afterwards took his departure for his snug little vicarage. The moon shone brightly, the air was clear and bracing, and he felt as blithe as a bird as he walked homeward!

CHAPTER III.

TWO STRANGE CREATURES ARE SEEN AT YATTON BY MR AUBREY AND HIS SISTER; AND A HAND-GRENADE IS THROWN, UNSEEN, AT THE FEET OF THE LATTER.

SUNDAY following immediately on Christmas day, contributed, in a manner, each somewhat of its character to the other—constituting a kind of double Christmas day, or a double Sunday. At Yatton, the ensuing Sunday was characterised by a cheerful solemnity; and in his sermon, Dr Tatham spoke of it as surrounded with the grand halo of the nativity of our Lord. That sermon was one admirable for its strength and simplicity—and listened to by his loving little congregation with reverent attention. There were one or two passages which Mr Aubrey felt to have been added, in consequence of some expressions which had fallen from himself on the preceding day. Their drift was, the duty of discarding vague apprehensions for the future, and cherishing a cheerful faith in God's protection, with, at the same time, a due sense of the precarious tenure by which man holds happiness. At this part Mrs Aubrey gently pressed her husband's hand, which she held in hers, and perhaps they had been talking together in the same strain!—

On the ensuing Monday, Mr Aubrey

was detained in-doors with his letters, and one or two other little matters of business in his library, till luncheon time. "What say you, Kate, to a ride round the country this lovely afternoon?" said he, on taking his seat. Kate was delighted; and forthwith the horses were ordered to be got ready as soon as possible.

"You must not mind a little rough riding, Kate, by the way," said Aubrey; "for we shall have to get over some ugly places—I'm going to meet Waters at the end of the avenue, about that old sycamore—we must have it down at last."

"Oh no, Charles, no; I thought we had settled that last year!" replied Kate earnestly.

"Pho! if it had not been for you, Kate, it would have been down two years ago at least. Its hour is come at last; 'tis indeed, so no pouting! It is injuring the other trees; and, besides, it spoils the prospect from the left wing of the house."

"'Tis only Waters that puts all these things into your head, Charles, and I shall let him know my opinion on the subject when I see him! Mam-

ma, haven't *you* a word to say for the old?"—

But Mr Aubrey, not deeming it discreet to await the new force which was being brought against him, started off to inspect a newly purchased horse, just brought to the stables.

Kate, who really became everything, looked charming in her blue riding-habit and hat, sitting on her horse with infinite ease and grace; she was, in fact, a capital horsewoman. The exercise soon brought a rich bloom upon her cheek; and as she cantered along the road by the side of her brother, no one could have met them without being almost startled at her beauty. Just as they had dropped into an easy walk—

"Charles," said she, observing two horsemen approaching them, "who can these be? Did you ever see such figures? And how they ride!"

"Why, certainly," replied her brother smiling, "they look a brace of arrant Cockneys! Ah, ha!—what can they be doing in *these* parts?"

"What exquisite puppies!" exclaimed Miss Aubrey, lowering her voice as they neared the persons she spoke of.

"They *are* certainly a most extraordinary couple! Who *can* they be?" said Mr Aubrey, a smile forcing itself into his features. One of the gentlemen thus referred to was dressed in a light blue surtout, with the tip of a white pocket-handkerchief seen peeping out of a pocket in the front of it. His hat, with scarce any brim to it, was stuck aslant on the top of a bushy head of queer-coloured hair. His shirt-collar was turned down completely over his stock, displaying a great quantity of dirt-coloured hair under his chin; while a pair of mustaches, of the same colour, were sprouting upon his upper lip, and a perpendicular tuft depended from his under lip. A quizzing-glass was stuck in his right eye, and in his hand he carried a whip with a shining silver head. The other was almost equally distinguished by the elegance of his appearance. He had a glossy hat, a purple-coloured velvet waistcoat, two pins

connected by little chains in his stock, a bottle-green surtout, sky-blue trousers, and a most splendid riding-whip. In short, who should these be but our old friends, Messrs Titmouse and Snap? Whoever they might be—and whatever their other accomplishments, it was plain that they were perfect novices on horseback; and their horses had every appearance of having been much fretted and worried by their riders. To the surprise of Mr Aubrey and his sister, these two personages attempted to rein in as they neared, and evidently intended to speak to them.

"Pray—a—sir, will you, sir, tell us," commenced Titmouse, with a desperate attempt to appear at his ease, as he vainly tried to make his horse stand still for a moment—"isn't there a place called—called"—here his horse, whose sides were constantly being galled by the spurs of its unconscious rider, began to back a little; then to go on one side, putting Titmouse into such a fright that he dropped his glass from his eye, and seized hold of the pummel. Nevertheless, to show the lady how completely he was at his ease all the while, he levelled a great many oaths and curses at the unfortunate eyes and soul of his wayward brute; who, however, not in the least moved by them, but infinitely disliking the spurs of its rider and the twisting round of its mouth by the reins, seemed more and more inclined for mischief, and backed close up to the edge of the ditch.

"I'm afraid, sir," said Mr Aubrey kindly and very earnestly, "you are not much accustomed to riding. Will you permit *me*?"—

"Oh, yes—ye—ye—s, sir, I *am* though,—uncommon—whee-o-uy! whuoy!"—(then a fresh volley of oaths). "Oh, dear, 'pon my soul—ho! my eyes!—what—what *is* he going to do! Snap! Snap!"—"Twas, however, quite in vain to call on *that* gentleman for assistance; for he had grown as pale as death, on finding that his own brute seemed strongly disposed to follow the infernal example

of the other, or rather, as it were, the *converse* thereof, and was particularly inclined to rear up on its hind-legs! The very first motion of that sort brought Snap's heart, not large enough, perhaps, to choke him, into his mouth. Titmouse's beast, in the meanwhile, suddenly wheeled round; and throwing its hind feet into the air, sent its terrified rider flying, head over heels, into the very middle of the hedge, from which he dropped into the soft wet ditch on the road-side. Both Mr Aubrey and his groom immediately dismounted, and secured the horse, who, having got rid of its ridiculous rider, stood perfectly quiet. Titmouse proved to be more frightened than hurt. His hat was crushed flat on his head, and half the left side of his face covered with mud—as, indeed, were his clothes all the way down. The groom, almost splitting with laughter, helped him on his horse again; and as Mr and Miss Aubrey were setting off—"I think, sir," said the former politely, "you were inquiring for some place?"

"Yes, sir," quoth Snap. "Isn't there a place called Ya—Yat—Yat—(be quiet, you brute!)—Yatton about here?"

"Yes, sir—straight on," replied Mr Aubrey. Miss Aubrey hastily threw her veil over her face, to conceal her laughter, urging on her horse; and she and her brother were soon out of sight of the strangers.

"I say, Snap," quoth Titmouse, when he had in a measure cleansed himself, and they had both got a little composed, "see that lovely gal?"

"Fine gal—devilish fine!" replied Snap.

"I'm blessed if I don't think—'pon my life, I believe we've met before!"

"Didn't seem to know you though!" quoth Snap, somewhat drily.

"Ah! you don't know—How uncommon infernal unfortunate for all this to happen just at the moment when"—Titmouse became silent; for all of a sudden he recollected when and where, and under what circumstances, he had seen Miss Aubrey before, and which his vanity would not

allow of his telling Snap. The fact was, that she had once accompanied her sister-in-law to Messrs Tag-rag and Company's, to purchase some small matter of mercery. Titmouse had served them; and his absurdity of manner and personal appearance had provoked a smile, which Titmouse a little misconstrued; for when, a Sunday or two afterwards, he met her in the Park, the little fool actually had the audacity to nod to her—she having not the slightest notion who the little wretch might be—and of course not having, on the present occasion, the least recollection of him. The reader will recollect that this incident had made a deep impression on the mind of Mr Titmouse.

The coincidence was really not a little singular—but to return to Mr Aubrey and his sister. After riding a mile or two further up the road, they leaped over a low mound or fence, which formed the extreme boundary of that part of the estate; and having passed through a couple of fields, entered the eastern extremity of that fine avenue of elms, at the higher end of which stood Kate's favourite tree, and also Waters and his under-bailiff—who looked to her like a couple of executioners, only awaiting the fiat of her brother. The sun shone brightly upon the doomed sycamore—"the axe was laid at its root." As they rode up the avenue, Kate begged very hard for mercy; but for once her brother seemed obdurate—the tree, he said, *must* come down—'twas all nonsense to think of leaving it standing any longer!

"Remember, Charles," said she passionately, as they drew up, "how we've all of us romped and sported under it! Poor papa also!"

"See, Kate, how rotten it is," said her brother; and riding close to it, with his whip he snapped off two or three of its feeble silvery-grey branches—"it's high time for it to come down."

"It fills the grass all round with little branches, sir, whenever there's the least breath of wind," said Waters.

"It won't hardly hold a crow's weight on the topmost branches, sir,"

added Dickons, the under-bailiff, very modestly.

"Had it any leaves last summer?" inquired Mr Aubrey.

"I don't think, sir," replied Waters, "it had a hundred all over it!"

"Really, Kate," said her brother, somewhat irresolutely, "'tis such a melancholy, unsightly object, when seen from any part of the Hall"—turning round on his horse to look at the rear of the Hall, which was at about two hundred yards' distance. "It looks such an old withered thing amongst the fresh green trees around it—'tis quite a painful contrast." Kate had gently urged on her horse while her brother was speaking, till she was close beside him. "Charles," said she tenderly, and in a low whisper, "does not it remind you a little of poor old mamma, with her grey hairs, among her children and grandchildren? *She* is not out of place amongst us—is she?" Her eyes filled with tears. So did her brother's.

"Dearest Kate," said he, with emotion, affectionately grasping her little hand, "you have triumphed! The old tree shall never be cut down in my time! Waters, let the tree stand; and if anything *is* to be done to it—let the greatest possible *care* be taken of it." Miss Aubrey turned her head aside to conceal her emotion. Had they been alone, she would have flung her arms round her brother's neck.

"If I were to speak my mind, sir," said the compliant Waters, seeing the turn things were taking, "I should say, with our young lady, the old tree's quite a kind of ornament in this here situation, and (as one might say) it sets off the rest." [It was he who had been worrying Mr Aubrey for the last three years to have it cut down!]

"Well," replied Mr Aubrey, unable to restrain a smile at Mr Waters' rapid conversion, "however that may be, let me hear no more of cutting it down—Ah! what does old Jolter want here?" said he, observing an old tenant of that name, almost bent double with age, hobbling towards them. He was wrapped up in a coarse thick blue

coat; his hair was long and white; his eyes dim and glassy with age.

"I don't know, sir—I'll go and see," said Waters.

"What's the matter, Jolter?" he inquired, stepping forward to meet him.

"Nothing much, sir," replied the old man, feebly, and panting, taking off his hat, and bowing very low towards Mr and Miss Aubrey.

"Put your hat on, my old friend," said Mr Aubrey kindly.

"I only come to bring you this bit of paper, sir, if you please," said the old man, addressing Waters. "You said, a while ago, as how I was always to bring you papers that were left with me; and this"—taking one out of his pocket—"was left with me only about an hour ago. It's seemingly a lawyer's paper, and was left by an uncommon gay young chap. He axed me my name, and then he looked at the paper, and read it all over to me, but I couldn't make anything of it."

"What is it?" inquired Mr Aubrey, as Waters cast his eye over a sheet of paper, partly printed and partly written.

"Why, it seems the old story, sir—that slip of waste land, sir. Mr Tomkins is at it again, sir."

"Well, if he chooses to spend his money in that way, I can't help it," said Mr Aubrey with a smile. "Let me look at the paper." He did so. "Yes, it seems the same kind of thing as before.—Well," handing it back, "send it to Mr Parkinson, and tell him to look to it; and, at all events, take care that poor old Jolter comes to no trouble by the business. How's the old wife, Jacob?"

"She's dreadful bad with rheumatis, sir; but the stuff that Madam sends her does her a woundy deal of good, sir, in her inside."

"Well, we must try if we can't send her some more; and, harkee, if the goodwife doesn't get better soon, send us up word to the Hall, and we'll have the doctor call on her. Now, Kate, let us away homeward." And they were soon out of sight.

I do not intend to deal so unceremoniously or summarily as Mr Aubrey did, with the document which had been brought to his notice by Jolter, then handed over to Waters, and by him, according to orders, transmitted the next day to Mr Parkinson, Mr Aubrey's attorney. It was what is called a "DECLARATION IN EJECTMENT;" touching which, in order to throw a ray or two of light upon a document which will make no small figure in this history, I shall try to give the reader a little information on the point; and hope that a little attention to what now follows, will be repaid in due time. Here beginneth, then, a little lecture on law.

If Jones claim a *debt*, or *goods*, or *damages* from Smith, one should think that, if he went to law, the action would be entitled "Jones *versus* Smith;" and so it is. But behold, if it be *LAND* which is claimed by Jones from Smith, the style and name of the cause stand thus:—"DOE, on the demise of Jones, *versus* ROE." Instead, therefore, of Jones and Smith fighting out the matter in their own proper names, they set up a couple of puppets (called "John Doe" and "Richard Roe"), who fall upon one another in a very quaint fashion, after the manner of Punch and Judy. John Doe pretends to be the real plaintiff, and Richard Roe the real defendant. John Doe says that the land which Richard Roe has, is his (the said John Doe's), because Jones (the real plaintiff) gave him a lease of it; and Jones is then called "the lessor of the plaintiff." John Doe further says that one Richard Roe (who calls himself by the very significant and expressive name of a "*Casual Ejector*"), came and turned him out, and so John Doe brings his action against Richard Roe. 'Tis a fact, that whenever land is sought to be recovered in England, this anomalous and farcical proceeding must be adopted.* It is the duty of the *real* plaintiff (Jones) to serve on the *real* defendant (Smith) a copy of the queer document which I shall proceed to lay before the reader; and

* See APPENDIX.

also to append to it an affectionate note, intimating the serious consequences which will ensue upon inattention or contumacy. The "Declaration," then, which had been served upon old Jolter, and so cavalierly treated by Mr Aubrey, was in the words, letters, and figures following—that is to say:—

"IN THE KING'S BENCH.

"Michaelmas Term,
the — of King —

"YORKSHIRE, to-wit—Richard Roe was attached to answer John Doe of a plea wherefore the said Richard Roe, with force and arms, &c., entered into two messuages, two dwelling-houses, two cottages, two stables, two out-houses, two yards, two gardens, two orchards, twenty acres of land covered with water, twenty acres of arable land, twenty acres of pasture land, and twenty acres of other land, with the appurtenances, situated in *Yatton*, in the county of York, which *TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE*, Esquire, had demised to the said John Doe for a term which is not yet expired, and ejected him from his said farm, and other wrongs to the said John Doe there did, to the great damage of the said John Doe, and against the peace of our Lord the King, &c.; and Thereupon the said John Doe, by *OLLY GAMMON*, his attorney, complains,—

"That whereas the said *TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE*, on the —th day of August, in the year of our Lord 18—, at *Yatton* aforesaid, in the county aforesaid, had demised the same tenements, with the appurtenances, to the said John Doe, to have and to hold the same to the said John Doe and his assigns thenceforth, for and during, and unto the full end and term of twenty years thence next ensuing, and fully to be completed and ended! By virtue of which said demise, the said John Doe entered into the said tenements, with the appurtenances, and became and was thereof possessed for the said term, so to him thereof granted as aforesaid. And the said John Doe being so thereof possessed, the said Richard Roe afterwards, to-wit, on the day and year aforesaid, at the parish

aforsaid, in the county aforsaid, with force and arms, that is to say with swords, staves, and knives, &c., entered into the said tenements, with the appurtenances, which the said **TITTLEBAT TYMOUSE** had demised to the said John Doe in manner and for the term aforsaid, which is not yet expired, and ejected the said John

Doe out of his said farm; and other wrongs to the said John Doe then and there did, to the great damage of the said John Doe, and against the peace of our said Lord the now King. Wherefore the said John Doe saith that he is injured, and hath sustained damage to the value of £50, and therefore he brings his suit, &c.

"**SQUEAL**, for the Plaintiff.
GROWL, for the Defendant.

{ Pledges of } John Den.
 { Prosecution. } Richard Fenn.

"**MR JACOB JOLTER**,

"I am informed that you are in possession of, or claim title to, the premises in this Declaration of Ejectment mentioned, or to some part thereof: And I, being sued in this action as a *casual ejector* only, and having no claim or title to the same, do advise you to appear, next Hilary term, in His Majesty's Court of King's Bench at Westminster, by some attorney of that Court; and then and there, by a rule to be made of the same Court, to cause yourself to be made defendant in my stead; otherwise I shall suffer judgment to be entered against me by default, and you will be turned out of possession.

"Your loving friend,

"**RICHARD ROE**.

"Dated this 8th day
 December 18—."*

You may regard the above document in the light of a deadly and destructive missile thrown by an unperceived enemy into a peaceful citadel; attracting, at the moment, no particular notice from the innocent unsuspecting inhabitants—amongst whom, nevertheless, it presently explodes, and all is terror, death, and ruin.

Mr Parkinson, Mr Aubrey's solicitor, who resided at Grilston, the post-town nearest to Yatton, from which it was distant about six or seven miles, was sitting on the evening of Tuesday the 28th December 18—, in his office, nearly finishing a letter to his London agents, Messrs Runnington and Company—one of the most eminent firms

* *Blackstone's Commentaries*, vol. iii. App. pp. ix. x.

in the profession—and which he was desirous of despatching by that night's mail. Amongst other papers which have come into my hands in connection with this history, I have happened to light on the letter which he was writing; and as it is not long, and affords a specimen of the way in which business is carried on between town and country attorneys and solicitors, here followeth a copy of it:—

"Grilston, 27th Dec. 18—.

"DEAR SIRS,

"*Re Middleton*.

"Have you got the marriage settlements between these parties ready? If so, please send them as soon as possible; for both the lady's and gentleman's friends are (as usual in such cases) very pressing for them.

"*Puddinghead v. Quickwit*.

"Plaintiff bought a horse of defendant in November last, 'warranted sound,' and paid for it on the spot £64. A week afterwards, his attention was accidentally drawn to the animal's head; and to his infinite surprise, he discovered that the left eye was a *glass eye*, so closely resembling the other in colour, that the difference could not be discovered except on a very close examination. I have seen it myself, and it is indeed wonderfully well done. My countrymen are certainly pretty sharp hands in such matters—but this beats everything I ever heard of. Surely this is a breach of the warranty? Or is it to be considered a *patent* defect, which would

not be within the warranty?—Please take pleader's opinion, and particularly as to whether the horse could be brought into court to be viewed by the court and jury, which would have a great effect. If your pleader thinks the action will lie, let him draw declaration, *venue*—Lancashire (for my client would have no chance with a Yorkshire jury), if you think the *venue* is transitory, and that defendant would not be successful on a motion to change it. *Qu.*—Is the man who sold the horse to defendant a *competent*† *witness* for the plaintiff, to prove that, when he sold it to defendant, it had but one eye, and that on this account the horse was sold for less?

“*Mule v. Stott.*”

“I cannot get these parties to come to an amicable settlement. You may remember, from the two former actions, that it is for damages on account of two geese of defendant having been found trespassing on a few yards of a field belonging to the plaintiff. Defendant now contends that he is entitled to common, *pour cause de voisinage*. *Qu.*—Can this be shown under Not Guilty, or must it be pleaded specially?—About two years ago, by the way, a pig belonging to plaintiff got into defendant's flower-garden, and did at least £3 worth of damage—Can this be in any way set off against the present action? There is no hope of avoiding a third trial, as the parties are now more exasperated against each other than ever, and the expense (as at least fifteen witnesses will be called on each side) will amount to upwards of £250. You had better retain Mr Cacklegander.

“*Re Lords Oldacre and De la Zouch.*”

“Are the deeds herein engrossed? As it is a matter of magnitude, and the foundation of extensive and permanent family arrangements, pray let the greatest care be taken to secure accuracy. Please take special care of the stamps”——

* See APPENDIX.

† *Ibid.*

Thus far had the worthy writer proceeded with his letter, when Waters made his appearance, delivering to him the declaration in ejectment which had been served upon old Jolter, and also the instructions concerning it which had been given by Mr Aubrey. After Mr Parkinson had asked particularly concerning Mr Aubrey's health, and what had brought him so suddenly to Yatton, he cast his eye hastily over the “Declaration”—and at once and contemptuously came to the same conclusion concerning it which had been arrived at by Waters and Mr Aubrey, viz., that it was another little arrow out of the quiver of the litigious Mr Tomkins. As soon as Waters had left, Mr Parkinson thus proceeded to conclude his letter:—

“*Doe dem. Titmouse v. Roe.*”

“I enclose you Declaration herein, served yesterday. No doubt it is the disputed slip of waste land adjoining the cottage of old Jacob Jolter, a tenant of Mr Aubrey of Yatton, that is sought to be recovered. I am quite sick of this petty annoyance, as also is Mr Aubrey, who is now down here. Please call on Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, of Saffron Hill, and settle the matter finally, on the best terms you can; it being Mr Aubrey's wish that old Jolter (who is very feeble and timid) should suffer no inconvenience. I observe a new lessor of the plaintiff, with a very singular name. I suppose it is the name of some prior holder of the acre or two of property at present held by Mr Tomkins.

“Hoping soon to hear from you (particularly about the marriage-settlement), I am,

“Dear Sirs,

“(With all the compliments of the season),

“Yours very truly,

“JAMES PARKINSON.

“MESSRS RUNNINGTON & Co.

“P.S.—The oysters and codfish came to hand in excellent order, for which please accept my best thanks.

“I shall remit you in a day or two £100 on account.”

This letter, lying among some twenty or thirty similar ones on Mr Runnington's table, on the morning of its arrival in town, was opened in its turn; and then, in like manner, with most of the others, handed over to the managing clerk, in order that he might inquire into and report upon the state of the various matters of business referred to. As to the last item (*Doe dem. Titmouse v. Roe*) in Mr Parkinson's letter, there seemed no particular reason for hurrying; so two or three days had elapsed before Mr Runnington, having some little casual business to transact with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, bethought himself of looking at his Diary, to see if there were not something else that he had to do with that very sharp 'house.' Putting, therefore, the Declaration in *Doe d. Titmouse v. Roe* into his pocket, it was not long before he was to be seen at the office in Saffron Hill—and in the very room in which had been the scene of several memorable interviews between Mr Tittlebat Titmouse and Messrs Quirk,

Gammon, and Snap. I shall not detail what transpired on that occasion between Mr Runnington and Messrs Quirk and Gammon, with whom he was closeted for nearly an hour. On quitting the office his cheek was flushed, and his manner somewhat excited. After walking a little way in a moody manner, and with slow step, he suddenly jumped into a hackney coach, and within a quarter of an hour's time had secured an inside place in the Tally-ho coach, which started for York at two o'clock that afternoon—much doubting within himself, the while, whether he ought not to have set off at once in a post-chaise and four. He then made one or two calls in the Temple; and, hurrying home to the office, made hasty arrangements for his sudden journey into Yorkshire. He was a calm and experienced man—in fact, a first-rate man of business; and you may be assured that this rapid and decisive movement of his had been the result of some very startling disclosure made to him by Messrs Quirk and Gammon.

CHAPTER IV.

COUNTRY LIFE; YATTON; FOTHERINGHAM; THE TWO BEAUTIES; AND AN ANGEL BESET BY AN IMP.

LET us now glide back to the delightful solitude which we reluctantly quitted so short a time ago.

Mr Aubrey was a studious and ambitious man; and in acceding so readily to the wishes of his wife and sister, to spend the Christmas recess at Yatton, had been not a little influenced by one consideration, which he had not thought it worth while to mention—namely, that it would afford him an opportunity of addressing himself with effect to an important and complicated question, which was to be brought before the House shortly after its re-

assembling, and of which he then knew, comparatively speaking, nothing at all. For this purpose he had had a quantity of Parliamentary papers, &c. &c. &c., packed up and sent down by coach; and he quite gloated over the prospect of their being duly deposited upon his table, in the tranquil leisure of his library at Yatton. But quietly as he supposed all this to have been managed, Mrs Aubrey and Kate had a most accurate knowledge of his movements, and a shrewd suspicion of his purposes, and resolved within themselves (being therein com-

forted and assisted by old Mrs Aubrey, that, as at their instances Mr Aubrey had come down to Yatton, so they would take care that he should have not merely nominal, but real holidays. Unless he thought fit to rise at an early hour in the morning (which Mrs Aubrey, junior, took upon herself to say *she* would take care should never be the case), it was decreed that he should not be allowed to waste more than two hours a-day alone in his library. 'Twas therefore in vain for him to sit at breakfast with eye alant and thought-laden brow, as if meditating a long day's seclusion; somehow or another, he never got more than an hour to himself. He was often momentarily petulant on these occasions, and soon saw through the designs of his enemies; but he so heartily and tenderly loved them—so thoroughly appreciated the affection which dictated their little manoeuvres—that he soon surrendered at discretion, and, in fact, placed himself almost entirely at their mercy; resolving to make up for lost time on his return to town, and earnestly hoping that the interests of the nation would not suffer in the meanwhile! In short, the ladies of Yatton had agreed on their line of operations: that almost every night of their stay in the country should be devoted either to entertaining or visiting their neighbours; and as a preparatory movement, that the days, weather permitting, should be occupied with exercise in the open air; in making "morning" calls on neighbours at several miles' distance from the Hall and from each other; and from which they generally returned only in time enough to dress for dinner. As soon, indeed, as the *York True Blue*, the leading county paper, had announced the arrival at Yatton of "Charles Aubrey, Esq., M.P., and his family, for the Christmas recess," the efforts of Mrs and Miss Aubrey were most powerfully seconded by a constant succession of visitors—by

"Troops of friends,"

as the lodge-keeper could have testified; for he and his buxom wife were

continually opening and shutting the great gates. On the Monday after Christmas-day came cantering up to the Hall Lord De la Zouch and Mr Delamere, of course staying to luncheon, and bearing a most pressing invitation from Lady De la Zouch, zealously backed by themselves, for the Aubreys to join a large party at Fotheringham Castle on New-Year's Eve. This was accepted—a day and a night were thus gone at a swoop. The same thing happened with the Oldfields, their nearest neighbours; with Sir Percival Pickering at Luddington Court, where was a superb new picture-gallery to be critically inspected by Mr Aubrey—the Earl of Oldacre, a college friend of Mr Aubrey's—the venerable Lady Stratton, the earliest friend and school-fellow of old Mrs Aubrey, and so forth. Then Kate had several visits to pay on her own account; and, being fond of horseback, but not of riding about the country with only a groom in attendance, her brother *must* accompany her on these occasions. The first week of their stay in the country was devoted to visiting their neighbours and friends in the way I have stated; the next was to be spent in receiving them at Yatton, during which time the old Hall was to ring with merry hospitality.

Then there was a little world of other matters to occupy Mr Aubrey's attention, and which naturally crowded upon him, living so little as he had latterly lived at Yatton. He often had a kind of levee of his humbler neighbours, tenants, and constituents; and on these occasions his real goodness of nature, his simplicity, his patience, his forbearance, his sweetness of temper, his benevolence, shone conspicuous. With all these more endearing qualities, there was yet a placid dignity about him which would have chilled undue familiarity, and repelled presumption—had they ventured to manifest themselves. He had here no motive or occasion for ostentation, or, as it is called, popularity-hunting, had he been so disposed. In a sense, it might be said of him, that he was "monarch of all

he surveyed." It is true, he was member for the borough—an honour, however, for which he was indebted to the natural influence of his commanding position: one which left him his own master, not converting him into a paltry delegate, handcuffed by pledges on public questions, and laden with injunctions concerning petty local interests only—liable, moreover, to be called to an account at any moment by ignorant and insolent demagogues—but a member of Parliament, training to become a statesman, possessed of a free will, and, therefore, capable of independent and enlightened deliberations; placed by his fortune above the reach of temptation—but I shall not go any further, for the portraiture of a member of Parliament of those days suggests such a humiliating and bitter contrast, that I shall not ruffle either my own or my reader's temper by sketching one of modern days. On the occasions I have been alluding to, Mr Aubrey was not only condescending and generous, but practically acute and discriminating; qualities of his, these latter, so well known, however, as to leave him at length scarce any opportunities of exercising them. His quiet but decisive interference put an end to many local unpleasantnesses and annoyances, and caused his increasing absence from Yatton to be justly and deeply regretted. Was a lad, or a wench, taking to idle and dissolute courses? A kind, or, as the occasion required, a stern expostulation of his—for he was a justice of the peace moreover—brought them to their senses. He had a very happy knack of reasoning and laughing quarrelsome neighbours into reconciliation and good-humour. He had a keen eye after the practical details of agriculture; was equally quick at detecting an inconvenience, and appreciating, sometimes even suggesting, an effectual remedy; and had, on several occasions, brought such knowledge to bear effectively upon discussions in Parliament. His constituents, few in number undoubtedly, and humble, were quite satisfied with, and proud of, their

member; and his unexpected appearance diffused among them real and general satisfaction. As a landlord, he was beloved by his numerous tenantry; and well he might be, for never was there a more easy and liberal landlord: he might at any time have increased his rental by £1500 or £2000 a-year, as his steward frequently intimated to him—but in vain. "Ten thousand a-year," would say Mr Aubrey, "is far more than my necessities require—it affords me and my family every luxury that I can conceive of; and its magnitude reminds me constantly that hereafter I shall be called upon to give a strict and solemn account of *my* stewardship." I would my space could admit of my completing, as it ought to be completed, this portraiture of a true Christian gentleman!

As he rode up to the Hare and Hounds Inn, at Grilston, one morning, to transact some little business, and also to look in on the Farmers' Club, which was then holding one of its fortnightly meetings, every one touching his hat and bowing to him on each side of the long street, as he slowly passed up it, he perceived that his horse limped on one foot. On dismounting, therefore, he stopped to see what was the matter, while his groom took up the foot to examine it.

"Dey-vilish fine horse!" exclaimed the voice of one standing close beside him, and in a tone of most disagreeable confidence. The exclamation was addressed to Mr Aubrey; who, on turning surprisedly to the speaker, beheld a young man—('twas, in fact, Titmouse)—dressed in a style of the most extravagant absurdity. One hand was stuck into the hinder pocket of a stylish top-coat, the everlasting tip of a white pocket-handkerchief glistening at the mouth of his breast-pocket; the other held a cigar to his mouth, from which, after addressing Mr Aubrey with an air of signal assurance, he slowly expelled the smoke which he had inhaled. Mr Aubrey wondered where he had seen the ridiculous object before.

"The horses in these parts arn't to

be compared with them at London—eh, sir?" quoth Titmouse, approaching closer to Mr Aubrey and his groom, to see what the latter was doing—who, on hearing Titmouse's last sally, gave him a very significant look.

"I'm afraid the people here won't relish your remarks, sir!" replied Mr Aubrey calmly—hardly able to forbear a smile; at the same time, with an astonished air, scanning the figure of his companion from head to foot.

"Who cares?" inquired Titmouse, with a very energetic oath. At this moment up came a farmer, who, observing Mr Aubrey, made him a very low bow. Mr Aubrey's attention being at the moment occupied with Titmouse, he did not observe the salutation; not so with Titmouse, who, conceiving it to have been directed to himself, acknowledged it by taking off his hat with great grace! Mr Aubrey presently entered the house, having ordered his groom to bring back the horse in an hour's time.

"Pray," said he mildly to the landlady, "who is that person smoking the cigar outside?"

"Why, sir," she replied, "he calls himself Mr *Brown*; and has another with him here, who's going up to London by this afternoon's coach. This one stays behind a day or two longer. They're queer people, sir. Such dandies! Do nothing but smoke, and drink brandy-and-water, sir; only that t'other writes a good deal."

"Well, I wish you would remind him," said Mr Aubrey, smiling, "that, if he thinks fit to speak to *me* again, or in my presence, I am a magistrate, and have the power of fining him five shillings for every oath he utters."

"What! sir," quoth she, reverently—"has he been speaking to your worship? Well, I never!! He's the most forward little upstart I ever see'd!" said she, dropping her voice; "and the sooner he takes himself off from here the better; for he's always winking at the maids, and talking impudence to them. I'll box his ears, I warrant him, one of these times!" Mr Aubrey smiled, and went up-stairs.

"There don't seem to be *much*

wrong," quoth Titmouse to the groom, with a condescending air, as soon as Mr Aubrey had entered the house.

"Much you know about it, I don't guess!" quoth Sam, with a contemptuous smile.

"Who's your master, fellow?" inquired Titmouse, knocking off the ashes from the tip of his cigar.

"A gentleman. What's *yours*?"

"Curse your impudence, you vagabond"—The words were hardly out of his mouth before Sam, with a slight tap of his hand, had knocked Titmouse's glossy hat off his head, and Titmouse's purple-hued hair stood exposed to view, provoking the jeers and laughter of one or two bystanders. Titmouse appeared about to strike the groom; who, hastily giving the bridles of his horses into the hands of an ostler, threw himself into boxing attitude; and being a clean, tight-built, stout young fellow, looked a very formidable object, as he came squaring nearer and nearer to the dismayed Titmouse; and on behalf of the outraged honour of all the horses of Yorkshire, was just going to let fly his *one-two*, when a sharp tapping at the bow-window overhead startled him for a moment, interrupting his warlike demonstrations; and, on casting up his eyes, he beheld the threatening figure of his master, who was shaking his whip at him. He dropped his guard, touched his hat very humbly, and resumed his horses' bridles; muttering, however, to Titmouse, "If thou'rt a man, come down into t' yard, and I'll mak thee think a horse kicked thee, a liar as thou art!"

"Who's that gentleman gone up-stairs?" inquired Titmouse of the landlady, after he had sneaked into the inn.

"Squire Aubrey of Yatton," she replied tartly. Titmouse's face, previously very pale, flushed all over. "Ay, ay," she continued sharply—"thou *must* be chattering to the grand folks, and thou'st nearly put thy foot into't at last, I can tell thee; for that's a magistrate, and thou'st been a-swearin' afore him." Titmouse smiled rather faintly; and entering the parlour, affected to be engaged with a county newspaper; and he remained very

quiet for upwards of an hour, not venturing out of the room till he had seen off Mr Aubrey and his formidable Sam.

It was the hunting season; but Mr Aubrey, though he had as fine horses as were to be found in the county, and which were always at the service of his friends, partly from want of inclination, and partly from the delicacy of his constitution, never shared in the sports of the field. Now and then, however, he rode to cover, to see the hounds throw off, and exchange greetings with a great number of his friends and neighbours, on such occasions collected together. This he did, the morning after that on which he had visited Grilston, accompanied, at their earnest entreaty, by Mrs Aubrey and Kate. I am not painting angels, but describing frail human nature; and truth forces me to say, that Kate had a kind of a notion that on such occasions she did not appear to disadvantage. I protest I love her not the less for it! Is there a beautiful woman under the sun who is not really aware of her charms, and of the effect they produce upon our sex? Pooh! I never will believe to the contrary. 'Tis, indeed, ordered so! In Kate's composition this ingredient was but an imperceptible alloy in virgin gold. Now, how was it that she came to think of this hunting appointment? I do not exactly know; but still I recollect that when Lord De la Zouch last called at Yatton, he happened to mention it at lunch, and to say that he and one Geoffrey Lovel Delamere—but however that may be, behold, on a bright Thursday morning, Aubrey and his two lovely companions make their welcome appearance at the field, superbly mounted, and most cordially greeted by all present. Miss Aubrey attracted universal admiration; but there was one handsome youngster, his well-formed figure showing to great advantage in his new pink and leathers, who made a point of challenging her special notice, and in doing so, attracting that of all his envious fellow-sportsmen,—and that was Delamere. He seemed, indeed, infinitely more taken up with the little

party from Yatton than with the serious affair of the day. His horse, however, had an eye to business; and with erect ears, catching the first welcome signal sooner than the gallant person who sate upon it, sprang off like lightning, and would have left its abstracted rider behind, had he not been a first-rate "seat." In fact, Kate herself was not quite sufficiently on her guard; and her eager filly suddenly put in requisition all her rider's little strength and skill to rein her in—which having done, Kate's eye looked rather anxiously after her late companion, who, however, had already cleared the first hedge, and was fast making up to the scattering scarlet crowd. Oh, the bright exhilarating scene!

"Heigh ho—Agnes!" said Kate, with a slight sigh, as soon as Delamere had disappeared—"I was very nearly off."

"So was somebody else, Kate!" said Mrs Aubrey, with a demure smile.

"This is a very cool contrivance of yours, Kate,—bringing us here this morning," said her brother.

"What do you mean, Charles?" she inquired, slightly reddening. He good-naturedly tapped her shoulder with his whip, laughed, urged his horse into a canter, and they were all soon on their way to General Grim's, an old friend of the late Mr Aubrey's.

The party assembled on New-Year's Eve at Fotheringham Castle, the magnificent residence of Lord De la Zouch, was numerous and brilliant. The Aubreys arrived about five o'clock; and on emerging from their respective apartments into the drawing-room, soon after the welcome sound of the dinner-bell—Mr Aubrey leading in his lovely wife, followed shortly afterwards by his beautiful sister—they attracted general attention. He himself looked handsome, for the brisk country air had brought out a glow upon his too frequently pallid countenance—pallid with the unwholesome atmosphere, the late hours, the wasting excitement of the House of Commons; and his smile was cheerful, his eye bright and penetrating. Nothing makes such quick triumphant way in English so-

ciety, as the promise of speedy political distinction. It will supply to its happy possessor the want of family and fortune; it rapidly melts away all distinctions. The obscure but eloquent commoner finds himself suddenly standing in the rarefied atmosphere of privilege and exclusiveness; the familiar equal, often the conscious superior, of the haughtiest peer of the realm. A single successful speech in the House of Commons, opens before its utterer the shining doors of fashion and greatness, as if by magic. It is as if were POWER stepping into its palace, welcomed by gay crowds of eager obsequious expectants. Who would not press forward to grasp in anxious welcome the hand which, in a few short years, may dispense the glittering baubles sighed after by the great, and the more substantial patronage of office—which may point public opinion in any direction? But, to go no further, what if to all this be added a previous position in society, such as that occupied by Mr Aubrey! There were several charming women, married and single, in that splendid drawing-room; but there were two girls, in very different styles of beauty, who were soon allowed by all present to carry off the palm between them—I mean Miss Aubrey and Lady Caroline Caversham, the only daughter of the Marchioness of Redborough, both of whom were on a visit at the castle. Lady Caroline and Miss Aubrey were of about the same age, and dressed almost exactly alike, viz. in white satin; only Lady Caroline wore a brilliant diamond necklace, whereas Kate had chosen to appear without a single ornament.

Lady Caroline was a trifle the taller, and had a stately carriage. Her hair was black as jet—her features were refined and delicate; but they wore a cold, haughty expression. After a glance at her half-closed eyes, and the swan-like curve of her snowy neck, you unconsciously withdrew from her, as from an inaccessible beauty. The more you looked at her, the more she satisfied your critical scrutiny; but your *feelings* went not out towards

her—they were, in a manner, chilled and repulsed. Look, now, at our own Kate Aubrey—nay, never fear to place her beside yon supercilious divinity—look at her, and your *heart* acknowledges her loveliness; your soul thrills at sight of her bewitching blue eyes—eyes now sparkling with excitement, then languishing with softness, in accordance with the varying emotions of a sensitive nature—a most susceptible heart. How her sunny curls harmonise with the delicacy and richness of her complexion! Her figure, observe, is, of the two, a trifle fuller than her rival's—stay, don't let your admiring eyes settle so intently upon her budding form, or you will confuse Kate—turn away, or she will shrink from you like the sensitive plant! Lady Caroline seems the exquisite but frigid production of a skilful statuary, who had caught a divinity in the very act of disdainfully setting her foot for the first time upon this poor earth of ours; but Kate is a living and breathing beauty—as it were, fresh from the hand of God himself!

Kate was very affectionately greeted by Lady De la Zouch, a lofty and dignified woman of about fifty; so also by Lord De la Zouch; but when young Delamere welcomed her with a palpable embarrassment of manner, a more brilliant colour stole into her cheek, and a keen observer might have noticed a little, rapid, undulating motion in her bosom, which told of some inward emotion. And a keen observer Kate at that moment had in her beautiful rival, from whose cheek, as that of Kate deepened in its roseate bloom, faded away the colour entirely, leaving it the hue of the lily—while her bosom heaved, almost visibly. Her drooping eyelids could scarcely conceal the glances of alarm and anger which she darted at her plainly successful rival in the affections of the future Lord De la Zouch. Kate was quickly aware of this state of matters; and it required no little self-control to appear *un-aware* of it. Delamere took her down to dinner, and seated himself beside her, and unconsciously paid her such pointed attentions as at length really distress-

ed poor Kate; and she was quite relieved when the time came for the ladies to withdraw. That she had not a secret yearning towards Delamere, the frequent companion of her early days, I cannot assert, because I know it would be contrary to the fact. Circumstances had kept him on the Continent for more than a year between the period of his quitting Eton and going to Oxford, where another twelvemonth had slipped away without his visiting Yorkshire: thus two years had elapsed—and behold, blooming Kate had become a woman, and he a man! They had mutual predispositions towards each other, and 'twas mere accident which of them first manifested symptoms of fondness—the same result must have followed, namely, to use a great word, reciprocation. Lord and Lady De la Zouch idolised their son, and were old and firm friends of the Aubrey family; and, if Delamere really formed an attachment to one of Miss Aubrey's beauty, accomplishments, talent, amiability, and ancient family—why should he not be gratified? Kate, whether she would or not, was set down to the piano, Lady Caroline accompanying her on the harp—on which she usually performed with mingled skill and grace; but on the present occasion, both the fair performers found fault with their instruments—then with themselves—and presently gave up the attempt in despair. But when, at a later period of the evening, Kate's spirits had been a little exhilarated with dancing, and she sat down, at Lord De la Zouch's request, and gave that exquisite song from the *Tempest*—"Where the bee sucks"—all the witchery of her voice and manner had returned; and as for Delamere he would have given the world to marry her that minute, and so for ever extinguish the hopes of—as he imagined—two or three nascent competitors for the beautiful prize, then listening to his nightingale.

That Kate was good as beautiful, the following little incident, which happened to her on the ensuing evening, will show. There was a girl in the village at Yatton, about sixteen

or seventeen years old, called Phoebe Williams; a very pretty girl, and who had spent about two years at the Hall as a laundry-maid, but had been obliged, some few months before the time I am speaking of, to return to her parents in the village, ill of a decline. She was a sweet-tempered girl, and all her fellow-servants had felt great interest in her, as also did Miss Aubrey. Mrs Aubrey daily sent her jellies, sago, and other such matters, suitable for the poor girl's condition; and about a quarter of an hour after her return from Fotheringham, Miss Aubrey, finding one of the female servants about to set off with some of the above-mentioned articles, and hearing that poor Phoebe was getting rapidly worse, instead of retiring to her room to undress, slipped on an additional shawl, and resolved to accompany the servant to the village. She said not a word to either her mother, her sister-in-law, or her brother; but simply left word with her maid whither she was going, and that she should quickly return. It was snowing smartly when Kate set off; but she cared not, hurried on by the impulse of kindness, which led her to pay perhaps a last visit to the humble sufferer. She walked alongside of the elderly female servant, asking her a number of questions about Phoebe, and her sorrowing father and mother. It was nearly dark as they quitted the Park gates, and snowing, if anything, faster than when they had left the Hall. Kate, wrapping her shawl still closer round her slender figure, her face being pretty well protected by her veil, hurried on, and they soon reached Williams' cottage. Its humble tenants were, as may be imagined, not a little surprised at her appearance at such an hour and in such inclement weather, and so apparently unattended. Poor Phoebe, worn to a shadow, was sitting opposite the fire, in a little wooden arm-chair, and propped up by a pillow. She trembled, and her lips moved on seeing Miss Aubrey, who, sitting down on a stool beside her, after laying aside her snow-whitened shawl and bonnet, spoke to her in the most gentle and soothing strain imaginable.

What a contrast in their two figures! 'Twould have been no violent stretch of imagination to say, that Catherine Aubrey at that moment looked like a ministering angel sent to comfort the wretched sufferer in her extremity. Phoebe's father and mother stood on each side of the little fireplace, gazing with tearful eyes upon their only child, soon about to depart from them for ever. The poor girl was indeed a touching object. She had been, as I have said, very pretty, but now her face was white and woefully emaciated—the dread impress of consumption was upon it. Her wasted fingers were clasped together on her lap, holding between them a little handkerchief, with which, evidently with great effort, she occasionally wiped the dampness from her face.

"You're very good, ma'am," she whispered, "to come to see me, and so late. They say it's a sad cold night."

"I heard, Phoebe, that you were not so well, and I thought I would just step along with Margaret, who has brought you some more jelly. Did you like the last?"

"Y-e-s, ma'am," she replied hesitatingly; "but it's *very* hard for me to swallow anything now, my throat feels so sore." Here her mother shook her head and looked aside; for the doctor had only that morning explained to her the nature of the distressing symptom to which her daughter was alluding—as evidencing the very last stage of her fatal disorder.

"I'm very sorry to hear you say so, Phoebe," replied Miss Aubrey. "Do you think there's anything else that Mrs Jackson could make for you?"

"No, ma'am, thank you; I feel it's no use trying to swallow anything more," said poor Phoebe, faintly.

"While there's life," whispered Miss Aubrey, in a subdued, hesitating tone, "there's hope—*they say*." Phoebe shook her head mournfully.

"Don't stop long, dear lady—it's getting very late for you to be out alone. Father will go"—

"Never mind me, Phoebe—I can

take care of myself. I hope you mind what good Dr Tatham says to you? You know this sickness is from God, Phoebe. He knows what is best for his creatures."

"Thank God, ma'am, I think I feel resigned. I know it is God's will; but I'm very sorry for poor father and mother—they'll be so lone like when they don't see Phoebe about." Her father gazed intently at her, and the tears ran trickling down his cheeks; her mother put her apron before her face, and shook her head in silent anguish. Miss Aubrey did not speak for a few moments. "I see you have been reading the prayer-book mamma gave you when you were at the Hall," said she at length, observing the little volume lying open on Phoebe's lap.

"Yes, ma'am—I was *trying*; but somehow lately, I can't read, for there's a kind of mist comes over my eyes, and I can't see."

"That's weakness, Phoebe," said Miss Aubrey, quickly but tremulously.

"May I make bold, ma'am," commenced Phoebe languidly, after a hesitating pause, "to ask *you* to read the little psalm I was trying to read a while ago? I should so like to hear *you*!"

"I'll try, Phoebe," said Miss Aubrey, taking the book, which was open at the sixth psalm. 'Twas a severe trial, for her feelings were not a little excited already. But how could she refuse the dying girl? So Miss Aubrey began, a little indistinctly, in a low tone, and with frequent pauses; for the tears every now and then quite obscured her sight. She managed, however, to get as far as the sixth verse, which was thus:—

"I am weary of my groaning: every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with tears: My beauty is gone for very trouble."

Here Kate's voice suddenly stopped. She hid her face for a moment or two in her handkerchief, and said hastily, "I can't read any more, Phoebe!" Every one in the little room was in tears except poor Phoebe, who seemed past that.

"It's time for me to go, now, Phoebe. We'll send some one early in the morning to know how you are," said Miss Aubrey, rising and putting on her bonnet and shawl. She contrived to beckon Phoebe's mother to the back of the room, and silently slipped a couple of guineas into her hands; for she knew the mournful occasion there would soon be for such assistance! She then left, peremptorily declining the attendance of Phoebe's father—saying that it *must* be dark when she could not find the way to the Hall, which was almost in a straight line from the cottage, and little more than a quarter of a mile off. It was very much darker, and it still snowed, though not so thickly as when she had come. She and Margaret walked side by side, at a quick pace, talking together about poor Phoebe. Just as she was approaching the extremity of the village, nearest the park, and with her mind's eye filled with the sad figure of Phoebe,—

"Ah! my lovely gals!" exclaimed a voice, in a low but most offensive tone—"alone? How uncommon!"—Miss Aubrey for a moment seemed thunderstruck at so sudden and unprecedented an occurrence: then she hurried on with a beating heart, whispering to Margaret to keep close to her, and not to be alarmed. The speaker, however, kept pace with them.

"Lovely gals!—wish I'd an umbrella, my angels!—Take my arm? Ah! Pretty gals!"

"Who *are* you, sir?" at length exclaimed Kate spiritedly, suddenly stopping, and turning to the rude speaker.

Who else should it be but Tittlebat Titmouse! "Who am I? Ah, ha, lovely gals! one that loves the pretty gals!"

"Do you know, fellow, who I am?" inquired Miss Aubrey indignantly, flinging aside her veil, and disclosing her beautiful face, white as death, but indistinctly visible in the darkness, to her insolent assailant.

"No, 'pon my soul, no; but lovely gal! lovely gal!—'pon my life, spirited

gal!—do you no harm! Take my arm?"—

"Wretch! ruffian! How dare you insult a lady in this manner? Do you know who I am? My name, sir, is Aubrey—I am Miss Aubrey, of the Hall! Do not think!"—

Titmouse felt as if he were on the point of dropping down dead at that moment, with amazement and terror; and when Miss Aubrey's servant screamed out at the top of her voice, "Help!—help, there!" Titmouse, without uttering a syllable more, took to his heels, just as the door of a cottage, at only a few yards' distance, opened, and out rushed a strapping farmer, shouting—"Hey! what be t'matter?" You may guess his amazement on discovering Miss Aubrey, and his fury at learning the cause of her alarm. Out of doors he pelted, without his hat, uttering a volley of fearful imprecations, and calling on the unseen miscreant to come forward; for whom it was lucky that he had time to escape from a pair of fists that in a minute or two would have beaten his little carcass into a jelly! As soon as Miss Aubrey had a little recovered from her agitation, she set off home, accompanied by Margaret, and followed very closely by the farmer, with a tremendous knotted stick under his arm—(he wanted to have taken his double-barrelled gun)—and thus she soon reached the Hall, not a little tired and agitated. This incident, however, she kept to herself, and enjoined her two attendants to do the same; for she knew the distress it would have occasioned those whom she loved. As it was, she was somewhat sharply rebuked by her mother and brother, who had just sent two servants out in quest of her, and whom it was singular that she should have missed. This is not the place to give an account of the eccentric movements of our friend Titmouse; still there can be no harm in my just intimating that the sight of Miss Aubrey, on horseback, had half maddened the little fool; her image had never been effaced from his memory since the occasion on which, as already explained, he had

first seen her; and as soon as he had ascertained, through Snap's inquiries, who she was, he became more frenzied in the matter than before, because he thought he now saw a probability of obtaining her. "If, like children," says Edmund Burke, "we will cry for the moon, why, like children, we must — cry on." Whether this was not something like the position of Mr Tittlebat Titmouse, in his passion for

CATHERINE AUBREY, the reader can judge. He had unbosomed himself in the matter to his confidential adviser Mr Snap; who, having accomplished his errand, had the day before returned to town, very much against his will, leaving Titmouse behind, to bring about, by his own delicate and skilful management, an union between himself, as the future lord of Yatton, and the beautiful sister of its present occupant.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXPLOSION OF THE HAND-GRENADE; SHATTERED HOPES, AND HAPPINESS.

MR AUBREY and Kate, some day or two after the strange occurrence narrated in the last chapter, were sitting together playing at chess, about eight o'clock in the evening; Dr Tatham and Mrs Aubrey, junior, looking on with much interest; old Mrs Aubrey being engaged in writing. Mr Aubrey was sadly an overmatch for poor Kate—he being, in fact, a first-rate player; and her soft white hand had been hovering over the three or four chessmen she had left, uncertain which of them to move, for nearly two minutes, her chin resting on the other hand, and her face wearing a very puzzled expression. "Come, Kate," said every now and then her brother, with that calm victorious smile which at such a moment would have tried any but so sweet a temper as his sister's. "If I were you, Miss Aubrey," was perpetually exclaiming Dr Tatham, knowing as much about the game, the while, as her little Blenheim spaniel lying asleep at her feet. "Oh dear!" said Kate at length, with a sigh, "I really don't see"—

"Who can that be?" exclaimed young Mrs Aubrey, looking up and listening to the sound of carriage wheels.

"Never mind," said her husband,

who was interested in the game—"come, come, Kate." A few minutes afterwards a servant made his appearance, and coming up to Mr Aubrey, told him that Mr Parkinson and another gentleman had called, and were waiting in the library to speak to him on business.

"What can they want at this hour?" exclaimed Mr Aubrey absently, intently watching an anticipated move of his sister's, which would have decided the game in his favour. At length she made her long-meditated descent—but in quite an unexpected quarter.

"Checkmate!" she exclaimed with infinite glee.

"Ah!" cried he, rising with a slightly surprised and chagrined air, "I'm ruined! Now, try your hand on Dr Tatham, while I go and speak to these people. I wonder what can possibly have brought them here! Oh, I see—I see; 'tis probably about Miss Evelyn's marriage-settlement—I'm to be one of her trustees." With this he left the room, and presently entered the library, where were two gentlemen, one of whom, a stranger, was in the act of pulling off his great-coat. It was Mr Runnington; a tall, thin, elderly man, with short grey

hair, of gentlemanly appearance; his countenance bespeaking the calm, acute, clear-headed man of business. The other was Mr Parkinson; a thoroughly respectable, substantial-looking, hard-headed family solicitor and country attorney.

"Mr Runnington, my London agent, sir," said he to Mr Aubrey, as the latter entered. Mr Aubrey bowed.

"Pray, gentlemen, be seated," he replied with his usual calm urbanity, taking a chair beside them.

"Why, Mr Parkinson, you look very serious—both of you. What is the matter?" he inquired surprisedly.

"Mr Runnington, sir, has arrived, most unexpectedly to me," replied Mr Parkinson, in a slightly flustered manner, "only an hour or two ago, from London, on business of the last importance to you."

"To me!—well, what is it? Pray, say at once what it is—I am all attention," said Mr Aubrey anxiously.

"Do you happen," commenced Mr Parkinson very nervously, "to remember sending Waters to me on Monday or Tuesday last, with a paper which had been served by some one on old Jolter?"

"Certainly," replied Mr Aubrey, after a moment's consideration.

"Mr Runnington's errand is connected with that document," said Mr Parkinson, and paused.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, apparently a little relieved. "I assure you, gentlemen, you greatly over-estimate the importance I attach to anything that such a troublesome person as Mr Tomkins can do, if I am right in supposing that it is he who—Well, then, what is the matter?" he inquired quickly, observing Mr Parkinson shake his head, and interchange a grave look with Mr Runnington; "you cannot think, Mr Parkinson, how you will oblige me by being explicit."

"This paper," said Mr Runnington, holding up that which Mr Aubrey at once identified as the one on which he had cast his eye upon its being handed to him by Waters, "is a Declaration in Ejectment, with which Mr Tomkins has nothing whatever to

do. It is served virtually on you, and you are the real defendant."

"So I apprehend that I was in the former trumpery action!" replied Mr Aubrey, faintly smiling.

"Do you recollect, sir," said Mr Parkinson, with a trepidation which he could not conceal, "several years ago, some serious conversation which you and I had together on the state of your title—when I was preparing your marriage-settlements?"

Mr Aubrey started, and his face was suddenly blanched.

"The matters which we then discussed have suddenly acquired fearful importance. This paper occasions us, on your account, the profoundest anxiety." Mr Aubrey continued silent, gazing on Mr Parkinson with intensity. "Supposing, from a hasty glance at it, and from the message accompanying it, that it was merely another action of Tomkins's about the slip of waste land attached to Jolter's cottage, I sent up to London to my agents, Messrs Runnington, requesting them to call on the plaintiff's attorneys, and settle the action. He did so; and—perhaps you will explain the rest," said Mr Parkinson, with visible trepidation, to Mr Runnington.

"Certainly," said that gentleman with a serious air, but much more calmly and firmly than Mr Parkinson had spoken; "I called accordingly, yesterday morning, on Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—a very well, but not enviably, known firm in the profession; and in a few minutes my misconception of the nature of the business which I had called to arrange, was set right. In short"—he paused, as if distressed at the intelligence which he was about to communicate.

"Oh, pray, pray go on, sir!" said Mr Aubrey in a low tone, rather imperatively.

"I am no stranger, sir, to your firmness of character; but I shall have to tax it, I fear, to its uttermost. To come at once to the point—they told me that I might undoubtedly settle the matter, if you would consent to give

up immediate possession of *the whole Yatton estate*, and account for the mesne profits to their client the right heir—as they contend—a Mr Tittlebat Titmouse.” Mr Aubrey leaned back in his chair, overcame, for an instant, by this astounding intelligence; and all three of them preserved silence for some moments. Mr Runnington was a man of a very feeling heart. In the course of his great practice he had had to encounter many distressing scenes; but probably none of them had equalled that in which, at the earnest entreaty of Mr Parkinson, who distrusted his own self-possession, he now bore a leading part. The two attorneys interchanged frequent looks of deep sympathy for their unfortunate client, who seemed as if stunned by the intelligence which they had brought him.

“I felt it my duty to lose not an instant in coming down to Yatton,” resumed Mr Runnington, observing Mr Aubrey’s eye again directed inquiringly towards him; “for Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap are dangerous people to deal with, and must be encountered promptly, but with the greatest possible caution. The moment that I had left them, I hastened to the Temple, to retain for you Mr Subtle, the leader of the Northern Circuit; but they had been beforehand with me, and retained him nearly three months before, together with another eminent king’s counsel on the circuit. Under these circumstances, I lost no time in giving a special retainer to the Attorney-General, in which I trust I have done right, and in retaining as junior a gentleman whom I consider to be incomparably the ablest and most experienced lawyer on the circuit.”

“Did they say anything concerning the nature of their client’s title?” inquired Mr Aubrey, after some expressions of amazement and dismay.

“Very little—I might say—nothing. If they had been *never* so precise, of course I should have distrusted every word they said. They certainly mentioned that they had had the first conveyancing opinions in the kingdom,

which concurred in favour of their client; that they had been for months prepared at all points, and accident only had delayed their commencing proceedings till now.”

“Did you make any inquiries as to who the claimant was?” inquired Mr Aubrey.

“Yes; but all I could learn was, that they had discovered him by mere accident; and that he was at present in obscure and distressed circumstances. I tried to discover by what means they proposed to commence and carry on so expensive a contest; but they smiled significantly, and were silent.” Another long pause ensued, during which Mr Aubrey was evidently silently struggling with very agitating emotions.

“What is the meaning of their affecting to seek the recovery of only one insignificant portion of the property?” he inquired.

“It is their own choice—it may be from considerations of mere convenience. The title, however, by which they may succeed in obtaining what they at present go for, will avail to recover every acre of the estate, and the present action will consequently decide everything!”

“And suppose the worst—that they are successful,” said Mr Aubrey, “after they had conversed a good deal, and very anxiously, on the subject of a formerly suspected infirmity in Mr Aubrey’s title, which had been pointed out to him in general terms by Mr Parkinson, on the occasion already adverted to—“what is to be said about the rental which I have been receiving all this time—ten thousand a-year?” inquired Mr Aubrey, looking as if he dreaded to hear his question answered.

“Oh! that’s quite an after consideration—let us first fight the battle,” said Mr Runnington.

“I beg, sir, that you will withhold nothing from me,” said Mr Aubrey. “To what extent shall I be liable?”

Mr Runnington paused.

“I am afraid that *all* the mesne profits, as they are called, which you have received”—commenced Mr Parkinson—

"No, no," interrupted Mr Runnington; "I have been turning that matter over in my mind, and I think that the statute of limitations will bar all but the last six years"—

"Why, *that* will be sixty thousand pounds!" interrupted Mr Aubrey, with a look of sudden despair. "Gracious Heaven! that is perfectly frightful!—frightful! If I lose Yatton, I shall not have a place to put my head in—not one farthing to support myself with! And yet to have to make up *sixty thousand pounds!*" The perspiration bedewed his forehead, and his eye was laden with alarm and agony. He slowly rose from his chair and bolted the door, that they might not, at such an agitating moment, be surprised or disturbed by any of the servants or the family.

"I suppose," said he, in a faint and tremulous tone, "that if this claim succeed, my mother also will share my fate!"—

They shook their heads in silence.

"Permit me to suggest," said Mr Runnington, in a tone of the most respectful sympathy, "that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

"But the *next* follows!" said Mr Aubrey, with a visible tremor; and his voice made the hearts of his companions thrill within them. "I have a fearful misgiving as to the issue of these proceedings! I ought not to have neglected the matter pointed out to me by Mr Parkinson on my marriage! I feel as if I had been culpably lying by ever since!—But I really did not attach to it the importance it deserved: I never, indeed, distinctly appreciated the nature of what was then mentioned to me!"

"A thousand pities that a *fine* was not *levied*, is it not?" said Mr Runnington, turning with a sigh to Mr Parkinson.

"Ay, indeed it is!" replied that gentleman—and they spoke together for some time, and very earnestly, concerning the nature and efficacy of such a measure, which they explained to Mr Aubrey.

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"It comes to this," said he, "that in all probability, I and my family are at this moment"—he shuddered—"trespassers at Yatton!"

"That, Mr Aubrey," said Mr Parkinson, earnestly, "remains to be proved! We really are getting on far too fast. A person who heard us might suppose that the jury had already returned a verdict against us—that judgment had been signed—and that the sheriff was coming in the morning to execute the writ of possession in favour of our opponent." This was well meant by the speaker; but surely it was like talking of the machinery of the ghastly guillotine to the wretch in shivering expectation of suffering by it on the morrow. An involuntary shudder ran through Mr Aubrey. "Sixty thousand pounds!" he exclaimed, rising and walking to and fro. "Why, I am ruined beyond all redemption! How can I ever satisfy it?" Again he paced the room several times, in silent agony. Presently he resumed his seat. "I have, for these several days past, had a strange sense of impending calamity," said he, more calmly—"I have been equally unable to account for, or get rid of it. It may be an intimation from Heaven; I bow to its will!"

"We must remember," said Mr Runnington, "that '*possession is nine-tenths of the law*;' which means, that your mere possession will entitle you to retain it against all the world, till a stronger title than yours to the right of possession be made out. You stand on a mountain; and it is for your adversary to displace you, not by showing merely that *you* have no real title, but that *he has*. If he could prove all your title-deeds to be merely waste paper—that in fact you have no more title to Yatton than I have—he would not, if he were to stop there, have advanced his own case an inch; he must *first* establish in himself a clear and independent title; so that you are entirely on the defensive; and rely upon it, that though never so many screws may be loose, so acute and profound a lawyer as the Attorney-General will

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impose every difficulty on our opponents"—

"Nay, but God forbid that any unconscientious advantage should be taken on my behalf!" said Mr Aubrey. Mr Runnington and Mr Parkinson both opened their eyes pretty wide at this sally; the latter could not at first understand why *everything* should not be fair in war; the former saw and appreciated the nobility of soul which had dictated the exclamation.

"I suppose the affair will soon become public," said Mr Aubrey, with an air of profound depression, after much further conversation.

"Your position in the county, your eminence in public life, the singularity of the case, and the magnitude of the stake—all are circumstances undoubtedly calculated soon to urge the affair before the notice of the public," said Mr Runnington.

"What disastrous intelligence to break to my family!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey tremulously. "With what fearful suddenness it has burst upon us! But something, I suppose," he presently added with forced calmness, "must be done immediately?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr Runnington. "Mr Parkinson and I will immediately proceed to examine your title-deeds, the greater portion of which are, I understand, here in the Hall, and the rest at Mr Parkinson's; and prepare, without delay, a case for the opinion of the Attorney-General, and also of the most eminent conveyancers of the kingdom. Who, by the way," said Mr Runnington, addressing Mr Parkinson—"who was the conveyancer that had the abstracts before him, on preparing Mr Aubrey's marriage-settlement?"

"Oh, you are alluding to the '*Opinion*' I mentioned to you this evening?" inquired Mr Parkinson. "I have it at my house, and will show it you in the morning. The doubt he expressed on one or two points gave me, I recollect, no little uneasiness—as you may remember, Mr Aubrey."

"I certainly do," he replied, with a profound sigh; "but though what you

said reminded me of something or another that I had heard when a mere boy, I thought no more of it. I think you also told me that the gentleman who wrote the opinion was a nervous, fidgety man, always raising difficulties in his clients' titles—and one way or another the thing never gave me any concern—scarcely ever even occurred to my thoughts, till to-day! What infatuation has been mine!—But—you will take a little refreshment, gentlemen, after your journey?" said Mr Aubrey suddenly, glad of the opportunity it would afford him of reviving his own exhausted spirits before returning to the drawing-room. In about half an hour's time the bearers of the direful intelligence just communicated to the reader, after a promise by Mr Aubrey to drive over to Griston early in the morning, and bring with him such of his title-deeds as were then at the Hall, took their departure; leaving him outwardly calmer, but with a fearful oppression at his heart. He made a powerful effort to control his feelings, so as to conceal, for a while at least, the dreadful occurrence of the evening. His countenance and constrained manner, however, on re-entering the drawing-room, which his mother, attended by Kate, had quitted for her bedroom—somewhat alarmed Mrs Aubrey; but he easily quieted her—poor soul—by saying that he certainly *had* been annoyed—"excessively annoyed"—at a communication just made to him, "and which might, in fact, prevent his sitting again for Yaton." "Oh, *that's* the cause of your long stay? There, doctor, am I not right?" said Mrs Aubrey, appealing to Dr Tatham. Did I not tell you that this was something connected with politics? Oh, dearest Charles—I do *hate* politics! Give me a quiet home!" A pang shot through Mr Aubrey's heart; but he felt that he had, for the present, succeeded in his object.

Mr Aubrey's distracted mind was indeed, as it were, buffeted about that night on a dark sea of trouble; while the beloved being beside him lay sleeping peacefully, all unconscious of the

rising storm! Many times, during that dismal night, would he have risen from his bed to seek a momentary relief by walking to and fro, but that he feared disturbing her, and disclosing the extent and depth of his distress. It was nearly five o'clock in the morning before he at length sank into sleep; and of one thing I can assure the reader, that however that excellent man might have shrunk—and shrink he did—from the sufferings which seemed in store, not for himself only, but for those who were far dearer to him than life itself, he did not give way to one repining or rebellious thought. On the contrary, his real frame of mind, on that trying occasion, may be discovered in one short prayer, which his agonised soul was more than once on the point of expressing aloud in words—"Oh my God! in my prosperity I have endeavoured always to acknowledge thee; forsake not me and mine in our adversity!"

At an early hour in the morning Mr Aubrey's carriage drew up at Mr Parkinson's door; and he brought with him, as he had promised, a great number of title-deeds and family documents. On these, as well as on many others which were in Mr Parkinson's custody, that gentleman and Mr Runnington were anxiously engaged during almost every minute of that day and the ensuing one; at the close of which, they had between them drawn up the rough outline of a case, with which Mr Runnington set off for town by the mail; undertaking to lay it immediately before the Attorney-General, and also before one or two of the most eminent conveyancers of the day, effectually commended to their best and earliest attention. He pledged himself to transmit their opinions, on the day on which he received them, to Mr Parkinson; and both of those gentlemen immediately set about active preparations for defending the ejection. The "eminent conveyancer" fixed upon by Messrs Runnington and Parkinson was Mr Tresayle, whose clerk, however, on looking into the papers, presently

carried them back to Messrs Runnington, with the startling information that Mr Tresayle had, a few months before, "advised on the other side!" The next person whom Mr Runnington thought of was—singularly enough—Mr Mortmain, who, on account of his eminence, was occasionally employed, in heavy matters, by the firm. *His* clerk, also, on the ensuing morning, returned the papers, assigning a similar reason to that which had been given by Mr Tresayle's clerk! All this formed a direful corroboration, truly, of Messrs Quirk and Gammon's assurance to Mr Runnington, that they had "had the first conveyancing opinions in the kingdom;" and evidenced the formidable scale on which their operations were being conducted. There were, however, other "eminent conveyancers" besides the two above mentioned; and in the hands of Mr Mansfield, who, with a less extended reputation, but an equal practice, was a far abler man, and a much higher style of conveyancer, than Mr Mortmain, Mr Runnington left his client's interests with the utmost confidence. Not satisfied with this, he laid the case also before Mr Crystal, the junior whom he had already retained in the cause—a man whose lucid understanding was not ill indicated by his name. Though his manner in court was not particularly forcible or attractive, he was an invaluable acquisition in an important cause. To law he had for some twenty years applied himself with unwearying energy; and he consequently became a ready, accurate, and thorough lawyer, equal to all the practical exigencies of his profession. He brought his knowledge to bear on every point presented to him, with beautiful precision. He was equally quick and cautious—artful to a degree—but I shall have other opportunities of describing him; since on him, as on every working junior, will devolve the real conduct of the defendant's case in the memorable action of *Doe on the demise of Timouse v. Roe*.

As Mr Aubrey was driving home from the visit to Mr Parkinson, which I have just above mentioned, he stop-

ped his carriage and alighted, on entering the village, because he saw Dr Tatham coming out of Williams's cottage, where he had been paying a visit to poor dying Phoebe.

The little Doctor was plunthering on, ankle-deep in snow, towards the vicarage, when Mr Aubrey, who had sent home his carriage with word that he should presently follow, came up with him, and greeting him with unusual fervour, said that he would accompany him to the vicarage.

"You are in great trouble, my dear friend," said the Doctor seriously—"I saw it plainly last night; but of course I said nothing. Come in with me! Let us talk freely with one another; for, *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.* Is it not so?"

"It is indeed, my dear Doctor," replied Mr Aubrey, suddenly softened by the affectionate simplicity of the Doctor's manner. How much the good Doctor was shocked by the communication which Mr Aubrey presently made to him, the reader may easily imagine. He even shed tears, on beholding the forced calmness with which Mr Aubrey depicted the gloomy prospect that was before him. The venerable pastor led the subdued mind of his companion to those sources of consolation and support which a true Christian cannot approach in vain. Upon his bruised and bleeding feelings was poured the balm of true religious consolation; and Mr Aubrey quitted his revered companion with a far firmer tone of mind than that with which he had entered the vicarage. But as soon as he had passed through the park gates, the sudden reflection that he was probably no longer the proprietor of the dear old familiar objects which met his eye at every step, almost overpowered him, and he walked several times up and down the avenue, before he had recovered a due degree of self-possession.

On entering the Hall, he was informed that one of the tenants, Peter Johnson, had been sitting in the servants' hall for nearly two hours, waiting to see him. Mr Aubrey repaired at once

to the library, and desired the man to be shown in. This Johnson had been for some twenty-five years the tenant of a considerable farm on the estate; had scarcely ever been behind-hand with his rent; and had always been considered one of the most exemplary persons in the whole neighbourhood. He had now, poor fellow, got into trouble indeed: for he had, a year or two before, been persuaded to become security for his brother-in-law, a tax-collector; and had, alas! the day before, been called upon to pay the three hundred pounds in which he stood bound—his worthless brother-in-law having absconded with nearly £1000 of the public money. Poor Johnson, who had a large family to support, was in deep tribulation, bowed down with grief and shame; and after a sleepless night, had at length ventured down to Yatton, with a desperate boldness, to ask its benevolent owner to advance him £200 towards the money, to save himself from being cast into prison. Mr Aubrey heard this sad story to the end, without a single interruption; though to a more practised observer than the troubled old farmer, the workings of Mr Aubrey's countenance, from time to time, must have told his inward agitation. "I lend this poor soul £200!" thought he, "who am penniless myself! Shall I not be really acting as *his* dishonest relative has been acting, and making free with money which belongs to another?"

"I assure you, my worthy friend," said he at length, with a little agitation of manner, "that I have just now a very serious call upon me—or you know how gladly I would have complied with your request."

"Oh, sir, have mercy on me! I've an ailing wife and seven children to support," said poor Johnson, wringing his hands.

"Can't I do anything with the Government?"

"No, sir; I'm told they're so mighty angry with my rascally brother, they'll listen to nobody! It's a hard matter for me to keep things straight at home without this, sir, I've so many mouths to fill; and if they take me off to prison,

Lord! Lord! what's to become of us all?"

Mr Aubrey's lip quivered. Johnson fell on his knees, and the tears ran down his cheeks. "I've never asked a living man for money before, sir; and if you'll only lend it me, God Almighty will bless you and yours; you'll save us all from ruin; I'll work day and night to pay it back again!"

"Rise—rise, Johnson," said Mr Aubrey with emotion. "You shall have the money, my friend, if you will call to-morrow," he added with a deep sigh, after a moment's hesitation.

He was as good as his word.*

Had Mr Aubrey been naturally of a cheerful and vivacious turn, the contrast now afforded by his gloomy manner must have alarmed his family. As it was, however, the contrast was not so strong and marked as to be attended with that effect, especially as he exerted himself to the utmost to conceal his distress. That *something* had gone wrong, he freely acknowledged; and as he spoke of it always in connection with political topics, he succeeded in parrying their questions, and checking suspicion. But, whenever they were all collected together, could he not justly compare them to a happy group, unconscious that they stood on a mine which was on the eve of being fired?

About a week afterwards, namely, on the 12th of January, arrived little Charles's birthday, when he became five years old; and Kate had for some days been sending far and wide to get up a juvenile ball in honour of the occasion. After divers urgent despatches, and considerable riding and driving about, she succeeded in persuading the parents of some eight or ten children—two little daughters, for instance, of the Earl of Oldacre (beautiful creatures they were, to be sure)—little Master and the two Miss Bertons, the children of one of the county members—Sir Harry Oldfield, an orphan, of about five years of

* Whether Mr Aubrey was justified in doing this, under his circumstances, is a question which the author has seen, and heard, several times keenly discussed. Much may be said on both sides of the question, by ingenious casuists.

age, the infant owner of a magnificent estate—and two or three little girls beside—to send them all—cold though the weather was—to Yatton, for a day and a night, with their governesses and attendants.

'Twas a charming little affair! It went off brilliantly, as the phrase is, and repaid all Kate's exertions. She, her mother, and brother and sister, all dined at the same table, at a very early hour, with the merry little guests, who, with a laughable crowd of attendants behind them, to be sure, behaved remarkably well on the occasion. Sir Harry—a little thing about Charles's age—the black ribbon round his waist, and also the half-mourning dress worn by his maid, who stood behind him, showed how recent was the event which had made him an orphan—proposed little Aubrey's health, in (I must own) a somewhat stiff speech, demurely dictated to him by Kate, who sat between him and her beautiful little nephew. She then performed the same office for Charles, who stood on a chair while delivering his eloquent, but somewhat audibly-prompted, acknowledgment of the toast.

[Oh! that anguished brow of thine, Aubrey, thank God it is unobserved! But it tells *me* that the iron is entering thy soul!]

And the moment that he had concluded, Kate folding her arms around him and kissing him, down they all jumped, and, a merry throng! scampered off to the drawing-room, followed by Kate, where blind-man's buff, husbands and wives, and divers other little games, kept them in constant enjoyment. After tea, they were to have dancing—Kate mistress of the revels—and it was quite laughable to see how perpetually she was foiled in her efforts to form the little sets. The girls were orderly enough—but their wild little partners were quite uncontrollable! The instant they were placed, and Kate had gone to the instrument and struck off a bar or two—ah!—what a scrambling little crowd was to be seen wildly jumping and laughing, and chattering and singing! Over and over again she formed

them into sets, with the like results. But at length a young lady, one of their governesses, took Miss Aubrey's place at the piano, leaving the latter to superintend the performances in person. She at length succeeded in getting up something like a country-dance, led off by Charles and little Lady Anne Cherville, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Oldacre, a beautiful child of about five years old, and who, judging from appearances, bade fair, in due time, to become another Lady Caroline Caversham. You would have laughed outright to watch the coquetish airs which this little creature gave herself with Charles, whom yet she evidently could not bear to see dancing with another.

"Now I shall dance with somebody else!" he exclaimed, suddenly quitting Lady Anne, and snatching hold of a sweet little thing, Miss Berton, standing modestly beside him. The discarded beauty walked with a stately air, and a swelling heart, towards Mrs Aubrey, who sat beside her husband on the sofa; and on reaching her, stood for a few moments silently watching her fickle partner busily and gaily engaged with her successor—Then she burst into tears.

"Charles!" called out Mrs Aubrey, who had watched the whole affair, and could hardly keep her countenance—"come hither directly, Charles!"

"Yes, mamma!" he exclaimed—quite unaware of the serious aspect which things were assuming—and without quitting the dance, where he was, as his jealous-like mistress too plainly saw, for, despite her grief, her eye seemed to follow all his emotions, skipping about with infinite glee with a *third* partner—a laughing sister of her for whom he had quitted Lady Anne.

"Do you hear your mamma, Charles!" said Mr Aubrey somewhat peremptorily; and in an instant his little son, all flushed and breathless, was at his side.

"Well, dear papa!" said he, keeping his eye fixed on the merry throng he had just quitted, and where his deserted partner was skipping about alone.

"What have you been doing to Lady Anne, Charles?" said his father.

"Nothing, dear papa!" he replied, still wistfully eyeing the dancers.

"You know you left me, and went to dance with Miss Berton; you did, Charles!" said the offended beauty, sobbing.

"That is not behaving like a little gentleman, Charles," said his father. The tears came into the child's eyes.

"I'm *very* sorry, dear papa, I *will* dance with her"—

"No, not now," said Lady Anne haughtily.

"Oh, pooh! pooh!—kiss and be friends," said Mrs Aubrey, laughing, "and go and dance as prettily as you were dancing before." Little Aubrey put his arms round Lady Anne, kissed her, and away they both started to the dance again. While the latter part of this scene was going on, Mr Aubrey's eye caught the figure of a servant, who simply made his appearance at the door and then retired, for such had been Mr Aubrey's orders, in the event of any messenger arriving from Grilston. Hastily whispering that he should speedily return, he left the room. In the hall stood a clerk from Mr Parkinson; and on seeing Mr Aubrey, he took out a packet and retired—Mr Aubrey, with evident trepidation, repairing to his library. With a nervous hand he broke the seal, and found the following letter from Mr Parkinson, with three other enclosures:—

"Grilston, 12th Jan. 18—.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have only just received from Mr Runnington, and at once forward to you, copies of the three opinions given by the Attorney-General, Mr Mansfield, and Mr Crystal, on the case submitted to them upon your behalf. I lament to find that they are all of a discouraging character. They were given by their respective writers without any of them having had any opportunity of conferring together—all the three cases having been laid before them at the same time: yet you will observe that each of them has hit

upon precisely the same point, viz., that the descendants of Geoffrey Dredlington had no right to succeed to the inheritance till there was a failure of the heirs of Stephen Dredlington. If, therefore, our discreditable opponents should have unhappily contrived to ferret out some person satisfying that designation—I cannot conjecture how they can ever have got upon the scent—I really fear, and it is no use disguising matters, that we must prepare for a most serious struggle. I have been quietly pushing my inquiries in all directions, with a view to obtaining a clue to the case intended to be set up against us, and which you will find very shrewdly guessed at by the Attorney-General. *Nor am I the only party*, I find, in the field, who has been making pointed inquiries in your neighbourhood; but of this more when we meet to-morrow.

"I remain,

"Yours most respectfully,

"J. PARKINSON.

"CHARLES AUBREY, Esq., M.P.
&c. &c. &c."

Having read this letter, Mr Aubrey sunk back in his chair, and remained motionless for more than a quarter of an hour. At length he roused himself, and read over the opinions; the effect of which—as far as he could comprehend their technicalities—he found had been but too correctly given by Mr Parkinson. Some suggestions and inquiries put by the acute and experienced Mr Crystal, suddenly revived recollections of one or two incidents even of his boyish days, long forgotten, but which, as he reflected upon them, began to reappear to his mind's eye with sickening distinctness. Wave after wave of apprehension and agony passed over him, chilling and numbing his heart within him; so that, when his little son came some time afterwards running up to him, with a message from his mamma, that she hoped he could come back to see them all play at snap-dragon before they went to bed, he replied mechanically, hardly seeming sensible even of the presence of the laughing and breath-

less boy, who quickly scampered back again. At length, with a groan that came from the depths of his heart, Mr Aubrey rose and walked to and fro, sensible of the necessity of exertion, and preparing himself, in some degree, for encountering his mother, his wife, and his sister. Taking up his candle, he hastened to his dressing-room, where he hoped, by the aid of refreshing ablutions, to succeed in effacing at least the stronger of those traces of suffering which his glass displayed to him, as it reflected the image of his agitated countenance. A sudden recollection of the critical and delicate situation of his idolised wife, glanced through his heart like a keen arrow. He sunk upon the sofa, and, clasping his hands, looked indeed forlorn. Presently the door was pushed hastily but gently open; and, first looking in to see that it was really he of whom she was in search, in rushed Mrs Aubrey, pale and agitated, having been alarmed by his long-continued absence from the drawing-room, and the look of the servant, from whom she had learned that his master had been for some time gone up-stairs.

"Charles! my love! my sweetlove!" she exclaimed, rushing in, sitting down beside him, and casting her arms round his neck. Overcome by the suddenness of her appearance and movements, for a moment he spoke not.

"For mercy's sake—as you love me!—tell me, dearest Charles, what has happened!" she gasped, kissing him fervently.

"Nothing—love—nothing," he replied; but his look belied his speech.

"Oh! am not I your wife, dearest? Charles, I shall really go distracted if you do not tell me what has happened!—I know that something—something dreadful!"—He put his arm round her waist, and drew her tenderly towards him. He felt her heart beating violently. He kissed her cold forehead, but spoke not.

"Come, dearest!—my own Charles!—let me share your sorrows," said she in a thrilling voice. "Cannot you trust your Agnes? Has not Heaven sent me to share your anxieties and griefs?"

"I love you, Agnes! ay, perhaps more than ever man loved woman!" he faltered, as he felt her arms folding him in closer and closer embrace; and she gazed at him with wild agitation, expecting presently to hear of some fearful catastrophe.

"I cannot bear this much longer, dearest—I feel I cannot," said she, rather faintly. "What has happened? What, that you dare not tell me? I can bear anything, while I have you and my children! You have been unhappy—you have been wretched, Charles, for many days past. I have felt that you were!—I will not part with you till I know all!"

"You soon *must* know all, my sweet love; and I take Heaven to witness, that it is principally on your account, and that of my children, that I——In fact, I did not wish any of you to have known it till"——

"You—are never going—to *fight a duel?*" she gasped, turning white as death.

"Oh! no, no, Agnes! I solemnly assure you! If I could have brought myself to engage in such an unhal- lowed affair, would *this* scene ever first have occurred? No, no, my own love! Must I then tell you of the misfortune that has overtaken us?" His words somewhat restored her, but she continued to gaze at him in mute and breathless apprehension. "Let me then conceal nothing, Agnes—they are bringing an action against me, which, if successful, may cause us all to quit Yatton—and it may be, for ever."

"Oh, Charles!" she murmured, her eyes riveted upon his, while she unconsciously clung still closer to him and trembled. Her head drooped upon his shoulder.

"Why is this?" she whispered, after a pause.

"Let us, dearest, talk of it another time. I have now told you what you asked me."—He poured her out a glass of water. Having drank a little, she appeared revived.

"Is all lost?—And—*why?* Do, my own Charles—let me know really the worst!"

"We are young, my Agnes! and have the world before us! Health and integrity are better than riches! You and our little loves—the *children which God has given us*—are my riches," said he, gazing at her with unspeakable tenderness. "Even should it be the will of Heaven that this affair should go against us—so long as they cannot separate us from each other, they cannot *really* hurt us!" She suddenly kissed him with frantic energy, and an hysteric smile gleamed over her pallid excited features.

"Calm yourself, Agnes!—calm yourself, for my sake!—as you love me!" His voice quivered. "Oh, how very weak and foolish I have been to yield to"——

"No, no, no!" she gasped, evidently labouring with hysteric oppression. "Hush!" said she, suddenly starting, and wildly leaning forward towards the door which opened into the gallery leading to the various bedrooms. He listened—the MOTHER'S ear had been quick and true. He presently heard the sound of many children's voices approaching: they were the little party, accompanied by Kate, and their attendants, on their way to bed; and little Charles's voice was loudest, and his laugh the merriest of them all. A dreadful smile gleamed on Mrs Aubrey's face; her hand grasped her husband's with convulsive pressure; and she suddenly sunk, rigid and senseless, upon the sofa. He seemed for a moment stunned at the sight of her motionless figure. Soon, however, recovering his presence of mind, he rang the bell, and one or two female attendants quickly appeared, by whose joint assistance Mrs Aubrey was carried to her bed in the adjoining room, where, by the use of the ordinary remedies, she was, after a brief interval, restored to consciousness. Her first languid look was towards Mr Aubrey, whose hand she slowly raised to her lips. She tried to throw a smile over her wan features—but 'twas in vain; and, after a few heavy and half-choking sobs, her overcharged feelings found relief in a flood of tears. Full

of the liveliest apprehensions as to the effect of this violent emotion upon her, in her critical condition, he remained with her for some time, pouring into her ear every soothing and tender expression he could think of. He at length succeeded in bringing her into a somewhat more tranquil state than he could have expected. He strictly enjoined the attendants, who had not quitted their lady's chamber, and whose alarmed and inquisitive looks he had noticed for some time with anxiety, to preserve silence concerning what they had so unexpectedly witnessed, adding, that something unfortunate had happened, of which they would hear but too soon.

"Are you going to tell Kate?" whispered Mrs Aubrey sorrowfully. "Surely, love, you have suffered enough through *my* weakness. Wait till to-morrow. Let her—poor girl!—have a few more happy hours.

"No, Agnes—it was my own weakness which caused me to be surprised into this premature disclosure to you. And now I must meet her again to-night, and I cannot control either my features, or my feelings. Yes, poor Kate, she must know all to-night! I shall not be long absent, Agnes." And directing her maid to remain with her till he returned, he withdrew, and with slow step and heavy heart descended to the library; preparing himself for another heart-breaking scene—plunging another innocent and joyous creature into misery, which he believed to be inevitable. Having looked into the drawing-room as he passed it, and seen no one there—his mother having, as usual, retired at an early hour—he rung his library bell, and desired Miss Aubrey's maid to request her mistress to come down to him there, as soon as she should be at leisure. He was glad that the only light in the room was that given out by the fire, which was not very bright, and so would in some degree shield his features from, at all events, immediate scrutiny. His heart ached as, shortly afterwards, he heard Kate's light step crossing the hall. When she entered, her eyes sparkled with

vivacity, and a smile was on her beautiful cheek. Her dress was slightly disordered, and her hair half uncurled—the results of her sport with the little ones whom she had been seeing to bed.

"What merry little things, to be sure!" she commenced laughingly—"I could not get them to lie still a moment—popping their little heads in and out of the clothes!—A fine time I shall have of it, by-and-by, with Sir Harry! for he is to be *my* tiny little bed-fellow, and I dare say I shall not sleep a wink all night!—Why, Charles, how very—*very* grave you look!" she added, quickly, observing his eye fixed moodily upon her.

"Tis you who are so very gay," he replied, endeavouring to smile. "I want to speak to you, dear Kate," he commenced affectionately, at the same time rising and closing the door—"on a serious matter. I have received some letters to-night"—

Kate coloured suddenly and violently, and her heart beat; but, ah, sweet soul! how she was mistaken!—How very, very far off the mark her troubled brother was aiming at! "And, relying on your strength of mind, I have resolved to put you at once in possession of what I myself know. Can you bear bad news well, Kate?"

She turned pale, and drawing her chair nearer to her brother, said, "Do not keep me in suspense, Charles—I can bear anything but suspense—that is dreadful! What has happened? Oh dear," she added, with sudden alarm, "where are mamma and Agnes?" She started to her feet.

"I assure you they are both well, Kate. My mother is now doubtless asleep, and as well as she ever was; Agnes is in her bedroom—certainly much distressed at the news which I am going"—

"Oh why, Charles, did you tell anything distressing to *her*?" exclaimed Miss Aubrey with an alarmed air.

"We came together by surprise, Kate! Perhaps, too, it would have been worse to have kept her in suspense; but she is recovering!—I shall

soon return to her. And now, my dear Kate, I know your strong sense and spirit!—A great calamity hangs over us. Let you and me," he grasped her hands affectionately, "await it steadily, and support those who cannot!"

"Let me at once know all, Charles! See if I do not bear it as becomes your sister," said she, with forced calmness.

"If it should become necessary for all of us to retire into obscurity—into humble obscurity, dear Kate—how do you think you could bear it?"

"If it will be an honourable obscurity—nay, 'tis quite impossible it can be a *dis*-honourable obscurity," continued Miss Aubrey, with a momentary flash of energy.

"Never, never, Kate! The Aubreys may lose everything on earth but the jewel honour, and love for one another!"

"Let me know all, Charles: I see that something or other shocking has happened," said Miss Aubrey in a low tone, with a look of the deepest apprehension.

"I will tell you the worst, Kate—a strange claim is set up, by one whom I never heard of, to the whole of the property we now enjoy!"

Miss Aubrey started, and the slight colour that had remained, faded entirely from her cheek. Both were silent for some moments.

"But is it a *true* claim, Charles?" she inquired faintly.

"That remains to be proved. I will, however, disguise nothing from you—I have woeful apprehensions!"

"Do you mean to say that Yatton is *not ours*?" inquired Miss Aubrey, catching her breath.

"So, alas! my dearest Kate, it is said!"

Miss Aubrey looked bewildered, and pressed her hand to her forehead.

"How shocking!—shocking!—shocking!" she gasped.—"What is to become of mamma?"

"God Almighty will not desert her in her old age. He will desert none of us, if we only trust in him," said her brother.

Miss Aubrey remained gazing at him intently, and continued perfectly motionless.

"Must we then all leave Yatton?" said she faintly, after a while.

"If this claim succeeds—but we shall leave it *together*, Kate."

She threw her arms round his neck, and wept bitterly.

"Hush, hush, Kate!" said he, perceiving the increasing violence of her emotions, "restrain your feelings for the sake of my mother—and Agnes."

His words had the desired effect: the poor girl made a desperate effort. Unclasping her arms from her brother's neck, she sat down in her chair, breathing hard, and pressing her hand upon her heart. After a few minutes' pause, she said faintly, "I am better now. Do tell me more, Charles! Let me have something to *think* about—only don't say anything about—about—mamma and Agnes!" In spite of herself a visible shudder ran through her frame.

"It seems, Kate," said he, with all the calmness he could assume—"at least they are trying to prove—that our branch of the family has succeeded to the property prematurely—that there is living an heir of the elder branch—that his case has been taken up by powerful friends; and—let me tell you the worst at once—even the lawyers consulted by Mr Parkinson on my behalf, take a most alarming view of the possibilities of the case that may be brought against us!"

"But is mamma provided for?" whispered Miss Aubrey almost inarticulately. "When I look at her again, I shall drop at her feet, insensible!"

"No, no, Kate, you won't! Heaven will give you strength," said her brother in a tremulous voice. "Remember, my only sister—my dearest Kate! you must support *me* in my trouble, as I will support you—we will try to support each other!"

"We will—we will!" interrupted Miss Aubrey—instantly checking, however, her rising excitement.

"You bear it bravely, my noble

girl!" said Mr Aubrey fondly, after a brief interval of silence.

She turned from him her head, and moved her hand—in deprecation of expressions which might utterly unnerve her. Then she convulsively clasped her hands over her forehead; and, after a minute or two, turned towards him with tears in her eyes, but tranquillised features. The struggle had been dreadful, though brief—her noble spirit had recovered itself.

—'Twas like some fair bark, in mortal conflict with the black and boiling waters and howling hurricane; long quivering on the brink of destruction, but at last outliving the storm, righting itself, and suddenly gliding into safe and tranquil waters!—

The distressed brother and sister sat conversing for a long time, frequently in tears, but with infinitely greater calmness and firmness than could have been expected. They agreed that Dr

Tatham should very early in the morning be sent for, and implored to take upon himself the bitter duty of breaking the matter as gradually and safely as possible to Mrs Aubrey; its effects upon whom, her children anticipated with the most vivid apprehension. They both considered that an event of such publicity and importance could not possibly remain long unknown to her, and that it was, on the whole, better that the dreaded communication should be got over as soon as possible. They then retired—Kate to a sleepless pillow, and her brother to spend a greater portion of the night in attempts to soothe and console his suffering wife; each of them having first knelt in humble reverence, and poured forth the breathings of a stricken and bleeding heart, before Him who hath declared that he is ever present to HEAR and to ANSWER prayer.

Ah! who can tell what a day or an hour may bring forth?

CHAPTER VI.

A WINTER EVENING'S GOSSIP AT THE AUBREY ARMS, AMONG YATTON VILLAGERS, AND ITS GRIEVOUS INTERRUPTION.

"It won't kindle—not a bit on't—its green and full o' sap. Go out and get us a log that's dry and old, George—and let's try to have a bit of a blaze in t'ould chimney, this bitter night," said Isaac Tonson, the gamekeeper at Yatton, to the good-natured landlord of the Aubrey Arms, the little—and only—in of the village. The suggestion was instantly attended to.

"How Peter's a-feathering of his geese to-night, to be sure!" exclaimed the landlord on his return, shaking the snow off his coat, and laying on the fire a great dry old log of wood, which seemed very acceptable to the hungry flames, for they licked it cordially the moment it was placed

amongst them, and there was very soon given out a cheerful blaze. 'Twas a snug room. The brick floor was covered with fresh sand; and on a few stools and benches, with a table in the middle, on which stood a large can and ale-glasses, with a plate of tobacco, sat some half-dozen men, enjoying their pipe and glass. In the chimney-corner sat Thomas Dickons, the faithful under-bailiff of Mr Aubrey, a big, broad-shouldered, middle-aged man, with a hard-featured face and a phlegmatic air. In the opposite corner sat the little grizzle-headed clerk and sexton, old Halleluiah—(as he was called, but his real name was Jonas Higgs). Beside him sat Pump-

kin, the gardener at the Hall, a frequent guest at the Aubrey Arms o' nights—always attended by Hector, the large Newfoundland dog already spoken of, and who was now lying stretched on the floor at Pumpkin's feet, his nose resting on his forefeet, and his eyes, with great gravity, watching the motions of a skittish kitten under the table. Opposite to him sat Tonson the gamekeeper—a thin, wiry, beetle-browed fellow, with eyes like a ferret; and there were also one or two farmers, who lived in the village.

"Let's ha' another can o' ale, afore ye sit down," said Tonson, "we can do with another half gallon, I'm thinking!" This order also was quickly attended to; and then the landlord, having seen to the door, fastened the shutters close, and stirred the crackling fire, took his place on a vacant stool, and resumed his pipe.

"So she do take a very long grave, Jonas?" inquired Dickons of the sexton, after some little pause.

"Ay, Mr Dickons, a' think she do, t' ould girl! I always thought she would—I used to measure her (as one may say) in my mind, whenever I saw her. 'Tis a reg'lar man's size, I warrant you; and when parson saw it, a' said, he thought 'twere too big; but I ax'd his pardon, and said I hadn't been sexton for thirty years without knowing my business—he, he!"

"I suppose, Jonas, you mun ha' seen her walking about i' t' village, in your time!—*Were* she such a big-looking woman?" inquired Pumpkin, as he shook the ashes out of his pipe, and replenished it.

"Forty year ago I did use to see her—she were then an old woman, wi' white hair, and leaned on a stick—I never thought she'd lasted so long," replied Higgs, emptying his glass.

"She've had a pretty long spell on't," quoth Dickons, after slowly emptying his mouth of smoke.

"A hundred and two," replied the sexton; "so saith her coffin-plate—a' see'd it to-day. But she called it a hundred and nine."

"What were her name?" inquired

Tonson—"I never knew her by any name but Blind Bess."

"Her name be *Elizabeth Crabtree* on the coffin," replied Higgs; "and she be to be buried to-morrow."

"She were a strange old woman," said Hazel, one of the farmers, as he took down one of the oatcakes hanging overhead, and breaking off a piece, held it with the tongs before the fire to toast, and then put it into his ale.

"Ay, she were," quoth Pumpkin; "I wonder what she thinks o' such things *now*—maybe—God forgive me!—she's paying dear for her tricks!"

"Tut, Pumpkin," said Tonson, "let t' ould creature rest in her grave, where she's going to, peaceably!"

"Ay, Master Tonson," quoth the clerk, in his reading-desk twang—"THERE be no *knowledge*, nor *wisdom*, nor *device*!"

"'Tis very odd," observed Pumpkin, "but this dog that's lying at his feet never could a' bear going past her cottage late o' nights—hang me if he could; and the night she died—Lord! you should have heard the howl Hector gave—and a' didn't then know she were gone—it's as true as the gospel—it *is*—actually!"

"No! but wer't *really* so?" inquired Dickons—several of the others taking their pipes out of their mouths, and looking earnestly at Pumpkin.

"I didn't half like it, I can tell you," quoth Pumpkin.

"Ha, ha, ha!—ha, ha!" laughed the gamekeeper—

"Ay, marry you may laugh," quoth Pumpkin, "but I'll stake half a gallon o' ale you daren't go by yourself to the cottage where she's lying—*now*, mind—i' the dark."

"I'll do it," quoth Higgs eagerly, preparing to lay down his pipe.

"No, no—*thou'rt* quite used to dead folk—'tis quite in thy line!" replied Pumpkin—and, after a little faint drollery, silence ensued for some moments.

"Bess dropped off sudden like, at the last, didn't she?" inquired the landlord.

"She went out, as they say, like the snuff of a candle," replied Jobbins,

one of the farmers; "no one were with her but my Missis at the time. The night afore, she had took to the rattles all of a sudden. My Sall (that's *done* for her, this long time, by Madam's orders) says old Bess were a good deal shaken by a chap from London, which cam' down about a week afore Christmas."

"Ay, ay," quoth one, "I've heard o' that—what was it?—what passed atwixt them?"

"Why, a' don't well know—but he seemed to know summat about t'ould girl's connections, and he had a book, and wrote down something, and he axed her, so Sall do tell me, such a many things about old people, and things that are long gone by!"

"What were the use on t'?" inquired Dickons; "for Bess hath been silly this ten years, to my sartin knowledge."

"Why, a' couldn't tell. He seemed very 'quisitive, too, about t'ould creature's bible and prayer-book (she kept them in that ould bag of her's)—and Sall said she had talked a good deal to the chap in her mumbling way, and seemed to know some folk he axed her about. And Sall saith she hath been, in a manner, dismal ever since, and often a-crying and talking to herself."

"I've heard," said the landlord, "that squire and parson were wi' her on Christmas-day—and that she talked a deal o' strange things, and that the squire did seem, as it were, *struck* a little, you know—struck, like!"

"Why, so my Sall do say; but it may be all her own head," replied Jobbins.

Here a pause took place.

"Madam," said the sexton, "hath given orders for an uncommon decent burying to-morrow."

"Well, a' never thought any wrong of ould Bess, for my part," said one—and another—and another; and they smoked their pipes for some short time in silence.

"Talking o' strangers from London," said the sexton, presently—"who do know anything o' them two chaps that were at church last Sun-

day? Two such peacock chaps I never see'd afore in *my* time—and grinning all sarvice-time! the heathen!"

"Ay, I'll tell you something of 'em," said Hazel—a big broad-shouldered farmer, who plucked his pipe out of his mouth with sudden energy—"They're a brace o' good ones, to be sure, ha, ha! Some week or ten days ago, as I were a-coming across the field leading into the lane behind the church, I see'd these same two chaps, and on coming nearer (they not seeing me for the hedge), Lord bless me! would you believe it?—if they wasn't a-teasing my daughter Jenny, that were coming along wi' some physic from the doctor for my old woman! One of 'em seemed a-going to put his arm round her neck and t'other came close to her on t'other side, a-talking to her and pushing her about." Here a young farmer, who had but seldom spoken, took his pipe out of his mouth, and exclaiming, "Lord bless me!" sat listening with his mouth wide open. "Well," continued the former, "a' came into the road behind 'em, without their seeing me; and"—(here he stretched out a thick, rigid, muscular arm, and clenched his teeth)—"a' got hold of each by the collar, and one of 'em I shook about, and gave him a kick i' the breech that sent him spinning a yard or two on the road, he clapping his hand behind him, and crying, to be sure—'You'll smart for this—a good hundred pound damages!' or summat o' that sort. T'other dropped on his knees, and begged for mercy; so a' just spit in his face, and flung him under t' hedge, telling him if he stirred till I were out o' sight, I'd crack his skull for him; and so I would!" Here the wrathful speaker pushed his pipe again between his lips, and began puffing away with great energy; while he who had appeared to take so great an interest in the story, and who was the very man that had flown to the rescue of Miss Aubrey, when she seemed on the point of being similarly treated, told that circumstance exactly as it occurred, amidst the silent but exoited wonder

of those present—all of whom, at its close, uttered vehement execrations, and intimated the summary and savage punishment which the cowardly rascal would have experienced at the hands of each and every one of them, had they come across him.

"I reckon," said the landlord, as soon as the swell had a little subsided, "they must be the two chaps that put up here, some time ago, for an hour or so. You should ha' seen 'em get on and off the saddle—that's all! Why, a' laughed outright! The chap with the hair under his chin got on upon t' wrong side, and t' other seemed as if he thought his beast would a' bit him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed all.

"I thought they'd a both got a fall before they'd gone a dozen yards!"

"They've taken a strange fancy to my churchyard," said the sexton, setting down his glass, and then preparing to fill his pipe again; "they've been looking about among 'em—among t' ould gravestones, up behind t' ould yew-tree yonder; and one of them writ something, now and then, in a book; so they're book-writers, in coorse!"

"That's scholars, I reckon!" quoth Dickons; "but rot the larning of such chaps as them!"

"I wonder if they'll put a picture o' the Hall in their book," quoth the sexton. "They axed a many questions about the people up there, specially about the squire's father, and some ould folk, whose names I knew when they spoke of 'em—but I hadn't heard o' them for this forty year. And one of 'em (he were the shortest, and such a chap, to be sure!—just like the monkey that were dressed i' man's clothes, last (Griston fair) talked uncommon fine about young *Miss*"—

"If I'd a' heard him tak' her name into his dirty mouth, his teeth should a' gone after it!" said Tonson.

"Lord! he didn't say any harm—only silly-like—and t' other seemed now and then not to like his going on so. The little one said *Miss* were a lovely gal, or something like that—and hoped they'd become by-and-by better friends—ah, ha!"

"What! wi' *that* chap?" said Pumpkin—and he looked as if he were meditating putting the little sexton up the chimney, for the mere naming of such a thing.

"I reckon they're fro' London, and brought toon tricks wi' 'em—for I never heard o' such goings on as theirs down *here* afore," said Tonson.

"One of 'em—him that axed me all the questions, and wrote i' t' book, seemed a sharp enough chap in his way; but I can't say much for the little one," said Higgs. "Lud, I couldn't hardly look in his face for laughing, he seemed such a fool!—He had a riding-whip wi' a silver head, and stood smacking his legs (you should ha' seen how tight his clothes was on his legs—I warrant you, Tim Timpkins never see'd such a thing, I'll be sworn) all the while, as if a' liked to hear the sound of it."

"If I'd a' been beside him," said Hazel, "I'd a' saved him that trouble—only I'd a laid it into *another* part of him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" they laughed—and presently passed on to other matters.

"Hath the squire been doing much lately in Parliament?" inquired the sexton, of Dickons.

"Why, yes—he's trying hard to get that new road made from Harkley bridge to Hilton."

"Ah, that would save a good four mile, if a' could manage it!" said one of the farmers.

"I hear the Papists are trying to get the upper hand again—which the Lud forbid!" said the sexton, after another pause.

"The squire hath lately made a speech in that matter, that hath finished them," said Dickons, in a grave and authoritative tone.

"What would they be after?" inquired the landlord of Dickons, of whom, in common with all present, he thought great things. "They *say* they wants nothing but what's their own, and liberty, and that like"——

"If thou wert a shepherd, Master Higgs," replied Dickons, "and wert to be asked by ten or a dozen wolves to let them in among thy flock of

sheep, they saying how quiet and kind they would be to 'em—wouldst let 'em in, or keep 'em out—eh?"

"Ay, ay—that be it—'tis as true as gospel!" said the clerk.

"So you a'n't to have that old sycamore down, after all, Master Dickons?" inquired Tonson, after a pause in the conversation.

"No; Miss hath carried the day against the squire and Mr Waters; and there stands the old tree, and it hath to be looked to better than ever it were afore!"

"Why hath Miss taken such a fancy to it? 'Tis an old crazy thing!"

"If thou hadst been there when she did beg, as I may say its life," replied Dickons with a little energy—"and hadst seen her, and heard her voice, that be as smooth as cream, thou wouldst never have forgotten it, I can tell thee!"

"There isn't a more beautiful lady i' t' county, I reckon, than the squire's sister?" inquired the sexton.

"No, nor in all England: if there be, I'll lay down twenty pounds!"

"And where's to be found a young lady that do go about i' t' village like she?—She were wi' Phoebe Williams t'other night, all through the snow, and i' t' dark."

"If I'd only laid hands on that chap!" interrupted the young farmer, her rescuer.

"I wonder she do not choose some one to be married to, up in London," said the landlord.

"She'll be having some delicate high quality chap, I reckon, one o' these fine days," said Hazel.

"She will be a dainty dish, truly, for whomever God gives her to," quoth Dickons.

"Ay, she will," said more than one, in an earnest tone.

"Now, to my mind," said Tonson, "saving your presence, Master Dickons, I know not but young Madam be more to my taste; she be in a manner somewhat fuller—plumper-like, and her skin be so white, and her hair as black as a raven's."

"There's not another two such ladies to be found in the whole world," said

Dickons authoritatively. Here Hector suddenly rose up, and went to the door, where he stood snuffing in an inquisitive manner.

"Now, what do that dog hear, I wonder?" quoth Pumpkin curiously, stooping forward.

"Blind Bess," replied Tonson, winking his eye, and laughing. Presently there was a sharp rapping at the door; which the landlord opened, and let in one of the servants from the Hall, his clothes white with snow, his face nearly as white, with manifest agitation.

"Why, man, what's the matter?" inquired Dickons, startled by the man's appearance. "Art frightened at anything?"

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" he commenced.

"What is it, man? Art drunk?—or mad?—or frightened? Take a man o' drink," said Tonson. But the man refused it.

"Oh, Lord!—There's woeful work at the Hall!"

"What's the matter?" cried all at once, rising and standing round the new comer.

"If thou be'st drunk, John," said Dickons sternly, "there's a way of sobering thee—mind that."

"Oh, Master Dickons, I don't know what's come to me, for grief and fright! The Squire, they do say, and all of us, are to be turned out o' Yatton!"

"What!" exclaimed all in a breath.

"There's some one else lays claim to it. We must all go! Oh, Lud! oh, Lud!" No one spoke for a while; and consternation was written on every face.

"Sit thee down here, John," said Dickons at length, "and let us hear what thou hast to say—or thou wilt have us all be going up in a body to the Hall."

Having forced on him part of a glass of ale, he began,—“There hath been plainly mischief brewing, *somewhere*, this many days, as I could tell by the troubled face o' t' squire; but he kept it to himself. Lawyer Parkinson and another have been latterly coming in chaises from London; and last night

the squire got a letter that seems to have finished all. Such trouble there were last night wi' t' squire, and young madam and miss! And to-day the parson came, and were a long while alone with old madam, who hath since had a stroke, or a fit, or something of that like (the doctors have been there all day from Grilston), and likewise young madam hath taken to her bed, and is ill. Oh, Lud! oh, Lud! Such work there be going on!"

"And what of the squire and miss?" inquired some one, after all had maintained a long silence.

"Oh, 'twould break your heart to see them," said the man, dolefully! "they be both pale as death: he so dreadful sorrowful, but quiet like, and she now and then wringing her hands, and both of them going from the bedroom of old madam to young madam's. Nay, an' there had been half-a-dozen deaths i' t' house, it could not be worse. Neither the squire or miss hath touched food the whole day!"

There was, in truth, not a dry eye in the room, nor one whose voice did not seem somewhat obstructed with his emotions.

"Who *told* thee all this about the squire's losing the estate?" inquired Dickons, with mingled trepidation and sternness.

"We heard of it but an hour or so ago. Mr Parkinson (it seems by the squire's orders) told Mr Waters, and he told it to us; saying as how it were useless to keep such a thing secret, and that we might as well all know the occasion of so much trouble.

"Who's to ha' it, then, instead of the squire?" at length inquired Tonson, in a voice half choked with rage and grief.

"Lord only knows at present. But

whoever 'tis, there isn't one of us sarvents but will go with the squire and his—if it be even to prison, *that* I can tell ye!"

"I'm Squire *Aubrey's* gamekeeper," quoth Tonson, his eye kindling as his countenance darkened, "and no one's else! It shall go hard if any one else here hath a game"—

"But if there's law in the land, sure the justice must be wi' t' squire—he and his family have had it so long?" said one of the farmers.

"I'll tell you what, masters," said Pumpkin mysteriously, "I shall be somewhat better pleased when Jonas here hath got that old creature Bess safe underground!"

"Blind Bess!" exclaimed Tonson, with a very serious, not to say disturbed, countenance. "I wonder—sure! sure! *that* ould witch can have had no hand in all this—eh?"—

"Poor old soul, not she! There be no such things as witches nowadays," exclaimed Jonas. "Not she, I warrant me! She hath been ever befriended by the squire's family. *She* do it!"

"The sooner we get that old woman underground, for all that, the better, say I!" quoth Tonson, significantly.

"The parson hath a choice sermon on 'The Flying away of Riches,'" said Higgs in a quaint, sad manner; "'tis to be hoped he'll preach from it next Sunday!"—

Soon after this, the little party dispersed, each oppressed with greater grief and amazement than he had ever known before. Bad news flies swiftly—and that which had just come from the Hall, within a very few hours of its having been told at the Aubrey Arms, had spread grief and consternation among high and low for many miles round Yatton.

CHAPTER VII.

GAMMON *versus* TAG-RAG; AND SNAP *cum* TITMOUSE, INTRODUCING HIM TO LIFE IN LONDON—OF ONE SORT.

WOULD you have believed it? Notwithstanding all that had happened between Titmouse and Tag-rag at Satin Lodge on the Sunday evening on which they were last seen together, they positively got reconciled!—a triumphant result of the astute policy of Mr Gammon. As soon as he had heard Titmouse's infuriated account of his ignominious expulsion from the mansion in question, Mr Gammon burst into a fit of hearty but gentle laughter, at length subsiding into an inward chuckle, which lasted the rest of the day; and was occasioned, first, by gratification at the impression which his own sagacity had evidently produced upon the powerful mind of Mr Titmouse; secondly, by an exquisite appreciation of the mingled meanness and stupidity of Tag-rag. I do not mean it to be understood that Titmouse had given Mr Gammon such a terse and clear yet picturesque account of the matter as I imagine myself to have given to the reader; but still he told quite enough to put his mentor in full possession of the true state of the case. Good: but then, instantly reflected Gammon, what are we *now* to do with Titmouse?—Where was that troublesome little ape to be caged, till it suited the purposes of his proprietors (as Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap might surely be called, for they had caught him, however they might fail to tame him) to let him loose upon society, to amuse and astonish it by his antics?—That was the question occupying the thoughts of Mr Gammon, while his calm, clear, grey eye was fixed upon Titmouse,

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apparently very attentive to what he was saying. The latter gentleman had first told the story of his wrongs to Snap, who instantly, rubbing his hands, suggested an indictment at the Clerkenwell sessions—an idea which infinitely delighted Titmouse, but was somewhat sternly “pooh-poohed!” by Mr Gammon as soon as he heard of it,—Snap thereat shrugging his shoulders with a disconcerted air, but a bitter sneer upon his sharp, hard face. Like many men of little but active minds, early drilled to particular and petty callings, Snap was equal to the mechanical conduct of business, the mere working of the machinery; but, as the phrase is, could never see an inch beyond his nose. Every little conjuncture of circumstances which admitted of litigation, at once suggested its *expediency*, without reference to other considerations, or connection with, or subordination to, any general purpose or plan of action. A creature of small impulses, he had no idea of foregoing a momentary advantage to secure an ulterior object of importance—which, in fact, he could not keep for a moment before his thoughts, so as to have any influence on his movements. What a different man, now, was Gammon!

To speak after the manner of physiologists, several of the characters in this history—to wit, Titmouse, Tag-rag (with his amiable wife and daughter), Huckaback, Snap, and old Quirk himself—may be looked on as reptiles of a low order in the scale of being, whose simple structures almost one dash of the knife would suffice to lay thorough-

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ly open. Gammon, however, I look upon as of a much higher order; possessing a far more complicated structure, adapted to the discharge of superior functions; and who, consequently, requireth a more careful dissection. But let it not be supposed that I have yet done with any of my characters.

Gammon saw that Tag-rag, under proper management, might be made very useful. He was a monied man; a selfish man; and, after his sort, an ambitious man. He had an only child, a daughter; and if Titmouse and he could only be by any means once more brought together, and a firm friendship cemented between them, Gammon saw several very profitable uses to which such an intimacy might be turned, in the happening of any of several contemplated contingencies. In the event, for instance, of larger outlays of money being required than suited the convenience of the firm—could not Tag-rag be easily brought to accommodate his future son-in-law of £10,000 a-year? Suppose that, alas! their case should finally break down, and all their pains, exertions, and expenditure be utterly thrown away! Now, if Tag-rag could be quietly brought, some fine day, to the point of either making an actual advance, or becoming security for Titmouse—ah! that would do—that *would* do, said both Quirk and Gammon. But then Titmouse was a very unsafe instrument—an incalculable fool, and might commit himself too far!

"You mustn't forget, Gammon," said old Mr Quirk, "that I don't fear this girl of Tag-rag's.—Not I! because only let Titmouse see—hem," he suddenly paused, and looked a little confused.

"To be sure—I see," replied Gammon quietly, and the thing passed off. "If either Miss Quirk or Miss Tag-rag becomes Mrs Titmouse," thought he, however, "I am not the man I take myself for."

A few days after the explosion at Satin Lodge, Titmouse, without having ever gone near Tag-rag's premises in Oxford Street, or, in short, seen or heard anything about him, or any one connected with him, removed

to small but respectable lodgings in the neighbourhood of Hatton Garden, provided for him by Mr Quirk. Mrs Squallop was quite affected while she took leave of her lodger, who gave her son a halfpenny to take his two boxes down stairs to the hackney coach, drawn up opposite to the entrance of Closet Court.

"I've always felt like a mother towards you, sir, in my humble way," said Mrs Squallop in a very respectful manner, and curtsying profoundly.

"A—I've not got any—a—change by me, my good woman," said Titmouse with a fine air, as he drew on his white kid glove.

"Lord, Mr Titmouse!" said the woman, almost bursting into tears, "I wasn't asking for money, neither for me nor mine—only one can't help, as it were, feeling at parting with an old lodger, you know, sir"—

"Ah—ya—as—and all that! Well, my good woman, good-day, good-day!" quoth Titmouse, with an air of languid indifference.

"Good-by, sir—God bless you, sir, now you're going to be a rich man!—Excuse me, sir."—And she seized his hand and shook it.

"You're a—devilish—impudent—woman—'pon my soul!" exclaimed Titmouse, his features filled with amazement at the presumption of which she had been guilty; and staring at his fingers as though they had been contaminated by the contact; and he strode down the stairs with an air of offended dignity.

"Well—I never!—*That* for you, you little brute," exclaimed Mrs Squallop, snapping her fingers as soon as she had heard his last step on the stairs—"Kind or cruel, it's all one to you!—You're a nasty jackanapes, only fit to stand in a tailor's window to show his clothes—and I'll be sworn you'll come to no good in the end, please God! Let you be *rich* as you may, you'll always be the fool you always was—that's one comfort!"

Had the good woman been familiar with the Night Thoughts of Dr Young, she might have expressed herself somewhat tersely in a line of his—

"Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps,"

And, by the way, who can read the next line—

"And pyramids are pyramids in vales,"

without thinking for a moment, with a kind of proud sympathy, of certain *other* characters in this history? Well! but let us pass on.

The day after that on which Mr Gammon had had a long interview with Titmouse, at the new lodgings of the latter,—when, after a skilful effort, he had succeeded in reconciling Titmouse to a renewal of his acquaintance with Tag-rag, upon that gentleman's making a complete and abject apology for his late monstrous conduct,—Mr Gammon wended his way towards Oxford Street, and soon introduced himself once more to Mr Tag-rag, who was standing leaning against one of the counters in his shop in a musing position, with a pen behind his ear, and his hands in his breeches' pockets. Ten days had elapsed since he had expelled the little impostor Titmouse from Satin Lodge, and during that interval, he had neither seen nor heard anything whatever of him. On now catching the first glimpse of Mr Gammon, he started from his musing posture, not a little disconcerted, and agitation overspread his coarse deeply-pitted face with a tal- lowy hue. What was in the wind! Mr Gammon coming to him—and so long after what had occurred? Mr Gammon, too, who, having found out his error, had discarded Titmouse! Tag-rag had a mortal dread of Gammon, who seemed to him to glide like a dangerous snake into the shop, so quietly, and *so deadly!* There was something so calm and imperturbable in his demeanour, so blandly crafty, so ominously gentle and soft in the tone of his voice, so penetrating in his eye, and he could throw such an infernal smile over his features! Tag-rag might be likened to the animal, suddenly shuddering as he perceives the glistening folds of the rattlesnake moving towards, or around him, in the long grass. One glimpse of his

blasting beauty of hue, and—Horror! all is over.

If the splendid bubble of Titmouse's fortune *had* burst in the manner which he had represented, why Gammon here now? thought Tag-rag. It was with, in truth, a poor show of contempt and defiance, that, in answer to the bland salutation of Gammon, Tag-rag led the way down the shop into the little room which had been the scene of such an extraordinary communication concerning Titmouse, on a former occasion.

Gammon commenced, in a mild tone, with a startling representation of the criminal liability which Tag-rag had incurred by his wanton outrage upon Mr Titmouse, his own guest, moreover, in violation of all the laws of hospitality. Tag-rag furiously alleged the imposition which had been practised on him by Titmouse; but seemed quite collapsed when Gammon assured him that that circumstance would not afford him the slightest legal justification. Having satisfied Tag-rag that he was entirely at the mercy of Titmouse, who might subject him to both fine and imprisonment, besides heavy law expenses, and exposure to the public of his shameful conduct, which might greatly prejudice him in his business!—Mr Gammon proceeded to open Tag-rag's eyes to their widest stare of amazement, by assuring him that Titmouse had been hoaxing him—or, perhaps, testing the sincerity of his attachment!—and that he was really in the dazzling position in which he had been first represented by Gammon to Tag-rag; that every week brought him nearer to the full and uncontrolled enjoyment of an estate in Yorkshire, worth £10,000 a-year at the very lowest; that it was becoming an object of increasing anxiety to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, to keep him out of the hands of money-lenders, who, as usual in such cases, had already scented out their victim, and so forth. Tag-rag turned very white, and felt sick at heart, in the midst of all his wonder. Oh, and his daughter had lost the golden prize! and through *his* stupidity and bru-

tality! He could have sunk into the cellar!—Mr Gammon declared that he could not account for the singular conduct of Mr Titmouse on the melancholy occasion in question, except on the grounds above hinted at, or by referring it to the excellent wines which he had too freely partaken of at Satin Lodge, added, said Gammon, with an exquisite expression of features which perfectly fascinated Tag-rag, to a "certain tender influence" which had fairly laid prostrate the faculties of the young and enthusiastic Titmouse; that there could be little doubt of his ruling motive in the conduct alluded to, namely, a desire to test the sincerity and disinterestedness of a "certain person's" attachment before he let all his fond and passionate feelings go out towards her—[At this point the perspiration burst from every pore in the devoted body of Tag-rag]—and that no one could deprecate the unexpected issue of his little experiment, so much as now did Titmouse.

Tag-rag really, for a moment, scarcely knew where he was, who was with him, nor whether he stood on his head or his heels, so delightful and entirely unexpected, but at the same time agitating, was the issue of Mr Gammon's visit. As soon as his faculties had somewhat recovered from their temporary confusion, almost breathless, he assured Gammon that no event in the whole course of his life had occasioned him such poignant regret as his treatment of Titmouse on the occasion in question; that he had undoubtedly followed unwittingly, he was ashamed to own, the example of Titmouse, and drunk far more than his usual quantity of wine; besides which he had undoubtedly noticed, as had Mrs T., the state of things between Mr Titmouse and his daughter—talking of whom, by the way, he could assure Mr Gammon that both Mrs and Miss T. had been ill ever since that unfortunate evening, and had never ceased to condemn his—Tag-rag's—monstrous conduct on that occasion. As for Miss T., she was growing thinner and thinner every day, and he thought he must send her to the country for a short time: in

fact—poor girl!—she was plainly pining away!

To all this Mr Gammon listened with a calm, delightful, sympathising look, which quite transported Tag-rag, and satisfied him that Mr Gammon implicitly believed every word that was being said to him. But when he proceeded to assure Tag-rag that this visit of his had been undertaken at the earnest instance of Mr Titmouse himself (who, by the way, had removed to lodgings which would suit his present circumstances, and were also near to their office, for the purpose of frequent communication on matters of business between him and their firm), who had urged Mr Gammon to tender the olive branch, in the devout hope that it might be accepted—Tag-rag's excitement knew scarce any bounds; and he could almost have started into the shop, and given orders to his shopmen to shut up shop half an hour earlier for the rest of the week! Mr Gammon wrote down Titmouse's direction, and handing it to Mr Tag-rag, assured him that a call from him would be gratefully received by Mr Titmouse. "There's no accounting for these things, Mr Tag-rag—is there?" said Mr Gammon, with an arch smile, as he prepared to depart—Tag-rag squeezing his hands with painful energy as Gammon bade him adieu, declaring that "he should not be himself for the rest of the day," and bowing the aforesaid Mr Gammon down the shop with as profound an obsequiousness as if he had been the Governor of the Bank of England, or even the Lord Mayor. As soon as Gammon had got fairly into the street, and to a safe distance, he burst into little gentle paroxysms of laughter, every now and then, which lasted him till he had regained his office in Saffron Hill.

The motive so boldly and skilfully suggested by Gammon to Tag-rag, as that impelling Titmouse to seek a reconciliation with him, was greedily credited by Tag-rag. 'Tis certainly very easy, as every observant man has occasion to notice in himself, to believe what one wishes to be true.

Was it *very* improbable that Tag-rag, loving only one object on earth—next to money, which indeed he really did love with the best energies of his nature—namely, his daughter; and believing her possessed of qualities calculated to excite every one's love—should believe that she had inspired Titmouse with the passion of which he had just been hearing?—a passion consuming him, and not to be quenched by even the gross outrage which—but laugh! *that*, Tag-rag shuddered to think of. He clapped his hat on his head, started off to Titmouse's lodgings, and fortunately caught that gentleman just as he was going out to dine at a neighbouring tavern. If Tag-rag had been a keen observer, he could hardly have failed to discover aversion towards himself written in every feature and gesture of Titmouse; and also the difficulty which he experienced in concealing his feelings. But his eagerness overbore everything, and he took Titmouse quite by storm. Before Tag-rag had done with him, he had obliterated every trace of resentment in his little friend's bosom. Thoroughly as Gammon thought he had armed Titmouse against the encounter—indeed, at all points—'twas of no avail. Tag-rag poured such a monstrous quantity of flummery down the gaping mouth and insatiate throat of the little animal, as at length produced its desired effect. So frail is human nature, that few can resist flattery, however coarsely administered; but as for Titmouse, he felt the delicious fluid softly insinuating itself into every crevice of his little soul, for which it seemed, indeed, to have a sort of elective affinity; 'twas a balm, 'twas an opiate soothing his wounded pride, lubricating all his inner man; nay, flooding it, so as at length to extinguish entirely the small glimmering spark of discernment which nature had lit in him. "To be *forewarned*, is to be *forearmed*," says the proverb; but it was not verified in the present instance. Titmouse would have dined at Satin Lodge on the very next Sunday, in accordance with the pressing invitations of Tag-

rag, but that he happened to recollect having engaged himself to dine on that evening with Mr Quirk, at his residence in Camberwell—ALIBI HOUSE. As I have already intimated in a previous part of this history, that most respectable old gentleman, Mr Quirk, with the shrewdness natural to him, and which had been quickened by his great experience, had soon seen through the ill-contrived and worse-concealed designs upon Titmouse, of Mr Tag-rag; and justly considered that the surest method of rendering them abortive would be to familiarise Titmouse with a superior style of things, such as was to be found at Alibi House—and a more lovely and attractive object for his best affections in Miss Quirk—Dora Quirk—the lustre of whose charms and accomplishments there could be no doubt, he thought, would instantly efface the image of that poor, feeble, vulgar creature, Miss Tag-rag; for such old Quirk knew she must be, though he had, in fact, never set eyes upon her. Mr Tag-rag looked rather blank at hearing of the grand party there was to be at Alibi House, and that Titmouse was to be introduced to the only daughter of Mr Quirk! and could not for the life of him abstain from dropping something, vague and indistinct to be sure, about "entrapping unsuspecting innocence," and "interested attentions," and other similar expressions—all of which, however, were lost upon Titmouse. Tapping with an auctioneer's hammer on a block of granite, would make about as much impression upon it, as will hint, inuendo, or suggestion upon a blockhead. So it was with Titmouse. He promised to dine at Satin Lodge on the Sunday after the ensuing one—with which poor Mr Tag-rag was obliged to depart content; having been unable to get Titmouse up to Clapham on either of the intervening evenings, on which, he told Mr Tag-rag, he was particularly engaged with an intimate friend—"in fact, one of HIS SOLICITORS;" and Tag-rag left him, after shaking him by the hand with the utmost cordiality and energy. He instantly conceived a lively hatred of

old Mr Quirk and his daughter, who seemed taking so unfair an advantage. What, however, could be done? Many times during his interview did he anxiously turn about in his mind the expediency of proffering to lend or give Titmouse a five-pound note, of which he had one or two in his pocket-book; but no—'twas too much for human nature—he *could* not bring himself to it; and quitted Titmouse as rich a man as he had entered that truly fortunate gentleman's lodgings.

The "intimate friend" to whom Titmouse alluded, as having engaged himself to dinner with him, was, in fact, Mr Snap; who had early evinced a great partiality for him, and lost no opportunity of contributing to his enjoyment. Snap was a sharp-sighted person, and quickly detected many qualities in Titmouse, kindred to his own. He sincerely commiserated Titmouse's situation, than which, could anything be more lonely and desolate? Was he to sit night after night, in the lengthening nights of autumn and winter, with not a soul to speak to, not a book to read (that was at least interesting or worth reading); nothing, in short, to occupy his attention? "No," said Snap to himself; "I will do as I would be done by; I will come and draw him out of his dull hole; I will show him life—I will give him an early insight into the habits and practices of the great world, in which he is so soon to cut a leading figure! I will early familiarise him with the gayest and most exciting modes of London life!" The very first taste of this cup of pleasure was exquisitely relished by Titmouse; and he felt a proportionate gratitude to him whose kind hand had first raised it to his lips. Scenes of which he had heretofore only heard and read—after which he had often sighed and yearned, were now opening daily before him, limited as were his means; and he felt perfectly happy. When Snap had finished the day's labours of the office, from which he was generally released about eight or nine o'clock in the evening, he would repair to his lodgings, and decorate himself for the

night's display; after which, either he would go to Titmouse, or Titmouse come to him, as might have been previously agreed upon between them; and then,—

"The town was all before them, where to choose!"

Sometimes they would, arm in arm, each with his cigar in his mouth, saunter, for hours together, along the leading streets and thoroughfares, making acute observations and deep reflections upon the ever-moving and motley scenes around them. Most frequently, however, they would repair, at half-price, to the theatres; for Snap had the means of securing almost a constant supply of "orders" from the underlings of the theatres, and also from reporters to the *Sunday Flash* (with which Messrs Quirk and Gammon were connected), and other newspapers. Ah, 'twas a glorious sight to see these two gentlemen saunter into a vacant box, conscious that the eyes of two-thirds of the house were fixed upon them in admiration, and conducting themselves accordingly—as swells of the first water! One such night counterbalanced, in Titmouse's estimation, a whole year of his previous obscurity and wretchedness! The theatre over, they would repair to some cloudy tavern, full of noise and smoke, and the glare of gas-light—redolent of the fragrant fumes of tobacco, gin, and porter, intermingled with the tempting odours of smoking kidneys, mutton-chops, beefsteaks, oysters, stewed cheese, toasted cheese, Welsh rabbits; where those who are chained to the desk and the counter during the day, revel in the license of the hour, and eat, and drink, and smoke to the highest point of either excitement or stupefaction, and enter into all the slang of the day—of the turf, the ring, the cockpit, the theatres—and shake their sides at comic, or gloat over ribald songs. To enter one of these places when the theatre was over, was a luxury indeed to Titmouse; figged out in his very uttermost best, with satin stock and double breastpins; his glossy hat cocked on one side of his head, his tight blue

surtout, with the snowy handkerchief elegantly drooping out of the breast pocket; straw-coloured kid gloves, tight trousers, and shining boots; his ebony silver-headed cane held carelessly under his arm! To walk into the middle of the room with a sort of haughty ease and indifference, or nonchalance; and after deliberately scanning, through his eye-glass, every box, with its occupants, at length drop into a vacant nook, and with a languid air summon the bustling waiter to receive his commands, was ecstasy! The circumstance of his almost always accompanying Snap on these occasions, who was held in great awe by the waiters, to whom his professional celebrity was well known, (for there was scarce an interesting, a dreadful, or a nasty scene at any of the police-offices, in which Snap's name did not figure in the newspapers as "appearing on behalf of the prisoner,") got Titmouse almost an equal share of consideration, and aided the effect produced by his own commanding appearance. As for Snap, whenever he was asked who his companion was, he would whisper in a very significant tone and manner—"Devilish high chap!" From these places they would repair, not unfrequently, to certain other scenes of nightly London life, of which, I thank God! the virtuous reader can form no notion, though they are, strange to say, winked at, if not patronised, by the police and magistracy, till the metropolis is choked with them. Thus would Snap and Titmouse pleasantly and profitably pass away their time till one, two, three, and often four o'clock in the morning; at which hours they would, with many yawns, skulk homewards through the deserted and silent streets, their clothes redolent of tobacco smoke, their stomachs overcharged, their heads often muddled, swimming, and throbbing with their multifarious potations—having thus spent a "*jolly night*," and "*seen life*." 'Twas thus that Snap greatly endeared himself to Titmouse, and secretly (for he enjoined upon Titmouse, as the condition of their continuance, strict secrecy on

the subject of these nocturnal adventures) stole a march upon his older competitors for the good opinion of Titmouse—Messrs Quirk, Tag-rag, and even the astute and experienced Gammon himself. Such doings as these required, however, as may easily be believed, some slight augmentations of the allowance made to Titmouse by Messrs Quirk and Gammon; and it was fortunate that Snap was in a condition, having a few hundreds at his command, to supply the necessities of Titmouse, receiving with a careless air, on the occasion of such advances, small slips of paper by way of acknowledgments; some on stamped paper, others on unstamped paper—promissory notes, and I. O. U.'s. Inasmuch, however, as Snap was not always possessed of a stamp on the occasion of a sudden advance, and having asked the opinion of his pleader (a sharp fellow who had been articulated at the same time as himself to Messrs Quirk and Gammon) as to whether an instrument in this form—

"I. O. U. so much—*with interest*," would be available without a stamp, and being informed that it was doubtful, Snap ingeniously met the difficulty by quietly adding to the principal what might become due in respect of interest: *e. g.* if £5 were lent, the acknowledgment would stand for £15—these little slips of paper being generally signed by Titmouse in moments of extreme exhilaration, when he never thought of scrutinising anything that his friend Snap would lay before him. For the honour of Snap, I must say that I hardly think he deliberately purposed to perpetrate the fraud which such a transaction appears to amount to; all he wanted was—so he satisfied himself at least—to have it in his power to recover the full amount of principal *really* advanced, with interest, on one or other of these various securities, and—hold the surplus as trustee for Titmouse. If, for instance, any unfortunate difference should hereafter arise between himself and Titmouse, and he should refuse to recognise his pecuniary obligations to Snap, the latter gentleman would be pro-

vided with short and easy proofs of his demands against him. 'Twas thus, I say, that Snap soothed the sensitive remains of his conscience, and rendered himself indispensable to Titmouse, whom he bound to him by every tie of gratitude; so that, in short, they became sworn friends; and each was worthy of the other.

I will always say for Gammon, that, whatever might have been his motive, he strenuously endeavoured to urge upon Titmouse the necessity of acquiring, at all events, a smattering of the elements of useful education. Beyond an acquaintance with the petty operations of arithmetic requisite for counter-transactions, I will venture to say that poor Titmouse had no serviceable knowledge of any kind. Mr Gammon repeatedly pressed him to put himself under competent teachers of the ordinary branches of education; but Tit-

mouse as often evaded him, and at length flatly refused to do anything of the kind. He promised, however, to read such books as Mr Gammon might recommend, who thereupon sent him several; but a book before Titmouse was much the same as a plate of sawdust before a hungry man. Mr Gammon, himself a man of considerable acquirements, soon saw the true state of the case, and gave up his attempts in despair and disgust. Not that he ever suffered Titmouse to perceive the faintest indication of such feelings towards him; on the contrary, Gammon ever exhibited the same bland and benignant demeanour, consulting his wishes in everything, and striving to instil into him feelings of love, tempered by respect, as towards the most powerful—the only real, disinterested friend he had! To a great extent he succeeded.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FEAST OF REASON AND THE FLOW OF SOUL AT ALIBI HOUSE; MR QUIRK'S BANQUET TO TITMOUSE, WHO IS OVERCOME BY IT.

TITMOUSE spent several hours in preparing for an effective first appearance at the dinner-table at Alibi House. Since dining at Satin Lodge, he had considerably increased his wardrobe both in quantity and style. He now sported a pair of tight black trousers, with pumps and gossamer silk stockings. He wore a crimson-velvet waistcoat, with a bright blue satin under-waistcoat, a shirt-frill standing out somewhat fiercely at right angles with his breast, and a brown dress-coat cut in the extreme of the fashion, the long tails coming to a point just about the backs of his knees. His hair, its purple hue still pretty distinctly perceptible, was disposed with great elegance. He had discarded mustaches; but had a promising imperial. The hair un-

derneath his chin came out curling on each side of it, above his stock, like two little tufts or horns. Over his waistcoat he wore his mosaic gold watch-guard, and a broad black watered ribbon, to which was attached his eye-glass—in fact, if he had dressed himself in order to sit to a miniature-painter for his likeness, he could not have taken greater pains, or secured a more successful result. The only points about his appearance with which he was at all dissatisfied, were his hair—which was not yet the thing which he hoped in due time to see it—his thick red stumpy hands, and his round shoulders. The last matter gave him considerable concern, for he felt that it seriously interfered with a graceful carriage; and that the defect in his

figure had been, after all, not in the least remedied by the prodigious padding of his coat. His protuberant eyes, of light hue, had an expression entirely harmonising with that of his open mouth; and both together, quite independently of his dress, carriage, and demeanour, gave you—there is nothing like being candid—the image of a complete fool. Having at length carefully adjusted his hat on his head, and drawn on his white kid gloves, he enveloped himself in a stylish cloak, with long black silk tassels, which had been lent to him by Snap; and about four o'clock forth sallied Mr Titmouse, carefully picking his way, in quest of the first coach that could convey him to Alibi House, or as near to it as might be. He soon found one, and, conscious that his appearance was far too splendid for an outside place, got inside. All the way along, his heart was in a little flutter of vanity, excitement, and expectation. He was going to be introduced to Miss Quirk—and probably, also, to several people of great consequence—as the heir-apparent to £10,000 a-year! With two respectable female passengers, his companions, he never once deigned to interchange a syllable. Four or five times did he put his head out of the window, calling out in a loud peremptory tone—"Mind, coachman—Alibi House—Mr Quirk's—Alibi House—Do you hear, demme?" After which he would sink back into the seat with a magnificent air, as if he had not been used to give himself so much trouble. The coach at length stopped. "Hallibi Ouse, sir," said the coachman, in a respectful tone—"this is Mr Quirk's, sir." Titmouse stepped out, dropped eighteenpence into the man's hand, and opening the gate, found himself in a straight and narrow gravel-walk, of about twenty yards in length, with little obstinate-looking stunted shrubs on each side. 'Twas generally known, among Mr Quirk's friends, by the name of "the Rope-walk." Titmouse might have been before, for a moment, in as fine-looking a house, but only to deliver a bundle of drapery or hosiery: never

before had he entered such an one in the quality of guest. It was, in fact, a fair-sized house, at least treble that of Satin Lodge, and had a far more stylish appearance. When Titmouse pulled the bell, the door was quickly plucked open by a big footman, with showy shoulder-knot and splendid red plush breeches, who soon disposed of Titmouse's cloak and hat, and led the way to the drawing-room, before our friend, with a sudden palpitation of the heart, had had a moment's time even to run his hands through his hair.

"What name, sir?" inquired the man, suddenly pausing—with his hand upon the handle of the door.

"Mr Titmouse!"

"I—beg your pardon, sir, *what* name?"

Titmouse, clearing his throat, repeated his name—open went the door, and—"Mr Ticklemouse," said the servant very loudly and distinctly—ushering in Titmouse; on whom the door was the next instant closed. He felt amazingly flustered—and he would have been still more so, could he have been made aware of the titter which pervaded the fourteen or twenty people assembled in the room, occasioned by the droll misnomer of the servant, and the exquisitely ridiculous appearance of the guest whom he had so introduced. Mr Quirk, dressed in black, with knee-breeches and silk stockings, immediately bustled up to him, shook him cordially by the hand, and led him up to the assembled guests—"My daughter—Miss Quirk; Mrs Alderman Addlehead; Mrs Deputy Diddle-daddle; Mrs Alias—my sister;—Mr Alderman Addlehead; Mr Deputy Diddle-Daddle; Mr Bluster; Mr Slang; Mr Hug; Mr Flaw; Mr Viper; Mr Ghastly; Mr Gammon you know." Miss Quirk was about four or five and twenty—a fat young lady, with flaxen hair curled formally all over her head and down to her shoulders; so that she strongly resembled one of those great wax dolls seen in bazaars and shop windows. Her complexion was beautifully fair; her eyes were small; her face was quite round and fat.

From the die-away manner in which she moved her head, and the languid tone of her voice, it was obvious that she was a sentimental young lady. She was dressed in white, and wore a massive gold chain—her fat arms being half covered with long kid gloves. She was sitting on the sofa, from which she did not rise when Titmouse was introduced to her—and the moment afterwards, hid her face behind the album which had been lying on her knee, and which she had been showing to the ladies on each side of her; for, in fact, neither she nor any one else could, without the greatest difficulty, refrain from laughing at the monkeyfied appearance of our friend. The Alderman was a stout, stupid, little man—a fussy old prig—with small angry-looking black eyes, and a short red nose; as for his head, it seemed as though he had just smeared some sticky fluid over it, and then dipped it into a flour tub, so thickly laden was it with powder. Mr Deputy Diddle-daddle was tall and thin, and serious and slow of speech, with the solemn composure of an undertaker. Mr Bluster was a great Old Bailey barrister, about fifty years old, the leader constantly employed by Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and was making at least a thousand a-year. He had an amazingly truculent-looking countenance, coarse to a degree, and his voice matched it; but on occasions like the present—i. e. in elegant society—he would fain drop the successful terrors of his manner, and appear the mild, dignified gentleman. He therefore spoke in a soft, cringing way, with an anxious smile; but his bold insolent eye and coarse mouth—what could disguise or mitigate their expression? Here he was, playing the great man; making himself, however, particularly agreeable to Messrs Quirk and Gammon. Slang was of the same school, fat, vulgar, confident, and empty; telling obscene jokes and stories with unctuous humour. He sang a good song, too—particularly of that class which required the absence of ladies—and of gentlemen. Hug—Mr Toady Hug—was also a barrister; a

glib little Jewish-looking fellow, creeping into considerable criminal practice. He was a sneaking backbiter, and had a blood-hound scent after an attorney. See him, for instance, at this moment, in close and eager conversation with Mr Flaw, who, rely upon it, will give him a brief before the week is over. Viper was the editor of the *Sunday Flash*; a cold, venomous, little creature. He was a philosopher—and of opinion that everything was wrong—moral, physical, intellectual, and social; that there was really no such thing, or at least ought not to be, as religion; and, as to political rights, that everybody was equal, and if any were uppermost, all ought to be! He had failed in business twice, and disreputably; then had become a parson of some sort or other; but, having seduced a young female member of his congregation, was expelled from his pulpit. An action having been brought against him by the mother of his victim, and heavy damages obtained, he attempted to take the benefit of the Insolvent Debtors' Act—but, on account of the aforesaid verdict, was remanded for eighteen months. That period he employed in writing a shockingly blasphemous work, for which he was prosecuted, and sentenced to a fine and imprisonment. On being released from prison, saturated with gall and bitterness against all mankind, he took to political writing of a violent character, and was at length picked up, half starved, by his present patron, Mr Quirk, and made editor of the *Sunday Flash*. Is not all this history written in his sallow, sinister-eyed, bitter-expressed countenance? Woe to him who gets into a discussion with Viper!

There were one or two others present, particularly a Mr Ghastly, a third-rate tragic actor, with a tremendous mouth, only one eye, and a very hungry look. He never spoke, because no one spoke to him, for his clothes seemed rather rusty black. The only man of gentlemanlike appearance in the room was Mr Gammon; and he took an early opportu-

nity of engaging poor Titmouse in conversation, and setting him comparatively at his ease—a thing which was attempted by old Quirk, but in such a fidgety-fussy way as served only to fluster Titmouse the more. Mr Quirk gave a dinner-party of this sort regularly every Sunday; and they formed the happiest moments of his life—occasions on which he felt that he had achieved success in life—on which he banished from his thoughts the responsible and dignified anxieties of his profession; and, surrounded by a select circle of choice spirits, such as were thus collected together, partook joyously of the

“Feast of reason, and the flow of soul.”

“This is a beautiful picture, Mr Titmouse, isn’t it?” said Gammon, leading him to the farther corner of the drawing-room, where hung a small picture, with a sort of curtain of black gauze before it. Gammon lifted it up; and Titmouse beheld a picture of a man suspended from the gallows, his hands tied with cords before him, his head forced aside, and covered down to the chin with a white night-cap. ’Twas done with sickening fidelity; and Titmouse gazed at it with a shudder. “Charming thing, isn’t it?” said Gammon, with an expressive smile.

“Y—e—e—s,” replied Titmouse, his eyes glued to the horrid object.

“Ah!—very striking thing that—a’n’t it?” quoth Quirk, bustling up to them; “’twas painted for me by a first-rate artist, whose brother I *very nearly* saved from the gallows! *Like* such things?” he inquired with a matter-of-fact air, drawing down the black gauze.

“Yes, sir, uncommon—most uncommon!” quoth Titmouse, shuddering.

“Well, I’ll show you something most particularly interesting! Heard of Gilderoy, that was hanged for forgery? Gad, my daughter’s got a brooch with a lock of his hair in it, which he gave me himself—a client of mine: within an ace of getting him off—flaw in the indictment—found it

out myself—did, by gad! Come along, and I’ll get Dora to show it to you!” and, putting Titmouse’s arm in his, and desirous of withdrawing him from Gammon, he led him up to the interesting young lady.

“Dora,” said Mr Quirk—“just show my friend Titmouse that brooch of yours, with Gilderoy’s hair.”

“Oh, my dear papa, ’tis such a melancholy thing!” said she, at the same time detaching it from her dress, and handing it to her papa, who, holding it in his hands, gave Titmouse, and one or two others who stood beside, an interesting account of the last hours of the deceased Gilderoy.

“He was *very* handsome, papa, wasn’t he?” inquired Miss Quirk with a sigh, and a pensive air.

“Wasn’t bad-looking; but good looks and the condemned cell don’t long agree together, I can tell you!—Had many?”—

“Ah, papa!” exclaimed Miss Quirk in a mournful tone, and, leaning back in the sofa, raised her handkerchief to her eyes.

“You are too sensitive, my love!” whispered her aunt, Mrs Alias, squeezing the hand of her niece, who, struggling against her feelings, presently revived.

“We were looking just now,” said Mr Hug, addressing Mr Quirk, “at an interesting addition to Miss Quirk’s splendid album—that letter of Grizzlegut.”

“Ah, very striking! Value it beyond everything! Shall never forget Grizzlegut! Very nearly got him off! ’Twas an ‘&c.’ that nearly saved his life, through being omitted in the indictment. Fore gad, we thought we’d got ’em!”

They were alluding to an autograph letter which had been addressed to Mr Quirk by Grizzlegut, who had been executed for high treason a few weeks before, the night before he suffered. He was a blood-stained scoundrel of the deepest dye, and ought to have been hanged and quartered half-a-dozen times.

“Will you read it aloud, Mr Hug?” inquired Miss Quirk with a deep sigh

—and the barrister, with solemn emphasis, read the following remarkable document:—

“*Condemned Cell, Newgate,
Sunday night, half past 11 o'clock,
30th April 18—.*”

“SIR,

“At this awful moment, when this world is closing rapidly upon me and my fellow-sufferers, and the sounds of the wretches putting up the Grim Gallows are audible to my listening ears, and on the morrow the most horrible death that *malicious tyrants* can inflict awaits me, my soul being calm and full of fortitude, and beating responsive to the call of GLORIOUS LIBERTY, I feel prouder than the King upon his throne. I feel that I have done much to secure the liberties of my *injured country*.

‘For Liberty, glorious Liberty,
Who’d fear to die?’

Many thanks to you, sir, for your truly indefatigable efforts on my behalf, and the constant exercise of a skill that nearly secured us a *Glorious Acquittal*. What a Flame we would have raised in England! That should have blasted the enemies of True Freedom. I go to Hereafter (if, indeed, there be a hereafter) as we shall soon know, not with my soul crammed with Priestcraft, but a Bold Briton, having laid down my life for my country, knowing that *Future Ages* will do me Justice.

“Adieu, Tyrants, adieu! Do your worst!! My soul defies you!!!

“I am, Sir,

“Your humble, obliged, and undismayed servant,

“ARTHUR GRIZZLEGUT.

“To CALEB QUIRK, Esq.

“‘Tyrants grim,
Will, on the morrow, cut me limb from limb:—

While Liberty looks on with terrible eye,
And says, *I will avenge him by-and-by.*”

“ARTHUR GRIZZLEGUT.”

The reading of the above produced a great sensation. “That man’s name will be enrolled among the Sidneys and the Hampdens of his country!” said Viper, with a grim and excited

air. “That letter deserves to be carved on a golden tablet! The last four lines are sublime! They are worthy of Milton! He was a martyr to principles that are silently and rapidly making their way in this country!”—How much farther he would have gone on in this strain, seeing no one present had resolution enough to differ with or interrupt him, even if they had been so disposed, I know not; but fortunately dinner was announced—a sound which startled old Quirk out of a posture of intense attention to Viper, and evident admiration of his sentiments. He gave his arm with an air of prodigious politeness to the gaunt Mrs Alderman Addlehead, whose distinguished lord led down Miss Quirk—and the rest followed in no particular order—Titmouse arm-in-arm with Gammon, who took care to place him next to himself (Gammon). It was really a dashing sort of dinner—such, indeed, as Mr Quirk had long been celebrated for. Titmouse had never seen anything like it, and was quite bewildered—particularly at the number of differently shaped and coloured glasses, &c. &c. &c., appropriated to his individual use! He kept a constant eye on the movements of Gammon, and did whatever he did (the two appearing moved by the same set of springs), and was thus saved not a few embarrassments and annoyances. What chiefly struck his attention was the prodigious number of dishes, great and small, as if a dozen dinners had been crowded into one; the rapidity with which they were changed, and plates removed, in constant succession; and the incessant invitations to take wine, flying about during the whole of dinner. For a considerable while he was too much flurried to enjoy himself; but a few glasses of champagne succeeded in elevating his spirits to the proper pitch—and, had he not been checked by Mr Gammon, would soon have driven them far beyond it. Almost everybody, except the great folk at the very top of the table, asked him to take wine; and on every such occasion he filled his glass. In fact, Gam-

mon, recollecting a scene at his own chamber, soon perceived that, unless he interfered, Titmouse would be drunk long before dinner was over. That gentleman had not imagined the earth to contain so exquisite a liquor as champagne; and he could have fallen down and worshipped it, as it came fizzing and flashing out of the bottle. Gammon earnestly assured him that he would be ill if he drunk so much—that many eyes were upon him—and that it was not the custom to do more than merely sip from his wine-glass when challenging, or challenged, to take wine. But Titmouse had taken a considerably greater quantity on board, before Gammon thus interfered, than that gentleman was aware of, and began to get confident and voluble. Guess the progress he had made, when he called out boldly and loudly—"Mr Alderman! Your health!"—whether more to that great man's astonishment, or disgust, I cannot undertake to say: but after a steady stare for a moment or two at Titmouse, "Oh! I shall be very happy, indeed, *Mr Gammon*," he called out, looking at the latter gentleman, and drinking with *him*. That signified nothing, however, to Titmouse, who, indeed, did not see anything at all pointed or unusual, and nodding confidently to the alderman, gulped down his wine as eagerly as before.

"Cool puppy that, Miss Quirk, must say," snuffed the offended Alderman, to Miss Quirk.

"He's young, dear Mr Alderman," said she, sweetly and mildly—"and when you consider the immense fortune he is coming into—ten thousand a-year, my papa says"—

"That don't make him less a puppy—nor a brute," interrupted the ruffled Alderman, still more indignant; for his own twenty thousand pounds, the source of all his social eminence, sunk into insignificance at the sound of the splendid income just about to drop into the lap of Titmouse. Mr Bluster, who headed the table on Miss Quirk's left-hand side, and who felt that he *ought* to be, but knew that in the presence of the Alderman he *was* not, the

great man of the day, observing the irritation under which his rival was suffering, resolved to augment it as much as possible: wherefore he immediately raised his threatening double-glasses to his eyes, and in a tone of ostentatious condescension, looking down the table to Titmouse, called out, "Mr Titmash—may I have the honour of drinking wine with you?"

"Ya—as, brother Bumptious," replied Titmouse, who could never bear to hear his name mispronounced, and raised *his* glass to his eye; "was just going to ask *you*!" All this was done in such a loud and impudent tone and manner, as made Gammon still more uneasy for his young companion. But his sally had been received by the company as a smart retort, and produced a roar of laughter, every one being glad to see Mr Bluster snubbed, who bore it in silent dignity, though his face showed his chagrin and astonishment; and he heartily agreed, for once in his life, with the worshipful person opposite to him, in his estimate of our friend Titmouse. "Mr Titmouse! Mr Titmouse! my daughter wonders you won't take wine with her," said Mr Quirk in a low tone—"will you join us? we're going to take a glass of champagne."

"Oh! 'pon my life—delighted"—quoth Titmouse.

"Dora, my dear! Mr Titmouse will take wine with you!—Jack," (to the servant,) "fill Miss Quirk's and Mr Titmouse's glasses to the brim."

"Oh no! *dearest* papa—gracious!" she exclaimed, removing her glass.

"Pho! pho!—nonsense—the first time of asking, you know, ah, ha!"

"Well! If it *must* be," and with what a graceful inclination—with what a sly searching glance, and fascinating smile, did she exchange courtesies with Titmouse! He felt disposed to take wine with her a second time immediately; but Gammon restrained him. Mr Toady Hug, having become acquainted with the brilliant prospects of Titmouse, earnestly desired to exert his little talents to do what was agreeable, and ingratiate himself with Mr

Titmouse; but there was a counter-acting force in another direction—viz. the attorney, Mr Flaw, who had the greatest practice at the Clerkenwell sessions, and sat beside him, receiving his most respectful and incessant attentions; Hug speaking ever to him in a low confidential whisper, constantly casting the while a furtive glance towards Bluster and Slang, to see whether they were observing him. In “strict confidence” he assured Mr Flaw how his case, the other day, might have been won, if such and such a course had been adopted, “which would have been the line *he*” (Hug) “would have taken;” and which he explained with anxious energy. “I must say, (but don’t mention it!) that Mr Flip regularly threw the case away—no doubt of it! By the way, what became of that burglary case of yours, on Friday, Mr Flaw? Uncommonly interesting case!”

“Found guilty, poor fellows!”

“You don’t say so!”

“Fact, by Jove, though!”

“How *could* Mr Gobble have lost that verdict? I assure you I would have bet ten to one on your getting a verdict; for I read over your brief as it lay beside me, and upon my honour, Mr Flaw, it was most admirably got up. Everything depends on the brief”

“Glad you thought so, sir,” replied Flaw, wondering how it was that he had never before thought of giving a brief to Mr Hug.

“It’s a great mistake of counsel,” quoth Hug, earnestly—“not to pay the utmost attention to their briefs! For my part,” he continued in a lower tone, “I make a point of reading every syllable in *my* brief, however long it is!”

“It’s the only way, depend on it, sir. We attorneys, you know, see and know so much of the case, conversing confidentially with the prisoners”

“Ay, and beyond that—Your practical suggestions, my dear sir, are often—Now, for instance, in the brief I was alluding to, there was, I recollect—one most—uncommonly acute suggestion”

“Sir—you’re particularly flattering!”

Am very much obliged to you indeed! May I ask, what it was that struck you?”—inquired the attorney briskly, his countenance showing the progress of Hug’s lubricating process.

“Oh—why—a—a—hem!” stammered Hug, somewhat nonplussed—for his little fiction had been accepted as a fact! “No; it would hardly be fair to Gobble, and I’m sorry indeed”

“Well, well—it can’t be helped *now*—but I must say that once or twice latterly I’ve thought, myself, that Mr Gobble has rather—By the way, Mr Hug, shall you be in town this week, till the end of the sessions?”

“Ye—e—s!” hastily whispered Hug, after glancing guiltily towards his brethren, who, though they did not seem to do so, were really watching him with ill-subdued fury.

“I’m happy to hear it!—You’ve heard of Aaron Doodle, who was committed for that burglary at —? Well, I defend him, and shall be happy to give you the brief. Do you lead Mr Dolt?” Hug nodded. “Then he will be your junior. Where are your chambers, Mr Hug?”

“No. 4, Cant Court, Gray’s Inn. When, my dear sir, does the case come on?”

“Thursday—perhaps Wednesday.”

“Then *do* come and breakfast with me,” quoth Hug, in a whisper—“and we can talk it over, you know, so nicely together!”

“Sir, you’re *very* polite. I will do myself the pleasure”—replied Mr Flaw—and good-naturedly took wine with Mr Hug.

This little stroke of business over, the disengaged couple were at liberty to attend to the general conversation of the table. Mr Bluster and Mr Slang kept the company in almost a constant roar, with descriptions of scenes in court, in which *they* had, of course, been the principal actors; and according to their own accounts they must have been wonderful fellows. Such botherers of judges—particularly aldermen and police magistrates!—Such bafflers and browbeaters of witnesses!—Such bamboozlers of juries!

You should have seen the sneering countenance of Hug all the while. He never once smiled or laughed at the brilliant sallies of his brethren, and did his best to prevent his new patron, Mr Flaw, from doing so—constantly putting his hand before his mouth, and whispering into Mr Flaw's ear—at the very point of the joke or story—and the smile would disappear from the countenance of Mr Flaw.

The alderman laughed till the tears ran out of his little eyes, which he constantly wiped with his napkin! Amidst the general laughter and excitement, Miss Quirk, leaning her chin on her hand, her elbow resting on the table, several times directed soft, languishing looks towards Titmouse, unobserved by any one but himself; and they were not entirely unsuccessful, although Titmouse was wonderfully taken with the stories of the two counsellors, and believed them to be two of the greatest men he had ever seen or heard of, and at the head of their profession.

"'Pon my soul—I hope, sir, you'll have those two gents in *my* case?" said he earnestly to Gammon.

"Unfortunately, your case will not come on in their courts," said Gammon, with an expressive smile.

"Why, can't it come on where I choose?—or when you like?" inquired Titmouse surprisedly.

Mr Quirk had been soured during the whole of dinner, for he had anxiously desired to have Titmouse sit beside him at the bottom of the table; but in the little hubbub attendant upon coming down to dinner and taking places, Titmouse slipped out of sight for a minute; and when all were placed, Quirk's enraged eye perceived him seated in the middle of the table, beside Gammon. Gammon *always* got hold of Titmouse!—Old Quirk could have flung a decanter at his head.—In his own house!—at his own table! Always anticipating and circumventing him.

"Mr Quirk, I don't think we've taken a glass of wine together yet, have we?" said Gammon, blandly and cordially, at the same time pouring

one out for himself. He perfectly well knew what was annoying his respected partner, whose look of quaint embarrassment, when so suddenly assailed, infinitely amused him. "Catch me asking you here again, Master Gammon," thought Quirk, "with Titmouse!" The reason why Mr Snap had not been asked was, that Quirk had some slight cause to suspect his having presumptuously conceived the notion of paying his addresses to Miss Quirk—a thing at any time not particularly palatable to Mr Quirk; but in the present conjuncture of circumstances quite out of the question, and intolerable even in idea. Snap was not slow in guessing the reason of his exclusion, which had greatly mortified, and also not a little alarmed him. As far as he could venture, he had, during the week, endeavoured to "set" Titmouse "against" Miss Quirk, by such faint disparaging remarks and insinuations as he dared venture upon with so difficult a subject as Titmouse, whom he at the same time inflamed by representations of the splendid match he might very soon command among the highest women of the land. By these means Snap had, to a certain extent, succeeded; but the few melting glances which had fallen upon Titmouse's sensitive bosom from the eyes of Miss Quirk, were beginning to operate a slight change in his feelings. The old alderman, on an intimation that the "ladies were going to withdraw," laid violent hands on Miss Quirk—he was a "privileged" old fool, and insisted on her singing his favourite song—"My Friend and Pitcher"! His request was so warmly seconded by the rest of the company—Titmouse loud and eager as any—that she was fain to comply. She sung with some sweetness, and much self-possession; and carried Titmouse's feelings along with her from the beginning, as Gammon, who was watching him, perceived.

"Most uncommon lovely gal, isn't she?" whispered Titmouse, with great vivacity.

"Very!" replied Gammon dryly, with a slight smile.

"Shall I call out *encore*? A'n't that the word? 'Pon my soul, most lovely gal! She *must* sing it again!"

"No, no—she wishes to go—'tis not usual: she will sing it for you, I dare say, this evening, if you ask her."

"Well—most charming gal!—Love-ly!"

"Have patience, my dear Titmouse," said Gammon, in a low whisper, "in a few months' time you'll soon be thrown into much higher life than even *this*—among *really* beautiful, and rich, and accomplished women"—[and, *thought* Gammon, you'll resemble a monkey that has found his way into a rich tulip-bed!]

"Fancy that girl Tag-rag standing beside Miss Quirk!" whispered Titmouse, scornfully.

"Ha, ha!" gently laughed Gammon—"both of them, in their way, are very worthy persons; but"—Here the ladies withdrew. 'Twas no part of Gammon's schemes that Titmouse should become the son-in-law of either Quirk or Tag-rag. Mr Gammon had formed already, vastly different plans for him!

As soon as Quirk had taken the head of the table, and the gentlemen drawn together, the bottles were pushed round briskly, accompanied by no fewer than three different sorts of snuff-boxes, all belonging to Mr Quirk—all of them presents from grateful Old Bailey clients! One was a huge affair, of Botany Bay wood, with a flaming inscription on the inside of the lid; from which it appeared that its amiable donors, who were trying the effect of a change of climate on their moral health at the expense of a grateful country, owed their valuable lives to the professional skill and exertions of "Caleb Quirk, Esq." In short, the other two were trophies of a similar description, of which their possessor was justly not a little proud; and, as he saw Titmouse admiring them, it occurred to him as possible that, within a short time, he should be in possession of a magnificent *gold* snuff-box, in acknowledgment of the services he should have rendered to

his distinguished guest and client. Titmouse was in the highest spirits. This, his first glimpse into high life, equalled all his expectations. Round and round went the bottles—crack went joke after joke. Slang sung song upon song, of, however, so very coarse and broad a character as infinitely disgusted Gammon, and apparently shocked the alderman;—though I greatly distrust that old sinner's sincerity in the matter. Then Ghastly's performances commenced. Poor fellow! he exerted himself to the utmost to earn the good dinner which he had just devoured; but when he was in the middle of one of his most impassioned scenes—undoubtedly "tearing a passion to rags"—Mr Quirk interrupted, impatiently—"Come, come, Ghastly, we've had enough of *that* sort of thing—it don't suit—d'ye see—at all!—Lord bless us!—don't *roar* so, man!"

Poor Ghastly instantly resumed his seat, with a chagrined and melancholy air.

"Give us something funny," snuffed the alderman.

"Let's have the chorus of Pigs and Ducks," said Quirk; "you do that *remarkable* well. I could fancy the animals were running, and squealing, and quacking all about the room!" The actor respectfully did as he was desired, commencing with a sigh, and was much applauded. At length Gammon happened to get into a discussion with Mr Bluster upon some point connected with the Habeas Corpus Act, in which our friend Gammon, who never got heated in discussion, and was accurate in whatever he knew, had glaringly the best of it. His smiling self-possession almost drove poor Bluster frantic. The less he knew, of course the louder he talked, the more vehement and positive he became; at length offering a *bet* that there was no such thing as a writ of *Habeas Corpus* before the time of Charles II.;* at which Gammon bowed, smiled, and closed the discussion. While engaged in it, he had of course been unable to keep his eye upon Titmouse, who drunk,

* See APPENDIX.

consequently, claret, port, sherry, and madeira eagerly, never letting the decanter pass him. Every one about him filled his glass every time—why should not he?

Hug sat next to Viper; feared him, and avoided discussion with him; for, though they agreed in the lowest Radical politics, they had a personal antipathy each to the other. In spite of their wishes, they at length got entangled in a virulent controversy, and said so many insulting things to each other, that the rest of the company, who had for some time been amused, got at length—not disgusted—but alarmed, for the possible results—fully expecting the exchange of a brace of wine-glasses against each other's heads! Mr Quirk, therefore, interfered.

"Bravo! bravo! bravo!" he exclaimed, as Viper concluded an envenomed passage, "that will do, Viper—whip it into the next *Flash*—'twill be a capital leader! It will produce a sensation! And in the mean time, gentlemen, let me request you to fill your glasses—bumpers—for I have a toast to propose, in which you'll all feel interested when you hear who's the subject of it. It is a gentleman who is likely soon to be elevated to a station which Nature has formed him—hem! hem!—to adorn"—

"Mr Quirk's proposing your health, Titmouse!" whispered Gammon to his companion, who, having been sus-

piciously restless for some time, had at length become quite silent—his head resting on his hand, his elbow on the table—his eyes languidly half open, and his face exceedingly pale. Gammon saw that he was, in truth, in an exceedingly ticklish condition.

"I—wish—you'd—let me—go out—I'm devilish ill"—said Titmouse, faintly. Gammon made a signal to Quirk, who instantly ceased his speech; and coming down to Titmouse, he and Gammon hastily led that gentleman out of the room, and into the nearest bed-chamber, where he began to be very ill indeed; and so continued for several hours. Old Quirk, who was a long-headed man, was delighted by this occurrence; for he saw that if he insisted on Titmouse's being put to bed, and passing the night—and perhaps the next day—at Alibi House, it would enable Miss Quirk to bring her attractions to bear upon him effectively, by exhibiting those delicate and endearing attentions which are so soothing, and indeed necessary, to an invalid. Titmouse continued desperately indisposed during the whole of the night; and, early in the morning, it was thought advisable to send for a medical man, who pronounced him to be in danger of a bilious fever, and to require rest, care, and medical attendance for some days to come. This was rather "too much of a good thing" for old Quirk—but there was no remedy.

CHAPTER IX.

TITMOUSE SEEMS TO HESITATE BETWEEN MISS QUIRK AND KATE AUBREY;
MOREOVER, A CLOUD COMES SUDDENLY OVER HIS FORTUNES.

FORESEEING that Titmouse would be thrown constantly, for some little time to come, into Miss Quirk's company, her prudent parent enjoined upon Mrs

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Alias, his sister, the necessity of impressing on his daughter's mind the great uncertainty which, after all, existed as to Titmouse's prospects;

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and the consequent necessity there was for her to regulate her affections with a view to either failure or success—to keep her feelings, as it were, in abeyance. But the fact was, that Miss Quirk had so often heard the subject of Titmouse's brilliant expectations talked of by her father, and knew so well his habitual prudence and caution, that she looked upon Titmouse's speedy possession of ten thousand a-year as a matter of almost certainty. She was a girl of some natural shrewdness, but of an early inclination to maudlin sentimentality. Had she been blessed with the vigilant and affectionate care of a mother as she grew up, that parent having died when Miss Quirk was but a child, and been thrown among people different from those who constantly visited at Alibi House, and of whom a favourable specimen has been laid before the reader, Miss Quirk might really have become a sensible and agreeable girl. As it was, her manners had contracted a certain coarseness, which at length overspread her whole character; and the selfish and mercenary motives by which she could not fail to perceive all her father's conduct regulated, gradually infected herself. She resolved, therefore, to be governed by the considerations so urgently pressed upon her by both her father and her aunt.

It was several days before Titmouse was allowed, by his medical man, to quit his bedroom; and it is impossible for any woman not to be touched by the sight of a sudden change effected in a man's appearance by severe indisposition and suffering—even be that man such a creature as Titmouse. He was pale, and considerably reduced by the serious nature of the attack, and of the powerful treatment with which it had been encountered. When he made his first appearance before Miss Quirk, one afternoon, with somewhat feeble gait, and a languid air which mitigated, if it did not obliterate, the foolish and conceited expression of his features, she really regarded him with something akin to interest; and, though she

might hardly have owned it to even herself, his expected good fortune invested him with a sort of subdued radiance. *Ten thousand a-year!*—Miss Quirk's heart fluttered! By the time that he was well enough to take his departure, she had, at his request, read over to him nearly half of that truly interesting work—the *Newgate Calendar*; had sung to him, and played to him, whatever he asked her; and, in short, she felt that could she but be certain that he would gain his great lawsuit, and step into ten thousand a-year, she could love him. She insisted, on the day of his quitting Alibi House, that he should write in her Album; and he readily complied. It was nearly ten minutes before he could get a pen to suit him. At length he succeeded, and left the following interesting memento of himself in the very centre of a fresh page:—

Tittlebat Titmouse Is My name,
England Is My Nation,
London Is My dwelling-Place,
And Christ Is My Salvation.

TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE,
habibi lodge.

Miss Quirk turned pale with astonishment and vexation on seeing this elegant and striking addition to her album. Titmouse, on the contrary, looked at it with no little pride; for having had a capital pen, and his heart being in his task, he had produced what he conceived to be rather a superior specimen of penmanship: in fact, the signature was by far the best he had ever written. When he had gone, Miss Quirk was twenty times on the point of tearing out the leaf which had been so dismally disfigured; but on her father coming home in the evening, he laughed heartily—“and as to tearing it out,” said he, “let us first see which way the verdict goes!”

Titmouse became, after this, a pretty frequent visitor at Alibi House; growing more and more attached to Miss Quirk, who, however, conducted herself towards him with much judgment. His inscription on her album had done a vast deal towards cooling down the ardour with which she had been disposed to regard even the future owner of ten thousand a-year. Poor

Snap seemed to have lost all chance, being treated with greater coldness by Miss Quirk on every succeeding visit to Alibi House. At this he was sorely discomfited; for she would have whatever money her father might die possessed of, besides a commanding interest in the partnership business. 'Twas a difficult thing for him to preserve his temper under such circumstances, in his close intimacy with Titmouse, who had, though unconsciously, so grievously interfered with his prospects.

The indisposition which I have been mentioning, prevented Titmouse from paying his promised visit to Satin Lodge. On returning to his lodgings from Alibi House, he found that Tag-rag had either called or sent every day to inquire after him, with the most affectionate anxiety; and one or two notes, lying on his table, apprised him of the lively distress which the ladies of Satin Lodge were enduring on his account, and implored him to lose not a moment in communicating the state of his health, and personally assuring them of his safety. Though the image of Miss Quirk was continually before his eyes, Titmouse, nevertheless, had cunning enough not to drop the slightest hint to the Tag-rags of the true state of his feelings. Whenever any inquiry, with ill-disguised anxiety, was made by Mrs Tag-rag concerning Alibi House and its inmates, Titmouse would, to be sure, mention Miss Quirk, but in such a careless and slighting way as gave great consolation and encouragement to Tag-rag, his wife, and daughter. "Miss Quirk," he said, "was well enough—but devilish fat!"—When at Mr Quirk's, on the other hand, he spoke somewhat unreservedly of the amiable inmates of Satin Lodge. These two mansions were almost the only private residences visited by Titmouse, who spent his time much in the way which I have already described. How he got through his *days*, I can hardly tell. At his lodgings he got up late, and went to bed late. He never read anything excepting occasionally a song-book lent him by Snap, or a low

novel, or some such book as "Boxiana," from the circulating library, and the *Sunday Flash*. Dawdling over his dress and his breakfast, then whistling and humming, and looking out of the window, took up so much of every day as he passed at his lodgings. The rest was spent in idling about the town, looking in at shop windows, and now and then going to some petty exhibition—as of sparring, cock-fighting, &c. When evening came, he was generally joined by Snap, when they would spend the night together in the manner I have already described. As often as he dared, he called at Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's office at Saffron Hill, worrying them not a little by inquiries concerning the state of his affairs, and the cause of the delay in commencing proceedings. As for Huckaback, by the way, Titmouse cut him entirely; saying that he was a devilish low fellow, and it was no use knowing him. He made many desperate efforts, both personally and by letter, to renew his acquaintance with Titmouse, but in vain. I may as well mention, by the way, that as soon as Snap got scent of the little money transaction between his friend and Huckaback, he called upon the latter, and tendering him twelve shillings, demanded up the document which he had extorted from Titmouse. Huckaback held out obstinately for some time—but Snap was too much for him, and talked in such a formidable strain about an indictment for a conspiracy (!) and fraud, that Huckaback at length consented, on receiving twelve shillings, to deliver up the document to Snap, on condition of Snap's destroying it on the spot. This was done, and so ended all intercourse—at least on this side of the grave—between Titmouse, as far, at least, as *his* intentions went, and Huckaback.

The sum allowed by Messrs Quirk and Gammon to Titmouse, was amply sufficient to have kept him in comfort; but it never would have enabled him to lead the kind of life which I have described—and he would certainly have got awkwardly involved,

had it not been for the kindness of Snap in advancing him, from time to time, such sums as his exigencies required. In fact, matters went on as quietly and smoothly as possible for several months—till about the middle of November; when an event occurred which seemed to threaten the total demolition of all his brilliant hopes and expectations.

He had not seen or heard from Messrs Quirk or Gammon for nearly a fortnight; Snap he had not seen for nearly a week. At length he ventured to make his appearance at Saffron Hill, and was received with a startling coldness—a stern abruptness of manner—which frightened him out of his wits. All the three partners were alike—as for Snap, the contrast between his present and his former manner was perfectly shocking; he seemed quite another person. The fact was, that the full statement of Titmouse's claims had been laid before Mr Subtle, the leading counsel retained on his behalf, for an opinion on the case generally, before actually commencing proceedings; and the partners were indeed thunderstruck on receiving that opinion; for Mr Subtle had pointed out a radical deficiency of proof in a matter which, as soon as their attention was thus pointedly called to it, Messrs Quirk and Gammon were amazed at their having overlooked, and still more at its having escaped the notice of Mr Tresayle, Mr Mortmain, and Mr Frankpledge. Mr Quirk hurried with the opinion to the first two of these gentlemen; and after a long interview with each, they owned their fears that Mr Subtle was right, and that the defect seemed incurable; but they somewhat anxiously impressed on their dismayed client, that *they*—the aforesaid Messrs Tresayle and Mortmain—had been guilty of neither oversight nor ignorance, inasmuch as the matter in question was one of *evidence* only—one which a *nisi prius* lawyer, with a full detail of "proofs" before him, could hardly fail to light upon—but which, it would be found, had been *assumed*, and *taken for granted*, in the cases laid before

conveyancers. They promised, however, to turn it over in their minds, and to let Mr Quirk know if anything occurred to vary their impression. A week elapsed, however, and Mr Tresayle and Mr Mortmain preserved an ominous silence. As for Frankpledge, he had a knack, somehow or another, of always coming to the conclusion wished and hoped for by his clients; and, after prodigious pains, he wrote a long opinion, to show that there was nothing in the objection. Neither Mr Quirk nor Mr Gammon could understand the process by which Mr Frankpledge had arrived at such a result; but, in despair, they laid his opinion before Mr Subtle, in the shape of a further "Case for his Opinion." It was, in a few days' time, returned to them, with the following somewhat laconic "Opinion:"—

"I see no reason whatever to depart from the view I have already taken of this case.—J. S."

Here was something like a dead lock, indeed!

"We're done, Gammon!" said Quirk with a dismayed air. Gammon seemed lost, and made no answer.

"Does anything—eh?" quoth Quirk, with a troubled air. "*Anything* occur to you? Gammon, I *will* say this for you—you're a long-headed fellow!" Still Gammon spoke not.

"Gammon! Gammon! I really believe—ah?—you—you—begin to see something—don't you?"

"*It's to be done*, Mr Quirk!" said Gammon at length, with a grave and apprehensive look, and a cheek which had suddenly grown pale.

"Eh? how? Oh, I see!—Know what you mean, Gammon," replied Quirk with a hurried whisper, glancing at both doors to see that they were safe.

"We must resume our intercourse with Titmouse, and let matters go on as before," said Gammon with an anxious, but, at the same time, a determined air.

"I—I wonder if what has occurred to *you*, is what has occurred to *me*?" inquired Quirk in an eager whisper.

"Pooh! pooh! Mr Quirk."

"Gammon, dear Gammon, no mys-

tery! You know I have a terrible deep stake in this matter!"

"So have I, Mr Quirk," replied Gammon with a sigh. "However"—Here the partners put their heads close together, and whispered to each other in a low, earnest tone, for some minutes. Quirk rose from his seat, and took two or three turns about the room in silence, Gammon watching him calmly.

To his inexpressible relief and joy, within a few hours of the happening of the above colloquy, Titmouse found himself placed on precisely his former footing with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.

In order to bring on the cause for trial at the next spring assizes, it was necessary that the declaration in ejectment should be served on the tenant in possession before Hilary term; and, in a matter of such magnitude, it was deemed expedient that Snap should proceed to Yorkshire, and personally effect the service in question. In consequence, also, of some important suggestions as to the evidence, given by the junior in the cause, Mr Lynx, it was arranged that Snap should go down about a week before the time fixed upon for effecting the service, and make quietly certain minute inquiries in the neighbourhood of Yatton. As soon as Titmouse had heard of this movement—that Snap was going direct to Yatton, the scene of his, Titmouse's, future greatness—he made the most pertinacious and vehement entreaties to Messrs Quirk and Gammon to be allowed to accompany him, even going down on his knees. There was no resisting this; but they exacted a solemn pledge that he would place himself entirely at the disposal of Mr Snap; go under some feigned name, and, in short, neither say nor do anything tending to disclose their real character or errand.

Snap and Titmouse established themselves at the Hare and Hounds Inn at Grilston; and the former immediately began, cautiously and quietly, to collect such evidence as he could discover. One of the first persons to whom he went was old Blind

Bess. His many pressing questions at length stirred up in the old woman's mind faint confused recollections of long-forgotten names, persons, places, scenes, and associations, thereby producing an agitation not easily to be got rid of, and which had by no means subsided when Dr Tatham and Mr Aubrey paid her the Christmas-day visit, which has been described.

The reader has had, already, pretty distinct indications of the manner in which Titmouse and Snap conducted themselves during their stay in Yorkshire; and which, I fear, have not tended to raise either of these gentlemen in our estimation. Titmouse manifested a natural anxiety to see the present occupants of Yatton; and it was with infinite difficulty that Snap could prevent him, from sneaking about in the immediate neighbourhood of the Hall, with the hope of seeing them. His first encounter with Mr and Miss Aubrey was entirely accidental, as the reader may remember; and when he found that the lady on horseback near Yatton, and the lady whose notice he had striven to attract in Hyde Park, were one and the same beautiful woman, and that that beautiful woman was neither more nor less than the sister of the present owner of Yatton—the marvellous discovery created a mighty pothor in his little bosom! The blaze of Kate Aubrey's beauty in an instant consumed the images both of Tabitha Tag-rag and Dora Quirk. It even for a while outshone the splendours of ten thousand a-year: such is the inexpressible and incalculable power of woman's beauty over everything in the shape of man—over even so despicable a sample of him, as Tittlebat Titmouse.

While putting in practice some of those abominable tricks to which, under Snap's tutelage, Titmouse had become accustomed in walking the streets of London, and from which even the rough handling they had got from farmer Hazel could not turn him, Titmouse at length, as has been seen, most unwittingly fell foul of that fair creature, Catherine Aubrey herself; who seemed truly like an angelic

messenger, returning from her errand of sympathy and mercy, and suddenly beset by a little imp of darkness. When Titmouse discovered who was the object of his audacious and revolting advances, his soul, such as it was, seemed petrified within him; and it was fortunate that the shriek of Miss Aubrey's attendant at length startled him into a recollection of a pair of heels, to which he was that evening indebted for an escape from a murderous cudgeling, which might have been attended with one effect not contemplated by him who inflicted it, so profoundly in the dark are we as to the causes and consequences of human actions; viz., the retention of the Aubreys in the possession of Yatton! Titmouse ran for nearly half a mile on the high-road towards Grilston, without stopping. He dared not venture to return to Yatton, with the sound of the lusty farmer's voice in his ears, to get back from the Aubrey Arms the horse which had brought him that afternoon from Grilston, to which place, therefore, he walked on, through the snow and darkness; reaching his inn in a perfect panic, from which, at length, a tumbler of stiff brandy-and-water, with two or three cigars, somewhat relieved him. Forgetful of the solemn pledge which he had given to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, not to disclose his name or errand—and it never once occurring to him that, if he would but keep his own counsel, Miss Aubrey could never identify *him* with the ruffian who had assailed her—Titmouse spent the interval between eight and twelve o'clock, at which latter hour the coach by which he had resolved to return to London would pass through Grilston, in indicting the following letter to Miss Aubrey:—

“Grilston, January 6th, 18—.

“HONOURED MISS,

“Hoping No Offence Will Be Taken where None is meant, (*which am Sure of*) This I send To say Who I Am which, Is the Right And True Owner of Yatton which You Enjoy Amongst You All At This present (Till The Law

Give it to *Me*) Which It quickly Will, and No Mistake, And which It Ought to Have done When I were First born And Before Y^r Respect. Family ever Came into it, And All which Y^r hon^d. Brother Have so unlawfully Got Possession Of must Come Back to Them Whose Due It is w^h Is myself as will be Soon prov^d. And w^h am most truly Sorry Of *on your own Acci.* (Meaning (hon^d. Miss) you Alone) as Sure As Yatton is Intirely Mine So My Heart Is *yours* and No Longer my Own Ever since I Saw You first as Can Easily prove but w^h doubtless You Have forgot Seeing You Never New, because (as Mr Gammon My Solicitor And a Very Great Lawyer, says) *Cases Alter Circumstances*, what Can I say More Than that I Love you *Most Amazing* Such As Never Thought Myself Capable of Doing Before and w^h cannot help Ever Since I First saw your most *Lovely and Divine and striking* Face w^h have Stuck In my Mind Ever Since Day and Night Sleeping and Waking I will Take my Oath Never Of Having Lov'd Any one Else, Though (must Say) have Had a Wonderful Many *Offers* From Females of *The Highest Rank* Since my Truly Wonderful Good fortune got Talked About every Where but have *Refused Them All* for *yr* sake, And Would All the World But you. When I Saw You on Horseback It was All my Sudden confusion In Seeing you (The Other Gent. was One of my Respe. Solicitors) w^h Threw Me off in that Ridiculous Way w^h was a Great Mortification And made My brute Of A horse *go on so*, For I Remembered You and was Wonderful struck with *Your Improv'd Appearance* (As that Same Gent. can Testify) And you was (Hon^d. Miss) Quite Wrong *To Night* when You Spoke so Uncommon Angry To Me, seeing If I Had Only Known What Female It Was (meaning *yourself* which I respect So) out so Late Alone I should Have spoke quite Different So hope You Will think Nothing More Of that Truly *Unpleasant Event* Now (Hon^d. Madam) What I have to say Is if You will Please to Condescend To Yield To My Desire We Can

Live Most uncommon Comfortable at Yatton Together w^h Place shall Have Great Pleasure (if you please) in *Marrying You From* and I may (*perhaps*) Do Something Handsome for y^r. respectable Brother and Family, w^h can Often Come to see us And Live in the Neighbourhood, if You Refuse me, Will not say What shall Happen to *Those* which (am Told) *Owe me a Precious Long Figure* w^h May (*perhaps*) Make a Handsome Abatement in, if You And I *Hit it*.

"Hoping You Will Forget What Have So Much Grieved me, And Write p^r. return of Post,

"Am,

"hon^d. Miss

"Y^r. most Loving & Devoted Servant

"(Till Death)

"TITTLERAT TITMOUSE.

"PARTICULAR Private."

This exquisitely constructed document its accomplished writer sealed twice, and then left, together with sixpence, in the hands of the landlady

of the Hare and Hounds, to be delivered at Yatton Hall the first thing in the morning. The good woman, however—having no particular wish to oblige such a strange puppy, whom she was only too glad to get rid of, and having moreover a good deal to attend to—laid the letter aside on the chimney-piece, and entirely lost sight of it for nearly a fortnight. Shortly after the lamentable tidings concerning the impending misfortunes of the Aubrey family had been communicated to the inhabitants of Grilston, she forwarded the letter, little dreaming of the character in which its writer was likely, ere long, to reappear at Grilston, together with one or two others, a day or two after Miss Aubrey had had the interview with her brother which I have described to the reader; but it lay unnoticed by any one—above all, by the sweet sufferer whose name was indicated on it—among a great number of miscellaneous letters and papers which had been suffered to accumulate on the library table.

CHAPTER X.

SUFFERING; DIGNITY; TENDERNESS; RESIGNATION.

MR AUBREY entered the library one morning, alone, for the purpose of attending to many matters which had been long neglected. He was evidently thinner: his face was pale, and his manner dejected: still there was about him an air of calmness and resolution. Through the richly-pictured old stained-glass window, the mottled sunbeams were streaming in a kind of tender radiance upon the dear familiar objects around him. All was silent. Having drawn his chair to the table, on which was lying a confused heap of letters and papers, he felt a momentary repugnance to enter upon the task which he had assigned to him-

self; and rose and walked slowly for some time up and down the room, with folded arms, uttering occasionally profound sighs. At length he resumed his seat, and commenced the disheartening task of opening the many letters before him. One of the earliest that came to his hand was from Peter Johnson—the old tenant to whom he had lent the sum of two hundred pounds, and it was full of fervent expressions of gratitude and respect: Mr Aubrey's heart ached as he read them. Then came a letter, a fortnight old, bearing the frank of Lord C—, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He opened it and read:—

"Whitehall, 16th January 18—.

"MY DEAR AUBREY,

"You will remember that Lord —'s motion stands for the 28th. We all venture to calculate upon receiving your powerful support in the debate. We expect to be much pressed with the Duke of —'s affair, which you handled shortly before the recess with such signal ability and success. When you return to town, you must expect a renewal of certain offers, which I most sincerely trust, for the benefit of the public service, will not be *again* declined.

"Ever yours faithfully,

"C—.

"(Private and confidential.)

"CHARLES AUBREY, Esq. M.P."

Mr Aubrey laid down the letter calmly, but with a heavy sigh, as soon as he had read it; and leaning back in his chair, seemed lost in thought for several minutes. Presently he re-applied himself to his task, and opened and glanced over a great many letters; the contents of several of some of them occasioning him deep emotion. Some were from persons in distress whom he had assisted, and who implored a continuance of his aid; others were from ardent political friends—some sanguine, others desponding—concerning the prospects of the session. Two or three hinted that it was everywhere reported that he had been offered one of the under secretarieships, and had declined; but that, at the king's desire, office was to be pressed upon him. Many letters were on private, and still more on county, business; and with one of them he was engaged when a servant entered with one of that morning's county newspapers. Tired with his task, Mr Aubrey rose from his chair as the servant gave him the paper; and, standing before the fire, unfolded the *Yorkshire Stingo*, and glanced listlessly over its miscellaneous contents. At length his eye lit upon the following paragraph:—

"The rumours so deeply affecting a member for a certain borough in this county, and to which we alluded in

our last paper but one, turn out to be well founded. A claimant has started up to the very large estates at present held by the gentleman in question; and we are much misinformed if the ensuing spring assizes will not effect a considerable change in the representation of the borough alluded to, by relieving it from the Tory thralldom under which it has been so long oppressed. We have no wish to bear hard upon a falling man; and, therefore, shall make no comment upon the state of mind in which that person may be presumed to be, who must be conscious of having been so long enjoying the just rights of others. Some extraordinary disclosures may be looked for when the trial comes on. We have heard from a quarter on which we are disposed to place reliance, that the claimant is a gentleman of decided Whig principles, and who will prove a valuable accession to the Liberal cause."*

Mr Aubrey was certainly somewhat shocked by brutality such as this; but on Miss Aubrey's entering the room, he quietly folded up the paper and laid it aside, fearful lest his sister's feelings should be pierced by the coarse and cruel paragraph which it contained. It had, in fact, been concocted in London, in the office of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; who were, as before stated, interested in the *Sunday Flash*, which was in some sort connected, through the relationship of the editors, with the *Yorkshire Stingo*. The idea had been suggested by Gammon, by way of attempting to enlist the *political* feeling of a portion of the county in favour of their client.

"Here are several letters for you, Kate," said her brother, picking out one or two of them. The very first she took up, it having attracted her

* The general character of the Newspaper Press, both in London and the country, has so greatly improved of late years, as (with a very few despicable exceptions) to render the appearance nowadays, of such a paragraph as that in the text, exceedingly rare. The press is now, in most instances, presided over by educated and gifted gentlemen. It was far otherwise in 18— (the period named in the text).

attention by the double seal, and the vulgar style of the handwriting, was that from Titmouse, which has just been laid before the reader. With much surprise she opened the letter, her brother being similarly engaged with his own; and her face getting gradually paler and paler as she went on, at length she flung it on the floor, with a passionate air, and burst into tears. Her brother, with astonishment, exclaimed—"Dear Kate, what is it?" and he rose and stooped to pick up the letter.

"Don't—don't, Charles!" she cried, putting her foot upon it, and flinging her arms round his neck. "It is an audacious letter—a vulgar, a cruel letter, dear Charles!" Her emotion increased as her thoughts recurred to the heartless paragraph concerning her brother with which the letter concluded. "I could have overlooked everything but *that*," said she, unwittingly. With gentle force he succeeded in getting hold of the painfully ridiculous and contemptible effusion. He attempted faintly to smile several times as he went on.

"Don't—don't, dearest Charles!" said she passionately. "I can't bear it!—Don't smile!—It's very far from your heart; you do it only to assure *me*!"

Here Mr Aubrey read the paragraph concerning himself. His face turned a little paler than before, and his lips quivered with suppressed emotion. "He is evidently a *very* foolish fellow!" he exclaimed, walking towards the window, with his back to his sister, whom he did not wish to see how much he was affected by so petty an incident.

"What does he allude to, Kate, when he talks of your having spoken angrily to him, and that he did not know you?" he inquired, after a few moments' pause, returning to her.

"Oh, Charles!—I am so *grieved* that you should have noticed it—but since you ask I will not deceive you!"—and she told him the disgusting occurrence alluded to in the letter. Mr Aubrey drew himself up unconsciously as Kate went on, and she perceived him be-

coming still paler than before, and *felt* the kindling anger of his eye.

"Forget it—forget it, dearest Charles!—So despicable a being is really not worth a thought," said Kate, with increasing anxiety; for she had never in her life before witnessed her brother the subject of such powerful emotions as then made rigid his slender frame. At length, drawing a long breath—

"It is fortunate for him, Kate," said he calmly, "that *he* is not a gentleman, and that *he* endeavours to be—a Christian." She flung her arms round him, exclaiming, "There spoke my own noble brother!"

"I shall preserve this letter as a curiosity, Kate," said he presently; and with a faint smile, and a pointed significance of manner, which arrested his sister's attention, added,—"It is rather singular, but some time before you came in, I opened a letter in which your name is mentioned—I cannot say in a *similar* manner, and yet—in short, it is from Lord de la Zouch, enclosing one"——

Miss Aubrey suddenly blushed scarlet, and trembled violently.

"Don't be agitated, my dear Kate, the enclosure is from Lady De la Zouch; and if it be in the same strain of kindness that pervades Lord De la Zouch's letter to *me*"——

"I would rather that *you* opened and read it, Charles"—she faltered, sinking into a chair.

"Come, come, dear Kate—play the woman!" said her brother, with an affectionate air—"To say that there is nothing in these letters that I believe will interest you—deeply gratify and interest your feelings—would be"——

"I know—I—I—suspect—I"—faltered Miss Aubrey with much agitation—"I shall return."

"Then you shall take these letters with you, and read, or not read them, as you like," said her brother, putting them into her hand with a fond and sorrowful smile, which soon, however, flitted away—and, leading her to the door, he was once more alone; and, after a brief interval of reverie, wrote answers to such of the many letters

before him as he considered earliest to require them.

Notwithstanding the judgment and tenderness with which Dr Tatham discharged the very serious duty which, at the entreaty of his afflicted friends, he had undertaken, of breaking to Mrs Aubrey the calamity with which she and her family were menaced, the effects of the disclosure had been most disastrous. They occasioned an attack of paralysis; and Mr Aubrey, who had long been awaiting the issue, in sickening suspense, in an adjoining room, was hastily summoned in to behold a mournful and heart-rending spectacle. His venerable mother—she who had given him life, at the mortal peril of her own; she whom he cherished with unutterable tenderness and reverence; she who doated upon him, and from whose dear lips he had never heard a word of unkindness or severity; whose heart had never known an impulse but of gentle, noble, unbounded generosity towards all around her—this idolised being now lay suddenly prostrated and blighted before him—

Poor Aubrey yielded to his long and violent agony, in the presence of her who could apparently no longer hear, or see, or be sensible of what was passing in the chamber.

"My son," said Dr Tatham, gently, after the first burst of his friend's grief was over, and he knelt down beside his mother with her hand grasped in his, "despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

"For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

"The Lord will not cast off for ever;

"But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

"For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

It was with great difficulty that Dr Tatham could render himself audible while uttering these soothing and solemn passages of Scripture in the ear of his distracted friend, beside whom he knelt.

Mrs Aubrey had suffered a paralytic

seizure, and lay motionless and insensible; her features slightly disfigured, but partially concealed beneath her long silvery grey hair, which had, in the suddenness of the fit, strayed from beneath her cap.

"But what am I about?" at length exclaimed Mr Aubrey, with a languid and alarmed air—"has medical assistance"—

"Dr Goddard and Mr Whately are both sent for by several servants, and will doubtless be very quickly here," replied Dr Tatham; and while he yet spoke, Mr Whately—who, when hastened on by the servant who had been sent for him, was entering the park on a visit to young Mrs Aubrey, also seriously ill and in peculiarly critical circumstances—entered the room, and immediately resorted to the necessary measures. Soon afterwards, also, Dr Goddard arrived; but alas, how little could they do for the venerable sufferer!

During the next, and for many ensuing days, the lodge was assailed by anxious and sympathising inquirers, who were answered by Waters, whom Mr Aubrey—oppressed by the number of friends who hurried up to the Hall, and insisted upon seeing him to ascertain the extent to which the dreadful rumours were correct—had stationed there during the day to afford the requisite information. The Hall was pervaded by a gloom which could be *felt*. Every servant had a woe-begone look, and moved about as if a funeral were stirring. Little Charles and Agnes, almost imprisoned in their nursery, seemed quite puzzled and confused at the strange unusual seriousness, and quietness, and melancholy faces everywhere about them. Kate romped not with them as had been her wont; but would constantly burst into tears as she held them on her knee or in her arms, trying to evade the continual questioning of Charles. "I think it will be time for *me* to cry, too, by-and-by!" said he to her one day, with an air half in jest and half in earnest, that made poor Kate's tears flow afresh. Sleepless nights and days of sorrow soon told upon her appearance. Her

glorious buoyancy of spirits, which ere-while, as it were, had filled the whole Hall with gladness—where were they now! Ah, me! the rich bloom had disappeared from her beautiful cheek; but her high spirit, though oppressed, was not broken, and she stood firmly and calmly amid the scowling skies and lowering tempests. You fancied you saw her auburn tresses stirred upon her pale but calm brow by the breath of the approaching storm; and that she also felt it, but trembled not, gazing on it with a bright and steadfast eye. Her heart might be, indeed, bruised and shaken; but her spirit was, ay, unconquerable. My glorious Kate, how my heart goes forth towards you!

And thou, her brother, who art of kindred spirit; who art supported by philosophy, and exalted by religion, so that thy constancy cannot be shaken or overthrown by the black and ominous swell of trouble which is increasing and closing around thee, I know that thou wilt outlive the storm!

A month or two may see you and yours expelled from Old Yatton, not merely having lost everything, but with a liability to your successor which will hang round your neck like a millstone.—What, indeed, is to become of you all? Whither will you go? And your suffering mother, should she indeed survive so long, is her precious form to be borne away from Yatton?

Around you stand those who, if you fall, will perish—and that you know; around your calm, sorrowful, but erect figure, are a melancholy group—an afflicted mother—the wife of your bosom—your two little children—your brave and beautiful sister—Yet think not, Misfortune! that over this man thou art about to achieve thy accustomed triumphs. Here, behold, thou hast a MAN to contend with; nay, more, a CHRISTIAN MAN, who hath calmly girded up his loins against the coming fight!

'Twas Sabbath evening, some five weeks or so after the happening of the mournful events above commemorated, and Kate, having spent, as usual, several hours keeping watch beside the silent and motionless figure of her

mother, had quitted the chamber for a brief interval, thinking to relieve her oppressed spirits by walking, for a little while, up and down the long gallery. Having slowly paced backwards and forwards once or twice, she rested against the little oriel window at the furthest extremity of the gallery, and gazed with saddened eye upon the setting sun, till at length, in calm grandeur, it disappeared beneath the horizon. 'Twas to Kate a solemn and mournful sign; especially followed as it was by the deepening shadows and gloom of evening. She sighed; and with her hands crossed on her bosom, gazed, with a tearful eye, into the darkening sky, where glittered the brilliant evening star. Thus she remained, a thousand pensive and tender thoughts passing through her mind, till the increasing chills of evening warned her to retire. 'I will go,' said she to herself, as she walked slowly along, 'and try to play the evening hymn—I may not have many more opportunities here!' With this view, she gently opened the drawing-room door, and, glancing around, found that she should be alone. The fire gave the only light. She opened the organ with a sigh, and then sat down before it for some minutes without touching the keys. At length she struck them very gently, as if fearful of disturbing those who, however, she soon recollected, were too distant to hear her. Ah! how many associations were stirred up as she played over the simple and solemn air! At length, in a low and rather tremulous voice, she began—

Soon will the evening star, with silver ray,
Shed its mild radiance o'er the sacred day;
Resume we, then, ere night and silence reign,
The rites which holiness and heaven ordain—

She sang the last line somewhat indistinctly, and, overcome by a flood of tender recollections, ceased playing; then, leaning her head upon her hand, she shed tears. At length she resumed—

Here humbly let us hope our Maker's smile
Will crown with sweet success our earthly
toil—
And here, on each returning Sabbath, join—

Here poor Kate's voice quivered—and after one or two ineffectual attempts to sing the next line, she sobbed, and ceased playing. She remained for several minutes, her face buried in her handkerchief, shedding tears. At length, 'I'll play the last verse,' thought she, 'and then sit down before the fire, and read over the evening service (feeling for her little prayer-book), before I return to poor mamma!' With a firmer hand and voice she proceeded—

Father of Heaven! in whom our hopes confide,
Whose power defends us, and whose precepts guide—
In life our guardian, and in death our friend,
Glory supreme be thine, till time shall end.

She played and sang these lines with a kind of solemn energy; and she felt as if a ray of heavenly light had trembled for a moment upon her upturned eye. She had not been, as she had supposed, alone; in the furthest corner of the room had been all the while sitting her brother—too exquisitely touched by the simplicity and goodness of his sweet sister, to apprise her of his presence. Several times his feelings had nearly overpowered him; and as she concluded, he arose from his chair, and approaching her, after her first surprise was over,—“Heaven bless you, dear Kate!” said he, taking her hands in his own. Neither of them spoke for a few moments.

“I could not have sung a line, or played, if I had known that you were here,” said she, tremulously.

“I thought so, Kate, and therefore I remained silent”——

“I don't think I shall have heart to play again!” she replied—they were both silent.

“Be assured, Kate, that submission to the will of God,” said Mr Aubrey, as, he with his arm round his sister, they walked slowly to and fro, “is the great lesson to be learned from the troubles of life; and for that purpose they are sent. Let us bear up a while; the waters will not go over our heads!”

“I hope not,” replied his sister faintly, and in tears.

“How did you leave Agnes, Charles?”

“She was asleep: she is still very feeble”—— Here the door was suddenly opened, and Miss Aubrey's maid entered hastily, exclaiming, “Are you here, ma'am?—or sir?”

“Here we are,” they replied, hurrying towards her; “what is the matter?”

“Oh, madam is *talking!* She began speaking all of a sudden. She did, indeed, sir. She's talking, and”—— continued the girl, almost breathless.

“My mother talking!” exclaimed Aubrey, with an amazed air.

“Oh yes, sir! she is—she is, indeed!”

Miss Aubrey sank into her brother's arms, overcome for a moment with the sudden and surprising intelligence.

“Rouse yourself, Kate!” he exclaimed with animation; “did I not tell you that Heaven would not forget us? But I must hasten up-stairs, to hear the joyful sounds with my own ears—and do you follow as soon as you can.” Leaving her in the care of her maid, he hastened out of the room, and was soon at the door of his mother's chamber. He stood for a moment in the doorway, and his straining ears caught the gentle tones of his mother's voice, speaking in a low but cheerful tone. His knees trembled beneath him with joyful excitement. Fearful of trusting himself in her presence till he had become calmer, he noiselessly sank on the nearest chair, with beating heart and straining ear—ay, every tone of that dear voice thrilled through his heart. But I shall not torture myself or my reader by dwelling upon the scene which ensued. Alas! the venerable sufferer's tongue was indeed loosed;—but reason had fled! He listened—he distinguished her words. She supposed that all her children—dead and alive!—were romping about her; she spoke of him and his sister as she had spoken to them twenty years before!

As soon as he had made this woeful discovery, overwhelmed with grief,

he staggered out of the room; and motioning his sister, who was entering, into an adjoining apartment, communicated to her, with great agitation, the lamentable condition of their mother.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE GREAT FLAW WAS DISCOVERED IN MR AUBREY'S TITLE; BUT A TERRIBLE HITCH OCCURS IN THE PROCEEDINGS OF HIS OPPONENTS.

THE chief corner-stone suddenly found wanting in the glittering fabric of Mr Titmouse's fortune, so that, to the eyes of its startled architects, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, it seemed momentarily threatening to tumble about their ears, was a certain piece of evidence which, being a matter-of-fact man, I should like to explain to the reader, before we get on any further. In order, however, to do this effectually, I must go back to an earlier period in the history than has been yet called to his attention. I make no doubt, that by the superficial and impatient *novel*-reader, certain portions of what has gone before, and which could not fail of attracting the attention of long-headed people, as not likely to have been thrown in for nothing, (and therefore requiring to be borne in mind with a view to subsequent explanation), have been entirely overlooked or forgotten. However this may be, I can fancy that the sort of reader whom I have in my eye, as one whose curiosity it is worth some pains to excite, and sustain, has more than once asked himself the following question, viz.—

How did Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, first come to be acquainted with the precarious tenure by which Mr Aubrey held the Yatton property?—Why, it chanced in this wise.

Mr Parkinson of Grilston, who has been already introduced to the reader, had succeeded to his father's first-rate business as a country attorney and solicitor in Yorkshire. He was a

highly honourable, painstaking man, and deservedly enjoyed the entire confidence of all his numerous and influential clients. Some twelve years before the period at which this history commences, he had, from pure kindness, taken into his service an orphan boy of the name of Steggars, at first merely as a sort of errand-boy, and to look after the office. He soon, however, displayed so much sharpness, and acquitted himself so creditably in anything that he happened to be concerned in, a little above the run of his ordinary duties, that in the course of a year or two he became a sort of clerk, and sat and wrote at the desk it had formerly been his sole province to dust. Higher and higher did he rise, in process of time, in his master's estimation; and at length became quite a *factotum*—as such, acquainted with the whole course of business that passed through the office. Many interesting matters connected with the circumstances and connections of the neighbouring nobility and gentry were thus constantly brought under his notice, and now and then set him thinking whether the knowledge thus acquired could not, in some way, and at some time or another, be turned to his own advantage; for I am sorry to say that he was utterly unworthy of the kindness and confidence of Mr Parkinson, who little thought that in Steggars he had to deal with—a rogue in grain. Such being his character, and such his opportunities, this worthy had long

made a practice of minuting down, from time to time, anything of interest or importance in the affairs of his betrayed master's clients—even laboriously copying long documents, when he thought them of importance enough for his purpose, and had the opportunity of doing so without attracting the attention of Mr Parkinson. He thus silently acquired a mass of information which might have enabled him to occasion great annoyance, and even inflict serious injury; and the precise object he had in view, was either to force himself, hereafter, into partnership with his employer, (provided he could get regularly introduced into the profession), or even compel his master's clients to receive him into their confidence, adversely to Mr Parkinson; and make it worth his while to keep the secrets of which he had become possessed. So careful ought to be, and indeed generally are, attorneys and solicitors, as to the characters of those whom they thus receive into their employ. On the occasion of Mr Aubrey's intended marriage with Miss St Clair, with a view to the liberal settlements which he contemplated, a full "Abstract" of his "Title" was laid by Mr Parkinson before his conveyancer, in order to advise, and to prepare the necessary instruments. Owing to inquiries suggested by the conveyancer, additional statements were laid before him; and produced an opinion of a somewhat unsatisfactory description, from which I shall lay before the reader the following paragraph:—

"* * * There seems no reason for supposing that any descendant of Stephen Dreddlington is now in existence: * still, as it is by no means physically impossible that such a person may be in esse, it would unquestionably be most important to the security of Mr Aubrey's title, to establish clearly the validity of the conveyance by way of mortgage, executed by Harry Dreddlington, and which was after-

wards assigned to Geoffry Dreddlington, on his paying off the money borrowed by his deceased uncle: since the descent of Mr Aubrey from Geoffry Dreddlington would, in that event, clothe him with an indefeasible title at law, by virtue of that deed; and any equitable rights which were originally outstanding, would be barred by lapse of time. But the difficulty occurring to my mind on this part of the case is, that unless Harry Dreddlington, who executed that deed of mortgage, survived his father, (a point on which I am surprised that I am furnished with no information), the deed itself would have been mere waste parchment, as in reality the conveyance of a person who *never had any interest* in the Yatton property—and, of course, neither Geoffry Dreddlington, nor his descendant Mr Aubrey, could derive any right whatever under such an instrument. In that case, such a contingency as I have above hinted at—I mean the existence of any legitimate descendant of Stephen Dreddlington—*might have a most serious effect upon the rights of Mr Aubrey.*"

Now every line of this opinion, and also even of the Abstract of Title upon which it was written, did this quick-sighted young scoundrel copy out, and deposit, as a great prize, in his desk, among other similar notes and memoranda, little wotting his master, the while, of what his clerk was doing. Some year or two afterwards, the relationship subsisting between Mr Parkinson and his clerk Steggars was suddenly determined by a somewhat untoward event; viz. by the latter's decamping with the sum of £700 sterling, being the amount of money due on a mortgage which he had been sent to receive from a client of Mr Parkinson's. Steggars fled for it—but first having bethought himself of the documents to which I have been alluding, and which he carried with him to London. Hot pursuit was made after the enterprising Mr Steggars, who was taken into custody two or three days after his arrival in town, while he was walking about the streets, with

* Before perusing this opinion, the reader should refer to the pedigree, *post* 210; without which the opinion will not be fully understood.

the whole of the sum which he had embezzled, *minus* a few pounds, upon his person, in bank-notes. He was quickly deposited in Newgate. His natural sagacity assured him that his case was rather an ugly one; but hope did not desert him.

"Well, my kiddy," said Grasp, the grim-visaged, grey-headed turnkey, as soon as he had ushered Steggars into his snug little quarters; "here you are, you see—isn't you?"

"It looks like it, don't it?" replied Steggars, shaking his head sadly.

"Well—and if you want to have a chance of not going across the water afore your time, you'll get yourself *defended*, and the sooner the better d'ye see. There's *Quirk*, *Gammon*, and *Snop*—my eyes! how they do thin this here place of ours, to be sure! The only thing is to get 'em soon; 'cause, ye see, they're so run after. Shall I send them to you?"

Steggars answered eagerly in the affirmative. In order to account for this spontaneous good-nature on the part of Grasp, I must explain that old Mr Quirk had for years secured a highly respectable criminal practice, by having in his interest most of the officers attached to the police-offices and Newgate. He gave, in fact, systematic gratuities to these gentry, in order to get their recommendations to the persecuted individuals who came into their power. Very shortly after Grasp's messenger had reached Saffron Hill, with the intelligence that "there was *something new in the trap*," old Quirk bustled down to Newgate, and was introduced to Steggars, with whom he was closeted for some time. He took a lively interest in his new client, to whose narrative of his flight and capture he listened in a very kind and sympathising way, lamenting the severity of the late statute applicable to the case;* and promised to do for him whatever his little skill and experience could do. He hinted, however, that, as Mr Steggars must be aware, a *little* ready money would be required, in order to fee counsel—whereat Steg-

gars looked blank indeed, and, knowing the state of his exchequer, imagined himself already on shipboard, on his way to Botany Bay. Old Mr Quirk asked him if he had no friends who would raise a trifle for a "chum in trouble,"—and on Mr Steggars answering in the negative, he observed the enthusiasm of the respectable old gentleman visibly and rapidly cooling down.

"But I'll tell you what, sir," said poor Steggars suddenly, "if I haven't money, I may have *money's worth* at my command;—I've a little box, that's at my lodging, which those that caught me knew nothing of—and in which there is a trifle or two about the families and fortunes of some of the first folk in the best part of Yorkshire, that would be precious well worth looking after, to those who know how to follow up such matters."

Old Quirk hereat pricked up his ears, and asked his young friend how he got possessed of such secrets.

"Oh fie! fie!" said he gently, as soon as Steggars had told him the practices of which I have already put the reader in possession.

"Ah—you may say fie! fie! if you like," quoth Steggars earnestly; "but the thing is, not how they were come by, but what can be done with them, now they're got. For example, there's a certain member of parliament in Yorkshire, that, high as he may hold his head, has no more right to the estates that yield him a good ten thousand a-year than I have, but keeps some folk out of their own, that could pay some other folk a round sum to be put in the way of getting their own;" and that—intimated the suffering captive—was only *one* of the good things he knew of. Here old Quirk rubbed his chin, hemmed, fidgeted about in his seat, took off his glasses, wiped them, replaced them; and presently went through that ceremony again. He then said that he had had the honour of being concerned for a great number of gentlemen in Mr Steggars' "present embarrassed circumstances," but who had always been able to command at least a five-

* See APPENDIX.

pound note, at starting, to run a heat for liberty.

"Come, come, old gentleman," quoth Steggars earnestly, "I don't want to go over the water before my time, if I can help it, I assure you; and I see you know the value of what I've got! Such a gentleman as you, can turn every bit of paper I have in my box into a fifty-pound note."

"All this is moonshine, my young friend," said old Quirk, but irresolutely.

"Ah! is it, though! To be able to tell the owner of a fat ten thousand a-year, that you can spring a mine under his feet at any moment—eh?—and no one ever know how you came by your knowledge. And if they wouldn't do what was handsome, couldn't you get the right heir—and wouldn't that—Lord! it would make the fortunes of half-a-dozen of the first houses in the profession!" Old Quirk got a little excited.

"But mind, sir—you see"—said Steggars, "if I get off, I'm not to be cut out of the thing altogether—eh? I shall look to be taken into your employ, and dealt handsomely by!"

"Oh hem!"—exclaimed Quirk involuntarily—adding quickly, "Yes, yes! to be sure! only fair; but let us first get you out of your present difficulty, you know!" Steggars, having exacted from him a written promise to use his utmost exertions on his (Steggars') behalf, and secure him the services of two of the most eminent Old Bailey counsel—viz., Mr Bluster and Mr Slang—gave Mr Quirk the number of the house where the precious box was, and a written order to the landlord to deliver it up to the bearer: after which Mr Quirk shook him cordially by the hand, and having quitted the prison, made his way straight to the house in question, and succeeded in obtaining what he asked for. He faithfully performed his agreement with Steggars, retaining both Bluster and Slang for him, and getting up their briefs with care: but alas! although these eminent men exerted all their great powers, they succeeded not in either

bothering the judge, bamboozling the jury, or browbeating the witnesses, the principal one of whom was Mr Parkinson. Steggars was found guilty and sentenced to be transported for fourteen years.* Enraged at this issue, he sent a message the next day to Mr Quirk, requesting a visit from him. When he arrived, Steggars, in a desperate tone, demanded that his papers should be returned to him.

'Twas in vain that Mr Quirk explained to him again and again his novel and interesting position with reference to his goods, chattels, and effects—i. e. that, as a convicted felon, he had no further concern with them, and might dismiss all anxiety on that score from his mind. Steggars hereat got more furious than before, and intimated plainly the course he should feel it his duty to pursue—viz. that, if the papers in question were not given up to him as he desired, he should at once write off to his late employer, Mr Parkinson, and acknowledge how much more he (Steggars) had wronged that gentleman and his clients than he supposed. Old Quirk feelingly represented to him that he was at liberty to do anything that he thought calculated to relieve his excited feelings: and then took a final farewell of his client, wishing him health and happiness.

"I say, Grasp!" said he, in a whisper, to that grim functionary, as soon as he had secured poor Steggars in his cell, "that bird is a little ruffled just now—isn't he, think you?"

"Lud, sir, the naturalist thing in the world, considering!"

"Well—if he should want a letter taken to any one, whatever he may say to the contrary, you'll send it on to Saffron Hill—eh? Understand?—He may be injuring himself, you know;" and Old Quirk with one hand clasped the huge arm of Grasp in a familiar way, and with the forefinger of the other touched his own nose, and then winked his eye.

"All right!" quoth Grasp, and they parted. Within a few hours' time, Mr Quirk received, by the hand of a

* See APPENDIX.

trusty messenger, from Grasp, a letter written by Steggars to Mr Parkinson—a long and eloquent one, to the purport and effect which Steggars had intimated. Mr Quirk read it with much satisfaction, for it disclosed a truly penitent feeling, and a desire to undo as much mischief as the writer had done. Mr Quirk was not in the least exasperated by certain plain terms in which his own name was mentioned, but, making all due allowances for excited feelings, quietly put the letter in the fire as soon as he had read it. In due time Mr Steggars, whose health was beginning to suffer from close confinement, caught frequent whiffs of the fresh sea-breeze, having set out, under favourable auspices, for Botany Bay; to which distant but happy place he had been thus fortunate in early securing an “*appointment*” for so considerable a portion of his life.

Such, then, I lament to say, were the miserable means by which Mr Quirk became acquainted with the exact state of Mr Aubrey’s title: on first becoming apprised of which, Mr Gammon either felt, or affected, great repugnance to taking any part in the affair. He appeared to suffer himself, at length, however, to be over-persuaded by Quirk into acquiescence; and, that point gained—having ends in view of which Mr Quirk had not the least conception, and which, in fact, had but suddenly occurred to Mr Gammon himself—worked his materials with a caution, skill, energy, and perseverance, which soon led to important results. Guided by the suggestions of acute and experienced counsel, after much pains and considerable expense, they had succeeded in discovering that precious specimen of humanity, Tittlebat Titmouse, who hath already played divers antics before the musing reader. When they came to set down on paper the result of all their researches and inquiries, in order to submit it in the shape of a case for the opinion of Mr Mortmain and Mr Frankpledge, in the manner described in a former part of this his-

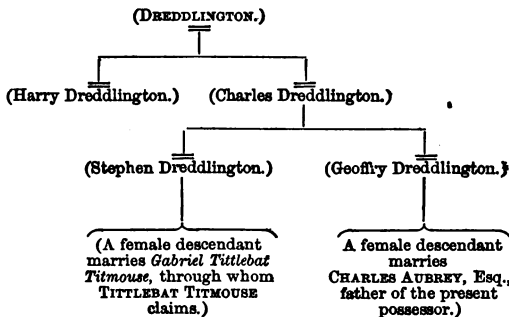
tory, it looked perfect *on paper*, as many a faulty pedigree and abstract of title had looked before, and will yet look. It was quite possible for even Mr Tresayle himself to overlook the defect which had been pointed out by Mr Subtle. That which is stated to a conveyancer, as a *fact*—any particular event, for instance, as of a death, a birth, or a marriage, at a particular time or place, which the very nature of the case renders highly probable—he is warranted in assuming to be so. But when the same statement comes, with quite a different object, under the experienced eye of a *nisi prius* lawyer, who knows that he will have to *prove* his case, step by step, the aspect of things is soon changed. “*De non apparentibus, et de non existentibus*,” saith the law, “*eadem est ratio*,” which, learnedly done into English, runneth thus, as many a poor suitor hath found to his exceeding great discomfiture: “It is all mighty fine to say that such and such a thing is a fact—it may be so; but if you cannot *prove* its existence, for legal purposes, it does not exist at all!” The first practitioner in the common law, before whom the case came, in its roughest and earliest form, in order that he might “lick it into shape,” and “advise generally” preparatory to its “being laid before counsel,” was Mr Traverse, a young pleader, whom Messrs Quirk and Gammon were disposed to take by the hand. He wrote a very showy, but, alas! superficial and delusive opinion; and put the intended *protégé* of his clients, as it were by a kind of hop, step, and jump, into possession of the Yatton estates. Quirk was quite delighted on reading it; but Gammon shook his head with a somewhat sarcastic smile, and said he would at once prepare a case for the opinion of Mr Lynx, whom he had pitched upon as the junior counsel in any proceedings which might be instituted in a court of law. Lynx, of whom I shall speak hereafter, was an experienced, hard-headed, vigilant, and accurate lawyer; the very man for such a case, requiring, as it did,

patient and minute examination. With an eye fitted

"To inspect a mite, not comprehend the heaven,"

he *crawled*, as it were, over a case; and thus, even as one can imagine that a beetle, creeping over the floor of St Paul's, would detect minute flaws and fissures invisible to the eye of Sir Christopher Wren himself, spied out defects which much nobler optics would

have overlooked. To come to plain matter-of-fact, however, I have beside me the original opinion written by Mr Lynx, and shall treat the reader to a taste of it—giving him sufficient to enable him to appreciate the very ticklish position of affairs with Mr Titmouse. To make it not altogether unintelligible, let us suppose the state of the pedigree to be something like this, as far as concerns our present purpose:—



Be pleased now, unlearned reader, to bear in mind that "*Dreddlington*," at the top of the above table, is the common ancestor, having two sons, the elder "*Harry Dreddlington*," the younger "*Charles Dreddlington*;" the latter having, in like manner, two sons, "*Stephen Dreddlington*" the elder son, and "*Geoffry Dreddlington*" the younger son; that Mr Aubrey, at present in possession, claims under "*Geoffry Dreddlington*." Now it will be incumbent on Mr Titmouse, in the first instance, to establish in himself a clear, independent, legal, and possessory title to the estates; it being sufficient for Mr Aubrey (possession being nine-tenths of the law) to falsify Titmouse's proofs, or show them defective—"because," saith a certain learned serjeant, who hath writ a text-book upon the Action of Ejectment, "the plaintiff in an action of ejectment must recover upon the strength of his own title, not the weakness of his adversary's."*

Now, *rebus sic stantibus*, behold the

* See APPENDIX.

astute Lynx advising, *inter alia*, in manner following; that is to say—

"It appears clear that the lessor of the plaintiff (*i. e.* Tittlebat Titmouse) will be able to prove that Dreddlington (the common ancestor) was seized of the estate at Yatton in the year 1740; that he had two sons, Harry and Charles, the former of whom, after a life of dissipation, appears to have died without issue; and that from the latter (Charles) are descended Stephen, the ancestor of the lessor of the plaintiff, and Geoffry, the ancestor of the defendant. Assuming, therefore, that the descent of the lessor of the plaintiff from Stephen, can be made out, as there appears every reason to expect, [on this point Lynx had written two "brief" pages,] a clear *prima facie* case will have been established on the part of the lessor of the plaintiff. As, however, it is suspected that Harry Dreddlington executed a conveyance in fee of the property, in order to secure the loan contracted by him from Aaron Moses, it will be extremely im-

portant to ascertain, and, if possible, procure satisfactory evidence, that the decease of Harry Dreddlington occurred before the period at which, by his father's death, that conveyance could have become operative upon the property: since it is obvious that, should he have survived his father, *that instrument, being outstanding*, may form a complete answer to the case of the lessor of the plaintiff. The danger will be obviously increased should the debt to Aaron Moses prove to have been paid off, as it is stated was rumoured to have been the fact, by Geoffrey Dreddlington, the younger son of Charles Dreddlington: for, should that turn out to be the case, he would probably have taken a conveyance to himself, or to trustees for his benefit, from Aaron Moses—which being in the power of the defendant, Mr Aubrey, would enable him to make out a title to the property, paramount to that now attempted to be set up on behalf of Mr Titmouse. Every possible exertion, therefore, should be made to ascertain the precise period of the death of Harry Dreddlington. The registries of the various parishes in which the family may have at any time resided, should be carefully searched; and an examination made in the churches and churchyards, of all tombstones, escutcheons, &c., belonging, or supposed to belong, to the Dreddlington family, and by which any light can be thrown upon this most important point. It appears clear that Dreddlington (the common ancestor) died on the 7th August 1742:—the question, therefore, simply is, *whether the death of his eldest son (Harry) took place prior or subsequent to that period*. It is to be feared that the defendant may be in possession of some better and more direct evidence on this point than is attainable by the lessor of the plaintiff. The natural presumption would certainly seem to be, that the son, being the younger and stronger man, was the survivor.*

The above-mentioned opinion of Mr Lynx, together with that of Mr Subtle entirely corroborating it, and which

* See APPENDIX.

was alluded to in a late chapter of this history, and a pedigree, were lying on the table, one day, at the office at Saffron Hill, before the anxious and perplexed partners, Messrs Quirk and Gammon.

Gammon was looking attentively, and with a dispirited chagrined air, at the pedigree; and Quirk was looking at Gammon.

"Now, Gammon," said the former, "just let me see again where the exact hitch is—eh? You'll think me perhaps infernally stupid, but—curse me if I can see it!"

"See it, my dear sir? Here, *here!*" replied Gammon with sudden impatience, putting his finger two or three times to the words "*Harry D.*"

"'Drat it! Don't be so sharp with one, Gammon! I know as well as you that that's *about* where the crack is; but what is the precise thing we're in want of, eh?"

"Proof, my dear sir," replied Gammon, somewhat impatiently, but with such a smile! "of the death of Harry Dreddlington some time—no matter when—previous to the 7th August 1742; and in default thereof, Mr Quirk, we are all flat on our backs, and had better never have stirred in the business!"

"You know, Gammon, you're better *up* in these matters than I—because I've not been able to turn my particular attention to 'em since I first began business—so just tell me, in a word, what good's to be got by showing that fellow to have died in his father's lifetime?"

"You don't show your usual acuteness, Mr Quirk," replied Gammon blandly. "It is to make waste paper of that confounded conveyance which he executed, and which Mr Aubrey doubtless has, and with which he may, at a stroke, cut the ground from under our feet!"

"The very thought makes one feel quite funny—don't it, Gammon?" quoth Quirk, with a flustered air.

"It may well do so, Mr Quirk. Now we *are* fairly embarked in a cause where success will be attended with so many splendid results, Mr Quirk

—though I'm sure you'll always bear me out in saying how very unwilling I was to take advantage of the villany of that miscreant Steg—hem”——

“Gammon, Gammon, you're always harking back to that—I'm tired of hearing on't!” interrupted Quirk angrily, but with an embarrassed air.

“Well, now we're in it,” said Gammon, with a sigh, and shrugging his shoulders, “I don't see why we should allow ourselves to be baffled by trifles. The plain question is, undoubtedly, whether we are to stand still—or go on.” Mr Quirk gazed at Mr Gammon with an anxious and puzzled look. “Ay—that's the question indeed!”

“How d'ye make out—in a legal way, you know, Gammon—when a man died—I mean, of a natural death?” inquired Quirk seriously. He was familiar enough with the means of proving the exact hour of certain violent deaths at Debtor's Door.

“Oh! there are various methods of doing so, my dear sir,” replied Gammon carelessly. “Entries in family bibles and prayer-books—registers—tombstones—ay, by the way, AN OLD TOMBSTONE,” continued Gammon musingly, “that would settle the business!”

“An old tombstone!” echoed Quirk briskly, but suddenly dropping his voice. “Lord, Gammon, so it would! That's an *idea!*—I call that a decided idea, Gammon. ’Twould be the very thing!”

“The very thing!” repeated Gammon, pointedly. They remained silent for some moments.

“Snap could not have looked about him sharply enough, when he was down at Yatton—could he, Gammon?” at length observed Quirk in a low tone, flushing all over as he uttered the last words, and felt Gammon's cold grey eye settled on him like that of a snake.

“He could not, indeed, my dear sir,” replied Gammon, while Quirk continued gazing earnestly at him, now and then wriggling about in his chair, rubbing his chin, and drumming with his fingers on the table—“And now that you've suggested the

thing, [oh, Gammon! Gammon!]—it's not to be wondered at!—You know, it would have been an old tombstone—a sort of fragment of a tombstone, perhaps—so deeply sunk in the ground, probably, as easily to have escaped observation. Eh?—Does not it strike you so, Mr Quirk?” All this was said by Gammon in a musing manner, and in a very low tone of voice; and he was delighted to find his words sinking into the eager and fertile mind of his companion.

“Ah, Gammon!” exclaimed Quirk, with a sound of partly a sigh, and partly a whistle, the former being the exponent of the *true* state of his feelings, *i. e.* anxiety—the latter of what he wished to *appear* the state of his feelings, *i. e.* indifference.

“Yes, Mr Quirk?”

“You're a deep devil, Gammon—I will say that for you!” replied Quirk, glancing towards each door, and, as it were, unconsciously drawing his chair a little closer to that of Gammon.

“Nay, my dear sir!” said Gammon, with a deferential and deprecating smile, “you give me credit for an acuteness I feel I do not possess! If, indeed, I had not had your sagacity to rely upon, ever since I have had the honour of being connected with you in business—ah, Mr Quirk, you know you lead—I follow”——

“Gammon, Gammon!” interrupted Quirk, with an uncomfortable, but still a mollified air. “Come—your name's *Oily!*”——

“In moments like these, Mr Quirk, I say nothing that I do not feel,” interrupted Gammon gravely, putting to his nose the least modicum of snuff which he could take with the tip of his finger out of the huge box of Mr Quirk, who, just then, was thrusting huge pinches, every half minute, up his nostrils.

“It will cost a great deal of money to find that same tombstone, Gammon!” said Quirk, in almost a whisper, and paused, looking intently at Gammon.

“I think this is a different kind of snuff from that which you usually take, Mr Quirk, isn't it?” inquired

Gammon, as he inserted the tips of his fingers a second time into the mechanically proffered box of Mr Quirk.

"The same—the same," replied Quirk hastily.

"You are a man better fitted for serious emergencies, Mr Quirk, than any man I ever came near," said Gammon deferentially; "I perceive that you have hit the nail on the head, as indeed you *always* do!"

"Tut! Stuff, Gammon; you're every bit as good a hand as I am!" replied Quirk, with an evident mixture of pleasure and embarrassment. Gammon smiled, shook his head, and shrugged his shoulders.

"'Tis that practical sagacity of yours, Mr Quirk," said he—"you know it as well as I can tell you—that has raised you to your present professional eminence!" He paused, and looked with a very special sort of sincerity at his senior partner.

"Well, I must own I think I *do* know a trick or two," quoth Quirk, with a sort of grunt of gratification.

"Ay, and further, there are *some* clever men who never can keep their own counsel; but are like a hen that has just laid an egg, and directly she has risen, goes foolishly cackling about everywhere, and then her egg is taken away; but *you*!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Quirk; "that's *devilish* good, Gammon!—Capital! Gad, I think I see the hen! Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Gammon gently. "But to be serious, Mr Quirk; what I was going to say was, that I thoroughly appreciate your admirable caution in not confiding to any one—no, not even to me—the exact means by which you intend to extricate us from our present dilemma." Here Quirk got very fidgety, and twirled his watch-key violently.

"Hem! But—hem! Ay—a—a," he grunted, looking with an uneasy air at his calm astute companion; "I didn't mean so much as all *that*, either, Gammon; for two heads, in my opinion, are better than one. You *must* own that, Gammon!" said he, not at all relishing the heavy burden of re-

sponsibility which he felt that Gammon was about to devolve upon his (Quirk's) shoulders exclusively.

"'Tis undoubtedly rather a serious business on which we are now entering," said Gammon; "and I have always admired a saying which you years ago told me of that great man Machiavel!"

[Oh, Gammon! Gammon! You well know that poor old Mr Quirk never heard of the name of that same Machiavel till this moment!]

"That 'when great affairs are stirring, a master-move should be confined to the master-mind that projects it.' I understand! I see! I will not, therefore, inquire into the precise means by which I am satisfied you will make it appear, in due time, (while I am engaged getting up the subordinate, but very harassing details of the general case), that *Harry Dred-dington died before the 7th of August 1742*." Here, taking out his watch, he suddenly added—"Bless me, Mr Quirk, how time passes!—Two o'clock! I ought to have been at Messrs Gregson's a quarter of an hour ago."

"Stop—a moment or two can't signify! It—it," said Quirk hesitatingly, "it was *you*, wasn't it, that thought of the tombstone?"

"I, my dear Mr Quirk"—interrupted Gammon, with a look of astonishment and deference.

"Come, come—honour among thieves, you know, Gammon!" said Quirk, trying to laugh.

"No—it shall never be said that I attempted to take the credit of"—commenced Gammon; when a clerk entering, put an end to the colloquy between the partners, each of whom, presently, was sitting alone in his own room—for Gammon found that he was too late to think of keeping his engagement with Messrs Gregson; if indeed he had ever made any—which, however, he had *not*. Mr Quirk sat in a musing posture for nearly half an hour after he and Gammon had separated. "Gammon is a deep one! I'll be hanged if ever there was his equal," said Quirk to himself, at length; and starting off his chair,

with his hands crossed behind him, he walked softly to and fro. "I know what he's driving at—though he thought I didn't! He'd let me scratch my hands in getting the blackberries, and then he'd come smiling in to eat 'em! But—share and share alike—share profit, share danger, master Gammon;—you may find after all that Caleb Quirk is a match for Oily Gammon—I'll have you in for it, one way or another!" Here occurred a long pause in his thoughts. "Really I doubt the thing's growing unmanageable—the prize can't be worth the risk!—*Risk*, indeed—bedad!—its neither more nor less than"—Here a certain picture hanging, covered with black crape, in the drawing-room at Alibi House, seemed to have glided down from its station, and to be hanging close before his eyes, with the crape drawn aside—a ghastly object—ugh! He shuddered, and involuntarily closed his eyes. "How devilish odd that I should just *now* have happened to think of it!" he inwardly exclaimed, sinking into his chair in a sort of cold sweat.

"D—n the picture!" at length, said he aloud—getting more and more flustered—I'll burn it! It shan't disgrace my drawing-room any longer!" Here Quirk almost fancied that some busy little fiend sat squatting before the grisly picture, writing the words "CALEB QUIRK" at the bottom of it; and a sort of sickness came over him for a moment. Presently he started up, and took down one of several well-worn dingy-looking books standing on the shelves—a volume of Burns' Justice. Resuming his seat, he put on his glasses, and with a little trepidation turned to the head "Forgery," and glanced over it, divided as it was into two great heads—"Forgery at Common Law, and Forgery by Statute," with many able observations of the learned compiler, and important "cases" cited. At length his eye lit upon a paragraph which seemed suddenly to draw his heart up into his throat, producing a sensation which made him involuntarily clap his hand upon his neck.

"Oh, Gammon!" he muttered,

drawing off his glasses, sinking back in his chair, and looking towards the door which opened into Gammon's room; extending at the same time, in that direction, his right arm, and shaking his fist. "You *precious* villain!—I've an uncommon inclination," at length thought he, "to go down slap to Yorkshire—say nothing to anybody—make peace with the enemy, and knock up the whole thing for a couple of thousand pounds—a trifle to the Aubreys, I'm sure. Were I in his place, I shouldn't grudge it; and why should he? By Jove," he got a little heated—"that *would* be, as Gammon has it, a master-move! and confined, egad! to the master-mind that thought of it!—Why should he ever know of the way in which the thing blew up?—Really 'twould be worth half the money to do Gammon so hollow for once—by George it would!—Gammon, that would slip Caleb Quirk's neck so slyly into the halter, indeed!"

"I'll tell you what, Mr Quirk," said Gammon, suddenly re-entering the room after about an hour's absence, during which he too had, like his senior partner, been revolving many things in his mind—"it has occurred to me, that I had better immediately go down to Yatton, *alone*."

Hereat Mr Quirk opened both his eyes and his mouth to their widest; got very red in the face; and stared at his placid partner with a mingled expression of fear and wonder. "Hang me, Gammon!" at length he exclaimed desperately, slapping his fist upon the table—"if I don't think you're the very devil himself!"—and he sank back in his chair, verily believing, in the momentary confusion of his thoughts, that what had been passing through his mind was known to Gammon; or that what had been passing through his own mind, had also been occurring to Gammon, who had resolved upon being beforehand in putting his purposes into execution. Gammon was at first completely confounded by Quirk's reception of him, and stood for a few moments, with his hands elevated, in silence. Then he approached the table, and his eye caught the well-

thumbed volume of Burns' Justice, open at the head "~~FORGIVENESS!~~" and the quick-sighted Gammon saw how matters stood at a glance—the process by which the result he had just witnessed had been arrived at.

"Well, Mr Quirk, what new vagary now?" he inquired with an air of smiling curiosity.

"Vagary be ——!" growled old Quirk sullenly, without moving in his chair.

Gammon stood for a moment or two eyeing him with a keen scrutiny. "What!" at length he inquired, good-humouredly, "do you then really grudge me any share in the little enterprise?"

"Eh?" quickly interrupted Quirk, pricking up his ears, "Do you intend to play *Mackivel!* eh? What must you go down alone to Yatton for, Gammon?" continued Quirk anxiously.

"Why, simply as a sort of pioneer—to reconnoitre the churchyard—eh? I thought it might have been of service; but if"—

"Gammon, Gammon, your hand! I understand," replied Quirk, evidently vastly relieved—most cordially shaking the cold hand of Gammon.

"But understand, Mr Quirk," said he in a peremptory manner, "no one upon earth is to know of my visit to Yatton except yourself."

He received a solemn pledge to that effect; and presently the partners separated, a little better satisfied with each other. Though not a word passed between them for several days afterwards on the topic chiefly discussed during the interview above described, the reader may easily imagine that neither of them dropped it from his thoughts. Mr Quirk, shortly afterwards, paid one or two visits to the neighbourhood of Houndsditch (a perfect hotbed of clients to the firm), where resided two or three gentlemen of the Jewish persuasion, who had been placed, from time to time, under

considerable obligations by the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, in respect of professional services rendered both to themselves and to their friends. One of them, in particular, had a painful consciousness that it was in old Mr Quirk's power at any time, by a whisper, to place his—the aforesaid Israelite's—neck in an unsightly noose which every now and then might be seen dangling from a beam opposite Debtor's Door, Newgate, about eight o'clock in the morning; him, therefore, every consideration of interest and of gratitude combined to render subservient to the reasonable wishes of Mr Quirk. He was a most ingenious little fellow, and had a great taste for the imitative arts—so strong, in fact, that it had once or twice placed him in some jeopardy with the Goths and Vandals of the law; who characterised the noble art in which he excelled by an ugly and formidable word, and annexed barbarous penalties to its practice. What passed between him and old Quirk on the occasion of their interviews I know not; but one afternoon, the latter, on returning to his office, without saying anything to anybody, having bolted the door, took out of his pocket several little pieces of paper, containing pretty picturesque devices of a fragmentary character, with antique letters and figures on them—crumbling pieces of stone, some looking more and some less sunk in the ground, and overgrown with grass; possibly they were designs for ornaments to be added to that tasteful structure—Alibi House—possibly intended to grace Miss Quirk's album. However this might be, after he had looked at them, and carefully compared them one with another, for some time, he folded them up in a sheet of paper, sealed it—with certainly not the steadiest hand in the world—and then deposited it in an iron safe, which he locked up quickly; and then, after a heavy sigh, exclaimed—"Whew!"

CHAPTER XII.

MADAM AUBREY'S DEATH AND BURIAL; GAMMON SMITTEN WITH THE SIGHT OF KATE AUBREY'S BEAUTY; AND A GREAT BATTLE TAKES PLACE AT THE YORK ASSIZES FOR YATTON.

YATTON, the recovery of which was the object of these secret and formidable movements and preparations, not to say machinations, was all this while the scene of deep affliction. The lamentable condition of his mother plunged Mr Aubrey, his wife and sister, into profounder grief than had been occasioned by the calamity which menaced them all in common. Had he been alone, he would have encountered the sudden storm of adversity with unshrinking, nay cheerful firmness; but could it be so, when he had ever before him those whose ruin was involved in his own?—Poor Mrs Aubrey, his wife, having been two or three weeks confined to her bed, during which time certain fond hopes of her husband had been blighted, was almost overpowered, when, languid and feeble, supported by Mr Aubrey and Kate, she first entered the bedroom of the venerable sufferer. What a difference, indeed, was there between the appearance of all of them at that moment, and on the Christmas day when, a happy group, they were cheerfully enjoying the festivities of the season! Ah, well might their sorely smitten hearts echo the awful words—*Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth!*

Kate was now pale, and somewhat thinner; her beautiful features exhibited a careworn expression; yet there was a serene lustre in her blue eye, and a composed resolution in her air, which bespoke the superiority of her soul. What had it not cost her to

bear with any semblance of self-possession, or fortitude, the sad spectacle now presented by her mother! What a tender and vigilant nurse was she, to one who could no longer be sensible of, or appreciate her attentions! How that sweet girl humoured all her venerated and suffering parent's little eccentricities and occasional excitement, and accommodated herself to every varying phasis of her mental malady! She had so schooled her sensibilities and feelings, as to be able to maintain perfect cheerfulness and composure in her mother's presence, on occasions which forced her brother to turn aside with an eye of agony—overcome by some touching speech, or wayward action, of the unconscious sufferer, who constantly imagined herself, poor soul! to be living over again her early married life; and that in her little grandchildren, she beheld Mr Aubrey and Kate, as in their childhood! She would gently chide Mr Aubrey, her husband, for his prolonged absence, asking many times a-day whether he had returned from London. Every morning old Jacob Jones was shown into her chamber, at the hour at which he had been accustomed, in happier days, to attend upon her. The faithful old man's eyes would be blinded with tears, and his voice choked, as he was asked how Peggy got over her yesterday's journey; and listened to questions, messages, and directions, which had been familiar to him twenty years before, about villagers and tenants who had long lain mouldering in their humble

graves—their way thither cheered and smoothed by Mrs Aubrey's Christian charity and benevolence! 'Twas a touching sight to see her two beautiful grandchildren, in whose company she delighted, brought, with a timorous and half-reluctant air, into her presence. How strange must have seemed to them the cheerfulness of the motionless figure always lying in the bed; a cheerfulness which, though gentle as gentle could be, yet sufficed not to assure the little things, or set them at their ease. Though her mild features ever smiled upon them, still 'twas from a prostrate figure, which never moved, and was always surrounded by mournful persons, with sorrowful constraint in their countenances and gestures! Charles would stand watching her, with apprehensive eye—the finger of one hand raised to his lip, while his other retained the hand which had brought him in, as if fearful of its quitting hold of him; the few words he could be brought to speak were in a subdued tone and hurried utterance;—and when, having been lifted up to kiss his grandmamma, he and his sister were taken out of the chamber, their little breasts would heave a sigh which showed how sensibly they were relieved from their recent constraint and apprehension.

How woefully changed was everything in the once cheerful old Hall! Mr Aubrey sitting in the library, intently engaged upon books and papers—Mrs Aubrey and Kate now and then, arm-in-arm, walking slowly up and down the galleries, or one of the rooms, or the hall, not with their former sprightly gaiety, but pensive, and often in tears, and then returning to the chamber of their suffering parent. All this was sad work, indeed, and seemed, as it were, to herald coming desolation!

But little variation occurred, for several weeks, in the condition of Mrs Aubrey, except that she grew visibly feebler. One morning, however, about six weeks after her seizure, from certain symptoms, the medical men intimated their opinion that some important change was on the eve of

taking place, for which they prepared the family. She had been very restless during the night. After frequent intervals of uneasy sleep, she would awake with evident surprise and bewilderment. Sometimes a peculiar smile would flit over her emaciated features; at others, they would be overcast with gloom, and she would seem struggling to suppress tears. Her voice, too, when she spoke, was feeble and tremulous; and she would sigh, and shake her head mournfully. Old Jacob Jones not being introduced at the accustomed hour, she asked for him. When he made his appearance, she gazed at him for a moment or two, with a perplexed eye, exclaiming, "Jacob! Jacob! is it you?" in a low tone; and then she closed her eyes, apparently falling asleep. Thus passed the day; her daughter and daughter-in-law sitting on either side of the bed, where they had so long kept their anxious and affectionate vigils—Mr Aubrey sitting at the foot of the bed—and Dr Goddard and Mr Whately in frequent attendance. Towards the evening, Dr Tatham also, as had been his daily custom through her illness, appeared, and in a low tone read over the service for the visitation of the sick. Shortly afterwards Mr Aubrey was obliged to quit the chamber, in order to attend to some pressing matters of business; and he had been engaged for nearly an hour, intending almost every moment to return to his mother's chamber, when Dr Tatham entered, as Mr Aubrey was subscribing his name to a letter, and, with a little earnestness, said—"Come, my friend, let us return to your mother; methinks she is on the eve of some decisive change: the issue is with God!" Within a few moments they were both at the bedside of Mrs Aubrey. A large chamber-lamp, standing on a table at the further end of the room, diffused a soft light, rendering visible at a glance the silent and sad group collected round the bed, all with their eyes directed towards the venerable figure who lay upon it. Mr Aubrey sat beside his wife close to his mother; and taking her white ema-

ciated hand into his own, leaned down and kissed it. She seemed dozing: but his action appeared to rouse her for a moment. Presently she fixed her eye upon him—its expression, the while, slowly but perceptibly changing, and exciting strange feelings within him. He trembled, and removed not his eye from hers. He turned very pale—for the whole expression of his mother's countenance, which was turned full towards him, was changing. Through the clouded windows of the falling fabric, behold! its long-imprisoned tenant, THE SOUL, had arisen from its torpor, and was looking at him. Reason was reappearing. It was, indeed, his mother, and in her right mind, that was gazing at him. He scarcely breathed. At length surprise and apprehension yielded before a gush of tenderness and love. With what an unutterable look was his mother at that moment regarding him! His lip quivered—his eye overflowed—and, as he felt her fingers gently compressing his own, his tears fell down. Gently leaning forward, he kissed her cheek, and sank on one knee beside the bed.

"Is it you, my son?" said she in a very low tone, but in her own voice, and it stirred up instantly a thousand fond recollections, almost overpowering him. He kissed her hand with fervent energy, but spoke not. She continued gazing at him with mingled solemnity and fondness. Her eye seemed brightening as it remained fixed upon him. Again she spoke in a very low but clear voice—every thrilling word being heard by all around her—*Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,—Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* It would be in vain to attempt to describe the manner in which these words were spoken; and which fell upon those who heard them as though they were listening to one from the dead.

"My mother—my mother!" at length faltered Aubrey.

"God bless thee, my son!" said she solemnly. "And Catherine, my daughter—God bless thee"—she presently added, gently turning round her head towards the quarter whence a stifled sob issued from Miss Aubrey, who rose, trembling, and leaning over, kissed her mother. "Agnes, are you here—and your little ones?—God bless"—Her voice got fainter, and her eyes closed. Mr Whately gave her a few drops of ether, and she presently revived.

"God hath been very good to you, madam," said Dr Tatham, observing her eye fixed upon him, "to restore you thus to your children."

"I have been long absent—long!—I wake, my children, but to bid you farewell, for ever, upon earth."

"Say not so, my mother—my precious mother!" exclaimed her son, in vain endeavouring to suppress his emotions.

"I do, my son. Weep not for me; I am old, and am summoned away from among you"—She ceased, as if from exhaustion; and no one spoke for some minutes.

"It may be that God hath roused me, as it were, from the dead, to comfort my sorrowful children with words of hope," said Mrs Aubrey, with much more power and distinctness than before. "Hope ye, then, in God; for ye shall yet praise him who is the health of your countenance, and your God!"

"We will remember, my mother, your words!" faltered her son.

"Yes, my son—if days of darkness be at hand"—She ceased. Again Mr Whately placed to her white lips a glass with some reviving fluid—looking ominously at Mr Aubrey, as he found that she continued insensible. Miss Aubrey sobbed audibly; indeed all present were powerfully affected. Again Mrs Aubrey revived, and swallowed a few drops of wine-and-water. A heavenly serenity diffused itself over her emaciated features.

"We shall meet again, my loves!—I can no longer see you with the eyes of"—Mr Whately, observing a sudden change, came nearer to her.

"Peace! peace!" she murmured

almost inarticulately. A dead silence ensued, interrupted only by smothered sobs. Her children sank on their knees, and buried their faces in their hands, trembling.

Mr Whately made a silent signal to Dr Tatham that life had ceased—that the beloved spirit had passed away. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!" said Dr Tatham, with tremulous solemnity. Mrs Aubrey and Miss Aubrey, no longer able to restrain their feelings, wept bitterly; and, overpowered with grief, were supported out of the room by Dr Tatham and Mr Aubrey.

As soon as it was known that this venerable lady was no more, universal reverence was testified for her memory, and sympathy for the afflicted survivors, by even those, high and low, in the remoter parts of the neighbourhood, who had no personal acquaintance with the family. Two or three days afterwards, the undertaker, who had received orders from Mr Aubrey to provide a simple and unexpensive funeral, submitted to him a list of more than thirty names of the nobility and gentry of the country, who had sent to him to know whether it would be agreeable to the family for them to be allowed to attend Mrs Aubrey's remains to the grave. After much consideration, Mr Aubrey accepted of this spontaneous tribute of respect to the memory of his mother. 'Twas a memorable and melancholy day on which the interment took place—one never to be forgotten at Yatton. What can be more chilling than the gloomy bustle of a great funeral, especially in the country; and when the deceased is one whose memory is enshrined in the holiest feelings of all who knew her? What person was there, for miles around, who could not speak of the courtesies, the charities, the goodness of Madam Aubrey?

When the ear heard her, then it blessed her; and when the eye saw her, it gave witness to her:

Because she delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.

The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her, and she caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

She was eyes to the blind, and feet was she to the lame.

She was a mother to the poor.

Pale as death, the chief mourner, wrapped in his black cloak, is stepping into the mourning-coach. No one speaks to him: his face is buried in his handkerchief; his heart seems breaking. He thinks of her whose dear dust is before him;—then of the beloved beings whom he has left alone in their agony till his return—his wife and sister. The procession is moving slowly on;—long, silent rows of the tenantry and villagers, old and young, male and female—not a dry eye among them, nor a syllable spoken—stand on each side of the way; no sound heard but of horses' feet, and wheels crushing along the wet gravel—for the day is gloomy and inclement. As they quit the gates, carriage after carriage follows in the rear; and the sorrowful crowd increases around them. Many have in their hands the Bibles and prayer-books which had been given them by her who now lies in yonder hearse; and a few can recollect the day when the late lord of Yatton led her along from the church to the Hall, his young and blooming bride—in pride and joy—and they are now going to lay her beside him again! They are met at the entrance of the little churchyard by good Dr Tatham, in his surplice, bareheaded, and with book in hand; with full eye and quivering lip he slowly precedes the body into the church. His voice frequently trembles, and sometimes he pauses while reading the service. Now they are standing bareheaded at the vault's mouth—the last sad rites are being performed; and probably, as is thinking the chief mourner, over the last of his race who will rest in that tomb!

Long after the solemn ceremony was over, the little churchyard remained filled with mournful groups of villagers and tenants, who pressed forward to the dark mouth of the vault, to take their last look at the coffin which contained the remains of her

whose memory would live long in all their hearts. "Ah, dear old madam," quoth poor Jonas Higgs to himself, with a sigh, as he finished his dreary day's labours, by temporarily closing up the mouth of the vault, "they might have turned thee, by-and-by, out of yonder Hall, but they shall not touch thee *here!*"

Thus died, and was buried, Madam Aubrey; *and she is not yet forgotten.*

How desolate seemed the Hall, the next morning, to the bereaved inmates, as, dressed in deep mourning, they met at the cheerless breakfast table. Aubrey kissed his wife and sister—who could hardly answer his brief inquiries. The gloom occasioned throughout the Hall, for the last ten days, by the windows being constantly darkened—now that the blinds were drawn up—had given way to a staring light and distinctness, which almost startled and offended the eyes of those whose hearts were dark with sorrow as ever. Every object reminded them of the absence of *one*—whose chair stood empty in its accustomed place. There, also, was her Bible, on the little round table near the window! The mourners seemed relieved by the entrance, by-and-by, of the children: but they also were in mourning! Let us, however, withdraw from this scene of suffering, where every object, every recollection, every association, causes the wounded heart to bleed afresh.

Great troubles seem coming upon them; and now that *they have buried their dead out of their sight*, and when time shall have begun to pour his balm into their present smarting wounds, I doubt not that they will look those troubles in the face, calmly and with fortitude, not forgetful of the last words of her for whom they now mourn so bitterly, and whom, beloved and venerable being! God hath mercifully taken away from evil days that are to come.

After much consideration, they resolved to go, on the ensuing Sunday morning, to church, where neither Mrs Aubrey nor Kate had been since the illness of her mother. The little

church was crowded; almost every one present, besides wearing a saddened countenance, exhibited some outward mark of respect, in their dress—some badge of mourning—such as their little means admitted of. The pulpit and reading-desk were hung in black, as also was Mr Aubrey's pew—an object of deep interest to the congregation, who expected to see at least *some* member of the family at the Hall. They were not disappointed. A little before Dr Tatham took his place in the reading-desk, the well-known sound of the family-carriage wheels was heard, as it drew up before the gate; and presently Mr Aubrey appeared at the church door, with his wife and sister on either arm; all of them, of course, in the deepest mourning—Mrs and Miss Aubrey's countenances concealed beneath their long crape veils. For some time after taking their seats, they seemed oppressed with emotion, evidently weeping. Mr Aubrey, however, exhibited great composure, though his countenance bore traces of the suffering he had undergone. Mrs Aubrey seldom rose from her seat; but Kate stood up, from time to time, with the rest of the congregation; her white handkerchief, however, might have been seen frequently raised to her eyes, beneath her black veil. As the service went on, she seemed to have struggled with some success against her feelings. To relieve herself for a moment from its oppressive closeness, she gently raised her veil; and thus, for a few minutes, exhibited a countenance which, though pale and agitated, was inexpressibly beautiful. She could not, however, long bear to face a congregation, every one of whom she felt to be looking on her, and those beside her, with tearful eyes, and rather quickly drew down her veil, without again removing it. There was one person present, on whom the brief glimpse of her beauty had produced a sudden, deep, and indelible impression. As he gazed at her, the colour gradually deserted his cheek; and his eye remained fixed upon her, even after she had drawn down her veil. He experienced emo-

tions such as he had never known before. *So that was Miss Aubrey!*

Mr Gammon—for he it was, and he had gone thither under the expectation of seeing, for the first time, some of the Aubrey family—generally passed for a cold-blooded person; and in fact few men living had more control over their feelings, or more systematically checked any manifestations of them; but there was something in the person and circumstances of Miss Aubrey—for by a hurried inquiry of the person next to him he learned that it was she—which excited new feelings in him. Her slightest motion his eye watched with intense eagerness; and faint half-formed schemes, purposes, and hopes, passed in rapid confusion through his mind, as he foresaw that circumstances would hereafter arise by means of which—

“Good heavens! how very—*very* beautiful she is!” said he to himself, as, the service over, her graceful figure, following her brother and his wife with slow sad step, approached the pew in which he was standing, on her way to the door. He felt a sort of cold shudder as her black dress rustled past, actually touching him. What was he doing and meditating against that lovely being? And for whom—disgusting reptile!—for Titmouse? He almost blushed from a conflict of emotions, as he followed almost immediately after Miss Aubrey, never losing sight of her till her brother, having handed her into the carriage, got in after her, and they drove off towards the Hall.

The reader will not be at a loss to account for the presence of Mr Gammon on this occasion, nor to connect it with an impending trial at the approaching York assizes. As he walked back to Grilston to his solitary dinner, he was lost in thought; and on arriving at the inn, repaired at once to his room, where he found a copy of the *Sunday Flash*, which had, according to orders, been sent to him from town, under his assumed name, “Gibson.” He ate but little, and that mechanically; and seemed to feel, for once, little or no interest in his newspaper.

He had never paid the least attention to the *eulogia* upon Miss Aubrey of the idiot Titmouse, nor of Snap, of whom he entertained but a very little higher opinion than of Titmouse. One thing was clear, that from that moment Miss Aubrey formed a new element in Mr Gammon's calculations; and for aught I know, may occasion different results from those originally contemplated by that calm and crafty personage.

As it proved a moonlight night, he resolved at once to set about the important business which had brought him into Yorkshire; and for that purpose started about eight o'clock on his walk to Yatton. About ten o'clock he might have been seen gliding noiselessly into the churchyard, like a dangerous snake. The moon continued to shine—and at intervals with brightness sufficient for his purpose, which was simply to reconnoitre, as closely as possible, the little sequestered locality—to ascertain what it might contain, and *what were its capabilities*. At length he approached the old yew-tree, against the huge trunk of which he leaned with folded arms, apparently in a reverie. Hearing a noise as of some one opening the gate by which he had entered, he glided farther into the gloom behind him; and turning his head in the direction whence the sound came, he beheld some one entering the churchyard. His heart beat quickly; and he suspected that he had been watched: yet there was surely no harm in being seen, at ten o'clock at night, looking about him in a country churchyard!—It was a gentleman who entered, dressed in deep mourning; and Gammon quickly recognised in him Mr Aubrey—the brother of her whose beautiful image still shone before his mind's eye. What could he be wanting there?—at that time of night? Gammon was not kept long in doubt; for the stranger slowly bent his steps towards a large high tomb, in fact the central object, next to the yew-tree, in the churchyard—and stood gazing at it in silence for some time.

“That is, no doubt, where Mrs Aubrey was buried the other day,”

thought Gammon, watching the movements of the stranger, who presently raised his handkerchief to his eyes, and for some moments seemed indulging in great grief. Gammon distinctly heard the sound of deep sighing. "He must have been very fond of her," thought Mr Gammon. "Well, if we succeed, the excellent old lady will have escaped a great deal of trouble—that's all!" "If we succeed," he inwardly repeated after a long pause! That reminded him of what he had for a few moments lost sight of, namely, his own object in coming thither; and he felt a sudden chill of remorse, which increased upon him till he almost trembled, as his eye continued fixed on Mr Aubrey, and he thought also of Miss Aubrey—and the misery—the utter ruin into which he was seeking to plunge them both—the unhallowed means which they—which—if necessary—he—contemplated resorting to for that purpose.

Gammon's condition was becoming every moment more serious; for *virtus*, in the shape of Miss Aubrey, began to shine momentarily in more and more radiant loveliness before him—and he almost felt an inclination to sacrifice every person connected with the enterprise in which he was engaged, if it would give him a chance of winning the favour of Miss Aubrey. Presently, however, Mr Aubrey, evidently heaving a deep sigh, bent his steps slowly back towards the old gate, and quitted the churchyard. Gammon watched his figure out of sight, and then, for the first time since his appearance, breathed freely. Relieved from the pressure of his presence, Gammon began to take calmer and juster views of his position; and he reflected, that if he pushed on the present affair to a successful issue, he should be much more likely, than by prematurely ending it, to gain his objects. He therefore resumed his survey of the scene around him, which presented appearances highly satisfactory, judging from the expression now and then animating his countenance. At length he wandered round to the other end

of the church, where a crumbling wall, half covered with ivy, indicated that there had formerly stood some building apparently of earlier date than the church. Such was the fact. Gammon soon found himself standing in a sort of enclosure, which had once been the site of an old chapel. And here he had not been long making his observations, before he achieved a discovery of so extraordinary a nature; one so unlikely, under the circumstances, to have happened; one so calculated to baffle ordinary calculations concerning the course of events, that the reader may well disbelieve what I am going to tell him, and treat it as absurdly improbable. In short, not to keep him in suspense, Gammon positively discovered evidence of the death of Harry Dreddlington in his father's lifetime; by means of just such a looking tombstone as he had long imaged to himself; and as he had resolved that old Quirk should have got prepared, before the cause came into court. He almost stumbled over it. 'Twas an old slanting stone, scarcely a foot above the ground, partly covered with moss, and partly hid by rubbish and long damp grass. The moon shone brightly enough to enable Gammon, kneeling down, to decipher, beyond all doubt, what was requisite to establish that part of the case which had been wanting. For a moment or two he was disposed to imagine that he was dreaming. When, at length, he took out pencil and paper, his hands trembled so much that he felt some difficulty in making an exact copy of the inestimable inscription. Having done this, he drew a long breath as he replaced the pencil and paper in his pocket-book, and almost fancied he heard a whispering sound in the air—"Verdict for the plaintiff." Quitting the churchyard, he walked back to Grilston at a much quicker rate than that at which he had come, his discovery having wonderfully elated him, and pushed all other thoughts entirely out of his mind. But, thought he, doubtless the other side are aware of the existence of this tombstone—they can hardly be

supposed ignorant of it; they must have looked up their evidence as well as we—and their attention has been challenged to the existence or non-existence of proof of the time of the death of Harry Dreddlington:—well—if they are aware of it, they know that it cuts the ground from under them, and turns their conveyance, on which, doubtless, they are relying, into waste paper; if they are *not*, and are under the impression that that deed is valid and effectual, our proof will fall on them like a thunderbolt. “Heavens,”—he held his breath, and stopped in the middle of the road—“how immensely important is this little piece of evidence! Why, if they knew of it—why, in Heaven’s name, is it there still? What easier than to have got rid of it?—why, they may still: what can that stupid fellow Parkinson have been about? Yet, is it because it has become unimportant, on account of their being in possession of other evidence? What *can* they have to set against so plain a case as ours is, with this evidence? Gad, I’ll not lose one day’s time; but I’ll have half-a-dozen competent witnesses to inspect, and speak to that same tombstone in court.” Such were some of the thoughts which passed through his mind as he hastened homeward; and on his arrival, late as it was—only the yawning ostler having sate up to let him in—he wrote off a letter to Mr Quirk, and made it into a parcel to go by the mail in the morning, acquainting him with the amazing discovery which he had just made, and urging Mr Quirk to set about getting up the briefs, for the trial, without delay; he himself—Gammon—purposing to stop at Grilston a day or two longer, to complete one or two other arrangements of an important nature. As soon as Mr Quirk had read this letter, he devoutly thanked God for his goodness; and, hurrying to his strong-box, unlocked it, took out a small sealed packet, and committed it to the flames.

Mr Aubrey, as soon as he had recovered from the first shock occasioned by Mr Parkinson’s communication of

the proceedings against him, set about acquainting himself, as minutely as he could, with the true state of the case. He had requested that gentleman to obtain from one of the counsel in London, Mr Crystal, a full account of the case for his—Mr Aubrey’s—own guidance; and on obtaining a remarkably clear and luminous statement, and also consulting the various authorities cited in it—such, at least, as could be supplied to him by Mr Parkinson—the vigorous practical understanding of Mr Aubrey, aided by his patient application, soon mastered the whole case, and enabled him to appreciate his perilous position. Since he could derive no title through the conveyance of Harry Dreddlington, which had been got in by Geoffry Dreddlington, owing to the death of the former in his father’s lifetime,* as Mr Aubrey understood from his advisers could be easily proved by the present claimant of the property; the right of accession of Geoffry Dreddlington’s descendants depended entirely upon the fact whether or not Stephen Dreddlington had really died without issue; and as to that, certain anxious and extensive inquiries instituted by Messrs Runnington and Mr Parkinson, in pursuance of the suggestions of their able and experienced counsel, had led them to entertain most alarming doubts concerning the right of Geoffry’s descendants to have entered into possession. By what means his opponents had obtained their clue to the state of his title, neither Mr Aubrey nor any of his advisers could frame a plausible conjecture. It was certainly possible that Stephen Dreddlington, who was known to have been a man, like his uncle Harry, of wild and eccentric habits, and to have been supposed to leave no issue, might have married privately some woman of inferior station, and left issue by her, who, living in obscurity, and at a distance from the seat of the family property, could have no opportunity of inquiring into or ascertaining their position with reference to the estates, till some

* See APPENDIX.

acute and enterprising attorneys, like Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, happening to get hold of them, and family papers in their possession, had taken up their case. When, with impressions such as these, Mr Aubrey perused, and re-perused the opinions of the conveyancer given on the occasion of his (Mr Aubrey's) marriage, he was confounded at the supineness and indifference which he had even then exhibited, and felt disposed now greatly to overvalue the importance of every adverse circumstance. The boldness, again, and systematic energy with which the case of the claimant was prosecuted, and the eminent legal opinions alleged, and with every appearance of truth, to concur in his favour, afforded additional grounds for rational apprehension. He looked the danger, however, full in the face, and as far as lay in his power, as a conscientious man, prepared for the evil day which might so soon come upon him. Certain extensive and somewhat costly alterations which he had been on the point of commencing at Yatton, he abandoned. But for the earnest interference of friends, he would at once have given up his establishment in Grosvenor Street, and applied for the Chiltern Hundreds, in order to retire from political life. Considering the possibility of his soon being declared the wrongful holder of the property, he contracted his expenditure as far as he could, without challenging unnecessary public attention; and paid into his banker's hands all his Christmas rents, sacredly resolving to abstain from drawing out one farthing of what might soon be proved to belong to another. At every point occurred the dreadful question—if I am declared never to have been the rightful owner of the property, how am I to discharge my frightful liabilities to him who is? Mr Aubrey had nothing except the Yatton property. He had but an insignificant sum in the funds; Mrs Aubrey's settlement was out of lands at Yatton, as also was the little income bequeathed to Kate by her father. Could anything be conceived

more dreadful, under these circumstances, than the mere danger—the slightest probability—of their being deprived of Yatton?—and with a debt of at the very least **SIXTY THOUSAND** pounds, due to him who had been wrongfully kept out of his property? That was the millstone which seemed to drag them all to the bottom. Against *that*, what could the kindness of the most generous friends, what could his own most desperate exertions, avail? All this had poor Aubrey constantly before his eyes, together with—his wife, his children, his sister. What was to become of *them*? It was long before the real nature and extent of his danger became known amongst his friends and neighbours. When, however, they were made aware of it, an extraordinary interest and sympathy were excited throughout almost the whole county. Whenever his attorney, Mr Parkinson, appeared in public, he was besieged by anxious inquiries concerning his distinguished client, whose manly modesty and fortitude, under the pressure of his sudden and almost unprecedented difficulty and peril, endeared him more than ever to all who had an opportunity of appreciating his position. With what intense and absorbing interest were the ensuing assizes looked for!—At length they arrived.

The ancient city of York exhibited, on the commission day of the Spring Assizes for the year 18—, the usual scene of animation and excitement. The High Sheriff, attended by an imposing retinue, went out to meet the Judges, and escorted them, amidst the shrill clangour of trumpets, to the Castle, where the commission was opened with the usual formalities. The Judges were Lord Widdrington, the Lord Chief-Justice of the King's Bench, and Mr Justice Grayley, a puisne judge of the same court—both admirable lawyers. The former was possessed of the more powerful intellect. He was what may be called a great scientific lawyer, referring everything to *principle*, as extracted from precedent. Mr Justice Grayley was

almost unrivalled in his knowledge of the *details* of the law; his governing maxim being *ita lex scripta*. Here his knowledge was equally minute and accurate, and readily applied to every case brought before him. Never sat there upon the bench a more painstaking judge—one more anxious to do right equally in great things as in small. Both were men of rigid integrity: 'tis, indeed, a glorious thing to be able to challenge the inquiry—when, for centuries, have other than men of rigid integrity sat upon the English Bench? Lord Widdrington, however, in temper was stern, arbitrary, and overbearing, and his manners were disfigured not a little by coarseness; while his companion was a man of exemplary amiability, affability, and forbearance. Lord Widdrington presided at the Civil Court (in which, of course, would come on the important cause in which we are interested), and Mr Justice Grayley in the Criminal Court.

Soon after the sitting of the court, on the ensuing morning—"Will your Lordship allow me," rose and inquired the sleek, smiling, and portly Mr Subtle, dead silence prevailing as soon as he had mentioned the name of the cause about which he was inquiring, "to mention a cause of *Doe on the demise of Titmouse v. Jolker*—a special jury cause, in which there are a great many witnesses to be examined on both sides—and to ask that a day may be fixed for it to come on?"

"Whom do you appear for, Mr Subtle?" inquired his Lordship.

"For the plaintiff, my Lord."

"And who appears for the defendant?"

"The Attorney-general leads for the defendant, my Lord," replied Mr Sterling, who, with Mr Crystal, was also retained for the defendant.

"Well, perhaps you can agree between yourselves upon a day, and in the mean time similar arrangements may be made for any other special jury causes that may require it." After due consultation, Monday week was agreed upon by the parties, and

fixed by his lordship, for the trial of the cause.—During the Sunday preceding it, York was crowded with persons of the highest distinction from all parts of the county, who felt interested in the result of the great cause of the assizes. About mid-day a dusty travelling carriage and four dashed into the streets from the London road, and drove up to the principal inn; it contained the Attorney-general (who just finished reading his brief as he entered York) and his clerk. The Attorney-general was a man of striking and highly intellectual countenance; but he looked, on alighting, somewhat fatigued with his long journey. He was a man of extraordinary natural talents, and also a first-rate lawyer—one whose right to take the woolsack, whenever it should become vacant, was recognised by all the profession. His professional celebrity, and his coming down '*special*' on the present occasion, added to the circumstance of his being well known to be a personal friend of his client, Mr Aubrey—whence it might be inferred that his great powers would be exerted to their utmost—was well calculated to enhance the interest, if that were possible, of the occasion which had brought him down at so great an expense, and to sustain so heavy a responsibility as the conduct of a cause of such magnitude.

He came to lead against a formidable opponent. Mr SUBTLE was the leader of the Northern circuit; a man of matchless tact and practical sagacity, and consummately skilful in the conduct of a cause. The only thing *he* ever looked at, was THE VERDICT, to the gaining of which he directed all his energies, and sacrificed every other consideration. As for display, he despised it. A *speech*, as such, was his aversion. He entered into a friendly, but exquisitely crafty *conversation* with the jury; for he was so quick at perceiving the effect of his address on the mind of each of the twelve, and dexterous in accommodating himself to what he had detected to be the passing mood of each, that they

individually felt as if they were all the while reasoning with, and being convinced by him. His placid, smiling, handsome countenance, his gentlemanly bearing and insinuating address, full of good-natured cheerful confidence in his cause, were irresistible. He flattered, he soothed, he fascinated the jury, producing an impression upon their minds which they often felt indignant at his opponent's attempting to efface. In fact, as a *nisi prius* leader he was unrivalled, as well in stating as in arguing a case, as well in examining as cross-examining a witness. It required no little practical experience to form an adequate estimate of Mr Subtle's skill in the management of a cause; for he did everything with such a smiling, careless, unconcerned air, equally in the great pinch and strain of a case as in the pettiest details, that you would be apt to suspect that none but the easiest and most straightforward cases fell to his lot!

Titmouse, Titmouse, methinks the fates favoured you in assigning to you Mr Subtle.

Next came Mr QUICKSILVER, who had received what may be called a *muffling* retainer. What a contrast was he to Mr Subtle! He was of a vast capacity, and versatile powers. In grasp and strength of intellect, Mr Subtle was a mere boy in comparison of him. His acquirements were prodigious, and his memory kept them always as it were under his eye. He was also one of the greatest orators of the age—equally feared and admired in the House of Commons. In the glare and multiplicity of his genius and knowledge, more extensive knowledge of law than he was given credit for, was eclipsed and lost; and it was feared that he disdained the details of his profession. Still it would not do to allow him to be retained on the other side! So he was secured for the plaintiff, in the hope that, like a wild elephant, he would be, in a manner, held in check by Mr Subtle and Mr Lynx. Lynx possessed the qualities which his name would suggest to you. I have partly described

him already. He was a man of minute accuracy; and "got up" every case in which he was engaged as if his life had depended on the result. Nothing escaped him. He kept his mind constantly even with the current of the cause. He was a man to *steer* a leader, if ever that leader should get, for an instant, on the wrong tack, or be uncertain as to his course. His suggestion and interference—rare, indeed, with such a man as Mr Subtle, incessant with Mr Quicksilver—were always worth attending to, and consequently received with deference.

For Mr Aubrey also was retained a formidable "BAR." Mr Attorney-general was a man much superior, in point of intellect and legal knowledge, to Mr Subtle. His mind was distinguished by its tranquil power. He had a rare and invaluable faculty of arraying before his mind's eye all the facts and bearings of the most intricate case, and contemplating them, as it were, not successively, but simultaneously. His perception was quick as light; and, at the same time—rare, most rare accompaniment!—his judgment sound, his memory signally retentive. Inferior, possibly, to Mr Subtle in rapid and delicate appreciation of momentary advantages, he was sagacious, where Mr Subtle was only ingenious. Mr Attorney-general had as much weight with the judge, as Mr Subtle with the jury. With the former there was a candour and straightforwardness—a dignified simplicity—which insensibly won the confidence of the judge; who, on the other hand, felt himself obliged to be ever on his guard against the slippery sophistries of Mr Subtle, whom he thus got to regard with constant suspicion.

Mr STERLING, the second counsel for the defendant, was a king's counsel, and a rival of Mr Subtle upon the circuit. He was a man of great power; and on important occasions, no man at the bar could acquit himself with more distinction. As a speaker, he was eloquent and impressive, perhaps deficient in vivacity; but he was a man of clear and powerful intellect; prompt in seizing the bearings of a

case; a capital lawyer; and possessing, even on the most trying occasions, imperturbable self-possession.

Mr CRYSTAL, with some faults of manner and bearing, was an honourable high-minded man; clear-sighted and strong-headed: an accurate and ready lawyer; vigilant and acute.

See, then, the combatants in this memorable encounter: for *Timouse*—Mr SUBTLE, Mr QUICKSILVER, Mr LYNX; for *Mr Aubrey*—Mr ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr STERLING, Mr CRYSTAL.

The consultation of each party was long and anxious.

About eight o'clock on the Sunday evening, at Mr Subtle's lodgings, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, accompanied by Mr Mortmain, whom they had brought down to watch the case, made their appearance shortly after Mr Quicksilver and Mr Lynx.

"Our case seems complete, *now*," said Mr Subtle, casting a penetrating and most significant glance at Messrs Quirk and Gammon, and then at his juniors, to whom, before the arrival of their clients and Mr Mortmain, he had been mentioning the essential link which, a month before, he had pointed out as missing, and the marvellous good fortune by which they had been able to supply it at the eleventh hour.

"That tombstone's a godsend, Subtle, isn't it?" said Quicksilver with a grim smile. Lynx neither smiled nor spoke. He was a very matter-of-fact person. So as the case came out clear and nice in court, he cared about nothing more: *that* result obtained, he felt that he should be *functus officio*!—But whatever might be the insinuation or suspicion implied in the observation of Mr Subtle, the reader must, by this time, be well aware how little it was warranted by the facts.

"I shall open it very quietly," said Mr Subtle, putting into his pocket his penknife, with which he had been paring his nails, while Mr Quicksilver had been talking very fast. "What do you think, Mr Lynx? Had I better allude boldly to the conveyance executed by Harry Dreddlington, and which becomes useless as soon as we

prove his death in his father's lifetime?"

"Ah! there's that blessed tombstone again," interposed Quicksilver, with a sarcastic smile.

—"Or," resumed Mr Subtle, "content myself with barely making out our pedigree, and let the conveyance of Harry Dreddlington come from the other side?"

"I think, perhaps, that the latter would be the quieter and safer course," replied Lynx.

"By the way, gentlemen," said Mr Subtle suddenly, addressing Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, how do we come to know anything about the mortgage executed by Harry Dreddlington?"

"(Oh! *that* you know," replied Quirk quickly, "we first got scent of in Mr _____ Here he paused suddenly, and turned quite red.

"It was suggested," said Gammon calmly, "by one of the gentlemen whose opinions we have taken in the case—I forget by whom—that, from some recital, it was probable that there existed such an instrument: and that put us on making inquiry."

"Nothing more likely," added Mortmain, "than that it, or an abstract, or minute of it, should get into Stephen Dreddlington's hands!"

"Ah! well! well!" said Mr Subtle, shrugging his shoulders,—"I must say there's rather an air of mystery about the case. But—about that tombstone—what sort of witnesses will speak"——

"Will that evidence be requisite," inquired Lynx, "in the plaintiff's case? All we shall have to do, will be to prove the fact that Harry died without issue, of which there's satisfactory evidence; and as to the *time* of his death, that will become material only if *they* put in the conveyance of Harry."

"True—true; ah! I'll turn that over in my mind. Rely upon it, I'll give Mr Attorney-general as little to lay hold of as possible. Thank you, Lynx, for the hint. Now, gentlemen," said he, turning to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, "one other ques-

tion—What *kind of looking* people are the witnesses who prove the later steps of the pedigree of Mr Titmouse? Respectable? eh?—You know a good deal will depend on the credit which they may obtain with the jury!”

“They’re very decent, creditable persons, you will find, sir,” said Gammon.

“Good, good. Who struck the special jury?”

“We did, sir.”

“Well, I must say that was a *very* prudent step for *you* to take! considering the rank in life and circumstances of the respective parties! However, to be sure, if *you* didn’t, they would—so—well; good-night, gentlemen, good-night.” So the consultation broke up; and Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap returned home to their inn, in a serious and anxious mood.

“You’re a marvellous prudent person, Mr Quirk,” said Gammon, in a somewhat fierce whisper, as they walked along, “I suppose you would have gone on to explain the little matter of Steggars, and so have had our briefs thrown at our heads!”

“Well, well,” grunted Quirk, “that *was* a slip!” Here they reached their inn. Titmouse was staying there; and in Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap’s absence, he had got drunk, and was quarrelling under the archway with ‘Boots;’ so they ordered him to bed, they themselves sitting up till a late hour.

The consultation at the Attorney-general’s had taken place about three o’clock in the afternoon, within an hour after his arrival; and had been attended by Messrs Sterling, Crystal, and Mansfield—by Mr Runnington, and Mr Parkinson, and by Mr Aubrey, whom the Attorney-general received with the most earnest expressions of sympathy and friendship; listening to every question and every observation of his with the utmost deference.

“It would be both idle and unkind to disguise from you, Aubrey,” said he, “that our position is somewhat precarious. It depends entirely on the chance we may have of breaking down the plaintiff’s case, for we have

but a slender one of our own. I suppose they can bring proof of the death of Harry Dreddlington in his father’s lifetime?”

“Oh yes, sir!” answered Mr Parkinson, “there is an old tombstone behind Yatton church which establishes that fact beyond all doubt: and a week or two ago no fewer than five or six persons have been carefully inspecting it; doubtless they will be called as witnesses to-morrow.”

“I feared as much. Then are ours no more than watching briefs. Depend upon it, they would not have carried on the affair with so high a hand, if they had not pretty firm ground under foot! Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap are tolerably well known in town—not *over*-scrupulous, eh, Mr Runnington?”

“Indeed, Mr Attorney, you are right. I don’t doubt they are prepared to go all lengths.”

“Well, we’ll sift their evidence pretty closely, at any rate. So you really have reason to fear, as you intimated when you entered the room, that they have valid evidence of Stephen Dreddlington having left issue?”

“Mr Snap told me,” said Mr Parkinson, “this morning, that they would prove issue of Stephen Dreddlington, and issue of that issue, as clean as a whistle—that was his phrase.”

“Ay, ay—but we mustn’t take all for gospel that *he* would say,” replied the Attorney-general, smiling sarcastically.

“They’ve got two houses filled with witnesses, I understand,” said Mr Runnington.

“Do they seem Yorkshire people, or strangers?”

“Why, most of them that I have seen,” replied Parkinson, “seem strangers.”

“Ah, they will prove, I suppose,” said the Attorney-general, “the later steps of the pedigree, when Stephen Dreddlington married at a distance from his native county.”

They then entered into a full and minute examination of the case; after which,—“Well,” said the Attorney-

general, evidently fatigued with his long journey, and rising from his chair, "we must trust to what will turn up in the chapter of accidents to-morrow. I shall be expected to dine with the bar to-day," he added; "but immediately after dinner—say at half-past seven o'clock, I shall be here and at your service, if anything should be required." Then the consultation broke up. Mr Aubrey had, at their earnest entreaty, brought Mrs Aubrey and Kate from Yatton on Saturday; for they declared themselves unable to bear the dreadful suspense in which they should be left there. Yielding, therefore, to these surely reasonable wishes, he had engaged private lodgings at the outskirts of the town. On quitting the consultation, which, without at the same time affecting over-strictness, he had regretted being fixed for Sunday—but the necessity of the case appeared to warrant it—he repaired to the magnificent *MINSTER*, where the evening prayers were being read, and where were Mrs Aubrey and Kate. The prayers were being chanted as he entered; and he was conducted to a stall nearly opposite to where those whom he loved so fondly were standing. The psalms allotted for the evening were those in which the royal sufferer, David, was pouring forth the deepest sorrows of his heart; and their appropriateness to Mr Aubrey's state of mind, added to the effect produced by the melting melody in which they were conveyed to his ears, excited in him, and, he perceived, also in those opposite, the deepest emotion. The glorious pile was beginning to grow dusky with the stealing shadows of evening; and the solemn and sublime strains of the organ, during the playing of the anthem, filled those present, who had any pretensions to sensibility, with mingled feelings of tenderness and awe. Those in whom we are so deeply interested, felt at once subdued and elevated; and as they quitted the darkening fabric, through which the pealing tones of the organ were yet reverberating, they could not help inquiring, Should they ever

enter it again,—and in what altered circumstances might it be?

To return, however—though it is, indeed, like descending from the holy mountain into the bustle and hubbub of the city at its foot—Mr Parkinson, being most unexpectedly, and as he felt it unfortunately, summoned to Grilston that afternoon, in order to send up some deeds of a distinguished client to London, for the purpose of immediately effecting a mortgage, set off in a post-chaise, at top speed, in a very unenviable frame of mind; and by seven o'clock was seated in his office at Grilston, busily turning over a great number of deeds and papers, in a large tin case, with the words "Right Honourable the Earl of Yelverton" painted on the outside. Having turned over almost everything inside, and found all that he wanted, he was going to toss back again all the deeds which were not requisite for his immediate purpose, when he happened to see one lying at the very bottom which he had not before observed. It was not a large, but an old deed—and he took it up and hastily examined it.

We have seen a piece of unexpected good fortune on the part of Gammon and his client; and the reader will not be disappointed at finding something of a similar kind befalling Mr Aubrey, even at the eleventh hour. Mr Parkinson's journey, which he had execrated a hundred times over as he came down, produced a discovery which made him tremble all over with agitation and delighted excitement, and begin to look upon it as almost owing to an interference of Providence. The deed which he looked at, bore an indorsement of the name of "*Dreddlington*." After a hasty glance over its contents, he tried to recollect by what accident a document, belonging to Mr Aubrey, could have found its way into the box containing Lord Yelverton's deeds; and it at length occurred to him that, some time before, Mr Aubrey had proposed advancing several thousand pounds to Lord Yelverton, on mortgage of a small portion of his lordship's property—but which

negotiation had afterwards been broken off; that Mr Aubrey's title-deeds happened to be at the same time open and loose in his office—and he recollected having considerable trouble in separating the respective documents which had got mixed together. This one, after all, had been by some accident overlooked, till it turned up in this most timely and extraordinary manner! Having hastily effected the object which had brought him back to Grilston, he ordered a post-chaise and four, and within a quarter of an hour was thundering back, at top speed, on his way to York, which, the horses reeking and foaming, he reached a little after ten o'clock. He jumped out, with the precious deed in his pocket, the instant that his chaise-door was opened, and ran off, without saying more than—"I'm gone to the Attorney-general's." This was heard by many passers-by and persons standing round; and it spread far and wide that something of the utmost importance had transpired, with reference to the great ejection cause of Mr Aubrey. Soon afterwards, messengers and clerks, belonging to Mr Runnington and Mr Parkinson, were to be seen running to and fro, summoning Mr Sterling, Mr Crystal, Mr Mansfield, and also Mr Aubrey, to a second consultation at the Attorney-general's. About eleven o'clock they were all assembled. The deed which had occasioned all this excitement, was one calculated indeed to produce that effect; and it filled the minds of all present with astonishment and delight. It was, in a word, a DEED OF CONFIRMATION by OLD DREDDLINGTON, the father of Harry Dreddlington, of the conveyance by the latter to Geoffrey Dreddlington, who, in the manner already mentioned to the reader, had got an assignment of that conveyance to himself. After the Attorney-general had satisfied himself as to the account to be given of the deed—the custody whence it came, namely, the attorney for the defendant; Mr Parkinson undertaking to swear, without any hesitation, that whatever deeds of Mr Aubrey's he possessed, he had taken

from the muniment room at Yatton—the second consultation broke up. Mr Aubrey, on hearing the nature and effect of the instrument explained by the Attorney-general and Mr Mansfield—all his counsel, in short, concurring in opinion as to the triumphant effect which this instrument would produce on the morrow—may be pardoned for regarding it, in the excitement of the moment, as almost a direct interference of Providence.

A few minutes before nine o'clock on the ensuing morning, the occasional shrill blasts of the trumpets announced that the judges were on their way to the castle, the approaches to which were crowded with carriages and pedestrians of a highly respectable appearance. As the castle clock finished striking nine, Lord Widdrington, in a short wig and plain black silk gown,* took his seat, and the swearing of the special jury commenced. The court was crowded almost to suffocation; all the chief places being filled with persons of distinction in the county. The benches on each side of the judge were occupied by ladies, who—especially the Countess of Oldacre and Lady De la Zouch—evinced a painful degree of anxiety and excitement in their countenances and demeanour. The bar also mustered in great force; the crown court being quite deserted, although "a great murder case" was going on there. The civil court was on the present occasion the point of attraction, not only on account of the interesting nature of the case to be tried, but of the keen contest expected between the Attorney-general and Mr Subtle. The former, as he entered—his commanding features gazed at by many an anxious eye with hope, and a feeling that on his skill and learning depended that day the destination of the Yatton property—bowed to the judge, and then nodded and shook hands with several of the counsel nearest to him; then he sat down, and his clerk having opened his bags,

* When the Judges of Assize preside in the Crown side (i. e. in the Criminal Court), they wear their scarlet and ermine robes, and full-bottomed wigs.

and taken out his huge brief, he began turning over its leaves with a calm and attentive air, occasionally conversing with his juniors. Every one present observed that the defendant's counsel and attorneys wore the confident looks of winning men; while their opponents, quick-sighted enough, also observed the circumstance, and looked, on that account alone, a shade more anxious than when they had entered the court. Mr Subtle requested Gammon, whose ability he had soon detected, to sit immediately beneath him; next to Gammon sate Quirk; then Snap; and beside him Mr Titmouse, with a staring sky-blue flowered silk handkerchief round his neck, a gaudy waistcoat, a tight surt-out, and white kid gloves. He looked exceedingly pale, and dared hardly interchange a word with even Snap, who was just as irritable and excited as his senior partners. It was quickly known all over the court which was Titmouse! Mr Aubrey scarcely showed himself in court all day, though he stood at the door near the bench, and could hear all that passed; Lord De la Zouch and one or two other personal friends standing with him, engaged, from time to time, in anxious conversation.

The jury having been sworn, Mr Lynx rose, and in a few hurried sentences, to the lay audience utterly unintelligible, intimated the nature of the pleadings in the cause. The Attorney-general then in a low tone requested that all the witnesses might leave the Court.* As soon as the little disturbance occasioned by this move had ceased, Mr Subtle rose, and in a low but distinct tone said, "May it please your Lordship—Gentlemen of the Jury,—In this cause I have the honour to appear before you as counsel for the plaintiff; and I shall pro-

* This is a step often taken in trials of importance, when the counsel for either party apprehends danger to his client, from his opponent's witnesses remaining in court, and hearing all the evidence which they are afterwards called to contradict. Either counsel has a right thus to exclude witnesses. The Court usually, in such cases, orders all the witnesses to withdraw.

ceed to state, as briefly as I can, the nature of his case. It is impossible, gentlemen, that we should not be aware of the unusual interest excited by this cause; and which may be accounted for by the large estates in this county which are sought this day to be transferred to a comparative stranger, from the family who have long enjoyed them, and of whom I am anxious to say everything respectful; for you will very soon find that the name on the record is that of only the nominal defendant; and although all that is *professed* to be this day sought to be recovered is a trifling portion of the property, your verdict will undoubtedly in effect decide the question as to the true ownership and enjoyment of the large estates now held by the gentleman who is the substantial defendant—I mean Mr Aubrey, the member of Parliament for the borough of Yatton; for whatever answer he might make to an action brought to recover his whole estate, he must make upon the present occasion." Aware of the watchful and formidable opponent who would in due time answer him, and also of being himself entitled to the general reply—to the last word in the event of his opponent offering evidence—Mr Subtle proceeded to state the nature of the plaintiff's case with the utmost brevity and clearness. Scarcely any sound was heard but that of the pens of the short-hand writers, and of the counsel taking their notes. Mr Subtle, having handed up two or three copies of the pedigree which he held in his hand to the judge, the jury, and his opponents, pointed out with distinctness and precision every link in the chain of evidence which he intended to adduce; and having done this, presenting as few salient points of attack to his opponent as he possibly could—he sat down, professing his entire ignorance of what case could be set up in answer to that which he had opened. He had not been on his legs quite half an hour; and when he ceased—how he had disappointed every one present, except the judge and the bar! Instead of a speech

apparently befitting so great an occasion—impressive and eloquent—there had been a brief dry statement of a few uninteresting facts, of dates, of births, deaths, marriages, registers, entries, inscriptions, deeds, wills—without a single touch of feeling, or ray of eloquence. The momentary feeling of disappointment in the lay audience, however—almost all of whom, it may easily be believed, were in the interest of the Aubreys—quickly yielded to one of satisfaction and relief; as they thought they might regard so meagre a speech as heralding as meagre a case. As soon as he had sat down, Mr Quicksilver rose and called the first witness. "We're safe!" said the Attorney-general to Mr Sterling and Mr Crystal, with his hand before his mouth, and in the faintest whisper that could be audible to those whom he addressed; and the witness having been sworn, they all resumed their seats and their writing. The first and the subsequent witness established one or two preliminary and formal points—the Attorney-general scarcely rising to put a question to them. The third witness was examined by Mr Subtle with apparent unconcern, but really with exquisite anxiety. From the earnestness and attention with which the words of the witness were watched and taken down by both the judge and the counsel, who knew somewhat better than the audience where the strain of the case commenced, it must have appeared to the latter, that either Mr Subtle under-estimated, or his opponents over-estimated, the value of the evidence now in process of being extracted by Mr Subtle, in short, easy, pointed questions, and with a bland and smiling countenance.

"Not so fast, sir," gruffly interposed Lord Widdrington, addressing the witness.

"Take time, Mr Jones," said Mr Subtle kindly, fearful of ruffling or discomposing an important witness. The Attorney-general rose to cross-examine; pressed him quietly but closely; varied the shape of his questions; now he soothed, then he star-

tled by his sternness; but sat down, evidently having produced no impression. Thus it was with one or two succeeding witnesses; the Attorney-general, on each occasion, resuming his seat after his abortive efforts with perfect composure. At length, however, by a very admirable and well-sustained fire of cross-questioning, he completely demolished a material witness; and the hopes of all interested in behalf of his clients rose high. Mr Subtle, who had been all the while paring his nails, and from time to time smiling with a careless air (though you might as safely have touched a tigress suckling her cubs as attempted at that moment to disturb him, so absorbed was he in intense anxiety), believing that he could establish the same facts by another and, as he thought, a better witness, did not re-examine; but calling that other, with an air of nonchalance, succeeded in extracting from him all that the former had failed in; baffling all attempts on the part of the Attorney-general to affect his credit. At length, another witness being in the box,—

"I object, my Lord, to that question," said Mr Attorney-general, as Mr Subtle, amidst many indifferent and apparently irrelevant questions, quietly slipped in one of the greatest possible importance and advantage to him—had it been answered as he desired. 'Twas quite delightful to see the Attorney-general and his experienced and watchful juniors all rise at one and the same instant: showing how vain were the tricks and ingenuity of their sly opponent. Mr Attorney-general stated his objection briefly and pointedly; Mr Subtle answered him, followed by Quicksilver and Lynx; and then Mr Attorney-general replied, with great force and clearness. This keen encounter of their wits over—

"I shall allow the question to be put," said Lord Widdrington, after a pause—"But I have great doubts as to its propriety. I will therefore take a note of Mr Attorney-general's objection."

Four or five similar conflicts arose during the course of the plaintiff's

case:—now concerning the competency of a witness*—then as to the admissibility of a document, or the propriety of a particular question. On each of these occasions there were displayed on both sides consummate logical skill and acuteness, especially by the two leaders. Distinctions the most delicate and subtle were suggested with suddenness, and as promptly encountered; the most artful manoeuvres to secure dangerous admissions resorted to, and baffled; the most recondite principles of law brought to bear with admirable readiness on both sides. To deal with them, required, indeed, the practised, penetrating, and powerful intellect of Lord Widdrington. Some points he disposed of promptly, to the satisfaction of both parties; on others he hesitated, and at length reserved them. Though none but the more experienced and able members of the bar could in the least degree enter into and appreciate the nature of these conflicts, they were watched with untiring attention and eagerness by all present, both ladies and gentlemen—by the lowly and the distinguished. And though the intensity of the feelings of all was manifest by a mere glimpse round the court, yet any momentary display of eccentricity on the part of a witness, or petulance or repartee on the part of counsel, would occasion a momentary merriment which, in point of fact, served only as a sort of relief to the strained feelings of the audience, and instantly disappeared. The tombstone part of the case was got through easily; scarcely any attempt being made on the part of Mr Aubrey's counsel to resist or interfere with it. But the great—the hottest part of the fight—occurred at that point of the case where Titmouse's descent from Stephen Dredrington was sought to be established. This gentleman, who had been a very wild person, whose movements were difficult to be traced or accounted for, had entered the navy, and ultimately died at sea, as had always been imagined, single and childless. It

* See APPENDIX.

was proved, however, that, so far from such being the case, he had married a person at Portsmouth, of inferior station; and that by her he had a daughter, only two years before his death. Both mother and daughter, after undergoing great privation, and no notice being taken of the mother by any of her late husband's family, had removed to the house of a humble and distant relative in Cumberland, where the mother afterwards died, leaving her daughter only fifteen years old. When she grew up, she lived in some menial capacity in Cumberland, and ultimately married one Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse; who, after living for some years a cordwainer at Whitehaven, found his way to Grilston, in Yorkshire, in the neighbourhood of which town he had lived for some years in very humble circumstances. There he had married; and about two years afterwards his wife died, leaving a son—our friend Tittlebat Titmouse. Both of them afterwards came to London, where, in four or five years' time, the father died, leaving the little Titmouse to flutter and hop about in the wide world as best he could. During the whole of this part of the case, Mr Gammon had evinced deep anxiety; and at a particular point—perhaps the crisis—his agitation was excessive; yet it was almost entirely concealed by his remarkable self-control. The little documentary evidence of which Gammon, at his first interview with Titmouse, found him possessed, proved at the trial, as Gammon had foreseen, of great importance. The evidence in support of this part of the case, and which it took till two o'clock on the ensuing afternoon to get through, was subjected to a most determined and skilful opposition by the Attorney-general, but in vain. The case had been got up with the utmost care, under the excellent management of Lynx; and Mr Subtle's consummate tact and ability brought it, at length, fully and distinctly out before the jury.

"That, my Lord," said he, as he sat down after re-examining his last wit-

ness, "is the case on the part of the plaintiff." On this the judge and jury withdrew, for a short time, to obtain refreshment. During their absence, the Attorney-general, Mr Sterling, Mr Crystal, and Mr Mansfield, might have been seen, with their heads all laid close together, engaged in anxious consultation—a group gazed at by the eager eyes of many a spectator whose beating heart wished their cause god-speed. The Attorney-general then withdrew for a few moments, also to seek refreshment; and returning at the same time with the judge, after a moment's pause rose, bowed to the judge, then to the jury, and opened the defendant's case. His manner was calm and impressive; his person was dignified; and his clear, distinct voice fell on the listening ear like the sound of silver. After a graceful allusion to the distinguished character of his friend and client, Mr Aubrey (to whose eminent position in the House of Commons he bore his personal testimony), to the magnitude of the interests now at stake, and the extraordinary nature of the claim set up, he proceeded—"On every account, therefore, I feel sensible, gentlemen, to an unusual and painful extent, of the heavy responsibility now resting upon my learned friends and myself; lest any miscarriage of mine should prejudice in any degree the important interests committed to us, or impair the strength of the case which I am about to submit to you on the part of Mr Aubrey; a case which, I assure you, unless some extraordinary mischance should befall us, will, I believe, annihilate that which, with so much pains, so much tact, and so much ability, has just been laid before you by my learned friend Mr Subtle—[here that astute gentleman drummed with his fingers on a book before him, and smiled—but only to disguise his apprehension and surprise]—and establish the defendant in the safe possession of that large property which is the subject of the present extraordinary and unexpected litigation. But, gentlemen, before proceeding so far as that, it is fitting that I should call

your attention to the nature of the case set up on the part of the plaintiff, and the sort of evidence by which it has been attempted to be supported; and I am sanguine of being successful in showing you that the plaintiff's witnesses are not entitled to the credit to which they lay claim; and, consequently, that there is no case made out for the defendant to answer." He then entered into a rigorous analysis of the plaintiff's evidence, contrasting each conflicting portion with the other, with singular cogency; and commenting with powerful severity upon the demeanour and character of many of the witnesses. On proceeding, at length, to open the case of the defendant—"And here, gentlemen," said he, "I am reminded of the observation with which my learned friend concluded—that he was entirely ignorant of the case which we meant to set up in answer to that which he had opened on the part of the plaintiff. Gentlemen, it would have been curious, indeed, had it been otherwise—had my friend's penetrating eye been able to inspect the contents of my client's strong-box—and so become acquainted with the evidence on which he rests his title to the property now in dispute. My learned friend has, however, succeeded in entitling himself to information on that point; and he shall have it—and to his heart's content." Here Mr Subtle cast a glance of smiling incredulity towards the jury and the Attorney-general. He took his pen into his hand, however, and his juniors looked anxious. "Gentlemen," continued the Attorney-general, "I am ready to concede to my learned friend every inch of the case which he has been endeavouring to make out; that he has completely established his pedigree.—At all events, I am ready to concede this for the purpose of the case which is now under discussion before you." He then mentioned the conveyance by Harry Dreddlington of all his interest—"You forget that he died in his father's lifetime, Mr Attorney-general," interposed Mr Subtle with a placid smile, and the air of a man

who is suddenly relieved from a vast pressure of anxiety.

"Not a bit of it, gentlemen, not a bit of it—'tis a part of my case. My learned friend is quite right; Harry Dreddlington *did* die in his father's lifetime: but"—Here Mr Subtle gazed at the Attorney-general with unaffected curiosity; and when the latter came to mention "the *Deed of Confirmation* by the FATHER of Harry Dreddlington," an acute observer might have observed a slight change of colour in Mr Subtle. Lynx looked at the Attorney-general as if he expected every instant to receive a musket-ball in his breast!

"What, '*confirm*' a NULLITY, Mr Attorney-general?" interrupted Mr Subtle, laying down his pen with a smile of derision; but a moment or two afterwards, "Mr Mortmain," said he in a hasty whisper, "what do you think of this? Tell me—in four words"—Mortmain, his eye glued to the face of the Attorney-general the while, muttered hastily something about—"operating as a new grant—as a new conveyance."

"Pshaw! I mean what's the *answer* to the Attorney-general?" muttered Mr Subtle impatiently; but his countenance preserved its expression of smiling nonchalance. "You will oblige me, Mr Mortmain," he by-and-by whispered, in a quiet but peremptory tone, "by giving your utmost attention to the question as to the effect of this deed—so that I may shape my objection to it properly when it is tendered in evidence. If it really have the legal effect attributed to it, and which I suspect it really to have, we may as well shut up our briefs. I *thought* there must be some such cursed point or other in the background!"

Gammon saw the real state of Mr Subtle's mind, and his cheek turned pale; but he preserved a smile on his countenance, as he sat with his arms folded. Quirk eyed him with undisguised agitation, scarce daring to look up at Mr Subtle. Titmouse, seeing a little dismay in his camp, turned very white and cold, and sat still, scarce

daring to breathe; while Snap looked like a terrier consciously going to have its teeth pulled out!

At length the Attorney-general, after stating that, in addition to the case which he had intimated, as resting mainly on the deed of confirmation, he should proceed to prove the pedigree of Mr Aubrey, sat down, having spoken about two hours and a half, expressing his conviction that when the defendant's evidence should have been closed, the jury, under his lordship's direction, would return a verdict for the defendant; and that, too, without leaving the jury-box, where, by their long and patient attention, they had so honourably acquitted themselves of the important duty imposed upon them by the constitution.

"James Parkinson!" exclaimed Mr Sterling, quietly but distinctly, as the Attorney-general sat down. "You are the attorney for the defendant?" inquired Mr Sterling, as soon as the witness had been sworn. "Do you produce a conveyance between Harry Dreddlington and Moses Aaron?" &c., (specifying it). It was proved and put in, without much opposition. So also was another—the assignment from Moses Aaron to Geoffrey Dreddlington.

"Do you also produce a deed between Harry Dreddlington the elder and Geoffrey Dreddlington?" and he mentioned the date and names of all the parties to the deed of confirmation. Mr Parkinson handed in the important document.

"Stay, stay; where did you get that deed, Mr Parkinson?" inquired Mr Subtle sharply, rising and extending his hand for the deed.

"From my office at Grilston, where I keep many of Mr Aubrey's title-deeds."

"When did you bring it hither?"

"About ten o'clock last night, for the purpose of this trial."

"How long has it been at your office?"

"Ever since I fetched it, a year or two ago, with other deeds, from the muniment-room of Yatton Hall."

"How long have you been solicitor to Mr Aubrey?"

"For this ten years; and my father was solicitor to his father for twenty-five years."

"Will you swear that this deed was in your office before the proceedings in this action were brought to your notice?"

"I have not the slightest doubt in the world."

"That does not satisfy me, sir. Will you *swear* that it was?"

"I *will*, sir," replied Mr Parkinson firmly. "It never attracted any more notice from me than any other of Mr Aubrey's deeds, till my attention was drawn to it in consequence of these proceedings."

"Has any one access to Mr Aubrey's deeds at your office but yourself?"

"None that I know of; I keep all the deeds of my clients which are at my office in their respective boxes, and allow no one access to them except under my immediate notice, and in my presence."

Then Mr Subtle sat down.

"My Lord, we now propose to put in this deed," said the Attorney-general, unfolding it.

"Allow me to look at it, Mr Attorney," said Mr Subtle. It was handed to him; and he, his juniors, and Mr Mortmain, rising up, were engaged most anxiously in scrutinising it for some minutes. Mortmain having looked at the stamp, sat down, and opening his bag, hastily drew out an old well-worn volume, which contained all the stamp acts that had ever been passed from the time of William the Third, when, I believe, the first of those blessings was conferred upon this country. First he looked at the deed—then at his book—then at the deed again; and at length might be seen, with earnest gestures, putting Mr Subtle in possession of some opinion which he had formed on the subject. "My Lord," said Mr Subtle after a pause, "I object to this instrument being received in evidence, on account of the insufficiency of the stamp." This produced quite a sensation in court. Mr Subtle then pro-

ceeded to mention the character of the stamp affixed to the deed, and read the act which was in force at the time that the deed bore date; and, after a few additional observations, sat down, and was followed by Mr Quicksilver and Mr Lynx. Then arose the Attorney-general, having in the meantime carefully looked at the act of Parliament, and submitted to his Lordship that the stamp was sufficient; being followed by his juniors. Mr Subtle replied at some length.

"I certainly entertain some difficulty on the point," said his Lordship, "and will mention the matter to my brother Grayley." Taking with him the deed, and Mr Mortmain's copy of the Stamp Acts, his Lordship left the court, and was absent a quarter of an hour—half an hour—three quarters of an hour; and at length returned.

"I have consulted," said his Lordship, as soon as he had taken his seat amidst the profoundest silence, "my brother Grayley, and we have fully considered the point. My brother happens, fortunately, to have by him a manuscript note of a case in which he was counsel, about eighteen years ago, and in which the exact point arose existing in the present case." He then read out of a thick manuscript book, which he had brought with him from Mr Justice Grayley, the particulars of the case alluded to, certainly almost precisely similar to those then before the court. In the case referred to, the stamp had been held sufficient; and so, his Lordship and his brother Grayley were of opinion, was the stamp on the deed then before him. The cloud which had settled upon the countenances of the Attorney-general and his party, here flitted over to, and settled upon, those of his opponents. "Your Lordship will perhaps take a note of the objection," said Mr Subtle, somewhat chagrined. Lord Widdington nodded, and immediately made the requisite entry in his notes.

"Now, then, we propose to put in and read this deed," said the Attorney-general with a smile of suppressed triumph, holding out his hand towards Mr Lynx who was scrutinising it

very eagerly—"I presume my learned friend will require only the operative parts to be read"—here Lynx, with some excitement, called his leader's attention to something which had occurred to him in the deed: up got Quicksilver and Mortmain; and presently—

"Not quite so fast, Mr Attorney, if you please," said Mr Subtle with a little elation of manner—"I have another, and I apprehend, a clearly fatal objection to the admissibility of this deed, till my learned friend shall have accounted for an ERASURE"—

"Erasure!" echoed the Attorney-general with much surprise—"Allow me to see the deed;" and he took it with an incredulous smile, which, however, disappeared as he looked more and more closely at the instrument; Mr Sterling, Mr Crystal, and Mr Mansfield also looking extremely serious.

"I've hit them *now*," said Mr Subtle to those behind him, as he leaned back, and looked with no little triumph at his opponents—"Was there ever anything so lucky in this world before?" From what apparently inadequate and trifling causes often flow great results! The plain fact of the case was merely this. The attorney's clerk, in copying out the deed, which was one of considerable length, had written eight or ten words by mistake; and fearing to exasperate his master, by rendering necessary a new deed and stamp, and occasioning trouble and delay, had neatly scratched out the erroneous words, and over the erasure written the correct ones. As he was the party who was intrusted with seeing to and witnessing the execution of the instrument, he of course took no notice of the alteration, and—see the result! The ownership of an estate of ten thousand a-year about to turn upon the effect of this erasure!

"Hand me up the deed," said the Judge; and inspected it minutely for a minute or two, holding it up, once or twice, to the light.

"Has any one a magnifying glass in court?" inquired the Attorney-general, with a look of increasing

anxiety. No one happened to have one.

"Is it necessary, Mr Attorney?" said Lord Widdrington, handing down the instrument to him with an ominous look.

"Well—you object, of course, Mr Subtle—as I understand you—that this deed is void, on account of an erasure in a material part of it?" inquired Lord Widdrington.

"That is my objection, my Lord," said Mr Subtle, sitting down.

"Now, Mr Attorney," continued the Judge, turning to the Attorney-general, prepared to take a note of any observations which he might offer. The spectators—the whole court, were aware that the great crisis of the case had arrived; and there was a sickening silence. The Attorney-general, with perfect calmness and self-possession, immediately addressed the court in answer to this critical and unexpected objection. That there *was* an erasure, which, owing to the hurry with which the instrument had been examined, had been overlooked, was indisputable. The Attorney-general's argument was, first, that the erasure was in a part not material; secondly, that even if in a material part of the deed, it would not be avoided, but the alteration would be presumed to have taken place before the execution of the deed.* It was easy to see that he spoke with the air of a man who argues *contra spem*; what he said, however, was pertinent and forcible. The same might be said of Mr Sterling and Mr Crystal; but they were all plainly *gravelled*. Mr Subtle replied with cruel cogency.

"Well," said Lord Widdrington, when Mr Subtle had concluded, "I own I feel scarcely any doubt upon the matter; but as it is certainly of great importance in the present case, I will just see how it strikes my brother Grayley." With this he took the deed in his hand and quitted the court. He touched Mr Aubrey, in passing to his private room, holding the deed before him! After an ab-

* See, for a discussion of this point, APPENDIX.

sence of about ten minutes, Lord Widdrington returned.

"Silence! silence there!" bawled the crier; and the bustle had soon subsided into profound silence.

"I think, and my brother Grayley agrees with me," said Lord Widdrington, "that I ought not to receive this deed in evidence, unless the erasure occurring in an essential part of it be first accounted for. Unless, therefore, you are prepared, Mr Attorney, with any evidence of that kind, I shall not receive the deed." The Attorney-general bowed, in silence, to his Lordship.

There was a faint buzz all over the court—a buzz of excitement, anxiety, and disappointment; during which the Attorney-general consulted for a moment or two with his juniors.

"Undoubtedly, my Lord," said he at length, "we are not prepared with any evidence to explain a circumstance which has taken us entirely by surprise. After this length of time, my Lord, of course"—

"Certainly—it is a great misfortune for the parties—a great misfortune. Of course you tender the deed in evidence?" he continued, taking a note.

"We do, my Lord, certainly," replied the Attorney-general: and sitting down, he and his juniors took a note of the decision; Lord Widdrington and the Attorney-general's opponents doing the same.

You should have seen the faces of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, as they looked at Mr Parkinson, with an agitated air, returning the rejected deed to the bag from which it had been lately taken with so confident and triumphant an air!—The remainder of the case, which had been opened by the Attorney-general on behalf of Mr Aubrey, was then proceeded with; but in spite of all their assumed calmness, the disappointment and distress of his counsel were perceptible to all. They were now dejected—they felt that the cause was lost, unless some extraordinary good fortune should yet befall them. They were not long in establishing the descent of Mr Aubrey from Geoffrey Dreddington. It was neces-

sary to do so; for, grievously as they had been disappointed in failing to establish the title paramount, founded upon the deed of confirmation of Mr Aubrey, it was yet an important question for the jury, whether they believed the evidence adduced by the plaintiff to show title in himself.

"That, my Lord, is the defendant's case," said the Attorney-general as his last witness left the box; and Mr Subtle then rose to reply. He felt how unpopular was his cause; that almost every countenance around him bore a hostile expression. Privately, he loathed his case, when he saw the sort of person for whom he was struggling. All his sympathies—he was a proud, haughty man—were on behalf of Mr Aubrey, whom by name and reputation he well knew, and with whom he had often sat in the House of Commons. Now, conspicuous before him, sat his little monkey-client, Titmouse—a ridiculous object; and calculated, if there were any scope for the influence of prejudice, to ruin his own cause by the exhibition of himself before the jury. That was the vulgar idiot who was to turn the admirable Aubreys out of Yatton, and send them into the world beggared!—But Mr Subtle was a high-minded English advocate; and if he had had for his client Miss Aubrey in all her loveliness, and knew that her *all* depended upon the success of his exertions, he could hardly have exerted himself more strenuously than he did on the present occasion for the imp that was squatting beneath him. And such, at length, was the effect which that exquisitely skilful advocate produced, in his address to the jury, that he began to bring about a change in the feelings of most around him! even the eye of scornful beauty began to direct fewer glances of indignation and disgust upon Titmouse, as Mr Subtle's irresistible rhetoric drew upon their sympathies in that young gentleman's behalf. "My learned friend, the Attorney-general, gentlemen, dropped one or two expressions of a somewhat disparaging tendency," said Mr Subtle, "in alluding to my client, Mr Tit-

mouse; and shadowed forth a disadvantageous contrast between the obscure and ignorant plaintiff, and the gifted defendant. Good heavens, gentlemen! and is my humble client's misfortune to become his fault? If he be obscure and ignorant, unacquainted with the usages of society, deprived of the blessings of a superior education—if he have contracted vulgarity, *whose fault is it?*—Who has occasioned it? Who plunged him and his parents before him into an unjust poverty and obscurity, from which Providence is about this day to rescue him, and put him in possession of his own? Gentlemen, if topics like these must be introduced into this case, I ask you *who is accountable* for the present condition of my unfortunate client? Is he, or are those who have been, perhaps unconsciously, but still unjustly, so long revelling in the wealth which is his? Gentlemen, in the name of everything that is manly and generous, I challenge your sympathy, your commiseration, for my client." Here Titmouse, who had been staring open-mouthed for some time at his eloquent advocate, and could be kept quiet no longer by the most vehement efforts of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, rose up in an excited manner, exclaiming, "Bravo! bravo, bravo, sir! 'Pon my life, capital! It's quite true—bravo! bravo!" His astounded advocate paused at this unprecedented interruption. "Take the puppy out of court, sir, or I will not utter one word more," said he in a fierce whisper to Mr Gammon.

"Who is that? Leave the court, sir! Your conduct is most indecent, sir! I have a great mind to commit you, sir!" said Lord Widdrington, directing an awful look down to the offender, who had turned of a ghastly whiteness.

"Have mercy upon me, my Lord! I'll never do it again," he groaned, clasping his hands, and verily believing that Lord Widdrington was going to take the estate away from him.

Snap at length succeeded in getting him out of court, and after the excitement occasioned by this irregular

interruption had subsided, Mr Subtle resumed:—

"Gentlemen," said he, in a low tone, "I perceive that you are moved by this little incident; and it is characteristic of your superior feelings. Inferior persons, destitute of sensibility or refinement, might have smiled at eccentricities, which occasion gentlemen like yourselves only feelings of greater commiseration. I protest, gentlemen"—his voice trembled for a moment, but he soon resumed his self-possession; and, after a long and admirable address, sate down, confident of the verdict.

"If we lose the verdict, sir," said he, bending down and whispering into the ear of Gammon, "we may thank that execrable little puppy for it." Gammon changed colour, but made no reply.

Lord Widdrington then commenced summing up the case to the jury with his usual care and perspicacity. Nothing could be more beautiful than the ease with which he extricated the facts of the case from the meshes in which they had been alternately involved by Mr Subtle and the Attorney-general. As soon as he had explained to them the general principles of law applicable to the case, he placed before them the facts proved by the plaintiff, and then the answer of the defendant; every one in court trembling for the result, if the jury should take the same view which he felt compelled himself to take. The judge suggested that they should retire to consider the case, taking with them the pedigrees which had been handed in to them; and added that, if they should require his assistance, he should remain in his private room for an hour or two. Both judge and jury then retired, it being about eight o'clock. Candles were lit in the court, which continued crowded to suffocation. Few doubted which way the verdict would go. Fatigued as must have been most of the spectators with a two days' confinement and excitement—ladies as well as gentlemen—scarce a person thought of quitting before the verdict had been pronounced. After an hour and a half's

absence, a cry was heard from the bailiff in whose charge the jury had retired—"Clear the way for the jury;" and one or two officers, with their wands obeyed the directions. As the jury were re-entering their box, struggling with a little difficulty through the crowd, Lord Widdrington resumed his seat upon the bench.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have the goodness," said the associate, "to answer to your names—*Sir Godolphin Fitzherbert*"—and, while their names were thus called over, all the counsel took their pens, and, turning over their briefs with an air of anxiety, prepared to endorse on them the verdict. As soon as all the jurymen had answered, a profound silence ensued.

"Gentlemen of the jury," inquired the associate, "are you agreed upon your verdict? Do you find for the plaintiff, or for the defendant?"

"FOR THE PLAINTIFF," replied the

foreman; on which the officer, amidst a kind of blank dismayed silence, making at the same time some hieroglyphics upon the record, muttered—*Verdict for the Plaintiff.—Damages one shilling. Costs, forty shillings;* while another functionary bawled out, amidst the increasing buzz in the court, "Have the goodness to wait, gentlemen of the jury. You will be paid immediately." Whereupon, to the disgust and indignation of the unlearned spectators, and the astonishment of some of the gentlemen of the jury themselves—some of them the greatest men of the county—Snap jumped up on the form, pulled out his purse with an air of wild exultation, and proceeded to remunerate Sir Godolphin Fitzherbert and his companions with the sum of two guineas each. Proclamation was then made, and the court adjourned till the next morning at nine o'clock.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE BATTLE.—THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE BELLIGERENTS; AND AN ADVENTUROUS PROJECT OF MR GAMMON'S.

"THE Attorney-general did his work very fairly, I thought—eh, Lynx?" said Mr Subtle, as, arm-in-arm with Mr Lynx, he quitted the castle-gates, each of them on his way to their respective lodgings, to prepare for the next day's work.

"Yes—he's a keen hand, to be sure: he's given us all work enough; and, I must say, it's been a capital set-to between you! I'm so glad you got the verdict!"

"It wouldn't have done to be beaten on one's own dunghill, as it were—eh?" quoth Mr Subtle with a bland smile—adding, in the fulness of his pleased heart—"By the way, Lynx, that was a good hit of yours about the erasure!—I ought, really, if it had occurred to me at the time, to have given you the credit of it—'twas entirely yours, Lynx, I must say."

"Oh, no!"—replied his junior modestly. "It was a mere accident my lighting on it; the merit was, the use you made of it!"

"To think," said Mr Subtle, musingly, "of ten thousand a-year turning on that same trumpery erasure!"

"But are you sure of our verdict on that ground, Mr Subtle? Do you think Lord Widdrington was right in rejecting that deed?"*

"Right? to be sure he was! But I own I got rather uneasy at the way

* See APPENDIX.

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the Attorney-general put it—that the estate had once been vested, and could not be subsequently de-vested by an alteration or blemish in the instrument evidencing the passing of the estate—eh? that was a pretty point, Lynx."

"Ay, but as Lord Widdrington put it—that could be only where the defect was proved to exist after a complete and valid deed had been once established."†

"True—true; that's the answer, Lynx; here, you see, the deed is disgraced in the first instance; no proof, in fact, that it ever *was* a deed—therefore, mere waste paper."

"But don't forget that *possession* has gone along with the deed"——

"Possession gone along with it!—What then?—That is to say, the man who has altered it, to benefit himself and his heirs, keeps it snugly in his own chest—and then that is of itself to be sufficient to"——

"Ay—but what I'm afraid of is this: that the presumption of forgery arising from the alteration, is overcome by the presumption to the con-

† Whether all this be, or be not, "*good law*," it is needless for the author to say—nor to hold himself responsible for the legal opinions expressed by any of the characters in this history. His own views may be seen by any one curious enough to refer to the Note in the Appendix. This remark the author thinks it necessary here to make, once for all.

trary, arising from long-continued and consistent possession!—On the other hand, however, it is certainly a general rule that the party producing an instrument must account for the appearance of erasure or alteration, to encounter the presumption of fraud!—I must say *that* seems good sense enough!" * *

"It's really been rather an interesting cause," said Mr Subtle.

"Very. Some capital points—that of Mortmain's on the stamp act"—

"Fish, Lynx! there's nothing in it! I meant the cause itself has been an interesting one—uncommonly."

Mr Subtle suddenly paused and stood still. "Bless my soul, Lynx—I've made a blunder!"

"Eh! What's the matter?"

"Yes—by Jove, a blunder! Never did such a thing since I've led a cause before!"

"A blunder? Impossible!—What is it?" inquired Lynx briskly, pricking up his ears.

"It will be at least thirty or forty pounds out of our client's pocket. I forgot to ask Widdrington for his certificate for the costs of the special jury. I protest I never did such a thing before—I'm quite annoyed—I hate to *overlook* anything."

"Oh! is that all?" inquired Lynx, much relieved—"then it's all right! While you were speaking to Mr Gammon, immediately after the verdict had been given, I turned towards Quicksilver to get him to ask for the certificate—but he had seen a man with the new 'Times' containing the Division on the Catholic claims, and had set off after him—so I took the liberty, as you seemed earnestly talking to Mr Gammon, to name it to the judge—and it's all right."

"Capital!—Then there isn't a single point missed!—And in a good two days' fight that's something."

"D'ye think we shall keep the verdict, and get its fruits?"

"We shall keep the verdict, I've no doubt; there's nothing in Widdrington's notes that we need be afraid of—but of course the Aubreys will put

us to bring another ejection, perhaps several."

"Yes—certainly—there *must* be a good deal of fighting before such a property as Yatton changes hands," replied Lynx, with a complacent air; for he saw a few pleasant pickings in store for him. "By the way," he continued, "our client's a sweet specimen of humanity, isn't he?"

"Fugh! odious little reptile! And did you ever in all your life witness such a scene as when he interrupted me in the way he did?"

"Ha, ha! Never! But, upon my honour, what an exquisite turn you gave the thing—it was worth more than called it forth—it was admirable."

"Pooh—Lynx!" said Mr Subtle, with a gratified air; "knack—mere knack—nothing more. My voice trembled—eh?—at least so I intended."

"Upon my word, I almost believed you were for the moment overcome, and going to shed tears."

"Ah, ha, ha!—Delightful! I was convulsed with inward laughter! Shed tears!! Did the Bar take it, Lynx?" inquired Mr Subtle; for though he hated display, he loved appreciation, and by competent persons. "By the way, Lynx, the way in which you've got up the whole case does you vast credit—that opinion of yours on the evidence was really one of the most masterly"—here he suddenly ceased and squeezed his companion's arm, motioning him thereby to silence. They had come up with two gentlemen, walking slowly, and conversing in a low tone, but with much earnestness of manner. They were, in fact, unfortunate Mr Aubrey and Lord De la Zouch. The two lawyers crossed over to the other side of the narrow street, and quickened their pace, so as to be soon out of sight and hearing of the persons whom they seemed desirous of avoiding. Mr Subtle was, indeed, unable to bear the sight of the man whom his strenuous and splendid exertions during the last two days had tended to strip of his all—to thrust from the bright domain of

wealth, prosperity, distinction, into—as it were—outer darkness—the outer darkness of poverty—of destitution.

"It's rather a nuisance for the Aubreys—isn't it?" quoth the matter-of-fact Lynx.

"It's frightful!"—replied Mr Subtle, in a tone of voice and with a manner which showed how deeply he felt what he uttered. "And it's not only what Mr Aubrey will lose, but what he will be liable to—the mesne profits—sixty thousand pounds."

"Oh!—you think, then, that we can't go beyond the *statute of limitations*?—Eh?—is that so clear?" Mr Subtle looked sharply at Lynx, with an expression baffling all description. "Well"—continued the impenetrable Lynx—"at all events I'll look into it." He felt about as much sentiment in the matter as a hog eating acorns would feel interest in the antiquity or picturesqueness of the oak from which they fell, and under whose venerable shade he was munching and stuffing himself.

"By the way, Lynx—aren't you with me in *Higson and Mellington*?"

"Yes—and it stands first for to-morrow morning!"

"I've not opened my papers, and—why, we've a consultation fixed for ten o'clock to-night. What's it all about?"

"It's *libel* against a newspaper editor—the POMFRET COCKATRICE; and our client's a clergyman. They've slandered him abominably," quoth Lynx, indignantly; "they say he does not believe what he teaches—and that it is a race between him and his congregation which gets to the devil first!"

"Ay, ay?—that sounds a little like substantial damages!—Do they *justify*?"* inquired Mr Subtle, smiling.

"No—they've pleaded not guilty only."

"Who leads for the defendant?"

"Mr Quicksilver."

"I suppose so. He'll make a splendid speech, no doubt, and turn it into

* See APPENDIX.

great fun!† We must have the consultation to-morrow morning, at the Robing-room—ten minutes before the sitting of the court. I'm rather tired to-night." With this the great leader shook hands with his modest, learned, laborious junior—and entered his lodgings, to glance over brief after brief, and squeeze the brain of junior after junior, till past midnight.

As soon as Titmouse had been ejected from the court, in the summary way which the reader will recollect, merely on account of his having, with some slight indecorum, yielded to the mighty impulse of his agitated feelings, he began to cry bitterly, wringing his hands, and asking every one about him if they thought he could get in again, because it was "*his case*" that was going on. His eyes were red and swollen with weeping; and his little bosom throbbed violently as he walked to and fro from one door of the court to the other.

"Oh, gents, will you get me in again?" said he, in passionate tones, approaching two gentlemen, who with an anxious and oppressed air were standing together at the outside of one of the doors—in fact, Lord De la Zouch and Mr Aubrey; and they quickly recognised in Titmouse the gentleman whose claims were being at that instant mooted within the court. "*Will you get me in? You see such respectable gents—'Pon my soul I'm going mad! It's my case that's going on! I'm Mr Titmouse*"—

"We have no power, sir, to get you in," replied Lord De la Zouch haughtily: so coldly and sternly, as to cause Titmouse involuntarily to shrink from him.

"The court is crowded to the very door, sir—and we really have no more right to be present in court, or get others into court, than you have," said Mr Aubrey, with mildness and dignity.

† Mr Subtle, the next morning, got five hundred pounds damages, after one of the wittiest speeches for the defence ever heard: none enjoying it more than the fortunate defendant, up to the moment of the delivery of the verdict.

"Thank you, sir! Thank you!" quoth Titmouse, moving with an apprehensive air away from Lord De la Zouch, towards Mr Aubrey, "Know quite well who you are, sir! 'Pon my solemn soul, sir, sorry to do all this; but law's law, and right's right all the world over!"

"I desire you to leave us, sir," said Lord De la Zouch with irrepressible sternness; "you are very intrusive. How can we catch a syllable of what is going on while you are chattering in this way, sir?" Titmouse saw that Mr Aubrey looked towards him with a different expression from that exhibited by his imperious companion, and would perhaps have stood his ground, but for a glimpse he caught of a huge, powdered, broad-shouldered footman, in a splendid livery, one of Lord De la Zouch's servants, who, with a great thick silver-headed cane in his hand, was standing at a little distance behind, in attendance on the carriage, in the castle-yard. This man's face looked so ready for mischief, that Titmouse slowly walked off. There were a good many standers-by, who seemed all to eye him with dislike and distrust. He made many ineffectual attempts to persuade the doorkeeper, who had assisted in his extrusion, to re-admit him; but the incorruptible janitor was proof against a sixpence—even against a shilling; and at length Titmouse gave himself up to despair, and thought himself the most miserable man in the whole world—and doubtless he was as miserable as his little nature admitted of: for consider what a horrid interval of suspense he had to endure, from the closing of Mr Subtle's speech, till the delivery of the verdict. But at length, through this portentous and apparently impenetrable cloud burst the dazzling sunlight of success.

"Mr Titmouse!—Mr Titmouse!—Mr Tit!"

"Here! Here I am! Here!"—exclaimed the little wretch, jumping off the window-seat on which he had been squatting for the last hour in the dark, half stupefied with grief and exhaustion. The voice which called him

was a blessed voice—a familiar one—that of Mr Gammon; who, as soon as the jury had begun to come back, on some pretence or other had quitted his seat between Quirk and Snap, in order, if the verdict should be for the plaintiff, to be the first to communicate it to him. In a moment or two Mr Gammon had grasped both Mr Titmouse's hands. "My dear, dear Mr Titmouse, I congratulate you! You are victorious! God grant you long life to enjoy your good fortune! God bless you, Titmouse!" He wrung Titmouse's hands—and his voice trembled with the intensity of his emotions! Mr Titmouse had grown very white, and for a while spoke not, but stood staring at Mr Gammon, as if hardly aware of the import of his communication.

"No—but—is it so? Honour bright?" at length he stammered.

"It is indeed! My long labours are at length crowned with success!—Hurrah, hurrah, Mr Titmouse!"

"I've really *won*? It a'n't a joke or a dream?" inquired Titmouse with quickly increasing excitement, and a joyous expression bursting over his features, which became suddenly flushed.

"A joke?—the best you'll ever have. A dream?—that will last your life. Thank God, Mr Titmouse, the battle's ours; we've defeated all their villany!"

"Tol de rol! Tol de rol! Tol de lol, lol, lol, rido!—Ah," he added in a loud truculent tone, as Lord De la Zouch and Mr Aubrey slowly passed him—"done for you now—pon my life!—turned the tables!—*that* for you!" said he, snapping his fingers; but I need hardly say that he did so with perfect impunity, as far as those two gentlemen were concerned, who were so absorbed with the grievous event which had just happened, as scarcely to be aware of their being addressed at all.

"Aubrey, it's against you—all is lost; the verdict is for the plaintiff!" said Lord De la Zouch in a hurried agitated whisper, as he grasped the hand of Mr Aubrey, whom he had

quitted for an instant to hear the verdict pronounced. Mr Aubrey for some moments spoke not.

"God's will be done!" at length said he in a low tone, or rather in a faint murmur. More than a dozen gentlemen, who came crowding out, grasped his hand with fervent energy.

"God bless you, Aubrey! God bless you!"—said several voices, quivering with emotion.

"Let us go"—said Lord De la Zouch, putting Mr Aubrey's arm in his own, and leading him away from a scene of distressing excitement, too powerful for his exhausted feelings.

"I am nothing of a fatalist," said Mr Aubrey, after a considerable pause, during which they had quitted the castle-gates, and his feelings had recovered from the shock which they had suffered;—"I am nothing of a fatalist, but I ought not to feel the least surprise at this issue, for I have long had a settled conviction that such *would* be the issue. For some time before I had the least intimation of the commencement of these proceedings, I was oppressed by a sense of impending calamity"

"Well, that may be so; but it does not follow that the mischief is finally *done*."

"I am certain of it!—But, dear Lord De la Zouch, how much I owe to your kindness and sympathy!" said Mr Aubrey with a slight tremor in his voice.

"We are at this moment, Aubrey, firmer friends than we ever were before. So help me Heaven! I would not lose your friendship for the whole world; I feel it a greater honour to be your friend than I am worthy of—I do, indeed," said Lord De la Zouch with emotion.

"There's a great gulf between us, though, Lord De la Zouch, as far as worldly circumstances are concerned—you a peer of the realm, I a beggar!"

"Forgive me, Aubrey, but it is idle to talk in that way; I am hurt beyond measure at your supposing it possible that under any circumstances"

"Believe me, I feel the full value of

your friendship—more valuable at this moment than ever!"

"That a serious calamity has fallen upon you is certain:—which of us, indeed, is safe from such a calamity? But who would bear it with the calm fortitude which *you* have already evinced, my dear Aubrey?"

"You speak kindly, Lord De la Zouch; I trust I shall play the man, now that the time for playing a man's part has come," said Mr Aubrey with an air of mingled melancholy and resolution. "I feel an inexpressible consolation in the reflection, that I cannot charge myself with anything unconscientious; and, as for the future, I put my trust in God. I feel as if I could submit to the will of Heaven with cheerfulness"

"Don't speak so despondingly, Aubrey"

"Despondingly?" echoed Mr Aubrey, with momentary animation—"Despondingly? My dear friend, I feel as if I were indeed entering a scene black as midnight—but what is it to the *valley of the shadow of death*, dear Lord De la Zouch, which is before all of us, and at but a little distance! I assure you I feel no vain-glorious confidence; yet I seem to be leaning on the arm of an unseen but all-powerful supporter!" As he said this, there was a grand expression in his pale countenance.

"You are a hero, my dear Aubrey!" exclaimed Lord De la Zouch with sudden fervour.

"And that support will embrace those dearer to me than life—dearer—far—far"—He ceased: his feelings quite overcame him, and they walked on for some time in silence. Soon afterwards they parted—for Lord De la Zouch perceived that his unfortunate companion wished to be alone. He wrung Mr Aubrey's hands in silence; and having turned in the direction of his hotel, Mr Aubrey made for his lodgings. The streets were occupied by passengers, some returning from the castle after the great trial of the day; others standing here and there, in little knots, conversing as he passed them; and he felt con-

scious that the subject of their thoughts and conversation was himself and his fallen fortunes. Several deep-drawn sighs escaped him, as he walked on, the herald of such dismal tidings, to those whom he loved: and he felt, but for that which supported him from within, as it were, a fallen angel, so far as concerned this world's honours and greatness. The splendours of human pomp and prosperity seemed rapidly vanishing in the distance. In the temporary depression of his spirits, he experienced feelings somewhat akin to those of the heart-sickened exile, whose fond eyes are riveted upon the mosques and minarets of his native city, glittering in the soft sunlight of evening, where are the cherished objects of all his tenderest thoughts and feelings; while his vessel is rapidly bearing him from it, amid the rising wind, the increasing and ominous swell of the waters, the thickening gloom of night—*whither?* The Minster clock struck ten as he passed one of the corners of the vast majestic structure, grey-glistening in the faint moonlight. The melodious chimes echoed in his ear, and smote his subdued soul with a sense of peculiar solemnity and awe; they forced upon him a reflection upon the transient littleness of earthly things. Then he thought of those dear beings who were awaiting his return, and a gush of grief and tenderness overflowed his heart, as he quickened his steps, with an inward and fervent prayer that Heaven would support them under the misfortune which he had to announce. As he approached the retired row of houses where his lodgings were situated, he imagined that he saw some one near the door, as if on the look-out for his approach; and who, as he drew nearer, suddenly entered them, and closed the door. This was a person whom Mr Aubrey did not at all suspect—it was no other than dear little Dr Tatham; who, unable to quit Yatton in time to hear the trial, had early that morning mounted his horse, and after a long and hard ride, reached York soon after Mr Aubrey had set off for the castle. Though

many of the county people then in York were aware that Mrs and Miss Aubrey were also there, a delicate consideration for their exquisitely distressing situation restrained them from intruding upon their privacy, which appeared to have been evidently sought for, from the species of lodgings which Mr Aubrey had engaged. On the second day, the excellent Dr Tatham had been their welcome and instructive guest, scarce ever leaving them; Mr Aubrey's groom bringing word, from time to time, from his master, how the trial went on. Late in the evening, urged by Kate, the Doctor had gone off to the castle, to wait till he could bring intelligence of the final result of the trial. He had not been observed by Mr Aubrey amidst the number of people who were about; and had at length fulfilled his mission, and been beforehand with Mr Aubrey in communicating the disastrous issue of the struggle. The instant that Mr Aubrey had set his foot within the door, he was locked in the impassioned embrace of his wife and sister. None of them spoke for some moments.

"Dearest Charles!—we've heard it all—we know it all!" at length they exclaimed in a breath. "Thank God, it is over at last—and we know the worst!—Are you well, dearest?" inquired Mrs Aubrey, fondly.

"Thank God, my Agnes, I am well!" said Mr Aubrey, much excited—"and thank God that the dreadful suspense is at an end; and also for the fortitude, my sweet loves, with which you bear the result. And how are *you*, my excellent friend?" continued he, addressing Dr Tatham, and grasping his hands; "my venerable and pious friend—how it refreshes my heart to see you! as one of the chosen ministers of that God whose creatures we are, and whose dispensations we receive with reverent submission!"

"God Almighty bless you all, my dear friends!" faltered Dr Tatham, powerfully affected. "Believe that all this is from Him! He has wise ends in view, as certainly as we see not nor comprehend them! *Faint not when you are rebuked of Him! If ye faint*

in the day of adversity, your strength is small! But I rejoice to see your resignation!"—Aubrey, his wife, and sister, were for a while overcome with their emotions.

"I assure you all," said Aubrey, "I feel as if a very mountain had been lifted off my heart! How blessed am I in such a wife and sister!" A heavenly smile irradiated his pale features—and he clasped the lovely weeping ones in his arms.

"God," said he, "that gave us all, has taken all: why should we murmur? He will enable us, if we pray for his assistance, to bear with equanimity our present adversity, as well as, I trust, we bore our past prosperity! Come, Agnes! Kate! play the woman!"

Dr Tatham sat silent by; but the tears ran down his cheeks. At length Mr Aubrey gave them a general account of what had occurred at the trial—and which, I need hardly say, was listened to breathlessly, and with many tears and sighs.

"Whom is that letter from, love, lying on the table?" inquired Mr Aubrey, during a pause in the conversation.

"It's only from Johnson—dearest!—to say the children are quite well," replied Mrs Aubrey. The ruined parents, as if by a common impulse, looked unutterable things at each other. Then the mother turned deadly pale; and her husband tenderly kissed her cold cheek; while Kate could scarcely restrain her feelings. The excitement of each was beginning to give way before sheer bodily and mental exhaustion; and Dr Tatham, observing it, rose to take his departure. It was arranged that the carriage should be at the door by eight o'clock in the morning, to convey them back to Yatton—and that Dr Tatham should breakfast with them, and afterwards accompany them on horseback. He then left them with a full heart; and those whom he had quitted soon afterwards retired for the night; and having first invoked the mercy and pity of Heaven, sank into slumber, and brief forgetfulness of the perilous po-

sition in which they had been placed by the event of the day.

Somewhat different was the mode in which the night was spent by the victorious party. Gammon, as has been seen, was the first to congratulate Titmouse on his splendid success. The next was old Quirk—who, with a sort of conviction that he should find that Gammon had been beforehand with him—bustled out of court, leaving Snap to pay the jury, settle the court-fees, collect the papers, and so forth. Both Quirk and Snap (as soon as the latter was at liberty) exhibited a courtesy towards Titmouse that had a strong dash of reverence in it, such as was due to the possessor of ten thousand a-year; but Gammon exhibited the tranquil matter-of-fact confidence of a man who had determined to be, and indeed knew that he was, the entire master of Titmouse.

"I—wish you'd call a coach, or something of that sort, gents.—I'm devilish tired—I am, 'pon my soul!" said Mr Titmouse yawning, as he stood on the steps between Quirk and Gammon, waiting for Snap's arrival. He was, in fact, almost beside himself—bursting with excitement; and could not stand still for a moment. Now he whistled loudly, and boldly; then he hummed a bar or two of some low comic song; and repeatedly drew on, and off, his damp gloves, with an air of petulant impetuosity. Now he ran his hand through his hair with careless grace; and then, with arms folded on his breast for a moment, looked eagerly, but with a would-be languid air, at two or three elegant equipages, which, one by one, with their depressed and disappointed occupants, rolled off. At length, Lord Widdrington, amidst a sharp impetuous cry of "Make way for the judge there—make way for my Lord!" appeared in his robes (holding his three-cornered hat in his hand), with a wearied air; and passing close by Titmouse, was honoured by him with a very fine bow indeed—his Lordship not being, however, in the least aware of the fact—as he passed on to his carriage. The steps were turned up;

the door was closed; and amidst a sharp blast of trumpets, the carriage drove slowly off, preceded and followed by the usual attendants. All this pomp and ceremony made a deep impression upon the mind of Titmouse. "Ah," thought he, with a sudden sigh of mingled excitement and exhaustion—"who knows but I may be a judge some day? It's a devilish pleasant thing, I'm sure! What a fuss he must make wherever he goes! 'Pon my life, it's quite delightful!" As there was no coach to be had, Mr Titmouse was reduced to the degradation of having to walk home, arm-in-arm with Mr Quirk and Mr Gammon, and followed, at a little distance, by a knot of persons, acquainted with his name and person, and feeling towards him a strange mixture of emotions—dislike, wonder, contempt, and envy. Goodness gracious!—thought many a one—that strange little gentleman was now worth ten thousand a-year! and was squire of Yatton!! Old Quirk shook Titmouse's hand with irrepressible enthusiasm, at least a dozen times on their way to the inn; while Gammon every now and then squeezed his arm, and spoke, in an earnest tone, of the difficulties yet to be overcome. On reaching the inn, the landlady, who was standing at the door, and had evidently been on the look-out for her suddenly distinguished guest, received him with several profound curtsies, and eager and respectful inquiries about his health, as he had had no luncheon—and asking what he would be pleased to have for his supper. She added, moreover, that fearing his former bedroom might not have been to his mind, she had changed it, and he would that night sleep in the very best she had.

"We must make a night on't, eh?" quoth Mr Quirk, with an excited air. His partners assented to it, as did Mr Titmouse; and cold beef, hot sausages, fowl, ham, beef-steaks, and mutton-chops, were ordered to be in readiness in half an hour's time. Soon afterwards Mr Titmouse followed the chambermaid to his new bedroom.

"This is the room we always gives to quality folk—when we get them,"

said she, as she set his candle on the drawers, and looked round the apartment with a little triumph.

"Ah—yes!—'pon my soul—quite right—always do your best for quality!—Lovely gal—eh?" Here he chucked her under the chin, and seemed disposed to imprint a kiss upon her cheek; but, with a "Lord, sir—*that's* not the way quality folks behave!" she modestly withdrew. Titmouse, left alone, first threw himself on the bed; then started off, and walked about; then sat down; then danced about; then took off his coat; then threw himself on the bed again; hummed, whistled, and jumped up again—in a sort of wild ecstasy, or delirium. In short, it was plain that he was not master of himself. His little mind was agitated by the day's event, like as would be a small green puddle by the road-side, for a while, on a stone being suddenly flung into it by a child. While Messrs Quirk and Snap were, after their sort, as excited as was even Mr Titmouse himself, Gammon, retiring to his bedroom, and ordering thither pens, ink, and paper, sat down and, with calm consideration of the objects at which it was aimed, wrote the following letter.

"York, 5th April, 18—

"MY DEAR SIR.—The first leisure moment I have, I devote to informing you, as one of the most intimate friends of our highly-respected client, Mr Titmouse, of the brilliant event which has just occurred. After a severe and protracted struggle of two days (the Attorney-general having come down special on the other side), the jury, many of them the chief gentlemen of the county, have within this last hour returned a verdict in favour of Mr Titmouse—thereby declaring him entitled to the whole of the estates at Yatton (ten thousand a-year rent-roll, at least), and, by consequence, to an immense accumulation of bygone rents, which must be made up to him by his predecessor, who, with all his powerful party, and in spite of the unscrupulous means resorted to to defeat the ends of jus-

tice, is dismayed beyond expression at the result of this grand struggle—unprecedented in the annals of modern litigation. The result has given lively satisfaction in these parts.—It is plain, indeed, that Mr Titmouse will soon become a great *lion* in society.

“To you, my dear sir, as an early and valued friend of our interesting client, I sit down to communicate the earliest intelligence of this most important and auspicious event; and I trust that you will, with our respectful compliments, communicate the happy news to your amiable family—who, I am persuaded, must ever feel a warm interest in our client’s welfare. He is now, naturally enough, much excited with his extraordinary good fortune, to which we are only too proud and happy to have contributed by our humble, but strenuous and long-continued exertions. He begs me to express his cordial feelings towards you, and to say that, on his return to town, *Satin Lodge* will be one of the first places at which he will have the honour of calling. In the mean time, I beg you will believe me, my dear sir, with the best compliments of myself and partners, yours most sincerely,

“OILY GAMMON.

“THOMAS TAG-RAG, ESQ.,
&c. &c. &c.”

“That, I think, will about do”—quoth Gammon to himself, with a thoughtful air, as, having made an exact copy of the above letter, he sealed it up and directed it. He then came down stairs to supper, having first sent the letter off to the post-office. What a merry meal was that same supper! Mr Titmouse, Mr Quirk, and Mr Snap, eat almost to bursting; Gammon was more abstinent—but, overpowered by the importunities of his companions, took a far greater quantity than usual of the bouncing bottled porter, the hard port, and fiery sherry, which his companions drank as if they had been but water. Then came in the spirits—with hot water and cold; and to these all present did ample justice; in fact, it was hard for any one to resist the other’s

entreaties. Mr Gammon in due time felt himself *going*—but seemed as if, on such an occasion, he had no help for it. Every one of the partners, at different stages of the evening, made *—more suo—* a speech to Titmouse, and proposed his health; who, of course, replied to each, and drank his health. Presently old Quirk sang a comic song, in a very dismal key; and then he and Snap joined in a duet called, “*Handcuff v. Halter*,” at which Gammon laughed heartily, and listened with that degree of pleased attention, which showed that he had resolved, for once at least, to abandon himself to the low enjoyment of the passing hour. Then Titmouse began to speak of what he should do, as soon as he had “*touched the shiners*”—his companions entering into all his little schemes with a sort of affectionate enthusiasm. At length old Mr Quirk, after by turns laughing, crying, singing, and talking, leaned back in his chair, with his half-emptied tumbler of brandy-and-water in his hand, and fell fast sleep. Gammon also, in spite of all he could do, began—the deuce take it!—to feel and exhibit the effects of a hasty and hearty meal, and his unusual potations, especially after such long abstinence and intense anxiety as he had experienced during the previous two days. He had intended seeing all his companions under the table; but he began gradually to feel a want of control over himself, his thoughts, and feelings, which a little disquieted him, as he now and then caught glimpses of the extent to which it was proceeding. “*In vino veritas*,” properly translated, means—that when a man is fairly under the influence of liquor, you see a strong manifestation of his real character. The vain man is vainer; the voluble, more voluble; the morose, more morose; the passionate, more passionate; the detractor, more detracting; the sycophant, more sycophantic, and so forth. Now Mr Gammon was a cold, cautious, long-headed schemer; and as the fumes of liquor mounted up into his head, they did but increase the action and intensity of those qualities for which,

when sober, he was so pre-eminently distinguished; only that there was a half-conscious want of coherency and subordination. The impulse and the habit were present; but there seemed also a strange disturbing force: in short—what is the use of disguising matters?—Mr Gammon was getting extremely drunk; and he felt very sorry for it—but it was too late. In due time the dismal effort *not to appear drunk*, ceased—a vast relief! Silent and more silent he became; more and more observant of the motions of Snap and Titmouse; more and more complicated and profound in his schemes and purposes, and at length he felt as if, by some incomprehensible means, he were attempting to take *himself* in—inveigling himself: at which point, after a vain attempt to understand his exact position, with reference to himself, he slowly, but rather unsteadily, rose from his chair; looked with an unsettled eye at Titmouse for nearly a minute; a queer smile now and then flitted across his features; and he presently rang the bell. Boots having obeyed the summons, Gammon with a turbid brain and cloudy eye followed him to the door, with a desperate but unavailing effort to walk thither steadily. Having reached his room, he sat down with a sort of suspicion that he had said or done something to commit himself. Vain was the attempt to wind up his watch; and at length he gave it up, with a faint curse. With only one stocking off, conceiving himself to be undressed, after trying four or five times ineffectually to blow out his candle, he succeeded, with a furious but well-aimed puff, and got into bed; his head, however, occupying the place assigned to his feet. He lay asleep for about half an hour—and then experienced certain insupportable sensations. He was indeed miserable beyond description; and lost all thoughts of what would become of Titmouse—of Quirk and Snap—in his own desperate indisposition.

“I say, Snap,” quoth Titmouse with a grin, and putting his finger to his nose, as soon as Gammon had quitted

the room in the manner above described—“Mr Quirk a’n’t much company for us just now, eh? Shall we go out and have some fun?”

“Walk will do us good—yes. Go where you like, Titmouse,” replied Snap, who, though young, was a thoroughly seasoned vessel, and could hold a great deal of drink without seeming, or really being, much the worse for it. As for Titmouse, happily for him! (seeing that he was so soon to have the command of unlimited means, unless indeed the envious fates should in the meantime interpose to dash the brimful cup from his eager lips), he was becoming more and more accustomed to the effects of drink; which had, up to the moment I am speaking of, had no other effect than to elevate his spirits up to the pitch of indefinite daring and enterprise. “Pon my life, Snap, couldn’t we stand another tumbler—eh? Warm us for the night air?” “What shall it be?” quoth Snap, ringing the bell—“whisky?”

“Devil knows, and devil cares!” replied Mr Titmouse recklessly; and presently there stood before the friends two steaming tumblers of what they had ordered. Immediately after disposing of them, the two gentlemen, quite *up to the mark*, as they expressed it—each with a cigar in his mouth—sallied forth in quest of adventures. Titmouse felt that he had now become a gentleman: and his tastes and feelings prompted him to pursue, as early as possible, a gentlemanly line of conduct—particularly in his amusements. It was now past twelve o’clock: and the narrow old-fashioned streets of York, silent and deserted, formed a strong contrast to the streets of London at the same hour, and seemed scarcely to admit of much sport. But sport our friends were determined to have; and the night air aiding the effect of their miscellaneous potations, they soon became somewhat excited and violent. Yet it seemed difficult to get up a *row*—for no one was visible in any direction to be insulted and maltreated. Snap, however, by way of making a beginning, suddenly shouted,

"Fire!" at the top of his voice, and Titmouse joined him; when having heard half-a-dozen windows hastily thrown up by the dismayed inhabitants whom the alarming sounds had aroused from sleep, they scampered off at their top speed. In another part of the town they yelled, and whistled, and crowed like cocks, and mewed like cats—the last two being accomplishments in which Titmouse was really eminent—and again took to their heels. Then they contrived to twist a few knockers off doors, pull bells, and break a few windows; and while exercising their skill in this last branch of the night's amusement, Titmouse, in the very act of aiming a stone which took effect in the middle of a bedroom window, was surprised by an old watchman waddling round the corner. He was a feeble asthmatic old man; so Snap knocked him down at once, and Titmouse blew out the candle in his lantern, which he then jumped upon and smashed to pieces, and knocked its prostrate owner's hat over his eyes. Snap, on some strange unaccountable impulse, wrested the rattle out of the poor creature's hand, and sprang it loudly. This brought several other old watchmen from different quarters; and aged numbers prevailing against youthful spirit—the two gentlemen, after a considerable scuffle, were overpowered and conveyed to the cage. Snap having muttered something about demanding to look at the *warrant*, and then about an action for malicious arrest and false imprisonment, sank on a form, and then down upon the floor, and fell fast asleep. Titmouse for a while showed a resolute front, and swore a great many oaths, that he would fight the Boots at the inn for five shillings, if he dared show himself; but all of a sudden, his spirit and his stomach together collapsed, as it were, and he sank on the floor, and was grievously indisposed for some hours.

About nine o'clock, the contents of the cage—viz. Snap, Titmouse, two farmers' boys who had been caught stealing cakes, an old beggar, and a young pickpocket—were conveyed be-

fore the Lord Mayor, to answer for their several misdeeds. Snap was woefully crestfallen. He had sent for the landlord of the inn where they had put up, to come, on their behalf, to the Mansion-house; and he told Quirk of the message he had received. Mr Quirk, finding that Gammon could not leave his room through severe indisposition—the first time that Mr Quirk had ever seen or heard of his being so overtaken—set off, in a mortified and angry mood, in quest of his hopeful client, and junior partner. They were in a truly dismal pickle. Titmouse was pale as death, his clothes were disordered, and a part of his shirt-collar was torn off; Snap sitting beside him with a sheepish air, scarce able to keep his eyes open. At him Mr Quirk looked with keen indignation, but spoke neither to him, nor on his behalf. For Titmouse, however, he expressed great commiseration, and entreated his lordship to overlook the little misconduct of which he (Titmouse) in a moment of extreme excitement, had been guilty, on condition of his making amends for the injury, to both person and property, of which he had been guilty. By this time his lordship had become aware of the names and circumstances of the two delinquents; and, after lecturing them severely, he fined them five shillings a-piece for being drunk, and permitted them to be discharged, on their promising never to offend in the like way again, and paying three pounds by way of compensation to the watchman, and one or two persons whose knockers they were proved to have wrenched off, and windows to have broken. His lordship had delayed the case of Messrs Snap and Titmouse to the last; chiefly because, as soon as he had found out who Mr Titmouse was, it occurred to him that he would make a sort of a little star, at the great ball to be given by the Lady Mayoress that evening. As soon, therefore, as the charge had been disposed of, his lordship desired Mr Titmouse to follow him, for a moment, to his private room. There having shut the door, the great man

gently chided Mr Titmouse for the indiscretion of which he had been guilty, and which, said his lordship, was not to have been expected from a gentleman of his consequence in the county. His lordship begged him to consider the station which he was now called to occupy; and in alluding to the signal event of the preceding day, warmly congratulated him upon it: and trusted by the way, that Mr Titmouse would, in the evening, favour the Lady Mayoress and himself with his company at the ball, where they would be proud of the opportunity of introducing him to some of the gentry of the county, amongst whom his future lot in life was likely to be cast. Mr Titmouse listened to all this as if he were in a dream. His brain (the little of it that he had) was yet in an unsettled state; as also was his stomach. When he heard the words "Lady Mayoress," "ball," "mansion-house," "gentry of the county," and so forth, a dim vision of splendour flashed before his eyes; and, with a desperate effort, he assured the Lord Mayor that he should be "very uncommon proud to accept the invitation, if he were well enough—but, just then, he was devilish ill."

His lordship pressed him to take a glass of water, to revive him and settle his stomach; but Mr Titmouse declined it, and soon afterwards quitted the room; and, leaning on the arm of Mr Quirk, set off homeward—Snap walking beside him in silence, with a quaint disconcerted air—not being taken the least notice of by his indignant senior, Mr Quirk. As they passed along, they encountered several of the barristers on their way to court, and others, who recognised Titmouse; and with a smile, evidently formed a pretty accurate guess as to the manner in which the triumph of the preceding day had been celebrated. Mr Quirk, finding that Mr Gammon was far too much indisposed to think of quitting York, at all events till a late hour in the evening, and, indeed, that Titmouse was similarly situated—with a bad grace consented to their stopping behind; and him-

self, with Snap—the former inside, the latter outside—having paid most of the witnesses, leaving the remainder, together with their own expenses at the inn, to be settled by Mr Gammon—set off for town by the two o'clock coach. It was, indeed, high time for them to return: for the oppressed inmates of Newgate were getting wild on account of the protracted absence of their kind and confidential advisers. When they left, both Gammon and Titmouse were in bed. The former, however, began to revive, shortly after the wheels of the coach which conveyed away his respected copartners, and the sound of the guard's horn, had ceased to be heard; and about an hour afterwards he descended from his room, a great deal the better for the duties of the toilet, and a bottle of soda-water with a little brandy in it. A cup of strong tea, and a slice or two of dry toast, set him entirely to rights—and then Gammon—the calm, serene, astute Gammon—was "himself again." Had he said anything indiscreet, or in any way committed himself over-night?—thought he, as he sat alone, with folded arms, trying to recollect what had taken place. He hoped not—but had no means of ascertaining. Then he entered upon a long and anxious consideration of the position of affairs, since the great event of the preceding evening. The only definite object which he had ever had in view, personally, in entering into the affair, was the obtaining that ascendancy over Titmouse, in the event of his becoming possessed of the magnificent fortune they were in quest of for him, which might enable the aforesaid Gammon, in one way or another, to elevate his own position in society, and secure for himself permanent and solid advantages. In the progress of the affair, however, new views presented themselves to his energetic and scheming mind.

Towards the close of the afternoon, Titmouse recovered sufficiently to make his appearance down stairs. Soon afterwards, Gammon proposed a walk, as the day was fine, and the brisk

fresh country air would, he said, be efficacious in restoring Titmouse to his wonted health and spirits. His suggestion was adopted; and soon afterwards might have been seen, Gammon, supporting on his arm his languid and interesting client, Mr Titmouse, making their way towards the river Ouse; along whose quiet and pleasing banks they walked for nearly a couple of hours in close conversation; during which, Gammon, by repeated and varied efforts, succeeded in producing an impression on Titmouse's mind, that the good fortune which seemed now within his reach, had been secured for him by the enterprise, skill, and caution of him, the aforesaid Mr Gammon, only; who would, moreover, continue to devote himself to Mr Titmouse's interests, and protect him from the designs of those who would endeavour to take advantage of him. Mr Gammon also dropped one or two vague hints that Mr Titmouse's continuance in the enjoyment of the Yatton property, would always depend upon the will and power of him, the aforesaid Mr Gammon; in whose hands were most unsuspected but potent weapons. And indeed it is not at all impossible that such may prove to be really the case.

What a difference is there between man and man, in temper, disposition, and intellect! Compare together the two individuals now walking slowly, arm-in-arm, beside the sweet Ouse; and supposing one to have designs upon the other—disposed to ensnare and overreach him—what chance has the shorter gentleman? Compare even their countenances—ah me!—what a difference!

Gammon heard with uneasiness of Titmouse's intention to go to the Lady Mayoress's ball that evening; and, for many reasons, resolved that he should not. In vain, however, did Gammon try to persuade him that he was asked only to be turned into ridicule, for that almost everybody there would be in the interest of the Aubreys, and bitterly opposed to him, Mr Titmouse; in spite of these and all other representations, Titmouse naturally expressed his de-

termination to go to the ball; on which Gammon, with a good-natured smile, exclaimed, "Well, well!—on consideration, I think it prudent for you not to displease so important a person as the Lord Mayor of York"—and withdrew his opposition. Shortly after their return from their walk, they sat down to dinner; and Gammon, with a cheerful air, ordered a bottle of champagne, of which he drank about a glass and a half, and Titmouse the remainder. That put him into a humour to take more wine, without much pressing; and he swallowed, in rapid succession, a glass of ale, and seven or eight glasses of red-hot port and fiery sherry. By this time he had forgotten all about the ball, and clamoured for brandy-and-water. Gammon, however, saw that his end was answered. Poor Titmouse was soon reduced to a state of helplessness and insensibility; and within half an hour's time was assisted to his bedroom in a truly deplorable condition! Thus Gammon had the satisfaction of seeing his benevolent design accomplished, although it pained him to think of the temporary inconvenience occasioned to the unconscious sufferer: who had, however, escaped the devices of those who wished publicly to expose his inexperience; and as for the means which Gammon had resorted to in order to effect his purpose,—why, he may be charitably supposed to have had a remoter and another object in view, viz., early to disgust him with intemperance.

Alas, how disappointed were the mayor and mayoress, that their queer little lion did not make his appearance in the gay and brilliant scene! How many had they told that he was coming! Their three daughters were almost bursting with vexation and astonishment. They had been disposed to entertain a warmer feeling than that of mere curiosity towards the new owner of an estate worth ten thousand a-year—had drawn lots which of them was first to dance with him; and had told all their friends on which of them the lot had fallen. Then, again, many of the county

people inquired, from time to time, of the chagrined little mayor and mayoress, when "Mr Ticklemouse," "Mr Tipmouse," "Mr Tipplebottle," or "whatever his name might be," was coming; full of real curiosity, much tinctured, however, with disgust and contempt, to see the stranger, who had suddenly acquired so commanding a station in the county—so strong a claim to their sympathy and respect! Then, again, there was a great lion there, exhibiting for a short time only, who also had wished to see the little lion, and expressed keen regrets that it was not there according to appointment. The great lion was Mr Quicksilver, who had stepped in for about half an hour, merely to show himself; and when he heard of the expected arrival of his little client, it occurred to Mr Quicksilver, who could see several inches beyond by no means a short nose, that Mr Titmouse had gained a verdict which would very soon make him patron of the borough of Yatton—that he probably would not think of sitting for the borough himself, and that a little public civility bestowed upon Mr Titmouse, by the great Mr Quicksilver, one of the counsel to whose splendid exertions he was indebted for his all, might be, as it were, *bread thrown upon the waters, to be found after many days*. It was true that Mr Quicksilver, in a bitter stream of eloquent invective, had repeatedly denounced the system of close and "rotten" boroughs; but his heart, all the while, secretly rebelled; and he knew that a snug little borough was a thing on every private account far otherwise than undesirable. He sat for one himself, though he had also contested several counties: but that was expensive and harassing work; and for the seat which he at present occupied he had paid far too high a price. He had no objection to the existence of close boroughs in the abstract; but only to so many of them being in the hands of the opposite party; and the legislature hath since recognised the distinction, and acted upon it. Here, however, was the

case of a borough which was going to change hands, and pass from Tory to Whig; and could Mr Quicksilver fail to watch it with interest? Was he, therefore, to neglect this opportunity of slipping in for Yatton—and the *straw moving*, too, in town—a general election looked for? So Mr Quicksilver really regretted the absence of the little lion—his little friend and client, Mr Titmouse.

Thus, and by such persons, and on such grounds, was lamented the absence of Mr Titmouse from the ball of the Lady Mayoress of York; none, however, knowing the cause which kept him from so select and distinguished an assembly. Mr Gammon, as soon as he had seen Mr Titmouse properly attended to, and had expressed an anxious sympathy for him, set out for a walk—a quiet solitary walk round the ancient walls of York. If on a fine night you look up into the sky, and see it gleaming with innumerable stars, and then fix your eye intently, without wavering, upon some one star; however vivid and brilliant may be those in its immediate vicinity, they will disappear utterly, and that on which your eye is fixed will seem alone in its glory—sole star in the firmament. Something of this kind happened with Mr Gammon when on the walls of York—now slowly, then rapidly walking, now standing, then sitting; all the objects which generally occupied his thoughts faded away, before one on which his mind's eye was then fixed with unwavering intensity—the image of Miss Aubrey. The golden fruit that appeared on the eve of dropping into the hands of the firm—ten thousand pounds—the indefinite and varied advantages to himself, personally, to which their recent successes might be turned, all vanished. What would he not undergo, what would he not sacrifice, to secure the favour of Miss Aubrey? Beautiful being—all innocence, elegance, refinement:—to gain so radiant a prize would elevate him in the scale of being; it would purify his feelings, it would ennoble his nature. What was too arduous or desperate

to be undertaken in order to secure so glorious a result? He fell into a long reverie, till, roused by a chill gust of night air, he rose from his seat upon one of the niches in the walls;—how lonely, how solitary he felt! He walked on rapidly, at a pace suitable to the heated and rapid current of thought passing through his mind.

“No, I have not a chance—not a chance!” at length he thought to himself—“That girl will be prouder in her poverty than ever she would have been in her wealth and splendour. Who am I?—a partner in the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; a firm in bad odour with the profession; looking for practice from polluted sources, with a host of miscreants for clients—faugh! faugh! I feel contaminated and degraded! My name even is against me; it is growing into a by-word!—We must push our advantage—they must be driven from Yatton—he, she—all of them; yes, all.” He paused for a long time, and a sort of pang passed through his mind. “They are to make way for—Titmouse!—for Titmouse!! And he, too, loves her—*bah!*” He involuntarily uttered this sound fiercely and aloud. “But stay—he really is in love with Miss Aubrey—that I know!—ah! I can turn it to good purpose; it will give me, by the way, a hold upon the little fool; I will make him believe that through my means he may obtain

Miss Aubrey!—Misery may make her accessible: I can easily bring myself into contact with them, in their distress! for there are the *mesne profits*—the *mesne profits*! Heavens! how glorious, but how dreadful an engine are they! They will help to batter down the high wall of pride that surrounds them, and her; but it will require infinite care and tact in the use of such an engine! I will be all delicacy—gentleness—generosity; I will appear friendly to her, and to her brother; but, if needs must be, why, he must be crushed. There is no help for it. He looks decidedly, by the way, a man of intellect. I wonder how he bears it—how they all bear it—how she bears it! Beggared beauty—there’s something touching in the very sound! How little they think of the power that is at this moment in my hands!” Here a long interval elapsed, during which his thoughts had wandered towards more practical matters. “If they don’t get a rule *nisi*, next term, we shall be in a position to ask them what course they intend to pursue: they may, if so disposed, hold out for—how very cold it is!”—he buttoned his coat—“and, what have I been thinking of? Really I have been dreaming; or am I as great a fool as Tittlebat?” Within a few minutes’ time he had quitted the walls, and descended, through one of the turreted gateways, into the town.

CHAPTER II

THE LAST CHANCE; AND SOME PROFITABLE REFLECTIONS.

WHEN, about seven o’clock on the morning after the delivery of the verdict, which, if sustained, consigned the Aubreys to beggary, they met to partake of a slight and hasty breakfast before setting off for Yatton, the

countenances of each bore the traces of great suffering, and also of the efforts made to conceal it. They saluted each other with fervent affection, each attempting a smile—but a smile, how wan and forced! “The moment

has arrived, dear Agnes and Kate," said Mr Aubrey with a fond air but a firm voice, as his sister was preparing tea, in silence, fearful of looking at either her brother or sister-in-law—"the moment has arrived that is to try what stuff we are made of. If we have any strength, this is the time to show it!"

"I'm sure I thought of you both, almost all night long!" replied Miss Aubrey tremulously. "You have a lion's heart, dear Charles; and yet you are so gentle with us"—

"I should be a poor creature indeed, Kate, to give way just when I ought to play the man. Come, dear Kate, I will remind you of a noble passage from our glorious Shakespeare. It braces one's nerves to hear it!" Then, with a fine impressive delivery, and kindling with excitement as he went on, Aubrey began—

"In the reproof of chance
Lies the true proof of men. The sea being
smooth

How many shallow bauble boats dare sail
Upon her patient breast, making their way
With those of nobler bulk?
But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage
The gentle Thetis, and, anon, behold
The strong-ribb'd bark through liquid moun-
tains cut,

Bounding between the two moist elements
Like Perseus' horse; where's then the saucy
boat,

Whose weak untimber'd sides but even now
Co-rival'd greatness? Either to harbour fled,
Or made a toast for Neptune!—Even so,
Doth valour's show, and valour's worth di-
vide,
In storms of fortune."*

'Twas kindly meant of Aubrey; he thought to divert the excited feelings of his wife and sister, and occupy their imagination with the vivid imagery and noble sentiment of the poet. While he repeated the above lines, his sister's eye had been fixed upon him with a radiant expression of resolution, her heart responding to what she heard. She could not, however, speak when he had ceased. For herself she cared not; but when she looked at her brother, and thought of him, his wife, his children, her fortune yielded before the moving array, and she burst into tears.

* *Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3.

"Come Kate—my own sweet, good Kate!" said he cheerfully, laying his hand upon hers, "we must keep constant guard against our feelings. They will be ever arraying before our eyes the past—the dear, delightful past—happy and beautiful, in mournful contrast with the present, and stirring up, every moment, a thousand secret and tender associations, calculated to shake our constancy. Whenever our eyes do turn to the past, let it be with humble gratitude to God for having allowed us all, in this changing world, so long an interval of happiness; such, indeed, as falls to the lot of few. *What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*"

"My own Charles!" exclaimed Mrs Aubrey, rising and throwing her arms round her husband, whose countenance was calm and serene, as the tone of the sentiments he expressed was solemn and elevated. Miss Aubrey was overcome with her stronger feelings, and buried her face in her handkerchief. Shortly afterwards the carriage drew up, and Dr Tatham also made his appearance, on horseback.

"Good morning! good morning, my friends," cried he cheerfully, as he entered, holding forth both his hands; "you can't think how fresh and pleasant the air is! The country for me, at all times of the year! I hate towns! Did you sleep well? I slept like a top all night long;—no, I didn't; either, by the way. Come, come, ladies! On with your bonnets and shawls!" Thus rattled on worthy little Dr Tatham, in order to prevent anything being said which might disturb those whom he came to see, or cause his own highly-charged feelings to give way. The sight of Mrs and Miss Aubrey, however, who greeted him in silence as they hastily equipped themselves, overcame his ill-sustained gaiety; and before he could bustle back, as he presently did, to the street door, his eyes were obstructed with tears, and he wrung the hand of Mr Aubrey, who stood beside him, with convulsive energy. They soon set off, and at a rapid pace, Dr Tatham

riding along beside the carriage. Yatton was about twelve miles off. For the first few miles they preserved a tolerable show of cheerfulness; but as they perceived themselves nearing Yatton, it became plainly more and more of an effort for any of them to speak. Dr Tatham, also, talked to them seldomer through the windows. At one time he dropped considerably behind; at another, he rode as much ahead.

"Oh, Charles, don't you dread to see Yatton?" said Miss Aubrey suddenly, as they turned a familiar corner of the road. Neither Mr nor Mrs Aubrey answered her.

"When you come to the village," said Mr Aubrey presently, to the postilion, "drive through it, direct up to the Hall, as quickly as you can." He was obeyed. As they passed rapidly along, with the windows up, none of the wretched party seemed disposed to look through, but leaned back, in silence, in their seats.

"God bless you! God bless you! I shall call in the evening," exclaimed Dr Tatham; as, having reached the vicarage, he hastily waved his hand, and turned off. Soon they had passed the park gates: when had they entered it before with such heavy hearts—with eyes so dreading to encounter every familiar object that met them? Alas! the spacious park was no longer theirs; not a tree, not a shrub, not a flower, not an inch of ground; the trees all putting forth their fresh green leaves—nothing was theirs; the fine old turreted gateway, too—an object always, hitherto, of peculiar pride and attachment, their hearts seemed to tremble as they rattled under it!

"Courage, my sweet loves! Courage! courage!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, grasping each of their hands, and then they burst into tears. He felt his own fortitude grievously shaken as he entered the old Hall, no longer his *home*, and reflected, moreover—bitterest thought of all—that he had been declared by the law to have been hitherto the wrongful occupant of it; that he must forthwith proceed to

"set his house in order," and prepare for a dreadful reckoning, with him whom the law had declared to be the true owner of Yatton.

The formal result of the trial at York, was, as has been already intimated, to declare Mr Titmouse entitled to recover possession of only that insignificant portion of the estates which were occupied by Jacob Jolter: and that, too, only in the event of the first four days of the ensuing term elapsing, without any successful attempt being made to impeach, before the court, the propriety of the verdict of the jury. It is a principle of our English law, that the verdict of a jury is, in general, irreversible and conclusive: but, inasmuch as that verdict may have been improperly obtained—as, for instance, either through the misdirection of the judge, or his erroneous admission or rejection of evidence, or through the fault of the jury themselves; or may have no force in point of law by reason of the pleadings of the party for whom it has been given, being insufficient to warrant the court to award its final judgment upon, and in conformity with, such verdict, or by reason of the discovery of fresh evidence subsequently to the trial: therefore the law hath given to the party who failed at the trial, what is deemed a reasonable interval—till the end of the first four days of the term next ensuing, to show the court why the verdict obtained by his opponent ought to go for nothing, and matters remain as they were before the trial, or a new trial be had. So anxious is our law to afford the utmost scope and opportunity for ascertaining what ought to be its decision, which, when obtained, is, as hath been said, solemnly and permanently conclusive upon the subject; such the effectual and practical corrective of any error or miscarriage in the working of that noble engine—trial by jury. Thus, then, it appears, that the hands of Mr Titmouse and his advisers were at all events stayed till the first four days of Easter term should have elapsed. During the interval thus afforded to

the advisers of Mr Aubrey, his case, as it appeared upon the notes of his counsel on their briefs, with the indirect assistance and corroboration derived from the short-hand writers' notes, underwent repeated and anxious examination in all its parts and bearings, by all his legal advisers. It need hardly be said, that every point in the case favourable to their client, had been distinctly and fully raised by the Attorney-general, assisted by his able juniors, Mr Sterling and Mr Crystal; and so was it with the counsel of Mr Titmouse, as, indeed, the result showed. On subsequent examination, none of them could discover any false step, or any advantage which had been overlooked or taken inefficiently. Independently of various astute objections taken by the Attorney-general to the reception of several important portions of the plaintiff's evidence, the leading points relied on in favour of Mr Aubrey were—the impropriety of Lord Widdrington's rejection of the deed of confirmation on account of the erasure in it; the effect of that deed, assuming the erasure not to have warranted its rejection; and several questions arising out of the doctrine of adverse possession, by which alone, it had been contended at the trial, that the claim of the descendants of Stephen Dreddlington had been peremptorily and finally barred. Two long consultations had been held at the Attorney-general's chambers, attended by Mr Sterling, Mr Crystal, Mr Mansfield, the three partners in the firm of Runnington and Company, Mr Parkinson, and Mr Aubrey—who had come up to town specially for the purpose. Greatly to the surprise of all of them, he stated distinctly and emphatically, that he insisted on no ground of objection being taken against his opponent, except such as was strictly just, equitable, honourable, and conscientious. Rather than defeat him on mere technicalities—rather than avail himself of mere positive rules of law, while the right, as between the consciences of man and man, was substantially in favour of his opponent—Mr Aubrey declared, however absurd

or Quixotic he might be thought, that he would—if he had them—lose fifty Yattons. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* “You mean to say, Aubrey,” interrupted the Attorney-general mildly, after listening for some time to his friend and client with evident interest, and admiration of his pure and high-minded character—“that it would be unconscientious of you to avail yourself of a fixed and beneficial rule of law, established upon considerations of general equity and utility—such, for instance, as that of adverse possession, in order to retain possession, while”——

“Pray, Mr Attorney-general, if I had lent you five hundred pounds seven or eight years ago, would you set up the *statute of limitations* against me when I asked for re-payment?”

“Excuse me, Aubrey,” replied the Attorney-general, with a faint flush upon his handsome and dignified features; “but how idle all this is! One would imagine that we were sitting in a school of casuistry! What are we met for, in the name of common sense? For what, but to prevent the rightful owner of property from being deprived of it by a trumpery accidental erasure in one of his title-deeds, which time has deprived him of the means of accounting for?” He then, in a kind way, but with a dash of peremptoriness, requested that the case might be left in their hands, and that they might be given credit for resorting to nothing that was inconsistent with the nicest and most fastidious sense of honour. This observation put an end to so unprecedented an interference; but if Mr Aubrey supposed that it had had any effect upon the Attorney-general, he was mistaken; for of course that learned and eminent person secretly resolved to avail himself of every legitimate means, technical or substantial, that he could think of for overturning the verdict, and securing the Aubreys in the possession of Yatton. He at the same time earnestly endeavoured to moderate the expectations of his client, declaring that he was by no means sanguine as to the issue; that Lord

Widdrington's rulings at *Nisi Prius* were formidable things—in fact, rarely assailable; and then, again, the senior puisne judge of the court—Mr Justice Grayley—had been consulted by him at the trial, and concurred with him in his principal ruling, now sought to be moved against. At the close of the second consultation, on the night of the first day in Easter term—the Attorney-general intending to move on the ensuing morning, after having finally gone over the case in all its bearings, and agreed upon the exact grounds of moving—he called back Mr Runnington for a moment, as he was walking away with Mr Aubrey, and whispered to him, that it would be proper to assume at once that the motion failed; and—seeing the peculiarly fastidious temper of their client—consider the best mode of negotiating concerning the surrender of the bulk of the property and payment of the mesne profits.

"Oh! Mr Aubrey has quite made up his mind to the worst, Mr Attorney-general."

"Ah, well!" replied the Attorney-general with a sigh; and about five minutes after Mr Runnington's departure, stepped into his carriage, which had been standing for the last hour opposite his chambers. He drove down to the House of Commons, where he almost immediately afterwards delivered a long and luminous speech on one of the most important and intricate questions that had been discussed during the session.

The next morning Lord Widdrington was occupied for about a couple of hours in "going through the Bar"—i. e. calling on counsel to "move" in their order, matters of general business, before taking motions for new trials. About a quarter of an hour before his Lordship had completed the round of the Bar, the Attorney-general came into court, and arranged all his books and papers before him; Mr Subtle sitting next to him, intending to take a note of the grounds on which he moved.

"Does any other gentleman move?" inquired Lord Widdrington, looking

over the court. He received no answer.

"Mr Attorney-general," said he; and the Attorney-general rose—

"If your Lordship pleases," he commenced, slowly rising and bowing—"in a case of *DOX* on the Demise of *TITMOUSE* against *JOLTER*, tried before your Lordship at the last assizes for the county of York, I have humbly to move your Lordship for a rule to show cause why a nonsuit should not be entered, or why the verdict entered for the plaintiff should not be set aside, and a New Trial had." He proceeded to state the facts of the case with clearness and brevity. In like manner—with perfect simplicity and precision—he stated the various points arising upon the evidence, and the general grounds of law which have been already specified; but I am so grateful to the reader for his patience under the infliction of so much legal detail as was contained in the last chapter of this history, that I shall now content myself with the above general statement of what took place before the court. As soon as he had sat down, the judges consulted together for a minute or two; and then—

"You may take a rule to show cause, Mr Attorney-general," said Lord Widdrington.

"On all the grounds I have mentioned, my Lord?"

"Yes—on all of them. They are certainly worth considering—Mr Solicitor-general, do you move?"

Up rose, thereupon, the Solicitor-general.

"I shall discharge your rule," whispered Mr Subtle to the Attorney-general.

"I'm not excessively sanguine,"—whispered the latter, leaning his head close to Mr Subtle, and with his hand before his mouth. Then his clerk removed the battery of books which stood before him, together with his brief; and taking another out of his turgid red bag, the Attorney-general was soon deep in the details of an Insurance case, in which he was going to move, when next it came to his turn.

Thus the court had granted a "RULE

as it is called (i. e., it commanded a particular thing to be done), "unless" sufficient "cause" could be thereafter shown to the court why it should not be done), for either entering a nonsuit, or having a new trial. Now, had this rule been obtained in the present day, nearly two years must have elapsed, owing to the immense and perhaps unavoidable arrear of business, before the other side could have been heard in answer to it. Had such been the state of business at the time when the Rule in *Doe d. Titmouse v. Jolter* was moved for, see the practical effect of it: had Mr Aubrey, instead of the high-minded and conscientious man he undoubtedly was, been a rogue, he might have had the opportunity of getting in nearly twenty thousand pounds, and setting off with it to spend upon the Continent, as soon as he found that the court had decided against him; or, if the tenants should have been served with notice not to pay their rents to any one but Mr Titmouse—at all events not to Mr Aubrey—how were Mr Aubrey and his family to have subsisted during this interval?—and with the possibility that, at the end of some two years, he might be declared to be the true owner of Yatton, and consequently all the while entitled to those rents, &c., the non-payment of which might have entailed upon him the most serious embarrassments! During the same interval, poor Mr Titmouse, heart-sick with hope deferred, might have taken to liquor, as a solace under his misery, and drunk himself to death before the rule was discharged—or brought his valuable life to a more sudden and abrupt conclusion: which affecting event would have relieved the court from deciding several troublesome points of law, and kept the Aubreys in possession of the Yatton estates. Thus much for some of the incidental effects of the law's delay! At the time, however, concerning which I am writing, it was otherwise.* Shall I be believed, when I inform the reader that within ten or twelve days after the rule nisi, in the present case, had been

* A. D. 1888-9.—See APPENDIX.

moved, "cause was shown" against it, by Mr Subtle and Mr Lynx? and very admirably shown against it too. (Mr Quicksilver, fortunately for the interests of Mr Titmouse, was absent, attending a great meeting in the City, called by himself to establish a society for the Moral and Intellectual Regeneration of Mankind, on the basis of Pure Reason.) The Attorney-general exerted himself to the utmost in support of his rule. He felt that the court—though scarcely at all interfering during his address—was against him; yet he delivered, perhaps, as masterly an argument as had ever been heard in the place where he was speaking. Mr Sterling and Mr Crystal, wisely avoiding the ground so admirably occupied by the Attorney-general, contented themselves with strengthening those positions which appeared to them less fortified by authorities than the others; and then the court said they would take a day or two's time to consider; "less on account," said Lord Widdrington, "of the difficulty of the case, than the magnitude of the interests which would probably be affected by their decision."

"You have them dead with you, Subtle," whispered the Attorney-general, a slight expression of chagrin stealing over his features, as he heard the observation of Lord Widdrington.

"I never doubted it," replied Mr Subtle with a confident air. Every day afterwards, from the sitting to the rising of the court, did the anxious Aubrey attend in the King's Bench, to hear the judgment of the court delivered. At length arrived the last day of the term. Soon after the sitting of the court, Lord Widdrington pronounced judgment in two or three cases; but not seeing the Attorney-general (who was engaged before the House of Lords) in his place, delayed giving judgment in the case of '*Doe v. Jolter*.' About two o'clock he made his appearance; and shortly afterwards, Lord Widdrington, after disposing of the matter then before the court, said in a dry matter-of-fact way,—"There was a case of *Doe* on the demise of Titmouse against Jolter, in

which, early in the term, a rule was obtained by the Attorney-general, calling upon the lessor of the plaintiff to show cause why"—and he proceeded to state the rule, and then to deliver the written unanimous judgment of the court. A clear statement of the facts out of which the questions submitted to the court had arisen, and of those questions themselves, was listened to by Mr Aubrey in breathless suspense, before he could obtain the faintest intimation of the judgment which the court was about to pronounce. Lord Widdrington went on to dispose, one by one, with painful deliberation and precision, of the several points presented for the decision of the court. One or two were decided in favour of the defendant; but his Lordship added, that it had become unnecessary to do so, in consequence of the answers given by the witnesses to subsequent questions at the trial, and which disposed of the doubts arising on the former ones. The documentary evidence, subsequently put in, got rid of another difficulty in the early part of the plaintiff's case, and rendered immaterial a question put by his counsel, and strenuously objected to on the part of the defendant, and which the court was of opinion, as had been Lord Widdrington at the trial, ought not to have been allowed. Then, as to the ADVERSE POSSESSION, on which great stress had been laid by the defendant's counsel, the court was of opinion that none existed; since there had been a *disability*—indeed, a series of disabilities*—through infancy, coverture, and absence beyond seas, of the various parties through whom the lessor of the plaintiff claimed. Finally, as to the question concerning the ERASURE, the court was of opinion, that the deed in which it occurred had been properly rejected; inasmuch as the erasure was in a clearly material part of the deed, and there were no recitals in it, by which the erasure could be helped. That it was incumbent upon those proffering the deed in evidence, to account for its altered appearance, although the deed

* See APPENDIX.

was more than thirty years old, and rebut the presumption of fraud arising therefrom. That the erasure was a clear badge of fraud; and to hold otherwise, would be to open a wide door to frauds of the most extensive and serious description. That there had been no evidence offered to show that the deed had ever been a valid deed; the very first step failed; and, in short, in its then state, it was in contemplation of law, *no deed at all*; and, consequently, had been properly rejected.† “For all these reasons, therefore,” concluded Lord Widdrington, “we are clearly of opinion, that the verdict ought not to be disturbed, and the rule will consequently be DISCHARGED.”‡ As these last words were pronounced, a mist seemed for a moment to intervene between Mr Aubrey and everything around him; for his thoughts had reverted to Yatton, and the precious objects of his affection who were there, in sickening suspense, awaiting the event which had that moment taken place. The words yet sounding in his excited ears, seemed like the sentence of expulsion from Paradise passed upon our dismayed and heart-broken first parents. Yes, in that solemn region of matter-of-fact and common-place—that *dead sea*—generally speaking—as far as feeling, sentiment, incident, or excitement is concerned, the Court of King's Bench—there sate a man of exquisite sensibility, pure and high-minded, whose feelings were for a while paralysed by the words which had fallen from the judgment-seat, uttered with a cold, business-like, indifferent air—oh! how horribly out of concert with the anxious and excited tone of him whom, with his lovely family they consigned, in fact, to destitution! After remaining for about a quarter of an hour, during which brief interval he resumed the control over his feelings which he had so long and successfully struggled to maintain, he rose, and quitted the court. It was a heavy,

† See the interesting and important law relating to Erasures and Estoppels, explained at length in APPENDIX.

‡ See APPENDIX.

lowering afternoon—one which seemed to harmonise with the gloomy and desolate mood in which he slowly walked homeward. He encountered many of his friends, on foot, on horseback, and in carriages, on their way down to the Houses of Parliament; and the sight of them, in his morbid state of feeling, gave him a pang that was indescribable. With *them* matters were the same as they had ever been—as they had till then been with him—and as probably they would be with them to the end of their career; but *he* had been forced, suddenly and forever, to quit the scene of high excitement and proud aspirations!—He heaved many deep sighs, as he exchanged nod after nod with those whom he met, as he approached Charing Cross. There he encountered Lord C—, the brilliant Foreign Secretary, arm-in-arm with two eloquent and leading members of the Government—all evidently in high spirits, on their way down to the House.

“Ah!—Aubrey!—In town?—An age since we met!”—exclaimed they, in a breath, shaking him cordially by the hand.—“You know, of course, that the — comes on to-night—eh?”

“I was not aware of it!”—said Mr Aubrey.

“I assure you,” interrupted Lord C—, “our friends will do us great service—essential service, by being early in their attendance! You know that Mr Quicksilver intends to come out against us to-night in great force?—My dear Aubrey, you are going the wrong way!”

“I am not going down to the House to-night!”

“Not going down?—Eh?—My dear Aubrey, you astonish me!—Have you paired off? You can’t think how I lament your absence!”

“I am returning to Yorkshire almost immediately.”

“But surely you can come for an hour or so, to-night—eh? Come! The division won’t come on till late. Don’t let a trifle stand in the way!”

“I would *not* let a trifle stand in the way,” replied Mr Aubrey, in a tone and manner which at once ar-

rested the attention of those whom he was addressing, and suddenly reminded them of what, in their political eagerness, they had for a moment lost sight of—namely, the perilous position of his private affairs.

“My dear Aubrey, I beg a thousand pardons for intruding such matters upon you,” said Lord C— with sudden earnestness; “but shall we have an opportunity of meeting before you leave town?”

“I fear—*not*;—I set off by the mail to-morrow evening—and have in the mean time much to attend to,” said Mr Aubrey, unable to repress a sigh—and they parted. But for a determination not to yield to a morbid sensibility, he would have got into a hackney-coach, and so have avoided the “troops of friends,” the hosts of “old familiar faces,” all wending down to the scene in which he had begun so eminently to distinguish himself—but from which he seemed now to be forever excluded. He, therefore, pursued his way on foot. One of those on whom his troubled eye lit, was a well-known figure on horseback—the great Duke of —, on his way down to the House of Lords, going very slowly, his head inclined on one side, his iron-cast features overspread with an expression of stern thoughtfulness. He did not observe Mr Aubrey—in fact, he seemed too much absorbed with his own thoughts to observe or recognise anybody; yet he now and then mechanically raised his finger to his hat, in acknowledgment of the obeisances of those who saluted him as he passed. Poor Aubrey sighed; and felt as if circumstances had placed him at an immeasurable distance from the man whom, so lately, he had entertained familiarly at dinner; that there seemed suddenly to exist, as it were, a great and impassable gulf between them.

On reaching his house in Grosvenor Street, his heart fluttered while he knocked and rang; and he seemed to himself to shrink from the accustomed obsequious voice and manner of the powdered menial who admitted him. Having ordered a slight dinner, he

repaired to his library. The only letter which had arrived since he had left in the morning, bore the Grilston post-mark, and was in the handwriting of Mrs Aubrey. He opened it with trembling eagerness. It was crossed—the dear familiar handwriting!—from beginning to end, and full of heart-subduing tenderness. Then it had a little enclosure, with a strange, straggling superscription, “To my Papa;” and, on opening it, he read, in similar characters—

“My dear Papa, I love you very very much. Do come home. Mamma sends her love. Your dutiful son.

“CHARLES AUBREY.

“P.S.—Agnes sends her love; she cannot write because she is so little. Please to come home directly.

“CHARLES A., Yatton.”

Aubrey saw how it was—that Mrs Aubrey had either affected to write in her little son's name, or had actually guided his pen. On the outside she had written in pencil—

“Charles says, he hopes you will answer his letter immediately.”

Aubrey's lip quivered, and his eyes filled with tears. Putting the letters into his bosom, he rose and walked to and fro, with feelings which cannot be described. The evening was very gloomy. Rain poured down incessantly. He was the only person in that spacious and elegant house, except the servants left in charge of it; and dreary and desolate enough it appeared. He was but its nominal owner—their nominal master! In order to save the post, he sat down to write home—(*home!* his heart sank within him at the thought)—and informed Mrs Aubrey and his sister of the event for which his previous letters had prepared them; adding that he should set off for Yatton by the mail of the ensuing night, and that he was perfectly well. He also wrote a line or two, in large printed characters, by way of answer to his little correspondent, his son, towards whom—ah!—how his heart yearned! and having despatched his packet, probably the last he should ever frank, he partook little more than nominally of dinner,

and then resigned himself to deep meditation upon his critical circumstances. He was perfectly aware of his precise position, in point of law, namely, that he was safe in the possession of the Yatton property (with the exception of the trifle which was occupied by Jolter, and had been the object of the action just determined), till another action should have been brought, directly seeking its recovery; and that by forcing his opponent to bring such action, he might put him to considerable risk of retaining his verdict, and thereby greatly harass him, and ward off, indefinitely, the evil day from himself. By these means he might secure time, possibly also, favourable terms for the payment of the dreadful arrear of mesne profits, in which he stood indebted to his successor. To this effect he had received several intimations from Mr Runnington, as upright and conscientious an adviser as was to be found in the profession. But Mr Aubrey had decided upon his course; he had taken his ground, and intended to maintain it. However sudden and unlooked-for had been the claim set up against him, it had been deliberately and solemnly confirmed by the law of the land; and he had no idea but of yielding to it a prompt and hearty obedience. He resolved, therefore, to waste no time—to fritter away no energy in feeble dalliance with trouble; but to face her boldly. He determined to instruct Mr Runnington, on the morrow, to write to his opponent's solicitors, informing them that within three weeks' time, the estates at Yatton would be delivered up to their client, Mr Titmouse, and also to arrange for the quickest possible disposal of his house in Grosvenor Street, and his wines and his furniture, both there and at Yatton. He resolved, moreover, to take forthwith the necessary steps for vacating his seat in Parliament, by applying for the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds; and having determined on these arrangements, consequent upon the adverse decision of the Court of King's Bench of that day, he experienced the momentary relief and sa-

tisfaction of the seaman who has completely prepared his vessel for the approaching storm. He felt, indeed, relieved, for a while, from a dreadful pressure.

"And what, now, have I really to complain of?" said he to himself; "why murmur presumptuously and vainly against the dispensations of Providence? I thank God that I am still able to recognise His hand in what has befallen me, and to believe that *He hath done all things well*; that prosperity and adversity are equally, from Him, means of accomplishing His all-wise purposes! Is it for me, poor insect! to question the goodness, the wisdom, or the justice of my Maker? I thank God for the firm belief I have, that *He governs the world in righteousness*, and that He has declared that He will protect and bless those who sincerely endeavour to discover, and conform to His will concerning them. He it was who placed me in my late condition of prosperity and eminence: why should I fret, when He sees fit gently to remove me from it, and place me in a different sphere of exertion and suffering? If the dark heathen could spend a life in endeavouring to steel his heart against the sense of suffering, and to look with cheerless indifference upon the vicissitudes of life, shall I, a Christian, shrink with impatience and terror from the first glimpse of adversity? Even at the worst, how favoured is my situation in comparison of that of millions of my fellow-creatures? Shall I—may I not—lessen my own sufferings, by the contemplation of those which the Almighty has thought fit to inflict upon my brethren? What if I, and those whom I love, were the subjects of direful disease—of vice—of dishonour? What if I were the object of the just and universal contempt of mankind; given up to a reprobate mind; miserable here, and without hope hereafter? Here have I health, a loving family—have had the inestimable advantages of education, and even now, in the imminent approach

of danger, am enabled to preserve, in some measure, a composure of feeling, a resolution—which will support me, and those who are dearer to me than life." Here his heart beat quickly, and he walked rapidly to and fro. "I am confident that Providence will care for them! As for me, even in sight of the more serious and startling peril which menaces me—what is it to a Christian but a trial of his constancy? *There hath no temptation taken you*, say the Scriptures written for our instruction, *but such as is common to man*; * *but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" This consolatory passage led Aubrey, in a calm and exalted mood of mind, to meditate upon that picture of submission to manifold misfortune, simple and sublime beyond all comparison or approach, drawn by the pencil of one inspired with wisdom from on high—calculated at once to solemnise, to strengthen, and elevate the heart and character of man; and which is to be found in the first and second chapters of the *Book of Job*. Oh reader! who, brilliant as may be at this moment your position in life, may have been heretofore, or may be hereafter, placed in circumstances of dreadful suffering and peril, suffer him whose humble labours now for a moment occupy your attention, reverently to refer you again and yet again, to that memorable passage of holy writ! With danger surrounding him, with utter ruin staring him in the face, Mr Aubrey read this passage of Scripture; his shaken spirit gathered from it calmness and consolation; and after a while, retiring early to bed, he enjoyed a night of comparatively tranquil repose.

* "*As permissives*," signifies in this place (1st Corinth. x. 13), says a commentator on this memorable passage of Scripture, "such as is suited to the nature and circumstances of man; such as every man may reasonably expect, if he consider the nature of his body and soul, and his situation in the present world."

CHAPTER III

A QUIKOTE; AND A FRIENDLY STATESMAN, BUT WITH AN EYE TO BUSINESS.

"THESE wretches are determined not to let the grass grow underneath their feet, Mr Aubrey," said, with a harassed air, Mr Runnington, who, the next morning, made his appearance at breakfast, pursuant to appointment; "within two hours' time of the court's delivering judgment, yesterday afternoon, I received the following communication." He handed to Mr Aubrey this letter:—

"*Saffron Hill, 25th April 18—*

"GENTLEMEN:

Doe d. Titmouse v. Jolter.

"The rule for a new trial herein having been this day discharged, and the unanimous judgment of the court delivered in favour of the claims to the Yatton estate, of the lessor of the plaintiff, in the present action, we shall feel obliged by an intimation from you, at your earliest possible convenience, of the course which your client may think fit to adopt. You are, of course, aware that we are now in a situation to attack, successfully, the entire property at Yatton, at present in the possession of Mr Aubrey; and that, had we thought fit, we might have sought and recovered it all in the action which has just been decided in favour of our client. It is now in our power greatly to *strengthen* the evidence adduced at the late trial: and we beg to be informed whether it is your client's intention to put Mr Titmouse to the enormous expense, and delay, of a second trial, the issue of which cannot be doubtful; or, with the promptitude and candour which are to be expected from a gentleman of the station and character of

your client, at once yield to our client the substantial fruits of his verdict.

"If his reasonable wishes and expectations in this matter should be disregarded and frustrated, we would merely intimate that it will be for your client seriously to weigh the consequences; to see whether such a line of conduct may not greatly prejudice his interests, and place him in a worse position than, perhaps, he would otherwise have occupied. As we understand your client to be in town, we trust you will forgive us for requesting you immediately to communicate with him; and that at your earliest convenience you will enable us to announce the result to our client.—We are, gentlemen, your obedient servants,

"QUIRK, GAMMON, & SNAP

"Messrs RUNNINGTON & Co."

"Well—I own I see nothing to find fault with," said Mr Aubrey calmly, but with a suppressed sigh, as soon as he had read the letter.

"Rather quick work, too—is it not, Mr Aubrey?—within an hour or two after judgment pronounced in their favour:—but, to be sure, it's very excusable, when you consider the line of business and the sort of clients that Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap are accustomed to."

"I have made up my mind as to the course I shall adopt," said Mr Aubrey.

"Oh, of course, that is quite clear!" said Mr Runnington, pouring out his coffee—"we shall stand another shot, and see if they've ammunition enough left for the purpose: and we'll tender

a bill of exceptions, and carry the case into the Exchequer Chamber, and thence into the House of Lords—ah! we'll *work* them, I warrant them!"—and he rubbed his hands, with a little excitement in his manner.

"Why, Mr Runnington," answered Mr Aubrey gravely, "would it not be wanton—most unconscientious—in me to put them to the expense and anxiety of a second trial, when the whole case, on both sides, has been fairly brought before both the court and the jury?"

"Good heavens, Mr Aubrey!" exclaimed Mr Runnington, with visible amazement—"who ever heard of an estate of even one or two hundred a-year being surrendered after one assault?"

"If it were ten thousand times ten thousand a-year, I would submit—after such a trial as ours!" said Mr Aubrey calmly.

"How do we know what fraud and perjury may have been resorted to in order to secure the late verdict, and which we may have the means of detecting against the next trial? Ah, Mr Aubrey, you don't know the character of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap in the profession; they learn a fresh trick from every scoundrel, swindler, and thief, whose case they undertake!"

"I thought that fraud and perjury were never to be presumed, Mr Runnington! Besides, had we not the advantage of eminent, acute, and experienced counsel? How could it escape them?"

"I would only venture to remind you," said Mr Runnington, firmly but respectfully, "of the observations of the Attorney-general, at our last consultation."

"I thought I was unanswered, Mr Runnington, though I did not feel at liberty to press the matter," replied Mr Aubrey with a melancholy smile.

"Excuse me, but we *must* take the chance of a second trial," said Mr Runnington.

"I have decided upon the course I shall adopt," replied Mr Aubrey calmly. "I beg you, Mr Runnington, to

write this day to the gentlemen upon the other side, and inform them that within three weeks I shall be prepared to deliver up possession of Yatton."

"My dear sir!—Do I hear aright?" exclaimed Mr Runnington, with some agitation. "Deliver up possession of the estates? and within three weeks? My ears are deceiving me!"

"That was what I said—or meant to say—Mr Runnington," replied Mr Aubrey rather peremptorily.

"I give you my honour, Mr Aubrey, that in the whole course of my practice I never heard of such a procedure!" said Mr Runnington with a half-desperate air.

"And I shall further request you to state that the last quarter's rents are in my banker's hands, and will be paid over to the order of Mr Titmouse!"

"Mr Aubrey! Mr Aubrey!" interrupted Mr Runnington, with an air of deep concern.

"I have well considered the position in which I am placed," said Mr Aubrey, seriously.

"It is extremely painful for me to mention the subject, Mr Aubrey, but have you adverted to the *mesne* profits?"

"I have. It is, indeed, a fearful matter: and I frankly own that I see no way open before me, but to trust to the forbearance of"—

"Forbearance!—The *forbearance* of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap!! or of any one counselled by them!"

"Why, what can I do? I might as well undertake to pay off the national debt as the sum of sixty thousand pounds!"

"That's just the very thing," replied Mr Runnington, with a dismayed air.

"Whatever honourable negotiation can effect, I leave it in your hands to do. With reference to the time which may be allowed for liquidating this frightful demand"—Mr Aubrey changed colour, but spoke with firmness—"I must own this to be a matter which has occasioned me inexpressible anxiety, Mr Runnington. I

really do not see what length of time will enable me to discharge so vast a sum of money, or even to make any sensible impression upon it. I am quite at the mercy of my enemies!" Here both were silent for some time.

"At one time, I fancied that in a case so grievously hard as yours," said Mr Runnington, with a sigh—"you might obtain relief from a Court of Equity from the payment of the mesne profits, on the ground of your total ignorance of the title of Titmouse; and I laid a case before the most skilful lawyer in the Court of Chancery—but alas! the answer was in the negative—that the court had no power whatever to deprive a man of what he had proved to be his strict legal rights"—

"Nor can I, Mr Runnington, see on what principle such an interference could be supported!* Besides—can I *entirely* acquit myself of negligence? Have I not been culpably forgetful of the suggestions which you made to me at the time of my marriage settlement? No, no! I feel myself bound hand and foot"—

At this moment a thundering appeal to the knocker of the door announced an arrival; and presently the servant entered and stated that Lord C— had called, and was waiting in the library. After repeating two or three directions to Mr Runnington, Mr Aubrey left him; and presently entered the library, where Lord C— was waiting to receive him. Lord C— was a middle-aged man, tall, of elegant person, with a handsome and intellectual countenance, and winning address; he was a thorough politician, and possessed of eloquence, immense practical knowledge, and a commanding intellect. He was made for eminent office; and got through the most complicated and harassing business with ease and celerity. He had for several years entertained a sincere regard for Mr Aubrey, whom he considered to be perhaps the most rising man in the House of Commons, and to have rendered him, on several occa-

* See APPENDIX.

sions, special service in debate. He had been much shocked to hear of the sudden misfortune which had befallen Mr Aubrey; and had now come to him with a sincere desire to be of service; and also, not without a faint hope of prevailing upon him to come down that evening, and support them in a very close division. He was as kind-hearted a man as—a keen politician *could* be.

"I am really shocked beyond expression to hear all this," said he, after Aubrey had, at his earnest request, explained the position in which he was placed; the dreadful loss he had sustained, the still more dreadful liabilities to which he was subject. "Really," exclaimed his Lordship, "who can be safe? It might have happened to me—to any of us! Forgive me, my dear Aubrey," he continued earnestly, "if I venture to express a hope that at all events Mrs Aubrey and your family are provided for, and your lovely sister; they, I trust, are out of the reach of inconvenience?" Mr Aubrey's lips quivered, and he remained silent.

"Allow me a friend's freedom, Aubrey, and let me repeat my question; are your family provided for?"

"I will be frank, Lord C—," replied Mr Aubrey, with a strong effort to preserve his composure. "The little provision which had been made for them is lost, with Yatton: but for them—my wife, my children, my sister—I could have submitted to this misfortune with unshrinking fortitude; but they are, alas, involved in my ruin! My wife had nothing when I married her; and of course the settlements I made on her were out of the Yatton property; as also was the little income left my poor sister, by my father. With Yatton all is gone—that is the plain fact; and there is no disguising it."

Lord C— seemed much moved.

"The Duke of —, I, and two or three other of your friends, were talking about these matters last night; we wish we could serve you. What is the sort of foreign service you would prefer, Aubrey?"

"Foreign service?" echoed Mr Aubrey significantly.

"Yes; an entire change of scene would be highly serviceable in diverting your thoughts from the distressing subjects which here occupy, and must continue to occupy them, for some time to come. Can there be a doubt of it?"

"It is kindly meant, Lord C——; but do you really think I can for a single moment entertain the idea of quitting the country to escape from pecuniary liability?"

"That's the point exactly; I decidedly think you ought to do so; that you *must*," replied Lord C—— in a matter-of-fact manner.

"Nothing upon earth shall induce me to do so," replied Mr Aubrey firmly. "The bare idea shocks me. It would be the meanest, most unprincipled conduct—it would reflect disgrace on the King's service."

"Poh—this is mere eccentricity—knight-errantry; I'm sure that when you are in a calmer mood you will think differently. Upon my honour, I never heard of such absurdity as yours, in my life. Are you to stay at home, to have your hands tied behind your back, and be thrust into prison—to court destruction for yourself and your family?" Mr Aubrey turned aside his head, and remained silent.

"I must plead in favour of Mrs Aubrey—your children—your sweet lovely sister;—good God! it's quite shocking to think of what you are bringing them to."

"You torture my feelings, Lord C——," said Mr Aubrey tremulously, and looking very pale; "but you do not convince my judgment. Every dictate of conscience and honour combines to assure me that I should not listen to your proposal."

"What an outrage on common sense!—But has anything been yet said on the subject of these liabilities—these *mesme* profits, as I think you said they are called?"

"Nothing; but they follow as a matter of course."

"How is it that you owe *only* sixty thousand pounds, Aubrey?"

"*Only* sixty thousand!" echoed Mr Aubrey, amazedly.

"At the rate of ten thousand a-year, you must have had at least a hundred thousand pounds of the money belonging to your successor!"—

"The statute of limitations prevents more than six years' arrears being recoverable."

"But do you intend, Aubrey, to avail yourself of such a protection against the just claims of this poor, unfortunate, ill-used gentleman? Are not the remaining forty thousand pounds justly due—money of his which you have been making away with? Will you let a mere technical rule of law outweigh the dictates of honour and conscience?"

"I really don't exactly understand your drift, Lord C——," said Mr Aubrey, colouring visibly.

"Well—I will explain. Your sovereign has a right to command your services; and, by obeying him and serving your country, you are enabled to prevent a malignant opponent from ruining you and your family, by extorting a vast sum of money not equitably due: I protest I see no difference in principle, Aubrey, between availing yourself of the statute of limitations, and of the call of the king to foreign service;—but we must talk of this again. By the way, what is the name of your worthy opponent? Titmouse, or some such strange name?"

"Titmouse!—By the way, you lose a seat for Yatton," said Aubrey with a faint smile.

Lord C—— pricked up his ears. "Ay, ay! how's that?"

"The gentleman whom you have mentioned professes, I understand, Liberal principles; probably he will sit for the borough himself; at all events, he will return the member."

"He's a poor ignorant creature, isn't he? What has made him take up with Liberal principles? By taking a little notice of him early, one might—eh?—influence him;—but of course you don't intend to vacate this session?"

"I intend this day to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds; and this evening,

if you like, a new writ may be moved for the borough of Yatton."

"You *must* come down to-night, my dear Aubrey, you really must," said Lord C——, with undisguised anxiety—with more than he had shown during the interview. "The numbers will run very close; they are stirring heaven and earth!—Good heavens! my dear Aubrey, a vote's invaluable to-night;—Nay—you *shan't* have the Chiltern Hundreds;* you mustn't really apply for it—at all events, not till to-morrow."

"I shall sit no more in the House of Commons," said Mr Aubrey, with a sad determined air; "besides, I leave for Yatton by to-night's mail. There are those waiting for me whom you would not have me disappoint, Lord C——!"

"Not for worlds, my dear Aubrey," replied Lord C——, half absently. He was intensely disappointed at not obtaining Mr Aubrey's vote that evening; and rose to go.

* It is by no means a matter of course to apply for and obtain this nominal appointment, which occasions *ipso facto* the vacating a seat in parliament. It is a matter of discretion with the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he has *refused* it during the present session [1844] to several applicants.

"Then I am to direct to Yatton, when I may have occasion to write to you?" said he.

"For the next three weeks only—my movements after that period are not yet fixed."

"Adieu, Aubrey; and I entreat of you to remember me most sincerely to Mrs Aubrey and your sister; and when you look at them,—recollect—pray, recollect our conversation of to-day."

With this Lord C—— took his departure, and left poor Aubrey much depressed. He quickly, however, roused himself, and occupied the principal part of the day in making the necessary and melancholy arrangements for breaking up his establishment in Grosvenor Street, and disposing of his wines, books, and furniture at Yatton. He also instructed a house-agent to look out for two or three respectable but small houses in the outskirts of town, out of which might be chosen the one appearing most suitable to himself and Mrs Aubrey, on their arrival in London. About eight o'clock he got into the York mail, and his heart was heavy within him.

CHAPTER IV.

MR AUBREY SURRENDERS AT DISCRETION; AND THE OPPOSING GENERALS HOLD A COUNCIL OF WAR.

THE result of a long consultation between Mr Runnington and his partners, held on the day after his last interview with Mr Aubrey, was, that he drew up the following draft of a letter, addressed to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap:—

"Lincoln's Inn, 26th April 18—.

"GENTLEMEN:

Doe d. Titmouse v. Jolter.

"In answer to your letter of yester-

day (the 25th inst.), we beg to inform you, that after the judgment in this cause pronounced yesterday in the Court of King's Bench, our client, Mr Aubrey, does not intend to resist the claim of Mr Titmouse to the residue of the Yatton property. We now, therefore, beg to give you notice, that on the 17th of next month you will be at liberty, on behalf of your client, Mr Titmouse, to take possession of all the property at Yatton, at present in

the possession of Mr Aubrey. The whole of the last quarter's rents, due at Ladyday, have been paid into the bank of Messrs Harley and Grilston, and will, on the day above mentioned, be placed at the disposal of your client.

"We are also instructed to request the delivery of your bill at as early a period as may suit your convenience, with a view to its immediate examination and settlement.

"We cannot forbear adding, while thus implicitly following the instructions of our client, our extreme surprise and regret at the course which he has thought fit to adopt; since we have the strongest reasons for believing, that had he been disposed to contest your client's claim further, in accordance with advice received from a high quarter, his case would have been materially strengthened, and your difficulties greatly increased, and rendered, in fact, absolutely insuperable. We feel confident that the magnanimity displayed by our client, will be duly appreciated by yours.

"We are, Gentlemen,

"Your obedient servants,

"RUNNINGTON & Co.

"MESSRS QUIRK, GAMMON, & SHAP."

"Really," said Mr Runnington, when he had read over the above to his partners, "I *must* throw in a word or two about those accursed *mesne profits*—yet it's a ticklish subject, especially with such gentry as these—eh?"

One partner shook his head and the other looked thoughtful.

"We must not compromise Mr Aubrey," said the former of the two.

"We have had no instructions on that point," said the latter,—“on the contrary, you told us yourself that your instructions were to announce an unconditional surrender.”

"That may be; but in so desperate a business as this, I do think we have a discretion to exercise on behalf of himself and family, which I must say, he seems quite incapable of exercising himself. Nay, upon my honour, I think we are *bound* not to forego the

slightest opportunity of securing an advantage for our client in this unrighteous claim!"

His partners seemed struck with this observation; and Mr Runnington, after a few moments' consideration, added the following postscript:—

"P.S.—As to the *mesne profits*, by the way, of course we anticipate no difficulty in effecting an amicable arrangement satisfactory to both parties, due consideration being had for the critical position in which our client finds himself placed so suddenly and unexpectedly. Indeed, it is not difficult to conceive that Mr Aubrey, in taking the step of which we have above advised you, must have contemplated"—(here Mr Runnington paused for a considerable time)—“being met in a similarly frank, liberal, and equitable spirit.”

It was agreed, at length, that the whole amount and effect of the above postscript ought to be regarded as a spontaneous suggestion of Messrs Runnington, not in any way implicating, or calculated in any event to annoy, Mr Aubrey; and a fair copy of the letter and postscript having been made, it was signed in the name of the firm, and forthwith despatched to Saffron Hill.

"Struck, by Jove, Gammon!" exclaimed Mr Quirk, as, with the above letter open in his hands, he hurried, the instant after he had read it, into the room of his wily partner, and threw it down exultingly before him. Gammon read it with apparent calmness, but a slight flush overspread his cheek; and, as he finished the perusal, a subdued smile of excitement and triumph stole over his acute and placid countenance.

"Lord, Gammon! isn't it glorious?" quoth Mr Quirk heatedly, rubbing his hands together; "give us your hand, friend Gammon! We've fought a precious hard battle together"—and he shook his partner's hand with vehement cordiality. "This fellow Aubrey is a trump—isn't he?—Egad, if I'd been in his shoes—one way or another, I'd have stuck at Yatton for a dozen years to come—ah, ha!"

"Yes, I'm sure you would—if you had been able," replied Gammon dryly, and with a smile—the real character of which was not perceived by Mr Quirk.

"Ay, that I would," replied he, with a triumphant chuckle—"but now to come to business. By next quarter-day Titmouse will have £5000 in hard cash—half of it on the 17th of next month.—Lord! what have we done for him!" he added, with a sort of sigh.

"We've put an ape into possession of Paradise—that's all"—said Gammon, absently and half aloud, and bitterly and contemptuously.

"Humph!—what of that?" said Mr Quirk—"It answers *our* purposes, at any rate! By the way, Gammon, you see what's said about our Bill!—eh? The sooner it's made out the better, I should say—and—ahem! hem!—while Mr Aubrey's on the tight rope he won't think of looking down at the particular items, will he? I should say now's our time; and we should strike while the iron's hot! I've got rather a stiff entry, I can assure you. I must say, Snap's done his duty; and I've not had my eyes shut—or my pen idle! You know one must live in these hard times—eh?" Here Mr Quirk winked knowingly.

"You must not *overdo* it, Mr Quirk, —but all that I leave, as usual, to your admirable management, as to that of a first-rate man of business. You know I'm a sad hand at accounts; but you and Snap are perfect adepts—in short, I'm satisfied you'll do all that should be done."

"Ay, ay, trust us!" interrupted Quirk quickly, with a significant nod, and fancying himself and Snap already at work, plundering the poor Aubreys. "And, by the way, Gammon, there are the mesne profits—that's a mighty fine postscript of theirs, isn't it?" and replacing his spectacles, he read it over aloud. "All my eye, of course!" he added, as he laid down the letter—"but I suppose one must give 'em a little time; it is a little hard on him just at present; but then, to be sure, that's his look-out—not ours, or Titmouse's!—Off-hand, I should say we

ought to be content with—say—twenty thousand down, and the rest within two years, so as to give him time to look about him a little"—

"That will be quite an after consideration," said Mr Gammon, who, for the last few minutes, had appeared lost in thought.

"Egad—an after consideration? Hang me if I think so, Gammon! There's a certain *bond*—eh? you recollect"—

"I assure you, Mr Quirk, that my eye is fixed quite as steadily and anxiously on that point as yours," said Gammon gravely.

"Thank you—thank you, Gammon!" replied Quirk with the air of a man suddenly relieved from apprehension—"it couldn't possibly be in better hands. Lud—to go wrong *there!* It would send me to my grave at a hand gallop—it would, so help me Heaven, Gammon!—Titmouse, by the way, is a queer hand to deal with—isn't he? Wasn't he strange and bumptious the other day? Egad it made me quake! Need we tell him, just yet," he dropped his voice, "of the letter we've got? Couldn't we safely say only that they have sent us word that we shall have Yatton by the 17th of next month?"

"Great caution, undoubtedly, is necessary, Mr Quirk, just now"—

"Why, you don't think the young scamp's going to turn round on us, and snap his fingers in our face, eh?" inquired Mr Quirk apprehensively, violently twirling about his watch-key.

"If you leave him implicitly to me, you shall get all you want," replied Gammon, gravely and pointedly. Quirk's colour changed a little, as he felt the keen grey eye of Gammon fixed upon him, and he involuntarily shrunk under it.

"You'll excuse me, Gammon," at length said he, with rather a disturbed air; "but there's no fathoming you, when you get into one of your mysterious humours; and you always look so particularly strange whenever we get on this subject! What can you know that I don't—or ought not to know?"

"Nothing—nothing, I assure you," replied Gammon with a gay smile, always at his command.

"Well, I should have thought not. But, coming back to the main point, if one could but touch some part of that same ten thousand pounds, I should be a happy man!—Consider, Gammon, what a draught there has been on my purse for this last sixteen months! Ecod!—the sleepless nights it has cost me!"

"Well, can you doubt being soon richly repaid, my dear sir? Only don't be too hasty."

"I take it, Gammon, we've a lien on the rents now in the banker's hands, and to become due next quarter-day, and on the first instalment of the mesne profits, both for our bill of costs, and in respect of that same bond?"

"Mesne profits, Mr Quirk?" echoed Gammon, rather quickly; "you seem to take it for granted that they are all ready to be paid over! Even supposing Titmouse not to grow restive, do you suppose it probable that Mr Aubrey, after so vast and sudden a sacrifice, can have more than a very few thousands—probably hundreds—to keep him and his family from immediate want, since we have reason to believe he has got no other resources than Yatton?"

"Not got 'em—not got 'em? D—n him! then he must look sharp and get 'em, that's all! You know we can't be trifled with; we must look after the interests of—Titmouse. And what's he to start with, if there's no mesne profits forthcoming? But, hang it! they must; I should say a gentle pressure, by-and-by, as soon as Aubrey's fairly got out of Yatton, must produce money, or *security*—he must know quantities of people of rank and substance that would rush forward, if they once heard him squeal!"

"Ah, you're for putting the thumb-screws on at once—eh?" inquired Gammon with subdued energy, and a strange sort of equivocal smile.

"Ay—capital—that's just what I meant!" quoth Quirk.

"Eugh—you heartless old repro-

bate"—thought Gammon, nearly on the point of expressing as much; but his momentary excitement passed off unobserved by Mr Quirk. "And, I must say, I agree with you," added Gammon calmly; "we ought in justice to see you first reimbursed your heavy outlays, Mr Quirk."

"Well, that's honourable, Gammon.—Oh, Gammon, how I wish you would let me make a friend of you!" suddenly added Mr Quirk, eyeing wistfully his surprised companion.

"If you have one sincere disinterested friend in the world, Mr Quirk, I am he," said Mr Gammon, throwing great warmth into his manner, perceiving that Mr Quirk was labouring with some communication of which he wished to deliver himself.

"Gammon, Gammon! how I wish I could think so!" replied Quirk, looking earnestly, yet half distrustingly, at Gammon, and fumbling about in his pockets. The mild and friendly expression of Gammon's countenance, however, invited communicativeness; and after softly opening and shutting the two doors, to ascertain that no one was trying to overhear what might be passing, he returned to his chair, which he drew closer to Gammon, who noticed this air of preparation with not a little curiosity.

"I may be wrong, Gammon," commenced Mr Quirk, in a low tone; "but I do believe you've always felt a kind of personal friendship towards me; and there ought to be no secrets among friends. Friends, indeed? Perhaps it's premature to mention so small a matter; but at a certain silversmith's, not a thousand miles from the Strand, there's at this moment in hand, as a present from me to you"—[Oh dear, dear! Mr Quirk! what a shocking untruth! and to suppose that Gammon believes you!]"—"as elegant a gold snuff-box as can be made, with a small inscription on the lid. I hope you won't value it the less for its being the gift of old Caleb Quirk"—he paused and looked earnestly at Mr Gammon.

"My dear Mr Quirk, you have taken me," said his bland partner, apparently

with great emotion, "quite by surprise. Value it? I will preserve it to the latest moment of my life, as a memorial of one whom the more I know of, the more I respect and admire!"

"You, Gammon, are in your prime—scarce even that—but I am growing old"—tears appeared to glisten in the old gentleman's eyes; Gammon, looking much moved, shook him cordially by the hand in silence, wondering what upon earth was coming next. "Yes,—old Caleb Quirk's day is drawing to a close—I feel it, Gammon, I feel it! But I shall leave behind me—a—a—child—an only daughter, Gammon;" that gentleman gazed at the speaker with an expression of respectful sympathy;—"Dora: I don't think you can have known Dora so long, Gammon, without feeling a leetle interest in her!" Here Gammon's colour mounted rapidly, and he looked with feelings of a novel description at his senior partner. Why, could it be possible that old Quirk wished to bring about a match between his daughter and Mr Gammon? That excellent gentleman's thoughts were for a moment confused. All he could do was to bow with an earnest—an anxious—a deprecating air; and Mr Quirk, rather hastily, proceeded,— "and when I assure you, Gammon, that it is in your power to make an old friend and his only daughter happy and proud,"—Gammon began to draw his breath hurriedly, and to look more and more apprehensively at his senior partner,— "in short, my dear friend, Gammon, let me out with it at once—my daughter's over head and ears in love with Titmouse! She is, so help me Heaven!"

["Whew!" thought Gammon, suddenly and infinitely relieved.]

"Ah, my dear sir, is that all?" he exclaimed, and shook Mr Quirk cordially by the hand,— "at length you have made a friend of me indeed! But, to tell you the truth, I have long suspected as much; I have indeed!"

"Have you really? Hang me if anything can escape your lynx's eyes!

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—Well! there is no accounting for tastes, is there?—especially among the women? Poor Dora's quite lost her heart—quite—she has—so help me Heaven!" continued Mr Quirk, energetically.

"Well, my dear sir, and why this *surprise*?" inquired Gammon earnestly. "I consider Titmouse to be a handsome young fellow; and that he is already rapidly acquiring gentlemanly manners; and as to his *fortune*—really—when one thinks of the thing—it would be most desirable to bring it about! Indeed, the sooner his heart's fixed, and his word's pledged, the better—for you must of course be aware that there will be many schemers on the look-out to entrap his frank and inexperienced nature—look, for instance, at Tag-rag."

"Eugh!" exclaimed Mr Quirk, with a sudden motion of sickening disgust—"the old beast! I smoked him long ago! Now, *that* I call villany, Gammon; infernal villany! Don't you?"

"Indeed, indeed, Mr Quirk, I do; I quite agree with you! Upon my honour, I think it is a part of even *my* duty towards our confiding and inexperienced client, if possible, to protect him against such infamous designs."

"Right—right, Gammon; by Jove, you're entirely right—I *quite* agree with you!" replied Quirk earnestly, not observing the lambent smile upon the features of his calm, crafty, and sarcastic companion.

"You see, however," said Gammon, "we've a delicate and difficult game to play with old Tag-rag. He's certainly a toad, ugly and venomous—but then he's got a jewel in his head—he's got money, you know, and, to serve *our* purposes, we must really give him some hopes about his daughter and Titmouse."

"Faugh! eugh! feugh! Nasty wretch! a little trollop! It makes one sick to hear of her! And, by the way, now we're on that subject, Gammon, what do we want of this wretch Tag-rag, now that Titmouse has actually got the property?"

"Want of him? Money—security, my dear sir!—money!"

"But, curse me! (excuse me, Gammon), why go to Tag-rag? *That's* what I can't understand! Surely any one will advance almost any amount of money to Titmouse, with such security as he can now give!"

"Very possibly—probably"——

"Possibly? Why, I myself don't mind advancing him five thousand—nay, ten thousand pounds—when we've once got hold of the title-deeds."

"My dear sir," interrupted Gammon calmly, but with a serious air, and a slight change of colour, which did not happen to attract the notice of his eager companion, "there are reasons why I should dissuade you from doing so; upon my word there are; further than that I do not think it necessary to go; but I have gone far enough, I know well, to do you a real service."

Mr Quirk listened to all this with an air of the utmost amazement—even open-mouthed amazement. "What reason, Gammon, *can* there be against my advancing money on a security worth at least twenty times the sum borrowed?" he inquired, with visible distrust, of his companion.

"I can but assure you, that were I called upon to say whether I would advance a serious sum of money to Titmouse on the security of the Yatton estates, I should at all events require a substantial *collateral* security."

"Mystery again!" exclaimed Mr Quirk, a sigh of vexation escaping him. "You'll excuse me, Gammon, but you'd puzzle an angel, to say nothing of the devil! May I presume for one moment, so far on our personal and professional relationship, as to ask what the reason is on which your advice rests?"

"Mere caution—excessive caution—anxiety to place you out of the way of all risk. Surely, is your borrower so soon to be pronounced firm in the saddle?"

"If you know anything, Gammon, that I don't, it's your bounden duty

to communicate it! Look at our articles!"

"It is; *but do I* know anything? Prove that, Mr Quirk, and you need trouble yourself no more!—But, in the meanwhile (without saying how much I feel hurt at your evident distrust), I have but a word or two further to add on this point."

When Mr Gammon chose, he could assume an expression of feature, a tone of voice, and a manner, which indicated to the person he was addressing, that he was announcing a matured opinion, an inflexible determination—and this, moreover, in the calmest, quietest way imaginable. Thus it was that he now said to Mr Quirk, "My opinion is, that you should get some third party or parties to advance any required sum, and prevail upon Tag-rag to join in a collateral security, without—if possible—making him aware of the extent of liability he is incurring. By exciting him with the ridiculous notion of an attachment between his daughter and Titmouse, he may be induced to give his signature, as to some complimentary matter of form only. Now, that's my opinion, Mr Quirk; not lightly or hastily formed; and it rests upon a deep feeling of personal regard towards you, and also our common interests."

Mr Quirk had listened to this communication in perturbed silence, eyeing the speaker with a ludicrous expression of mingled chagrin, apprehension, and bewilderment. "Gammon," at length said he, affecting a smile, "do you remember, when you, and I, and Dora, went to the play to see some German thing or other—Foss was the name, wasn't it?"

"Faust—Faust," interrupted Gammon curiously.

"Well: and now, what was the name of that fellow that was always—Meph—Meph—what was it?"

"Mephistophiles," replied Gammon, unable to repress a smile.

"Ah—yes! so it was. That's all; I only wanted to think of the name—I'd forgotten it. I beg your pardon, Gammon."

This was poor Mr Quirk's way of being sarcastic with his friend. He thought that he had now cut him to the quick.

"If it hadn't been for what's passed between us to-day, Gammon, I should almost begin to think that you were not sincere in your friendship"—

"Did I ever deceive you? Did I ever attempt to overreach you in anything, Mr Quirk?"

"N—o—o—," replied Mr Quirk—but not in the readiest manner, or most confident tone in the world,—“I certainly can't say I ever found you out—but I'll tell you what, we each keep a precious sharp look-out after each other, too—don't we?” he inquired, with a faint smile, which seemed for a moment reflected upon the face of Gammon.

"How long," said the latter, "I am to be the subject of such unkind suspicions, I do not know; but your nature is suspicious; and as every one has his fault, that is the alloy in the otherwise pure gold of your manly, generous, and straightforward character. Time may show how you have wronged me. My anxious wish is, Mr Quirk, to witness your daughter occupying a position in which we may all be proud to see her." Here a smile shot across Quirk's anxious countenance, like evening sunshine on troubled waters.

"I do really believe, Gammon," said he eagerly, "that Dora's just the kind of girl to suit Titmouse"—

"So, indeed, my dear sir, do I. There's a mingled softness and spirit in Miss Quirk"—

"She's a good girl, a good girl, Gammon! I hope he'll use her well if he gets her." His voice trembled. "She's very much attached to him! Gad, she's quite altered lately; and my sister tells me that she's always playing dismal music when he's not there. But we can talk over these matters at another time. Gad, Gammon, you can't think how it's relieved me, to open my mind to you on this matter! We quite understand each other now, Gammon—eh?"

"Quite," replied Gammon pointedly; and Mr Quirk having quitted the room, the former prepared to answer Messrs Runnington's letter. But first he leaned back, and reflected on several points of their late conversation. Of course, he had resolved that Miss Quirk should never become Mrs Titmouse! And what struck him as not a little singular, was this; viz. that Mr Quirk should have made no observation on the circumstance that Gammon allowed him to risk his daughter, and her all, upon chances which he pronounced too frail to warrant advancing a thousand or two of money! Yet so it was.

This was the answer he presently wrote to the letter of Messrs Runnington:—

Saffron Hill, 26th April 18—.

"GENTLEMEN:

"Doe d. Titmouse v. Joller.

"We are favoured with your letter of this day's date; and beg to assure you how highly we appreciate the prompt and honourable course which has been taken by your client, under circumstances calculated to excite considerable commiseration. Every expression of respectful sympathy, on our parts, and on that of our client, Mr Titmouse, which you may think fit to convey to your distinguished client, is his.

"We shall be prepared to receive possession of the Yatton estates on the day you mention—namely, the 17th May next, on behalf of our client, Mr Titmouse; on whose behalf, also, we beg to thank you for your communication concerning the last quarter's rents.

"With reference to the question of the mesne profits, we cannot doubt that your client will promptly pursue the same line of honourable conduct which he has hitherto adopted; and we sincerely trust that a good understanding in this matter will speedily exist between our respective clients.

"As you have intimated a wish upon the subject, we beg to inform you that we have given instructions

for making out and delivering our bill herein.

"We are, Gentlemen,
 "Your obedient humble
 servants,
 "QUIRK, GAMMON, & SNAP.
 "Messrs BUNNINGTON & Co."

Having finished writing the above letter, Gammon sat back in his chair, with folded arms, and entered upon a long train of thought—revolving many matters which were unquestionably worthy of the profound consideration they then received.

When Gammon and Titmouse returned to town from York, they were fortunate in having the inside of the coach to themselves for nearly the whole of the way—an opportunity which Gammon improved to the utmost, by deepening the impression he had already made in the mind of Titmouse, of the truth of one great fact—namely, that he and his fortunes would quickly part company, if Gammon should at any time so will—which never would, however, come to pass, so long as Titmouse recognised and deferred to the authority of Gammon in all things. In vain did Titmouse inquire how this could be. Gammon was impenetrable, mysterious, authoritative; and at length enjoined Titmouse to absolute secrecy concerning the existence of the fact in question, on pain of the infliction of those consequences to which I have already alluded. Gammon assured him that there were many plans and plots hatching against him, but that it was in his (the aforesaid Gammon's) power to protect him from them all. Gammon particularly enjoined him, moreover, to consult the feelings, and attend to the suggestions of Mr Quirk, wherever Mr Gammon did not intimate to the contrary; and wound up all by telling him, that as he, Gammon, was the only person on earth—and this he really believed to be the case, as the reader may hereafter see—who knew the exact position of Titmouse, so he had devoted himself, for his life, to advancing and securing the interests of that fortunate gentleman.

For about a fortnight after their return, Titmouse, at Gammon's instance, continued at his former lodgings; but at length complained so earnestly of their dismal quietude, and of their being out of the way of "life," that Gammon yielded to his wishes, and, together with Mr Quirk, consented to his removing to a central spot—in fact, to the CABBAGE-STALK HOTEL, Covent Garden—a queer enough name, to be sure; but it was the family name of a great wholesale green-grocer, who owned most of the property thereabouts. It was not without considerable uneasiness and anxiety that Messrs Quirk and Snap beheld this change of residence, apprehensive that it might have the effect of estranging Titmouse from them; but since Gammon assented to it, they had nothing for it but to acquiesce, but with a succession of spasms, considering Titmouse's proximity to his splendid independence. They resolved, however, as far as in each of them lay, not to let themselves be forgotten by Titmouse. Pending the rule for the new trial, Mr Quirk had been so confident concerning the issue, that he considerably increased the allowance of Titmouse; to an extent, indeed, which admitted of his entering into almost all the gaieties that his as yet scarce initiated heart could desire. In the first place, he constantly added to his wardrobe. Then he took lessons every other day, in "the noble art of self-defence;" which gave him an opportunity of forming, with great ease, at once an extensive and brilliant circle of acquaintance. Fencing-rooms, wrestling-rooms, shooting-galleries, places for pigeon-shooting, cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and billiard-rooms; the water, and boat-racing—these were the dazzling scenes which occupied the chief portion of each day. Then, in the evenings, there were theatres, great and small, the various taverns, and other places of nocturnal resort, which are the secret pride and glory of the metropolis—but to which I shall not more distinctly allude. In addition to this, at an advanced period of the night, or rather early hour in

the morning, he sedulously strove to perfect himself in those higher arts and accomplishments, formerly excelled in by one or two of the more eminent of the youthful aristocracy, viz., breaking windows, pulling bells, wrenching off knockers,* extinguishing lamps, tripping up old women, watchmen, and children, and spoiling their clothes. Ah, how often in his humbler days had his heart panted, in noble rivalry of such feats as these, and emulation of the notoriety which they earned for the glittering miscreants excelling in them! Ah, Titmouse, Titmouse! Now is your time! *Macte novâ virtute, puer!*

That he could long frequent such scenes as these without forming an extensive and varied acquaintance, would be an unlikely thing to suppose; and there was one who would fain have joined him in his new adventures—one who, as I have already intimated, had initiated him into the scenes with which he was now becoming so familiar; I mean Snap, who had been at once his

“Guide, philosopher, and friend;”

but who now had fewer and fewer opportunities of associating with him, inasmuch as his (Snap's) nose was continually “kept at the grindstone” in Saffron Hill, to compensate for the lack of attention to the business of the office, of his senior partners, owing to their incessant occupation with the affairs of Titmouse. Still, however, Snap now and then contrived to remind Titmouse of his existence, by

* This species of sport has recently, alas! been seriously interfered with, by the increased power given, in such cases, to the police magistrates.

sending him intimations of interesting trials at the Old Bailey and elsewhere, and securing him a good seat to view both the criminal and the spectators—often persons of the greatest rank, fashion, and beauty; for so it happens that, in this country, the more hideous the crime, the more intense the curiosity of the upper classes of both sexes to witness the miscreant perpetrator; the more disgusting the details, the greater the avidity with which they are listened to by the distinguished auditors;—the reason being plain, that, as they have exhausted the pleasures and excitements afforded by their own sphere of action and enjoyment, their palled and sated appetites require novel and more powerful stimulants. Hence, at length, we see “fashionables” peopling even the condemned cell—rushing, in excited groups, after the shuddering malefactor, staggering, half palsied, and with horror-laden eye, on his way to the gallows! As soon as old Quirk had obtained an inkling of Titmouse's taste in these matters, he afforded him many opportunities of gratifying it. Once or twice the old gentleman succeeded in obtaining for him, even the gratification of shaking the cold and pinioned hands of wretches within a few minutes' time of their being led out for execution!

This is a brief and general account of the way in which Titmouse passed his time, and laid the groundwork of that solid, extensive, and practical acquaintance with men and things, which was requisite to enable him to occupy with dignity and advantage the splendid station to which he was on the point of being elevated.

CHAPTER V.

A GLIMPSE OF THE REVEREND DISMAL HORROR; AND MR QUIRK'S ENTERTAINMENT TO MR AND MRS TAG-RAG.

WE must not lose sight of our early and interesting friends, the Tag-rags—a thing which both Quirk and Gammon resolved should not happen to Titmouse: for on the very first Sunday after his arrival in town from York, a handsome glass-coach might have been seen, about two o'clock in the afternoon, drawing up opposite to the gates of Satin Lodge; from which said coach, the door having been opened, presently descended Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Titmouse. Now, the Tag-rags always dined at about two o'clock on Sundays; and, on the present occasion, Mr, Mrs, and Miss Tag-rag, together with a pretty constant visitor, the Reverend Dismal Horror, were sitting at their dinner-table discussing as savoury a leg of roast pork, with apple-sauce, as could at once have tempted and satisfied the most fastidious and indiscriminating appetite.

"Oh, ma!" exclaimed Miss Tag-rag faintly, changing colour, as she caught sight, through the blinds, of the approaching visitors—"if there isn't Mr Titmouse!" and almost dropping on the table her plate, in which, with an air of tender gallantry, pious Mr Horror was in the act of depositing some greens, she flew out of the room, darted up-stairs, and in a trice was standing, with beating heart, before her glass, hastily twirling her ringlets round her trembling fingers, and making one or two slight alterations in her dress. Her papa and mamma started up at the same moment, hastily wiping their mouths on the corners of the tablecloth; and,

after a hurried apology to their reverend and astounded guest, whom they begged "to go on eating till they came back"—they bounced into the little drawing-room, just time enough to appear (as they thought) to have been seated there for some time; but they were both rather red in the face, and flustered in their manner. Yet, how abortive was their attempt to disguise the truly disgraceful fact of their having been at dinner when their distinguished visitors arrived! For, firstly, the house was redolent of the odours of roast pork, sage and onion stuffing, and greens; secondly, the red-faced servant-girl was peering round the corner of the kitchen stairs, as if watching an opportunity to whip off a small dinner-tray that stood between the dining-room and drawing-room; and thirdly, the visitors caught a glimpse of the countenance of the reverend young guest, who was holding open the dining-room door just wide enough to enable him to see who passed on to the drawing-room; for, in truth, the name which had escaped from the lips of Miss Tag-rag was one which always excited unpleasant feelings in the breast of her spiritual-minded friend.

"Ah! Mr and Mrs Tag-rag! 'Pon my soul—glad to see you—and—hope you're all well?" commenced Titmouse, with an air of easy confidence and grace. Mr Gammon calmly introduced himself and Mr Quirk.

"We were just going to sit down to—*lunch*," said Mr Tag-rag hurriedly.

"You won't take a little, will you, gentlemen?" inquired Mrs Tag-rag

faintly; and both the worthy couple felt infinite relief on being assured that the great people "had already lunched." Neither Mr nor Mrs Tag-rag could take their eyes off Mr Titmouse, whose easy nonchalance convinced them that he must have been keeping the society of lords. He was just inquiring—as he ran his hand through his hair, and gently smacked his slight ebony cane against his leg—after Miss Tag-rag, when, pale and agitated, and holding in her hand a pocket-handkerchief, which she had first suffused with musk and bergamot, designed to overcome so much of the vulgar odour of dinner as might be lingering about *her*—that interesting young lady entered. Titmouse rose and received her in a familiar, forward manner; she turning white and red by turns. She looked such a shrivelled little ugly formal creature, that Titmouse conceived quite a hatred of her, through recollecting that he had once thought such an inferior piece of goods superfine! Old Quirk and Tag-rag, every now and then, cast distrustful glances at each other; but Gammon kept all in a calm flow of small talk, which at length restored those whom they had come to see, to something like self-possession. As for Mr Quirk, the more he looked at Miss Tag-rag, the more pride and satisfaction he felt in reflecting upon the unfavourable contrast she must present, in Titmouse's eyes, to Miss Quirk. After a little further conversation, principally concerning the brilliant success of Titmouse, Mr Quirk came to the business of the day, and invited Mr, Mrs, and Miss Tag-rag to dinner at Alibi House, on the ensuing Sunday, at six o'clock—apologising for the absence of Miss Quirk, on the score of indisposition—she being at the time in the highest possible state of health. Mrs Tag-rag was on the point of saying something deprecatory of their dining out on Sunday, as contrary to their rule; but a sudden recollection of the earthly interests she might peril by so doing, aided by a fearfully significant glance from Mr Tag-rag, restrained

her. The invitation was, therefore, accepted in an obsequious manner; and soon afterwards their great visitors took their departure, leaving Mr and Mrs and Miss Tag-rag in a state of great excitement. Goodness! could there be a doubt that there must be some potent attraction at Satin Lodge to bring thither Titmouse, after all that had occurred? And where could reside the point of that attraction, but in Miss Tag-rag?

As soon as their visitors' glass-coach had driven off—its inmates laughing heartily at the people they had just quitted—Mr, Mrs, and Miss Tag-rag returned to the dining-table, like suddenly disturbed fowl returning to their roost, when the disturbance has ceased. Profuse were their apologies to Mr Horror: not aware, however, that he had improved the opportunity afforded by their absence, to recruit his exhausted energies with a couple of glasses of port wine from a decanter which stood on the sideboard—a circumstance which he did not deem important enough to mention. Vehemently suspecting as he did, what was the state of things with reference to Mr Titmouse and Miss Tag-rag, it was somewhat of a trial of temper to the exemplary young pastor, and calculated to interfere grievously with the preparation for his evening duties, to have to listen, for the remainder of the afternoon, to the praises of Titmouse, and speculations concerning the immensity of his fortune—matters, indeed, in his pious estimation, *of the earth, earthy*. In vain did the worthy minister strive, every now and then, to divert the current of conversation into a more profitable channel—*i. e.* towards himself; all he said was evidently lost upon her for whose ear it was intended. She was in a reverie, and often sighed. The principal figures before her mind's eye were—TITTLERAT TITMOUSE, Esquire, and THE REV. DISMAL HORROR. The latter was about twenty-six, (he had been "called to the work of the ministry" in his sixteenth year.) short in stature; his face slightly pitted with small-pox; his forehead nar-

row; his eyes cold and watery; no eyebrows or whiskers; high cheek-bones; his short dark hair combed primly forward over each temple, and twisted into a sort of topknot in front; he wore no shirt-collar, but had a white neck-handkerchief tied very formally, and was dressed in an ill-made suit of black. He spoke in a drawling canting tone; and his countenance was overspread with a demure expression of—CUNNING, trying to look religious. Then he was always talking about himself, and his chapel, and the devil, and the bottomless pit, and the number of souls which he had saved, and the number of those whom he knew were damned, and many more who certainly would be damned; and other cheerful and interesting matters of that sort, intrusted—it would seem—to his confidential keeping. All this might be very well in its way, began to think Miss Tag-rag—but it was possible to choke a dog with pudding. Poor girl, can you wonder at her dwelling fondly upon the image of Titmouse? So splendidly dressed—so handsome—such a fashionable air—and with—ten thousand a-year! When she put all these things together, it looked almost like a dream; such good fortune could never be in store for a poor simple girl like herself. Yet there was such a thing as—love at first sight! After tea, they all walked down to Mr Horror's meeting-house. It was crowded; and it was remarked that the eloquent young preacher had never delivered a more impassioned sermon from that pulpit: it was sublime. Oh, how bitterly he denounced "worldly-mindedness!" What a vivid picture he drew of the flourishing green bay-tree of the wicked, suddenly blasted in the moment of its pride and strength; while the righteous should shine like stars in the firmament for ever and ever! Who cannot see here shadowed out the characters of Titmouse and of Horror?—who hesitate between the two? And when at length, the sermon over, he sat down in his pulpit, the congregation also sitting and singing, which had a somewhat queer

effect, and drew gracefully across his damp forehead his white pocket-handkerchief, which had been given him by Miss Tag-rag; and looked with an air of interesting languor and exhaustion towards Mr Tag-rag's pew, where sat that young lamb of his flock—Miss Tag-rag—her father the wealthiest man in the congregation, and she his only child—he felt a lively and tender interest in her welfare—her spiritual welfare, and resolved to call the next morning; entertaining an humble hope of finding that his zealous labours had not been in vain, that he had not missed the mark at which he had been secretly aiming. Was one fruit of the pious pastor's exertions the benignant temper which Tag-rag, to the amazement of his shopmen, evinced the next morning, for at least an hour? Would that the like good effects had been visible in Mrs and Miss Tag-rag; but—alas that I should have to record it!—it was so far otherwise, that they laid aside some fancy-fair work on which Mr Horror had set them—for the whole week, devoting it, instead thereof, to the preparation of those dresses with which they purposed the profanation of the ensuing Sunday!

That day at length arrived, and precisely at six o'clock a genteel fly deposited the visitants from Satin Lodge at the splendid entrance to Alibi House. There was the big footman—shoulder-knot, red breeches, and all. Tag-rag felt a *little* nervous. Before they had entered the gates, the fond proud parents had kissed their trembling daughter, and entreated her "to keep her spirits up!" The exhortation was needful; for when she saw the sort of dazzling splendour that awaited them, she became not a little agitated. When she entered the hall—ah! on a chair lay a glossy new hat, and a delicate ebony walking-stick; so he had come—was then up-stairs!—Miss Tag-rag trembled in every limb.

"I don't know, my dear," whispered Mrs Tag-rag to her husband, with a subdued sigh, as they followed the splendid footman up-stairs,—“It

may be all uncommon grand; but somehow I'm afraid we're doing wrong—it's the Lord's Day—see if any good comes of it."

"Tut—hold your tongue! Let's have no nonsense," sternly whispered Mr Tag-rag to his submissive wife.

"Your name, sir?" quoth the footman, in a sort of gentlemanly way.

"Mr, Mrs, and Miss Tag-rag," replied Mr Tag-rag, after clearing his throat; and so they were announced, Miss Quirk coming forward to receive the ladies with charming affability. There stood Titmouse, in an easy attitude, with his hands stuck into his coat-pockets, and resting on his hips, in a delicate and elegant fashion. How completely he seemed at his ease!

"Oh Lord!" thought the almost trembling Tag-rag, "that's the young fellow I used to go on so to!"

In due time dinner was announced; and who can describe the rapture that thrilled through the bosoms of the three Tag-rags, when Mr Quirk requested Mr Titmouse to take down—Miss Tag-rag! Her father took down Mrs Alias; Mr Quirk, Mrs Tag-rag; and Gammon, Miss Quirk. She really might have been proud of her partner. Gammon was about thirty-six years old; above the average height; with an easy, calm, gentlemanly appearance and address, and an intellectual and even handsome countenance; though it occasionally exhibited, to a keen observer, a sinister expression. He wore a blue coat, a plain white waistcoat, not disfigured by any glistening fiddle-faddle of pins, chains, or quizzing-glasses, black trousers, and plain black silk stockings. There was an appearance at once of neatness and carelessness; and such a ready smile, such a bland ease and self-possession, as communicated itself to those whom he addressed. I hardly know, Mr Gammon, why I have thus noticed so particularly your outward appearance: It certainly, on the occasion I am describing, struck me much; but there are such things as *whited walls and painted sepulchres!*

Dinner went off right pleasantly, the wines soon communicating a little confidence to the flustered guests. Mrs Tag-rag had drunk so much champagne—an unusual beverage for her—that almost as soon as she had returned to the drawing-room, she sat down on the sofa and fell asleep, leaving the two young ladies to amuse each other as best they might; for Mrs Alias was deaf, and moreover stiff and distant, and sat looking at them in silence. To return to the dining-room for a moment—it was quite delightful to see the sort of friendship that seemed to grow up between Quirk and Tag-rag, as their heads got filled with wine: at the same time each of them half unconsciously drawing closer and closer to Titmouse, who sat between them—volubility itself. They soon dropped all disguise—each plainly under the impression that the other could not, or did not, observe him; and at length, impelled by their overmastering motives, became so barefaced in their sycophancy—evidently forgetting that Gammon was present—that he could several times, with only the utmost difficulty, refrain from bursting into laughter at the earnest devotion with which these two worshippers of the little golden calf strove to attract the attention of their divinity, and recommend themselves to its favour.

At length the four gentlemen repaired to the drawing-room, whence issued the sounds of music; and on entering, they beheld the two lovely performers seated at the piano, engaged upon a duet. The plump flax-haired Miss Quirk, in her flowing white muslin dress, her thick gold chain and massive bracelets, formed rather a strong contrast to her sallow skinny little companion, in a span-new slate-coloured silk dress, with staring scarlet sash; her long corkscrew ringlets glistening in imaginary bear's grease; and as for their performance, Miss Quirk played boldly and well through her part, a smile of contempt now and then beaming over her countenance at the ridiculous incapacity of her companion. As soon as the gentle-

men made their appearance the ladies ceased, and withdrew from the piano; Miss Tag-rag, with a sweet air of simplicity and conscious embarrassment, gliding towards the sofa, where sat her mamma asleep, but whom she at once awoke. Mr Quirk exclaimed, as, evidently elevated with wine, he slapped his daughter on her fat back, "Ah, Dora, my dove!" while Tag-rag kissed his daughter's cheek, and squeezed her hand, and then glanced with a proud and delighted air at Titmouse, who was lolling at full length upon the other sofa, picking his teeth. While Miss Quirk was making tea, Gammon gaily conversing with her, and in an under-tone satirising Miss Tag-rag; the latter young lady was gazing, with a timid air, at the various elegant nick-nacks scattered upon the tables and slabs. One of these consisted of a pretty little box, about a foot square, with a glass lid, through which she saw the contents; and they not a little surprised her. They were pieces of cord; and on looking at one of the sides of the box, she read, with a sudden shudder,—"*With these cords were tied the hands of Arthur Grizzle-gut, executed for high treason, 1st May 18—*. Presented, as a mark of respect, to Caleb Quirk, Esq., by J— K—."

Poor Miss Tag-rag recoiled from the box as if she had seen it filled with writhing adders. She took an early opportunity, however, of calling her father's attention to it; and he pronounced it a "most interesting object," and fetched Mrs Tag-rag to see it. She agreed, first, with her daughter; and then with her husband. Quietly pushing her investigations, Miss Tag-rag by-and-by beheld a large and splendidly-bound volume—in fact, Miss Quirk's album; and, after turning over most of the leaves, and glancing at the "poetical effusions" and "prose sentiments" which few fools can abstain from depositing upon the embossed pages, when solicited by the soft-brained proprietresses of such works, behold—her heart fluttered—she almost dropped the magnificent volume; for there was the idolised name of Mr Titmouse appended to

some beautiful poetry—no doubt his own handwriting and composition. She read it over eagerly again and again,—

"Titmouse Is My name,
England Is My Nation,
London Is My dwelling-Place,
And Christ Is My Salvation."

How exquisite—how touching its simplicity! She looked anxiously about for writing implements! but not seeing any, was at length obliged to trust to her memory; on which, indeed, the remarkable composition was already inscribed in indelible characters. Miss Quirk, who was watching her movements, guessed the true cause of her excitement; and a smile of mingled scorn and pity for her infatuated delusion shone upon her face; in which, however, there appeared a little anxiety when she beheld Titmouse—not perceiving that he did so in consequence of a motion from Gammon, whose eye governed his movements as a man's those of his spaniel—walk up to her, and converse with a great appearance of interest. At length Mr Tag-rag's "carriage" was announced. Mr Quirk gave his arm to Mrs Tag-rag, and Mr Titmouse to the daughter; who endeavoured, as she went down the stairs, to direct melting glances at her handsome and distinguished companion. They evidently *told*, for she could not be mistaken; he certainly once or twice squeezed her arm—and the last fond words he uttered to her were "'Pon my soul—it's early: devilish sorry you're going—hope you've enjoyed yourself!" As the Tag-rags drove home, they were all loud in the praises of those whose splendid hospitality they had been enjoying. Possessing a daughter, for whom Mr Quirk must naturally have wished to make so splendid a match as that with Titmouse—only that she was plainly engaged to Mr Gammon—how kind and disinterested was Mr Quirk, in affording every encouragement in his power to the passion which Titmouse had so manifestly conceived for Miss Tag-rag! And was there ever so delightful a person as Gammon? How cordially he had shaken the hands of each of them

at parting! As for Miss Tag-rag, she felt that if her heart had not been so deeply engaged to Titmouse, she could have loved Mr Gammon!

"I hope, Tabby," said Mrs Tag-rag, with subdued excitement, as they rattled homeward, "that when you're Mrs Titmouse, you'll bring your dear husband to hear Mr Horror? You know, we ought to be grateful to the Lord—for He has done it!"

"La, ma, how can I tell?" quoth Miss Tag-rag petulantly. "I must go where Mr Titmouse chooses, of course; and no doubt he'll take sittings in one of the West End churches: you know, you go where 'pa goes—I go where Titmouse goes! But I will come sometimes, too—if it's only to show that I'm not above it, you know. La, what a stir there will be! The three Miss Knipps—I do so hope they'll be there! I'll have your pew, ma, lined with red velvet; it will look so genteel."

"I'm not quite so sure, Tabby, though," interrupted her father with a certain swell of manner, "that we shall, after a certain event, continue to live in these parts. There's such a thing as retiring from business, Tabby; besides, we shall naturally wish to be near you!"

"He's a *love* of a man, 'pa, isn't he?" interrupted Miss Tag-rag with irrepressible excitement. Her father folded her in his arms. They could hardly believe that they had reached Satin Lodge. That respectable structure, somehow or other, now looked to the eyes of all of them shrunk into contemptible dimensions; and they

turned up their noses, involuntarily, on entering the little passage. What was it to the spacious and splendid residence which they had quitted? And what, in all probability, could *that* be to the mansion—or any one, perhaps, of the several mansions—to which Mr Titmouse would be presently entitled, and—in his right—some one else?

Miss Tag-rag said her prayers that evening briefly—pausing for an instant to consider, whether she might in plain terms pray that she might soon become Mrs Titmouse; but the bare thought of such an event so excited her, that in a sort of confused whirl of delightful feeling, she suddenly jumped into bed, and slept scarce a wink all night long. Mr and Mrs Tag-rag talked together very fast for nearly a couple of hours, sleep long fleeing from eyes dazzled with so splendid a vision as that which had floated before them all day. At length Mr Tag-rag, getting tired sooner than his wife, became sullen and silent; and on her venturing—after a few minutes' pause—to mention some new idea which had occurred to her, he told her furiously to "hold her tongue, and let him go to sleep!" She obeyed him, lying awake till it was broad daylight. About eight o'clock, Tag-rag, who had overslept himself, rudely roused her—imperiously telling her to "go down immediately and see about breakfast;" then he knocked gently at his daughter's door; and on her asking who it was, said in a fond way—"How are you, Mrs T.?"

CHAPTER VI.

MR 'TITMOUSE'S MAGNIFICENT KINSMAN, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON, G.C.B.

WHILST the brilliant success of Tittlebat Titmouse was exciting so great a sensation amongst the inmates of Satin Lodge and Alibi House, there were also certain quarters in the upper regions of society, in which it produced a considerable commotion, and where it was contemplated with feelings of intense interest; nor without reason. For indeed to you, reflecting reader, much pondering men and manners, and observing the influence of great wealth, especially when suddenly and unexpectedly acquired, upon all classes of mankind—it would appear passing strange that so prodigious an event as that of an accession to a fortune of ten thousand a-year, and a large accumulation of money besides, could be looked on with indifference in those regions where MONEY

"Is like the air they breathe—if they have it not they die;"

in whose absence, all their "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends," disappear like snow under sunshine; the edifice of pomp, luxury, and magnificence that "rose like an exhalation," so disappears—

"And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,
Leaves not a rack behind."

Take away money, and that which raised its delicate and pampered possessors above the common condition of mankind—one of privation and incessant labour and anxiety—into one entirely artificial, engendering totally new wants and desires, is gone, all gone; and its occupants suddenly fall, as it were, through a highly rarified atmosphere, breathless and dismayed, into contact with the chilling exigen-

cies of life, of which till then they had only heard and read, sometimes with a kind of morbid sympathy; as we hear and read of a foreign country, not stirring the while from our snug homes, by whose comfortable and luxurious firesides we read of the frightful palsy of the polar regions, and for a moment sigh over and shudder at the condition of their miserable inhabitants, as vividly pictured to us by adventurous travellers.

If the reader had reverently cast his eye over the pages of that glittering centre of aristocratic literature, and inexhaustible solace against the ennui of a wet day—I mean *Debrett's Peerage*, his attention could not have failed to be riveted, amongst a galaxy of brilliant but minor stars, by the radiance of one transcendent constellation.

Behold; hush; tremble!

"**AUGUSTUS MORTIMER PLANTAGENET FITZ-URSE, EARL OF DREDDLINGTON, VISCOUNT FITZ-URSE, AND BARON DREDLINCOURT; KNIGHT OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE; G.C.B., F.C.S., F.P.S., &c., &c., &c.;** Lieutenant-General in the army; Colonel of the 37th regiment of light dragoons; Lord Lieutenant of —shire; elder brother of the Trinity House; formerly Lord Steward of the Household; born the 31st March, 17—; succeeded his father, PERCY CONSTANTINE FITZ-URSE, as fifth Earl, and twentieth in the Barony, January 10th, 17—; married, April 1, 17—, the Right Hon. Lady Philippa Emmeline Blanche Macspleuchan, daughter of Archibald, ninth Duke of Tantal-

lan, K.T., and has issue, an only child.

"**CÆCILIA PHILIPPA LEOPOLDINA PLANTAGENET**, born June 10, 17—.

"**TOWN RESIDENCE**, Grosvenor Square.
"SEATS, Gruneagholaghan Castle, Galway; Tre-ardevoraveor Manor, Cornwall; Llmryllwcrwpllgly Abbey, N. Wales; Tullyclachanach Palace, N. Britain; Poppleton Hall, Hertfordshire.

"**Earldom**, by patent, 1667; Barony, by writ of summons, 12th Hen. II."

Now, as to the above imposing list of seats and residences, be it observed that the existence of two of them, viz., Grosvenor Square and Poppleton Hall, was tolerably well ascertained by the residence of the august proprietor of them, and the expenditure therein of his princely revenue of £5000 a-year. The existence of the remaining ones, however, the names of which the diligent chronicler has preserved with such scrupulous accuracy, had become somewhat problematical since the era of the civil wars, and the physical derangement of the surface of the earth in those parts, which one may conceive to have taken place * consequent upon those events; those imposing feudal residences having been originally erected in positions so carefully selected with a view to their security against aggression, as to have become totally inaccessible—and indeed unknown, to the present inglorious and degenerate race, no longer animated by the spirit of chivalry and adventure.

[I have now recovered my breath, after my bold flight into the resplendent regions of aristocracy; but my eyes are still dazzled.]

The reader may by this time have got an intimation that Tittlebat Titmouse, in a madder freak of Fortune than any which her incomprehensible ladyship hath hitherto exhibited in the pages of this history, is far on his way towards a dizzy pitch of ele-

* See Dr Bubble's "Account of the late Landslips, and of the Remains of Subterranean Castles."—Quarto Edition, vol. iii. pp. 2000-2008.

vation,—viz. that he has now, owing to the verdict of the Yorkshire jury, taken the place of Mr Aubrey, and become heir-expectant to the oldest barony in the kingdom—between it and him only one old peer, and his sole child, an unmarried daughter, intervening. Behold the thing demonstrated to your very eye, in the Pedigree on the following page, which is only our former one † a little extended.

From this I think it will appear, that on the death of Augustus, fifth earl and twentieth baron, with no other issue than Lady Cecilia, the earldom being then extinct, the barony would descend upon the Lady Cecilia; and that, in the event of her dying without issue in the lifetime of her father, Tittlebat Titmouse would, on the Earl's death without other lawful issue, become **LORD DRELLINCOURT**, twenty-first in the barony! and in the event of her dying without issue, after her father's death, **TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE** would become the twenty-second **LORD DRELLINCOURT**; one or other of which two splendid positions, but for the enterprising agency of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, would have been occupied by **CHARLES AUBREY, Esq.**;—on considering all which, one cannot but remember a saying of an ancient poet, who seems to have kept as keen an eye upon the unaccountable frolics of the goddess Fortune, as this history shows that I have. 'Tis a passage which any well-taught schoolboy will translate to his mother or his sisters—

— "Hinc apicem rapax
 Fortuna cum stridore acuto
 Sustulit, hic possidisse gaudet." ‡

At the time of which I am writing, the Earl of Dreddlington was about sixty-seven years old; and he would have realised the idea of an incarnation of sublime PRIDE. He was of rather a slight make, and, though of a tolerably advanced age, stood as straight as an arrow. His hair was glossy, and white as snow: his features were of an aristocratic cast; their

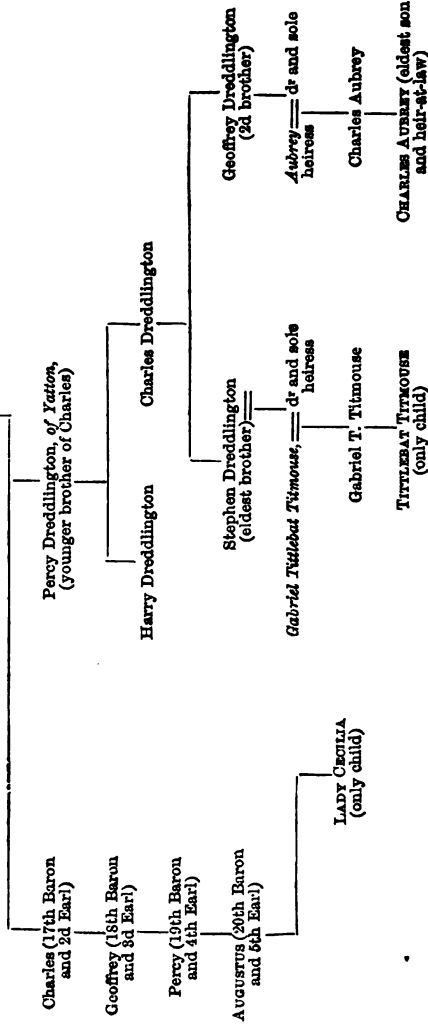
† Ante, vol. i. p. 210.

‡ Horace, Carm. l. 34, ad Menam.

Geoffrey de Drelinccourt
Summoned as Baron, by writ, 12 Hen. II.

From him : descend

Henry Dreddington, sixteenth Baron by writ,
created Earl of Dreddington 1667.



expression was severe and haughty; and I am compelled to say that there was scarce a trace of intellect perceptible in them. His manner and demeanour were cold, imperturbable, inaccessible; wherever he went, he, so to speak, radiated cold. Comparative poverty had embittered his spirit, as his lofty birth and ancient descent had generated the pride I have spoken of. With what calm and supreme self-satisfaction did he look down upon all lower in the peerage than himself! And as for a newly-created peer, he looked at such a being with ineffable disdain. Amongst his few equals he was affable enough; and amongst his inferiors he exhibited an insupportable appearance of condescension—one which excited a wise man's smile of pity and contempt, and a fool's anger—alike, however, naught to the Earl of Dreddlington!—If any one could have ventured upon a *post mortem* examination of so august a structure as the Earl's carcass, his heart would probably have been found of the size of a pea, and his brain soft and flabby; both, however, equal to the small occasions which, from time to time, called for the exercise of their functions. The former was occupied almost exclusively by two feelings—love of himself and of his daughter, because upon her would descend his barony; the latter exhibited its powers, supposing the brain to be the seat of the mind, in mastering the military details requisite for nominal soldiership; the game of whist; the routine of petty business in the House of Lords; and the etiquette of the court. One branch of useful knowledge by the way he had, however, completely mastered—that which is so ably condensed in *Debrett*; and he became a sort of oracle in such matters. As for his politics, he professed Whig principles—and was, indeed, a bitter though quiet partisan. In attendance to his senatorial duties, he practised an exemplary punctuality; was always to be found in the House at its sitting and rising; and never once, on any occasion, voted against his party. He had never been heard to speak in a

full House; first, because he never could summon nerve enough for the purpose; secondly, because he never had anything to say; and lastly, lest he should compromise his dignity, and destroy the *prestige* of his position, by not speaking better than any one else present. His services were not, however, entirely overlooked; for, on his party coming into office for a few weeks—they knew it could be for no longer a time—they made him Lord Steward of the Household; which was thenceforward an epoch to which he referred every event of his life. The great object of his ambition, ever since he had been of an age to form large and comprehensive views of action and conduct, to conceive superior designs, and to achieve distinction amongst mankind—was, to obtain a step in the peerage; for considering the antiquity of his family, and his ample, nay *superfluous* pecuniary means—so much more than adequate to support his present double dignity of earl and baron—he thought it but a reasonable return for his eminent political services, to confer upon him the honour which he coveted. But his anxiety on this point had been recently increased a thousand-fold by one circumstance. A gentleman who held an honourable and lucrative official situation in the House of Lords, and who never had treated the Earl of Dreddlington with that profound obsequiousness which the Earl conceived to be his due—but, on the contrary, had presumed to consider himself a man, and an Englishman, equally with the Earl—had, a short time before, succeeded in establishing his title to an earldom which had long been dormant, and was, alas! of creation earlier than that of Dreddlington. The Earl of Dreddlington took this untoward circumstance so much to heart, that for some months afterwards he appeared to be in a decline; always experiencing a dreadful inward spasm whenever the Earl of Fitzwalter made his appearance in the House. For this sad state of things there was plainly but one remedy—a *MARQUISATE*—at which the Earl gazed with the

wistful eye of an old and feeble ape at a cocoa-nut, just above his reach, and which he beholds at length grasped and carried off by some nimbler and younger rival.

Amongst all the weighty cares and anxieties of this life, however, I must do the Earl the justice to say, that he did not neglect the concerns of hereafter—the solemn realities of that Future revealed to us in the Scriptures. To his enlightened and comprehensive view of the state of things around him, it was evident that the Author of the world had decreed the existence of regular gradations of society. The following lines, quoted one night in the House by the leader of his party, had infinitely delighted the Earl:—

Oh, where DEGREE is shaken,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick!
Take but DEGREE away—untune that string,
And, hark! what discord follows! each thing
meets,

In mere oppugnancy!*

When the Earl discovered that this was the production of Shakespeare, he conceived a great respect for that writer, purchased a copy of his works, and had them splendidly bound. They were fated never to be opened, however, except at that one place where the famous passage in question was to be found. How great was the honour thus conferred upon the plebeian poet, to stand amidst a collection of royal and noble authors, to whose productions, and those in elucidation and praise of them, the Earl's splendid-looking library had till then been confined!—Since, thought the Earl, such is clearly the order of Providence in this world, why should it not be so in the next? He felt certain that in it would be found corresponding differences and degrees, in analogy to the differences and degrees existing upon earth; and with this view had read and endeavoured to comprehend the first page or two of a somewhat dry but learned book—Butler's *Analogy*—lent him by a deceased kinsman—a bishop. This consolatory conclusion of the Earl's was greatly strengthened by a passage of Scripture from which

* Troilus and Cressida, I. iii.

he had once heard the aforesaid courtly bishop preach—“*In my Father's house are MANY MANSIONS; if it had not been so, I would have told you.*” On grounds such as these, after much conversation with several old brother peers of his own rank, he and they—those wise and good men—came to the conclusion that there was no real ground for apprehending so grievous a misfortune as the huddling together hereafter of the great and small into one miscellaneous and ill-assorted assemblage; but that the rules of precedence, in all their strictness, as being founded in the nature of things, would meet with an exact observance, so that every one should be ultimately and eternally happy—in the company of his equals. The Earl of Dreddlington would have, in fact, as soon supposed, with the deluded Indian, that in his voyage to the next world—

“His faithful dog should bear him company;”

as that his lordship should be doomed to participate the same regions of heaven with any of his domestics; unless, indeed, by some, in his view, not improbable dispensation, it should form an ingredient in their cup of happiness in the next world, there to perform those offices—or analogous ones—for their old masters, which they had performed upon earth. As the earl grew older, these just, rational, and Scriptural views became clearer, and his faith firmer. Indeed, it might be said that he was in a manner ripening for immortality—for which his noble and lofty nature, he secretly felt, was fitter, and more likely to be in its element, than it could possibly be in this dull, degraded, and confused world. He knew that there his sufferings, in this inferior stage of existence, would be richly recompensed; for sufferings indeed he had, though secret, arising from the scanty means which had been allotted to him for the purpose of maintaining the exalted rank to which it had pleased God to call him. The long series of exquisite mortifications and pinching privations arising from this inadequacy of means, had, however, the Earl doubted not,

been designed by Providence as a trial of his constancy, and from which he would, in due time, issue like thrice-refined gold. Then also would doubtless be remembered in his favour the innumerable instances of his condescension in mingling, in the most open and courteous manner, with those who were unquestionably his inferiors; sacrificing his own feelings of lofty and fastidious exclusiveness, and endeavouring to advance the interests, and, as far as influence and example went, polish and refine the manners, of the lower orders of society. Such is an outline—alas, how faint and imperfect!—of the character of this great and good man, the Earl of Dreddlington. As for his domestic and family circumstances, he had been a widower for some fifteen years, his countess having brought him but one child, Lady Cecilia Philippa Leopoldina Plantagenet, who was, in almost all respects, the counterpart of her illustrious father. She resembled him not a little in feature, only that she partook of the plainness of her mother. Her complexion was delicately fair; but her features had no other expression than that of a languid hauteur. Her upper eyelids drooped as if she could hardly keep them open; the upper jaw projected considerably over the under one; and her front teeth were prominent and exposed. Frigid and inanimate, she seemed to take but little interest in anything on earth. In person, she was of average height, of slender and well-proportioned figure, and an erect and graceful carriage, only that she had a habit of throwing her head a little backward, which gave her a singularly disdainful appearance. She had reached her twenty-seventh year without having had an eligible offer of marriage, though she would be the possessor of a barony in her own right, and £5000 a-year; a circumstance which, it may be believed, not a little embittered her. She inherited her father's pride in all its plenitude. You should have seen the haughty couple sitting silently side by side in the old-fashioned yellow

family chariot, as they drove round the crowded park, returning the salutations of those they met, in the slightest manner possible! A glimpse of them at such a moment would have given you a far more just and lively notion of their real character, than the most anxious and laboured description of mine.

Ever since the first Earl of Dreddlington had, through a bitter pique conceived against his eldest son, the second earl, diverted the principal family revenues to the younger branch, leaving the title to be supported by only £5000 a-year, there had been a complete estrangement between the elder and the younger—the titled and the monied—branches of the family. On Mr Aubrey's attaining his majority, however, the present Earl sanctioned overtures being made towards a reconciliation, being of opinion that Mr Aubrey and Lady Cecilia might, by intermarriage, effect a happy reunion of family interests; an object, this, which had long lain nearer his heart than any other upon earth, till, in fact, it became a kind of passion. Actuated by such considerations, he had done more to conciliate Mr Aubrey than he had ever done towards any one on earth—but, in vain. Mr Aubrey's first delinquency was, an unqualified adoption of Tory principles. Now, all the Dreddlingtons, from time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, had been firm unflinching Tories, till the distinguished father of the present Earl quietly walked over, one day, to the other side of the House of Lords, completely fascinated by a bit of ribbon which the minister smilingly held up before him; and ere he had sate in that wonder-working region, the ministerial side of the House, twenty-four hours, he discovered that the true signification of Tory, was *bigot*—and of Whig, *patriot*: and he stuck to that version till it transformed him into a GOLD SICK, in which capacity he died, to the great grief and discomfiture of the nation; having repeatedly and solemnly impressed upon his son the

necessity and advantage of taking the same view of public affairs, that so he might, please Heaven, arrive at similar results. And in the way in which he had been *trained up*, most religiously had gone the Earl; and see the result: he, also, had attained to eminent and responsible office—to wit, that of Lord Steward of the Household. Now, things standing thus—how could the Earl so compromise his principles, and indirectly injure his party, as by suffering his daughter to marry a Tory? Great grief and vexation of spirit did this matter, therefore, occasion to that excellent nobleman. But, secondly, Aubrey not only declined to marry his cousin, but clenched his refusal, and sealed his final exclusion from the dawning good opinion and affections of the Earl, by marrying, as hath been seen, some one else—Miss St Clair. Thenceforth there was a great gulf between the Earl of Dreddlington and the Aubreys. Whenever they happened to meet, the Earl greeted him with an elaborate bow, and a petrifying smile; but for the last seven years not one syllable had passed between them. As for Mr Aubrey, he had never been otherwise than amused at the eccentric airs of his magnificent kinsman.—Now, was it not a hard thing for the Earl to bear—namely, the prospect there was that his barony and estates might devolve upon this same Aubrey or his issue? for Lady Cecilia, alas! enjoyed but precarious health, and her chances of marrying seemed daily diminishing. This was a thorn in the poor Earl's flesh; a source of constant *worry* to him, sleeping and waking: and proud as he was, and with such good reason, he would have gone down on his knees and prayed to Heaven to avert so direful a calamity—to see his daughter married—and with a prospect of perpetuating upon the earth the sublime race of the Dreddlingtons.

Such being the relative position of Mr Aubrey and the Earl of Dreddlington, at the time when this history opens, it is easy for the reader to imagine the lively interest with which the Earl first heard of the tidings that a

stranger had set up a title to the whole of the Yatton estates; and the silent but profound anxiety with which he continued to regard the progress of the affair. He obtained, from time to time, by means of confidential inquiries instituted by his solicitor, a general notion of the nature of the new claimant's pretensions; but, with a due degree of delicacy towards his unfortunate kinsman, his lordship studiously concealed the interest he felt in so important a family question as the succession to the Yatton property. The Earl and his daughter were exceedingly anxious to see the claimant; and when he heard that that claimant was a gentleman of "decided Whig principles"—the Earl was near setting it down as a sort of special interference of Providence in his favour, and one that, in the natural order of things, would lead to the accomplishment of his other wishes. Who could say that, before a twelvemonth had passed over, the two branches of the family might not be in a fair way of being reunited? And that thus, amongst other incidents, the Earl would be invested with the virtual patronage of the borough of Yatton, and, in the event of their return to power, his claim upon his party for his long-coveted marquisate rendered irresistible? He had gone to the Continent shortly before the trial of the ejection at York; and did not return till a day or two after the Court of King's Bench had solemnly declared the validity of the plaintiff's title to the Yatton property, and consequently established his contingent right of succession to the barony of Drelincourt. Of this event a lengthened account was given in one of the Yorkshire papers, which fell under the Earl's eye the day after his arrival from abroad; and to the report of the decision of the question of law, was appended the following paragraph:—

"In consequence of the above decision, Mr Aubrey, we are able to state on the best authority, has given formal notice of his intention to surrender the entire of the Yatton property without further litigation; thus making

the promptest amends in his power to those whom he has—we cannot doubt unwittingly—injured. He has also accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and has consequently retired from Parliament; so that the borough of Yatton is now vacant. We sincerely hope that the new proprietor of Yatton will either himself sit for the borough, and announce immediately his intention of doing so, or give his prompt and decisive support to some gentleman of decided Whig principles. We say *prompt*—for the enemy is vigilant and crafty. Men of Yatton! To the rescue!!!—Mr Titmouse is now, we believe, in London. This fortunate gentleman is not only at this moment in possession of the fine property at Yatton, with an unencumbered rent-roll of from twelve to fifteen thousand a-year, and a vast accumulation of rents to be handed over by the late possessor, but is now next but one in succession to the earldom of Dredlington and barony of Dreincourt, with the large family estates annexed thereto. We believe this is the oldest barony in the kingdom. It must be a source of great gratification to the present Earl, to know that his probable successor professes the same liberal and enlightened political opinions, of which his lordship has, during his long and distinguished public life, been so able, consistent, and uncompromising a supporter.”

The Earl of Dredlington was not a little flustered on seeing the above paragraph; which he read over half-a-dozen times with increasing excitement. The time had at length arrived for him to take decisive steps; nay, duty to his newly-discovered kinsman required it.

Messrs Titmouse and Gammon were walking arm-in-arm down Oxford Street, on their return from some livery-stables, where they had been looking at a horse which Titmouse was thinking of purchasing, when an incident occurred, that ruffled him not a little. He had been recognised and publicly accosted by a vulgar fellow, with a yard-measure in his hand, and a large parcel of drapery under his

arm—in fact, by our old friend Mr Huckaback. In vain did Mr Titmouse affect, for some time, not to see his old acquaintance, and to be earnestly engaged in conversation with Mr Gammon.

“Ah, Titty!—Titmouse!” exclaimed Huckaback, loudly and eagerly—“Well then—*Mister* Titmouse—how are you?—Devilish long time since we met!” Titmouse directed a look at him which he wished could have blighted him, and quickened his pace without taking any further notice of the presumptuous intruder. Huckaback’s blood was up, however—roused by this ungrateful and insolent treatment from one who had been under such great obligations to him; and quickening *his* pace also, he kept alongside with Titmouse.

“Ah,” continued Huckaback, “why do you cut me in this way, Titty? You aren’t ashamed of me surely? Many’s the time you’ve tramped up and down Oxford Street with your bundle and yard-measure, every bit the same as me, now”——

“Fellow!” at length exclaimed Titmouse indignantly, “Pon my life I’ll give you in charge if you go on so! Be off, you low fellow!—Dem vulgar brute!” he subjoined in a lower tone, bursting into perspiration, for he had not forgotten the insolent pertinacity of Huckaback’s disposition.

“My eyes! Give me in charge?” quoth Huckaback furiously,—“Come, I like that rather—you vagabond! Pay me what you owe me! You’re a swindler! You owe me fifty pounds, you do! You sent a man to rob me!”

“Will any one get a constable!” inquired Titmouse, who had got white as death. The little crowd that was collecting round them began to suspect, from Titmouse’s agitated appearance, that there must be some foundation for the charges made against him.

“Oh, go, get a constable! Nothing I should like better! Ah, my fine gentleman—what’s the time of day when chaps like you are wound up so high?”

Gammon’s interference was in vain. Huckaback got more abusive and

noisy; no constable was at hand; so, to escape the intolerable interruption and nuisance, Gammon beckoned a coach off the stand, which was close by; and, Titmouse and he stepping into it, they were soon out of sight and hearing of Mr Huckaback. Having taken a shilling drive, they alighted, and walked towards Covent Garden. As they approached the hotel, they observed a yellow chariot, at once elegant and somewhat old-fashioned, rolling away from the door. "I wonder who that is," said Gammon; "it's an earl's coronet on the panel; and a white-haired old gentleman was sitting low down in the corner"—

"Ah—it's no doubt a fine thing to be a lord, and all that—but I'll answer for it, some of 'em's as poor as a church mouse," replied Titmouse as they entered the hotel. At that moment the waiter, with a profound bow, presented him with a letter and a card, which had only the moment before been left for him. The card was thus:—

THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON.

GROSVENOR SQUARE.

and there was written on it, in pencil, in rather a feeble and hurried character—"For Mr Titmouse."

"My stars, Mr Gammon!" exclaimed Titmouse excitedly, addressing Mr Gammon, who also seemed greatly interested by the occurrence. They both repaired to a vacant table at the extremity of the room; and Titmouse, with not a little trepidation, hastily breaking a large seal which bore the Earl's family arms, with their crowded quarterings and grim supporters—better appreciated by Gammon, however, than by Titmouse—opened the ample envelope, and, unfolding its thick gilt-edged and slightly-scented enclosure, read as follows:—

"The Earl of Dreddlington has the honour of waiting upon Mr Titmouse,

in whom he is happy to have, though unexpectedly, discovered so near a kinsman. On the event which has brought this to pass, the Earl congratulates himself not less than Mr Titmouse, and hopes for the earliest opportunity of a personal introduction.

"The Earl leaves town to-day and will not return till Monday next, on which day he begs the honour of Mr Titmouse's company to dinner, at six o'clock. He may depend upon its being strictly a family reunion; the only person present, besides Mr Titmouse and the Earl, being the Lady Cecilia.

"Grosvenor Square, Thursday.
"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq., &c. &c."

As soon as Titmouse had read the above, still holding it in his hand, he gazed at Gammon with mute apprehension and delight. Of the existence, indeed, of the magnificent personage who had just introduced himself, Titmouse had certainly heard, from time to time, since the commencement of the proceedings which had just been so successfully terminated. He had seen the brightness, to be sure; but, as a sort of remote splendour, like that of a fixed star which gleamed brightly, but at too vast a distance to have any sensible influence, or even to arrest his attention. After a little while, he began to chatter volubly; but Gammon, after reading over the note once or twice, seemed not much inclined for conversation: and, had Titmouse been accustomed to observation, he might have gathered, from the eye and brow of Gammon, that that gentleman's mind was deeply occupied by some matter or other, probably suggested by the incident which had just taken place. Titmouse, by-and-by, called for pens, ink, and paper—"the very best gilt-edged paper, mind"—and prepared to reply to Lord Dreddlington's invitation. Gammon, however, who knew the peculiarities of his friend's style of correspondence, suggested that *he* should draw up, and Titmouse copy the following note. This was presently done; but when Gammon observed how thickly studded it was with capital letters, the numerous

flourishes with which it was gar-
nished, and its more than question-
able orthography, he prevailed on
Titmouse, after some little difficulty,
to allow him to transcribe the note
which was to be sent to Lord Dred-
dlington. Here is a copy of that
courteous document:—

“Mr Titmouse begs to present his
compliments to the Earl of Dreddling-
ton, and to express the high sense he
entertains of the kind consideration
evinced by his Lordship in his call
and note of to-day.

“One of the most gratifying cir-
cumstances connected with Mr Tit-
mouse’s recent success, is the dis-
tinguished alliance which his Lordship
has been so prompt and courteous in
recognising. Mr Titmouse will feel
the greatest pleasure in availing him-
self of the Earl of Dreddlington’s in-
vitation to dinner for Monday next.

“Cabbage-Stalk Hotel, Thursday.

“The Right Honble. the
“EARL OF DREDDLINGTON, &c. &c. &c.”

“Have you a ‘Peerage’ here,
waiter?” inquired Gammon, as the
waiter brought him a lighted taper.
Debrett was shortly laid before him;
and turning to the name of Dreddling-
ton, he read over the paragraph which
has been already laid before the reader.
“Humph—‘*Lady Cecilia*’—here she
is—his daughter—I thought as much
—I see!” This was what passed
through his mind, as—having left
Titmouse, who set off to deposit a
card and the above “Answer” at
Lord Dreddlington’s—he made his
way towards the delectable regions
in which their office was situated—
Saffron Hill. “Tis curious—amusing
—interesting, to observe the social
progress of this charming little fel-
low”—continued Gammon to him-
self—

“*Tug-rag*—and his daughter;

“*Quirk*—and his daughter;

“*The Earl of Dreddlington*—and
his daughter. How many more?
Happy! happy! happy Titmouse!”

CHAPTER VII

FAREWELL TO YATTON!

THE sun rising on Titmouse, was
setting upon the Aubreys. Dear,
delightful—now too dear, now too
delightful—Yatton! the shades of
evening are descending upon thee,
and thy virtuous but afflicted occu-
pants, who, early on the morrow, quit
thee for ever. Approach silently yon
conservatory. Behold, in the midst of
it, the dark slight figure of a lady, soli-
tary, motionless, in melancholy atti-
tude—her hands clasped before her:
it is Miss Aubrey. Her face is beauti-
ful, but grief is in her eye; and her
bosom heaves with sighs, which,
gentle though they be, are yet the
only sounds audible. Do you know

her?—Yes, that is the sweet and
once joyous Kate Aubrey!

’Twas she indeed; and this was her
last visit to her conservatory. Many
rare, delicate, and beautiful flowers
were there. The air was laden with
the fragrant odours which they ex-
haled, as it were in sighs, on account
of the dreaded departure of their
lovely mistress. At length she stoop-
ed down, and, in stooping, a tear fell
right upon the small sprig of geranium
which she gently detached from its
stem, and placed in her bosom. “Sweet
flowers,” thought she, “who will tend
you as I have tended you, when I am
gone? Why do you look now more

beautiful than ever you did before?" — Her eye presently fell upon the spot on which, till the day before, had stood her aviary. Poor Kate had sent it, as a present, to Lady De la Zouch, and it was then at Fotheringham Castle. What a flutter there used to be among the beautiful little creatures, when they perceived Kate's approach. She turned her head away. She felt oppressed, and attributed it to the closeness of the conservatory — the strength of the odours given out by the numerous flowers; but it was sorrow that oppressed her; and she was in a state at once of mental excitement, and physical exhaustion. The last few weeks had been an interval of exquisite suffering. She could not be happy alone, nor yet bear the company of her brother and sister-in-law, or their innocent and lovely children. Quitting the conservatory with a look of lingering fondness, she passed along into the house with a hurried step, and escaped, unobserved, to her chamber — the very chamber in which the reader obtained his first distant and shadowy glimpse of her; and in which, now entering it silently and suddenly, the door being only closed, not shut, she observed her faithful little maid Harriet, sitting in tears before a melancholy heap of packages prepared for travelling on the morrow. She rose as Miss Aubrey entered, and presently exclaimed passionately, bursting afresh into tears, "Ma'am, I *can't* leave you — indeed I can't! I know all your ways; I won't go to any one else! I shall hate service! and I know they'll hate *me* too; for I shall cry myself to death!"

"Come, come, Harriet," faltered Miss Aubrey, "this is foolish; nay, it is unkind to distress me in this manner at the last moment."

"Oh, ma'am, if you did but know how I love you? How I'd go on my knees to serve you all the rest of my life!"

"Don't talk in that way, Harriet; that's a good girl," said Miss Aubrey rather faintly, and, sinking into the chair, she buried her face in her handkerchief, "you know I've had a great

deal to go through, Harriet, and am in wretched spirits as it is!"

"I know it, ma'am, I do; and that's why I can't *bear* to leave you!" She sank on her knees beside Miss Aubrey. "Oh, ma'am, if you would but let me stay with you! I've been trying, ever since you first told me, to make up my mind to part from you, and, now it's coming to the time, I *can't*, ma'am — indeed, I can't! If you did but know, ma'am, what my thoughts have been, while I've been folding and packing up your dresses here! To think that I sha'n't be with you to unpack them! It's very hard, ma'am, that madam's maid is to go with her, and I'm not to go with *you*!"

"We were obliged to make a choice, Harriet," said Miss Aubrey, with forced calmness.

"Yes, ma'am; but why didn't you choose us both? Because we've both always done our best; and, as for me, you've never spoke an unkind word to me in your life" —

"Harriet, Harriet," said Miss Aubrey tremulously, "I've several times explained to you that we cannot any longer afford each to have our own maid; and Mrs Aubrey's maid is older than you, and knows how to manage children" —

"What signifies *affording*, ma'am? Neither she nor I will ever take a shilling of wages; I'd really rather serve you for nothing, ma'am, than any other lady for a hundred pounds a-year! Oh, so happy as I've been in your service, ma'am!" she added hastily, and burst into an agony of weeping.

"Don't, Harriet! — You would not, if you knew the pain you give me," said Miss Aubrey faintly. Harriet perceived Miss Aubrey's ill-concealed agitation; and starting aside, poured out a glass of water, and forced her pale mistress to swallow a little, which presently revived her.

"Harriet," said she, feebly, but firmly, "you have never once disobeyed me, and *now* I am certain that you will not. I assure you that we have made all our arrangements, and cannot alter them. I have been very fortunate in obtaining for you so kind a mistress

as Lady Stratton. Remember, Harriet, she was the oldest bosom friend of my"—Miss Aubrey's voice trembled, and she ceased speaking for a minute or two, during which she struggled against her feelings with momentary success. "Here's the prayer-book," she presently resumed, opening a drawer in her dressing-table, and taking out a small volume—"Here's the prayer-book I promised you; it is very prettily bound, and I have written your name in it, Harriet, as you desired. Take it, and keep it, for my sake. Will you?"

"Oh, ma'am," replied the girl bitterly, "I shall never bear to look at it! And yet I'll never part with it till I die!"

"Now leave me, Harriet, for a short time—I wish to be alone," said Miss Aubrey; and she was obeyed. She presently rose and bolted the door; and then, secure from interruption, walked slowly to and fro for some time; and a long and deep current of melancholy thoughts and feelings flowed through her mind and desolate heart. She had but a short time before seen her sister's sweet children put into their little beds for the last time at Yatton; and, together with their mother, had hung fondly over them, kissing and embracing them—their destined little fellow-wanderers—till her feelings compelled her to leave them. One by one, all the dear innumerable ties which had attached her to Yatton, and to everything connected with it, ever since her birth, had been severed and broken—ties, not only the strength, but very existence of which, she had scarce been aware of, till then. She had bade—as had all of them—repeated and agonising farewells to dear and old friends. Her heart trembled as she gazed at the objects familiar to her eye, and pregnant with innumerable little softening associations, ever since her infancy. Nothing around them now belonged to *them*—but to a stranger—to one who—she shuddered with disgust. She thought of the fearful position in which her brother was placed—entirely at the mercy of, it might be, selfish and rapacious men—

what indeed was to become of all of them? At length she threw herself into the large old easy-chair which stood near the window, and with a fluttering heart and hasty tremulous hand, drew an open letter from her bosom. She held it for some moments, as if dreading again to peruse it—but at length unfolded and read a portion of it. 'Twas full of fervent and at the same time delicate expressions of fondness; and after a short while, her hand dropped, with the letter, upon her lap, and she burst into a passionate flood of tears. After an interval of several minutes, she again took up the letter—read a little further—still more and more moved by the generous and noble sentiments it contained—and at length, utterly overcome, she again dropped her hand, and sobbed aloud long and vehemently. "It cannot—cannot—no, it *cannot* be," she murmured; and, yielding to her feelings for a long while, her tears showered down her pallid, beautiful cheeks.

At length, having resumed her perusal of the letter, she came to the conclusion. In a kind of agony she pressed the signature to her lips; and then hastily folding up the letter, replaced it whence she had taken it, and continued sobbing bitterly. Alas, what additional poignancy did this give to the agonies of her last evening at Yatton! She had become somewhat calmer by the time that she heard the door hastily, but gently tapped at, and then attempted to be opened. Miss Aubrey rose and unbolted it, and Mrs Aubrey entered, her beautiful countenance as pale and sad as that of her sister-in-law. The former, however, was both wife and mother; and the various cares which these relations had entailed upon her, at a bitter moment like the present, served, in some measure, to occupy her thoughts, and prevent her from being absorbed by the heart-breaking circumstances surrounding her. Suffering had, however, a little impaired her beauty; her cheek was very pale, and her eye and brow were laden with trouble.

"Kate, dear Kate," said she rather quickly, closing the door after her,

"what is to be done? Did you hear carriage-wheels a few moments ago? Who do you think have arrived? As I fancied would be the case, the De la Zouches!" Miss Aubrey trembled and turned pale. "You must see—you *must* see—Lady De la Zouch, Kate—they have driven from Fotheringham on purpose to take—*once more*—a last farewell! 'Tis very painful, but what can be done? You know what dear, dear, good friends they are!"

"Is Lord De la Zouch come, also?" inquired Miss Aubrey apprehensively.

"I will not deceive you, dearest Kate, they are *all* come; but *she*, only, is in the house: they are gone out to look for Charles, who is walking in the park." Miss Aubrey trembled violently; and after evidently a severe struggle with her feelings, the colour having entirely deserted her face, and left it of an ashy whiteness, "I cannot muster up resolution enough, Agnes," she whispered. "I know their errand!"

"Care not about their errand, love!" said Mrs Aubrey, embracing her fondly. "You shall not be troubled—you shall not be persecuted." Miss Aubrey shook her head, and grasped Mrs Aubrey's hand.

"They do not, Agnes, they *cannot* persecute me," replied Miss Aubrey with energy. "It is a cruel and harsh word to use—and!—consider how noble, how disinterested is their conduct; *that* it is which subdues me!"

Mrs Aubrey embraced still more closely her agitated sister-in-law, and tenderly kissed her forehead.

"Oh, Agnes!" faltered Miss Aubrey, pressing her hand upon her heart to relieve the intolerable oppression which she suffered—"would to Heaven that I had never seen—never thought of him!"

"Don't fear, Kate! that he will attempt to see you on so sad an occasion as this. Delamere is a man of infinite delicacy and generosity!"

"I know he is—I know he is," gasped Miss Aubrey, almost suffocated with her emotions.

"Stay, I'll tell you what to do; I'll go down and return with Lady de la

Zouch: we can see her here, undisturbed and alone, for a few moments; and then nothing painful *can* occur. Shall I bring her?" she inquired rising. Miss Aubrey did not dissent; and, within a few minutes' time, Mrs Aubrey returned, accompanied by Lady De la Zouch. She was rather an elderly woman. Her countenance was still handsome; and she possessed a very dignified carriage. She was of an affectionate disposition, and passionately fond of Miss Aubrey. Hastily drawing aside her veil as she entered the room, she stepped quickly up to Miss Aubrey, kissed her, and grasped her hands, for some moments, in silence.

"This is sad work, dearest," said she at length, hurriedly glancing at the luggage lying piled up at the other end of the room. Miss Aubrey made no answer, but shook her head. "It was useless attempting it, my love—we *could* not stay at home; we have risked being charged with cruel intrusion; forgive me, dearest, will you? *They*," said Lady De la Zouch pointedly, "will not come near you!" Miss Aubrey trembled. "I feel as if I were parting with an only daughter, Kate," said Lady De la Zouch with sudden emotion. "How your mamma and I loved one another!" said she fondly and burst into tears.

"For mercy's sake, open the window; I feel suffocated," faltered Miss Aubrey. Mrs Aubrey hastily drew up the window, and the cool refreshing breeze of evening quickly diffused itself through the apartment, and revived the drooping spirits of Miss Aubrey, who walked gently to and fro about the room, supported by Lady De la Zouch and Mrs Aubrey, and soon recovered a tolerable degree of composure. The three ladies presently stood, arm-in-arm, gazing through the deep bay window at the fine prospect which it commanded. The gloom of evening was beginning to steal over the landscape.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Aubrey faintly, with a deep sigh.

"The window in the northern tower of the Castle commands a still more

extensive view," said Lady De la Zouch, looking earnestly at Miss Aubrey, who, as if conscious of some agitating allusion, burst into tears. After standing gazing through the window for some time longer, they stepped back into the room, and were soon engaged in deep and earnest conversation.

For the last three weeks Mr Aubrey had addressed himself with calmness and energy to the painful duties which had devolved upon him, of *setting his house in order*. Immediately after quitting the dinner-table that day—a mere nominal meal to all of them—he had retired to the library, to complete the extensive and important arrangements consequent upon his abandonment of Yatton; and after about an hour thus occupied, he went forth to take a solitary walk—a melancholy—a last walk about the property. It was a moment which severely tried his fortitude; but that fortitude stood the trial. He was a man of lively sensibilities, and appreciated, to its utmost extent the melancholy and alarming change which had come over his fortunes. Surely even the bluntest and coarsest feelings which ever tried to disguise and dignify themselves under the name of STOICISM—to convert into bravery, and fortitude, a stupid, sullen insensibility—must have been not a little shaken by such scenes as Mr Aubrey had had to pass through during the last few weeks—scenes which I do not choose to distress the reader's feelings by dwelling upon in detail. Mr Aubrey had no mean pretensions to real philosophy; but he had still juster pretensions to an infinitely higher character—that of a CHRISTIAN. He had a firm unwavering conviction that whatever befell him, either of good or evil, was by the ordination of the Almighty—ininitely Wise, infinitely Good;—and this was the source of his fortitude and resignation. He felt himself here standing upon ground which was immovable.

To avert the misfortune which menaced him, he had neglected no rational and conscientious means. To retain the advantages of fortune and station to which he had believed himself born, he had made the most stren-

uous exertions consistent with a rigid sense of honour. What, indeed, could he have done, that he had not done? He had caused the claims of his opponent to be subjected to as severe a scrutiny as the wit of man could suggest; and they had stood the test. Those claims, and his own, had been each of them placed in the scales of justice; those scales had been held up and poised by the pure and firm hands to which the laws of God, and of the country, had committed the administration of justice: on what ground could a just and reasonable man quarrel with or repine at the issue? And supposing that a perverse and subtle ingenuity in his legal advisers could have devised means for delaying his surrender of the property to the individual who had been solemnly declared its true owner, what real and ultimate advantage could have been obtained by such a dishonourable line of conduct? Could the spirit of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION tolerate the bare idea of it? Could such purposes or intentions consist for one instant with the consciousness that the awful eye of God was always upon every thought of his mind, every feeling of his heart, every purpose of his will? A thorough and lively conviction of God's moral government of the world secured Aubrey a happy composure—a glorious and immovable resolution. It enabled him to form a true estimate of things; it extracted the sting from grief and regret; it dispelled the gloom which would otherwise have settled portentously upon the future. Thus he had not forgotten the exhortation which spoke unto him, as unto a child: *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.* And if, indeed, religion had not done this for Mr Aubrey, what could it have done, what would it have been worth? It would indeed have been that which dull fools suppose it—a mere name, a melancholy delusion. What hopeless and lamentable imbecility would it not have argued, to have acknowledged the reality and influence of religion in the hour of prosperity—and to have doubted, distrusted, or denied it in the

hour of adversity? When a child beholds the sun obscured by dark clouds, he may think, in his simplicity, that it is gone for ever; but a MAN knows that behind is the sun, magnificent as ever; and that the next moment, the clouds having rolled away, its glorious warmth and light are again upon the earth. Thus it is, thought Aubrey with humble but cheerful confidence, with the Almighty—who hath declared himself *the Father of the spirits of all flesh*—

“Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!
Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his works in vain:
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.”

“Therefore, O my God!” thought Aubrey, as he gazed upon the lovely scenes familiar to him from his birth, and from which a few short hours were to separate him for ever, “I do acknowledge Thy hand in what has befallen me, and Thy mercy which enables me to bear it, as from Thee.” The scene around him was tranquil and beautiful—inexpressibly beautiful. He stood under the shadow of a mighty elm-tree, the last in a long and noble avenue, which he had been pacing in deep thought for upwards of an hour. The ground was considerably elevated above the level of the rest of the park. No sound disturbed the serene repose of the approaching evening, except the distant and gradually diminishing sounds issuing from an old rookery, and the faint low babbling of a clear streamlet which flowed not far from where he stood. Here and there, under the deepening shadows cast by the lofty trees, might be seen the glancing forms of deer, the only live things visible. ‘Life,’ said Aubrey to himself, with a sigh, as he leaned against the trunk of the grand old tree under which he stood, and gazed with a fond eye on the lovely scenes stretching before him, to which the radiance of the departing sunlight communicated a tone of tender pensiveness; ‘life is, in truth, what the Scripture—what the voice of nature—represents it—a long journey, during which the traveller stops at many resting-places. Some of them are more, others less beauti-

ful; from some he parts with more, from others with less regret; but part he must, and pursue his journey, though he may often turn back to gaze with lingering fondness and admiration at the scene which he has last quitted. The next stage may be, as all his journey might have been, bleak and desolate; but, through that, he is only passing: he will not be condemned to stay in it, as he was not permitted to dwell in the other; he is still journeying on, along a route which he cannot mistake, to the point of his destination, his journey’s end—the shores of the vast, immeasurable, boundless ocean of eternity—**HIS HOME!**’

The deepening shadows of evening warned him to retrace his steps to the Hall. Before quitting the spot upon which he had been so long standing, he turned his head a little towards the right, to take a last view of an object which called forth tender and painful feeling—it was the old sycamore which his sister’s intercession had saved from the axe. There it stood, feeble and venerable object! its leafless silvery-grey branches becoming in the fading light, dim and indistinct, yet contrasting touchingly with the verdant strength of those near it. A neat strong fence had been placed around it; but how much longer would it receive such care and attention? Aubrey thought of the comparison which had on a former occasion been made by his sister; and sighed heavily as he looked his last at the old tree. Then he slowly walked on towards the Hall. When about halfway down the avenue, he beheld two figures apparently approaching him, but undistinguishable in the gloom and the distance. As they neared him, he recognised Lord De la Zouch and Mr Delamere. Suspecting the object of their visit which a little surprised him, since they had taken a final leave, and a very affecting one, the day before, he felt a little anxiety and embarrassment. Nor was he entirely mistaken. Lord De la Zouch, who advanced alone towards Aubrey—Mr Delamere turning back—most seriously pressed his son’s

suit for the hand of Miss Aubrey, as he had often done before; declaring, that though undoubtedly he wished a year or two first to elapse, during which his son might complete his studies at Oxford, there was no object dearer to the heart of Lady De la Zouch and himself, than to see Miss Aubrey become their daughter-in-law. "Where," said Lord De la Zouch, with much energy, "is he to look elsewhere for such an union of beauty, of accomplishments, of amiability, of high-mindedness?" After a great deal of animated conversation on this subject, during which Mr Aubrey assured Lord De la Zouch that he would say everything which he honourably could to induce his sister to entertain, or at all events, not to discard the suit of Delamere; at the same time reminding him of the firmness of her character, and the hopelessness of attempting to change any determination to which she might have been led by her sense of delicacy and honour,—Lord De la Zouch addressed himself in an earnest manner to matters more immediately relating to the personal interests of Mr Aubrey; entered with lively anxiety into all his future plans and purposes; and once more pressed upon him the acceptance of munificent offers of pecuniary assistance, which, with many fervent expressions of gratitude, Aubrey again declined. But he pledged himself to communicate freely with Lord De la Zouch, in the event of an occasion arising for such assistance as his Lordship had already so generously volunteered. By this time Mr Delamere had joined them, regarding Mr Aubrey with infinite earnestness and apprehension. All, however, he said, was—and in a hurried manner to his father—"My mother is waiting for you in the carriage, and wishes that we should immediately return." Lord De la Zouch and his son again took leave of Mr Aubrey. "Remember, my dear Aubrey, remember the pledges you have repeated this evening," said the former. "I do, I will!" replied Mr Aubrey, as they each wrung his hands; and then, having grasped

those of Lady De la Zouch, who sat within the carriage powerfully affected, the door was shut; and they were quickly borne away from the presence and the residence of their afflicted friends. While Mr Aubrey stood gazing after them, with folded arms, in an attitude of melancholy abstraction, at the Hall door, he was accosted by Dr Tatham, who had come to him from the library, where he had been, till a short time before, busily engaged reducing into writing various matters which had been the subject of conversation between himself and Mr Aubrey during the day.

"I am afraid, my dear friend," said the Doctor, "that there is a painful but interesting scene awaiting you. You will not, I am sure, forbear to gratify, by your momentary presence in the servants' hall, a body of the tenantry, who are there assembled, having come to pay you—good souls!—their parting respects."

"I would really rather be spared the painful scene," said Mr Aubrey with emotion. "I am nearly unnerved as it is! Cannot you bid them adieu, in my name? and say God bless them!"

"You must come, my dear friend! If it be painful, it will be but for a moment; and the recollection of their hearty and humble expressions of affection and respect will be pleasant hereafter. Poor souls!" he added, with not a little emotion, "you should see how crowded is Mr Griffiths' room with the presents they have each brought you, and which would surely keep your whole establishment for months!—Cheeses, tongues, hams, bacon, and I know not what beside!"

"Come, Doctor," said Mr Aubrey quickly, and with evidently a great effort, "I will see them, my humble and worthy friends! if it be for but a moment; but I would rather have been spared the scene." He followed Dr Tatham into the spacious servants' hall, which he found nearly filled by some forty or fifty of his late tenantry, who, as he entered, rose in troubled silence to receive him. There were lights, by which a hurried glance

sufficed to show him the deep sorrow visible in their countenances. "Well, sir," commenced one of them after a moment's hesitation—he seemed to have been chosen the spokesman of those present—"we've come to tak' our leave; and a sad time it be for all of us, and it may be, sir, for you." He paused, and added abruptly—"I thought I could have said a word or two, sir, in the name of all of us, but I've clean forgotten all; and I wish we could all forget that we were come to part with you, sir;—but we sha'n't—no, never!—we shall never see your like again, sir! God help you, sir!" Again he paused, and struggled hard to conceal his emotions. Then he tried to say something further, but his voice failed him.

"Squire, it may be law; but it be not justice, we all do think, that hath taken Yatton from you, that was born to it," said one, who stood next to him who had first spoke. "Who ever heard o' a scratch in a bit of paper signifying the loss o' so much? It never were heard of afore, sir, and cannot be right!"

"You'll forgive me, Squire," said another, "but we shall never tak' t' new one that's coming after you!"

"My worthy—my dear friends," commenced Mr Aubrey, with melancholy and forced composure, as he stood beside Dr Tatham, "this is a sad trial to me—one which I had not expected, and am quite unprepared for. I have had lately to go through many painful scenes; but few more so than the present. My dear friends, I can only say from my heart, God bless you all! I shall never forget you, whom I have always respected, and indeed been very proud of, as my tenantry, and whom I now, of course, look at as my friends only. We shall never forget you"—

"Lord Almighty bless you, sir, and Madam and Miss, and little Miss—and the little squire!" said a voice in a vehement manner, from amidst the throng, in tones which went to Mr Aubrey's heart. His lips quivered, and he ceased speaking for some moments. At length he resumed.

"You see my feelings are a little shaken by the sufferings which I have gone through. I have only a word more to say to you. Providence has seen fit, my friends, to deprive me of that which I had deemed to be my birthright. God is good and wise; and I bow, as we must all bow, to His will with reverence and resignation. And also, my dear friends, let us always submit cheerfully to the laws under which we live. We must not quarrel with their decision, merely because it happens to be adverse to our own wishes. I, from my heart—and so must you, from yours—acknowledge a firm, unshaken allegiance to the laws; they are ordained by God, and he demands our obedience to them! society cannot exist without them"—He paused. "I have to thank you," he presently added, in a subdued tone, "my worthy friends, for many substantial tokens of your good-will, brought with you this evening. I assure you sincerely that I value them far more"—he paused, and it was some moments before he could proceed—"than if they had been of the most costly and splendid description!"

"Lord, only hearken to t' Squire!" called out a voice, as if on an impulse of eager affection, which its rough, honest speaker could not resist. This seemed entirely to deprive Mr Aubrey of the power of utterance, and he turned suddenly towards Dr Tatham with an overflowing eye and a convulsive quivering of the lips which showed the powerful emotions with which he was contending. The next moment he stepped forward and shook hands with those nearest. He was quickly surrounded, and every one present grasped his hands, scarcely any of them able to utter more than a brief but fervent "God bless you, sir!"

"I am sure, my friends," said Dr Tatham, almost as much affected as any of them, "that you cannot wish to prolong so afflicting a scene as this. Mr Aubrey is much exhausted, and has a long journey to take early in the morning—and you had better now leave."

"Farewell! farewell, my kind and dear friends, farewell!—May God bless you all, and all your families!" said Mr Aubrey, and, powerfully affected, withdrew from a scene which he was not likely ever to forget. He retired, accompanied by Dr Tatham, to his library; where Mr Griffiths, his steward, was in readiness to receive his signature to various documents. This done, the steward, after a few hurried expressions of affection and respect, withdrew; and Mr Aubrey had then completed all the arrangements, and transacted all the business, which had required his attention before quitting Yatton: which, at an early hour in the morning, he was going to leave; having determined to go direct to London, instead of accepting any of the numerous offers from his friends in the neighbourhood, to take up with them his abode for, at all events, some considerable period. That, however, would have been entirely inconsistent with the plans for his future life, which he had formed and matured. He left the whole estate in admirable order and condition. There was not a farm vacant, not a tenant dissatisfied with the terms under which he held. Every document, all the accounts connected with the estate, after having been carefully examined by Mr Parkinson, and Mr Aubrey, and Mr Griffiths, were in readiness for the most scrupulous and searching investigation on the part of Mr Aubrey's successor and his agents.

Mr Aubrey's library was already carefully packed up, and was to follow him, on the ensuing day, to London, by water; as also were several portions of the furniture—the residue of which was to be sold off within a day or two's time. How difficult—how very difficult had it been for them to choose which articles they would part with, and which retain! The favourite old high-backed easy-chair, which had been worked by Miss Aubrey herself; the beautiful ebony cabinet, which had been given by her father to her mother, who had given it to Kate; the little chairs of Charles and Agnes—and in which Mr Aubrey and Kate,

and all their brothers and sisters—long since deceased—had sat when children; Mrs Aubrey's piano; these, and a few other articles, had been successfully pleaded for by Mrs Aubrey and Kate, and were to accompany, or rather follow them to London, instead of passing, by the auctioneer's hammer, into the hands of strangers. The two carriage-horses, which had drawn old Mrs Aubrey in the family coach for many years, were to be turned to grass, for the rest of their days, at Lady Stratton's. Poor old Peggy was, in like manner, to have to herself a little field belonging to Dr Tatham. Little Charles's pony, a beautiful animal, and most reluctantly parted with, was sent as a present, in his name, to little Sir Harry Oldfield, one of his playfellows. Hector, the magnificent Newfoundland dog, was, at the vehement instance of Pumpkin, the gardener, who had almost gone upon his knees to beg for the animal, and declared that he loved the creature like a son—as I verily believe he did, for they were inseparable, and their attachment was mutual—given up to him, on his solemn promise to take great care of him. Then there was a poor animal which they hardly knew how to dispose of. It was a fine old favourite staghound, stone-blind, quite grey about the head, and so very feeble that it could but just crawl in and out of its commodious kennel, and lie basking in the genial sunshine; wagging its tail when any one spoke to it, and affectionately licking the hand that patted it. Thus had it treated Mr Aubrey that very morning, as he stood by, and stooped down to caress it for the last time. It was, at his earnest request, assigned to Dr Tatham, kennel and all; indeed the worthy little Doctor would have crammed the whole of his little premises in a similar way, in order to have the more "keepsakes" and "memorials" of his friends. Miss Aubrey's beautiful Blenheim spaniel, with its brilliant black eyes, and long glossy graceful ears, was to accompany her to London.

As for the servants—the house-keeper was going to keep the house

of her brother, a widower, at Grilston, and the butler was going to marry, and quit service. As for the rest, Mr Parkinson had, at Mr Aubrey's desire, written about them to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and Mr Gammon had sent word that such members of the establishment as chose, might continue at Yatton, at all events till the pleasure of Mr Titmouse, upon the subject, should have been known. All the servants had received a quarter's wages that morning from Mr Griffiths, in the presence of Mr Aubrey, who spoke kindly to each, and earnestly recommended them to conduct themselves respectfully towards his successor. Scarce any of them could answer him, otherwise than by an humble bow, or curtsy, accompanied by sobs and tears. One of them did contrive to speak, and passionately expressed a wish that the first morsel Mr Titmouse eat in the house might choke him—a sally which received so grave a rebuke from Mr Aubrey, as brought the hasty offender to her knees, begging forgiveness; which, I need hardly say, she received, but with a serious admonition. Several vehemently entreated to be allowed to accompany Mr Aubrey and his family to London, and continue in their service, but in vain. Mr Aubrey had made his selection, having taken only his own valet, and Mrs Aubrey's maid, and one of the nursery-maids, and declaring that on no consideration would he think of being accompanied by any other of the servants.

There were some twenty or thirty poor old infirm cottagers, men and women, who had been for years weekly pensioners on the bounty of Yatton, and respecting whom Mr Aubrey felt a painful anxiety. What could he do? He gave the sum of fifty pounds to Dr Tatham for their use; and requested him to press their claims earnestly upon the new proprietor of Yatton. He also wrote almost as many letters, as there were of these poor people, on their behalf to his friends and neighbours. Oh, it was a moving scene which had occurred at each of their little cottages, when their benefactors,

Mr Aubrey, his wife, and sister, severally called to bid them farewell, and receive their humble and tearful blessings! But it was the parting with her school, which neither Kate nor her brother saw any probability of being kept up longer than for a month or two after their departure, which had occasioned Kate the greatest distress. There were several reasons, which will occur to the reader, why no application could be made, about the matter, from her, or on her account, to Mr Titmouse; even if she had not had reason to anticipate, from what she had heard of his character, that he was a person unlikely to feel any interest in such an institution. Nor had she liked to trouble or burden the friends whom she left behind her, with the responsibility of supporting and superintending her little establishment. She had nothing for it, therefore, but to prepare the mistress, and her scholars, for the breaking up of the school, within a month of her departure from Yatton. She gave the worthy woman, the mistress, a present of a five-pound note; and five shillings to each of the children. She felt unequal to the task of personally taking leave of them, as she had intended, and several times attempted. She therefore, with many tears, wrote the following lines, and gave them to Dr Tatham, to read aloud in the school, when their good and beautiful writer should be far on her way towards London. The little Doctor paused a good many times while he read it, and complained of his glasses.

“ My dear little girls,—You know that I have already bid each of you good-by; and though I tried to say something to all of you at once, I was not able, because I was so sorry to part with you, and tell you that my little school must be given up. So I have written these few lines, to tell you that I love you all, and have tried to be a good friend to you. Be sure not to forget your spelling and reading, and your needle. Your mothers have promised to hear you say your catechisms; you must also be sure to say your prayers, and to

read your Bibles, and to behave very seriously at church, and to be always dutiful to your parents. Then God will bless you all! I hope you will not forget us, for we shall often think of you when we are a great way off; and Dr Tatham will now and then write and tell us how you are going on. Farewell, my dear little girls; and may God bless and preserve you all! This is the prayer of both of us—Mrs Aubrey and

“CATHERINE AUBREY.

“*Yatton, 15th May 18—.*”

The above was not written in the uniform and beautiful hand usual with Miss Aubrey; it was, on the contrary, rather irregular, and evidently written hastily;—but Dr Tatham preserved it to the day of his death, and always thought it beautiful.

On the ensuing morning, at a very early hour, Dr Tatham left the vicarage, to pay his last visit to friends whom it almost broke his heart to part with, in all human probability for ever. He started, but on a moment's reflection ceased to be surprised, at the sight of Mr Aubrey approaching him from the direction of the little churchyard. He was calm, but his countenance bore the traces of recent emotion. They greeted each other in silence, and so walked on for some time, arm-in-arm, slowly, towards the Hall. It was a dull heavy morning, almost threatening rain. The air seemed full of oppression. The only sounds audible were the hoarse clamorous sounds issuing from the old rookery, at some distance on their left. Mr Aubrey and Dr Tatham interchanged but few words, as they walked along the winding pathway, to the Hall. The first thing which attracted their eyes, after passing under the gateway, was the large old family carriage, standing opposite the Hall door, where stood some luggage, sufficient for the journey, ready to be placed upon it; the remainder having been sent on the day before to London. How mournful was the sight! On entering the Hall, they found its heartbroken inmates all up,

and dressed. The children were taking their last breakfast in the nursery; Charles making many inquiries of the weeping servants, which they could answer only by tears and kisses. In vain was the breakfast-table spread for the senior travellers. There sat poor Kate, in travelling trim, before the antique silver urn, attempting to perform, with tremulous hand, her accustomed office; but neither she nor Mrs Aubrey was equal to the task; which, summoning the housekeeper into the room, they devolved upon her, and which she was scarce able to perform. Mr Aubrey and Dr Tatham were standing there; but neither of them spoke. A short time before, Mr Aubrey had requested the servants to be summoned, as usual, to morning prayer, in the accustomed room, and requested Dr Tatham to officiate. As soon, however, as the sorrowful little assemblage was collected before him, he whispered to Mr Aubrey that he felt unequal to go through the duty with the composure which it required; and after a pause, he said, “Let us kneel down;” and in a low voice, often interrupted by his own emotions, and the sobs of those around him, he read, with touching simplicity and solemnity, the ninety-first psalm; adding the Lord's prayer, and a tremulous benediction.

The bitter preparations for starting at an early hour, seven o'clock, were soon afterwards completed. Half smothered with the kisses and caresses of the affectionate servants, little Charles and Agnes were already seated in the carriage, on the laps of their two attendants, exclaiming eagerly, “Come, papa! come, mamma! What a while you are!” Just then, poor Pumpkin, the gardener, scarce able to speak, made his appearance, his arms full of nosegays, which he had been culling for the last two hours—having one a-piece for each of the travellers, servants, and children, and all. The loud angry bark of Hector was heard from time to time, little Charles calling loudly for him; but Pumpkin had fastened him up, for fear of his starting off after the carriage. At length,

having scarcely tasted breakfast, the travellers made their appearance at the Hall door. Kate and Mrs Aubrey were utterly overcome at the sight of the carriage, and wept bitterly. They threw their arms passionately around, and fervently kissed, their venerable friend and pastor, Dr Tatham, who was grievously agitated. Then they tore themselves from him, and hastily got into the carriage. As he stood alone, bareheaded, on their quitting him, he lifted his hands, but could scarce utter a parting benediction. Mr Aubrey, almost overpowered with his emotions, then grasped his hand, whispering, "Farewell, my dear and venerable friend! Farewell!" "The Lord God of thy fathers bless thee!"* murmured Dr Tatham, clasping Mr Aubrey's hand in both of his own, and looking solemnly upward. Mr Au-

brey, taking off his hat, turned towards him an unutterable look; then, waving his hand to the group of agitated servants standing within and without the door, he stepped into the carriage; the door was shut; and they rolled slowly away. Outside the park gates were collected more than a hundred people, to bid them farewell—all the men, when the carriage came in sight, taking off their hats. The carriage stopped for a moment. "God bless you all! God bless you!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, waving his hand, whilst from each window were extended the white hands of Kate and Mrs Aubrey, both of which were fervently kissed and shaken by those who were nearest. Again the carriage moved on; and, quickening their speed, the horses soon bore them out of the village. Within less than half an hour afterwards, the tearful eyes of the travellers, as they passed a familiar turning of the road, had looked their last on Yatton!

* These were the last words addressed to the author by his blind and very aged grandfather—then not far from his hundredth year.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

MR TITMOUSE'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO VERY HIGH LIFE INDEED. A DINNER WITH AN EARL, IN GROSVENOR SQUARE!

RANK hardly ever fails to attract and dazzle vulgar and feeble optics; and the belief that such is its effect upon mankind generally, is unspeakably gratifying to a vain and ignorant possessor of that rank. Of the truth of one part of this observation, take as an illustration the case of Tittlebat Titmouse; of the other, that of the Earl of Dreddlington. The former's dinner engagement with the latter, his august and awful kinsman, was an event of such magnitude as to absorb almost all his faculties in the contemplation of it, and also occasion him great anxiety in preparing for an effective appearance upon so signal an occasion. Mr Gammon had repeatedly, during the interval, instructed his anxious pupil, if so he might be called, as to the manner in which he ought to behave. He was—Heaven save the mark, poor Titmouse!—to assume an air of mingled deference, self-possession, and firmness; not, on the one hand, to be overawed by the greatness with which he would be brought into contact, nor, on the other, unduly elated by a sense of his own suddenly acquired importance. He was, on the contrary, to steer evenly between the extremes of timorousness and temerity—to aim, at least, at that happy mean, so grateful to those able to appreciate the effort, and object, of those who had attained to it. Titmouse was to

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remember that, great as was the Earl of Dreddlington, he was yet but a man—related, too, by consanguinity, to him, the aforesaid Titmouse; who might, moreover, before many years should have elapsed, become himself Lord Drelincourt, and by consequence equally entitled, with the present possessor of that resplendent rank, to the homage of mankind. At the same time that the Earl's advanced years gave him a natural claim to the reverence of his young kinsman—whom his Lordship was about to introduce into the sublime regions of aristocracy, and also of political society—Titmouse might extract a few ingredients of consolation from the reflection, that his income probably exceeded, by a third, that of the Earl of Dreddlington. This is the sum of Mr Gammon's general instructions to his eager and excited pupil; but he also gave Titmouse many minor hints and suggestions. He was to drink but little wine—whereat Titmouse demurred somewhat vehemently, and asked, "How the d—l he was to get his steam up without it?"—and on no account to call for beer or porter, to which plebeian beverages, indeed, he might consider himself as having bid a long and last adieu;—to say occasionally, only, "my lord" in addressing the Earl—and "Lady Cecilia" in addressing Lady Cecilia;—and,

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above all, never to appear in a hurry, but to do and say whatever he had to do and say calmly; for that the nerves of aristocracy were very delicate, and could not bear a bustle, or the slightest display of energy or feeling. Then, as to his dress—Gammon, feeling himself treading on very doubtful ground, intimated merely that the essence of true fashion was simplicity—but here Titmouse grew fidgety, and his Mentor ceased.

During the night that ushered in the eventful day on which Titmouse dined with the Earl of Dreddlington, our friend got but little sleep. Early in the morning he engaged a respectable glass-coach to convey him westward in the evening, in something like style; and before noon his anxieties were set at rest by the punctual arrival of various articles of dress, decoration, and scent—for Titmouse had a great idea of scents. As for his new watch and its brilliant gold guard-chain—ambitious reader! you should have seen them! About half-past four o'clock Titmouse retired to his bedroom, and resigned himself into the hands of Mr Twirl, the tip-top hairdresser from the Strand, whose agreeable manipulations, and still more agreeable small-talk, occupied upwards of an hour; Titmouse, from time to time, giving the anxious operator abundant notice of the high quarter in which his handiwork was likely soon to be scrutinised.

"Pray-a, can you tell me," quoth Titmouse drawlingly, shortly after Twirl had commenced his operations, "how long it will take me to get from this infernal part of the town to Grosvenor Square? Dem long way, isn't it, Mr What's-your-name?"

"Grosvenor Square, sir?" said Twirl glibly, but with a perceptible dash of deference in his tone; "why, it is as one might say a tolerable way off, certainly; but you can't well miss your way there, sir, of all places in town"—

"My coachman," interrupted Titmouse, with a fine air, "of course, had I thought of it, he must know, dem him, of course!"

"Oh! to be sure, sir. There's none but people of the most highest rank lives in that quarter, sir. Excuse me, sir, but I've a brother-in-law that's valet to the Duke of Dunderwhistle there"—

"Indeed! How far off is that from Lord Dreddlington's?" inquired Titmouse carelessly.

"Lord Dreddlington's, sir?—Well, I never! Isn't it particular strange, if that's where you're going, sir—the next door to the Duke's—the very next door, sir!"

"Pon my life, is it indeed? How devilish odd!"

"Know the Earl of Dreddlington then, I presume, sir?"

"Ya-as, I should think so; he's my—my—relation, that's all; and devilish near too!"

Mr Twirl instantly conceived a kind of reverence for the gentleman upon whom he was operating.

"Well, sir," he presently added, in a still more respectful tone than before, "p'r'aps you'll think it a liberty, sir; but, do you know, I've several times had the honour of seeing his Lordship in the street at a little distance—and there's a—a family likeness between you, sir—'pon my word, sir. It struck me, directly I saw you, that you was like some *nob* I'd seen at the other end of the town." [Here Titmouse experienced pleasurable sensations, similar to those said to be enjoyed by a cat when you pass your hand down its glossy coat in the right direction.] "Will you allow me, sir, to give your hair a good brushing, sir, before I dress it? I always like to take the greatest pains with the hair of my quality customers!—Do you know, sir, that I had the honour of dressing his Grace's hair for a whole fortnight together, once when my brother-in-law was ill; and though p'r'aps I oughtn't to say it, his Grace expressed the highest satisfaction at my exertions, sir."

"Pon my life, and I should say you were an uncommon good hand—I've known lots worse, I assure you; men that would have spoiled the best head of hair going, by Jove!"

"Sir, you're very kind. I assure you, sir, that to do justice to a gent's hair requires an uncommon deal of practice, and a sort of nat'ral talent for it besides. Lord, sir! how much depends on a gent's hair, don't it! Of two coming into a room, it makes all the difference, sir! Believe me, sir, it's no use being well-dressed, nay, nor good-looking, if as how the hair a'n't done—what I call—correct!"

"By Jove, I really think you're nigh about the mark," said Titmouse; and after a pause, during which Mr Twirl had been brushing away at one particular part of the head with some vehemence; "well," he exclaimed, with a sigh, ceasing, for a moment his vigorous exertions—"I'm blest if I can manage it, do what I will!"

"Eh? What's that? What is it?" inquired Titmouse a little alarmedly.

"Why, sir, it's what we gents, in our profession, calls a feather, which is the most hobstinatest thing in nature."

"What's a feather?" quoth Titmouse, rather faintly.

"You see, sir, 'tis when a small lot of hair on a gent's head will stick up, do all we can to try and get it down; and (excuse me, sir), you've got a regular rattler!" Titmouse put up his hand to feel, Twirl guiding it to the fatal spot; there it was, just as Twirl had described it.

"What's to be done?" murmured Titmouse.

"I'm afraid, sir, you don't use our OSTRICH GREASE and RHINOCEROS MARROW, sir."

"Your what!" cried Titmouse apprehensively, with a dismally distinct recollection of the tragedy of the Cyanochaitanthropopoion, and the Damascus Cream, and the Tetaragmenon Abracadabra; matters which he at once mentioned to Mr Twirl.

"Ah, it's not my custom, sir," quoth Twirl, "to run down other gents' inventions; but my real opinion is, that they're all an imposition—a rank imposition, sir. I didn't like to say it, sir; but I soon saw there had been somebody a-practising on your hair."

"What, is it very plain?" cried Tit-

mouse, with a kind of horror, starting up and stepping to the glass.

"No, sir—not so very plain; only you've got, as I might say, accustomed to the sight of it; but when it's properly curled, and puckered up, and frizzed about, it won't show—nor the feather neither, sir; so, by your leave, here goes, sir;" and, after about a quarter of an hour's more labour, he succeeded in parting it right down the middle of the head, bringing it out into a bold curl towards each eyebrow, and giving our friend quite a new and fascinating appearance, even in his own eyes. And as for the colour—it really was not so marked, after all; a little purple-hued and mottled, to be sure, in parts, but not to a degree to attract the eye of a casual observer. Twirl having declared, at length, his labours completed—regarding Titmouse's head with a look of proud satisfaction—Titmouse paid him half-a-crown, and also ordered a pot of ostrich grease and of rhinoceros marrow, (the one being *suet*, the other *lard*, differently scented and coloured), and was soon left at liberty to proceed with the important duties of the toilet. It took him a good while; but in the end he was supremely successful. He wore black tights, (*i. e.*, pantaloons fitting closely to his legs, and tied round his ankles with black ribbons), silk stockings, and shoes with glittering silver buckles. His white neckerchief was tied with great elegance, not a wrinkle superfluous being visible in it. His shirt-front of lace had two handsome diamond pins, connected together by a little delicate gold chain, glistening in the midst of it. Then he had a white waistcoat edge, next a crimson one, and lastly a glorious sky-blue satin waistcoat, spangled all over with gold flowers inwrought—and across it hung his new gold watch-guard, and his silver guard for his eye-glass, producing an inconceivably fine effect. On the little finger of each hand he wore a massive-chased gold ring. His coat was of a light brown, of exquisite cut, fitting him as closely as if he had been born in it, and with burnished brass buttons, of sugar-loaf shape. 'Twas

pped also with great judgment, and really took off more of his round-shouldered awkwardness of figure, than any coat he had ever worn before. Then he had a fine white pocket-handkerchief, soaked in lavender water; and immaculate white kid gloves. Thus habited, he stood before his glass, bowing fifty different times, and adjusting his expression to various elegant forms of address. He was particularly struck with the combined effect of the two curls of his hair towards each eye, and the hair underneath his chin curved upwards on each side of his mouth in complete symmetry. I have ascertained from Mr Titmouse himself, that on this memorable occasion of his first introduction to ROSLRY, every item of dress and decoration was entirely new; and when at length his labours had been completed, he felt great composure of mind, and a consciousness of the decisive effect which he must needs produce upon those into whose presence he was so soon to be ushered. His "carriage" was presently announced; and after keeping it standing for a few minutes, which he conceived to be usual with fine people, he gently placed his hat upon his head; drew on one glove, took his little ebony cane in his hand; and, with a hurried inward prayer that he might be equal to the occasion, stepped forth from his apartment, and passed on to the glass-coach. Such a brilliant little figure, I will take upon myself to say, had never before issued, nor will perhaps ever again issue, from the Cabbage-stalk hotel. The waiters whom he passed, inclined towards him with instinctive reverence. He was very fine, to be sure; but who could, they justly thought, be dressed too finely that had ten thousand a-year, and was gone to dine with a lord in Grosvenor Square?

Titmouse was soon on his way towards that at once desired and dreaded region. He gazed with a look of occasional pity and contempt, as he passed along, at the plebeian pedestrians, and the lines of shops on each side of the narrow streets, till increasing in
of superior modes of exist-

ence presented themselves; and then he began to feel not a little fidgety and nervous. The streets grew wider; the squares greater; hackney coaches, unsightly objects! became fewer and fewer, giving place to splendid vehicles—coaches, and chariots—with one, two, and even three powdered footmen, in elegant liveries, clustering behind, with long canes, cockades, and shoulder-knots; crimson, blue, green, bear and tiger-skin hammercloths, with burnished coronets and crests upon them; sleek coachmen with wigs and three-cornered hats, and horses that pawed the ground with very pride; ladies within, glistening in satin, lace, and jewels—their lords beside them, leaning back with countenances so stern and haughty; oh, by all that was grand and tremendous! Titmouse felt himself getting now within the very vortex of greatness and fashion, and experienced a frequent fluttering and catching of the breath, and a sense of indefinite distressing apprehension. He was, however, now *in for it*—and there was no retreat. As he neared Grosvenor Square, he heard, ever and anon, terrific thundering noises at the doors opposite which these splendid vehicles had drawn up—as if the impatient footmen were infuriate because the doors did not fly open of themselves, at the sound of the approaching carriage-wheels. At length he entered Grosvenor Square, that "pure empyrean" of earthly greatness. Carriages rolled calmly and haughtily past him, others dashed desperately in different directions. At each side of Lord Dredlington's house, were carriages setting down with tremendous uproar. Mr Titmouse felt his colour going, and his heart began to beat much faster than usual. 'Twas quite in vain that he "hemmed" two or three times, by way of trying to re-assure himself: he felt that his hour was come; and would have been glad, at the moment, of any decent excuse for driving off home again, and putting off the evil day a little longer. Opposite the dreaded door had now drawn up Mr Titmouse's glass-coach; and the decent coachman—whose well-worn hat, and long, clean,

but threadbare blue coat, and ancient-looking top-boots, bespoke their wearer's thriftiness—slowly alighting, threw the reins on his quiet horses' backs, and gave a modest *rat-tat-tat-tat* at the door, without ringing.

"What name shall I give, sir?" said he, returning to his coach, and letting down the loud clanking steps, with such a noise as seemed to indicate his desire to show the solid metal structure of them!

"Titmouse—Mr Titmouse;" replied our friend hurriedly, as the lofty door was thrown open by the corpulent porter; disclosing several footmen in light blue liveries, with silver shoulder-knots, and powdered heads, standing in the hall waiting for him.

"Mr Titmouse!" exclaimed the coachman to the servants: then, having returned to the coach—"When shall I come back for you, sir?" he inquired of his flustered fare.

"Demme, sir—don't bother *me*," faltered Titmouse, quitting the vehicle with great trepidation; and the next moment he was in the hands of the Philistines—the hall door was closed upon him. All his presence of mind had evaporated; the excellent lessons given him by Mr Gammon, had disappeared like breath from the surface of a mirror. Though Lord Dreddlington's servants had never before seen in the house so strange an object as poor little Titmouse, they were of far too highly polished manners to appear to notice anything unusual. They silently motioned him up-stairs with a bland courteous air, he carrying his little agate-headed cane in one hand, and his new hat in the other. A gentlemanly person, in a full black dress suit, opened the drawing-room door for him, with an elegant inclination, which Titmouse gracefully returned. A faint mist seemed to be in the drawing-room for a second or two, during which Titmouse heard his name gently whispered by the gentleman who had introduced him; quickly clearing away, however, he beheld, at the upper end, but two figures, that of an old gentleman, and a young lady—they were, in fact, the Earl of Dreddling-

ton, and Lady Cecilia. Now, if truth must be told, that great man had been not a whit behindhand, in the matter of dress, with the little creature now trembling before him; being, in truth, full as anxious to make an effective first appearance in the eyes of Mr Titmouse, as he in those of the Earl of Dreddlington. And each had, in his way, completely succeeded. There was little or no substantial difference between them. The Right Honourable the Earl of Dreddlington was an old experienced fool, and Tittlebat Titmouse a young inexperienced one. They were the same species of plant, but had grown in different soils. The one had had to struggle through a neglected existence by the dusty, hard roadside of life; the other had had all the advantage of hot-house cultivation—its roots striking deep into, and thriving upon, the rich manure of sycophancy and adulation!—We have seen how anxious was our little friend to appear as became the occasion, before his great kinsman; who, in his turn, had several times during the day anticipated with calm satisfaction the impression which must be produced upon the mind of Titmouse, by the sudden display, in the Earl's person, of the sublimest distinctions which society can bestow, short of royalty. It had once or twice occurred to him, whether he could find any fair excuse for appearing in his full general's uniform; but on maturer reflection, governed by that simplicity and severity of taste which ever distinguished him, he had abandoned that idea, and appeared in a plain blue coat, white waistcoat, and black knee-breeches. But on his left breast glittered one or two foreign orders, and across his waistcoat was the broad red ribbon of the Bath. His hair was white and fine; his cold blue eye and haughty lip gave him an expression of severe dignity; and he stood erect as an arrow. Lady Cecilia reclined on the sofa, with an air of languor and *ennui* which had become habitual to her; and was dressed in glistening white satin, with a necklace of large and beautiful pearls. The Earl was

standing in an attitude of easy grace to receive his guest, as to whose personal appearance, by the way, he was quite in the dark—Mr Titmouse might be a great or a little man, and forward or bashful; and require a corresponding demeanour and address on the part of the Earl. "Gracious Powers!" he involuntarily exclaimed to himself, the instant his eye caught sight of Titmouse, who approached slowly, making profound and formal obeisances. The Earl stood rooted to the spot which he had occupied when Titmouse entered. If his servants had turned an ape into the drawing-room, his lordship could scarcely have felt or exhibited greater amazement than he now experienced, for a moment. "Ah, Heavens!" thought he, "what a fool have we here! what creature is this?" Then it flashed across his mind—"May this be the FUTURE LORD DRELLINCOURT?" He was on the point of recoiling from his suddenly-discovered kinsman in dismay, (as for Lady Cecilia, she gazed at him, through her glass, in silent horror, after a faint exclamation, on his first becoming visible, of "O, Heavens! Papa!") when his habitual self-command came to his assistance in undoubtedly a difficult situation; and, advancing slowly a step or two towards Titmouse—who, after a hurried glance around him, saw no place to deposit his hat and cane upon except the floor, on which he accordingly dropped them—the Earl extended his hand, slightly compressed the tips of Titmouse's fingers, and bowed courteously, but with infinite concern in his features.

"I am happy, Mr Titmouse, to make your acquaintance," said the Earl slowly—"Sir, I have the honour to present you to my daughter, the Lady Cecilia." Titmouse, who by this time had got into a sort of cold sweat—a condition from which the Earl was really not far removed—made a profound and formal bow, (he had been taking lessons from a posture-master to one of the theatres), first to the Earl, and then to Lady Cecilia, who rose about two inches from the sofa, with an almost audible sigh, and

then sank again upon it, without removing her eyes from the figure of Titmouse, who went on bowing, first to the one and then to the other, till the Earl had engaged him in conversation.

"It gives me pleasure, sir," commenced his lordship, "to see that you are punctual in your engagements. I am so, too, sir; and owe to it no small portion of any success which I may have had in life. Punctuality, sir, in small matters, leads to punctuality in great matters." This was said deliberately, and with a sort of freezing grandeur.

"Oh yes, my lord! quite so, your lordship," stammered Titmouse, suddenly recollecting a part of Gammon's instructions; "to be sure—wouldn't have been behind time for a minute, my lord; uncommon bad manners, if it please your lordship"—

"Will you be seated, sir?" interrupted the Earl, dignifiedly motioning him to a chair, and then sitting down beside him; after which his lordship seemed for a second or two to forget himself; staring in silence at Titmouse, and then in consternation at Lady Cecilia. "I—I—" said he, suddenly recollecting himself, "beg your par—sir, I mean—I congratulate you upon—your recent success. Sir, it must have been rather a surprise to you?"

"Oh yes, sir—my lord, most uncommon, may it please your lordship—particular—but right is right—please your lordship"—

["Oh Heavens! merciful Heavens! How horrid is all this! Am I awake, or only dreaming? 'Tis an idiot—and what's worse, a vulgar idiot! And this thing may become Lord Drellincourt!"] This was what was passing through Lord Dreddington's mind, while his troubled eye was fixed upon Titmouse.]

"It is, indeed, Mr Titmouse," replied his lordship, "very true; sir, what you say is correct. Quite so; exactly." His eye was fixed on Titmouse, but his words were uttered, as it were, mechanically, and in a musing manner. It fitted for a moment

across his mind, whether he should ring the bell, and order the servant to show out of the house the fearful imp which had just been shown into it; but at that critical moment he detected poor Titmouse's eye fixed with a kind of reverent intensity upon his lordship's glittering orders. 'Twas a lucky look, that, for Titmouse, since it began to melt away the ice which had suddenly incrustated the little heart of his august relative. 'Twas evident that the poor young man had not been accustomed to society, thought the Earl, with an approach towards the compassionate mood. He was frightfully dressed, to be sure; and as for his speech, he was manifestly overawed by the Presence in which he found himself; [that thought melted a little more of the ice.] Yet, was it not evident that he had *some* latent power of appreciating real distinction, when he beheld it? [his lordship's little heart here lost *all* its surrounding ice.] And again;—he has actually thrust out the intolerable Aubrey, and is now lawful owner of Yatton—of TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR—

"Did you see the review to-day, sir?" inquired the Earl, rather blandly—"His Majesty was there, sir, and seemed to enjoy the scene." Titmouse, with a timid air, said that he had not seen it, as he had been at a boat-race upon the river; and after a few more general observations—"Will you permit me, sir? It is from a QUARTER requiring the highest—a-hem!" said the Earl, as a note was brought him, which he immediately opened and read. Lady Cecilia, also, appearing to be reading, Titmouse had a moment's breathing time and interval of relief. What would he have given, he thought, for some other person, or several persons, to come in and divide the attention—the intolerably oppressive attention of the two august individuals then before him! He seized the opportunity to cast a furtive glance around the room. It opened into a second, which opened into a third: how spacious, each, and lofty! And glittering glass chandeliers in each! What chimney and pier glasses!

What rich flowered satin curtains—they must have cost twelve or fourteen shillings a-yard at least!—The carpets, of the finest Brussels—and they felt like velvet to the feet;—then the brackets, of marble and gold, with snowy busts, statues, and vases, glistening upon each; chairs so delicate, and gilded all over—he almost feared to sit down on them. What would the Quirks and Tag-rags think of this! Faugh—only to think for a moment of Alibi House and Satin Lodge!—Then there was the Lady Cecilia—a lady of high rank! How rich her dress—and how haughtily beautiful she looked as she reclined upon the sofa! [she was in fact busy conning over the new opera, which was to come out the next evening.] And the Earl of Dreddlington—there he was, reading, doubtless, some letter from the King, or one of the royal family—a man of great rank—resplendent in his decorations—all just according to what he had seen in pictures, and heard and read of—what must that red ribbon have cost? [Ay indeed, poor Lord Dreddlington, it had cost you the labour of half a life of steadfast sycophancy, of watchful manoeuvring, and desperate exertion! And at last, the minister tossed it to you in a moment of disgust and despair—mortally perplexed by the conflicting claims of two sulky Dukes and a querulous old Marquis, each of whom threatened to withdraw his "influence and support," if his rival's claims were preferred!] He had never seen any of such a breadth.—It must have been manufactured on purpose for the Earl!—How white were his hands! and he had an antique massive signet-ring on his forefinger, and two glittering rings at least on each of his little fingers—positively Titmouse at length began to regard him almost as a god:—and yet the amazing thought occurred that this august being was allied to him by the ties of relationship! Such were the thoughts and reflections passing through the mind of Titmouse, during the time that Lord Dreddlington was engaged in reading his letter—and afterwards during the brief intervals

elapsing between the various observations addressed to him by his lordship.

The gentleman in black at length entered the room, and advancing slowly and noiselessly towards the Earl, said, in a gentlemanlike manner, "Dinner, my Lord;" and retired. Into what new scenes of splendid embarrassment was this the signal for Mr Titmouse's introduction? thought our friend, and trembled.

"Mr Titmouse, will you give your arm to the Lady Cecilia?" said the Earl, motioning him to the sofa. Up jumped Titmouse, and approached hastily the recumbent beauty; who languidly arose, arranged her train with one hand, and with the other, having drawn on her glove, barely touched the proffered arm of Titmouse, extended towards her at an acute angle, and at right angles with his own body—stammering, "Honour to take your ladyship—uncommon proud—this way, my lady." Lady Cecilia took no more notice of him than if he had been a dumb waiter; walking beside him in silence—the Earl following. To think that a nobleman of high rank was walking *behind* him!

Would to heaven, thought the embarrassed Titmouse, that he had two fronts, one for the Earl behind, and the other to be turned full towards Lady Cecilia! The tall servants, powdered and in light blue liveries, stood like a guard of honour around the dining-room door. That room was extensive and lofty: what a solitary sort of state were they about to dine in! Titmouse felt cold, though it was summer; and trembled as he followed, rather than led, his haughty partner to her seat; and then was motioned into his own by the Earl, himself sitting down opposite an antique silver soup tureen! A servant stood behind Lady Cecilia; another behind Titmouse; and a third on the left of the Earl; while on his right, between his lordship and the glistening side-board, stood a portly gentleman in black, with a bald head and—Titmouse thought—a somewhat haughty countenance. Though Titmouse had touched nothing since breakfast, he

felt not the slightest inclination to eat, and would have given the world to have dared to say as much, and be at once relieved from a vast deal of anxiety. Is it indeed easy to conceive of a fellow-creature in a state of more complete thralldom, at that moment, than poor Titmouse? A little animal under the suddenly exhausted receiver of an air-pump, or a fish just plucked out of its own element, and flung gasping and struggling upon the grass, may serve to assist your conceptions of the position and sufferings of Mr Titmouse. The Earl, who was on the look-out for it, observed his condition with secret but complete satisfaction; here he beheld the legitimate effect of rank and state upon the human mind.—Titmouse got through the soup—of which about half-a-dozen spoonfuls only were put into his plate—pretty fairly. Any where else than at Lord Dreddlington's, Titmouse would have thought it poor, thin, watery stuff, with a few green things chopped up and swimming in it; but now he perceived that it had a sort of superior flavour. How some red mullet, enclosed in paper, puzzled poor Titmouse, is best known to himself.

"The Lady Cecilia will take wine with you, Mr Titmouse, I daresay, by-and-by," observed the Earl blandly: and in a moment's time, but with perfect deliberation, the servants poured wine into the two glasses. "Your ladyship's health, my lady"—faltered Titmouse. She slightly bowed, and a faint smile glimmered at the corners of her mouth—but unobserved by Titmouse.

"I think you said, Mr Titmouse," quoth the Earl, some time afterwards, "that you had not yet taken possession of Yatton?"

"No, my lord; but I go down the day after to-morrow—quite—if I may say it, my lord—quite in style"—answered Titmouse with humble and hesitating jocularity of manner.

"Ha, ha!"—exclaimed the Earl gently.

"Had you any acquaintance with the Aubreys, Mr Titmouse?" inquired the Lady Cecilia.

"No, my lady—yes, your ladyship, (I beg your ladyship's pardon)—but, now I think of it, I had a slight acquaintance with Miss Aubrey." [Titmouse, Titmouse, you little wretch!]

"She is considered pretty in the country, I believe," drawled Lady Cecilia languidly.

"Oh, most uncommon lovely!—*middling*, only middling, my lady, I should say"—added Titmouse suddenly; having observed, as he fancied, rather a displeased look in Lady Cecilia. He had begun his sentence with more energy than he had yet shown in the house; but finished it hastily, and coloured as he spoke—feeling that he had, somehow or another, committed himself.

"Do you form a new establishment at Yatton, sir?" inquired the Earl, "or take to any part of that of your predecessor?"

"I have not, please your lordship, made up my mind yet exactly—should like to know your lordship's opinion."

"Why, sir, I should be governed by circumstances—by circumstances, sir; when you get there, sir, you will be better able to judge of the course you should pursue." Titmouse made an humble obeisance.

"Do you intend, Mr Titmouse, to live in town, or in the country?" inquired Lady Cecilia.

"A little of both, my lady—but mostly in town; because, as your ladyship sees, the country is *devilish* dull—pon my life, my lady—my lord—beg a thousand pardons," he suddenly added, bowing to both, and blushing violently. Here he *had* committed himself, and awfully; but his august companions bowed to him kindly, and he presently recovered a measure of self-possession.

"Are you fond of hunting, Mr Titmouse?" inquired the Earl.

"Why, my lord, can't exactly say that I am—but your lordship sees, cases alter circumstances, and when I get down there among the country gents, p'raps I may do as they do, my lord."

"I presume, Mr Titmouse, you have scarcely chosen a town residence yet?" inquired Lady Cecilia.

"No, my lady—not fixed it yet—was thinking of taking Mr Aubrey's house in Grosvenor Street, understanding it is to be sold;" then turning towards the Earl—"because, as your lordship sees, I was thinking of getting into *both* the nests of the old birds, while both are warm"—he added, with a faint smile.

"Exactly; yes—I see, sir—I understand you," replied Lord Dredlington, sipping his wine. His manner rather discomposed Titmouse, to whom it then naturally occurred that the Earl might be warmly attached to the Aubreys, and not relish their being spoken of so lightly; so Titmouse hastily and anxiously added—"your lordship sees I was most particular sorry to make the Aubreys turn out. A most uncommon respectable gent, Mr Aubrey: I assure your lordship I think so."

"I had not the honour of his acquaintance sir," replied the Earl coldly, and with exceeding stiffness, which flustered Titmouse not a little; and a pause occurred in the conversation for nearly a minute. Dinner had now considerably advanced, and Titmouse was beginning to grow a little familiar with the routine of matters. Remembering Gammon's caution concerning the wine, and also observing how little was drunk by his noble host and hostess, Titmouse did the same; and during the whole of dinner had scarcely three full glasses of wine.

"How long is it," inquired the Earl, addressing his daughter, "since the Aubreys took that house?" Lady Cecilia could not say. "Stay—now I recollect—surely it was just before my appointment to the Household. Yes; it was about that time, I now recollect. I am alluding, Mr Titmouse," continued the Earl, addressing him in a gracious manner, "to an appointment under the Crown, of some little distinction, which I was solicited to accept at the personal instance of his Majesty, on the occasion of our party coming into power—I mean that of Lord Steward of the Household."

"Dear me, my lord! Indeed! Only to think, your lordship!" exclaimed

Titmouse, with such a profound deference in his manner as encouraged the Earl to proceed.

"That, sir, was an office of great importance, and I had some hesitation in undertaking its responsibility. But, sir, when I had once committed myself to my sovereign and my country, I resolved to give them my best services. I had formed plans for effecting extensive alterations, sir, in that department of the public service, which I have no doubt would have given great satisfaction to the country, as soon as the nature of my intentions became generally understood; when faction, sir, unfortunately prevailed, and we were compelled to relinquish office."

"Dear me, my lord! How particular sorry I am to hear it, my lord!" exclaimed Titmouse, as he gazed at the baffled statesman with an expression of respectful sympathy.

"Sir, it gives me sincere satisfaction," said the Earl, after a pause, "to hear that our political opinions agree"—

"Oh yes! my lord, quite; *sure* of that"—

"I assure you, sir, that some little acquaintance with the genius and spirit of the British constitution has satisfied me that this country can never be safely or advantageously governed except on sound Whig principles."—He paused.

"Yes, my lord; it's quite true, your lordship"—interposed Titmouse reverentially.

"That, sir, is the only way I know of, by which aristocratic institutions can be brought to bear effectively upon, to blend harmoniously with, the interests of the lower orders—the *people*, Mr Titmouse." Titmouse thought this wonderfully fine, and sat listening as to an oracle of political wisdom. The Earl, observing it, began to form a much higher opinion of his little kinsman. "The unfortunate gentleman, your predecessor at Yatton, sir, if he had but allowed himself to have been guided by those who had mixed in public affairs before he was born," said the Earl with great dignity—

"'Pon my word, my lord, he was, I've heard a d—d Tory!—Oh my lady! my lord! humbly beg pardon," he added, turning pale; but the fatal word had been uttered, and heard by both; and he felt as if he could have sunk through the floor.

"Shall I have the honour of taking another glass of wine with you, sir?" inquired the Earl, rather gravely and severely, as if wishing Mr Titmouse fully to appreciate the fearful breach of etiquette of which he had just been guilty, by swearing in such a presence. After they had bowed to each other, a sufficiently awkward pause occurred, which was at length broken by the considerate Lady Cecilia.

"Are you fond of the opera, Mr Titmouse?"

"Very, my lady—most particular," replied Titmouse, who had been there once only.

"Do you prefer the opera, or the ballet? I mean the music or the dancing?"

"Oh, I understand your ladyship, 'Pon my word, my lady, I prefer them both. The dancing is most uncommon superior; though I must say, my lady, the lady dancers there do most uncommonly—*rather*, I should say"—He stopped abruptly; his face flushed, and he felt as if he had burst into a perspiration. What the deuce was he about? It seemed as if some devil within were urging him on, from time to time, to commit himself. Another word, and out would have come his opinion as to the shocking indecency of the ballet!

"I understand you, sir; I quite agree with you," said Lady Cecilia calmly; "the ballet does indeed come on at a sad late hour; I often wish they would now and then have the ballet first."

"'Pon my life, my lady," quoth Titmouse, eagerly snatching at the plank which had been thrown to him; "that is what I meant—nothing else, upon my soul, your ladyship!"

"Do you intend taking a box there, Mr Titmouse?" inquired her ladyship, with an appearance of interest in the expected answer.

"Why, your ladyship, they say a

box there is a precious long figure;—but in course, my lady, when I've got to rights a little with my property—your ladyship understands—I shall do the correct thing."

Here a long pause ensued. How dismally quiet and deliberate was everything! The very servants, how noiselessly they waited! Everything done just when it was wanted, yet no hurry, or bustle, or noise; and they looked so composed—so much at their ease. He fancied that they had scarce anything else to do than look at him, and watch all his movements; which greatly embarrassed him, and he began to hate them. He tried hard to inspirit himself with a reflection upon his own suddenly acquired and really great personal importance; absolute master of Ten Thousand a-Year, a relation of the great man at whose table he sat, and whose hired servants they were; but then his timorously raised eye would light, for an instant, upon the splendid *insignia* of the Earl; and he felt as oppressed as ever. What would he not have given for a few minutes' interval, and sense of complete freedom and independence? And were these to be his feelings ever hereafter? Was this the sort of tremulous apprehension of offence, and embarrassment as to his every move, to which he was to be doomed in high life? Oh that he had but been born to it, like the Earl and the Lady Cecilia!

"Were you ever in the House of Lords, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Lord Dreddlington suddenly, after casting about for some little time for a topic on which he might converse with Titmouse.

"No, my lord, never—should most uncommon like to see it, my lord"—replied Titmouse eagerly.

"Certainly, it is an impressive spectacle, sir, and well worth seeing," said the Earl, solemnly.

"I suppose, my lord, your lordship goes there every day?"

"Why, sir, I believe I *am* pretty punctual in my attendance. I was there to-day, sir, till the House rose. Sir, I am of opinion that hereditary legislators—a practical anomaly in a

free state like this—but one which has innumerable unperceived advantages to recommend it—Sir, our country expects at our hands, in discharge of so grave a trust—in short, if we were not to be true to—we who are in a peculiar sense the guardians of public liberty—if we were once to betray our trust—Let me trouble you, sir, for a little of that —," said the Earl, using some foreign word which Titmouse had never heard of before, and looking towards a delicately constructed fabric, as of compressed snow, which stood before Titmouse. A servant was in a twinkling beside him, with his lordship's plate. Ah me! that I should have to relate so sad an event as presently occurred to Titmouse! He took a spoon; and, imagining the glistening fabric before him to be as solid as it looked, brought to bear upon it an adequate degree of force, even as if he had been going to scoop out a piece of Stilton cheese—and inserting his spoon at the summit of the snowy and deceitful structure, souse to the bottom went spoon, hand, coat-cuff and all, and a very dismal noise evidenced that the dish on which the aforesaid spoon had descended, with so much force, was no longer a dish. It was, in fact, broken in halves, and the liquid from within, ran about on the cloth. * * *

* A cluster of servants was quickly around him. * * A mist came over his eyes; the colour deserted his cheek; and he had a strange feeling, as if verily the end of all things was at hand.

"I beg you will think nothing of it—for it really signifies nothing at all, Mr Titmouse," said the Earl kindly, observing his agitation.

"Oh dear! oh my lord—your ladyship—what an uncommon stupid ass!" faltered Titmouse.

"Pray don't distress yourself, Mr Titmouse," said Lady Cecilia, really feeling for his evident misery, "or you will distress us."

"I beg—humbly beg pardon—please your lordship—your ladyship. I'll replace it with the best in London the first thing in the morning." Here the servant beside him, who was arranging the tablecloth, uttered a faint sound

of suppressed laughter, which disconcerted Titmouse still more.

"Give yourself no concern—'tis only a trifle, Mr Titmouse!—You understand, ha, ha?" said the Earl kindly.

"But if your lordship will only allow me—expense is no object. I know the very best shop in Oxford Street."

"Suppose we take a glass of champagne together, Mr Titmouse?" said the Earl rather peremptorily; and Titmouse had sense enough to be aware that he was to drop the subject. It was a good while before he recovered even the little degree of self-possession which he had had since first entering Lord Dreddlington's house. He had afterwards no distinct recollection of the manner in which he got through the rest of dinner, but a general sense of his having been treated with the most kind and delicate forbearance—no *fuss* made. Suppose such an accident had occurred at Satin Lodge, or even Alibi House!

Shortly after the servants had withdrawn, Lady Cecilia rose to retire. Titmouse, seeing the Earl approaching the bell, anticipated him in ringing it, and then darted to the door with the speed of a lamplighter to open it, as he did, just before a servant had raised his hand to it on the outside. Then he stood within, and the servant without, each bowing, and Lady Cecilia passed between them with stately step, her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her lip compressed with the effort to check her inclination to a smile—perhaps, even laughter. Titmouse was now left alone with Lord Dreddlington; and, on resuming his seat, earnestly renewed his entreaties to be allowed to replace the dish which he had broken, assuring Lord Dreddlington that "monee was no object at all." He was encountered, however, with so stern a negative by his lordship, that, with a hurried apology, he dropped the subject; but the Earl good-naturedly added that he had perceived the *joke* intended by Mr Titmouse, which was certainly an excellent one! This would have set off poor Titmouse again; but a glance at the face of his magnificent host sealed his lips.

"I have heard it said, Mr Titmouse, presently commenced the Earl, "that you have been engaged in mercantile pursuits during the period of your exclusion from the estates which you have just recovered? Is it so, sir?"

"Ye-e-e-s, sir—my lord"—replied Titmouse, hastily considering whether or not he should altogether sink the shop; but he dared hardly venture upon so very decisive a lie—"I was, please your Lordship, in one of the greatest establishments in the mercery line in London—at the west end, my lord; most confidential, my lord; management of everything; but, somehow, my lord, I never *took to it*—always felt a cut above it—your lordship understands?"

"Perfectly, sir; I can quite appreciate your feelings. But, sir, the mercantile interests of this great country are not to be overlooked!—Those who are concerned in them, are frequently respectable persons."

"Begging pardon, my lord—no, they a'n't—if your lordship only knew them as well as I do, my lord. Most uncommon low people. Do anything to turn a penny, my lord; and often sell damaged goods for best."

"It is very possible, sir, that there may exist irregularities, *eccentricities*, ha, ha! of that description; but upon the whole, sir, I am disposed to think that there are many decent persons engaged in trade. I have had the happiness, sir, to assist in passing measures that were calculated, by removing restrictions and protective duties, to secure to this country the benefits of free and universal competition. We have been proceeding, sir, for many years on altogether a wrong principle—that of protecting native industry and enterprise; but, not to follow out this matter further, I must remind you, sir, that your acquaintance with the principles and leading details of mercantile transactions—undoubtedly one of the mainsprings of the national greatness—may hereafter be of use to you, sir."

"Yes, my lord, 'pon my soul—when I'm furnishing my houses in town and country, I mean to go to market my-

self—please your lordship, I know a trick or two of the trade, and can't be taken in, my lord. For instance, my lord, there's Tag-rag—a-hem! hem!" he paused abruptly, and looked somewhat confusedly at the Earl.

"I did not mean that exactly," said his lordship, unable to resist a smile. "Pray, fill your glass, Mr Titmouse." He did so. "You are of course aware that you have the absolute patronage of the borough of Yatton, Mr Titmouse?—It occurs to me, that as our political opinions agree, and unless I am presumptuous, sir, in so thinking—I may be regarded, in a political point of view, as the head of the family—you understand me, I hope, Mr Titmouse?"

"Exactly, my lord—'pon my soul, it's all correct, my lord."

"Well—then, sir, the family interests, Mr Titmouse, must be looked after"——

"Oh! in course, my lord, only too happy—certainly, my lord, we shall, I hope, make a very interesting family, if your lordship so pleases—I can have no objection, my lord!"

"It was a vile, a disgraceful trick, by which Ministers popped in their own man for our borough, Mr Titmouse."

[Lord Dreddlington alluded to the circumstance of a new writ having been moved for, immediately on Mr Aubrey's acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds, and, before the Opposition could be prepared for such a step, the Government had sent down, without delay, to Yatton, and Sir Percival Pickering, Bart., of Luddington Court, an intimate friend of Mr Aubrey's, and a keen unflinching Tory, being returned as member, before the Titmouse influence could be brought for even one moment into the field; the few and willing electors of that ancient and loyal borough being only too happy to have the opportunity of voting for a man whose principles they approved—probably the last they would have of doing so.]

"Yes, my lord—Sir What.d'y'e-call-him *was* a trifle too sharp for us in that business, wasn't he?"

"It has succeeded, sir, for the mo-

ment, but"—continued his lordship in a significant and stately manner—"it is quite possible that their triumph may be of short duration—Mr Titmouse. Those who, like myself, are at headquarters—let me see you fill your glass, Mr Titmouse.—I have the honour to congratulate you, sir, on the recovery of your rights, and to wish you health and long life in the enjoyment of them," quoth the Earl with an air of the loftiest urbanity.

"May it please your lordship, your lordship's most uncommon polite"—commenced Titmouse, rising and standing while he spoke—for he had had experience enough of society, to be aware that when a gentleman's health is drunk on important occasions, it becomes him to rise and acknowledge the compliment in such language as he can command—"and am particularly proud—a—a—I beg to propose, my lord, your lordship's very superior good health, and many thanks." Then he sat down; each poured out another glass of claret, and Titmouse drank his off.

"It is extremely singular, sir," said the Earl musingly, after a considerable pause, "the reverses in life that one hears of! Doubtless there is some very good reason for their being allowed to happen."

[I cannot help pausing, for a moment, to suggest—what must have become of the Earl and his daughter, had they been placed in the situation of the unfortunate Aubreys?]

"Yes, my lord, your lordship's quite true, 'pon my word!—Most uncommon ups and downs! Lord, my lord, only to fancy me, a few months ago, trotting up and down Oxford Street with my yard mea"—He stopped short, and coloured violently.

"Well, sir," replied the Earl, with an expression of bland and dignified sympathy—"however humble might have been your circumstances, it is a consolation to reflect that the Fates ordained it. Sir, there is nothing dishonourable in being poor, when you cannot help it! Reverses of fortune, sir, have happened to some of the greatest characters in our history.

You remember Alfred, sir!" Titmouse bowed assentingly; but had he been questioned, could have told, I suspect, as little about the matter as a hedgehog—or *pæce tanti viri*,—the Earl himself.

"Allow me, sir, to ask whether you have come to any arrangement with your late opponent concerning the back-rents?" inquired the Earl, with a great appearance of interest.

"No, my lord, not yet; but my solicitors say they'll soon have the screw on, please your lordship—that's just what they say—their very words.

"Indeed, sir!" replied the Earl gravely. "What is the sum to which they say you are entitled, sir?"

"Sixty thousand pounds, my lord, at least—quite set me up at starting, my lord—wont it?" replied Titmouse with great glee; but the Earl shuddered involuntarily for a moment, and sipped his wine in silence.

"By the way, Mr Titmouse," said he, after a considerable pause—"I trust you will forgive me for suggesting whether it would not be a prudent step for you to go to one of the universities, for at least a twelvemonth."

"Humbly begging your lordship's pardon, am not I too old? I've heard they're all a pack of overgrown school-boys there—and learn nothing but a bit of some old languages that a'n't the least use nowadays, seeing it a'n't *spoke* now, anywhere"—replied Titmouse—"Besides, I've talked the thing over with Mr Gammon, my lord"—

"Mr Gammon? Allow me, sir, to ask who that may be?"

"One of my solicitors, my lord; a most remarkable clever man, and an out-and-out lawyer, my lord. It was he that found out all about my case, my lord. If your lordship was only to see him for a moment, your lordship would say what a remarkable clever man that is!"

"You will forgive my curiosity, sir—but it must have surely required ample means to have carried on so arduous a lawsuit as that which has just terminated so successfully?"

"Oh yes, my lord!—Quirk, Gammon, and Snap did all that; and be-

tween me and your lordship, I suppose I shall have to come down a pretty long figure, all on the nail, as your lordship understands; but I mean them to get it all out of that respectable gent, Mr Aubrey!"—By quietly pressing his questions, the Earl elicited a good deal more from Titmouse than he was aware of, concerning Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and in doing so, conceived a special dislike for Gammon. The Earl gave him some pretty decisive hints about the necessity of being on his guard with such people—and hoped that he would not commit himself to anything important without consulting his lordship, who would of course give him the signal advantage of his experience in the affairs of the world, and open his eyes to the designs of those whose only object was to make a prey of him. Titmouse began to feel that here, at length, he had met with a *real* friend—one whose suggestions were worthy of being received with the profoundest deference. Soon afterwards, he had the good fortune to please the Earl beyond expression, by venturing timidly to express his admiration of the splendid ribbon worn by his lordship; who took the opportunity of explaining that and the other marks of distinction he wore, and others which he was entitled to wear, at great length and with much minuteness—so that he at length caused Titmouse to believe that he, Lord Dreddlington—the august head of the family—must have rendered more signal service, somehow or other, to his country, and also done more to win the admiration and gratitude of foreign countries and posterity, than most men of former or present times. His lordship might not, perhaps, have intended it; but he went on till he had almost defied himself, in the estimation of his little listener. One natural question was perpetually trembling on the tip of Titmouse's tongue; viz. how and when he could get such distinctions for *himself*—and do the services that earned them!

"Well, Mr Titmouse," at length, observed the Earl, after looking at his

watch—"shall we adjourn to the drawing-room? The fact is, sir, that Lady Cecilia and I have an evening engagement at the Duchess of Diamond's. I much regret being unable to take you with us, sir; but, as it is, shall we rejoin the Lady Cecilia?" continued his lordship, rising. Up jumped Titmouse; and the Earl and he were soon in the drawing-room; where, besides the Lady Cecilia, sat another lady, to whom he was not introduced in any way. This was Miss Macspleuchan, a distant connection of the Earl's late countess—a poor relation, who had entered the house of the Earl of Dreddlington, in order to eat the bitter, bitter bread of dependence. Poor soul! you might tell, by a glance at her, that she had not thriven upon it. She was about thirty, and so thin! She was dressed in plain white muslin; and there were a manifest constraint and timidity about her motions, and a depression in her countenance; the lineaments of which showed, however, that if she could have been happy, she might have appeared handsome. She had a perfectly ladylike air: and there were thought in her brow, and acuteness in her eye, which, however, as it were, habitually watched the motions of the Earl and the Lady Cecilia, with deference and anxiety. Poor Miss Macspleuchan felt herself gradually sinking into a sycophant; the alternative being *that*, or starvation. She was conscious of warm affections and tender sensibilities; but as conscious that they were gradually withering within her: that all constituting dear lovely womanhood was perishing—and not a hand held out to help or save. Poor Miss Macspleuchan! how large and uncomplaining an order is that to which you belong! of women gentle and restrained—whom a sudden word of kindness dissolves in tears—to earn but a freezing glance from haughty suspicion, jealousy, and heartlessness! She was highly accomplished, particularly in music and languages, while the Lady Cecilia really knew scarcely anything—for which reason, principally, she had long ago conceived a

bitter dislike to Miss Macspleuchan, and inflicted on her a number of petty but exquisite mortifications and indignities; such, perhaps, as only a sensitive soul could fully appreciate; for the Earl and his daughter were exemplary persons in the proprieties of life, and would not do such things with visible coarseness.

Miss Macspleuchan was a sort of companion of Lady Cecilia, and entirely dependent upon her and the Earl for her subsistence. She was sitting on the sofa, beside Lady Cecilia, when Titmouse re-entered the drawing-room; and the latter eyed him through her glass with infinite *non-chalance*, even when he had advanced to within a few feet of her. He made Miss Macspleuchan, as she rose to take her seat and prepare tea, an obsequious bow; for, in his simplicity and ignorance, he had supposed her a *lady*! Absurd as was the style of its performance, she saw that there was politeness in the intention; 'twas moreover a courtesy towards herself, that was unusual from the Earl's guests; and these considerations served to take off the edge of that ridicule and contempt, with which Lady Cecilia had been preparing her to receive their newly-discovered kinsman. After standing for a second or two near the sofa, Titmouse ventured to sit down upon it—on the edge only—as if afraid of disturbing Lady Cecilia, who was reclining on it with an air of languid hauteur.

"So you're going, my lady, to a dance to-night, as my lord says?" quoth Titmouse respectfully; "hope your ladyship will enjoy yourself!"

"We regret that you do not accompany us, Mr Titmouse," said Lady Cecilia, slightly inclining towards him, and glancing at Miss Macspleuchan with a faint and bitter smile.

"Should have been most uncommon proud to have gone, please your ladyship," replied Titmouse, as a servant brought him a cup of tea. "These cups and saucers, my lady, come from abroad, I suppose? Now, I daresay, though they've *rather* a funny look, they cost a good deal?"

"I really do not know, sir; I believe we have had them some time. I think they were my great-great-grand-mamma's."

"Pon my life, my lady, I like them amazing!" Seeing her ladyship not disposed to talk, Titmouse became silent.

"Are you fond of music, Mr Titmouse?" inquired the Earl, presently; observing that the pause in conversation had become embarrassing to Titmouse.

"Very, indeed, my lord: is your lordship?"

"I am rather fond of *vocal* music, sir—of the opera."

This the Earl said, because Miss Macspleuchan played upon the piano brilliantly, and also upon the harp, but did not sing. Miss Macspleuchan understood him.

"Do you play upon any instrument, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Lady Cecilia, with a smile lurking about her lips, which increased a little when Titmouse replied in the negative, adding that he had once begun to learn the *clarinet* some years before, but could not manage the notes. "Excuse me, my lady, but what an uncommon fine piano that is!" said he.—"If I may make so bold, will your ladyship give us a tune?"

"I daresay, Miss Macspleuchan will play for you, Mr Titmouse, if you wish it," replied Lady Cecilia coldly.

Some time afterwards, a servant announced to her ladyship and the Earl that the carriage was at the door; and presently they both retired to their dressing-rooms to make some slight alteration in their dress;—the Earl to add an order or two, and Lady Cecilia to place upon her haughty brow a small tiara of brilliants. As soon as they had thus retired—"I shall feel great pleasure, sir, in playing for you, if you really wish it," said Miss Macspleuchan, in a voice of such mingled melancholy and kindness as must have gone to Titmouse's heart, had he possessed one. He jumped up, and bowed profoundly. She sat down to the piano, and played such music as

she supposed would suit her auditor—namely, waltzes and marches—till the door opened, and Lady Cecilia re-appeared, drawing on her gloves, with the glittering addition which I have mentioned—followed presently by the superbly-adorned Earl.

"Well, sir," said he, with dignified affability, "I need not repeat how highly gratified I feel at our introduction to each other. I trust you will henceforth consider yourself no stranger here"—

"Oh, 'pon my life, my lord! your lordship's most particular polite!" exclaimed Titmouse in a low tone, and with a sudden and profound bow.

"And that on your return from Yorkshire," continued the Earl, drawing on his gloves, "you will let us see you: we both feel great interest in your good fortunes. Sir, I have the honour to wish you a good evening!" he extended his gloved hand to his distinguished little kinsman, whose hand, however, he touched with little more than the ends of his fingers.

"We exceedingly regret that we must leave you, Mr Titmouse," said Lady Cecilia with forced seriousness; "but as we wish to leave the duchess's early, we must go early. Good evening, sir;" and having dropped him a slight formal curtsy, she quitted the drawing-room followed by the Earl, Titmouse making four or five such bows as provoked a smile from all who witnessed them. The next moment he was alone with Miss Macspleuchan. Her unaffected, good-natured address made him feel more at home within the next five minutes, than he had been since entering that frigid scene of foolish state—since being in the oppressive presence of the greatness just departed. She felt at first a contempt for him bordering upon disgust, but which soon melted into pity. What a wretched creature was this to be put into such a dazzling position! What might be the design of Providence in placing such a being in the possession of such wealth and rank, at the expense of the virtuous Aubreys? For virtuous she knew

them to be, and deeply sympathised with them, but in silence.

Titmouse soon got pretty communicative with Miss Macspleuchan, and told her about the Tag-rags, Miss Tag-rag, and Miss Quirk, both of whom were absolutely dying of love for him, and thought he was in love with them, which was not the case—far from it. Then he hinted something about a most particular uncommon lovely gal that had his heart, and he hoped to have hers, as soon as he had got all to rights at Yatton. Then he described the splendid style in which he was going down to take possession of his estates. Having finished this, he told her that he had been the morning before to see a man hanged for murdering his wife; that he had been into the condemned cell, and then into the press-room, and had seen his hands and arms tied, and shaken hands with him; and he was going into such a sickening minuteness of detail, that to avoid it Miss Macspleuchan—who, shocked and disgusted, had gone very pale—suddenly asked him if he was fond of heraldry. Rising from the sofa, she went into the second room, where, on an elegant and antique stand, lay a huge roll of parchment, on a gilded stick, splendidly mounted and superbly illuminated—it was about three-quarters of a yard in breadth, and some ten or twenty feet in length. This was the *Pedigree of the Dreddlingtons*. She was giving him an account of Simon de Drelincourt, an early ancestor of the Earl's, who had come over with William the Conqueror, and performed stupendous feats of valour at the battle of Hastings, Titmouse listening in open-mouthed awe, and almost trembling to think that he had broken a valuable dish belonging to a nobleman who had such wonderful ancestors; not, at the moment, adverting to the circumstance that he was himself descended from the very same ancestors, and had as rich blood in him as the Earl and Lady Cecilia—when a servant entered and informed him in a whisper that "his

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carriage had arrived." He considered that etiquette required him to depart immediately.

"Beg your pardon; but if ever you should come down to my estate in the country, shall be most uncommon proud to see your ladyship."

"I beg your pardon; you are mistaken, sir," interrupted Miss Macspleuchan hastily, and blushing scarlet; the fact being that Titmouse had not caught her name on its having been once or twice pronounced by Lady Cecilia; and naturally concluded that she also must be a lady of rank. Titmouse was, however, so occupied with his efforts to make a graceful exit, that he did not catch the explanation of his mistake; and, bowing almost down to the ground, reached the landing, where the tall servant, with an easy grace, gave him his hat and cane, and preceded him down stairs. As he descended, he felt in his pockets for some loose silver, and gave several shillings between the servants who stood in the hall to witness his departure! after which, one of them having opened the door and gently let down the steps of the glass-coach, Titmouse popped into it.

"Home, sir?" inquired the servant, as he closed the door.

"The Cabbage-Stalk Hotel, Covent Garden," replied Titmouse, with an affected drawl.

His answer was communicated to the coachman, who thereupon addressed a sharp argument to the brace of meek and skinny brutes, standing with downcast heads before him, which they lifted up, then they got into motion, and away rumbled the glass-coach, and the distinguished scion of aristocracy which it contained. As soon as he had become calm enough to reflect upon the events of the evening, he arrived at the conclusion that the Earl of Dreddlington was a very great man indeed; the Lady Cecilia beautiful, but rather proud; and Miss Macspleuchan (Lady Somebody, as he supposed) one of the most interesting ladies whom he had

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ever met with ; that there was something uncommon pleasing about her : in short, he felt a sort of grateful attachment towards her ; but how long it would have lasted after his hearing that she was only a plain miss, and a

poor relation, I leave the acute reader to conjecture. It will be for him, also, to appreciate the entertainment which Mr Titmouse afforded, that evening, to the polished occupants of the servants' hall.

CHAPTER II

MR TITMOUSE AT YATTON, AND THE SPLENDID FESTIVITIES ATTENDING HIS INAUGURATION.

MR GAMMON was with Titmouse about half-past nine o'clock the next morning, not a little anxious to hear how that young gentleman had got on overnight ; but met with a totally different reception from any that he had before experienced.

He imagined, for a few minutes, that Lord Dreddlinton had been *pumpiny* Titmouse ; had learned from him his position with respect to Gammon, in particular ; and had injected distrust and suspicion of him into the mind of Titmouse. But Gammon, with all his acuteness, was quite mistaken. The truth was, 'twas only an attempt on the part of poor Titmouse to assume the composed demeanour, the languid elegance, which he had observed in the distinguished personages with whom he had spent the preceding evening, and which had made a deep impression on his little mind. He drawled out his words, looked as if he were half asleep, and continually addressed Gammon as "Sir," and "Mr Gammon," just as he himself had been addressed by the Earl of Dreddlinton. Our friend was sitting at breakfast, on the present occasion, in a gaudy dressing-gown, and yellow slippers, with the newspaper before him ; in short, his personal appearance and manner were totally different from what Gammon had ever previously witnessed ; and

he looked now and then at Titmouse, as if for a moment doubting his identity. Whether or not he was now on the point of throwing overboard those who had piloted him from amidst the shoals of poverty into the open sea of affluence, shone upon by the vivid sunlight of rank and distinction, Gammon did not know ; but he contracted his brow, and assumed a certain sternness and peremptoriness of tone and bearing, which were not long in reducing Titmouse to his proper dimensions ; and when at length Mr Gammon entered upon the delightful subject of the morrow's expedition, telling him that he, Gammon, had now nearly completed all the preparations for going down to, and taking possession of Yatton in a style of suitable splendour, according to the wish of Titmouse—this quickly melted away the thin coating of mannerism, and Titmouse was "himself again." He immediately gave Mr Gammon a full account of what had happened at Lord Dreddlinton's, and, I fear, of a great deal more, which *might*, possibly, have happened, but certainly *had not* ; *e. g.* his lordship's special laudation of Mr Gammon as a "monstrous fine lawyer," which Titmouse swore were the exact words of his lordship, who "would have been most happy to see Mr Gammon to dinner," and a good deal to the like effect. Also that he

—Titmouse—had been “most uncommon thick” with “Lady Cicely,” (so he pronounced her name); and that both she and Lord Dreddlington had “pressed him very hard to go with them to a ball at a duke’s!” He made no mention of the broken trifle-dish; said they had nearly a dozen servants to wait on them, and that there were twenty different sorts of wine, and no end of courses, at dinner. That the Earl wore a star, and garter, and ribbons—which Gammon conceived to be as apocryphal as the rest; and had told him that he—Titmouse—might one day wear them, and sit in the House of Lords; and had, moreover, advised him strenuously to get into Parliament as soon as possible, as the “cause of the people wanted strengthening.” [As Lord Coke somewhere says, in speaking of a spurious portion of the text of Lyttleton, “*that arrow came never out of Lyttleton’s quiver*”—so Gammon instantly perceived that the last sentence came never out of Titmouse’s own head, but came plainly ear-marked, as that of a considerate and enlightened statesman.]

As soon as Titmouse had finished his little romance, Gammon recurred to the chief object of his visit—their next day’s journey. He said that he much regretted to inform Titmouse that Mr Snap had expressed an anxious wish to witness the triumph of Mr Titmouse; and that unless he had some particular objection—“Oh none, ‘pon honour!—poor Snap!—devilish good chap, in a small way!” said Titmouse in a condescending manner, and at once gave his consent—Gammon informing him that Mr Snap would be obliged to return to town by the next day’s coach. The reader will smile when I tell him, and if a lady, will frown when she hears, that Miss Quirk was to be of the party—a point which her anxious father had secured some time before. Mrs Alias had declared that she saw no objection, as Mr Quirk would be constantly with his daughter, and Gammon had appeared ready to bring about so desirable a result. He had also striven hard, un-

known to his partners, to increase their numbers, by the Tag-rags, who might have gone down, all three of them, if they had chosen, by coach, and so have returned. Gammon conceived that this step might not have been unattended with advantage in several ways; and would, moreover, have secured him a considerable source of amusement. Titmouse, however, would not listen to the thing for a moment, and Gammon was forced to give up his little scheme. Two dashing young fellows, fashionable friends of Titmouse—who had picked them up, Heaven only knows where, but they never deserted him, infinitely to Gammon’s annoyance—were also to be of the party. He had seen them but once, when he had accompanied Titmouse to the play, where they soon joined him. One was a truly disgusting-looking fellow—a Mr PIMP YAHOO—a man about five-and-thirty years old, tall, with a profusion of black hair parted down the middle of his head, and falling, in revolting fashion, in long clustering curls, from each temple upon his coat collar. His whiskers also were ample, and covered two-thirds of his face, and spread in disgusting amplitude round his throat. He had also a jet-black tuft, an imperial depending from his under-lip. He had an execrable eye—full of insolence and sensuality; in short, his whole countenance bespoke the thorough debauchee and ruffian. He had been, he said, in the army; and was nearly connected, according to his own account—as fellows of this description generally represent to be the case—with “some of the first families in the north!” He was now a man of pleasure about town—which contained not a better billiard-player, as the admiring Titmouse had had several painful opportunities of judging. He was a great patron of the ring—knowing all their secrets—all their haunts. He always had plenty of the money of other people, and drove about in an elegant cab, in which Titmouse had often had a seat; and as soon as Mr Yahoo had extracted from his communicative little com-

panion all about himself, that astute gentleman made it his business to conciliate Titmouse's good graces by all the arts of which he was master—and he succeeded. The other chosen companion of our friend was Mr ALGERNON FITZ-SNOOKS; a complete fool. He was the sole child of a rich tradesman—who had christened him by the sounding name given above; and afterwards added the patrician prefix to the surname,* which also you see above, in order to gratify his wife and son. The youth had never "taken to business"—but was allowed to saunter about, doing, and knowing, and learning nothing, till about his twenty-second year, when his mother died, as also a year afterwards did his father; discreetly bequeathing to his hopeful son some fifty thousand pounds—absolutely and uncontrolledly. Mr Algernon Fitz-Snooks judiciously thought that youth was the time to enjoy life; and before he had reached his thirtieth year, had got through all his fortune except about five or six thousand pounds—in return for which, he had certainly got *something*; viz. an impaired constitution, and a little experience, which *might*, possibly, at some future time, be useful. He had a pleasing face—regular features, and interesting eyes; his light hair curled 'deliciously'; and he spoke in a sort of lisp and in a low tone—and, in point of dress, always 'turned out' beautifully. *He*, also, had a cab, and was a great friend of Mr Yahoo, who had introduced him into a great deal of high society, principally in St James's Street: where both he and Mr Yahoo had passed a great deal of

* I wish here to correct a small popular error—that it is necessary to have recourse to the Royal sign-manual to change a surname. "A man may, if he please, and it be not for any fraudulent purpose, take a name, and work his way in the world with this new name, as well as he can." This was laid down by the late Chief-Justice Tindal, in the celebrated case of *Davies v. Loundes*, 1 Bingham's New Cases 618: adding, "there is no necessity for any application for a Royal sign-manual to change the name. It is a mode to which persons often have recourse, because it gives a greater sanction to it, and makes it more notorious."

their time, especially during the night! There was no intentional *mischief* in poor Fitz-Snooks: nature had made him only a fool—his prudent parents had done the rest; and if he fell into vice, it was only because—as people say—"he couldn't help it." Such were the chosen companions of Titmouse; the one a fool, the other a rogue—and "he must," he said, "have them down to the jollifying at Yatton." A groom and a valet, both impudent knaves, and newly hired the day before, would complete the party of the morrow. Gammon assured Titmouse that he had taken all the pains in the world to get up a triumphant entry into Yatton; his agents at Grilston, Messrs Bloodsuck and Son, the Radical electioneering attorneys of the county, who were well versed in the matter of processions, bands, flags, &c. &c. &c., had by that time arranged everything, and they were to be met, when within a mile of Yatton, by a grand procession. The people at the Hall, also, were under orders from Mr Gammon, through Messrs Bloodsuck and Son, to have all in readiness—and a banquet prepared for nearly a hundred persons—in fact, all comers were to be welcome. To all this Titmouse listened with eyes glistening, and ears tingling with rapture; but can any tongue describe his emotion, on being apprised that the sum of £2500, in the banker's hands, was now at his disposal—that it would be doubled in a few weeks—and that a cheque for £500, drawn by Mr Titmouse on the London agents of the Grilston bankers, had been honoured on the preceding afternoon? Titmouse's heart beat fast, and he felt as if he could have fallen down at Gammon's knees and worshipped him. As for the matter of carriages, Mr Gammon said, that probably Mr Titmouse would call that morning on Mr Axle, in Long Acre, and select one to his mind—it must of course be one with two seats—and Mr Gammon had pointed out several which were, he thought, eligible, and would be shown to Mr Titmouse. That would be the carriage in which, he presumed, Mr Titmouse himself

would travel; the second, Mr Gammon had taken the liberty of already selecting. With this, Mr Gammon, just as the new valet brought in no fewer than a dozen boxes of cigars ordered overnight by Titmouse, shook his hand and departed, saying that he should make his appearance at the Cabbage-Stalk the next morning, precisely at eleven o'clock—about which time it was arranged they were all to start. Titmouse hardly knew how to contain himself, on being left alone. About an hour afterwards, he made his appearance at Mr Axle's; who, worthy and indefatigable man, carried on two businesses, one public, *i. e.* that of a coach-builder—one private, *i. e.* that of a money-lender. He was a rich man—a very obliging and “accommodating” person; by means of which latter quality he had amassed a fortune of, it was believed, a hundred thousand pounds. He never made a fuss about selling on credit—or lending, taking back, or exchanging carriages of all descriptions; nor in discounting the bills of his customers, to any amount. He proved generally right, in each case, in the long run. He would supply his fashionable victim with as splendid a chariot, and funds to keep it some time going, as he or she could desire; well knowing that in due time, after they should have taken a few turns in it about the parks, and a few streets and squares in the neighbourhood, it would quietly drive up to one or two huge dingy fabrics in a different part of the town, where it would deposit its burden, and then return little the worse for wear to its maker, who took it back at about a twentieth part of its cost, and soon again disposed of it in a way equally advantageous to himself. Mr Axle showed Mr Titmouse obsequiously over his premises, pointing out, as soon as he knew who his visitor was, the carriages which Mr Gammon had the day before desired should be shown to him; and which Mr Titmouse, with his glass stuck in his eye, where it was kept by the pure force of muscular contraction, examined with something like the air of a connoisseur; occa-

sionally rapping with his agate-headed cane—now against his teeth, then against his legs. He did not seem perfectly satisfied with any of them; they looked—he said—“devilish plain and dull.”

“Hollo—Mr Axletree, or whatever your name is—what have we *here*? Pon—my—soul, the very thing!”—he exclaimed, as his eye caught a splendid object—the state-carriage of the ex-sheriff, with its gorgeously decorated panels: which, having been vamped up for some six or seven successive shrievalties—(being on each occasion heralded to the public by laudatory paragraphs in the newspapers, as entirely new and signal instances of the taste and magnificence of the sheriff elect)—seemed now really *perfunctus officio*. Mr Axle was staggered for a moment, and scarce supposed Mr Titmouse to be in earnest—Gammon having given him no inkling of the real character of Titmouse; but observing the earnest steadfast gaze with which he regarded the glittering object, having succeeded in choking down a sudden fit of laughter, smooth Mr Axle commenced a seductive eulogium upon the splendid structure—remarking how singular it was that the carriage should happen just at that exact moment to be placed at his disposal by its former owner—a gentleman—Mr Axle made no allusion to his official character—of great distinction, who had no longer any occasion for it. Mr Axle declared that he had had numerous applications for it already; on hearing which, Titmouse got excited. The door was opened—he got in; sat on each seat—“Don't it hang beautifully?” inquired the confident proprietor, testing, by pressure, the elasticity of the springs, as he spoke.

“Let me see, who was it that was after it yesterday? Oh—I think it was Sir Fitzbiscuit Gander; but I've not *closed* with him yet!”

“What's your price, Mr Axletree?” inquired Titmouse rather heatedly, as he got out of the carriage.

After some little higgie-hagging he bought it!!!—for there was nothing

like closing at once, where there was keen competition! Mr Gammon, thought Titmouse, could not have seen this beautiful vehicle when making his choice on the preceding morning! For the rest of the day he felt infinitely elated at his fortunate purchase; and excited his imagination by pictures of the astonishment and admiration which his equipage must call forth, on the morrow. Punctual to his appointment, Mr Gammon, a few moments before the clock had struck eleven on the ensuing morning, drew up to the Cabbage-Stalk, as near at least as he could get to it, in a hackney coach, with his portmanteau and carpet-bag. I say as near as he could; for round about the door stood a considerable crowd, gazing with a sort of awe, on a magnificent vehicle standing there, with four horses harnessed to it. Gammon looked at his watch, as he entered the hotel, and asked why the sheriff's carriage was standing at the door? The waiter to whom he spoke seemed nearly bursting with suppressed laughter, which almost disabled him from answering, that the carriage in question was that of Mr Titmouse, ready for setting off for Yorkshire. Mr Gammon started back—turned pale, and almost dropped an umbrella which was in his hand.

"Mr Titmouse's!" he echoed incredulously.

"Yes, sir—been here for this hour, at least, packing. Such a crowd—all the while; everybody thinks it's the sheriff, sir," replied the waiter, scarce able to keep his countenance. Mr Gammon rushed up stairs with greater impetuosity than he had perhaps ever been known to exhibit before, and burst into Mr Titmouse's room. There was that gentleman, with his hat on, his hands stuck into his coat-pockets, a cigar in his mouth, and a tumbler of brandy-and-water before him. Mr Yahoo, Mr Fitz-Snooks, and Mr Snap were similarly occupied; and Mr Quirk was sitting down with his hands in his pockets, and a glass of negus before him, with anything but a joyful expression of countenance.

"Is it possible, Mr Titmouse?"—

commenced Gammon, almost breathlessly.

"Ah, how d'ye do, Gammon?—punctual!" interrupted Titmouse, extending his hand.

"Forgive me—but can it be, that the monstrous thing now before the door, with a crowd grinning around it, is *your carriage*?" inquired Gammon, with dismay in his face.

"I—rather—think—it is," replied Titmouse, slightly disconcerted, but striving to look self-possessed.

"My dear sir," replied Gammon, in a kind of agony, "it is impossible! It never can be! Do you mean to say that you bought it at Mr Axle's?"

"I should rather think so," replied Titmouse, with a piqued air.

"He's been grossly imposing on you, sir!—Permit me to go at once and get you a proper vehicle."

"Pon my life, Mr Gammon, I think that it's a monstrous nice thing—a great bargain—and I've bought it and paid for it, that's more."

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you," confidently, said Gammon, turning in desperation to Mr Yahoo, and Mr Fitz-Snooks.

"As for me, sir," replied the former coolly, at the same time knocking off the ashes from his cigar;—"since you ask my opinion, I confess I rather like the idea—ha! ha! 'Twill produce a *sensation*; that's something in this dull life!—Eh, Snooks?"

"Ay—a—I confess I was a little shocked at first, but I think I'm getting over it now," lisped Mr Fitz-Snooks, adjusting his shirt-collar, and then sipping a little of his brandy-and-water. "I look upon it, now, as an excellent joke; egad, it beats Chitterfield hollow, though *he*, too, has done a trick or two, lately."

"Did you purchase it by way of a joke, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Gammon with forced calmness, nearly choked with suppressed fury.

"Why—a—'pon my life"—said Titmouse, with a strong effort to appear at his ease—"if you ask me—wonder you don't see it! Of course I did!—Those that don't like it may ride, you know, in the other—can't they? Eh?"

"We shall be hooted at, laughed at, wherever we go," said Mr Gammon vehemently.

"Exactly—that's the *novelty* I like," said Mr Yahoo, looking at Mr Gammon with a smile of ineffable insolence.

Mr Gammon made him no reply, but fixed an eye upon him, under which he became plainly rather uneasy. He felt outdone. Talk of scorn!—the eye of Gammon, settled at that instant upon Mr Yahoo, was its complete and perfect representative; and from that moment the wretch Yahoo felt something like *fear* of the eye of man, or of *submission* to it. When, moreover, he beheld the manner in which Titmouse obeyed Gammon's somewhat peremptory request to accompany him out of the room for a moment, he resolved, if possible, to make a friend of Gammon. That gentleman failed, on being alone with Titmouse, in shaking his resolution to travel in the splendid vehicle standing at the door. Titmouse said that he had bought and paid for the carriage; it suited his taste—and where was the harm of gratifying it? Besides, it was already packed—all was prepared for starting. Gammon thereupon gave it up; and, swallowing down his rage as well, and as quickly, as he could, endeavoured to reconcile himself to this galling and unexpected predicament.

It seemed that Miss Quirk, to do her only justice, however really anxious to go down to Yatton, to do anything, in short, calculated to commit Mr Titmouse to her, was quite staggered on discovering, and shocked at seeing, the kind of persons who were to be their travelling companions. As for Mr Yahoo, she recoiled from him with horror at the first glance. What decent female, indeed, would not have done so? She had retired to a bedchamber, soon after entering the Cabbage-Stalk; and, seeing her two unexpected fellow-travellers, presently sent a chambermaid to request her papa to come to her.

He found her considerably agitated. She wished earnestly to return to Alibi House; and consented to proceed on her journey only on the express pro-

mise of Mr Titmouse and her papa, that no one should be in the carriage in which she went except her papa and Mr Gammon—unless, indeed, Mr Titmouse should think proper to make himself the fourth.

Mr Quirk, on this, sent for Mr Gammon, who, with a somewhat bad grace, ("Confound it!" thought he, "everything seems going wrong,") undertook to secure Mr Titmouse's consent to that arrangement.

While Messrs Quirk and Gammon were closeted together, one of the waiters entered the room occupied by Mr Titmouse and his friends, and informed him that a lad had brought a parcel for him, which he, the aforesaid lad, had received special orders to deliver into the hands of Mr Titmouse. Accordingly there was presently shown into the room a little knock-knee'd lad, in tarnished livery, in whom Titmouse recollected the boy belonging to Mr Tag-rag's one-horse chaise; and who gave a small parcel into Mr Titmouse's hands, "with Mrs and Miss Tag-rag's respectful respects."

As soon as he had quitted the room, "By Jove! What have we here?" exclaimed Titmouse, a little flustered as he cut the string of the parcel. Inside was a packet wrapped up in white paper, and tied in a pretty bow, with narrow white satin ribbons. This again, and another still, within it, having been opened, behold, there stood exposed to view, three fine cambric pocket-handkerchiefs, each of which, on being examined, proved to be marked with the initials "T. T." in hair; and Mr Yahoo happening to unfold one of them, in so doing, dropping upon it some of the ashes of his cigar, lo! in the centre was—also wrought in hair—the figure of a heart transfix'd with an arrow! Mr Yahoo roared; and Mr Fitz-Snooks lisped, "Is she pretty, Tit? Where's her nest? Any old birds?—eh?"

Titmouse coloured a little; then grinned, and put his finger to the side of his nose, and winked his eye, as if favouring the bright idea of Mr Fitz-Snooks. On half a sheet of gilt-edged paper, and sealed with a seal bearing

the tender words, "*Forget me not*," was written the following:—

"Sir,—Trusting you will excuse the liberty, I send you three best cambric pocket-handkerchiefs, which my daughter have marked with her own hair, and beg your acceptance of, hoping you may be resigned to all the good fortune that may befall you, which is the prayer of, dear sir, yours respectfully.
MARTHA TAG-RAG.

"P.S.—My daughter sends what you may please to wish and accept: and hope we shall have the great happiness to see you here again, when you return to town from your noble mansion in the country,

"*Satin Lodge, 18th May 18—.*"

"Oh! the naughty old woman! Fie! Fie!" exclaimed Mr Yahoo, with his intolerable smile.

"Pon my soul, there's nothing in it," said Titmouse, reddening.

"Where's *Satin Lodge*?" lisped Mr Fitz-Snooks.

"It is a large country-house on the—the Richmond road," said Titmouse, with a little hesitation; and just then the return of Gammon, who had resumed his usual calmness of manner, relieved him from his embarrassment. Mr Gammon had succeeded in effecting the arrangement suggested by Mr Quirk and his daughter; and within about a quarter of an hour afterwards, behold the ex-sheriff's resplendent but cast-off carriage filled by Miss Quirk, Titmouse, Mr Quirk and Gammon—the groom and valet sitting on the coach-box; while in the other, a plain yellow carriage, covered with luggage, sat Mr Yahoo, Mr Fitz-Snooks, and Mr Snap, all of them with lighted cigars—Snap never having been so happy in all his life as at that moment.

Mr Titmouse had laid aside his cigar in compliment to Miss Quirk; who wore a long black veil, and an elegant light shawl, and looked uncommonly like a young bride setting off—oh, heavens!—thought she—that it *had* been so!—on her wedding excursion. Mr Gammon slouched his hat over his eyes, and inclined his head down-

wards, almost collapsed with vexation and disgust, as he observed the grins and tittering of the group of spectators gathered round the carriage and doorway; but Titmouse, who was splendidly dressed, took off his hat on sitting down, and bowed several times to—as he supposed—the admiring crowd.

"Get on, boys!" growled Mr Gammon; and away they rattled, exciting equal surprise and applause wherever they went. Whoever had met them, must have taken Titmouse and Miss Quirk for a newly-married couple—probably the son or daughter of one of the sheriffs, who had lent the state carriage to add *éclat* to the interesting occasion!

With the exception of the sensation produced at every place where they changed horses, the only incident during their journey worth noticing, occurred at the third stage from London. As they came dashing up to the door of the inn, their advent setting all the bells of the establishment ringing, and waiters and ostlers scampering up to the dazzling equipage like mad, they beheld a plain and laden dusty travelling-carriage, waiting for horses—and Gammon quickly perceived it to be the carriage of the ruined Aubreys, who had alighted for a moment. The graceful figure of Miss Aubrey, her face pale, and wearing an expression of manifest anxiety and fatigue, was standing near the door, talking kindly to a beggar-woman, with a cluster of half-naked children around her; while little Aubrey was romping about with Miss Aubrey's beautiful little spaniel Cato; Agnes looking on and laughing merrily, and trying to escape from the hand of her attendant. Mr and Mrs Aubrey were conversing earnestly close beside the carriage-door. Gammon observed all this, and particularly that Mr Aubrey was scrutinising their appearance, with a sort of half-smile on his countenance, melancholy as it was.

"Horses on!" said Gammon, leaning back in the carriage.

"That's a monstrous fine woman standing at the inn door, Titmouse—

eh?" exclaimed Mr Yahoo, who had alighted for a moment, and stood beside the door of Titmouse's carriage, his execrable eye settled upon Miss Aubrey. "I wonder who and what she is? By Jove, 'tis the face—the figure of an angel! egad, they're somebody: I'll look at their panels!"

"I know who it is," said Titmouse rather faintly; "I'll tell you by-and-by."

"Now, now! my dear boy. Our divinity is vanishing," whispered Mr Yahoo eagerly, as Miss Aubrey, having slipped something into the beggar's hand, stepped into the carriage. As soon as her brother had entered, the door was closed, and they drove off.

"Who's that, Mr Titmouse?" inquired Miss Quirk with a little eagerness, observing—women are quick in detecting such matters—that both Gammon and Titmouse looked rather embarrassed.

"It's the—the Aubrey's," replied Titmouse.

"Eh! By Jove!—is it?" quickly inquired old Quirk, putting his head out of the window; "how odd, to meet the old birds? Egad! their nest must be yet warm—ha! ha!"

"What! dear papa, are those the people you've turned out! Gracious! I thought I heard some one say that Miss Aubrey was pretty! La! I'm sure I thought—now what do *you* think, Mr Titmouse?" she added, turning abruptly and looking keenly at him.

"Oh! 'pon my life, I—I—see nothing at all in her—devilish plain, I should say—infernally pale, and all that!"

They were soon on their way again. Titmouse quickly recovered his equanimity, but Gammon continued silent and thoughtful for many—many miles; and the reader would not be surprised at it, if he knew as well as I do, the thoughts which the unexpected sight of that travelling carriage of Mr Aubrey had suggested to Mr Gammon.

As they approached the scene of triumph and rejoicing, and ascertained that they were within about a mile of the peaceful little village of Yat-

ton, the travellers began to look out for indications of the kind which Mr Gammon had mentioned to Titmouse, viz. a band and procession, and an attendant crowd. But however careful and extensive might have been the arrangements of those to whom that matter had been intrusted, they were likely to be sadly interfered with by a circumstance which, happening just then, might, to a weaker and more superstitious mind than that of Mr Titmouse, have looked a little ominous—namely the occurrence of a tremendous thunderstorm. It was then about five o'clock in the afternoon. The whole day had been overcast, and the sky threatening; and just as the two carriages came to that turning in the road which gave them the first glimpse of the Hall—only, however, the tops of the great antique brick chimneys, which were visible above the surrounding trees—a fearful, long-continued flash of lightning burst from the angry heavens, followed, after an interval of but a second or two, by a peal of thunder which sounded as if a park of artillery was being repeatedly discharged immediately overhead.

"Mind your horses' heads, boys," called out Mr Gammon; "keep a tight rein."

Miss Quirk was dreadfully alarmed, and clung to her father: Titmouse also seemed disconcerted, and looked to Gammon, who was perfectly calm, though his face was not free from anxiety. The ghastly glare of the lightning was again around them—all involuntarily hid their faces in their hands—and again rattled the thunder in a peal lasting more than half a minute, and seemed to be in frightful contiguity, as it were only a few yards above their heads. Down, then, came the long-suspended rain, pouring like a deluge; and so it continued, with frequent returns of the thunder and lightning, for nearly a quarter of an hour. The last turning brought them within sight of the village, and also of some fifty or sixty persons crowding under the hedges, on each side—these were the triumphant procession; musicians, flagmen, footmen, horsemen, all drip-

ping with wet, and constituting surely a spectacle piteous to behold. Out, however, they all turned, true to their orders, as soon as they saw the carriages, which immediately slackened their speed—the rain also somewhat abating. The flagman tried desperately to unroll a wet banner, of considerable size, with the words—

“WELCOME TO YATTON!”

in gilded letters; while the band, consisting of a man with a big drum, another with a serpent, a third with a trumpet, a fourth with a bassoon, two with clarionets, and a boy with a fife, struck up—“*See the conquering hero comes!*” They puffed and blew lustily—bang! bang! bang! went the damp drum; but the rain, the thunder, and the lightning woefully interfered with their harmony. “I would have made your heart ache to see the wet flag clinging obstinately to the pole, in spite of all the efforts of its burly bearer! But now for the procession—first, on horseback, was Barnabas Bloodsuck, senior, Esq.; beside him rode his son, Barnabas Bloodsuck, junior, Esq.; then came the Reverend Gideon Fleshpot, a solemn simpleton, the vicar of Grilston, the only Radical clergyman in that part of the country; beside him, the Reverend Smirk Mudflint, a flippant, bitter, little Unitarian parson, a great crony of Mr Fleshpot, and his surname singularly enough exactly designating the qualities of his brain and heart. Next to these, alone in his one-horse chaise, looking like a pill-box drawn by a leech, came the little fat Whig apothecary, Gargle Glistler, Esq. Following him came, also in a gig, Going Gone, Esq., the auctioneer—the main prop of the Liberal side, being a most eloquent speaker—and Mr Hic Hæc Hoc, a learned schoolmaster, who undertook to teach the rudiments of Latin, viz. the Latin grammar, as far as to the irregular verbs. Then there were Mr Centipede, the editor, and Mr Woodlouse, the publisher and proprietor of the “*YORKSHIRE STINGO*,” for which, also, Mr Mudflint wrote a great deal. These, and about a dozen others, the flower of the “party” thereabouts,

disdainful of the inclement weather, bent on displaying their attachment to the new owner of Yatton, and solacing each his patient inner man with anticipation of the jolly cheer awaiting him at the Hall, formed the principal part of the procession; the rest, consisting of rather a miscellaneous assortment of scot-and-lot and pot-walloper-looking people, all wet and hungry, and frequently casting looks of devout expectation towards the Hall. Scarcely a villager of Yatton was to be seen stirring; nor did any of the tenants of the estate join in the procession; even had they not felt far otherwise disposed, they had luckily a complete excuse for their non-appearance in the deplorable state of the weather. Sometimes the band played; then a peal of thunder came; then a cry of “hurra! Titmouse for ever! hurra!” then the band, and then the thunder, and rain! rain! rain! Thus they got to the park gates, where they paused, the half-drowned men and boys shouting, “Titmouse for ever! hurra—a—a!” Mr Titmouse bobbing about, now at one window, then at the other, with his hat off, in the most gracious manner. Really it seemed almost as if the elements were indicating the displeasure of heaven at Mr Titmouse’s assumption of Yatton; for just as he was passing under the old gateway, out flashed the lightning more vividly than it had yet appeared, and the thunder bellowed and reverberated among the woods as though it would never have ceased. The music and shouting now ended suddenly; carriages, horsemen, pedestrians, quickened their pace in silence, as if anxious to get out of the storm; the horses now and then plunging and rearing violently. Titmouse was terribly frightened, in spite of his desperate efforts to appear unconcerned. He was pale as death, and looked anxiously at Gammon, as if hoping to derive courage from the sight of his rigid countenance. Miss Quirk trembled violently, and several times uttered a faint scream; but her father, old Mr Quirk, did not seem to care a pinch of snuff about the whole matter; he rub-

bed his hands together cheerily, chuckled his daughter under the chin, rallied Titmouse, and now and then nudged and jeered Gammon, who seemed disposed to be serious and silent. The carriage having drawn up opposite the Hall door, it was opened by Mr Griffiths, with a saddened, but still respectful look and manner; and in the same way might be characterised some six or seven servants standing behind him, in readiness to receive the newcomers. The reeking musicians tried to strike up "Rule Britannia," as the hero of the day, Mr Titmouse, descended from his carriage, Mr Griffiths holding an umbrella for him, and bounded out of the rain with a hop, step, and jump into the Hall, where the first words he was heard to utter, were—

"What a devilish rum old place!"

"God bless you! God bless you! God bless you, Titmouse!" exclaimed old Mr Quirk, grasping him by the hand as soon as he had entered. Titmouse shook hands with Miss Quirk, who immediately followed a female servant to an apartment, being exceedingly nervous and agitated. Gammon seemed a little out of spirits; and said simply, "You know, Mr Titmouse, how fervently I congratulate you."

"Oh! my dear boy, Tit, do, for Heaven's sake, if you want the thunder and lightning to cease, order those wretched devils off—send them anywhere, but do stop their cursed noise, my dear boy!" exclaimed Mr Yahoo, as soon as he had entered, putting his fingers to his ears.

"Mr what's-your-name," said Titmouse, addressing Mr Griffiths, "I'll trouble you to order off those fellows and their infernal noise. Demme! there's a precious row making up above, and surely one at a time will do—demme!"

"Ah, ha, capital joke, by Jove! capital!" said Mr Fitz-Snooks, arranging his shirt collar.

"A—Titmouse—by Jupiter!" said Mr Yahoo, as, twirling his fingers about in his long black hair, of which he seemed very proud, he glanced about the Hall, "this a'n't so much amiss! Do you know, my dear boy,

I rather like it; it's substantial, antique, and so forth!"

"Who are those dem ugly old fellows up there?" presently exclaimed Titmouse, as, with his glass stuck into his right eye, and his hands into his coat pockets, he stood staring at the old-fashioned pictures.

"Some of them, sir," replied Mr Griffiths, with an irrepressible sigh, "are ancestors of the Dreddlington's, others of the Aubrey families. They are very old, sir," continued Mr Griffiths, "and are much admired, and Mr Aubrey desired me to say, that if you should be disposed to part"—

"Oh confound him, he may have 'em all, if he'll pay for 'em, if that's what he wants: I shall soon send them packing off!" Mr Griffiths bowed, and nearly shed a tear. By this time the Hall was crowded with the gentlemen who had formed part of the procession, and who came bowing and scraping to the new lord of Yatton, congratulating him, and wishing him health and happiness. As soon as he could disengage himself from their flattering but somewhat troublesome civilities, Tweedle, his valet, came and whispered, "Will you dress, sir? All is ready," and Titmouse followed him to the dressing-room which had formerly been young Mrs Aubrey's. 'Twas the first time that Titmouse had ever experienced the attentions of a valet; and he was quite nonplussed at the multitudinousness and elegance of the arrangements around him. Such quantities of clothes of all sorts—dressing-implements, curling-irons, combs, brushes, razors, a splendid dressing-case, scents in profusion, oils, bear's-grease, several sorts of soaps, &c. &c. &c.; all this gave Titmouse a livelier idea of his altered circumstances, of his having really become a GENTLEMAN, than anything which he had up to that moment experienced. He thought his valet one of the cleverest and most obliging men in the world, only somewhat oppressive with his attentions; and at length Mr Titmouse said, he preferred, *this* time, dressing alone, and so dismissed his obsequious attendant;

whom, however, he was soon obliged to summon to his assistance after all, not knowing the proper uses of several implements about him. Having completed his toilet, he descended into the drawing-room; which, as well as the dining-room, was ready prepared for the banquet, covers being laid for forty or fifty, and good substantial fare provided for at least as many more, in the servants' hall, where operations had already commenced. On entering the drawing-room, his appearance seemed to produce a great sensation; and after a momentary and embarrassing pause, the only county gentleman who was present, advanced and introduced himself, his wife, and daughter. This was Sir Harkaway Botgut Wildfire, Baronet, a tall and somewhat corpulent man of about fifty, choleric and overbearing; his countenance showing the hard life he had led, his nose being red, and his forehead and mouth beset with pimples. He had been a bitter political opponent of Mr Aubrey, and once a member for the county; but had so crippled his resources by hunting and horseracing, as to compel the sacrifice of their town amusements; viz. his seat in the House of Commons, and Lady Wildfire's box at the opera. This had soured both of them not a little, and they had completely sunk out of the county circle, in which they had once been sufficiently conspicuous. Sir Harkaway had an eye to the borough of Yatton on the happening of the next election, as soon as he had obtained an inkling that the new proprietor of Yatton was a weak young man; and hence his patronising presence at Yatton, in consequence of the invitation respectfully conveyed to him in Mr Titmouse's name, through Messrs Bloodsuck and Son. Besides Lady Wildfire and her daughter, both of whom had inquired with a sort of haughty curiosity about the lady who had accompanied Mr Titmouse from town—a point at length cleared up to their satisfaction—there were about a dozen ladies, the wives of the gentlemen who had borne so distinguished a part in the triumphal procession.

They certainly looked rather a queer set; and none of them dared to speak to either Lady Wildfire or her daughter, till spoken to by them. Never had old Yatton beheld within its walls so motley a group; and had the Aubreys continued there, hospitable as they were, accessible and charitable as they were, I leave the reader to guess whether such creatures ever *would* have found their way thither. By such guests, however, were the two principal tables crowded on this joyous occasion; and about half-past six o'clock the feast commenced, and a feast it certainly was, both elegant and substantial, nothing having been spared that money could procure. Mr Aubrey had a fine cellar of wines at Yatton, which, owing to some strange misunderstanding, had been sold by private contract, not amongst his own friends in the neighbourhood, as Mr Aubrey had intended, and imagined that he had directed, but to Mr Titmouse. Choice, indeed, were these wines, and supplied on the present occasion in wanton profusion. Champagne, burgundy, and claret, flowed like water, and the rich old port, the pure and delicate sherry, and madeira in like manner;—these last, however, not being confined to the two principal rooms, but finding their way into the servants' hall, where they were drunk without stint. Merriment echoed uproariously from all parts of the old Hall, and Mr Titmouse was universally declared to be a fine fellow, and likely to become the most popular man in the county. The Reverend Mr Fleshpot said grace, and the Reverend Mr Muddfiint returned thanks—but such thanks!—and shortly afterwards Sir Harkaway arose, and, his eye fixed firmly on the adjoining borough, and also on the jolly table which promised to be ever open to him at Yatton, proposed the health of the distinguished proprietor of Yatton, in a flattering and energetic speech. The toast was received with the utmost enthusiasm; the gentlemen shouted and jingled their glasses on the table, while the ladies waved their handkerchiefs; indeed the scene

was one of such overpowering excitement, that Miss Quirk burst into tears, overcome by her emotions; her papa winking significantly to those about him, and using every exertion in his power to point the attention of those present to the probability that an intimate and tender connection was about to exist between that young lady and Mr Titmouse. Mr Gammon, who sat next to Titmouse, assured him that it was absolutely necessary for him to make a speech to the company, in acknowledgment of the compliment which had just been paid him.

"I shall put my foot into it—by jingo I shall! You must help me!" he whispered to Mr Gammon, in an agony of trepidation and a mist of confusion, as he rose from his chair, being welcomed in the most enthusiastic manner, by applause of every kind, lasting for several minutes. At length, when the noise had subsided into a fearful silence, he stammered out, prompted incessantly by Mr Gammon, something exceedingly like the following, if, indeed, he did not use these very words:—

"Mr—I beg pardon—*Sir Harkaway*, and gentlemen—gentlemen and ladies, am most uncommon, monstrous—particular happy to—to—(eh? *what d'ye say*, Mr Gammon?) see you all here—at this place—here—at Yatton."—(*Applause*). "Ladies and gentlemen—I say—hem!—unaccustomed as"—(*much applause*, during which Titmouse stooped and whispered to Gammon—"Curse me if I can catch a word you say!") "Happy and proud to see you all here—at Yatton—homes of my ancestry—known to you all—centuries. Enjoyed yourselves, I hope—(*great applause*)—and hope you'll often come and do the same—(*still greater applause*). Particular glad to see the ladies—(*applause*)—often heard of the beauties of Yatton—never believed it—no—beg pardon, mean I now see them—(*applause*). Am fond of horses—(*applause*)—racing, hunting, and all that." (Here *Sir Harkaway*, extending his hand, publicly shook that of

the eloquent speaker). "Sorry to turn out the—the—old bird—but—nest not *his*—mine all the while—(*sensation*)—bear him no ill-will—(*applause*). Political principles—(*profound silence*)—Liberal principles—(*loud applause*)—rights of the people—religious liberty and all that—(*vociferous applause*)—found at my post in the hour of danger—enemy stole a march on me—(*great laughter and applause*). Won't detain you—ladies and gentlemen—drink your good healths, and many happy returns of the day." Down sat Mr Titmouse, exhausted by his maiden speech; and quite overpowered, moreover, by the extraordinary applause with which he was greeted at its conclusion. In due course, many other toasts were drunk: among them were—"Lady *Wildfire* and the married ladies." "*Miss Wildfire* and the single ladies." "*Sir Harkaway* *Rotgut* *Wildfire*." "*Religious Liberty*," (to which Mr Muddint responded in a very eloquent speech). "*The Liberty of the Press*;" "*Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, the enterprising, skilful, and learned professional advisers of Mr Titmouse*." Dancing was now loudly called for; and the hall was speedily prepared for it. By this time, however, it was past eleven o'clock: the free potations of all the gentlemen, and indeed (to be candid) of more than one of the ladies, were beginning to tell, and the noise and confusion were great. Fierce confused sounds issued from the servants' hall, where it proved that a great fight was going on between Pumpkin the gardener, and a man who insisted on shouting "*Titmouse for ever—down with Aubrey!*" Pumpkin, I am not sorry to say, had much the best of it, and beat his opponent, after a severe encounter, into silence and submission. Then there were songs sung in all the rooms at once—speeches made, half-a-dozen at the same time; in short, never before had such doings been witnessed, or such uproar heard, within the decorous, dignified, and venerable precincts of Yatton. Scenes ensued which really baffle description. Mr

Titmouse, of course, drank prodigiously, although Mr Gammon never left his side, and checked him twenty times when he was about to fill his glass. The excitement thus produced by wine will, I trust, in some measure, mitigate the reader's indignation, at hearing of a little incident which occurred, in which Titmouse was concerned, and which, about half-past three or four o'clock in the morning, served to bring that brilliant entertainment to a somewhat abrupt and rather unpleasant termination. Scarcely knowing where he was, or what he was about, I am sorry to say, that while standing, as well as he could, beside Miss Wildfire, to dance for the fifth time with her—a plump, fair-faced, good-natured girl of about nineteen or twenty—he suddenly threw his arms round her, and imprinted half-a-dozen kisses on her forehead, lips, cheek, and neck, before she could recover from the confusion into which this monstrous outrage had thrown her. Her faint shriek reached her father's ears, while he was, in a distant part of the room, persecuting poor Miss Quirk with drunken and profligate impertinence. Hastily approaching the quarter whence his daughter's voice had issued, he beheld her just extricated from the insolent embrace of the half-unconscious Titmouse, and greatly agitated. With flaming eye and outstretched arm, he approached his unfortunate little host, and seizing hold of his right ear, almost wrung it out of his head, Titmouse actually yelling with the pain which he experienced. Still retaining his hold, uttering the while fearful imprecations—Sir Harkaway gave him three violent kicks upon the seat of honour, the last of them sending him spinning into the arms of old Mr Quirk, who was hurrying up to his relief, and who fell flat on the floor with the violent concussion. Then Miss Quirk rushed forward and screamed; a scene of dreadful confusion ensued; and at length the infuriated and half-drunken baronet, forced away by his wife and his daughter, aided by several of the company, quitted the hall, and stag-

gered into his carriage, uttering fearful threats and curses all the way home; without once adverting to the circumstance, of which also Lady Wildfire and her daughter were not aware, that he had been himself engaged in perpetrating nearly the same sort of misconduct which he had so severely and justly punished in poor Titmouse. As for Mr Yahoo and Mr Fitz-Snooks, they had been in quest of similar sport the whole night; and had, in pursuing their adventures in the servants' hall, narrowly escaped much more serious indignities and injuries than had fallen to the lot of the hospitable owner of the mansion.

About half-past four o'clock, the sun was shining in cloudless splendour, the air cleared, and ringing with the music of the lark, and all nature seeming freshened after the storm of the preceding day; but what a scene was presented at Yatton! Two or three persons, one with his hat off, asleep; another grasping a half-empty bottle; and a third in a state of desperate indisposition, were to be seen, at considerable distances from each other, by the side of the carriage-road leading down to the park-gates. Four or five horses, ready saddled and bridled, but neglected, and apparently forgotten by both servants and masters, were wandering about the fine green old court opposite the Hall-door, eating the grass, and crushing with their hoofs the beautiful beds of flowers and shrubs which surrounded it. Mr Glisters's gig had got its wheels entangled with the old sun-dial—having been drawn thither by the horse, which had been put into it at least two hours before; opposite the Hall door stood the post-chaise which had brought Mr and Mrs Muddfint and their daughter. The latter two were sitting in it, one asleep—the other, Mrs Muddfint, anxiously on the look-out for her husband, from time to time calling to him, but in vain; for about half an hour before, he had quitted the room where he, Mr Fleshpot, Mr Going Gone, and Mr Centipede, had been playing a rubber at whist, till all of them had nearly fallen asleep with their cards in their hands,

and made his way to the stables; where, not finding his chaise in the yard, or his horses in the stalls, he supposed his wife and daughter had gone home, whither he followed them by the footpath leading through the fields stretching along the high-road to Grilston; and along which said fields he was, at that moment, staggering, and hiccuping, not clearly understanding where he was, nor where he had last seen his wife and daughter. Candles and lamps were still burning and glimmering in some of the rooms at Yatton; and in the servants' hall there were some dozen or so of the lower kind of guests, who, having awoke from a deep sleep, were calling for more ale, or wine, or whatever else they could get. Some of the old family servants had fled hours before from scenes of such unwonted riot, to their bedrooms, and locked and barricaded the doors, but were too much shocked to sleep. Mr Griffiths sat in an old arm-chair in the library, the picture of misery; he had been repeatedly abused and insulted during the night, and had gone thither, unable to bear the sight of the disgusting revelry going forward. In short, at every point that caught the eye, were visible evidences of the villanous debauchery which had prevailed for the last seven hours; and which, under the Titmouse dynasty, was likely to prevail at all times thereafter. As for Mr Titmouse, half-stunned with the treatment which he had experienced at the hands of Sir Harkaway, he had been carried to bed—where his excessive, miscellaneous, and long-continued potations aggravating the effect of the serious injuries which he had sustained, he lay sprawling, half undressed, in a truly deplorable condition. Mr Glistler, who had been summoned to his bedside upwards of an hour before, sat now nodding in his chair beside his patient; and pretty nearly in a state of similar exhaustion were his valet and the housekeeper, who had, from time to time, wiped her eyes and sobbed aloud when thinking of past times, and the horrid change which had come over old Yatton. Mr Yahoo, Mr Fitz-Snooks, Mr Snap, Mr Quirk, and Miss Quirk, (the last hav-

ing retired to her bedroom in the utmost terror, at the time of Titmouse's mischance), were in their respective chambers, all of them probably asleep. Poor Hector, chained to his kennel, having barked himself hoarse for several hours, lay fast asleep, no one having attended to him, or given him anything to eat since Mr Titmouse's arrival. Gammon had retired from the scene, in disgust and alarm, to his bedroom, some three hours before; but unable to sleep—not, however, with excess of wine, for he had drunk very little—had arisen about four o'clock, and was at that moment wandering slowly, with folded arms and downcast countenance, up and down the fine avenue of elm-trees, where, it may be recollected, Mr Aubrey had spent a portion of the last evening of his stay at Yatton.

Such is *my* account of that memorable entertainment—and as fair an account as I know how to give of the matter; but it is curious to observe how differently the same thing will strike different people. As soon as the grateful Mr Centipede had recovered from the excitement occasioned by the part which he had borne in the splendid festival, he set to work, with the pen of a ready writer, and in the next number of the "YORKSHIRE STINGO," there appeared the following interesting account of the

"FESTIVITIES at YATTON HALL, on the occasion of POSSESSION being taken by TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esquire.

"Yesterday this interesting event came off with signal *éclat*, notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the weather. About five o'clock in the evening, an imposing cavalcade, comprising many of the leading gentry and yeomanry of this part of the county, on foot and on horseback, preceded by an admirable band, and a large and splendid banner, bearing the inscription—'Welcome to Yatton,' went out to meet the above distinguished gentleman, whose *cortège*, in two carriages, made its appearance in the village about half-past five. The band immediately struck up 'See the Conquering

Hero comes:' which inspiring air, however, was nearly drowned in the shout which welcomed the new proprietor of the noble estate of Yatton. His carriage was of the most tasteful, splendid, and unique description, and attracted universal admiration. Mr Titmouse repeatedly bowed through the carriage windows, in graceful acknowledgment of the cordial welcome and congratulations with which he was received. He was dressed in a light blue surtout, with velvet collar, full black stock, and a rich velvet waistcoat of plaid pattern. His countenance is handsome and expressive, his eye penetrating, and his brow strongly indicative of thought. He appears to be little more than twenty-five years old; so that he has before him the prospect of a long and brilliant career of happiness and public usefulness. Tables were spread in all the chief apartments, groaning beneath the most costly viands. All the luxuries of the season were there; and the wines (which we believe were those of Mr Aubrey) were of the first description. Grace was said by the exemplary vicar of Grilston, the Rev. Mr Fleshpot; and the Rev. Mr Mudfint returned thanks. Sir Harkaway Botgut Wildfire (whose amiable lady and accomplished daughter were present) proposed the health of Mr Titmouse in a brief, but manly and cordial address; and the manner in which Mr Titmouse acknowledged the toast, which was drunk with the greatest possible enthusiasm—the simplicity, point, and fervour which characterised every word he uttered—were such as to excite lively emotion in all who heard it, and warrant the highest expectations of his success in Parliament. Nothing could be more touching than his brief allusions to the sufferings and privations which he had undergone—nothing more delicate and forbearing than the feeling which pervaded his momentary allusion to the late occupant of Yatton. When, however, he distinctly avowed his political principles as those of a dauntless champion of civil and religious liberty among all classes of his Majesty's subjects—the applause was long and

enthusiastic. After dinner, the great hall was cleared for dancing, which was opened by Mr Titmouse and Miss Wildfire; Lady Wildfire being led out by the Honourable [!] Mr Yahoo, an intimate friend of Mr Titmouse. We should not omit to mention that Miss Quirk (the only daughter of Caleb Quirk, Esq., the head of the distinguished firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, of London, to whose untiring and most able exertions is owing the happy change which has taken place in the ownership of the Yatton property) accompanied her father, at the earnest request of Mr Titmouse, who danced several sets with her; and it is whispered—but we will not anticipate family arrangements. Sir [!] Algernon Fitz-Snooks, a distinguished fashionable, also accompanied Mr Titmouse, and entered with great spirit into all the gaieties of the evening. The 'light fantastic toe' was kept 'tripping' till a late, or rather early hour in the morning—when the old Hall was once more (for a time) surrendered to the repose and solitude from which it has been so suddenly and joyously aroused." [In another part of the paper was contained an insulting paragraph, charging Mr Aubrey with being a party to the "flagrant and iniquitous job," by which Sir Percival Pickering had been returned for the borough, and intimating pretty distinctly, that Mr Aubrey had not gone without "*a consideration*" for his share in the nefarious transaction.]

A somewhat different account of the affair appeared in the "YORK TRUE BLUE" of the same day.

"YATTON HALL.—We have received one or two accounts of the orgies of which this venerable mansion was yesterday the scene, on occasion of Mr Titmouse taking possession. We shall not give publicity to the details which have been furnished us—hoping that the youth and inexperience of the new owner of Yatton (all allowance, also, being made for the natural excitement of such an occasion) will be deemed a palliative in some measure of the conduct then exhibited. One fact, however, we may mention, that a serious

fracas arose between Mr Titmouse and a certain well-known sporting Baronet, which is expected to give employment to the gentlemen of the long robe at the ensuing assizes. Nor can we resist advertng to a circumstance, which our readers will, we trust, credit, on being assured that we witnessed it with our own eyes—that Mr Titmouse positively travelled in the cast-off state carriage of the Lord Mayor of London!!! Nothing, by the way, could be more absurd and contemptible than the attempt at a 'Procession' which was got up—of which our accounts are ludicrous in the extreme. Will our readers believe it, that the chief personages figuring on the occasion, were the editor and publisher of a certain low Radical print—which will no doubt, this day, favour its readers with a flaming description of this 'memorable affair!'

Titmouse, assisted by his attentive valet, made a desperate attempt to get up, and present himself the next day at dinner. Aided by a glass of pretty strong brandy-and-water, he at length got through the fatiguing duties of the toilet, and entered the drawing-room, where his travelling companions were awaiting his arrival—dinner being momentarily expected to be announced. He was deadly pale; his knees trembled; his temples throbbed; his eyes could not bear the light; and everything seemed in undulating motion around him, as he sank in silent exhaustion on the sofa. After a few minutes' continuance, he was compelled to leave the room, leaning on Gammon's arm, who conducted him to his chamber, and left him in charge of his valet, who got him again into bed, and there he lay, enduring much agony, while his friends were enjoying themselves at dinner.

Snap had set off the ensuing day for town, by the first coach, pursuant to the arrangements already spoken of; but I think that old Mr Quirk would have made up his mind to continue at Yatton until something definite had been done by Titmouse, in two mat-

ters which absorbed all the thoughts of the old gentleman—his daughter, and the *Ten Thousand Pounds* bond. Miss Quirk, however, intense as was her anxiety to become the affianced bride of Titmouse, and as such the mistress of the delightful domain where at present she dwelt only as a guest, and in a very embarrassing position—was not so blind to all perception of womanly delicacy as to prolong her stay; and at length prevailed upon her father to take their departure on the day but one after that on which they had arrived. Mr Quirk was perfectly miserable. He vehemently distrusted Titmouse—and feared and detested Gammon. As for the former gentleman, he had not made any definite advances whatever towards Miss Quirk, nor afforded to any one the slightest evidence of a promise of marriage, either express or implied. He chattered to Miss Quirk an infinite deal of vulgar absurdity—but that was all, in spite of the innumerable opportunities afforded him by the lady and her anxious parent. Was Titmouse acting under the secret advice of that deceitful devil Gammon?—thought Mr Quirk, in an ecstasy of perplexity and apprehension. Then as to the other matter—but there Gammon had almost as deep a stake, in proportion, as Quirk himself. On the morning of his departure, he and Gammon had a long interview, in which they several times came to high words; but in the end Gammon vanquished his opponent as usual; allayed all his apprehensions; and accounted for all Titmouse's conduct in the most natural way in the world. 'Look at his position just now,' quoth Gammon—'the excitement, the novelty, the bewilderment, the indisposition he is experiencing: surely, surely *this* is not a moment to bring him to book!' In short, Gammon at length brought Quirk, who had received the first intimation of the matter with a sudden grunt of surprise and anger, to acknowledge the propriety of Gammon's remaining behind, to protect Titmouse from the designing Yahoo that had got hold of

him; and solemnly pledged himself, as in the sight of Heaven, to use his utmost efforts to bring about, as speedily as possible, the two grand objects of Mr Quirk's wishes. With this the old gentleman was fain to be satisfied; but entered the chaise which was to convey Miss Quirk and himself to Grilston, with as rueful a countenance as he had ever exhibited in his life. Mr Titmouse was sufficiently recovered to be present at the departure of Miss Quirk, who regarded his interesting and languid looks with an eye of melting sympathy and affection. With half a smile and half a tear, she slipped into his hand, as he led her to the chaise, a little sprig of heart's ease, which he at once stuck into the button-hole of his coat.

"'Pon my soul—must you go? Devilish sorry you can't stay to have seen some fun!—The old gent (meaning her father) don't quite seem to like it—he, he!" said he, in a low tone; then he handed her into the chaise, she dropping her veil to conceal the starting tear of mingled disappointment, desire, and disgust, and they drove off, Titmouse kissing his hand to her as he stood upon the steps; and, as soon as they were out of sight, he exchanged a significant smile with Mr Gammon.

The next day, Titmouse rose about ten o'clock, almost entirely recovered from his indisposition. Accompanied by Mr Yahoo and Mr Fitz-Snooks, with whom he was conversing as to the course he should take with reference to Sir Harkaway—whom, however, they advised him to treat with silent contempt, as he, Titmouse, was clearly in the wrong—he took a stroll about noon, down the path leading to the park gates. They all three had cigars in their mouths, Titmouse walking between them, as odious-looking a little puppy, sure, as man ever saw—puffing out his smoke slowly, and with half closed eye, his right hand stuck into his coat-pocket, and resting on his hip. These three figures—Heaven save the mark!—were the new lord of Yatton and his select friends!

"By jingo, surely here comes a par-

son," quoth Titmouse; "what the devil can he want here?"—"Twas Dr Tatham, who slowly approached them, dressed in his Sunday suit, and leaning on his old-fashioned walking-stick, given him many, many years ago by the deceased Mrs Aubrey.

"Let's have some sport," said Fitz-Snooks.

"We must look devilish serious—no grinning till the proper time," said Yahoo.

"Hallo—you sir!" commenced Titmouse, who are you?" Dr Tatham took off his hat, bowed, and was passing on.

"Devilish cool, upon—my—soul—sir!" said Titmouse, stopping and staring impudently at the worthy little doctor, who seemed taken quite by surprise.

"My worthy old gentleman," said Yahoo, with mock respect, "are you aware who it was that asked you a question?"

"I am not, sir," replied Dr Tatham quietly, but resolutely.

"My name is Tittlebat Titmouse, at your service—and you are now in my grounds," said Titmouse, approaching him with an impudent air.

"Am I really addressed by Mr Titmouse?" inquired Dr Tatham, somewhat incredulously.

"Why, 'pon my life, I think so, unless I'm changed lately; and by Jove, sir—now, who are you?"

"I am Dr Tatham, sir, the vicar of Yatton: I had intended calling at the Hall, as a matter of courtesy; but I fear I am intruding"—

"Devil a bit—no, 'pon honour, no! you're a good old fellow, I don't doubt!—Pray—a—is that little church outside, yours?"

"It is, sir," replied Dr Tatham seriously and sternly; his manner completely abashing the presumptuous coxcomb who addressed him.

"Oh—well—I—I—'pon my soul, happy to see you, sir—you'll find something to eat in the Hall, I dare say"—

"Do you preach in that same church of yours next Sunday?" inquired Mr Yahoo, whose gross coun-

tenance had filled Dr Tatham with unspeakable aversion.

"I preach there *every* Sunday, sir, twice," he replied, gravely and distantly.

"You see, sir, lisped Fitz-Snooks, "the prayers are so—so—devilish long and tiresome—if you could—eh?—shorten 'em a little?"—

Dr Tatham slowly turned away from them, and disregarding their calls to him, though their tone of voice was greatly altered, walked back again towards the gate, and quitted the park for the first time in his life, with feelings of mortal repugnance. On reaching his little study, he sat down in his old arm-chair, and fell into a sad reverie, which lasted more than an hour; and then he rose, and went to see the old blind stag-hound fed—and looked at it, licking his hands, with feelings of unusual tenderness; and the Doctor shed a tear or two as he patted its smooth grey head.

On Saturday morning, Mr Titmouse, at Mr Gammon's instance, had fixed to go over the estate, accompanied by that gentleman, and by Mr Waters and Dickons, to give all the information required of them, and point out the position and extent of the property. To an eye capable of appreciating it, in what admirable order was everything! but Titmouse quickly tired of it, and when about a mile from the Hall, discovered that he had left his cigar case behind him; at which he expressed infinite concern, and, greatly to the annoyance of Gammon, and the contempt of his two bailiffs, insisted on returning home; so they re-entered the park. How beautiful it was! Its gently undulating surface, smooth as if overspread with green velvet; trees great and small, single and in clumps, standing in positions so picturesque and commanding; the broad, babbling, clear trout-stream winding through the park, with here and there a mimic fall, seen faintly flashing and glistening in the distance; herds of deer suddenly startled amid their green pastures and silent shades, and moving off with graceful ease and rapidity; here

and there a rustic bridge over the stream; here an old stone bench placed on an elevation commanding an extensive prospect; there a kind of grotto, or an ivy-covered summer-house; then the dense, extensive, and gloomy woods, forming a semicircular sweep round the back of the Hall; all around, nearly as far as the eye could reach, land of every kind in the highest state of cultivation, plentifully stocked with fine cattle, and interspersed with snug and substantial farms.

All this, thought Titmouse, might do very well for those who fancied that sort of thing; but as for *him*, how the devil could he have thought of leaving his cigars behind him! Where, he wondered, were Yahoo and Fitz-Snooks? and quickened his pace homeward.

On Gammon the scene which they had been witnessing had made a profound impression; and as his attention was now and then called off from contemplating it, by some ignorant and puerile remark of the proprietor of the fine domain, he felt a momentary exasperation at himself for the part he had taken in the expulsion of the Aubreys, and the introduction of such a creature as Titmouse. That revived certain other thoughts, which led him into speculations of a description which would have afforded uneasiness even to the little idiot beside him, could he have been made aware of them. But the cloud that had darkened his brow was dispelled by a word or two of Titmouse. "Mr Gammon, 'pon my soul you're devilish dull to-day;" said he, Gammon started; and with his winning smile and cheerful voice, instantly replied, "Oh, Mr Titmouse, I was only thinking how happy you are; and that you deserve it!"

"Yes; 'pon my soul it ought all to have been mine at my birth!—Don't it tire you, Mr Gammon, to walk in this up-and-down, zigzag, here-and-there sort of way? It does *me*, 'pon my life! What would I give for a cigar at this moment!"

The next day was the Sabbath, tranquil and beautiful; and just as

the little tinkling bell of Yatton church had ceased, at half-past ten o'clock, Dr Tatham rose, in his reading-desk, and commenced the service. The church was quite full, for every one was naturally anxious to catch a glimpse of the new tenants of the Squire's pew. It was empty, however, till about five minutes after the service had commenced, when a gentleman walked slowly up to the church door; and having whispered an inquiry of the old pew-opener which was the Squire's pew, she led him into it—all eyes settled upon him; and all were struck with his appearance, his calm keen features, and gentlemanly figure. 'Twas, of course, Gammon; who, with the utmost decorum and solemnity, having stood for half a minute with his hat covering his face, during which time he reflected that Miss Aubrey had sat in that pew on the last occasion of his attendance at the church, turned round, and behaved with the greatest seriousness and apparent reverence throughout the service, paying marked attention to the sermon. Gammon was a contemptuous unbeliever, but he thought Dr Tatham an amiable and learned enthusiast, most probably in earnest; and he felt disposed to admit, as his eye glanced round the attentive and decent congregation, that the sort of thing was not without its advantages. Almost all present took him for Titmouse, watching every turn of his countenance with intense interest: and, in their simplicity, they rejoiced that Mr Aubrey's successor was, at all events, so grave and respectable-looking a man; and they fancied that he frequently thought, with kindness

and regret, of those whose seat he was occupying. About the middle of the service, the main-door of the church standing wide open, the congregation beheld three gentlemen, smoking cigars, and laughing and talking together, approaching the porch. They were dressed very finely indeed; and were supposed to be some of the great friends of the new Squire. They stopped when within a few yards of the church; and after whispering together for a moment, one of them, having expelled a mouthful of smoke, stepped forward to the door, holding his cigar in one hand, and with the other taking off his hat. There was a faint smirk on his face (for he did not catch the stern countenance of Gammon anxiously directed towards him), till he beheld Dr Tatham's solemn eye fixed upon him, while he made a momentary pause. Titmouse blushed scarlet; made a hesitating but most respectful bow; and, stepping back a few paces, replaced his hat on his head, and lit his cigar from that of Mr Fitz-Snooks, within view, perhaps unconsciously, of more than half the congregation. Then the three gentlemen, after Mr Titmouse had spoken a word or two to them, burst out into a laugh, and betook themselves to that part of the churchyard which had been the scene of Mr Aubrey's last agony, on quitting the spot where reposed the precious remains of his mother. Leaning against the tomb-stone, they smoked out their cigars, making merry remarks on the quaint inscriptions visible on the surrounding grave-stones. Then they retraced their steps to the Hall, to take a turn at billiards.

CHAPTER III.

A GENTLEMAN IN DIFFICULTIES PONDERING HIS POSITION AND PROSPECTS—
NEVER DESPAIR.

AUBREY'S sudden plunge into the cold and deep stream of trouble, had, the first shock over, served, as it were, to brace his nerves. It is at such a time, and on such an occasion, that the temper and quality of the soul are tried; whether it be weak in seeming strength, or strong in seeming weakness. How many are there, walking with smiling complacent confidence along the flowery bank, who, if suddenly bidden to strip and enter, would turn pale and tremble as they reluctantly prepared to obey the stern mandate; and, after a convulsive shudder, a faint shriek, a brief struggle, disappear from the surface, paralysed, never to be seen again! In such a point of view, let us hope that the situation of Aubrey, one of deepening difficulty and danger—the issue of which, hid in the darkness of the future, no earthly intelligence could predict—will excite in the thoughtful reader an anxiety not unmingled with confidence.

The enervating effects of *inactivity* upon the physical structure and energies of mankind, few can have failed to observe. Rust is more fatal to metal than wear. A thorough-bred racer, if confined in stable or paddock, or a boxer, born of the finest muscular make, if prematurely incarcerated in jail, will, after a few years, become quite unable to compete with those vastly their inferiors in natural endowments and capabilities; however they may, with careful training, be restored to the full enjoyment and exercise of their powers. Thus is it with the temper and intellect of man, which,

secluded from the scenes of appropriate stimulus and exercise, become relaxed and weakened. What would have become of the glorious spirit and powers of Achilles, if his days had all melted away in the tender, delicate, emasculating inactivity and indulgence of the court of Lycomedes? The language of the ancient orator concerning his art may be applied to life, that not only its greatness, but its enjoyment, consists in *action—action—action*. The feelings, for instance, may become so morbidly sensitive, as to give an appearance of weakness to the whole character; and this is likely to be specially the case of one born with those of superior liveliness and delicacy, if he be destined to move only in the realms of silent and profound abstraction and contemplation—in those refined regions which may be termed a sort of paradise; where every conceivable source of enjoyment is cultivated for the fortunate and fastidious occupants, to the very uttermost, and all those innumerable things which fret, worry, and harass the temper, the head, and the heart of the dwellers in the rude regions of ordinary life—anxiously weeded out; instead of entering into the throng of life, and taking part in its constant cares and conflicts—scenes which require all his energies always in exercise, to keep his place, and escape being trodden under foot. Rely upon it, that the man who feels a tendency to shrink from collision with his fellows, to run away with distaste or apprehension from the great practical business of life, does not

enjoy moral or intellectual health; will quickly contract a silly conceit and fastidiousness, or sink into imbecility and misanthropy; and should devoutly thank Providence for the occasion, however momentarily startling and irritating, which stirs him out of his lethargy, his *cowardly* lethargy, and sends him among his fellows—puts him, in a manner, upon a course of training; upon an experience of comparative suffering, it may be of sorrow, requiring the exercise of powers of which he had before scarcely been conscious, and giving him presently the exhilarating consciousness^e that he is exhibiting himself—a man.

“It is probable,” says the late Mr Foster, in his Essay on “Decision of Character”—“that the men most distinguished for decision, have not, in general, possessed a large share of tenderness: and it is easy to imagine that the laws, according to which our nature is formed, will with great difficulty allow the combination of the refined sensibilities, with a hardy, never shrinking, never yielding constancy. Is it not almost of the essence of this constancy, to be free from even the *perception* of such impressions as cause a mind, weak through susceptibility, to relax, or to waver?—No doubt, this firmness consists partly in overcoming feelings—but it may consist partly, too, in not having them.” The case I am contemplating is perhaps the difficult, though by no means, I am persuaded, uncommon one—of a person possessing these delicate sensibilities, these lively feelings; yet with a native strength of character beneath, which, when the occasion for its display has arisen—when it is placed in a scene of constant and compulsory action, will fully evince and vindicate itself. It is then “that another essential principle of decision of character,” to quote from another part of the same essay, “will be displayed; namely, a total incapability of surrendering to indifference or delay the serious determinations of the mind. A strenuous will accompanies the conclusions of thought, and constantly urges the utmost efforts for their prac-

tical accomplishment. The intellect is invested, as it were, with a glowing atmosphere of passion, under the influence of which the cold dictates of reason take fire, and spring into active powers.”

There is, indeed, nothing like throwing a man of the description we are considering, upon his own resources, and compelling him to exertion. Listen, ye languid and often gifted victims of indolence and *ennui*, to the noble language of one blessed with as splendid powers as perhaps were ever vouchsafed to man—Edmund Burke!

“DIFFICULTY is a severe instructor, set over us by the Supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better, too. *Pater ipse colendi, haud facilem esse viam voluit.* He that wrestles with us, strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill; our antagonist is our helper. This amicable contest with difficulty obliges us to an intimate acquaintance with our object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations; it will not suffer us to be superficial.”

The man, moreover, whose disposition is one of sterling excellence, despite the few foibles which it may have contracted in comparative solitude and inactivity, when he is compelled to mix indiscriminately with the great family of man, oh how patient and tolerant he becomes of the weakness and errors of others, when thus constantly reminded of, and made to feel his own! Oh, how pitiful! how very pitiful he is!—How his heart yearns and overflows with love, and mercy, and charity towards his species, *individually*—whose eye looks oft on their grievous privations, their often incurable distress and misery!—and who in the spirit of a heavenly philanthropy penetrates even to those deserted quarters—

“Where hopeless anguish pours her moan,
And lonely want retires to die!”

It may be that some of the preceding observations are applicable to many individuals of the purest and most amiable characters, and power-

ful and cultivated intellects, in the higher classes of society, whose affluence exempts them from the necessity of actively intermingling with the concerns of life, and feeling the consciousness of individual responsibility,—of having a personal necessity for anxious care and exertion. They are assured that a position of real precariousness and danger, is that requisite for developing the energies of a man of high moral and intellectual character; as it will expose to destruction one of a contrary description.

I have endeavoured, in previous portions of this history, to delineate faithfully the character of Mr Aubrey—one (how idle and childish would have been the attempt!) by no means perfect, yet with high qualities. He was a man of noble simplicity of character,—generous, confiding, sincere, affectionate: possessing a profound sense of religion, really influencing his conduct in life; an intellect of a superior order, of a practical turn, of a masculine strength—as had been evidenced by his successful academical career, his thorough mastery of some of the most important and difficult branches of human knowledge, and by his aptitude for public business. He was at the same time possessed of a sensibility that was certainly excessive. He had a morbid tendency to pensiveness, if not melancholy, which, with a feeble physical constitution, was partly derived from his mother, and partly accounted for by the species of life which he had led. From his early youth he had been addicted to close and severe study, which had given permanence and strength to his naturally contemplative turn. He had not, moreover, with too many possessed of his means and station, entered, just at the dawn and bloom of manhood, upon that course of dissipation which is a sure and speedy means of destroying “the freshness of thought and of feeling,” which “never again can be theirs,” and inducing a lowered tone of feeling, and a callousness which some seem to consider necessary to enable them to pass through life easily and agreeably. He, on

the contrary, had stepped out of the gloom and solitude of the cloister, into the pure and peaceful region of domestic life, with all its hallowed and unutterable tendernesses, where the affections grow luxuriantly; in the constant society of such women as his mother, his sister, his wife, and latterly his lovely children. Then he was possessed, all this while, of a fine fortune—one which placed him far beyond the necessity for anxiety or exertion. With such tastes as these, such a temperament as his, and leading such a life as his, is it surprising that the tone of his feelings should have become somewhat relaxed? The three or four years which he had spent in Parliament, when he plunged into its fierce and absorbing excitement with characteristic ardour and determination, though calculated to sharpen the faculties, and draw forth the resources of his intellect, subjected him to those alternations of elevation and depression, those extremes of action and reaction, which were not calculated to correct his morbid tendencies.

Therefore came there up to him a messenger from Heaven, with trouble and affliction in his countenance, telling him to descend from the happy solitude of his high mountain, into the dismal hubbub and conflict in the plain beneath. He came down with humility and awe, and with reverent resignation; and was—instantly surrounded!—

A weak man would have been confused and stunned, and so sunk helpless into the leaden arms of despair. But it was not so with Aubrey. There was that dormant energy within, which, when appealed to, quickly shook off the weakness contracted by inaction, and told him to *be up and doing*; and that, not with the fitfulness of mere impulse, but the constant strength of a well-regulated mind, conscious of its critical position; and also of a calm inflexible determination to vanquish difficulty, and if possible escape the imminent danger, however long and doubtful might prove the conflict. Above all, he was consoled and blessed by the conviction,

that nothing could befall him that was not the ordination of Providence,

—“supremely wise,
 Like in what it gives and what denies;”

that His was the ordering of the sunshine and the gloom, the tempest and the calm of life. This was to Aubrey—this is—as the humble writer of these pages, who has had in his time his measure of anxiety and affliction, has in his soul a profound and intimate persuasion and conviction of—the only source of real fortitude and resignation, amidst the perplexities, afflictions, and dangers of life. Depend upon it, that a secret and scarce-acknowledged disbelief, or at least doubt and distrust of the very existence of God, and of his government of the world—HIS REAL PRESENCE AND INTERFERENCE with the men, and things, of the world—lies at the bottom of almost all impatience and despair under adverse circumstances. How can he be impatient, or despairing, who believes not only the existence of God, and his moral government of the world, but that he has mercifully vouchsafed to reveal and declare expressly that the infliction of suffering and sorrow is directly from himself, and designed solely for the advantage of his creatures? *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. While thus benignantly teacheth the voice of God, thought Aubrey, shall I rather incline mine ear to the blighting whisper of the Evil One—a liar, and the father of a lie, who*

would fain that I should become a fool, saying within my heart there is no God—or, if I cannot but believe that there is one, provoking me to charge Him foolishly, to curse Him and dis? Not, so, however, had Aubrey read the Scriptures—not so had he learned the Christian religion.

The last time that we caught a glimpse of the ruined family, they had arrived nearly at the end of their long and melancholy journey from Yatton to the metropolis. When before had such been the character of their journey to town? Had they not ever looked forward with pleasure towards the brilliant gaieties of the season; their re-entrance into an extensive and splendid circle of friends—and he into the delightful excitement of political life—the opening of the parliamentary campaign? Alas, how changed now all this! how gloomy and threatening the aspect of the metropolis, whose dusky outskirts they were entering! With what feelings of oppression—of vague indefinite apprehension—did they now approach it: their spirits heavy, their hearts bleeding with their recent severance from Yatton! Now, distress, desertion, dismay, seemed associated with the formidable name of “London.” They had now no place of their own awaiting, thoroughly prepared for them, their welcome arrival—but must drive to some quiet and unexpensive family hotel for temporary shelter. As their eyes caught familiar point after point in their route through the suburbs—now passed at a moderate pace, with a modest pair of horses; formerly dashed past by them in their carriage-and-four—there were few words spoken by those within the carriage. Both the children were fast asleep. Poor Kate, as they entered Piccadilly, burst into tears: her pent-up feelings suddenly gave way, and she cried heartily; Mrs Aubrey also wept. Mr Aubrey was calm, but evidently oppressed with profound anxiety. Still he affectionately took their hands, and, in something which was designed for a cheerful tone and manner, besought them to restrain

their feelings, and thank Heaven that so far they had got on safely.

"I shall be better presently, Charles," said Miss Aubrey passionately, burying her face in her handkerchief, "but I feel quite *afraid* of London!"

Over the pavement they rattled, meeting carriages rolling in all directions—for it was about the dinner hour, and in the height of the season; and it was the casual but vivid evidence thus afforded of their desolate position, this sudden glimpse of old familiar scenes, which had momentarily overcome the fortitude of Miss Aubrey. They drove to a quiet family hotel in a retired street running parallel with Piccadilly; they were all wearied, both in mind and body, and after a slight repast, and much anxious and desponding conversation, they bade each other affectionate adieus, and retired to rest. They rose in the morning refreshed with repose, and in a more tranquil mood of mind than could have been expected.

"Now we enter," said Aubrey with a cheerful smile, "upon the real business of life; so we must discard sentiment—we must not think of the past, but the future."

At their request, they, shortly after breakfast, accompanied him to the house agent who had been commissioned by Mr Runnington to look out two or three residences from which, on their arrival in town, they might easily select that deemed most suitable for their purposes. One was particularly recommended to them; and after due inquiry, within three days after their arrival in town, they engaged it. 'Twas a small, but convenient, airy, and comfortable house, within five minutes' walk of Hyde Park, and situated in Vivian Street—one only recently completed—and as quiet and retired as they could have wished. The rent, too, was moderate—fifty pounds a-year. Though none of the houses in the street were large, they were all strictly private residences, and had an air of thorough respectability. Mr Aubrey's house had but one window to the dining-room, and two to the drawing-room.

The passage and staircase were sufficiently commodious, as were the chief apartments. At the back of the house was a small garden, about twenty yards in length, and about ten in width, with several lilacs, laburnums, and shrubs; and a considerable portion of the wall was covered with ivy. Was not this a delightful place for the children to play about in? The back parlour, a somewhat small one certainly, looked into this garden, and was at once appropriated to be a library for Mr Aubrey. Within a week's time, all their luggage, furniture, &c., had arrived in town from Yatton; and they had quite sufficient to furnish their little residence out of the wreck of the equipments of the old Hall—adapted as it was, under the tasteful superintendence of Mrs and Miss Aubrey, with equal regard to elegance, simplicity, and economy. How busy were they all for a fortnight! Many and many an irrepressible sigh, and rebellious tear, would the sight of these old familiar objects, in their new situation, occasion them! Some half-dozen family pictures hung upon the wall. Over the mantelpiece was suspended a piece of beautiful embroidery—by poor old Mrs Aubrey, many years before—of the arms of the family. In the dining-room was the old high-backed chair in which she had sat for twenty years and more. In the drawing-room was Miss Aubrey's favourite ebony inlaid cabinet, and Mrs Aubrey's piano; and, in short, everywhere might be seen the delicate traces of dear, dear, graceful, and elegant woman—touching nothing that she adorns not! What with the silk curtains, and a carpet of simple but tasteful pattern, and the various articles of furniture and ornament, all possessing a kind of old family air—all from Yatton, I declare there was a sort of richness about the general aspect of the drawing-room; and when Mrs Aubrey and Kate came to fetch Mr Aubrey out of his little library to witness the completion of their labours, he gazed round him for a while, looked at each object, and then at the two dear fond beings standing beside

him, awaiting his opinion with womanly eagerness; but he could not express his feelings. He kissed each of them tenderly and in silence, and then they were a little overcome. His library, also, though small, was as snug and comfortable as a bookworm could have desired. All the sides were covered with books, and in the middle were the library-table and arm-chair which he had used in Grosvenor Street, and which were, it must be owned, on too large a scale for the little room to which they had been removed.

That this oppressed family were not incessantly, and painfully, reminded of the contrast afforded by their present to their former circumstances, I do not pretend to assert; but it seldom formed a topic of conversation between any of them. When, however, the bustle and occupation of arranging their house was over, and Mrs Aubrey and Kate were left a good deal to themselves—Mr Aubrey being either absent from home, or in his library, engaged in matters of the last importance to them all—then they would talk together with increasing eagerness and excitement about past times, and their recent troubles and bereavements; not displaying then—sweet souls!—quite that degree of resignation and fortitude which they strove to exhibit in the presence of Mr Aubrey.

“Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon.”

They passed a good deal of their time in-doors, in needlework, *practical* family needlework, an art in which they were not particularly accomplished, but which they quickly acquired from a sempstress whom they kept engaged constantly in the house for several weeks. Then sometimes they would sit down to the piano; at other times they would read—on all occasions, however, frequently falling into conversation on the all-engrossing topic of their expulsion from Yatton. Now and then, they could scarcely refrain from a melancholy smile, when they remarked upon their shrunken personal importance. “Really, Agnes,” said one day

Miss Aubrey, “I feel just as one can fancy a few poor newly-shorn sheep must feel! So light and cold! so much *less* than they were half an hour before! Surely they must hardly know what to make of themselves!”

“Then, I suppose, mamma,” said Charles, who was sitting on a stool beside them—making believe to write on a small slate—“I am a *little* sheep?” They both looked at the child with silent tenderness, and presently thought of Him who “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.”

Their proximity to the parks was delightful, and many a pleasant hour did they pass there with the children; and then, returning home, would occupy themselves with writing letters—and long ones they usually were—to early and loved friends, especially to Dr Tatham, with whom Miss Aubrey kept up a constant correspondence. I ought to have mentioned before, that Mr Aubrey, in bringing his favourite valet up to town with him, had no other design than, with that kind thoughtfulness for which he was remarkable, to have an opportunity of securing for him a good situation; and that he succeeded in doing, after about a fortnight's interval: but the poor fellow was quite confounded when he first heard that he was to quit the service of Mr Aubrey, and, almost falling on his knees, begged to be permitted to continue and receive no wages, and he should be a happy man. Mr Aubrey was, however, firm; and on parting with him, which he did with no little emotion, put two guineas into his hand as a present, and wished him health and happiness. The poor fellow's deep distress at parting with the family sensibly affected them all, and reminded them vividly of one of the latest and bitterest scenes at Yatton. On his departure, their little establishment consisted but of three female servants, a cook, a housemaid, and a nursery-maid. It took them some little time to familiarise themselves with the attendance of a female servant at dinner! That was one little matter—and another was Charles' now and then complaining of being tired, and inquiring

why his mamma did not drive in the carriage as she used to do, and how he should like to go with her!—which brought home to them, in a lively manner, their altered circumstances—their fallen fortunes. Many, many were the anxious calculations they made together, of the probable amount of their annual expenditure—which at length, inexperienced as they were, they fixed at from £300 to £400, including everything; his wife and sister eagerly assuring Mr Aubrey, and persuading each other, that as for clothes—their wardrobe would, with care, last them for three or four years to come—so that that was an item which might be almost altogether excluded from the account; except, by the way, the children—yes, they should be always well dressed; that all agreed upon. Then there was their education—oh, Kate would see to that! Could they, in this manner, with rigid and persevering economy, hold on their way for a year or two? was a question they often asked one another, with beating hearts. If they could, then, they said, they should be happy; for they had health—they had peace of mind; their consciences were not oppressed by a sense of misconduct—and they were able to put their trust in Providence.

Mr Aubrey resolved to live in strict privacy; and they consequently communicated their residence to but one or two of their numerous friends, and to them only in confidence. To have acted otherwise would have seriously interfered with the arrangements which, long ago contemplated, he had now fixed upon. It would have been perpetually calling their attention to the contrast between former days and scenes, and the present; opening their wounds afresh; and moreover, subjecting them to kind and generous importunities and offers, which, however delicate, would have been exquisitely painful and trying to an honourable pride. But it is time that I should proceed to give a more particular account of the position, the personal feelings, and the purposes and prospects, of Mr Aubrey.

From the moment when he received

the first intimation of the desperate assault about to be made upon his fortunes, he felt a conviction—whether arising from weakness, or superstition, or any other cause, it concerns me not here to say—that the issue would be a disastrous one for him; and, the first alarm and confusion over, he addressed himself with serious calmness, with deep anxiety, to the determination of his future course of life. A man of his refined taste and feeling would inevitably appreciate exquisitely—with, indeed, a most agonising intensity—the loss of all those superior enjoyments—the *delicæ* of life—to which he had been from his birth accustomed. *Semper enim delicatè ac molliter vivit.* I speak not here of the mere exterior “appliances and means” of wealth and station, but of the fastidious and sensitive condition of feeling and temper, which such a state of things is calculated to engender in a person of his description. He could part with the one; but how could he divest himself of the other? Even had he been alone in the world, and not surrounded with objects of the tenderest regard, whose safety or ruin was involved in his own, one of the results of his opponent’s success—namely, his claim to the mesne profits—was calculated to fetter all his movements, to hang like a millstone round his neck; and that effect, indeed, it had. Still he played the man—resolved to act promptly, and with the best consideration he could give to his critical position. He had not yet reached the prime of life; had a fair share of health; had been blessed with the inestimable advantages of a first-rate education—and, above all, had followed out his early advantages by laborious and systematic study. He had not only made accurate, extensive, and valuable acquisitions of knowledge, but learned how to use them—to turn them to practical account. What would, he thought, have become of him, had he, or those before him, neglected his education? Then he had acquired business-habits in the House of Commons; and had friends and connections who might be of essential service to him,

if he could but first succeed in attaining such a position as would enable him to avail himself of their good offices. Surely all *these* were cheering considerations! Had he not even advantages superior to those possessed by many in entering upon some one of the scenes of honourable struggle for a livelihood and distinction? He surveyed all the professions, with much deliberation. The army and navy were of course out of the question. There was the *Church*: but no—his soul recoiled from the degradation and guilt of entering that holy calling from mercenary motives, merely as a means of obtaining a livelihood; and he would rather have perished than prefer the prayer uttered by the descendants of one whose lamentable case is left on record—who *came and crouched for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread, saying, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.** A personage of high distinction in the Church, of eminent piety and learning, aware of the mis-

* 2 Samuel, ii. 36.

fortunes of Aubrey, and well acquainted with his pure and exemplary character, his learning, acquirements, and fitness for the ministerial office, wrote to him, offering every facility for taking orders, with an assurance that he need not wait long before being placed in a situation of public usefulness. Though he assured Mr Aubrey that he believed himself consulting the best interests, both of Mr Aubrey and of the Church—the scruples of Mr Aubrey were not to be overcome; and he wrote to the kind and venerable prelate, a letter declining his offers, and assigning reasons which filled him with profound respect for Mr Aubrey. Then literature, for which—for real substantial literature—he possessed superior qualifications, was proverbially precarious. As for *teaching*—he felt quite unfit for it; he had not the least inclination for it; 'twas a cheerless scene of exertion, in which, as it were, he felt his energies *perishing in the using*. The *BAR* was the profession to which his tastes and inclinations, and, he hoped, his qualifications, pointed him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, AND MR WEASEL, SPECIAL PLEADER.

ONE of the first things Mr Aubrey did, on reaching London, was to apply for information to one consummately qualified to guide him in the matter. He wrote to the Attorney-general, soliciting an interview at his chambers upon the subject of entering the profession; and received an immediate answer, appointing ten o'clock on Saturday, on which day the Attorney-general expected to be partially free from public engagements. Precisely at that hour, Mr Aubrey entered the chambers of that distinguished person, whose arrival he had anticipated. Poor Aubrey felt a little nervous and

depressed as the fussy clerk showed him into the room—as he fancied, and only fancied—with an air of patronising civility, as if aware of his diminished personal consequence. He stood for a minute or two close to Mr Aubrey, with a sort of confidence in his manner, as he rubbed his hands, and glibly observed on the innumerable engagements of the Attorney-general, which slightly—very slightly—displeased Mr Aubrey, suggesting the idea of undue familiarity. He answered the voluble clerk therefore courteously, but with an evident disinclination to prolong the conversa-

tion, and was quickly left alone. Poor Aubrey's pride had taken the alarm. Was it possible that the man had been presuming to give him a hint not to occupy much of the Attorney-general's time? Nay, further, had it been done in consequence of an intimation from the Attorney-general himself? Oh, no—his own good sense came presently to his assistance, and banished so absurd a notion. There were three tables in the room, and each was laden with briefs, some of them of prodigious bulk. Seven or eight recent ones were placed on the table opposite to which his vacant chair was standing; the very sight of all this oppressed Aubrey: how could one man's head manage so much? He was ruminating on such matters—and especially upon the powerful, versatile, and practised intellect which was requisite successfully to cope, as the Attorney-general coped, with such perpetually accumulating difficulties, independently of the harassing responsibilities and occupations of political office, when that personage entered. He was a tall and handsome man, about forty-five, with an extremely graceful and gentlemanlike carriage. There was a slight dash of negligence in it; while his manner was fraught with cheerful composure. He looked quite a man of the world: you would have thought that he could have nothing to do but lounge at his club; ride round the Park; saunter into the House of Lords for an hour or two: and then surrender himself to the pleasures of society. There was not a trace of anxiety or exhaustion about him; yet had he been engaged during the whole of the preceding day conducting a great political cause, one of high treason, not having concluded his reply till nine o'clock at night! There was a playful smile about his mouth; his ample forehead seemed unfurrowed by a wrinkle; and his bright penetrating hazel eyes seemed never the worse for wear with all the tens of thousands of brief sheets on which they had travelled for the last twenty years.

"Ha—Aubrey—I'm a few minutes

behind time, I'm afraid!—How are you?" said he, with a cheerful air, grasping his saddened visitor cordially by the hand.

"Good morning, Mr Attorney—*Cum tot sustineas, et tanta negotia solus*"—commenced poor Aubrey, pointing to the piles of briefs.

"Pho, my dear Aubrey; nonsense! *They've* enough of my time, surely, without grudging me half an hour's conversation with a friend—ah, ha!" They were both quickly seated—and within a minute or two's time the Attorney-general, *more suo*, had got to business—the business of the visit. Aubrey perceived the rapidity of the movement; but nothing could be kinder than the manner of his companion, however distinct and decisive his intimation that time was precious. He approved entirely of Mr Aubrey's coming to the bar, and strongly recommended him not to lose a day in entering upon the serious practical study of it; informing him that, as a university man, within three years' time he would be eligible to be called to the bar. "I'll call you myself, Aubrey, if you will allow me," said he; but before that period had arrived, he had taken his seat upon the Woolsack as Lord High Chancellor of England!

"Undoubtedly," said he, amongst other things, when pressed by Aubrey about the difficulties to be encountered in adopting the legal profession—"the acquisition of technical knowledge will be for some little time rather troublesome; but a twelvemonth's steady study, by a man in earnest, and accustomed to real *work*, will make a vast inroad on it. Everything you master, you see, helps to master so much more. Three years' serious application to the law, by a man like you, my dear Aubrey, will place you far a-head of the mob of men at the bar. Besides, 'tis not the study but the practice of the law that teaches law most effectually. * * Always have an eye to principle, referring everything to it. Resolve thoroughly to understand the smallest details; and it will be a wonderful assistance in fixing them for practical use in your mind, to learn as

much as you can, of the reasons and policy in which they originated. You'll find Reeves' History of the English Law of great service to you; I should study it in the evenings; 'tis full of interest and value in every point of view. I read it, very carefully, soon after I left college; and, by the way, I'll tell you another book, by which I did the same—the State Trials: ay, you could hardly believe me, if I were to tell you how much I have read of them—speeches, examinations, cross-examination of witnesses, reply, and summing up. That's where I first learned how to examine and cross-examine a witness! Consider, the counsel employed were, you know, generally first-rate men, and exerted themselves on such occasions, to the utmost, and the records of their procedure show you the best possible style of doing business. And there you also learn a great deal of constitutional law. * * You ask me how I get through so much? To be sure, one has enough to do, and I'm afraid I neglect a good deal; but the great secret is,—attention, and to one thing at a time. The sun's rays scattered are comparatively powerless; condense them, they are irresistible:—but all this, you know, Aubrey, as well as, or better than I do. * * Certainly, law is difficult; but its difficulty is often greatly overrated, especially by imperfectly educated, and ill-disciplined, quick, sharp men. You will find it a different matter. What is wanted is a clear head; a good memory; strong common sense; fixity of purpose; an aptitude for analysis and arrangement: before these combined, the difficulties of law fly like the morning mist before the sun.—Tact with the court, and a jury, is acquired by practice, to a considerable extent, in the absence even of natural endowments. And as for you, Aubrey—upon my honour, I've often listened with great satisfaction to you in the House; few ever made clearer statements of facts, or reasoned more closely and cogently than you did; with practice, you would have become—and you soon will become—a

formidable debater. In your new profession you will find facts become quite different things from what they have ever hitherto appeared; flexible, elastic, accommodating—you may do anything with them—twist, and turn, and combine; ha! ha! Aubrey!" [Here the Attorney-general laughed in the plenitude of his own conscious power.] "In a word, Aubrey, if you determine to get on at the bar, you will; and if you can but get a bit of a start at the beginning; now, for instance, there's Runningtons' house—why if they would push you—your fortune's made. But you must make up your mind to wait a little: you can't get into a great business by a hop, step, and a jump, believe me. Certainly I have no cause to be dissatisfied; I've done pretty well; but I can tell you that eight years passed over me before I earned enough a-year to pay my laundress. With me, accident supplied the place of connection: but only suppose how I must have worked in the mean time to be able to do business when it came to me! I know it's said that I was always an idle man; but people were a good deal mistaken about that matter, I can promise them! What idiots, indeed, to suppose such a thing! Why, my very first start lifted me into a business of a thousand a-year; and, in the name of common sense, how could I have got through it, if I hadn't worked beforehand? Bah!—Now, if Runningtons'—one of the first firms in the profession—will stand by you, I'll guarantee your making £300 your first year! and if they won't, which is inconceivable, why, don't despair; you'll have to wait a little longer; but it will come at last, depend on it, if you continue on the look-out! Besides, you can help me a little bit, eh? It will be a sort of introduction, you know; but we've time enough to see about that.—I recommend you to get at once into the chambers of some hard-working man, with a good deal of general business, particularly Pleading—let me see"—Here the Attorney-general paused, and stroked his chin for a moment or two in a musing

manner, "Ah, yes, there's WEASEL, the very man for your purpose. He's a good pleader, and a neat draftsman; gets through his work cleanly—ah! Weasel's a clear-headed painstaking little fellow—all for law; and he's got a good deal of it. He's not a polished person, little Weasel, ha! ha! but he's an honourable, right-minded man—shall I introduce you? Well, by-and-by, I'll walk over with you.—As to books? oh! why—I suppose you've looked into Blackstone? He's a fine fellow, Blackstone, and deserves all that has been said in his praise. Many think that he's only to be glanced at, at the beginning of their studies; never believe it! He's good to the end of the chapter! I've a profound respect for Blackstone; it's the only book I've read four or five times through—ay, from cover to cover; he makes law lovely! Stick to Blackstone by all means! Reeves—oh! I mentioned him, you know. Then I should go, I think, to Coke on Littleton; but we shall have several opportunities of talking over these matters. I really believe, Aubrey, that you are doing a wise thing in coming to the bar. If you've health, and the average opportunities, though I think you will have more, I'll undertake to say that in a few years' time you will realise an income—which may be a great one—but which, whatever it may be, you'll earn, as you did not the one you've lost; and you'll enjoy it, my dear Aubrey, ten thousand times more! All that I can do for you, I will—command me! By the way," he added, assuming a somewhat anxious expression of countenance, and a manner different from that free, buoyant, off-hand one in which, for the last twenty minutes, he had been speaking, (Aubrey feeling all the while the easy commanding power and simplicity of the resplendent intellect with which he was communing), "I'm almost afraid to ask; but how do you come on, about the—Meane Profits?"

"I have heard nothing whatever about them, as yet," replied Aubrey, sighing; his face suddenly over-

shadowed with gloom. A moment's pause ensued; which was interrupted by the Attorney-general saying, in an earnest and feeling manner, "I hope to heaven you'll be able to get some favourable arrangement made! You've not seen anything of Mr Titmouse's attorneys, I suppose?"

"Oh, no!" replied Aubrey, sighing, "nor heard anything from them!"

"I've had little to do with them; Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—these are the people, eh?" Mr Aubrey nodded. "Quirk is a stubborn wooden-headed fellow—an old hedgehog! Egad! that man's compounded more felonies, the old scamp, than any man in England! I should like to have him in the witness-box for a couple of hours, or so! I think I'd tickle him a little," said the Attorney-general with a bitter smile. "They say he's a confidential adviser to a sort of Thieves' Association! But there's Gammon: I've had several things to do with him. He is a superior man, that Gammon, a decidedly superior man. A keen dog! I recollect him being principal witness in a cause when I was for the plaintiff; and he completely baffled Subtle—ah, ha, how well I recollect it!—Subtle lost his temper at last, because he couldn't make Gammon lose his! Ah, how cleverly the fellow twisted and turned with Subtle for nearly an hour! ah, ha—Subtle looked so chagrined!—Have you seen Mr Gammon?"

"No, I've had no occasion."

"He has a pleasing, gentlemanlike appearance; rather a striking face. He's the man you'll have to deal with in any negotiations on the subject I named. You must mind what you're about with him—for he's a dangerous man, if what I've heard of him be true. You mustn't think me intrusive, Aubrey, but, have they sent in their bill yet?"

Mr Aubrey involuntarily shuddered, as he answered in the negative.

"I'd give a trifle to know how the plague such people ever came to be concerned in such a case. 'Tis quite out of their way—which is in the criminal line of business!—They'll

make their client pay for it through the nose, I warrant him:—By the way, what an inconceivably ridiculous little ass that Titmouse is—I saw him in court at York. If he'd only go on the stage, and act naturally, he'd make his fortune as a fool!"—Mr Aubrey faintly smiled at this sally; but the topics which the Attorney-general had just before touched upon, had not a little oppressed his spirits.

"As this is comparatively an idle day with me," said the Attorney-general, "and I've got ten minutes more at your service—suppose I go with you at once—nothing like the present moment—to Mr Weasel's?"

"I am greatly obliged to you," replied Aubrey—and both rose to go. "Say I shall be back in a few minutes," said the Attorney-general, in answer to his clerk, who reminded him as he passed, that Mr Sergeant Squelch and Mr Putty would be there in a moment or two's time. As they crossed the court—"How do you do, Mr Putty?" said the Attorney-general, with lofty civility, to a grinning little confident personage who met him, exclaiming with flippant familiarity, "How do you do, Mr Attorney?—Coming to your chambers—you don't forget?—Consultation—eh?"

"I perfectly recollect it, Mr Putty, I shall return presently. Perhaps, if convenient, you will have the goodness to wait for a few minutes"—replied the Attorney-general, somewhat stiffly, and passed on, arm-in-arm with Mr Aubrey.

"Now, that forward little imp's name, Aubrey, is Purry," whispered the Attorney-general. "He was a glazier by trade; but just as he finished his apprenticeship, an uncle left him a few hundred pounds, with which—would you believe it?—nothing would suit him but decking himself in a wig and gown, and coming to the bar—ah, ha!—The fellow's creeping, however, into a little business, positively! They say he has a cousin who is one of the officers to the Sheriff of Middlesex, and puts a good many little things in his way! He's my junior in an action of libel against a

newspaper, for charging his father-in-law—a baker who supplies some work-house with bread—with making it of only one-third flour, one-third rye, and the remainder *saw-dust*—ah, ha, ha!—I dared hardly look at the judges while I moved the Rule for a New Trial, for fear of laughing! This is the case in which we're going to have the consultation he spoke of—but here's Mr Weasel's." They mounted a narrow dingy-looking, well-worn staircase—and on the first floor beheld "MR WEASEL" painted over the door. On the Attorney-general's knocking, as soon as his clear silvery voice was heard asking for Mr Weasel, and his dignified figure had been recognised by the clerk, who had one pen in his mouth, and another behind his ear—that humble functionary suddenly bent himself almost double three or four times; and with flustered obsequiousness assured the great man that Mr Weasel was quite at liberty. The next moment the Attorney-general and Mr Aubrey were introduced into Mr Weasel's room—a small dusky apartment wretchedly furnished, but the walls lined with book-shelves well filled—and the table at which he was writing, and a chair on each side of him, strewn with draft paper, which he was covering at a prodigious rate. He was, in fact, drawing a "Declaration" in an action for a *Breach of promise of Marriage* (taking a hasty pinch of fiery Welsh snuff every three minutes); and his task seemed to be rendered very difficult, by the strange conduct of the defendant—surely the most fickle of mankind—who, with an extraordinary inconsistency, not knowing his own mind for a day together, had promised to marry Miss M's Squint, the heart-broken plaintiff, firstly, within a reasonable time; secondly, on a given day; thirdly, on the defendant's return from the Continent; fourthly, on the death of his father (both of which events were averred to have taken place); fifthly, when the defendant should have cut his wise teeth (which it was averred he had); and lastly, on "being requested" by the lady—which it was averred she had

done, and in the most precise and positive manner, that she had been ready and willing, and then [what will the ladies say?] "tendered and offered herself to marry the said defendant," who had then wholly neglected and refused to do any such thing. One notable peculiarity of the case was, that all these promises had been made, and all these events appeared to have come to pass in one particular place—and that rather an odd one, viz. in "the parish of St Mary Le Bow, in the ward of Cheap, in the city of London."* If you had been better acquainted with Mr Weasel's associations and mode of doing business, you would have discovered that, in his imagination, almost all the occurrences of life took place at the same spot! But to return—thus was that astute little pleader engaged when they entered. He was a bachelor, upwards of forty; of spare make, of low stature, with a thin, sharp, fallow face, and short stiff black hair; there was an appearance about the eyes as if they were half-blinded with being incessantly directed to white paper; he had a furrowed forehead, a small pursed-up mouth—one hardly knew why, but really there was something about his look that instantly suggested to you the image of the creature whose name he bore. He was a ravenous lawyer, darting at the point and pith of every case he was concerned in, and sticking to it—just as would his bloodthirsty namesake at the neck of a rabbit. In law he lived, moved, and had his being. In his dreams he was everlastingly spinning out pleadings which he never could understand, and hunting for cases which he could not discover. In the daytime, however, he was more successful. In fact, everything he saw, heard, or read of—wherever he was, whatever he was doing, suggest-

* It may be as well to apprise the reader, that this strange mode of pleading has been lately superseded by one more reasonable and intelligible.—Since this note was written, most of the destructive nonsense of pleading has been got rid of (1855).

ed to him questions of law, that might arise out of it. At his sister's wedding, whither he had not gone without reluctance, he got into a wrangle with the bridegroom, on a question started by Weasel himself, whether an *infant* was liable for goods supplied to his wife, before marriage. At his grandmother's funeral he got into an intricate discussion with a puzzled proctor about *bona notabilia*, with reference to a pair of horn spectacles, which the venerable deceased had left behind her in Scotland, and a poodle in the Isle of Man; and at church, the reading of the parable of the *Unjust Steward*, set his devout, ingenious, and fertile mind at work for the remainder of the service, as to the modes of stating the case, nowadays, against the offender, and whether it would be more advisable to proceed civilly or criminally; and if the former, at law, or in equity. He was a hard-headed man; clear, acute, and accurate in his legal knowledge; every other sort he despised, if, indeed, he had more than the faintest notion, from hearsay, of its existence. He was a Cambridge man; and there had read nothing but mathematics, in which he had made a decent figure. As soon as he had taken his degree, he migrated to the Temple, where he had ever since continued engaged in the study, and then the successful practice of the law, as a special pleader under the bar.† He had a large business, which he got through ably and rapidly. He scarcely ever went into society; early want of opportunity for doing so, had at length abated his desire for it—to say nothing of his want of time. When, as was seldom the case, he ventured out for a walk, he went, muttering to himself, at a postman's pace, to get the greatest quantity of exercise in the smallest space of time. He was not a bad-tempered man, but, from the absorbing and harassing nature of his employments, had become nervous, fidgety, and irritable. His tone of

† This ingenious and industrious race of beings is now nearly extinct (1855).

voice was feeble, his utterance hesitating, his manner hurried. What a laughable contrast between him and his visitor! The Attorney-general coming to Mr Weasel's chambers, suggested the idea of a magnificent mastiff suddenly poking his head into the little kennel of a querulous pup-dog; and I suppose Mr Aubrey might be likened to a greyhound accompanying the aforesaid mastiff! On seeing his visitors, Mr Weasel instantly got up with a blush of surprise, and a little hurry and embarrassment of manner. His clerk put out a couple of rickety chairs, and down they sat. The Attorney-general came to the point in about half a minute, and the matter was quickly settled; it being arranged that within a day or two's time, as soon as the forms necessary for admitting Mr Aubrey to an Inn of Court could have been completed, he should commence his attendance at Mr Weasel's, from ten o'clock till five daily.

"It's a comical-looking little animal, isn't it?" quoth the Attorney-general, with a laugh, as soon as they had got out of hearing.

"Certainly, I don't feel particularly prepossessed."

"Oh, pho! He's exactly the man for you—the very man. There's no nonsense with Weasel; you may learn an infinite deal of law from him, and that is all you require. He's a perfectly inoffensive fellow; and I've no doubt you'll soon like his chambers greatly, if you're in earnest in studying the law. You go or not, from day to day to his rooms, of course, as you choose; whatever you do is perfectly voluntary; pay him his hundred guineas, and then, if you like, you may get many thousand pounds' worth out of him in the twelvemonth. Now, I *must* bid you good morning—I've really not another moment to spare. God bless you, my dear Aubrey; and," he added with great kindness, and very pointedly, "whenever you may think it worth your while to talk over your affairs with me, come without notice or ceremony—wherever I may be, I shall be delighted to see

you!" Then they parted. Mr Aubrey was not aware of a certain stroke of delicacy and generosity on the part of the Attorney-general; viz. that immediately on the *Rule* for a new trial being discharged, he had sent for Mr Runnington, and insisted on returning every sixpence of his fees—upwards of six hundred guineas—desiring that Mr Aubrey should not be made acquainted with it, if by any means Messrs Runnington could conceal it from him!

A little fatigued and harassed by several important matters, which kept him engaged till a late hour in the afternoon, he reached Vivian Street in a depressed and desponding mood. Just as he turned the corner, he beheld, at about twenty yards' distance, Mrs Aubrey and Miss Aubrey slowly walking homeward, on their return from the Park. Mrs Aubrey held Charles by the hand, who was dancing and frisking wildly about, and Miss Aubrey's beautiful little Cato she was leading along by a slender chain. They were in half-mourning. What an air of elegant simplicity was about them—their figures, their carriage, how easy and graceful! Aubrey, as he approached, gazed at them with mingled feelings of pride and tenderness.

"Oh, my papa! my papa!" suddenly exclaimed Charles, who, happening to turn round, had caught sight of his father, and ran eagerly down to him: with what a thrill of love did he take in his arms the beautiful breathless boy, and how his heart yearned towards his wife and sister, as they also turned quickly round to meet him, after a long day's absence! How inexpressibly dear were they to him—how, that day, he enjoyed their quiet little dinner-table—the romp with his children afterwards—and a long evening of eager and interesting conversation, after the little ones had gone to bed, Mrs Aubrey and Kate busy, the while, with their needles! They had received several letters from Yorkshire, which they read to him. One was from poor Dr Tatham, who, though he con-

cealed much that would have occasioned needless pain, yet gave them a melancholy notion of the altered state of things at the Hall. Though it was rather late before they retired to rest on the evening of the ensuing Sunday, Mr Aubrey was to be found seated in his study by half-past four on Monday morning, perusing, with profound attention, stimulated by the strong observation of the Attorney-general, the second volume of Blackstone's Commentaries—a work with which he had already some acquaintance. 'Twas really a thing to be thankful for that Mr Aubrey, with so many absorbing anxieties, such distracting apprehensions concerning the future, could command his attention in the way he did. To be sure, he felt that it was plainly life-and-death work with him; but he might have derived great encouragement from perceiving himself possessed of that faculty of concentrating the attention, which the Attorney-general had spoken of as so essential an attribute of a lawyer.

The way in which Mr Aubrey parcelled out his time was this: From the period of entering his study, till breakfast-time, he resolved to read law; from ten o'clock till four or five, was to be spent at Mr Weasel's chambers; and the evenings were to be devoted to the society of his children, his wife and sister, and also to certain occasional literary efforts, from which he hoped to derive some little increase to his precarious means. This was severe work; but it was probably the most fortunate and salutary thing in the world for Aubrey, that his energies should be thus occupied, and his mind kept from the corroding effects of constant reflection upon his misfortunes, and dismal apprehensions concerning the future. After he had spent a few days in Mr Weasel's chambers, his involuntary prejudice against that gentleman began to wear off. Mr Aubrey found him all that the Attorney-general had described him—acute, able, and indefatigable, with a constant current of important, varied, and instructive

business, running through his chambers, and every disposition to render his utmost assistance to Mr Aubrey, whom he quickly found out to be a man of superior intellect, and seriously bent upon acquiring a knowledge of the profession. Mr Weasel was not blessed with the power of formally communicating elementary knowledge; Mr Aubrey had, as it were, to extort from him what he wanted, with something like a painful effort. The real advantages of his position were, the innumerable practical hints and suggestions as to the mode of dealing with miscellaneous business, which he derived from a watchful attention to whatever passed in chambers—to the mode in which Weasel hunted up and applied his law, and reduced the facts involved in litigation into legal shape and language, in the process of pleading. The penetrating eye of Mr Aubrey, thus closely fixed on everything that came under his notice, quickly began to discover and appreciate the good sense, the practical utility, of most of the positive rules of law which he saw in operation; and at the end of a fortnight or three weeks, he began to feel interest in the study upon which he had so vigorously entered, and in which he felt himself making real progress. Mr Weasel, during even that time, perceived the decisive superiority of Mr Aubrey over another pupil, who had nearly completed his second year in Mr Weasel's chambers, after a twelvemonth spent in a conveyancer's; not, of course, in respect of legal knowledge, but intellectual power and aptitude for business.

Mr Aubrey would return to Vivian Street about six o'clock each evening, a little fatigued with a long day's work (for he was never later than five o'clock in entering his study in the morning); but he was quickly cheered and refreshed by the sight of the fond and lovely beings whom he there rejoined, and who had been counting the very minutes till he returned. Every day knit that little family together, if possible, in stronger bonds

of love; for they clung to each other with a feeling of having been thrust out of the great gay world together, and sent, as it were, upon a far pilgrimage, amidst scenes of increasing gloom, difficulty, and danger. Each day that bore them further from that of their expulsion from Yatton, mellowed, as it were, their recollections of past scenes, and poured upon their wounded feelings the soothing balm of pious resignation; and sometimes, also, faint and trembling beams of hope concerning the future, would steal across the gloomy chambers of their hearts. Thank God, the view of the past presented to them no occasion for shame, for remorse, for self-condemnation! They trusted that, in their day of wealth and distinction, many as had been their shortcomings, they had not been found wilfully neglecting the duties imposed upon them. Therefore they derived a just consolation from a view of the past. But the FUTURE—indeed—

“Shadows, clouds, and darkness rested on it.”

Their hearts involuntarily fluttered and shrank within them, when they gazed upon the threatening gloom which hung over it. Their straitened circumstances—an honourable poverty—had been a burden light, indeed, to bear. They were happy in one another's company; their house, though small, was convenient, and even elegantly comfortable; they had health; Mr Aubrey had constant exercise for an active and vigorous mind, in acquiring the learning of a noble profession, the practice of which might possibly hereafter raise all of them to even affluence and distinction—at all events, might secure them the substantial comforts of life. But

he would have his moments of heaviness and trepidation. When engaged in his little study, in the profound solitude and silence of the early morning, while thus straining his faculties to their utmost, on behalf of the sweet innocent beings—his wife—his children—his sister—sleeping above, he would sometimes lean back in his chair, with a deep sigh, and sink into a reverie—oh, how sad and painful!—deepening occasionally into agony; but he would suddenly arouse himself, and resume his studies with a powerful effort at abstraction—with additional intensity of application.—How, indeed, could he be otherwise than momentarily paralysed when he surveyed his truly alarming, his tremendous pecuniary liabilities? Bills of costs—Heaven only knew to what amount—due to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; to his own attorneys, Messrs Runnington; and to Mr Parkinson: and then—sickening and fearful object!—the *Mesne Profits*—what was to become of them all? The mind which, in the presence of such disturbing forces as these, could apply its energies so successfully as did that of Mr Aubrey, to the acquisition of knowledge, with any degree of calmness, must surely have been of no common order, and undergone no slight discipline; but, alas! alas! what could all this have availed him, unless he had been vouchsafed assistance from on high? When the *waters were come in unto his soul*; when he was sinking in deep mire, where there was no standing; when he was come into deep waters, where the floods overflowed him—whither was he to look but to one quarter, and that ABOVE, with earnest, faithful, and constant supplication to the Almighty?

CHAPTER V.

SUSPENSE AND TREPIDATION.

THE constant apprehension of great evil—suspense—is a state almost as terrible and insupportable, especially to those of lively susceptibilities, as that produced by the infliction of the evil. Every morning when Aubrey left home, he dreaded to think of what might happen before his return; and when he quitted the Temple, he experienced a sinking of the heart, when imagining what might have occurred in his absence. In fact, they all felt like those whom the ominous silence and repose of surrounding nature—a portentous calm and gloom overhead—fill with trembling apprehension of the coming storm. Their fears are quickened by the occasional falling of large spreading drops of rain through the sultry sky, not a breath of air stirring. Upward is oft turned the pale cheek and apprehensive eye, towards the black accumulating clouds, from which may soon flame the destructive lightning—what, in such a case, is there to rely upon, but the mercy of Him around whose throne are clouds and darkness, and the whirlwind and tempest His ordering?

The little family were sitting one morning at their usual early and simple breakfast, and Mr Aubrey was reading aloud, for his wife and sister's suggestions, a second article which he had commenced over-night, designed for a recently established Review—having, some fortnight before, sent off his first effort, about which, however, he had as yet heard nothing; and Kate was playfully patting his cheek, and telling him that, for all he might say to the contrary, a particular ex-

pression was not, in her opinion, "*elegant English!*"

"It is, you pert puss," insisted Aubrey with a good-natured laugh; and then, turning to Mrs Aubrey, "What do you say, Agnes?"

"Oh—why—I really like it very much, as it is."

"I sha'n't alter it," said Aubrey laughing.

"Then I'll alter it when you're gone," quoth Kate jauntily, and bringing her beautiful laughing face so near his own, with a kind of air of defiance, that he kissed her forehead, and said it should be as she chose.

Just then a knock at the door announced a visitor, who proved to be Mr Runnington. Why it was they hardly knew; but all slightly changed colour. He had called so early, he said, to insure seeing Mr Aubrey before he went to the Temple; and, though he had been shown into the study, Mr Aubrey insisted on his joining the breakfast table.

"We've very plain fare for you, however," said he, as Mr Runnington yielded to his wishes.

Mr Aubrey perceived, with some uneasiness, that the kind and thoughtful countenance of Mr Runnington wore rather an anxious expression. And indeed so it was. When he looked at those who sat before him—lovely, elegant, yet with a plainly forced cheerfulness—reflected on the sufferings through which they had passed, and those but too evidently in store for them—and for the first bitter instalment of which he had come to prepare Mr Aubrey—could he but feel

deep sympathy for them? As soon as he had retired with Mr Aubrey to the study, in a low tone he explained his errand, which was to apprise him that, the evening before, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's BILL had come in. "Well, show it me, if you please," said Mr Aubrey calmly, extending his hand.

"My dear sir, why do you suppose I have it *with me*?" inquired Mr Runnington with a concerned air. "You are not accustomed to such matters—God forbid you should be! It is too bulky for me to have brought with me, and lies at our office!"

"What is the *amount* of it, then?" inquired Mr Aubrey, dreading to hear the answer; while Mr Runnington took out of his pocket-book a slip of paper, which he handed to Mr Aubrey, and on which the latter read—'£3946, 14s. 6d.' He gazed at it for some moments in silence, and became very pale. Mr Runnington could hardly bear to look at him, and think of the two lovely women in the adjoining room, who were so fearfully interested in the intelligence so dismaying to Mr Aubrey.

"This is a very—large—amount," said the latter at length, with suppressed emotion.

"It is a serious affair," replied Mr Runnington, shaking his head and sighing.

"Then there is yours—and Mr Parkinson's."

"Oh, Mr Aubrey—*sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*."

"Will you oblige me by saying what is the probable amount of your bill?" inquired Mr Aubrey, with a calmness which seemed lent to him by despair.

"Oh! I assure you we have thought nothing at all about it, nor shall we for some time to come, Mr Aubrey. We have not the slightest intention of troubling ourselves, or you, with the matter till you may be in a position to attend to it without serious inconvenience.

"But do favour me with something like a notion," pressed the unhappy Aubrey.

"Why—perhaps I am hardly doing right in mentioning it; but whenever our bill is sent in, it will be less than it would otherwise have been, by some six hundred and fifty pounds, through the noble generosity of the Attorney-general, who has returned all his fees"—

"Returned all his fees!" echoed Mr Aubrey starting, while the colour rushed into his cheek, and the expression of his countenance was of pride struggling with astonishment, gratitude, and admiration. He profoundly appreciated the conduct of his distinguished friend; and at the same time felt a totally new and painful sense of pecuniary obligation.

"I feel, Mr Aubrey, that I have broken my promise to the Attorney-general, who extracted from me a solemn pledge, to endeavour so to manage the matter as that you should never know it. What is it, after all, to the Attorney-general, with his £12,000 or £15,000 a-year?"

"Oh—do not talk so, Mr Runnington; I am overpowered, oppressed. Never in all my life have I experienced feelings like those by which I am now agitated!" He rose, and stood opposite the window for a few minutes—neither of them speaking. Then he returned to his seat.

"How much does that leave me your debtor?"

"Why—really I am quite at sea at the present moment. I should imagine, if you will really force me to speak of such an unpleasant topic, that our account is reduced to some £1500 or £1600—about which"—

"Then there is Mr Parkinson's," said Aubrey in a low tone, but with a desperate air; presently adding—"Here are some £6000 or £7000 to start with; and *then* we come to the mesne profits—merciful God!" he suddenly added, with a visible shudder. He folded his arms convulsively, and gazed, for a second or two, at Mr Runnington, with an eye, the expression of which was overpowering. In his features Mr Runnington beheld no longer the melancholy mildness to which he had been accustomed, but

a sternness and power he had not imagined them capable of exhibiting. They told of a strong soul thoroughly roused, excited, and in agony. At that moment a knocking was heard at the door, as of tiny fingers. "Come in!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, with unusual quickness and sternness. He was obeyed—and Charles's little face peeped into the room timidly. He was evidently quite startled by the tone in which he had been addressed.

"Come in, my child!" said Mr Aubrey, rather tremulously, when he saw that it was *his son*, and observed the apprehensiveness overspreading his sweet features. Charles immediately advanced, with a serious submissive air, saying—"This letter is just come—Mamma sent me with it, dear papa."

"Give it me, Charles," said Mr Aubrey, extending his hand for it, while with the other he gently placed the child upon his lap, and kissed him. "I'm not angry with you, Charles," he whispered tenderly.

"I've not been naughty, you know, dear papa!" said he with innocent surprise.

"No, no, my love." The ruined FATHER could say no more; but putting aside the child's flowing curly locks from his temples, as it were mechanically, he gazed on his little face for a moment, and then folded him in his arms with unspeakable tenderness. Mr Runnington rose, and stood for some moments gazing through the window, unwilling that his own emotion should be observed. When Mr Aubrey opened the letter, it proved to be from the publisher of the Review to which he had sent his article, enclosing a cheque for forty guineas, expressing an earnest desire that he would continue his contributions, and assuring him that the editor considered the article "in every way admirable." As soon as he had glanced over the letter—"You little messenger of hope and mercy!" he thought, again kissing his son, who sat passively gazing at the agitated countenance of his FATHER—"I cannot, I will not despair! You have

brought me, as it were, a ray of light from heaven, piercing the fearful gloom of my situation; 'tis a token, surely, that I am not forgotten: I feel, as though an angel, momentarily brightening the night of sorrow, had come and whispered in my ear—'COURAGE!'" His features began to resume their natural serenity of expression. "Take it in to your mamma," said he, kissing little Charles, and despatching him with the letter. Shortly afterwards, as soon as he had recovered the command of his manner sufficiently to avoid occasioning uneasiness to Mrs and Miss Aubrey, he proposed to Mr Runnington that they should walk towards the Temple; and bidding adieu to those whom he left behind him, without giving them an opportunity to ask him as to the nature of Mr Runnington's errand, but leaving them in high spirits at the letter which he had sent in to them, he quitted the house arm-in-arm with Mr Runnington. I am persuaded that if that gentleman had had no one to consult, he would, serious as was the amount of his claim, have relieved Mr Aubrey altogether from liability to *him*; but he had four partners; their own pecuniary outlay had been considerable; the thing, therefore, was practically quite out of the question. As they walked along, in the course of much anxious conversation, Mr Runnington told Mr Aubrey that he considered Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's bill to be outrageous and profligate in its charges; and that it might, on taxation—a process which he explained to Mr Aubrey—be reduced, probably, by at least *one-half*. But he also reminded Mr Aubrey of the power which they held in their hands, in respect of the mesne profits; and intimated his opinion, that in all probability they had constructed their account with an eye to such considerations—namely, that it should be discharged without rigorous scrutiny into its constituent items, before they would listen to any terms proposed for the payment of the mesne profits; and that Mr Aubrey's position, with respect to Messrs Quirk, Gammon,

and Snap, was one requiring the greatest deliberation and circumspection on his part, especially in the matter of the bill which had been just delivered in by them.

"I see! The whole," said Mr Aubrey, "comes to this: they will relieve me from liability to Mr Titmouse, for as much of what may be due to him, as they can divert into their own pockets!"

"That certainly seems very much like it," replied Mr Runnington, shrugging his shoulders; "but you will leave all such considerations and matters to us; and rely on our vigilance and discretion. At what may appear to us the exact moment for doing so with effect, depend upon our cautious interference. We know, Mr Aubrey, the kind of people we have to deal with. Mr Titmouse is likely to be merely a puppet in their hands—at least in those of Mr Gammon, who is a formidable man to deal with; and with him, I have no doubt, our negotiations will have to be carried on."

"That is just what the Attorney-general said—and he invited me, moreover, to converse with him whenever I might consider that his advice would be useful."

"Could you have a better adviser? He has a penetrating sagacity, long exercised—in short, his qualifications are consummate; and I should not hesitate about consulting him in a friendly way, whenever we feel at a loss."

"Why should I disguise anything from you, Mr Runnington?"—said Aubrey—"you ought to know the exact state of my affairs. I have a little family plate, which I could not bear to part with; my books; and the remnants of the furniture at Yatton, which I have saved in order to furnish our present residence. Besides this, the outside of all that I am possessed of—and I have no expectations, nor has my wife nor my poor sister, from any quarter—is a sum of about £3000 in the funds, and £423 at my banker's. Those are my circumstances; they appal me merely in stating them:—Why, I owe double the sum I have

named, for lawyers' bills only. I have not enough, without parting with my books and plate, to discharge even Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's bill!"

"It would be cruel and absurd in me not to express at once, Mr Aubrey, my conviction that your situation is fearfully critical; and that your sole hope is in the moderation which may be hoped for from Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, and their client, Mr Titmouse. Serious as are, at present, your other liabilities—to that one, of the mesne profits, they are but as a bucket of water to the Thames. As we are talking, Mr Aubrey, in this candid and unrestrained manner, I will tell you my chief source of apprehension on your account, with reference to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap: namely, that they may possibly speculate on your being able, if placed in real peril, to call around you, in your extremity, a host of wealthy and powerful friends—as security, or otherwise"—

"They will find themselves, then, utterly mistaken," said Mr Aubrey sternly. "If they and their client are really capable of such meanness, and barbarity—such wanton oppression—let them do their worst: I am resigned. Providence will discover a shelter for my poor wife and children, and my dear, devoted, high-spirited sister; and as for myself, rather than satiate the rapacity of such wretches, by plundering good-natured and generous friends, I will spend the remainder of my days in prison!"

Mr Aubrey was evidently not a little excited while he said this; but there was that in his tone of voice, and in his eye, which told Mr Runnington that he meant what he said; and that, as soon as it should have come to the point of oppression and injustice, no man could resist more powerfully, or endure with a more dignified and inflexible resolution. But Mr Runnington expressed strong hopes that it would not come to such an issue. He consoled Mr Aubrey with assurances that, as for their own demand, it might stand over for years:

and that so, he was sure, would it be with the lesser demand of Mr Parkinson; and that if, by a great effort, sufficient could be raised to discharge promptly the bill of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, some much more favourable arrangement respecting the amount and mode of payment of the meagre profits might be effected—leaving Mr Aubrey, in the mean time, leisure to apply himself vigorously to his studies for the bar, for which Mr Runnington assured him that he considered him peculiarly qualified; and pledged himself to back him with all the influence he had, or could command.

“Oh, Mr Runnington!” said Aubrey, with a little excitement, “is it not nearly intolerable that I should pass the prime of my days in thralldom to such people as these, and be encircled by the chains of such a man as this person Titmouse is represented to be? I will not call myself his foe, nor his victim; but I am the one through whose sudden destitution he has obtained a splendid fortune. I did not *knowingly* deprive him of it—he must be bereft of all the ordinary feelings of humanity, to place me, whom he has already stripped of all, upon the rack—the rack of extortion! Were I put in his place, and he in mine—do you think I would not have been satisfied with what I had gained? Would I have alarmed and tortured him by calling for an account of what he had spent with a firm, a reasonable persuasion that it was his own—profoundly unconscious of its being another’s? Oh, no! I would not only have forgiven him all, but endeavoured to secure him from future want!” He sighed. “Oh, that I were at this moment a free man! *pauper—sed in meo aere*; that I had but five hundred pounds to keep me and mine for a year or two—with a mind at ease, and fit for study! but here we are at the Temple. When shall we meet again—or shall I hear from you?”

“Very shortly,” replied Mr Runnington, who for the last few minutes had been listening to Mr Aubrey in respectful and sympathising silence;

and shaking him warmly by the hand, with much cordiality and fervency of manner, he pledged himself to do all in his power to promote his interests.

When Mr Aubrey arrived at Weasel’s chambers, he looked dejected and harassed; yet, exerting his powers of self-command, he at once addressed himself, calmly and vigorously, to the business of the day. From time to time he peremptorily excluded the distressing thoughts and recollections arising out of his morning’s interview with Mr Runnington; and succeeded in concentrating his attention upon a case of more than usual intricacy and multifariousness of details, which Mr Weasel, having glanced over, had laid aside for a more leisurely perusal. He handed it, however, to Mr Aubrey soon after his arrival, with something approaching to a secret satisfaction, in the expectation of its “proving too much for him;” but he was mistaken. Mr Aubrey left a little earlier than usual; but not before he had sent in the voluminous “case” to Mr Weasel’s room by the clerk, together with a half-sheet of draft paper, containing a brief summary of the results at which he had arrived; and which not a little surprised Mr Weasel. The case did not happen to involve much technical knowledge; but, as well in respect of the imperfect manner in which it was drawn up, as of the confusion worse confounded of the transactions themselves, out of which the questions arose, there were required persevering attention, strength of memory, and clear-headedness. In short, Weasel owned to himself that Mr Aubrey had taken a masterly view of the case; and how would his estimate of his pupil’s ability have been enhanced, by a knowledge of the situation in which he was placed—one so calculated to distract his attention, and prevent that hearty and complete devotion to legal studies, without which Mr Weasel well knew how vain was the attempt to master them?

“Have you read Aubrey’s opinion on that troublesome case—I mean the one relating to the Cornish Bank?”

inquired Weasel, taking a pinch of snuff, of Mr Thoroughpace, another pupil who had just sat down beside Mr Weasel, to see him "settle" [*i. e.* score out, interline, and alter] a pleading drawn by the aforesaid Thoroughpace. That gentleman replied in the negative. "He's got a headpiece of his own, I can tell you!—Egad, somehow or another, he always contrives to hit the nail on the head!"

"I'd a sort of notion, the first day he came, that he was a superior man," replied Thoroughpace. "He makes few notes—seems to trust entirely to his head"—

"Ah! a man may carry that too far," interrupted Mr Weasel, taking, somewhat energetically, another pinch of snuff.

"Then I wish I could," replied Thoroughpace. "Isn't there such a thing as making the hand engross the business of the head?" Mr Weasel—recollecting that in his library stood twelve thick folio volumes of manuscript "precedents," which he had been fool enough to copy out with his own hand during his pupilage, and the first year or two of his setting up in business—hemmed, and again applied to his snuff-box. "How do you get on with Aubrey in the pupils' room?" he inquired.

"Why, I didn't like him at first. Reserved, and is not without *hauteur*. Even now, though courteous, he says little, and appears entirely absorbed by his studies; and yet he seems to have something or other pressing on his mind."

"Ah! I daresay! Law's no trifle, I warrant him! No doubt it's teasing him!" replied Weasel, rather complacently.

"Do you know, I should doubt it! I never saw a man to whom it seemed to yield so easily.—He's a particularly gentlemanlike person, by the way; and there's something attractive in his countenance.—He seems a man highly connected.

"Oh—why, you've heard of the great cause of *Doe d. Titmouse v. Jolter*, a Yorkshire ejectment case, tried only last Spring assizes?—That case you know, about the effect of an erasure.—Well, he's the defendant, and has, I hear, lost everything."

"You astonish me! By Jove, then, he had need work!"

"Shall we set to work, Mr Thoroughpace?" said Weasel suddenly, looking at his watch lying on his desk. "I've promised to let them have these pleas by six o'clock—for, if not delivered to-night, the other side will be signing judgment;" and plunging his pen into the inkstand, to work he went, *more suo*, as if such a man as his pupil, Mr Aubrey, had never existed. Weasel was not at all a hard-hearted man; but I verily believe that if a *capias ad satisfaciendum* (*i. e.* final process to take the body into custody to satisfy debt and costs) against Charles Aubrey, Esquire, had come into Mr Weasel's chambers to be "settled" as requiring special care to secure the bird within the snare—after humming and hawing a bit—and taking an extra pinch of snuff, he would have done his duty by the document faithfully, marked his seven-and-sixpence in the corner, and sent it out indifferently with other papers, consoling himself with this just reflection, that the thing must be done by somebody! and he might as well have the *fee* as any one else.

CHAPTER VI.

MR AUBREY'S INTERVIEW WITH MR GAMMON; FOLLOWED BY SOME PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON LIFE.

ON Mr Aubrey's return home to dinner, he found that his sister had received another long letter from Dr Tatham, to which was appended a postscript mentioning Mr Gammon in such terms as suggested to Mr Aubrey a little scheme which he resolved to carry into effect on the morrow—namely, to call himself at the office of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, and seek an interview with Mr Gammon, who, Dr Tatham stated, had quitted Yatton for town only the day before the Doctor had written to Miss Aubrey. After a restless and unhappy night, during which he was tormented by all kinds of dismal dreams, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap figuring in each as the stern and mysterious arbiters of his earthly destiny, he resolved to put an end to his present insupportable suspense—to learn at once the extent of what he had either to hope or to fear—by calling that afternoon at Saffron Hill. For that purpose, he quitted Mr Weasel's at the early hour of three o'clock; and straightway bent his steps towards those delectable localities—through Fetter Lane to Hatton Garden, thence inquiring his way to Saffron Hill. He was not long in finding the house of which he was in quest, his eye being soon attracted by the great, gleaming brass-plate with the words, "QUIRK, GAMMON, and SNAP," as prominent and threatening as ever those names had appeared to Titmouse, in the day of *his* agony and suspense. He had stood gazing at them with idiot longing and vulgar apprehension, as the reader has seen. How different a per-

son now looked at them with feelings of intense interest and overmastering anxiety, as at the names of those who had him completely in their power—his fortunes, his liberty, his livelihood, and that of the dear beings whose interests, whose all on earth, whose personal safety—were bound up in his! Mr Aubrey, with a jaded air, dressed in a buttoned black sur-tout, and with an umbrella under his arm, entered the hall, where were sitting and standing several strange-looking people—one or two suffering evidently great agitation; in fact, relatives of prisoners whose trials for capital offences were coming on the next day at Newgate—and made his way into a room, on the door of which he read "Clerks' Office."

"Now, sir, your name and business?" said a showily-dressed Jewish-looking youth, with copious curls, lolling at a desk from which he did not move, and speaking in a tone of disagreeable assurance.

"Is Mr Gammon within? my name is Aubrey," he added, taking off his hat; and there was a certain something in his voice, countenance, and bearing—a courtly superiority—which induced the personage whom he had addressed to slip off his stool, and exhibit as polite an air as he could possibly assume.

"Mr Gammon is in his room, sir, and alone. I believe he is rather busy," said the youth, going towards Mr Gammon's room—"but I've no doubt you can see him."

The fact was, that at that moment Mr Gammon was engaged drawing up

"Instructions to prepare Declaration" in an action for mesne profits against Mr Aubrey! He had only the day before returned from Yatton, where circumstances had occurred which had quickened their intended proceeding against that unfortunate gentleman—the mesne profits being the first quarter to which, at Mr Titmouse's suggestion, they were to look for a considerable supply of ready money. That morning, in the very room into which Mr Aubrey was to be presently shown, had taken place a long discussion between Mr Quirk and Mr Gammon, on the subject which had now brought to their office Mr Aubrey. Mr Quirk was for making short work of it—for "going straight ahead"—and getting the whole £60,000, or security for the greater portion, and £20,000 down! Gammon, however, was of opinion that that was mere madness; that by attempting to proceed to extremities against so unfortunate a sufferer as Mr Aubrey, they could not fail of drawing down on themselves and their client universal execration—at that, Quirk only grunted and grinned; and, moreover, of driving Mr Aubrey desperate, and forcing him either to quit the country, or accept the protection of the insolvent laws—at this Mr Quirk looked serious enough. Gammon had, in the end, satisfied his senior partner that their only chance was in gentleness and moderation; and the old gentleman had, as usual, agreed to adopt the plan of operations suggested by Gammon. The latter personage had quite as keen a desire and firm determination as the former, to wring out of their wretched victim the last farthing which there was the slightest probability of obtaining; for Titmouse had pointed to that quarter for the discharge of his ten thousand pound bond, and bill of costs; then twenty—or at least fifteen—thousand pounds, were to be handed over to himself, Titmouse; and all the rest that could be got, Mr Gammon might appropriate to his own use. Such was the prospective partition of the spoil!—Mr Gammon's inquiries into Mr Aubrey's circumstances had com-

pletely convinced him, however, that it would be impossible to extract any considerable sum from that unfortunate gentleman; and that if they could contrive to get payment of their bill against him—perhaps substantial security for a portion—say four or five thousand pounds—of the mesne profits; and his own personal responsibility for the payment of any portion of the remainder, hereafter—they had better rest satisfied—and look for liquidation of their own heavy claim, to a mortgage upon the Yatton estates. Mr Gammon had also proposed to himself certain other objects, in dealing with Mr Aubrey, than the mere extraction of money from him; and, in short, prompted by considerations such as those above intimated, he had come to the determination, an hour or so before Mr Aubrey's unexpected visit, to be at once prepared with the necessary means for setting in motion legal proceedings for the recovery of the mesne profits. But we are keeping Mr Aubrey waiting, all this while, in the outer office.

"Have I the honour to address Mr Gammon?" commenced Mr Aubrey courteously, on being shown into the room—not announced by name, but only as "*a gentleman*"—where Gammon sat busily engaged writing out the "Instructions" for framing the rack on which it was designed to extend his unconscious visitor!

"Sir, my name is Gammon," he replied, colouring a little—and rising, with an expression of great surprise—"I believe I have the honour of seeing Mr Aubrey?—I beg you will allow me to offer you a chair"—he continued with forced calmness of manner, placing one as far distant as was possible from the table, and, to make assurance doubly sure, seating himself between Mr Aubrey and the table, to prevent his eye catching his own name, expecting to hear his visitor at once open the subject of their bill, which they had so recently sent in.

"Will you suffer me, Mr Aubrey," commenced Gammon with a bland and subdued air, not fulsome, but extremely deferential, "before entering on any

business which may have brought you here, to express deep sympathy with your sufferings, and my personal regret at the share we have had in the proceedings which have ended so adversely for your interests? But our duty as professional men, Mr Aubrey, is often as plain, as painful!"

"I feel obliged, sir," said Mr Aubrey with a sigh, "for your kind expressions of sympathy—but I cannot for a moment conceive any apology necessary. Neither I, nor my advisers, that I am aware of, have ever had cause to complain of harsh or unprofessional treatment on your part. Your proceedings certainly came upon me—upon all of us—like a thunder-stroke," said Mr Aubrey with a little emotion. "I trust that you have given me credit, Mr Gammon, for offering no vexatious or unconscientious obstacles."

"Oh, Mr Aubrey! on the contrary, I am at a loss for words to express my sense of your straightforward and high-minded conduct; and have several times intimated my sentiments on that subject to Messrs Runnington"—Mr Aubrey bowed—"and again I anxiously beg that you will give me credit for feeling the profoundest sympathy"—he paused, as if from emotion: and such might well have been excited, in any person of ordinary feeling, by the appearance of Mr Aubrey—calm and melancholy—his features full of anxiety and exhaustion, and his figure, naturally slender, evidently somewhat emaciated.

["I wonder, by the way," thought Gammon, "whether he has any insurances on his life!—He certainly has rather a consumptive look—I should like to ascertain the fact—and in what office—and to what extent."]

"I trust sincerely, Mr Aubrey, that the mental sufferings which you must have undergone have not affected your health?" inquired Gammon, with an air of infinite concern.

"A little, certainly, sir, but, thank God, I believe not materially; I never was very robust," he replied, with a faint sad smile.

["How like his sister!"]—thought

Gammon, watching his visitor's countenance with real interest.]

"I am not quite sure, Mr Gammon," continued Aubrey, "that I am observing etiquette in thus coming to you, on a matter which you may consider ought to have been left to my solicitors, and who know nothing of my present visit—but"—

"An honourable mind like yours, Mr Aubrey, may surely act according to its own impulses with safety! As for etiquette, I know of no professional rule which I break, in entering into a discussion with you of any topic connected with the action which has recently been determined," said Gammon cautiously, and particularly on his guard, as soon as his penetrating eye had detected the acuteness mingled with the sincerity and simplicity of character visible in the oppressed countenance of Mr Aubrey.

"I daresay you can guess the occasion of my visit, Mr Gammon?"

["Here comes *our bill!*—whew!—What now?" thought Gammon.]

Mr Gammon bowed, with an anxious, expectant air.

"I allude to the question yet remaining between your client, Mr Titmouse, and me—the *mesme profits*"——

"I feared—I expected as much! It gave me infinite anxiety, as soon as I found you were approaching the subject!"

"To me it is really a matter of life and death, Mr Gammon. It is one pressing me on almost to the verge of despair!"

"Do not, Mr Aubrey," said Gammon, in a tone and with a look which touched the heart of his agitated companion, "magnify the mischief. Don't—I beg—imagine your position to be one so hopeless! What is there to stand in the way of an amicable adjustment of these claims? If I had my own way, Mr Aubrey—and if I thought I should not be acting the part of the unjust steward in Scripture—I would write sixty thousand farthings for sixty thousand pounds."

"You have named the sum for which I believe I am legally liable to Mr Tit-

mouse," said Mr Aubrey with forced composure; "it is, however, a sum as completely out of my power to pay, or secure—or even a quarter of it—as to give him one of the stars."

"I am aware, Mr Aubrey, that you must have had many calls upon you, which doubtless have temporarily crippled your resources"——

"Temporarily!" echoed Mr Aubrey with a sickening smile.

"Well, I devoutly trust that it is only temporary! For your own and family's sake," he added quickly, observing the watchfulness with which his every look and word was regarded by his companion. "Any proposal, Mr Aubrey," he continued with the same apparent kindness of manner, but with serious deliberation, "which you may think proper to make, I am ready—eager—to receive and consider in a liberal spirit. I repeat—If I only had to be consulted—you would leave this room with a lightened heart; but to be plain and candid, our client, Mr Titmouse, is a difficult person to deal with! I pledge my word of honour to you—[*Oh Gammon! Gammon! Gammon!*—that I have repeatedly urged upon him to release you from all the rents which had been received by you previously to your having legal notice of the late proceedings." I suppose Gammon felt that this declaration was not received as implicitly as he desired and had expected; for with a slight stiffness, he added, "I assure you, sir, that it is a fact. I have always been of opinion that the law is harsh, and even faulty in principle, which, in such a case as yours—where the possessor of an estate, to which he believed himself born, is ousted by a title of which he had no previous knowledge, nor means of knowledge"—Gammon uttered this very pointedly, and with his eye fixed searchingly upon that of Mr Aubrey—"requires him to make good the rents which he had so innocently, or, at all events, with such venial negligence, appropriated to his own use. That is my opinion, though it may be wrong. I am bound to say, however, that as the law now stands—if Mr Titmouse

should, contrary to my advice, determine to stand upon his strict rights"

—— Gammon paused, shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and looked with melancholy significance at Mr Aubrey.

"I am entirely at his mercy! that I perfectly understand: but I do trust that, for the sake of our common humanity, he will have some consideration for the helpless—the miserable situation in which I am so unexpectedly placed," said Aubrey, with mournful energy. "Never having imagined it necessary to save money"——

"Oh no—nor, with such an income as yours was, to resort, I fear, to any of the ordinary modes of providing against emergencies—by *insurance* of your life, for instance"—interposed Gammon, sighing.

"No, sir! nothing of the sort"—["Ah!—the deuce you have not!"] thought Gammon—"and I confess—I now bitterly feel—how improvident I have been! My situation is so deplorable and desperate, that disguise would be absurd, even could I stoop to it; and I declare, in the presence of Heaven, Mr Gammon, that without giving up the little remnant of plate I have preserved, and my books, I am unable to liquidate even the amount of your bill sent in the day before yesterday"—Gammon gazed at Aubrey mournfully, but in silence—"and if my miserable remnant of means must be so appropriated, we are literally beggars"—he paused, and his voice faltered.

"Indeed—indeed, you distress me beyond measure, Mr Aubrey," said Gammon in a low tone: and he was distressed—but on the account of himself and firm!

"If you can but secure me, sir—and that is the object of this intrusion upon you—a merciful interval, to prepare myself for the profession which I have entered—the Bar—whatever earnings I might obtain, after leaving a bare maintenance for myself and family, shall be devoted faithfully to liquidate the heavy claims upon me! For myself, Mr Gammon, I do not care about living upon bread and water

for the next ten years; but there are others"—his voice trembled. "Sir," he suddenly added, with passionate energy, "by every consideration which can influence a gentleman, I conjure you to interfere between me and utter immediate ruin!" This was the real thrilling language of the heart; but it failed to produce the least impression upon Gammon, in whom it excited only intense chagrin and disappointment. "Oh, that it were but in my power," said he, however, with great energy, "to send you out of this room a free man! If I alone were to be consulted," he continued, with vivacity, "I would instantly absolve you from all demands—or at least give you your own time, and take no other security than your word and honour!"

"Oh! what a happy—happy man! what a happy family should we be if only"—he could not finish the sentence, for he was greatly moved.

"Here's an infernal business!" thought Gammon to himself, and, bending down his head, he covered his eyes with his hands;—"worse, far worse than I had suspected. I would take five pounds for all my residuary interest in the sixty thousand pounds!! I've not the least doubt that he's speaking the truth. But the bill part of the business is highly unsatisfactory! I should like my friend Quirk to be here just now! Surely, however, Mr Aubrey must be able to get security! With such friends and connections as his!—If one could only get one or two of them to join him in a bond for ten thousand pounds—stay—that won't exactly do either—by the way—I must keep my own thumb upon him!"

"I am so profoundly affected by the situation in which you are placed, Mr Aubrey," said Gammon, at length appearing to have subdued his emotion, and feeling it necessary to say something, "that I think I may take upon myself to say the instructions which we have received shall not be acted upon, come what may. Those must be really monsters, not men, Mr Aubrey, who could press upon one in your position; and that such should be attempted by one who has suc-

ceeded to your former splendid advantages, is inconceivably shocking. Mr Aubrey, you shall not be crushed—indeed you shall not, so long as I am a member—possibly not the least influential one—of this firm, and have any weight with your formidable creditor, Mr Titmouse. I cannot do justice to my desire to shelter you and yours, Mr Aubrey, from the storm of which you are so justly apprehensive. But set your trust in a gracious Providence!" There was a warmth, an energy in Gammon's manner, while saying all this, which cheered the drooping heart of his wretched visitor. "What I am about to say, Mr Aubrey, is in complete confidence," continued Gammon in a low tone. Mr Aubrey bowed, with a little anxious excitement in his manner. "May I rely implicitly upon your honour and secrecy?"

"Implicitly, sir. What you desire me to keep within my own breast, I will neither directly nor indirectly communicate to any one upon earth."

"There are serious difficulties in the way of serving you. Mr Titmouse is a weak and inexperienced young man, naturally excited to a great pitch by his present elevation, and already embarrassed for want of ready money. You may imagine, sir, that his liabilities to us are of considerable magnitude. You would hardly credit, Mr Aubrey, the amount of mere money out of pocket for which he stands indebted to us; our outlay during the last two years having considerably crippled our own pecuniary resources, in an extensive practice like ours, and driven us to incur responsibilities which are beginning to occasion us personally considerable anxiety. Of course, Mr Aubrey, we must look to Mr Titmouse to be speedily reimbursed: he insists upon our immediately calling upon you; and I have reason to suspect that he has at his elbow one or two heartless advisers, [Oh, Gammon! Gammon!] who have suggested this to him; for he follows it most pertinaciously. That he cannot meet the liabilities I have alluded to out of his annual income, without

swallowing it up entirely for eighteen months or two years, is certain. I regret to say—in sacred confidence, I repeat—that Mr Quirk and Mr Snap encourage his disposition to press you;—do not be alarmed, my dear sir!” he continued, observing the deadly paleness of Mr Aubrey, whose eye was riveted upon that of Gammon; “for I declare that I will stand between you and them; and it is enough for me to say, moreover, that I have the power of doing so. I am—but this is committed specially and sacredly to your confidence—the only person living who happens to possess the means of controlling Mr Titmouse; and since you have entered this room, I have resolved to exercise my powers. Now, bearing in mind that I have no legal authority from him, and am, at the same time, only one of a firm, and assuring you that I am entailing a serious personal responsibility upon myself in what I am doing, let me throw out for your consideration my general notion of what I think ought to be done—merely my off-hand notion.”

“I perfectly understand you, sir—and am penetrated by a sense of gratitude! I listen to you with inexpressible anxiety,” said Mr Aubrey.

“Had I been consulted,” continued Mr Gammon, “we should have proposed to you, with reference to our bill, which I frankly acknowledge contains a much more liberal entry than would probably be allowed on taxation, but with equal truth I declare that it is none of my doing,”—Gammon knew the credit for candour which this acknowledgment of a fact, of which Messrs Runnington would quickly apprise Mr Aubrey after examining the bill, was likely to obtain for him with Mr Aubrey—“I say, I should have proposed to you, in the first instance, the payment of our bill by easy instalments, during the next three or four years, provided you could have obtained partial security. But I am only one of three, and I know the determination of Mr Quirk and Mr Snap not to listen to any proposal with reference to the mesne profits which is not based upon—in short,

they say, the bill must be paid at once without being looked into—I mean,” he added quickly, “without its being subjected to the harassing and protracted scrutiny which a distrustful, an ungrateful client, or unreasonable opponent, has it too frequently in his power to inflict upon even the most honourable and scrupulous practitioners. Oh, let me disguise nothing from you, my dear sir, in a conversation of this kind between two gentlemen!” continued Gammon, with an admirable air of frankness, for he perceived that Mr Aubrey looked slightly staggered. “I am ashamed to acknowledge that our bill does contain exorbitant entries—entries which have led to frequent and fierce disputes between me and my partners. But what is to be done? Mr Quirk is—to be completely candid with you—the monied man of the firm; and if you were but to glance at the articles of our partnership”—Gammon shrugged his shoulders and sighed—“you would see the tyrannical extent of power over us which he has thereby secured! You observe how candid I am—perhaps foolishly so.”

[‘I’ve not quite mastered him—I can tell it by his eye’—thought Gammon—‘is this a game of chess between us? I wonder whether, after all, Messrs Runnington are aware of his being here—knowing and trusting to his ability—and have put him thoroughly on his guard? He is checking strong feelings incessantly, and evidently weighing every word I utter. Misery has sharpened faculties naturally acute.’]

“Pray do not say so, Mr Gammon; I fully appreciate your motives. I am devoured with anxiety for an intimation of the nature of the terms which you were about, so kindly, to specify.”

“Specify, Mr Aubrey, is perhaps rather too strong a term—but to proceed. Supposing the preliminary matter which I have alluded to satisfactorily arranged, I am disposed to say, that if you could find security for the payment of the sum of ten thousand pounds within a year, or a year and a half”—[Mr Aubrey’s teeth al-

most chattered at the mention of it]—"I—I—that is, my impression is—but—I repeat—it is only mine"—added Gammon earnestly—"that the rest should be left to your own honour, giving at the same time a personal undertaking to pay at a future—a distant day—in the manner most convenient to yourself—the sum of ten thousand pounds more—making in all only one-third of the sum due from you; and receiving an absolute release from Mr Titmouse in respect of the remaining two-thirds, namely, forty thousand pounds."

Mr Aubrey listened to all this with his feelings and faculties strung to the utmost pitch of intensity; and when Gammon had ceased, experienced a transient sense, as if the fearful mountain which had pressed so long on his heart were moving.

"Have I made myself intelligible, Mr Aubrey?" inquired Gammon kindly, but gravely.

"Perfectly—but I feel so oppressed and overwhelmed with the magnitude of the topics we are discussing, that I scarcely at present appreciate the position in which you would place me. I must throw myself, Mr Gammon, entirely upon your indulgence!"

Gammon looked a little disappointed.

"I can imagine your feelings, sir," said he, as, thrusting into a heap the papers lying on the table, he threw them into a drawer, and then took a sheet of paper and a pencil; and while he made a few memoranda of the arrangement which he had been mentioning, he continued—"You see—the grand result of what I have been hastily sketching off is—to give you ample time to pay the amount which I have named, and to relieve you, at once, absolutely from no less a sum than FORTY THOUSAND POUNDS," said he, with emphasis and deliberation, "for which—and with interest—you will otherwise remain liable to the day of your death;—there can be no escape," he continued, with pointed significance of manner—"except, perhaps, into banishment, which, with your feelings, would be worse than death—for it would—of course—be a

dishonourable exile—to avoid just liabilities:—and those who bear your name would, in such an"—

"Pray, sir, be silent!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, in a tone and manner which electrified Gammon, who started in his chair. Mr Aubrey's face was whitened; his eye glanced lightning at his companion. Dagon-like, Gammon had put forth his hand and touched the ark of Aubrey's honour. Gammon lost his colour, and for, perhaps, the first time in his life, quailed before the majesty of man; 'twas also the majesty of suffering: for he had been torturing a noble nature. Neither of them spoke for some time—Mr Aubrey continuing highly excited—Gammon gazing at him with unfeigned amazement. The paper which he held in his hand rustled, and he was obliged to lay it down on his lap, lest Mr Aubrey should notice this evidence of his agitation.

"I am guilty of great weakness, sir," said at length Mr Aubrey—his excitement only a little abated. He stood erect, and spoke with stern precision; "but you, perhaps unconsciously, provoked the display of it. Sir, I am ruined; I am a beggar: we are all ruined; we are all beggars: it is the ordering of God, and I bow to it. But do you presume, sir, to think that at last my honour is in danger? and consider it necessary, as if you were warning one whom you saw about to become a criminal, to expatiate on the nature of the meditated act by which I am to disgrace myself and my family?" Here that family seemed suddenly standing around him: his lip quivered; his eyes filled; he ceased speaking; and trembled with excessive emotion.

"This is a sally equally unexpected, Mr Aubrey, and, permit me to add, unwarrantable," said Gammon calmly, having recovered his self-possession. "You have entirely misunderstood me, my character, sir, and what I have been saying—or I have ill explained myself. Your evident emotion and distress touch my soul, Mr Aubrey." Gammon's voice trembled. "Suffer me to tell you—unmoved by your

violent rebuke—that I feel an inexpressible respect and admiration for you, and am miserable at the thought of one word of mine having occasioned you an instant's uneasiness." When a generous nature is thus treated, it is apt to feel an excessive contrition for any fault or extravagance which it may deem itself to have committed—an excessive appreciation of the pain which it may have inflicted on another. Thus it was, that by the time Gammon had done speaking, Mr Aubrey felt mortified, and ashamed of himself, and conceived an admiration of the dignified forbearance of Gammon, which quickly heightened into respect for his general character, as it appeared to Aubrey, and fervent gratitude for the disposition which his companion had evinced, from first to last, so disinterestedly to serve a ruined man. He seemed now to view all that Gammon had proposed in quite a new light—through another medium; and his excited feelings were in some danger of disturbing his judgment.

"As I am a man of business, Mr Aubrey," said Gammon shortly afterwards, with a captivating smile—how frank and forgiving seeming his temper, to Aubrey!—"and this is a place for business, shall we resume our conversation? With reference to the first ten thousand pounds, it can be a matter of future arrangement as to the mode of securing its payment; and as for the remaining ten thousand, if I were not afraid of rendering myself personally liable to Mr Titmouse for neglecting my professional duty to him, I should be content with your verbal promise—your mere word of honour, to pay it, as, and when, you conveniently could. But, in justice to myself, I really must take a show of security from you. Say, for instance, two promissory notes, for £5000 each, payable to Mr Titmouse. You may really regard them as matters of mere form; for, when you shall have given them to me, they will be deposited there," pointing to an iron safe, "and not again be heard of until you may have thought proper to inquire for them. The influence which

I happen to have obtained over Mr Titmouse, you may rely upon me exercising with energy, if ever I should be disposed to press you for payment of either of the instrument I have mentioned. I tell you candidly that they must be negotiable in point of form; but I assure you, a sincerely, that I will not permit them to be negotiated. Now, may I venture to hope that we understand each other?" added Gammon with a cheerful air; "and that this arrangement if I shall be only able to carry it into effect, is a sufficient evidence of my desire to serve you, and will relieve you from an immense load of anxiety and liability?"

"An immense—a crushing load, indeed, sir, if Providence shall in any manner, to me at present undiscoverable, enable me to perform my part of the arrangement, and if you have but power to carry your views into effect," replied Mr Aubrey, sighing heavily but with a look of gratitude.

"Leave that to me, Mr Aubrey; I will undertake to do it; I will move heaven and earth to do it—and the more eagerly, that I may thereby hope to establish a kind of set-off against the misery and loss which my professional exertions have unfortunately contributed to occasion you—and your honoured and distinguished family!"

"I feel deeply sensible of your great—your unexpected kindness, Mr Gammon; but still, the arrangement suggested is one occasioning me dreadful anxiety as to my being ever able to carry out my part of it."

"Never, never despair, Mr Aubrey. Heaven helps those who help themselves; and I really imagine I see your powerful energies already beginning to surmount your prodigious difficulties! When you shall have slept over the matter, you will feel the full relief which this proposed arrangement is so calculated to afford your spirits. Of course, too, you will lose no time in communicating to Messrs Runnington the nature of the proposal. I can predict that they will be not a little disposed to urge upon you its completion. I cannot, however, help

once more reminding you, in justice to myself, Mr Aubrey, that it is but a proposition, in making which, I hope it will not prove that I have been carried away by my feelings much further than my duty to my client or his interests"—

Mr Aubrey was afraid to hear him finish the sentence, lest the faint dawn of hope should disappear from the dark and rough surface of the sea of trouble upon which he was being tossed. "I will consult, as you suggest, sir," said he, gravely, "my experienced and honourable professional advisers; and am strongly inclined to believe that they will feel as you predict. I am of course bound to defer to them"—

"Oh, certainly! certainly! I am strict in the observance of professional etiquette, Mr Aubrey, I assure you; and should not think of going on with this arrangement, except with their concurrence, acting on your behalf. One thing I have to beg, Mr Aubrey, that either you or they will communicate the result of your deliberations to me personally. I am desirous that the suggested compromise should, if it be entertained by you and Messrs Runnington, be broken to my partners and our client, by myself.—By the way, if you will favour me with your address, I will make a point of calling at your house, either late in the evening or early in the morning."

[As if Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap had not kept eagle eyes upon his every movement since quitting Yatton, with a view to any sudden application for a writ of *Ne Exeat*, which a suspicious approach of his towards the sea coast might render necessary!]

"I am infinitely obliged to you, sir—but it would be far more convenient for both of us, if you could drop me a line, or favour me with a call at Mr Weasel's, in Pomegranate Court in the Temple."

Gammon blushed scarlet! happily unobserved, however, in his excitement and anxiety by Mr Aubrey. But for this accidental mention of the name of Mr Weasel, who was one of the pleaders occasionally employed by Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap in

heavy matters—in all probability Mr Aubrey might, within a day or two's time, have had to exercise his faculties, if so disposed, upon a declaration of Trespass for Mesne Profits, in a cause of "TITMOUSE v. AUBREY!"

"As you choose, Mr Aubrey," replied Gammon, with difficulty concealing his feelings of pique and disappointment at losing the opportunity of a personal introduction by Mr Aubrey to his family. After a few words of general conversation, Gammon inquiring how Mr Aubrey liked his new profession, and assuring him, in an emphatic manner, that he might rely upon being supported, from the moment of his being called to the bar, by all the important common-law business of the firm of "Quirk, Gammon, and Snap"—they parted. It had been to Mr Aubrey a memorable interview—and to Gammon a somewhat arduous affair, taxing to an unusual extent his powers of self-command and dissimulation. As soon as he was left alone, his thoughts instantly recurred to Aubrey's singular burst of hauteur and indignation. Gammon retained a stinging sense of submission to superior energy—and felt indignant with himself for not having at the moment resented it. Setting aside this source of exquisite irritation to the feelings of a proud man, he felt a depressing consciousness that he had not met with his usual success, in his recent encounter with Mr Aubrey; who had been throughout cautious, watchful, and courteously *distrustful*. He had afforded occasional glimpses of the unapproachable pride of his nature—and Gammon had consciously succumbed. Had there been anything in their interview—thought he, walking thoughtfully to and fro in his room—which, when Aubrey came to reflect upon it, would excite his suspicion and displeasure? For instance, had Gammon disclosed too much concerning the extent of his influence over Titmouse? His cheek slightly flushed; a sigh of fatigue and excitement escaped him; and gathering together his papers, he began to prepare for quitting the office for the day.

Mr Aubrey left Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's office, with feelings of mingled exhaustion and despondency. As he walked down Saffron Hill—a dismal neighbourhood!—what scenes did he witness! Poverty and profligacy revelling, in all their wild and revolting excesses! Here, was an Irishman, half-stupified with liquor and bathed in blood, just rescued from a savage fight, in a low underground public-house cellar, by his squalid wife, with dishevelled hair and a filthy infant in her arms—who walked beside him cursing, pinching, and striking him—reproaching him with the knowledge that she and her seven children were lying starving at home. Presently he stumbled; she with her wretched babe falling down with him: and she lay striking, and scratching, and abusing him till some one interfered.

There, was a woman—as it were, a bloated mass of filth steeped in gin—standing with a drunken smile at an old-clothes stall, pawning a dirty little shirt, which she had a few minutes before stripped from the back of one of her four half-naked children!

A little further on, was a noisy excited crowd round two men carrying a shutter, on which was strapped the bleeding body (a handkerchief spread over the face) of a poor bricklayer, who had fallen a few minutes before from the top of some scaffolding in the neighbourhood, and was at that instant in the agonies of death—leaving behind him a wife and nine children, for whom the poor fellow had long slaved from morning to night, and who were now ignorant of the frightful fate which had befallen him, and that they were left—the widow and fatherless—utterly destitute.

There, was a skinny little terrified urchin, about eight years old, with nothing to conceal his dirty, half-starved body, but a tattered man's coat, pinned round him; dying with hunger, he had stolen a villanous-looking bare bone—having scarce a halfpenny worth of meat upon it; and a brawny constable, his knuckles fiercely dug into the poor little offen-

der's neck, with his tight grasp, was dragging him off, followed by his shrieking mother, to the police-office, whence he would be committed to Newgate; and thence, after two or three months' imprisonment, and being flogged—miserable little wretch!—by the common hangman, who had hanged the child's father some six months before, he would be discharged—to return probably several times and undergo a similar process; then to be transported; and finally be hanged, as had been his father before him.

These startling scenes passed before Mr Aubrey, in the course of a five minutes' walk down Saffron Hill—during which period he now and then paused, and gazed around him with feelings of pity, of astonishment, of disgust, which presently blended and deepened into a dark sense of horror. These scenes, to some so fatally familiar—fatally, I mean, on account of the INDIFFERENCE which familiarity is apt to induce—to Mr Aubrey, had on them all the frightful glare of novelty. He had never witnessed anything of the sort before; and had no notion of its existence. The people residing on each side of the Hill, however, seemed accustomed to such scenes; which they appeared to view with the same dreadful indifference with which a *lamb led to the slaughter* is beheld by one who has spent his life next door to the slaughter-house. The Jew clothesman, before whose shop window, arrested by the horrifying spectacle of the bleeding wretch borne along to the hospital, Mr Aubrey had remained standing for a second or two, took the opportunity to *assail* him, with pertinacious importunities to purchase some articles of clothing! A fat baker, and a greasy eating-house keeper, stood each at his door, one with folded arms, the other with his hands thrust into his pockets—both of them gazing with a grin at two curs fighting in the middle of the street—oh, how utterly insensible to the ravenous want around them! The pallid spectres haunting the gin-shop—a large splendid structure at the corner—gazed with sunken lack-

lustre eye, and drunken apathy, at the shattered man who was being borne by.

Ah, God! what scenes were these! And of what other hidden wretchedness and horror did they not indicate the existence! 'Gracious mercy!' thought Aubrey, 'what a world have I been living in! And this dismal aspect of it exposed to me just when I have lost all power of relieving its wretchedness!'—here a thrill of anguish passed through his heart—'but, woe, woe is me! if at this moment I had a thousand times ten thousand a-year, how far would it go amidst the scenes similar to this, abounding in this one city? Oh God! what unutterable horror must be in store for those who, intrusted by Thee with an overflowing abundance, disregard the misery around them in guilty selfishness and indolence, or'—he shuddered—'expend it in sensuality and profligacy! Will Dives become sensible of his misconduct, only when he shall have entered upon his next stage of existence, and of punishment? Oh, merciful Creator! how is my heart wrung by the sight of horrors such as these? Awful and mysterious Author of our existence, *Father of the spirits of all flesh*, are these states of being which Thou hast ordained? Are these thy children? Are these my fellow-creatures? Oh, help me! help me! my weak heart faints; my clouded understanding is confounded! I cannot—insect that I am!—discern the scope and end of thy economy, of thy dread government of the world; yet blessed be the name of my God!—*I know that thou reignest! though clouds and darkness are around thee! righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne! with righteousness shalt thou judge the world, AND THE PEOPLE WITH EQUITY!*'

Like as the lesser light is lost in the greater, so, in Aubrey's case, was the lesser misery he suffered merged in the sense of the greater misery he witnessed. What, after all, was his position, in comparison with that of those now before and around him? What cause of thankfulness had he not, for even the merciful mildness of

the dispensations of Providence towards him?—Such were his thoughts and feelings, as he stood gazing at the objects which had called them forth, when his eye lit on the figure of Mr Gammon, approaching him. He was threading his way, apparently lost in thought, through the scenes which had so powerfully affected Mr Aubrey; who stood eyeing him with a sort of unconscious intensity, as if secure from his observation, till he was actually addressed by him.

"Mr Aubrey!" exclaimed Gammon, courteously saluting him. Each took off his hat to the other. Though Aubrey hardly intended it, he found himself engaged in conversation with Gammon, who, in a remarkably feeling tone, and with a happy flattering deference of manner, intimated that he could guess the subject of Mr Aubrey's thoughts, namely, the absorbing matters which they had been discussing together.

"No, it is not so," said Mr Aubrey, with a sigh, as he walked on—Gammon keeping easily beside him—"I have been profoundly affected by scenes which I have witnessed in the immediate neighbourhood of your office, since quitting it! what misery! what horror!"

"Ah, Mr Aubrey!"—exclaimed Gammon, echoing the sigh of his companion, as they slowly ascended Holborn Hill, separate, but side by side—"what a checkered scene is life! Guilt and innocence—happiness and misery—wealth and poverty—disease and health—wisdom and folly—sensuality and refinement—piety and irreligion—how strangely intermingled we behold them, wherever we look on life—and how difficult, to the philosopher, to detect the principle!"

"Difficult?—Impossible! Impossible! God alone can do so!"—exclaimed Mr Aubrey thoughtfully, and reverently.

"Comparison, I have often thought," said Gammon, after a pause—"of one's own troubles with the greater misfortunes endured by others, is beneficial or prejudicial—consolatory or disheartening—according as the mind of him

who makes the comparison is well, or ill, regulated—possessed, or destitute, of moral and religious principle!”

“It is so, indeed,” said Mr Aubrey. Though not particularly inclined to enter into or prolong conversation, he was pleased with the tone of his companion’s remark.

“As for me”—proceeded Gammon with a slight sigh—“the absorbing anxieties of professional life; and, that, too, in a line which, infinitely to my distaste, brings me constantly into scenes such as you have been observing—have contributed to render me, I fear, less sensible of their real character; yet can I vividly conceive the effect they must, when first seen, produce upon the mind and heart of a compassionate, an observant, a reflecting man, Mr Aubrey, like yourself!”

Gammon looked a gentleman; his address was easy and insinuating, full of delicate deference, without the slightest tendency to cant or sycophancy; his conversation that of an educated and thinking man. He was doing his utmost to produce a favourable impression on Mr Aubrey; and, as is little to be wondered at, he succeeded. By the time that they had got about twenty yards beyond Fetter Lane, they might have been seen walking together, arm-in-arm. As they approached Oxford Street, they suddenly encountered Mr Runnington. “God bless me, Mr Aubrey!” said he surprisedly—and Mr Gammon? How do you do, Mr Gammon!”—he continued, taking off his hat with a little formality, and speaking in a corresponding tone; but he was encountered by Gammon with greatly superior ease and distance, and was not a little nettled at it; for he was so palpably foiled with his own weapons.

“Well—I shall now resign you to your legitimate adviser, Mr Aubrey,” said Gammon with a smile: then, addressing Mr Runnington, in whose countenance pique and pride were abundantly visible—“Mr Aubrey has favoured me with a call to-day, and we have had some little discussion on a matter which he will explain to you.

As for me, Mr Aubrey, I ought to have turned off two streets ago—so I wish you good evening.”

Mr Aubrey and he shook hands as they exchanged adieus: Mr Runnington and he simply raised each his hat, and bowed to the other with cold politeness. As Mr Runnington and Mr Aubrey walked westward together, the former, who was a remarkably cautious man, did not think fit to express the uneasiness he felt at Mr Aubrey’s having entered into anything like confidential intercourse with one whom he believed to be so subtle and dangerous a person as Mr Gammon. He was, however, greatly surprised when he came to hear of the proposal which had been made by Mr Gammon, concerning the *mesme* profits; which, he said, was so unaccountably reasonable and liberal, considering the parties by whom it was made, that he feared Mr Aubrey must be labouring under some mistake. He would, however, turn it anxiously over in his mind, and consult with his partners; and, in short, do whatever they conceived best for Mr Aubrey—that he might depend upon. “And, in the mean time, my dear sir,” added Mr Runnington, with a smile designed to disguise considerable anxiety, “it may be as well for you not to have any further personal communication with these parties, whom you do not know as well as we do; but let us negotiate with them in everything, even the least!” Thus they parted; and Mr Aubrey entered Vivian Street with a considerably lighter heart than he had ever before carried into it. A vivid recollection of the scenes which he had witnessed at Saffron Hill, caused him exquisitely to appreciate the comforts of his little home, and to return the welcomes and caresses which he received, with a kind of trembling tenderness and energy. As he folded his still blooming but somewhat anxious wife fondly to his bosom, kissed his high-spirited and lovely sister, and fondled the prattling innocents who clambered upon his knees, he forgot, for a while, the difficulties, but remembered the lessons of the day.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOL. I.

(I.)—PAGE 54, col. 2.

TAXING AN ATTORNEY'S BILL.

By statute 6 & 7 Vict. c. 73, §§ 37, 43, passed in 1843, salutary alterations have been made in the law regulating the taxation of the bills of attorneys and solicitors. Except "*under special circumstances*," a client cannot now have his attorney's or solicitor's bill taxed, after the lapse of twelve months since it was delivered. If as much as *one-sixth* of the bill be struck off, the attorney or solicitor must pay the costs of the operation; if less than one-sixth, the client will enjoy that luxury.

(II.)—PAGE 59, col. 2.

BURIAL OF A SUICIDE.

In the year 1823, stat. 4 Geo. IV. abolished the barbarous and senseless mode of dealing with the body of a *felo de se*, spoken of in the text. The remains of such a person are ordered by that act to be buried privately in the churchyard—but without the performance of any rites of Christian burial. The Prayer-book also prohibits "the office for the burial of the dead from being used for any that have laid violent hands upon themselves."

(III.)—PAGE 70, col. 1.

A PARTY GIVING EVIDENCE IN HIS OWN FAVOUR.

If the case of *Huckaback v. Titmouse* were to be tried now, either party could give evidence; seeing that, in the year 1851, statute 14 & 15 Vict. c. 99, enabled parties to become witnesses on their own behalf. The difficulty suggested in the text, therefore—*viz.* that Titmouse assaulted Huckaback when they were alone—will not arise.

(IV.)—PAGE 76, col. 2.

COSTS IN AN ACTION OF SLANDER.

To discourage frivolous and malicious actions for (*inter alia*) libel and slander, it was enacted by statute 3 & 4 Vict. c. 24, § 2, passed in the year 1840, that, if the jury award less damages than forty shillings, the plaintiff shall not recover *any* costs, unless the presiding judge certify that the words were uttered "*wilfully and maliciously*"—*i. e.* "from personal malice,—from a real design to injure the plaintiff." *Foster v. Pointer, & Meeson & Welsby*, 395. The statute here cited, repealed that referred to in the text.

(V.)—PAGE 93, col. 2, note.

DISSENTERS FREQUENTING THEATRES.

This note is so inadvertently worded as to convey the erroneous idea that Dissenters generally "*allow* their members to frequent theatres." The author does not believe this, nor did he intend to assert the fact to be so, with the exception specified in the note; but that individual, and especially the younger and less strict members of dissenting families, are never to be seen in a theatre, is an assertion which cannot be seriously maintained. The note would, in fact, have been cancelled, as of no importance, had the author's attention been earlier pointed to it.

(VI.)—PAGE 146, col. 1.

THE ACTION OF EJECTMENT.

So much curiosity has been excited amongst lay readers in this country and in America, and also among professional persons in France and Germany, as to the real nature of the species of action

mentioned in the text, that the author is induced here to give some further account of a matter entering so considerably into the construction of the story. The action of Ejectment is described with minute accuracy in the text; had been then in existence for at least five hundred years, (*i. e.* since the close of Edward II., or beginning of Edward III., A.D. 1327); and its venerable but tortuous fiction had been scarcely even touched by the "amending hand," which in the year 1834, cut away so many cumbersome, complicated, and quasi obsolete portions of the law of actions, (see stat. 3 & 4, Will. IV. c. 27, § 36). The progress of this action is calculated to throw much light on some of our early history and jurisprudence. It was resorted to for the purpose of escaping from the other dilatory, intricate, and expensive modes of recovering landed property anciently in existence. The following is the description given of it by Lord Mansfield. "AN EJECTMENT is an ingenious action for the Trial of Titles to the possession of Land. In form it is a trick between two, to dispossess a third by a sham suit and judgment. The artifice would be criminal, unless the Court converted it into a fair trial with the proper party. The control the Courts have over the judgment against the Casual Ejector, enables them to put any terms upon the plaintiff which are just. He was soon ordered to give notice to the tenant in possession. When the tenant in possession asked to be admitted defendant, the Court was enabled to add CONDITIONS; and therefore obliged him to allow the fiction, and go to Trial on the real merits."—(*Fair Claim v. Sham Title*, 3 Burr. 1294). This action is now, in effect, the only direct common-law remedy for the recovery of land in England and Ireland; in many of the United States of America, the action of Ejectment is retained—"with its harmless, and—as matter of history—curious and amusing English fictions."—(4 *Kent's Comment.* p. 70, note e): but in New York, the action of Ejectment is "stripped of all its fictitious parts."—(*Id. ib.*) In the year 1852, however, the legislature (by statute 15 & 16 Vict. c. 76), laid rough hands on poor old John Doe and Richard Roe, who then ceased to exist, together with the fictions among which they had so long figured. A very simple process for the recovery of land was substituted—viz. a "Writ of Eject-

ment"—containing the names of the real parties, and specifying the property in dispute between them.

(VII.)—PAGE 148, col. 1.

A HORSE WITH A GLASS EYE, WARRANTED SOUND.

"A general warranty," says Blackstone, "will not extend to guard against defects that are plainly and obviously the objects of one's senses; as if a horse be warranted perfect, and want either a tail or an ear: unless the buyer in this case be blind. But if the horse want the sight of an eye, yet as the discernment of such defects is frequently matter of skill, it hath been held that an action for damages lies for this imposition." 3 Blackst. Comment. 165-6. In the year 1832, a horse was sold, 'warranted sound at the time of the contract;' when he had a visible splint. This, however, was held not to be one of those patent defects against which a warranty is operative, because a splint does not necessarily cause lameness. *Margetson v. Wright*, 8 Bingham's Rep. 454.

(VIII.)—PAGE 143, col. 1.

INCOMPETENCY OF WITNESSES TO GIVE EVIDENCE.

The difficulty suggested by Mr Parkinson, in the text, in respect of a witness whose evidence was desirable, being interested in the matter, was got rid of in the year 1843, by statute 6 & 7 Vict. c. 85, removing incompetency on the score of 'interest' or 'crime.' In 1851, however, the legislature, as we have seen, went infinitely further, and admitted those to give evidence who had the greatest possible interest, viz. the parties themselves.—See the Note (III) to p. 70, (*ante*, p. 375).

(IX.)—PAGE 192, col. 2.

HABEAS CORPUS.

For this glorious and inestimable safeguard of the liberty of the subject, we are indebted to the ancient common law of England, strengthened from time to time by the legislature, and now made secure against the insidious encroachments of tyranny. The chief statute passed with this view is known as *The Habeas Corpus Act*, (31 Car. II. c. 2), and "has been incorporated into the jurisprudence of every state in the Union" in America.—STORY, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the U. S.*, vol. iii. p. 208.

"It is a very common mistake," says Mr Hallam (and the Lord Chief-Justice Denman had occasion, during Michaelmas Term 1844, publicly to make a similar observation), "not only among foreigners, but many from whom some knowledge of our constitutional laws might be expected, that the statute of Charles II. enlarged in a great degree our liberties, and forms a sort of epoch in their history; but though a very beneficial enactment, it introduced no new principle, nor conferred any right upon the subject. * * * It was not to bestow an immunity from arbitrary imprisonment, which is abundantly provided in Magna Charta, (if, indeed, not much more ancient), that the statute of Charles II. was enacted; but to cut off the abuses by which the government's lust of power, and the servile subtlety of crown lawyers, had impaired so fundamental a privilege."—§ HALL. *Const. Hist.*, pp. 16, 17.

(X.)—PAGE 208, col. 2.

HOW A BREACH OF TRUST BECOMES FELONY.

Till within a few years before the period in question, the law of England regarded the act done by Mr Steggars as amounting only to a *breach of trust*, and consequently subjecting him to no *criminal liability*; on the ground that the £700, *never having been actually in his master's possession*, could not be the subject of a *felonious taking*. The alarming consequences of this doctrine led to the passing of stat. 39, Geo. III. c. 85, [passed on the 12th July 1799,] which declared such an act of embezzlement to be felony, punishable with transportation for any term not exceeding fourteen years: this was lately repealed, but re-enacted by stat. 7 & 8 Geo. IV. c. 29. § 47, [passed on the 21st June 1827,] on the occasion of consolidating that branch of the criminal law, giving the Court an option to transport for fourteen or seven years; or to imprison for any term not exceeding three years, and also a public or private whipping, in the case of a male, once, twice, or thrice.

(XI.)—PAGE 210, col. 1.

WHAT IS MEANT BY POSSESSION BEING NINE-TENTHS OF THE LAW.

The popular maxim, that "possession is nine-tenths of the law," is founded on the salutary and reasonable doctrine of the law, that the party *in possession* of property is presumed to be the owner

until the contrary shall have been proved. Consider how intolerable, and, in fact, destructive of civil society, would be an opposite rule—if every one in the enjoyment of property were liable to be called upon to explain to any one challenging his right, how that right had been acquired! By the operation of the rule laid down in the text, a defendant in ejectment may (except in the case of landlord and tenant) always defeat the action, simply by showing the real title to be in *some third party*—without showing that the defendant holds possession with the consent, or under the authority of the real owner. The defendant's evidence is thus altogether confined to falsifying his adversary's proofs, or rebutting the presumptions which arise out of them.

(XII.)—PAGE 211, col. 1.

NICE PRESUMPTIONS AS TO SURVIVORSHIP.

Mr Lynx is here glancing at a rule of the Roman law on a point of great difficulty, interest, and importance—*i. e.*, where two persons above the age of puberty perished by the same accident, the younger was presumed to have been the survivor; but if one was *under* the age of puberty, the other was presumed to have been the survivor.—(Dig. lib. 34, tit. 5, §§ 9, 22, 23.) It is curious to see how this question is dealt with in modern times. The *Code Civile* (in France) adjusts the presumption to specific periods of life. If those who perished were all under 15 years of age, the eldest is presumed to have survived; if all above 60 years, the youngest. If some under 15, and others above 60, the former shall be presumed to have survived. If all were between 15 and 60 years of age, the male, (when the ages are equal, or within a year of being so), shall be presumed the survivor. If of the same sex, that presumption shall be admitted which opens the succession in the order of nature—of course the younger being presumed to have survived the elder.—(*Code Civ.* §§ 720—722.) It has been objected, that, though these rules are generally equitable, they are imperfect: for a man above sixty ought surely to be held to have survived a mere infant; and no provision is made for the case of persons under 15, and under 60 years of age, perishing together. By the *Mahomedan law of India*, "when relations perish together, it is to be presumed that they all died at the same mo-

ment, and the heir of each immediately succeeds." The difficulty of the case arises, of course, from the circumstance of there being no evidence whatever as to the *actual fact* of survivorship. Our English law has not adopted any definite rule on the subject, but leans in favour of the survivorship of the party possessed of the property in dispute; and *some* regard seems to be had to the probability of the survivorship of the stronger party. Several interesting questions of this kind have arisen in this country; and, generally speaking, our courts appear to have required some evidence of the *fact*. A singular case occurred in Queen Elizabeth's time, (1596). A father and son were hanged at the same time, in one cart; being joint tenants of property, which, on their death, was to go to the *son's* heirs. According to one report (Noy) the *father's* feet were seen moving after the son's death; but other witnesses swore to the son's "shaking his legs" after his father's death. This the jury believed; found that the son survived; and his widow was therefore held entitled to her dower!—(*Broughton v. Randall, Cro. El.*, p. 502.)

(XIII.)—PAGE 231, col. 1, note.

ORDERING WITNESSES OUT OF COURT.

Though a judge may order witnesses to be out of court during the trial, till called for, and fine them for disobeying, he cannot lawfully refuse to permit the witness to be examined. This was recently laid down by Lord Campbell, in the case of *Cobbett v. Hudson*, [1852-3.]

(XIV.)—PAGE 233, col. 1.

COMPETENCY OF WITNESSES.

See Note VIII. to page 148.

(XV.)—PAGE 243, col. 1.

THE LAW RELATING TO CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS FOR LIBEL.

A highly important and salutary improvement in the law of libel, especially in the case of newspaper and periodical publications, was effected in the year 1843, by statute 6 & 7 Vict. c. 90; amended in the year 1845, by statute 8 & 9 Vict. c. 75.

Till the former year, the TRUTH was inadmissible as a *justification* on a criminal prosecution for libel—the rule being that the greater the truth the greater was the libel—by which was

meant its greater tendency to provoke a breach of the peace. Now, however, the defendant may *defend* himself against an indictment or information, by pleading that the charge was true, and that it was for the public benefit that it should have been published; but he must specially state in his plea the particular facts by reason of which it was for the public benefit. If such plea, or evidence in support of it, should be false or malicious, the act allows that circumstance to be taken into consideration in awarding punishment. A serious amount of fine, imprisonment, and hard labour, may be inflicted for publishing, or threatening (with intent to extort money) to publish, a false and malicious libel.—In *civil* proceedings a defendant may plead that he was not guilty of *actual* malice or *gross* negligence; and offered to publish, or published, a full apology, in which case he must pay money into court by way of amends; and in *all* actions of defamation he may show an apology, or offer of one, in mitigation of damages.—This statute does not extend to Scotland.

(XVI.)—PAGE 260, col. 1.

DELAYS IN DISPOSING OF NEW TRIALS.

About the time when the passage in the text was written, the superior courts of Common Law were overwhelmed with their term business. In the year 1838, an act (1 & 2 Vict. c. 32) was passed, enabling them to sit in vacation time, "for the purpose of disposing of business then pending and undecided in such courts." These post-terminal sittings soon altered the aspect of matters;—and now [1854] they are pretty nearly in the state represented in the text, at the time to which the story refers.

(XVII.)—PAGE 261, col. 1.

DISABILITIES, &c.

If the reader will refer to page 233, he may see how the *disabilities* here alluded to arose, and affected the case. The doctrine of "adverse possession" is founded on the anxiety of our law to secure quietude of title. It gives every reasonable facility for the assertion of just rights against wrongful possessors of property; but with equal reasonableness fixes a limit to immunity from the consequences of negligent acquiescence under usurpation; considering it, in a word, better policy to protect a person

in possession, than to encourage a struggle for it among strangers. *Vigilantibus non dormientibus jura subveniunt*, is the maxim of the common law, on which also the statute law has often acted, and recently with great effect, by statute 3 & 4 Will. IV. c. 27, (passed on the 24th July 1833). By its provisions, many of the most subtle and difficult questions concerning the nature of "possession" are got rid of; and the period of twenty years from the commencement of the right of possession, fixed as that within which alone an action or suit in equity for the recovery of lands must be brought—unless a party was, when his right accrued, labouring under the *disability* of infancy, coverture, insanity, or absence beyond seas: in any of which cases an extension of ten years is allowed: but it is expressly provided, that however numerous such disabilities may have been—however long and uninterruptedly they may have lasted—*forty* years shall be absolutely the limit within which the action or suit must be brought from the time of the *right first accruing*. If the statute "once begin to run"—as the lawyers say, "nothing can stop it." The above constitute some of the boldest and best of the great alterations recently effected in our English system of real property law. A far longer period than the present one was requisite to constitute "adverse possession" at the time mentioned in the text. By the operation of the statute cited in this note, an end is put to all questions and discussions as to whether the possession is or is not 'adverse.' The question is now—have twenty years elapsed, since the right accrued? whatever be the *nature* of the possession. See Lord St Leonard's Essay on the Real Property Statutes, p. 84.

(XVIII.)—PAGE 261, col. 2.

THE LAW OF ERASURE AND ESTOPPELS.

1. ERASURES.—The question—What is the effect of an erasure, an interlineation, or alteration apparent in a material part of a deed above thirty years old, when offered in evidence?—has led to much discussion among both professional and general readers of this work, as well at home as abroad; and several communications upon the subject have been received by the author. Lord Widdrington at the trial, and subse-

quently he and the full court, held in the case of *Doe d. Titmouse v. Jolter*, that such an erasure was fatal to the case of the party adducing the instrument in which it was exhibited. In constructing this portion of the story, the author, aware of some difference of opinion on the subject among lawyers, relied upon the following passage in a work of long-established authority (BULLER'S *Nisi Prius*, p. 255), in which the law is thus laid down—"If there be any [material] blemish, by rasure or interlineation, in a deed, it ought to be proved, though it were above thirty years old, by the witnesses if living, and if dead, by proving the handwriting of at least one of the witnesses, and also the hand of the party, *in order to encounter the presumption arising from the blemishes in the deed.*" Such, also, is the law laid down in Chief Baron Gilbert's Treatise on Evidence (p. 89); and the proposition appears adopted, and these two high authorities are cited, in the last edition (the ninth), of that celebrated text-book, PHILLIPS *on Evidence*, p. 205, published since the former edition of this work. There is an impression, however, that this strict rule would not now be acted upon; on the ground that the presumption resulting from a continued possession, in conformity with the effect of a deed with erasure or interlineation, is strong enough to overcome the presumption of forgery afforded by the alterations themselves. Still it is possible to foresee great danger arising out of the adoption of such a rule: for a man enjoying an estate in lands, less than one of fee simple, may alter the deed so as to give to himself that superior estate, and then, after a lapse of thirty years, produce the deed so altered, and thereby defeat the innocent party challenging his title to the property. It may be asked—Suppose an erasure to have been made so imperfectly as to leave visible, on close inspection, the original words, having a vitally different operation from those substituted, and that hostile to the interests of the person offering the deed in evidence?—[Since this note was written, it has been decided by the Court of Queen's Bench (A.D. 1851), in the case of *Doe v. Catomore*, 16 Q. B. 745, that in the case of a deed, an alteration should be *presumed* to have been made before execution, since an alteration after execution cannot be made with-

out fraud, or wrong; which the law presumes against: and in that case it was held that the question was one properly left to the jury. In the case of *Doe v. Palmer*, *ib.*, p. 747, it was decided that the presumption was exactly the reverse in the case of a will. In conformity with these principles, it would now, probably, be submitted as a question for a jury to decide, *whether the alteration had been made previously or subsequently to the delivery of the deed?* for if previously, the deed remains valid and binding. A deed thirty years old is called 'an ancient document,' and is said to prove itself—*i. e.* to require no proof of its execution, provided it shall have been produced from a custody which may be reasonably and naturally explained, even though not the strictly proper legal custody.—See the late case of *Doe d. Neale v. Sampler*, 8 *Adolphus and Ellis Rep.* 151; and *Doe d. Wildgoose v. Pearce*, 2 *Moody and Robinson*, 240. As to the point made by the Attorney-general, at the trial, that where the right is once vested—*i. e.* the instant after the execution of the deed—such execution creating a title to the land in question—that right and title cannot be affected by any subsequent alteration of the deed;—it has been affirmed to be good law, in a recent decision of the Court of Exchequer, confirmed in a Court of Error.—See *Davidson v. Cooper*, 11 *Meeson & Welsby*, 799-800, and 13 *Meeson & Welsby*, 343. 'The moment after the execution of the deed, it has become valueless,' said Lord Abinger, 'except as affording evidence of the fact that it had been executed.' In this case, in which the author was engaged, the whole doctrine of erasures was thoroughly canvassed; and it was held, that when an instrument (whether under seal or not), which is the foundation of a right sought to be enforced, is altered in a material part, even by a stranger, without the privity of the party affected by it, such alteration makes the instrument utterly void.—The Scotch law respecting erasures is exceedingly stringent; and even goes further than that laid down by Lord Widrington.

II. ESTOPPEL.—Both this doctrine, and that of erasures, as illustrated by this work, formed the subject of elaborate investigation in an article in the *American Jurist* for 1842 (vol. xxvii.

pp. 50, et seq.) The question relating to estoppel, is thus stated there, in abstract terms: "If the son and heir-apparent of a tenant in fee-simple, convey the land thus held, and afterwards die in his father's lifetime, is the heir of the father, who also makes his pedigree through the son, estopped by that son's conveyance?" The conclusion arrived at is, that, according to Lord Coke, if such conveyance had been with warranty, the heir would be bound, if assets descended to him from the son.* But statute 4 & 5 Anne, c. 16, § 22, makes void as against his heir all collateral warranties made by an ancestor who has no estate of inheritance in possession; and stat. 7 & 8 Vict. c. 76 § 5, permitting the alienation of contingent interests, expressly declares that it shall not enable any heir to dispose of his expectancy.

In this story an heir is represented as conveying away his expectancy; and the author received an elaborate communication on the subject, from perhaps the greatest conveyancer then living (Mr Preston) to the following effect:—"The rule of law is—*Qui non habet, ille non dat: nemo potest plus juris in alium transferre, quam ipse habet.* Therefore a grant by an expectant heir, *simpliciter*, is void. But the doctrine of estoppels (a 'cunning learning,' says Lord Coke) affords exceptions to this general rule. A feoffment with warranty binds an heir, however, not by estoppel, but by *rebutter*, "in order to avoid circuitry of action, which is not favoured by the law."—(Co. Litt. 265 a.) He might be estopped by a lease for years, and by matter of record—or by fine and recovery, before those methods of assurance were abolished; but a conveyance by Lease and Release would not bind the heir, on the subsequent descent of the estate: for he had *no right at all* at the time of the release, made, but that once in the ancestor; after whose decease the heir may enter into the land against his own release.—(Co. Litt. 265 a.) "The late Vice-Chancellor, Sir John Leach," adds

* By 'Warranty,' is meant the clause with which deeds of feoffment formerly concluded, and by which the feoffor agreed that he and his heirs would 'warrant, acquit, and for ever defend the feoffee and his heirs against all persons.' This old form has long been obsolete; and may be considered to have been, by two late statutes, abolished.

Mr Preston, "once decided that a release *did* operate as an estoppel, in conformity with my argument before him; but Lord Lyndhurst on appeal, contrary to his own first impression, on Sir Edward Sugden's handing up to him my own Book on conveyancing, as a *contre projet* to my attempt to support the Vice-Chancellor's decision, overruled that decision."

(XIX.)—PAGE 267, col. 1.

MR TITMOUSE'S RIGHT TO THE MESNE PROFITS

It might be inferred, from a somewhat loose statement in an English law treatise, that in a case like that of Mr Aubrey—viz. of possession of property in entire ignorance that it belonged to another—a Court of Equity would protect against the rightful owner's claim for the mesne profits. Such, however, is by no means the case. Mr Titmouse had recovered at law—by the superior strength of his title, and without requiring any assistance whatever from a Court of Equity; the mesne profits, therefore, were absolutely his—and any interference, by a Court of Equity, to deprive him of them, would have been an act of direct spoliation. Such a notion, there-

fore, is utterly destitute of foundation. If Mr Titmouse had been compelled to seek the assistance of a Court of Equity in order to prosecute his claim, and had clearly been guilty of negligence or fraud, it is possible that some terms might have been imposed upon him, with reference to the mesne profits to be wrung from his comparatively-speaking innocent opponent—but even then, it is conceived that Equity would be very slow and jealous in exercising such a stretch of power. The Roman law took a different view of the subject, regarding him—*qui justas causas habuisset quare bona ad se pertinere existimasset*, (Dig. Lib. v. Tit. iii. l. 20, &c.)—with great leniency, and exempting him from payment of mesne profits accrued previous to the action.—According to the law of Scotland, a *bonâ fide* possessor evicted (*i. e.* turned out) by a person having a better right, is entitled to retain the fruits or profits (called "*violent profits*") which he may have reaped or received during his *bonâ fide* possession. It would seem, however, that this doctrine is based not solely upon the *bonâ fide* ignorance of the ousted party, but upon the concurring *negligence* and *delay* of his victorious opponent.



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