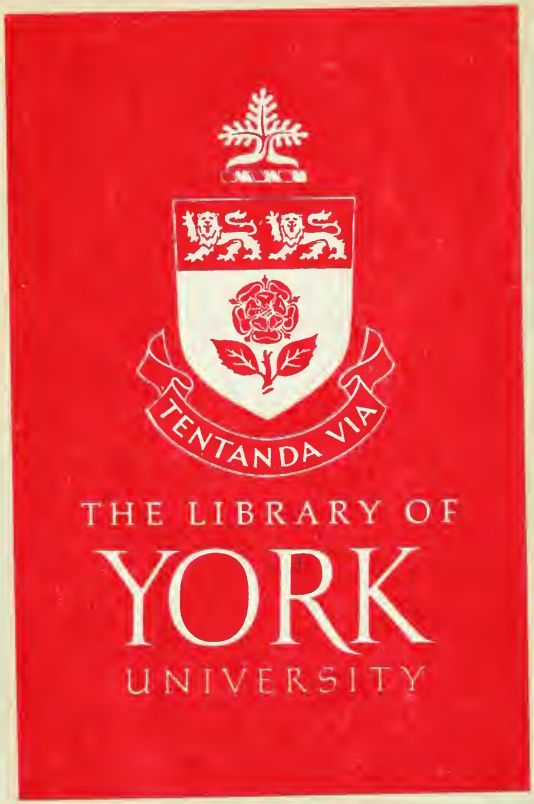
THE VILLAGE OF MERROW;

ITS PAST AND PRESENT

By FRANK JOHNSON.



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VILLAGE OF MERROW;

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By FRANK JOHNSON,

Author of Lashed to the Mizzen, Giles and Janey, or the Kindly Gentleman, &c.

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us."

KING LEAR.

Montreal:
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1876.

DEDICATION

TO WILLIAM CHAMBERS, Esq.

Sir,—In inscribing to you the accompanying narrative, I have been guided, mainly, by the high opinion which I have ever entertained of your unremitting exertions in the diffusion of profitable knowledge. I can recall the day when the earliest of your publications for the people made its appearance. I was then in my twenty-first year, with Leith Walk and its surroundings as familiar, perhaps, to me as to yourself, which not a little enhanced the interest that I took in your adventure. From then to the present time, no observer can have failed to notice, and no candid mind but will acknowledge the giant share which it and its successors have had, not only in cultivating the taste of the public, but in awakening in those for whom they were more especially intended an ambition for still higher attainments.

Although the English agricultural labourer, in whose behalf the following pages have been written, can hardly, in the comparative darkness that still begirts him, be said to have been more than reached by your endeavours, you have been instrumental, and more so than any one I could name, by quickening the sympathy of those better circumstanced, in furnishing him, and when most needed, with friends and upholders. It would, indeed, be disheartening to suppose that labours, so fruitful elsewhere, had in one direction been entirely barren.

There is no name, moreover, it would seem, that could be here introduced with so much propriety as your own, from the circumstance that it was an account in "Things as they are in America," of the hopeless prospect of a Scottish ploughman in his old age, that determined me to write some such work as "The Village of

Merrow." This was many years ago. I was then living in a log house, on a farm embosomed in the woods of Lower Canada. Never were words more in place than your own, that, doubtless, the writing of it had been to me a source of pleasure on many a wearisome day. In the trials inseparable from broken health, in a new and rugged country, it has indeed been so, and it is from your sympathy therein that I am emboldened to hope that my work, now completed and revised, will be found to afford you an additional pleasure in its perusal. In the meantime, I have the satisfaction to know that my work will, with you, be under the eye of one too informed to misjudge me, and too generous not to know how to make allowance for failure in a field where so few have ventured to tread, and where very few, in so doing, would be found not to have stumbled.

With the hope that many years of health and happiness are yet in store for you,

Believe me, Sir,
With the utmost respect,
Your obedient servant,
FRANK JOHNSON.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

In the hope of meeting with support, not only in the Dominion of Canada, but also in the United States, in the publication of "The Village of Merrow, its Past and Present," I have been encouraged by the belief that no rightly minded man can have regarded with indifference the degradation, in every way, of that exodus from Britain which, for so many years, has been inundating and polluting the shores of America.

That, long ago, the American people, I am speaking of the States, were aware of the danger that threatened them, may be gleaned from a work, published some twenty years since, entitled "Emigration in its practical application to individuals and communities." "But while," writes Mr. Burton, its author, "the "States can, as it is generally said, absorb them, while they are "in the meantime an advantage, in a pecuniary sense at least, to "the American people, transatlantic statesmen, who look into the "future, shake their heads, and fear that too large a stratum of "this coarsest clay of human life is imported from our country, "and deposited on theirs. They think that it comes in masses "too large to be sufficiently disintegrated and dispersed among "their own energetic people. The time may come when it is "no economic advantage to receive them, and here is one warning "to us in Britain to strain every nerve to save our own country "from a succeeding race of a similarly damaged population, a "warning that, disastrous as it must ever be to possess such a popu-"lation within our bosom, the wretched resource of draining it off "may be denied to us by the stopping of the exit." Now, no one familiar with the present condition of what in Britain are called the lower orders, will, I am sure, venture to say that, at least in one great and important body of them, of whom thousands annually emigrate to America, there has been, since the above was written, any alteration for the better. Again and again was it enforced on me, some twelve years since, by the farmers of England, that in the present agricultural labourer I should hardly recognize the man whom, of old, it was my fortune to employ, so had he morally retrograded.

Were the evil I am speaking of to be rated only by the number of those who, on landing in America, report themselves as peasants and labourers, it would appear that, comparatively, it could be but of limited extent; but they who have made it their business to look into the matter, know, that a large, very large percentage of such as on their arrival announce themselves as artizans and tradesmen owe by far the greater part of what in them is divine or otherwise, to the days when, neglected and poorly fed, it was their lot to follow their fathers into the fields.

There is never anything to be gained by refusing to look facts in the face. As a rule, this is the man that, as an agricultural labourer at least, has, for the last half century, been inundating the West, that, for generations past, has been sent out to aid in perpetuating British rule,—in establishing new kingdoms for her governance. In nine cases, to the full, of every ten, he is an ignorant, under-fed, saucy, dishonest clout.—a tippler into the bargain. Of religion he has none,—of self-reliance as little. In this last respect, the Irishman in New Brunswick, who condemned the country as one in which a man had no one to depend on but himself, may be cited as a sample. Of the tenth to be excepted from this, which some, knowing them less thoroughly than others, may be disposed to regard as too severe a condemnation, it is impossible to speak too highly; and disheartening is it to reflect on the position of men so, in every way, deserving of a better one. Did not humanity and religion equally forbid the withholding a hand from the former, despite of their unworthiness, the miserable position of this tithe, so representative of what one would hope the majority of British countrymen might be brought to become, would still be sufficient to incite even the less sanguine to stir in their behalf.

Now, there must be a cause for this,—this wholesale demoralization. Men are not physically weak without an assignable reason; as little can they be morally so. Let us see to it.

With the least possible fear of contradiction, it may be said that the oldest amongst us can recall nothing better than low wages and hard work as the unvarying lot of the English agricultural labourer. Now, is not such a condition the one most calculated to disnature and demoralize any one, the most certain to sap and destroy every tendency to religion and morality, more particularly when causes scarcely less potent contribute, as can be shown, to the same result?

At a recent ecclesiastical gathering in Montreal it was said by one of the Episcopacy, in reply to a fellow divine who had suggested that it would be cheering and encouraging to immigrants were the Church to put itself more directly in communication with them on their arrival, that he was afraid that immigrants, in general, have never been in the habit of attending churches. Never was an observation more to the point, and never, in its truthfulness, one more humiliating to an establishment of which the reverend utterer, doubtless, considered he had every reason to be proud. As far as the agricultural labourer is concerned, assuredly no insignificant item as an immigrant, he certainly is not, nor has he, for generations past, been in the habit of attending his church. Not that I would put such (his attendance) in all cases, as a test of a man's moral standing. Very far from it; but in him, the agricultural labourer, in whom, in general, little dissent, and still less philosophy withholds, be assured that something is radically wrong, both socially and politically, in his habitual absenteeism. Herein is the secret. The labourers are accustomed to look upon their minister as one leagued against them in the interest of the landowner. In their recent endeavours to elevate themselves how rare was a word in their behalf from those whose business it is to inculcate Christianity! Moreover, can any one, labourer or other, be expected to feel himself at home where, in every shape, he is made conscious of his inferiority, and where the weaknesses, follies and sins of only a class are dwelt on, to the utter ignorement of the wholesale neglect of duty so general with that class who of all should be the forwardest by their example and teachings to encourage what is good in others. Is it reasonable for those whose interests and sentiments are, at all times, identified with those of capital to calculate upon the sympathy and respect of labour? No, there is little room for surprise at their habitual absenteeism. With wages insufficient for the bare necessaries of life, with endurances, in a thousand shapes, humiliating, with no moral guide that they care to listen to, with no prospect in the distance but a workhouse, is it not rather a thing to be wondered at, is it not an astounding compliment to our common nature, that, now and again a religious and sober man is still to be found in their midst. I hold myself responsible, said an old Indianapolis methodist to a Nonconformist of Brooklyn "for having every body do right by me, and if they don't do right, it is because I do not do my duty. In preaching

during your life do you take the blame upon yourself, and don't you be scolding your church, and blaming every body. It is your business to see that your folks are right." Would the thousands, at present so in every way ready to truckle to the landowner, but take these noble words to their bosoms, and carry them with them into their pulpits, the poor clod-hoppers would soon cease to require to be told who were their friends, but, with affection and reverence, they would seek them in their temples, and listen to them there as elsewhere.

But recently at the opening (in the mother country) of a block of improved industrial dwellings it was observed by a high divine that "he was quite certain that there was nothing that so interfered with that morality, which it was the business of the Municipality to guard over as the state of the homes of the poor, when those homes were such as to demoralize the occupants." Might not the reverend gentleman, with equal honour to himself, permit his philanthropy to indulge itself, at times, a little further. Would a word or two from the same source be all waste upon something of still greater importance at least to the agricultural poor, that their wages should cease to be such as to compel them, and how frequently, to drag into the fields with them even their daughters and wives! Can morality or decency be ever hoped for in homes where such a resort is a *necessity?* It would need for his reverence to make but a very limited tramp in his own Devonshire to assure himself of this.

Were the consequences of this neglect restricted to those with whom it originated, we, upon this side of the Atlantic, might be pardoned for considering that it was in no way our business to remonstrate or interfere. But whilst consequences the most fatal must result to the mother country from this continued neglect of her labourers, we, in the meantime, in America, whether of the Dominion, or of the States, are made bitterly to taste of its fruits, in a lowered standard amongst us of principle and sentiment. It is far, therefore, from being no concern of ours. I know that I am treading upon delicate ground; but what is to be found again and again in the columns of our ablest and most reliable journals but an expression of regret that, with all our advances materially and scientifically, we are yearly as a people becoming more dissolute and less trustworthy. Is it necessary to dilate upon this? I refer every one to his daily experience. Sons and grandsons, to so great an extent, of men out nightly for what they could lay

their hands on as a make up for their deficient earnings, to say nothing of the thousands who, in the days when there were no ocean cables, found America too often a convenient resort,—how, with the bulk of us, could it well have been otherwise. Not in a vengeful spirit, but by the operation of natural laws, are the sins of the fathers visited upon the children. The dishonesty and ruffianism, too frequently imported into this country by the former, are, with the majority of them, on the acquirement of property in land, in some degree abandoned; still, it is difficult to suppose that the sons of such men find in their paternal soil a very encouraging one for the growth of honour or nobility.

Disheartened by their ingratitude, a philanthropic society in England has of late been complaining that of nearly a thousand assisted emigrants to the Dominion, selected for their known honesty and providence, not one, in accordance with their written promises, had remitted a single farthing of what was advanced to them, though many of them are known to have prospered exceedingly. Let such societies, howsoever hard they may find it to do so, keep silent for the future. They have expected an impossibility. Nor let Canadian journalists, on an insinuation of something contaminating in the climate of Canada, be too ready to retaliate, that the change complained of "is not a metamorphosis but a relapse," that "the honesty and providence shown in England was the whited sepulchre covering ingrained dishonesty and selfishness," that "these paltry (?) vices are importations, not indigenous to the soil of Canada," that "if there is one thing that the people of Canada despise more than another it is an act of meanness." Let them not thus, I say, retaliate. Let them rather remember their own daily reprovings of the meanness and dishonesty, not of such as the parties complained of, but of the very highest, most influential in the state, a majority of whom would possibly be found, on inquiry, to be indebted for their social or political prominence to a life-long practice of the same *paltry* vices inherited, of old, from their own neglected sires and grandsires. The gallant Major General, vice chairman of the society complaining, forgets that his protégés have never in any temptations *at home* been able to promise themselves so probable an escape with impunity. The temptation has simply proved, and would again and again prove too strong for them, with no better training than had been theirs in England, and with so tainted an atmosphere as awaits them in America. Singularly exceptional must have been

his position and experience *here* who shall venture to deny the truthfulness of this.

Now, this degraded condition of the English agricultural labourer can never, in the way of improvement, be reached but from above and beyond him. Recent events have clearly demonstrated this. He is, both morally and intellectually, too debased to stand true even to himself. He endures his wrongs and miseries with a patience that surprises us, but he is totally unable to see that unanimity alone is wanting to obtain for him his rights. The man that, for years, has submitted, with barely more than a grumble, to short commons and insufficient clothing, trembles when called upon to look his oppressors in the face. It has ever been so. Neither the British nor American slave could have effected his own freedom. This was the result, under Divine guidance, of an enlarged public sentiment in his favour, and it has been in the hope of awakening the same, in behalf of what, in the States, I have too often heard of as the white slave of England, that I have been encouraged, in hours stolen from Canadian winter nights, in the prosecution of "The Village of Merrow." My object therein has been to give the countryman of England an opportunity of speaking for himself, of stating his own case, and, in so doing, by reaching the heart of the public, bring, if possible, a blush to the cheeks of those who, with rare exceptions, have for so long a period been banded with the landowner against him. It would have availed but little to have tamely followed in the steps of a Crabbe, "revelling," as a critic has said of him, "as in a luxury, in descriptions of vice and woe, and never caring to teach how the poor, of whom he is emphatically called the poet, may be made wiser, andbetter, and happier." Crabbe, in becoming a Churchman, and a pluralist, tied up his hands. To have spoken the *whole* truth might have robbed him of his bread Taking a less timid, and more extended range, I have made it my endeavour to show, not only what is precisely the position of the English countryman, but, at the same time, to demonstrate that there is ample opportunity of improving it, and further, that in evey way it is immensely England's interest to do so. It can never, surely, be to her advantage to populate colonies with no kindly looking back to her in the majority of their peoples. Let her take her countryman more humanely by the hand, put him in a better position to do justice to himself and those dependent on him, and, a thousand-fold, let her rely on it, would she find

herself repaid in his increased loyalty both at home and abroad. "Never vote, sir," said an old countryman to me, at a recent election in Quebec, "never vote for *he*, sir;—he be one o' thaay 'risturcrats, I knaws 'em well, sir—thaay be aal alike, thaay 'risturcrats." Bitterly was this uttered, yet was this man, with all his bitterness, but a sample of his class. How easily, one would think, might England, with her hazeled lanes and her hawthorned fields to aid her, have retained his affection and respect. Still ringing in my ears are the groans and hisses of a batch of emigrants, when, in public meeting, on the day of their departure, the merest allusion was made to their treatment by the farmers and squirearchy; and, if a home journal now by my side may be trusted, but the other day might the same hootings and hisses have been heard, on the leaving of another shipload for the same continent. To what, let me ask, must this lead,—what will be its fruits! Let not England deceive herself. At the fountain head of that stream which, gathering as it flows, is still spreading itself over the most distant lands, must she purify and make wholesome its waters, or disease will alone spring from them wherever they shall spread, not a people virtuous and enlightened, loving and honouring her, loyal and true to her, but one, in every way, antagonistic to her, and corrupt and disloyal at heart. Hourly are her best wishers *here* made to feel, and in all its bitterest, the truthfulness of this. Nay, impossible is it, I repeat, for the least attentive observer of what is passing, either in the United States, or in Britain's colonies, not to be struck by the fact, that not only is their intelligence and moral standing invariably proportionate to the intellectual and moral calibre of those by whom they were first settled, but that in proportion as they have since been exposed to the damaging influences of a deteriorated population from Europe have they in their peoples more or less retrograded. Even in the old Puritan States, by all who have a past to draw upon, this is unhesitatingly allowed. Railroads, steamships, and electric cables, said the late Canon Kingsley, are not civilization; that is a thing from within. It is so. Jefferson, on becoming President, proposed to himself to show "how the ship would sail when laid upon the democratic tack."—He had less considered than, perhaps, had Washington, that his pet ship would have eventually to be put upon her trial, not by the honest tars of her own training, the democrats of his own soil, but by millions, it may be truly said, of the very dregs of society shoveled out, as so much filth, upon her shores.

It is England's pride that her people and her language are spreading themselves over the earth. It is so, and if what I have just said be equally so, how great is her responsibility therein. Let her look to it. What a destiny might then be hers!

To be sure, we are promised, in an extended education of her people, a less benighted immigrant, but shall we find in him a soberer and more honest one, if still reared upon wages which to us of the West appear simply disgraceful? Will it advantage either him or us that he shall have been taught how to syllable honesty, if hunger and misery are still to forbid him its practice? I have too little faith in some things to believe so. "I, you must know, sir," once said to me a Dorset woman, "have brought up a family upon eight shillings a week." Yes, she had brought them up, but not to be honest;—two of them I know to be robbers.

It is time that both the Dominion and the States protest against this wholesale exportation of what Mr. Burton has not inaptly called the coarsest clay of human life,—that Britain be told, and in a tone to be heard, that she has no right to stand in the way of civilization by reducing her labourers to the level of brutes. In vain will America look for honest citizens, for upright legislators, for orderliness and decency in men, sprung, to so great an extent, from a class whose progenitors, for generations past, have been educated, or rather driven by want and misery to dishonesty and untruthfulness.

To awaken, I repeat, in England, a sympathy for this unfortunate class of men, as a means of assisting them to a higher and happier position, and thereby to originate a higher standard of refinement and morality *here*, has been my object in writing "The Village of Merrow;" and if, for very many years, both in the old country and in her colonies, to have rubbed shoulders with the English countryman, and to have tasted, and in no small degree, of the bitterness and misery I have written of, whilst, with a young family and broken health, battling with the wilderness of Lower Canada, can be regarded as qualifying me for the task, may I not venture to hope that my endeavours will be found to have not been entirely in vain.

It may be thought by some that I have drawn upon my imagination a little too severely in my delineation of the Rev. Horatius Slack. In reply I would say, that in the columns of one of the highest and discreetest journals of the day is still to be seen how much more indulgent I have been to him who sat to me for the

picture than was he to any one so unfortunate as to stand within his reach. Having, long since, passed to his account, I might in charity, it would seem, have left him to his deserts. And so had it been, had I, on my way, since, met with fewer treading in the same path, mantled in all the unholiness that was his. By no pardonable misconduct, rely on it, nor by any mere skin-deep conviction of the necessity for so doing, could an assembly, no other than our own Imperial parliament, have, on more than one occasion of late, been provoked to an enquiry into the tyranny and injustice of such as was he. By too many of his class "THE VILLAGE OF MERROW" will, I know, be little welcomed, and in its dappled pages venomously assailed. It is pleasant to know that their arrows will fall harmless upon the ocean between us. In return, I will make bold to say, if only as a warning to them, that I am far from being the only one, with at least the Atlantic for a lens, to whose vision the little cloud pointed to in my tale is daily becoming bigger and bigger; and let them beware, lest, on its breaking, upon their heads descend its retributive bolt.

FRANK JOHNSON.

THE VILLAGE OF MERROW;

ITS PAST AND PRESENT.

Scene, England,—a county bordering on the mouth of the River Thames. Time,—towards the end of the first half of the present century.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

Merrow Churchyard by moonlight.

Now Dian's orb was hung on high,
And all so sunk in rest,
A stranger to the world had deemed
Its habitants were blest.

Who, with the sorcery around
Of a night so calm, so clear,
Could have borne to think that its least content
Could have ever known a tear ?

A night indeed !—so hushed, serene,
Scarce a dead leaflet stirr'd;
If, in the far, a cry, a chime,
Who would not such have heard.

The snowy moon that lives aloft
Seemed all alone to bide,
As if the only thing awake,
And watching all beside.

I could but think, if day's bright orb
Were made alone for light,
Man might have done without the sun,
For the sake of such a night.

Thus bewitched,—leaning against an old tomb, whose shade, in part, concealed me, my attention was suddenly aroused by the tread of some one approaching. By the western gate, to the left of me, a countryman was entering the yard. On his right arm was a scythe. Breaking, after a few steps, from the beaten track, I could see him, by the brightness everywhere, zigzagging amidst the tombs, till he had reached one in the part (at the back of the

church) devoted to the poor. By this, after a while, I observed him to kneel;—then, abruptly rising,—the sleeve of his smock, for a moment, to his eyes, and his scythe again on his arm, he, as in haste, made for the road. I could guess who it was:—It was John Hawthorne, a labourer of Merrow, a man of great strength of character, and of equal kindliness and honesty, one of those who occasionally make their appearance upon the troubled waters of life, as if for no other end than to help to make them the smoother. For some years a widower, and with two children, his way had, for awhile, been anything but an easy one. The early handiness, however, of the elder, a girl, had, of late, bettered things a bit. Moreover, being of sound health, and of good prowess, his established name enabled him, at times, to somewhat enlarge the miserable pittance which is still for men of his class called wages, and, to his honor be it said, this was never, in the hour of their need, withheld from his mates. By many a half-starved comrade, to the present day, might a bright tale be told of him. By one alone was he regarded with a less friendly feeling. It was whispered that, in one direction, no little jealousy existed in respect of the numbers that increasingly mustered at what Hawthorne was in the habit of calling "his little meetings like." These were held weekly at his cottage, on the Sunday:—but of this hereafter.

And now for a little retrospection.—I was still but a young man when I first passed through the village of Merrow.—I am speaking, mind, of realities,—I was out botanizing. This was some years prior to when old remembrances induced me, as spoken of above, to loiter, on my way homeward, in its burial ground. I was bound, at the time for Shropton, a borough town, between which and Lavent, where I had taken up my abode, and equally distant by a mile or two from either, lay the village of Merrow. I recall, and if any thing is ever engraven on the heart, this, I should say, from its present vividness, must have been upon mine, I recall that, on reaching about the half-way house of the few straggling cottages which was all that existed of Merrow as a village, I was suddenly brought to a standstill by the almost rabid indignation of a countryman named Harry Hobbs, at the seizure, (it had just taken place) by the Vicar's employee, of a *spade* from the little garden patch in front of his cottage. All that I could get from him at first, in the shape of explanation, was, "There he go-e-s, sir!"—pointing to a man at a distance in

the middle of the road, with something on his shoulder, "There he go-e-s, sir!"

"What about him?" I said.

"Why, sir, there he go-e-s!"

"Well, but, my good man—"

"You be, sir, the young gentleman, bean't you, as is a stoppin' at Lavent" (a village a mile or two to the west of Merrow) "for' his health?"

"Well?"

"'Xcuse I, sir, but if you'll be good enough to jist step into my garden, I should like you, sir, to hear the rights on't.—You see, sir, (pointing to a yard or two of newly dug ground,) you see, sir, wheer I wer a diggin' for innuns," (onions).

"Certainly."—

"Well, sir, as I says, I wer a diggin' for innuns; when, lookin' out, I sees a chap as wer a comin' up the road.—"Sal," says I, to my Missus, "Who be that, yunder?" "Yunder?" says she—"the passon's man." "Then," says I,—"bad luck to'n!" Well, sir, on he come, and jist, as you, sir, the like o' now, he steps into my patch, and meaking right up to wheer I wer a standin', he taakes out, sir, from his pocket a lot o' bits o' peaper, and handin' one to I, "That's yourn," says he; "And what about it?" says I,—"Two and nine for the passon's tithe."—"Then," says I, "I'm dang'd if I pays it,"—when up he struts to wheer, as you see, sir, I wer a diggin' for innuns, and clutching hold o' my speade he claps it on to his shoulder, and walks clean aff with it; and there he go-e-s, sir, yunder!—A mussy as I kep my hands aff'n!"

Poor fellow! I forget whether my own found its way into my pocket;—one will hope that it did. But I recall, that, as I sauntered on in the direction of Shropton, the "'sizes town," simpling as I went, my portfolio was encumbered with fewer specimens than usual, and that, before I had reached Shropton, I was fain to set at defiance the dusty nettles which by the road side, in the rankness of their growth, quite threateningly stood betwixt me and a snug hedge bank that I had singled out for a resting spot, —with the luxury of a hawthorn tangled with Bryony for a shade, and with the still lingering Lychnis and pretty Herb Robert both within reach. Here, youthful, comparatively, as I was, I found it impossible to abstain from a little retrospection, and, as you will, probably, have already supposed, I was not long in coming to a conclusion that in what I had just heard and seen

there was something that was radically wrong,—something that had no need to be;—and I have ever since regarded it as among the experiences which it would hardly be less than a crime, for some of us at least, to have known, and never to have spoken of.

The interest which this had excited in me as to the doings in Merrow had certainly not blunted my attention on my return march from Shropton, which, as the borough was new to me, was not till late in the evening. To the left, looking westward, about midway between it and Merrow, I observed a branch road which, by a circuitous sweep, bounding on the north a tempting preserve, the property of Squire Squander, re-entered the main road a little in advance of the first cottage (John Hawthorne's) of what was then the village of Merrow. The first, say quarter of a mile, of this bye-road, at the Merrow end of it, went by the name of "the Moor lane," and at the bottom of it, or, strictly speaking, a little beyond it, lay the freehold hut, for it was scarcely better, of Giles Hawthorne, the brother of John Hawthorne. Returning to the main road,—to the right, further on, and lying back a bit, was the homestead of farmer Manly, and facing this, straggling for fully a quarter of a mile, were a number of cottages, which, whenever the neatly kept little plots of ground in front of them were able to wean one from reflection, had still, perhaps, a charm. Beyond these, to the right, lay the noble mansion of Charles Squander, Esq., and further on, but on the opposite side of the road, was the church, and its cemetery, beyond which, on the same side of the way, was the residence of the Rev. Horatius Slack.

Late when I left Shropton, the lights were all out as I passed through Merrow, and nothing broke upon the simple solemnity of the scene, with the exception of a rampant and, seemingly, ferocious mastiff, which, as I passed the Vicar's, with his deep-mouthed sullenness made me for a moment pause, and consider—but a truce, just now, with considering:—

Quickening my pace, I was soon where by one less at war, at least with myself, I was welcomed, as who would not be, to what was to me, for years afterwards, the happiest of homes.

CHAPTER II.

On retiring for the night, I was less early asleep than my day's tramp would have warranted. Independently of the exceptional circumstance under which I first observed him, Harry Hobbs was about the last man to be seen, and readily forgotten. If ever in a Briton's face was the bull-dog, it was in his. This, in the days when the heroes of Moseley Hurst were still remembered, commanded for him a certain consideration. At the time I am writing of, he was in his twenty-sixth year, and, although in stature somewhat wanting, he was a man of remarkable prowess, and, as his looks showed, fearless, to a fault. His course had, it seems, so far, been an uphill one:

His father was a Devon man,
An ostler at an inn,
With less in this life's lottery,
Far less, to lose than win.

And dying young, while Hobbs was yet
A parent's petted joy,
Hobbs early had to front the world,
A rude unlettered boy.

How grand it is that parent's love,
That mother's guardian care,
Have more than half supplied the place
Of school, when schools were rare.

But for this boon, with Hobb's fierce hate,
Keen sense of wrong, and pride,
His failings, sure, had rather leaned
To vice than virtue's side.

But, as it proved, in roughest hour,
Ev'n hunger's rudest shock,
A mother's angel voice would start
Beneath the country smock.

This kept him straight in virtue's way;
Her champion all along,
Many a round fought Hobbs for right,
And rarely one for wrong.

The companionship of the Hawthornes, and of one Isaac Styles, an aged hedger, had helped to mould him, particularly of the latter, than whom no one, be it observed, in his sterling integrity, and unpretending piety, to say nothing of his repute in law matters, stood higher in the parish.

CHAPTER III.

The little incident, on my way through the village, having excited my curiosity, it occurred to me that this might be agreeably gratified by availing myself of an invitation with which, and not for the first time, I had been favoured by one farmer Manly. Accordingly, but twice had the old village clock of Merrow calendered another day when I found myself, on a bright June morning, comfortably seated in his front parlour, and with something on the table between us which I was assured by Mr. Manly, would *harm no one*, discussing the politics and particulars of the place.

"Well," said he, "this titheing us, as times stand, has done no good. You see, sir, among the labourers there's a deal of discontent just now, and (possibly some of the squires would not like to hear me say it) with good reason. When I was a youngster, sir, and for some years, indeed, afterwards, things were altogether different. I can mind me of the day, when a man would off with his smock, and up with his sleeves at half of a word against his master. It's not so now, sir. We don't pull together at all. What with commons enclosure bills, and taking away the bits of ground that were let with the cottages, the independent feeling of the men has been quite broken down. They look to the parish, in the winter, as a matter of course. You see (help yourself, sir, that'll not hurt you) you see, sir, when a man has something to fall back upon, if only an acre or so, he feels that he is not, altogether, a mere cipher;—he has, and he knows it, a stake in the place,—it makes him law-abiding. I am sorry to say it, but even here, where the men are better behaved than in some parts, many a one is out in the fields, at night, for what don't belong to him. A neighbour and I, the other evening, counted up as many as ninety little holdings that at one time were within the circuit of a mile or so. Not one of them, sir, is left. Many of the proprietors have even pulled down their cottages, thinking, by driving the poor fellows elsewhere, to lessen the rates. Now, I say, sir, this is not right,—not the way to make a country either happy, or lastingly great. I have always thought, sir, (a noble father taught me to think so), that nothing in a nation that is unchristian goes unpunished more than in an individual. It is the duty, (don't spare it, sir, that'll not hurt you), it is the duty, I say, of a govern-

ment to make it more the interest of a man to keep the law than to break it. Picture, sir, no bread in the house, for days, and a field of potatoes handy! I may seem to be talking boldly."

"Not at all so," I said.

"Rely on it, sir, that the day will be, when all this will right itself."

"I thought, Mr. Manly," I ventured "that on such points farmers were barely permitted the privilege of thinking, still less of speaking."

"Ah, there's the misfortune, sir. The yearly tenancy system is little better than serfdom. Fortunately for me, though my farm is but a small one, the lease I hold of it is for three lives, my own for one;—but for that, sir, I should soon feel the bit in my mouth. You were speaking of the new tithe claim. Well, you see, sir, it had lapsed, as they say, for so long, that it was not till after three years of lawing and fussing about it that the Vicar's claim was allowed. Of course, as a Vicar's it was a small tithe."

"I understand you."

"It has done him, sir, a deal of harm, as, being a wealthy man, quite independent of his living, it is thought that he, at least, might have left things as they were. Such men as Giles Hawthorne and Harry Hobbs kick at it fiercely, which I am sorry for, as Giles, for one, has a deal to contend with otherwise. You see, sir, his bit of a freehold giving him a county vote, at the last contest, which was a close one, he voted for the liberal man. Many of us did so. He was offered almost anything for his vote by the other side."

"And he refused it?"

"Yes, sir, for he's a thorough man, every inch of him; but it has sadly crossed him in obtaining employment, even, which may seem strange, with the mere farmers;—the fact is, more than half of these are at the bidding of the landlords. The Squire's gamekeeper, too, I am afraid, has anything but forgotten how a little blue-eyed damsel, not an age since, snubbed him at the Squire's. His brother John still, at times, works for me. He did, a deal so, till my own lads got to be big enough to help me."

I was, indeed, sorry that an engagement at Shropton compelled me to somewhat abruptly conclude my interview with Mr. Manly. I had much, I was aware, yet to learn from him."

"This will not" said he, as I rose to leave, "be, I trust, sir, the last that we shall see of you?"

I bowed.

"If you're fond of flowers, sir, there's my wife fairly flower mad."

"A fine old fellow!" I said, on regaining the road, "a fine old fellow!"

CHAPTER IV.

The Rev. Horatius Slack.

Of temper mild, in bearing meek,
His tears the weaker part,
His piety, ah, who could doubt,
He knew *the book* by heart.

Ah gentleness,—whose lips as thine
Can reach all hearts within;
The proud his meek reproof confessed
Would more than flattery win.

Who, with an ear the least attuned,
Could hearken to the tone
Of that wierd voice, so suasive, soft,
And not its witchery own.

As who, with soul, with sense t' observe
How thoughts, the least expressed,
Can some eyes reach, had not in his
The same wierd power confessed.

But what in him still more prevailed
Was his propriety
Of manner with all grades, surpassing
Even his piety.

The rich,—riches will have their cares,
In every consolation
Found, in the Vicar's courteous way,
Their due appreciation:

Whilst never, on the lowliest one,
Was known to turn his back,
If generous counsel aid could give,
This courteous Mr. Slack.

How, on a Sabbath, hieing home
From little pastoral meetings,
'T would more than win, quite touch the heart,
T' observe his gracious greetings.

A nod to him,—a smile to her,—
A soft word to another;—
One would have thought that each had been
A sister or a brother.

It costs us nothing,—next to it,
Such condescension,—true;
But, ah, how few appreciate this,
As Parson Slack,—how few!

Strange, was it not, that one so free
From vulgar faults should, still,
Raise enemies,—yet so it runs
With some, do what they will.

'T was said, he little learning had,
By learning *lettres* meant;
Some minds but superficial things,
Mere surface show content.

Too trained was he to task the brain
With trite collegiate lore;
Enough for him were wisdom's ways,
Even Heaven exacts no more.

Again—"he science set aside,"
As leading mind astray;
But facts are awkward things to face,
Assert what malice may.

What eye, as his, with faultless care
Would note the varying hours,
Track in the sky,—the gathering cloud,
The coming squalls and showers!

Who, so as he, could time the tides,—
The changes of the moon;
Without an altitude could hit
The exactest nick of noon!

What pen, as his, could set at nought
The frivolous cavilling theories,
How older earth than scripture shows,
By twenty thousand years, is!

Nor science less his aid, no doubt,
In his supreme regard
For what, in every clime alike,
Claims health for its reward.

Scanning his home, within, what eye
Could miss "the mathematics;"
Such order, regularity!
From the parlor to the attics.

"A whole is *better* than its part,"
Seemed ciphered everywhere;
Such a completeness! not a thing,
Needed, was wanting there.

Not that ambition, pride, or greed
Had ought to do in this,
The worthlessness of this world's wealth
A favourite theme of his.

"Not for poor self,—simply for friends,—
And for *thee*, Arabella,"*
Often he'd say "was this or that,
Like *many* a foolish fellow."

Indeed, so little value set he
Even on *recherché* things,
As seldom to concede a price
That art, with excellence, brings.

This willingness to sacrifice
Self for another would,
As in his pressure for small tithe,
Sometimes belie his good.

Few but regarded it unwise
To rake up obsolete,
Long lapsed assessments which the poor
Are hardly prone to meet.

Some would go further, even to say,
Nay, press the point as sure,
That often a loaf, a single loaf,
Is *something* with the poor.

Not all, it seems, are competent
'T appreciate the deep,
The delicate sentiment that puts,
With some, all else asleep.

* The Vicar's sister, resident at the vicarage.

Tithes were with him as duties, things
Held sacredly in trust;
T' endanger them, in *any* way,
More than he dare do,—just,

" But once " he'd say " but once permit
The idea t' obtain, abroad,
That tithes are other than Heaven's dues,
Away, in fact—the Lord!"

He'd done, thank heaven, *his* duty,
He, who followed him would find
How tenderly he'd ever borne
His interest in mind.

This delicate discernment may,
Who knows, have had its weight
In his acceptance of the cares,
When pressed, as magistrate.

Even here, it seems malignity
Could not withhold its fling;
How different a song, mayhap,
Had charity to sing.

How may a word, a well-placed word,
A mere expense of breath,
Make even, at times, the difference
'Twixt liberty and death!

How has the Bench's gracious smile,
The magistratic shake,
Served as a bribe, ere now, with power,
For trembling frailty's sake!

Yet so it runs,—however high
Men's motives, *some* will see
In such the mere appetence
For power, place, or fee.

CHAPTER V.

A word or two now upon one who is doomed to play no second part in the present drama. It has already been noted that at some little distance from the south end of what is still called the Moor lane, a lane leading from the main road to Merrow moor, lay the freehold cottage of Giles Hawthorne. Giles had inherited it from his father, he, the latter, having obtained a grant of the land upon which it stood, in return for some especial service, from the father of the present Squire Squander, the same of whom mention has already been made. Though but a rude hovel, with scant accommodation, it entitled him to a county vote, a dangerous privilege for one of Giles' temperament, in so dependent a position. At the time I am writing of, Giles was in his twenty-ninth year, and had been married, some half dozen years, to one Jenny Briarston, an orphan. Three children, the eldest a girl, were already theirs:

Giles was a man a queen had loved,
A queen is still a woman;
Her Majesty herself hath shown
How queens can love a true one.

The heart it is, that above all else,
A right true woman scans,
Though fashion's ways, and fortunes change
Will mar the bosom's plans.

So, at least, must it have been with Jenny Briarston, when she took to her bosom an all but penniless man, a mere agricultural labourer, in preference to the comparatively accomplished and well-to-do gamekeeper of the proudest squire in the district. Giles may have had, as others have, his faults, but these were more than forgotten, at least by Jenny, in a strength of character which for her was a necessity, to say nothing of an uprightness and sincerity which, she well knew, would in vain be sought for in such as was Snipe.

With strangers, after what years of struggling for sheer existence had done to him, Giles' expression and bearing somewhat belied the high character which he still bore, notwithstanding the calumnies ceaselessly circulated respecting him both by political prejudice, (of the which anon) and the unremitting jealousy of

Snipe. There was a sullenness of discontent in his look,—a knit on his brow;—but I was satisfied, for it fell to me to know him well, that these were marks that were by no means borne out in the man. His kindliness to everything in his charge was allowed. "Unbeknown" to him, as *he* would have said, I had often, watching him through a hedge, been an observer of this. Nor the less, as admitted by them all, was his kindliness and generosity to his mates.

Not one amongst his comrades round
But felt a touch of pride
When Giles put out a friendly hand,
Or sauntered by his side.

Wealth and power may, at times, have missed, in him, the submissive respect they are accustomed to; but was this, in Giles, *always* a fault? Are there not always some who find it more difficult than others to forget what, at the same time, is due to themselves. It may have been so with him;—and hence his enemies.

The proud man could not look him down,
As pride will look the weak;
Many a proud one met his match
When Giles essayed to speak.

He spoke but as a country man,
All rude and rough it ran,
Yet wanting never to his words
The muscle of a *man*.

Such was Giles Hawthorne,—tall and well-built, into the bargain. Many a recruiting officer, at Shropton fair, had had his eye on him; he would have made as fine a life-guardsman as ever crimsoned the cheek of a village belle.

Jenny Briarston was in her eighteenth year, having been in service at the Squire's for some time, when Giles first came to the conclusion that *that was the girl for his money*, and bitter was the disappointment of the Squire's game-keeper, Snipe, when Jenny, vanquished by the earnest sincerity of Giles, screwed up her courage for the required *warning*. Flung upon the parish by the loss of both parents in her childhood, she was fortunate in having, from the first, elicited the good opinion of the matron of the workhouse. This was a shield to her from much that, in those days, in workhouses, was in every sense

objectionable. The pretty little wild flower that the good woman had taken to her bosom bloomed on without a blight, and it was not till after a deal of persuasion by Squire Squander, and the repeated assurance of his lady that they were *so* in want of a *decent* and *thoroughly honest* girl, that Mrs. Parish consented to part with her.

Sweet Jenny, never woodland flower
More beautifully bloomed,
In its close haunts, than thou, to shades
Still deeper, closer, doomed.

* * * * *

Like some wild fruits that sweeter are,
The less sunward displayed,
So Jenny, as she ripened, grew
Still sweeter for the shade.

* * * * *

It was a misfortune for Giles that, in his marriage with Jenny, he had exposed himself, not only to the malignity of Snipe, but to a hatred and vindictiveness, even still more dangerous, on the part of Mrs. Sophia Squander. The vanity of this lady, it seems, had been severely tried by what the villagers were at no pains to conceal, their preference of the charms of Jenny Briarston above those of her ladyship. "Athout her *finery*," according to Hobbs, "she waun't nothing to her, no how,"—"on'y spruce Jenny out in *hern!*" This, of course, it was impossible to forgive. Jenny might have insulted her, robbed her, struck her, calumniated her,— done anything to her, and all, perhaps, have been more or less condoned,—but that—*that*—never!

CHAPTER VI.

The dangerous custom with many farmers of discharging all but positively indispensable hands, on the commencement of winter, to the injury not only of themselves, but of the country generally, was in full force in the neighborhood of Merrow at the time I am writing of. Consequently, from the fall till the return of work with the spring there was always a deal of suffering and privation amongst its labourers, more especially with such as regarded an application to the parish, and, still more, a

domicilement in its workhouse, with abhorrence. Giles, in addition, being of those who, for reasons already stated, were regarded with suspicion, was particularly exposed. He had frequently been driven for assistance to his brother, and during the entire of my first winter in Lavent it would be difficult to imagine greater distress than was to be witnessed, not only in *his* cottage, but I am sorry, and as an Englishman, ashamed to say it, in that of too many others. Needed this to have been? In the richest country in the world the producers, to so great an extent, of its food without a sufficiency for themselves! Well, as an Englishman, may I hesitate as I write it. Where, let me ask, were they who should have been to them, more than in the name merely, pastors and protectors! Whence an indifference so cruel, so unworthy of them. To the point, and dearly paid for, we may be sure, was the response of the elder Hawthorne on an occasion to his friend, the old hedger of Merrow.

They've never, Styles, been tempted so,
They don't know what it is,
Never to look upon a joy,
Never to hope of bliss.

Hunger has never gnawed their hearts;
I say their hearts, for ne'er
Has want trod closely upon *me*, Styles,
But I have felt it *there*.

"It waun't no easy matter," according to Styles, "to forgit the way as this wer said. He did'nt mind as he'd ever a knowed un to let it out so afore." This might well be, as Hawthorne, from an instinctive prudence, was not in the habit, with every one, of so delivering himself, still less so when with Harry Hobbs, in whose cottage, with Pilch, Slop, and others of his mates, we are now to suppose ourselves. He would fain have retreated. Harry was already up, "If he'd o'ny *his* mind, he'd—he'd!"—nothing betwixt heaven and earth but "he'd do!" "To be sarved wus than slaves!" "Thaay taalks o' Bot'ny Bay, why doan't thaay ship us aal yunder, as thaay done, a time back, with poor Diggs, for shootin' a wretched hare!—better zo 'an starvin'."

At the sound of "Bot'ny Bay," Pilch and Styles, two of Merrow's labourers, having their eyes upon Hawthorne, observed that he was any thing but at his ease. His countenance flushed, his eye at the same time singling out that of his brother, who, thought

ful and hungry, was leaning against the wall facing him. Styles well understood what was passing in his friend, and did his best, by his looks at least, to put a check upon Hobbs; but nothing could restrain the redoubtable Harry.

"Well, I *do* say, Styles, it be enough to bring down the light-'nin' o' God on 'em." "Come, come, Harry," said John, "less warmly, lad. A long lane, as your old mother used to say, that has no turning. A day, perhaps, when some folks will be less particular about rubbing shoulders with us."

This said, beckoning his brother, John, with a "Good night, lads," started for his home.

"Did'st mark, Styles," said Slop, "how John *looked* when Harry wer a taalkin' o' Bot'ny Bay?"

"I did," said Styles, (and with more than his usual gravity), "I did, lad. John be aal'ays afeard, Slop, af his brother a gittin' into trouble. (Pilch reddened.) Giles be a braave fellow, and he sees as how Snipe hev never his eye aff un, but the Loard on'y knows to what, 'fore winter done, starvation may a drive un to;—thaay be aal agin un, Slop, passon too. You see, Slop, the Vicar doan't a like as us should be aal'ays, on a Sundays, at John's."

"Then why," burst out Hobbs, "doan't he shaw hisself to be muore ov a christian,—why doan't he practice as he preaches,—why doan't he give me back my speade!"

"I hates yer moleskinn'd hypercrites
What kneels aal hours and prays,
And then does jist the uppersite
To every thing thaay says.

The Loard keep I from sich like folks,
Bean't nothing 'bout 'em true,
Can put on this, and put aff that,
Jist as play actors do.

The man for I who when, in preayer,
He glories God in heaven,
Feels, if he bean't sincere in heart,
Wooll never be forgiven.

'Be zummat now when Hawthorne prays,
I scarce knaws what it be,
So upperhands I, in a trice,
Heart, soul, and aal agree.

'T bean't in his words,—he've sich a look
O' goodliness and grace;
Aften I wishes measter Slack
Wer like'n in his feace.

Never crassed I a man, in preayer,
So arnest in his eyes;
Many's a time I've thaught'n see'd
A zummat in the skies."

"There, now, thee've said it Hobbs!"—"Well, Pilch,
And what muore like to be,
Than God, at times, should shaw hisself
To sich a one as he."

"Aal granted, Hobb's,—bean't no one knows
John Hawthorne's noble heart
Better'n Pilch, or trust, woold turn
Sooner to taake his part."

"I woo'den count'n, Pilch, a friend,
Could bring his tongue to say
A thing unkindly of a man
So Christ-like, in his way.

CHAPTER VII.

I am somewhat, I see, in advance,—I shall have to return. Simpling in the lanes and fields between Lavent and Merrow, pleasantly enough with me passed my first summer at the former. The neighbourhood was rich in the richest of England's, while an improving acquaintance with my friend Manly gave an increased zest to many a ramble. But, as autumn gained upon its ruder successor, features less agreeable blended themselves with the scene. Selfishness alone could have regarded with indifference the daily decreasing call for labour. Misery and want were abroad with their rags everywhere; and, now that the winter was fairly in, the condition of the labourers could hardly have been worse. The Hawthornes had never before been so put to it. Giles found it impossible to resist the repeated urging of his wife to, at once, lay before the Vicar his precise position. He was

persuaded into the hope that, by so doing, he might escape, what above all else he abhorred, an application to the parish. Something had to be done, and, as his wife had said, there could be no harm in trying.

Giles was at least fortunate in finding the Vicar alone, and his reception was not an uncourteous one, but in nothing practical did it result. The worthy gentleman in no way ignored the distresses of the day, but, as with too many of us, he contented himself with suggestions of patience and perseverance, including himself, seemingly, in the comforting consideration that in the hour of trouble from *none of us* was withheld such assistance as the law, in its wisdom, had provided:—But attend,—our hero has but just returned:—We will forgive in him a mimicry so suggestive of the speaker.

* * * * "besides, 't wool not
Be all'ays winter, mind:

"And when the bounteous spring returns,"—

"Now, it was not, Giles, *so* that he spoke, you know," interrupted his wife.

"Thee waun't there, Jane?"

"N-o-o;—Well?"

"And when the bounteous spring returns,
And busier times wi' land,
Things 'll, of course, look up a bit,
Labour be more to hand.

You'll hardly yield because jist now
Not quite p'rhaps clear the way,
To turn ye round t' obtain a meal
Sufficient for the day.

Meself, who knows, may find a job,
Ere many a week hev fled;
Not that I'd have thee lean on that,
But One can see ahead."

"Now, Giles!—"

"Nothing, believe, afflicts me more
Than to see in your position
So many, and athout the means
O' betterin' their condition.

Your safer course, no doubt, 'll be
To abide the coming spring;
Time, and a little patience, scarce
Can fail their fruits to bring.

"But now, with aal best wishes, friend,
The word must be—farewell;
Few as can caal an hour their own,"—
And then he—*rang the bell!*

"Less bitterly, my Giles," said Jane,
"'Tis not for *us* to know
How, p'rhaps, his *will*,—we can't, the *best*,
What we would *always* do.

"The calls, too, that he hourly has,
No doubt, upon his purse!—
Troubles like ours are sad enough,
Yet some may, Giles, be worse."

"I wunna judge,—thy words, my Jane,
May aal be very well;
But churchfolks should do summat muore,
Methinks, than—*ring the bell!*"

"For shame, my love,—the children near!"
Such men must, Giles, know best,"—
"Not aal'ays, Jane,—or heav'n, I say,
Defend one from the rest."

"Then think, Giles, of the good he does,
His marvellous Christian bounty;
What it must cost him, fancy, Giles,
In books for half the county!"

"Their worth, my wench, I know full well,
They've been o' good to many;
But as to cost'n' *him* a deal,
Not, my good girl, a penny.

He has a man, in Loonun town,
What gits them from another,
And he from a committee like,—
They go from one to t'other."

"But then, my dear, it lies with him
To leave them where he may;"
"Oh yes, good Jane, the gentleman
Is generous in *that* way."

Giles, it would seem, was any thing but in accord with his wife in her allowances for the Vicar. Jenny, however, was far from not sharing in her husband's disappointment. Few women will require to be told of the many and good reasons which, as a wife and parent, she could but have that her husband should not entirely estrange himself from one whom she had been taught to regard as, in every way, so essential to them. Giles took it all in good part, for he respected her as truly as he loved her. He might, occasionally, have been heard to speak of the Vicar as "my wife's parson," but that was his severest, and it was never said in his wife's hearing.

CHAPTER VIII.

Giles' failure at the manse, be sure, added nothing to the esteem in which his reverence was already held by the villagers of Merrow. How often, looking back upon this, has a something akin to astonishment possessed me at the disproportionate estimate by men in the position of Mr. Slack, of a popularity so, in every sense, to be desired, and so readily and honestly obtainable. How often has political aspiration been willing to renounce, for a far more questionable repute, connexions and considerations having in them every thing to flatter and persuade. Should not this, one would think, obtain equally elsewhere. Does it so ? Not at least from what was then to be seen in Merrow and its surroundings. Nor will my reader, I think, be inclined to dispute this, if but permitted by him to indulge in a little retrospection.

It was about the time of Giles' application to the Vicar that I found myself, on a fine autumnal afternoon, returning from an extended ramble in the neighbouring parish of Orton. I was still within its precints, and, as usual, was abroad, botanizing. In the shelter of the woods was still to be found, here and there, a lingering bloom. But it is not of these that I have now to speak.

Resting myself on a stile, (I had seven miles still to tramp), from the doorway of a cottage to the left of me suddenly emerged, and was as quickly withdrawn, the head and shoulders of a woman. She was curious, possibly, as to the intruder upon her

so retired locality. But for this the cottage might have escaped me, as it lay in a direction opposed to that of my return route, at least so I thought, and, to make sure, I availed myself of the opportunity for inquiry.

"Yes, sir" in reply, said a short, and not very healthy looking woman, dropping me the inevitable courtesy, "you can't better it, sir,—nigher by a mile."

Now was my chance, I saw, spying in the back ground four hungry looking urchins, with a fifth at the breast,—now was my chance. The woman was, evidently, gartulously inclined, and "maaster wer from home." Now was my chance for a peep, and more perhaps, at the doings of a district of which not a little, by no means complimentary to it, had already reached me at Lavent.

"All yours?" said I, pointing to the children.

"Sartain, sir,—and, as times be, 'nough on 'em too, sir."

"Your husband is not without work, I hope?"

"Not at present, sir," she replied, "but what's nine shillin a week, sir!—With rent, and coal, and ile, which, wi' three ounces o' soap, 'mounts to two an' a penny, it doan't a leave, sir, for wittles nothing whatsumdever scarce."

"Just a shilling per week for each of you," I said.

"A copper or so more, sir,—we caals us six,—we doan't a count, you see, sir, the beaby."

"But should you not," I said,—"ought you not to consider yourself a little more?"

"I'd a ought to, perhaps," she replied.

"But how, my good woman," I demanded, assisting myself to a stool, "how, in the name of goodness, with so small an incoming, do you ever contrive to make ends meet?"

"They never do meet, sir."

"And with every forbearance and conrrivance, no doubt, upon your part:—A mystery to me how you manage."

"Well, sir," said she, obliging me by seating herself, "the main thing as hev got to be considered wi' childern is as they requires a plenty,—it be the plenty, sir, as is the main thing as us hev a got to look to.''

"The plenty!" I said to myself,—"how, in the name of sense, is she going to bring that about!"

"Now, sir, there's taturs;—a bushel o' thaay come to jes two and four;—taturs bean't bread, and never can't be no how; but there be a summat in 'em, sir, to look at, and growin' uns aal'ays

ikes, sir, a full platter, and wi' a sprinkle o' salt, by way o' relish I never knowed one on 'em as a didn't a take to 'em kindly :—Yes, sir, taturs be a great thing wi' childern,—Then, a mornins, thaay gits a little meal, wi' jes, mebbe, a sup or so o' milk ; and, a bed time, over and above the meal, (oatmeal, sir,) thaay each on 'em hevs a smaall slice o' bread, (brown bread, sir.) O' thaay four six-pennies hev to carry we through."

"Groceries, and so forth, I suppose, out of the question ?"

"Well, sir,—o' the like o' thaay us hev, ov course, to be a summat spearing. Half ov an ounce o' tea wi' a half pound o' sweetning hev to stand we the week."

"A summat spearing, indeed !" thought I.

"Us tried, sir, a time back, to git along athout'n, but maaster said as I never could a do justice to the beaby :—It be a summat too, sir, for to look furrard to ov a evening—it do so cheer one !"

"But, my good woman," I said, "you don't mean to say that your husband has to do a hard day's work upon such an allowance ?"

"Oh no, sir,—there be a pound o' baacon o' purpose for he."

"For the whole week ?"

"Sartain—he couldn't a do, sir, athout'n no how. Baacon be a grand thing, sir, for work,—there be sich a stay in it.

"A stay in it !"

"Jes, for a change, as mebbe, sir, us tried, for a week or more, in the stead o' it, herrins, and, agin, what thaay caals, sir, Dutch cheese ; but maaster found as there waun't nothing like the stay in em ;—yes, sir, baacon be a grand thing for to work on."

Ye Exchequer chancellors, from a cottage such as was this what might ye not carry away, with advantage to yourselves and country !

"And is this," said I, "the sum, the full sum of your weekly fare ?"

"In or'nary times, sir, let alone on a busy day, mebbe, a sup o' cider or sich like. Cast'n aal up, sir, an' 'lowing thrippence for backer, you'll find, sir, as there bean't room for nothing more no how :—A couple o' coppers be aal as is left, which us do our best, sir, for to put by agin what us caals a *rainy* day ;—it doesn't a do, sir, not to hev nothing in a house.

"God of heaven !" I said, silently,—"But meet you with no assistance ?"

"Mr. Goodwill, sir, the curate, as I'd a ought to ha' mentioned afore, now and agin drops we a shillin' which, the Loard bless'n, sir, be as much, us knows, as he can afford. He dares'nt a do, sir, thaay says, aal as he'd a like to."

"Ah!—but how with the rector? He, I have heard, is wealthy. Moreover, if applied to, he would, of course, lay the position of such as yourself, at once, before both the farmers and landlords."

"Well,—Mr. Wrench, you see, sir, be afeard o' bein' thaaght to be a mischief meaker. He knows as the squires and farmers 'd be aal agin un, and he be a terreble man, sir, for the gentlefolks."

"Oh!"

"Us tried for a bit, sir, to do with less ile; but when the childern 'd be a ailin' a' nights, it wer so lonesome, sir, so dreadful to hear 'em a cryin' in the dark,—us couldn't a bear it, sir, no how."

"Have done, for God's sake," I said, rising spasmodically. Her last words had touched me to the core, so fully did they seem to realize the terrible position of her class.

"No offence, sir?"

"Not in the least, my good woman;"—then, thrusting into her hand the first that my fingers lighted on in my purse, I made for the door. And now, ye, who profess to be at home in the secrets of the heart or soul, tell me,—was it in the consciousness of what little service I had already done, in the mere earnest of the moment, or in the thousand and one resolutions and intentions which in a few seconds had crowded themselves on me, that, on looking upward, as I left this miserable cottage, it seemed that the sun looked brighter and grander, and the sky lovelier and nearer to me than before I had entered it.

It was dark when I reached Lavent. I don't remember to have ever so stumbled and missed my way as upon that afternoon and evening.

CHAPTER IX.

What Giles had long dreaded he was at last driven to,—to apply to the workhouse at Shropton for assistance,—with what success we shall hear presently. He had stood it out till the commencement of March, but not without frequent application to his brother. I recall him, distinctly, at the time I am writing of;—on my way to Shropton, it fell to me often to meet him,—a mere skeleton. It was impossible to pass him without *speaking to him.* One might have laid one's fingers in the wrinkles of his face. *Why have I, since, so often bethought me of this?*

On his way homeward Giles stopped at his brother's. There some of his mates, Pilch, Harry Hobbs, Styles, and others, had already mustered;—Hobbs' tongue was again at work,—had it ever ceased! At some new or old grievance was the bull dog still gnawing. He was far, however, from being always in the wrong, —so, let us give him his bone.

"One's aal'ays lookin' round and round
At what some richer holds,
Sickened to see his well fenced fields,
His cattle and his folds.

They caals us rebels, wonders why
Us kicks aginst the laaws;
Muore wonder, Pilch, as none does wus;
'T bean't, sure, from what o' cause.

Some as had hev us *list*,—"Better
A so'dger's life than yourn;"
Let them, says I, John, list as likes,—
A so'dger's trade arn't ourn.

Why, John, should *us*, let what wooll come,
Tarn out, half frocked, half fed,
Give up one's heart's least drop of blood
For what denies one bread.

How care can *us* for king or queen,
What pride in country taake,
What matters it to I who's up,
With not a groat at staake.

Toss one a little croft or two,—
Loard, Pilch! if ever blest
Wer I with sich, I'd fight enough,
For the like, for aal the rest.

Half as is spent in butcherin' folks,
Laid out in Christian ways,
Woold muore'n that, Pilch,—zummun's lips
Might then lack less of praise.

Never to hold, lad, half a rood.
Never, with hedge and dyke,
To circle in a little whome,
I feels—as soured like."

Hobbs' hammering coming to a stand, brought Pilch into the field, with "Well Giles, how at the wukkus?"—*unions* had not yet come into play. Very little, however, could be got from him,—Giles' pride was nettled,—"A letter from one to t'other"—"more'n he could bide"—"sooner starve"—and "that Snarl!"* was about the pith of what he *did* say. This, in turn, started Styles:

"It bean't, I says, like Christians, Hobbs,
"To let un starve and die,"—
"Little care thaay for that, friend Styles,
'T be jist as thaay sarved I.

"That Parish, bless ye, han't a soul
Bit bigger than a mouse;
It puzzles I he bean't ashamed
To sit in the Loard's house."

"Would that the fellow were," said John,
"His shame might teach him better
Than to suppose a hungry man
Could live upon a letter."

"Zactly as I tell'd Missus, John,
Come six months next July;
Jist see, says I, what hearty fare
Parish hev given I.

* * * * * * *

"Heerd o' my job, Pilch?"—"Manly's wuts?"
"No, lad,—the passon's wheat,"—
"Tight bargain waun't it?—none, I specks,
Grudges thee, Hobbs, the treat."

* Porter at the workhouse.

"Well, I wun't say,—I put'n low,—
'T wer my own affer like;
'T waun't no good tryin' to git muore,
Too well I knaws the pike.

"Enough to keep one jist alive,
Body and soul together,
The moast I ever counts on he,
The hardest o' the weather.

"Bean't nothing good in this world, Styles,
The good be aal in t'other;
Wonder as some folks shaws sich love
Toward a poorer brother.

"But, lads, good night"—"Hold on," quoth Styles,
"Wooll foot it, Hobbs, together;
Keep up your heart, Giles,—fouler skies
Than now hev braught fair weather."

Which saying, Styles, with Hobbs and Pilch,
Slop, and his neighbour Tom,
Made for the road;—a short half mile,
And each was at his home.

"A blunt bold fellow, John" said Giles,
"That Hobbs,—yet would that all
Could say they had a heart their own
As ready at a call."

"Would, brother, that they could, for, sure,
It makes one sick to see
So little in the world of soul
For the like of you and me."

"'T most makes one doubt of Providence,"
Said Giles, "to toil and strive
The long, long year, and never reach
The wherewithal to live."

"Don't say so, Giles,—there's more, believe,
Than we can comprehend;
Sorry should I be, lad, to doubt,
At least of one true friend.

"The proudest not the happiest, p'rhaps,
Trust me, there never can
Be anything about them, Giles,
To make a happy man.

"No, I've never y t mistrusted, lad,
For the troul ed and the tried,
I couldn't bear to think that God
Was *never* by their side."

"I dunna doubt it, John," said Giles,
" I know God means us good ;
Still, hard, at times, to check the tongue
That's crying out for food."

* * * * * *

Oh, poverty !—oh, poverty !—
How hard art thou to bear,
How little does the rich man know
The bitternesses there.

How little fit is *he* to frame
The laws that bind the poor ;
The crimes of poverty were few,
If rich men's laws were fewer.

Could but, for one short hour, with thee,
Gaunt *hunger*, power and pride
Acquaintance make, would penury's plea
Be then so oft denied.

How, to the daintiest, best of earth's
Though bred, reborn in *thee*,
Has many a one in these wild woods,
At thy bid, bent his knee.

Ev'n I, p'rhaps, owe thee every thing,
More than my pen can pay ;
But for the teaching of thy trials,
E'en to the passing day,*

I had never in the pitiless world,
The cold crowd streaming by,
For any suffering, save its own,
Without a thought, a sigh,

I had never, mingling with the *few*,
Shared in their sympathies,
Had never found, nor cared to find
Where pure pleasure lies.

I had never had affliction lay
A hand across mine own,
As now, with so a brother's warmth
For the merest kindness done.

Some taint of pride, some soil of self,
Unwittingly betrayed,
Had crushed the heart's responsive heave,
And starved the proffered aid.

* Written in 1859.

Still less had I, as o'er these lines
I glance with watery eye,
Caught, through the glistening tear, aloft,
A glimmering in the sky.

Pardon me, my readers, this digression.—It has forced itself upon me. I would have you to remember that much, very much of this my narrative, that by many of you will be read amongst the carpeted surroundings of matured civilization, has been written amidst the ruder appliances of a pioneer's home, and in moments snatched from a winter's night in the far away wildernesse of Canada. With pen in hand, so situated, it is impossible always to suppress. It is here that to some things time has a habit of putting more than an iron handle.

CHAPTER X.

It was about the time of Giles's application to Shropton workhouse that, on rambling round by the Moor road which skirted to the north, as already stated, a tempting preserve of the Squire's, I was startled by the report of a gun, and, on looking round, I saw two men emerging from a wood on my left. One was a tall man, with a thin pale face, and dark hair,—the other a shorter one, by some five inches, with forward features, and reddish hair; both were farm labourers. The first was Pilch,—I never heard of him by his christian name,—the second Turnpike Tom, as he was invariably called,—his father, when Tom was a boy, having kept a gate on the Shropton road. On seeing me, they paused,—then one of them, advancing a few steps, picked up a hare, whilst the other, whispering his mate, and crossing a strip of grass between the wood and a style against which I was leaning, came right up to me, and touched his hat.

"Dangerous work, my good sir, that—is it not so?" I said.

"Well, sir, *look at me;* am I to blame?"

I looked at him. What a wreck of bad usage, of bad laws, was standing before me! poor fellow—poor fellow. "What is it that you wish of me," I said.

"On'y, sir, as you'd be kind enough to keep this dark."

Could the man, it was Pilch, have fathomed but a tithe of the detestation with which the young man before him had been taught to regard the *then* revoltingly cruel and unjust game laws, he would assuredly have dispensed with his request; for it was not till about a twelvemonth after this that the somewhat more lenient laws were passed, which in their *lenity* restricted *transportation* to night poaching!

Tiring, on my return homeward by the same road, I dropped in, for a rest, at the cottage of Giles Hawthorne. He was out, but his wife and children were at home. The first thing that, on entering, caught my eye, was the identical gun which I had seen in Pilch's hands. I recognized it by the wire with which the lock was secured, for it was but a shaky affair. "Wi' a woman's wile" Jenny promptly disposed of a shawl on it, but it had not escaped me. By what trifles are our destinies shaped. Had it not been *my* fortune to have crossed Pilch, it had not been *his*, from distrust of me, to have left his gun with Giles,—nor for *Giles*, —but let me not anticipate. It was by no means with Jenny's approval that the gun had been left with them; but Giles was at home when Pilch called, and he could hardly have refused him. Jenny seemed intuitively conscious of some impending danger. It was always with her eyes shut, and at arms length, that she handled it. Nothing that went wrong during the next few days but in one way or another she could connect with *that* gun. "When will he take it away?" was her incessant song.

CHAPTER XI.

SQUIRE SQUANDER AND HIS WIFE.

There was a singularity
About this special pair,
Their close resemblance in some points,
Complexion, aspect, air.

A veritable living proof
Of certain laws of nature,
By which the disposition gives
The face, and not the feature.

Minds so alike, say moralists,
Were scarcely meant for marriage;
But rules, it seems, the best, at times,
Are fated to miscarriage.

Since, never more devotedly
Attached to one another
Were couple seen,—in love, as look,
Like pets of the same mother.

When *tête-à-tête*, who half so kind,
Affectionate and free;
If sterner he in some points, none
The less their harmony.

More prettily two turtle doves
Ne'er cooed in woodland shade,
My love, my dear,—my dear, my love,
Accompanied half they said.

Wherever Squander went *she* went,
Whatever did, *she'd* do;
One scarcely thought, breathed, wished, or prayed,
And not the other, too.

With greater complacency would this reciprocity of feeling have been regarded, had not their resemblance in one respect been equally marked,—had they, with those whom fortune had less befriended, been less disposed to severity on the least interference with their predominant passions. The Squire's God was his gun, —sport his necessity. Woe to any one who crossed him in his pursuit of it; whilst at the altar of her own charms, nor was she wanting therein, alone worshiped his lady. Woe equally to any one who disturbed her ladyship there. Though but a wild flower, the beauty of Jenny Hawthorne was a thorn in her pride, which roused in her, with no higher principle opposed to it, the bitterest vindictiveness. This was still further inflamed by the villagers, who, hating her heartily, never permitted an opportunity to escape them of flaunting in her face the superiority of their village belle, while Snipe, for his own ends, was equally alert in repeating the merest whisper calculated to annoy her. He knew, well, too, by what means his master's hatred of the Hawthornes could be best reached.

Thornley Hall, the property and residence of the Squire, was bosomed in an estate that a nobleman would not have slighted.

It was generally, however, understood to have descended to the present Squire heavily mortgaged, a state of things which the extravagance of his wife, it was thought, would tend but little to improve. Moreover, the Squire had contracted an acquaintance, which soon ripened into friendship, with one dangerous, in every respect, to know,—Baron Steinberg, of Orton. He was by birth an Austrian. Of showy exterior, he had captivated an English heiress at Vienna, married her, and, in a few years afterwards, at her decease, became the lord of a very handsome domain in the adjoining parish of Orton. Of this man it will be sufficient to say, that as a companion he was agreeable,—as a sportsman choicely so, but utterly without principle,—a roué,—a gambler. The Squire had once been of essential service to the Baron in a poaching affair, assisting him materially in getting *one Diggs* out of the country. This had helped not a little to draw them together. That his neighbours should see more than the Squire seemed willing to see, in this daily increasing intimacy, is nothing to be wondered at,—a tale that has been told again and again. At the Baron's was the best shooting in the country, and that was sufficient for the time. It was not, moreover, till some years in advance of this that there was anything in the Baron's attentions in *one quarter* that was particularly open to observation, not till it was well known that the Baron's purse had on an occasion been of essential service to the Squire. A shake of the head by Isaac Styles, the old hedger, might, at times, have been observed, when the Baron and Mrs. Squander would pass his cottage, but, what, at the moment, he, in addition, may have whispered to his wife, he was too guarded, at least upon that point, to let others hear.

CHAPTER XII.

ISAAC STYLES.

Than Isaac Styles there was no one, as I have already said, in all Merrow more thoroughly respected. His sterling integrity and unpretending piety were at the bottom of it. His was not an unthumbed Bible. He was, moreover, a man of no little research. Guthrie's Grammar and The Pilgrim's Progress might both have been found on a small shelf within reach from

his bed, the leaves of the latter worn to a ravel, while his cognomen of "Lawyer Styles" bespeaks at once the variety as well as depth of his studies; and, as his acquirements were always at the service of another for simply thanks, his liberality still further raised him in the good opinion of his fellow villagers. It would seem from what passed, about this time, between Hobbs and Slop, in the cottage of the latter, that, with his mates at least, this exceptional erudition was a matter of no little curiosity.

* * * * * *

"It puzzles I, Slop, aften, wheer
The old man got it;—true,
As Pilch says, half as *his* brain holds
Woold split some heads in two."

"He got it from his fearther, Hobbs,
The old man used to sheer
The laawyers, and the larned like,
When 'sizes time wer here.

Right wonderful how cute he wer,
And well he knowed it, too;
Styles wer a man, Hobbs, muore'n a match,
By tens, for me nor you.

Not one could touch'n, round about,
In ticklish p'ints o' laaw;
Aften the wigs 'oold nod to 'n,
Aye, sometimes, even muore.

Many's a time I've heerd it said
The judge hisself 'oold ask
Styles' concludin' on a case,
While busy at his task.

And muore'n once 't wer rumored round,
He'd tarned, and changed his mind,
'Cardin' to Styles, who aal'ays left
A deal o' laaw behind.

I've knowed ten troubles at a time,
It 'scapes I jist what for;
But well I minds not one had been
But for old Styles' laaw!"

"I zee, Slop, 'zactly, how it wer:
Styles larnt it 'fore his prime,
Braught up a lad 'mongst laawyers like,
He kind o' sarved his time."

"Sartaintly, Hobbs,—and muore'n that,
' Be difference twixt folk;
Styles be a sort o' genus like,
Got the real genus look."

"Well, well,—us bean't aal born alike,
For sartain, Slop, or, p'rhaps,
Thee'd been Loard Chancellor, and I
One o' the larned chaps.

"But, good night, Slop,—'t be gittin' late;"
"'Member I, Hobbs, to Missus,"
"I wooll, my boy;—sure, never, Slop,
See'd I a night like this is."

It was, indeed, a lovely night,
The moon's fair silvered face
Gleamed like an angel's, fit to light
Some happier, holier place.

Great mystery! that on a world
Of ever threatening woe
Should so look heaven's orbs, as if
They shared no griefs below.

Mark, on the hut where misery moans
How softly sheds its light
Yon mocking mistress of the scene,
Pale empress of night!

CHAPTER XIII.

* * * * * * *

Giles and his wife scanning the faces of their children by moonlight.

"He is n't dead, Giles!"—Jenny said,
Stooping her face, to list,
"No-o-o,—I can hear,—but, ah, how cold
The little lips I pressed!

"I'll wake him, Giles;—but, no, no, no,—
He'll cry to me for food!—
Sleep on, my pretty one,—these tears
Can do thee nothing good."

"Jenny,"—"What Giles?"—"Jenny,"—"Dear Giles,
What is it,—speak,—art ill?"
"Fetch me the gun, Jane,—heaven attest
'Tis done agin my will."

Jane answered not, but pressed her face
Close to her husband's breast,
And in the saddest sobs and tears
Her agony confessed.

"I'll not be long, Jane,—fast the door,—
See that the fire keeps low;"
Then, gently Giles unlaced the arms
All loath to let him go.

"The clouds are gathering!"—the wind
Had on a sudden veered;
Never, till then, had Giles or Jane
The light of heaven feared.

"Fast, Jane, the door," again said Giles,
"And mind, be wakeful till ——"
"Yes, yes,—oh yes,—but Giles, dear Giles,
The night is so *so* still!"

"Hush! Jenny, hush!"—"What Giles?"—"Hu-s-h!
Some one, methought, this way!"—
"You *shall* not go, Giles,—say you won't,—
Me—me the gun,—oh pray!"

Now did that secret monitor,
Kind counsellor of the heart,
Keep for awhile good Giles in check,
Still tempted to depart.

Hard hunger conquered,—oh, forgive,
Ye who have never neared
Temptation's rock,—"Stay!" Jenny cried—
But Giles had disappeared!

Motionless sits Jenny, *listening*—an hour passes and she is still listening;—when suddenly, ringing through the stillness,—a gun!—With a start, clapping her hand to her bosom, Jane rushes out,—regardless of the door!—

Fanned by the air, the smouldering fire
Blazed up anew, on high;
Jane marked it not,—ah, fatal flame,
It caught the *keeper's* eye!

Poor Jenny, the night was bitterly cold; when is a March night not so; yet there stood she, listening—listening!

Presently, as a ghost, looming through the mist, some one is approaching! It is Giles. Jane, as in fear of him, retreats to her cottage;—Giles shortly enters;

"No one been here?—"No one."—"The fire!
See see, girl!—to the door."
"You tremble, Giles!"—"The night fog, Jane,
Is thick upon the moor."

Giles is, in turn, the listener:—After a while, drawing from beneath his smock a pheasant, he, in silence, hands it to his wife, —for some moments neither speaks.

"Giles you look cold, dear!" Jenny said,
At length, the starting tear,
And trembling tone telling, too well,
Of something worse than fear.

"To the fire, Giles, the hearth is warm;"—
Jane fanned the flame anew,—
"Don't seem so wretched, dear,—oh speak,
Speak to me, Giles,—do,—do."

"Jane, I was only—thinking, Jane;"—
"Yes—but that thinking, dear!
We mustn't think,—let's try and talk;—
There's a good Giles, draw near."

Now, by the flickering faggot fire,
Jane scans the beauteous bird;
The crime, the danger disappear,
The penalty incurred.

Be not in haste, reader, to judge,
Less prone to censure, still;
Jane but obeyed that instinct, power,
That something,—what you will,

Empress o'er all in woman's breast,
Alike beyond control
In guilt or good, condoned, at least,
By Him who framed the whole.

For Thou, who hast made womankind
All beautiful and good,
To love the beautiful hast made
Part of her womanhood.

"Giles, you don't notice these bright spots,
This gold-tipp'd rainbowed ring;
I'll wake our pretty sleeping ones
To see the precious thing"!

"No,—wake them not,——they maunna see,
They maunna know it, Jane,
It never may be tauld to them,
Nor ever done again.

To see our little innocents,
First taught by me and you,
Betake to idle, evil ways,
Woold tear this heart in two.

Conceal it, Jane, as best ye may,
We'll look to it i' the morning;
The grief of heart I feel to-night,
To me at least, a warning!"

"Believe me, Giles, my own misgives,
It fails me what to do;"—
"Nay, Jenny,—I am lost to-night,
Maun leave it all to you."

So, Jenny took the *precious* bird
Into her special care,
"I'll put it, Giles, beneath the bed,
They'll never, Giles, look there."

"Keepers have ferret noses, Jane,—
But, still, we'll trust the grace
Of God will not be held, for once,
From a poor strayer's place.

Coom, Jane, to bed;—this aching heart
Needs aid from heavy eyes;
Good-night,—I caunna see ye, babes,
But I can hear—your sighs."

And now Giles is asleep,—not so, his wife. Giles' last look, as he rose from the fire, she had carried with her to her couch,—so haggard!—so worn! and why was he now so still, so cold!—Sliding her hand into his bosom, she is alarmed.

And, rising from her rushy bed,
Crept to the fire's place,
When, with a lighted paper's blaze,
She looked into his face!

Giles turned him at the sudden flare,
As with a conscious pain,—
He does not speak,—the light is out,—
The room is dark again!

More than enough, however, had Jenny seen:

Sadder and sadder, close beside
Her loving lord she lay;
And tardily the hours crept
That brought the break of day.

Ah Jenny, had thy bosom dreamed
That night might be the last
With thy loved Giles, how flittingly
The tarrying hours had passed!

CHAPTER XIV.

The daylight at last;—Giles and his wife are both up,—Giles, in his shirt sleeves, seated on a stool, pondering,—Jenny busied with the children,—when, without a tap Snipe and a constable break in upon them. Snipe's dog makes immediately for the bed, from beneath which, with a sportsman's cry, Snipe drags the *bird*.

Poor Jenny blushed,—looked, lost, around;——
When recollection came,
"Twas *I*,—*I* put it there,—'twas *I*,—
I only am to blame."

"Mark the poor wing'd thing's fluttering, Faunce,—
Thanks, lady, for your tongue;
A single shot will sometimes miss,
Two barrels seldom wrong."

"Oh, mercy, mercy, man,—for once,
In mercy, let him go;
How hunger edged us on to this
The hungry only know."

"I've nothing, ma'am, to say to that,
All that concerns the Squire;
My acts are his,—I've but t'obey
His orders for my hire."

"Keep silent, Jane,—what's *he* to do
With hunger, or with tears!
Mercy!—believe me, that's a thing
He's left to God for years."

"Civility had served thee best,
Perhaps;—come,—hence with us;—
Nay, woman,—not a word,—keep back,
We want no woman's fuss."

Giles crushed upon his nether lip
What his wrought heart would say;
Then, slowly putting on his smock,
Turned as to go away.

"I'm ready, sirs"—Giles moved a step,
Jane drew him gently back,
"Take comfort, Giles,—I yet have hope,
I'll straight to—*parson Slack*."

Giles shook his head, then pressed his lips
Upon her whitened cheek;
He tried some parting word to say,
But nature would not speak.

Then, fondly clasping to his breast
His children, one by one,
The heaviest sigh heart ever gave
Told what that night had done.

"Less proudly with them," whispered Jane,
"P'rhaps, Giles, they'll listen then;
Try them, dear, do;"——Giles answered not,
Too well he knew the men.

A long, hard, lingering look around
His desolated home,
When a tear started at the thought
Of what might be its doom.

"Come sir,—our time———" "Move on," said Giles,
Not loath to close the scene;
When forth they went,—in file, with Giles
As prisoner, between.

"John will be here, Jane,—wait till then,—
I pray you follow not,"
Were his last words, as Giles looked back,
Towards his hungry cot.

Jane watched him from the open door,
A spectacle of fears,
And now, that he had passed the moor,
Broke into sobs and tears:

"They *shall* not have him, *shall* not have him,
My good, my noble Giles,—
They dare not hurt him,—God will aid,
And turn these tears to smiles.

I'll off, at once, to parson Slack,—
I'll on my knees to Squander;
What will I not,"—here Jenny's girl
Flung her lean arms around her;

"Mother, I'm hungry,—mother, bread;—"
"I've none to give thee, child;—
Oh, peace, my little angel, peace,
Or mother will go wild."

"You'll let me, then, to uncle John,
Mother, he'll find me some;"
"Well, well, my child,—and bid him hence,
Tell him at once to come.

Now, not a moment must I lose,
I'll seek the Vicar, straight,
He'll blame us, else, we didn't think
Of him till when too late.

I'll try to catch him all alone,—
Oh, if I could but balk
The keeper's spite,—but, come, come, come,
I mustn't stop to talk.

If only quick, I'll cross him, p'rhaps,
Somewhere about his grounds;
I know, he always, after prayers,
Goes on his little rounds.

What will he think of me—of this—
This so unseasoned dress!
Scarce decent, scarce enough to hide
What else might pain the less.

Oh, oh, oh, oh! this is to live,
To taste life's bitterest cup;
My truthful glass! what tales it tells
Of joys all broken up!

Ah, hunger, hunger, little thou
Hast left for time with me!
This wasted cheek, these hollow eyes,
Are witnesses of thee!

But oh! John? yes,—and with him Jane!—
So sad and down he seems!—
Something has reached him! Jane, perhaps,—
Or else he little dreams.

What shall I say to him? and have
We made him wretched, too!
How can he ever look on us
As was his wont to do.

* * * * * * * * * * *

John, John, forgive us,—judge not hard,
By all that's good, I swear,
Sheer misery led us thus astray,
We couldn't, couldn't bear

To see our little ones,—oh, look,
Look at their haggard faces!"
"I know it all, good Jane," said John,
"And where, too, the disgrace is."

"Giles, then has seen you? Said he aught?
John, hold it not from *me;*"—
"Only he bade me hasten, Jane,
Knowing how things would be."

You wont, then—*keep from us?*"—"May Heaven,
Jane, fail me if I do;
A pity, Giles———but well I know
All that is known to you."

"Oh, had he, John, but listened once,
Once when I bade him wait,"—
"Poor fellow," murmured John, "I've feared,
Strongly, some ill of late.

But why, good Jane, thus bonneted,
Whither so early pressed?"—
"I thought I'd call on parson Slack,
I'd try and do my best."

John wiped his eyes,—"Go Jane," he said,
"If there be aught in heaven
To plead, at times, on misery's lips,
To thee it will be given."

As starts the antelope when struck
By some swift arrow's head,
So Jenny, o'er the dewy fields,
In fear and anguish fled.

It happened,—strange how things will hap,
I've marked it oft of late,
As if some hidden hand, not ours,
Was fashioning our fate!

It happened, just as Jenny neared
The Squire's, that "Lady S,"*
Advised how morn's salubrious breath
In roseate bloom could dress,

In careless, quiet negligée,
Her pet of pets in hand,
Stood, fondling, by the outer gate,
As happening had planned.

Jane, who was bent that parson Slack
Should first address the Squire,
Paused,—not a little puzzled how,
Unchallenged, to slip by her.

"She'll only say some unkind thing;
She bears me no good will,
I hear, but yet,—to pass her by,
Perhaps, she'll take it ill!

Besides, she hasn't crossed me close,
Of late,—mayhap she'll find,
In these changed looks, less room for hate,
Less cause to prove unkind."

Then nature, prompting nature urged
Who, as a wife, should know
The yearning of a woman's breast
In her particular woe.

Ah Jenny, thou hadst judged aright,
Had *her* heart, like thine own,
Been schooled in nature's simpler ways,
And not by art undone.

Still hesitating, Jenny mused,—
"If she would hear me *through*,—
Perhaps I wrong her,—should she speak!
What had I better do?"

Jane had not counted on a chance
Like this with "Lady S."
A moment more,—on bended knees,
She grasped her by her dress.

* As Mrs Squander was styled by the village folks of Merrow.

"Lady,—dear lady,—lady, hear!
Oh, turn not deaf away,
Oh, hear a breaking bosom's prayer,
Lady,—dear lady, stay!"

"Oh mercy, Heaven!—release me—help!
A creature!—leave me,—oh!
My dress!"—a scream,—a second scream,
And Jenny's hand let go.

"Lady, dear lady," Jenny still
"Cried in imploring tone,
Till the *dear* Lady's vanished self
Left her to plead alone.

"Oh, woman, so, in face and form,
An angel's counterpart,
That thou should'st ever lack, within,
The angel of the heart!

"I frightened her, I fear," said Jane,
"She didn't–understand,—
What have I done!—made matters worse,
Unsettled all I planned!

So sure, too, as I might have been,
With parson Slack's good aid;—
I ought to have minded,—gentlefolks
Are not like others made.

Her dog, too, bit me!—well,—I'll go,
But waste of words to stay;—
The Vicar won't so treat me, he,
At least, won't turn away;

"At least—"–but here let Jenny wend
Her way to parson Slack,
While we, as in politeness bound,
The frighted lady track.

Again it happened, just as Jane
Had loosed her trembling hold,
The Squire (his eye had fondly sought
How far his pet had stroll'd)

Peeped from the porch,—when lo! a shriek!
Sharp on his ear a shriek!—
Picture!—no, fancy cannot paint
Some things, and words are weak.

Ne'er mother to her dangered child
Sprang, as the startled squire,
When on his ear again a shriek,
Again, and from Sophia!

Quick in his arms his tottering spouse
He took, and, trembling, ran
To where a sofa's ease consoled,
As only sofas can:

"Not one at hand!—not one!—and, ah!"—
The lady paled and shook,—
"Where can they be!—Jeannette! Maria!—
My love, my life—one look!

Speak, speak, Sophia!—Sophia, speak!
She didn't surely dare———!
Say are you hurt, !—Sophia, the doubt—
Is more than heart can bear.

I ought to have cautioned her, I ought,
To have known the dangerous set;—
But soft,—she stirs!—she,—things, perhaps,
Are not so serious yet.

Sophia!—Sophia!—say, are you hurt?—
"Not hurt,—exactly,—dear;
But oh, the shock! the cruel shock!
The pit, the pit, pat, *here!*

She raised her voice!—she wrung her hands!
Such "Lady dears"!—ah me,
My poor dress!—a miracle
I ever, Charles, got free!

I never shall get over it,
I scarcely, dear, can speak,—
I shan't be quite myself again,
I know, for a full week.

"Trust me, that fellow Giles shall pay
Full dearly for this fright,"
Said hurriedly the Squire, pulling
The bell with all his might.

"Quick, quick, Maria—for Doctor D.,
As quick, now, as you can,—
But stop,—see, see—your mistress' head,
Give *me*, my love, your fan."

Fans are to ladies more than physic,
If ladies' lips are true—
"You needn't fetch—the Doctor,—dear,—
I feel—I'm coming—to."

"Quite *sure*, my love, *quite* sure"? replied
The Squire, with coaxing care,
"Had we not better, still———Maria,
Attend,—her head,—there, there."

"Such kindness, Squander!—always so,
Ever since first we met,—
Don't tremble, dear—you haven't lost
Your little Sophy yet."

Thus reassured, the shaken Squire,
He quick, with generous hand,
Proffered a thousand little aids,
At quality's command.

Kindness will seldom miss its aim
From hearts and hands we love,
"Squander, I feel so-o-o tranquilized,"
"She do-e-s, a de-a-r, a dove."

While this sad scene was passing, Jane
Had reached the Vicar's gate;—
There, on his lawn——but thither haste,
Not yet, perhaps, too late.

CHAPTER XV.

The Vicar, on Jenny's arrival, was airing himself on his lawn,—she sees her opportunity;—with her hands clasped, and pressed to her bosom she is speaking. * * * * * *

"He never, Sir, need fear that Giles
Will trouble him again,—
But half a day,—and, oh, an age,
An agony of pain!

My poor fellow, sir!—oh, think,
How hard!—what it must be!
Put with all sorts of——, and denied
All comforting from me!

As to the *bird*, sir,—tell him, tell him,
By daylight and by dark,
All that these hands can do, I'll give;
Tell him, I'll work, I'll work.

And say, sir, if he will but hear me,
To my last breath I'll pray
For Heaven to shield him from all griefs,
And bless him every way.

So kind, sir, he has ever been,
'T would break my heart to lose him;
Indeed, sir, *if you knew our wants*,
Indeed, sir, you'd excuse him."

"No doubt, no doubt, —well, well, we'll see,
He'll not be tried before
The turn of Easter,—and—why—then—
We'll see, we'll see,—p'rhaps more."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" —"No thanks, good dame
My duty to be ready,
At every sacrifice, to assist
Th' afflicted and the needy."

"So kind, sir!"—"Not at all,—but now,
'T were best, methinks, look home;
Your friends will be expecting you,
Nay, anxious till you come."

"He never liked to trouble *you*, sir;
When I have asked him why,
He couldn't bear, he'd say, to call,—
He'd sooner starve and die."

"He had, no doubt, a proper pride,
Becoming in a man;
He knew besides,—the calls,—he saw,
Precisely, how things ran."

"He'd heard your sister say, sir, once,
That had you only given
A trifle to a tenth that called,
They'd scarcely left you Heaven."

"Well, well—well, well,—not quite so bad,
Though truly some discretion
Should hold in charity, as well
In practice, as profession.

You need n't, mind, distress yourself
With further call,—I'll not,
Rely on it, forget—some things
Not readily forgot."

" Don't trouble, sir, I'll close the gate,"
Said Jane, now turned away,
" Lucky I called,—what will dear Giles,
When I have told him, say !

Such Christianity !--no pride ;—
So different to the other :
They, who have known what trouble is,
Can feel it in another.

Good John, too, will be glad to hear
How kindly he has spoken ;
A word of kindness is like food
To the poor heart that's broken."

With this reflection, Jenny reached
The threshold of her door,
And crossed it with a lighter heart,
At least, than just before.

End of Part First.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

Scene, the Vicar's drawing room,—present, the Vicar, Squire Squander and his lady.—To restore the dilapidated condition of "Lady S.'s" nerves, the Squire had driven his lady to the Vicarage. The Vicar is endeavoring to reconcile her ladyship to the trials to which a more delicate nervous sensibility exposes the otherwise less afflicted children of fortune.

"A penalty, indeed we pay
For feelings more refined,
A sensibility,—a taste
Above the commoner kind.

Still, p'rhaps, the pleasures we enjoy
We taste with greater zest,
So, that, in one respect, at least,
Our lot goes not unblest,"

"So to the point!—Vicar, our thanks—
A poor return, I fear;
Such sympathy has quite subdued
The racketing, rioting *here*."

"Don't mention it, dear Madam, blest
Am I, at any hour,
To have my fellow-creatures put
Their happiness in my power."

"This nuisance, Vicar, called on you,
Did he not, some time back?"—
"None in that name, I think"—"Indeed!—
Ex-cuse me, Mr. Slack."

"O-h, yes,—I mind,—for charity
Our bell so often rings,—
I had forgot,—I—don't recall,
Always, these little things."

"So like yourself,—so christian-like,
Not to note what one does;
You don't, I see, as some, restrict
The christian to Sundays."

The Vicar bowed,—the lady smiled,—
The Squire, in turn, the same,—
Then rose,—the bell,—a pause,—and now
The liveried summons came.

"You'll not forget us at the Hall;
Vicar, your word for bail;"—
"When pleasure is with duty joined,
We seldom, Madam, fail."

CHAPTER II.

On the day of Giles' arrest I had an engagement at Shropton, and it was on my way thither that I first heard of his misfortune. All Merrow was in arms. Hobbs, spying me at a distance, was in the road waiting for me, and, like a certain mastiff that I had just past, he was even more rampant than ever. "Heerd, sir, o' what's up now? Muore'n one, sir,'s at the bottom on't; but thaay as hev done it, sir, *'ll come to no good, sartain*,—That Snipe!—wait till I crasses'n,—till I gits within a rod ov'n."

Styles, whom I met rounding the lane that led from the main road to Giles' cottage,—he had just come from it,—seemed quite crushed,—"They wants, sir," said he, "to break the hearts ov us,—I've knowd 'n, sir, since he wer that high." If ever a certain lump in the throat, of which Her Majesty has spoken in her journal, was disposed to make free with mine, it was then. How often, since, have I recalled him,—his sleeve to his eyes.—Oh God! can I look across to old England, remembering such things!

On my return *passage*, I was about to say, it was clear, from the numbers that I met in Merrow, most of whom turned down to Giles,' that something of more than ordinary consequence was at issue there. It had been agreed, I learned, that the villagers, Giles' immediate mates at least, should assemble in the evening at his cottage, to determine upon what a Scotsman would have called the *state of affairs*. So, one by one, as the evening advanced might many a hungry-looking fellow have been counted, wending his way in the direction of the lane, and, in less than an hour after dark, Jenny's cottage was fuller than it had ever been before, and still some were arriving;—now it was Pilch,—now

Harry,—now Slop,—more than one was from Lavent. I have never been able to recall that any women were present. Their presence, I suppose, was at that hour indispensable elsewhere. John after a flying visit to his brother at Shropton, had rejoined his sister-in-law and was still with her:

Nor welcomed least, came honest Styles,
His countenance full of pain,
With "summat for the childern, John,
And Missus' love to Jane."

"Kind o' thee, Styles,—sit down;—see, Jane,
Good Styles hath not forgot us;—"
"Less sad, my wench;" said Styles, "wooll bear
What Heaven may will to lot us."

By few unmarked in some curt way
The old man's timely aid,
While Hobbs' more than humbled look
Some keener sense betrayed.

"Pilch," said he, "Pilch, I never felt
Till now, though nothing new,
How hard is poverty,—and dang'd
If I daan't tell'n, too."

Which saying, Hobbs, with feverish haste,
Strode to where Hawthorne stood,
None noting him, his mates, the while,
Battling for Giles' good.

"Us didn't, John, forgit our friend,"
Said he, "nor Pilch, nor I
Hev knowed, God's truth, what food is, John,
Some ten hours by the sky."

"I know it Hobbs,—I see it, Hobbs,"—
—John took his poor friend's hand,
"We who crop close, lad, only need
The eye to understand."

Hobbs grasped with a convulsive grip
The hand that clenched his own,
"Loard help us, John,—I feels, to-night,
Sumhow, a beaten down."

Hobbs was of such as seldom yield,
Nature might prompt within,
Still, rarely on his roughened cheek
The telltale drop was seen.

Yet such as rightly judge the eye
An index of the heart
Had found it easy to descry,
Sometimes, its counterpart.

John, who knew well the sterling pride
That graced his humble friend,
Was touched, even to tenderness,
To see him brought to bend.

"Come, come," said he, "we mustn't, Hobbs,
Permit ourselves to yield;
Times have, perhaps, been full as hard
With some whose pride concealed."

This called forth all the manliness
That still lined Hobbs' breast,
"John, but for Giles, doan't think that Hobbs,——
Long hev he borne the rest."

"Well spoken, lad,—enough, enough;—
We can, my friend, but do
What our best means permit,—that done
Amply pays pity's due."

While Hobbs and John were busied thus
Pilch had rejoined the rest,
Who now, with clamorous comforting,
Round Styles and Jenny pressed.

"Hear *me*," said one,—"hear *I*," another,—
All would be heard together,
"They ca-an't I tell thee, Jane," a third,—
A fourth, "no matter whether."—

Not one, the least loud of them all,
But shared the genial view,
That not a jot had Jane to fear,
Let spite its utmost do.

Jane turned the kindliest face to each,
Then glanced, with watery eye,
To note how far, in John's approve,
Her bosom dare rely.

"One at a time,—now let I speak,'
Cried Slop,—"mid sich confusion,
There aint no comin' no sumhow,
To no kind o' conclusion."

"Fust hear what Styles hev got to say,"
Quoth Hobbs, "bean't no one better
'S can tell the laaw than ye can, Styles,—
Ye knaw it to a letter!"

"I can clench that," said Turnpike Tom,
"Styles wer the on'y one
As see'd, when Scales farged his own will,
How that the thing wer done.

Let Styles start first,—staake out the laaw,
Then sich as likes let foller;
If Styles leave much behind'n, Hobbs,
'T bean't no use bein' a scholar."

None seeming to dissent from this,
All eyes, expectant, turned
On him who well the learned name
Of *lawyer Styles* had earned.

"Ye'll not, Styles, disapp'int us, well
Ye knaws what ye can do,"
Again said Hobbs, "yer looks, Styles, shaw
Ye're jist in the right cue."

Blushingly proud, on this, Styles rose,
Elately glancing round,
All eyes still on him, Jane's except,
Bent tearblind on the ground.

"Now us 'll hev it," whispered Slop,
"Right aff,—the kind old man!"
Delay grew painful,—so, at once,
All silenced, Styles began:

"There bean't, my friend"—"What us"—
"Now, Pilch,"
Cried Hobbs, "keep quiet, do;
Leave Styles alone, Styles arn't the man,
To larn the laaw from you."

"And who, Hobbs, ever s'posed he wer,—
Aal as I wished that he——"
"Now, Pilch, shaw sense, shut up;—On, Styles,
Out wi' it how things be."

"There bean't a bit o' doubt, my friends,
About—the blood—wer spilt;—
But, still,—they daresn't—touch he, Hobbs,
They *didn't see'n kill't!*"

"I thaught as much,—but at it, Styles,
Out wi' it aal, lad, straight;—
I zee what, Styles, it 's coming to,
Ize been at 'sizes, late."

Styles raised his hand, in way to crave
Attention from his friend,
Anxious lest Hobbs' eager tongue
Anticipate the end.

"Right on," said Pilch, "I longs to hear
'Zactly how matters stand,"
So, Styles again, with cautious touch,
Took the loose reins in hand.

"It bean't no sarcumstantial case,
Things *must* be *plump* and *plain;*
And if—they quit he,—*aal his life*
He caan't be tried again!"

"Hear that!" said Slop—"And if the twelve
As tries 'n disagrees,
Aal but the judge be straight shut up,
And twixt 'em finds the fees.

So doan't be frought, my wench, 'shall aal
Be there upon the day,
And dang'd if us doan't shaw the judge
Things shan't be jist *his* way."

"There's for thee, Jane!—what say thee, now?
Didn't I tell thee so,"
Cried Slop,—"there ain't a man as knows
The laaw, if *he* doan't know.

Thanks to thee, Styles,—'hev done us aal
A moartal sight o' good;
When next I crasses un, the Squire
'Ll find I summat rude."

"And I," said Hobbs, "'ll tell'n plain
He dunna knaw his pleace;
He bean't a bit the gentleman,—
I'll tell'n to his feace."

"And I," quoth Pilch, "can shaw that Snipe
Hev sauld the Squire's geame;
And down beyond the mill stream bridge,
Jim Ralph can shaw the seame."

"And I hove gotten one, at home,
'S can tell a pretty tale,"
Said Turnpike Tom, "about *some one*,
And dang me, too, she sha-all."

Thus each expressed, in different way,
The earnest of his heart,
Save sober John, who, silent, sat,
All sorrowful, apart.

Too well *he* knew the law's stern strength,
Too well the haughty feelings
With which the powerful approach
The weak in all their dealings.

And, more,—he knew his brother's proud
And upright mind had bred
A jealousy in one who most
In morals should have led.

Of justice he had little hope,
The Judge was called severe;
Judge Dooill was the man to sit
In judgment for the year.

The Squire he knew when quite a boy,
Scarce fifteen summers span,
And marked that, as he grew in years,
He little grew the *man*.

CHAPTER III.

It was not without some little difficulty that John had obtained access to his brother, now, alas! in Shropton jail; for Giles, after having been taken before some local magistrates, one of them a rector, was committed for trial at the approaching assizes. Snipe swore, and falsely, that on several previous occasions Giles had been a trespasser on the Squire's grounds.—Nothing could exceed the ecstacy of this magnanimous gentleman at Giles' incarceration.—"At last, my boy!" was his parting fling at him.

Improvements, as at present, were by no means general, at that time, in the discipline of jails. The sunshine of Howard's philanthropy still played but feebly within the walls of too many of them. Giles found himself among the vilest of the vile,—with burglars, murderers, and prostitutes. He positively forbade the admission of his wife. But now I have something to speak of,

upon the which I feel it impossible to be silent, so much had it, I believe, to do with the future of Giles.—The assizes were at hand. Sir James Dooill, the judge, had already arrived, as had also many of the barristers and lawyers attendant on his circuit. Private apartments had been taken by them all. It was upon such notables, at their rooms, that the father of Styles had been in the habit of plying his trade as a barber.

Now, early on the day before the commencement of *business*, it had not escaped the vigilance of Snipe that the carriage of Sir James Dooill was at the Vicar's gate. With the subtlety of a snake, this was immediately communicated to "Lady S," who, in less than a minute, was off to the Vicar's.—"Never was any thing so fortunate!"

Her ladyship, *on foot*, was, indeed, a surprise! Miss Arabella Slack was evidently not displeased at her arrival. A smile less wintery than usual lighted her angular features; while the skilled in face reading might have detected a tinge of uneasiness in that of her brother.

"Your shawl, Mrs. S.—I'll ——"

"I'm away, Bella, in a moment."

"Not before I've introduced you to Sir James?"

"Oh no,—certainly not."

Never had Sir James been scrutinized more closely by trembling offender than by the keen and inquiring glance of Mrs. Squander,—"You'll find Shropton, I'm afraid, but a dull place, Sir James." So said her lips,—not so her *eyes*—"Can we *rely* on him?"—"is he one *of us?*"—*so* said *they*.

"I was not aware, Sir James," said the Vicar, resuming the broken thread of their discourse, that the destruction of game by an unlicensed party was, at one time, a capital offence."

Mrs. S. was all attention.

"Under the ancient forest laws," replied Sir James, "the killing of the king's game was equally penal with murdering one of his subjects."

"And what, pray, Sir James," said Mrs. Squander, "induced them to change the law?"

"Well,—it was considered by *some* to press a little too severely on the subject;—though, really, there are moments, so troublesome are, at times, these fellows, when I am more than disposed to think (Mrs. Squander's eye brightened) that the alteration was, perhaps, after all, somewhat premature."

A November smile passed over the face of Miss Slack.

"There can be very little doubt, I think, Sir James," said the Vicar, "that the audacity of poachers, of late, is traceable, in a great measure, to the mistaken lenity of the law. The ——"

"And yet, brother—— "

"Pardon me, my dear;—I was about, Sir James, to observe that the unquestionable increase of crime of late most demonstratively shows that the assumptive philanthropy of the day is entirely a mistake,—simply an impediment in the way of justice.—A diseased love of notoriety is, in most cases, I suspect, at the bottom of it. I have a cousin, now,—a man in good position, and of considerable talent, who for the mere repute of *reformer*, would scarcely, I believe, hesitate at getting rid of the game laws *altogether!*"

"What, no game laws at all!" said Mrs. Squander.

"Just so, Madam."

"I am entirely of your opinion, Mr. Slack," added Sir James. "In my own profession, I might point to more than one who, for the sake of a mere paper popularity, are ready, at any moment, with the wildest, remotest utterances. Even Blackstone, the great Sir William Blackstone, was not, at all times, able to withstand the temptation."

"Indeed!" said the Vicar.

"One would have thought, certainly," resumed the Judge, "that boasting, as could *he*, of a North for a protector, he, at least, would hardly have so forgotten himself."

"More especially, when I recall," said the Vicar, "that it was Sir William who, on an occasion, pleaded against the right of copyholders to a vote."

"You have not, I see, Mr. Slack, been upon the bench for nothing."

The Vicar bowed.

"Yes," continued Sir James, "Sir William's Nimrod in every Manor, in the stead of the *one mighty hunter* in the land, is, too frequently, I am sorry to say it, upon the lips of some people."

"You have heard, Sir James," ventured "Lady S.," now somewhat emboldened, "of the desperado that you will have shortly to deal with?"

"We never, Madam," replied the Judge, but in a tone by no means disheartening, "permit ourselves, howsoever invited—we hold it, indeed, a duty— "

"You have, I can easily imagine," interrupted Mrs. Squander,

"quite enough of such fellows by the time you have done with them."

"To that," said Mr. Slack, "Sir James will find no difficulty in assenting."—"If such men," continued the Vicar, "could only, Sir James, be persuaded to look a little more to the future,—to cultivate a reasonable economy—could only, as my good sister is constantly suggesting to them, be induced to *lay by* a bit—if never so little, it would still be something in the moment of temptation, to assist in keeping them from trouble."

"Instead," said Miss Slack, addressing herself to the Judge, "they live up to their *last farthing*."

"What, pray, may be the wages, with you, Mr. Slack, of such men at present?"

"Nine and sixpence,—and, in some cases, as high as ten shillings per week."

"Of course, with such wages, the men provide for themselves?"

"Of course."

"And lost time deducted?"

"Certainly;—and yet we hear of nothing but poverty—poverty!"

"As with us in Dorsetshire, Mr. Slack:—I have sometimes, indeed, been inclined to think that without *hunger* the people of our part would be really at a loss for something to talk about."

"Well," said Mrs. Squander, rising, upon this, with an air of jubilation that told its tale, "I must be going—Charles will be expecting me.—You'll not forget before leaving, Sir James, that there's such a place as the Hall."

"Certainly not."

——— Poor Giles!—

CHAPTER IV.

The day had now arrived for the commencement of Shropton assizes. According to the county Herald the calendar was an unusually heavy one, including, amidst every variety of delinquency, for these were the days of "chopstick" riots, a case of desperate poaching, by one Hawthorne, on the property of Charles Squander, Esq., of Merrow. This was accompanied by some apposite remarks upon the general increase of poaching, followed by a hint that it was only by a commensurate severity of punishment

that such could be kept down. An example had to be made, and *the sooner the better.* This may help to account for the great crowd in attendance; for poaching affairs, even ordinary ones, are always attractive in boroughs.

Trusting to a statement, by no less a person than the Vicar, that Giles' case would be one of the earliest presented, the country people of Merrow were all upon the road, betimes, on the opening day of the court. An opinion seemed to prevail that the Vicar was favourably disposed to Giles. This had put heart into more than one. He had assured Styles, as also Slop, that it was indeed a *sad* affair, a *very sad* affair, that "we must all, *every one of us*, see what could be done." His presence, too, in court was still more encouraging, and brought from Hobbs the remark that "if the chap 'oold only say a word or two for Giles, he might keep his *speade* and welcome to it." We were all, however, it seems upon a wrong scent. Giles' case was not brought forward on the first day. Indeed it reached me, afterwards, that more than one was well informed that such was a settled arrangement beforehand. Still, with Mr. Slack upon Giles' side, hope held up her head, and Styles further came to the support of some of us with the assurance that "thaay passons coold do a'most anything."

Being mounted, although I had lingered in Shropton till after the court had closed, it was before reaching Merrow that I slackened my pace, on observing ahead of me the brother of Giles. John also had been lingering in the town at the jail with his brother.

"Good evening, *Mr. Hawthorne,*" I said, on nearing him, for not the heir apparent to a crown would have ventured to address *that* man with an assumptive familiarity.—"I was glad to see Mr. Slack in court," I added.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "Mr. Slack was in court," but with so much of the calmness of utter hopelessness that I was both hurt and disappointed. It occurred to me, also, that perhaps my remark was not altogether in place; so, with heel to my horse, "Good night, Mr. Hawthorne," I said; but in a tone as kindly and considerate as I could muster.

"Good night, sir," he replied with the same calmness,—the same hopelessness.

With the beautiful faith that youth so invariably has, sometimes fatally to our after happiness, in the sincerity of others, I was still of those who believed in the truthfulness of the Vicar's expressed sympathy for Giles, and it was with a manner more

benignant than usual that, on passing his gate, I bade a good night to the guardian angel of his grounds.

There was no mistake, however, upon the second day. Giles' was the first case called for. As my reader, recalling the language of the Herald, will readily suppose, the excitement, on Giles' appearance, was extreme. The court, as on the previous day, was crammed. Every reserved seat was already occupied, situations commanding a good view of the *villain* being evidently the choice ones, while Hobbs, Pilch, and others of his comrades had posted themselves conveniently for an encouragement to Giles, as he passed them, that "things," as Styles had assured them, "were not going, for once, to be jist the judge's way."

A little incident now occurred upon the which a word or two may not be out of place. When Giles was brought into court, a constable on each side of him, Snipe took it into his conceit to be a fourth, and on Giles pausing for a moment to disengage his hand from Hobbs, the baffled Lothario, giving him a thrust in the back, ordered him to—"on." It had been safer to have touched a torpedo. In an instant, spinning round on his heel, and staggering to the ground, was Snipe to be seen, from a smasher on the jaw from Giles. A broad red mark, where Giles' barky knuckles had bared his flesh, spoke for the severity of the blow. Giles, however, was not free from his share of punishment. Venturing at Snipe a second compliment, he missed him, and bringing up against a support to a side gallery, both cut and bruised his right hand fearfully, while in a rush made at him by a host of officers, who, in their alacrity, seemed to be well posted, he received from the staff of one of them, upon his left temple, a return compliment of no trifling severity. An officer tied round it his handkerchief.

With the blood dripping from his now shackled hands, and ever and anon a drop stealing from beneath the tiara on his temples, Giles' appearance, I confess, was anything but improved, howsoever impressive. I observed that a barrister, who sat in front of him and below him, on looking round, removed to a greater distance. I was surprised at this, as professional men, in general, are not cowards.

The excitement, upon this, with Giles' immediate supporters, was intense. Hobbs was, as usual, uppermost.—

"Look at 'n," said he,—"jist look at 'n,–if the very roof doan't tumble in on 'em, then I says, Tom, there ain't no God."

"Doan't talk so, Harry,— doan't say so, lad," said Styles.

It was noticed that Giles seldom looked directly to one side of the court,—his wife and children were there; for not only had Jenny begged to be allowed to be present, but it was the opinion of all the Missuses of Merrow that her presence, whilst it might do some good, "couldn't do no harm no how;" and Styles, on being consulted, had distinctly stated that "*at 'sizes*, one word from a wench wer worth more'n a underd from even a laawyer"—"He'd heerd, too, of a whole court as wer downright drownded, judge and aal, by jist a few tears from jist sich as she."

On this arraignment, Giles pleaded *guilty* to having shot upon one night, a pheasant on the grounds of Squire Squander; but *not guilty* to other charges trumped up against him by Snipe, who, with his scarred and swollen jaw, cut a somewhat conspicuously contemptible figure. More than once had the country folks to be called to order for laughing, or affecting to laugh, at the mumbling way in which he gave his evidence. Nothing in this, however, be sure had his eye lost of its malice,—his pride of its vindictiveness. He was ready to swear to any thing, as were, also, the hirelings under him.

This partial admission of guilt by Giles was not, altogether, what was wanted by more than one in court; so, after some delay, with a deal of whispering, neither of which were intelligible, or satisfactory to Hobbs, and utterly condemned by Styles, as "agin aal statue laaw," it was resolved to "give the fellow a chance," by putting him upon trial on the wholesale charge, selecting to commence on what he had, indeed, never repudiated. Such a trial was, of course, both a mockery and contradiction:—The evidence against him was, of necessity, overwhelming, blended, as it was, in every way, with falsehood that art could suggest to prejudice a jury.

But where was Mr. Slack!—In vain had I sought for him in every nook and corner of the court. Had I been older, better experienced, I might have spared myself much trouble. A *clerical* magistrate, if present, would have been *readily discoverable*.

The evidence against him completed, Giles had expressed a wish to say a few words prior to the retirement of the jury, when Jenny, who was now utterly beside herself, clutching by his gown a barrister passing, begged of him and in a tone so beseeching as to set refusal at defiance, to inquire for Mr. Slack,—"He promised me *so* to be here."

Retracing his steps, the sergeant, for such he was, in an under tone

said something to the judge. The reply was manifestly any thing but satisfactory. The sergeant (to the credit of the bar I say it) rouged, and looked nettled. Persevering, however, in his suit, a few words were passed to the crier, who, after a stern injunction to "Silence," in the same impressive tone, inquired for—"The Rev. Horatius Slack ?"—No answer !—"The Rev. Horatius Slack ?" —Again—no answer !—A pin, as the saying runs, might now have been heard to fall. A silent anxious expectancy possessed every one. Apprehension seemed uppermost with Jenny. "What," said the poor thing, looking into the angel haunts of her own bosom, "what can have happened to him !"

The attention of all was now diverted to Giles;—he was evidently about to address the judge.

Giles had been but a few weeks in jail, but in appearance he was much altered. Thinner he could hardly well be, but there was a pale leaden tint both in his face and hands, and the peculiar ringing tone of a cough, which he certainly had not before his arrest, I have, since, often, and painfully recalled. His smock (I doubt that the poor fellow had a shirt), patched and worn before he was in *trouble*, was now sadly, indeed, out of sorts, whilst his bandaged temples and gore-clotted hands impressed, I should say, every one present alike.

Thus stood the English countryman,
Once England's honest pride,
When not another man, on earth,
To fellow by his side.

There, clothed in rags and wretchedness,
With outstretched arms he stood,
And thus his guileless tale began
To one more *great* than good :

"I doan't deny what I ha' done ;
I know it wunna right ;
But I wer sorely put to it
Upon that cruel night.

I couldn't bear,—God's truth, my loard,
To see my babbies want,
I shouldn't ha' had the heart o' man
To ha' longer looked upon't.

Not all as us, for months, my loard,
Could reckon as our own
Stood us, at best, a crust apiece,
To leave *still worse* alone.

Split up, my loard, two crowns yerself,
And, counting folks as five,
See if it muore'n gives enough
Than to jist keep flesh alive.

The day was,—many as 'members it,—
When a man had something more
To help him through than his wages worth,
When he didn't feel like poor.

What has a labourer now to show,
What to fall back on left,
Of his little croft, of his commons' right,
Of his every chance bereft!

Surely, temptation, night and day,
Right at his cottage door,
Might have been spared with one so spoilt,
So trodden down, so poor.

Do unto others as ye'd hev
As they should do by you,
Is the law, at least in heaven, and might
Be sometimes elsewhere, too.

One that as well had been, p'rhaps, here,
No need to blab his name,
As witness might have stood to that,
And less, too, to his shame.

My loard, my loard, I woo'den beg,
My blood wer yet too proud,
But oh!—my wife!—my little babes!—
See—crying in the crowd!

On them, my loard, and not on him
Who only is to blame;
The judgment of the court wooll be,
In all but christ'n name."

Many, when Giles had got thus far,
Silently shed a tear;
Not so the haughty one, whose smile
Wore its accustomed sneer.

Giles missed it not, and judged, aright,
All vain the hope to reach
The heart that misery's saddest tale
So little seemed to teach.

"Thy smile full well I comprehend;—
I dunna know to plead;—
Wer thou, my loard, the Judge of all,
Perhaps, I had'en need."

This said,—his hands, still locked, in front,
With a half defiant air,
Looked Giles away, his proud fine face
Th' observed of all eyes there.

Many a brow was, by this time, shaded with a moistened hand, —Styles, leaning on Hobbs' shoulder, was sobbing like a child. All was elsewhere silence, and in its midst the judge rose. Never was a Kemble more studied, never a mere imitator more artificial and formal than Sir James in his manner and utterance. Yet was there a *method* in both,—the method of malice and tyranny. His formality and stateliness, he knew, would work upon the weak,— and where are the strong?—at least in juries. With his eyes searchingly on the jury, after pausing for a few seconds, till his hauteur had softened into something of blandness, he commenced:

Gentlemen of the jury,—having heard
The evidence adduced
Against the prisoner, you'll now
Take in your hands the accused.

You'll'make it your especial aim,
Sole care, to set aside
All prejudice,—all partial views,—
The law alone your guide.

In simple cases,—such as this,
Seldom we stand in need
Of hint, or aid,—still, a few words
As well ere we proceed.

Now, gentlemen,—the prisoner,
To put the matter right,
Did, or did *not* a pheasant kill,
Upon a certain night.

Your'duty, gentlemen, will be
Simply to fix the fact;
The prisoner *did* or did *not* do
A certain criminal act.

If satisfied that so he *did*,
Why—then—your course is plain,—
But if—in any doubt,—therein
The prisoner must gain.

It sometimes happens that we have
A painful task to do,
Justice forbids what pity, else,
Would hold from very few.

As to the plea of poverty,
Why—that's the common plea
Of every criminal, and will have
No weight with you or me.

Nor must we, gentlemen, permit
Ourselves t'eschew the laws;
A seeming harshness often has
A wisely rooted cause.

Besides it is for Parliament
To move when statutes err;
We don't sit here to make the laws,
But—to administer.

With this—you'll, gentlemen,—retire,
To *agree* upon the case;
A very simple one, the facts
Indeed upon the face."

Such as wished well to Giles observed,
With tremor, that the jury
Kept nodding to the Judge's words,
As in judicial hurry.

And few were taken by surprise
To hear the foreman say
"Guilty, my lord," for what could hope
Promise the other way.

"Well, if that ain't a sheame," cried Slop,
"Didn't thee mind the old un;
They jist waalk'd out, and then jist 'gree'd
Jist as the Judge had towld'n."

"'Bout time, methinks, the Styleses, Slop,
Took on agin with laaw;
Never heerd I a judge address
A jury so, afore."

"They waun't a jury fit to try
A case like his'n,—not one,
I knows 'em Styles, in aal his life
Hev ever fired a gun."

"Cause, Slop, they clapped," said Turnpike Tom,
"No one but town folks there;
I sees it aal,—there waun't a bit
About the trial fair."

"I'd hev, had I *my* mind," said Hobbs,
"That smoothface pretty quick
Braught to his bearings,—'nough to make
A passon's donkey sick.

Not aal the things Giles ever done
Agin the will o' God,
Pitted 'ginst one day's work of his 'n
'Oold more nor half the load.

But look out, Slop, I aal'ays minds,
Wheniver mischief's brewin',
Woold think their hearts nigh breakin' like
At what theirselves be doin'."

The judge had risen!—silently
His eye surveyed his man —
"Mercy, my loard!" cried Styles;—the judge
Checked him, then thus began:

"Prisoner at the bar,—it grieves me,
Beyond my power to say,
To see a man,—decent,—like you,
Fling himself thus away.

You have been tried, and guilty found,
By an impartial jury,
Of what the law counts no light crime,
And justly, I assure you.

I don't see, from the evidence,
How they could rightly come
To any finding, but that the facts
Bring the guilt clearly home.

As to your own admission, that,
Believe, had little weight;
The facts alone more than enough
To justify your fate.

It only now remains for me,
Biassed by no report,
To pass on you,—a painful task,—
The sentence of the court.

Worse had it fared with you erewhile,
Indeed, there *was* a time,
Some still defend, your life had been
The forfeit of your crime.

But, by the more considerate,
More merciful decree
Of modern law, a duty less
Severe devolves on me.

The law, thus mitigated, rules,
With power, in hand still ours,
That simple banishment subserve
In cases such as yours;

But seven years penal servitude
Beyond the seas,—*no more ;*—
May heaven so shape you as t'acquit
The mercy of the law.

Here a distinct, unmistakeable, heavy sigh caused every one present to look round. It was from old Styles—The law both of his head and heart was, at last, at a dead stand.

"You-dang'd old villain!" burst out Hobbs,
"Christ!—if I woo'den tear
Yer very heart out, had ye one,
This ye caall *playing fair!*"

"Silence, sir, there;—remove him—quick,"
Shouted the nettled judge—
"Gently, my friends, gently, my lads,
Or dang'd an inch I budge."

"No gently with him, constables,
Away with him at once;
A court of justice, sir, you'll find
No place for your brave bounce."

"Hark ye, old chap;—for twenty worlds,
And twenty on to that,
I woo'den do as you hev done
The six hours you ha' sat.

Look at the wench!—Christ! if it arn't
A real downright disgrace;
Gently, my chum, or, by my soul,
I'll sheame yer pretty feace."

"For heav'n's sake, Hobbs, go quietly,"
Said Styles,—"'t wooll only make
Things worse for Giles,—for this once, lad,
A friend's best counsel take."

Hobbs felt the force of Styles' words,
So, without more ado,
He let the hirelings of the law
Their hackneyed course pursue.

* * * *

The trial o'er,—the court adjourned,—
Hope slowly sighed farewell,
As Giles' mates their homes regained,
And he—his silent cell.

CHAPTER V.

Never, so sorrowfully, had I wended my way homeward as on the evening after Giles' condemnation. Never had I felt so disposed to doubt of a presiding Providence :—"Can such things be, and a God be over us!" But it was in my weakness, my blindness, that I said so, and, with a gushing heart, I ask for forgiveness.

On reaching the lane which, at the threshold of Merrow, led down to Giles' cottage, I found it almost impossible to proceed for the reflections that crowded, and how painfully, on me. "So kindly, so simple, so unsuspicious!" I was thinking of his wife. Indeed, on my reaching home, one, for whom friendship might have readily deepened into a tenderer feeling, observed, on my entrance, that she was sure I had been either crying or laughing; "Let me see," said she, rising, and with her hands on my shoulders, looking me in the face, "you —— —— ——?"

The excitement, on the following day, at what was regarded, and openly spoken of, as a cowardly desertion by the Vicar, was intense. Towards the evening, however, this was considerably tempered by a report that sudden and serious indisposition had interfered with the worthy gentleman's attendance. "I knew," said Jenny, in the sobbing way that she now said everything, "that *something* must have happened." Hawthorne was silent,—and Styles merely said, that "God alone could see into men's hearts; or, as paraphrased by Hobbs, that "howsumiver folks might humbug *theirselves*, there waun't no humbugging *he*, no how."

It will have been supposed, and, possibly, with surprise, that at Giles' trial, farmer Manly was also an absent one. Such, how-

ever, was not the case. He was present upon both days, nor, in any shape, had his sympathy been withheld from the Hawthornes in this their greatest trial. It was his opinion, and he had acted on it, that anything like a public interference on *his* part would tend rather to the disadvantage of Giles than otherwise.

"With some folks here, sir," said he, "I am no favourite. Even many of the farmers are against me. I do what I can to make up to a labourer, in an indirect way, what I consider he is entitled to. This, by some of them, is not liked. I believe that, were I to openly advocate a higher, fairer standard of wages, I might reckon upon having to abandon my place altogether. My taxed means will not permit me to do *much*. My family, as you may see, sir, is numerous, and a suit in chancery has, for some years, pressed heavily on me; but I do what I can."

It was whilst at this worthy man's house, on the second day after Giles' trial, and whilst discussing with him, amongst other things, what the fine old fellow still assured me would "hurt nobody," that I espied from an open window no less a carriage than that of Sir James Dooill wending its way in the direction of Lavent. It was not, however, for Lavent that it was destined—"For the Vicar's, I suspect," said Mr. Manly. "This familiarity with the Slacks," he continued, "since Sir James' arrival amongst us, I am sorry, very sorry to observe. Giles has not a greater enemy, sir, than the Vicar, letting alone, perhaps, his sister. There is, I have heard, some little distant relationship between them. Moreover, men in power and position, as Sir James, are but too inclined to remember with gratitude the assistance never denied to them by the Establishment."

"But in what way," I inquired, "is this likely to have affected the Hawthornes."

"Well—you see, sir,—there is nothing that, in general, men find it so difficult to forgive in another as a superiority that reflects upon their own shortcomings. Now, the brother of this Giles, John Hawthorne—I have spoken of him to you, I believe, before—is no ordinary man. With a higher education, and better opportunity, he might have been anything. In America he would, probably, have been President,—a congress man, at all events—He is a Methodist,—and there, sir, lies the sting with the Vicar. *Half of the village folks are up at his cottage on the Sunday.*

It has often, sir, occurred to me, observing the remarkable influence which this man has with his fellows that, should it ever please

the great God above us, by human agency, to interfere with the present unjust state of things with the labourers it would be upon such a one that he would have His eye; to such a one that He would beckon. The labourers have, long since, lost all confidence in those whom they are still in the habit of calling their *betters*. They distrust them, to a man. But their ears and hearts might both, I think, be yet reached by such as, like themselves, had tasted of the bitterer side of things,—who had toiled with them—*hungered* with them. Such, *for good at least*, could alone influence them;—I am now pretty old, sir, but you may, perhaps, live to recall what we have been talking of."—I have indeed recalled it.

"It is so, (help yourself, sir,) precisely so, with the Rev. Mr. Goodwill, curate of Orton.—Are you acquainted with him?"

"On the eve of becoming so."

"You will find him to be one of the finest fellows living. By some, to be sure, he is objected to, and for an odd reason,—that he is not *like* a parson. His neck, for such objectors, is, perhaps, a little too pliant,—his hand less *patronizingly* extended to the poor,—while his coat may, at times, seem to have surrendered to the wind and weather a little too much of its nap; but if to be thus, sir, is to be more like a christian, in times when one out of every ten we meet has, in some shape, a claim upon one's charity, then, sir, I say, that the worthy gentleman may forgive his glass for its unsparing reflection of the grounds upon which a silly world is too apt to build its estimates. An old coat will be no drawback, sir, *some* day. Coaches-and-sixes will find a pretty heavy toll at *one* gate."

Here the old gentleman emptied his tumbler.

"Ah, sir, if we were all like Parson Goodwill we might get along without parsons."

"But in what respect, Mr. Manly," I inquired, "is Hawthorne's position suggestive of Mr. Goodwill's."

"Well, in this, sir. The indefatigable zeal of Mr. Goodwill is a reflection upon the rector."

"You mean upon the Rev. Mr. Wrench?"

"Certainly.—Till the presence of Mr. Goodwill in Orton every thing there was out of sorts:—schools were neglected,—the ailing uncared for,—charity unencouraged—indeed, nothing was as it should be. Service, at least in the afternoon, was, most certainly, more honoured, as the poet has it, in the breach than in the observance. The bench seemed, and seems still, to be an object of far higher consideration with his reverence than the church.

I don't know that I can recall having seen Mr. Wrench emerging from the cottage of a labourer; but he is ever to be found at a gathering of magistrates, and any thing but remarked for the lenity of his suggestions. Now, it is well known to the rector that Mr. Goodwill is in principle, however guarded in declaring himself, opposed to all this;—hence a feeling of hostility on the rector's part. Mr. Goodwill, I am afraid, has a hard time of it, sir,—a very hard time of it."

"He is not wealthy, I have heard?"

"Very far from it, sir. His stipend from the rector is, as usual, painfully small. Report puts it at barely seventy pounds per annum, not the wages of a mechanic. An allowance from a well-to-do uncle may foot up his means to something like a couple of hundred per annum, still, little enough you will allow, for the man's heart is too large to look upon want, and very often to keep his hand from his pocket. He is, indeed, sir, a most excellent man. Not a cottager in Orton but has a kindly word for him."

"At what figure, Mr. Manly," I asked, "do you put the rector's means?"

"At eight hundred per annum, and the parsonage, independently of a rich inheritance."

"Of which the allowance to Mr. Goodwill is something less than the tithe?"

"A trifle less."

"Hem!—but is not the income of such men supplemented to some extent by fees customary at marriages, christenings, burials, and so forth?"

"Very little, sir, I assure you. A marriage of even a well-to-do farmer is always a rector's affair,—*of course, out of respect;* and such as Mr. Goodwill have little relish for the poor man's penny. His greatest offence, I apprehend, is in his sympathy, which he has not always found it possible to conceal, with the farm labourers in their present degraded position. He has even been rash enough, as many have regarded it, to hint at the positive necessity for higher wages with them; and it is no secret that he has lately signed a petition for the repeal of the corn laws. Upon this last point, I had it from Mr. Goodwill himself, the rector and he were very nearly coming to a rupture. The rector wrote to him, pointing out to him the propriety of confining his attention to the religious requirements of the parish. To this Mr. Goodwill responded, that it seemed to him that he could in no way better

promote the ends of religion than in endeavouring to provide for his parishioners a sufficiency *to be honest on*. This brought from Mr. Wrench a further remonstrance with an injunction to remember that it was not as an *inspector*, nor as an *overseer*, that he had engaged him;—hard language, sir, I thought. The worthy gentleman, I know, smarted under it.—I can only add, sir, that if Mr. Goodwill has since felt but a tithe of the pleasure it has been to *me* to know that I did not—for I signed the petition myself—that I did not, I say, permit my greed as a farmer, to override a sense of what is right and christian, he has been amply repaid for any ill-will that his signature may have brought on him. That God and I were about to do something together I was never more satisfied than when on that occasion I took up my pen, and I have not been denied, since, *the comforting assurance that it was so*.—I am sadly afraid that the upshot will be that Mr. Goodwill will be driven to resign, an irreparable loss, not only to every one in Orton, but to some at least out of it. I confess for one to feeling much more at home in *his* church than in Mr. Slack's. Indeed, till Mr. Goodwill's arrival amongst us, I was quite at a loss for any thing of that consolation which, at times, perhaps, is nowhere to be less found than in one's own circle.—A man qualified both by nature and training for his position, as is Mr. Goodwill, is a treasure, sir, a blessing to a parish —nay, sir, a *necessity*, at least to such as have ever known what it is in the hour of trouble to have such a one to lean on.—You will understand this, sir, better, perhaps, *bye-and-bye*."

My noble friend, how tenderly, just now, are your utterances renewed!

CHAPTER VI.

On my way homeward, my attention was attracted by two carriages, Sir James' and the Squire's. Both (the horses had been loosened) were standing in the yard at the back of the Vicar's. This was suggestive of something more than a mere exchange of formalities. Sir James was there in redemption of his promise of a day and a night at the vicarage, while the Squanders had been purposely invited to meet him.

Mr. Manly, it seems, was in the right;—and now as the evening

advanced—an early tea putting every one at home—the style in which Miss Arrabella's tongue dealt with the scandals of the village left but scant room to doubt that Mr. Manly, in another of his suspicions, was as little at fault.—A-tiptoe, let us approach.

"I trust, Horatius" (the Vicar's sister is speaking), "that this will, at least, serve as a caution. Such excessive zeal is altogether a mistake. I assure you, Sir James, that had I not, so infatuated was my brother with this Giles, positively *insisted* on his remaining at home, it would be difficult to divine what turn his indisposition might have taken."

"Something constitutional, Mr. Slack?" inquired Sir James.

"Far from it," responded his sister, "I don't recall the having ever seen him so till then. There was nothing, perhaps, in his look, immediately indicative of suffering,—of positive pain;—but his silence!—his manner so strange!—so unusual!—so unlike anything that I had previously known in him!"

"Billious, perhaps?" said Mrs. Squander.

"Nothing of that kind, my dear."

"Any cloudiness, heaviness in his eye?'

"Not in the least, Sir James—It was in his appetite that he seemed *so* to suffer. At breakfast, a mere round of toast, and, at dinner, a little fish, with a leg and breast of a fowl, was all, and only by coaxing, that I could induce him to take. It was not till—"

"Had you ventured, Arabella, upon stimulants?"

"Just so, Mrs. S.—I was about to say, that not till he had taken a glass or two of Madeira and a tumbler of stout, which I insisted on, seemed he in any way himself. His appetite appeared, then, to gradually return, and, at supper, he ate even more heartily than usual."

"A somewhat remarkable case," said Sir James.

"I have looked both into 'Buchan,' and 'The Family Physician,' and in neither can I see any thing in the least resembling it.—I trust, Horatius, indeed, that this will be a lesson.—The idea, Sir James, of his attendance, in such a state, at a court of Justice!"

Mr. Slack laid his hand on the shoulder of his sister,—"You are a good creature, Arabella."

Sir James smiled.

In this conversation it will have been noticed that the Squire took no part. He was not in his usual spirits.

"One would suppose, Charles, that the Vicar's complaint was contagious."

"Not at all, my dear,—Has it reached you, Sir James, that one Manly (here the squire's any thing but better nature betrayed itself), a common, impertinent fellow, who sets himself up for a reformer, has been circulating a petition in behalf of this Giles Hawthorne?"

"I am afraid," replied the Judge, "that the petitioners will find that poachers are in little favour at present."

"This is the same fellow," added the squire, "that honoured, as I suppose he imagined, with his signature, the other day, a silly thing, in circulation against the corn laws."

"Himself a farmer, too?" inquired Sir James:—"a somewhat remarkable man."

"Is it not surprising," continued the Judge, "to observe in a country so, comparatively, enlightened as England, such mistaken notions upon many questions.—The rescission, now, of the corn laws would scarcely, to a labourer, make the difference of a loaf, at all events, of a loaf and a half in his favour per week."

"The difference," said Mr. Slack, "would, certainly, not amount to *two* loaves."

"Not half of what many of such fellows," superadded his sister, "are in the habit of receiving, weekly, from the parish. If one-third of the pains which some people, Sir James, take in propagating mischief, were devoted to inculcating on the *lower orders* a more general providence, it might be for the better with all of us. —It was but the other day, Sir James,"—

"My dear," interposed Mr. Slack, "Sir James will not care to hear,——"

"Pardon me, Mr. Slack,—pray—"

The Vicar flushed, but paused.

"It was only, Sir James, the other day, that I had occasion, on some little errand of charity, to *drop in* upon a family, with the prime minister of which *some one*, I imagine, is not altogether unacquainted,—the family of one Hobbs."

"The fellow that inaugurated such confusion in court, the other day?—A most irrepressible scoundrel!"

"Well, Sir James, what was the first thing, do you suppose, that I espied on entering his cottage?"

"Hard to say."

"In a house always uppermost, observe, with manifestoes of

hunger, not only an abundance of *good wholesome brown bread,* but *actually,* both pork and pudding, *both,* mind, *progressing* at the same time, indeed, in the same utensil, in celebration, as I was told, of the *eldest boy's birthday!*—Did you ever, Mrs. Squander, hear of such rubbish!"

The Vicar showed signs of uneasiness.

"I should, certainly, have thought," said Mrs. Squander, "from the fuss made by some people about large families, that birthday remembrances would be anything but agreeable ones.'

"I am sure, Mrs. Hobbs," I said, 'quite sure, that *you* are not in need of assistance from the parish.' This of course elicited the usual tears, protestations, &c., with something about there being, I can hardly repeat it without laughter, *no suet* in the pudding, and that the pork was *a gift,* and weighed, I think it was only *two ounces*—and then as a finish—"

"By way of desert," said Sir James.

"I suppose so,—a flourish about poor folks having feelings as well as their betters."

"Hear *that,* Charles?"

"Of course, I made it my business to acquaint Mr. Parish with what I had seen, and, as a consequence, *some one* I imagine, is in very little favour *somewhere.*"

"My sister, you see, Sir James," said the Vicar, certainly not paler than usual, "is *heart* and soul in her aspirations for a more general, a more extended providence."

"There is, certainly, ample room for it," observed the Judge—"I remember, when on the home circuit, I think,—yes, it was at Guildford, a case *precisely identical.*"

"Arabella, my dear," said Mr. Slack, "the room feels *chilly.* Do you find it so, Sir James?"

"No-o-o."

The parlor maid, however, Mercy, was summoned, and soon everything again looked bright, blazing and cheerful.

The paraphernalia of tea being removed, at the suggestion of the Vicar, all drew nearer to the fire, when Mr. Slack, from an apprehension shared in by most hosts, of one of those appalling conversational lulls, most frequent, perhaps, in politer circles, ventured an inquiry respecting the prospects of the proposed Reform Bill.

"That," said Sir James, "they will *never* carry. The upper house will see to *that.*"

"Otherwise, we can well dispense with it," said the Squire.

"I should be less apprehensive," resumed Sir James, "of an enlarged representation, as proposed, but for certain alarming symptoms, of late, against which it is impossible to shut one's eyes."

The Squire was all attention, as also was the Vicar, while the ladies looked smiles of approval at each other.

"Since the unfortunate Bill of 1824, which sanctioned combination among the working-class for the regulation of wages and working hours, there has been a growing tendency in the masses to meddle with old established customs and usages,—to take care of themselves, rather, than to allow themselves, as heretofore, to be taken care of by others, far better, I suspect, acquainted with their real wants and position."

"There is the mischief," said the Vicar.

Miss Arabella laid her hand on the back of her brother's.

"Recall, Mr. Slack, the dangerous meeting on the 28th day of June last, at Manchester, of delegates from branches of the general trade associations. The objects of that meeting, I should hope, sufficiently evince the danger, the positive folly of anything like an extension of political power in the masses. Fortunately the scattered location of men employed in agriculture, and their limited opportunity of acquiring information, *have, as yet at least, preserved them from similar combinations.*"

"Picture, Charles, a meeting of Slops and Pilches, with Harry Hobbs, as they call him, in the chair!"

"It would, certainly," resumed Sir James, "be an oddity; but let us not be too confident, too sanguine, too unobservant. Let us read as we go;—let us take care, in all proposed measures of reform, to do nothing to still further disturb existing relations between employers and employed.—I can assure you—but perhaps I am assuming—"

"Not at all, Sir James, not at all," simultaneously exclaimed the Squire and Mr. Slack; "we are but too proud of the opportunity presented."

With an acknowledgment, Sir James proceeded. "My position enables me, pretty clearly, to judge upon some matters. I can assure you that it is no longer with the hackney coach age that is past, with even its Burdetts and Colonel Joneses, that we have now to deal. A class of men are springing up whose lowliest aspirations are in advance of the boldest of such celebrities. I have in my eye, now, a young friend, comparatively so, at least,

a fair, by no means an exaggerated representative of such men. I call him friend, for in spite of his reckless enthusiasm, there is a sincerity, an earnestness in him that, were I a young man, might possibly more than, as at present, simply divert me. As to the proposed reform bill you were inquiring of (here Sir James turned to Mr. Slack), he confesses, for there is no concealment about the fellow, that it is a mere stepping-stone, as he calls it."

"And to what, pray, Sir James?" said Miss Slack, somewhat alarmedly.

"Well—to anything—everything.—We are to have a second Reform Bill,—the ballot—household suffrage!—compulsory education!—I assure you, we are to carry things with a high hand."

"He builds, I see, Sir James," said Mr. Squander, "this young gentleman, upon a Radical Government, a novelty, certainly, in a country like England, since no other would assuredly *be insane enough even to dream of a household suffrage.*"

"I should think not," answered Sir James.

"A very *eccentric* man, Charles?"

"I should rather say, my dear, a very *dangerous* one."

"Is he allowed, Sir James, to go *at large?*" inquired Miss Slack.

This seemed to tickle Sir James. Indeed, the piquancy of Mrs. Squander, and the dry sterile starchness of Miss Slack, were evidently a relief to the Judge, something refreshing after the any side, either side, every side style of reasoning to the which in his professional duties he had daily to submit.

"On one point," resumed the Judge, "his opinion is very decided. Educate," he says, "the agricultural labourer to the level of the meanest mechanic, and *he would not endure his present position for an hour longer.*"

"No man," exclaimed the Squire, "ought, Sir James, to be permitted to enunciate such sentiments."

"Quite *so*, Mr. Squander, yet such sentiments are, now-a-days, openly, fearlessly promulgated. On one point his views are somewhat original, and have been thought by my friend, Mr. Justice Scales, to be deserving of attention."

The Vicar shifted his chair somewhat nearer to Sir James.

"He contends that the enormous increase of wages, *inevitably* consequent on the enlightenment of the rustics, by rendering it impossible for the farmer to pay his present rent and rates, without an increase in the price of produce such as the public would never submit to, would compel the land owners to a subdivision of

their estates, in order to sustain their rent roll as at present. A labourer, that is to say a small farmer, he contends, could easily, and would cheerfully pay a higher rent, a much higher one than the landlord is at present receiving. Of course, the farmer, whose daughter almost turns up her nose at the *town* ball, would, in a great measure, disappear, to be replaced by a class of men having a more direct interest in what he is fond of calling *good government*."

"With himself, I suppose," supplemented the Squire, "at the head of it."

"We are not, then, to be without our rents, it seems," observed the Vicar.

"There ought to be a statute made on purpose for that man," said Mrs. Squander. The unyielding features of 'Arabella' were put to a trial.

"There is something, however, at times," resumed the Judge, "very amusing in him. It is quite diverting to observe how lugubriously he predicts, and at no distant date, a decline in our trade and manufactures."

"And for what reason?" inquired Mr. Squander.

"Well,—he contends that if the present monopolizing system of land tenure is allowed to continue, it will bring us into competition with the lower labour rate of the foreigner, consequent on the greater cheapness of food with him; which will, he says, be but another exhibition of the way in which Providence 'of our pleasant vices makes instruments to scourge us.' My friend has read history, he says."

It was open to notice that the Vicar was particularly attentive.

"Scarcely less amusing," continued Sir James, "is his notion, that the Almighty, I give you his words, could never have intended that three distinct parties, meaning, of course, the landlord, the farmer, and the labourer, should be supported by the labour of one of them, and that one begrudged a sufficiency of food."

The Squire's face darkened.

"I, really, Sir James," said Mr. Slack, "cannot see the necessity, nor do I at all approve of mixing up the Almighty, as your friend seems disposed to do, with any such matters."

"I wonder that the poor rabbits and hares," said Mrs. Squander, "were not advanced as a fourth party."

"It would not have surprised me," said the Judge; "his fancy is not a little suggestive. My friend's views, indeed, if carried out, would eventuate in an interference with every existing insti-

tution, and of this no one is more thoroughly aware than himself. So let us be cautious, I say; we cannot be too much so."

"How different, in all probability, will be, *some* day, Sir James, your young friend's views. I recall (the Vicar is speaking) that when I was at Oxford, and even for some time afterwards, in expectancy of a living, I had very loose notions upon many points."

"Yes, I assure you, Sir James, there was not, at one time, a greater demagogue than Horatius."

"It is too true, I am afraid, Sir James, that I have, as others, my little inexperiences to answer for. I can hardly without a smile, indeed, recall some of my earlier oddities. An irregular reading was, of course, not without its fruits. That property had its duties as well as its rights was, I remember, at that period, an especial principle with me; but when, through the premature death of my father, as you are aware, the bulk of my grandfather's property fell to me, I began after a while to discover that property had, at least, *some* rights as well as duties and that, at times, it was necessary to guard that the former were not entirely consumed, in consideration of the latter."

"A caution, Mr. Slack, too frequently necessitated."

"As well, Horatius, seemingly, that Sir James' phenomenon has at least the good taste to leave some people alone. His eccentricities would be poorly in place *somewhere*."

"I assure you," said the Judge, "that he is very far from doing so, upon the which will many, opposed to his political eccentricities, as you have not inaptly called them, congratulate themselves. He would not only, continued Sir James, not only dissociate the church and state, but he admonishes that Government, by Act of Parliament, a favourite power of his, by the bye, appropriate all church property, with a view to a redistribution, in a way *more consistent with justice and religion!*"

"Why, Charles, that man can never, surely, be in his right senses!"

"I am not quite so certain of that, my dear."

"A little vague, in his expression, your friend," said Mr. Slack; "one can hardly conceive, Sir James, of religion without justice."

"Hardly;—but such men, you are aware, seldom, Mr. Slack, advance above a step or two without a stumble. In his reconstructive notions this is constantly apparent. They are certainly, however, *original!*"

"Such men, Sir James," added the Squire, "have, generally, an

ulterior, a disguised object in view. Once deprive the landed interest of the support of a rich and powerful church, and the crafty scoundrel knows well what would be then at his mercy."

"Of that, indeed, he makes no secret, Mr. Squander; and to that end he throws upon the church, however unjustly, the entire responsibility for, what he is eternally harping on, *the present degraded position of the farm labourer*. The church, that is, the *real* church, he contends, has never stood forward as his friend. Hand and glove with the aristocracy, its interests and sympathies according to him, have ever been, and are still, entirely, with *them*."

"Most churchmen, I imagine, Sir James, have quite enough upon their hands already. The horsepond, I suspect, would not be amiss with some of these gentlemen.—What say *you*, Mr. Slack?"

"W-e-l-l,—from my own experiences, I *must* say, Mr. Squander, that I should be sorry to see the day, very sorry to see it, when ministers of the Establishment consider,—that is to say, make it, in any way, a part of their business to trouble themselves with matters *inconsistent* with their duties as shepherds of One who looked, and would have us all look, to something widely remote from any thing that this sublunary world can afford us. I am aware, perfectly aware that many things are far, very far from being with the agricultural labourers as they should be, and it grieves me, truly grieves me that it is so. Living in their midst no one has so complete an opportunity of becoming acquainted with their wants and necessities as ourselves, and our sympathies are, naturally, proportionately enlisted. I have often, indeed, very often regretted that the more immediate calls of *duty* should at times necessitate upon our part a silence which illiberality is too astute to forego the opportunity of representing as a neglect."

"It has reached me,—with what amount of truth, Mr. Slack, I am not aware,—that there is a more widely diffused, an increasing indifference with the farm labourers to religious truths?"

"W-e-l-l—I am sorry, very sorry, Sir James, that a familiarity with them obliges me to confess that such is but too truly the case. Indeed, the greater part of them can hardly be said *to have any religion at all*,—a sad, a very sad thing to reflect on; as in the trials and troubles of life, from which how few are exempt, (how few! said Miss Slack) they are without, entirely without those consolatory influences which, when all others fail, might at least assist in reconciling them to that position in which it has pleased

Providence to place them. I am aware also, and it grieves me, more than grieves me to say it, —that many, too many, I am afraid, have of late, from an *excess of zeal*, put the church in a position which it must be painful, very painful for any prospective, appreciative mind to contemplate."

"But, my good brother," interrupted Miss Slack, "this is not ———"

"My dear!"

"Your friend, must indeed, Sir James," interposed Mr. Squander, "be an original."

"Not the least amusing of his originalities is his charitable consideration for those with whose pockets he has just been making so free. All ministers,—my poor friend! of every denomination are to be alike endowed with a 'reasonable and gentlemanly independence.'"

"Oh, we are still to be gentlemen," said Mr. Slack, "a consideration that with *some* parties will not be the least likely to advance his views."

"Christianity, too, Horatius, is still to be permitted to exist!"

"Not very clear, Sir James," said Mr. Slack, "in what way your reformer's views admit of a separation of the Church from the State; yet, such a disseverment, if I understand you, he proposes?"

"Only of the connection as it at present stands."

"The crafty scoundrel!" interrupted the Squire.

"He considers," resumed Sir James, "that a church, with a broad significance, to be sure, in the word, such as, according to his talismanic notions, it might be made to be, would, to a great extent, supersede the necessity for a police, and, that, therefore, it would become, not only a duty, but a positive economy for the State to uphold it. No improvement upon the present system, he contends, could possibly result, with ministers dependent, in the remotest degree, on the patronage of their flocks."

"I am glad to be able to agree with him, for once," said Mr. Slack.

He considers, nevertheless, that to attach temporal advantages to a profession of *particular* opinions is unfavourable to the progress of inquiry and truth, and has a tendency to encourage simulation in ministers, while, at the same time, it leads to political subserviency, and fosters in them a worldliness of spirit. You will see, Mr. Slack, pretty clearly his drift."

"There is, certainly, as you observed, no concealment about him."

"Without, however," resumed Sir James, "a House of Commons—widely different from what even the proposed reform bill promises us—he would object to the least interference with the Church as at present. Such interference would only, he thinks, postpone what he is fond of calling the *desired end*,—that the choice of ministers lie with their congregations."

"Their salaries, however," interrupted Mr. Slack, "to be, in no degree, dependent on them, I understand you. But what—what pray, Sir James, would he propose for our higher clergy? They have, of course, not been overlooked. Are we to have no St. Peters in our midst?"

"You will judge of his boldness, Mr. Slack, of his insane recklessness, when I tell you, that, with a dash of his pen, he would annihilate the whole of them."

"The entire of our bishops and archbishops!"

"The whole of them!"

"Does that man, Sir James, ever say his prayers?" said Miss Slack.

"We will hope so."

"He can never, Sir James, have seen, at all events have heard, a bishop."

"It would seem so."

"I would advise," interposed Mrs. Squander, "that the riot act be read, at the least, twice a day wherever that young gentleman resides."

"Not a bad suggestion, Mrs. Squander."

"He can never, surely, suppose that any but the choicest rif-raf would frequent his churches. Why, his vulgar fellows would be singling out any one they pleased for a lecture. It would be positively unsafe, Charles, for some people to go near them."

"There is very little room for uneasiness, my dear."

"It is, I imagine, from the same restrictive tendency," remarked the Judge, "that we may deduce his persistency that *no clergyman, of any denomination, be permitted to be a magistrate.*"

"To that," said Mr. Slack, his countenance betraying, till then, perhaps, concealed languor, "not a few of us would, I suspect, but too readily submit."

"Well, well, into what contradictions, Sir James, will not enthusiasm betray us? To whom so indebted as to yourself, Horatius,

the unfortunate creature for whom, you will recall, was so much mistaken sympathy expressed."

"I don't,—my dear—"

"Forgotten, Horatius, your infatuation for Diggs!"

"Diggs, Diggs," interjected Sir James,—"not altogether new to me the name. Was it not Mr. Justice Grindwell before whom—"

"Just so, Sir James,—the affair, you have recalled it, was purely this:—One Diggs of an adjoining parish had been tried, that is to say convicted, of poaching, on an occasion."

"On several occasions, Horatius!"

"Possibly, my dear,—on the grounds of our good neighbour, Baron Steinberg. He was sentenced, if I remember,—Mr. Squander can correct me, to transportation for fourteen years."

The Squire, with a blush, assented.

Apprised that the man had, at times, been without work, and that, for weeks prior to his committal, he had been distressingly put to it with an ailing wife, it seemed that the merits of the case might be met, and with no very great sacrifice of justice, by a somewhat modified penalty. I, therefore, in conjunction with others, made it my business, I might have said my duty, to appeal in his behalf. A commuted sentence of ten years was the result.

"And what of the thanks, Horatius?"

"We-l-l—we don't on all occasions, my dear, take that into our consideration. There are times when it is sufficient, more than sufficient, to know that we have been doing, that is to say, have done our duty.—By-the-bye, I have heard, and, I am sure, Sir James, that you will believe me, with the sincerest pleasure, that the man's behaviour has obtained for him a remission of the two years still unexpired of his term. He proposes, I have further heard, to return to his old quarters. His wife and mother, I suspect, are the magnets;—but, for some years now both have been dead!"

This was followed by a silence.

"His wife had been troubled, had she not, Horatius, for the last year or two, with *heart* disease?"

No one replied,—and poorly detective the eye that had read nothing in the countenance of the Squire. It was evidently with a view of breaking ground that he inquired of Sir James what opening, if any, his abolitionist proposed for young men of spirit and position, in lieu of the one he would deprive them of: "An increased army estimate would find but few friends just now, I opine, Sir James?"

"Have you forgotten, Charles," volunteered Mrs. S., "how some one was always rallying a certain young gentleman on his belonging to neither the army nor the church?"

"Well,—in my poor friend's Utopia no army, Mr. Squander, would, of course, be required."

"I would have that man," ejaculated the Squire, "and the sooner the better, sent upon his travels;—what say you, Mr. Slack?"

"Such a man is certainly, Mr. Squander, there can be no doubt of it, a dangerous, a most dangerous man,—still, perhaps, one less to be dreaded than to be pitied."

"To be tarred and feathered," frothed the Squire.

"You just took, Charles, the words from my lips."

Here a summons by Mercy, the parlor-maid, to supper was a relief, I suspect, to at least one present.—The Vicar gave his arm to Mrs. Squander, as did Sir James to "Arabella."

The combined comfort, taste, and liberality that in every thing, presented itself, whilst flattering, and justly so, to the pride of both Mr. Slack and his sister, was a compliment to Sir James which, to judge by his heartiness and conversational brilliancy, he appeared to fully appreciate.—On returning to the drawing-room all were delighted with his eloquence and urbanity, and it was not without a sigh of regret, and a re-promise, on the part of Sir James, of a day or two at Thornley Hall, that Mrs. Squander, in company with the Squire, for that night at least, bade him an adieu.

"A delightful creature! Mr. Slack," said the Judge,—a most charming, a most entertaining woman!"

"She is indeed so!" replied the Vicar.

"And always the same!" added Miss Slack,—"we have known her now for years—and to see her once is to see her always. You are not acquainted, it seems, with Thornley Hall, Sir James?"

"A pleasure, however, that I have promised myself."

"You will be much struck with it.—Mrs. S. is *everywhere*—she has not been in Italy for nothing you will say.—Such an eye!—It is at her suggestion that we propose pulling down a number of beggarly cottages so annoyingly in sight from my brother's——"

"Sir James," interposed the Vicar, "whenever—you may feel disposed—to—retire—; with such onerous duties in prospective I imagine." With a bow from Sir James that was as good as to say "Thank you, Mr. Slack, thank you," the Vicar paused.

And now an ominous, a somewhat prolonged silence, which,

more than words could have done, proclaimed that another evening's pleasures and excitements had come to an end.

"You have no objection, Sir James," said Mr. Slack, advancing from a side table, with a *book* in his hand "to join—with us—in—in—*prayer?*"—O Thou of Bethlehem,—bear with us,—bear with us!

CHAPTER VII.

We will hardly pause to remark upon Mrs. Squander's exclamatory surprise at the *ridiculously* lavish parochial provision for Jenny, so out of proportion to the *woman's* desserts and necessities; or upon Mr. Slack's repeatedly expressed satisfaction that *the poor creature*, in the *hour of affliction*, had been found not to be altogether destitute of friends. It will be sufficient to observe that, but for the few pence contributed by the broken-hearted comrades that Giles was shortly to leave so far behind him, it would, indeed, have gone hard with his wife.—The relieving officer, Mr. Paul Parish, was more than *something* of an economist, and Jenny's good friend, Mrs. Parish, his wife, who had so cared for her in her girlhood, had already been dead some years,—to Jenny an irreparable loss.

It is but just that I record that, from the time of Giles' arrest until now, little sums, varying, in amount, from a shilling to one-and-sixpence, had been repeatedly forwarded to her, through Hawthorne, by the Rev. Mr. Goodwill, of Orton, and always with an injunction to silence.—I am not able to say that nothing was ever sent to her by Mr. Slack, but I am equally unable to say to the contrary. Had it been so, I could hardly, I think, not have heard of it.

But now I have a sad, a dull office to perform. The hour had arrived when Jenny was to look perhaps her last upon one dearer to her than all besides. Giles, on the morrow, was to be transferred to the Dove transport, lying in readiness at Woolwich. In a retired angle of the jail yard at Shropton have they already met.—Let us observe them,—yonder,—the two, with their little ones, apart from the rest, standing together,—a high spiked wall to the left of them. Jenny upon the bosom of her husband is letting fall the bitterest tears that ever, perhaps, stole from the lids of woman. An infliction, nothing less would it be, to repeat but a

tithe of her tender broken-hearted utterances. "What of joy or of peace had she now to look for;—even the poor pleasure of concealed wretchedness would be no longer hers;—who, with a smile still a smile, would there be, in his tired arms, to take up her little ones, and joy at them;—for whom was she hence to save, to conceal, to contrive;—who to welcome, or be welcomed by;—to advise with, to plan with;—had she still to struggle, to endure, to sacrifice, and no one to love, to bless her for it;—how was she to bear it!"—Giles could hold no longer.

"My Jane,—my Jane,—thee dunna speak,
It wunna be for long,
For though thy Giles be moartal weak,
Yet God is heavenly strong.

Whether upon the foamy sea,
Or on my prison bed,
He wunna, Jane, keep far from me,
If I ha' rightly read.

For though it waun't, I know, aright
To break my country's laws,
God knows as what wer done that night
Waun't, Jane, athout a cause.

Nay, He whose eye is looking down,
And sees this parting tear,
I couldn't for my Maker own,
If I had cause to fear.

Oh, dunna weep,—thou'lt break my heart;—
Why should I thee deceive,
Thee only hast with me to part,
But I ha' all to leave."

"Oh, say not so, my bosom's pride,
Thou'rt more than all to me,
I cannot in the world abide,
When I am lost to thee."

"Nay, Jenny, coom,—thee maunna say
Sich cruel parting words;
If from the nest should'st thou away,
Oh, who shall guard the birds?

These little birds, whose searching eyes
Are on my fretted face,
Like heaven's lights from out the skies
Upon a darker place.

Ah, who shall tend them, night and day,
As we were proud to do,
Still teach them how to love and pray,
If,—Jenny,—not with you?

So, for our hearts best treasure's sake,
Thee maunna spurn at life;—
My breaking bosom's blessing take,
My poor,—my poor wife.

I've nothing more,—must leave thee, Jane,
To God's enduring love;—
Good bye,—good bye,—we meet again,
At least, we'll trust, *above*."

Here, with the kindliest consideration, stepped forward John Hawthorne, from where Hobbs and he, the only ones admitted with Jenny, had been standing, watching them. Loosening Jenny from her husband's neck, and giving her to Hobbs, John drew him convulsively towards him, and, with a hug in which was his whole soul, a kiss upon both of his cheeks, and a word or two of never-failing care for his wife, tore himself from him, and, taking Jenny in his arms, carried her out of the yard. Her little ones, led by the eldest, a girl, followed. It was with a bitterness barring expression that Giles had lifted them, for the last time, perhaps, one by one, to his lips.

Giles was, by this, left alone with Harry, his tried, his brave, affectionate friend.—Hobbs stepped up to him,—looked him for a moment in the face, and then took him by the hand.—Even the breast of Harry rose and fell.

"Giles, there be one wooll taake thy part,
Let Heaven but spare poor Hobbs;
'Shall never be forgotten, Giles,
While this heart beats and throbs.

'Hast never knawed me womanish,
So, the tears I woo'den stay
Thee'll taake, Giles, in the stead of aal
A friend's full heart woold say."

Giles pressed the hand his earnest friend
Clasped closely to his own,
When lo!—the jailer's voice is heard,
And Giles once more—alone!

CHAPTER VIII.

There can be little doubt that it had been purposely arranged that the van for the conveyance of Giles and others to Woolwich should not leave till the night had, at least, somewhat advanced. It had been whispered that Merrow contained in it some dangerous stuff. It was known, however, to Hawthorne who, in confidence, revealed it to Styles, that a batch of prisoners would leave Shropton on that night between the hours of eight and nine. Of these Giles was to be one. Along with him would be about a dozen others, including a reprieved murderer,—three burglars,—as many poachers,—and a few rioters, (chopsticks), among whom, by the bye, was one *quite a boy.*

John had not the courage, and he knew his brother too well, to be present on his leaving the jail. Not a word of his intended departure had been breathed by John to any one but Styles. Even Jenny had been kept in the dark. But, at about nine o'clock, concealed in the best way possible, might have been found two men in their respective garden patches, with brows sadder than usual, anxiously, restlessly listening.

Who that has ever looked upon a prison van, with its wild beast suggestions, will find it difficult to realize the repulsiveness with which Hawthorne regarded the one that now, at a moderate pace, was advancing upon his cottage. With a lightning step, he made for the road.—His first impulse was to stop the horses,—his next to call out;—but what would either have availed him; John's soberer sense restrained him. Nevertheless, strong, remarkably so, as were the nerves of this man, he was at last brought to know what it was even to tremble. He was shaking with agitation.—"Caged as a wild beast,—with burglars and murderers!"—It tore him to pieces.—"And for shooting a pheasant!—a miserable pheasant!"—"Will there be no judgment on the doer of this!"—"Heaven keep me from him in a thunderstorm!"

Styles was standing at his gate, close by the road, as the van passed him. Not a muscle in him moved. A living statue, he stood, gazing after it as it disappeared in the distance, and not till it had entirely done so escaped from him a syllable, when, with a heavy sigh,—"He be gone!" he said, "He be gone!"

Gone was he indeed! as Merrow in its Sunday-like quietness, for days afterwards, touchingly told. In scarcely above a whis-

per was the past spoken of. In groups were the villagers to be seen standing for hours, as if the society of each had become a necessity to the rest. A crime, a great crime had been committed. The feelings of every warm-hearted rough diamond in the place had been cruelly outraged, and all were agreed that, sooner or later, the great Looker on upon every thing would *take it into His wisdom to step forth in their behalf.*—"It bean't our'n," said Styles, "to sarcumstand aal'ays the way as God goes about things; but, sartain, Slop, as Hobbs hev a said, '*thaay as hev done it 'll come to no good leastways.*'"

It was now the sixth day since Giles' removal to the Dove; when a little tempest was suddenly raised in a bosom that, in its sorrow, had become dangerously silent.—Sally Hobbs, the wife of Harry, (and well matched to a T) rushed into Jenny's cottage, with the news that the Dove, with a host of others, had for days, with a contrary wind, been detained at the Nore. Hobbs had been working at Manly's.—Giles, then, was still within the possibility of reach! This again started Jenny to her feet—"Oh, could she see him but once more!"—"Could she only speak to the captain!—perhaps he might let him off!"—"He could never refuse her!"

"But how could her git there, Jane?" said Sally. "It be a good thirty mile, and I doan't a think as the captain could a do it; but I could a ask Styles."

"Oh, I am sure, Sally, that he would, if I could only speak to him."

"But how could her git along, Jane? athout wittles, and so poorly as her be."

"I want for nothing, Sally,—only to see him."

"Her hevn't a got, Jane, nothing as I could a tarn to account at Shropton?"

Here Jenny glanced at a mere ghost of a dress that was hanging on the wall, and then, with a long n-o-o, shaded her eyes with her hand.

"I tell ee what, Jane, as I could a do. I'll off to Shropton, where I be a owed a summat for a day's wash, and Harry, I knaws, wun't a mind as I, for once, should a do, as I likes wi' it.—Doan't her cry, a dear,—I knaws as you'd ha' done as much for we, Jane."

Jenny squeezed the hand that had kindly taken hers.

"Did thee ever see a ship, Jane?"

"Only in the pictures, Sally."

"How could her tell which wer Giles'?"

"It has no white streak on it, they say,—*black all over.*"

"Her doan't a say so!"

"They can't prevent me, Sally, can they, from seeing it?"

"I doan't a think, Jane, as they can;—Styles, p'rhaps, knaws."

It was finally settled that Sally Hobbs should away for Shropton, and that, on her return, she would see, during Jenny's absence, to her children, and make it all right with John, of whose displeasure Jenny was chiefly apprehensive.

Sally, in her zeal for her friend, was certainly in fault. But here were two women, one with the heart of a lioness, and as warm as the tropics, and the other, with a thousand dangers and difficulties as but straws between her and her adored. Can we wonder at the result.

In little more than an hour Sally was back, and with what seemed to Jenny quite a little fortune. Ten hard earned pennies were put into her hand, and with them, as it was still early in the day, Jenny, who had in the meantime dressed herself in the best way she was able, was prepared for a start. A cousin of Sally's was living at about ten miles from the Nore; and with her it was arranged that Jenny was to stop for the night;—And now it was "Good bye, Sally;"—"Good bye—her'll mind now, Jane, to taake it easy."

"Oh yes," said Jenny, making off like a frighted hare.

"I be afeard," said Sally, looking after her, "as John and Harry 'll both be a giving it I for this."

Now, upon the high road sped Jenny on her way,—now, as a nearer cut, across commons and heaths,—now over the fields, scrambling through the holly and the hawthorn; but who will bring himself to believe that Jenny heeded them a jot, or that any one could resist her appeal for a lift on the road, which on more than one occasion, fortunately, fell to her.

In the best way that wages *as high*, according to Mr. Slack, as ten shillings per week would permit, was Jenny both sheltered and fed by the cottaged cousin of Sally; and by noon on the following day, from a bluff overhanging the water, might she have been seen scanning it with maddened earnestness for the ship that was *black all over*. This it was not so difficult to detect, though quite a fleet was at anchor, it being amongst those nearest to the Essex side.

"If he only knew that I was here!"—Ah, Jenny, are you sure that would have comforted him.—But on what is it that Jenny is

now so intent? A boat is leaving the Dove, with three hands in it!—"It can't be Giles?"—poor Jenny!

Nearer and nearer it comes, watched by Jenny as was never, perhaps, boat watched before, until, now, upon the oozy sand below her it beaches; when the three men, one of them an officer, a little in advance of the others, by a winding path ascended to where Jenny was standing. Her heart failing, the first was allowed to pass unchallenged, and the two behind were already abreast of her—It was now or never.—"Please, sir," said she, making up to one of them, " is that the Dove?"

"Yes, my good lass,—the Dove."

" You couldn't, sir, take me on board?"

" Why, my good girl, you're crazy!"

"No, sir, I'm not.—I want to see the captain;—Giles is on board:—if I could only speak to him!"

" And who's Giles?" said one of the men.

" My husband, sir."

" Oh, I see,—going a pleasuring."

" I don't understand, sir."

" A vast heaving, my good girl," said the same man, " we're only fore'ard hands, and it don't lie with the like of us to interfere in any thing;—all we can do is to pass the word for you, and if Giles, as you call him, likes to speak to the Surgeon Superintendent—"

Here a hoarse hail from the officer, with a true British *blessing*, left unfinished what the sailor lad was saying.

" A tight little craft, Bill," said one of them, hurrying away.

In about an hour the three returned; but Jenny had not the courage to again address them. There was something discouraging in the officer.

" What in the name of Neptune can she be cruising about here for!" said he.

Hour after hour, however, passed, and Jenny was still upon the bluff. A revenue officer, who had been watching her, had more than once begged of her to leave; but *there* was the ship!

* * * * * * * *

And now it was night!—A light at the main top, however, still kept the Dove in sight:—It was cold,—as the morning neared,

piercingly so.—But hark!—a noise! strange, at least to Jenny —the windlass! The breeze in the night had shifted,—the Dove's anchor was on the left!—the light is *moving!*—Jane realizes the situation with aching brain, watching it as it advances till dimming in the distance, amidst the haze of the horizon, it is gone!

And when the morning broke, before
The sky had seen the sun,
The ship had tided out of sight,
And the wicked deed was done!

And now upon the scene appeared one who may not have been unexpected, stalwart and tanned, and with the look of *a man.* Making up at once to Jenny, and laying both hands upon her shoulders, "My poor, my poor girl!" he said, a burning drop starting to his eyes. "Oh God!"

It was Hawthorne.—As a hound upon a hare had he followed her.

"There!" said Jenny, pointing to the spot where the Dove had been riding,—"there!"

John understood her, and looked at her anxiously;—the bow had been over bent;—what should he do, what say to her?—"Oh, my poor sister, for *his* sake you must try to bear it; indeed, indeed, you must."

"I do try—I do bear it;—John, this is *you?*"

"Yes, Jenny, I am come to take care of you,—to take you home, Jenny."

"Home! John, home!"

"Yes, Jenny, to where your children are, your little children—all crying for you!"

"What!—what!—crying for me!—did you say crying for me?"—Oh take, take, take me, John,—I'll go, I'll go."

"A good girl, Jenny,—a good girl."

"Oh, could I have seen him, John, but once, only once more, just to have assured him how truly I have ever loved him, how dearer and dearer still he is to me now."

"My poor girl," said John, "not an hour of the past but will too tenderly, perhaps, assure him of that."

"Oh yes,—he knew, John, all my heart,
Before this cruel blow;
But oh, the love it bears him now,
He'll never, never know."

Why did I not go beg,—pray,—steal,—
Why leaned I to despair,—
All might have yet been well—he still—
But oh, look there! look there!"

(*Pointing to where the Dove had been riding.*)

"Jane, have a care,—this racking grief
But breaks thee more and more;
Have pity on poor self, for once,
Jane, I entreat, implore."

"I cannot, cannot,—no, no more
Together,—not together!—
From him away, where shall I go,
Oh, whither, whither, whither!

"You *will* not leave me? *will* not leave me?" (*clutching Hawthorne by the breast.*)
"Jane, my good wench, be calm;—"
"I am,—but say you *will* not leave me,
Why will you wish me harm?"

"What mean ye, Jane?"—"Oh, do not ask,
My brain is brok'n in two,
I dread to think, oh God! oh God!
What I may dare to do!"

John is again driven to recall to her her children. This alone has weight with her. The spot whence she had last looked upon the ship how could she abandon!

"You'll promise, then, to come here again with me, you'll promise me that, John?"

John assured her that he would:—so another hard long look at the water, and Jenny allowed herself to be led from the bluff.

On the third day they reached Merrow;—And now Jenny is again in her own home,—and alone with her noble friend, the bare contemplation of whom has been, since, with *me* in how much of bitterness a relief. In every way imaginable is he trying to paint to her the future in less gloomy colours. A never-failing care for her is promised.

* * * * *

"'Tis little that I hold just now,
The time is hard and poor,
But, trust me, thou shalt share it, Jane,
Or Heaven deny me more."

Thus this true man, on whose tried breast
The Lamb of God had laid
His head, as on a resting place,
And never was betrayed.

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

It was now the third day after Jenny's return. The last seen of the Dove was off Portland Race, crowding all sail for the westward and southward. This was not a little satisfactory to the Squanders, and possibly to *some others.*

A lovely morning! Nature arrayed in her spring freshness was resistless. The Squire and his lady were, betimes, on the road. No wonder that Mrs. S. was in brilliant spirits. She was triumphant. Power and property had vindicated their privileges, and, moreover, she had crushed, quite crushed a little wild flower that God had deigned to deck with graces sweeter, purer than her own. Far beyond Shropton extended their drive, and, to still lengthen the way, *at the suggestion of Mrs. S.*, their return was by the moor road, which would, eventually, bring them by *somebody's* cottage. Of this they are now within but a short distance, and Mrs. S. is congratulating herself and husband on having got rid of *one* pest.

"I often wonder why, my love,
Such creatures are created;
We, surely, should be happier
Without them, and less hated."

"As to their hate," replied the Squire,
"We well might do without it;
But as to something else, Sophia,
Ma foi, it may be doubted.

Sophia, if every Lady Fair
Had on herself to wait?"—
"Well, Squander, now, I—really—really—
I never thought of that.

I never could bear politics;
But tell me, Squander, dear,
What means all this *materiel*,
This preparation here."

The Squire had proposed to himself the pleasure of a *surprise* in the shape of a wire enclosure for his deer. He would impose upon them a restraint as light and as veiled as with *his own pet dear.*

His own pet dear,—so Charles himself!—
Never so pleased as when
Planning some little thing, to show
How thoughtful are the men.

"But Charles, dear, see—how beautiful
The sky!—so prettily
In softened colours dressed, it quite
Recalls dear Italy."

Thus, *tête-à-tête*, anon they neared
The now all desolate cot
Where Jenny's swollen cheeks betrayed
Her worse than widowed lot.

Jane had stept out, expecting John;
Her face was to the lane,
Whence a familiar bark, that ne'er
Had promised her in vain.

Jane turned on their approach, nor missed
The lady's vaunting air,
Pride struggling to uphold her heart,
To mask the misery there.

Squander looked hard at her,—poor Jane,
Her tears but fell the faster;—
The Squire took note,—whispered his wife,
Then rapidly drove past her.

"I'm sorry for the wench," said he,
"Strange how we hate to part;
No judge, perhaps,—or, by her looks,
Jane takes things sad to heart."

"I didn't care to notice, dear,
My thoughts were else astray;
Quite possible, poor thing, just now
She feels it in *her* way.

But la! such creatures soon forget;
Love is with them, a mere
Animal instinct,—they don't feel
As you or I do, dear."

The Squire was silent,—on his face
Was fixed John Hawthorne's eye,
Who, on his way to Jenny's hut,
Paused, as they cantered by.

" The fellow never touched his hat,
My dear," said " Lady S."
" I noticed it, my love; the cause
Not difficult to guess."

" Couldn't we have him punished, Charles,
There must be surely, some
Convenient statute, or to what—
What are we next to come!"

" Not, p'rhaps, so well, my love, to make
All enemies at once,
Or, else, 'twere easy, by some means,
To rid us of the dunce."

" We mustn't call him dunce, my dear,
The country people say
They'd rather than the Vicar hear
This bumpkin preach or pray.

There's no accounting, sure, for tastes,
Though some seem passing strange;
Fancy him, in the Vicar's place,
Some Sunday, Charles, for change,

But oh,—the pest!—that monster Hobbs!—
I never meet the man
Without,—keep clear of him, Charles pray,—
Do, do, dear, if you can."

" Not so, Sophia,—I've a bone
To pick with this same cur;—
" Well met, sir brave—a word or two,
And seasonably, sir.

As saucy as you please,—but hark;—
Let me again but catch you
On my domain,—on any part—
And, once for all, I'll match you.

You have been seen, of late, by Snipe,
With gun too in your hand."—
" Wheer, sir?"—" No matter that—enough,
I catch you on the land."

" 'Be false,—and well ye knaw it, too,—
I never yet done sich;
The way I taakes is free for aal,
For poor as well as rich."

" 'Tis free to no one, sir,—the right
I claim, and *I* alone;—
Mark me, bold fellow, you shall rue
This braggart insolent tone."

" This hins'lent tone!—ay, ay,—a breath,
In battle for one's right,
Is aal'ays hinsellence, when power
And poor folks jines in fight."

" Now hark you, sirrah,—I have brooked
This sauciness full long;
To-morrow shall not pass ere I
Teach you a bridled tongue."

" Do-ant fancy now to frighten I,
'Bean't quite so easy frought,
Hobbs never yet feared no man,—dang'd
If I daan't see it out.

Ye bean't a bit the gentleman,
Ye dunna knaw yer pleace,
Whatever *I* thinks of a man
I tells 'n to his feace.

Better at home, and at yer preayers,
Ye well knaws what I mean,
More decenter,—a sin to let
Yer sheameless feace be seen.

So hard beset!—so beaten down!—
With sich a goodly neame!—
A man as woo'den harm a worm!—
For sheame, for sheame, for sheame!

I no great scholard,—but I minds
What wiser folks hev read,
An', 'cordin' that, there bean't no God,
If *some one* die in a bed."

" Squander, my dear, you look quite ill!
I never saw you so,
As pale,—don't answer him, Charles, pray,
Let the rude creature go.

Not in a bed!—more likely far
To be his highness' lot;
A decent bed is, probably,
More than the lout has got."

"Mine bean't like yourn, mebbe, proud dame,
A bed o' hayder down,
But, for a quiet sleep a nights,
I woo'den swop my own.

But go yer ways,—'shall mind of I,
I stands by what I zaid,
There bean't no God in that good sky,
If some folks dies in a bed."

"A saucy hound!—Squander, the reins,—
The reins, Charles!"—"A-y—the reins;"—
"Better, another time, my dear,
Avoid these horrid lanes.

This comes, Charles, of that Hawthorne's prate;
The silly coxcomb fancies,
By preaching, praying, and so forth,
To fashion us as France is.

This upstart has been carrying on,
Of late with a high hand;
The villagers, on Sunday, Charles,
Are half at his command.

That Manly must be spoken to,—
The Vicar is the one
Should see to it,—the time, at length,
That something must be done.

Such creatures, if not checked, will next
Carry themselves as good
As you or I, Charles, and assert
A general brotherhood.

This sweet disciple, I opine,
Thinks to 've done great things,
To 've nettled us,—such gnats mistake,
Always, their nips for stings.

Wasn't it rich when, Charles, *I* flung
His own bed in his face;
How cut he looked,—how quick it brought
The upstart to his place."

"Sophia, pray, what—what were his words,
When speaking of the bed?
His words, Sophia, I mean,—his words,—
The exact words he said."

"Some nonsense, dear,—that you and I,
Was ever thing so rich,
Would come, just fancy, Charles, to find
A deathbed in a ditch!"

"His very words?"—"Not so,—but thus
The fellow's thoughts were bent,
Ditches, and dogs, and deathbeds, dear,
A common compliment."

"I've sometimes wished, Sophia, of late,
We'd let that Hawthorne go;—
I never—told you—of a dream—
That,—somehow,—haunts me so."

"I never pay attention, dear,
To any dreams, unless
The very lucky ones,—and then,
There *may* be,—I confess.

But, Squander, dear, you don't observe
The beauty of the scene,—
The lovely sky,—the *charmants* trees,
The church steeple between."

"Sophia, when speaking of the bed,
Kept he his eye on *me?*"
"Till *I*, Charles, took the fellow up,
And then it ran that *we*—"

"I—know, Sophia,—myself to blame,
In speaking to the hound;
Let him beware!—if Snipe or I
But catch him on the ground!"

"He surely, cannot know us, Charles;—
Such nonsense, I declare,—
Not in a bed!—with more, my dear,
Than twenty beds to spare!

But who, pray, now, Charles,—just in view,
Coming straight down the lane?
If any of that Hawthorne's set,
Some insolence again."

"The further one bids well for Pilch,
The nearer Turnpike Tom;
Seem not to notice them, Sophia,
Be absent as they come."

"Just so,—the more indifferent,
The less———" "Hush, hush, my dear,
Mark what a look that Pilch puts on,
As the rude hind draws near."

"Nothing but what I looked for, Charles,
To see them turn like Tartars;
I never count on gratitude,
Make up our minds for martyrs.

What bird is that, my love, I see,
Far in the sky away?"
"Yonder, Sophia?—a hawk prepared
To pounce upon his prey."

"So cruel, Charles, such creatures seem,
Bent always on oppression;
Indeed th' inferior animals
Seem all of one profession.

I thought I should have laughed, Charles; did
One ever see such creatures!
Two of John Hawthorne's *Christians*, Charles,
Sweet Christians, by their features!

The shepherd must be very proud
If all his flock are thus,—"
"Sophia, I see the Vicar,—yes,—
Yonder, awaiting us."

"Indeed, Charles,—where?"—"By Manly's gate,
Standing his face this way;"—
"Don't loiter, love,—a tête-à-tête
Quite a relief to-day.

After such creatures, really now,
To pop on one of taste!
Like stumbling on a flower, Charles,
In some neglected waste."

"*Do I look pale, dear?*" * * *

But five little words,—and yet how much have they revealed! Never, perhaps, was the Vicar's hand more acceptable to Mrs. Squander than now,—never was his presence so restorative. Mrs. S. was even more than herself. Enough had the Vicar to do to defend himself from her sallies, "Such reports as reached us,—such absurdities,—nothing that you had not done for the fellow, or was not about to do!"

"Had even written to the judge,
The day before he sat!
We knew you, Vicar, both, too well
For any fear of that."

"Rumor is ever, Madam, rife
With some fresh fashioned tale;
The fancy dearly loves to paint
When facts are found to fail."

"Just so with us,—now this,—now that,—
Could we but, Vicar, see,
Our own poor selves with some folks' eyes,
What beauties we should be!

Here, Charles quite takes the thing to heart,
As *triste* and dumb forsooth—"
"Come, come, Sophia,"—"Vicar, believe,
I barely speak the truth."

The lady was evidently in better spirits than her lord, nor was this disparity removed though now drawing upon home.

"The gate, my dear!—Squander, the gate!
Why, chuck, you would have passed,—
Quite a campaign, Charles,—heaven be praised,
The d-e-a-r Hall at last."

CHAPTER II.

As a thunderclap upon the good folks of Merrow came the news of Hobbs' rencounter with the Squire. On the Sunday following not a cottager in the village but, in company with him, paid a visit to the scene of action, and such consolation as Harry's bravado could afford them was gratefully acknowledged by them all. That, in their greediness for revenge, Hobbs should be regarded as nothing less than a hero will no one be surprised, nor that a widespread and more than whispered disapproval of the Squire's severity should exasperate still further both the Squanders and their tool, Snipe. To an extent, indeed, was this exhibited as pitiful as dangerous. Every precaution had to be taken against the keeper and his snares. Now it was winded that for a few days his presence was required elsewhere,—now, that by sickness he was restricted to his chamber. A friend at court, in the shape

of a Merrow-bred parlour maid had, possibly, kept more than one from following in the wake of Giles.

It was not long, my reader may be sure, before I was again in Merrow; nor had mere curiosity directed me thither. The game that was there being played had daily tightened its hold of me. Moreover, already a transatlantic traveller, my acquaintance with the position of the English labourer abroad had awakened in me an interest in him at home. As a promoter of emigration, I was often in Shropton, and it was on my return homeward from thence that I again found myself a loiterer in Merrow. With the villagers, as usual, I had had more than a word or two, and as it was still short by an hour, of noon, and a return to Lavent, without the same with my friend Manly having of late become all but an impossibility, behold me again within a rod or two of his gate.

"You will find him, sir," said one of his labourers, "alone, in the kitchen,"—just where I delighted to meet him.

"Don't rise," I said, as on entering by a back door, I espied him in the act of laying down his pipe, "I will make myself quite at home."

"I am indeed glad to see you, and I will tell you why," he replied; "some one will be here presently whose acquaintance, I know, you are desirous of improving. I am expecting Hawthorne—John Hawthorne."

"You could hardly have promised me a greater pleasure."

"Moreover," said he, resuming his seat and pipe, "I have been speculating ever since our last interview upon what passed between us in respect of our agricultural labourers. I have not always met with the same sympathy upon that question as in yourself. It has emboldened me to think that the day may yet be when, with many now living, their present degradation will have become a thing of the past. There is a cloud, sir, gathering which it is not every one, it seems, can see; but there it is, sir, and it will spread and darken till it breaks, when a brighter day may follow. Much, I know," he continued, "will, in the meantime, have to be endured,—a bitter fight it will be. There are too many of us, as matters rule, already. How it will be with us some twenty years hence is a puzzle."

"By that time with emigration, as at present," I said, "may we not rather look for an improvement?"

"With that in view, if I rightly understood you, you regard America as a field for only the hardy and self-reliant?"

"For such only," I replied, "at least, in its remoter, unreclaimed parts.—It is not every one, sir, who is made for a pioneer."

"I should say not."

"It is simply a cruelty to make no such distinction. Of what possible use to himself or to any one could a Shropton skittle player be in the back settlements of Canada! It would seem that the consideration at present, in sending out some parties, is less their advancement elsewhere than their removal from where they are an acknowledged nuisance."

"It was not, however," inquired my friend, "of such incapables that the host who accompanied you, on your return, consisted?'

"By no means," I replied, "such are utterly powerless to return. The greater part of them were men broken in health by the climate of the West and South. Some, the more healthy looking, were from Canada. Of these, many were on business demanding their presence in England, while a few, so I was informed, were on a more delicate mission, to be settled between themselves and some still unforgotten Janey or Sally of the hayfield. A few also, of more advanced years, were for another last look at the haunts of their boyhood,—at what they are still in the habit of calling *home*."

"Oh, they still," said Mr. Manly, bringing his chair nearer to mine, "they still called it *home?*"

"Yes, to a man;—and the humbler, the less desirable it appeared to have been, the more lovingly, the more holily, I may say, did they seem to look forward to it."

"Ah!"

"Not so, however, to their country," I continued. "The wrong which at *its* hands they consider themselves to have suffered, that drove them from its shores, is never forgotten. '*Thaay risturerats*' is on the lips of too many of them."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Mr. Manly, "not that it surprises me. It confirms much that I have both heard and read.—Would any of them, think you, be for returning, with a prospect of doing better than of old?"

"Very few,—at least of those who have long been out. Habituated to the ways and climate of the country, and above not only want but the fear of it, it would take much to induce them to do so. Those who return for a last look at the old lanes are mostly men who left England at an age when its prettiness had taken an enduring hold of them,—who, too often for their comfort, have

been in the habit of looking back, to moments at least, of what they have in vain sought for elsewhere; as, not only from what I was a witness of, but from what it fell to me to hear from very many, prosperity, I should say, is more frequently to be met with in America than happiness. I am speaking, of course, of those whose maturer years, on emigrating, had formed tastes, habits and affections not readily to be surrendered. Such men complain of being alone even with their children,—that their associations are all different, while age pines for what it recalls is less rarely denied to it *at home*. It is not, however, sir, till a man again finds himself in England that he discovers to what an extent a protracted residence in the woods has disqualified him for the old world. He has become much more of an Indian than he was aware of. Its contrasted exclusiveness is intolerable to him. A hard hand has ceased to be a letter of introduction. As in his woods or prairie he sighed for the hawthorn of his boyhood, so, on a return to it, is he sensible, still more, of a something wanting, and, with a sense of humiliation, he looks wistfully back at the independence he has abandoned. "Why, I quarrelled, sir," said one to me, "with my own brother!"—while, said another, "I can never, sir, but in memory, live there again."

"How much better," interrupted my friend, "would it not be, both for their country and themselves, were such men at least less necessitated to leave it. As Scotch Kames, sir, of the past century, observed: 'A small share of the money and attention bestowed on raising colonies in America would have done wonders at home.' When that, sir, was written an increasing population was regarded as the touchstone of national prosperity, and such would it still be accounted, if some folks could be brought to understand better than they seem to do their true interest.—Now, sir, I contend, that if only a sixth part of our enclosed land were devoted to farms of from five to ten or twenty acres each, with suitable buildings on them, the higher rent which, I know, the labourers would cheerfully submit to, would throw into the pockets of the landowners an additional sum so great that they can never, surely, have taken it into their consideration, while a million, at least, of able men and their families would be nobly provided for. I know that, in their selfishness no less than in their ignorance, there are many who contend that in a labourer there would be no security against his insolvency. To me, sir, it seems that the temptation for the landlord to repossess himself of improved properties would

necessitate the most cautious and stringent measures for the protection of the tenant.—With our millions of acres of waste lands only a government, perhaps, is qualified to deal, for a while at least; but, eventually, on a good breadth of them might tens upon tens of thousands of additional settlers be located. And would such occupants," continued my friend, warming as he advanced, "be of no value to their country, *sharers in a conservative spirit as inseparable from the soil as its weeds?* When wanted by the commonwealth, would no willing as well as able hands be to be found in their midst? For the homes that they were happy in would such men be the likeliest to begrudge a sacrifice? Rely on it, sir, that, with an extended representation, we shall be any thing but safe with such, comparatively, a mere handful of men having a stake in the soil. The tendency of things, at present, is to multiply a class whom revolution could scarcely injure. An antagonistic, an indemnifying class is demanded. With an extended suffrage this will hourly become more apparent. What a weakness, then, not at once to create it, not at once to engraft it on the soil, when such could be done with even a profit to the engrafter. Certain is it, sir, that the inevitable increase in our numbers, must, sooner or later, necessitate some such action. The selfishness which now obstructs it may, by then, be its readiest prompter; for I have no faith, sir, that a population, such as before the expiration of the passing century may be looked for, will passively submit to anything like the existing exclusive state of things. Of every ten of us now born, nine, at the least, have a fight, and a hard one, for sheer existence. How, then, will it be with us hereafter! Sorry will be many by then, sir, that neither they nor their fathers had assisted to multiply a class whose interest it would have been to uphold order and obedience."

"But, in our extending commerce and manufactures," I observed "may not employment for some years to come be reasonably reckoned on, even for a vastly-increased population?"

"Certainly;—but this, you will allow, must have its limits. It cannot be supposed that we are for ever, as at present, to ride it over other nations, and it is sorrowful to reflect that this prospective increase in our numbers will be little calculated, from the nature, to so great an extent, of its employment, to conduce to the moral betterment of society. The humanizing influences of agriculture will be entirely denied to it. Nor can an outlet for the *uneasy* class, as they have been called, be reckoned on for a very

lengthened period. The land, now open to all, will, eventually, be required, and, possibly, reserved for those born under its own skies. It is easy, sir, to foresee that such will be the case, whenever actual competition for its possession exists. A very large portion, moreover, of the boasted West of America is, I have been given to understand, simply valueless."

"In the millions of sturdy yeomen and occupiers whom you would engraft on the soil, you would look for a bulwark against what, in the States, would be called the *rowdyism* of crowded communities?"

"Just so,—by making every man possessed of land in fee, or for a term of years, liable to militia duty. It was so, if I mistake not, in the olden Saxon times. With a militia such as we might have we should have little to apprehend from home troubles, and our wooden walls ought to be sufficient for all others."

"I should say so."

"England had never greater need, sir, than just now, to guard against herself."

"I understand you."

"In the sons, too, sir, of such men, seldom in their teens out of their sires' sight, what soldiers would be found, and who, with an eye to the future, would be more likely to tender their services, let their country but show that it knows how to set a proper value by them. We are not a little Switzerland, with no opening for them but at the beck of the foreigner. The rif-raf at present either trapped or driven to enlistment would, I believe, almost entirely disappear. We should hear very little of the lash then, sir, and as little of conscription. I am not alone, and it emboldens me to know it, in my conviction of the immediate danger to us in this continued indifference on the part of our very highest to the interests of the labourers. Even with the latter the sentiment is any thing but uncommon. My neighbour opposite, Isaac Styles,—you are acquainted with him, no doubt, has often expressed himself accordingly, and, although but a man in humble position, his opinions on some matters are not to be slighted."

"There is no one in Merrow," I observed, "for whom I have a greater respect."

"That is the feeling, sir, with every one who has the good fortune to know him.—He is at times, too, very entertaining, and seldom fails, after a fashion of his own, to leave his mark behind him."

This was scarcely uttered when, by one of those chances which cannot but sometimes occur, who should present himself at the door but the very veteran in hand, with a request for the loan of a hay knife. Mr. Manly immediately rose, and, pointing to a seat, touched the bell, when, in a few minutes, after an inquiry as to my health, the old man encouraged, doubtless, by a mug of generous proportions, which he now steadied on his knee, was in full swing upon what, it was easy to see, had been purposely introduced by Mr. Manly.

"Yes, sir," said he, in response to my friend, "it hev aften puzzled I how thaay as be at the tip-top do'ant a come furrard, if on'y for theirselves like, to straighten things a bit. If thaay on'y knowed, sir, how thaay really stands, or woold stand, if things went the least askew wi'em, thaay'd be afeard to let some folks hev it aal their own way as thaay now hev. My owld fearther, sir, used to tell———but I minds, Mr. Manly, as you've a heerd av of it afore."

"Pray, Mr. Styles," said my friend, "proceed;—this gentleman I am sure, will be but too pleased to hear you."

"Well, sir, as I wer about to say, my owld fearther used to tell, —many as is living hev a heerd un,—o' two kings as lived nighst one another,—I forgits the wheerabouts—and as went, arter awhile, as folks wooll do, to loggerheads. Now, one o' thaay kings, sir, when he wer o'ny a prince, as thaay caals em, wer, in some specks, a likely sort ov a man. So, thaay as had to do with the workin' o' the land, and as could'nt a git scarcely no wages at aal, pooty much as now-a-days, sir, got summun to write to un, axin un to be good enough to jist say a word or two for em to the measters—the squires and varmers like. Well, sir, the prince he giv em for answer, that it waun't for the like o' he, as wer to be king, p'rhaps, some day, to interfere twixt measter and man no how;—you see that, sir!—

Now, sir, as I've a towld ee, the prince, when he come to be king, got into trouble like wi's neighbour, and wer a gittin', by a good deal, the wust on't; so he bethought un o' raisin,' straight away, some muore sodgers, and he sends to the labourers, axin em to list; when thaay sends sir, to he (how my owld fearther usèd to laugh when he wer a tellin' it) the very same man as thaay sent to un afore, when he wer on'y a prince, to tell un as how that it waun't for the like o' thaay, as wer o'ny labourers, to interfere

twixt gentlefolks no how. How it used to meake the owld man laugh."

"And how did it end with him?" I enquired.

"Well, sir, as he could'nt a git no muore sodgers nohow, he wer a tarned clean out o' the pleace, and there waun't nothing but murderin' and mischief in it for a good fifty year arterwards. Now, sir, if, when he wer a prince he'd a o'ny said a kindly word or two for the labourers, be it likely, sir, as thaay'd've been the men to forgit un, when thaay see'd as their friend wer in trouble. Not, sir, if one can trust in summat"—here the old man touched his breast—"as bean't in the habit o' foolin' us.—Upon this, Mr. Styles rose, and after an inquiry of the "wheerabouts" of the hay knife, left us.

"His story," said Mr. Manly, "is no idle fable. As time marches on, rely on it, sir, if nothing be done, in the way I have said, to promote loyalty and patriotism, it will realize itself, to the full. The rowdy element is in our wake, and gains upon us hourly. It is encouraging to know that, on a trial, it would be found that there is nothing in what I have proposed antagonistic to the interest of the landowner.—Why, sir, were I in a position so to do, and consulted simply my pocket, I could cut up into lots the farm we are now on, re-let it, and, with thanks and blessings into the bargain, half live upon my profits; and, surely, sir, the way is open to others. It can only be selfishness and ignorance combined that prevent thousands from seeing this, a selfishness and ignorance, however, which, it is consolatory to know, will, in their turn, have to yield to the imperatives of the future. In the meantime, where to look for a patron the labourer is, indeed, at a loss. The Church you see, sir, is not with him. The poor fellow has *no favours to bestow*. Would the Church but do its duty, but speak out as a shepherd of Christ should speak, I am satisfied that the landlords, with the best grace possible, would be forced to submit; but, with that silent, what can be expected.—Rely, on it, sir, (here Mr. Manly again brought his chair nearer to mine), that this century will not see itself out, without a visitation upon what for so many years has been looking on, in silence and indifference, at the hunger and degradation of the very providers of its own food and wealth; a visitation that shall point, as never finger has pointed yet, to a Providence above us of justice and retribution.—Recalling the words of my noble friend, and looking out from the woods that surround me at what is looming in the land of their utterance,

I am fain to believe, as I lift my pen from my page, that an embodied Providence, and with no indifferent eye, is regarding me as I write.

But, to return, "Bundled abroad!" continued my friend, and in a tone that told what was still so sorely uppermost with him, "a broken and degraded man!—and for what!"

Mr. Manly paused, and looked at me.

"His wife," said I, "takes it sadly to heart, I hear."

"She will never survive it, sir."

Here Mr. Manly again paused,—he was evidently moved. He might have spared himself an effort to hide it.

"You were in Boston or New York, on your return route?" said he, at length.

"In the latter," I replied.

"You must have there seen, sir, many things that were new to you, much that interested you?"

"Some things, too, that not a little humiliated me," I answered. "One scene in particular, I have never recalled without a sense of shame. It fell to me to be present at the landing of a batch of emigrants from our own Plymouth.—An American, so it chanced, was near me,—a Philadelphian."

"Ah! made he any remark?"

"It would be difficult," I said, "to find an American who would not have done so; and but for the mortification, which I found it hard to conceal, at the pinched appearance of my own countrymen, his Americanisms might, possibly, have amused me."

"Can you recall what was said?"

"I have repeated it too often since," I replied, "to have forgotten it."

Here Mr. Manly, replenishing his pipe, and putting himself at his ease, inquired of me the stranger's age.

"Well,—by his hair, he might have been forty."

"Your meeting was accidental?"

"Quite so;—we had both, for some minutes, been engaged upon what was passing, when, turning suddenly round, and looking at me as only can an American, 'Some of yourn, sir, I reckon,' said he."

"I found it convenient, you may be sure, to be silent. Confident, however, in his position, and pointing with his cigar to the crowd of men, women, and children, in advance, 'rather a small pocket, sir, I calkilate, would hold the hard cash of that lot,' he added—'Churches pooty scarce, I guess, where *they* come from?'"

I was conscious, I confess, of something on my cheeks.

"Now ain't it kinder strange, sir," he continued, "how little you Britishers know the value of some things. Now, in my country, sir, we reckon that it takes something like a thousand dollars to raise a man, and even at that, sir, we don't account it a bad trade. But then, sir, as soon as a young un with us can cram, we handle him as we do our hosses,—we put him to good grass, and stuff him with plenty of corn, so as it ain't long, after shedding his colt's teeth, 'fore we can get something out of him. A pooty starved bite fell to that lot, I guess! Well, well—Look ye, now, friend, at that four-year-older, yunder. Now, just stuff that little crittur out with Johnny cake and slapjacks, as we do in my noble country, and in six weeks, sir, his own mother wouldn't know him,—that's so.—If some of our great men, sir, were over among you Britishers, they'd kinder fire up, I reckon—Well, well, if they ain't a lot!—That ain't the way, sir, we treat *our* slaves."

"Slaves!" said I, "they were never slaves."

"No," said he, shaking the ashes from his cigar, "I rather calkilate they waun't. They'd show a little more like humans if they wer,—that's so;—We don't raise cattle the like o' them, sir, down South,—no, we doan't."

"I had now, you may be sure, both seen and heard more than enough."

"And was it so," said Mr. Manly, "that our poor fellows were spoken of?"

"I have but given you the truth, I replied."

"Would, sir,—" Here Mr. Manly paused, and, rising, stepped to the window—"Some one I have been looking for, I think," said he—"yes, he will be with us immediately."

The old gentleman had scarcely reseated himself when, in response to a kindly intoned "come in," the door opened, and before us stood John Hawthorne. I had not seen him since his brother's *departure.*

With the instinct of his class, Hawthorne was about to retire:" —"I'll see you by-and-bye, sir," said he.

"Not so, John," responded Mr. Manly,—"this gentleman and you can hardly be unacquainted;—be seated."

With a half blush, on a chair somewhat nearer to the window than to the table, Hawthorne seated himself.

"We have been talking, John," said Mr. Manly, stretching towards him a glass which he had just filled, "upon what no one, I have reason to know, has more at heart than yourself."

Hawthorne put down his glass, and, with a slightly flushed face, returned to his seat.

"We have been indulging, John, in the hope of better times for some of us. My friend, as you are aware, has been no idle spectator in our midst."—Here Mr. Manly, with a view of bringing Hawthorne to the front, entered, at once, upon what had been passing between him and myself.

Hawthorne's countenance, as the old gentleman proceeded, was a study. Expressive solely, on his entrance, of a resignation he was so capable of, muscle after muscle, as my friend advanced, was again brought into play, and, by the time he had concluded, a countenance more intensely and sincerely sympathetic it would be difficult to imagine.

"Upon one point, Mr. Manly, if you will allow me—" said he.

"Speak out, John."

"I was about, sir, to say that, however well it might be for the higher folks to take in hand for a while the waste lands, as they call them, I am much behind-hand, sir, if most of us in Merrow, and, doubtless, elsewhere, give us but the chance, wouldn't very soon entitle them to a better name. What a man, sir, bred to labour, can do with a bit of land, when working for himself, may be seen, I think, pretty plainly in our garden patches. A family, sir, and none the smallest, on an acre or two, with the like handling, would be as well off in a few years as they'd need to be. We can't all of us be squires and gentle-folks, I know sir. It was never meant, nor would it be for the happiness of any one that we should be. As with other things, some will always be getting the start of the rest, and keeping it, too; but a chance, an opportunity might be, surely, given to every one. A man's industry and prudence would then be the measure of him, and to something better might a labourer look forward for his old age than a poor-house and a pauper's——, no need, sir, to say more."

I have not forgotten the manner and tone in which this last was said.

"We wouldn't be too nice, sir;" he continued, looking, as he spoke, towards me, "give us, as I've often said to Mr. Manly, but a space, a mere *space* for a home, and, with the wills that most of us, I know, have, we would soon show a good account of it. A home would be soon seen to start on it, and none the worse, in the long run, perhaps, if a little slow, at the first, in rooting. Very few would be then looking Westward;—you know what I mean, sir."

"You have never, John, I believe, been a favourer of emigration?"

"I have never liked, Mr. Manly, the being driven to it, nor the charity style of it. One's country, too, sir, has a hold upon some of us very different from what it has upon others. Emigration to some men would be little better than tearing them in two. For such, now, as Isaac Styles, sir, never again to look upon where his mother lies!—Many, sir, have found this out, and made their way back again.— It has reached me, as well, Mr. Manly, that, in America at least, it is rarely that the old folks are treated with the same respect as with us,—that they are less regarded as still the heads of their families, that their position, indeed, is frequently quite a subordinate one. Now, for myself, sir, I would rather live it out, to my last hour, upon bread and water, than surrender, for whatever increase of means, a single tithe of what, in England, you know, we all so look forward to, and without the which some of us, when old, would, indeed, be poor. I must be better informed, Mr. Manly, upon that point before I would throw in my lot with that of the many as an emigrant."

Mr. Manly's eyes were upon mine. I had no need to inquire why.

"You have not, Mr. Hawthorne," I observed, "been entirely misinformed upon that point. There is an impatience of control universal in America, that originates many a pang where such should least be. The comparative worthlessness of a slave in his old age is, I confess, too apt, in America, to be the standard by which a man of years is gaged. But to what, Mr. Hawthorne, has a labourer in Merrow to look forward——, to what but, as you have yourself said,—a workhouse!"

"There is no denying it, sir."

"John," said Mr. Manly, pointing to his glass, "make yourself at home."

"Thank you, sir;—quite possible, sir," he continued, addressing himself to me, "that the fault is not entirely upon one side. The temptation for the "old man," as he is called, I understand, in America, to make the most of every one, as well as of himself, may, at times, be too strong. I am, perhaps, a little nice upon some points, when speaking of emigration. Many very many have, no doubt, bettered their condition by it. The thousands of farms, and good ones, I am told, now scattered over even the remoter parts of America are an unanswerable

proof of that. They have not been the growth of ages. What I would wish, Mr. Manly, to be understood to say is, that it is hard, sir, to be put in a position that leaves no choice between it and starvation. Certainly, an emigrant must escape much in the shape of short commons hardly, one would think, to be found elsewhere, and many temptations, too, which it is not every one—Here Hawthorne paused,—still paused,—when Mr. Manly, with a tact that a good heart needs nothing but itself to suggest, made an effort to " bout ship ;" but Hawthorne was already aground. His glass, with its contents, had slipped from his hand, and, as he stopped to pick up its bits, a dimmed eye that mine had not missed told plainly enough its tale.

" I'm *foolish*," he said, rising from his seat.

" Not at all, John," said Mr. Manly, " misfortunes will happen."

" I'll see you again, sir, in the afternoon," said Hawthorne, crimsoning.

" At any time, John ;—I am at home for the day."

Upon this, bowing respectfully both to Mr. Manly and myself, with the shattered tumbler in hand, Hawthorne left.

" Poor fellow," said Mr. Manly, " he was on the rocks before he was aware. I thought it as well not to press him to stop.—His main objection to emigration, I believe to be in the interest which he so sincerely, and for so many years, has taken in the welfare of his mates. " They'd be half of them on the other side of the water in less than a month," he once said to me, " were I to desert them ;" and I verily believe, sir, that such would be the case. It is impossible, you see, sir, to get it into the head of a starved labourer, all enactments notwithstanding, that there can be any crime in meddling with what they see gets its living anywhere, and every where ; and, so long as the rich man only is a loser by him, his conscience is very easily persuaded to cry quits. Much has to be said for the poor fellows, for even the dangerous ones among them. They have, by bad laws, sir, been made what they are,—year after year hardened into it. It has not been the work of a day.—There's Pilch, now,—you know him ?"

" I do."

" Well, sir, either in Merrow or Orton, like too many others, he is out almost nightly ; yet I can remember him to have been one of the likeliest lads in the place. His first lesson in poaching was from his own father, who, I have reason to know, was, like poor Giles, driven to it by want. It cost him, in the run, his life. He

was killed in a fray with the watchers on Baron Steinberg's of Orton. One Diggs, of whom you may have heard, was in the mess, and got ten years for it. There is a rumour that the residue of his term has been remitted, and that, shortly, he will be back again.—Now, sir, if one such as was Pilch's father had had the better fortune to have held a few acres that would have put the comforts of himself and family in his own power, that would have made them dependant solely on his own will and industry, is it likely, let any reasonable mind, sir, ask itself, that he would have been weak enough to jeopardize his very freedom for the sake of a paltry hare or two. Let no man, sir, fancy so. I would by no means say that a chance puss, intruding on his domain, would have always been allowed to go scot-free; but a widely different thing, sir, would that be to turning out at night as a thief, with the chance of finding one's self, by the morning, a murderer. Let the labourer, I say, sir, be more generously, more honestly dealt by, and very few would need to trouble themselves about game laws. Give him but land, and, from that moment, he would feel as much interested in the preservation of game as the richest squire.—It has often, sir, surprised me, recalling the fearful crimes consequent on our present game laws, that a certain Establishment can reconcile itself to so continued a silence thereon."

"As you remarked," said I, "the labourer's inability in the shape of patronage may have something to do with it."

"Not a little, I suspect;—but so it is, sir,—go where you may, in vain will you seek in the Church for a champion of the countryman. No wonder that so many are seceders. Its free sittings, in some cases, are well named, for free enough they will soon be with *us*, sir. Half of those who might occupy them are already, on the Sunday, at Hawthorne's.—I have, at times, been almost inclined to think that there is something more at the bottom of this neglect of her labourers than England, in the main, is aware of. 'Where, sir,' said one to me, not an age since, who, of all men, should have been the last to say so, 'where, with a peasantry petted as you propose, would you look for a recruit. Conscription, *sir*, would be necessitated. The very Constitution, *sir*, would be endangered!' How narrow-minded, my friend, is always selfishness, or it might have occurred to the reverend speaker that, should trouble ever arise where it is least to be desired, such men might be tempted to a retrospection much more suggestive

of the poor man and his cottage than of the richer and his castle. Had I, at the moment, been severely inclined, I might have reminded his reverence that had some folks but done their duty with a third of the zeal that one I could have named did his, the necessity for recruiting would have long since ceased. But before that, sir, will be, before such men will be brought to a conscientious sense of their duties, some things will have to be put on a widely different footing with them. The temptation to fawn and bend, as a bait for advancement, will have to be removed. It is not what a minister ought to say in his pulpit, but what he dares to say, that is the rule at present. This, sir, should be entirely changed. Churchmen will have to be put, one with another, so upon a level, that when necessary that the truth, howsoever in any quarter unacceptable, be spoken, no apprehension of after consequences to the speaker of it shall stand in the way of its utterance. Christianity would then, sir, put forth in earnest its fruits. A fuller justice between man and man would result,—selfishness would be blushed into it. We might then hope to again see the smocked labourer in his church, and his pastor spared the pain, as at present, of knowing that the necessaries and comforts daily upon *his* table have, in a great measure, been put there by men with but ten shillings per week, as wages, to comfort *their's* with.

Here Mr. Manly rose and touched the bell.—I had no wish to interrupt him. "The main difficulty," said he, on resuming his seat, "in the way of bettering the condition of the peasantry seems to me, sir, to lie, not so much in their extreme poverty, as in their morally damaged condition. This, sir, was made painfully apparent in an effort recently by the Hawthornes, and a few others of the village, for a higher rate of wages. Their places were immediately taken, and at the old rate, by labourers from Orton, and so, sir, it would be with them again and again, in their present uninformed condition. They would never be found to hold true to one another. It would be a great help to them if the *farmers* could be brought to a clearer understanding of *their* position, so that the labourers and they might make a strong pull together. To that it will come, eventually, but, at present, upon many points vitally affecting them, the latter are as little informed as their labourers. Some able missionaries are woefully needed amongst them. Hawthorne, as I have heard him say, has some hope from the new Reform bill. He will find himself, I am afraid,

sadly disappointed. The labourer has been totally overlooked in it."

"I can easily understand," I said, "how it is that the Hawthornes are with some parties in so little favour. Have you seen, pray, since his departure, the wife of the poor fellow that was recently sent off?"

"I have not, but from no disinclination; I am truly uneasy about her. If half of what I have heard be true, it will go hard with her. You have heard, by-the-bye, of a bonfire, how one thing recalls another, in which a certain Squire and his lady figured somewhat prominently, on the heath betwixt this and your place?"

I had heard of it.

"It was high sport, I am told, for some folks; still, I am sorry for it, sir,—it will only exasperate the Squanders and their clique the more, and the less excitement just now the better for the poor creature you were inquiring about. She is about, I have heard, to become a mother again."

This again sent Mr. Manly into a brown study. I was on my guard not to disturb him;—"Yes, sir," said he at length, laying down his pipe, "the bulk of us have, upon such matters, to be far better informed. A higher civilization and happiness would be then easily attainable. There are few men, sir, I should hope, selfish enough, as the world now stands, to be thoroughly happy."

"Very few, I should say."

"Not that it needs to be turned topsy turvey. I would not, my friend, be misunderstood. There is no one, believe me, more deeply impressed than myself with the necessity for true civilization of a class, and that by no means a limited one, with leisure for cultivating, to the full, their tastes and intellect. It is a painful truth, but truths, sir, have to be looked in the face, that certain pursuits have a greater tendency than others to stultify and brutalize. It is only in the refinement which a high cultivation develops that civilization is preserved. It is not needed that parks be ploughed up, or pleasure grounds destroyed. It would be a dark day for us all should such vandalism prevail. What is wanted is simply justice—that a chance, an opportunity, as Hawthorne observed, be given to every one. It is not right, I repeat, that the tiller of the soil, the producer of the world's food, be without a sufficiency for himself; and sadly shortsighted, sir, must he be who is blind to the necessity of at once creating a far

greater number of those who, in their freeholds and leaseholds, would be sharers, as I have before said, in a conservative spirit as inseparable from the soil as its weeds. It will be a great day for England, sir, when she understands this. We are hourly drifting into disorder; but with justice, impartial justice, civilization might yet be saved to us. With that in our midst, we might be almost any thing, a bright little spot that the world might take for a model."

I have dwelt thus at length upon what passed during this interview with my friend, not only from a wish that my reader may share in the pleasure which his utterances were to me, but for a reason which, as I proceed, will, I doubt not, be fully understood by him.

CHAPTER III.

We will draw a veil over the more than melancholy time that, for some months after the departure of her husband, it was poor Jenny Hawthorne's to know.

By the middle of October she was again a mother. The child was a boy, and, in due time, it was named, after her benefactor, John. The attention that the little thing necessitated assisted, in some degree, to withdraw her thoughts from what they had, of late, been too exclusively bent on; and, as time worked on, and a new year set in, Jane found it difficult to deny herself a share of the comfort in which not a few of the villagers indulged, that a goodly portion at least of Giles' degradation was already at an end. Many, too, were emboldened by the hope that, before long, philanthropy would intercede in his behalf. It had reached Mr. Manly that the Surgeon Superintendent had said that it seemed to him that there was one man on board who had no business there. That this was owing to a straightforwardness in Giles that would win for him friends in abundance abroad doubted no one to whom it was told, and already had hope, drawing upon her fairy land of futures, carried him in triumph through the village, and, with a cheer at the gates of Thornley Hall, escorted him to his old home.

But, alas! whilst poor broken-down nature was thus doing its best for a rally, an event occurred, which not only cast a gloom upon all Merrow, but which most seriously affected the position of

the Hawthornes. By the death of Mr. Manly, an occurrence by no means looked for, were they robbed of their sincerest and most substantial friend. It is not my business here to record my own disappointments, or to this might a deal be added. I will content myself with saying that I was one who followed him to his resting place, and I doubt that a sincerer tear than mine paid, upon that occasion, its tribute of respect. He was buried in the pretty churchyard of Merrow, and, with a tolerance complimentary to Mr. Slack, the service, in compliance with Mr. Manly's wish, was read by the Rev. Mr. Goodwill of Orton.

CHAPTER IV.

Dr. Hearse.

Shropton had, of course, its workhouse; civilization necessitated it; and to that workhouse was attached, as a further matter of course, a doctor,—Dr. Anthony Hearse, of Shropton. He was not a man of transcendent parts, nor had he, by industry and application, made, perhaps, the most of himself. He was, moreover, eccentric,—in some of his views decidedly so. In one of them, however, I have reason to know that he was at least not alone:

For hours o'er the rich man's ails
His puzzled brain would brood;—
Poor people had but one complaint,
And that was *want of food.*

His treatment of the latter, old or young, parent or child, was, as a consequence, unique and simple. Not to disturb nature in her slow and silent operations, as he was fond of calling them, was, indeed, a cardinal point with him at all times. Possibly, the contents of a certain jar, posted in his laboratory with an eye to convenience, were concocted with that in view:—Of *it* anon.

But for the death of Mr. Manly one party would probably have less early become acquainted, practically at least, with any of Dr. Hearse's particularities; for not only was the son, into whose hands Mr. Manly's farm had fallen, a man of less generosity than his father, but a jealousy of Hawthorne, which he had not always been able to conceal, was by no means diminished by an annuity, a small one, and dependent on the result of his suit,

bequeathed to him by Mr. Manly. This, coupled with a dislike, shared in by every villager in Merrow, to subject himself to either the churlishness of Snarl (porter at the workhouse) or to the repulsive meanness of Mr. Parish, made it a harder and harder task for Hawthorne to provide, not only for himself and his, but for one whom by all that was sacred he held himself bound to protect. By the fall of the year succeeding that of Giles' departure it had become a close bite with them, and both Hawthorne and his sister were alarmedly anxious respecting the little one at her breast. Hawthorne had observed that for some weeks it had been slowly but surely failing, and his mind was fully settled in regard to it, which made him the more determined to shift from himself further responsibility. So, on a likely looking morning, towards the middle of September, Jane was persuaded to accompany him to Shropton, that Dr. Hearse's opinion might be taken.

The doctor was busy enough on their arrival. The measles were about, and several cases of scarlatina had showed themselves in Orton. What particularly struck Hawthorne was, that, whatever the complaint, howsoever contrasted the symptoms brought to the doctor's notice, a certain jar was invariably consulted, one particular jar. Again and again was this the case, for very many, as it happened, were on that day the applicants for help; so that Jenny had full time for a rest, which was as well, before, nudging his sister, Hawthorne gave her to understand that it was now her turn, that "the gentleman was at liberty."—With a timidity as natural to her as life, Jenny blushingly advanced;—but a word or two, first, as promised, of the jar.

There was a jar, an earthen jar,
Upon a lower shelf,
A miserable looking thing,
In a corner by itself.

White once had been its earthenware,
With golden lettered name,
But, long begrimed with dirt and drugs,
What eye could trace the same.

Lidless it stood, as unabashed
T'unmask its inmost soul;
All other pots cured one complaint,
This claimed to cure the whole!

Mysterious this magic power,
Though rumour, once, arose,
The shop-boy could the mystery solve,
If but the master chose.

Certain that, every day, an hour
Before the doctor came,
The urchin was observed to be
Busy about the same.

Pounding, and pelting, stirring, scraping,—
As if to bring to pass
A combination of strange things
In one concreted mass.

Whether the doctor held a view
Peculiar in his art,
That every drug in each disease
Should play its special part;

Or whether he conceived it safer
By opposites to correct
The tendency of any one,
And so shape its effect,

I cannot say,—he may have been
Economist in time;
The jar's choice self is all that I
Can vouch for in this rhyme.

It was now for Jenny to make acquaintance with the same. She has already advanced:

"I've brought my little infant, sir;"
Ere Jane had got thus far
The doctor had already turned
Towards his mystic jar.

"Had you not better, sir," said she,
Examine my poor child?"—
"As well, perhaps;—ah, ah,—I see,—
Ratling,—a little wild!"

Which said, again the doctor's steps
Were t'wards his potent pot;
Jane, as his fingers went to work,
Eyeing the wondrous *what!*

"He never can have noticed, sure,
How young the baby, John,"——
"Hush, Jane, observe;"—Hawthorne had marked
The doctor's task was done.

"You'll take these *pills*,"—Jane courtesied,—
"Possibly one will do,—
But should the child seem not so well,
Why then—why then—say *two*."

"My child, sir, may refuse it, p'rhaps,—
How am I then to act?"——
"Oh, well,—we don't—we can't,—you see,
Rule matters so exact."

"What diet, sir";—"Diet!—oh, that's
A thing for others' care;—
Snarl, at the gate, as you pass out,
Inquire, will show you where."

When shall I come again, sir, pray?"—
"Oh, well,—you'll see,—you'll see,
While the pills last, with Snarl's good aid,
You'll hardly trouble *me*."

This said, the doctor's steps, once more,
Were t'wards his potent jar;
Some other ailing child of want
Required his Christian care.

"He's very shrewd, didst mark, John, how
He made no alteration
Betwixt his first glimpse of the child
And his examination!"

"God grant there needed none," said John,
"We've done at least *our* best;—
Let us, Jane, homeward, both of you
Are, I know, in need of rest."

Rightly they judged, in one so young,
Nature invoked no aid
Such as parochial charity
Administers in need.

The breast, and it alone could help,
That marvellous fount of food,
Wrought, in dame nature's subtlest way.
Of every thing that's good.

Well John knew this, and grieved at heart
To note how Jenny's strength
Daily declined,—parent and child
Tottered alike, at length.

"Jane, we must strive in every way,"
Said he, "within our power
To prop up the poor stem that holds
This delicate, drooping flower.

Come, come, take heart—I'll straight away
Even to parson Slack,
If all else fail;—I'll not, believe,
Come empty handed back.

Better you strike across the fields,
'Tis nigher,—and oh, pray,
When you fetch home, for his poor sake,
Put all sad thoughts away.

I'll by the road, as I pass mine,
To just right things within;
My good girl might be wondering
Why none of us had been.

Some faggots will be wanting, too,
The morn breaks chill again,
And best I sit up the night through,
Perhaps, —— ye'll need me, Jane."

Jane looked at John,—ah, there are looks
That let the bosom speak,
When, but for their joint utterance,
Words would be, oh, how weak!

"Good John, ye'll not be long away,"
Said Jane, in timid tone,
"When *you* are absent, John, I feel
So utterly alone."

With promise of rejoining her
Ere the sun sank to rest,
John hastened on his way, resolved,
Indeed, upon his best.

"God will be with him," murmured Jane,
"And when poor I am laid
In my last home, then will he find
These mercies not unpaid."

CHAPTER V.

To a letter, did Hawthorne fulfil his promise. Jenny's immediate wants were amply relieved by the evening. His apprehension, however, in regard to her infant was but too well grounded, unless Dr. Hearse's pills are to be credited with a potency dangerously greater upon that night than usual.

According to Hobbs, whose wife, in company with Hawthorne, was with Jenny through the night, scarcely had an hour elapsed since the inflection of pill number one, "afore he wer a took wi' a kind o' quiverin' like, aal over un, and his knees wer a draawed up to's chest; and when, 'cordin' as the doctor had a ordered, thaay giv he a second un, he were agin seized wi' a quiverin' like, and never stirred arterwards:—that second un *did the business.*" Harry had to be careful of the when and where this was said, as his wife had, again and again, observed that "the pills wuz wonderful, that if any thing, dead or alive, could ha saved un, it wer as plain as a charch steeple as thaay'd ha done it; but he wer a past, no doubt, aal as Dr. Hearse could a do for'n."—John was silent;—when he did speak, it was to console his sister.

By the end of the week the child was interred at the back of Merrow church, in a part of the ground set aside, as before stated, for the poor. Prayers, were, of course, read on the occasion by Mr. Slack, who considerately ordered his sexton to see that the body was *decently covered.* It had not been considered necessary that it should be taken into the church.

"It be the fust blood as is spilt," said Styles, as he and Hobbs sauntered homeward together, "but it wun't be the last; mind, as I says, Harry, it wun't be the last!"

"What did the old man mean, John?" inquired Hobbs on the following day.

"It wouldn't be the last," he said, "eh?"

"Jist so."

"What the old man, Harry, likely enough meant, was, what no one more sincerely believes than himself, that nothing that we do that in any way is wrong goes *unremembered.*" John's finger, as he finished, was pointed upwards.

"'T be sartain:—By-the-bye, John, bean't it sing'lar as Giles hev never a writ but once?"

Had Hobbs, when he put this question, looked closely at his friend he could hardly have missed the pain that it gave him.

Why was this so? It had been observed, for some weeks, that Hawthorne was anything but himself. His self possession seemed shaken. He was less communicative, and Isaac Styles and he, it was noticed, were more frequently than was usual with them in converse alone.

Unwillingly my pen advances, but the truth has to be told. In less than a twelvemonth after the departure of the Dove, Hawthorne had heard from his brother, for Giles could write, though but indifferently, giving an account of the passage and of his position at the time of his writing. His health during the passage, a somewhat tedious one, had, as far as John could understand him, not been satisfactory, but from the Superintendent on board he had received many little favours and kindnesses, and in one material point he had derived the greatest comfort from his assurances. On his arrival at Sydney he had had the good fortune to be employed on what is there to this day called the Government Domain. He was by this in a position less humiliating, and less harassing than might otherwise have fallen to him. He bade his brother to daily call upon his wife, and never to cease assuring her that from what he had learnt from the Superintendent, and from others on shore, he had every reason to believe that their separation would, eventually, be much shortened. In a postscript, he mentioned that Diggs was in Sydney, working on his own account, that he had been a ticket of leave man for some time, and that a petition recently forwarded to the Home Secretary in his behalf, had been successful, and, further, that from him they would be able to learn all particulars respecting himself, as Diggs had told him of his intention of returning, before long, to his old quarters in England:—Diggs, he said, had been much hurt at neither his mother nor his wife having, for some time, answered his letters: "He did'nt a think as *thaay*'d hev tarned agin him!" He concluded with a promise of writing once in every three months.

Now, John knew that his brother was a man of his word. What then was he to think of the time having twice passed for the fulfilment of his promise, and no letter! What construction but one did it admit of! John had never been quite satisfied with the tone of his brother's letter, and now, as again and again he read it, did he wonder the more that from the first he had not better understood it. Giles, indeed, had landed at Sydney but the shadow of a man than whom an abler had never cut a rush upon

Merrow's moor. The pestiferous atmosphere of Shropton jail, want, and wounded pride had, even before he set foot upon the Dove, diseased his lungs, and in the crowded 'tween decks of a convict ship where was his chance! His conscious degradation alone tore him to pieces:—to be a marked man for life! That he had not jumped overboard only showed the strength of his attachments. He did his utmost, on landing, to reconcile himself to his position, and he was sincere in all that he had written to his brother; but the struggle was too great for him.

It was in Australia's spring time that he arrived, everything abroad was fresh and beautiful:

Not a joy had nature still for him;
Nothing to cheer, to bless,
What else had been society,
But mocked his loneliness.

He went among the dark leaved trees,
And flowers fair, and strange,
But these were not the blue harebell,
The heather's wholesome range.

He sat upon the shelly rocks,
By the side of the foamy sea,
But there was not the western breeze,
Nor the air of liberty.

He listened to the tuneful notes
Of many a songster gay,
But one sad voice, as sweet as sad,
Was ever far away.

Thus, hour by hour, the days crept on,
Till moon on moon went by,
Care sapping every source of joy,
Save one half hope on high.

When as a flower of foreign clime,
Its own good skies denied,
For while the brave man struggled on,
Then sickened—drooped—and died!

CHAPTER VI.

Oh Albion, my native land,
My white cliff'd pretty isle,
That I, so thy adorer, still,
Must blush for thee, the while!

Well, indeed, had month after month passed, and no letter. A second and a third year went and still,—no letter! Curiosity was everywhere on the inquire. The Vicar, notwithstanding the assurance of his sister, that "the man was, no doubt, alive, and happy enough," was particularly anxious.

He often of the neighbours asked,
And always when he met her,
Inquired, in the kindliest way,
If time had brought a letter.

But neither word nor letter came,
Though many a moon went round;
The postage, that it might not fail,
Jane put into the ground.

But whose, upon a dull eyed morn,
The lids so swollen and red!
Strange how, at times, can some, asleep,
Communion with the dead!

For lo! upon that very day
A tapper at the door!
A tapper, with a doubtful face,
Jane had not seen before.

* * * * *

"I've brought thee, Ma'am,"———,
The stranger paused, and sighed,—
"Giles begged as I'oold bring it thee
The day as afore he—*died!*"

When Jenny heard the dreaded news
She gave nor start nor scream,
But, as drooped her head upon her breast,
Bethought her of her dream.

Then to the stranger, silent, went,
And leaned upon his shoulder;—
The poor man truly seemed to be
"A sorry he ha towld her."

* * * * *

"Oh, leave me, leave me," Jenny said,
At length,—"alone,—alone,—
Take it not, pray, unkindly that
I crave you to be gone."

"Well—if thee wishes it so, Ma'am,
And no offence,—I'll go,—
Try, Ma'am, to bear with it,—'be muore
Nor you with griefs below.

Yes, Ma'am,' be muore nor you," —which said,
The stranger turned, and left,
Jane gazing after him, as one
Of sense, soul, all bereft.

But hark! —a cry! oh heavens, a cry!
Mounting the frighted air,
Higher and higher, as heavenward bound,
To crave an entrance there!

(Jenny had opened the packet.)

"God! God! God! God!—oh, look, look, look!
All dead! all bleached with care!—
So raven black! — so snowy white!
And I not there, not there!

Oh, take me, God—take, take me, God,
I cannot bear it more;
Ere madness make me all forget,
Oh, take me, I implore."

It was well for Jenny that in this extreme moment her children were with her. The pitiful, desolated aspect of one of them, as it caught her eye, was the turning point with her. In the clasp with which she folded her to her bosom had she again bound herself to the world and its rackings.—God! God!

CHAPTER VII.

It is hardly necessary to state that the tapper with his so disastrous news was no other than James Diggs, newly returned from what was in Merrow still called Bot'ny Bay. He may well have told Jenny "that muore nor her had griefs below." He had just heard from Isaac Styles of the deaths of his mother and wife. This had, seemingly, confused him in the carrying out his mission, as, on finding Hawthorne from home, a letter, which he had brought from Giles for his brother, he had handed to his

daughter, forgetting that the package which he afterwards delivered to Jenny was also to have been given to Hawthorne, that its stunning contents might be broken to her as gently as possible. The mistake was a dangerous one, but who will not already have forgiven him for it. By an hour later, John was at home, and opened his brother's letter, ignorant of the greater blow that his sister had just received.

It needed no expert to declare at what moment, under what circumstances Giles' letter had been written. A line or two, only, of it were intelligible;—thus will we put it:

"All as I've, John, to ask thee now,
* * * * * *
* * * * * * *
I hear thee say—thou woolt.

Oh, John,—I caunna lay my hand
Upon thine own to thank thee,"
* * * * *
* * * * *

Hawthorne had buried a young and beloved wife, and for some years, father and mother had been words less frequent on his lips; but of no harder blow than this was he conscious. It would seem that he had deserved better of fortune.—He must weep it out;

"And is this, Giles, all that I shall ever
Know of thy last request!—
Well hast thou written—*thou woolt*, if One
Interprets me the rest.

Alas! alas!—support me Heaven!—
How shall I tell it Jane!
'Twill break her heart,—she'll never, never
Hold up her head again!

Oh, bitterness!—oh, bitterness!—
That I should live to see
A day so dark as death has made
This bitter one to me!

So young, so noble, so upright!—
Why not have flung a dart,
Hard-dealing death, at one less good,
And spared a broken heart."

Poor fellow,—it is hard to bear with such trials.

It was a disappointment to many as well as to Hawthorne, that Diggs had delayed but an hour or two in the village. The man was far from wanting in sympathy, but the news of his mother's and wife's deaths had fairly bewildered him. He had, it seems, now, but one relative left, a sister. She was married, and resided with her husband (one Crouch) in a county further north. Diggs was not without some little means. His stay for awhile in Sydney, after Giles' death, had been any thing but profitless. So, on hearing from Styles of his bereavement, he bethought him, at once, of making his home where he had good reasons for believing he would be welcome. "I can caal, Styles," he said, the tears swimming into his eyes, "*somewheer*, as I goes along.— No, doan't a say nothing, Styles,— I got to bear it,— but, doan't,—doan't a say nothing."

That Styles was the only one in Merrow to whom Diggs was particularly known, was owing to his having formerly resided in Orton, which was Diggs' parish,—"Good-bye, Styles," were his words on leaving,—"shall see I agin when ye least, p'rhaps, specks." Some years afterwards, one by one, Styles repeated his words.

PART FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

Let us lay the turf of at least a few months upon what has just passed. Dull would the heart or brain be that required to be assured of either Jenny's unspeakable anguish, or Hawthorne's untiring efforts to reduce it. Moreover, there are troubles ahead yet to be spoken of before it becomes my more particular task to introduce in their midst *One* who, as it proved, had, from the first been no inattentive observer. In the meanwhile it may not be uninteresting, nor altogether out of place, as helping us the better to detect and understand, both now and hereafter, that One, if, in colours as faithful as I am master of, I introduce upon my page a few scenes which, at the time of their occurrence, were of no little interest in the neighbourhood.

It had always been with the country folks of Merrow a standing wonder that Jenny Hawthorne could never be brought to confess, as the rest of them had long since done, to a distrust of Mr. Slack's sincerity. Some even unkindly things had, at times, been said of her in respect of it. Jenny had been so indoctrinated by Mrs. Parish into a belief that, as representative of Him above all reproach, it was impossible for any one in Mr. Slack's position to be *very* deserving of it, that she had almost laid herself open to an imputation of bigotry in her determined endeavours to think well of him. She was anxious, moreover, that her children should any thing but resemble some who, she was aware, were little in the habit of frequenting his church. Jane was, besides, neither a philosopher nor a politician. She had not questioned herself as to the cause of their absence, and she was somewhat confused on observing how many of them had, of late, been finding their way to her brother-in-law's "little meetings like." It fell to her, however, at last, to have the scales removed, though not, it will be allowed, without a farewell effort to reinstate the Vicar in her good opinion.

It was always a custom with Mr. Slack, whenever either business or pleasure attracted him to Shropton, to turn down by the Moor lane, and proceed by the more circuitous, but more agreeable route skirted, for a goodly distance, by the moor upon one

side, and by the Squire's preserves on the other. This would, of course, take him by what we may no more call Giles' cottage. He could hardly, therefore, fail of occasionally meeting with Jenny, in her almost daily pilgrimage to John's.

It was upon one such occasion, about eight months after the news of her husband's death, that, by a half way gate in the lane, he, in the blandest and politest way, accosted her with inquiries of both her own and her children's health. Jenny, at the time, having the three with her, was not a little disconcerted at meeting him, and for a reason very natural in a woman. By a subscription, headed by Styles, a merino of scanty proportions had been raised for Jenny, while the little ones had to be contented with simply an edging, or bordering of black, extemporized from an undergarment of Jenny's which had been surrendered for the occasion. Smile not ye who have never tasted but of the favours of fortune. In her secretest of temples nature admits of no monopolies. This make shift, as I have said, was more than an annoyance to Jenny.—"It looks so!" she thought, "as if I had never cared for him!" Parson Slack, however, she had the pleasure to find, was far from supposing so. He bade her to remember that it was not with this world's opinions that some things rest.—that the Great One, in all such matters,takes the will for the deed, and that none of us are expected to do more than our means permit. He also inquired of the names of her children, noting them down as she named them;—and, on leaving, he bade her to be of good heart,—to remember that she was not alone—that we all, every one of us, indeed, had our troubles, the best of us.

"No one, I am sure," said Jenny, "could have spoken kinder; if John could only have heard him!"

Hawthorne, nevertheless, found it difficult to suppress a smile as Jenny descanted on Mr. Slack's urbanity, whilst Jenny's curiosity worked itself up to quite an excitement, on recalling his condescension with her children: "He seemed, John, so particularly anxious to have their names *quite right!* Not Hannah," he said, "but Anna?"

Before the day was over, hope, with her bricks and mortar, we may be sure, was at work, and, in her sleep, many a little castle had Jenny built by the morning.

CHAPTER II.

It was early in the forenoon of the following day, whilst Jenny was leaning at her door, (she had been expecting her brother), that she observed some one, rounding the corner of the lane, whom she, at once, suspected to be Mercy, Mr. Slack's parlour maid. In another minute she was sure of it.

"You'll step in, Mercy?" said Jenny, who had waited her coming.

"Don't ask me to, Jane,—the Vicar is expecting me."—Here the good hearted girl handed to Jenny three tracts, very neatly enveloped, with the children's names on them, and with the kindly addition of "Not to be returned;"—"and here, Jenny," said she, "is something for you all." This was a handkerchief full of what were, certainly, broken victuals, and which, as certainly, had the appearance of having been very recently broken. Jenny handed them to her eldest girl who was just within doors.

"But mind," said Mercy, looking searchingly at Jenny, "you are not to say a word about it to any one, for the Vicar is *that* man he never likes as his left hand should know what his right does. Nothing he detests more than to be thanked for any thing. More than once, Jane, on his charities being known, has every servant been discharged!"

Now, Jenny, simple as she was, was not quite such a simpleton as to be thus easily imposed upon, and serious misgiving came over her as to the propriety of accepting the present. Hawthorne had been constantly putting her on her guard against giving the Squanders, or any of their adherents the shadow of a hold on them, and Jenny, remembering this, was about to tell Mercy that she must decline the bundle, when, glancing at her room, the sight of her half famished children fairly fighting for its contents, carried the day, and turning towards her brave benefactor, and drawing her affectionately towards her, Jenny surrendered all idea of refusal.

"You'll not, now, Jenny, forget," said Mercy, again, on leaving her, (Jane assured her that she would not), "for he's *that* man."———

"Good girl!" said Jane, "and so for me
She'd risk the Vicar's wrath,
Be called a thief,—a trustless thing,
All that contempt calls forth.

This must not be—I'll straight away,
And let the Vicar learn
Just how things stand,—this putting off
But wrongs us both, in turn.

When he shall hear how, silently,
We've striven, we've starved for years,
How hoped, still hoped, still hungered on,
'T will turn him all to tears;

Quite break his heart;—best not let John
Know how my planning lies;
I'll see the Vicar first, and, so,
Take him like by surprise.

The noble fellow! oh, my heart,
The joy to let him know
He needn't, hence, work after hours,
Keeping toiling, slaving so.

When, too, the Vicar comes to hear
What trouble he has taken
On Sundays with his mates, how all
The brother 't will awaken!"

How singularly blended, at times, are dullness and subtlety of apprehension in woman. Could Jenny really have believed that there was a pathway to the Vicar's heart in her brother-in-law's fidelity to his fellows? I cannot say; but, certainly, it would have been difficult for her to think that none of "*His Ways*" (as one of the Tracts was named) were to be found where, of all places, just then, she had so much reason to wish they should be. So, after a lapse of a few days, which, for look's sake, Jenny had thought it as well to submit to, behold her, on a dull afternoon, attired in her best, wending her way in the direction of the Vicar's, to lay before him a statement, in full, of all that she had of late been subjected to, and was then enduring.

"He'll be blaming me, I know," she said, "for keeping him so long in ignorance. I must tell him how I knew of the numbers that were always so teazing him."

This was certainly a somewhat indulgent dilution of Sally's injunction "to let him have a bit of her mind,"—"to giv it him right and left." "Good Sally," said Jane, on recalling it, "she meant no harm, and, of course, I must mind to keep nothing from him, to tell him every thing. Where, if I don't, the use of calling on him."

I have said that it was a dull afternoon, and so it was, when Jenny started, which it was thought would rather improve her chance of finding the Vicar both at home and alone. So, although, before reaching the manse, the rain was descending in no passing shower, Jenny persevered on her way, and that the chance might be the greater of being unheard by any but themselves, she made, at once, for the front gate, and, to appearance, was fortunate, on closing it, in attracting the Vicar's notice from his parlour window.

Now, the Vicar had a private study, a sort of Sanctum sanctorum, which was entered from a landing reached by a few stairs to the left of the hall. With a consideration in keeping with him, Mr. Slack himself opened the door, and as Jenny, with a femininality of eloquence by no means unusual with her, burst immediately into tears, the good man was so touched that he at once conducted her to his study, and, leading her to a chair, bade her to be comforted.

"I am not at all surprised," said he, "at seeing you. It was too apparent, from what passed in the lane, that you were in lack of a consolation to be had only from such as have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the bitters and struggles of life."

Jenny now was sobbing fearfully.

"Dear me!" said the Vicar, silently, an apprehension stealing over him that his sister Arabella might not be the only one of her sex whose griefs invariably ended in hysterics, "dear me, what is to be done!"—With a most persuasive kindliness of manner he represented to her the necessity, the duty, indeed, of regarding all trials as but visitations for our future good.—Our griefs, he observed, were but so many recommendations to Heaven,—our tears but as glasses by the which the more clearly to discern our way. He had travelled much, it appears, *this wearying world*, and his experiences had led him to the conclusion that few, *very few of us* are exempt from at least a share of its sorrows and troubles.

"God knows," said Jenny to herself, "that's true enough."

"To look back upon a lost husband, or to know that one's children have not always, perhaps, every thing that one could desire, are troubles, indeed, sufficiently distressing; but, if satisfied that such is His will, how can we consistently complain." Every grief, every fresh trial, he assured her, if rightly regarded, was but another mount on a ladder upon whose rounds who need be afraid to tread.

With a deal of the like, uttered with a blandness of manner worthy of a sincerer heart, Jenny was so perfectly taken aback, so completely mesmerised, that, as a speechless statue, she sat, oblivious utterly of every thing in the shape of her resolve to leave nothing unsaid, to lay every thing, to her least trouble, *this time,* before him.

"I see," said the Vicar, apprehensive, possibly, of an awakening on Jenny's part that he had studied to avoid.

"I see advice is comforting,—
Some day ye may lack more,
When, if ye fear to face the front,
Why,—come to the *back door.*"

With this suave hint the Vicar rose,
And touched more than the bell;
What brought the tears to Jenny's eyes
It needs not here to tell.

"Show, Mercy, this poor creature down,
And mind, before she goes,
She stays by the hall stove awhile,
To dry her drenched clothes.

Just Heaven forbid that any one,
On such a sad, sad night,
Should ever leave a door of mine
Without the thing that's right."

In duty bound, so Jenny deemed.
(The servant led the way)
She halted at the proffered stove,
Yet fain had turned away.

There, shivering with wet and cold,
And weak from want of food,
Jane pondered, in a woman's way,
On how her troubles stood.

"And could he not a single word
Of positive comfort find!
To all these famished looks revealed,
To all my misery blind!

Ah, had he sat in my sad stead,
With half my troubles pressed,
Heart had not needed tongue to tell
What every look confessed.

Why did I not speak out,—I then
Had left him no excuse;
To so keep silent! as if tongues
Were nothing made for use.

Why am I ever thus with him,
When he, of all, should be,
As God's good shepherd, one that should
Hearten poor things like me.

I don't find words so fail me when
Before One higher still,
I then feel, *somehow*, so at home,
The words like come at will.

Nor used I, when, at Sunday school,
The proudest, richest dressed
Would honour us, on passing them,
Not courtesy like the rest.

We're different, it seems, at times,
The day, mayhap, will come,
The Vicar will be found at fault,
And I, in turn, at home.

To bear all silently!—to hear
One's pretty lambkins cry
From sheer craving, and not breathe
A passing plaint on high!

This cannot, sure, religion be,
This cruel, cold advice,
This affectation of concern,
While all within is ice!

This beckoning to back doors! as if
Distress and they were one;
Well might he rise to reach the bell,
To hide what shame had done.

No, piety, thou art not thus,
All lowly in thy call,
Thou beckonest to no back door,
Thy front is free to all.

Oh, Giles, if thou art looking down,
And know'st thy Jenny dear,
Thou wilt forgive me, now I own
The wrong I did thee here.

Now do I know the bitter draught
This must have been to thee,
The angel of whose heart it was
That hushed it so to me."

Thus Jenny, with herself communed,
Treading on dangerous years,
When, with her face hid in her hands,
She gave herself to tears.

"Poor creature!" said a Christian's voice,
Mercy had heard her sobs,
"Here, Jane,—a loaf!—for God's sake take,—
What He gives no one robs.

But, oh, good heavens!—the Vicar's voice!
Conceal it, or he'll drive me,—
I know not where,—he's *so upright*,
He never will forgive me!

Go, go, at once!"—so what could Jane
But hurry to the door,
And, taking to the fields and lanes,
Make homeward for the moor,

Where, on her knees, now safe she dropped,
But did not speak, nor dare
Look from the ground,—the loaf!—the loaf!—
Still Heaven put down a prayer.

The scales were from her eyes!

CHAPTER III.

Yes, from her eyes were the scales, at last. Never was she, afterwards, heard in the way of apology for the Vicar, and never, afterwards, did this simple, but tender-hearted woman set foot within his church. She had seldom been an absentee from John's "little meetings like," and now was she one of his most faithful attendants; while, more and more, was it observed, did John seem to rise in her esteem and respect. It could hardly have been otherwise; for now that Hawthorne saw that every chance of outside assistance grew less and less, did he redouble his exertions in her behalf. The more necessary had he considered it so to do from another of those overwhelming afflictions which seem so often to delight in not coming alone. Jenny's third child, a girl, named, after her brother's deceased wife, Anna, had gone the road of her last. I would fain not have troubled my reader

with this,—but so it was. Nor was this Jenny's only new trouble. Comforting as was Hawthorne's so ceaseless care for her, it was a source, nevertheless, to her of the acutest anguish to be compelled to observe how, in every way, this redoubled exertion was telling on him. She was, also, not a little out of heart at what had but newly reached her from Hobbs' wife, who at times was, perhaps, somewhat too ready with her news, that Snipe had been heard to boast that some one's pretty game would soon be up,—that Merrow would learn soon not only *who was who*, but *what was what!* Jenny was far from fathoming the depth of the villain's meaning, but she knew that the *some one* could point to none but Hawthorne, upon whom all his former hatred of her husband seemed now to have centred itself. The upstart, it was whispered, had had the vanity to think that, but for John, he might have yet found a way of rendering himself agreeable to the still pretty widow of the man he had so wronged. Be this as it may, a more malignant hatred never was in another's breast than in Snipe's for Hawthorne. It was well, as it helped in part to foil him, that Hawthorne was aware of it.

And now for a revenge in full, as Snipe flattered himself *at last.*

John, in obedience to his brother's wish, seldom let a day pass without a minute or two at Jane's. There was always some little thing to be said or done that helped to reconcile her to the world. It was on one of these occasions that Jenny could no longer conceal her uneasiness at what was too plainly to be read in Hawthorne's face.—We will give the scene as it showed—in its own colours.

* * * * * * * *

"You do not know, John,—oh, my heart,
How changed in one short year;
Words do not hide these whitening locks,
Nor smoothe one wrinkle here."

"Be comforted, good girl, 'tis but
The giving up, on earth,
A little of life's wear to win
A thousand times its worth.

Jane, not a wrinkle here, but trust,"
John pointed to the sky,
"Will be found and, p'rhaps, when needed most,
Upon some spare page on high."

Touched by this generous trait of love,
Still wretched in her fears,
Burying her face in Hawthorne's breast,
Jane gave herself to tears.

There had she wept her bosom dry,
When,—but without a start,
"A snake! a snake!" said John, the words
Nestling in Jenny's heart.

Snipe, ever on the peep and pry
Round Jenny's honest cot,
Had followed in John's wake, guarded
That John observe him not.

Barely, as said, had Jenny laid
Her head upon his breast,
Than John espied him, crouched, his face
Close to the window pressed.

As eyes the tracker his long trailed,
And now assured, game,
So Snipe, what his base heart believed,
His prize in Jenny's shame.

"Snipe at the window!" whispered John,
"Move guardedly,—don't seem
T' observe him, Jenny,—possibly
I'll spoil his pretty dream."

John on the move, Snipe drew aside,—
"He's gone, I think," said Jane;
"No,—I can hear,—he's there, John, yet,—
Yes, yes, John,—there again!"

A tiptoe Hawthorne neared the latch,
But, as at woodman's tread,
The guarded adder, so, on watch,
The cautioned villain fled.

Jane saw in his retreating smile
What, to her artless mind,
Meant only present insult, so,
It left no sting behind.

"What can the scoundrel mean?" said John;
"More, John, that I can say;—
He's often so,—I'll ask of him
His reason for't, some day."

"I'll save ye, Jane, that trouble, I'll,
Ere the fox fetches home,
Know something of his hankerings;
He don't for nothing come."

"Don't think, John, that I care," said Jane,
As Hawthorne closed the door,
"There's nothing he can carry hence,
They all know I am poor."

Whether Snipe half believed that John
Would barely face him, or,
Trusting in Hawthorne's calmness, thought
He still might venture more.

I cannot say,—'tis hard to tell,
At times, what secret spring
Puts men at variance with themselves,
When hard upon the wing;

But, as he hastened, John observed,
Having him well in view,
A loitering on Snipe's part, as if
Bent on encounter, too.

Now and again he'd turn, casting
A measuring look behind;—
"What new conceit, what dodge," thought John,
"Now in the fellow's mind?

Not fool enough, the brag, to dream
Of venturing his say!
I'll not, Snipe, disappoint ye, if
Your loitering lean that way."

Just where the Moor lane joins the road,
Snipe came to a stand still;—
"He means to speak me, then, the rogue,—
Well, well, I trust he will."

John was not wrong,—the chuckling knave,
Shifting has gun in hand,
As Hawthorne neared, crossed to a gate,
And 'gainst it took his stand.

John was by this time fully bent
T' assail the scoundrel first;
But Snipe, towering in confidence,
Ventured, at once, his worst.

"Good day, Sir Romeo,—pleasant sport,"—
"I don't, man, comprehend";—
"Oh, no, you don't,—others, no doubt,
Will be as dull, my friend.

Huggings, and sighs, and so on, eh,
Not easily understood!—
Plague on the law, John, eh, that so
Balks us in what we would." *

Scenting his meaning, Hawthorne roused,
"I guess your game," said he,
"I know ye for a villain, Snipe,
This no way startles *me*.

Nothing in reach has 'scaped your eye,
Nothing you wouldn't dare,
For spite on one a very fiend,
For pity's sake, might spare.

Now, hark ye,—from your viper lips
One word 'gin Jenny's fame,
And, by the God ye never loved,
I'll whip ye into shame."

There is a kind of quiet man,
More dangerous by far,
When roused, than any on whose tongue
The noisier notes of war.

Snipe had not reckoned upon this,
John took him by surprise;—
"Mark you yon house, my brag,—the Squire's,
That way your safety lies."

Abler than Snipe just then had quailed
At Hawthorne's resolute air,
"Come, sir, no tarrying,—a word;
A half word, if ye dare!"

As skulks a cur when caught at fault,
Content t'escape at all,
So Snipe, no way particular,
Slunk to his master's Hall.

"A pretty piece of valiant goods!"
Said John;—"strange whim to take
Such care of a mere carcase, and
No heed for its soul's sake!"

* Snipe must have here alluded to the law forbidding marriage with a deceased brother's wife.

CHAPTER IV.

John, the scotched adder yet can sting;
Ere night had couched the day,
All that a venomed tongue could do,
Did Snipe's in slander's way.

Thee and thy Jane, time upon time,
The villain blazed he'd seen
Fondling, as shame forbids to say,
While pity steps between.

From lip to lip, once fired, flew
The scandal, "Lady" S.
Fanning the flame, at every lull,
With heartless earnestness.

That very evening at the manse
Was she, that *one* might learn,
From her lips first, how "caught at last,
Affairs had taken a turn!"

Nothing was left untold, the worst
That villainy had famed,
Malice improved on her tart tongue,
Till womanhood was shamed.

"You fully," at the close said she,
"Vicar, I trust, discern
What only could have weighed with me
That you *at once* should learn."

"You naturally, Madam, felt
That I could not but take
Some kind of interest in the man
For his *religion's* sake."

"Snipe's known it for some time, it seems,
Being often by the moor;
But never till to day ———, you see,
Vicar, the man was poor.

Snipe's not bad hearted,—I'm convinced,
When first turned up the bird,
Had Giles but *gone upon his knees*,
There'd ne-ver have been a word.

Or had the silly thing but called
Herself upon the man;
Women, you know, can wonders work,
At least, some women can.

Vicar, you'll have to see to it,
And presently;—such shame,
If suffered to proceed, will give
The neighbourhood quite a name."

"I'm sorry for the man, indeed,"
Said Mr. Slack, "although
I'm not surprised,—it takes some time
His kind of man to know.

But, still,—we'll hope,—we'll trust,—perhaps,—
Yet hard to think that Snipe
Should deem it requisite ———, the man
So clearly in his gripe."

"Now, really, Mr. Slack, that you
Can champion for the fellow!
The cloth, I see, the cloth!—what says
Silent Miss Arabella?

"I did think, Mrs. S., the man,
Perhaps, had something in him;
But as to her, no doubt she used
Her every art to win him."

"Precisely, dear, my view of her;
There's no one can assume
A way more winning than *she* can,
Let the sly puss have room."

"Well—as to that, *I* never could
See in her manner more
Than just the simple thing one meets
At every cottage door."

"Quite so,—you misconceive me,—what,
What, dear, I meant was this ———"
"You'll never, Mrs. S., make me,
You'll never, Mrs. S. ———"

"What then, says Bella, "to the talk
That Jane, though not so tall,
Is counted by the cottage folks
The queen dame of us all."

"Is't possible!—well, well, I never!"—
"Come, come," said Mr. Slack,
"Wild flowers may, ladies, still have charms,
Candor compels you back."

"So like you, brother;—Mrs S.,
Not the most shameless sinner
That ever yet disgraced the sex,
But *he* sees *something* in her.

Not the most heartless reprobate,
Not the most saucy slut
Can I do justice to, but up
Comes brother with his—" but ! "

" Dear Madam, it has been, you see,
The study of a life,
With me, betwixt th' extremes of things,
T'avoid all cause for strife. .

Where sympathy is so at fault
An enemy might spare
A word or two, in charity,
And yet risk nothing there."

" One consolation, her career,
Vicar, can not last long,
Her health I hear,—her health, you know,
Was never very strong."

" Bella, my dear," said Mr. Slack,
Shifting a bit his chair,
" Could nothing, do you think, be done
In the way of *counsel* here ?"

" Me, brother, me !—Horatius, me !
A place that can't be named !—
A common ——— ! really, I *did* think—
Brother, I'm quite ashamed ! "

" Let him that is without a sin,"
Said One, " cast the first stone ;"—
" Now, brother, pray give over, do,
Such texts best left alone.

There's many a worthless creature, I'm
Convinced, had never strayed
But for this kind of sympathy
So thoughtlessly displayed."

How long thus Christianly these three
Had bandied, hard to say,
But for a carriage from the Squire's
That whispered one away.

" You'll not forget us, Mrs. S.,
Should any—thing—that's new ;"—
" Certainly not—though really, really,
Bella, twixt me and you !"—

CHAPTER V.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the excitement which the report of Snipe's inventions, garnished by Mrs. Squander's artistic tongue, created, not merely amongst the villagers, but in a class whom those accustomed exclusively to large towns would be disposed to exempt from a curiosity by themselves unshared in. Belief in it, however, was far from being general. An honest outcry was raised against it, from the first. There was one, too, than whom none could better appreciate its merits, in whose breast was aroused a very volcanic fury of indignation. His broad chest literally arched, and as he clenched, with an assuring pride, his heavy and hard hands, "I towld 'n," said he, "as I'd a taake his part,—I giv'n my word for't. —It bean't agin Giles as the villain's a lyin',—thaay caan't a hurt he now, but it's 'gin his wife, and that be aal one wi' I."

This was addressed to Pilch whom Hobbs had overtaken in his tramp homeward from a job at Lavent, and who we may be sure lost no time in disburdening himself of his indignation to Harry.

Barely had Hobbs relieved himself, as above, when who should they see coming leisurely along the road, at about a half mile from Merrow, but the identical object of their combined hate.

"I'm dang'd, Pilch, if us doan't a speak un," said Hobbs,—"what say thee, Pilch?

"Jist as thee likes, Harry,—but doan't hurt un."

"I tell ee what, Pilch,—sooner'n let that coxcomb craw it over one o us a day longer', I'd be swung up at Shropton to-morrow."

And now that Snipe was within a rod or two of them, at Hobbs' bidding, they stopped, when Harry stepping forward, and with his arms spread, "A half word, Measter Snipe," said he, "thee been a tellin' a pack o'lies 'bout Jane Hawthorne, as I've a heerd, and be you the man as 'll stand to em now?"

"If some people," replied the more polished keeper, "would mind their own business, Master Hobbs, it would be as well,—would it not?"

"That bean't as I says," said Hobbs, stepping closer to his man.

Snipe, suspecting that Harry was about to strike him, with a half blow or thrust, (hardly conscious, in his fear of so doing) pushed him from him. This was enough. With a smasher on his right eye more than sufficient to have burst it, followed by a second on

his teeth, down went the scoundrel, stalwart as he was, and jumping up, Pilch, to prevent mischief, having grasped Hobbs by the waist, away through the hedge by the roadside bolted the cur, howling as in agony,—his hand to his right eye.

"That be the fust as he've tasted of Harry Hobbs, but I wun't say, Pilch, as it'll be the last," said Harry, as he stepped to the roadside to rinse his hands —"no, nor the last by a long way, mebbe."

On reaching his home (Hobbs') Slop, who chanced to be there, was taken at first quite aback at Harry's excitement, but his joy knew no bounds on hearing of Snipe's discomfiture, a joy by no means, it seems, unshared in by Pilch.

"T'wer worth a 'lection dinner, Slop,
To see Hobbs how he mill'd 'n."—
"Lucky ye took I aff'n, Pilch,
I knaws I should ha kilt'n.

It was the noon, now, of the day following on Snipe's imagined discoveries; still, entirely ignorant was Hawthorne respecting them. By daybreak he had left home on business at Shropton, where the same had detained him. Pilch was aware of this; so, at Hobbs' suggestion, it was decided that Pilch should step over, between then and the evening, to John's, and acquaint him not only with the full of Snipe's villainy, but "tickarlarly," as Hobbs put it, with the pounding he had had.

"But mind,—thee doan't, Pilch, tell'n how
Hobbs crawed, and flapped his wings;—
Thee'll mind, now, Pilch, for John, I knaws,
Be 'ticklar 'bout sich things."

Pilch assured him of his fidelity,—that John should be told of every tear that he had shed.

Pilch was on his guard to be clear of the house on saying this, as even Harry's play was not at all times desirable.

In Hobbs' apprehension, how much by many esteeming themselves his betters might be taken home, to their advantage. It was on no mitred brow that Harry had his eye at the time.

Pilch, we may be sure, was not a little flattered with his mission. Some one, however, had already, unobserved, slipped from the house. No sooner had Sally Hobbs heard of her husband's heroism, than, aware that Jenny was equally with John unacquainted with matters, the temptation to be off, and "out wi' it aaltoher," was perfectly resistless.

Jenny was ill, and abed, at the time of Sally's arrival. This was unfortunate, as Sally was by no means guarded in her statements, nor in her way of expressing them.

Never was exhibited in holier colours the simplicity of Jenny's unsuspicious innocence than in her reply to Mrs. Hobbs' obtrusive, howsoever well intentioned, eloquence.

"He must have been mistaken, Sal,
Let us not judge too hard;
I don't know what the world expects,
P'rhaps, I've been off my guard.

But, then, he must have known that John
Would never, never lend
A hand to any thing that had
Dishonour for its end."

Here Jenny ceased,—the bare idea
Of guilt, of shame so great
Was more than mind could grapple with,
In one so broken, of late.

This silence not a little raised
Good Mrs. Hobbs' surprise,
"*I* couldn' taake it so, not I,
I'd hev the villain's eyes.

A meddling mischief box! as if,
Lowing the thing as true,
Long as folks doan't harm other folks
Folks hev n't a right to do!—"

"'T were better, my good friend," said Jane,
"Not to repeat the tale;"—
"Loard bless thee, love, 't be blowed about
Jes like a summer's gale."

"Don't take it in me, Sal, unkind,
I beg, but—leave me now;—
Talking distresses me,—your hand,
Your hand, Sal, on my brow."

"La sure it do!—Well *I'll* straight aff,
And let John Hawthorne know;"—
"For heaven's sake don't;—Sally indeed,
Indeed, you must n't so!"

"Well, as her likes, a dear,—but, la,
Of aal folks, I'd ha thought,
As should ha' knowed, John wer the one,
The very one as ought."

"He shall know, Mrs. Hobbs,—he ought,
And *shall* know, but I must,
He'll think it's killing me, just say
Something t'assure him, just——"

"Doan't trouble about that, a dear,
If I lets Hawthorne know,—
But, hark!—a dog!—yes, sure,—perhaps,
Thee'd raither, Jane, I'd go?"

This said, with barely a good-bye,
Reddening, rushed Sally out:
Jane guessed at once, but helpless all,
What she was bent about.

Soon a sharp voice, with Harry's name
And Snipe's entwined, revealed
The secret of her eagerness,
Nothing was kept concealed.

"I'd this—I'd that, wer I," the wind
Wafted to Jenny's ear;
Snipe had not long been kenneling,
Had the sly fox been near.

"Ah, Sally," to herself said Jane,
"Had'st thou but half as good
A head as heart, few would surpass
Thee in true womanhood."

* * * * *

Now the noise ceased!—Sally had left,
Leaving Jane sadly out;—
Where, too, was John!—John had held back,—
"What could he be about!"

"See, Jenny, what your uncle John,"
Said she, "is doing now;"—
"Standing quite still, mother, his hand,"
Like *so*, upon his brow."

"He isn't crying, surely, dear?—"
"Mother, he never cries:
Thinking, perhaps,—both his hands, now,
Are *so* upon his eyes."

"Father of mercy," Jenny said,
"Oh, on his aching heart
Lay Thy hush hand, and teach these lips
This once to play their part."

"Wasn't that, mother, a low tap?"—
"I think not, darling,—no;—
Peep from the window,"—"Yes!—mother,
What made him tap so low?"

John, as he entered, struggled hard
To seem the self same one;
His calmness, more than common, spoke
Of an actor's part o'erdone.

"I'm glad you're come, John," Jenny said,
"*So* glad, John, you are come;—
A stool, Jane,—no, child,—nearer,—there,—
Try to feel, John, at home."

"'Am I not always so, then, Jane?"
Said he, taking her hand,
"Y-e-s,—but—you don't,—" "yes, yes, I do,
Too well, Jane, understand.

Girl, this has hurt you,—you look flushed,—"
"John, I can't bear that you
Should so be—*troubled*,—some, perhaps,
Think what he says is true!"

Let the mean villain vent his worst,—
Trust me, there's not a man
Or woman will believe him, Jane,
For all his villainy can."

Jane looked into John's earnest face,
And read assurance there;
Who could mistrust that guileless brow,
That upright, artless air.

"Did Sally tell you about Hobbs,"
Said Jane, in steadier tone,
"What would he not for *us*, poor lad,
Don't leave him, long, alone!"

"Well reckoned, Jane,"—which uttered, John,
Wringing his sister's hand,
Made for the door,—a wish in her,
With him was a command.

Barely a hundred paces, now,
Was Hawthorne on his way,
When Pilch encountered him, with full
Particulars of the fray.

"Hobbs hasn't hurt him much, I trust,"
Said John, "twere hard to see
My good friend get in trouble, Pilch,
In standing up for me?"

"Well, I wun't say, aal as I knaws,
Not for a underd pound,
I'd stood afore 'n in Snipe's shoes,
Not for a single round.

To see'n run, John!—never hare
Started clean aff away
As Snipe, when *I* like stepped atwixt,
Afeard to let em play."

"Well, well," said John, "we will but hope,
If no great harm be done,
Some good may come of it, such haps
Hit home with every one."

"'T 'll teach'n John, to peep and pry,
To slander honest folks;
My Missus caals 'n "peeping Tom,"
No end, John to the jokes.

But now I minds, he'll 'member Hobbs
Long as the villain lies;
Tom heerd jist now as he's like to lose
The use o' one o' his eyes."

"I'm sorry to hear that much, Pilch;
When next Hobbs crosses you, just say,
There'll be a little meeting like,
As usual, up my way."

"Sartaintly, John,—Hobbs longs, I knaws,
To tell ye 'bout the fight;—
Wun't scold'n, mind;—Snipe pushed'n fust,
And that, you know, waun't right."

* * * * * * *

"How time remembers us!" said John,
As, homeward bent, he cast
His eye across a field or two,
Pondering on what had passed.

CHAPTER VI.

How time remembers us!—Hawthorne was far from being the only one in Merrow who had been brought to an understanding of this. By an older, and as worthy a one had he been long since taught it, one to whom the writer of this is, also, not without his indebtedness. Indeed, it is impossible for him to look back to the days he is speaking of without this man coming to the front, without something calculated to better and ennoble one again renewing itself on his lips. I have hardly, I am afraid, done him justice with my reader. With what vividness still recurs to me a scene that I cannot say how often I have recalled. It will not be regarded, I trust, as an intrusion, if here introduced. Indeed, I don't know that its introduction is not necessary to a thorough understanding of much that has to follow.

It was within a day or two after Snipe's castigation, whilst lolling under an old elm, by a pathway leading from Merrow to Orton, that I was startled from my drowse by the tramp of some one approaching, and on looking up, who should I see, within fifty paces of me, but Isaac Styles. I looked hard at him. Time had handled him lightly. He was still beautiful.

"Good day, sir," said he, on nearing me,—"pleasant goin', sir."

"Very so."

"You ha'n't a see'd, sir, you knows'n, I b'lieve, Harry Hobbs, go by?"

"I have not," I replied.———"Some fresh scoundrel for him to thrash?"

"I leaves that, sir, to One as knows better nor I;—you've a heerd ov it then, sir?"

"I have," I said.

"He be the first on em, sir, as hev got his dezarts, but he wun't be the last, by a long way, or Isaac Styles doan't a see, sir, what he've aal'ays a see'd.

"What is that, pray?

"Why, sir, as God, sooner or later, brings every thing as us do wrong home to we, though in a way aften as it bean't for the like o' we to sarcumstand."

"Room here for more than one, Mr. Styles," I said, pointing to a dry spot.

With as much as to say "that's kindly," the old man, on a root, a little removed, seated himself.

"Yes, sir, there be some as doan't see it, and some as wun't see it, but I, sir, I aal'ays sees it. I be as sartain, sir, as God be in yunder sky, that there wun't be a soul on em as hev had to do wi' a sendin' o' Giles Hawthorne to Bot'ny Bay but in the upshot 'll git his dezarts. It waun't no boy's play, sir, with measter Snipe. Dr. Hearse hev a said as how he'll a lose the sight o' his right eye, sartain; and, you see, sir, he wun't be a rush light's worth to the Squire arterwards.—You see that, sir!"

I confess that what the old man said went home to me.

"I've aal'ays a noticed, sir, that when down be a comin' God on us, us fancies oursels so secure like. You see, sir, how the Squire and his lady be a lifted up;—thaay thinks as how thaay can a do a' moast as thaay likes wi' folks. Thaay be fairly 'toxicated, sir."

"You are looking, then, for their deserts, if I understand you?"

"I bean't a looking, sir, for nothing. I on'y says as it wer jes so wi' Snipe. *It be the nat'ral way, sir, as things rights theirselves.*"

That Styles, in his hard and instructive experience, had picked up, or rather, had had forced on him a pretty clear comprehension of that moral chemistry, which not a page of the past, nor of what is passing but upholds, it was plain enough to any one. Would that, looking to the ocean, I could say that there were none beyond it who seem less to see, and less to understand it than did this poor, but clear headed, noble hearted man. Not, as now, should we then hear of a mere half and half, procrastinated sympathy for such as Isaac Styles being, ever and anon, lauded through the land as a thing, on the part of some folks, miraculously Christian. Nor, as now, would be found even the very highest in the realm, whenever humanity or justice has a word to say in behalf of its poorest and least privileged sons, pandering, for the sake of a laugh's compliment, to the weakness and selfishness of a party whom their better natures might have long since taught them to despise. Far nobler in them would it be to remember, and with respect, what a great departed one has said of "*unseasonable* pleasantry in the venerable presence of misery." To return, "By-the-bye, Mr. Styles," I said, (I was curious on the point) "has the man Diggs ever again turned up in the neighbourhood, the man, who, a few years back (for time had been running on) returned from Sydney?"

"He hev never been here since, sir," he replied," but he towld

I, when I see'd 'n last, as he'd be over, a some day, when us least 'spected un."

"It was not on the Squire's ground," I further inquired, "that the affair occurred in which Diggs was concerned?"

"No, sir, on the Baron's;—but the Squire, thaay says, had muore to do in gittin' un sent away than the Baron."

"That was before the Squire's marriage?"

"Sartain. And us aal thinks as he've a been a harder man from the day as his lady fust come among us, though I aal'ays says there be one in Merrow as is wus nor she. I means, sir, the passon's sister,—Miss Bella, as us caals her."

"I thought," said I, "that by some one she was regarded quite as a patroness?"

"I never been nighst her o' late, sir, and, muore'n that, I never means to."

"How is that?" I inquired.

"Well, sir, if it waun't for the troublin' o' you, I should ha liked to hev let you, sir, know 'zactly how it wer."

"Pray, let us have it, Mr. Styles," I said.

"Well, sir,"—Here the old man paused, taking off his hat, and with his handkerchief wiping his head;—"gittin' warmish, sir."

"Take your time, Mr. Styles."

"Well, sir, I needn't a tell you as some folks in Merrow hevs pooty often a tough job of it to meake both ends meet."

"Just so."

"Specially, the owld uns. Now, sir, in sich like times, by way o' meakin' up for a short week, I goes about 'mong the varmers,—you, mebbe, hev a see'd I, sir,—and, I gits hold ov a few vowls, which, when missus and I hev a dressed em, I peddles 'mong the gentry. I goes as far as Shropton wi' em. The moast as us meakes on em be three pennies a head, lettin' alone the feathers; and, in season like, I, at times, taakes round wi' em a few creesses—waater creesses.

Now, one evening, sir, I wer over at the passon's wi' a couple o' vowls,—a pootty couple thaay wer, sir,—I got em at Measter Swain's,—you knows 'n, sir—over agin the mill stream.—Well, sir, as I says, I wer over at the passon's, it wer a Monday, wi' a couple o' vowls, and I wer a waitin' in the back kitchen till the owld crust braught I the money, jist four and six. As soon as her come in, "Measter Styles," says she, "I thinks as you charges pooty high for your vowls."

"Doan't I, ma'am," says I, "aal'ays bring you very nice vowls?"

"I caan't a say as you doan't," says she.

"Aal as us meakes on em, ma'am," says I, "be sixpence a couple, which I thinks, ma'am, says I, be little enough.—I'd a ought to ha towld her o' the feathers."

"Well, sir, her didn't, arter that, say nothing muore o' the vowls; but her taakes a chair, and clappin' herself down right by the side o' I, "you be a gittin," says she, "pooty owld, Measter Styles."

"No fault o' mine, ma'am," says I.

"I doan't a say as it be," says she, "but as years increases, do you, Measter Styles, if so be I may meake so bold, ever think o' your latter end?"

"Now, sir, a' times, as you, mebbe, hev a noticed, I be a little deef, specially wi' a wind from the East, and it bean't aal'ays, when along wi' folks as taalks as she do, as I sarcumstands em 'tirely, —tickalarly, sir, when thaay taalks pious. Aal as I could a catch for sartain wer a summat like creesses, (increases) so, I says to her, says I, "Did you say, ma'am, as you wanted some waater creesses?"

"I 'm not a taalkin," says she, "Measter Styles, 'bout waater creesses, but about your latter end. Do you, I say, as years increases, ever think of your latter end?"

"As soon as I see'd what her wer a drivin' at, I jist picks up my beasket, and, athout a word, I waalks clean out o' the pleace, and I never been nighst the owld crust since. It waun't, I says, sir, for the like o' she to taalk to I in that fashion. I doan't a see, sir, as her hev to do wi' my latter end a bit muore'n I wi' hern. That be a thing, sir, I says, as lies 'twixt I and *somebody else.*—She be a staale owld crust, sir."

I was, certainly, any thing but inclined, from what I had heard of the lady, to dispute it; and, to this day, I have considered myself as Mr. Styles' debtor in the still greater zest with which I have since partaken of what I have always been more than partial to. Water-cresses, indeed, have never been, since, upon my table, but, seated at the same, with his finely chiseled face and kindly looks, has been Isaac Styles. What would I not of this world's surrender to again hear the same story, from the same lips, under the same tree. The old elm, I am told, is still there,—still in leaf,—still green. Alas, for the yellow leaves that can never be green any more!

CHAPTER VII.

Hawthorne was never further from being in the wrong than when he said to Jenny, "Girl, this has hurt you."—Hurt her had it, indeed; and wounded to the core was he to be compelled to observe it. Jenny was often puzzled to explain to herself why she would so start at his accustomed tap, and dull the eye, that, at times, could not have detected on her cheek a shade of crimson, as he entered. Every one was in arms against Sally for having said to her a word. Styles, in particular, fretted at it. "Pity," said he to Hobbs, on the third day afterwards, in Pilch's cottage,

"Pity Sal hadn't a spoke to I,
I'd a towld her as't woo'd'en do;
'T waun't for herself as Jenny cared,
'T wer John as touched her so."

"Sure, Sal wer wrong,—her didn't heed
How Jane oold taake it on;
Wooll say no more, for, sartain, Styles,
'T wer aal in kindness done."

This it was impossible to deny, so, it was not an age before Sally was again able to show her face, though Styles was, at times, still heard to say that "a wus thing for the poor wench could ha hardly been." I was at the time quite of the same opinion, but I have looked at it differently since.

CHAPTER VIII.

Not idly, it seems, had Styles declaimed under the old elm. His triumph was at hand.

In the spring of the year following upon that in the fall of which he and I had by chance, if so it was, found ourselves together, prospecting under the same tree, I had been invited by a neighbour in Lavent, a young farmer, to make one of two in an afternoon drive to Shropton. An early luncheon had stood us in the stead of dinner, so that the sun was barely at its highest as we drew upon Merrow.

More than usually vociferous, as heard at a distance, was the Vicar's custodian. As we neared the manse, this was explained. Two men, one of them was Pilch, running their hardest, with their hats off, encountered us on this side of it. Their excitement was

such that our nag shied at them, and, within a hundred yards of the Vicar's gate, two more men passed us, paying, in their haste, no attention to an effort by one of us to speak with them.

"What can be up?" I said.

"Nothing at all," replied my companion; "these simple clouts take a scare at any thing."

The tone in which this was said put me on my guard.

Nothing further, however, that was unusual presented itself as we passed through Merrow. The aspect of comfort and refinement which the vicarage wore, contrasting so exceptionally, I thought, with the meanness and poverty of the cottages about it, was neither new in itself, nor in the reflections which it again forced on me. I observed, however, when abreast of Styles' cottage, that the old man, as in haste, made his appearance, when, if ever eye imaged a wish for a word or two, did his on encountering mine. We were stepping it out, at the time, my companion's business being urgent, so I decided to pass on; but, on reaching Shropton, it was clear that something unusual was afloat. The chief constable, with a subaltern, was leaving the town, by the Merrow road, at a pace absolutely dangerous, and into a gig, standing at his gate, with quite a precipitancy, jumped the coroner and his servant, driving off in the same direction. Then, in full swing, rounding the corner of a street, came Dr. Hearse, mounted, while, on foot, numbers of both sexes were wending their way, evidently for Merrow, as fast as they were able; and on returning, I observed, before reaching it, that about Hawthorne's cottage quite a crowd, in the wildest excitement, had gathered. This was more than curiosity could stand. I should immediately have requested my companion to put me down, had I not, in the distance, as if the old man had been watching for me, espied Isaac Styles in the little garden patch in front of his cottage. We were soon up with it, when bidding my friend not to wait for me, and springing from the gig to the road, in a second more, Styles and I were in his garden together.

"Heerd, sir!—hev ee heerd, sir?" said he, with an excitement quite extraordinary.

"I have heard nothing, Mr. Styles," I said, begging him to be less excited.

"Oh, sir, come in,—come in;—I towld ee, sir, how it'd a be!" Here the old man burst into tears.

"Matty, a stool for the gen'leman."

I was not, however, in a mood for sitting, nor, seemingly, was my friend.

"He said, sir, as he'd be over, a some day, when us least 'spected un. You mind, sir, as Styles towld ee so, when us were alone unner the tree; but who'd a ever a thaught, sir, how it wer to tarn out!"

Here the old man again took to weeping.

"You mind, sir, it wer in the very path as he stopped Harry in!—You see that, sir!"

To this hour, are his wiry fingers on my shoulder.

"Who stopped him," I said, "and what was in the path?—you forget, my good sir, that I have heard nothing.—Explain a little."

"Thee hev n't a heerd, sir, as how Diggs be a found, wi' 's brains shot out o' s head, in the path as the Squire for years hev been a tryin' to stop up!"

The stool that Matty had brought me was now of real service.

"Shot dead, do you say?"

"Sartain!—the Squire'll never no more witness agin un, sir."

"Why, who could have done it?" I said.

"That be jist it, sir;—it waun't hisself!"

"Is any one, more than another, suspected?"

"I hev n't a heerd none say, sir,—but folks caant a help their thoughts.—He wer a commin' a purpose to see Matty and I, sir. A summat for she wer a found on un, a tucked in his breast!"

Here the old man again burst into tears.

"You see'd, sir, a crowd, as you come by, at John's;—thaay've a carried un in there, and the crowner hev been sent for to hold a 'quest on un. Thaay wanted as I should be one on em, but Isaac Styles, sir, I says, hev little enough o' life left in him as it be;—no call, sir, for muore'n one crowner's 'quest in a day;—I hev n't a looked at un, and I doan't a mean to. At the time o' his trial sir, the Squire tried his wust agin un; it didn't 'cur to'n then, as how, some day, Diggs'd be a found, wi' his brains a blowed out, on his own grounds.—You see that, sir! (His hand again on my shoulder.) And it didn't 'cur to un neither, sir, as, when the body 'd be a found, the same Judge as handled Giles 'd be a taakin' his tarn agin at Shropton! It do, I says, sir, seem odd, spoasin' the Squire done it,—I on'y says, mind, sir, *spoasin'*, as the very same Judge what tried Giles should a tarn out to be the very un as wer to try *he!*"

"But, my good sir," I said, "your talk would seem to show that you suspected the Squire. Are you justified, at present, in doing so?"

"I doan't a say, sir, as nobody done it. Aal as I says, sir, be, as the body be a found in the very path as the Squire, for years, hev been a tryin' to stop up. Whatsumdever I thinks furder I keeps to myself."

"Not altogether so," I thought.

Here a constable, (and as well, perhaps,) in haste, broke in upon us, putting a folded paper into Styles' hand.

Styles paled a little, and his hand, as might well be, shook as he took it. After a rigid scrutiny of it, "'T be aal right, sir," he said, "thaay 've a 'rested I to 'denterfy to the copse.—Spoase, sir, as us 'll hev to go;—didn't a want to ha' see'd un, but crowner's 'quest laaw be the strictest a goin'.—Thee'll be gwine, too, sir?"

Thinking that my presence could at least do no harm, I assented. It took but a moment or two for Styles to prepare himself, when a few moments more brought us to the crowd about Hawthorne's.

"Stand back there," said a strong voice, easily recognizable as Hobbs', "how be the owld man to git along—keep back I tell ee."

With such like injunctions, enforced with accompaniments by no means uncommon with Harry, it was not long before Styles, notwithstanding the crowd, was jostled into the presence of the coroner, Mr. William Wormley. The coroner regarded him respectfully. He could hardly have done otherwise. There was quite a stir in the room on his entry. "Now," seemed upon every face, "aal 'll go right."

Being duly sworn, Styles deposed that he could, "'denterfy to the copse" as that of James Diggs, formerly of Orton.

"On what, my good man," said Mr. Wormley, "do you mainly rely?"

"I doant, sir, rely on nothing, I on'y 'denterfies to the copse."

"But you must, surely, have some reason, or reasons for so doing, some particular"—

"'Xcuse I, sir, but, cordin' to the statue, us beant a bounden to nothing whatsumdever but to 'denterfy to the copse." Here, Styles, that he might, as it seemed, show that he had no wish to shirk any part of his bounden duty, and that the law, as he had always held it, and his father before him had held it, might be carried out in its entirety, and with a solemnity becoming the occasion, stepped up to the body, and laying his right hand on its left shoulder, looking

round him, at the same time, with an eye inviting attention, in as clear and steady a voice as he could command, said: "In the name o' the king I 'denterfies to the copse."—A pin might have been heard to fall!

The coroner yielded, and, as I thought, wisely; for nothing more, rely on it, was, on that occasion, to be had of Isaac Styles.

I staid, as did Styles, till the inquest was over. It was fully shown by numbers from Orton that the body before them was that of James Diggs; and "Wilful murder by some person or persons unknown" was the unanimous verdict. Appended to it was an expressed hope that Government would be nothing backward in offering a reward in furtherance of the ends of justice.

Mr. Wormley assured them that he fully approved of the recommendation and that he would do his best in forwarding it accordingly.

"Thee'll not forgit, sir," said Styles, on parting, but in a tone sadly sobered, "what I minded ee ov as to wheer the body wer a found."

I promised him that I would give it my fullest consideration, and never more faithfully did I keep my word.

How many times I stopped on my tramp homeward,—whether I walked, or ran,—who I met, or didn't meet, would all be questions difficult to answer, so completely possessed was I by what I had just heard and seen.

That the Squire was one of the least likely to have done such a deed it could hardly be denied. What had he to gain by it. It was not for poaching upon *his* grounds that Diggs had been transported, and, if otherwise, surely, his punishment had been ample, more than sufficient, in its consequences so terrible to him, to leave no room for further vindictiveness. Rapidly, however, upon this suggested itself something that interfered not a little with such a conclusion. Styles, and Hobbs had, on so many occasions, and in terms so unguarded, prognosticated that no good would eventually befall the Squire for his doings to Giles, that it had reached the ears of Snipe, who, forthwith, reported it to his master. Now, it was whispered that the Squire, apprehensive of mischief, had, from that day, been in the habit, at least when alone, of carrying arms. Could a quarrel have arisen between Diggs and the Squire, and the latter, partly in anger, and partly in fear ——— !

Diggs had clearly been on the disputed pathway, and the pride

of the Squire was said to be in advance of his courage. But could a man, in his sane senses, with, apparently, everything upon earth to make happy such as was he, be rash enough, foolish enough to jeopardize his very life, in a heated moment, on a mere question of trespass ?—Impossible.—Some one, knowing Diggs to be not without means, and suspecting that he carried it about with him, had waylaid him. But then started the confounding fact that robbery had not been added to murder. His purse, and watch had both been found on him. Robbery, then, had not been contemplated, unless I was to suppose that the assassin had been disturbed at his work.

The Squire had been seen to leave his gate at about an hour before a report of fire arms was heard in the direction of the murder. This was early in the morning, before breakfast. The Squire, as a sportsman, was an early riser. It was further rumoured that none of his servants had observed him to reenter the Hall. All this, however, might have easily happened at any time, as might, also, his breakfasting, upon that morning, somewhat later than usual.

Dr. Hearse had stated, at the inquest, that the murderer must have been close to his victim, on firing. This, I thought, looked like a quarrel, particularly as the shot had been delivered in front.

What, however, most forcibly struck me was, that the Squire, as I was informed by Mrs. Manly, had in no way, concerned himself respecting the affair. Indeed, since the morning, he had been seen by no one, saving his domestics. This I thought, was decidedly against him.

As to the remark by his wife (a mere rumour one would hope) that "Providence had evidently "taken the fellow in hand," it was too shocking to be of much account.

The Vicar, too, as it reached me from the same quarter, was particularly taciturn, and his sister had contented herself with saying that " some people seemed to be born to be always in trouble."

To Turnpike Tom, as it transpired at the inquest, had fallen the distinction of having first met with the body. Tom was, constitutionally, none of the bravest, so, no one will be surprised to hear that, even on my leaving Merrow at a late hour, his complexion in no way belied Mrs. Hobbs' reiterated statement, that " when us fust a see'd un he wer jes for aal the world like a sheet!"

Of Master Snipe I have said nothing, as this gentleman had, of late, made himself essentially scarce. Dr. Hearse's opinion as to the result of his recounter with Hobbs had been fully borne out. He had never recovered the use of his right eye. This, as a keeper, had rendered him useless. He was only with the Squire on sufferance. Whether her Ladyship thought that Providence had, at length, taken him, too, in hand, I cannot tell. My friend Styles would, probably, have had something to say on it.

CHAPTER IX.

Shropton had never been remarkable for the shrewdness or activity of its police, and its sluggishness on the present occasion might well originate a report that an unjust influence was at the bottom of it. Such, however, was not the case. A letter of mysterious import had been immediately surrendered by its recipient, a constable, which led to an offer by the government of a hundred pounds reward, as an incentive to renewed exertion. So fully, however, had they, the police, made up their minds that Diggs had been waylaid for the money he was supposed to have carried about with him, that they were put upon an entirely wrong scent, and, after a week or two of fruitless activity, their exertions and inquiries subsided, and the crime, enormous as it was, had comparatively ceased to be uppermost on men's lips, saving, perhaps, with a few, more immediately interested, in Merrow.

My own sentiment on the subject had hourly gone, more and more, against the Squire. I learned, on inquiry, that the Vicar had seldom if ever, since the day on which Diggs' body was found, visited at the Hall, and on meeting the Squire, which it occasionally fell to me to do, there was never absent from his looks a confusion by no means assuring. Nor was I the only one, as it turned out, that had been looking in that direction. Thus for awhile, however, rested matters in Merrow, but only for awhile, as will be now seen. On or about the third week after the inquest a letter was brought to me at Lavent by a labourer from Merrow. This was early in the morning. It was wrapped in a piece of coarse brown paper, sealed, and ran as follows:

"'Xcuse I, sir, but I wishes as how you'd a come over. A hankercher hev been found blowed into a fuz bush nighst wheer it done, wi' *summun's* nisshals on't,—and *muore 'n that*, sir, by a deal.

P.S. 'T waun't no 'ornary 'un. Yourn, speckfully,

Isaac Styles.

What a long reach did I seem to make into Some one's ways as I read this, and I silently blessed the veteran that had encouraged me to do so.

A hasty breakfast, and I was off for Merrow.—The old man had been watching for me.—He was at his door on my arrival.

"Come in, sir," he said, "come in;—Matty, a stool.—It be aal out, sir!—Pilch hev a tarned 'n up;—I guessed jist how it wer, but, as you knows, sir, I kep it to myself."

"Let me hear everything in detail, Mr. Styles," I said, "begin now at the beginning. You say that a handkerchief has been found, with some one's initials on it, and near the spot of the murder?"

"Jist so, sir.—Sit down, and I'll tell 'ee, right aff, jist how it wer.—Pilch—you minded, sir, when us wer agither—"

"But what about Pilch, Mr. Styles?"

"Well, sir, as I wer a gwine to say, Pilch hev a noticed, as he towld I, 'bout an hour back, that the Squire wer aal'ays o' late, that is, sir, since the murder, prowlin' about, afore as he reckoned any one wer astir, nighst the wheerabouts it wer done. So he tooked it into 's head to watch un, and, on meakin' yesterday for home, what should a stumble on but a hankercher, blowed, as I towld 'ee, sir, into a fuz bush, and it wer as plain as the fuz bush itself as summun had a wiped his hands wi' it;—it wer streaked, sir, wi' blood, and on one corner o' it wer a writ C. S.—you see that, sir!"

I did see it!

"But that bean't aal, sir, by a deal."

"Take your time, Mr. Styles."

"Sartainly.—Now, Pilch, sir, who, bye the bye, bean't no fool, on'y to hisself, kep aal quiet:—you knows, sir, there be a reward out, a unnerd pound,—and he tooked to a watchin' un muore and muore.—He wer up best part o' the night. I minded as he waun't at work yesterday."

"Well, he was up the best part of the night?"

"Jist so, sir, and early i' the mornin', it waun't hardly light, who should he spy a crassin' the field at the back o' us, agin the wood by the moor, but the Squire. Pilch followed un, hidin' and dodgin', as he best could, when, jist as they wer about half way acrass the wood, the Squire stopped, and arter lookin, for a second or so, on the ground, at the foot of a beech tree, passed on. Pilch had his eye on un, when the Squire stopped, and tarnin', whistled

his dog as had stayed behind, snuffin' and scratchin' by the beech tree. The Squire couldn't ha see'd it, but it waun't, sir, for sich as Pilch to miss it. So, he hid hisself till the Squire tarned back, and wer out o' sight, when straight made Pilch for the beech tree, and, from jist below wheer the dog wer a scratchin', out he hooks a pair o' gaiters as he knowed wer the Squire's, and as he minded never to ha see'd on the Squire's legs since *the day!*—Both on em, sir, wer blooded; you see that, sir!"

I listened in silence.

"This, sir, were muore'n Pilch could a longer keep to hisself; so on he come straight to I, and towld I aal as I've a towld you, sir;—us both on us thaught it as well to keep things quiet a bit, but Pilch didn't 'ject, sir, as I should a write to you."

I bowed, and with real pride.

"The dog as 'tracted Pilch to the spot, sir, wer the same as snuffed out the pheasant at poor Giles!—you see that, sir!"

Here the old man burst into tears,—he had shed, perhaps, bitterer ones.

"Loard God! sir," said he, sitting down by me, and laying his hand on my knee, "if us on'y could be a braught to feel as God hev never his eye aff us. But, somehow, it bean't so, by a long way, or poor Diggs 'd never a been found yunder. It be aal, sir, the passons' fault. If thaay, sir, tickerlarly the great uns, had a done, since I can a mind, as thaay'd a ought to,—had a harkened a little more to One who, as the Book says, *wer meek and lowly o' heart*, and a beckoned a little muore, as He done, *to them as labours and be heavy laden*, I says, sir, if thaay'd a done so, awhile back, things woo'den show as thaay do now. Thaay hev, sir, so many on 'em, their eyes on the fleece i' the stead o' the flock.—Lettin' alone, sir, what the Book says, one'd a thought that sich as Measter Slack, wi' aal his finery and riches, might be asheamed to know o' the little as some folks hev, and *to keep quiet on't;* and he woold be asheamed, but he be a lifted up, sir, above hisself, as Snipe wer, and the Squire and his lady wer. But it'll be aal square wi'n, sir, some day;—as folks sows, sir, so em reaps:—John and I hev aften a talked it over, and John says as he can a see, as summun else, sir, sees, too, that the little cloud as Mr. Manly once pinted out to 'n be, a'ready, a deal bigger. You mind, sir, how God hev a writ, that *a haughty spirit goeth afore a fall.* It be the nat'ral way, sir, as things rights theirselves."

"Quite so," I observed; "but in all your experience, Mr. Styles,

have you met with none, in Mr. Slack's position, with more enlarged and generous sympathies?"

"Lots on em, sir;—thaay be aften the on'y friend as a poor man hevs, and for that, sir, I says, when thaay, of aal folks, knows so well what thousands hev to go through with to live it out, thaay'd a ought to hev come furrard long ago wi' a word or two o' help. Thaay knows, sir, as well as thaay knows any thing, that, at present wages, a man wi' a family hev either to beg, or to steal, to meake ends meet. Yet ax one on em, sir, to git up a public meetin' like for the labourer's good, or to say a word for un in his charch, and he'd a think, if he didn't a tell 'ee so, sir, as you waun't in your right senses. Thaay be aal'ays a lookin' for another mount in the ladder, and it bean't the poor labourer's hand, thaay knows, as can help em there;—thaay be very *shrewd* men, sir."

"Others, Mr. Styles," I said, "will, some day, perhaps, show themselves to be as shrewd."

"Well, sir, I says, till religion be a put, as Mr. Manly wer a wont to say, on its own legs, cast adrift like from what they caals the State, with nothing for a passon to lean or build on but the love and riverence of his flock, it'll be aal'ays so. The Charch, sir, now-a-days, be jist, for aal the world, like the grass unner a big tree,—weak and spindly,—bean't as it 'a ought to be no how;—nothing wun't thrive on't;—it wants sunning,—and sun enough, I specks, sir, it'll hev some day. I aften feels as I should ha liked to a see'd it, but—it wun't be, sir. God, in some things tickerlarly, be a slow God,—he kinder taakes his time like,—that his lessons, perhaps, may be the better remembered. The Squire's doins to Giles Hawthorne 'll not be forgotten the sooner, sir, for the six years as hev passed since!"

Something again on my shoulder!

Not wishing to be present on Pilch's return, after a word or two more with the old *gentleman* I had all but said, I bade him a good-bye, thanking him, in all sincerity, for his kindly communication with me, and promising that, before long, I would see him again.

CHAPTER X.

I was somewhat surprised on the following morning, to find that nothing had reached Lavent, in connexion with what had been passing, on the day previous, at Merrow. That the Squire had been arrested, I expected to have found upon every lip All,

however, was as usual. It had been decided by the shrewder ones of Shropton, that the Squire, for a day or so, should be allowed his liberty, and *watched;* and two detectives were purposely appointed.

Again, ere the daybreak, was his excellency on the move; again was his course by the fields, to the right, at the back of the village, and, again, after a cautious look behind him, unobserved, as he supposed, did he enter his own wood, and, still unobserved, as he imagined, did he again pause at the same beech tree, when, with an "Oh God!" his right hand clenched in the hair of his head, behold him confounded, and betrayed. In less time than it takes to tell of it, a powerful grip had him securely by the throat, while a hand, equally able, was in no way behind in arresting the Squire's on its way to *something* which, it was well known, he had, of late, been in the habit of carrying about with him.

"Unhand me, sirs," cried the Squire, blanched with rage.

"We are not here, sir, for that."

"By whose authority am I thus dogged?"

The superior of the two pointed to the foot of the beech tree.

It was all over! but for the shoulder of one of the officers, the Squire would have fallen.

After a pause, (the detectives, the while, regarding him in silence), "I have," said the Squire—sadly changed was his tone—"*gentlemen*,—a— a request to make."

"If in no way"—

"Simply," said the Squire, interrupting him, "that I may not be subjected to the trial of being led through the village."

"It is not likely, sir, that your presence will be required there. You will accompany us to Shropton."

The Squire looked searchingly into the face of the officer, and then in the direction of his home.

"I have also to request that my friend, Baron Steinberg, of Orton, be directed to break the affair to Mrs. Squander."

Of this the officer took note.

"I wish, also," added the Squire, pausing for a moment, "to avoid passing the cottage of John Hawthorne."

It was a hard look that the officers exchanged with each other.

"This will necessitate our keeping to the road which skirts to the north of it,"—here the Squire again paused—and then, with a voice poorly audible, said—"my own property."

"You will accompany us quietly?—your word, I suppose,—"

"I have been in the habit of late, I am afraid," said the Squire, his eye on the moisten as he spoke, "of keeping my word *too well*.'

This was not lost upon the men who still held him.

With an officer on each side of him, the Squire was now, in compliance with his request, conducted through *his own property* to the road south of it, the Squire directing them to a gate which opened on to it. Jenny Hawthorne's cottage was in sight from it. The Squire turned, and for a moment looked thoughtfully in the direction of it. It was manifestly with an effort that he abstained from speaking. Little did its poor sorrow-stricken inmate dream, as she slumbered on, for it was still early, of what was passing so near to her.

Notwithstanding the greater privacy of their route, it was not without recognition by one of the villagers that the Squire reached Shropton. Slop encountered them before they had entered the main road. Even the eyes of poor Slop were now as a basilisk's to the Squire's.

Not a little, be sure, was Slop elevated in his own opinion at the possibility of being the first to blazen in Merrow the astounding fact in his possession; for, although the detectives were in anything but their official robings, Slop fully comprehended their business. The distinction had, indeed, fallen to him, as even Pilch was in ignorance of the Squire's arrest;—he had been forbidden, for the present, to interfere. Like wildfire, however, went the news upon Slop's entrance into Merrow. Hobbs' cottage was the first in his march, whence away flew the two to Turnpike Tom's, where, as it happened, was Styles, who in return for what had been supplemented by Slop, deeming himself no longer bound to secresy, related in full what had been confided to him by Pilch. Hobbs was, as usual, nothing behind hand.

"'T 'll let un see what God can do,"
Said he, still more elate,
"I aal'ays towld un what, some day,
'Oold be the feller's fate.

And muore'n that, Sal heerd jist now,
His lady hev forsook un:—
Aal true as Gospel, Tom, Slop see'd
The coonstables as took un."

Harry Hobbs' addendum will recall what was whispered, awhile back, of Baron Steinberg of Orton. The suspicion then enter-

tained of him, by very many at least, had, by recent events, been fully justified. That one so notorious for his gallantries as the Baron should have found it an easy matter to work upon the weakness of a woman like Mrs Squander is less to be wondered at than that the Squire should so determinately shut his eyes to what was apparent to every one but himself. He had, it seems, in order the better to conceal from his wife his early rising, and watchings of late, proposed to her a visit at a Mrs. Oakley's, in Orton. Here was the Baron's opportunity, and well had he availed himself of it. By the third day of her visit had Mrs. S. turned her back on her *dear* Charles, and put herself en route for the continent, with as black a scoundrel as ever fortune hunted in England. A letter to Mrs. Oakley, posted on the day after her decampment, left nothing in doubt, nor had the tongue of a returned hireling, from whom Sally Hobbs, in a chance rencounter, had gleaned every particular.

"You see," said Styles, "it wer hisself, Slop, as done it,—it wer hisself as sent her to Orton!"

"You sees it aal, Styles."

"A wonder as her waun't a drownded," said Hobbs, "a crassin the sea!"

"A wonder as her waun't!" repeated Slop and Tom, while Styles, with a longer reach into the future, said, and with more than his usual solemnity, "—Perhaps, Harry, her wer allowed to live for her punishment."

The excitement, far and near, was now at its highest. Both country and metropolitan papers seemed to exist solely for the mysterious murder in Merrow. Hundreds of all classes and callings were down daily from London, perambulating the neighbourhood, and were as busy in their inquiries as reporters. Tom had become quite proud from the curiosity respecting the man who had first fallen in with the body. Not even he who had first seen the Squire in custody was entirely neglected; while, as to Pilch, his praise was upon every lip. Scores, who had neither seen nor heard of him before, shook him by the hand with a heartiness as sincere, seemingly, as earnest. As to the Squire,—he had been taken before a bench of magistrates at Shropton, and fully committed for trial at the approaching assizes, for the wilful murder of James Diggs.—Of the justice of this the Squire himself soon put an end to all doubt. In an early issue of the *Shropton Herald* appeared a statement that the Squire, on hearing of his

wife's desertion of him, gave a hard sigh, and, for some hours afterwards, neither to himself, nor to another uttered a word. "I see it all," he said at length, "too well,—and too late." This was said without regard to an officer's presence, and, on the evening of the same day, it was the third of his confinement, he expressed a desire to speak with the ordinary, and to that gentleman made a confession in full of his guilt.

He had encountered Diggs on the disputed pathway, where, indeed, he had purposely posted himself, Snipe, from his hatred of Hobbs and Hawthorne, having incited him to make an example of some who still set him at defiance. Worked upon by his own selfish tool, the Squire had insisted upon Diggs retracing his steps. Diggs refused, throwing in his face his former persecution of him. The Squire *threatened* him,—Diggs dared him,—then a blow from the Squire,—a return one from Diggs,—a scuffle,—and then—a shot from the Squire!

The Squire was open enough, and off his guard enough to confess that he had threatened Diggs, on his refusal to return. This, in the opinion of every one, was a dark point against him, and showed, as particularly dwelt on by Mr. Stretch, a leading attorney in Shropton, the folly of the Squire's persistence in declining professional aid. The Vicar, too, it was rumoured, had said that his confession, to say the least of it, was precipitate, which was supplemented by his sister with an emphatic doubt of "the man's sanity." How contrastingly had Christianity spoken,—"The poor fellow," said Hawthorne, in the presence of Styles and others, "has lost, I am afraid, all wish to live." On this from John, Styles, according to Harry, stepped up to him, and drawing him affectionately towards him, kissed him upon both cheeks.

The Squire, by no means wanting in shrewdness, was not without good reason both for the admission he had made, and his abstinence from legal advice. He was aware that the evidence against him would be overwhelming, and that his only chance lay in the possibility of a recommendation to mercy. His concealment of nothing, he calculated, would tell in his favour, more particularly with a Judge who, he flattered himself, would at least not be biassed against him.

Nothing added so much to the excitement, more especially in the neighbourhood where all particulars respecting Giles Hawthorne were so well remembered, as that not only was the trial of the Squire immediately at hand, but, as it then ruled in the

disposition of the judges, that the same Justice Dooill who had tried and condemned Giles was, in his rightful turn, again to sit in judgment at Shropton, and on the man who, if not in the law's eye, had at least in God's, committed a crime, in his persecution of the Hawthornes, greater by far than the one for which he was now about to be tried. There were few in the neighbourhood with whom this had no weight. Styles' tongue seemed never to tire on it. "You see, sir," said he, (we were standing at the time by his garden gate) "it be jist for aal the world as it wer wi' a people as thaay caals the Rumuns, as lived afore and arter Christ's coming,—you may a heerd on em, sir,—moartal cruel folks,—used to meake them as thaay 'd a upperhanded fight, for mere pleasurin', not on'y wi' theirselves, but with wild beasties,—lions and them like. Now, you mind, sir, how thaay sandwiches, as the Rumuns caaled em, come down on em, at last, like the locusts in Scriptur, and arter killin' every blessed soul on em, tooked away wi' em in big *sacks* aal as thaay could a lay hands on; and thaay says, sir, them as knows the ticklars, that, for a good seven underd year arterwards, there waun't nothing whatsumdever to be see'd but tumbled down houses, and wild beasties. You see, sir, it come home to em, and so, I says, sir, it hev come home to the Squire, and there be a sight muore on em, sir, you knows who I mean, as it'll come home to some day. It wun't be with wild beasties, mebbe, as *thaay* 'll hev to fight, but I wun't say as to *theirselves*, —no, I wun't say, sir, a bit about *that*."

I have been more disposed to believe in the gift of prophecy, from my remembrance of many things said to me, at a time when it was less safe to say them, by this fine old fellow than from all that I have since either read or heard from the ablest divines.

It was, also, a point prolific of observation that the Vicar was, still, superlatively taciturn, and that not the merest allusion to so dominant an event could be surmised from either of his texts on the ensuing Sunday. It was still further noticed, and not a little commented on, that the Judge seemed to make it a point, as some were bold enough to say, to leave no room for an interview with any one in Merrow previous to the trial. He was, of course, through the press, fully cognizant of what was in store for him, and it would be difficult to suppose that he regarded it with indifference. Whether this avoidance of him by the Judge was agreeable, or otherwise, to the Vicar it would be hard to say. His demeanour, however, since the Squire's confession, was so subdued

and reserved, that, according to Slop, "One had a thaught, as didn't a know the rights on't, as hisself wer to be tried, too." His sister, it was also remarked, was seldom abroad, and had never, since the Squire's arrest, ventured through the village. One of her latest utterances, according to her waiting maid, Mercy, was, that "there was really, Horatius, now-a-days, no trusting the *best*." In Mrs. S.'s stampede she had, at least, met with something *new*, though it was not for her ladyship, it seems, to be the bearer of it.

PART FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

The day had now all but arrived, twenty-four hours alone intervened, when from out the same walls within which was once incarcerated his still too well remembered victim, would be brought, and exposed to the world's gaze, the, till lately, proudest squire of the district;—so not a moment have we to lose in bringing to the front whatsoever of significance remains to be spoken of.

It is hardly necessary to say that in Merrow and its vicinity, no one, with the exception of the Slacks and Squanders, believed in a particle of Snipe's slanderous utterances respecting Jenny Hawthorne and her protector. It had however reached Jenny, through Sally Hobbs' often unguarded tongue, that such was far from being the case in localities more remote, where her acknowledged innocence and integrity were not at hand to at once stamp out a lie. This had told terribly on her, she was secretly withering under it. Not a word, however, had she whispered of it to Hawthorne, and she strictly forbade Sally to do so.

Mrs. Squander galled by the reflections which, in spite of her husband's position and influence, the death of Giles had everywhere brought on them, lost no opportunity of adding fuel to the fire, and although this was borne, for a while, by Jenny with any thing but a vindictive feeling, the case was not a little altered under the continued revelation of Sally Hobbs' incautious repeater. Of this Sally was determined to take advantage.—It was a prominent feature in Mrs Hobbs' philosophy that there was nothing like "speaking one's mind,"—that Jenny "'d be twice the 'ooman if her 'd on'y pluck up her sperrit, and hev it out wi' em," and with an eye to this, she had concocted a plan, to the which, on the day previous to the Squire's trial, Jenny reluctantly gave her consent. It was, that Jenny should present herself in court, and denounce the murderer of her husband, and the traducer of herself and benefactor, for Sally had artfully entwined any chance utterance of the Squire's with the worst of her ladyship's. Jenny for a while had firmly refused; John, she knew, would be opposed to it, but, as the idea became more familiar, Sally, again and again,

pressing her, her reluctance grew less, till, at length, not to be tiring, Sally Hobbs carried the day.

"But how am I to get there, Sally, without his knowledge?—and doesn't it look like deceiving him!"

"Doan't her trouble about that, a dear; John 'll be over at the court betimes, so as I, Jane, can easily, unbeknown, step over for my biggest, as can stay wi' thee, whiles I run over to Shropton to jes see how things be a goin'. Many's a time, Jane, hev Sal been there and back in less 'n an hour; and then, Jane, thee can away, jes so as to feace un as he'll be a beggin' like to be a let aff;—thee'll mind, Jane, to get close to un and doan't a speare un, Jane;—A vagabones!—for the last eight year hev he and that sarpent Snipe been a schemin' to git my Harry into trouble!"

John would, indeed, have objected to so womanly a scheme. How Jenny, with legs scarcely able to carry her as far as Hawthorne's, was to reach Shropton, had never entered into Sally's calculation, and, had it done so, she would have been sure to have fallen back upon the *sperrit* of her sex, which she, at least, had never found to be wanting, whatever the emergency.

CHAPTER II.

The spring was already in advance, and the sun had again risen. It was not a morning of promise, not such a one as May had reason to be proud of. The day previous had been, for the season, close and sultry. Less the wonder that a sky darkened and threatening was now showing to the East. Thousands were watching it anxiously, none more so than Sally and her friend. Still, it is no exaggeration to say, that, on that day, both in Merrow and Orton, all work was at a stand, and, long before the accustomed hours of business, the entire neighbourhood of Shropton was, by my own sex at least, all but deserted.

Precisely as the old court house clock was chiming ten, in a court crowded to suffocation, took the learned judge his seat.

The Squire's was not, as expected, the first case called for. It was rumoured that the alteration had been made by the Judge, after his arrival on the previous evening. It was also upon every lip, that the Squire intended to plead guilty, a disappointment, seemingly, to no few.

And now, the first case, one of minor importance, having been disposed of, behold, in a few minutes more, standing at the same bar where, but six years back, had stood Giles Hawthorne, with his shackled wrists, and bandaged temples, his once proud persecutor, the Squire of Thornley Hall.—What a sight!—What a revelation! The judge was evidently moved, and when, to the solemn question of, "guilty or not guilty?" the Squire, in a distinct, though subdued tone, responded "Guilty, my lord," he looked more than astounded. He begged of him to reconsider his plea, inquiring, at the same time, if he was aware of the position in which it placed him.

"Perfectly, my lord."

"Have you no counsel,—no one to———?"

"None, my lord, nor do I desire any.

This was said without the least show of either indifference or boldness. It was apparent to all that the Squire fearfully felt his position, and an attentive observer might have detected something more than was said in his words, as the eye of the speaker singled out the Judge's on their utterance; nor were there wanting, among those present, some who found it impossible to doubt that the Judge's reflections, on recalling, as he certainly at that moment must have done, the agreeable hours which he had more than once spent with the Squire and his lady, could have been neither the pleasantest, nor the least reproachful.

It was finally agreed that a barrister present, one acquainted with the leading features of the case, be allowed to address the jury, in behalf of the accused.

It was observed by those nearest to him that the Squire, on his apologist urging that the return blow by Diggs be regarded as an extenuating circumstance, covered his face with his hands, and leaned forward in the dock.

The Judge seemed stung.

"Muore'n he can feace, Harry," said Styles.

All that the ablest counsel in court could suggest was urged in defence, but the jury stolidly observed how, from the first, the astute pleader cautiously avoided the least allusion to the threat confessed to by the Squire.

This arrangement in the culprit's behalf was a fortunate one for Sally. Her scheme would have, otherwise, been completely balked. She found, on her arrival at the court house, that not a half moment was to be lost, and quicker, perhaps, than she had

ever before done the distance, made she her way back, scampering over hedges and ditches, partly with a view to escape recognition.

"Jane! Jane!" it was now, "quick, quick!—thee hev' nt a moment to lose. Thee'll keep to the fields, mind—and doan't her be afeard." Here Sally drew from her pocket a something with the which Jenny was persuaded to wet her lips. We will withhold its name, lest some, who may have done fewer hard days' works than had Sally, may be tempted to reflect on her.

Thus fortified, started Jenny, trembling more from an apprehension of being too late than from aught else, for Jenny had, in the meantime, nursed herself to a resolution that surprised even her redoubtable friend. Sally's injunction to keep to the fields was in good part. By the road she would have encountered Hawthorne, whose anxiety respecting his sister had mastered his curiosity to see the trial out. He had kept to the highroad that he might drop in at his home on the way to Jenny's.

The morn, as I have already said, was not one of promise, nor did the day's aspect improve as it advanced. Over the old court-house, on a rise in the distance, hung a drapery of doubtful import. Jenny kept her eye on it as a guide, hastening her uttermost, as worse and worse promised the day;

Yea, the long pent-up, darkened sky,
As the day crept on, began
To augur of a coming strife,
Unfit for beast or man.

The wind, let loose, with fearful blasts
Swept by the aged pile;—
The big elms bent,—the tower bell toll-
Ing drearily the while.

But for the threatening sky, which had quickened Jenny, she would have been too late for her object. Styles, be assured, had something to say on it.—She was hardly at the court house when the Squire was pleading his utmost for mercy, the jury, notwithstanding all that the Squire's counsel had urged in his behalf, to say nothing of the Judge's leaning towards him in his address to them, agreeing upon a verdict of—*guilty*,—and with no recommendation to mercy. The Squire's cry for it, as the Judge rose, floated above the hum of the crowd, which, in its closeness at the court's entrance, seemed to bar all further ingress. Jane could

distinctly hear him. What was she to do! She had all but accomplished her purpose,—and still to be baffled!

"Oh, let me pass,—I must,—I will,—
For heaven's sake let me pass;—
Hark! hark!—for "*mercy!*"—there, again!—
And there!—alas! alas!"

"A maniac!—mad woman!" ran,
Like wild fire, through the crowd;
All was excitement,—"Silence,—Order,"
Called out the clerk aloud.

Struck with amaze, the crowd fell back,
Jane wildly pressing through,
Squander still crying "Mercy, my lord,—
My lord, have mercy, do."

Who could the mad intruder be!—
All eyes were on the strain,—
When Hobbs the myst'ry solved, at once,
With "Dang'd if there bean't Jane!"

"Let the wench pass,—let the wench pass,"
A hundred voices cried,
And many a stout arm lent its aid
Upon the weaker side.

"Loard help her, Styles," said Hobbs,—"Sally
Towld I, as 'twer to day,
Her 'd hardly left her strength enough,
Poor thing, to kneel, and pray."

* * * * * * *

Jane had now reached where from the dock
Squander could mark her plain;—
With close-clasped hands, his arms outstretched,
"Mercy" was still his strain.

"Mercy!—for *mercy!*—merciless,
No mercy shalt thou have,
God's hand shall be against thee, man,
In all thou darst to crave.

Look on these hairs thus early greyed,
Look at my famished face,
This care-streaked brow where quiet sat
Till anguish filled its place!

Look in my heart thou never canst,
Nor lift an eye to heaven,
Unless to meet,—" "Oh, no, no, no,
Still say, still say—*forgiven.*"

"Silence,—we can't allow this scene,"
Uprose the Judge in ire,
"I must commit you, if you don't
Immediately retire."

Waste words—a half one more, and Jane
Had been for aye committed,
Her heart's frail cage have oped its door,
And its angel bird have flitted!

Her last words uttered, broken quite,
Jane trembled to the ground,
And, grasping at some aid at hand,
Looked piteously around.

When, as if Heaven, till then content
T' have played a silent part,
Now would be heard, a thundercrash
That shrunk at least one heart,

Burst overhead,—ablaze, the sky
Peal upon peal sent forth;
Th' entire artillery of heaven
Seemed bent upon the earth.

Needed no call to order, now,
None but therein could hear
The one great chartered One whose voice
Claims audience everywhere.

Flash upon flash, the lightning leaped
Across the serried hall;
The big old building shook, as if
Still further to appal.

The jury were aghast,—strange looks
Cast they at one another!
The sons of the sly craft surveyed,
In silence, each the other.

That at the very moment when
The Squire, with piteous prayer,
Pleaded for mercy, that just then
Something should bring Jane there!

That then, just then th' imperial voice
Of Heaven, in thunder's tone,
Should break upon the scene, as if
Heaven sanctioned what was done!

Hobbs but expressed, in rougher way,
What seemed all hearts to enter,
That no mere chance had brought Jane there,
That "God hisself hev sent her!"

Not the high Judge held out,—for once,
An all resistless hand
Had grappled with his haughtiness,
And brought him to a stand.

"Hold constable," he cried, "quick, quick—
Look to the woman,—pray,
Will no one tell the woman there
I don't mean what I say!" *

"Tell her he bean't in arnest, Styles,"
Said Hobbs, "or, else, I wooll,"—
"Us daresn't, Hobbs,—the laaw be strict,
Plump plain agin the rule."

"Well, thee knaws best,—but Loard! poor thing,
What could ha' braught her here,
Her 'll hardly, sure, fetch home agin—"
"Jist what, my friend, I fear.

But hark, the coonstable!"—"My lord,
Had we but freer air—"
"Help me to rise," said Jane,—"I'll then—
I'm willing—anywhere."

"Deal gently with her, officer,
(Still kindlier in tone)
And see she doesn't leave the court,
At any cost, alone.

Come hither, constable,—I've crossed
Somewhere, methinks, before,
This maniac woman,—question her,—
Somewhere, I'm pretty sure."

Scarcely this said, when one at hand
No stranger to the place,
Thrust a loose paper on the Judge,
All eagerness in face.

Lo! as the lightning, in his looks,
Some startling intimation,
"The wife,—*his* wife!"—at once he rose,
Trembling with expectation.

* This will remind at least some of my readers of an exclamation by the penurious Kenyon, on the fainting of a young woman whom he had just sentenced to death for theft—"I don't mean to hang you,—Will nobody tell her that I don't mean to hang her."

"Stay, woman, stay,"—Jane turned her eyes
Full on the Judge's gaze;—
The strip of paper, fluttering fell,—
"'Tis she!—oh, God—*thy ways!*"

By all but One this was unheard,
Not so the whitened cheek,
The quivering lip, the shrinking eye,
The tongue that could not speak.

These were all heard, and in a voice
Tone tempered from on high;
Conscience will out, pale lips will speak,
In spite of the tongue's tie.

Now, as the deepening drama worked,
Mazed and more mazed were all;
So stilled, subdued the scene, a tear
Had startled in its fall.

When lo! the heavens again broke forth,
Again the blinding flash,
And down the drifting deluge came,
Amid the thunder's crash!

"The Loard preserve us!" whispered Tom,
"I wishes I waun't here,—
Be summat, Styles, a goin' on
Muore'n us knows, I fear."

"Keep up yer heart, lad, nothing heed,—
My word for't, Tom, to day;
'T waun't sich as you and I as sent
Poor Giles to Bot'ny Bay."

Straightway a muttering murmur ran
Round and about the hall,
What could the mystic paper mean,
Why should it so appal!

Then to the Judge all eyes returned,
Silent, and fixed he sate,
Lost in the consciousness of what,
He knew, had sealed his fate.

Jane eyed him with forgiving grace;
Too well he understood,
And felt the withering reproof,
In one so crushed, so good.

The Squire looked up and round,—some chance,
Perhaps, had oped for him,—
His eye a moment brighter gleamed,
And then again grew dim!

Many, from apprehension, now
Fain for the door had fought;
Nothing seemed next impossible,
Jane was not there for nought!

All were astounded at a scene
No mimic actors played;
The gown-men, ever on their guard,
Were equally betrayed.

Nor least the country people marked
His lordship's shattered mien,
And many a homethrust thing escaped
Upon the passing scene.

"I bean't no scholard, Styles," said Hobbs,
"But I be sad mistaken,
If zummat aan't on that man's mind,
He do look moartal shaken."

"Did'st mark the strip o' paper, lad,
What slipped the Judge's hand?"
"I did, my friend,—'t be, jist, Styles, what
I doan't quite sarcumstand."

"Bad news from home, mebbe, or p'rhaps
A sort o' Shirriff's writ,
A kind o' order from the king,
At 'sizes time, to quit."

"Well, I wun't say," quoth Turnpike Tom,
"I wer a watchin' sly,
And never see'd I sich a shrink
As when he caaght Jane's eye."

"He could feace her, Tom, you think,
He knowed the wench, mebbe,
Though Jane ha sadly altered, sure,
Since Giles went out to sea.

But hark! the old fellow's found his tongue,
And got the cap on, sure,!—
Loard! if the Squire bean't quiverin' liko
A flag leaf in the moor!

'T be awful solemn, bean't it, Hobbs,
It touches I to see;
I feels I should ha' cried outright,
Been any man but he.

I never, Hobbs, ha' doubted God,
And trust I never may,
Us seen enough, Loard knows, in proof
O' Providence, to-day.

And, sure, us maunt complain, for spite
Of aal the laawyer's brags,
There bean't one man in ruffles hung
For fifty odd in rags."

" Silence !" " Holloa—the coonstables
Be cooming round this way;
Best keep our tongues in check strings, Tom,
Be aal in Judge's pay."

The Judge had already risen, and, for some time, had, in silence, been regarding the Squire, before demanding of him if he had any thing to say why the extreme sentence of the law should not be passed on him. The Squire's subdued look would have disarmed his greatest enemy. " Nothing, my lord," was all that escaped him and in a tone scarcely audible. He had, indeed, to be assisted by an officer, and it was some time before he was sufficiently himself to be able to leave the dock.

It is but just that I record that the Vicar, who was present from the first, was visibly affected, as the trial advanced. His trimly bordered handkerchief, on more than one occasion, did him real service.

While this was passing John apprised,
At his home, that Jane had fled,
Guessing her route, o'er hedge and ditch,
Like one bewildered, sped.

Once at the court, with desperate will,
Struggling he wins his way,
To near where Jane, still helpless, leaned,
Watching the too true play.

Hobbs was the first t'espy him, straight
Nudging his aged friend;
Both were well pleased,—" Thank Heaven, " said Hobbs,
" Her 'll now some chance to mend.

Loard, mark his look! as if, good soul,
His heart wer nigh to bust!—
So like un, Styles, in troubled times
Aal'ays at hand the fust.

I've aften thaught, Styles, eyeing John,
Consarned as he be now,
The folks as follered poor Christ
Had jist his arnest brow."

"The score of Heaven, Hobbs,—not one
But, in a kind o' way,
Carries his shepherd's mark, that He
May know his own, some day.

It saddens I to note how old,
And worn John looks, of late;
The double load of Jenny's wants
Is muore nor honest weight."

"A countless loss to lose un, Styles!
Like aal true Christians, poor,
But how one spends one's little shaws
What one woold do wi' muore."

"Muore, p'rhaps, had made 'n prouder, Hobbs,"—
"Well, I wun't say for that,
'T be sumhow in the grain on us,
But hark!—what's Dooill at!"

* * * * * *

"I give her now into your charge,
See, till her friends be found,
She needs for nothing, Faunce, with care
We yet may bring her round."

"Hear that?—in charge!—given in charge!
If that be it I'm dang'd,—
Stand ye hear, Styles,—by heaven,
I'll see the harpies hanged.

Shan't harm a hair,—Good Styles, keep aff,
Woolt git thyself, now, hurt;
Bean't no use holding I,—so, aff,—
And now, lads, your dezart."

Quick, free'd from Styles, Hobbs' brawny limbs
Burst through the crowd his way,
"Jane and I 'gin ye aal," he cried,
"Ye'll jist, John, see fair play."

"Why, Hobbs, what aileth thee!—hush, hush,
For Jane's sake, if ye can;
Don't fling thyself away so, lad,
Be calm, be calm, my man."

"'I wooll,—but, John, to look and zee
The poor thing put about
As she wer now, I waun't a man,
To stand, and zee it out.

Loard God of heaven! if Giles could but
Look down!"—"There, there, Hobbs, hush!"—
"I zee, John,—I forgits—my blood
Be aal upon the rush.

There, coonstable, I've done,—tarn to,—
Be nothing frought, meake free;—
I bears ye no ill will, not I,
But, mind ye,—hands aff she."

Hobbs' burst at his imagined committal of Jenny having blazed itself out, and it being allowed, on a whisper from the Judge, to pass without further notice, Hawthorne was permitted to advance to where his sister was still leaning, a constable, who knew him, directing him to a private way of leaving the court with her. As he advanced, the Squire, in charge of an officer, crossed him. Their eyes met;—they had once met in the moor lane, when Hawthorne had been brute enough, in Mrs. Squander's estimation, to withhold his hand from his hat. Was this, just then, remembered by only one of them!

Hawthorne's pulse was at its highest, when, after a few steps, he was again with his sister.

"What could have made thee Jane, leave home,
With such a threat'ning night,
In this sad shift,—so ill,—enough
To kill thee, girl, outright."

"For"—give me John,—Jane would have said,
As she fell upon his breast;
Her quivering frame, her silent tears
Bitterly spoke the rest.

Nature had done, the last faint spark
Of earthly hope had flown,
"Ye'll take me hence?" she murmured low,
"I am here, John, alone."

"Poor mateless bird! Heaven help thee now;—
Art able, think ye, Jane,
Far as the door?—come, come,—on me,—
There, there,—again, again."

Now at the door, John glanced around,
All eagerness, to stay
Some friendly wain that, homeward bound,
Might help them on the way.

But few were for the moor, of these
Some lingered in the town,
Others had not yet left the court,
Still waiting on the crown.

Thus at a loss, with Jenny quite
Unable to proceed,
A well known pair came dashing up,
The Vicar's, at full speed.

"The Vicar homeward, James?" said John,
In eager, anxious tone;—
"Ain't sartain, John, but specks he wooll,
Soon as the trial done."

"Thank heaven!" said John, "he cannot, sure,
Deny us, Jane, *this* aid;
Folks may be proud, still not so proud,
We'll trust, as some have said."

"Back there a leetle, John,—Measter,
I see, be cooming now;"—
John raised his hat,—a gracious smile
Sunn'd the good Vicar's brow.

"Your sister, John, still ailing, eh?
Be careful of her,—mind
The cruel damp, these heavy rains
Leave a chill air behind."

John glanced at Jane,—her shatter'd look!
Her fevered, filmed eye!—
Her trembling hold! how little fit
To face the threat'ning sky!

Fearing the worst, John cast a look,
Imploringly, at Slack,
"You couldn't, sir, for love of Heaven,
Help the poor creature back?"

"I see—I see—thou'rt seeking, friend,
Some fitting portage home,"
"But none, sir, can I find, at least,
For hours yet to come."

"We'll trust not so,—there,—there's a cart,—
And there,—come, try again;"—
"Indeed, sir, I have tried them all,
And found the trial vain."

"All will not surely be so hard,
All have not iron hearts,
Thou'lt, surely, find some friendly one
Among so many *carts*."

"Thou art the only one," said John,
"That goeth by the lane
That leads, as well your reverence knows,
Down by the home of Jane."

"I am, indeed, unfortunate!
That I should have to be,
Within an hour at the most,
To plead for *charity!*"

"For charity!—for charity!"—John's blood,
For once, was at its height,
"Take heed, lest this same charity
Leave mercy out of sight;

And take thou heed,—no distant day
May a trial far different be,
When some may wish, too late, to share
This poor thing's company!"

"I see thou art excited, man,
And know'st not what thou sayest,
And even in thine anger too
Some goodness thou betrayest;

So, I forgive thee,—and I trust
Kind Heaven will do the same;"—
The sky grew darker now, and down
The pelting torrent came.

So, without answering, John slipped off
His smock of many storms,
And wrapping it about her close,
Took Jenny in his arms.

Full manfully he bore her on,
Sure, Heaven helped, in part;
Poor Jenny, as she lay, could hear
The pulsing of his heart.

The Vicar passed them at the lane,
We'll trust 't was his to see
A lesson that he well might quote,
Some day, on *Charity*.

CHAPTER III.

JENNY'S COTTAGE.

"Ye'll promise me.—no stranger, John,
I cannot, cannot bear———,"
Jane glanced around her naked room
At the little that was there!

This was said from an apprehension of an *intruder*. Jenny, at the moment, was resting with her head on her brother's shoulder. He was sitting by her side, supporting her. Hawthorne, however, had little faith in the only one it would have been in his power to send for. To get her to bed seemed to him to be the first thing to be done, and, by quiet and attention, give nature an opportunity to rally. With a view to this, Sally Hobbs was already doing her best.

* * * * * *

Ah poesy, and art thou put
To such poor shift at last,
Thou dars't not trust upon thy lips
A picture as it passed!

To how much had Hawthorne to shut his eyes? How many a shift and want had Jenny concealed from him.

It was not long, as Sally was now fearfully apprehensive of the consequences of her imprudence, before Hawthorne was called upon to surrender his charge, when, in a curtained corner of the room, all that a warm heart, and forward will could do, to make her comfortable for the night, was done.

It was now settled, after Jenny had been persuaded to a cup of tea, that Sally with her "biggest" should away for home to prepare for her husband, who, with Styles and others, had lingered in Shropton for a poaching case, and that Mrs. Pilch should be

asked to take charge at John's, so that he and Sally, on her return, might sit up by Jenny for the night.

"Her'd be a wakin' a' moast every second, John, if her knawed as thee waun't by."

"Sally," said Jenny, as her friend was passing to the door, "come here."—Sally went to her, when Jenny, taking her by the hand, with all the warmth she was capable of pressed it to her lips. The poor woman burst into tears. "Thaay 'll be aal agin *I*, Jane, I knaws."

"No, no, Sally," said Hawthorne, "not in the least."

"I knaws ye wooll though," said she, sobbing, as she left.

"I was more to blame than was Sally, John," said Jane.

"All was meant for the best, Jenny."

In less than an hour Sally was back, when Hawthorne bethought him of leaving, for a while, the two women together. Sally had, doubtless, a word or two for her friend, who would sleep, perhaps, the sounder afterwards. He, in the meantime, would step to his home; some firing would be wanted,—the nights were still cold, and his drenched garments called for a shift.

On his return, Hawthorne was well pleased that a "H-u-s-h!" from Sally should be the first that greeted him, for in what nature might medicine to her in repose had he alone any hope.

"Her do look happy, doan't her!" said Sally, as they stood together, observing her.

John sighed, and returned to his seat, where, in the darkness, relieved only by an occasional gleam from the hearth, he sat, silently listening. Mrs. Hobbs had, at his suggestion, betaken herself to sleep.

In an unbroken silence hour after hour had now passed, when, uneasy at the more than stillness which seemed to possess every thing, John, with a lighted faggot stick, shaded by his hand, advanced to where Jenny was lying. Whilst comforting himself with her apparent tranquillity, a whispered "J-o-h-n," from a window that had been slowly opened, reached him. Some one was outside. It was Harry who, with Styles, had been no longer able to abide in ignorance of "how things wer agoin'."

John, a tiptoe, stepped to the window, and did his best to assure them, but, after a few words, it was considered as well that they should return.

"And better," said Hobbs, "as I, Styles, caal upon Slop, and stop un a comin'. Slop *wooll* taalk, Styles; and that wun't do as

things stand now wi' her." It had never, of course, occurred to Harry that there was any one else in Merrow that, at times, *woold* talk.

"It 'd be hard, Styles," said Hobbs, as they rounded the corner of the lane, "for thaay as, a some day, us 'll aal hev to feace, to tarn agin sich as wer on'y to look as Jane did, when John wer a watchin' her."

Styles, seemingly, was less in a humour for talking than was usual with him,—he made no answer, and, Hobbs taking the hint, without further word the two reached Harry's cottage. "Thee'll step in, Styles," said Hobbs, but Styles wished, as he said, "to be alone a bit, Harry;" and who that, upon that night, had peeped in at him, as he knelt in his quiet chamber, could have helped thinking that he needed much less to be reminded of his *latter end* than the stalest of old crusts, as Styles was in the habit of calling them, that ever infected a neighbourhood.

The night had by now passed its keystone, when, again, a pulsing light ever and anon lit up the darkened chambers of Merrow, and, now and again, a distant murmuring, drawing nearer and nearer, told that the startling weather of yesterday had anything but come to an end.

Sally was now awake, and looking at Hawthorne, through the gleams from the hearth, with feverish apprehension.

"I be afeard, John," said she, "as it 'll a wake Jane!" and well she might be, for, by another hour the scene, both within and without, was fearful. So severe a night storm had not been in Merrow for years.—"The Loard protect us!" had never been oftener upon Sally's lips than now; yet on slept Jenny through the whole of it, with the same quiet, beautiful aspect; and now that the storm, as the daybreak advanced, had, in a measure abated, she was still sleeping, beautifully sleeping.—John began to hope.

It had been arranged, before the day was fairly on the peep, that Sally should step up, and do her best with the children who, fortunately, in an upper chamber, a sort of loft, had slept out the storm, and that, then, she should off with the good news of Jenny's lengthened sleep, and see to her husband's and children's breakfast; —her lengthened sleep! John had not laid his finger on her wrist.

And now, with the two children, Giles and Jenny, and their still slumbering mother, Hawthorne was alone. They were standing, or, rather, leaning by the side of him. It was more than day-

light. The sun had risen, and was breaking lovelily through some clouds which were still loitering to the east, when, suddenly, Jenny opened her eyes, and looked languidly around her;—Hawthorne eyed her anxiously.—She regarded him for a moment,—and then her lids slowly fell. John was alarmed, and, on her again raising them, he, with her two children, advanced to her side. She looked, first at the children, and then at him, her countenance momentarily changing;—John made an effort to rally her:

"Come, cheer thee, Jane,—one pretty smile,—
Thy little boy and girl,—
We shall all see better days yet,
Indeed, indeed, we shall.

See, Jane, how beautifully bright
The sun shows, breaking through
Yon settling clouds, as if its light
Were all for me and you."

Jane motioned with her eye,—it seemed
She something had to tell,—
"What is't that thou would'st whisper me,
Art not, poor girl, so well?"

"Dear, *dear* John,"—Jane moved her hand
Towards her ebbing heart,
"A sinking—*something*—tells me *here*
The hour is come to part.

Oh, but for these I leave behind,
How quietly away
Could I steal me from the world's wear,
To comfort in the clay.

It *may* be there are many things
I ought not to have done,
But God—will be good and merciful
To a poor stricken one.

* * * * *

Oh, John, in every way, of late,
I have pressed hard on thee,—
And nothing now but these bare thanks
For all thy pains for me!

* * * * *

Thou'lt be unto my little boy,
I know, and to my Jane,
All thou hast ever been to me,
Though never, John, again?

And I'll carry to my grave, John,
In this poor heart a prayer,
And if ever, *some one* at Heaven's gates,
She'll not forget it there.

* * * * *

Ye'll put me in the little grave
Where John and Anna lie,—
Don't fret, my pretty ones,—ye'll both
Be with me *by-and-bye*.

* * * * * *

And, John, this mind,—as mine in yours,
Take ye poor Harry's hand,
And tell him—that—with this—last tear,—
Tell him,—he'll understand.

Now, all be near me,—cover me,—
I shall be less alone,
Ye can leave me when the night comes,—
And———o-h-h!—my heart,—my own!"

"*Dear* Jane, do'st mind of anything
That I can do, undone?
Speak, Jenny dear,———ah! getting cold!
Still colder!———she is gone!"

Yes, she was gone,—John closed her eyes,—it was all over!

CHAPTER IV.

That a morning as lovely as May in its loveliest could have ever known should be the usherer in of such pain to so many a hard handed toiler in its midst! Yet so it was. By an hour later quite a gathering of sorrowing hearts were, with moistened eyes, turned to where Jenny, with all of this world's cares now at an end, was lying. It was, indeed, a trial, and for none more so than for Hawthorne, though he bore up against it with a fortitude surprising. This could not be said of all present. Poor Sally was quite beside herself. It was pitiful to observe her.

"Her wer so good, Harry," she would say, as again and again she took up her friend's wasted hand,—"It be poor Sally, Jane,—her'll never no more to Shropton for thee,—I knaws what you'll aal be a sayin'—but her couldn't a lived no how."

"It bean't o' no use, Sally, a goin' on so," said Hobbs, advancing, and leading her away, "her be gone to a better place 'n here."

Harry's eye, as he said this, glanced at Styles, who immediately took up his words.

"Sartain, Hobbs, wheer her'll never hev no muore griefs and troubles,—never no more. Thaay as is left, and knows how good she wer, hev moast"———here the old man's voice tottered, and Hawthorne, who till now had striven his best, could no longer withhold a witness, that, stealing to his cheek, dropped upon the hand of one who had taken his, as she stood by his side. It was Jenny's eldest. All noticed it, and looked at one another,—but no one spoke,—and there was something funereal in the silence in which, on a whisper from Styles to leave him alone with the women, each took him by the hand, on parting.

"His heart," said Styles, as they drew upon Hobbs' cottage, "be a broke at last!"

Harry made no reply, but, with his sleeve to his eyes,——opened his door.

———

CHAPTER V.

My tale is nearing its end. Some little, however, has yet to be told.

It will be a surprise to no one familiar with the more indulgent discipline too common with criminals of a higher grade to hear that, before Hawthorne and his mates had separated, it was already abroad that the Squire had been found, at daybreak, in his cell—*dead*. He was lying, when first seen, upon his face, and by the side of him, on the ground, penciled on a strip of paper, were a few words of forgiveness for his wife. He had poisoned himself. It would be interesting to know if the deed had been delayed till the night had quieted;—I should say it was so.—His affairs were found to be in a sad state. Nothing was left after his creditors were satisfied. His indebtedness to the Baron was much remarked on.

It was very generally supposed that it was from him that the Squire, immediately on his arrest, had procured the means made use of. The Baron, it was known, had been more than once in communication with him prior to his elopement with Mrs. Squander, and the Vicar, it was observed, was silent on being questioned on the point.

And now of Snipe, as, also, of a few others, a word or two. They had not yet reaped the full fruits of their iniquities.

It fell to me, in my checkered career, to find myself (a year or two from now) on a bright morning in October, on my way to the Bathurst Plains in Australia. I had gone as far as Paramatta, within twenty miles of Sydney, by stage, when in order the better to see the country, I proceeded on foot for the ten miles between it and the half-way house to Penrith. I had, for my companions, I might have said my protectors, two transported thieves, assigned to a sheep station far up the country. One of them was only in his seventeenth year. It would hardly have been prudent in those days to have gone, at least for any one of means, more especially of what was then called the *sterling* class, upon that road alone. Bushrangers are awkward customers. Government grey jackets were considered a protection.

On reaching the half-way house, I had hardly refreshed myself, when a man, who certainly knew how to sit on a horse, at a brisk pace rode up to the inn, and inquired of the landlord if any one was there for him. I was outside at the time. I observed that the man for a moment looked inquiringly at me, and I was not a little surprised at his declining an invitation by the landlord (a ticket of leave man) to dismount. The two lads, as bidden, immediately stepped out, and, one of them mounting a led horse which the stranger had brought with him, the three at a quick walk started.

"In a hurry, seemingly," I said. "Who is he,—do you know him?"

"Know him!" said the landlord, "I should like to know who doesn't. He's the meanest fellow that was ever lagged. He gets, about once a month, what we call here (you're a stranger, I see, sir,) a native's hiding. I don't think, sir, that he ever opens his mouth without a lie. He's a fourteen year man, and it'll go well with him, if, in eight years from now, he gets his ticket. He was once, he says, that is before his lagging, a gamekeeper to some great English Squire; but Lord, sir, there's no believing a syllable he says. He has to thank, if one can trust him, a cricket ball for the loss of his right peeper."

"What does he call himself, pray?"

"Snipe or Snip, or some such like."

All was explained,—his hat slouched upon one side,—his reserve,—his declining to dismount, and his eagerness to be off. He had recognized me. What a glorious piece of news for Harry! Providence had, surely, at last, as Mrs. Squander phrased it, taken *him* in hand.

On my return to England, I inquired respecting him, when I

learned, that, on the break up at Thornley Hall, he had, as a States man would say, skedaddled, and that, from lack of employment, and laziness, he betook himself, after awhile, to poaching, and that, in a night attack, in company with about a dozen braves, upon two keepers, he was taken and put on his trial at the Kingston assizes; and that, it being regarded as an aggravation of his offence that he had once been a keeper, his term of punishment was extended to fourteen years.

And, now, of Mrs. Squander and her paramour.—Not a month had elapsed since her disappearance from Orton, when the former found herself alone, in a Belgian gambling town, with barely a handful of coin to fall back on. The Baron had been shot in a duel consequent on a gaming quarrel. She afterwards fell into still worse hands, by whom she was finally deserted in France.

I have ever been theatrically inclined. So, on again reaching my birth place, it was not long before I was once more on the Catherine street steps of old Drury. I had just taken my check, and was on the point of mounting to the second tier of boxes, when, on looking round, my attention was arrested by a face which I was all but certain of having seen elsewhere. But who had I ever known with so passionless an eye,—so faded a cheek,—so forced a smile! As I approached her, however, all doubt was at an end.

"You will know me when you next see me," said she, annoyed, seemingly, at my persevering gaze.

"You are not then already known to me?" I said.

"I should say not," she replied, but less pertly.

"Could by no possibility *some one* have dismounted at Thornley Hall?"

With a convulsive "Oh!" and striking me, unconsciously perhaps, with her half closed hand on my breast, she rushed up the stairs, and disappeared.

"What a wreck!" I said.

I had no wish to follow her, but on leering round the boxes with some curiosity to observe her, unnoticed in return, I again caught her eye. As a started stag, she vanished from the door she was leaning against, and it has never been my fortune to see, or hear of her since.

It was too fine a night, with the Foundling Hospital bounding my journey, to dream, on my return, of a cab. How, as I tramped on through the now all but deserted streets between old Drury and quiet Bloomsbury, did what had just past repeat and repeat

itself;—how, again and again, returned to me Isaac Styles' words, "Perhaps, Harry, her wer allowed to live for her punishment!"

It was not till after a lapse of something like a dozen years from now, including a five years experience as a farmer in Pembrokeshire; and many more as a pioneer in New Zealand, that I again visited Merrow and its neighbourhood, breaking my journey to do so, on my return from elsewhere. My old home at Lavent had long since been broken up by death or departure. It was when on my way to Shropton for the night, old associations having detained me in Lavent till it was late, that I again found myself, as spoken of in my first page, lingering in the pretty moonlit burial ground of Merrow. It had received many additions since I was last in it. Isaac Styles, with his old Matty, as also Slop, had been laid at the *back* of the church, where, let us trust, they will rest none the less peacefully for the lying *there*. The turf of Styles' grave edges on to that of Jenny's. His is the only one thereabouts, it least it was so then, with a stone to it. A very lowly one, at its head, records his name and age, with, beneath, howsoever rudely chiseled, what an emperor might read and envy,

WER A GOOD MAN.

It was pleasant, too, to observe that the spot where my old friend, Mr. Manly, lay was still, as the grass about it showed, no unfrequented one. Many a village youngster, I was told, had more than half learnt his letters there.

Here also, within a rod or two of my friend, lay the Rev. Horatius Slack. He had survived the Squire barely a twelve month, which, at the time, was somewhat commented on. A handsome monument, erected by his grave to the right of the church, does honour to his memory. It is surmounted by an urn richly wreathed, with, on each side of it, a draped Lachrymal sorrowing for the departed. On its plinth below, Charity and Love had lettered as follows,

Mourn ye of genial nature, drop
The sympathetic tear;
The modest, temperate, pious, meek,
The chaste lies buried here.

By hearts that knew, and loved him best
This rightful meed is given;
The seeds of life he strewed on earth,—
His harvest home in Heaven.

His sister Arabella has been credited with the last couplet, which somewhat surprised me. What, in our ignorance, we at times lose. Was it not singular that, notwithstanding so flattering a memorial, so few, not one of the villagers, attended at his burial. His old and most intimate friend, the Rev. Mr. Wrench, of Orton, officiated on the occasion, and did ample justice to the memory of the deceased: "The world has in *him*," said he, "lost one of its lights."

His sister's charities, it seems, had not, in their publicity, either flattered or consoled her. She had removed to Shropton, where she was living in hired apartments, in preference to the fatigue and annoyance of *a parcel of ungrateful servants*.

It could have been no trifling item in these annoyances that her parlour maid, Mercy, (of whom a word or two is due) refused to remain with her, for even a few days, after the Vicar's removal. She had contrived to get along *somehow* while he was living,—there was something, she said, droll in him,—he amused her—but at his decease the house became intolerable;—coals seemed to be of no use in it;—even the cat, a pet with the Vicar, took up its quarters, at once, in the kitchen. So, the poor girl forthwith removed herself (sacrificing a month's wages in doing so) to one farmer Swain, where, it will be remembered, Isaac Styles was in the habit of purchasing his *vowls*. It is pleasant to have to state that Mr. Swain's eldest son had the good taste to so far appreciate, not only the blooming cheeks, but the simple honest nature of this good girl, as to make her his wife within a twelvemonth of her residence with his parents, and with the full sanction of both of them. She is still living, and, at times, still indulges in recollections of "His Ways,"—of a certain parcel of broken victuals, and of the loaf that "no one robs." The cat followed her to the Swain's, where, after an effort or two, in vain, to induce it to return to the Vicarage, it was allowed to remain.

It will be thought, I am sure, not unworthy of mention, that, from the date of Mercy's residence at the Swain's, neither Harry nor Hawthorne were often without a job, which, notwithstanding the lowness of wages everywhere, kept them at least from the parish, and enabled Harry now and again to slip a copper into the hands of some there can be no need to name.

I missed an opportunity, which I remember with regret, of again communicating with John Hawthorne. The lateness of the hour led me to postpone calling on him till the next day, when circum-

stances unforeseen prevented my doing so. I heard, however, that, for the last few years, he had been in receipt of the annuity (£12) bequeathed to him by Mr. Manly, and that Jenny's children, now grown up, were still with him, Jenny's eldest keeping his house, his own daughter having married.

Pilch, with his hundred pounds reward, emigrated, after awhile, to Canada, generously taking with him, in addition to his own family, Turnpike Tom and his wife. Of his last letter to Hobbs I obtained a copy. It shows what may be done by a man of health and determination, with no monopolizing selfish laws in his way.

Mr. Slack had been succeeded by a Mr. Philip Sharpley. He was not spoken very well of. The same leaning to wealth and power, the same soulless aping of humility were the observed of every one. Hawthorne's "little meetings like" were as crowded as ever. Indeed, I remarked but little improvement in the aspect of things anywhere. To be sure, the "beggarly cottages, so annoyingly in sight frommy brother's——"had been removed, but, with such exceptions, there was the same contrasted wealth and penury,—the same mocking roses round the doorways of the latter,—the same patched smocks and patient endurances,—the same blending of bloom with wrinkles,—the same shameless unconsciousness *somewhere;*—what, indeed, was not *there* the same that religion and justice must have long since sighed and blushed at. Will it always be thus? It would be a denial of God to suppose so.

I heard, also, that Mr. Goodwill, of Orton, finding it impossible to endure the ungenerous treatment of Mr. Wrench, had resigned his curacy, and removed to Tulse Hill, near Brixton, where he had opened a school, and with great success, two of Mr. Wrench's pupils helping to swell the number of his scholars.

Dr. Hearse had been dead some years. His death was by many attributed to too free an indulgence in his especial jar; but this could hardly have been the case, as on his own account he had never by those about him been known to visit it. The secret of its singular merits passed into the hands of his brother, a naval surgeon, whence, I have since thought, may have originated the all but universal use of pills, as a specific *at sea*, especially in emigrant ships. If so, is it yet too late to do justice to his memory?

Of those who had to do with the persecution of the Hawthorne's I have still one to speak of, and I do so with some hesita-

tion. I allude to Sir James Dooill. That Sir James died very shortly after the Squire's trial, and subsequently to the death of an only, and much cherished son, is quite a matter of history; but, in a report, and one not lightly bruited, that, on the day previous to his death, he had all but acknowledged in that of his son a rightful judgment on himself, and that with his last words was blended a name familiar to the reader of this record, I say, may there not be room to suppose that, in such a report, imaginations too ready to suggest it had found no difficulty in meeting with ears equally willing to accept it, and lips as ready to repeat it.

For twenty years after this, my latest presence in Merrow, I have been, saving for one short interval in England, a chopper in the woods of Lower Canada, with leisure, from broken health, ample for much more than this too truthful record of my experiences. It has fallen to me, however, occasionally to hear from my old haunts. Hobbs and Hawthorne are both living, and still in Merrow, as is also honest Sally, and her *biggest*. No generosity upon Pilch's part has been able to persuade Harry to abandon a mate dearer to him than ever, which says much for him, as Harry was just the fellow for the woods. Every thing else seems to be about the same. The mocking roses, and patient endurances are still there, and, with the hopes so of late but indifferently realized, will the latter, I fear, need to be retained.

It is quite a possibility that I again see Lavent and Merrow, when, rely on it, I shall not be slow in calling upon old remembrances. There will be more than one door, I know, that, somehow, will be sure to be upon the jar just as I am nearing it, while the goodly elm under which I, of old, sat, and with Isaac Styles chatted so guilelessly, one would hardly like to recall with nothing in the shape of a welcome left to it. It has often, I am told, been said by Hobbs, on the sheep of Merrow being admitted to a bite in its burial ground, that in no part of it is it ever so closely cropped as in that where Jenny and his old favourite lie. This will, of course, not be the last thing that I shall make it my business to see to.

THE END.