

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## MABEL'S PROGRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."

### BOOK II.

#### CHAPTER I. A BACKWARD GLANCE.

PHILIP EARNSHAW, Mabel's father, a scientific chemist of some standing, had worked his way to a good position in the scientific world, by dint of enormous industry and considerable talent. He had a younger brother, who was also a chemist, and for whom his influence procured an engagement as superintendent of some large chemical works in the north.

This brother, John Earnshaw, was a lively well-looking young man, fonder of play than of work; but on the whole fairly steady, and generally considered by his intimates a "very good fellow." One day he astonished and shocked his family, who were rigid Presbyterians, by bringing home as his wife a young lady who had been performing for a couple of seasons at the theatre of the little provincial town in which he lived. Marry an actress! No words can describe the horror of his relatives; curiously enough, it was the most distant of his kinsfolk who appeared to find the enormity of John's proceeding the most intolerable. It seemed as if the acuteness of their suffering on the occasion were in exact proportion to the unlikelihood of their ever being brought into personal contact with the young couple. One old lady, who had resided for five-and-thirty years in one of the Orkney Islands, and who had never manifested the slightest intention of quitting them, took the trouble to write a long letter to her third cousin, John Earnshaw, for the express purpose of informing him that, after the way in which he had disgraced the family, she felt reluctantly compelled to cast him off for ever.

And it must be confessed, that over this letter her cousin and his bride enjoyed a very hearty and innocent laugh.

Mary Earnshaw was no beauty. She was scarcely even pretty. But she was sweet, modest, sensible, and as simple-minded and unsophisticated a girl as one would be likely to find in—well, say in Belgravia—perhaps even a trifle more so.

She loved her husband with a very devoted and unselfish affection, and set herself earnestly

to become a good notable housewife, and to make his home happy. In both endeavours she thoroughly succeeded. They lived for ten years in peace and contentment, and during that time three fine children were born to them. John Earnshaw continued in his position at the chemical works, and, as neither he nor Mary was ambitious, nor greedy after riches, he found his salary sufficient for their wants.

But a heavy shadow of misfortune darkened their lives. Literally a shadow that blotted out the external sunshine from John Earnshaw, and, for a season, quenched the rays of hope and cheerfulness within him. He became blind.

The affliction fell upon him gradually, and at first its dreadful extent was not suspected. But a time of agonising suspense followed, when husband and wife went through alternations of hope and despair that racked them almost beyond endurance. At last the final sentence was pronounced. Total and hopeless blindness for life.

And now, John Earnshaw, even in the first fulness of his affliction, perceived how great a blessing God had given him in the brave faithful loving woman whom he had taken to his bosom. Of all John Earnshaw's relations, his brother Philip alone had abstained from expressing any violent disapprobation of his marriage. He acknowledged John's right to choose for himself, and, having made acquaintance with his pleasant sister-in-law during a flying visit on business to the north, became evermore her staunch friend. Mary Earnshaw's simple heart overflowed with gratitude to her husband's brother. She had looked forward to his visit with awe and trepidation. Philip was a very great personage in the estimation of his brother's household; and when he came, and, instead of a dry stern pedantic man of science, such as she had pictured to herself, she found a handsome, genial, courteous gentleman, who behaved to her with a mixture of tenderness and deference such as one might show to a younger sister, her delight and gratitude knew no bounds, and she enshrined Philip in her heart from that time forth as one to be only less beloved and honoured than her husband.

When the calamity of blindness fell upon John Earnshaw, Philip was newly married. He had made a love-match after living a bachelor until middle life, and had taken to wife a

charmingly pretty young creature, the portionless daughter of a country curate. His scientific reputation had not been productive of much pecuniary gain, and he was not without money-troubles. He felt his brother's great affliction very sorely; the more so that he himself was powerless to give him any substantial help. John was, of course, obliged to resign his situation at the chemical works. His employers were kind in words, and, for a time, in deeds. They sent him to London at their own expense to consult a famous oculist, and they continued to pay his salary for some time after he had ceased to earn it. But at last all that came to an end, and it seemed as though absolute beggary stared him and his family in the face.

Mary Earnshaw then rose up with a brave undaunted heart, to help her husband and her children.

"She was determined," she said, "to return to her old profession."

No opposition would have availed to dissuade her from this step, and, indeed, what better prospect had the helpless family? So Mary Earnshaw resumed her maiden name—out of deference to the highly sensitive feelings of her husband's family in the Orkney Islands and elsewhere—and, calling herself Mrs. Walton, returned to the stage.

For years her struggle was a very hard one; but, as she said, God was good to her, and she preserved her health and strength through all the fatigues and vicissitudes of a very laborious life.

By-and-by her children began to contribute something to the weekly earnings. Her eldest girl—about eight years older than Mabel—adopted her mother's calling, and they generally succeeded in getting an engagement together in the same theatre. When this could not be managed, Polly's salary had to be relinquished; for neither father nor mother could bear the thought of parting with their child. And indeed "let us keep together" was the device of the family, and the object of their constant endeavours. The only son, Polly's junior by a year or two, showed some ability as an artist, and was able to turn his talent to account and to contribute to the weekly income by scene-painting. In short, the worst times of poverty and struggle were over for Mrs. Walton (as she was now always called) before the death of Mabel's father. This took place when Mabel was nearly six years old, and she and her mother were left totally unprovided for.

The reader knows that Mrs. Earnshaw became the humble companion and dependent of an old lady residing at the Welsh watering-place where she met her second husband. In this position her child was a burden on her, and the difficulties of placing her in any suitable home, within reach of the widow's slender means, were almost insuperable.

But Mary Walton, mindful of her old affection for Philip, held out her honest helpful hand

to her widowed sister-in-law, and took the little fatherless Mabel to her own home.

"What keeps five of us will keep six," said the little woman to her husband, cheerfully: "and I do believe your brother would have done as much for any of our children."

With her aunt's family, therefore, Mabel continued to live, up to the time of her mother's second marriage. She went with them whithersoever the vicissitudes or necessities of their profession carried them. And whatever else she learnt in her aunt's household, this lesson, at least, was taught her by hourly example: that family affection and confidence, unselfish care for others, and cheerful industry, can rob poverty of its grimness, and cast a ray of bright enchantment over the most prosaic details of a hard and precarious life. When Mrs. Earnshaw accepted Benjamin Saxelby, she was obliged to confide to him, with much nervous terror and many tears (for she knew his opinions and modes of thought well enough to dread the disclosure), what manner of people the relatives were, with whom her little girl had been and was living. Mr. Saxelby was duly and conscientiously shocked by the confession.

"Of course, my dear," he said, "we must have your daughter—our daughter—away at once. And if it be possible to make this person whom she is with, and who seems to have behaved very kindly to the child, any pecuniary remuneration, I will do what I can. But it must be a sine qua non that Mabel shall hold no further communication with these people. I feel it to be my imperative duty to insist upon this."

So Mabel was taken away from the warm-hearted family who had learned to love her very dearly, and was forbidden to speak of them more.

Her aunt, unselfish as ever, encouraged Mabel in all good feeling towards Mr. Saxelby, telling her that it was a good thing for her mother and herself to find an honest kind protector who would do his duty by them. She uttered no word of complaint to the child of the harsh cold letter in which money-payment was offered her in exchange for her motherly care and affection, and in which she was civilly informed that, according to Mr. Saxelby's most conscientious judgment, she and her family had entered very far on the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Nevertheless, she shed some of the bitterest tears over that letter that she had shed for years.

"I think," she said to her husband, whose indignation knew no bounds, and who was for sending an angry and cutting reply: "I think Mrs. Philip might have spared me this. But perhaps Mrs. Philip cannot help it. She never was famous for having a will of her own; and, after all, the man is to be her husband, and I suppose he thinks he is doing right. But, John dear, isn't it very strange that he *should* think so?"

During a year or two after Mabel's removal from her aunt and uncle, letters arrived for her

at intervals from one or other of the family; but she was not allowed to answer them. Her mother now and then sent a brief note to the effect that Mabel was well: which brief note was always submitted to Mr. Saxelby's inspection before being despatched. At last came a letter to Mrs. Saxelby, signed Mary Walton Earnshaw, saying that she and her husband had felt for some time that Mr. and Mrs. Saxelby desired to put an end to communication between the two families, and that, though they should never cease to love their dear brother Philip's daughter, they would send her no more unwelcome letters.

From that time forward, no mention was ever made to Mabel of her father's relatives, and they dropped completely out of her life. But she cherished a loving memory of them in her faithful heart.

#### CHAPTER II. A JULIET UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

SOME six weeks after Mabel had left Hazlehurst, her mother received from her the following letter:

"Eastfield, December 30, 18—.

"Dearest Mamma. My last letter told you so much of my life here that I have little more to say on that score. The work is irksome and incessant; but, for the present, I am well, though when I saw my pale face in the glass last night, I thought I looked quite *old*. What I am chiefly writing about now, is a discovery I made yesterday. You know that I lent Corda Trescott my Robinson Crusoe. Well, her father, it seems, brought it back himself; but it was in the first moments of our great sorrow, and I did not think of mentioning the circumstance to you, nor did I open the book. I don't know why I put it in my trunk to bring away, but there I found it when I unpacked my clothes. Last night I came upon the book, which had been lying beside my little desk ever since my arrival at this place, and I opened it mechanically. Between the fly-leaf and the title-page I found the enclosed little note from Corda. Now, dear mamma, I mean to write to the Trescotts to ask for Aunt Mary's address, and then I shall send her a letter, which I will first forward for your perusal. I hope, dear mamma, that you will not oppose my doing so. My life here is wretched; that is the truth. I would keep it from you if there were any hope of an improvement in the state of things, but there is none. As to my profiting by the masters' lessons, that is a farce. I am wasting my life; and for your sake and Dooley's, as well as my own, I feel that I must make an effort in another direction. I promised you to give this school-plan a six months' trial, and I will keep my promise; but I am convinced that it will never afford a decent livelihood for myself. How, then, can I hope to do anything for Dooley or for you? Let me have your consent to attempt the career that has been my dream for so long. I think—I believe—I could achieve success; at all events, take my most solemn assurance that I cannot be more miserable in

mind than I am here. I grieve—oh how I grieve!—to distress you, darling mother, but I *know* it is right. Love me, and forgive me, dearest mamma, and kiss my own sweet Dooley's soft cheeks for your ever loving

"MABEL."

The following was Corda's little note enclosed in the letter, and written in a large round childish hand:

"Dear Miss Mabel. I am very obliged to you for lending me this book, and I am very glad to find that Missis Walton is your aunt, for she is a very kind lady, like you, and she gave me the fairy stories and she was very kind to me, and papa knew her in Yorkshur, and please accept my best love from your grateful little friend,

"CORDELIA ALICE MARY TRESCOTT."

Mabel had indeed passed a weary time at Eastfield. The school was by no means a first-class one. A kind of odour of poverty exhaled from the house. Every necessary comfort was pinched and pared down to the narrowest possible dimensions. Mrs. Hatchett, the schoolmistress, passed her life in that most depressing of human occupations, a struggle to keep up appearances. Gentility was her Moloch, to whom she offered up such little children as came within her clutches. Perhaps, however, the parents who sent their children to Mrs. Hatchett's school, were more to blame than that lady herself. Second-rate tradespeople in a small way of business chiefly composed her clientèle; and these people expected that their daughters should receive a "genteel" education, at a yearly rate of payment which would scarcely have sufficed to board and lodge them in a thoroughly good and wholesome manner. So the little girls were crammed four into one small sleeping room; and had their stomachs filled with heavy suct-pudding instead of eating nourishing food, and breathing pure air. But they learned to torture a pianoforte, and they had a foreign governess who taught them lady's-maid's French with a Swiss accent (though this was of less consequence, as none of the girls were ever able to speak a syllable of the language thus imparted), and their parents flattered themselves that they were doing their duty by them, and giving them a "genteel" education.

The contemplation of this state of things was painful to Mabel's clear sense and upright conscience. But she had little leisure to consider the abstract evils of the case, for the pains and penalties inseparable from a system of hollowness and falsehood pressed very closely upon her.

As she had told her mother, the promise that she should have opportunities of profiting by the lessons of the masters was a mere farce. The literal words of her engagement were, that she should be allowed to devote her "leisure hours" to her own studies. She had no leisure hours. Her days were occupied in

an incessant round of drudgery of an almost menial kind. Having arrived at Eastfield so late in the year, it was arranged that she should not return to Hazlehurst for the Christmas holidays. They were not of very long duration in Mrs. Hatchett's establishment, and Mabel did not think herself justified in draining her slender purse by a journey to her home and back again for only a short stay. So she made up her mind to wait until Easter for a sight of her mother and Dooley.

Mrs. Hatchett was not cruel, or malicious, or arrogant, unless driven to those vices by the Moloch whom she worshipped, and to whom she sacrificed herself quite as much as others. But she was covetous, and immeasurably dull.

Mabel passed the Christmas holidays in utter dreariness and desolation; and still that phrase can only, strictly speaking, be applied to the first few days of that period. After a little while, though all the outward circumstances of her life remained unaltered, she discovered a new interest and occupation.

Her discovery of the note in her copy of *Robinson Crusoe* had confirmed a vague impression she had previously entertained, that Corda's kind friend and her Aunt Mary might be one and the same person. It had, moreover, opened a possible channel of communication with her uncle's family. The more she tried to peer into the chances of her future life, the stronger grew her desire to attempt the stage as a profession. The daily pressure of her present existence was squeezing all the buoyancy out of her heart, and, she feared, would crush her bodily health. The atmosphere of Mrs. Hatchett's house was slow poison to her.

She had a great enjoyment in dramatic expression. She had a large share of that idiosyncrasy which delights in the portrayal of strong emotion, under the sheltering mask of an assumed individuality. Of her own feelings Mabel was reticent. But she thought she could abandon herself freely in the utterance of Imogen's wifely love, Cordelia's sorrows, or the witty witcheries of Beatrice. She knew something of the seamy side of a player's life, and was not dazzled by that seductive brilliancy of the footlights which has enchanted so many young eyes. She was devotedly fond of her little brother, and ambitious to obtain for him the education of a gentleman. This motive strengthened her resolution. She would lie awake for hours, painfully considering how it would be possible for her to make a beginning as an actress. It was naturally towards her Aunt Mary that her main hopes and expectations turned. But, in her ignorance of Mrs. Walton's present place of abode, she cast about in her mind to find some practical and immediate object on which to expend her energy. She had the very useful habit of doing, first, the duty that lay nearest to her.

All Mrs. Hatchett's pupils went home for the Christmas holidays with the exception of two little South Americans from Rio Janeiro, who remained at the school. These children were entrusted almost entirely to Mabel's care.

Among the two or three books she had put into her trunk on leaving home, was a pocket Shakespeare:—a little old well-worn edition, in terribly small print, that had belonged to her father. During the holidays, when all the sleeping-rooms were not needed for the children, Mabel enjoyed the luxury of a chamber to herself. On many and many a cold winter's night did the lonely girl sit on the side of her little bed, wrapped in a shawl, and straining her eyes over her Shakespeare, by the dim light of a miserable candle. She was studying the principal female characters in Shakespeare's plays.

Poor Mabel! As she committed to memory, line after line of that noble music whose cadence has so special a charm for the ear, and as she declaimed aloud whole speeches of Portia, Imogen, Cordelia, Rosalind, Juliet, the sordid cares, the monotonous drudgery, the uncongenial associations of her life, were all forgotten. The mean room, with its bare scanty furniture, faded away, and Mabel roamed, in doublet and hose, through the sun-flecked forest of Arden, seeing the mottled deer glance by under the great oaks, and hearing the stream that "brawled along the wood" babble a murmurous accompaniment to the deep voice of the melancholy Jaques, or Touchstone's dry satiric laughter. Or, she walked through the quaint mazes of a garden in Messina, and sitting hidden in the

pleached bower,  
Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun,  
Forbid the sun to enter,

listened with a "fire in her ears" to Ursula and Hero discoursing of the Signior Benedick and her disdainful self.

Or, she paced the stately halls of Belmont; or, stood before the choleric old King, to speak Cordelia's simple truths and lose her dower. Or, she leaned forth from a balcony amidst the soft beauty of a southern summer night, and drank in the passionate vows of Romeo, as he stood with upturned face whereon the moonlight shone, beneath her window.

O youth, O poetry, O mighty wizards, ruling boundless realms of fancy and of beauty, how at the touch of your enchanted wands this "muddy vesture of decay" grows clear and light, and we hear all the quiring of the spheres!

She would wake to the realities around her at the closing of her book, as one wakes from a dream. And having no one to whom to confide her hopes and plans, or from whom she could look for sympathy with her wonder at, and admiration of, the genius whose creations were, for her mind, living, breathing, immortal realities, she grew to look forward to the solitary

hours spent in her own room as the only hours worth her living for.

With her dreams, too, mingled at times bright prospects. Visions of fame, and of the sweet incense of praise, and the triumphant music of applause. She was but seventeen, and in spite of all her practical sense and severe repression of too sanguine hopes, there were moments when her youth asserted its rich privilege of building fairy castles in the air. But the castles, however stately, were always peopled by those she loved.

As the last days of the holidays drew nigh, Mabel studied hard; making the most of the few precious hours of freedom that remained to her, before the weary round of school-life should recommence. She had studied herself nearly perfect in Juliet, and was in the habit of reciting long passages from the play aloud at night, until, in her enthusiasm, she would be startled by the sound of her own voice raised in passionate entreaty or vehement grief, and ringing through the desolate house.

One night—the last before the girls came back—she began, while undressing, to repeat the long soliloquy that precedes Juliet's drinking of the sleeping potion. As she spoke the thrilling words in which the love-sick girl breathes out the terrors that crowd upon her fancy, she seemed to see the lofty antique chamber into which darted one blue streak of bright Italian moonlight, the dark shadow-haunted recesses of the spacious room, the dagger with rich handle and sharp blade, the little phial on whose mysterious aid her fate depended. And then she conjured up the appalling picture of the silent stone-cold sepulchre,

The horrible conceit of death and night,  
Together with the terror of the place,

and all the ghastly remnants of mortality. The unquiet spirit of the murdered Tybalt glided by, seeking Romeo, with an awful frown upon its death-pale face; and with a stifled shriek she raised the potion to her lips, and dashing herself down, fell—not on Juliet's couch, but, from the enchanted realms of poetry, down to Mrs. Hatchett's establishment for young ladies at Eastfield. With a heart yet beating fast, and nerves all quivering with emotion, Juliet transformed crept shivering into bed.

#### CHAPTER III. MRS. SAXELBY TAKES COUNSEL.

THE receipt of Mabel's letter threw Mrs. Saxelby into a state of considerable agitation. It did not come upon her with the shock of a surprise. She had known, from the tone of the very first letters from Eastfield, that her child was unhappy in Mrs. Hatchett's house, and that the school could not be of such a class as to give any credentials worth having, to a teacher coming out of it. Mrs. Saxelby was weak and selfish, but she had her share of maternal love—of that love which is inseparable from self-sacrifice in some shape. Had it been merely her desire set against Mabel's, she might

have yielded without a struggle. But she was a woman whose opinions (if not her tastes) were absolutely the echo of the opinions of those around her. During the past five years she had relied on Benjamin Saxelby's judgment, and had adopted his views. And how unhesitatingly he would have condemned such a scheme as Mabel's, she well knew.

Oh for some one to advise her! By this, Mrs. Saxelby meant, some one to say: "I command you to do this thing;" or, "I tell you to abstain from doing that." She read and re-read her daughter's letter. "How nice it would be," she thought, "if dear Mabel could be rich and happy and prosperous. Dear me, I've been told that some actresses hold quite a position in society. But, of course, if the thing be wrong in itself, that ought not to weigh with me. Yet, I can't feel sure that it is so very wicked. Philip did not think so, and Mary Walton made his brother an excellent wife. But, then, Benjamin thought it most dangerous and improper for Mabel to remain in her home; not that I believe she ever learned anything but good there. Oh dear, oh dear! I wish I knew what to do. I suppose I cannot forbid her writing to her aunt in any case. And perhaps, after all, something may happen to prevent her attempting this scheme."

It is no disparagement to Mrs. Saxelby to admit that she certainly did feel the chance of a comfortable home for herself, and education for Dooley, twitching at her, as a strong temptation. Her life at Hazlehurst was utterly dull and colourless, and she missed Mabel every hour.

The one day in the week that brought her a glimpse of cheerfulness was Sunday. When the weather did not make it absolutely impossible, there was the morning walk to church with Dooley (who had become quite a regular attendant there, and had made the personal acquaintance of the mild old clergyman in the silver-rimmed spectacles). Then, on Sunday afternoons, Clement Charlewood was a frequent visitor. He walked or rode over to Hazlehurst nearly every week, and Dooley never failed to find in a certain outside pocket of his coat a packet of sweetmeats, the discovery of which occasioned ever new delight and surprise. Did Mrs. Saxelby ever entertain any idea that Clement's frequent visits were not made quite disinterestedly? She used to maintain, afterwards, that she had always suspected that he came as much to hear of Mabel as to see herself. But I am inclined to think that she was mistaken there.

On the Sunday afternoon after the receipt of Mabel's letter enclosing little Corda's note the hoofs of Clement's horse were heard clattering sharply on the hard frosty road. Dooley, stationed at the parlour window with a big illustrated Bible, the pictures in which formed his Sunday diversion, announced that "Mr. Tarlewood was tummin'," and ran to the door to meet him.

"I am riding on to leave Duchess at the inn,

Mrs. Saxelby," called Clement, lifting his hat as he saw her at the window. "May I take Dooley so far with me? I undertake to bring him back safely."

Dooley, having received permission to go, rushed into the house again, and had his hat stuck on his head all askew by Betty, whose eyes were occupied in staring at Mr. Charlewood and his steed; then she wrapped the child in a warm shawl of his mother's, and lifted him on to the saddle before Clement. Dooley's little pink legs protruded from his bundle of wraps, and stuck out horizontally on either side of the horse. As his hat was all awry, so his flaxen curls were dishevelled and waving. But he looked supremely happy as he grasped the bridle with little frost-reddened fingers, and incited Duchess to put forth her mettle by many imperious gees and shouts of "Tum up! Do along, Dutsess!" and several strenuous though unsuccessful efforts to make a clicking noise with his tongue.

As Mrs. Saxelby watched this from the window, and marked the kind smile on Clement's face as he held the little fellow in his protecting arm, a sudden impulse came into her heart to take counsel with Clement touching Mabel's letter. "He is a very clever man of business, and he is fond of Mabel and of all of us, and he will be able to advise me," thought the poor weak little woman.

When Clement and Dooley returned on foot, having left Duchess in a warm stable at the inn, Mrs. Saxelby received them in the little parlour. She had a bright fire in the grate, and the aspect of the room was pleasant and cozy. Clement wondered to himself, as he sat down beside the clean hearthstone, *what* it was that gave to that poor meanly furnished little room an atmosphere of peace and comfort such as he never found in any of the rich rooms at Bramley Manor. The cottage at Hazlehurst he felt to be a home, whereas Bramley Manor was only a very handsome house. The difference, though undefinably subtle, was quite appreciable.

"And how is Miss Earnshaw?" said Clement, stroking Dooley's curls. "I hope you continue to have good news of her?"

"Thank you, she is not ill."

There was a tremor in Mrs. Saxelby's voice, and a stress on the last word, that caused Clement to look up quickly.

"You have heard nothing disagreeable, I trust?"

"N—no; that is to say—I wonder if you would mind my reposing a great confidence in you, Mr. Charlewood? I have no right to ask it, but I should be so grateful for your advice."

"A great confidence implies a great responsibility," returned Clement, gravely. It was his character to be earnest and to take things seriously; and the bound his heart gave at Mrs. Saxelby's words—suggestive of some revelation regarding Mabel—made him change colour for the moment.

"I repeat, I have no right to burden you

with any responsibility," said Mrs. Saxelby, meekly. "But I—I—feel towards you almost as to a son."

Clement flushed, and pressed Dooley's curly head so hard that the child winced.

"Dooley, my boy, I beg your pardon. Did I hurt you?" asked Clement, somewhat confused.

"'Oo did hurt me, but 'oo is very sorry," returned Dooley, endeavouring to combine candour with courtesy.

"Dear Mrs. Saxelby," said Clement, earnestly, "pray do not suppose that I have any selfish dread of responsibility. I am very sensible of your kindness and confidence. Only I doubted whether you might not have found a more competent counsellor. One who has a higher regard for you and yours, I do not think you would find easily. Was it something concerning Miss Earnshaw that you wished to say to me?"

"Yes. I received a letter from her on Friday morning. I am afraid she is very far from contented in Eastfield."

"I got a letter from Tibby, too!" said Dooley, triumphantly.

"Yes, my darling. Go and tell Betty to wash your hands and face and brush your hair, and then you may bring your letter to show to Mr. Charlewood. I don't like," added Mrs. Saxelby, as the child left the room, "to speak before him. He is very quick, and his attachment to his sister is so strong, that I really believe, baby though he is, it would break his heart to think she was unhappy."

"But I hope, Mrs. Saxelby, that there is nothing serious."

"Ah, but there is, though. Something very serious. There! Read that letter, and tell me your opinion."

Mrs. Saxelby experienced a little trepidation as she gave Mabel's letter into the young man's hand, and felt that she had taken an irrevocable step. Clement read the letter steadily through, and the long sigh of relief that he drew at its close, came upon him almost as a revelation. The news was very annoying, very distressing, but—it was not hopeless, not irremediable. What revelation regarding Mabel had he feared, which would have seemed to him so much harder to bear? He did not answer the question even to himself, but he knew in the moment when he laid the letter down, that he loved her with all the strength of his heart, and that he would henceforth bend the powers of his will and energy to the endeavour of winning her to be his wife.

"You don't speak, Mr. Charlewood."

"I am not sure that I thoroughly understand the contents of this letter. But I suppose I have guessed their meaning pretty accurately. I presume that the career to which Miss Earnshaw alludes as having been her dream for so long, is—is—the stage?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Saxelby. "Now the truth is out. The Aunt Mary she speaks of in her letter, is an actress. We never mentioned that

part of the family during Mr. Saxelby's lifetime, for he had a very strong objection to—" Mrs. Saxelby finished the sentence in her pocket-handkerchief.

"Not an unreasonable objection, I think," said Clement, almost sternly.

"You think so? You really think so? But you ought to understand, Mr. Charlewood, that my sister-in-law has been an excellent wife and mother. Quite exemplary, and"—Mrs. Saxelby blushed a little—"and she was very kind and good to me, and to my fatherless little girl. Mabel was almost brought up in her uncle's family."

"Do I understand," said Clement, "that you are asking my advice as to your answer to Miss Earnshaw's letter?"

"Yes, indeed I am. *What* do you think I ought to do?" Mrs. Saxelby crossed her hands, and raised her soft blue eyes imploringly.

Perhaps no more subtle flattery can be addressed to a man, than through an appeal made to his superior wisdom and experience, by a woman who asks his advice, and appears to lean helplessly and reliantly on his strength. When the appeal is made in the shape of a great confidence, which he supposes to be entrusted to himself alone, and when the appealer is a still graceful and pretty woman, the incense is so intoxicating, as to be well-nigh irresistible.

Clement—far from being a vain man—was not insensible to this flattery. And though Mrs. Saxelby had just confessed her utter inability to form a judgment for the guidance of her own conduct, he had a confused impression at that moment that she was a very sensible person, and that he had never hitherto done full justice to her discernment.

"Dear Mrs. Saxelby, I appreciate your confidence very highly indeed, and I feel diffident in offering advice on so delicate and important a matter. But, since you ask me, I will frankly tell you, that if Miss Earnshaw were my sister, or my—my cousin—I would not hesitate to put a decided veto upon her scheme."

"I thought so," returned Mrs. Saxelby. "I fancied that would be your opinion. But what am I to do with her? You see what she writes. And after all, you know, Mr. Charlewood, her chief anxiety is for me and Dooley."

"Miss Earnshaw is the most excellent young lady I know. Believe me, I have the highest admiration and—and—respect for her. But it is the duty of her true friends to shield her from the consequences of her own generosity and inexperience. Of course, as her mother, you feel that strongly."

"Mabel is not easily turned from what she thinks right, Mr. Charlewood."

"Undoubtedly. But if this course could be shown her to be *not* right?"

"Ah, how is one to do that? I may have my own convictions" (Mrs. Saxelby never did have her own convictions, being always willing to cling to other people's); "but to per-

sua<sup>d</sup>e Mabel of their correctness—that is not so easy."

"She would not disobey your commands?"

"No. She would not do that. She has always been a loving and dutiful child. But how can I have the heart to condemn her to the hopeless drudgery she is now engaged in? You see, she fears that her health may absolutely give way."

"But, Mrs. Saxelby, it does not follow that all her life need be sacrificed to this drudgery. Surely a better position might be found for her. And, besides: would you not like, Mrs. Saxelby, to see your daughter, and talk to her yourself?"

"Oh, so much! But that is out of the question until Easter. The Christmas holidays are just over."

"I mean, could you not run over to Eastfield for a day? I have long been intending to ask my friend Dooley to a bachelor dinner. If you would come too, Mrs. Saxelby, I should esteem it a great honour."

"To dinner?"

"Yes; at Eastfield. I have business that will oblige me to go there, at the end of the week. We could dine at the hotel, and I would convey you and Dooley home in the evening. You might thus have an opportunity at once of speaking to Miss Earnshaw, and conferring an obligation on me."

"You are very good; but—"

"Pray don't raise any difficulties, dear Mrs. Saxelby. If it were summer-time, I would bring a carriage and drive you over. But in this weather I fear I must ask you to come by the train. You will be warmer. And the journey will be so much shorter for Dooley at night."

Mrs. Saxelby hesitated only at the idea of going to Eastfield as Clement Charlewood's guest, for she had an uneasy sense that Mabel would disapprove of her doing so. However, Clement's strong purpose prevailed; as almost any strong purpose, strongly urged, was sure to prevail with Mrs. Saxelby. She at last consented to accept the invitation; meanwhile, she would write to Mabel to prepare her for the visit, without returning any decisive answer to her letter.

"Of course you will hold my confidence sacred, and mention what I have said to no one," said Mrs. Saxelby, as Clement was about to take his leave.

"I shall certainly mention it to no one without your express permission. I did think at one time of asking one of my sisters to play hostess for us at our little dinner; but, under the circumstances of our visit to Eastfield, you will prefer that no other person should be asked?"

"Oh, please no. I don't want *anybody* to know a word. If Miss Fluke were to hear—"

"Miss Fluke!" exclaimed Clement, with a start. "The last person on this earth to be thought of! If she were to speak to your daughter on this subject—which she would not

refrain from doing—would be certain to do if confided in—she would drive Miss Earnshaw to extremity, and offend her beyond forgiveness. Miss Fluke! In Heaven's name do not think of Miss Fluke!"

"Benjamin thought very highly of her," said Mrs. Saxelby, in a deprecating manner.

"Good-bye till Saturday, and no Miss Fluke! I will send a fly for you at twelve o'clock, if that will suit your convenience, and will meet you myself at the station at Hammerham."

"Good-bye; and thank you very, very much, dear Mr. Charlewood."

Dooley had been standing wistfully for some minutes by Clement's side, holding a letter in his hand; finding himself unnoticed, he had crept away to the window, where he climbed upon a chair, and knelt with his forehead against the glass.

"Good-bye, Dooley!" said Clement, coming behind him.

"Dood-bye," said the little fellow, in a low voice, but he neither moved nor looked round.

"Won't you shake hands?"

"No," returned Dooley, dryly.

"Dooley, I'm ashamed of you," cried his mother. "Not shake hands with Mr. Charlewood?"

Dooley turned round slowly, and held out his tiny hand; then they saw that the child's eyes were full of tears.

"Why, Dooley, my boy, what's the matter?" asked Clement.

No reply.

"And there's your sister's letter, that you never showed me, after all. Mayn't I see it now?"

"No."

"No?"

"Oo don't want to tee it," said Dooley, checking a sob, and turning resolutely towards the window again, with the letter pressed against his breast.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Saxelby aside to Clement, "I see what it is. He is so sensitive about any slight to Tibby. Her letters are his great joy and pride, and he fancied you did not sufficiently appreciate the privilege of seeing one."

Clement took the child in his arms, and kissed his forehead with almost a woman's tenderness. "Dooley," said he, "I will be so grateful to you if you will let me see Mabel's letter. I will indeed. I love her, Dooley," he whispered, pressing his cheek against the child's. Dooley looked at him with a solemn searching gaze, and then gave the letter into his hand without a word.

Clement read it and duly admired it, and was careful to remark that it was addressed to "Dooley Saxelby, Esq., Hazlehurst, near Hammerham;" upon his reading which direction aloud, Dooley chuckled with irrepressible glee, and stuffed a corner of his pinafore, still wet with tears, into his mouth.

Clement walked to the village inn for his horse, mounted, and rode briskly toward Ham-

merham. His head was full of whirling thoughts, and the beat of his horse's hoofs seemed to be keeping time to the rhythmic repetition of a name.

What name?

MABEL, MABEL, MABEL, EARNSHAW.

#### FENIAN JAMES FITZPATRICK.

THE day's partial thaw is succeeded by a clear sharp frost to-night. A solemn stillness reigns over field and fell. The very air is sleeping, and not a cloud fleckers the great dome of heaven. All the expanse is flooded with pale moonlight. The fir-trees, still bearing fleeces of snow in tiers upon their fan-like arms, cast grotesque shadows on the lawn. Three bright lines of light blaze in the barracks yonder on the hill. They keep the lights burning all the night through now, for there are few men within, and they are watching. A solitary owl hoots in the deep thicket near our barn. From the distant steeple, white and clear against the sky, ring out the chimes. A dog disturbed, barks sharply far away down in the valley, others of his kind take up and repeat his warning; for a moment there is a chorus of sharp terriers and deep-toned mastiffs, then all is still again. The silence saddens and oppresses one; we feel to be alone in the vast world. Our favourite constellations glitter in the sky unclouded and serene, but silently. I count them all, the Pleiades, Orion, Perseus, and Andromeda. Some set and disappear behind the range of hills, others to rise and flash above the wood. All are asleep within, and I long for some sign of active life to break the grave stillness of the hour.

Yes, there is life. A mile away behind the house they are burning furze upon Knockrea. The huntsmen will not thank those who destroy the cover. Yet these are not furze-burners, now that I look again. The light is too steady and too red. It must be just above the ledge on which the police-station can be discerned, white above its own dark shadow. It is extinguished, and flashes out again. Once more I try to fix the spot where it appeared, once more it blazes out, and stronger than before. Is that an electric flash, marking out a path of light among the trees, and glancing off the red-barked pine? Signal answers signal, as I live! They speak to each other across the gorge, those men upon the hill and some round my own homestead. All is still as death, but near me there are others awake, and watching like myself.

The stealthy drawing of a bolt, the rattling of a chain, the creak of a hinge upon the gate, and suddenly the clank of hoofs on the hard roadway. My horses are away! Have they broken loose, or are they ridden? I shout, and in reply hear from the skirt of the wood, horrible in the night's quiet, that demonic war-whoop which James Fitzpatrick learned of the Indians



—a succession of yells ending in chuckling laughter. It is Fitzpatrick; he has thrown off the mask at last! Distant, ever more distant, is the clatter of the hoofs, now ringing more clearly as they mount the hills, now dying away in the hollows. At last it is heard only at distant intervals, and then no more.

According to his own story, James Fitzpatrick had left Ireland three years before "the war." Wandering through "the States," doing a turn of work, now here, now there, he became a sort of slave-driver on a cotton-plantation in South Carolina. When the war between North and South broke out, he bore arms in the Confederate ranks, and fought at Beaufort and New Orleans under the Palmetto flag. Either as a deserter or a prisoner, he changed sides, and served with Sherman during his famous march from Atlanta to Charleston, and fearful were the tales he told to our frightened but eagerly listening children of blood, and death, and plunder he had seen. Leaving this service, too, he never told us how or why, he became "lifter" to a corn-merehant at Chicago—an employment for which his powerful and active frame well fitted him. He offered his services to me a few weeks after his return to Ireland "for any wages I pleased to give." I had just obtained a life interest in a small farm of twenty acres of arable land, with ten acres of ornamental wood. The place had been shamefully neglected, and my ignorance of farming was supreme. Fitzpatrick was recommended to me as a "handy man," ready to "put his strength" to any kind of labour; and such I found him.

His experience in "the territories" of America had taught him much. He was equal to three ordinary men in capacity for work and facility in expedients. He kneaded and baked our bread, cared and milked our cows, made our butter, did a trifle of blacksmith's work, repaired our gates and fences, and executed rough jobs of carpentry. We found out that he washed, clear-starched, and "did up fine things" as well as any laundry-maid. There was nothing he was not willing to attempt and could not manage to do in some way, so as to answer the purpose for a time. He soon brought our small farm "to rights," working himself energetically but noisily, and making others work. With our children he was all in all; their great authority and lawgiver in the art of constructing rabbit-hutches, setting snares for hares or birds, and building toy ships to sail upon the pond. He knew where the hawk had her young, and the woodquost built her nest. Great was the store of wild birds' eggs the boys gathered on the moor and "blew" under his direction. As a help he was invaluable to us, but there was a restlessness and wildness, sometimes a degree of violence, in his character which caused uneasiness. He spoke of our farm as his own, and openly said what he would have done next year; but the Irish steward identified himself so far with his master, that this occasioned no surprise. We knew not then that he had pur-

chased an "Irish bond" on our small estate. He boasted more than once to others that "he could buy and sell us" if he pleased. I was informed he threatened to leave those behind him who would revenge him if I dismissed him, but the evidence was vague and wavering. The Irish peasant will not "peach," and if in passion he blurts out a charge, under examination he softens down his words and leaves you powerless. In this case I could find no fair reason to dismiss Fitzpatrick, and placed as I was amidst strangers not of my own creed, I would do nothing without the clearest proof. One part of his character did give me real uneasiness. He hated, or professed to hate, the priests of his own communion. He forsook his "duty," seldom going to chapel, never to confession. The language he ventured to use towards his own priest was unmeasured in abuse; yet the parish priest was a gentle aged man, kindly and charitable, never interfering in politics save to condemn the Fenians.

Early in the month of October, Fitzpatrick requested me to sign, in evidence of his identity, an American draft for one hundred and eighty dollars, drawn in his favour at New York. This, he said, was the amount of his savings at Chicago, which he had left in bank until "gold got cheap." His account was not improbable, for I knew him to be hard-working and thrifty. On the third Sunday of December he brought another note, but this time for two hundred and fifty dollars. I refused, but in quiet terms, to sign such a document on Sunday. A sudden fear flashed across my mind, for these American bills were objects of suspicion. I determined on the moment, come what would, to dismiss Fitzpatrick. On my refusal to sign the note his face grew purple, and he dashed from the room, more resembling a maniac than a sane man. On that night he fled.

There was no rest for the remainder of the night. We closed the yard-gates, bolted and barred the rooms below, and waited for the winter's dawn. To send for the constabulary, I should leave the house to females and children. I should have to pass through the wood to reach the lodge; and who could tell whether the keeper was not in the plot? An hour passed away, and then came the tramp of men upon the gravel. They paused before the house, and the sound of grounded arms was plain. A short rapid glance from the window showed us the police. There were twelve in the patrol. Three, and the sergeant a little in advance, faced the hall door full in the moonlight; two were dimly seen in the dark shadow of the trees on either side; the rest had mounted the yard gate, for we heard them moving on the pavement.

"Very sorry to disturb you, sir, but we have orders."

"Wait one moment, sergeant, I will let you in."

"We have a warrant, sir, against Fitzpatrick, which is his room?"

A few words sufficed to show that Fitzpatrick

had known the warrant was issued almost as soon as the police themselves. The accurate and timely information possessed by the leading Fenians was sometimes a complete puzzle to the authorities. They seemed to know beforehand when and where, and in what force, a search would be made. The escape of Stephens from Richmond Bridewell was only one of a series of proofs that the conspiracy had active and unsuspected agents in offices of trust. Two, if not three, years had been spent by Stephens and his colleagues in preparation. Efforts were made, often aided innocently by most loyal men, to obtain situations for confederates in prisons, hospitals, and public offices. There were confederates in the camps, in barrack, and in the neighbourhood of police-stations. The slightest movement on the part of the constabulary, the receipt of a letter at an unusual time, the arrival of a mounted orderly at a guard-house, the silence and mystery generally observed by men about to be engaged upon a movement of importance, were all noted by vigilant, but unseen or unsuspected watchers. A simple system of light signals by night, scouts on the tops of hills during the day, betrayed the line of route taken by military or police. The uncouth and silent peasant screening the sand on the mountain-side; the tramp who infested your grounds; the pedlar with his "lucifers," and song books, and bits of showy ribbon; the labourer looking for work with his spade upon his shoulder; the ragged and shoeless urchin pretending to mind the sheep; the girl half hidden among the furze playing with her kid, were all scouts, well-paid scouts—for a trifle serves as a great bribe where the wages of a working man are but seven shillings weekly—doing the bidding of an unknown agent under pain of death. Chiefly the leaders sought to place confederates, or persons likely to be seduced, about the families of persons holding office under the crown. A word casually dropped at the breakfast-table would be repeated in the servants' room or stable-yard. During the crisis the master of the household generally stated where he would be found at any hour of the day, and when he intended to return. Any movement out of the routine course was suspected and watched. A sentence heard at the dinner-table, and most innocently mentioned in the kitchen, seemed to have wings. The purport of it, if it concerned the conspiracy, was known miles away before nightfall.

A search was made in the room so recently occupied by the fugitive. Little was found: a pair of military gloves, two copies of the Irish People—not the genuine Irish People suppressed by the government, but an American publication transmitted in quantities to Ireland, either separately or folded in the pages of other New York newspapers. A plank of the floor had been taken up, and lay on its side against the wall. Here, it was supposed, "the rifle" had been secreted. Bedding was tossed up and carefully examined, with no result. In passing down the stairs leading to the room, the

lamp held by the sergeant flashed its light upon a paper affixed to the wall. It was wafered up, and covered with short pencil strokes, opposite words written in ink. Under the words "Head," "Hands," "Fingers," "Feet," "Toes," were marks I did not comprehend. The sergeant knew at once the importance of the document. These names indicated the position held by the members of the conspiracy. The "hands" were superior to the "feet," but both had authority. The "fingers" were the "privates" who had been supplied with arms. The "toes" were unarmed as yet. The down-strokes indicated the attendance at drill.

"There is evidence here to hang him, if he's caught," said the sergeant. "A document like this we do not often find."

So the very man whom we had, until lately, trusted most, and who was thoroughly acquainted with the whole tenor of our lives, was the chief organiser and paymaster of the Fenians in our district!

Before mid-day on Monday we knew all. They amongst whom we lived, and who never had uttered one word of warning, were voluble in offering information now. Every one knew something about Fitzpatrick, and came to tell it. On holidays, or in the evenings after the hours of work, "our man" drilled his recruits among the sand-hills, or seduced and swore men in at the canteen. He reviewed his levies and distributed pay, on starry nights, at the edges of the moor. Now was explained why we often heard the sound of horses' hoofs so late at night, and why our ponies appeared exhausted and spiritless in the morning.

Five arrests were made early in the morning of Fitzpatrick's flight. Two publicans, who had a thriving trade, disappeared, without informing their nearest relatives why, or whither—at least, so they said. The whole district was in commotion, and every labourer was suspected, or professed to hold others in suspicion. I sent my family up to Dublin, although we were guarded more securely than we had reason to suppose. Our children told us how they had seen "the sergeant and his men" lying flat among the trees around the house by night. My wife and daughters found that, on their visits to the village, men of soldier-like bearing, but in civilians' clothes, hovered near them. Often I hailed and spoke to the patrol, who appeared to rise up out of the earth. Our servants, however, gave warning, and we feared to engage others. The lodge-keeper alone stood his ground, and kept the house with me.

Gradually the alarm through the district subsided. Arrests were no longer made, and not the slightest injury was done to person or property. I had my family safe in Dublin, and my mind was free. Six days before the rising there had not existed with us the slightest suspicion that an outbreak was intended. The military authorities and police thought otherwise, and they were right. The precautions taken by the

State were now the chief proofs that the conspiracy still existed, and the very means wisely adopted to obviate or anticipate danger gave birth to apprehension.

A hot pursuit was set on foot after James Fitzpatrick, but in vain. He had timed his flight cleverly, and taken the railway to Dublin at a station nine miles off, although there were two stations nearer. My ponies were brought back next day, and gave proofs of having been ridden desperately hard. Who accompanied Fitzpatrick we never knew. It was supposed he had made for Liverpool, and had hidden himself amongst the dockyard labourers for a time, and then started for New York. The constabulary gathered up and carefully recorded all the evidence they could collect concerning him—to little purpose, as I imagined. But they said, if ever a rising should actually take place, "Fitzpatrick would surely be in the thick of it." He would dare anything, they believed, and could not settle down.

During the interval between the flight of Fitzpatrick and the rising at Tallaght, we heard occasionally vague rumours concerning him. "He had become a great man, entirely;" "He was full of money," and "would soon be back in Ireland with the States army." But we gathered some decided information from the New York papers, which, in their reports of Fenian meetings, recorded his name as that of an accredited agent of "the Irish republic," regularly commissioned to explain the position of the conspiracy in Ireland. He was named in small capitals as "Head Centre" and "District Organiser of the I.R.B." His story harmonised with that told by all the rest who had fled from Ireland, and appeared as "agents" in the cities of the United States. "There were thousands of men, wholly or partly drilled and disciplined, ready to rise, if they had but arms." Arms, or money to buy arms, would enable "the men in the gap" to liberate Ireland from the British yoke. He openly announced his determination to return to "the front," and to join in striking "the final blow" against British tyranny. All this was considered as a device to induce the Celtic element in the United States to subscribe once more to the Fenian treasury. We believed Fitzpatrick to be but a type of a numerous class, Irish in nothing but their birth. Habituated to violence and rapine during the American civil war, the return of peace found them unfitted for industrial employment, and ready to become the instruments of any American intrigue which promised them congenial occupation, Whiteboyism, Terry-altism, Ribbonism, the Phenix mystery, had been carried to America by a million of emigrants, and there developed into secret societies of vast extent and considerable political influence. The Irish element in these societies was believed to have combined to a man in Fenianism, and to be wielded by clever and unscrupulous leaders for political objects or pecuniary advantage. As a theoretical organisation on paper, the Fenian

scheme was remarkably complete; but, as the emissaries of the conspiracy must have known, that not one person worthy to be called, by the most liberal application of the term, a citizen—not one in decent position or respectable employment, could be induced to take part in the scheme from first to last, it was not generally believed they would ever oppose to the enormous power of the government the loose and hungry waifs and strays, the debauched and dissolute idler of the towns, and the weak-minded and feeble-bodied youths, who constituted in Ireland the Fenian army.

When this army had melted away at the first touch of the constabulary on Tallaght Hill, Fitzpatrick was diligently sought for. The authorities were aware that he had acted as one of the leaders in the affray, and it was supposed, rightly or wrongly, that he would willingly purchase his own safety by supplying information. "Generals," "captains," "head centres," strove who should be the first to betray those whom they had led, but there was good reason to suspect that Fitzpatrick knew more of the American side of the conspiracy than the rest. He was one whose appearance could not be mistaken. He was not amongst the miserable rabble paraded in the Castle-yard the day succeeding the rising; he was not found among the straying fugitives picked up by the police; he certainly had not succeeded in getting through the Wicklow mountains, or making "for the south." We concluded that he had slipped back to Dublin somehow, and hidden himself amidst the crowd.

In the wards of an hospital he lay powerless and moribund when I recognised him. A ball had struck him right on the breast-bone, and, glancing off, ran in a semicircle to the shoulder, and there, breaking the clavicle, passed out. A thick blue welt, tight as a rope, marked the track of the ball. The blood oozed drop by drop from the narrow puncture, and would not be stanchd. The stars in their courses had fought against the Fenians. Never was there known in Ireland so bitter a month as the March which the conspirators madly chose for their attempt. For two endless nights and two inclement days Fitzpatrick had lain in a furrow freezing to death. Then the gathering of a flock of crows around his hiding-place led to his discovery. He was carefully lifted up and borne away, no longer an enemy. He could not have been more kindly tended. He could only look his thanks. This only I gathered from his whispered words, spoken at long intervals:—that he had been treacherously shot by one of his American confederates because he knew too much.

All that he knew, lies buried with him. We buried him among "his own people," in a sunny graveyard. He was the last of his kin in Ireland. I see his grave every Sunday, and the children have made it bloom with daffodils and primroses. There is often a little group gathered around the place. They know as yet nothing

of treachery or treason, but much of old companionship and pleasant hours on sunny days upon the moorland.

### A MYSTERY STILL.

NEARLY half a century ago, a young fellow with a smartish air, though of a small ill-proportioned figure, landed at the Cape of Good Hope, bringing letters of introduction to the governor of that colony from a well-known eccentric Scottish nobleman. This fair-faced slender youth held the humble rank of an assistant-surgeon in the army.

He soon showed that he possessed the power of self-appreciation to such a degree as required a little taking down. But this was found to be no easy task. He had the faculty called, in French, *l'audace*, often a good substitute for ability; but when the two go hand in hand, they carry all before them, in one shape or other; and as the young surgeon was as clever as he was impudent, he made a position for himself, and, what is more, he kept it.

*Doctor James*—we give part of his name as it stood in the Army List in 1865—was a physician by Edinburgh diploma. As we shall show by-and-by, he never held any regimental rank, passing, contrary to all precedent, to his full surgeoncy on the staff.

By dates from unquestionable records, he seems to have received his diploma at the early age of fifteen. Whether these dates corresponded with his certificate of baptism it is impossible to say, as, under all circumstances, it may be doubtful whether such a document ever existed.

Whatever might have been the status of military medical men fifty years since, James liked his calling, and, socially speaking, was a gentleman every inch of him: though this is not literally saying very much for him, seeing he was but a little man. He had a fair allowance from some source or other; but he never spoke of any relatives or friends out of the military profession. His habits were too expensive to be met by his mere pay and allowances. He kept a horse and a private servant, and, as a strict vegetarian, would touch none but the most delicate fruits of the earth. Potatoes and apples were, to him, "filthy roots;" the odour of cabbage turned him sick; but he liked peas, and craved for asparagus, sea-kale, peaches, grapes, melons, figs, custard apples, and, above all, mangoes. Coffee was the only stimulant he could bear, except when ill, and then he would sip diluted champagne or brandy, medicinally.

Some called him a toady; but, his letters of introduction placed him at once in the best society of the colony. Neither had he health for general visiting. With those among whom he lived, he made friends, and kept them. His testiness was harmless, his abilities were unquestionable; and it having been intimated to the governor that the young medico's duties were to be made as light

as the rules of the service would permit, he was installed as honorary physician to his excellency's family, and soon obtained such a reputation, both as physician and surgeon, that private practice came to him without his seeking it. His queer ways and irritable temper rather increased than diminished his prestige, and he held his own through good report and evil report.

When first called in to a patient, he would have the room cleared of everything previously prescribed, and would almost invariably order, as preface to his course of treatment, a bath of Cape wine! Happen what might, he claimed the whole credit of a cure, or blamed others for failure. He was, to be sure, sent for at times as a last resource. If the patient recovered, Doctor James had all the merit; if death ensued, "Doctor James had unfortunately been summoned when the case was hopeless."

His excellency spoiled him. He became a kind of tame imp, encouraged as amusing and harmless enough; but, like such imps, he took advantage one day of his position, and was impertinent. He had the entrée of the governor's private cabinet. One morning, sauntering in, he had the assurance to make some querulous remarks on an official document lying on the table. Finally, he worked himself into such an offensive pet, that his excellency resolved to give him a lesson; so, snatching the little fellow up by the collar of his uniform, he swung him over the window-sill—a few feet above the grassy garden—and shook him. James screeched and cried *peccavi*. He was forgiven, and never offended there in the same way again. Still, every one was persuaded that such unwarrantable humours as he exhibited, were only tolerated by reason of certain influences that remain a mystery at this day. His next adventure might have ended his career. The story from Government House got bruited abroad, and much fun was raised at Doctor James's expense. Some laughed about it, in such a way as that James could not but be aware of the fact. He had been looking out for a chance of checking the sauciness of some of the young fellows in the garrison, and here was the chance at last. One morning, a tall cornet, whose contemptuous manner had much irritated him, was sauntering along under the trees of a charming walk, in one of the most public parts of Cape Town—where, to this day, the people are wont to sit upon the steeps, men smoking, women knitting, and grave little Dutch children toddling up and down—when James strutted up to the young dragoon: a member of the governor's staff. James stopped the way with a defiant air. Some ill-conditioned person had made the most of the cornet's disparaging jests. James was glad of this opportunity of asserting himself. High words ensued, the doctor's shrill voice piercing the air, and thus drawing attention (as he intended it should) to the encounter, which ended in a challenge. Next morning a quiet little duel took place. It ended well. Hands were shaken, and cornet and doctor became good friends for life. If the affair ever came

to the ears of the governor, he thought it best to ignore it, according to the fashion of the day.

Doctor James afforded a good illustration of the triumph of mind over matter. Tetchy as he was, he never excited any professional jealousy, albeit, in defiance of all precedent, he was promoted on the staff as full surgeon without doing a day's regimental duty. Frail in body, unique in appearance, and eccentric in manner, he ensured respect by his capacity; and, as he could be courteous when he pleased, his oddities were excused by his colleagues. He must have realised at this period considerable sums by his private practice, but he never changed his mode of living. He kept a black servant, a serviceable pony, and a small dog called Psyche. Most of Psyche's successors bore her name. This queer quartet usually took their walks abroad in company, and were a well-known group at Cape Town.

On Doctor James's return to England, he was offered an appointment at another colonial station. Here, owing to the climate, or possibly to non-appreciation, he grew discontented, and, without making any official application for leave of absence, on plea of sickness or "urgent private affairs," took his departure for England.

He would chuckle as he related the story of his unlooked-for reappearance before the director-general of the medical department in London. "Sir," said the director, "I do not understand your reporting yourself in this fashion. You admit you have returned without leave of absence. May I ask how this is?"

"Well," said James, coolly running his long white fingers through his crisp sandy curls, "I have come home to have my hair cut."

He more than once defied the rules of the service with impunity, and invariably boasted that he could have his choice of quarters. And he had. He was counted a lucky fellow; but who he was, or what he was, never ceased to be a question of debate among his brethren less fortunate than he.

It would scarcely be supposed that he would submit to the banishment of St. Helena, but he thought "it might suit him very well," and he accepted it. It did suit him very well, until he made it too hot to hold him. The climate pleased him. The fruits and delicate vegetables were strong considerations with him. His health was more settled than in former days, his reputation was high, and he had brought with him his usual letters of introduction. Despite his shuffling gait, he might have been no more than thirty, although he had been an M.D. nearly twenty-four years! His smooth face, his sandy hair, his boyish voice, and a tolerable set of teeth, contributed essentially to his juvenile appearance.

He was now principal medical officer. He installed himself in a pretty cottage at the head of James Town, and revelled in the tropical fruits, as many who read this account will remember. A certain mango-tree was his favourite

bower. He paid well for all he had, and those who had the best opportunities of knowing him asserted that, selfish, odd, and cranky as he was, he had kindness for the poor, and was charitable without ostentation. He would go about, bestriding his pony in strange fashion, with an umbrella over his head. His saddle was a curiosity. It was so comfortably padded and so safely shaped, that, once wedged into it, it was a marvel how he got out of it. In uniform he was a caricature. His boot heels were two inches above the ground, and within the boots were soles three inches thick. Add to these boots very long spurs, crown the sandy curls with a cocked-hat, and complete all with a sword big enough for a dragon, and you have the doctor complete. The pony was enveloped in a net from ears to heels, and swung the tassels about impatient of the gear. The black man attended at the beast's head, and Psyche tripped after them, the doctor's treble waking up the hot silence of the one narrow street shut in by barren rocks, and Psyche's bark making discord at intervals.

He established himself in the old fashion at Government House, where he was suffered to talk of his aristocratic acquaintance, sometimes alluding to those of other days in a manner sufficiently puzzling. As at Cape Town, he became the family physician, or considered himself such, and gave himself his usual airs when called in to a private family. He effected some great cures, and gained the confidence of his patients. His presence at the hospital was a signal for the juniors to be all on the alert. The soldiers liked him and trusted in his skill; but woe betide the laggard medico who was not there to receive the P. M. O., or who had swerved one hair's-breadth from his instructions.

All went on harmoniously enough for upwards of a year, when the doctor, in an evil moment, picked a quarrel with an officer of the garrison. The affair led to a challenge, which the doctor declined in no dignified way, and it was followed by his open expulsion from the garrison mess as an honorary member. Finally, the governor called for a court of inquiry, which resulted in James being sent home under arrest.

The writer of this article witnessed his exit from James Town. On one of those still sultry mornings peculiar to the tropics, the measured step of the doctor's pony woke up the echoes of the valley. There came the P. M. O., looking faded and crestfallen. He was in plain clothes. He had shrunk away wonderfully. His blue jacket hung loosely about him, his white trousers were a world too wide, the veil garnishing his broad straw hat covered his face, and he carried the inevitable umbrella over his head so that it screened him from the general gaze. The street was deserted, but other eyes besides the writer's looked on the group through the Venetian blinds. No sentry presented arms at the gates, and the familiar quartet proceeded unnoticed along the lines to the ship's boat in waiting.

His influence had been at work for him be-

fore he landed. He was released from arrest, outrageous as his conduct had been, and again had his choice of quarters. He went to other stations, in the tropics, to Greece, and the Mediterranean. He retained his taste for Government House society, and as he grew older got less testy. He began to think of death and sepulture, and would have had a friend in the West Indies take an oath that, if he (James) died there, he should be buried in the garments he wore at the time. The friend declined to swear, but James did not quarrel with him.

His last voyage was made as an amateur. Our winter drove him to the West Indies again, where he gave out "confidentially" that his reasons for leaving England were very sad: "a broken-off engagement with a young and beautiful creature, and some trouble in money matters. He had lost documents, jewels, and family records, on board a vessel which had foundered at sea. He was unhappy, and he wanted solace. His former opponent in the duel was commander-in-chief, and he and James were capital friends.

The summer of '64 brought him back to England, with Black John and a little dog, whose name was not Psyche. As the creature is probably living, she shall be nameless. Doctor James must now have been quite seventy years old. His friends of former days held by him to the last; he was often ailing; and the kind ladies of his Cape patron's family would take him out driving in the park, and would have him to dinner, with provision of suitable fruits and cakes and coffee.

It was asserted that he aspired to the honour of being a K.C.B., and that his new uniform was ordered for the last levee of the season. No doubt, his service entitled him to some distinction; and his influence still existed somewhere. One day he returned to his lodgings from a carriage ride, shivering and feverish. He went to bed, and despatched Black John with his excuses from a dinner engagement for next day, Sunday.

On that Sunday morning Black John went into his master's room, as usual, to lay out his body linen. Six towels were among the invariable items of his toilet, and though Black John never assisted at it personally, he was aware that his master wrapped these cloths about him; whether he did so for warmth, or to conceal any personal defects in his emaciated form, was a mystery. No wonder the form was emaciated, for James had accustomed himself for many years to periodical blood-lettings, either by leeches or lancet.

On Black John's return to the room, he found his master worse, but nothing would elicit his permission to send for the medical friend who had been in attendance on him previously, for bronchitis. The faithful valet was alarmed, but he and the dog were the only watchers on the sufferer throughout the sultry July day. James lay dozing and powerless. It was after midnight when he rallied.

He sat up and spoke to John, wandering at times, and expressed concern at his long attendance through so many hours; he would have had John take some slight stimulant, which the faithful soul declined. Suddenly James fainted on his pillow. The valet used restoratives, which revived him.

"John," gasped the invalid, "this must be death." But John did not think so.

"You are only weak, sir," he said: "let me give you some champagne and water, or the least drop of brandy in a wine-glass of water." For James would take such stimulants in great extremity, and he was now in great extremity. He sipped a little from the glass, and said, more gently than usual: "Have some yourself, John; you need it, and you will not mind drinking after me." They were his last distinct words. John again declined refreshment, fearing he might fall asleep, but, at his master's request, went to lie down in an adjoining room; thinking that "the general," as James chose to be designated by his valet, would get some rest.

Always considerate to his dependents, "the general" had been almost tender to John. He had spoken to him of his lonely life. "It was not always so, John," he had said: "once I had many friends. I have some still, and those are very good to me; but they are not the friends of early times; they will think of me, though, and if you want help, they will remember you for my sake. Now go and lie down. I think I shall sleep."

He never woke again. At daylight, John entered the sick-room. The curtains were closed, so he took the night-light and approached the bed. "The general" had died without a struggle. His eyes were closed. The worn features were calm. There had been apparently no pain.

John drew the sheet over the face, and descended to the kitchen for a charwoman, who he knew would be there at that hour. He summoned her to assist at the last toilet of the dead "general." As she closed the door of the room, he retreated to his own, and laid himself down, tired out. He was closing his eyes, when the charwoman hurried in. "What do you mean," she said, "by calling me to lay out a general, and the corpse is a woman's?"

John was utterly unprepared for this, although, like many others, he had fancied the "general" to be "different from other people in some way or another." There had been floating suspicions respecting the sex of the doctor, but John declared he had never thoroughly shared in them. He had lived with the "general" three years, and, whatever doubt he might have had at first, he had latterly dismissed from his mind.

According to John's account, the poor creature—the "old girl," as the ghastly adept in her calling terms her—was not treated in her last toilet with the courtesy she had never wanted during her military career. Before the poor corpse was laid in its grave, news reached the registrar-general of the discovery, and he at once called for a report from the proper authority. The report was, "that after a post

mortem examination, it was found that Doctor James, of her Majesty's service, was not only a woman, but had at a very early period of life been a mother!

The deceased's effects were taken possession of by accredited agents. Notwithstanding the large sums of money she must have received as fees during her long course of private practice, she died penniless. The question arises, How had she spent the fortune she had made? As hush-money, or in support of the child who, if still living, must be an elderly person?

James left no will. There was nothing to leave, but the poor dog. A nobleman's valet came for the animal; settled accounts with Black John, even to giving him the return passage-money to the island whence he came; and no one has since appeared claiming any relationship with the eccentric being, who was even more mysterious in death than in life.

Doctor James was buried at Kensal Green late in July, 1865, and is registered under the name borne from the time of his entering the army as hospital assistant.

#### OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

WAGER OF BATTLE. THE TRIAL OF ABRAHAM THORNTON FOR THE MURDER OF MARY ASHFORD.

ON a bleak acclivity seven miles to the north-east of that vast centre of industry, Birmingham, there is a small town named Sutton Coldfield, a place of about four thousand inhabitants. On Monday, the 26th of May, 1817, Mary Ashford, a blooming girl of about twenty years of age, acting as servant to her uncle, a small farmer named Coleman, who lived at Langley Heath, in the parish of Sutton Coldfield, and three miles from Erdington, prepared to start for Birmingham market on some errands for the family. This servant-girl, standing before the bedroom glass in her pink frock, scarlet spencer, and little straw bonnet streaming with primrose-coloured ribbons, was in more than a girl's usual flutter of pretty vanity and holiday excitement; for that night, being Whit-Monday night, there will be the annual club-feast and dance at Tyburn House (an inn), a mile from Erdington, and she will meet there all the young beaux of half a dozen miles round, and, above all, a young man whom she has often seen on Sundays—that thick-set, sturdy young bricklayer, Abraham Thornton, a farmer's son at Erdington. Smiling at her own pretty reflexion in the glass, Mary Ashford looks over her shoulder (after the manner of girls) to see that her shawl sets well, ruffles out her bonnet-bows, and, with little quick bird-like touches, arranges her glossy hair and the set of her pink gown. Then she ties up in a bundle her clean frock, white spencer, and white stockings, for the dance in the evening. She trips away at last, with a merry laugh at her uncle's warnings to be home early, and runs singing down the lane, happy and innocent as a bird the first day it can use its wings. At about ten o'clock that May morning, when thrushes are singing, hedges

flowering, and everything is happy and rejoicing, Mary Ashford calls on her friend, Hannah Cox, servant to Mr. Machin, to leave her bundle at her (Hannah's) mother's, who lived opposite. She is to call in the evening on her way from market, change her dress, and go to the dance at Tyburn with her friend. At about six Mary Ashford returns, changes her dress, dons the clean coloured frock and the white spencer, puts on a new pair of Hannah's shoes, and between seven and eight sets out, full of anticipation, pretty girlish chatter, and surmise.

The club-feast at Daniel Clarke's inn (Tyburn House—ill-omened name) was, like all other club-feasts, as bad a place for an innocent young woman as could well be. The house would ring with tipsy shouts, the windows shake with the competing shuffles of the dancers. They are always alike, these club-revels: owlish old men sit outside on the ale benches, the young wild striplings of the place, half drunk, are bragging and quarrelling; the low-roofed room is reeking with smoke; the ale is passing round much too fast; the language is coarse; all but the women are fevered or besotted with beer. Nothing healthy or honest about the amusements, but, on the contrary, everything degradedly stupid, drunken, "raffish," and debasing.

Hannah Cox, rather frightened at the revel, remained up-stairs with her sister, and only stayed in the lower room a quarter of an hour, just to see a dance or two, and who was there. She did not observe Thornton. But the dancing-room had some magnetic attraction for poor Mary, and she remained there all the time. A little before eleven, Hannah thought it time for respectable girls to go, and came down to look for Mary. She met her at the door of the room, when Mary said she would not be long, but would come to her soon. Hannah then walked about twenty yards on the road, and waited on the bridge. Presently a man named Benjamin Carter came out, and Hannah, getting restless, sent him in to call Mary. Soon after, Mary came out with Abraham Thornton. She was going to sleep at her grandfather's, and walked homewards first, followed by Carter and Hannah. Carter walked a little way further, and then went back to the revel. Near an inn called the Old Cuckoo, Hannah lost sight of Mary and her young man. On reaching her mother's house at Erdington, Hannah went calmly to bed. In the morning, twenty minutes to five by the cottage clock, Hannah was awake by a knocking at the door. She went down, and found it was Mary Ashford, calm and in good spirits, and in the same dress as she had danced in the night before. As Mary changed her dress and put on again the old pink frock and scarlet spencer in which she had gone to market on the day before, she told Hannah she had slept at her grandfather's at the top of Bell-lane. She then wrapped her boots up in her pocket-handkerchief, tied the rest of her dress and some marketing things

in a napkin, and, after staying about a quarter of an hour chatting, went away.

Poor Mary, no longer honest, no longer pure, no longer happy, had deceived Hannah. She had not slept at her grandfather's; she had been about the whole night, rambling here and there with Thornton. John Humpidge, a labourer of Whitton, leaving a friend's house at Penn's Mills about a quarter before three, saw Thornton and a girl at the "ford-rift," at a stile leading into Bell-lane. Humpidge wished Thornton good morning, but the girl held her head determinately down, and the bonnet hid her face. This girl was Mary Ashford; of that, there can be no doubt. It is beyond dispute. Thomas Aspre, a man of Erdington, on his way to Birmingham that morning, crossed Bell-lane, leaving it on his right, and Erdington on his left. It was about half-past three; he then saw Mary alone, walking very fast past a horse-pond in the lane, in the direction of Mrs. Butler's, at whose house she called to change her dress. At about four the lost girl was seen by another Erdington labourer, named Dawson, coming from Erdington. John Kesterton, a farmer's man at Erdington, who had got up soon after two to "fettle" his horses, put them to the waggon at four, and watered them at the pond in Bell-lane. At a quarter-past four Kesterton turned the horses round, and made straight for Birmingham, through Erdington. Turning to look back a little past Mrs. Butler's by some chance impulse—for the road was quiet and lonely enough at that hour—he saw Mary Ashford, whom he knew well, coming out of the entry to widow Butler's cottage. He smacked his whip to make her turn, and she turned and looked at him. No one was with her. She turned up Bell-lane, and seemed to be in a great hurry. She had on a straw bonnet and a scarlet spencer, and carried a bundle in her left hand. The road she took led both to her grandfather's, where she ought to have slept, and her uncle's, to whom she was servant.

At five o'clock, George Jackson, a Birmingham gun-borer, who had left Moor-street, Birmingham, on his way beyond Penn's Mills to seek work, came past the workhouse at Erdington. He turned out of Bell-lane about half-past six into the ford-rift leading to Penn's Mills, going along the foot-road till he came to a pit close by the footpath. As he came near it he observed, to his extreme horror, in the pure morning sunlight, a bonnet, a pair of shoes, and a bundle, close by the slope that overhung the pit; one shoe was all over blood. The pit was in a grass-field separated from the carriage-road only by a hedge, and near a stile. The things were about a foot below the top of the slope, and about four yards below spread the dark water of the pit-mouth. There had evidently been a murder, and the body must lie weltering in that pool. Kesterton, frightened, instantly ran to Penn's Mills, half a mile off, for assistance; but at the nearest house, finding a man named Lawell coming out,

he told him to stop and guard the things while he ran to the mills. Some labourers came from the mills and passed an eel-rake through the water. Yes, there it was—a woman's body, duckweed and leaves and mud on the pale cold face. It was poor Mary Ashford, recognised in a moment by her scarlet spencer and pink gown; murdered beyond a doubt; her clothes were steeped in blood. She had been abused, then murdered. That was the universal belief.

One of the workmen at Penn's Mills instantly went along the harrowed field beyond the pit to see if he could trace the footsteps of the poor girl and her murderer. Going to the pit from Erdington there were footprints of a woman and a man; they were close together, and appeared like the footprints of persons running, both by the stride and the depth of the impressions. Near the pit, the footprints doubled backwards and forwards, as if one person had chased the other. The footsteps were trackable on the grass, but not on it, and were visible on the harrowed ground. The prints were traceable on the grass by a dry pit, then towards a water-pit in the harrowed field. The woman's steps were nearest the pit. The footprints of a man were also visible the contrary way, as if running back on the harrowed ground to the gate at the far corner across the footpath, which led across a clover-field towards Pipe Hall, and by a short cut to Castle Bromwich. There was a man's footprint near the edge of the declivity; there was blood about forty yards off the pit, and some as near as fourteen yards; there was also a track of blood lying thick upon the clover in the direction of the pit. The footpath was about one hundred and forty yards from the dry pit on one side, and the wet pit on the other.

Thornton was instantly arrested, and examined at Tyburn, the scene of that unhappy revel. He owned to guilty association with the girl, and at once made the following statement:

He said he was "a bricklayer; that he came to the Three Tuns at Tyburn about six o'clock the night before, where there was a dance; that he danced a dance or two with the landlord's daughter, but whether he danced with Mary Ashford or not he could not recollect. Examinant stayed till about twelve o'clock; he then went with Mary Ashford, Benjamin Carter, and a young woman, whom he understood to be Mr. Machin's housekeeper, of Erdington; that they walked together as far as Mr. Potter's; Carter and the housekeeper went on towards Erdington, examinant and Mary Ashford went on as far as Mr. Freeman's; they then turned to the right, and went along a lane till they came to a gate and stile on the right-hand side of the road; they then went over the stile, and into the next piece, along the foot-road; they continued along the foot-road four or five fields, but cannot exactly tell how many. Examinant and Mary Ashford then returned the same road; when they came to the gate and stile, they first got over; they stood there ten minutes or a quarter



of an hour talking; it might be then about three o'clock. Whilst they stood there a man came by (examinant did not know who); he had on a jacket of a brown colour; the man was coming along the footpath they had returned along; examinant said, 'Good morning,' and the man said the same; examinant asked Mary Ashford if she knew the man; she did not know whether she knew him or not, but thought he was one who had been at Tyburn; that examinant and Mary Ashford stayed at the stile a quarter of an hour afterwards; they then went straight up to Mr. Freeman's again, crossed the road, and went on towards Erdington, till he came to a grass-field on the right-hand side the road, within about a hundred yards of Mr. Greensall's, in Erdington; Mary Ashford walked on; examinant never saw her afterwards. It was nearly opposite to Mr. Greensall's. Whilst he was in the field he saw a man cross the road to James's, but he did not know who he was; he (Thornton) then went on for Erdington Work-house to see if he could see Mary Ashford; he stopped upon the green about five minutes to wait for her; it was four o'clock, or ten minutes after four o'clock. Examinant went by Shipley's, on his road home, and afterwards by John Holden's, where he saw a man and woman with some milk-cans, and a young man driving some cows out of a field, whom he thought to be Holden's son. He then went towards Mr. Twamley's mill, where he saw Mr. Hatton's keeper taking rubbish out of the nets at the flood-gates. He asked the man what o'clock it was; he answered, 'Near five o'clock, or five.' He knew the keeper. Twamley's mill is about a mile and a quarter from his father's house, with whom he lives. The first person he saw was Edward Leake, a servant of his father's, and a boy; his mother was up. He took off a black coat he had on, and put on the one he now wears, which hung up in the kitchen, changed his hat, and left them both in the house; he did not change his shoes or stockings, though his shoes were rather wet from having walked across the meadows. That examinant knew Mary Ashford when she lived at the Swan at Erdington, but was not particularly intimate with her; that he had not seen Mary Ashford for a considerable time before he met her at Tyburn. Examinant had been drinking the whole evening, but not so much as to be intoxicated."

Abraham Thornton, against whom public opinion ran high, was tried for the murder of Mary Ashford, before Mr. Justice Holroyd, at the Warwick assizes, on August 8th, Mr. Reynolds appearing for the defence. The prosecution chiefly relied on the deceased having been last seen with the prisoner in the fields not long before she called at Butler's and changed her dress. Great stress was also laid on the footmarks in the newly harrowed field adjoining the pit where the poor girl's body was found. They exactly fitted Thornton's and Mary Ashford's shoes. There were some nails projecting from the side of one of Thornton's shoes, and

the traces of those two nails were visible in several of the footsteps, particularly in one in which a bit of short stick had thrown the foot up. It was also proved that the prisoner had spoken to a man at the Tyburn House dance, and asked who Mary Ashford was, then recognising her as having been a servant at the Swan Inn, Erdington, declared that he should go home with her that night, as he had known her sister before. He was dancing with her when Hannah Cox, after waiting half an hour at the bridge for Mary, had sent Carter for her.

Black as these things looked, the defence was very able and very convincing. It was contended that little stress could be laid on the footprints. Labourers' shoes, made by the same shoemaker, almost exactly resemble each other. Moreover, so many persons from Penn's Mills had crowded to the field and pit on hearing of the murder, that all means of identifying the first footprints were soon destroyed. All the footprints, in fact, except two that were at once covered with boards, were effaced by a heavy thunderstorm that broke soon after over the scene of guilt. If Thornton's story were true, the footprints were really his and Mary Ashford's, for they had been in those fields on their way from Tyburn House. Mary Ashford left Butler's house at nineteen minutes after four. At about half-past four Thornton was seen by William Jennens, a milkman, as he was milking cows at Mr. Holden's farm, passing towards the meadows leading to Castle Bromwich. He was walking very gently, and was not at all heated or agitated. About five minutes after five John Heydon, gamekeeper to John Rutter, Esq., at Castle Bromwich, saw Thornton as he (Heydon) was taking up the flood-gates and examining the nets at Castle Bromwich Mill. Thornton told the keeper he had been taking a girl home from the Tyburn club. He was sober, and did not appear heated, but said he was "much tired." He stayed a quarter of an hour talking. He then went on in the direction of his father's house. The Bromwich stable-clock was proved to have been fifteen minutes faster than Birmingham time; it was, therefore, only seven or eight minutes before five when Thornton spoke to the keeper. It was, therefore, wisely and convincingly contended that it was impossible the prisoner, between nineteen minutes past four and twenty-five or thirty minutes past four, when he was seen by the milkman, could have abused and murdered Mary Ashford, and got over the intervening distance.

The distances were most material in the case, and must be examined before Thornton's case can be fully understood. Mary's nearest road to the pit from Butler's house measured one mile two furlongs and thirty-eight yards. From the pit to Holden's, even across hedge and ditch, was one mile four furlongs sixty-one yards. But then the hedges would have delayed him, and, taking the way a murderer would probably have gone for expedition, the distance would have been two miles two furlongs forty-

seven yards from the pit to Holden's, making a total distance of three miles four furlongs eighty-five yards. This calculation, which is bound on all sides by the most stringent observation, left only eleven minutes for the deceased's walk from Butler's house to the pit, for the assault, the death, and the struggle, after a pursuit (as the prosecution surmised), and the carrying the girl's body thirty yards to the pit, and placing the bundle and shoes on the slope. To do all this, Thornton, a stout short man with clumsy legs, must have leaped over the country at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. It was also proved that deceased had no wound or bruise upon her, and that the blood found proceeded from natural causes. Mr. Sadler, the prisoner's solicitor, complained much at the time of the cruel reports spread against Thornton, the pamphlets and songs, that rendered it difficult to find an unbiased jury. The county magistrates themselves were strongly prejudiced against Thornton, and had pursued their investigations with the acrimony of partisans, who had quite made up their mind that Thornton had abused and murdered Mary Ashford after she left Butler's house; although it was proved (by circumstances which we need not recapitulate) that Thornton and the girl had been together all night, and that Mary Ashford had returned to her friend with a lie in her mouth, smiling, and without a word of complaint.

It also appears that the Reverend Mr. Bedford, a county magistrate, went to Birmingham jail and reproached Thornton for having denied that he had seen the girl after she went home to dress. He also expressed his astonishment at Thornton being able to eat (he was at dinner), and said to him, very unwisely:

"You'll be hanged, and your body will be given to the surgeons to be dissected; you've long deserved it, for you've cost your father many a hundred pounds for getting you out of scrapes like this before."

It was also clear that the deceased could have thrown herself from the bank six feet high into the water. There was no sign of a struggle near the pit, and although there were two labourers' houses within a hundred and fifty yards of the pit, and men were beginning to stir for milking, bird-minding, and stable-cleaning, there were no cries for help heard, notwithstanding Mary Ashford was a vigorous and robust girl in the prime of life.

The prisoner's conduct after leaving Mary Ashford was quiet and straightforward. He got home about five. He then changed his black coat for a damson-coloured one, but did not change his shoes or stockings, though the former were wet. When arrested at ten o'clock, he at once confessed he had spent all night with Mary Ashford, but said he had left her near Butler's, and after having waited five minutes for her on Erdington-green. There was nothing to impugn this statement, and Thornton was acquitted by the jury.

In reviewing this intensely interesting case

earnestly, judiciously, and dispassionately, we are fully of opinion that the verdict was a just one. It is true Thornton confessed that he wanted to see the girl on her way to her uncle's; but he could not have committed the crime (for which there was no motive), and arrived calm and cool at the flood-gates in the time. There is only One who will ever know who committed that cruel crime—if it were a crime; but let us examine the worst possible conjectures. If Thornton murdered the girl, he must have met her again, assaulted her, then thrown her, while fainting, into the pit, to prevent discovery; but her previous guilt renders this unlikely. Or, she might have pressed him to promise marriage, and he in a rage might have thrown her into the pit; but, if this were on her mind, how could she have returned in such good spirits to her friend at Butler's? Three other conjectures (reconcilable with Thornton's innocence) seem to us more reasonable.

First, she might have been assaulted and murdered by some rambling tramp from Birmingham, or some labourer on his way to work. Traups can easily escape, for they leave no clue; labourers have a right to be out early, in the fields. But, then, why were the things placed deliberately on the edge of the slope? By design of the murderer? We doubt it.

Secondly, did Mary Ashford try to go down to the water to wash, and, in the attempt, drown herself?

Thirdly (and this we think is the most probable), the girl alone, the excitement of the guilty revel and its fatal consequences gone off, the flush of perhaps more beer and spirits than a country girl was in the habit of taking having passed away, there came a sudden pang—a bitter and unbearable pang of conscience—an awakening of innocent horror at the night and its results—a dread of consequences, of shame, of discovery; then one look round of bitter parting at the fields, the sky, the awakening birds, and the dewy flowers; then a hurried placing down of the bundle, the shoes, and the bonnet, and a desperate plunge into death.

Had there been a struggle, short as it might have been, there must have been traces of it at the pit's edge, and there would have been bruises on the girl's throat or chest.

Public feeling was far too much set on Thornton's death, to be satisfied with this verdict of acquittal.

A letter-press description, strongly coloured, together with a sketch of the pit and a drawing of Mary Ashford, were published by Mr. Lines, and engraved by Mr. Radcliffe, of Birmingham. A hot-pressed map (15 by 11) also appeared, and "An Antidote to Prejudice" was followed by "An Investigation of the Case." The Rev. Luke Booker also published a moral review of the conduct and case of Mary Ashford, in refutation of the arguments adduced in defence of her supposed violator and murderer, which concluded with: "*A proposed Epitaph.*—As a warning to female virtue, this monument is erected over

the remains of Mary Ashford, a young woman chaste as she was beautiful, who, in the twentieth year of her age, having incautiously repaired to a scene of amusement, without proper protection, was brutally violated and murdered on the 27th of May, 1817, in the parish of Aston.

Lovely and chaste as is the primrose pale,  
Rifled of virgin sweetness by the gale,  
Mary! The wretch, who thee remorseless slew,  
Will surely God's avenging wrath pursue.  
For, though the deed of blood be veiled in night,  
'Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?'  
Fair blighted flower! The muse, that weeps thy  
doom,  
Rears o'er thy sleeping dust this warning tomb!"

To answer the last-named work there was published "A Reply to the Remarks of the Rev. Luke Booker, LL.D., in a pamphlet entitled 'A Moral Review of the Conduct and Case of Mary Ashford, &c.' By a Friend to Justice."

There also appeared, "Observations upon the case of Abraham Thornton, &c.; showing the danger of pressing presumptive evidence too far, together with the only true and authentic account yet published of the evidence given at the trial, the examination of the prisoner, &c. And a correct plan of the locus in quo. By Edward Holroyd, of Gray's Inn."

There were also two very wild dramas on the subject: one of them entitled "The Murdered Maid; or, The Clock Struck Four! A drama in three acts." The other, "The Mysterious Murder; or, What's the Clock? A melodrama in three acts. Founded on a tale too true."

Funds were procured, and a clever local solicitor, raking up an old unrepealed statute, induced the brother of Mary Ashford, as her heir, to take proceedings for an "appeal of murder" against Abraham Thornton, who was arrested by the sheriff of Warwick on the 1st of October. On the 16th of November term, William Ashford appeared in the Court of King's Bench, at Westminster, as appellant, and Abraham Thornton was brought up on a writ of habeas corpus as appeller. Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Reader defended Thornton. Lord Ellenborough and the other judges took their seats at eleven. Ashford's counsel were Messrs. Clarke, Gurney, and Chitty. Ashford was a short slight-made young man of twenty, with sandy hair and blue eyes; Thornton, a short, very fat, robust man, with full cheeks, fresh complexion, and a confident smile on his by no means forbidding countenance. The court was densely crowded, and the place almost taken by storm. Lord Yarmouth and Lord Montford were conspicuous among the spectators.

There was a vague feeling that the old trial by ordeal was to be revived—single combat in the lists—a tournament in full plate armour, with trumpets blowing, and the law-judges standing by to cheer on the two combatants; the drowsiest and most briefless old lingerer on the

back benches at the Westminster court kindled with curiosity, and began to pore over Bracton and Spelman for the last precedent of such an extraordinary way of discovering the innocence or guilt of a prisoner who had already stood his trial.

Mr. Le Blanc concluded the reading of the record by saying, "Are you guilty or not guilty of the said felony and murder whereof you stand so appealed?" Mr. Reader now put into the prisoner's hand a slip of paper, from which he read, "Not guilty; and I am ready to defend the same with my body." Mr. Reader had likewise handed a pair of large gauntlets or gloves to the prisoner, one of which he put on, and the other, *in pursuance of the old form, he threw down for the appellant to take up.* The glove was not taken up. Ashford's counsel disputed the right of Thornton to "wager of battle," and were ready to fight it out with tongues and not spears.

Mr. Le Blanc: Your plea is, that you are not guilty, and that you are ready to defend that plea with your body?

The prisoner: It is.

The appellant then stood up in front of Mr. Clarke.

Lord Ellenborough: What have you got to say, Mr. Clarke?

Mr. Clarke: I did not expect, my lord, at this time of day, that this sort of demand would have been made. I must confess that I am surprised that the charge against the prisoner should be put to issue in this way. The trial by battle is an obsolete practice, which has long since been out of use, and it would appear to me extraordinary indeed, if the person who has murdered the sister should, as the law exists in these enlightened times, be allowed to prove his innocence by murdering the brother also, or, at least, by an attempt to do so.

Lord Ellenborough: It is the law of England, Mr. Clarke; we must not call it murder.

Mr. Clarke: I may have used too strong an expression, my lord, in saying murdering the brother; but, at all events, it is no less than killing. I apprehend, however, that the course to be taken is in a great measure discretionary; and it will be for the court to determine, under all the circumstances, whether they will permit a battle to be waged in this case or not.

Mr. Clarke then put in a counter-plea that the applicant was incompetent, from youth and want of bodily strength, to fairly meet the appellee in battle, and trusted the court would waive the right of battle, and direct a new trial by jury.

On November 22nd the case again came on, and Ashford counter-pleaded that there were circumstances which induced the most violent presumption of Thornton's guilt, and that in such cases the law was that he could not be permitted to wage battle, but must be tried by his country. The proceedings were then postponed till the next term. This interim lawyers all over England devoted to antiquarian researches

into the absurd old custom revived as a clever checkmate to the iniquitous persecution of an acquitted man. It was found that in Spelman's time there had been a quashed case of the same kind. In Monstrelet, a case was discovered in which Brunecte, a gentleman of Hainault, charged Soltier Bernaige, a gentleman of Flanders, with murder. Brunecte overcame his adversary, forced him to confess his crime, and gave him over to the headsman. Then in St. Palaye's *Mémoires sur l'Ancienne Chevalerie* they discovered the case of the Dog of Montargis (since distinguished on the stage), who in judicial combat forced the Chevalier Maccire to confess the murder of his (the dog's) master, the Chevalier Aubri de Montdidier. Shakespeare's Henry the Sixth furnished another instance—Dugdale, Bracton, and Fleta all agreed that the following was the form the trial should assume: If the appellant took up the glove, the defendant would lay his right hand on the Gospels, and taking hold of the appellant's right hand with his left, would swear that he did not commit the murder. The appellant, with the same formula, would assert the guilt of the defendant, kissing the book as he repeated the oath. The lists were to be sixty feet square, the sides due north, south, east, and west. Places were to be provided for the judges and the bar. On the day fixed the court was to proceed to the lists from Westminster Hall at sunrise, the judges in their full robes. When they were seated, proclamation would be made for the combatants, who were then to appear with bare heads, arms, and legs, each led by a person carrying his bâton on an ell long and tipped with horn, and preceded by another carrying his square double-leather target. On entering the lists, the combatants were to make congés to the judges, and take the following absurd oath against witchcraft and sorcery:

"Hear this, ye justices, that I, —, have this day neither ate nor drunk, nor have upon me bone, stone, nor grass, nor have done anything, nor any other for me, whereby the law of God may be depressed, and the law of the devil exalted. So help me, God!"

Then, after a proclamation of silence, under pain of imprisonment for a year and a day, the combat was to begin, and to continue till either party was vanquished or till the stars appeared in the evening. If the appellant was defeated, he would be subject to a year's imprisonment and fine, and must make restitution as damages; but if the appellant turned *craven*, and gave up the fight, he became infamous, and lost the privileges of a freeman. If the defendant was defeated, he was to be instantly executed—nor could even the king pardon him; but if he was victorious, or could maintain the fight till the evening, he was to be honourably acquitted.

There was also much serious and very angry discussion as to whether Blackstone was right in thinking that the wager of battle was originally a Saxon substitute for the werewolf,

or compensation money; or whether it was not rather a substitute for the Norman trial by combat.

On the 24th of January, 1818, the vexed case was again tried. Thornton replied, stating all the facts in his favour, and claiming a right to the combat. On the 29th, it was again discussed; and on February 7, Mr. Tyndall appeared for the defendant. On April 16, Lord Ellenborough gave the final decision. He said:

"The general law of the land is that there shall be a trial by battle in cases of appeal, unless the party brings himself within some of the exceptions. The only exception relied on in this case is the exception with reference to the case in Bracton, which relates to a case so clear as to exclude all doubt, and would not admit of proof to the contrary, by means whereof the party never could deny the fact alleged. The discussion which has taken place here, and the consideration which has been given to the facts alleged, most conclusively show that this is not a case that can admit of no denial or proof to the contrary; under these circumstances, however obnoxious I am myself to the trial by battle, it is the mode of trial which we, in our judicial character, are bound to award. We are delivering the law as it is, and not as we wish it to be, and therefore we must pronounce our judgment, that the battle must take place, unless the party reserves for our consideration whether, under the circumstances of the case, the defendant is entitled to go without a day, which is a point for further consideration; and on the part of the appellant it shall be considered necessary to advise on that point. At present we pronounce that there be trial by battle, unless the appellant show reason why the defendant should not depart without a day."

On April 21, Ashford not having accepted the wager of battle, the appeal was urged, and Thornton was discharged. The crowd were so threatening and turbulent, that he had to be concealed in a private room until they dispersed.

This was the last instance of trial by battle being demanded in an English court. In the following session, the rusty old act of parliament under which the appeal was made, was repealed. Wager of battle had only been snatched up as a weapon of defence, exciting as great astonishment in Thornton's adversaries as the bows and arrows used by a Tartar regiment at Austerlitz produced on the Grenadiers of Napoleon. It is a pity that our statute-book should still contain pages as mischievous and dead as that page of whose removal we have given the brief history.

Poor Mary Ashford's grave at Sutton Coldfield is still a place of pilgrimage for holiday visitors from Birmingham. The tombstone, with the epitaph before given, was erected by subscription. As for Thornton, who had up to this time been respected at Erdington, he went to America, where he followed his trade of a bricklayer, married, had children, and died

some years ago. In the January only of this very year (1867), William Ashford, the brother of the murdered girl, and for many years a fish-hawker, was found dead in his bed in New John-street, Birmingham. He was seventy years old. The causes of Mary Ashford's death, only the Last Day can now reveal.

### THE BOTATHEN GHOST.

THERE was something very painful and peculiar in the position of the clergy in the west of England throughout the seventeenth century. The church of those days was in a transitory state, and her ministers, like her formularies, embodied a strange mixture of the old belief with the new interpretation. Their wide severance also from the great metropolis of life and manners, the city of London (which in those times was civilised England, much as the Paris of our own day is France), divested the Cornish clergy in particular of all personal access to the master-minds of their age and body. Then, too, the barrier interposed by the rude rough roads of their country, and by their abode in wilds that were almost inaccessible, rendered the existence of a bishop rather a doctrine suggested to their belief than a fact revealed to the actual vision of each in his generation. Hence it came to pass that the Cornish clergyman, insulated within his own limited sphere, often without even the presence of a country squire (and unchecked by the influence of the fourth estate, for until the beginning of this nineteenth century, Flindell's Weekly Miscellany, distributed from house to house from the panner of a mule, was the only light of the west), became developed about middle life into an original mind and man, sole and absolute within his parish boundary, eccentric when compared with his brethren in civilised regions, and yet, in German phrase, "a whole and seldom man" in his dominion of souls. He was "the parson," in canonical phrase: that is to say, The Person, the somebody of consequence among his own people. These men were not, however, smoothed down into a monotonous aspect of life and manners by this remote and secluded existence. They imbibed, each in his own peculiar circle, the hue of surrounding objects, and were tinged into distinctive colouring and character by many a contrast of scenery and people. There was "the light of other days," the curate by the sea-shore, who professed to check the turbulence of the "smugglers' landing" by his presence on the sands, and who "held the lantern" for the guidance of his flock when the nights were dark, as the only proper ecclesiastical part he could take in the proceedings. He was soothed and silenced by the gift of a keg of Hollands or a chest of tea. There was the merry minister of the mines, whose cure was honeycombed by the underground men. He must needs have been artist and poet in his way, for he had to enliven his people, three or four times a year, by mastering the arrangements of a

guary, or religious mystery, which was duly performed in the topmost hollow of a green barrow, or hill, of which many survive, scooped out into vast amphitheatres and surrounded by benches of turf, which held two thousand spectators. Such were the historic plays, The Creation, and Noe's Flood, which still exist in the original Celtic as well as the English text, and suggest what critics and antiquaries these Cornish curates, masters of such revels, must have been; for the native language of Cornwall did not lapse into silence until the end of the seventeenth century. Then, moreover, here and there would be one parson more learned than his kind in the mysteries of a deep and thrilling lore of peculiar fascination. He was a man so highly honoured at college for natural gifts and knowledge of learned books which nobody else could read, that when he "took his second orders" the bishop gave him a mantle of scarlet silk to wear upon his shoulders in church, and his lordship had put such power into it that when the parson had it rightly on he could "govern any ghost or evil spirit," and even "stop an earthquake."

Such a powerful minister, in combat with supernatural visitations, was one Parson Rudall, of Launceston, whose existence and exploits we gather from the local tradition of his time, from surviving letters and other memoranda, and, indeed, from his own "Diurnal," which fell by chance into the hands of the present writer. Indeed, the legend of Parson Rudall and the Botathen Ghost will be recognised by many Cornish people as a local remembrance of their boyhood.

It appears, then, from the diary of this learned master of the grammar school—for such was his office, as well as perpetual curate of the parish—"that a pestilential disease did break forth in our town in the beginning of the year A.D. 1665; yea, and it likewise invaded my school, insomuch that therewithal certain of the chief scholars sickened and died." "Among others who yielded to the malign influence, was Master John Eliot, the eldest son and the worshipful heir of Edward Eliot, Esquire, of Trebursey, a stripling of sixteen years of age, but of uncommon parts and hopeful ingenuity. At his own especial motion and earnest desire, I did consent to preach his funeral sermon." It should be remembered here that, howsoever strange and singular it may sound to us, that a mere lad should formally solicit such a performance at the hands of his master, it was in consonance with the habitual usage of those times. The old services for the dead had been abolished by law, and in the stead of sacrament and ceremony, month's mind and year's mind, the sole substitute which survived was the general desire "to partake," as they called it, of a posthumous discourse replete with lofty eulogy and flattering remembrance of the living and the dead. The diary proceeds: "I fulfilled my undertaking, and preached over the coffin in the presence of a full assemblage of mourners and lachrymose friends. An ancient

gentleman, who was then and there in the church, a Mr. Bligh, of Botathen, was much affected with my discourse, and he was heard to repeat to himself certain parentheses therefrom, especially a phrase from Maro Virgilius, which I had applied to the deceased youth, 'Et puer ipse contra digmas.'

"The cause wherefore this old gentleman was thus moved by my applications was this: He had a first-born and only son; a child who, but a very few months before, had been not unworthy the character I drew of young Master Eliot, but who, by some strange accident, had of late quite fallen away from his parents' hopes, and become moody, and sullen, and distraught. When the funeral obsequies were over, I had no sooner come out of church than I was accosted by this aged parent, and he besought me incontinently, with a singular energy, that I would resort with him forthwith to his abode at Botathen, that very night; nor could I have delivered myself from his importunity, had not Mr. Eliot urged his claim to enjoy my company at his own house. Hereupon I got loose, but not until I had pledged a fast assurance that I would pay him, faithfully, an early visit the next day." "The Place," as it was called, of Botathen, where old Mr. Bligh resided, was a low-roofed gabled manor-house of the fifteenth century, walled and mullioned, and with clustered chimneys of dark grey stone from the neighbouring quarries of Venter-gan. The mansion was flanked by a pleasance or enclosure in one space, of garden and lawn, and it was surrounded by a solemn grove of stag-horned trees. It had the sombre aspect of age and of solitude, and looked the very scene of strange and supernatural events. A legend might well belong to every gloomy glade around, and there must surely be a haunted room somewhere within its walls. Hither, according to his appointment, on the morrow, Parson Rudall betook himself. Another clergyman, as it appeared, had been invited to meet him, who, very soon after his arrival, proposed a walk together in the pleasance, on the pretext of showing him, as a stranger, the walks and trees, until the dinner-bell should strike. There, with much prolixity, and with many a solemn pause, his brother minister proceeded to 'unfold the mystery.'

"A singular infelicity, he declared, had befallen young Master Bligh, once the hopeful heir of his parents and of the lands of Botathen. Whereas he had been from childhood a blithe and merry boy, 'the gladness,' like Isaac of old, of his father's age, he had suddenly, and of late, become morose and silent, nay, even austere and stern—dwelling apart, always solemn, often in tears. The lad had at first repulsed all questions as to the origin of this great change, but of late he had yielded to the importunate researches of his parents, and had disclosed the secret cause. It appeared that he resorted, every day, by a pathway across the fields, to this very clergyman's house, who had charge of his education, and grounded him in

the studies suitable to his age. In the course of his daily walk he had to pass a certain heath or down where the road wound along through tall blocks of granite with open spaces of grassy sward between. There in a certain spot, and always in one and the same place, the lad declared that he encountered, every day, a woman with a pale and troubled face, clothed in a long loose garment of frieze, with one hand always stretched forth, and the other pressed against her side. Her name, he said, was Dorothy Dinglet, for he had known her well from his childhood, and she often used to come to his parents' house; but that which troubled him was, that she had now been dead three years, and he himself had been with the neighbours at her burial; so that, as the youth alleged, with great simplicity, since he had seen her body laid in the grave, this that he saw every day must needs be her soul or ghost. 'Questioned again and again,' said the clergyman, 'he never contradicts himself; but he relates the same and the simple tale as a thing that cannot be gainsaid. Indeed, the lad's observance is keen and calm for a boy of his age. The hair of the appearance, sayeth he, is not like anything alive, but it is so soft and light that it seemeth to melt away while you look; but her eyes are set, and never blink, no, not when the sun shineth full upon her face. She maketh no steps, but seemeth to swim along the top of the grass; and her hand, which is stretched out alway, seemeth to point at something far away, out of sight. It is her continual coming; for she never faileth to meet him, and to pass on, that hath quenched his spirits; and although he never seeth her by night, yet cannot he get his natural rest.'

"Thus far the clergyman; whereupon the dinner clock did sound, and we went into the house. After dinner, when young Master Bligh had withdrawn with his tutor, under excuse of their books, the parents did forthwith beset me as to my thoughts about their son. Said I, warily, 'The case is strange, but by no means impossible. It is one that I will study, and fear not to handle, if the lad will be free with me, and fulfil all that I desire.' The mother was overjoyed, but I perceived that old Mr. Bligh turned pale, and was downcast with some thought which, however, he did not express. Then they bade that Master Bligh should be called to meet me in the pleasance forthwith. The boy came, and he rehearsed to me his tale with an open countenance and, withal, a pretty modesty of speech. Verily he seemed 'ingenui vultus puer ingenuique pudoris.' Then I signified to him my purpose. 'To-morrow,' said I, 'we will go together to the place; and if, as I doubt not, the woman shall appear, it will be for me to proceed according to knowledge, and by rules laid down in my books.'

The unaltered scenery of the legend still survives, and, like the field of the forty footsteps in another history, the place is still visited by those who take interest in the supernatural tales of old. The pathway leads along a moorland waste, where

large masses of rock stand up here and there from the grassy turf, and clumps of heath and gorse weave their tapestry of golden and purple garniture on every side. Amidst all these, and winding along between the rocks, is a natural foot-way worn by the scant rare tread of the village traveller. Just midway, a somewhat larger stretch than usual of green sod expands, which is skirted by the path, and which is still identified as the legendary haunt of the phantom, by the name of Parson Rudall's Ghost.

But we must draw the record of the first interview between the minister and Dorothy from his own words. "We met," thus he writes, "in the pleasance very early, and before any others in the house were awake; and together the lad and myself proceeded towards the field. The youth was quite composed, and carried his Bible under his arm, from whence he read to me verses, which he said he had lately picked out, to have always in his mind. These were Job vii. 14: 'Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions;' and Deuteronomy xxviii. 67: 'In the morning thou shalt say, Would to God it were evening, and in the evening thou shalt say, Would to God it were morning; for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.'

"I was much pleased with the lad's ingenuity in these pious applications, but for mine own part I was somewhat anxious, and out of cheer. For aught I knew, this might be a demonium meridianum, the most stubborn spirit to govern and guide that any man can meet, and the most perilous withal. We had hardly reached the accustomed spot, when we both saw her at once gliding towards us; punctually as the ancient writers describe the motion of their 'lumes, which swoon along the ground, neither marking the sand nor bending the herbage.' The aspect of the woman was exactly that which had been related by the lad. There was the pale and stony face, the strange and misty hair, the eyes firm and fixed that gazed, yet not on us, but on something that they saw far, far away; one hand and arm stretched out, and the other grasping the girdle of her waist. She floated along the field like a sail upon a stream, and glided past the spot where we stood, pausingly. But so deep was the awe that overcame me, as I stood there, in the light of day, face to face with a human soul separate from her bones and flesh, that my heart and purpose both failed me. I had resolved to speak to the spectre in the appointed form of words, but I did not. I stood like one amazed and speechless, until she had passed clean out of sight. One thing remarkable came to pass. A spaniel dog, the favourite of young Master Bligh, had followed us, and lo! when the woman drew nigh, the poor creature began to yell and bark piteously, and ran backward and away, like a thing dismayed and appalled. We returned to the house, and after I had said all that I could to pacify the lad, and to soothe the

aged people, I took my leave for that time, with a promise that when I had fulfilled certain business elsewhere, which I then alleged, I would return and take order to assuage these disturbances and their cause. January 7, 1665. At my own house, I find, by my books, what is expedient to be done; and then, Apage, Sathanas! January 9, 1665. This day I took leave of my wife and family, under pretext of engagements elsewhere, and made my secret journey to our diocesan city, wherein the good and venerable bishop then abode. January 10. Deo Gratias, in safe arrival at Exeter; craved and obtained immediate audience of his lordship; pleading it was for counsel and admonition on a weighty and pressing cause; called to the presence; made obeisance; and then by command stated my case—the Botathen perplexity—which I moved with strong and earnest instances and solemn asseverations of that which I had myself seen and heard. Demanded by his lordship, what was the succour that I had come to entreat at his hands? Replied, license for my exorcism, that so I might, ministerially, allay this spiritual visitant, and thus render to the living and the dead release from this surprise. 'But,' said our bishop, 'on what authority do you allege that I am entrusted with faculty so to do?' Our Church, as is well known, hath abjured certain branches of her ancient power, on grounds of perversion and abuse.' 'Nay, my lord,' I humbly answered, 'under favour, the seventy-second of the canons ratified and enjoined on us, the clergy, Anno Domini 1604, doth expressly provide, that "no minister, unless he hath the license of his diocesan bishop, shall essay to exorcise a spirit, evil or good." Therefore it was,' I did here mildly allege, 'that I did not presume to enter on such a work without lawful privilege under your lordship's hand and seal.' Hereupon did our wise and learned bishop, sitting in his chair, condescend upon the theme at some length with many gracious interpretations from ancient writers and from Holy Scripture, and I did humbly rejoin and reply, till the upshot was that he did call in his secretary and command him to draw the aforesaid faculty, forthwith and without further delay, assigning him a form, inasmuch that the matter was incontinently done, and after I had disbursed into the secretary's hands certain moneys, for signatory purposes, as the manner of such officers hath always been, the bishop did himself affix his signature under the sigillum of his see, and deliver the document into my hands. When I knelt down to receive his benediction, he softly said, 'Let it be secret, Mr. R. Weak brethren! weak brethren!'"

This interview with the bishop, and the success with which he vanquished his lordship's scruples, would seem to have confirmed Parson Rudall very strongly in his own esteem, and to have invested him with that courage which he evidently lacked at his first encounter with the ghost.

The entries proceed: "January 11, 1665.

Therewithal did I hasten home and prepare my instruments, and cast my figures for the onset of the next day. Took out my ring of brass, and put it on the index-finger of my right hand, with the scutum Davidis traced thereon.

"January 12, 1665. Rode into the gateway at Botathen, armed at all points, but not with Saul's armour, and ready. There is danger from the demons, but so there is in the surrounding air every day. At early morning, then, and alone, for so the usage ordains, I betook me towards the field. It was void, and I had thereby due time to prepare. First, I paced and measured out my circle on the grass. Then did I mark my pentacle in the very midst, and at the intersection of the five angles I did set up and fix my crutch of raun (rowan). Lastly, I took my station south, at the true line of the meridian, and stood facing due north. I waited and watched for a long time. At last there was a kind of trouble in the air, a soft and rippling sound, and all at once the shape appeared, and came on towards me gradually. I opened my parchment-scroll, and read aloud the command. She paused, and seemed to waver and doubt; stood still; then I rehearsed the sentence again, sounding out every syllable like a chant. She drew near my ring, but halted at first outside, on the brink. I sounded again, and now at the third time I gave the signal in Syriac—the speech which is used, they say, where such ones dwell and converse in thoughts that glide.

"She was at last obedient, and swam into the midst of the circle, and there stood still, suddenly. I saw, moreover, that she drew back her pointing hand. All this while I do confess that my knees shook under me, and the drops of sweat ran down my flesh like rain. But now, although face to face with the spirit, my heart grew calm, and my mind was composed. I knew that the pentacle would govern her, and the ring must bind, until I gave the word. Then I called to mind the rule laid down of old, that no angel or fiend, no spirit, good or evil, will ever speak until they have been first spoken to. N.B. This is the great law of prayer. God himself will not yield reply until man hath made vocal entreaty, once and again. So I went on to demand, as the books advise; and the phantom made answer, willingly. Questioned wherefore not at rest? Unquiet, because of a certain sin. Asked what, and by whom? Revealed it; but it is sub sigillo, and therefore, nefas dictu: more anon. Inquired, what sign she could give that she was a true spirit, and not a false fiend? Stated, before next yule-tide a fearful pestilence would lay waste the land, and myriads of souls would be loosened from their flesh, until, as she piteously said, "our valleys will be full." Asked again, why she so terrified the lad? Replied: 'It is the law: we must seek a youth or a maiden of clean life, and under age, to receive messages and admonitions.'

We conversed with many more words, but it is not lawful for me to set them down. Pen and ink would degrade and defile the thoughts she uttered, and which my mind received that day. I broke the ring, and she passed, but to return once more next day. At even song, a long discourse with that ancient transgressor, Mr. B. Great horror and remorse; entire atonement and penance; whatsoever I enjoin; full acknowledgment before pardon.

"January 13, 1665. At sunrise I was again in the field. She came in at once, and, as it seemed, with freedom. Inquired if she knew my thoughts, and what I was going to relate? Answered, 'Nay, we only know what we perceive and hear; we cannot see the heart.' Then I rehearsed the penitent words of the man she had come up to denounce, and the satisfaction he would perform. Then said she, 'Peace in our midst.' I went through the proper forms of dismissal, and fulfilled all as it was set down and written in my memoranda; and then, with certain fixed rites, I did dismiss that troubled ghost, until she peacefully withdrew, gliding towards the west. Neither did she ever afterward appear; but was allayed until she shall come in her second flesh to the Valley of Armageddon on the last day."

These quaint and curious details from the "diurnal" of a simple-hearted clergyman of the seventeenth century appear to betoken his personal persuasion of the truth of what he saw and said, although the statements are strongly tinged with what some may term the superstition, and others the excessive belief, of those times. It is a singular fact, however, that the canon which authorises exorcism under episcopal license, is still a part of the ecclesiastical law of the Anglican Church, although it might have a singular effect on the nerves of certain of our bishops if their clergy were to resort to them for the faculty which Parson Rudall obtained. The general facts stated in his diary are to this day matters of belief in that neighbourhood; and it has been always accounted a strong proof of the veracity of the Parson and the Ghost, that the plague, fatal to so many thousands, did break out in London at the close of that very year. We may well excuse a triumphant entry, on a subsequent page of the "diurnal," with the date of July 10, 1665: "How sorely must the infidels and heretics of this generation be dismayed when they know that this black death, which is now swallowing its thousands in the streets of the great city, was foretold six months ago, under the exorcisms of a country minister, by a visible and suppliant ghost! And what pleasures and improvements do such deny themselves who scorn and avoid all opportunity of intercourse with souls separate, and the spirits, glad and sorrowful, which inhabit the unseen world!

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