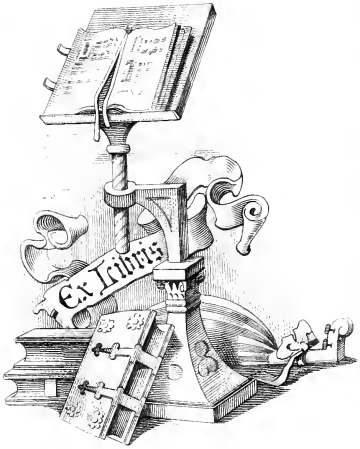

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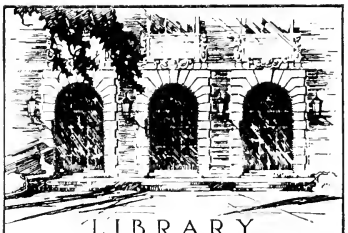

THE

TEN YEARS' TENANT

VOL. I.

THE

TEN YEARS' TENANT

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

WALTER BESANT & JAMES RICE

AUTHORS OF
'READY-MONEY MORTIBOY' 'THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY' 'THE MONKS OF THELEMA'
'THE SEAMY SIDE' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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THE FIRST VOLUME.

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SWEET NELLY, MY HEART'S DELIGHT.

THE

TEN YEARS' TENANT.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I MET HIM.

It is now twenty years ago. I was staying at an hotel in Scarborough, one of the great places where they have a couple of hundred people every day at their *table d'hôte*. In the evening some of the company who had been long enough in the place to make each other's acquaintance had got up an entertainment for the rest in the shape of private theatricals, which was given, after the Elizabethan manner, without the accessories of scenery, in the dining-hall. I forget what the play was; but it needed no scenery, being a comedy of the last century, for which the actors were dressed in

the fashions of the second George, stately and spiendid, though rather stiff.

I am not very fond of private theatricals. It always seems to me that the best amateur actors are those who have most carefully studied the gestures and tricks of professionals in the same parts. Therefore my attention was gradually diverted from the performance to the audience, where were all the materials from which an old-fashioned moralist would have drawn his weary old moral, with a tag of 'telle est la vie' about the group met together that night, never again, perhaps, to gather under the same roof. There was the doddering old gentleman; there was the bright and happy girl of seventeen, to whom life seemed made up of lovers and sugar-candy, a most delightful object of contemplation for men of all ages; there were the two elderly maiden ladies, who were

enjoying the representation enormously, with a fearful joy, because they had been taught to regard the drama as wicked beyond all things: could, it was always asked, a serious person, with a regard to his soul, look even at the outside of a theatre without shuddering? There was a comfortable old widow, sound asleep with her mouth open; there was a group of children, in happy raptures; there were young men and maidens, half listening and half flirting; there were the usual superior young men from Oxford, who looked on with tolerant pity; there were the country cousins, half ashamed of enjoying the performance too much; there were the waiters and servants at the door, mouths and eyes wide open. Presently my eyes fell upon a listener who somehow compelled my attention, so that I forgot all the rest, even that sweet rosebud of

seventeen, and gazed steadfastly upon him alone.

He was a man between fifty and sixty years of age; his hair was 'grayed,' but not white; his whiskers were grayer than his hair; his face was puffy and red; his nose was certainly swollen with good living and little exercise; his lips were rather thick; his eyes were bright; his forehead was broad; his chin was square. It was the face of a man who had lived and enjoyed all his fifty years.

He was listening to the performance with a curious intentness which the subject scarcely deserved. What did he see in the old-fashioned play? The dialogue was stilted, the sentiment was false. Lord Bellamour, Captain Lovelace, and Amanda were tedious to me, with their parade of musty epigrams and stale claptrap, though their dresses were fine. Yet to this

man they seemed full of interest. Yet he neither laughed nor sighed; what pathos there was in the piece moved him not, nor did the low-comedy servant provoke a smile. There was a good deal of 'business' with snuff-boxes and fans: at this he shook his head critically, as if the by-play left much to be desired; when they performed a minuet he turned away his head despondingly, as if he must draw the line of endurance somewhere, and he could not stand that. Yet I thought the minuet gracefully danced.

He was, perhaps, an actor himself; or he might be a London manager on the look-out for talent. That, no doubt, was the meaning of it. Managers in strange towns always go to see the play, I believe, just as the attendants at one Turkish bath spend their little holiday in visiting rival establishments, or conscientious mutes

off duty haunt cemeteries. Yes, he must be a London manager.

After the performance some of the men found themselves presently in the smoking-room. Here, instead of gloomily staring at each other, we fell to talking over the evening's entertainment. Hither came my friend with the red face and thick lips. He took a chair next to mine, and, calling for a brandy-and-soda, began to talk. His utterance was slow and measured.

'It is always,' he said, when his mixture was set before him, 'advisable to fall in with the habits of the current generation. A hundred years ago—in 1760, for instance—gentlemen did not drink brandy-and-soda, nor did they smoke tobacco. Common people, country clergy, light porters, and the like took their pipes. But not gentlemen.'

These propositions, thus baldly stated, pro-

duced on my mind much the same effect as two or three copy-book texts.

'I suppose,' I replied, presently rallying, 'that one cannot help adopting the manners of his own generation.'

'Perhaps,' he said, 'it is difficult for ordinary people to avoid doing so. As for myself, I confess it is sometimes pleasant to live again in the past—sometimes to dine off peacock-pie at noon, to eat a larded swan, to order a plum-porridge, now and then to exchange claret for mead, and to breakfast off that neglected beverage, small ale.'

Not a London manager: an antiquary, an eccentric of uncommon type. It would, perhaps, reward one to encourage him by a nod of approval, as if mead, larded swans, and plum-porridge were within the art of every plain cook at sixteen pounds a year.

'It gratified me to-night,' he went on, 'to witness an attempt, laudable though unsuccessful, to revive something of the great and glorious eighteenth century. The dresses were fairly correct; it is difficult to go wrong in the matter of dress with so many pictures before one; at the same time the fashion of one wig was that of 1750, and of another that of 1770, while I think the patches in the year 1760 were worn quite differently. But perhaps I am thinking of 1745; one's memory sometimes plays one false in the matter of ten years or so. As for the language, it was, of course, that of the time; where they failed was in the tone, the pitch, the management of the voice. Good Heavens, sir!'—he turned quite red with emotion as he said this—'what would be your surprise and indignation were a modern actor to represent a young gentleman of the Victorian

age talking in the cockney accent and the nasal twang of an omnibus cad? And the management of the fan and snuff-box! Deplorable, sir! Quite pitiable! And the minuet! How contemptible a failure! To think of that courtly dance being executed as if by clumsy boys and girls in a dancing academy!'

'But, my dear sir,' I ventured to say, 'it is not everybody who has studied the period so deeply as yourself. What, for instance, was wrong about the snuff-box?'

'They handed it so;' he imitated with exaggeration the offering of the box as rendered by our actors of the evening. 'So. Did one ever see the like? Why, sir, a cit at Vauxhall, a London mercer trying to pass for a gentleman at Epsom Wells or Tunbridge, a country bumpkin thinking to put on the manner of St. James's at Bath, would have done better! The

true way to offer the snuff-box, the courtly way, is—thus.'

He stood up and assumed an attitude which, in his frock-coat, seemed profoundly ridiculous. The body was slightly bent, the head inclined in an attitude of courteous and deferential invitation, the right hand held out the snuff-box with the lid open, the left was raised as if partly to protect the snuff-box and partly to emphasise the offering. The attitude of the legs was similarly studied, the right leg being advanced and slightly bent at the knee, the left being held in readiness for immediate action.

'That, sir,' said the antiquary, 'was the courtly method of offering the snuff-box, and, of course, with the lid open. I would I could by any attitude of mine figure to you the elegance and ease with which the charming ladies of the period handled their fans. Believe

me, they as far surpassed the present age in their grace and beauty (which was the triumph of Art practising on Nature in her most generous mood) as the beaux of the time surpassed the uncouth moderns in carriage, wit, and politeness.'

He sat down again, and drank off his tumbler of soda-and-brandy.

'A theory,' I said very weakly, 'which you would have to defend against a formidable array of facts.'

'Facts! what facts?' he burst in. 'Where are they? Can literature, books, letters, poetry, reconstitute a *salon?* Can we actually see Horace Walpole amusing old Madame du Deffand, for instance, or can we again hear the witty Mrs. Montague or see the beautiful Peggy Banks, or cry over the fate of the lovely Miss Ray cut off in her prime? Can you even

imagine the atmosphere, the light, the grace of an evening when men met ladies, not to rush round the room with them, but to *talk?* I say advisedly, *talk.* Why, sir, every sentence was an epigram; the meaner wits studied their phrases before they came; the ladies were as ready as the men—ay, readier sometimes—with their arrows, whose points were so sharp, though they were no longer than the point of a pin. A dance in such an assembly was a stately thing, in which every lady walked as if she were a goddess, and every man as if he were a great lord. Attitudes were taught and studied in those days; a proper carriage of the body was part of a gentleman's education, and the art of deportment, now lost, was a thing which could never be truly acquired save at Courts and under the wing of great ladies. This art alone, sir, marked the distinctions of

rank, and taught the classes who work for their bread that between themselves and the nobility was fixed a gulf never to be bridged over. Why, why did the nobility of England and France resign that inestimable advantage? Why has a school of manners been allowed to grow up which opens the *salons* of the greatest to every scrub who can boast that he does not jump a counter and can buy a black tail-coat? A dress-coat! Saw one ever a more frightful, a more meaningless, a more levelling garb? Into what days are we fallen, when our gentlemen sit down to dinner in the same dress as the lacqueys and fellows who wait upon them!'

This was given with such earnestness, that one felt exactly as if the man were delivering himself of a personal reminiscence. Of course that was nonsense. But one felt so. The

other men in the room were attracted, and chairs were pushed closer to the table at which we sat. Presently conversation ceased, and all listened.

'Every century,' he went on, his eyes having a far-off look, 'takes something away with it which can never be restored. I dare say there is something, if one knew it, in this dull and driving age of yours which is to be prized; but one by one the old things leave us. What I most regret in the eighteenth century is its politeness. What have you gained to compensate for the loss of politeness? Think what it means. The attitude of body proper for every circumstance in life—can one ever forget the dignity with which, for instance, Lord Ferrers went to be hanged?—that is one thing; the tone of voice suitable for every kind of necessary or complimentary speech, such as that

proper for a tradesman or a servant, that for a lady, that for a pretty woman. Lord Foppington in the play may show you what I mean. There is the true manner of estimating your own position and rank compared with those of other people. None of your accursed revolutionary levelling down; no freedom in print over a nobleman's name; a gentleman was a gentleman; rank had a real meaning; every younger son of a squire did not consider himself as good as an earl; and lawyers, doctors, chaplains, ushers, actors, artists, writers, curates, and such cattle, worthy enough in their way, did not pretend to be gentlemen. Think of the absurdity of any man who earns his living by work calling himself a gentleman! When levelling began, politeness vanished. Where are your manners now? How do you treat ladies? What respect remains for rank? What have you got in

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exchange for the good old rules which laid down the deference to be paid to woman and the aristocracy? I saw, only a month ago,' here he shuddered, 'I actually saw a common man, whom I knew to be a person in the City, tap a Duke—a Duke!—upon the shoulder!'

The men laughed. One of them replied conventionally:

'We have railways. We can travel.'

'The better sort travelled then,' replied the antiquary, 'and quite fast enough. As for the rest, they stayed at home, did their work, went to church, died, and went to the heaven set apart for the unbred and the illbred.'

'Electric telegraph,' proposed a second.

'Rubbish! what good to know bad news a minute before you need?'

'Free-trade,' said a third. 'You will allow that——'

'That the farmers are on the high road to ruin.'

'Universal education is fast coming,' said a fourth. 'That alone——'

'Will complete the ruin of the world. Society will dissolve into universal anarchy when you have taught even your farm-labourers to read, write, learn, and compare. Stick to your old Church Catechism: "Learn and labour to get your own living in that state of life"—ah, good and honest teaching, how is it disregarded! Your own state! You would like my state!'

'Come, sir,' said a man who looked as if he belonged to Birmingham—that is, he had an intensely practical and self-satisfied air, so that one felt sure that, if he was not really a native of that illustrious town, he must sympathise with the opinions of the majority—

'Come, sir, what do you say to the spread of Radical ideas and the progress of national freedom? What do you think of universal suffrage and the ballot, which we are bound to introduce?'

'Tut, tut!' The learned antiquary put him aside with a wave of his hand, and declined to reply. As no one else made any suggestion, he went on himself:

'Your steam has turned the working man into a machine. He is no longer an intelligent man; he makes a little bit of something, always the same little bit; away from his work he is a barrel for the reception of beer, which you have not the sense to supply unadulterated; he can read, but he cannot think, therefore he is a tool in the hands of any agitator. Your railways incite people to travel about and look for visionary joys abroad

instead of finding substantial ones at home; your electricity threatens to upset everything left that we value—but never mind. Of all your boasted inventions, only two deserve to be mentioned with respect. One is the use of chloroform. This shows that when mankind begin to pay one-tenth the attention to medicine which they pay for the accursed arts by which accidents are multiplied and life made noisy and noxious, they will be on the right path. I believe the sewing-machine is also a useful invention. And upon my word, gentlemen'— he rose and took a candle from the table—'upon my word, there is no other invention of modern days worth a thought, and your losses are greater than your gains. Politeness, rank, conversation, dress, dancing, cookery—all these are gone.'

'Pardon me, sir'—it was a young fellow

who had played in the piece—'you have forgotten one thing. Permit me to suggest that we have gained by the loss of the tallow candle.'

The antiquary set down his candlestick, and regarded the speaker with a benignant admiration.

'That,' he said, 'is the most sensible speech I have heard to-night. You are the young man who made an exhibition of ignorance with a snuff-box just now, are you not? Come to me to-morrow morning, and I will teach you better, as a reward for this reminder. Yes; you have gained by the adoption of a composite candle. Everything which adds to the comfort of the upper classes is a distinct gain to humanity, if only because it promotes admiration of their happy lot. I allow, gentlemen, that the tallow candle was, in the last century, a serious grievance. No house, however rich,

could afford wax candles for the kitchen; few, indeed, of the middle classes could afford a sufficiency of common dips. From the palace to the tavern we were cursed with the continual dropping of tallow. The servants smeared the loaf with it and poisoned the butter with it; they snuffed candles with their fingers, and then handled the white French bread for breakfast; the cook held a tallow candle with one hand while she fried a cutlet with the other; the tallow mingled with the hot bread-crumbs; you found a melted drop in the soup; it lurked in the sauce; it poisoned the gravy; it lay upon the browning; it corrupted the pudding; you smelt it in the air, especially when you passed a bevy of servant-girls on a Sunday; the smell of the candle-snuffing destroyed the illusion at the theatre and shocked the flow of devotion in

the church The saloon, lit with wax candles and crowded with high-bred ladies and gentlemen who knew the value of manners, more nearly resembled heaven than anything you have to show; but to reach these sweet and pleasant places you had to pass through a purgatory of stinking tallow. Gentlemen, I wish you good-night.'

CHAPTER II.

HOW I DID HIM A SIGNAL SERVICE.

By the simple process of asking the waiter, who consulted the visitors' book, I discovered before going to bed that this remarkable lover of the past was named Mr. Montagu Jekyll, and that his room in the hotel was next to my own, both being at the end of a long passage on the first-floor. The name taught me nothing. I knew of no books written, so far as I could remember, by anyone of that name; I had never heard of any great historian or scholar of the name. Possibly he was one of those little known but learned antiquaries who grub along among their books in the country, acquire

immense knowledge, keep it to themselves, chuckling over the ignorance of mankind, and never write anything except, perhaps, a paper for a meeting of the Archæological Institute, should that rambling body pass their way.

We continued to talk of him after he went away at eleven o'clock. The reality and vividness which he had thrown into his talk concerning the past; the confidence with which he spoke of such little details as the snuff-box, whose lid was always to be open when offered; the attitude with which he illustrated his teaching; the way in which he spoke of us and our *gaucheries* as 'you' and 'yours,' just as if he did not belong to the century at all—all these things pointed to an absorbing study of our period. Then we began to recollect similar instances from our own experience and from the pages of history.

'I knew a man,' said one, 'who never read anything which was not connected with the history of his own cathedral.'

'I knew a man,' said a second, 'who never read anything that did not bear on the subject of infant baptism.'

'I knew a man,' said a third, 'who was always engaged in finding out mysterious things about the Great Pyramid.'

'I knew a man,' said a fourth, 'who was for ever occupied with the site of Solomon's Temple. He couldn't talk about anything but the Temple.'

'I knew a man——,' said a fifth; and so on.

They went on telling anecdotes about men they had known. I listened until two superior undergraduates began to relate marvels about the men of their college. Then I left them and went to bed.

I found the antiquary putting his boots outside the door. He looked up and nodded.

'Very interesting conversation to-night,' I said, 'thanks to you.'

'About the last century? Yes, you know nothing, any of you—nothing at all, conceited though you are—of that most remarkable period.'

'In what books,' I asked, 'can a man find those curious details which you presented to us to-night in t he smoking-room?

'Books! books!'—he spoke with great contempt—'I never read. Men—and women—women especially—are the only books worth studying.'

'Then how in the name of goodness——'

'Good-night, sir. It is past twelve o'clock.'

I went to my own room and sat down on the bed, pondering over this very singular per-

son. Perhaps he was mad ; perhaps he was only affected. Men have been known to study repartees and *bons mots*, which they afterwards bring out under the pretence of their being impromptu. No doubt this humbug had carefully got up the whole scene beforehand. Not read books! Of course he must read books. How else could he know things? To be sure it was possible, and perhaps not unlikely, that he invented. Anybody, with the necessary impudence *and a little practice beforehand*, could have invented the whole thing. Likely enough he was posturing before his looking-glass at that very moment in an eighteenth-century attitude. Or was he the Devil ?

I went to bed with just that little touch of nervousness which always comes over a man when he seems to touch upon the domain of the supernatural; and I confess that I should

have been better pleased had my room been at the other end of the house. There was a door of communication between my room and his; there was a bolt on my side, which I drew. The key was on his side, to be sure; but it was useless while my bolt held. With such reflections to soothe me, I fell asleep.

I was awakened an hour or so later by a suffocating smell of smoke. I sprang to my feet, rushed to the door, and looked into the passage; there the gas was burning tranquilly, and I could see no sign of fire. I ran to the end of the passage; all was quiet and safe. I returned to my own room: there was no mistake possible, the room was filled with smoke. But where was the fire? My candle had long been out. The fire, I said to myself, must be below me; the ceiling very likely was already on fire. At any moment the

flames might break through the floor. At least, I thought, rapidly weighing the chances, the joists might hold out long enough to enable me to escape either through the door or the window.

One thinks quickly in moments of great danger. I bethought me, next, of my neighbour, the man in the next room. I ran to the door of communication, unbolted it, and tried to open it. It was locked on the other side. With one firm and judicious kick, I burst the lock open and rushed in. Good Heavens! the man was lying in a heavy sleep on the right side of the bed, while on the left, close to him, the curtains, sheets, mattress and all, were in flames. I threw myself upon him, dragged him, still half asleep, from the bed, and began to pile the blankets upon the flaming mass. There were a couple of cans full of water, for the bath in his room and my own. I poured the whole over

the bed, pulled down the curtains, and succeeded, at the expense of a few slight burns, in rapidly subduing a fire which might have burned the house down. When I saw that there was no more danger, I opened the windows in both rooms, and lit a candle in my own. Then, and not till then, I remembered my friend the antiquary. He was sitting on a sofa in his room in the dark, shivering and shaking. He had taken no part in extinguishing the fire; he had said nothing; and now, when it was all over, he sat still in helplessness, terrified out of his wits.

'Come,' I said, taking him by the arm, 'you must not sit there any longer; you will catch cold. The fire's out, however; that's the great thing. Get up and come into my room, out of this horrible mess.'

He followed without a word. His teeth

were chattering, his face was horribly pale, his limbs shook with terror.

I had a spirit-flask containing brandy. I made him drink a couple of glasses, one after the other; then he looked up, gasped, and said incoherently——

'I lost it in the eighteenth century.'

'What did you lose?' I asked, to humour his wandering wits.

'I lost my Religion. In a moment like this one feels to want it; but it is quite gone. I have not looked after it for close upon two hundred years.'

'You had better get between my blankets and go to sleep,' I said, wondering if the man was really mad, or only frightened out of his wits. 'This business has upset you. Come.'

I laid him in my bed and covered him up

like a child. Then I stole to look at the extinguished fire—*what* a mess the place was in! —shut the windows, wrapped myself in my rug, and went to sleep on my sofa.

In the morning I awoke and found my guest still sleeping. I rang for the waiter and explained things; the manager was called; he came and saw the mischief and heard my story. He used bad words about the cause of the accident, still asleep, and good words about my promptitude in action. Truly the house had had a most narrow escape.

After breakfast I found my antiquary still sleeping. In fact, it was not until past eleven that he awoke; then he sat up with lack-lustre eyes and looked round. If it was a remarkable face which I had observed the night before, the face of the morning was still more remarkable: it seemed the face of a very,

very old man, older than any man one has ever read of, full of wrinkles, crows' feet, and lines; shrunken were the cheeks and feeble were the eyes. As I looked on, the sleep passed from him, a change came upon him: the lines rapidly disappeared, the cheeks filled out, the eyes brightened. The face became again that of a man of fifty or so.

'I know now,' he said, nodding his head. 'I remember now what happened last night. I was reading in bed. I went to sleep. (I shall never, never, never read again in bed, unless by daylight, as long as I escape accident.) The bed caught fire. You got in, somehow, and dragged me out. You saved my life. I do not know your name, sir, but I thank you.'

'That is nothing,' I replied. 'Of course I did what——'

'You call it nothing'—he had by this time got one leg out of bed—'you call it nothing? Sir, the life you have saved is no common ephemeral existence. It is a most remarkable life, sir, although you know it not.'

I bowed.

'It is a life to which history affords no parallel, one of which the world is ignorant.'

'Really!'

One naturally felt a little angry at this extraordinary boastfulness. Both legs were out of bed.

'Sir'—he stood upright with the blanket round him—'the life you have saved is a *unique* life.'

He strode with the grandest air into his own room and closed the door of communication. Presently, while I was packing my portmanteau, he opened it again.

'In case I do not see you again to-day,' he said, 'would you kindly give me your card? Thank you. I will do myself the pleasure, if you will allow me, of calling upon you in town. You have saved, sir, a life which is unique in history.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HE REWARDED ME.

After my return to town, I thought little more about the strange old antiquary. Perhaps the adventure, with its hero, made with too much learning, served for an after-dinner story more than once. But I hardly expected to see him, and nothing ever surprised me more than to receive his card, brought to my room by a clerk one afternoon in the following winter. He followed his card. He called, he said, to thank me again for the presence of mind and courage I had displayed, and begged me to believe that he was not insensible nor ungrateful. Having satisfied me upon this point, he

invited me to dine with him that evening at a well-known private hotel in Jermyn Street. I accepted, and he went away. When he was gone I began to recall the many curious things connected with the fire; how old and worn he looked when he woke up in the morning, the strange words he used about his own life.

'A maniac,' I said. 'Probably a harmless one, mad on one point. One had better humour him.'

He gave me an excellent dinner, with no attempt at emulating the ancients in the matter of larded swans and plum-porridge. On the contrary, the *menu* was as modern as could be desired, and the dinner as well cooked and as well put on the table as could be wished.

'Come,' I said, 'the eighteenth century

could not beat a dinner like this, and there couldn't have been better wines.'

'The century was greater at suppers,' he replied, 'than at dinners. As for wines, the claret and champagne and German wines were as good as they are now. The port, I admit, was generally too fiery. Many a quarrel has been caused, many a valuable life has been thrown away, by the ardent nature of the eighteenth-century port.'

'We do not fight duels now,' I urged. 'You must give us credit for so much.'

But he refused to give us any credit on that account. He said that a quiet and unpretending gentleman need never fight a duel; that the knowledge of its dangers made all men practise and acquire the noble art of fencing, which brought with it a dignified carriage; that polite manners were greatly assisted by

the fear of being called out if you offended a man; and that public opinion was set dead against unnecessary duels and professional bullies.

I humoured him, and he enlarged at length on the eighteenth century. He seemed to know the beginning as well as the end, and was as familiar with Queen Anne's reign as with George III.'s. Yet it was a strange sort of familiarity. He showed no interest in political events, regarded Ministries with contempt, and such things as wars, alliances, sieges, and victories, or the growth of national liberty—about which modern historians keep such a coil—he had either forgotten or was ready to forget. Nor did he care at all to talk about poetry and literature, evidently holding authors and poets in the greatest contempt. Indeed, he professed not to know who Oliver Goldsmith was, and called Dr. Johnson himself a

dictionary grub. He loved, however, to talk about dinners, society, the coffee-houses, amusements, theatres, actresses, young lords, gambling hells, and so forth; and he told me some excellent stories about Cupid's Gardens, the Folly, Ranelagh, the Marylebone Bowling Green, and Vauxhall. One thing presently struck me: he seemed to have collected and to remember quite clearly every story he could hear connected with accidents.

'It was not nearly such a time for accidents,' he said, after telling me some of them, 'as the present. To be sure there were a good many fires, and the service for extinguishing them was next to useless; but there were no railways. There was a great thing to begin with. There were no hansom cabs, no mail-carts, no galloping butchers' carts, no enormous vans thundering down the street.

Things everywhere went slow. There was no hurry. Only think of the safety to life and the immunity from accident involved in that single statement. Things went slow. Then there was no steam-engine of any kind; not a locomotive yet built, not a paddle-wheel boat yet devised, no machinery, no boilers, no driving wheels, no explosions, no bursting of pipes, no scaldings by escape pipes, no collisions. Think of there being no fear of accident on the line or on the river. To be sure, one could not wholly escape the danger of accident. If you rode, your horse sometimes ran away with you and killed you; but you might easily get a quiet pad. In the streets there were sometimes mad bulls; a friend of mine—that is, a man of whom I have read —was once killed by an escaping bear; there was once a highly respectable mer-

chant of the City, also a friend of mine—that is to say—well—such a man was once killed by the fall of a shop sign upon his head; another, I remember to have read, was knocked over by a crowd chasing a pickpocket, and trampled on so that he died; or a man might be bitten by a mad dog, or he might be run through by mistake, being supposed in the twilight to be quite a different person. Then there were such things as occur everywhere, such as the fall of things from roofs upon your head, or slipping and breaking your ribs, or being upset in a coach, or—in fact, one can never escape the chance of an accident. But in quiet and slow times one has comfort in taking precautions, and I say that the precautions one had to take a hundred years ago were as nothing, merely nothing, compared to those one must take now.'

He spoke with heat, and as if labouring under the sense of some personal injury. I said that everybody must run his chance, and that if we did nothing but look out for accidents, we should have no time to look after our business. The observation was weak.

'Ay,' he groaned, 'you are right. That is what I find: looking out for accidents absorbs the whole of a man's time.'

At eleven o'clock I left him. He very kindly hoped that we might meet again, and spoke of calling upon me when next he should be in London.

In the morning I received a small parcel with Mr. Montagu Jekyll's compliments. It contained a splendid gold watch and chain. This was very handsome. I wrote to thank the donor, but received my letter back. Mr.

Jekyll had left the hotel, given no address, and ordered that letters were not to be kept for him.

It was in the year 1870, ten years later, that I saw my friend again. He called at my office as before, and asked me to dinner as before I congratulated him on his excellent health. In fact, he looked younger than he had some ten years before, yet he must then have been considerably over sixty. He said he had been at some German baths, and had found great relief as to gout.

'We old fellows,' he said, 'like to look as young as we can.'

In the course of the evening he informed me that he had married since he saw me last, but had lost his wife. I condoled with him, but found him singularly cold on the matter,

or perhaps he affected a coldness which he did not feel.

'It is the way of life,' he said. 'We desire a wife; we take a wife; if she is a good wife she dies, to disappoint him; if she is a bad wife she lives, to torment him. My dear friend, if I could only tell you my experiences! Are you married?'

'No; but I am engaged.'

'Ah!'

The expression he threw into that interjection was wonderful, but he did not pursue the subject.

The day after the dinner he came to my office and desired to confer with me on professional matters. He proposed, he said, to buy a certain house standing in its own grounds about ten miles north of London.

I managed the business for him and drew

up the conveyance of the property. After he had bought it, however, something disgusted him—I think it was the fall of a slate from the roof, which he said might have come upon his own head and killed him—and he begged me to sell it again. I managed that, and my friend disappeared without telling me he intended to leave London.

I saw him no more for ten years. It was in May of this present year of grace eighteen hundred and eighty, while the young spring days were still like January for rigour, that he came to see me once more. For the third time I went to dine with him, and he looked positively younger than ever, yet he must have been seventy-five at least. He was very friendly; produced a pretty set of presents, which he begged me to give to the wife and children, made a little speech about that fire

business, and offered me as good a dinner as the heart of man could desire. I asked him where he had been during the last ten years. He said that he grew restless from time to time; that England, France, and other civilised countries became during these fits insufferable to him, and that, under the influence of one of these fits, which were a kind of melancholy, or, as he boldly put it, due to the extraordinary isolation of his position, he had thought that a few years in some quiet place, reasonably free from the chances of accident, quite removed from western civilisation, would act as a beneficial change, and probably restore his mind to its usual groove of contentment. The place which he fixed upon, after very great inquiry and search among gazetteers and consular blue-books, was a small island in the Greek Archipelago.

'The wine there,' he said, 'is rough, but remarkably good; it keeps a long while, like Commandery, and when you get it old it has a luscious fragrance, quite peculiar; the climate is delightful; the fare simple, it is true, but wholesome for a few years. No carts, no horses, no railways, because there are no roads; none of the ordinary causes of accident. There were dangers in getting there, to be sure, and I meditated long whether I should go on grumbling over the dulness and stupidity of this century, of which thirty years more had then to be got through before we began a new period'—did the man expect to live another thirty years?—'but I turned everything over in my own mind, and at last resolved to pluck up courage and brave the dangers of the journey. You will probably laugh when you hear me speaking of danger which common

men, ordinary men of the groove, so to speak, recklessly meet every day and think nothing of them. But you do not know, my friend, you do not know what risk I, alone among men, have to face. You, and the rest of you, may lose the short remainder of your contemptible lives . . . bah! ten years, twenty, thirty, forty at the outside . . . while I . . . but you do not know. Horrors! I did face the danger. I went across the continent in an express train, and a tumult of terror; had three days of gale and peril in a steamer, with four and twenty hours of risk in a half-decked boat; and finally landed with all my stores and with my French valet on the island. Ah!' He breathed a long sigh. 'Here I lived for nine years and a half. I married a wife'—good Heavens! he had actually married again—'found that the place suited me remarkably well, and, in fact, was for

a short time perfectly happy. They murdered my valet; but as I found that the Greeks of that island only stick knives into each other when they are jealous, I did not consider myself in any peril. My wife was, at first, a most remarkably beautiful girl, with such eyes as one dreams of when one is young. She fell off, however, terribly, and—and, in fact, the reason why I came away was that I made the dreadful discovery that Greek women are sometimes jealous without a cause. There was not a creature of her sex upon the island on whom I dared to cast an eye, on account of their brothers' knives. Yet she was jealous. And her temper was violent, and I love a philosophical calm. So I ordered a steam-yacht; gave instructions to the skipper to pretend it was his own; went on board to see the craft when she arrived, and—ho! ho! steamed away.'

'And your wife?'

'She will, I dare say, think that I was drowned. No doubt by this time she has dried her eyes. Do not let us trouble ourselves about her.'

It seemed afterwards, when I came to think of it, a tolerably cold-blooded thing to do.

We drank a good deal of wine during dinner and after. My friend's red cheeks became redder and he began to talk faster. When we were in the middle of the second bottle of claret he laughed oddly, and said:

'And who do you think I am?'

'I have not the slightest idea. You are an enigma to me.'

'And to every one else who knows me: that is the reason why I am unhappily compelled to change all my friends every twenty or thirty years.'

'Of course, I do not understand a word you say.'

'I have a great mind to tell you. Yet I fear. Are you sure that you can keep a secret?'

'It is part of my profession to hear and to keep secrets.'

'True, true; and it would be comfortable to have a man like yourself to advise with on matters. You see, my position is a lonely one: I have never confided my history to a single person, not even to any of my wives.'

'*Any* of your wives?'

'I have had seventeen,' he replied calmly. 'Now to you I think I might, perhaps, communicate part of my history. People are no longer burned for possessing knowledge, even if you should break confid-

ence. And besides, I may sometimes want an adviser.'

'Pray go on.'

I was by this time extremely curious and interested.

'I was born,' he said solemnly, 'in the parish of Malvern, being the eldest son of a gentleman of good family, on the fourteenth day of August, in the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen.

'What!' I pushed the chair back, ready to fly from a madman. 'In what year?'

'In the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen. Sit down again, my dear sir; I am no more mad than yourself. Shall I repeat the words? In the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen.'

CHAPTER IV.

HOW HE CONFIDED IN ME.

'I WAS born,' he continued, 'in the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen. Ah! a long time it seems to look back upon, but nothing when it is gone. The Jekylls are an old family, although ours was a younger branch. They sent me to Cambridge, and thence to Lincoln's Inn, where I studied such law as is useful for a country gentleman and a justice of the peace. There came a time, however, when I exchanged the pursuit of the law for one more fascinating and useful. After profiting by the result of those studies for two hundred and fifty years, it would be ungracious to join

in the ignorant outcry which your men of science (poor blind mortals, most of them) carry on against the search which we of the seventeenth century made after the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. I allow that you know more about electricity, with which, if you used it rightly, you could——' here he stopped short and paused for a moment. 'What we sought was effect; that is the only thing in this world worth looking for; what you seek is cause. You consider that when you have formulated laws, you have found a cause; you think that when you have classified facts and deduced a rule, you have laid your hand on the final cause; you escape from God by substituting an equation; you think it better to live under the reign of law than the reign of love. Cause! Can any one among you all tell me why the sun puts out

the fire, why the poker placed in front of it gets it up again; or why the moon causes the rain to fall? Yet these are little things. How, then, can you explain birth, growth, and decay? We did not try to explain. We sought to prevent decay, to find out, not the secret of life, but the preserver of life, the universal specific to cure all things, even the slow decay of man's strength. Glorious and noble pursuit!

'You never heard, I suppose, of John Rowley, reputed necromancer and astrologer? Yet history preserves the smaller names of Cromwell, Milton, and Hampden, who lived about the same time. Rowley was no astrologer, though he did not doubt the influence of the stars, a thing no reasonable man who has weighed the evidence can for a moment doubt. He was a searcher after the secrets of Nature;

he worked upon the properties of matter; he looked to find the primitive metal from which all the common metals have descended; he wanted to make gold for himself, because the possession of gold gives power to conduct experiments; and he worked at the discovery of this universal medicine.

'I made the acquaintance of this remarkable man, it matters not how. I was admitted to his laboratory. I acquired his confidence; I worked with him. In those days I was young, hopeful, and enthusiastic; I worked with an ardour the contemplation of which at this moment appals me: sometimes our labours were continued without remission for two or three days and nights continuously, one of us taking turn now and then to snatch an hour's slumber while the other watched at the fire. All other work was thrown aside,

all other friends were neglected, and from my twenty-second to my twenty-eighth year it was hardly known whether I was living or dead. Yet during this long period I was but on the threshold, working for the master as his apprentice, by whom all kinds of work must be done, while his master teaches him by slow degrees the mysteries of the craft.

'After serving John Rowley as long as Jacob served Laban for Rachel (which is an allegory for the patient working after the Elixir), and received Leah (which means that he got that lower, yet most excellent, gift which came to me), the master called me apart and spoke to me very gravely.

'It had given him, he was good enough to say, the greatest pleasure to watch the zeal and patience with which I had worked for seven

years, and it cut him to the heart to discourage any student in our glorious science, the only science worthy of the name. Yet I must understand, and be under no illusions, that the highest prize of philosophy is given to none but those who possess, to a degree beyond that of my own gifts, an insight almost prophetic, and the power of reaching out, as it were, into the darkness and depths of ignorance which enables the truly great man to walk blindfold among pitfalls and traps. Therefore he would not encourage me to persevere in researches which would lead me to disappointment. Let me leave them to others more favoured by Heaven than myself.

'I was greatly dashed at hearing this advice, for I was already so far advanced as to know something of the infinite possibilities of

chemistry. Yet the master spoke with so much wisdom, and with such evident sorrow, that I could not choose but be persuaded that he spoke true words.

'"Those," he continued, "to whom it is given to discover the Great Secret of Life, hidden away by Nature till the time shall come, must keep that secret jealously and hand it down to few. No greater misfortune to humanity could possibly happen than a general immortality with all their sins and vices still upon them. Think of an immortal Nero! Think of an immortal Grand Inquisitor! It is the prospect of dissolution alone which prevents men from committing the most frightful crimes. Thanks to death, there is a limit to suffering as well as to sin. The tyrant must die as well as his victim; the torturer must lie down beside the tortured."

'I asked him, were there many who knew the secret?

'He replied that, so far as he knew, there were but two or three to whom it had been given to discover it, and that they had communicated it to none. He was himself, he said, one of those who had arrived at it after a long life of research. "I hold it in my power," he said solemnly, "to live as long as I please; to die when I please; to ward off all diseases; to suffer no pain; to return to youth, if youth should seem desirable to me. If I please I can go on enjoying the pleasures of life, or I can spend a deathless period, as long as the world endures, in research and contemplation. I can follow the slow growth of true religion, and mark the onward march of mankind, a man among men. Or, by a simple effort of the will, I can stay the beating of the pulse, and

pass away painlessly to an unknown and unknowable Eternity."

'I asked him, then, if his studies gave him any glimpse or vision of the other world.

'He replied that Nature can only yield up her own secrets. As to the mysteries of the hereafter, they were hidden from the search of man, and could only be seen and apprehended by the eye of faith. And here he changed the discourse, and informed me with further expressions of goodwill that he was resolved upon giving me such a proof of his affection as the world had never before heard of.

'It was, in fact, this. He offered me nothing short of the absolute power of living as long as I pleased. There were certain conditions which, he said, were necessarily imposed upon the gift; otherwise I should grow to regard myself as an Immortal. The mention

of conditions, I confess, troubled me: but as he proceeded to unfold the plan, I found the conditions light indeed compared with the magnificence of the gift.

'Briefly, because it would be tedious to relate all the discourses we held and the instructions I received, I learned that by following a simple course in which he instructed me I could arrest my age for ten years—that is to say, supposing I began at thirty, I could for ten years remain thirty, and then after ten more years I could again remain thirty for another decade; but that should I pass beyond the ten years without renewing the term, I should at one leap become forty; and if I did not choose to continue, the ordinary lot of human life would be mine, and in course of time decay of strength and gradual decline would follow. During each period of ten years

I was to be subject to no other disease than any which might be upon me or in my constitution at or before the beginning of that period; so that if I were subject to rheumatism, gout, cold, or fever, I should remain subject, but yet not be killed by any attack. The rules, further, did not hold me free from accident. A drunken man's club, a quarrelsome man's knife, a chance gun-shot, the kick of a horse, anything might bring upon me the death which otherwise I had no occasion to fear. When, in cold blood, I came to think of this danger, it became certain to me that some day or other I should fall a victim to accident. For though a man may possibly pass through the wretchedly short tenure of life allotted to the common herd without accident; and although one may, as I have done, pass through two centuries and a half in perfect safety, yet the time may come

—nay, sometimes I think it must come—when the inevitable accident will happen, and I shall perish.'

He paused again, overcome by this apprehension. It was not till much later that I realised how differently the chance of an accident would appear to him. For to us, though a hansom cab may run over us or a train may have a collision, yet there is always the feeling (in anticipation) that we are all of us in the same boat; whereas to my friend Mr. Jekyll the feeling was always that he was alone. He would live for ever; he had lived already for a quarter of a thousand years; and there was only this one danger to fear: no disease, no decay could kill him—only the danger of accident. Presently he went on again, with a long sigh.

'The conditions once understood, and the

instructions learned, we had next to decide upon the age of commencement. This, on reflection, proved a much more difficult matter than would at first be supposed. The master was for my waiting until I was seventy, and then beginning life. "For," he said, "at seventy one is free from the passions of youth and the ambitions of middle life; one is full of wisdom, reflection, experience, and learning. There may be, it is true, a few of the inconveniences of old age, but think of the advantages of beginning with the stock of a lifetime of work!" Now a singular change had come over me from the very first moment that the master communicated his design to me. My thoughts flew away from the dingy and smoky laboratory to the joys of the world. "Let me," I cried, "be twenty-two." "Fie upon thee!" said the master; "wouldst remain

ever a boy? Well, I see that the last and greatest gift could never have been thine. Choose rather some ripe age, when the passion of youth is over, and the strength of the brain is at its best; an age which commands reverence, but not as yet pity." I had, however, no taste for gray locks, and pleaded at last to begin at once, being then about twenty-eight. To this, however, he would not accede. Finally he consented to my beginning at thirty-five, provided that I should wait in patience and take my chance with the rest of mankind until then. Thirty-five, he reminded me, is an age when one should be strongest in body and fittest in brain for undertaking any kind of work, and most ready for any kind of enjoyment. I have always thought it a happy thing that I consented to wait for seven years in order to begin the long period during which I remained

steadily at thirty-five. Fool, insensate fool that I was, ever to pass that limit!

'Further, the master promised me that just as my health and vigour should continue unabated, so my fortune should be unimpaired. Both were to remain unaffected by time or waste. Therefore he urged upon me to live with economy and thrift, as well as with great moderation as regards eating, drinking, exercise, and so forth, for the seven years between me and full fruition. Then he took a solemn farewell of me. We should never more, he said, meet in this world; he was about to retire to the wastes of Arabia, where, removed from the clash of arms and the struggles of men, he could work on until he felt tired and satisfied, and content to fall asleep. As for me, he wished me a happy use of the gift which he had placed in my hands, and hoped that I should find this

limited tenure of life so satisfactory that I should be induced to prolong it indefinitely. He exhorted me to use it well, and for the benefit of mankind; to work on, accumulating knowledge, extirpating diseases, discovering new modes of increasing happiness, preventing famines, and spreading wisdom. "Then," he said, "you will be a benefactor to the human race such as the world has never yet seen. We who learn and meditate can assist you who will learn and work. My friend, you may become the greatest of mankind." He added cautions about certain temptations which might draw me aside, but I will not repeat these. "Farewell!" he said. "I have hopes, but I have misgivings. Take the gift and use it as you will. When you are tired of your work or dissatisfied, let the years go on unheeded; take your chance with the rest; lie down and die

with the common herd." He left me, and I sat down, wondering, overwhelmed at this great and wonderful fortune. Now consider my situation. I was twenty-eight years of age; I owned an estate of five hundred pounds a year in Warwickshire (what was then five hundred has since risen, by increase in the value of money—for I have long since sold my land—to five thousand a year). I had seven years to wait, during which my life was exposed hourly to the same dangers which threaten Tom, Dick, or Harry. I might in quiet times have gone to live on my estate, content to wait there in comparative safety. But the times were not good for quiet men. Everybody in the year 1643 was taking a side: a man had to be Cavalier or Roundhead, and to fight for his cause. Was it likely that I, with so great a gift, was to imperil my precious life, my unique life, for the

sake of a party? Why, from that very moment I ceased to take the least interest in either side or in any politics. Men who had only a few trumpery years to throw away might go and fight for King or Parliament. Was a man who had hundreds, nay thousands—perhaps —to hazard them for any cause whatever? I made up my mind, therefore, to withdraw. I put my affairs into such order as was possible, and I retired to Leyden, under the pretence of studying at the newly-founded University.

'Few places in Europe were better suited to my purpose than Leyden. It was retired; it was not a great city; it was peaceful; it was healthy; the students were not brawlers or strikers; one might reasonably expect there, if anywhere, to escape accident and disease. I entered my name as a student, and I began

the seven years—a longer seven years than any captive ever passed—with an anxiety which made me, who had previously been as brave a man as my neighbours, nothing short of a coward. I passed for one who was entirely absorbed in study. Alas! I read but little, being continually pondering over the chances of accident. I had narrow escapes, too, which made me more anxious. Once there was a rumour of the plague; once a neighbour's house took fire in the night and was burned down; once, when I was walking with a companion, a drunken fellow ran past us with a knife and stabbed him to the heart, so that he fell dead. It might just as well have been myself. They accused me of cowardice because I did not run after the flying madman. Why, what would have been the sense in pursuing a man who would have finished the race with a stab in the vitals?

Was such a life as mine to be fooled away in an attempt to revenge the death of another? And another time I was run over by a trooper on horseback. It seemed as if sudden and horrible accidents were around and about me on every side.

'The years passed slowly on; there came a time when twelve—six—three months only remained to complete the time. The three months became one; the four weeks became one week; and then, because I would be alone when the time arrived, I left Leyden and sought a lodging in a farmhouse some four or five miles from the town. The farmer, who lived there with his family of two or three sons and a daughter, gave me his best room, thinking that the grave and serious scholar from the University would benefit by the country air.

'Then came the eve of the day, my birth-

day, my thirty-fifth birthday. I spent the day in the fields, meditating. The words of the master returned to me. I was to be a benefactor to the human race. I was to use his gift in the acquisition of knowledge. I resolved that I would do so. I would master all knowledge; I would confer such benefits on mankind as they had not dreamed——'

'And have you done so?' I asked eagerly.

'Not yet,' he replied; 'all in good time. Why, man, it is only two hundred and fifty years since I began to live. Give a man a little rope——'

He grumbled and growled for a few moments about the hardships of expecting a man to begin work at once before he had had his fling. Presently he resumed his narrative.

'In the evening I went early to my room. Now I suppose I could have considered the day

as beginning at midnight. I would not; it should begin at sunrise. All night long I sat up waiting. The casement was closed; I would not begin the new life with a cold in the head. Then I considered myself carefully. I was well made, strong, and had no complaint, weakness, or defect of any kind. Every function of mind and body in perfect working order. What a future lay before me!

'As I waited and watched, full of fears, calculations, and doubts, it seemed, just at the darkest hour, about two in the morning, when the whole world is sleeping, as if the room became suddenly filled with ghosts. I saw nothing; but I knew they were there, and that they had come to reason with me. First it was the voice of my mother who spoke to me. "Son," she said, "I looked to see thee soon among us in the Islands of the Happy Dead. Now must I

wait—and how long? Yet forget not that, soon or late, Death will come even to you, and the past shall be but as a dream of the night, even if thy days be as long as the days of Noah. Forget not this; and remember that men do not live until the after life."

'Then spoke the voice of my father. "'Twere better, son, to fight the good fight and then to die like thy forefathers. Thou hast turned aside from thy country and thy kin in their sorest need. Turn not aside from the Faith. We watch and wait for thee."

'Then spoke the voice of one whom I had loved in my youth and forgotten. "Sweetheart," she said, "bethink thee. There is no life without love; there is no love between our generation and those which follow after."

'Then it was the voice of my little sister. "Brother," she said, "come to us before you

have forgotten us all; do not quite desert me. Come soon and play with me again."

'Strange. It is two hundred and fifty years ago. I have indeed forgotten them. During all these years I have never thought of them again until now. Can it be that they wait for me still? My sister must long since have grown up—grown old—do they grow old there?'

His face changed as he said these words; his eyes softened; but only for a moment. Then he went on again:

'These appeals annoyed me. Just at the last moment, when I was entering upon my glorious career, to be thus addressed by my own people, who should have been proud of their son's distinction! I thought of the future, and hardened my heart against the past. Then the voices ceased, though I heard a weeping and sobbing

as of women over the death of one they love. Yet this moved me not; for I was mad to begin the new life free from fear of death, disease, want, and age. The weeping of the spirits ceased, and they left me. Then another vision began, and it seemed as if the world with all its pleasures lay at my feet, waiting for me to enter upon my inheritance and enjoy.

'A long night, but it came to an end. I saw the streak of light in the east; I saw the gray grow into red, the darkness into dawn. Then up sprang the glorious sun, bright, warm, clear; the sky was blue; the birds burst out a-singing. Nature rejoiced with me as I rose and followed the instructions I had so long known by heart.

'Why, I was filled with a new life; I was like one intoxicated with the joy of breathing; I was strong with a strength you cannot dream

of. Heavens! what a splendid man I was; what a splendid man I remained for two hundred and sixty years! You shall hear, presently, by what mad folly I threw away that glorious manhood.'

CHAPTER V.

HOW HE USED HIS MOST EXCELLENT GIFT.

'I REMAINED in my room,' he went on, after a pause, 'while the sun rose higher in the heavens. With every moment my pulse beat stronger, the blood coursed more freely through the veins, my heart sounded the note of stronger, eager, and impetuous manhood. I was more than a king—I was a demigod, because Death, the slayer of all, and Time, the slow subduer of all, had no power over me. I, alone of created things, was free from the law of decay. In the fields below me I saw the farm drudges creeping about their day's work; I heard the song of my landlord's daughter as she began her

work in the dairy; I watched the birds in the trees, the cattle in the meadows, the horses being led from the stable, all alike, at first, with that pity which naturally seized the mind in thinking of the pitiful condition from which I had myself only that moment emerged.'

'And you still feel that pity?' I asked.

'Not at all,' he replied promptly. 'I feel no more pity for those who are beneath me—in fact, for all humanity—than you feel for the menial condition of the waiter who has just brought in the soda-and-brandy, or for the abject state of any wretched beggar in the street, or for the sufferings of any unknown patient in a hospital. It is Fate. We have nothing to do with Fate. When I think of my long life behind me and the long life before me I am glad, that is all.'

I was silent, and he proceeded:

'I went downstairs, presently, in a dream, and my landlord's daughter, a blue-eyed girl of eighteen, gave me a cup of milk, for which I thanked her with a kiss. She laughed and said she did not expect that of the grave scholar from Leyden schools; and then she blushed and started, and wanted to know what I had done with myself; for my feet seemed to dance as they went, and my eyes were bright with life and love; my lips were ready to sing, or to kiss, or to drink; my cheek was ruddy and healthy, and dotted with a couple of dimples; and my arms were swinging so loosely that it seemed the most proper and seemly thing in the world for them to seize the girl by the waist and kiss her again. Poor Lisa! Well, she has forgotten her troubles this many a day.

'After a few weeks I began to think it was time to devise some plan for the future, and

without saying farewell to the poor fond creature—indeed, I found consolation in the thought that a short forty or fifty years would bring her to the end of any sorrow my departure might occasion. I therefore returned to Leyden, where I sat down, resolved to draw out a fixed plan for work.

'First, I recalled the words of the master, how I was to use my gift so that it might become a boon to the whole of mankind. How was this best to be effected? Not, I thought, by conferring the same gift upon the whole of humanity. Why, if there were no end to life, there would be no need of religion, to begin with. Why, if there were only two such men in the world at the same time as myself, very serious difficulties might arise.

'I would not make men immortal; but I would free them from disease.

'I conceived the most beautiful dream —some day I mean to work it out thoroughly, if it takes me a thousand years to do it; but not just yet, not yet. To remember that dream causes me the greatest satisfaction, because it shows how fit and worthy a man I am for the confidence bestowed in me. I thought that if a man situated as happily as myself were to devote himself, taking one disease at a time, not only to its alleviation and cure, but also—a very much more important thing—to its complete and entire suppression, he would become in very truth the greatest benefactor to the human race that has ever appeared upon the world. It would take time to collect statistics, facts, figures, and accounts; but what was time to me? Nothing. If each disease were to take me a century of uninterrupted

labour, consider what that would mean to mankind if it ended in its entire abolition.

'You see, there are the big things first: fevers, plagues, smallpox, consumption, rheumatism, gout; then the smaller things, for which surgeons use the knife; then the many little ailments of life which cause so many grievous moments, such as toothache, earache, headache, and all the pains. I would begin with the great things, and after destroying them from off the face of the earth I would attack the smaller, and finally the smallest diseases. Acknowledge that this was a great —a noble dream. I pictured myself at work in my laboratory for generation after generation, discovering why this or that disease existed, and what should be done to meet it and prevent it. What, to me, were centuries of patient labour? I pictured to myself at

last a strong and grateful humanity plagued no longer with diseases, or, if the symptoms showed themselves in punishment for excesses, able to meet them at once, and, with little suffering, to subdue them. My friend, I declare to you that this dream, while it lasted, filled me with an ineffable rapture; my old religion, which seemed to have deserted me, came back and filled my soul; I was able to thank God solemnly for His great and wonderful gift, and to implore His blessing on my most beneficent enterprise.'

He was silent, and shook his head sorrowfully.

'Why did the dream leave you?' I asked him.

'There is always between the conception and the realisation of a dream,' he replied, 'the interposition of something from the out-

side. This time it was the arrival at Leyden of Lisa's brothers. I fled with such precipitation that the dream was for the time shattered to atoms.

'I repaired to Paris, whither I was quite certain those young Hollanders would not follow me. Here, as an English gentleman of fortune, I was hospitably received, although I was fain to assume the disguise of a Roman Catholic, as an excuse for not having fought for the king.

'Paris, in the year 1650, was a much less desirable place of residence than London, except that there were fewer theological controversies. The streets were narrow, accidents were fearfully common, the people were rough and rude, gentlemen were given to duelling on small provocation, and there were always the dangers of the Bastille. Suppose, I thought

sometimes, that I was to incur the misfortune of being imprisoned for life on suspicion of some libel. How long would it be before my gaolers would have their suspicions aroused by the youthfulness of their prisoner? And what would the Church say, if the problem were set before it? And with what face could I tell the story and bear the tender mercies of the secular arm, which was heavy indeed upon magicians? Had it not been for disquietude on these accounts, I should have been happy in Paris. It was a city which possessed (should my dream of labour come back to me) the best library of medical books in the world, and when I was inclined to enjoy the pleasures of life, gave me such boon companions as Chapelle, Bachaumont, and Bois-Robert; such evenings as none but well-bred ladies of Paris could offer; and such talk as was to

be heard nowhere but among the scholars of Paris.

'After a year or two of Paris, when it seemed as if things were becoming more settled in my own country, I returned to Warwickshire. In the calm retreat of my estate, I thought, I could carry out undisturbed those projects which I had only laid aside for a while, and proposed to undertake in earnest.'

'And what prevented you?'

'The usual thing—a woman. I fell in love. She was a girl of twenty-four, handsome, well-born, with a considerable fortune, and was reported to have a good temper. I have nothing to say against her at all; she was a most excellent housekeeper. At making of strong waters, brewing, baking, pickling, preserving, and the knowledge of herbs, there was never any one her equal.

We married, and for the first twenty years of my married state I was perfectly happy. But in each experiment made in a life like mine there are new dangers and difficulties which were unforeseen. The danger which I had overlooked was that my wife would grow old while I should not. In fact, when she was forty-five and I was, in the eyes of the world, fifty-five or so, I was freely congratulated on my wonderful preservation. This, which was only matter for laughter then, became, ten years later, when I should have been sixty-five, a thing of unwelcome notoriety. To be sure, it is not every day that one sees a man of sixty-five with the crisp beard and brown curls, the clear eyes and the elastic tread of thirty-five. To avoid this kind of talk I once kept my bed for a week, pretending illness, and came out of it with a stoop in the shoulders

and a shaking at the knees. I also adopted an old-fashioned peruque, and painted every morning crows'-feet and lines about the eyes.

'It is very well to make up (being five and thirty) into five and sixty. But what about five and seventy, five and eighty, five and ninety? My friend, the most unforeseen thing happened. The life of my wife was prolonged so far beyond the usual span that she actually reached the age of ninety-eight. Now consider what that meant to me. First, there was the discomfort, which lasted for sixty years and more, of being married to a wife older than yourself. How should you at thirty-five like to be married to a woman of ninety-five, eh? Then there was the inconvenience of having to look as if age was telling upon me more and more. It would be positively indecent for a man at a hundred to shake a leg as merrily as

a man at thirty: he may not laugh, nor sing, nor ride, nor dance, nor talk cheerfully, nor even drink. Now when she had got to ninety-eight, I, though still only thirty-five, was actually supposed to be a hundred and nine. You may walk bowed and bent; when any one is looking, you may shake in every limb; you may pull an old-fashioned wig over your ears, or sit muffled up in a nightcap; yet your *eye will look young*. You cannot pretend at five and thirty to get along on the same amount of food as does for an old man of a hundred; you cannot disguise the fact that you have all your teeth; you cannot wholly dissemble your vigour. Therefore it became the fashion in my neighbourhood to see, and bring strangers to see, this wonderful old fellow, who, at a hundred and eight, was so vigorous. "Look at him," they would say, as if I was a prize ox;

"there is health for you at a hundred and eight. Look at his eye, full and clear and strong. A hundred years, gentlemen, and eight! This is marvellous! He ate two mutton-chops yesterday to his dinner, and a dish of hot sausages to his supper, and drank a quart of October. Saw one ever the like? His teeth, too, look at them! And your memory, good sir?"

'"Alack," would I reply, in feeble pipe, "there my age finds me out; for my memory, gentlemen, save for things of my childhood, when Charles I. was king, is but a poor thing."

'Clergymen preached about me, books were written upon me; and I sat still in my chair opposite the poor old lady, who was now bent double, wondering what would happen, and how to get out of the difficulty. A cruel thing, to desire the death of a wife, yet what

else could I wish for? And in the end I killed her.'

'You murdered your wife?'

'Not exactly; yet I killed her. Thus it was. On one Saturday afternoon in June, the year being 1724, I felt an uncontrollable desire to leave the armchair, in which after dinner at noon I was left for my afternoon nap, and to move about somewhere. The maids were in some distant part of the house. I took my sticks and hobbled slowly along, intending to creep into the garden, where, if no one were about, I might straighten my back and stand upright for a bit. On the way I passed the cellar door, and thought I should like for once a full tankard of ale. I descended, and throwing away the sticks, I sat on a stool and poured down the strong October tankard after tankard, till it mounted to my

head. Still, I did not so far forget myself but that I returned to my own room on the crutches, stooping and staggering, so that the maids whispered that the old gentleman was failing fast. When I found myself alone, as I thought, I contained myself no longer; but, locking the door, I threw my wig up to the ceiling, my crutches on the floor, and I began to dance, the jolly old ale in my heels.

'Ouf! It was a relief. For many days I had been so carefully watched, that here had been no chance of any exercise. The quiet house, in which the only noise was the slow ticking of the cuckoo-clock; the aged lady who sat opposite to me all day long, bowed and bent, meditating on the past and future—for to the old there is no present—the old servants, the old dogs, the old furniture, amid which our married life of seventy-five years had been

spent—all these things fell upon my spirits like lead. So that, warmed by the strong ale, believing myself free from observation, I shook off all disguise, and danced with the agility of a man in his twenties.

'A loud shriek interrupted me. I had made a mistake in the room, the beer being in my head: instead of my own bedroom, I was in our common sitting-room. My poor old wife stood before me, pointing with her shrivelled finger, gasping for terror and amazement. Then her head turned, and she fell headlong to the ground. The shock and affright were too much for her, and she never spoke again.'

'After that,' I said, 'there would be nothing to prevent your beginning the Grand Research?'

'Stop a moment. Think. Another difficulty began here. How was I to get rid of

myself? An old man of a hundred and eight could not suddenly leave his house and go away by himself. How was I to make the old man disappear? This difficulty occupied my thoughts continually. Sometimes I thought of escaping at night; but I wanted to keep my estate, which, when I disappeared, would fall to my heirs. Now, here an accident happened which proved of the greatest use to me. My eldest son (cut off at seventy) had left a grandson, his own son having also died, who was at the time living quietly, being a young man of twenty-two, and of studious habits, in a lodging at Westminster. Here he contracted a fever of some kind, which quickly carried him off. No one of the family, except myself, knew his place of residence; none of his cousins or great uncles (my sons) had ever seen him; for an obscure country lad to die in an obscure London

lodging makes but little stir. Therefore I made use of his death to my own advantage. I instructed my lawyers that my heir, Mr. Montagu Jekyll the younger, would shortly call upon them. He did call: he had a long talk with them about the estate and the failing health of the old squire; but when he came to pay his respects at the Hall I was nowhere to be found.

'It was strange; I had disappeared. They dragged the rivers; they searched the woods; they found my crutches; they found my clothes, my wig, and my hat. But my body was never recovered. I need not tell you that the young man, the heir, was no other than myself.

'That difficulty surmounted, I resolved that it should not occur again. The estates were not entailed, and I sold them, reckoning on the

promise that I should always have the equivalent to what I started upon in an annual income.'

'And the rest of your children and grandchildren?'

'I do not know. It is absurd to suppose that I could keep the genealogical tables of so large a family as mine. Why, at the estimate of four children apiece, I have reckoned that my present descendants amount to over a million and a quarter; and, of course, many of them must have had more than four children. It is long, however, since I cared about following the fortunes of my grandchildren. I start the sons and portion the daughters; then they go out into the world, and I know nothing more about them. Long before the grandchildren begin to get troublesome, I am away and forgotten.'

'Do you, then, change your name?'

'Sometimes, for a generation or two. Then I take it again, and display a curious acquaintance with the family history of the Jekylls of Worcestershire. At present I am bearing my own name.'

'Then, having got rid of your estate, I suppose the Research was fairly begun? There were no longer any obstacles?'

He laughed gently.

'No obstacles? Why, I was beginning the world all over again. I, who had for forty years pretended to be an old man, I was a young fellow again of five and thirty. My heart was young as well as my body; I quickly forgot the poor old lady with whom I had for so long been unequally yoked; and I burned to make a new departure.'

'But your studies, your resolutions—did you think nothing of them?'

'Yes, at times I thought of them; but they would always wait; meantime, I wanted to enlarge my experience of the world.

'I went to London this time; the glorious eighteenth century was well begun: when shall we see its like again? I found myself among wits of whose talk you can have no conception, among ladies whose beauty was only equalled by their incomparable grace, and in a school of manners the like of which the world has never seen. It was only in the eighteenth century that men and women succeeded in defeating age. By means of wigs, powder, paint, stays, and other artificial adornments, they kept up the pretence of always being young. When they failed, as sometimes happened through an unmannerly palsy or a disconcerting blindness, or anything of that sort, the rest of us pretended that

nothing was wrong. But, short of their afflictions, men and women—I mean gentlemen and ladies, of course—went on with their suppers, their cards, and their dice, until they fell down and died. To me, of course, who dreaded nothing but an accidental knock with a chair-pole, or the upset of a coach, or the falling of something on my head, there was no merit in this kind of acting; but I confess that I was then, and am still, lost in admiration of the admirable way in which these poor creatures of a few short years behaved as if centuries at least were before them.'

He sat still and stroked his chin reflectively.

'How well I remember it, that century of gaming, drinking, suppers, and what preachers call unreality! Unreality, indeed! when men and women took all there was to be had in

life, and said: "Thus will we live while we are in health. Sufficient for the present the wax-tapers, the supper-table, the wit and conversation of well-bred men." Ah!'

He heaved a profound sigh.

'We might have been going on still in the same way, making a little Paris in every capital, the rich enjoying life, and the poor—I suppose the poor were no worse off then than they are now. But the French Revolution came and spoiled everything. I never before thoroughly realised the selfishness of mankind The most beautiful society that the world had ever seen, smashed and destroyed; a whole continent in flames; and all because a few demagogues persuaded the people that they were unhappy. For the first time I was disgusted with my epoch, and for the first time for a hundred and fifty years I was contented

to think that I had not spent my time in toiling for them.

'Long, however, before the crash of the Revolution, which altered and upset so much, I left London and retired to the country, where I met with that great misfortune which——'

'Which retarded the prosecution of the Great Research?'

'No, sir, worse than that—which added ten years to my life. It began, naturally, with a woman. I formed for her the most serious passion of my life. Can you wonder if I postponed, for the sake of her society, the prosecution of my stupendous design, which could always wait, and might be commenced when she grew old?

'She was eighteen when I married her. She was the daughter of the old vicar of the parish. She was innocent and true; her tem-

per was of the sweetest; her face was the loveliest; she loved me'—here he paused and sighed again. 'Never, never shall I meet again anyone like her. We lived together in perfect bliss for eight years; at the end of that time a fever carried her off.

'I was entirely cast down at this sad misfortune: her religion had softened me; her faith at the end subdued me; I made a resolution that, come what might, I would give up my immortality for her sake, and take my lot among my fellow-creatures. I kept that resolution with firmness. I saw the hour approach when I must either go back ten years again, or take the irrevocable step of going on ten years. Life was so dreary without my Susan that I did not care to face it again; and on the last night of the tenth year, when I should have become five and thirty for the

fifteenth time, I went to bed heroically resolved to pass straight on to forty-five, and after that to endure the rapid advance of time, and sink to the grave with my seventieth year. I would live, I said, always in the country; I would know no joys but those of meditation and retrospect; I would recover, if I could, the consolation of religion; my future years should be spent in making me worthy to join my Susan in heaven, where she awaited me.

'Nothing could have been more laudable than my resolution; but there was one thing which I had forgotten. There was a clause in our agreement that should I slip a decade, and therefore carry on my age for ten years, I should be, like other men, liable to punishment in the flesh for the sins of my past life. Now before I fell in love with Susan I had been

drinking in the company of the hardest livers of the time—with perfect disregard of the future, as I had a right to do—port, punch, and strong waters of all kinds. I had gone to bed in the most beautiful, resigned, and religious mood possible. I felt, for the first time since many a long year, repentance for the past follies, and a sincere desire to amend during the brief future. I would, I was resolved, die when my time came, and join my Susan in heaven. And at that moment I even remembered my mother and sister departed so long before, and forgotten since that night in the Dutch farm-house.

This peaceful and holy frame of mind was to be rudely disturbed in a way quite unexpected and most disagreeable. I fell asleep. At midnight I awoke suddenly to find that not only was I forty-five years of age, in

itself a fearful misfortune, but also that I was afflicted with the most violent attack of gout in the great toe that ever unfortunate man experienced. What can withstand gout? Not love, not religion, not regrets. All these vanished, and I cursed the hour when I was fool enough voluntarily, actually without being obliged, to surrender the best part of my manhood.

'I got through the gout; but, my dear friend, forty-five is not thirty-five. The elasticity of life is gone at forty-five; the muscles are no longer young; the stomach is beginning to be used. They say that a man of forty-five is in his full vigour. I deny it; he is not. He has already begun to feel the prickings of time; he has passed the first fresh rush of feeling and enjoyment. The world has no more to give him; and to think that I might have con-

tinued my vigour and enjoyment but for mere boyish, weak, mawkish, sentimental regret over a girl I loved!'

He paused again, this time deeply moved.

'That was,' he resumed, 'about the year 1795, more than eighty years ago. I confess that my life since then has been a wandering and uncertain life. You, as a moralist, might condemn it——' He hesitated, and looked at me with uncertain eyes.

'I am your confidant first,' I said, 'and a moralist afterwards. Let me hear such particulars as you wish to tell me.'

'I told you before,' he went on, 'that I have had seventeen wives. I have only as yet accounted for two. That leaves fifteen for eighty-four years, an average of less than six years apiece.'

'You don't mean to say, man,' I cried, 'that you have murdered fifteen wives?'

'Nay, I am not Bluebeard. I did not murder them; I only deserted them.'

'You—deserted—them?'

'Yes.' He was quite calm, and looked as if he was confessing an action neither virtuous nor the opposite, but just of the commonplace kind. 'Yes; you see, after my last experiences of marriage, I was difficult to please. If my poor Susan, blameless herself, was the cause of my gout, my forty-five years, the loss of my youth. the appearance of crows'-feet, fatness, puffed cheeks, thin hair, and a red nose, she had also instilled into my mind an ideal of womanly perfection which, while it was delightful to possess and to reflect upon, stood greatly in the way of conjugal happiness. I passed in review one maiden after another; I considered,

but without profit, the widows: I failed anywhere to find my ideal. I did not, perhaps, consider that most unfortunate rule of human life, that, as a man grows older and knows women better, he becomes more difficult to please, because his imagination is duller; while it is more difficult for him to please, because he is no longer a young man and comely. To be sure, I was less comely just then than I am now, having upon me the effects of a hundred years' suppers. Still, with a courtly manner, good means, and such experience of the world as was mine, one might have hoped for something better than what I found. Eight of my wives lasted for an average of two years each. Then they became insupportable, and, after making due provision for their welfare, I left them.'

'Children and all?'

'Children and all. I never did care greatly for children, and latterly I have cared less than ever. They are the most selfish creatures in existence. To be sure, women are not much better.'

He was silent again, and reflected for a few minutes.

'I did not expect much; but a little honour, a little respect to my extraordinary attainments, I did look for. Yet—would you believe it?—they treated my science as if it was so many old women's tales, and my stories of the past as if I had made them up, and the halo of romance, which I could not help wreathing round my own brow, they laughed at. Women have no poetry, no imagination! And then they annoyed me by always wanting to know about my parents and connections; searching among my papers when they thought

I was out of the way; putting leading questions about the origin of my fortune; giving me, all round, no peace.

'It was this intolerable curiosity which caused me to desert my vows, not, I assure you, any roaming disposition, nor any selfish desire to seek for greater beauty. Selfishness is a vice of which I have never, I am happy to say, been guilty, though my wives have frequently brought it against me as a charge. The difficulty in each case was to get rid of them quietly and without fuss. The best way seemed to make them widows. You can't call a man selfish who makes away with himself in order to benefit his wife—come. Once, when we lived by the seaside, I pretended a violent passion for boating, kept a sailing boat, and one evening set the sail, stove a great hole in her side, and launched her. I then walked away.

The boat was found, capsized, and of course they concluded I was drowned. On another occasion, later on, when we were in London there was a great accident on the river—a steamer run down, with two or three hundred people drowned. I did not go home that evening or ever after, and had the satisfaction, a few days later, of seeing my own name among the list of the supposed victims. One cannot, however, always find an accident ready to one's hand, and different means had to be devised. In these I think I showed considerable ingenuity. On one or two occasions, however, I was compelled to adopt a common and even a brutal plan, as when, after a more than stormy scene with a very bad-tempered and long-tongued wife (although a beautiful creature), I left home, and sent her a letter to say that I was going away and should return no more.

This was in 1808, I remember. She was living in Edinburgh, but I suppose she lives nowhere now. Ah! she promised well at the beginning. But they all fall off—they all fall off after the first month or two. Selfishness, morbid curiosity, and inability to appreciate my exceptional qualities! . . . But these details tire you. Of course I had to leave the place and move to quite another part of the world after every such little change.

'They have been, one with another,' he went on, 'a good-looking lot of women; fair, dark, brunette, blonde; eyes of every shade, blue, gray, brown, black, violet, hazel; tall and *petites*; majestic, like Juno, or *gracieuses*, like Venus. I have had little to complain of about their beauty. Their tempers have, of course, varied from "set stormy" to "change.' They could all be coaxed into good temper, and

most of them would believe anything, unless they were jealous. One of them, whom I could only stand for three months, was extraordinary in her jealousy—gave me no peace at all.'

'And about your friends?'

'My—my friends!' He lifted his voice a little, and smiled. 'You are comparatively young; you think there are such things as friends in the world. Perhaps some day you will know better. Friends! I never had any. Nobody ever has any. A few men become close acquaintances, and are fools enough to tell them all their private concerns; but I was never that kind of man. No; we were acquaintances in the dear delightful eighteenth century who conversed with each other, gambled, drank, and banqueted, at arm's length; ready at a moment to draw the sword upon each other, distrustful and distrusted, anxious to get the

best for ourselves, and careless about anybody else. Friendship means the association of men for the purpose of making the best out of life; marriage means a compact in which either party expects the other to work for him or her; children love their parents for the good things they get——'

'And parents love their children—for what?' I asked.

'You forget,' he answered coldly, 'I told you I did not like children.'

He went on talking; but I fell into a sort of reverie, and only half heard what he said. He was describing his different wives, I believe. I was thinking what a strange effect this man's wonderful gift had produced upon his moral nature; of his cold and callous crust of selfishness, which made him insensible to any of the ordinary feelings of human nature; how the

sight of so many generations dying around him had robbed him of sympathy, power of love, friendship, humanity—all the qualities which draw men together, and make them seem less lonely. He could no longer love woman, man, or child; he could no longer shed tears for bereavement, or feel the sorrow of the hastening years. He could no longer feel for the sufferings of others; he pretended to perish suddenly, thinking only how to get rid of a woman of whom he was tired; he walked away, deserting a creature who loved him, with children who looked for his love, in cruel, heartless, unheeding callousness. It seemed to me as if, were that the inevitable result of such a gift, it would be better to take one's chance with the rest, and live out the three-score years and ten.

When I listened again he was still talking.

'On leaving her, my fifteenth wife, a truly dreadful thing happened. I had been so continually occupied for a whole year in devising this notable scheme of separation, that I actually forgot that the fatal ten years was once more drawing to a close. The time arrived in the middle of the night, when I was still walking away from the house, on the hard and frosty road, rejoicing to be once more free, and resolving that it should be indeed a long time before I would again run the risks of matrimony. Suddenly I heard the clock strike twelve; in a moment I remembered, with horror and agony, what had happened. A sudden loss of vital force, a curious feeling of comparative weakness. I had forgotten to renew my forty-fifth year, and I was fifty-five.

'That, my friend, I am still; that I intend

to remain. It is not a bad age. My gout is with me still, but it is not so troublesome as it has been. I have contracted no fresh diseases. I lead a regular life, drink little, go to bed early, and enjoy things in moderation.'

'And now,' I said, 'that you have given up marriage, you will be able to commence the Research.'

'Oh, the Research—the Research!' he spoke impatiently. 'Yes; no doubt some day I shall begin it. Meantime, is my experience complete—*have* I done with matrimony? Truly, I cannot say. Stay; I will show you some of my manuscripts.'

He opened a desk, and took out a volume bound in leather, fastened with brass, and put it into my hands.

'Sir,' he said, 'one of my old volumes.

This contains all the chemistry of the sixteenth century.'

I opened it. The volume was closely written in a small and crabbed handwriting, on paper gone yellow with age, and in ink still black and clear.

'All the chemistry of the sixteenth century. I have only to read that book again, to read the discoveries of modern science, and I am furnished with the materials for the Grand Research. Yes, I am resolved to begin it. Sometimes, though, I confess, my desire to benefit my fellow-creatures is much less than my desire to live comfortably and beyond the reach of accident. And, to live quite comfortably, I want the right kind of wife. Find her for me, my friend, and I will show my gratitude to you in any way you prefer.'

We had more talk, but it was of no further

importance; and presently, as I saw that my host was growing silent, and besides, as it was already half-past eleven, I took my leave. He promised to call upon me the next morning about some business, the nature of which he did not state, and, shaking my hand, he said:

'My friend, I am in earnest about a wife. Find me a sensible, kind, good-tempered girl, who will put herself out a little to please a man —no longer young.'

'But you would grow tired of her after a little, and leave her.'

'Not till she grew tired of me,' he replied. 'Believe me, my wives were as glad to get rid of me as I was to be free. "Selfish, thoughtless, except about my own pleasures"—such were the epithets they used to hurl at me! What a benefactor I have been, to make so many widows—and all so young!'

'What a benefactor,' I said, 'you might have been, had you stuck to your Grand Research!'

'Perhaps,' he replied airily. 'Patience; your great-grandchildren will reap the benefit of my work. I shall begin—say in thirty, forty, fifty years. Who knows? I am now two hundred and sixty-four years of age. During nearly the whole of that time I have lived for my own pleasure. What a life I have had! And how I wish the eighteenth century would return with my five and thirty years! Oh, to sit at the play in wig and satin coat, with your hat under your arm and your little telescope in your eye, ogling the women behind the wax-candles! Oh, for the little suppers after the play, with songs and the wine and the punch! Oh, for the faro-table and the sweet rapture of winning a *coup!* Oh,

for St. James's Park in the afternoon and Ranelagh in the evening, and the dominoes and hoods and the chase of the fair *incognita!* But the century is gone, and with it half the grace and pleasure of life. Good-night, my friend!'

I was very busy next day, and forgot all about his appointment, which was for half-past twelve. At about two o'clock in the afternoon, however, a policeman came to see me, with a letter addressed to me. I opened it. The lines which were written were illegible. The signature alone remained, 'Montagu Jekyll,' with the address.

'Sad accident, sir,' said the policeman. 'The gentleman slipped in the road and was run over and instantly killed. It was a hearse as did it.'

A sad accident, indeed. I went to the hotel. My poor friend was laid out, quite dead, ready for his funeral. The odd thing was that his face had grown already quite old, incredibly old; a thousand lines were round the eyes and mouth, the skin looked like parchment, the fingers were lean and shrivelled.

'He made up wonderfully well,' the head-waiter whispered. 'Who would have thought he was such an old man? He looks like ninety.'

'He looks, John,' I said, 'like two hundred and sixty-four—or,' I added, because the number might seem strange, 'like any other age you like. I was his lawyer once, in some business matters. I will, if you please, open his desk, and ascertain, if possible, the address of his present advisers.'

We searched the desk. There was money in

it, but no more than enough to pay his hotel and funeral expenses, and a number of papers, but all of them illegible. Nor have I learned anything since then about this wonderful client.

SWEET NELLY,

MY HEART'S DELIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

IN SACKCLOTH AND SLAVERY.

In a trackless country, through a forest stretching away for hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of miles—for no traveller has ever yet crossed the great continent of America and measured its breadth—there journeyed, slowly and with pain, a woman who sometimes carried and sometimes led a little girl four years old. The woman wore no hat nor hood, and her clothes were torn to shreds and tatters by the thorny briars through which she had made her way. Her eyes were wild, and her face, save when she looked at the little child, was set stern: her lips moved as she went along, showing that

she was engaged in some internal struggle. The forest since she first plunged into it had changed its aspect. Everywhere now were pines, nothing but pines, growing in clumps, or in belts, or in great masses, in place of the oaks, maples, hemlocks, and birches through which she had passed. There were no longer any wild vines; the air was resinous to the smell; the ground was soft and yielding. In some places the fugitive drew back her foot in dismay, because the soil sank beneath her weight.

The sun was making rapid way down to the west; the shadows were long; the child dragged its steps, and presently began to burst into a little crying; the woman soothed her. Presently the little cry became a great sobbing. 'Nelly is hungry,' she sobbed.

Then the woman sat down on a fallen

trunk, and looking round her, wrung her hands in despair, for she was quite lost; she knew not where to go, and she had no food.

'I thought to find revenge,' she cried, 'and I have found death and murder. Heaven is just. I shall sit and watch the little one starve to death—the child will go first—and then I shall die. Oh, wretched woman! why wast thou born? Child, child'—she burst into tears of despair, and clutched the little one to her heart—'curse me with your dying breath. Oh! my little innocent, my lamb, I have murdered thee; for I have no food, no water. Hush! hush! Try to sleep.'

She soothed and rocked the little one, who presently, weary with the long day's march, dropped asleep, hungry as she was.

Then the sun sank lower: a little more, and he would have disappeared altogether,

and the woman would have been left alone for the night with the starving child: but while the red colour was beginning to spread in the west, she saw emerging from a clump of pines before her an old man.

He was a white man, but his skin was now dark with exposure to the sun and air; he was clad in skins; he was very old; his hair and beard were long and white; he leaned upon a stick as he went; his steps were feeble; his eyes wandered up and down the glades of the forest, as if he were afraid of being watched. Presently he saw the woman and the child, and after a moment's hesitation he made his way, in a curious and zigzag fashion, across the green space which lay between himself and the woman, and accosted her.

'Who are you?' he asked.

'A runaway,' she replied.

'Show me your hand.'

She held out her left hand; he held out his; on both was the same mark—the brand of a convict.

'I am a thief,' she said; 'I was rightly punished.'

'I am an Anabaptist,' he replied. 'I was punished by the law of the land. Who is the child?'

'I stole the child. It is my master's. I stole it for revenge, because they were going to flog me. I have brought it all the way. My food is exhausted, and so she will die. And now,' she added, with a despairing cry, 'I am a murderess as well as a thief and the companion of thieves, and there can be no more hope for me in this world or the next.'

The old man shook his head and looked at the child, still asleep.

'Come with me,' he said; 'the little one shall not die. I have a hut, and there is food. Both hut and food are poor and rough.'

He led her with the greatest care across the treacherous quagmire by steps of which he alone knew the secret. 'Here I am quite safe,' he explained, 'because no one except myself can cross the place. Safe, so long as I am in hiding. This place is an island of firm land in the midst of a bog.'

There was a hut standing beneath pines which grew on ground a little elevated. It was furnished with a few skins and an earthenware pot of the rudest kind. There was, besides, another earthenware vessel containing water. In the pot was meal. The old man mixed the water with the meal.

'When the child wakes,' he said, 'give her

some, and take some yourself at once. Now sleep in hope: to-morrow I return.'

'Oh! do not leave us alone,' said the woman.

'You are quite safe. I go to fetch more meal; there are some friendly blacks who will provide me. Sleep in peace.'

Then he disappeared, and the woman, laying the child upon one of the skins and covering it with the other, sat beside her, wondering, and presently fell fast asleep. In the morning when she awoke the sun was already up, and her host was standing in the doorway. Then the child awoke too, and presently sat up and ate her breakfast with a hearty good will. The old man, leaning upon his stick, thereupon began a very serious and solemn discourse. He told the woman what a wicked thing she had done in carrying

away a helpless child to the great Dismal Swamp, a place inhabited by none but runaways, and those scattered about, difficult to find, and poorly provided. 'Here,' he said, 'the whites who have exchanged slavery for this most wretched freedom live separately, each by himself; they are jealous of one another, they suspect each his brother; and the blacks, who live together in communities, change their quarters continually, for fear of being caught by the planters, who come out with guns and dogs to hunt them down. I have had to lie hidden here without fire or food for days, while the hounds followed my track until the morass threatened to swallow them up. You, who might have courted such a life yourself—did you think what it meant for a child?'

The woman shook her head.

'I have been here twenty years and more. I have lost the count of time; I know only the seasons as they follow. I think that I am over seventy, and when I can no longer beg meal of my friends, I must lie down to starve. I have spoken to no white person except to you during all this time. When I came I had a Bible. That was lost one night of storm. Since then I have had nothing but my meditations and my hopes; and you—what would you have had? The continual memory of a murdered child.'

'What shall I do? what shall I do?' she cried.

'Take back the child; whatever happen afterwards, take back the child.'

The little girl looked up in the woman's face, and laughed and clapped her hands.

'I have sinned,' said the woman. 'Let me

take her back. God forgive me! She shall go home to her mother.'

She rose at once, as if there was not a moment to be lost. The old Anabaptist put up some meal in a bag of skin, and led her again over the treacherous path.

'You have lost your way,' he said. 'I will be your guide.'

He led her by paths known to himself across forty miles and more of thick forest. When they came near any cleared land, they rested by day and travelled by night. After four days of travelling, they came to their destination.

The old man took the child in his arms and solemnly blessed her in all her doings. Then he prayed with the woman for a while, and then, grasping his stick, he disappeared in the forest.

The woman, left alone, began to tremble. Before her were the broad fields of tobacco belonging to the plantation. On the fields she saw the gangs of men and women at work, the overseers going about among them armed with their heavy whips. Some of the labourers were white, like herself; some were black. Far away, beyond the fields, she saw the house. It was afternoon. She retreated to the forest and sat down, thinking. Finally, she resolved to delay her return until the day's work was done and the gangs had left the fields.

It was past seven o'clock and already dark when she came to the house. She told the little one to be very quiet. There was no one in the portico, but there were lights in the state room. The woman opened the door and set the little one down.

'Run to your mother, child,' she whispered.

A pattering of little feet, and a wild cry as the mother snatched up her lost babe, and then the woman, leaning against the door, sighed heavily and sank to the ground. They found her there—those who came running at the cry of the mother—and brought her within the room.

'It is the woman Alice Purview,' said the master.

'Leave her to me, husband,' said his wife. 'If she carried away the child, she hath brought her back again. Let me deal with her.'

Madam dealt very gently with her. Her past offence, whatever that was, received pardon; her wounded and torn feet were bandaged and cared for; her broken spirit was soothed. When she recovered she was taken from her former office of nurse to the sick

ward, and made nurse to the little girl; and, as the sequel will show, no girl ever had nurse more faithful, loving, and true.

The woman was my nurse; I was the little girl; that journey to the Dismal Swamp is the first thing I can recollect; and when I read of Elijah, I think of the poor runaway Anabaptist, whose face, I am sure, was like unto the face of the prophet.

It was my fortune to be born in His Majesty's Plantations of Virginia. I am persuaded that there is not anywhere upon this earth a country more abundantly supplied than this with all that God hath provided for the satisfaction and delight of man. It is not for me, a simple woman, to undertake the praise of this happy colony, which has been already fitly set forth by those ingenious gentlemen

whose business or pleasure it is to recommend the place for the enterprise of gentlemen adventurers, planters, and those whose hearts are valiant though their fortunes be desperate. Yet, when I contemplate the hard and cruel lives led by so many poor people in the great city of London, I am moved to wonder that His Majesty the King, who with his council is ever considering the happiness of his subjects, doth not order the way to be made plain and easy for all who are in poverty to reach this happy land. Who, for instance, in the hope of a few pence, earned with trouble and sometimes with kicks and blows, would cry up and down the street dry faggots, small coal, matches, Spanish blacking, pen and ink, thread, laces, and the like, when he might with little toil maintain himself in comfort on a farm which he could get for nothing? There is room for

all on the banks of the Potomac, the Rappahannock, and the James Rivers. Yet the crowd of the city grows daily greater, and the forests of Virginia remain uncleared. Or when learned men demonstrate that, at the present rate of increase, our own population long before the end of this eighteenth century will be so vast that there will not be enough food for all, and thousands, nay, millions, will yearly perish of starvation, I am constrained to think of those broad tracts which are ready to receive thousands upon thousands of Englishmen. Sure I am, that if those at home knew the richness and fertility of the American colonies, every newly-born English child would be regarded as a fresh proof of Heaven's benevolence to this country, and another soldier in the cause of liberty and the Protestant faith.

I was born in the year one thousand seven

hundred, on my father's great Virginian estate. It stretched for six miles and more along the banks of a little river, called Cypress Creek, which runs through the Isle of Wight County into the James River. My father, Robert Carellis, Esquire, was a Virginian gentleman of old stock, being a grandson of one John Carellis who came to the Province in the ship which brought the first company of Gentlemen Adventurers. There were, alas! too many gentlemen on board that vessel, there being fifty of that rank to a poor three of labouring men. They were too proud to dig, being all armigeri and esquires, although younger sons. Some of them in consequence proudly perished of starvation; some fell fighting the Indians; a few, however, of whom John Carellis was one, survived the first disasters of the colony, and became lords of vast territories covered with

forest, in a corner of which they began to plant tobacco. It has been said of the Virginian gentlemen that they would all be kaisers, and obey none. In sooth, they are all kaisers, inasmuch as they live each on his own estate—the lord and seigneur whose will none questions; the owner and absolute master of slaves whom they reckon by hundreds. When I read the narratives of those unfortunate men who have served in captivity to Turk or Moor, I think of our slaves in the plantations; and the life of the Turkish bashaw, in my mind, greatly resembles that of his honour, Robert Carellis, save that my father was ever a merciful man, and inclined to spare the lash.

Those who worked for us were, of course, all slaves. They were of many kinds, white, black, and copper-coloured. They were Eng-

lish, Irish, Scotch, French, Africans—men of every country. First, as regards the negroes. There are some, I know, who doubt the righteousness of this trade in men. Yet it cannot be denied that it must be a laudable thing to bring these poor creatures from a land, where they live in constant danger of life, to one where they are maintained in security; and from the most brutish ignorance of religion to a knowledge of the Christian faith. I am aware that the Reverend Matthew Marling, Master of Arts, our late learned rector, held that it is uncertain, the Church not having pronounced upon the matter, whether black negroes, children of Ham and under his curse, have souls to be saved or lost. Yet, I have seen so many proofs of intelligence, fidelity, and affection among them, that I would fain believe them to be in all respects, save for their colour,

which for this life dooms them to a condition of slavery, like unto ourselves.

Side by side with the negroes worked in our fields the white slaves, sent over to the plantations from the London and Bristol gaols —the forgers, thieves, foot-pads, shoplifters, highway robbers, passers of counterfeit coin, vagabonds, and common rogues, who had, by their ill-doing at home, forfeited their lives to the law and lain in prison under sentence of death. They had been respited by the King's mercy, some of them even rescued at the very last moment, when the noose that was to kill them was already hanging from the fatal beam, and the bitterness of death was already tasted, and the dismal funeral service had been already commenced by the ordinary. The Royal clemency gave these fortunate wretches a reprieve, but they were pardoned only on condi-

tion of being sold for a term of years to work on the plantations of Virginia, whither they were conveyed after being branded in the hand, and sold on their arrival by public auction to the highest bidder.

It might be thought that desperate creatures such as these, the offscourings of the country, would prove troublesome, mutinous, or murderous. But the contrary was the rule. No one, seeing their obedience, their docility (to be sure, the overseer's terrible whip was always present before their eyes), would have imagined that these men and women had once been hardened criminals, common rogues and vagabonds. For the most part they worked cheerfully, though they lived hardly. Some of the more prudent of them, when their time was out, took up small plantations of their own, grew tobacco, and even advanced so far as to

become themselves the owners of slaves, as well as of lands. Then would they fain forget the past, and, in company, when they thought themselves unknown, would even try to pass for Gentlemen Adventurers.

There was a third class of plantation slaves of whom my father would have none. I mean the men sold into captivity for religious opinions or for political offences. It was a most dreadful thing, my father said, that men whose only crime was a lack of reasoning power should be driven to work under the lash. Therefore he would never buy any Papists, Anabaptists, or Quakers, although on other plantations there were plenty of these gentry. And while other planters had servants who had been out with Monmouth, or were concerned in some of the little conspiracies of that unquiet time, my father would have nothing to do with them.

Once, indeed, in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixteen, he bought and brought home with him half-a-dozen gallant gentlemen (though they were at the time greatly cast down and unhappy in their appearance) who had been engaged on the wrong side in the rising of the Pretender. These, I say, he brought home to his house, and then, calling for wine, he made them a speech. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'it grieves me to see you in this piteous case. Yet believe me it might have been worse, because, although I have bought you, and, for so many years, your services are mine, yet I cannot find it in my heart to subject persons of your consideration to the rigours contemplated by your judges. I cannot, however, break the law and give you your freedom. I propose, therefore, to establish you all together on a piece of land which you will cul-

tivate for yourselves, according to such rules as you choose to establish for your own guidance. There I will help you to what you want for necessaries. And now, gentlemen'—for all began to cry aloud for surprise and joy—'here is wine, and we will drink to the health of the King—and on this side of the Atlantic we must all, whatever our opinions, add—"over the water."'

We lived in a large house built entirely of wood, like all the houses in the country, and embellished with a wooden portico after the Grecian style, erected in front: this served instead of the verandah which most Virginian houses possess. The great chimney, which served for all the rooms, was built of brick outside the house. The room of state where my mother sat was a low room, forty feet long, lit with five windows, opening upon the great por-

tico; in the summer the glass windows were replaced by green jalousies; the ceiling was plastered white; the walls were painted of a dull lead colour; the fireplace and mantelpiece, which were very grand, were made of walnut-wood richly carved by a London workman, in flowers, fruits, and the arms of the Carellis family, gilt. In the winter there was a screen and a carpet before the fire, but in the summer these were taken away; the tables and chairs were all from London; there were portraits of our ancestors on the walls; there was a genealogical tree carrying back the family of Carellis to a patriarch who lived about the same time as Abraham (it was so stated on the tree), but who is passed over in the sacred narrative because, as I always supposed, his estate was far from that of Abraham, and they never met; and outside, in the portico, were chairs made of

hickory wood with sloping backs, where, in the summer evenings, my father sat with his friends and smoked a cool pipe of his best Virginia.

One does not look for books on a Virginian estate, yet we had a goodly library, consisting of Captain John Smith's History of Virginia, Speed's English History, Livy done into English by Several Hands, the History of the Turks, the History of the Spaniards' Conquest of Mexico, and the True Relation of Bacon's Horrid Conspiracy. These books served for lesson books for myself, though I do not remember that anyone else ever read them. As for our overseers and people, my father was ever of opinion, in the which I agree with him, that the arts of reading and writing should only be taught to those who are in a position of authority, so that they may with the greater dignity admonish unto godliness and contentment those

placed under them. The Church Catechism warrants this doctrine, to my thinking.

Our house was, in fine, a country seat which any English gentleman would be proud to call his own, furnished with guest-chambers, dining-rooms, and every sort of convenience and luxury. Behind it lay a great garden planted with fruit trees, vegetables for the table, and herbs for the still-room. Before it was the square, a large cleared ground, on the three sides of which stood the houses of the overseers and the slaves. All these houses were alike, built of logs, the windows without glass, the brick or mud-built chimney standing at one end; each with a little projecting verandah or lean-to, and some with a small garden, where the people grew what liked them best. There were stables, too, and coach-houses, with horses, mules, cows, turkeys, ducks, geese, fowls, and

pigs. A running stream ran through the square, and after providing drinking-water above the clearing, became, below it, a gutter to carry off refuse. The pigs ran about everywhere, save in the gardens of the house; and here and there were enclosures where fatting hogs lay grunting and eating till their time arrived. It was like a great farmstead, only there were no corn ricks; the barns held meal (but it was not grown on the estate) and home-made pork and bacon: the pigs and cattle, like the slaves, belonged to his honour; all was for him.

Beyond the house and square lay the tobacco-fields, and beyond them forest, everywhere forest. Save on that side where you rode down to the banks of the great James River, running into Chesapeake Bay, you had forest on all sides, boundless and without end.

Unless you knew the forest very well; unless you knew the Indian compass, the hemlock-tree which always inclines its head to the east; and unless you could read the blazings of the trees which pointed to the homestead, you could lose yourself in the forest in five minutes; and then wander round and round in a ring of twenty yards, thinking you were walking straight ahead for miles, till starvation seized you and you fell down and presently died.

The Virginian manner of life was simple, yet plentiful. It becomes not a woman to think overmuch about eating, yet I own that the English breakfast-tables seem to me but poorly provided compared with those of Virginia. Here, indeed, you have cold meat and small ale in plenty, with bread and cheese, and, for the ladies, a dish of tea; there you had daily set forth fried fowl, fried ham, bacon

and eggs, cold meat, preserved peaches, quinces and grapes, hot wheaten biscuit, short-cake, corn-cake, griddle-cake soaked in butter, with claret or small ale for the gentlemen, and milk or milk and water for the women and children. Our wine, our malt for brewing, the best sort of our beer, our spices, our sugar, our clothes, our furniture, all came from England.

Virginia has been divided into parishes—not like your little London parishes, which consist of half an acre of houses, but great broad districts half the size of an English county. To each parish is a clergyman of the Established Church. No dissenters are allowed, nor any meeting-houses save one of Quakers. Our clergyman was paid ten thousand pounds of tobacco for all his stipend; and as he could sell it for threepence the pound, you will perceive that the clergy of Virginia are better paid than

those of England. In addition to their stipend, they received two hundred pounds of tobacco for a christening, three hundred pounds for a wedding, and four hundred pounds for a funeral. Add to these advantages that the clergyman was not expected, as is too often the custom here, to rise from the table at the third course, or to drink less wine than his host and the other guests.

Thus, then, and in so great state, did we live, in the enjoyment of every luxury that can be procured in England, together with those which are peculiar to America—notably, the soft sweet air of Virginia. We were, on our estates, our own builders, carpenters, gardeners, graziers, bakers, butchers, brewers (only we used English malt), pastry-cooks, tailors, and bootmakers. We had every variety of fish, flesh, and game; we drank Madeira, Canary,

claret, cider, peach brandy, and apple wine; we formed a society of gentlefolk, separated and set apart from the settlers who had been our bought servants, and who bore in their hands the brand which no years can ever efface. We had been Cavaliers in King Charles's time, but we stood up for Church and State, and welcomed the Protestant hero, great William the Deliverer. We had scant sympathy with those who would trouble the peace for the sake of a Papist Pretender, who, if all reports were true, was no son of King James at all, but had been brought into the Queen's chamber in a warming pan. Open house was kept for all comers—all, that is, of our own station, for no peer in England was prouder of his rank than we of Virginia were of ours—and should there be a decayed gentleman of good family among us, he might still live at ease and gallantly by jour-

neying from one plantation to another, only taking care never to outstay his welcome. And this, provided he were a man of cheerful disposition, or one who could sing, shoot, drink, and tell stories, would be difficult, or well-nigh impossible, in a Virginian house.

So we lived, and so I grew up; bred in such courtly and polite manners as were familiar with my mother, the most dignified gentlewoman in Virginia; taught to read, write, cypher (but indifferently); to work samplers, to make puddings, pies, and preserves, to distil strong waters, to brew home-made wines, to say the Catechism and respect the Church, and, naturally, to believe that there was nowhere on the surface of the earth, except, perhaps, the King of Great Britain, a man of nobler birth and grander position than his honour, Robert Carellis, my father.

But at the age of nineteen a great misfortune happened to me. The overseers brought from James Town, where they had purchased them, six men who, though we did not know it, were suffering from gaol-fever. They all died; two of the overseers died; many of the people died; lastly, my father and mother caught the infection and died too.

Then I was left alone in the world.

I had many cousins to whom I could go, but by my father's will—made while in full expectation of death and in true Christian resignation—I was to be sent across the Atlantic to our agent in London, there to remain as his ward until I was twenty-one, when I was to be at liberty to do what I pleased with my inheritance.

CHAPTER II.

ON TOWER HILL.

We had a favourable voyage of five weeks and two days, with fair weather and no adverse winds until we arrived off the Nore, where we were compelled to lie to and anchor in the Roads, together with over a hundred other vessels, small and great, waiting for the wind to change, so that we might beat up the river to the port of London. If I was surprised at the sight of so many ships gathered together in one place, you may think how much more I was astonished as we slowly made our way up the crowded river, and finally dropped anchor in the Pool over against the Tower of London, in

the midst of so many masts and such a crowd of ships as, in my ignorance, I had never dreamed of. There were East Indiamen; dusky colliers; brightly painted traders with France and Spain; prodigious great ships in the Levantine trade, armed with long carronades; round Dutch sloops; with every kind of pinnace, tender, smack, hoy, brig, schooner, yacht, barge, and ferryboat. On all these ships men were running about, loading, unloading, painting, repairing, fetching, carrying, and shouting. There, before my very eyes, rose the White Tower, of which Speed speaks so much; London Bridge was on the left; beyond it the Monument to the Great Fire; then the dome of St. Paul's, and innumerable spires, steeples, and towers of this rich and prosperous city. I remembered, standing on the deck of the ship and seeing all these things for the first time, how

we colonists had been accustomed to speak in our boastful way of America's vast plains. Why, is the greatness of a country to be measured by her acres? Then should the Dismal Swamp be more illustrious than Athens, Virginia more considerable than Middlesex, and the Potomac a greater river than the Tiber or the Thames. What have these new countries to show with the old? Why, the very stones of the old Tower, the narrow arches of the bridge, the towering cathedral, even the roofs of the houses, cry aloud to the people to remember the past, how they fought for liberty and religion, and to be jealous for the future.

It was late in the afternoon, about five o'clock, when we finally came to anchor in the Pool, and I began to wonder what was coming next. My guardian's name was

Alderman Benjamin Medlycott, and he lived on Tower Hill. He and his had been agents to the Carellis plantation since we first settled there. They were far-off cousins, John Carellis the Gentleman Adventurer having been a first cousin of Carellis Medlycott, the alderman's great-grandfather; so that I was not going among strangers, but my own kin.

What was he like, this formal merchant whose letters I had read? They were full of the prices current; they advised the arrival of cargo, and the despatch of wine, spices, furniture, clothes, wigs, saddles, guns, swords, sashes, and all the things which were required in the settlement of a Virginian gentleman of rank. But nothing about himself or his family.

I had not long to wait in suspense. Presently, standing on the quarter-deck with

Nurse Alice, I saw the captain shake hands with a young man soberly attired in a brown square-cut coat, with long calamanco waistcoat down to his knees. I had time to look at him, because he conversed with the captain for a few minutes before the latter led him aft and presented him to me. I set him down at once as a messenger from my guardian, and I made up my mind that his dress, which was by no means so splendid as that which my father habitually wore, was in the fashion of London merchants. There was no finery; the cuffs were wide and large; steel clocks adorned the shoes; the stockings were silk, but of a dark colour; his peruke was long and curled, but not extravagant; a black silk cravat, of the kind they call a steenkirk, was round his neck, and his laced linen cuffs were of a dazzling whiteness. This splendour

of linen, I learned afterwards, was thought much of by London citizens. On his hands, which were white, he wore a single signet ring. He carried no sword, but a short stick was under his arm. His hat was trimmed with silver galloon. As for his face, I could only see then that his features were straight and handsome. Was he, I thought, a son of my guardian?

After the exchange of a few words with the captain, and receiving a packet of papers, he climbed the companion, and, taking off his hat, bowed low.

'Mistress Elinor Carellis,' he said, 'I have the honour to present myself as the alderman's chief factor, though unworthy of that position, and your most obedient servant. My name is Christopher March.'

I made him a courtesy.

'I hope,' I said, 'that my guardian is in good health.'

'He suffers from gout, otherwise he is well. I trust,' continued the chief clerk, 'that you have had a favourable passage, and as much comfort as is possible on board a ship.'

These compliments exchanged, Christopher March—I call him so henceforth, because he never received any other style or title—informed me that he had waiting alongside a boat to carry me ashore, and that the ship's officers would see all my boxes brought up to the house as soon as convenient. Upon that I took leave of my friend the captain—an honest brave sailor, and less addicted than most seafaring men to the vice of swearing—and so into the boat with Alice, my nurse.

The little voyage lasted but a few minutes,

and we were presently landed at the stairs. Our conductor led us through a narrow lane, with tall warehouses on either side, and paved with round stones, which were muddy and slippery ; then we turned to the right, and found ourselves in a broad and open space, which was, he told me, Tower Hill, the place where so many unfortunate gentlemen's heads have fallen. On the other side I saw the beefeaters in their scarlet embroidered uniform. But I was so bewildered with the noise and the novelty of everything, that I hardly saw anything or heard what was said to me. But we had not far to go. We passed a warehouse four storeys high, and from every storey a projecting beam with ropes, which made me think of the gallows. But the beams were only for the pulleys and ropes by which bales were lifted up and down.

'This,' said Christopher March, 'is Mr. Alderman Medlycott's warehouse, and this—' he stopped at the door of a private house next to the warehouse—'this is Mr. Alderman Medlycott's residence.'

He spoke of the alderman in tones of such great respect, that I began to feel as if part of my education had been neglected—that part, I mean, which teaches respect to the aldermen of London. A thought also crossed my mind that this excessive respect for his master was useful in exalting his own position.

However, there was no time to think, because the door was presently opened, and we found ourselves in a large and spacious hall, containing chairs and a fireplace, with a stand of strange weapons. Horns, heads of buffaloes and deer, and curious things of all sorts, brought to Tower Hill by the alderman's

captains, hung upon the walls. Then the maid opened a door to the right, and I found myself in the parlour of a great London city merchant.

The room was lofty, and had two windows looking upon Tower Hill; the walls were wainscoted and painted in a fashion strange to me and unknown in Virginia. A soft Turkey carpet was on the floor, a bright sea-coal fire was burning in the fire-place, though the air was not cold to one fresh from the sea breezes; there was a high mantel-shelf, on which were displayed more curiosities from beyond the seas, and above them wonderful specimens of ladies' work in samplers, representing peacocks, birds of paradise, landscapes, and churches all in satin. Seated at one window were two ladies and a gentleman, who rose to receive me. Christopher March, I observed,

left me at the door with a profound bow. We made deep reverences to each other, and then I blushed because, although Alice had dressed me in all my best, I felt how countrified and rustic was my appearance compared with the fine new fashions of these London ladies.

The elder lady, who was about forty-five years of age, and had a most kind face, with soft eyes, held out her hand.

'My dear,' she said, 'I am Mistress Medlycott, the wife of your guardian, the alderman, who is now ill with the gout, but will see you shortly; and this is my daughter Jenny, who desires your better acquaintance.'

Jenny here in her turn took me by the hand. She was a little thing, and so pretty and agreeable was her face, with bright laughing blue eyes, light brown hair, a dimple in her

chin, and saucy lips, that I thought I had never seen the like. 'Good heavens!' I thought; 'what must they think of me—ill-dressed, tall, and ungainly?'

'Mistress Elinor,' said Jenny, 'if I were tall enough I would kiss you. As I am not, I hope you will stoop and kiss me. We shall be very good friends, I hope.'

'I may present my Lord Eardesley,' said madam, with dignity. 'His lordship, being here upon business with the alderman, hath requested permission to see'—here she stopped and smiled very kindly—'to see the Princess Pocahontas of Virginia.'

At that little joke we all laughed. His lordship was a young man, about the same height as Christopher March, but very much unlike the chief factor. For while Christopher had a way of dropping his eyes when he met

your own, and of hanging his head, and in many other ways of showing that he was not perfectly at his ease with ladies, the young lord looked you frankly in the face and laughed, and was not only happy himself in being with two girls, but also made us all happy as well. Only this knowledge came later.

'I must call you Nelly,' said Jenny, pressing my hand. 'Elinor, or Mistress Elinor, is too long. How tall you are! And oh!'—she broke off, with a sigh and a laugh—'Nelly, the hearts of all the men will be broken.'

'Pray Heaven,' said my lord, 'that the fragments of one, at least, be put together again.'

'This is idle talk,' said madam. 'Mistress Elinor will despise us after the grave discourse to which, no doubt, she has been accustomed in Virginia.'

'We had grave discourse,' I explained, 'when the Reverend Matthew Marling came to see us, twice a year. At other times we talked about the crops, and my father's sport, and such topics.'

Presently Lord Eardesley took his leave with more compliments. When he went away it seemed as if some of the sunshine of the room had gone with him. To be sure, a great deal of the colour had gone, for his coat was of scarlet silk, and he wore a crimson sash for his sword.

'Do not think, Nelly,' said Jenny, in her quick way, 'that lords associate every day with City merchants, or that we know more than one peer. Lord Eardesley has had money affairs with my father for many years, and the custom has grown up for him to call upon us whenever he calls at the counting-

house. Oh, Nelly! they did not tell us what to expect.'

'My dear,' I said, 'you will make me vain. And, indeed, I am not so pretty as you.'

'Oh, I? I am a City girl, little and saucy; but I know what a beautiful lady of family should be—she should be like you. You ought to be Lady——'

'Jenny,' her mother interrupted, 'for shame. As for Lord Eardesley, Elinor, he is an excellent young man; but he is, unfortunately, very poor, his father having gambled away all the money and most of the estates. Poor young Lord Eardesley will probably have to take service with the Austrian.'

Jenny shook her head.

'He had better carry the Virginian colours,' she said, with a laugh. 'Come with me, Nelly. I will show you your room.'

They had bestowed me in the best room on the first floor, which had a little room beside it for Alice. I was at first much awed by the magnificence of the bed, which was much finer and more richly hung than any in our Virginian home. But familiarity presently reconciles us to the most majestic things. Here I found my boxes and trunks, which had been brought ashore, and here was Alice taking everything out. Jenny looked on, naturally interested at the display of dress, and though she kindly said nothing, it was plain to me that she found my frocks of a fashion quite impossible to wear in London. Presently, however, we came to my jewel-case, wherein lay all the family treasures, which had been my mother's; and her delight was extraordinary when she had dressed herself up in all the necklaces, bracelets, rings, chains, and glittering

gauds which had been worn by many successive matrons in the Carellis family. She then threw her little head back, waved her hands, and went through a hundred posturings and bowings.

'I am Mrs. Bracegirdle, at the theatre,' she said. 'This is how she looks and carries her fan, and makes eyes at the beaux in the pit.'

However, we could not stop playing there, because madam sent word that the alderman was ready to see me.

It was now past six, and candles were lit. Madam herself led me to the back of the house, where was a covered way to the counting-house. Here the alderman himself was sitting with his clerk, Christopher March. One foot was wrapped in flannel, and lying on a cushion; a stick stood by the side of the arm-chair in which he sat, with a pillow to give

him ease; bundles of papers were on the table before him.

'Come in, my dear,' he said, in a cheery voice—'come in. Leave her here, wife, to talk to me. Send for her when you take your dish of tea. Now, Christopher, your day's work is done. Good-night to you, and be off.'

The words were peremptory, but the tone was gentle. Christopher March bowed low to him, and lower still to madam, and departed. Meanwhile I looked to see what manner of man this guardian of mine might be. He was a man of sixty or so, and he had a monstrously red face, but his nose was redder still; his lips were thick and projecting; his wig was pushed a little off one side, which made him look, somehow, as if he were going to say something to make everybody laugh. His eyes

were kind and soft, and his voice, though a little rough, was kind, too. In fact, as I afterwards found out, the alderman was well known for being the kindest man who ever sat on the bench of magistrates, or ruled a great house with many clerks and servants.

The first thing that he did, however, was not reassuring. He clutched the arm of his chair, leaned forward, and gazing upon me with intense eyes, he shouted :

'Death and zounds ! '

Naturally, I shrank back, frightened.

'Do not be alarmed, my dear,' said his wife calmly. 'It is his only relief when a pinch seizes his toe.'

I thought he would have a fit, for his eyes stood out of his head, and his face became quite purple. But he recovered suddenly, and, with a sigh of relief, resumed the benevolent

expression which the redness of his face and his puffed cheeks could not altogether conceal.

'Sit down, my dear,' he said. 'I am better now! Phew! That was a pinch. If you want to know what gout is like, take a hair-pin from your pretty head and put it in the fire till it is a white heat. Then put it to the middle joint of—your thumb will do for illustration—and hold it there tight; and if you find that any method besides swearing will relieve you, I shall be glad to know what that method is. Sit down, my dear, and let us talk.'

I took a chair opposite to him, and madam left us alone. He arranged his papers, and began to talk to me about my affairs.

First, after some kind compliments on my beauty (which I may pass over), he told me of his grief on receiving intelligence of my father's death, by which unhappy event he had lost a

much esteemed correspondent. He had always hoped, he said, to see my honoured father some day at his poor home, and offer him such hospitality as a London merchant, with the aid of his company — that of the Grocers — could command. He added, with much consideration, that it would have been his duty to recommend my father to the hospitality of the Lord Mayor, as a Virginian Gentleman Adventurer of the highest position; and he gave me to understand that in the important matter of turtle soup and fat capons, without speaking of venison, turkey, Christmas ducks, small fowl, haunches of mutton, and barons of beef, and without dwelling on the hypocras, loving cups, and their vast cellars filled with such wine as even kings cannot equal, the Worshipful Company of Grocers stood pre-eminent among the City guilds.

'Our kitchen motto,' he added, with a fine feeling of pride, which, somehow, seemed to reflect credit upon him, as indicating a thrifty habit as well as a large enjoyment of good things, 'is one which should be engraven on the heart of every one who loveth the good gifts of Heaven, 'Waste not—spare not;' so that while the reputation of the City be maintained, we may ever remember that there are others outside our hall not so richly favoured as ourselves. And you may see, my dear, within a stone's throw of Grocers' Hall itself, boys and even men who have, poor wretches, to make a dinner off a penny dish of beef broth, with a cup of small ale added by the charity of the cook.'

After this digression, he proceeded with the main thread of his discourse, which was to the effect that, although I had some two years to

wait before I attained my majority, it was his duty to lay before me an account of my affairs and of his stewardship.

And then occurred the greatest surprise of all my life. Of course I knew without being told that the daughter of Mr. Robert Carellis, his only child, was certain to be what in Virginia would be called wealthy. I could not live in the rough splendour of the plantation without looking on myself as belonging to the ranks of those who are called rich. But I was not prepared for the greatness of the fortune which my guardian announced to me.

The successive owners of the Carellis estate had all transmitted their tobacco every year to Medlycott and Company. The merchants received the cargo, sold it, and after remitting to Virginia all those things which were required, invested the remainder of the

money as advantageously as was possible. Mine was the fourth generation of this annual consignment; and though some years might be poor, some cargoes might be wrecked or spoiled, yet in the space of a hundred years the profits of the tobacco had grown up to a vast amount of money. In a word, I was a very great heiress. My guardian held in trust for me over one hundred thousand pounds, and my plantation in Virginia produced, even under the careless and easy rule of my father, more than a thousand pounds a year.

'You are worth,' said Mr. Medlycott, looking at the figures with admiring eyes, 'you are worth more than a plum.' He smacked his lips over the word. 'A plum, my dear. How few of us, unworthy and unprofitable servants that we are, achieve a plum! and how many

things can be bought when one has a plum in one's hand to buy them with.'

By a plum, I learned afterwards, he meant a hundred thousand pounds.

'But what am I to do with all this money?' I cried, aghast.

'You will buy, my dear,' he said, laughing, 'falbalas for your frocks, quilted petticoats, gold kickshaws, china, pet negro boys——'

'Oh, no,' I said, laughing; 'I have had quite enough of negro boys already.'

'Then there is one expense saved. And as for the rest, why, my child, unless we take heed, your husband—nay, never blush—will show you how to spend it. There are gamblers enough, I warrant, among the gallants of St. James's, who would cock their hats for our Virginian heiress, and leave her in the end as ragged as any fish-wife. But fear

not, Cousin Elinor. Here shall we keep you under lock and ward, safe from the Mohocks.'

Presently he stopped, and I, fearing to trespass longer on his patience, rose to go.

He took my hand, and was about to raise it to his lips, when another twinge of gout seized him.

'My dear ward—— Death and zounds!'

When I returned to the parlour I found Jenny waiting for me.

'Come,' she said, 'let us sit down and talk. We shall be alone for half an hour, and we have so many things to say that one does not know where to begin.'

I noticed then that there was some appearance of preparation.

'It is our evening for cards,' Jenny explained. 'Most ladies in the City have one

evening a week; and, indeed, my mother, who is fond of a game, generally plays four or five evenings in the week. But, for my part, I love better to sit out and talk.'

Two silver candlesticks were on the mantel-shelf, lighted, and four more stood, ready to be lighted, on the card-table, set out with counters and cards.

'Have we,' I asked, 'so much to say?'

'Why, surely, Princess Pocahontas. We are to be friends, and to tell each other everything. Now, show your friendship by telling me how you like the name—the name'—here she blushed and laughed—'of Lysander.'

'Of Lysander?'

'And Clarissa? Lysander and Clarissa. Do they go well together? I will show you his poems, and on Sunday next I will show you—himself.'

I began to understand. It was a little love story that was to be confided to me.

'And does no one know anything about it?'

'Hush—sh!' She opened her eyes very wide and shook her pretty head. 'No one. Christopher March receives his letters and gives them to me privately. I send mine to Wills's Coffee House. It is like the novel of "Clarinda, or the Secrets of a Heart," all in letters. And on Sunday mornings we sigh at each other across the pews while the people are singing the psalms.'

The young man, Christopher March, then, was assisting to deceive his master by secretly receiving letters for his master's daughter. This was very remarkable in so good a young man. But I could say no more then, because the company began to arrive. They were all ladies, except Christopher March himself, who

had assumed a gayer coat for the evening; and, still with the exception of that young man, they all came to play cards. A little delay, at which some waxed impatient, happened while I was introduced as the Virginian newly arrived, but presently they were all seated at the table and deep in play. Among them were one or two quite young girls, no older than Jenny or myself, and it surprised me to see them staking and losing little piles of counters, which meant, I knew, money. The ladies were very finely dressed, with patches set on artfully—some of them with more paint than I could approve—and their manners very stately. But, Lord! to see what a change the chances of the game presently wrought in my hostess's face, which had naturally so much kindness in it. For her colour came and went, her eyes brightened,

and her mouth stiffened. She represented in turns, and in a most lively manner, the varied emotions of hope, terror, indignation, joy, and despair. The other ladies were like her, but they concerned me less.

'Look at my mother,' whispered Jenny. 'That is the way with her every night. She says there is no other joy so great as to win at cards. Let us play and sing.'

She played the spinet very prettily, and presently sang with great spirit, 'As down in the meadows I chanced to pass.'

Christopher March applauded, and then asked me to sing. I declined, because I wished to do nothing but look on that first night. Then he began to talk to us, and paid compliments, at which Jenny laughed contemptuously—it was clear that her father's clerk was a person of small position in her eyes.

At twelve o'clock the chairs came, and the ladies presently rose to go. After what promised to be an endless shouting of bearers and link-boys, with more swearing, the chairs were got away at last.

Madam sank into a seat and pressed her hands to her head.

'Did ever woman have such luck?' she cried, lifting her face,

'You have lost, madam?' asked Christopher, with a grave face.

She groaned.

'I shall want to see you to-morrow morning, Christopher,' she said. 'Girls, go to bed. Elinor, my dear, I thought you would bring me good luck.'

To be sure, as the sequel proved, my arrival was the beginning of the worst luck in the world.

All night I lay awake listening to the rolling and rumbling of carts and coaches, which never seemed to stop. About three in the morning there was a lull, but the noise began again at six, and at seven it was at its height again, with shouting of men and cries of the streets.

'Oh, nurse!' I cried, 'is London always so full of noise?'

'Always,' she replied. 'There is never any lull from year to year. It is the labour of the world which makes this noise.'

She dressed me, and I went downstairs. No one was there yet, although it was already half-past seven, and Betty, the maid, when she came to clear away the card-tables and set out the breakfast, was astonished to see me so early. I waited a little, and then took refuge

with Jenny, who was lying awake, reading Lysander's last.

'It is beautiful, Nelly,' she cried, with sparkling eyes. 'How should you like to have a man writing to you—verses, you know, not prose — beautiful verses like this:

> Sure, Jenny hath some secret charm
> That she doth guard, but not discovers,
> To raise the hopes and soothe th' alarm
> Of all her sighing, anxious lovers.'

It did not seem to me very real, or if the poet meant it; but it would have been unkind to say so.

'When my mother loses at cards,' she told me, 'she always sends for Christopher March. He gives her money without my father knowing any thing about it. What she does with the money which she wins, I cannot tell'

Then we went downstairs and had a dish of chocolate for breakfast. The chocolate was good, but I missed the abundant and plentiful provision of things which we had in Virginia. Not that one wanted to eat more, but in America, as I have already said, there is always on the table a prodigality of good things, as if nature was lavish with her gifts.

After breakfast I stood at the window and looked at the people. There was a company of soldiers in red coats going through drill; at the right-hand side, a little in advance, stood the fugleman, with a pike, and it seemed to me as if the men were all copying him; in front of them was a sergeant, brave with ribbons, giving the orders in a hoarse voice, and with him a drummer boy, smart and ready. The open space north of the Tower was crowded with groups of sailors waiting to be

hired by the captains of trading ships, who marched gravely about among them, asking questions of one and another, and sometimes engaging one. In one place a quarrel and a fight, quickly begun and soon ended; in another a pump, whither I see a crowd haling a boy with shout and laughter, and presently pumping upon him till he is half drowned. Then they let him go, and he creeps away, wet and faint with ill-usage.

Then, when I had tired of looking out of the window, nothing would please Jenny but that I must go a-shopping in Cheapside. It was already eleven of the forenoon, and the streets were filled with people. I was so rustic and ignorant that I was for stopping at every shop and gazing stupidly at every crowd, so that people had much ado not to run against me. However, Jenny made me take the wall,

and by leading me through the narrow lanes and passages which make this wonderful city like an anthill, she conveyed me safely to Cheapside, where for two hours we were shown the most wonderful things, and I laid out a great sum of money, by Jenny's advice and instigation, all to make me fine. There were wadded calico wrappers; a musk-coloured velvet mantle, lined with squirrel skins; falbalas; laced shoes with high heels; roundabout aprons with pockets; hoods; satin frocks; whalebone hoops; a gold repeating watch, with a gold chain; a gold *étui* for needles and scissors; and all sorts of vanities, the like of which I had never before dreamed of; and yet they pleased me, Heaven knows, being a girl, and therefore by nature prone to love these worthless yet pretty things. Besides, as Jenny said, 'You are a great heiress, my dear.

It is fitting that you should dress so that no one will mistake you for a poor, penniless country maid.' I wanted to present her with something to hansel friendship, but she would have nothing except an ostrich egg, set in a rim and feet of silver, which took her fancy, together with a silver-gilt box for carraway comfits, to be taken during long sermons: the lid, I remember, was beautifully enamelled with a Cupid fishing for hearts. And one little thing she bought herself. It was a ninepenny-piece, bent both ways by no less a person than the great Lilly, the fortune-teller. Jenny bought it for luck at langter-a-loo. But I never heard that it brought her any, and I fear that the man who sold it was dishonest—perhaps Lilly never saw the coin, and the dealer himself may have bent that piece. As for lip-salves, rouge, and all the things

which we were asked to buy, I would have none of them; and, indeed, Jenny owned that I needed not the artifices with which some of the pale City madams are fain to heighten and set off their graces.

The next day we went to church at ten in the morning. The church of our parish was that of St. Olave, a beautiful structure, built by that great architect Sir Christopher Wren. Our own pew was square, with straw hassocks and red serge seats, high and narrow. I was astonished to see the ladies as they came in bowing to their friends in the pews. Nor did it seem to me becoming for gentlemen carrying their hats under one arm, and having their canes suspended from the button of their right sleeve, to take out little telescopes and look up and down the church, spying out their friends. Several of these tubes were directed

at our pew, and I saw Jenny suddenly drop her eyes upon her prayer-book, and assume an air of devotion which I had not thought to belong to her nature.

In Virginia we had service for all alike, the household, the convicts, and the negroes, so that I was sorry to see in this church none but the well-to-do, with the respectable clerks and their wives. Surely, I thought, free-born Britons of all kinds should be brought to the ordinances of religion as much as negroes and convict slaves. The clergyman who read the prayers was a young gentleman fresh from the University of Oxford, where, I learn, they for ever run after some new thing. The language of the prayer-book was not, it seems, to his liking. He would have 'pardons' instead of 'pardoneth,' and 'absolves' for 'absolveth;' but I think his taste was wrong when he chose to read,

'endue 'um, enrich 'um, prosper 'um,' instead of 'endue them,' &c., as I had been accustomed to read.

While the psalms were singing, Jenny nudged me gently with her hand, and I saw her turn her head half round and look straight across the church. Then she shut her eyes, and gently raised and dropped her head, and I remembered what she told me about their sighs in church. Sure enough, on the opposite side of the church, was a young gentleman who was affected in exactly the same manner. He did not appear to me to be possessed of a very noble appearance, being small, pale, and with a turned-up nose, a feature which in men should be straight, or perhaps Roman. When we sat down, our heads being well below the top of the pew, Jenny whispered to me that it was Lysander. The lesson for the day was a

chapter of Proverbs, and there were in it certain verses which seemed a special rebuke for the frivolity of us girls. 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.'

The sermon, a very long one under five heads, was preached by the rector himself, in whose face and voice I seemed to perceive some resemblance to my guardian the alderman, for his cheeks and nose were red and puffed, and his voice was thick. He was, in fact, the chaplain of the Grocers' Company, and, as such, was present at all their feasts. At last he finished the sermon, and we all got up and came away. If the ragged boys had not come to the service, at least they were standing outside the doors, and while we thronged the porch there was a cry of pickpocket, and one of them darted from the crowd and fled

through some of the lanes, followed by two or three.

The next day, after serious talk with madam, I began to undertake the study of those things in which I could not fail to be ignorant. The most important were that I should learn to dance, and that I should be improved in music and singing, and for these I had masters. My dancing-master, who took the first place, and considered himself an artist of the greatest distinction, was Sieur Isaac Lemire, a French gentleman of Huguenot descent, born in London. He was a man of little stature, somewhat over the middle age, with thin features and bright eyes. He was very careful about his dress, which was always in accordance with the most recent French fashion; he spoke English as well as French; and when he went out to give a lesson he was followed by a negro boy carry-

ing the fiddle with which he accompanied his instruction.

'Mademoiselle,' he said with a profound bow, on being introduced to me, 'I am charmed by the prospect of lending a fresh grace to one already possessed of so fine a figure and so beautiful a face. Mistress Jenny, I am your very humble servant. You will, I trust, assist us in our task.'

Jenny always stayed, partly because she loved dancing and partly because this professor talked during the whole lesson, and gave us the latest West End news, which we could not get from the 'Postman' or the 'Examiner.'

'A young lady dancing,' said the professor, tuning his fiddle and occasionally allowing one foot a preliminary flourish as if for a treat; 'a young lady dancing is a brandished torch of beauty. She is then most dangerous to the

heart of man; she is then most powerful.' Twang-twang. 'You will now, mademoiselle, have the goodness to pay attention to the carriage of Miss Jenny while she treads with me the *minuet de la cour*.' It is a beautiful dance, the minuet. My heart warmed for it at once; the stateliness of it; the respect for woman which is taught by it; the careful bearing of the body, the grace of the studied gestures, which must be in harmony with the music; all these things made me love the minuet. That was our first lesson; but the professor was not contented with the minuet only, although that dance was the most important. We had, besides, the English country dances; we danced the Hey, with Joan Sanderson, the Scotch reel, the round, and the jig. He taught us, besides, the old-fashioned dances, such as used to be danced at Court, the saraband, which

Jenny did very prettily, with the help of castanets, and coranto, and the cotillon. And then he taught us figures of his own country, such as the Auvergne *bourrée*, the Basque step, and the jigs of Poitou and Picardy.

Once, when we were in the midst of our lesson, Lord Eardesley paid us a visit. Then it was delightful to practise with him as a partner, while Jenny played the spinet and the professor the violin. And his lordship and the professor, and Jenny, too, all said kind things of my grace and quickness in learning.

So began my new life, with kindness, hospitality, and affection, such as I had not looked for nor expected. When the alderman grew better I found him the most delightful of companions, full of stories about the greatness of London and the vastness of her commerce. I was troubled, however, in my mind when I

thought what he would say if he knew that his wife secretly took money from Christopher March, and that his daughter, by help of the same agent, was carrying on a correspondence with a secret lover.

As for nurse, she began by being heavy and dull, whereat I guessed, rightly, that she was thinking over that bad past which never left her mind. She spoke little of it, but once when we were crossing Tower Hill, and I gave a penny to a ragged brat, she began to cry gently, and told me that she had once a son who might have been like that poor boy, as friendless and neglected. 'And their end, my dear, is to carry a musket for sixpence a day, and so get killed in battle, or to go a-thieving, and so get hung.'

After a while, however, she cheered up and found her way to the place which most de-

lighted her, the still-room. Here she sat among the bottles and compounds, making lavender water, ratafia water, decoction of primroses for toothache, cowslip wine, elder-flower wine, and elder-berry wine, preserving poppy-heads and camomile for fever pains, horehound for coughs, trying all the thousand recipes which a woman of her condition of life should, if she be a notable woman and take a pride in her own knowledge, understand perfectly. And madam said that she had never a still-room maid with half her handiness and knowledge.

CHAPTER III.

RIVAL SUITORS.

NATURALLY, I had to unlearn a good many of the opinions which I had learned in Virginia. For instance, I thought there that in England everyone was honest except those few exceptions who, being caught, were either hanged or else branded in the hand, well flogged, and sent across the seas to us. I now learned that for one so caught there were a hundred thieves at large, and that every unknown person was considered dishonest until the contrary was proved. As for my ideas of religion, it was always difficult for me to believe that the fine ladies and gentlemen in the City churches were so devout

as our poor Virginian convicts. As for our amusements, I could not learn to like cards, because it seemed to me cruel to take the money of a player who could not afford to lose it. But I liked the City shows, when we could look out from a window and see the processions, the Lord Mayor's day of state when he sat in his gilded coach, preceded by the train-bands, the City companies, and the masons, singing, 'Hey! the merry masons! Ho! the merry masons,' as they went, while the cannon were fired and the bells clashed. On the Fifth of November they carried Gog and Magog through the streets with more bands. Sometimes the butchers made a wedding merry-making with bones and cleavers. At Christmas the waits came at midnight—

> Sing high, sing low, sing to and fro,
> Go tell it out with speed;

and the mummers came without being invited —Turks, sweeps, kings and queens—and frolicked among us as long as they listed. And at the New Year we had parties at which the alderman would have no cards, but only the merry old games of blind man's buff, hot cockles, and country bumpkin. On Twelfth Night we looked for the bean in the cake. In the spring, when the flowers came, whenever there was a City rejoicing we had gardeners' walks made in the streets and lanes with green arches and rows of flowers—lupins, bachelors' buttons, peony roses, ribbon grass, and the like. There was, indeed, no lack of amusement for me, a girl who had seen so little.

It took me long to learn the value of money. To teach it was the alderman's share in my education. He gave me whatever I wanted, but made me enter it in a book which

he kept for the purpose. I put it down on the left-hand side, and on the right I set out all that I had bought. It was a record of vanity, for the most part, and my cheeks burned while the alderman read it aloud.

'To laced gloves, two shillings; to satin for a frock, five guineas; to hoops for ditto, twelve shillings. Truly, my dear, no husband will be wanted to teach thee how money may be spent. Let us consider how it has been made. These gloves of thine stand for eight pounds of tobacco; this satin for four hundredweight—a grievous load of tobacco for your young slender shoulders. How many naked wretches have risen early and toiled all day in the sun beneath the whip to sow, plant, weed, keep clean, pick, and roll this tobacco before it could be sold or exchanged for thy satin frock? They have fared of the worst, these creatures, and toiled

the hardest, all that thou mightest go in satin and hoops. Of a truth, my dear, thy lines have been cast in pleasant places.'

The alderman, to be sure, had his own weaknesses. I might have asked him, for example, why he ate turtle soup and drank the strong wine of Oporto, when so many boys were running ragged and uncared for about the streets. Nevertheless, his words were timely, and made me understand what a thoughtless girl was I, who could, without reflection, thus waste and lavish the money which the labour of so many poor wretches had been given to save up. And yet, whether I spent the money or whether I saved it, made no difference to the convicts or to the negroes.

But the thing which most astonished me was the conversation of the young ladies who

called upon Jenny and me, and were our friends. For, when we were all alone together, they talked about nothing but love-making and how to attract the admiration and attention of men. For my own part, I suppose that if I had ever thought about it at all, I had considered it likely that I should some day marry some one, and so dismissed the matter from my mind. The ordered course of things would come in due time. But these girls were continually thinking and talking about the lover of the present or of the future; they had their little secrets; they would show each other songs and verses addressed to their fair eyes, just as Jenny did; they discussed the beaux, their dress, their carriage, their impudence, or their wit (mostly, I believe, their wit was impudence); and they openly pitied, or derided, any of their friends who had failed to

find a lover and was destined to lead apes in that place which frivolous and thoughtless persons are too ready to name lightly.

'Were you not so tall, Nelly,' said Jenny, when I first remonstrated with her on this idle talk, 'I would call you little Puritan. But prithee consider. If it were not for the attention and thought that men bestow upon us and we upon them, what would become of the men. It is for their own good, my dear, more than for ours, that we seek to attract their foolish eyes.'

Here, indeed, was a pretty turning of the tables!

'No man, my dear,' she went on, laughing, 'can possibly make any figure in the world until he begins to hope for our favours. Then, indeed, he pays attention to his figure and his manners, learns to talk, dresses himself in the

latest mode, carries himself with a fashionable air, and becomes a pretty fellow. Then, to attract the eyes of one of us, he studies to distinguish himself, and when he cannot succeed he tries to be different from his fellows, and commits a thousand pretty follies. Such, my dear, are a few of the benefits we confer upon our lovers.'

Jenny stopped and laughed again.

'What part does Lysander play?' I asked.

At that she smiled and blushed prettily. 'Lysander,' she said, 'has offended his Clarissa. I have had enough verses, and I have written to say that if he wishes to gain my favours in reality, he must now, in person, inform me of his rank and name.'

'Good heavens, child!' I cried. 'Do you mean that you have been in correspondence

with a man whose very name you have not learned?'

'Tis even so,' she replied, laughing. 'No harm has been done, my fair Puritan princess; Clarissa has written nothing that would hurt her reputation; trust Clarissa, who is a Londoner, for taking care of herself. As Lysander prettily says, "Clarissa doth command an awe, would straight confound the great Bashaw." He may be a lord, or he may be a templar; I fear he is the latter. But what a noble air he shows, particularly when he sighs during the psalms!'

I thought of his turned-up nose, and was unable to agree with Jenny, but did not tell her so.

The one thing which displeased me at this time was the constant intrusion of Christopher March into all our plans and conversation.

We could go nowhere without meeting him, and then he would walk with us; if we were playing or singing he would join us without being asked; he generally took dinner with us, and on madam's evenings was always one of the company. That did not matter much but for his attentions to me, which were incessant, especially before company. It was as if he wished the world to consider me as his property. Of course, I was not so foolish but that I understood the meaning of his politeness; a week of Jenny's talk had been sufficient to remove the ignorance of my Virginian days; but, naturally, being a Carellis, I was not so mad as to think of encouraging the mere clerk of my guardian, a paid servant, to aspire to such a thing as marriage with me. My only difficulty was to know how, without being cruel and unkind, I could get rid of the man.

I supposed, and rightly too, that it was he who sent me verses and epistles written in the same extravagant fashion as that followed by Jenny's Lysander, and signed 'A Lover.' I kept them all carefully and said nothing even to Jenny. But I told Nurse Alice, and bade her watch and find out by what means they were conveyed to my bedroom.

Alice presently informed me that they were placed on my table by Prudence, the housemaid. So I sent for the young woman and roundly taxed her with the fact, which she confessed with tears and promises of amendment.

'But, girl,' I said, 'who gave you the verses?'

At first she refused to tell me, but being pressed and threatened, she owned that it was none other than Christopher March. And here I made another discovery. Not only had this

man won the alderman's complete confidence by reason of his industry and zeal, not only had he gotten a hold over madam by secretly giving her money, and over Jenny by conniving at her correspondence, but he had made the very servants afraid of him by acquiring a knowledge of their secrets, and by letting them feel that their situations and characters depended upon his pleasure. When I understood the state of the case I considered whether I ought not to let the alderman know, and to ask him whether it was proper for one of his servants to gain this footing and authority in his own house. And yet I dared not for the sake of madam, for I knew not how much money Christopher had supplied her with. I would that I had told him all, and so saved—but that I could not know—the honour and the fortune of that good old man!

Well; I sent away the girl forgiven and a little comforted—be sure I did not ask the nature of her secret—and I determined to seek out Christopher March and explain myself openly to him.

I waited till one afternoon, when madam and Jenny had both gone out a-shopping, and I was private in the parlour. Then I sent Alice to invite my gallant to an interview.

He came straight from the counting-house, wearing his office brown coat, and looking exactly what he was, a merchant's clerk and servant. Yet he tried to assume a gallant air, and stepped with as much courtliness as he could manage.

'Christopher March,' I began, 'I have asked you to come here when I am alone because I have a serious discourse to hold with you.'

He bowed and made no reply.

'I am an ignorant American girl,' I went on, 'and unused to the ways of London. But I am not so ignorant as not to know the meaning of those compliments and attentions with which you have honoured me.'

'Oh, Mistress Elinor,' he cried, sinking on his knees, 'give your most humble adorer a little hope.'

'Get up immediately,' I said, 'or I will leave the room. Get up, sir, and stand or sit, as you will, but do not presume again to address me in that way.' I was now really angry. 'Remember, sir, if you can, that I am a gentlewoman, and you are a clerk. Know your position.'

He rose as I bade him.

'In London,' he said, in a soft, slow voice, with down-dropped eyes, 'young men of ob-

scure family have a chance of rising. Many a Lord Mayor began by being an errand-boy. It is true that I have no coat-of-arms. Yet I am already well-considered. If the alderman does not make me a partner, some other merchant may. No clerk in the tobacco trade has a better reputation than I have. I could bring your ladyship a good name and an honest heart. What better things can a man have than honesty and honour?'

'Assuredly, nothing. Give them, therefore, to some young woman of your own station. Meantime, Master Christopher March, take back these foolish verses and these letters. Let me have no more nonsense. There can be no question of that kind between us; none at all.'

He received the letters with dark and gloomy brow.

'You will not only cease your letters, you will entirely cease you compliments and your attentions. You understand what you have to do?'

'And if I disobey your ladyship's commands?'

'In that case I must inform the alderman. I should, at the same time, ask him to consider the nature of that "honour and honesty" of which you make such boast, when it permits you to advance madam sums of money of which her husband knows nothing; secretly to assist his daughter in a silly correspondence; and secretly to threaten his servants.'

'You would, then,' he replied coldly, 'do much more harm to the alderman's happiness than you would do to mine.'

'Perhaps. But I should do all the harm to you that I wish; which is nothing but that

you should continue to be the faithful servant which the alderman believes you to be, that you should not aspire beyond your station, and that you should confine yourself entirely, so far as I am concerned, to your duties. Perhaps you had better return, then, at once to the counting-house, or the alderman my be examining the books for himself, and find out where some of his money goes.'

He turned suddenly white, and glared at me with eyes which had as much terror as rage in them. Then he left me without another word. But I know that I had made of Christopher March an enemy, though being young and foolish I did not believe he could harm me. I have since learned that there is no man, however humble, who cannot at least do mischief. Some men, by their evil lives and base thoughts may lose the power of doing good; but the

power of wickedness never leaves us. I had, however, the good sense to tell Alice what I had done. She, though this I knew not till afterwards, began to watch the movements of the man until, long before the rest of us knew anything about him, she had learned all his secrets.

I told Jenny something of what had passed, and, to my great joy, she laughed and clapped her hands, and kissed me.

'Oh, Nelly,' she said, 'I am so glad. I have seen for a long while what was coming, and I did not dare to warn you. Besides, he threatened——'

'Jenny!' I cried. 'Is it possible? Did you allow your father's servant to threaten you?'

'What could I do?' she replied. 'He knows all about—about Lysander, you know.'

'Oh! this is dreadful, Jenny. Go straight and tell your father, child, and then you can laugh at him.' But this she would not do, fearing the alderman's displeasure.

The next thing I tried to do was to persuade madam to go to her husband for money to pay her debts of honour. The good lady was growing more passionately addicted to cards every day, and, whether she played ill or had continual bad luck, she seemed never to win. Then it was difficult for me, a young woman, to remonstrate freely with her, and though I spoke a little of my mind once, Jenny being out of the room, I could not persuade her to tell her husband all. So that failed. Yet had I succeeded, all the unhappiness that was to follow would have been averted. Fate, as the Turk calls it, or Providence, as we more rightly say, is too strong to be set aside by the efforts

of a weak girl. We were all to be punished in a way little expected for our sins and weaknesses, and the wicked man was to work his wicked will for a little space.

'Alas!' said Jenny, sitting in my room, where we could talk freely. 'He is a dangerous man, and I would he were not so much in my father's confidence. Before you came the attentions which displeased you were offered to me. He actually wanted me to marry him! Perhaps that would have been my fate, but for your arrival. The chance of getting a hundred thousand pounds for a fortune with such a wife as you turned his head, and I now fear him no longer. It would, indeed, be a rise in life for a gutter-boy like him to marry you, the Virginian heiress.'

'Why do you call him a gutter-child?'

'Because he was, as much as any of those

ragged little wretches playing out there on Tower Hill. He would willingly hide the story if he could; but he never shall, so long as I live to tell it for him. Such as those boys are, such was he; as ragged, as dirty, as thievish, I daresay; as ready to beg for a penny to get him a dish of broth. He was found lying on the doorstep one cold wintry day in March, barefooted, bareheaded, stupid with cold and hunger. My father had him taken to the kitchen to be warmed and fed. Then, seized with pity for a boy so forlorn, he gave him to one of his porters to be brought up at his expense. Then he sent the lad to school, where he got on, being quick and clever. Finally he took him into his own counting-house, and gave him a chance to rise in the world, as so many poor boys have already done in London. Methinks he has risen already high enough.'

Let us leave Christopher March for the present, and talk of more pleasant things.

I have said that Lord Eardesley once or twice called upon us when we were with Monsieur Lemire, the dancing-master, and took part in our lesson. During the winter he came but little, to my chagrin; because, having then no thought of what was to follow, I found his manner and discourse pleasing. He brought new air to the house, and talked of things which otherwise we should not have heard of. It did us all good when his lordship came in the evening and took a dish of tea with us. Then madam forgot her cards, Jenny put on her finest airs, and the alderman, who generally despised tea, joined us and told stories. The best tea-cups were set out—those, namely, brought from Canton by one of the alderman's seafaring friends—the reserve or company

candles were lit, and the tea brewed was stronger and better than that which we allowed ourselves. After tea we would go to the spinet and sing, Jenny and I in turn or together.

Those were pleasant evenings, but there were few of them. My lord was a most cheerful and agreeable man, without any of the fashionable affectations of which Jenny had told me; full of sense and understanding. He did not waste the time in paying us foolish compliments, and when he spoke of himself, he laughed at his own lamentable condition as an impoverished peer. He told us once, I remember, that he seldom dined at his friends' houses, because he could not afford the vails expected by the servants.

So the winter passed quickly away, and the spring came upon us with those easterly

winds which in England do so poison and corrupt that sweet season.

As the year advanced the attention of everyone was settled upon that great bubble, the South Sea Company, whose stock advanced daily till it reached seven hundred, eight hundred, and even a thousand pounds. I knew little, indeed, and cared nothing, because I understood nothing, of the general greediness; yet we heard daily from the alderman, at dinner and supper, how the shares were fought for, and what prodigious prices they fetched. And once he took me to the Exchange, where I saw a crowd of finely-dressed ladies and gentlemen mixed with a throng of merchants and tradesmen, all struggling, fighting, and shouting together. They were buying and selling South Sea Stock. The street posts or the backs of porters served

for writing-desks; he who had a bunk or a stall commanded as much rent as if it had been a great house in Eastcheap; and, in that crowd, a petty huckster of Houndsditch, if he had but a single share, was as great a man as a lord.

'See, Nelly,' said the alderman; 'the love of money is like the hand of death; for it strikes at all alike, both rich and poor.'

The alderman, who believed that Sir Robert Walpole was the greatest and wisest of statesmen, took fright when he heard that the minister had spoken in the House vehemently against the South Sea Scheme, to which, before this, he had perhaps secretly inclined. 'It was a project,' said this great man, 'which would lure many thousands of greedy and unwary people to their ruin; holding out promises which it never could

keep, and offering dividends which no scheme ever devised could maintain.'

While everybody else was mad with this dream of wealth, we in our house were full of our own thoughts, careless of the tumult which raged in every heart. As the spring advanced, Lord Eardesley came oftener, and would go with us when we drove out to take the air. London is a great city, indeed, but it is richly provided with fields, gardens, parks, and places of recreation. We could drive to the spring gardens of Knightsbridge; to the bowling-green of Marylebone; to the fields beyond Islington, where we bought cakes; to those of Stepney, where there is another kind of cake; or to the walk of Chelsea, where there are buns. We could go farther afield, and visit Caen Wood and Hampstead, or to the gardens beyond Hyde Park, where they

sold syllabubs. We were a gay and happy party whenever we had his lordship with us. And for one thing I am grateful, indeed, to Jenny, that though she suspected what was coming, she was so good as not to spoil the innocence of my happiness by telling me her suspicions.

One evening in April — ah! happy evening—Lord Eardesley took us to the theatre.

Suppose you were never to go to a theatre at all until you were nineteen years of age; suppose you had read of a dramatic performance, but never seen one; and suppose you had no idea whatever what it would be like. Then think of going—for the first time!

It was to Drury Lane. We drove to the doors, where we were met by my lord, in brave attire. He led us to the first row of boxes, where, for the most part, only ladies of

quality are found, the wives of citizens commonly using the second row. Truly it passes my power to express the happiness of this evening and the splendour of the scene. The pit contained only gentlemen, but the boxes in which we sat were full of ladies dressed in extravagance of splendour of which I had never dreamed, nor Jenny either. But the patches spoiled all; nor could I ever, although for the sake of the mode, I wore two or three small ones, reconcile myself to the custom of sticking black spots over a pretty face. The house was brilliantly lit with many thousands of candles. I say nothing about the play, except that the players did so artfully represent the characters, that you would have thought the house, with all the audience, a dream, and only the play itself the reality. Yet I was astonished to find so many fine ladies whisper

ing, laughing, and flirting with the fan, while the most moving scene and the most eloquent passages failed to rouse their interest.

'You know not your sex, fair Virginian,' said Lord Eardesley, when I ventured to take this objection to the behaviour of the spectators. 'The ladies do not come here to see, but to be seen. They are the principal spectacle of the house to the gentlemen in the pit.'

And then I observed that, although I myself could see with the greatest ease whatever was done upon the stage, and the faces of the actors and actresses, a large number of gentlemen, especially those of the younger kind, were afflicted with a sort of blindness which forced them to carry to the theatre the little magnifying tubes which I had seen in church. And such was the strange callousness of these unfortunate young men to the

piece performed, that many of them at the side of the pit stood with their backs to the stage, and, with their tubes held to one eye, surveyed the glittering rows of beauties on the first tier of boxes.

'Nelly,' whispered Jenny, 'you are the prettiest girl in the house. Half a hundred beaux are gazing upon you.'

In the delight of the play I forgot the annoyance of this attention, and, perhaps, Jenny was mistaken.

When we came away, at the falling of the curtain, we found the entrance-hall lined with a double row of pretty fellows, all hat under arm and right leg thrust forward. One of them stepped audaciously forward to the front and offered to lead me to the coach.

'This young lady, sir,' said my lord, 'is of my party. We thank you.'

The young fellow said something about pretty faces and hoods, upon which our escort stepped forward and whispered in his ear.

'I am Lord Eardesley,' he said aloud. 'You can find me when you please.'

I did not know enough of polite customs to suspect that the altercation might possibly, although so slight, lead to a duel.

Alas! that this custom of duelling should make every young man hold his life in his hand; so that it is less dangerous to cross the Atlantic Ocean, or to travel among the Indians of Western Virginia, or to serve a campaign against the Turk, than it is to live in London for a season—I mean, for a young gentleman of birth and rank. As for plain citizens, I have never heard that the custom of the duello has been brought into the manners of the London merchant.

I thought little that night of the matter, my head being full of the wonderful play. But the next day, when I was sitting alone and feeling a little sad, as is the way with foolish girls after an evening of great happiness, Jenny burst in upon me in a half hysterical state of excitement.

'Nelly!' she cried. 'Have you heard the news? They have fought, and my lord has pricked his man.'

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'You remember the dapper little man at the theatre last night, who insulted us by calling us pretty girls—the wretch! As if we did not know so much already. 'Twas an officer in the Guards. Lord Eardesley fought him this morning in the Park with small swords, and ran him through the left shoulder. He is as brave as he is generous.'

It was quite true. Our evening's pleasure had ended in two gallant gentlemen trying to kill each other, and one being wounded. Surely the laws of honour did not need so tragic a conclusion to so simple an adventure Nevertheless, I was proud of Lord Eardesley, and rejoiced that he was so brave a gentleman.

He came that evening. Madam was abroad, playing cards. Jenny and I were alone, and presently Jenny rose and left the room. She told me afterwards that my lord had asked her to do so.

Then he begged permission to speak seriously to me, and my heart beat, because I knew, somehow, what he was going to say.

That is, I knew what his speech would contain, but I could not guess the manner in

which he would say it. He began by saying that he was the poorest man of his rank in Great Britain ; that all his wealth consisted of a barren mountain, a marshy valley, and a ruined castle in Wales; that in offering his hand to a rich heiress like myself he should be accused of fortune-hunting.

'Nay, Mistress Nelly,' he went on, 'I must confess that at first my thoughts ran much upon the money of which you are possessed. That was the reason why, having had the happiness of seeing you, I came here once or twice, and then ceased my visits. But,' he added, 'I was constrained to return. And having come, I was drawn daily by irresistible ropes to the shrine of my affection.' He took my hand and held it. 'Nelly, rich or poor, believe that I love you tenderly.'

I made no reply. Oh ! that life could be one

long rapture such as that which followed when he took me in his arms and kissed my lips.

I cannot write more of that moment. It would be a sacrilege of that first baptism or sacrament of love when we promised our hands and hearts to each other.

Presently, however, Jenny came back, discreetly knocking at the door—the little witch!

'Jenny, my dear,' cried my lord, 'come kiss me.' He laid his hands upon her shoulders, and kissed the pretty little laughing thing as gaily as if a kiss meant nothing. Heavens, what had it meant to me? 'See, this Princess of Virginia, this queen of fair maidens—she has promised, my pretty Jenny, to be my wife.'

'No—not a queen at all," I murmured, while Jenny flew into my arms and kissed me again and again. 'Not a queen—only my

lord's handmaid. It may be that I have found favour in the sight of my king——'

'Not a queen? No,' he replied, kissing my hands. 'No—not a queen—only my mistress sweet and fond—only Nelly, my Heart's Delight!'

CHAPTER IV.

MY LORD EARDESLEY.

WHEN my lover left me he immediately sought the alderman, in order to convey to his worship the substance of what he had said to me. My guardian heard the story patiently, and then, falling into a kind of muse, sat with his head upon his hands, saying never a word.

'Why, sir,' said my lord with some heat, after waiting for a reply, 'surely my proposal hath no dishonour in it. I can but offer Mistress Elinor what I have to give. It is little, as you know, besides my hand and a coronet.'

'Sit down, lord,' said the alderman gravely.

'I have much to say.'

He then proceeded in such terms, as would give the young suitor as little pain as possible, to remind him that his own estates, save for the mountain and valley in Wales, were gone altogether, and that by his father's rashness over the gaming-tables, so that had it not been for the small fortune left him by his mother his lordship would have nothing. But, said the alderman, the lack of fortune would have been a small thing, considering the ample inheritance of his ward, were he assured that none of the late lamented peer's weaknesses had descended upon his son. Lord Eardesley must excuse him for speaking plainly, but it was rumoured, rightly or wrongly, that he himself was addicted to the same pernicious habit.

Here my lord protested strongly that the rumour was based upon no foundation whatever in fact, and that he never gambled.

'Indeed,' the alderman replied gravely. 'Then am I rejoiced, and I hope that these words of yours can be made good.'

After this he became more serious still, and, speaking in a whisper, he reminded the young lord that there were other sins besides the grievous sin of gaming, that many—nay, most of the young gentlemen of rank took a pleasure and pride in deriding and breaking all God's laws; that they were profane swearers, professed atheists, secret Jacobites, duellists, deceivers of maidens, and contemners of order; that the voice of rumour had been busy with his name as concerns these vices as well.

Here Lord Eardesley protested again. He would confess to none of these things. A duel he had certainly fought only a few days before, but that was in defence of two ladies—in fact, Mistress Elinor Carellis herself and Mis-

tress Jenny, the alderman's own daughter—but, he added, he had spared the life of his adversary, and only given him a lesson. That personally he abhorred the cursed laws of so-called honour which obliged a gentleman to risk his life or seek to take another life at any fancied insult. As for the other vices mentioned by the alderman, he declared that he was not guilty of any of them; that his life and conversation were pure, and his religion that of his forefathers.

'It may be so,' said the alderman. 'Nevertheless, we do well to be careful. The young lady is an orphan; she hath neither brother nor near relation to protect her, should her husband use her ill; she is a stranger in the land and ignorant of the wickedness of this great town; like all innocent maidens, she is accustomed to look on every stranger, if he be a

gentleman, as a good man; she admires a gallant carriage, a noble name, a long pedigree, a handsome face—and all these, my lord, she admires in you. Then, she is a great heiress; her husband will have, with her, a hundred thousand pounds in bonds, scrip, and mortgages, and none of your perilous South Sea Stock, besides a great estate in Virginia. Think of all this, my lord. Consider further that she hath been placed in my charge as a most sacred trust by my far-off cousin, Robert Carellis, now deceased, out of great confidence which he was good enough to repose in me—and own that I do well to be careful. Remember that she is all virtue and innocence; and that, according to the voice of rumour, you, my lord—pardon the plain speaking—are addicted to the --the same manner of life as most young noblemen. Why, you would be a wicked man,

indeed, if you thought that I should easily consent to her marriage and without due forethought.

'Take all forethought and care possible,' said my lord. 'I assure you the voice of rumour was never so wrong as when it assigned me the possession of those fashionable follies which, I may remind you, require the waste of a great deal of money.'

'True,' my guardian replied. 'That is a weighty argument in your favour. Meanwhile, my lord, we thank you for the honour you have offered to confer upon this house. I am sure that his lordship Robert Carellis would have wished for no higher alliance for his daughter, were he satisfied on those points on which I have ventured to speak. I go now, my lord, or I shall go shortly, to make such enquiry into your private life as is possible. I expect that,

meanwhile, you will abstain from visiting this house or from making any attempt to see my ward. The delay shall not be longer than I can help, and if the issue be what your words assure me, there shall be no further opposition on my part, but, on the contrary, rejoicing and thankfulness.'

He bowed low to his lordship and conducted him to the door of the counting-house, which led to the outer office. Christopher March was there; he looked up, and, seeing Lord Eardesley, he changed colour. The alderman, walking slowly back, beckoned his chief clerk.

'You told me,' he said, 'that Lord Eardesley fought a duel the other day.'

'Yes. On account of some quarrel over cards, I heard,' said Christopher.

'Where did you hear it?'

'It was the talk at Wills's Coffee House. It was the talk at all the coffee-houses.'

'So they make free with his name, then.'

'They make free with every name,' replied Christopher. 'Yes, sir, they call him gamester, like his father; duellist, like his father; profligate, like his father. Of course, I know nothing except what I learn from these rumours.'

'Ay, ay,' the alderman mused. 'No smoke without fire. It is, indeed, a perilous thing to be born to rank and title! We humble folk, Christopher, should thank Heaven continually that we are not tempted, in the same way as our betters, to overstep the bounds of the moral law. No dicing, no profligacy, for the sober London merchant.'

I understood, presently, that I was not to see my lord until the alderman was perfectly

satisfied as to his private character. This gave me no uneasiness, as I was so assured of my lover's goodness that I felt no pain on that score, and was only anxious for the time of probation to be passed.

Now a thing happened during the time when my lord was conferring with the alderman concerning his suit, which caused in my mind a little surprise, but which I thought no more of for the moment. It was this.

Outside the house my lord's servant, holding his horse, was waiting for his master. It was midsummer, and the evening was quite light. One does not in general pay much heed to men-servants, but this fellow caught my eye as I stood at the window and wondered what my guardian would say. When the mind is greatly excited a little thing distracts the attention for the moment and gives relief. Therefore I ob-

served that the groom was a rosy-faced fellow, not very young, but fresh of cheek, who looked as if he had come up from the country only the day before, so brown and rustic was his appearance. In his mouth there was a straw, and his hair was of a bright red, of the kind called shock. While I was idly noting these matters I saw Christopher March standing by one of the posts of the street, looking, as men will do, at the horse. Presently the groom looked in his direction, and a sudden change came over him. For his rosy cheeks grew pale and his knees trembled.

Then Christopher started and slowly walked nearer the horse. He spoke to the man, and began stroking the animal's neck, as if he were talking about the horse. I knew, however, by some instinct, perhaps because I now suspected Christopher in everything, that he was not talk-

ing of the horse at all. But what could he have to say to a country bumpkin, the groom of Lord Eardesley? I watched more narrowly. They were having some sort of explanation. Gradually my bumpkin seemed to recover from his apprehension, and began to laugh at something Christopher said. And when the latter left him he nodded after him with a familiarity that was odd indeed.

Nor was that all. While I was still wondering, partly how the alderman would take it, and partly who this servant could be, that he should be an old acquaintance of Christopher March, another thing happened.

Alice, who had been out on some errand or other connected with my wants, was returning home. I saw the dear old woman slowly walking along the rough stones within the posts, and transferred my thoughts easily

enough to her and her fidelity. Why, I should have something that night to tell her worth the hearing! Then, all of a sudden —was I dreaming?—she, too, stopped short on sight of Thomas Marigold, which was, I learned afterwards, the fellow's name, and gazed upon him with an air of wonder and doubt. Then she, too, stepped out into the road and accosted him. Again that look of terror on his face; and again, after a few moment's talk, the look of relief.

What they said was this, as nurse told me afterwards. She touched his arm and said sharply, 'What are you doing here?'

Then it was that he turned pale.

'What are you doing, Canvas Dick?'

Upon this he staggered and nearly dropped the reins.

'Who—who—are you?' he asked.

'Never mind who I am. It is enough that I remember you, and that you are Canvas Dick, and that what I know about you is enough to hang you any day.'

Then his knees trembled and his jaws chattered for fear.

'It is nigh upon twenty years ago,' he said, 'since I heard that name. Too long for anybody to remember; and, besides, what is it you know? Perhaps, after all, you are only pretending.'

'Then will this help you? A man and two boys, one of them fifteen years of age, that is yourself, and one six or seven years younger; a house in the Ratcliffe Highway; a great robbery of jewels, planned by a man and carried out by the boldness and dexterity of the two boys; and——'

'Hush!' whispered the man. 'Don't say another word. Tell me who you are.'

'They call me Alice,' said nurse, looking him straight in the face. 'That does not help you much. If you want to know more, I am nurse to Mistress Carellis, who lives in this house.'

The man stared hard at her. 'No,' he said; 'I can't remember who you are. Do you mean mischief, or do you mean halves?'

'First, what are you doing here?'

'I'm groom to Lord Eardesley.' He grinned from ear to ear. 'Who would think to find me as Tummas Marigold, honest Tummas, fresh from the country, and grooming a nobleman's horse?'

'Groom to Lord Eardesley, are you? Oh!' and here a sudden light sprang into her face. 'And what,' she asked with a catch in her voice, 'What became of the other boy?'

Honest Tummas hesitated. Then he re-

plied,' taking the straw out of his mouth and stroking the horse's neck: 'Why—the other boy—the little un'—he was hanged a matter of five years ago, on account of a girl's purse which he snatched in the fields behind Sadler's Wells.'

'Oh!' she groaned, with a kind of despair. 'It was the end to be looked for. It is the end of you all.'

'Ay,' he said; 'give us a long day and plenty of rope. Then we climb the ladder gaily and kick off the shoes, game to the last.'

She shook her head. 'Well,' she said, 'now I know where to find you, I must use you for my own purposes. Come here if you can to-morrow evening at nine, and I will ask you certain questions. Be sure that you answer me truthfully.'

'Then you don't mean mischief.'

'If you serve me faithfully I will not harm you. If you dare to play me false I will tell his worship, Alderman Medlycott, who you are, and give evidence against you at Newgate.'

The man still hesitated. Presently, however, he held out his hand.

Honour, he said, was the only thing on which poor rogues and gentlemen of the road had to depend. And as he was satisfied that the good lady meant him no harm, he would meet her the next day and take her to a quiet place in the fields where they could talk.

Here nurse laughed. 'Thou art a villain indeed, Dick, but put that thought out of your mind. An old woman like me may be knocked o' the head, but suppose she writes a history of Thomas Marigold, and lays it in a place where, after her murder, it might be found!'

Thomas laughed at this, and protested that he was a most honest and harmless fellow, and that he would certainly come and answer all her questions.

That night, nurse, Jenny, and I had a long and serious talk together in my chamber; so long that when I went to bed the watchman below was bawling, 'Past two o'clock and a fine night.' And all our talk was about my lord.

Nurse had foreseen what was coming; so had Jenny; so had everybody except the principal person concerned. Nurse was sure that he was as good as he was brave and handsome, and only owned to some misgivings on the subject of wine, which, she said, when gentlemen exceeded their couple of bottles or so, was apt to fly to the head and make them quarrelsome. Then, because she was a very wise

woman, and knew the world, she began to tell me how different my life would be when I was a peeress.

'Oh!' said Jenny, with a long sigh, 'I wonder if Lysander is a peer. There is an air about him; he may be anything. Happy, happy, happy Nelly!' she cried, kissing me before she went to bed. 'To marry such a man, and to gain a title and—oh! Lysander!'

She ran upstairs to her own room—and I began to undress.

'As for my lord's character,' said nurse, 'the alderman may make any enquiries he pleases. But I have a surer way to find the truth.'

In two or three days she told me that she had learned all. Lord Eardesley was the most quiet and steady young man in London.

He was studious, and read and wrote a great deal. In the evening he might be seen at a coffee-house or at the play. He went but little into society. He neither drank nor gambled. He attended church. His friends were chiefly gentlemen older than himself. No character could have been more satisfactory. I was in the highest spirits. I did not ask nurse how she came by the information, which I trusted entirely; and I waited impatiently for the alderman to tell me that all was well, and that my lord was coming to the house as my betrothed lover.

It was bright sunny weather in early summer, I remember. The June and July of 1720 were full of splendid days, in which every stone in the White Tower stood out clear and distinct, and the river sparkled in the sunshine. They were all days of hope and joy

Yet a week—a fortnight—passed, and the alderman made no sign. That is, he became more silent. He had an attack of gout upon him, though not a serious one. Yet it laid him up, so that he could not get about.

One day I sought him in the counting-house, and asked him, seeing that he was alone, what was the meaning of his continued silence.

'My dear,' he said, 'I hope you will receive with resignation the news I have to give you. I would fain have spared you yet. But you force it from me.'

'Go on quickly,' I said. 'Is Lord Eardesley ill?'

'More than that,' he replied solemnly. 'He is not worthy of your hand. He must not marry you.'

He laid his kindly hand on mine, to keep

me quiet, while with sad eyes and sad voice he said what he had to say.

'He is a fortune-hunter, Elinor. He is a gamester; he is a wine-bibber; he is a profligate. Such as his father was, so is he; and the late Lord Eardesley was the most notorious of all the men about Court twenty years ago. Such as his grandfather was, so is he; and the grandfather was the private friend and intimate of Charles the Second, Buckingham, and Rochester.'

'How do you know, sir, that the son inherits the vices of the father? You speak from some envious and lying report.'

'Nay, child, nay. I would I did. At first I had only my fears on account of idle reports which reached my ears; now, however, these reports are confirmed, and I know from a most certain, although a secret

source, the whole private life of this young nobleman.'

I was silent, bewildered.

'Consider for a moment, child, what a dreadful thing it is to be the wife of a gambler. At the beginning of an evening's play he hath a noble fortune, say, perhaps a hundred thousand pounds; at the close of the night all is gone—all gone. Think of that. The money which represents the patience of generations and the labours of hundreds of men, all gone in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye, fooled away upon a chance. Why, girl, the profligate and the drunkard are better; they, at least, have some semblance of pleasure for their money; the gambler alone hath none.'

'I do not believe,' I said doggedly, 'that my lord is a gambler at all.' Then I remem-

bered my nurse's discoveries. 'Why, my dear alderman, I can prove you are wrong. I have my secret way of finding out, too, and my information is trustworthy. What do you say to that?'

'I say, Elinor,' replied the alderman, 'that I cannot promise the hand of the daughter of my late correspondent and honoured friend, Robert Carellis, to the young Lord Eardesley, and that I have written to tell him so. Believe me, child, it was the hardest letter that I ever had to write. Now it is written.'

'In a year or so I shall be of age,' I said bitterly. 'Then I shall not want your consent.'

'Be it so,' he replied. 'Let me do my duty meanwhile as it becomes an honest man. Go, child. You are sorrowful, and with reason. The day will come when you will own that I have acted rightly.'

I returned sadly. Jenny and madam knew what had been done, and we sat and cried together. Presently Jenny whispered, 'What if Lysander should prove a gambler!'

'All the sorrow in the world,' said madam solemnly, 'comes from the extreme wickedness of man. What vice is so terrible as the love of gaming?'

I thought of her own passion for cards and wondered. I know, now, that people are never so virtuously indignant as when they denounce the sins to which they are themselves most prone.

Before night a letter was brought to me. It was from my lord.

'Dearest and best of women,' he said, and I seemed to feel again the touch of his hand and to hear his soft and steady voice, so that my head swam and my heart sank, 'I have

received a letter from the alderman, in which I learn that I possess such vices as unfit me for your hand. I know not, in very truth, what they are. Have courage, my dear, and cheer your Geoffrey with an assurance that you will trust him until he can clear away these clouds. I have promised that I will not intrude myself upon your house. My intention is to do nothing for a week or two, and then to ask if the alderman will bring before me the reasons, clearly and certainly, for his bad opinion. So now farewell, and believe that I may be unworthy of so great a blessing as your love, but that I am not insensible to it and not ungrateful.'

Had any girl so sweet a letter? Be sure I answered it with such silly words as I could command, telling him that I was altogether his, and that I firmly believed in his inno-

cence. And so, with lighter heart and with an assured hope in the future, I lay down to sleep on the first night after my lover was sent from me.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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