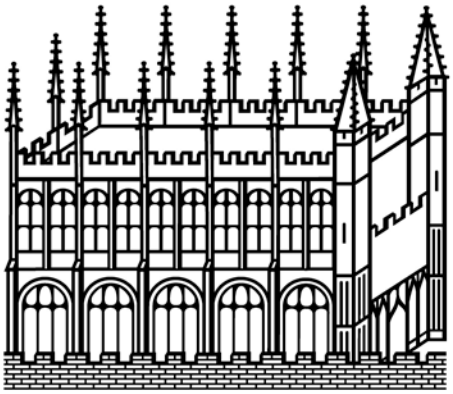

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GALE MIDDLETON.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BRAMBLETYE HOUSE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1833.

GALE MIDDLETON.

CHAPTER I.

Why should they not continue to value themselves for this outside fashionableness of the taylor's or tire-woman's making, when their parents have so early instructed them to do so?

LOCKE.

IT was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the chariot of Lady Barbara Rusport swept rapidly, and yet almost noiselessly, along the macadamised pavement of Portland Place, and drew up at a handsome house towards its northern extremity. The footman plied the knocker with an air and vigour that seemed to express a mingled sense of his own importance and that of his titled mistress; but, even in the best regulated mansions of the rich and noble, the delay in getting the street-door opened ge-

nerally increases with the number of the domestics, who must all be collected and distributed in their respective places before admission can be given to a visitant. Though there were but three men-servants in the house of Sir Matthew Middleton, in Portland Place, they were by no means well drilled; nor, had they been three times as numerous, could the menial duties of the establishment have been worse discharged. Monsieur Dupin, the French butler, whom Lady Middleton, half in joke and half in hope that the title might be seriously recognised by her friends, termed her *maître d'hôtel*, had the faculty of being generally in the way when he was not wanted, and as often out of the way when his presence was required. As he was in the latter predicament at the moment in question, his fellow-servants were still running about the premises seeking him and calling out his name, when the knocker again sent its echoes through Portland Place, and Lady Barbara, peering through her eye-glass, first at the door and then at the drawing-room windows, murmured in a peevish, drawling voice,

"It is well that I never hurry myself about any thing. She *must* be at home, for I wrote her word that I should call, and she would hardly presume to disappoint me. It is well also that I have a companion who can beguile the time quite as well as Lady Middleton." So saying she leaned back in the carriage, and began playing with an Italian greyhound seated by her side, in which occupation she had remained two or three minutes, when Dupin, having been found, took his station on the landing-place; one of the livery servants stood at the foot of the stairs, the second opened the door, and the visitant was at length ushered into a spacious and handsome drawing-room, from the extremity of which the mistress of the mansion came running up to her, exclaiming:

"*Ah, ma chere* Lady Barbara! *charmée de vous voir.* I am delighted to see you! this is so *very* good of you; and I am the more vexed that my stupid people should keep you so long at the door. Pray accept my apologies."

"There is not the smallest occasion for offering them; and since you have requested, nay intreated, that I would apprise you whenever you deviated from any of the customary usages of high life and the select circles, I must remind you that to make a formal apology, especially to a friend, is almost as much out of vogue, as to present compliments in writing a note, to introduce your visitants to one another, or to say grace before and after dinner. Trifling as they may seem, it is only by such minutiæ that, in these levelling times, any distinctions can be preserved. Permit me also to guard you against interlarding your ordinary discourse with scraps of French, even if they be grammatical and idiomatic, as yours always are."

"You surprise me, Lady Barbara. I thought I could not be wrong in adopting what seems to be an invariable custom of high life, if I may believe the authority of certain fashionable novels."

"Ah, my credulous friend! is it possible that you can have been duped by those vulgar

lampooners, who would fain persuade you that we never open our lips without imitating the prioress, of whom Chaucer records that

> ' French she spake full fayre and fetishly,
> After the schole of Stratford atte Bowe,
> For Frenche of Paris was to hir unknowe.'

This is a mistake not the less absurd for its being so common."

" It is one, fortunately, which I can easily rectify."

" Then you must carefully eschew any thing like earnestness or cordiality. Against enthusiasm of whatever description I need not caution you, for your natural strong sense and quickness of tact would preserve you from committing such a solecism in good manners. An air of listless indifference to all persons and all things must establish your superiority to the cares and concerns of the vulgar world."

" But to you, my dear Lady Rusport, I could never affect this coldness."

" Pardon me ; it is indispensable ; the more you really feel, the more scrupulously should you assume an absolute indifference. You

never see *me* betray the least pleasure at meeting *you*." Lady Barbara, who sometimes indemnified herself by a masqued battery of sneer or sarcasm for the lessons which she gave, or rather sold, to her rich *protegée*, could not avoid an ironical smile as she spoke; but, observing the blank expression of her friend's countenance, she added: "I need not tell you that in exercising this restraint I achieve a great triumph of fashion over feeling."

"You make me very happy in saying so," exclaimed Lady Middleton, with brightened looks.

"Then I am sorry I said it, for you ought never to be happy, or at least you should never wear the appearance of being so. To be brisk, vivacious, cordial, or loud-voiced, are all the infallible tests of a vulgarian: a hearty cachinnation would almost justify the exclusion of the most approved member from the ranks of the *élite*. He who wants to laugh, must laugh in his sleeve, or be contented with a smile. If you would enjoy the reputation of being one of us, you must enjoy nothing else.

Be as listless, languid, and impassive, as you please, and remember that merriment is absolutely excluded by the exclusives."

"And yet melancholy is foreign to my temperament."

"You are not required to be melancholy, but indifferent; to be simply negative, and to treat the world as if it did not interest you enough to make you either happy or unhappy. I myself, for instance, am by no means in the latter predicament, and yet I ought to be so, for I am labouring under a sad attack of impecuniosity. In short, my dear Lady Middleton, I must request from you the loan of another hundred, which I doubt not I shall soon be enabled to repay. What with the sums yearly set apart for the education of his boys, the improvement of his estate, the gradual extinction of his father's debts, and other extravagances, Lord Rusport lavishes his money so idly, that I have not really wherewithal to defray such indispensable charges as my dressmakers' and jewellers' bills, card-money, and the current expenses of the day for the

knick-knacks that one cannot possibly avoid buying."

"I am glad that it is in my power to oblige you," said Lady Middleton, looking, however, by no means pleased, as she unlocked a rich japan escrutoire, and handed a bank-note to her friend—"and I trust there will be now no further obstacle or delay in procuring my admission into the Duchess's circle, which I find to be more difficult than I had anticipated."

Lady Barbara insinuated the bank-note into her tortoise-shell card-case, when, having successfully accomplished her main object, and feeling that after having thus humiliated herself she was entitled to retaliate upon her wealthy pupil, she exclaimed—"You must recollect that, in a commercial country like England—where a fortunate speculation in the stocks, a lucky hit in tar, tallow, or turpentine, or an improvement in spinning-jennies, may suddenly transform the mechanic into the *millionaire*—the leaders of fashion, the privileged conservators of their order, must protect themselves from invasion by certain barriers which

vulgar opulence cannot scale without the submission and consent of the garrison."

"There are means, however, of obtaining this consent," said Lady Middleton, letting her eye fall upon the card-case, but smiling most graciously, as if to neutralise the insinuation.

"You mean by favour," resumed her companion—"and even as such, it is a condescension extended very rarely, and only under particular circumstances. In your case, for instance, conspicuous as are your personal claims for admission into the sanctuary, I have had a hard battle to fight; and it was only as a concession to me, one of her oldest friends, that I could at last win the Duchess's consent. However, every thing is now definitively arranged. Your party is to be a musical *soirée;* the names of the performers whom you are to engage will be sent to you to-morrow; the list of the people to be invited will be drawn up by the Duchess and myself, with the express understanding that not a single friend of your own is to be included without our sanction; but the Duchess, wishing to be as

liberal as possible, yields to you without reserve the right of ordering the supper, that you may have an opportunity of displaying your acknowledged taste and magnificence."

"How exceedingly considerate of her Grace!"

"Oh! she is all kindness and condescension: but I had almost forgotten to mention one trifling condition in our little negotiation which, although the Duchess was too polite to mention it, she would, I am sure, wish to be observed. Were it any other individual I might hesitate in naming him, but as the objection is only to your husband, I have no scruple in saying that the Duchess would wish him not to appear."

"Indeed!" said Lady Middleton, colouring with indignation, and yet striving to assume a complacent smile. "Pleasant enough! pleasant enough! do you call this a trifle? I knew not that her Grace had ever seen Sir Matthew."

"O yes! once at church, when her brother, the Bishop, preached a charity sermon, Sir Matthew's rubicund face, voluminous nose, and aldermanic appearance, combined with what

she pleasantly called, his giant's laugh, as he waited for his carriage and saluted his passing friends, won her attention: she inquired his name, and you may infer the rest."

"This difficulty, my dear Lady Barbara, is insuperable, nor upon such humiliating terms do I ——"

"What nonsense! there is neither difficulty nor humiliation. Sir Matthew need not know anything of the matter. I have heard you often declare that he has no taste for music, hates large parties, and detests late hours. You can either, therefore, send him to bed before your visitants arrive, or prevail upon him to avoid annoyance by dining and sleeping at the house of some friend. Nothing is so simple; and your son, whose acquaintance her Grace is really desirous of making, can do the honours of the house instead of his father."

"True; I thank you for the hint: in this way it might be accomplished. But is not the Duchess despotic in her own peculiar empire? and could she not command her subjects to receive Sir Matthew, as well as myself?"

"What! were the friends of Galatæa obliged to invite Polyphemus? and was Vulcan always included in the cards addressed to his wife?"

Lady Middleton bowed graciously, assumed her most becoming smile, and stole a glance at the mirror.

"Ridiculous!" continued Lady Barbara—"Besides, her Grace is not so omnipotent as you might suppose. Fearless of every thing else, she lives in perpetual dread of ridicule. Were she to be seen patronising Sir Matthew, that horrid Tom Rashleigh, who is a most unmerciful quiz, and the absolute terror of the *beau monde*, would persecute her with lampoon and epigram; the professional witlings and slanderers would presently catch the cue; and she would be shown up every Sunday in the scandalous newspapers, of which she has a particular horror. I will fix an early day with the Duchess, and then you may proceed forthwith to consult Gunter, or your own purveyor, respecting the supper, which is all that you will have to attend to. And so your tutelar

goddess must take her flight. I have twenty visits to pay to as many of my dearest friends, and if I do not make haste, they will half of them have returned from their morning drives, and I shall find them at home! Adieu, therefore, for the present."

"Adieu, my dear Lady Barbara! you have laid me under an obligation which I feel that I shall never adequately repay."

"Tush! tush! among friends there should be no such vulgar words as repayment." Smiling half-derisively as she spoke, her ladyship dropped the card-case into her reticule, nodded listlessly to her friend, took up her Italian greyhound, who had remained couched at her feet, and sauntered from the room, patting and fondling her four-footed favourite, and bestowing upon him a variety of endearing epithets in Italian, as if that language were more intelligible to him than any other.

No sooner had her visitant departed, than Lady Middleton, summoning Dupin, and apprising him that she was not at home to any one, walked up and down her splendid draw-

ing-room, for her feelings would not allow her to sit still, revolving in her mind the particulars of the conference she had just held. Their friendship being uncongenial, and each party sufficiently clever to see through the designs and motives of the other, there was generally beneath the insidious smoothness of these interviews with Lady Barbara an under-current of mutual taunts and retorts, rather insinuated than expressed, and always kept within the bounds of good-breeding, but not the less keenly felt and resented on either side. Stung by the calm arrogance which had not very obliquely stigmatised herself as a vulgarian; annoyed at the insulting proscription of her husband; and by no means pleased that the offending party should so cavalierly extort from her another hundred pounds, which she little expected to recover, the predominant feeling in the mind of Lady Middleton was, nevertheless, that of gratification and triumph—an apparent inconsistency which may require some explanation.

Although of civic origin, a misfortune which

she never ceased to regret, her ladyship had been well educated; nature had been rather indulgent to her, both in form and feature, nor was she by any means deficient in talent; she dressed well, spoke well, wrote well; her voice was gentle and lady-like, her manners prepossessing, her appearance fashionable, and yet her mind remained essentially and irredeemably vulgar. Selfish and envious, at once ostentations and sordid, overbearing and obsequious, her's was truly the "meanness that soars, and pride that licks the dust." Fired with emulation and hatred of a sister with whom she had quarrelled for no other reason than because she had made a better match than herself, it was the great object of her life to mortify by eclipsing her in equipage, house, and establishment. This was the motive that had urged her incessant attacks upon Sir Matthew, until she had fairly worried him into a removal from Bloomsbury Square to Portland Place; for the furnishing and decoration of which latter residence, she had received a fixed sum from her plodding husband, who had neither

genius nor time for such occupations. This commission she executed with a tact and good taste that rarely forsook her, so far as externals were concerned. While her rooms displayed a becoming splendour and chaste magnificence, she had carefully eschewed that gorgeousness and over-finery, which, in the mansion of many a civic Crœsus, or newly enriched upstart, seems to throw in your teeth the opulence of its possessor, and to arrogate homage as well as admiration. The sure way to win her heart, or rather to prove her want of one, was to declare that she had evinced more taste, and possessed a much handsomer house, than her sister and rival, Mrs. Howard Maltby; when she would enjoy a spleenful triumph, which, with all her exterior politeness and self-possession, she sometimes found it difficult to conceal.

It was to establish beyond question her superiority over this competitor, who had been unable to obtain admission to the higher coteries of fashion, that Lady Middleton had entered into the negotiation with the Duchess, of

which we have furnished a brief outline, and had advanced money, with much apparent readiness but with great real reluctance, to Lady Barbara Rusport. As Sir Matthew was a shrewd calculator of household expenses, and would not have supplied a shilling for any such ridiculous object, she had drawn these funds from a private purse, which she kept replenished by a system of pinching and even painful domestic economy, little in accordance with the parade and state of her establishment. Denying comforts and almost necessaries to others, in order that she herself might make an additional show of luxuries, she kept her servants upon board-wages, grudged them every petty gratification, withheld from them the customary pickings and perquisites, and practised the most vigilant and illiberal parsimony wherever it could be exercised without detection. Though she never forgot herself so far as to scold or wrangle, her manner towards inferiors was haughty and offensive, even when she affected condescension. This misplaced thrift entailed its usual discomfort.

Her servants were perpetually leaving her; none at last would apply who understood their business, or were worth having; the house had been twice robbed by men who had been engaged in a hurry without due inquiry; and poor Sir Matthew was often piqued to regret the happy days, when he had only a single maid of all-work, and brushed his own coat.

"Yes, yes," said Lady Middleton, as she paced up and down her drawing-room—"I think this *coup d'etat* will effectually mortify Mrs. Maltby." (It was thus she usually termed her sister, gratifying a paltry malice by suppressing the genteeler prefix of Howard.) "The names of my illustrious visitants shall be blazoned in the fashionable Journals, nor shall she pretend not to have seen the list, for I myself will take care to send her half-a-dozen papers." In this strain, occasionally diversified by considering how she should decorate her rooms and her supper-table, she continued to enjoy her anticipated triumph, until her reveries were dissipated by the well-known knock and

ring of Sir Matthew. Surprised at the lateness of the hour, for her husband seldom varied ten minutes in the time of his arrival at home, Lady Middleton rang for her maid, and, hurrying to her own apartment, began to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER II.

High-built abundance heap on heap—for what?
To breed new wants and beggar us the more,
Then make a richer scramble for the throng?
Soon as this feeble pulse which leaps so long,
Almost by miracles, is tir'd with play,
Like rubbish from disploding engines thrown,
Our magazines of hoarded trifles fly.

YOUNG.

Though Lady Barbara had alluded to the rubicund face, voluminous nose, and loud triumphant chuckle, of Sir Matthew rather for the purpose of mortifying his wife than of drawing a correct portrait, she had not deviated into caricature. If to the sketch she had drawn we add a moderately protuberant stomach, a burly figure, and the confident walk and look

of a man who feels that he has made his own way in the world, and is proud of the wealth he has achieved, a tolerably accurate notion will have been formed of the Baronet's personal appearance. And yet this combination did not by any means present so vulgar a result as might have been anticipated. Good height, and an upright carriage, combined with a half-bald head and well-appointed clothes, imparted to him a certain air of respectability; while his flushed good-humoured countenance and victorious laugh might have almost led a hasty observer to conclude that he beheld some elderly *bon-vivant* of the Corinthian class. Any such delusion, however, would be instantly dissipated when he began to speak; for not only did he retain a strong west-country accent, with some portion of its dialect, but he frequently violated the minuter rules of grammar, and in his hurried, hubble-bubble way of speaking, would as often make mistakes as to meaning. This was more especially observable when he quoted the homely proverbs originally instilled into him by a careful mother, but which

he had so long recited by rote, that he ceased to pay much attention to their import, and was apt to transpose or intermix them till they formed a ludicrous *imbroglio*. Though evidently uneducated, and offering the last living specimen of the vulgar civic baronet of the old school, it was not less manifest to those who conversed with him that he possessed considerable shrewdness, and so fair a share of worldly wisdom that he was seldom likely to act the part of an ignoramus, however he might occasionally talk like one.

Having made a hasty toilet in a dressing-room on the ground-floor, for, being somewhat short-breathed, he had a mortal objection to any unnecessary climbing of stairs, Sir Matthew ascended to the drawing-room, in which he found no other present occupant than his daughter Cecilia, who welcomed him with a smile, and received in return a hearty and audible kiss upon the cheek, followed by the exclamation of:

"Lord love 'ee, Ciss! what hast got upon thy head? looks like a hay-stack with a man

a-top of it. Not the first girl, I warrant, that has had a man in her head. Hey, Ciss! Hick, hick, hick! Ha, ha, ha!"

"These high curls are the fashion," replied the daughter.

"Thought the girls carried their heads high enough before. Had'ee there! When your mother and I was in Lawrence-Pountney Lane, how we should have stared to see you carrying such a spread o' topsail with so little ballast in your hold. Wouldn't underwrite you for fifty per cent. Sure to capsize in the first gale of wind. Hick, hick, hey!"

"La, Pa! I wish you would never allude to Lawrence-Pountney Lane. Mamma, you know, cannot bear to hear the word mentioned, and says we ought to forget all about it."

"'Spose we did, dost think other folks would do the same? Shutting your own eye won't make the world blind, will't? For my part I'm proud on't, and even if you and your mother baint, you had better blab it at once, and seem not to care about it. Didn't know Dick Swayles, didst? Bad health; obliged to

go every year to Harrowgate and the watering-places; always lived at a boarding-house; first day at dinner rapped table for silence, stood up and addressed company: 'Ladies and gentlemen! my name's Dick Swayles, of Fenchurch Street, London, Russia broker. I have a sister who made a runaway match with a fellow of bad character, named Hacklestone; and a second cousin who was transported for swindling. That's all the harm I know of the whole family, and I mention it now to save you all the trouble of ferreting it out. If there's any good in me or mine, I'm sure you would not wish to hear of it, and I shall therefore say nothing upon the subject.' Hick, hick! Droll fellow that, hey, Ciss?"

"We were in very different circumstances, Sir, at the time to which you allude."

"Ay, ay, child, so we were. Paid no rent then; house belonged to the partnership. Fool to go to Bloomsbury Square; greater fool still to come to Portland Place, where rent and taxes stand me in——never mind. Meg's doing, not mine. Don't like it, and never

shall. Twenty men may lead a horse to the water, but one can't make him drink. Where's Gale, hey ?"

" I have not seen my brother since breakfast. I dare say he is still in his study."

" Dare say he be. Can't think how a fellow can be poring over books when he ought to be thinking of dinner. Talk of digesting what you read ! Fegs ! if a chap had nothing else to digest he'd soon be a walking atomy. No, no : fine words butter no parsnips ; solid praise better than empty pudding. What say, Ciss, hey ?"

Before any reply could be made, Lady Middleton entered the room, when the baronet, who was more kindly and polite in trifles than might have been expected from his unpolished way of speaking, placed a chair by the fireside, pushed an ottoman to the front of it, and holding out his hand, exclaimed in a friendly voice :

" Well, Meg dear, how do 'ee now ? thee'dst a headach in the morning."

" Prythee, Sir Matthew," replied the lady,

" do not call me Meg. You know I have a particular objection to that vulgar contraction."

" Well, well, I see thee'st offended by smiling so graciously; but I quite forgot; I meant it kindly, and somehow or other, when I wish'ee well, Meg comes more naturally to my mouth than Lady Middleton. Head's better, is it? Glad on't, glad on't. What visitors have'ee had to-day?"

" The last who left me was Lady Barbara Rusport."

" What! that lean harridan that goes about craning up her long painted throat out of a low carriage, like a goose in a hen-coop?"

" Even if Lady Barbara were not a woman of distinguished fashion and elegance, it does not become you to speak in such terms of my particular friend. To be sure, she does daub herself most unmercifully with red and white; the long whitewashed throat of which she is so proud is quite frightful; and at her age there is something preposterous in her affecting to dress like a girl of fifteen."

"Why, Lady Middleton, I thought she was your particular friend! Hick, hick!"

"It is precisely on that account that I am vexed at seeing her thus expose herself to merited ridicule; but I have observed that if women are once turned of forty without having any grey hairs they invariably discard caps and take to girls' head-dresses, as if people would look at the *chevelure* instead of the face when they came to reckon their age. Ridiculous!"

"Mindee don't imitate it then, though it be the fashion. For my part, I had rather old Time should claw off my hair then scratch wrinkles in my face. Bald already: cheat him there. Any other visitors, Meg?—Lady Middleton, I mean."

"None that you know. Yes, Mrs. Burroughs."

"A prying, sly, flaunting busy-body. Hate that woman."

"She is no favourite of mine; but she is a very useful person. To-day, however, I could well have dispensed with her, for her loud

and incessant talking drove away Sir Dennis Lifford."

"What, Sir Dennis again! Why, he has called every day this week."

"The fact is, Sir Matthew, that *entre nous*——"

Here the wife drew her chair close to her husband's, and dropped her voice into a whisper, while the daughter, who saw that her presence was not required, sauntering to the other end of the room, stood before a tall mirror, pretending to arrange her lofty curls, but in reality contemplating the effect of her dress and figure. With the assistance of a little vanity, in which few young persons of either sex are totally deficient, she found reason to be satisfied with the survey; although, in point of fact, there was nothing very marked, or that calls for particular description, either in her form or face. Had she been in humble life, she would have excited little or no attention; but, being the only daughter of a wealthy baronet, she was generally admitted to be pretty, at the least; and indeed there were several needy

young men in the circle of her acquaintance, who, being smitten *par les beaux yeux de sa cassette*, hesitated not to call her handsome. Well educated and naturally well disposed, she might have been an attractive girl, had she not been misled by Lady Middleton, who not only taught her to be ashamed of her own father, affectionate as he was, and of his city acquaintance, but filled her head with the same foolish and aspiring notions that perverted her own, about the *beau monde*, the *haut ton*, and the polite circles.

While she was yet viewing herself in the mirror, the second dinner-bell sounded—for, in imitation of larger establishments, Lady Middleton had ordered this useless parade to be observed; when Sir Matthew, starting up, even before Dupin came to announce that the meal was ready, offered his arm to his lady, exclaiming:

"Come along, come along: never wait dinner for any one, still less for my own son. Strange boy that! neither ride nor drive: never make any thing of him. No wonder

they called him crazy Middleton at Cambridge. Mad indeed, not to be ready for dinner. Hick, hick, hey?"

"I question whether his toilet detains him," said Lady Middleton with a sneering smile, as they sate down; "he does not trouble himself much with sacrificing to the Graces."

"Nay now," said his sister, "I think Gale is always graceful. He is so handsome and well-made that he cannot look otherwise; but I do wish he would pay a little more attention to the fashion of the day. He might take a few hints from Sir Dennis Lifford."

"Ay, indeed," said Lady Middleton, "Sir Dennis is a perfect model of high-born and high-bred elegance and gentility, always dressed in the supreme of the fashion, and yet without any foppery or dandyism. Gale had better remain the sloven that he is, than vainly attempt to imitate the inimitable."

As Sir Matthew, who was a professed epicure, as well as a free and almost invincible toper, seldom said any thing at dinner that did not bear immediate reference to the viands

or wines before him, he took no part in this colloquy, confining himself to occasional exclamations of, "Good soup—good soup, hey! leetle too salt: toast not fried, shocking! Devil sends bad meat, heaven sends good cooks, ha! Fish tough; bought it of Higgins too: rascal! —No nutmeg in sauce. Shameful! Glass wine, dear, hey? Ont'ee join us, Ciss? Ha, capital Madeira! went out twice in the Ganges, Captain Tugwell."

At this moment the son hurried into the room, making many apologies for being so late, which he attributed to his not having heard the dinner-bell. "See what 'ee lost, boy!" said the father, pointing reproachfully to the table. "Fish cold, soup cold. Serve 'ee right."

"Oh, Sir, it will do perfectly well for me," replied Gale, proceeding to help himself. "I am only sorry that I should have appeared so rude."

Vexed as Sir Matthew really was at his impunctuality upon so important an occasion as dinner, his paternal bowels yearned with such

compassion when he saw him about to select the very worst part of the fish, that, without stopping to empty his mouth, he sputtered out, "My dear boy! what 'ee about, what 'ee about? underneath part turbot always best. Put it back, put it back, hey!"—after which advice he addressed himself to a saddle of mutton, his favourite dish, with such assiduity, that for some time he did not utter a word, excepting two or three interjections, expressive of perfect satisfaction.

Any one who had overheard Cecilia's observation about her brother would have recognised its truth the moment he came into the room. Rendered perfectly free and unembarrassed by his utter indifference to appearances, his well-proportioned form was never thrown into an ungraceful attitude, while his youthful aspect, dark intelligent eyes, thoughtful brow, and earnest countenance, fully warranted the commendation that had been bestowed upon them, in spite of the wanness of his cheek and an expression of unhappiness that overshadowed his handsome features like a cloud. For his

dress, however, if scrutinised by the rigid code of fashion, no valid defence could be offered. His clothes, indeed, were in good preservation, nor did they seem to have been made by an unskilful artist; but they were unbrushed, and put on in so careless and untidy a manner that they looked worse, both in quality and fashion, than they really were. Instead of neckcloth, of which he could never bear the irksome restraint, a broad black ribbon was passed loosely round his throat; and his noble head of dark hair, parted at top, and falling on either side in waving curls, however becoming and picturesque it might have appeared to an artist, would have been condemned by a fashionist as utterly at variance with every tonsorial mode that then existed. He ate little and spoke less, seeming to labour under a depression of spirits, upon which his father occasionally rallied him with a boisterous coarseness, that rather served to aggravate the seriousness it was intended to dispel.

It was one of Lady Middleton's imitative affectations, copied of course by Cecilia, to speak

French to Dupin, who was a Parisian, and understood but little English. To Sir Matthew, who knew not a word of the Gaul's language, this was a subject of sore annoyance, as it sometimes occasioned his orders to be misunderstood, when he would get into a passion, and swear at the foreigner for his involuntary mistakes. During the dessert he took occasion to stigmatise the fashion of selecting aliens for domestics, as not less absurd than unfeeling and unpatriotic, at a moment when so many Englishmen were starving for want of employment. The son, however indifferent he had been to the previous topics of conversation, which indeed had chiefly borne a reference to the dinner, eagerly took up the Baronet's argument, his whole countenance becoming animated, and his feelings evidently roused, as with a vehement eloquence he vindicated the claims of the lower orders of his fellow-countrymen, and exposed the cruelty of bestowing the situations to which they had a natural right upon aliens and strangers. Piqued at his indignant tone, which she thought disrespectfnl to herself,

Lady Middleton vindicated the practice he had condemned, declaring that no persons of the least fashion or refinement could bear to have an English animal about them when once they had been accustomed to a foreigner, and concluding with a warm eulogy of Dupin, as one of the honestest, cleverest, and best, servants that ever came into a house.

"My dear Gale!" said the sister, following up the mother's argument, "where can you have possibly picked up such antiquated notions? Do you not find in every house of distinction either a Frenchman or a Swiss, as *chef de cuisine, maître d'hôtel,* or in some other capacity; and can you possibly deny that they are a thousand times more clever and polished than our horrid English creatures? Oh, the heavy-handed and heavy-headed bunglers! How *can* you compare them with our dear, quickwitted, and fairy-footed Dupin, who seems to be everywhere at once."

"Ay, and what's the upshot?" asked the father; "find him nowhere when you want him. Had him there tho'! Hick, hick, hey!"

Sir Matthew then proceeded to enforce his former objections, and his lady as vigorously defended her own positions, her smile becoming more bland, and her language more coldly courteous, as she felt her ground to be untenable, until at length, in order to terminate a discussion in which she was losing ground as well as patience, she arose, and retired with her daughter to the drawing-room, bowing as she departed with an expression of peculiar complacency. When the ladies had quitted the apartment, Sir Matthew, drawing round his chair to the fire, and desiring his son to do the same, poured out a couple of bumpers, and, after swallowing the contents of his own glass, and refilling it, exclaimed—"No good to be done with an empty glass, or an empty stomach; *ex nihil nihil fit:* nothink can come of nothink: there, you dog! See, I understand Latin, though they tell me I can't speak English. Fudge! Gale, my dear boy! glad the women are gone, for I want to have a long chat with 'ee, and haven't had an opportunity since 'ee came back from Sussex. Why, lad,

thee seemest more in the dumps and doldrums than ever. Come, tell us what 's the matter with 'ee. Understand thee'st been dangling after Chritty Norberry, at Maple Hatch. Hope not: knew her father a drysalter in Watling-street; used to call him surly Sam upon 'Change; failed; retired into the country; poor as a church mouse. Hit the head on the right nail, hey ?"

"No indeed, Sir; I was as grave as I am now before ever I knew Miss Norberry. If I am not so cheerful as you could wish, I am sorry for it; especially as I fear my dejection must be a constitutional defect, since I cannot assign any particular cause for it."

"Tell 'ee what, boy. Think it 's all owing to your grubbing so much in your study, and poking and poring over those plaguy books. Wouldn't mind if they were journal and ledger, cash-book and day-book. Some sense in them; giv'ee salt to your porridge; but as to your poets and philosophers, your Shakspeare and Milton, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and Boulton and Watt, and the devil knows what,

wouldn't give five pounds for the whole kit. Can't eat 'em, nor drink 'em, nor make a jacket of 'em, nor pay bills with 'em; then, what are they good for, hey?"

It was a peculiarity in the character of Gale Middleton, who, from his long habit of thinking aloud, was almost unconscious of his soliloquies, that when his feelings were aroused, he would occasionally burst into some rapturous effusion in the presence of auditors who, so far from sympathising with his enthusiasm, were even unable to comprehend, or even to account for it, except by whispering to themselves, or to one another, the significant words, "Crazy Middleton."

"What are they good for?" echoed the youth—his pale cheek kindling, and his eye flashing with animation. "O my books, my dear, my precious books! my delights, my guides, my chosen friends and companions, the miracle and magic of my life! Ye are to me as guardian angels, bright-eyed, peace-breathing, seraph-winged, and happy-hearted, who waft around me with your pinions the tranquil

airs of heaven, and reconcile me to this melancholy world by abstracting me for a time from the contemplation of its miseries !"

" Whew !" whistled the Baronet, setting down his glass, and staring at his son—" What 's the matter ? got a fit ? struck comical, hope 'ee dont bite. But that 's always your way. Either as glum and grave as a bankrupt at Guildhall, or else away you go like a rocket, up into the clouds, whizz ! fizz ! crack ! Can't speak plain sense and good English as I do ?"

" You asked me, Sir," said the son, in a more composed tone, " what books were good for ; and I would enquire of you in return, whether you have ever considered the mysterious, I had almost said the divine, nature of a book ?"

" Not I ! knew something about the cash-book, and the waste-book, and the bill-book, and the pay-book. Made my fortune by that sort o' library. What will 'ee ever make by yours ? Had 'ee there, Gale, hey, hick !"

" Have you ever reflected, Sir, that thought, which a French materialist has defined to be an invisible secretion of the brain ; thought, which

I hold to be an emanation from the great fount of divine intelligence, after its subtle and volatile spirit receiving, as it were, a corporeal form, has been rendered visible to every eye by the invention of letters, and imperishable by means of printing, may be diffused in the form of a book, through all time and all space; may be preserved as a fresh and perfect portrait of an individual's mind for thousands of years after the marble or brazen images of his body shall have crumbled into dust? Marvellous and sublime is the nature, stupendous and almost omnipotent is the power of a book! It is a sort of material soul, a visible, tangible, indestructible, intellect, living and yet dead, dead and yet living, speaking at the same moment to the four quarters of the earth, and yet silent as the unknown grave in which, perchance, its author sleeps; spread throughout the whole world, and yet compact enough to be carried in an infant's hand. Strange that the signs of ideas, stamped upon the perishable pulp of rags, should be more enduring than

adamant or the earth-rooted rock! Oh, Sir, books are sacred, are awful things. They are the spirits of the departed, visiting us, not to surprise and terrify, but to guide, to comfort, and protect."

"Riddle-me-riddle-me ree! What sort o' lingo do ye call this? Wont do, Gale, wont do. Your books must be bad spirits at all events, else 'ee wouldn't be in such bad spirits thyself. Had 'ee there boy, hey!"

"You only see me when I am removed from them; if I am gloomy, it is because I am deprived of that cheering light which perhaps shines more intensely upon me than upon others."

"Like enough; cause it comes in through a crack in your skull. 'Spose that's the reason they called 'ee Crazy Middleton at Cambridge. Had 'ee again there; hey, hick, hick! Lookee, Gale. Listened patiently to all your rigma-role, now you must listen to mine. Told 'ee I wanted to have a long chat with 'ee; but fill glass first. What! not drink any more!

Lord love 'ee, poor boy! did hope to make a three bottle man of 'ee, if couldn't make any thing else."

The baronet tossed off his bumper, and immediately refilled his glass, which was indeed his invariable habit, when, drawing his chair nearer to his son's, and hemming loudly and lustily, as if to clear his voice for a long oration, he thus proceeded.

"Look 'ee, my dear boy, Meg and I,—call her Meg now, 'cause she ai'nt here,—Meg and I have had a deal o'talk about 'ee; both very unhappy to find 'ee so glum and dumpish, and we 've settled it's all because 'ee haven't got any business or occupation. Every young man ought to be employed. Idleness root of all evil. Devil tempts other men, but idlers tempt him. No pains no gains. Bad day's work when 'ee refused to come into the firm of Middleton, Thwaytes, and Hobson. Only chap in all England that wouldn't have jumped mast-high at such an offer."

"Of this, Sir, I am perfectly aware, and I hope not ungrateful for your intended kind-

ness; but I stated my reasons so fully at the time——"

"Reasons, sirrah! there can be no reasons for that which is utterly unreasonable. In another year your cousin, Caleb Ball, will take place meant for you, and come perhaps to be one of the first men in the city when you 're nobody. Amazing clever chap that Caleb: wonderful! Understands business, and sticks to it like a leech. Always first and last in the counting-house. Don 't know what we should do without him. But that 's neither here nor there; talking of you, not him. Sent 'ee to college when 'ee decided on not being a merchant, and had fine accounts, though they did call 'ee Crazy Middleton, that 'ee got prizes, and came to be first wrangler. Don't wrangle much at home; good-tempered enough for that matter. Took for granted, after I went to such an expense, that yee 'd follow some profession; but deuce a bit; here thee beest, running down to Sussex, to wander in the woods and spout poetry to crows and pigeons; or else coming up to Portland Place, only to mope over books,

till thee'st as down in the mouth as the root of my tongue. A murrain take all the musty rubbish! Why casn't make thyself useful and respectable? Know thee'st got enough to live on; but what of that? Any thing's better than idleness. Why couldn't'st be a doctor or a surgeon?"

"To be a butcher of human carcases, a dissector of dead bodies, and a tormentor of living ones; to be conversant with misery, anguish, and putrifying sores; to pour drugs of which I know little, into a frame of which I know less; to see none but sufferers, to breathe for ever the loathsome atmosphere of sick rooms, to be a daily hoverer over the bed of death, not always free from the consciousness, and never from the apprehension, that I may have shortened the life which I have been paid for prolonging—horrible!"

"Fudge! soon get reconciled to it; musn't be too fine for use; mouse in mittens catches no cat. Will 'ee be a counsellor then?"

"What! to live amidst the rottenness and abomination of our moral nature; to be let

behind the curtain of the human heart, and discover all its hideous corruptions, its fraud, its avarice, its envy, hatred, and malice; to feed upon quarrels, and to live in an arena of perpetual strife; or to stand in the courts like a forensic bravo, ready, for a miserable fee, to uphold the cause of oppression, falsehood, and injustice; or for another miserable fee, to turn round and attack the identical parties whom I had just been vindicating! Faugh!"

"I say once more, fudge! all stuff and nonsense! How do others do? Why then I 'spose thee'lt be a parson, ont'ee?"

"Ay, Sir, that would I gladly, if I felt within me that divine call by which every minister of the Gospel avers himself to be actuated, and if apostolical ordination would confer upon me the self-denial and lowliness of the poor fishermen of Galilee, who, when they went forth upon their mission, were ordered not even to provide any subsistence for their journey, not to take staff, nor scrip, nor money. But I cannot be as a blind man holding a lamp, or as a finger-post pointing the way which I do

not follow. To become a struggler for promotion in the spiritual arena; to enroll myself a member of a wealthy and worldly hierarchy; to read, in almost every page of the Sacred Volume, that a rich man can scarcely enter into the kingdom of Heaven, and that pomps and vanities are the destruction of the soul; yet to seek, with the whole energy of that soul, to obtain wealth, distinctions, state, and all the corrupting luxuries of an episcopal palace; to make my whole life, in short, give the lie to my lips, to my professed creed, and to my solemn averment at the time of ordination,—this, Sir, this is a self-sacrifice to which I could never submit."

"Stuff, boy, stuff! Mustn't read every thing backwards like a Hebrew book. Sure there are poor parsons enough in England, ay, and as good men and good Christians as ever trod upon earth. If went into the Church though, *should* like to call 'ee my lord, and see thee a bishop."

"So, Sir, I fear, might I; and I would not seek the mouth of the devil's den for the pe-

rilous chance that he may not strive to draw me into it."

"Of all which rigmarole nonsense the English and the upshot is this, that'ee wont do any thing but lounge about, and poke over old books, hey! I wish 'eed take a leaf out o' my book. Lord love 'ee, Gale! when I was your age;—tell 'ee all about it, and then perhaps ye may be shamed into imitating your father, and doing something for yourself.—No more wine? well, then, I must, for I got to drink for both." The Baronet, who had by this time emptied the first bottle, now rang for a second, and, having quaffed a preliminary bumper, thus proceeded.

"Look'ee, boy; when I first came up from Somersetshire, went as wharf-clerk to Nat. Giblet, the ship-chandler at Rotherhithe—bow-winded counting-house hanging over the river, warehouse above it, three stories high; cranes to each, barrels, tierces, and firkins, always going up and down—passed whole day on the wharf, slept over a coal-shed, smelt pitch and tar, and heard the creaking of cranes, the pop-

pling of water, and the wrangling of bargemen for fifteen years, until Nat. Giblet died. Knowing hand, that Nat.; left money behind him; always stuck to the main chance; many a mickle makes a little—hey, boy, do 'ee mind? Well, Nat left me nothing, and so I determined to have all that he left."

"Indeed, Sir, how was that to be accomplished?"

"Listen, boy, and learn. Good trade—widow wanted to carry it on—but I had curried favour with all the captains—threatened to set up an opposition; proposed partnership for life; and as I had begun with making myself master of the business, ended with making myself master o' the widow, and fifteen thousand pounds beside. What 'ee think o' that, hey? Hick, hick, hick! Ha, ha, ha! Well, good trade and good credit now; buy and sell with the best of 'em. Government advertised large contract for Irish butter for Navy; war time then, you know. Took it at very low rate; went and bought at higher prices every firkin there was in market;

fools upon 'Change chuckled and rubbed hands; thought I was ruined. Knew what I was about: old birds not caught with chaff:—none so blind as them that can't see: told Government I had made a bad bargain, and couldn't stand to it; paid five thousand penalty, according to my bonds. What was the upshot of that? Fresh contract advertised; nobody could offer, 'cause I had bought up all there was; put it in then at my own price—Victualling Board obliged to take it;—cleared thirteen thousand pounds by the job. Hick, hick, hick! Say, Gale, when will 'ee make such a capital hit as that, hey?"

No reply was given to this interrogatory.

"Well, boy, shortly after moved to Laurence-Pountney Lane, where you and Ciss were born. As family increased, extended my concerns; always cut my cloth according to my coat; took in partners, became a general merchant; and here it was that I decided on making a purchase which proved a better spec to me than even the widow, or the butter contract. Can'st guess what it was, hey?"

"I cannot even form a conjecture."

"A seat in Parliament, ye dog!" cried Sir Matthew, smiling triumphantly, and digging his knuckle into his son's ribs. "Saw clear enough that this was the only way to get at the loaves and fishes. Must hold up your dish when it rains pottage. Always stuck to the Government through thick and thin: claw me and I'll claw you: one good turn deserves another. Never out of way when wanted for thirteen years, and during all that time never once voted against the Minister."

"How, Sir! did it never happen that the speeches and arguments of the opposition induced you to change your opinion?"

"A hundred times, ye gull; but I never changed my vote. What did I buy a seat for, except for what it would bring. Shan't I have my pennorth out of my penny? Paid me capitally. Besides fair share of jobs and contracts, always carried on in name of my partners—for I'm last man to violate law, or do anything wrong—I came in for pickings and

lickings (little fishes eat sweet), and was enabled to get clerkships and other berths, abroad or at home, for the poor relations who trooped up to me when they found I had become a great man. Took a house now in Bloomsbury Square, where your poor mother died. Next year, minister knowing me to be a sure card, a stanch Tory, and disinterested friend of my king and country, got me made a Baronet. Some of my old chums, who had often seen me rolling casks or carrying firkins from the wharf at Rotherhithe into the barges alongside, quizzed my new title; but let them laugh that win—when the fox ate sour grapes, said he couldn't reach 'em, hey? Well, boy! wanted a mother for you and Ciss, to bring 'ee up, and bring 'ee out. Didn't care so much for money now—looked out for something genteel, and lady-like, well educated, and all that sort o' thing; fell in with Meg Jenkinson, the daughter of a factor in Basinghall-street, and made her Lady Middleton. Good spec that too! only she never ceased wheedling and

teasing till —— Hallo! who's coming in at this time o' night?"

The Baronet broke suddenly off upon the opening of the door, and we shall avail ourselves of the interruption in his narrative, to close the chapter.

CHAPTER III.

How much of the future should be let into the present in the progress of the human mind, and ennoble and purify without raising us above the sphere of our usefulness, to qualify us for what we ought to seek without unfitting us for that to which we must submit, are great and difficult problems, which can be but indifferently solved.

SIR J. MACKINTOSH.

SIR MATTHEW'S exclamation had been occasioned by the entrance of a snug, trim, and withal a somewhat demure-looking young man; his thick, thatch-like, mud-coloured hair combed straight upon his head; his neckcloth turned down with a finical neatness; his clothes spruce and tidy, without a particle of fashion or elegance; his gait awkward, his manner vulgarly deferential, and his complexion of that

wan, sodden hue, which is almost peculiar to the dwellers in the civic quarters of London. "Ha, Caleb Ball!" cried Sir Matthew, "what brings 'ee up here, lad? thought 'ee never left the counting-house, on foreign post nights, afore eleven or twelve o'clock."

"But rarely indeed, Sir Matthew," replied the nephew, "nor shall I now be long absent from it; I shall hurry back immediately; but I thought I might venture to run up to Portland Place, and intrude upon you for a few minutes, as I am the bearer of good news."

"Ha! so much the better, so much the better! luck 's luck now-a-days. But what 'ee keep standing for? sit down, take glass wine, and then say your say." Doing as he was bid, and drinking respectfully to the health of his uncle and cousin, Caleb put the glass coyly to his lips, and then said—"I am very happy to inform you, Sir Matthew, that our missing ship, the Arethusa, from Buenos Ayres, is arrived."

"Arrived! thee dostn't say so, lad! Fegs!

I 'm right glad to hear it, for we were plaguy short insured upon her."

"I knew you were anxious upon the subject, and I felt it to be my duty to give you immediate information. Captain Bracebridge, having travelled post from Poole, arrived at the counting-house about an hour ago with the ship's papers."

"Clever fellow that Bracebridge, hey, hick! 'Spose we drink his health—fill glasses, lads. Good old port this! stick to your ribs; better than all your wishy-washy French stuff, hey? Ship all right, Caleb?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew; only while the captain was off Madeira, he cut away an anchor and cable in a gale of wind. Both were a good deal worn, and he had been waiting some time for a fair opportunity of getting them renewed at the expense of the underwriters."

"Short insured though, Caleb."

"True, Sir Matthew, but this being a general average, will be spread over the whole cargo; we shall have to deduct a third from

the cost of the cable for the difference between old and new, but still the captain says we shall be gainers."

"Clever fellow that Bracebridge, and yet Hobson tells me he knows nothing hardly of navigation, hey, hick?"

"Oh! Sir Matthew, what does that signify? he is the best captain for his owners that ever stepped upon deck. When he commanded the Adventure, from Jamaica, and learned, upon speaking a ship at sea, that logwood was hardly saleable at any price in the London market, do you remember how cleverly he waited for a heavy sea, and threw the whole of ours overboard, to prevent the ship from foundering? he! he!"

"Hick, hick, ha! ha! ha! so he did, boy, and we made a capital sale to the underwriters: monstrous clever fellow that Bracebridge, hey? thought he'd turn up sooner or later. However, bird in bush worth two in the hand. Full ship now, Caleb?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew, and many packages upon deck. He took in some hides for ballast,

a few light articles for dunnage, and about fifty tons upon freight, on very favourable terms, as you will see by the copy of the charterparty which I have brought with me; but the rest of the cargo is all for account of Middleton, Thwaytes, and Hobson, and consists chiefly of indigo in serons, cochineal, drugs, and a few boxes of dollars. He had not brought the bills of lading with him, but, from a hasty glance at the invoices, I see the cochineal is laid in very low, and the indigo will also leave a handsome profit. The Arethusa's arrival will be known to-morrow by the port letters at Lloyd's, and I dare say we shall have our counting-house full of brokers; but I have desired the captain to disclose nothing of what she brings, lest it might flatten the market; and in the mean time, if you think proper, you may sell, deliverable on arrival. Nobody need know her cargo, for though she has clean bills of health, and will not therefore be detained at Stangate Creek, she cannot be reported inwards at the Custom-house for this week to come."

"Good idea, good idea, Caleb! understand

trap; up to snuff and a pinch above it. Great man one of these days, hey, hick!"

"Yes, Sir Matthew, if I should ever be so fortunate as to become a partner in the house—"

"If, ye dog, to be sure thee wilt, when articles are renewed a few months hence: all settled. Ah, Gale, Gale, my dear boy! see what 'ee lost. Stand in your own light like man in the moon, or thief in a candle. Hick, hick, hick! ha! ha! ha!"

"The present arrangement," said the son, "is infinitely the best. Caleb is expressly fitted for the situation, while I am as utterly unqualified for it."

"Ay, and for everything else: had 'ee there, boy! Well, Caleb, what more?"

"Nothing, Sir Matthew, but what is good. Captain Bracebridge touched at Rio, and he brought home bills of exchange for proceeds of the consignment to Da Costa and Co. by the Charming Kitty. They are remitted at a very favourable exchange, and are drawn on the house of Hicks and Hoggins."

"Don't much like those chaps: too many kites flying, hey!"

"Nor do I, Sir Matthew; I should be sorry to discount their acceptances at a long date, but these are at twenty-one days' sight, and are moreover endorsed by Oliveira and Crump, who are as good as the Bank."

"All right, all right. Any farther news?"

"The Captain brings accounts that the Severn, Swainson; and the Nautilus, Davis, have been both cast away at St. Salvador's, and utterly lost."

"The devil! do 'ee call that good news? Underwritten them both, haven't we? Capital ships too. Both stand A 1. in the Register books, don't 'em?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew, or I am sure you would never have underwritten them to the amount of eight hundred pounds; but as I considered that they ought to have arrived some weeks ago, I suggested to Mr. Hobson to re-insure them, which was done last week, at a small advance on the original premium."

"Did 'ee, lad! good! good! capital thought

—clever fellow! tip us your daddle!" So vigorous and hearty was Sir Matthew's approbation of his nephew's commercial shrewdness, that he almost crushed his hand as he shook it, and then pouring out a bumper, desired him to toss it off, and drink a good sale to the Arethusa's cargo. "I thank you very kindly, Sir Matthew," replied the clerk, "but I never take more than one glass; and I must hasten back to the counting-house, for Mr. Hobson said he could not make up the letters till I returned to close the account current with Delafosse Brothers, and to check the calculation of exchange on the foreign bills." So saying, he rose up, made a respectful bow, put back his chair, and quitted the apartment.

For some time after his disappearance, Sir Matthew did nothing but sing the praises of his nephew; first, because he really felt what he said; secondly, because he wished to pique his son, if possible, into an imitation of his cousin's commercial talent and industry; and, thirdly, because every time he mentioned Caleb

Ball, or compared him with other young men, who had risen to wealth and eminence in the city, he had an excuse for tossing off a bumper to the health of each individual, some of whose names were probably introduced for no other purpose. "Well, Gale!" he at length exclaimed, when he had concluded his nephew's eulogy, "I never finished my story—where was I, hey, hick? Told 'ee, how I got made a Baronet, didn't I?"

"Yes, Sir; you had related your marriage, and were saying that Lady Middleton was always becoming a solicitor—"

"Didn't! hate solicitors and lawyers too. Said she was always plaguing and wheedling me to move to Portland Place. Consented at last; more jackass I! never mind; if all fools wore white caps, we should look like a flock of crows. Chaps upon 'Change began to jeer and sneer again—gave me nick-name—never suffered 'em to nick me in a bargain though, hey, Gale!" He again dug his knuckle exultingly into his son's side, and then continued:—"No, no; laugh at me as much as

they like—laugh with 'em—ha! ha!—but never let 'em laugh at my expense in money matters. Always took care number one; mind main chance; made some of them pay for their sniggering; pluck a feather from every goose, and soon feather your nest—hey! Well, boy, I never told you of another good spec I made; and yet it was more interesting to you than all the rest put together. Had but one relation in the world with money—Jem Gale, the soap-boiler, of Mile End; droll hand; bachelor himself, yet always preaching up marriage; close old hunks; narrow-fisted chap; no children; stuck to his skirts,—pleasant walking sometimes in dead men's shoes. Others after the same game; thought to hook him by going to dine with him, and pretending they liked smell of soap-boiler's yard. Fudge! Jem wished 'em all at the devil; hated visitors that came to eat and drink. I knew better; old fox; understood trap. Never tasted a mouthful in his house; sent him a present every month,—hams and yams, a tierce of sugar,

keg of tamarinds, or a jar of preserved ginger, and never asked a favour of him in my life, except that he would stand your godfather; and that 's the reason you 're called James Gale, though you have dropped the James since the old man's death."

"I have only done so in compliance with the wishes of Lady Middleton; to myself it was a matter of perfect indifference."

"So is everything else, hey? had 'ee there, hick! Well, boy; Jem Gale made a heavy loss by bad debt; got sulky; retired from business; bought an estate in Sussex; couldn't live upon the poor, griping, thin, tasteless air of the country, after being so long used to the rich, fat, strengthening atmosphere of soap-lees; so died in a twelvemonth, and left Brookshaw Lodge and three substantial farms to his godson, an idle young fellow, whom you and I know something about, and whose name is, or ought to be, James Gale Middleton. What 'ee think o' that, boy, hey?"

"I was aware, of course, that the property

came from my godfather; but I had not previously learnt how entirely I am indebted for it to your forethought and good management."

"Not indebted to me a bit; won't tell any lies about the matter; didn't mean it for you; kin may be near, but skin 's nearer; no flesh and blood like that in one's own coat; thought to get it all myself, and more too. No use to you; not enough to make a gentleman of you; only serve to keep you idle."

"According to my limited notions, sir, it is a perfect independence; and though I decline engaging in any pursuit or profession, I am by no means so idle as you seem to imagine. My books and my chemical amusements——"

"Amusements do 'ee call 'em? Death to you, but sport to us, as the frogs said to the boys. Expect to be burnt in our beds some night or other; always something whizzing, fizzing, and bouncing in your little labery—what 'ee call it? Told 'ee set fire to the floor last week; frightened Meg and Ciss out of their wits. Stink us out o' house sometimes with your experiments; worse than Jem Gale's

back-yard on boiling days. 'Spose it was this fancy made 'em call 'ee Crazy Middleton at Cambridge, hey? What was it, boy?"

"Indeed, sir, I know not; nor did I ever trouble my head to inquire; but if the life led by my fellow collegians were that of rational beings, then am I proud to be called a madman. I could not make the University a sink of abomination, and a mere mockery of the high and holy purposes for which it was instituted. I could not drink, nor game, nor hunt, nor associate with loose women, nor drive a tandem, nor make a jest of religion, as an excuse for a compulsory observance of its outward forms. To such society I preferred solitude; for such occupations I substituted experimental chemistry, books, and above all, the study of the Bible. In short, sir, I was an unsociable and eccentric being, an enthusiast, a madman. Such may I ever be! O pleasant banks of Cam! O silent and sequestered shades! whither I have so often retired with my pencil and my book, to read, to meditate, and to compose—never, never shall

I forget the delight with which ye filled my bosom, when I escaped from the uncongenial haunts of men whom I could not esteem, and threw myself into those silent solitudes which are ever rendered eloquent, instructive, and endearing, by the voice, the wisdom, and the maternal tenderness, of Nature!"

"Bounce! there 'ee go; up in the clouds again, flying off at a tangent. Meant to have talked to 'ee rationally, 'bout business; but see thee 'st not in the humour for it now; time for all things—mustn't swim against the grain, nor rub against the tide.—Well, Mounseer, what 'ee want, hey?" Dupin, who had entered while his master was speaking, announced that tea was ready: Gale availed himself of the opportunity for making his escape, and the Baronet, who never drank slops of any sort, remained in the dining-room until he had finished his second bottle of port, and looked over all the papers relative to the Arethusa's cargo, which had been placed before him by his nephew.

Leaving the son to amuse himself in the

study and little laboratory which he had fitted up at the top of the house, to the great annoyance of Lady Middleton, and to which he seized every opportunity of retreating, even from the society of his own family, we will enter into a few explanations, which may serve to account for his alternations of silent dejection or splenetic complaint, with bursts of passionate though misplaced enthusiasm, which might otherwise appear somewhat anomalous and contradictory.

Mild and amiable, loving and confiding, Gale Middleton had been sent at an early age to a public school, where his gentle and sanguine spirit had received a shock, which, turning all the sweet currents of his soul into bitterness, and rudely dissipating the bright visions of his boyhood, had injured his mental vision, and occasioned him to view the whole surface of life through a dark and distorted medium. This revulsion, which could have been effected only in a delicate and sensitive mind, had been mainly produced by the atrocious system of *fagging*, as it is termed, or making one boy

a slave to another—a degrading and demoralising practice, disgraceful to every scholastic institution where it is still suffered to prevail. Instead of finding friends and playfellows, as his affectionate heart had anticipated, he encountered only foes and oppressors. His boy-master, punishing the innocent for the guilty, wreaked a revenge upon his young victim for the cruelties that he had himself endured in his servile days; exercising so wanton and capricious a tyranny that it was sometimes impossible to understand his orders, and yet visiting their misapprehension or disobedience with instant and remorseless chastisement. If it be the self-entailed curse of oppression, whatever form it may assume, that it brutalises both the tyrant and his slave, to what chances of vitiation must that youth be exposed who has stood in both these predicaments, at an age when the evil passions are most easily developed, and when the heart receives those impressions which are generally the most indelible?

The misery and maltreatment he had expe-

rienced, which would have hardened a tougher mind into callousness and cruelty, had rendered him melancholy, without injuring his temper or impairing the benevolence of his heart, although, when he turned inwards and sought for support in his own resources, he was stigmatized as shy and unsociable. His father, soon discovering that he was unhappy, removed him from school, and placed him with a tutor who had been recommended to him, giving him for a companion his cousin Caleb Ball, for whose education Sir Matthew had kindly undertaken to provide. Unfortunately for Gale, the tutor thus selected to form and frame his ductile mind, was a rigid, gloomy, fanatical predestinarian, who by impressing upon him the total depravity of mankind, with the exception of the elected few, and the inevitable perdition and torment to which the great mass of human creatures must be eternally condemned, turned even the sweet fountains of religious peace into bitterness and woe, and fostered that morbid dejection which a kinder-hearted man and a sounder Christian would have endeavour-

ed to correct. When Ball was withdrawn from this perilous instructor to be placed in the counting-house, his cousin was sent, at his own request, to Cambridge, where he arrived with a wounded spirit, but not without hopes; for he was too young and too sanguine to despond that in this classic haunt of the muses he might find a more fortunate and congenial sphere.

Bitter was his disappointment when he fully understood the prevailing character of his fellow-students, if that term can be applied to young men who rarely studied. In his colloquy with Sir Matthew, he had truly stated those qualifications which seemed to be most in request among the collegians; to these his own habits, thoughts, feelings, and principles, were diametrically opposed, and he had no resource, no alternative, but the melancholy one of becoming a hermit in the midst of a crowd, by secluding himself in his study, whence he rarely emerged, except to plunge into the solitudes of nature.

An unfortunate combination of circumstances aggravated his distempered views, and strength-

ened the ascetical habits which had been thus early superinduced by adventitious causes. A middle-aged gentleman, residing in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge, whose aspirations, like his own, seemed to be dolphin-like, and to "lift themselves above the element they moved in," sought and obtained his friendship, participating with the greatest zest in his long rural rambles, his chemical pursuits, his studies, and his devotional exercises. This person had a niece, a fair and elegant girl, whose countenance, weighed down by an habitual melancholy, little in accordance with her youth and apparent health, possessed, in the eyes of our sympathising student, an indescribable charm that enhanced her beauty. Deeply interested in the fate of one whose mental temperament seemed to be so congenial with his own, he inquired the cause of her deep dejection, and was assured that it was constitutional, since there was nothing in her history or circumstances, her connexions being of the first respectability, that should warrant so complete a prostration of spirits. Animated at the same

moment by curiosity and compassion, the youth became a frequent visitant at the house of his friend, and found the niece, in spite of a certain shyness and reserve, which did but the more pique him to conquer her coldness, an amiable, well-bred, and accomplished girl. Although her hypochondriacal affection, if such it were, underwent at first no change, our young collegian perceived, or imagined, that after a little while she derived an evident pleasure from his attentions and his society, and that her pensiveness was occasionally diminished. Frequent sighs, however, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress, and a woe-stricken air, which, in in spite of herself, would steal over and darken her assumed complacency like a passing cloud, sufficiently attested that her mental malady, whatever might be its cause, was rather mitigated than cured.

To Gale Middleton, who, in spite of the yearnings of his heart, had hitherto found no fitting recipient for his affections, so much worth and beauty, rendered ten times more interesting by an accompanying melancholy,

could not appeal in vain. Sympathising deeply with her dejection, and the more so because it appeared to be constitutional, he quickly afforded a new proof that pity, when directed towards a young and attractive female, almost inevitably lapses into love. Far from being displeased when the discovery of this fact was forced upon his conviction, he lent himself eagerly to the new passion with which he was inspired, delighted at the happy prospect of being united to so fair and amiable a girl, and of thus cementing a life-long friendship with her uncle, whose tastes, habits, and pursuits, bore such an affinity to his own. None but lovers can appreciate his delight when he was blushingly told, in answer to his declaration of love, that his passion was fully reciprocated, and when he perceived that the confession had completely cleared from the countenance, and apparently from the heart, of his mistress the gloom with which she had been so long oppressed.

Elated with a happiness more intense than he had ever before experienced, Gale was about

to write to his father to communicate the contract he had formed, and to solicit his sanction for the marriage, when some fatal discovery was made, or some insurmountable objection sprung up, which occasioned the intended match to be suddenly broken off, and the young collegian and his friend to part from each other, not only in anger, but with fierce and mutual menace. The former, with his niece, suddenly left Cambridge, nor was it known whither they had retired; Gale buried himself for a time in his study, plunged into a misgiving gloom, which thenceforward assumed a more dark, settled, and cynical character than it had hitherto exhibited. Over the circumstances that had occasioned this final and violent disruption of the ties he had formed was thrown a veil of the deepest and most impenetrable mystery. From that day forward the names of the parties never passed his lips, and he not only refused to answer any interrogatories upon the subject, but even commanded others, with a sternness foreign to his nature, to refrain from such questions, and to observe the profound

silence which he had prescribed to himself. That inquiries and conjectures could be stifled by this prohibition was hardly to be expected. Curiosity was piqued; rumours of the most contradictory nature were afloat; and we will not conceal the fact, that some of the collegians indulged in surmises which deeply implicated the moral character of Middleton, and fully justified the uncle, according to their version of the story, in refusing him the hand of his niece, and even menacing him—for in their loud altercation a threat of this nature had been overheard—with some signal and avenging chastisement. In defence of the party thus inculpated we are, however, bound to declare that these dark charges, or rather insinuations, when they came to be strictly investigated, could not be made to assume any tangible or definite form. Plausible enough to warrant a blind suspicion, and yet totally unsusceptible of proof, they left the affair involved in the same darkness with which, from the first moment, it had been inscrutably shrouded.

Many an unhappy mind, indignantly strug-

gling with the miserable and base realities that surround it, and panting for some more congenial sphere, has sought refuge in an Atlantis, an Utopia, or a Millennium, where the imagination might spread its seraph wings without contamination or control, and revel in all the beatitudes of a terrestrial paradise, with inhabitants like the dewy roses, which "blush without guilt and weep without a tear." In such day-dreams would Middleton sometimes indulge; but when he contrasted the beauty, order, and completeness, of the physical world with the darkness, defects, and contradictions, of the moral system, he deemed the science of matter so much more consolatory than that of morals and of metaphysics, that he betook himself to experimental philosophy and more especially to chemistry. In this pursuit, he flattered himself with the hope of making some important discovery that might minister to the comfort, safety, and enjoyments, of his fellow-creatures; objects which, in spite of his apparent spleen, ever formed the secret and ardent, though unavowed, aspirations of his soul. His

study was a chaos of philosophical instruments, crucibles, retorts, air-pumps, and magnets, confusedly intermingled with books, papers, lamps, and bottles containing noxious fluids, wherewith he would often besmear his hands, his furniture, and his apparatus. Not seldom would a fetid smoke, or a sudden explosion, occasion his neighbours to rush into his chamber, when he would apologise for the alarm he had occasioned, and proceed with great courtesy to explain the process in which he was engaged. Combining these eccentric habits and pursuits with his negligent attire, his recluse life, his lonely wanderings — seldom without a Bible in his hand — his occasional self-accusations, as if he had committed some dark and secret crime, the suspicious mystery of his love-affair, and the enthusiastic, the rapturous apostrophes into which he would sometimes burst when his feelings were aroused by cheering excitements or aspiring hopes, or when he drew a miniature from his bosom, which in his rambles he had more than once been seen to press passionately to his heart, his fellow-

collegians were a good deal puzzled to pronounce upon his real character, or to decide what manner of man they had got among them. One of their number at last suggested that he must be crazy: a solution so satisfactory was instantly and unanimously adopted, and thenceforward the young collegian was known by no other name than that of "Crazy Middleton."

CHAPTER IV.

——— If clear honour
Were purchas'd by the merit of the wearer,
How many then should cover that stand bare!
How many be commanded that command!
How much low peasantry would then be glean'd
From the true seed of honour! how much honour
Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times
To be new varnish'd!

SHAKSPEARE.

WE have recorded that, when Sir Matthew expressed his surprise at the frequent visits of Sir Dennis Lifford to Portland Place, his lady had dropped her voice, and had communicated something not meant to be overheard by their daughter Cecilia. As we wish not to have any secrets with the reader, we may divulge the nature of the short colloquy

thus maintained *sotto voce*, so far as the lady was concerned; for the bluff Baronet could hardly subdue his voice to any thing approximating towards a whisper. "*Entre nous*," began Lady Middleton, with a very significant smile; but before she could proceed any farther, her husband interposed with,—"Fudge! what 'ee mean by *entre nous?* If you want to *parlez vous*, talk to Dupin: can't 'ee speak English?"

"Between ourselves, then, my dear Sir Matthew," resumed the wife, "Sir Dennis's visits have been so frequent, and his attentions to Cecilia so very marked, that I have little doubt he is smitten by her charms, and means to propose to her."

"Charms! don't know what charms she has; the girl's well enough; arn't very handsome myself, to be sure; and her mother, poor soul! was rather fat and fubsy. Seen Ciss look pretty at times, though."

"I cannot say I have ever thought her so; but there is no accounting for tastes. Sir Dennis evidently admires her, and if he should

offer his hand, as I fully expect, you may thank me for having procured a match for your daughter a thousand times more advantageous than either she or you could ever have anticipated. I took care to place him next to her at Mrs. O'Grady's supper, after they had waltzed together, and I believe the whole affair may be attributed to my good management on that occasion."

"So, then, she means to discard young Ned Travers, who has been dangling after her these six months, and has walked up so many times to tea, all the way from Broad-street Buildings."

"Don't mention that common-place vulgarian: Cecilia gave him his dismissal long since, though he will continue to persecute her with his unwelome attentions."

"Tell 'ee what: Ned Travers is a good fellow, and a very rising young man. Capital judge of hemp and flax—soon be the very first broker on Russia walk. What 'ee think o' that, hey?"

"His hempen talents I will not question;

but you will hardly put him in competition, even for a single moment, with Sir Dennis Lifford, who is not only the most elegant and fashionable young man I ever saw, and the possessor of handsome estates in Donegal, but in the direct line of succession to the Earldom of Ballycoreen, if the present owner of the title should have no children."

"Hey, what — Ciss a Countess? Fegs! won't tell any lies about the matter — *should* like to see that. But does the girl like the chap?"

"My dear Sir Matthew, what a question! Is there any girl that would *not* like such a man, with a title and a good estate?"

"Well, well, only ask'd; said yourself there was no accounting for tastes; every Jill has his Joe. Ciss a Countess!—hick, hick, hick!"

The conversation was broken off by the announcement of dinner, a summons which always operated with a magical effect upon Sir Matthew; but the idea of his daughter's elevation to the peerage must have been complacently entertained in his mind, for not only did it

recur to him more than once, even as he was turning over the papers of the Arethusa's cargo, but, in the evening's nap, which generally followed the completion of the second bottle, he dreamt that he saw her going to court with a countess's coronet on her head, and her train held up by Ned Travers, attired in a page's garment of undressed hemp, and wearing a flowing periwig of flax!

On the following afternoon, Sir Dennis's cabriolet, emblazoned with flaunting arms upon the panels and harness, drove up to Portland-place, and the young Irishman, who, though he was as strong and vigorous as a buffalo, affected an ultra-fashionable lassitude and languor, crawled up the stairs by the help of the banister, and threw himself at full length upon one of the drawing-room couches. Evident as it was that he meant to assume all the airs and graces of an exquisite, it was by no means so clear to others, as it seemed to have been to Lady Middleton, that he had succeeded in his object, and that his appearance stamped him at once a perfect gentleman and a finished man of

fashion. A more critical and experienced eye would have decided that his personal appointments, like the decorations of his vehicle, were somewhat too tawdry and ostentatious—a mistake, however, which his countrymen are so apt to commit, that it rather impeached the national taste than that of the individual. His plaited *jabot* was studded with large amethysts; a ponderous wrought-gold chain hanging round his neck secured a diminutive flat French watch inserted into the pocket of his embroidered waistcoat; expensive rings glittered upon his fingers, and his black satin neckcloth was studiously arranged according to the latest and the best authorities. But his fine head of hair seemed to have engaged his most elaborate attention. Saturated with odoriferous unguents, and arranged with the most consummate care, he was perpetually twiddling his curls or adjusting his umbrageous whiskers before the mirror, for which purpose he carried a tiny mother-of-pearl comb, which he flourished with a graceful and a jaunty air. In speaking, he assumed the fashionable drawl,

occasionally dropping a letter when its pronunciation was attended with any difficulty — an affectation that assorted but ill with his Irish brogue, of which he could not divest himself.

"Thirty-two stone steps, is it, or thirty-four," asked Sir Dennis, "that I have had to mount? 'Pon my honour, Lady Middleton, I wonder I survive it! Indeed, then, it would take the breath out of Phil. O'Brien, that ran round the whole currah of Kildare without stopping. Really, now, I believe I must leave off visiting, unless where the drawing-room is upon the ground-floor."

"Then your visiting-list, Sir Dennis, will be very circumscribed; for whatever may be the case in Donegal, houses are never built upon that plan in London."

"Why then they should pull them all down; for London, as it is, must be pronounced abawminable — an *uncawmon* bore — quite intolerable! Paying morning visits is an absolute drudgery; one only wants the hod upon one's shoulder to be like a bricklayer's labourer, who passes the whole day in going up

and down a ladder. Another month will certainly be the death of me."

"And yet you look so strong."

"Ah now, my dear Lady Middleton, don't talk of it—you musn't believe a syllable of what you see in my face—it 's all imposition; I have no more stamina than a butterfly. Give you my honour, I could eat nothing all day yesterday but a Savoy cake, which I forced down, with the assistance of a bottle of soda-water and a glass of Roman punch."

"And yet you can have hardly been long enough in London to be thus debilitated by its gaieties."

"Oh, then, don't call them gaieties!—sure, they are the greatest nuisance ever was. Night after night don't you see the same faces, and dance the same dances, and hear the same music, and talk the same nonsense, and eat the same sort of jelly and ices? Really, now, it 's a mons'ous nuisance! very extr'or'nary that people can't strike out something new!"

"Talking always the same nonsense must be your own fault: at all events, you may get

new partners; and that reminds me that you have never inquired after Cecilia, with whom you danced at Mrs. O'Grady's."

"Is it Miss Middleton ye spoke of? Faith, then, I came on purpose to see her, but I quite entirely forgot all about it! Och, such a head! But it certainly is uncawmonly troublesome to remember things. Don't you find it so? Now you mention it, Lady Middleton, I do recollect that I waltzed with her two nights ago. Ah now, pawsitively it 's the last thing of the kind I shall ever do. Enough to kill an ox! A quadrille one can saunter through and survive, but a waltz!—Heigho!—you 'll excuse my gaping—these shocking late hours! What was I talking of, Lady Middleton?"

"Of Cecilia; have you so soon forgotten her?"

"Ah now, what a question! Sure I 'm never thinking of any thing else. Isn't it on purpose to enquire how she is that I am come? Shan't we see her soon? Wouldn't she be dressed yet? Indeed now, Lady Middleton, that 's an ilegant head-dress of yours. Ah!

it's mighty nate, only the curls on the left side are a thought too heavy."

"Likely enough, Sir Dennis, for my maid is a very indifferent *coiffeuse*."

"And my fellow's a most detestable wretch," said the Baronet, turning towards a glass, and adjusting his hair with the assistance of his fairy comb. "Sends me out with stone-curls, like Sir Cloudesley Shovel in Westminster-abbey. Ah, Miss Middleton! I can see by the glass that ye have entered the room; but ye'll excuse my becoming visible till I have made myself look like a Christian."

"It's well I am in no hurry," said Cecilia, affecting indifference, but seating herself nevertheless in the chair that was nearest to him, and assuming one of her most becoming looks.

"'Pon my honour, that's very severe of you," drawled the Baronet, resuming his recumbent posture, and taking a leisurely survey of her with his eye-glass. "Never saw you better dressed in my life. Faith! it's mighty elegant that *canezou*, and your hair is

beautifully braided. It's rael tortoiseshell, isn't it ?—the comb, I mean."

"In anybody else now," thought Lady Middleton, "this lounging manner and free and easy talk, to say nothing of his occasional yawning, might be deemed impolite; but Sir Dennis carries off every thing with such a perfect *nonchalance*, while his appearance is so stylish and *distingué*, that it is quite impossible to criticise any thing he says or does. It is all the very supreme of fashion and *bon ton*. It must be confessed that he is altogether an elegant creature."

Like a prudent mother, Lady Middleton retired to the farthest window, pretending to be deeply engaged by something in the street, but in reality wishing to leave the young folks to an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête;* for the better attainment of which object, and yet to preserve appearances, she had desired Gale to be summoned into the drawing-room, that she might talk with him apart, and had whispered Dupin to deny her to all visitors while Sir Dennis remained in the house. It was not

until after a second and urgent message that her son made his appearance, hurrying into the room in old slippers and a dishabille so grotesque, that Cecilia, accustomed as she was to his freaks in point of dress, could not refrain from laughing outright. The fustian jacket which he always wore when making his chymical experiments, was covered with stains and burns, his trowsers were in no better plight, both his hands were dyed by some bluish mixture in which he had been dabbling, his hair was disordered, and his whole countenance was flushed from the effects of the furnace over which he had been hanging.

"Is it a human creature?" whispered Sir Dennis, slowly raising his eye-glass, and measuring him from top to toe with a derisive smile. "Pawsitively the most extr'or'nary specimen I ever saw out of the Zoological Gardens. Ah, now! it's really quite distressing to see such a fine head of hair arranged in such a particularly Gothic manner. 'Pon my honour it's a sort of suicide."

"Is this a new drawing-room costume?" asked Lady Middleton, with one of those equivocal smiles that always betrayed her to be offended.

"I was told that you had instant and urgent need of my attendance, and I hastened to you accordingly, as soon as I had emptied the crucible with which I was engaged."

"That horrid laboratory? I expect you will blow up the house some day or other."

"Most likely he will make the attempt on the fifth of November," whispered Sir Dennis to Cecilia, "for he bears an uncawmon resemblance to Guy Fawkes, don't he now?"

"Oh, Sir Dennis! you are so irresistibly droll," was the tittering reply.

"My summons was not so imperative," resumed Lady Middleton, "as to require your attendance in this disreputable plight, fitter methinks for a journeyman painter than for the son of Sir Matthew Middleton. However, as I have particular occasion to speak with you, I will overlook this strange disguise.

Sir Dennis, we shall be only in the back drawing-room; you will excuse us for a short time."

"Sure you are in your own house, and may do as you like: and won't I have Miss Cecilia in the mean time to amuse me?"

"Nay, that is more than I can promise," said the young lady coquettishly.

"At all events, you are sure of being amused," resumed Lady Middleton.

"Ah now, it's very good of you to say so," cried the Baronet.

Retreating into a little *boudoir* beyond the back drawing-room, Lady Middleton proceeded to lecture her companion very seriously, always, however, wearing a bland and courteous smile, upon his gross inattention to his personal appearance, impressing upon him the great importance of making his dress conformable to his rank and station, and imploring him to take Sir Dennis Lifford for his model, whom she again eulogised as the very pink of fashion and elegance.

"Then, I thank Heaven," exclaimed the son,

" that I am a vulgarian, and an alien to all the modes and manners of polite life. Why should you wish to metamorphose a sloven into a *petit-maître*, a Diogenes into an Adonis?—or why should I vainly attempt to contravene my nature? Fate or circumstances have made Sir Dennis a fop; me they have made——"

" What, my dear Gale?"

There was a pause of some seconds; the youth smiled, but it was in bitter spirit, and then ejaculated, with an emphatic voice and melancholy look—" Crazy Middleton!"

" Hush, Gale, hush! let me never hear that word again. You should be the last to recall a foolish nickname, which might serve for a joke at college, but which may be of serious injury both to you and your family, should it attach to you in after-life. To return to Sir Dennis, you cannot surely deny that he is a perfect gentleman?"

" I am not sufficiently acquainted with him to decide, but I do know that many wear the external semblance of gentlemen whose inward spirit possesses not a single claim to the title;

even as there are many gentlemanly minds of the highest and purest order beneath clothes of vulgar fashion and coarse quality, or even of 'loop'd and window'd raggedness.' To constitute a perfect gentleman, the best attributes of the head and heart must be combined. He who would indeed deserve that proud epithet must be devout, courteous, and accomplished, gentle, generous, and brave; pure in word and deed, disinterested, philanthropic, and, above all, incessant and intrepid in charitably succouring the weak, the lowly, and the poor. One of our old poets, sensible of the rare conjunction of attributes required for this exalted character, hesitated not to affirm, with a pious fervour almost pushed to profanation, that our Saviour was 'the first true gentleman that ever lived.'"

"Without flattery, Gale, I believe you to possess many of the internal requisites you have mentioned, and I should be the more delighted to see you make some approximation towards those exterior recommendations and *bienseances de la societé*, which nobody can vio-

late without being thought rude and vulgar. At the present moment I am particularly anxious that you should assume a more appropriate and fashionable appearance, because I am about to have a grand musical *soirée*, which will be honoured with the attendance of the Duchess of Harrowgate and her friends, and as this will be your debut before the *beau monde* and the *haut ton*, I am naturally anxious that you should make it as successfully as possible. You will be delighted with the party on other accounts than the high rank of my visitants; for I know that you doat upon music, though there are so few things in which you take pleasure."

"Yes, Madam, I value it as an exquisite gratification, the more precious because it is scarcely susceptible of corruption or abuse, unless when the performer, seeking to conquer difficulties rather than to excite pleasant emotions, thinks more of himself than of others, and astonishes without delighting his auditors. From the moment that he is led astray by this pitiful ambition his art degenerates, even while

it seems to attain its highest practical perfection. Performances merely instrumental seldom touch my feelings; to prefer them to vocal melody, sweetening the sweetest inspirations of the muse, is to exalt the inanimate organ above its living inspirer. What instrument is comparable to the human voice divine? Noble and delicious is music when, by being married to immortal verse, it acquires a soul, and is elevated from a sensual to an intellectual pleasure. Nobler, and more hallowed still, when it hymns the praises of its great First Cause; and while it wraps us in an earthly elysium of dulcet sound, wafts the ecstatic spirit heavenwards, until it thrills to the choral song of angels and the harmonious chiming of the spheres."

"Very fine, my dear Gale, and I dare say all very true, but not particularly germane to the matter. I entreat you to betake yourself to a fashionable tailor, and you answer me by a high-flown extravaganza about the songs of angels and the music of the spheres. To what church-organ have you been listening;

from what charity boys have you drawn your inspiration ?"

" From none, from none ! Never without shame and regret have I heard those ill-taught urchins desecrating by their dissonant yells the sweet and majestic psalms of David. We ransack the whole world for exquisite singers, and blindly throw our treasures at their feet, that they may warble licentious love-songs upon an opera-stage; while we leave the praises of the Deity and the noble songs of David to be droned by nasal clerks, or screeched by vociferous brats. The opera is our real religion, and the church is only the theatre where we act it. Oh ! how differently were the divine hymns chanted, when Solyma was indeed the chosen city of the Lord, and David reigned in Israel !"

" That was a species of sacred opera," said Lady Middleton, smiling—" of which, in the present times, we can scarcely form an idea."

" What, Madam ! have you not often, while studying the Bible, been stolen from yourself, and rapt away, away, away, in a glorious day-

dream, to the times of David and to the city of the Lord? *I* have—*I* have! methinks I see it now! Lo! yonder is the God-hallowed temple, solemn, massive, and gigantic. I see the high-priest, gorgeous in pontifical robes, with the awful name of Jehovah inscribed upon his forehead. I behold the Levites in their silken stoles; mine ears are filled with the choral music of the players upon the harp, clarion, and hautboy, the shawm and the dulcimer, the cythern and the sackbut; the female dancers, with their tambourines and bells, are moving gracefully along the great court of the temple, in a joyous yet majestic measure; the fumes of incense from the Holy of Holies are redolent around me; and hark! how the valley of Jehoshaphat rings to the glad music, as the silver trumpets send forth a shivering sound, and the cymbals clash, and the assembled multitude shout in chorus—Hosanna to the Lord!"

Though Lady Middleton had more than once seen her son burst out into similar rhapsodies, his accents and gestures were now so impas-

sioned, and his looks so wild, that she was not entirely free from alarm, as she backed her chair somewhat nearer to the door. Deeming it better, however, to assume a bantering tone, she exclaimed, "Upon my word, Gale, you have treated me to an excellent *scena;* you would have formed an admirable ballet-master to King Solomon; and I only regret that your present rehearsal has been *à-propos* to nothing If you have quite done with the songs of angels, the music of the spheres, and the silken stoles of the Levites, we will return, with your permission, to the subject of your own personal appointments and appearance."

"Have you nothing further to communicate than what I have already heard?"

"Only to express my hope that you will accede to my declared wishes, and that, when next you honour me with a colloquy, you will neither present yourself in the costume of a scene-shifter, nor apostrophise the clouds, the spheres, and Jerusalem, instead of attending to my observations."

"I must not suffer my furnace to go out,

nor my crucible to cool," said Gale, bowing as he hastened from the room.

"If that young man be not crazy already, he will be so soon," exclaimed Lady Middleton. "*Raison de plus* for marrying Cecilia as quickly as we can, for a lunatic brother may frighten away many who would otherwise become claimants for her hand. I hope, however, that we have hooked the baronet."

Lady Middleton remained sometime longer in the *boudoir*, pretending to busy herself with the flowers, until, upon observing that her visitant had risen from the sofa, and was sauntering towards the window, she tripped lightly into the front drawing-room, exclaiming:—

"A thousand excuses, Sir Dennis, for leaving you so long; but I have been so deeply engaged with Gale that I could not sooner make my escape."

"Ah now, Lady Middleton, don't say a word about it. 'Pon my honour I never noticed it. I was going to do something. I could not have got up else, for its a mons'ous

bore rising and walking, but pawsitively I forget what it was."

"You were going to show me your new cabriolet horse," said Cecilia.

"Faith, and so I was! What a memory you have! Here, you may see him better from this window. He cost me a hundred guineas last week, and I give you my honour he hasn't a single pace in him. It's a mere robbery."

"Did you not try before you purchased him?" enquired Lady Middleton.

"Is it I that would take the trouble? Sure it would be worth all the money. No: I left it to my precious fellow yonder in the white gloves, and he has cheated me, as he does every day of his life."

"Then why do you not get rid of him?" asked Cecilia.

"And where would I get a better? Sure they're all alike; all rogues and thieves."

"But too true!" cried Lady Middleton, who, as she carried on a sort of servile war with her domestics, and was constantly changing

them, always jumped at an opportunity of throwing upon them the blame of her own penuriousness and oppression, and of stigmatising the whole class as a set of idle ingrates, whom no treatment however kind could conciliate or reclaim. This was one of the very few subjects upon which she forgot her habitual politeness, often wearying her auditors with a grievous detail of the favours she had heaped upon servants, and of the ill-returns she had invariably experienced.

"My dear Lady Middleton," said the baronet, interrupting a tiresome catalogue of this nature, "nothing on earth so easy as to prevent all this. Ah now, if you would just submit quietly, as I do, to be robbed every year to the amount of three or four hundred pounds, you would find it a mon'sous pleasant thing. The trouble of preventing this would be honestly worth a thousand a year to me, so that I consider myself a gainer of six hundred pounds per anuum. 'Pon my honour I do! Ah, there's Lord Arthur Fintown. I must

overtake him to know what time he dines to-night. Really, now, it's uncawmonly trouble-some to remember things."

"So it seems by his forgetting to wish us good morning," said Lady Middleton, as her visitant sauntered out of the room. "Well, my dear, did you settle with him about going to the Colosseum to-morrow?"

"Oh yes, it is all arranged. He is to call here in his cab at two o'clock, and I promised to carry him to the Park in our carriage, for he says he never walks."

"Good, good! Remember to wear your bonnet with the pink lining, which is more becoming to you than any other. Nothing can be better than the Colosseum; there's the Swiss Cottage, and the Grotto, and the Marine Caves, and the Conservatory, some of which are always unoccupied, and are delightful places for a flirting *tête-à-tête*. I must engage some discreet person to go with us. Who shall it be?"

"Would Mrs. O'Grady—— ?'

"Heavens, child! how could you dream of such a thing? She would give you the *congé*, and engross him all to herself."

"Perhaps Lady Bishopstown would accompany us."

"Worse and worse: she has a marriageable daughter of her own. Do mention some other and more appropriate name."

"What think you of my brother?"

"Gale? Ridiculous! He would either present himself in the costume of Abel Drugger's apprentice, or, if sane in his attire, he would be crazy in his demeanour, and draw upon us the attention of the company, which I wish particularly to avoid, by mouthing and ranting some of his moon-struck heroics. Can you suggest no better companion?"

At this moment the door was thrown open, and Dupin announced Mrs. Burroughs.

"What a singular coincidence!" whispered Lady Middleton. "The very person whom I was about to propose."

CHAPTER V.

"Indeed, Sir, there are cozeners abroad, and therefore it behoves men to be wary."—SHAKSPEARE.

"O you Gods! think I, what need we have any friends if we should never have need of 'em?—We are born to do benefits, and what better or properer can we call our own, than the riches of our friends?"—*Ibid.*

MRS. BURROUGHS was a prying, inquisitive, bustling busybody, who not only possessed the talent of raising contributions upon society for the support of herself and her family, but had the consummate skill to conceal her operations so effectually from the world, and to a certain extent even from herself, that she was everywhere received on a footing of perfect equality, and contrived, by a little blinking of the question, not to forfeit her own feelings of personal independence. Her husband, who practised as

an attorney in a fashionable quarter of the town, was, as well as herself, of Irish extraction. Although only very distantly related to one nobleman of the sister island, the lady contrived, by twisting and twirling the branches of her genealogical tree, to claim some sort of connection with half the peerage; an averment which, being taken upon trust, and supported by a handsome face and figure, plausible manners, and a fashionable appearance, making some little abatement for the Hibernian tendency towards flauntiness and over-finery, had enabled her, without much exertion, to push herself into a pretty extensive circle of polite acquaintance. By means of her husband, who was connected with an Alderman, she had insinuated herself as a visitant into a good many of the civic families: while by frequenting religious and charitable meetings, enrolling herself a member of Bible, tract, missionary, slave-abolition, and other societies, and acting as committee-woman, auditress, or treasurer, to some of these institutions, she procured a *passe-partout*, which has been known to carry

many a damaged reputation into good and general society, and which, in the case of Mrs. Burroughs, whose character was really without blemish, opened an incredible number of houses to her visits, and gave her an acquaintance more or less intimate with people of all classes, quarters, and denominations.

Knowledge of all sorts, even of persons, is power. Sensible of this truth, she felt a philanthropic wish to apply the influence of which she had possessed herself to the benefit of the community. It was natural, therefore, that she should recommend her friends to betake themselves to her good man, whose long head and short bills formed the constant theme of her eulogy. An economical zeal for the interests of the religious societies over which she had any control often prompted her to resist the payment of just demands, and to involve them in litigation; when the same praiseworthy principle dictated the employment of Dominick (such was the name of her husband,) who, in spite of his alleged cheapness, contrived to turn the pettiest squabble or involvement of

this nature to good and profitable account, and by his specious manners to extend considerably the list of his clients.

But Mrs. Burroughs condescended to bestow much more trifling benefits and favours upon her acquaintance: nothing was too minute for her friendly and vigilant solicitude. A sort of universal agent, broker, and factotum, she negociated as a match-maker; found tutors and governesses, masters and teachers for the elder children, and proper schools for the younger; recommended tradespeople of all descriptions; superintended the arrangement of parties, and the ordering of suppers; secured boxes at the opera or the theatres; and was in her own single person a complete register-office for servants. That the carriages of her acquaintances, for she kept none herself, should be constantly at her disposal, to carry her to the public places, for which free tickets were liberally forced upon her acceptance; that she should as often be receiving handsome presents of all sorts, useful as well as ornamental, were circumstances so far from trenching upon her

independence, that they rather established it, for she generally reciprocated these flattering testimonials of friendship by donations of card-racks, match-boxes, pincushions, or some little paste board trifle, fashioned by her own industrious hands. If the institutions that she patronised chose, upon an understanding of mutual secrecy, to take her children at half-price; if the confectioner whom she recommended supplied her suppers, when she had a party, upon the same saving footing; or if other tradespeople were glad to make a similar arrangement, why should she attempt to repress so natural and laudable a gratitude, of which, as she herself often pathetically lamented, there was but too little in this selfish world. Besides, bargaining was not disreputable: was it not a duty that she owed to her husband and children to get every thing upon as cheap conditions as she could? Unquestionably it was, and a duty was too sacred a thing to be trifled with.

"My dear Lady Middleton," cried the person we have been describing, as she bustled into the drawing-room, "delighted to see you;

I need not ask you how you are to-day; never saw you look so divinely: what a love of a cap! How do, dear?" nodding familiarly to Miss Middleton—"what a pretty, genteel-looking dress, but *that* you always have. I saw Sir Dennis's cab waiting, so I wouldn't be *de trop*, as I fear I was yesterday, but called in Duke Street, on my friend Mrs. O'Gorman French. It was about luncheon-time; I knew she had a party yesterday, and it is really a charity to assist in demolishing the fragments, which would otherwise be completely spoilt. Besides, she gave me all these French *bonbons* for the children. My young folks quite doat upon sweetmeats of all sorts."

Of this fact Mrs. Burroughs took good care to apprise her friends, and, under the maternal and amiable pretext of catering for her young fry, she collected more than enough to furnish forth her own desserts and supper tables. For the purpose of stowing away such strays and waifs of this or any other nature as fortune might throw in her path, she invariably carried a gigantic reticule, which was in fact a con-

cealed basket, separated into three divisions. Diving into one of these, under the pretence of selecting a curious *bonbon* to offer to Cecilia, she suddenly exclaimed, "What have we here? Well, I protest I had almost forgotten what I came about. You were saying yesterday, dear Lady Middleton, that you wanted some more ornaments for the mantelshelf of your little boudoir, and I have therefore brought you two hyacinth-stands of my own manufacture. They are scarcely worth your acceptance, but as I have emblasoned on them your arms and cypher, I thought you might like to have them, and, being a very curious coincidence, I completed them just as I finished the last of that delicious tea you were so good as to give me some time ago."

"Is it all gone? I have a quarter chest of the same quality for which I have no immediate need, and if you will allow me, I will desire Dupin to have it taken to your house."

"O my dear Lady Middleton! you are too good; I could not think of robbing you, but as you have no immediate need of it, and Do-

minick is so fond of that particular quality, and we can't get it any where else, I will avail myself of your friendly offer. *A-propos* to Dupin, do you continue to like him as a *maitre d'hôtel?*"

Lady Middleton and her daughter both sang the praises of their favourite domestic, and their visitant, who was a persevering talker, resumed the thread of her tittle-tattle. "I am so glad I recommended him to you. I was sure he would suit. Such a character I got of him! quite a treasure! Servants are such a torment, that a really good one cannot be valued too highly. Well, my dear Lady Middleton! I was all impatience till I was let in; for I came on purpose to congratulate you."—The speaker looked significantly at her friend, and paused.

"To congratulate me! upon what? *Je n'y suis pas.*"

"Nay, now, don't put on that look of wonder, though it really becomes you, and so indeed does every look. I did not think you would have any concealments from me, but I

have discovered your secret, since you did not think proper to make a confidante of me."

"I am a bad Œdipus, and seldom attempt to solve enigmas."

"Well, then, I will put you out of your misery, by telling you that I have learnt the whole arrangement you have made with the Duchess of Harrowgate, through Lady Barbara Rusport."

"I am fully aware of your abilities in fathoming the affairs of your acquaintance, though I can hardly guess how you have so quickly come to the knowledge of this little negociation, which was only concluded yesterday afternoon."

"Oh! that's a secret of mine, and one which I mean to keep too, in order that it may serve me again, as well as it has done now; so you see what a spy I shall have in your camp, if you ever declare war against me. Ha! ha! ha! Seriously though, I congratulate you most cordially on this *coup d'etat*, which will establish you in the very first circles of fashion.

I am aware that the day is not yet fixed; I shall know it, I dare say, as soon as you do; but is it not fortunate that I have just had a most curious figured French silk dress given me by my kind friend Mrs. O'Gorman French, which may make its *debut* upon the occasion. It is quite *unique*."

"I have nothing to do with the parties to be invited," said Lady Middleton, not sorry to mortify her prying and officious friend. "The Duchess makes out the list, and I fear you are not of her acquaintance."

"We have never been formally introduced; but she must know who I am. She has seen me at Lady Selina Silverthorpe's, and, by hook or by crook, I am determined to be of your party. It would be strange indeed if I were to be shut out of the house of so old and intimate a friend. You will have an infinity to do, and I shall be most happy to assist you in the preparatory arrangements. I am accustomed to these matters, you know, and, unless you have me at your elbow, you will be liable to be miserably cheated. Shall I engage

the vocal and instrumental performers for you? I know them all, and understand what to pay them. At all events you must positively let me order the supper for you, as I did for Lady Selina. Her's was universally admired, and yet, *entre nous*, and I am sure you will not let it go any farther, it cost comparatively a mere trifle."

As Lady Middleton thought herself quite as good an economist and manager as her friend, and was not without a latent suspicion of her motives, for the mean and the parsimonious easily suspect others of similar pettiness, her offers were civilly declined. A sort of diamond-cut-diamond colloquy ensued; but as Mrs. Burroughs, in spite of all her skirmishing and manœuvring, could not carry her point, she changed the conversation just as it was getting so extremely polite and friendly as to threaten a quarrel, by exclaiming:

"What a thoughtless creature I am! I quite forgot, though I almost came on purpose, to enquire how the affair goes on with my friend Sir Dennis and a certain fair damsel

who shall be nameless." She dropped her voice as she concluded, and looked significantly towards Cecilia, who, during the courteous sparrings of her companions had been amusing herself with a book. "My dear," said the mother for the purpose of getting her daughter out of the room, "do me the favour to fetch me my smelling-bottle from the little drawer in my dressing-room. I am afraid to trust Horton, for she always steals my lavender-water."

Lady Middleton, who kept the most trifling articles under constant lock, thus suggesting dishonesty to her servants by showing that she thought them capable of it, handed a bunch of keys to her daughter, who had no sooner quitted the apartment than she continued:

"Every thing, my dear Mrs. Burroughs, is proceeding as favourably as we could wish; and I am glad you have made allusion to the subject, for we have engaged him to go to the Colosseum to-morrow, and as I want some discreet confidential person to take my arm, while Cecilia and Sir Dennis——"

"I understand perfectly, my dear Lady Middleton, and shall have great pleasure in accompanying you. Fortunate indeed may you and Sir Matthew consider yourselves if this affair comes to a satisfactory conclusion, and certainly every thing looks auspicious at present. As to Miss Middleton, she will be the envy of all the spinsters in London. Lady Gauntley evidently wants to secure Sir Dennis for her scraggy giantess of a daughter; but she angles so palpably, and the bait is so unattractive, that the man must be a gudgeon indeed to nibble at it; nor is Mrs. Curzon Chilvers likely to win him for her pretty-faced lisping simpleton, though she smiles and simpers in his face, and talks nonsense to him by the hour together."

"Be not too hard upon her," said Lady Middleton with a sneering smile, "for the poor girl must either talk in that way or be silent."

"Very good, very good! your wit is always ready at hand. Was it not lucky that I made you acquainted with Sir Dennis. We are in

some way connected with him, you know, through my relation Lord Ballycoreen; so, as soon as I heard of his arrival, I pounced down upon him, introduced myself without ceremony, did the honours of London, for this is his first appearance in the metropolis, and I believe presented him to your ladyship within five days of his arrival at Mivart's hotel. The probability of a certain attachment was always in my eye, and I determined that my best friend should have the first chance of so capital a prize."

Mrs. Burroughs did not strictly adhere to truth in this statement, for she had paraded the baronet before half a dozen more of her best friends, always claiming relationship with him, and eulogising his large estates and personal good qualities as if he had been one of her oldest and most intimate acqaintance. In point of fact, she had no preferences to make, and no wish to influence him in his choice, provided always that he selected a wife from some of the families to whom she introduced

him, in which case certain factorages and presents would inevitably accrue to herself, while Dominick would as certainly be employed to draw up the marriage-articles and prepare the settlements.

CHAPTER VI.

Was ever woman in such fashion wooed?
Was ever woman in such fashion won?

SHAKSPEARE.

MRS. BURROUGHS, who was a complete woman of business and always punctual to an appointment, presented herself in good time on the following morning, having put a friend's carriage in requisition for the declared purpose of conveying her to Portland-place, though she had not scrupled to order the driver to several other points, where she had calls to make or commissions to execute, assuring the man that her visits were all in the way and would make no difference whatever. Her capacious reticule, which she never forgot to carry, and,

if possible, to fill in the course of her morning's privateering, was suspended from her arm; and she had arrayed herself for the occasion in a very handsome but somewhat showy and flaunting dress. Cecilia, who had not forgotten the bonnet with the pink lining, and had taken more than usual pains in equipping herself becomingly, did not by any means look *un*pretty or *un*genteel; for her common-place appearance and insipid character might both best be described by negative terms. Tame, spiritless, and correct, you felt half disposed to be angry with her for being "content to dwell in decencies for ever;" for being neither handsome nor ugly, neither witty nor stupid, neither fashionable nor vulgar. A slight roseate tint, however, reflected from her bonnet's lining, improved her inexpressive cheek; the hope of receiving a declaration in the course of the morning, which might soon confer upon her the title of Lady Lifford, threw a few sparks of animation into her passionless eyes; her heart actually beat with an accelerated motion; and, after having for some time beat a tattoo upon

the carpet with her foot, she walked up and down the drawing-room, casting impatient glances, first at the French clock upon the mantel-shelf and then at the street, where, however, the cabriolet of the impunctual Baronet was not to be seen.

Copious, almost inexhaustible, as was the subject, Lady Middleton and Mrs. Burroughs were nearly weary of discussing the faults of some of their mutual near and dear friends, and had begun to suspect that Sir Dennis had forgotten his appointment, when his cabriolet was heard driving rapidly up to the door, and in a few minutes he dawdled into the drawing-room. "Indeed then, Lady Middleton," he exclaimed, affecting to pant as he sank into a chair, "I cannot speak to you yet awhile, for your long flight of stairs has taken every bit of breath clean out of my body. Och! it 's the death of me they 'll be one of these days! Ah, my dear Mrs. Burroughs, would I be an Irishman and not glad to see one of my own kith and kin? Miss Middleton, I am your most devoted, as my friend Lord Arthur says.

Sure now, ladies, I ought to apawlogise for being after my time, but it's so uncawmonly difficult to remember the hour, now isn't it? and my lazy fellow never wound up my watch last night. Here it is, you see, just stopping at two."

He took the little French toy from his waistcoat-pocket and showed it to Mrs. Burroughs, who apostrophised it with the most endearing epithets, as a love, a dove, a treasure, and a darling: Lady Middleton, with the bland smile by which she usually expressed displeasure, hoped that Sir Dennis, when next he had an appointment with ladies, would not trust to so inaccurate a watch; and Cecilia, piqued at the impunctuality of her admirer, observed, that as they had lost quite time enough already, and the carriage had been a good while in waiting, they had better set off immediately.

"Faith now!" cried the Baronet, "I am quite entirely of your opinion that it's the most foolish thing in life to lose time, especially when there's a young lady in the case; so

perhaps you 'll be doing me the favour to take my arm."

Lady Middleton, looking significantly at her friend, accompanied her down stairs, the party entered the carriage, and were presently deposited at the door of the Colosseum. Mrs. Burroughs, who rarely visited public places except with orders, did not dream of paying for her admission upon the present occasion, considering herself to be rather conferring than receiving an obligation when she assisted in the important object of securing the baronet for Cecilia; but it may appear strange that Lady Middleton, living at an expense of several thousands per annum, should designedly hold back, in the hope that Sir Dennis would offer to frank the whole party, and thus save her a few shillings. It was upon these insignificant sums that she more especially exercised her parsimonious finesse; so true is the observation of Swift, that five pounds a-year would redeem almost any one from the imputation of meanness. Her manœuvre succeeded; Sir Dennis, cheerfully drawing out his well-stored purse,

claimed the usual male privilege of paying for the ladies, (a vulgarism, by the by, which is, or ought to be exploded, as derogatory to those whom it professes to compliment,) and they passed into the interior of the building.

Dull and obtuse must be the senses and the intellect of that spectator who can fail to be delighted by the grandeur, the beauty, and the variety of the objects successively presented to him at this most interesting exhibition. Sir Dennis indeed complained almost immediately upon his entrance into the statue-gallery that he could not find a mirror; but this desideratum being presently supplied, he drew out his tiny comb, coaxed his whiskers to his cheek, not forgetting to display his glittering rings in the operation, gave a few finishing touches to his really fine head of hair, and, without replacing his hat, again offered his arm to Cecilia, and sauntered onwards, exclaiming:

"I hope this gallery 's not very long, walking is such a mons'ous bore, isn't it? Oh now, just look at the head of this statue. 'Pon my honour it's too ridiculous. That's what I

complain of in my fellow; he sends me out with curls like those. I really must discharge the creature. He will never be an artist. But changing is such a trouble. Really these sculptors should not thus expose their ignorance; they should take a few lessons from some fashionable *coiffeur*."

Cecilia, who like most of our English young ladies, knew very little of statuary and the arts, enquired the names of several of the figures upon which no ticket was affixed; but her companion was unfortunately as ignorant as herself. Indolently lifting up his eye-glass, he cast a passing glance at the objects of her enquiry, and exclaimed:

"Really now, I haven't the honour of knowing the gentleman. Very sorry, but I never saw the lady before in the whole course of my life, 'pon my honour! Cannot say I regret it. Most extr'or'nary figures; not the least style upon earth about them."

Even to Cecilia the remarks of her companion seemed singularly vapid and jejune though his conversation assumed a more in-

teresting character when he declared her to be a much finer figure than any in the room, whether animate or inanimate. Unluckily, however, just as she thought he was becoming more rational and intellectual, because he began to flatter her, they had completed the round of the gallery, and had reached the little circular platform upon which they were to be wound up to the top of the building, in order to see the panorama. Here the baronet was informed that he might walk up if he pleased, instead of being hoisted by machinery.

"Is it by those horrid stairs?" he asked, "that you would have me climb up to the top of this abawminable St. Paul's. Ah, now! wouldn't I be dead before I got half-way up? Sure if there was heaven at the top I could never attempt it."

So saying he entered the little circular alcove, his companions followed, and the whole party were safely deposited upon the elevated platform that commands the Panorama.

Sir Dennis was too inert to feel, or too listless and apathetic to express the admiration

and delight which the scene outspread before him was calculated to elicit; the others, even if they had not gazed upon it before, were too fashionably fine to betray any marked sensation, especially of a pleasurable nature, so that little was said for a few minutes, until Lady Middleton, upon changing her position, and perceiving her son, suddenly ejaculated:

"Gale here! amazement! You are the last person I should have expected to encounter. I knew not that you took pleasure in exhibitions of any sort."

"Pleasure!" exclaimed the young man, shaking his head with a melancholy look of dissent. "And yet it is a species of pleasure thus to see London without being stunned with its din, suffocated by its fetid smoke, and above all, without being revolted by the noxious portion of its inhabitants. It is like contemplating a portrait, wherein we may trace the form and the lineaments of some hideous monster, while we avoid his roar, his stench, and his ferocity. Or rather may it seem that I am gazing upon the silent and

unsubstantial ghost of a departed metropolis. Oh! what a curiosity were this painted apparition, could it reappear at some future date, not perhaps so distant as we fondly dream, when the mighty city which it represents, like all its commercial predecessors, shall have passed away, and be numbered with the buried majesty of things that are no more,—with Ophir and Tadmor, with Tyre, Sidon and Carthage: when St. Paul's, dwindled to a few upstanding columns amid a wilderness of prostrate ruins, shall echo no vespers but those of the hooting owl and the screaming bat; when yonder lapsing Thames, for ever flowing away, and yet the only feature of the scene destined to remain, supporting no vessels upon its deserted waves, and reflecting no stately edifices on its banks, shall wind through an uninhabited and swampy waste; whose silence shall be only broken by the bark of the lurking fox, or the mournful cry of the bittern."

"*Allons!*" whispered Lady Middleton to her companion. "*Cette tirade m'ennuie.* We did not come hither to listen to these rhapso-

dies. Let us make our escape, for Gale has no more tact than an infant, and if he attaches himself to our party he will prove a perfect Marplot."

"Now then is our time," said Mrs. Burroughs, "for he seems plunged in so profound a reverie that we may reach the bottom of the building before he comes to himself."

Nodding a silent assent, Lady Middleton made a signal to her daughter, and the party, descending the stairs, passed through the conservatory towards the Swiss cottage, till they reached the pastrycook's-shop, when Sir Dennis courteously invited his companions to refresh themselves after a laborious descent, which he stigmatised as the most murderous fatigue he had ever voluntarily undertaken. Mrs. Burroughs declared that she never took any luncheon; but as she saw some of the almond-cakes, of which her dear little children were so fond, she would just put up a few that she might have the pleasure of telling her young folks they were sent by Sir Dennis. So saying, she stowed away into her capacious

reticule a whole cargo of edibles, for which the baronet paid, and they proceeded to the cottage. Sir Dennis, apparently exhausted with fatigue, threw himself into a chair; Cecilia seated herself beside him; there were no other visitants in the room, and the opportunity as well as the scene, with its little lake, its fir-crowned rocks, babbling waterfalls, and cooing doves, seemed to be so expressly adapted to a declaration of love, that Lady Middleton, taking her companion's arm, sauntered back towards the conservatory, under pretext of examining some of the rare plants.

Cecilia had been instructed by her prudent mother that, as her admirer seemed to be a sluggish indecisive person, who, if permitted, would probably degenerate into a mere dangler, it might be expedient to quicken his resolves by a timely hint, or even to pique his jealousy by an allusion to Ned Travers, her civic suitor. Willing as the daughter was to avail herself of these hints, and sensible that she could hardly expect a better opportunity than the present, she scarcely knew how to administer the pre-

scribed stimulants, since her companion talked of nothing for some time but the ducks in the little lake, and the owl upon the rocks. Collecting, however, her ideas and her courage at the same moment, she ventured to exclaim:

"Certainly this is a most sweet and picturesque scene, and if I were at all romantic, I should say it is precisely the sort of place for making love."

"Ah now, that's very extro'r'nary," cried the Baronet. "I give you my honour I was just thinking of the self-same thing." He sate upright instead of lolling, drew his chair nearer, and assuming a more earnest manner than was his wont, thus proceeded: "Indeed then, Miss Middleton, I have long been wishing for an opportunity of speaking to you upon this subject, which lies upon my heart, it does, and of telling you that though I never meant to marry for some years to come, for sure if I did, wouldn't there be wives enough to be got in Ireland; yet since I came to London I have been induced to change my mind, and to come quite entirely to a different conclusion. In-

duced, did I say? Compelled would be the better word, for truly, now, it was no wish of mine; only when a man's day is come, and he falls in love in spite of himself, there's no use in life fighting with the fates, or squaring your elbows for a set-to with Cupid. And this being the case, Miss Middleton, I hope you'll forgive me if I declare——" Here he suddenly broke off, and pointing to the water, whence a flapping and a splashing sound proceeded, exclaimed: "Och, now! lookye there, two of the ducks are fighting. Sure the big one is trying to hold the other under the water. Oh the spite of that murderous creature!" He continued watching the struggle till the weaker combatant made its escape, and waddled up the bank, while the victor struck across the lake quacking and wagging his tail in triumph, when the spectator of the battle, resuming the seat from which he had started, said with a bewildered look. "Indeed, then, I hardly remember. Can you tell me what I was talking about, Miss Middleton?"

Cecilia, whose curiosity had been wound up

to the highest pitch of expectation, and who felt the offensiveness of this most inopportune absence of mind, was too much piqued to make any immediate reply. Recollecting, however, her mother's salutary counsel about exciting, if possible, the jealousy of her indecisive admirer, she said with an air of indifference, "Really, Sir Dennis, I cannot undertake to collect for you your wandering thoughts, but I can tell you my own if you wish to hear them. I was just then recalling, that the last time I visited the Colosseum, it was in company with Mr. Travers, a gentleman whom I believe you have once seen in Portland Place. He professes himself my admirer, and Sir Matthew, who has a great regard for him, is very anxious ———."

"Ah now, my dear Miss Middleton!" interposed the Baronet—"let me beseech you not to bestow a thought upon the creature. I was about to declare that it was yourself, your own sweet self that had made me change my resolution: you have quite entirely won my heart. I never did, and never will, love anybody but

yourself, and I 'll never rise up from the ground, unless you allow me to hope that this dear hand may soon become mine for life." Sinking upon one knee as he spoke, he threw himself into a theatrical attitude, seized her hand, pressed it to his heart, and endeavoured to look as tender as his unmeaning bewhiskered face would allow.

" Pray, pray rise up !" cried Cecilia, in great agitation—" I must refer you to my father."

" But, if Sir Matthew has no objection, and sure I hope he won't, may I flatter myself that you will confirm my happiness ?"

" In that case I should not withhold my consent," blushed Cecilia.

" Oh then, my dear Miss Middleton ! ten thousand thanks for that same confession. I give you my honour you have made me the happiest creature in the world."

At this moment footsteps were heard approaching, Sir Dennis started upon his feet, strangers entered the room, he offered his arm to Cecilia, and they rejoined their friends, who had been all this time busily idle in the con-

servatory. Lady Middleton drew a favourable augury from the excited looks of her daughter, which rarely betrayed any emotion; but nothing was said confirmatory of her hopes until they reached the portico, when Sir Dennis, just as he was stepping into his cabriolet, told her that he should call next morning, before Sir Matthew went into the city, as he wished to see him on particular business. No sooner were the ladies seated in their carriage, than the impatient mother, reminding her daughter that they need not have any secrets before friends, asked her whether she could explain the cause of Sir Dennis's promised visit at so unusual an hour. This drew forth a hasty account of what had occurred, and all was instantly mutual congratulation, and shaking of hands, and "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," in the midst of which Mrs. Burroughs forgot not to observe that, as she had been the means of their securing such a prize, by first introducing Sir Dennis to their house, she took it for granted Dominick would be employed to draw up the settlements, and marriage-articles,

and all that sort of thing, with which matters he was particularly conversant. To a request so reasonable a willing assent was given. They were now in Portland Place. Lady Middleton and her daughter alighted at their own door, and Mrs. Burroughs, recollecting that she had a visit to make two or three streets off, requested the use of the carriage for that purpose. This application being as readily granted as its predecessor, she ordered the driver to Gloucester Place, then to two or three other streets, and finally to her own house, when she gave the children one cake apiece out of her heavily-laden reticule, and deposited the remainder in a private store which she kept for furnishing forth her desserts, whenever any friends likely to become clients were invited to dine with her.

CHAPTER VII.

" Kill men i' th' dark! Where be these bloody thieves?
————Ho! murder! murder!"

SHAKSPEARE.

" SWEET are the uses of adversity," saith the bard, who, with a not less acute and redeeming insight into human nature, proclaims that there is " a soul of goodness in things evil." By constantly basking in the sunshine of prosperity, the heart may indeed look bright and glittering, but it is apt to become hard, dry, and sterile. The cloud that passes over it refreshes while it darkens: tears are the genial showers that soften and intenerate it, fertilising the latent seeds of goodness until they shoot forth and expand into blossom and precious fruit. By a beautiful provision of our nature, they who are under affliction of

any sort generally betake themselves for solace to the exercise of the virtues, and more especially of that charity which "blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." Thus are the unhappy in mind and the needy in circumstance relieved at the same moment; and thus do we realise the quaint saying, that crosses are ladders that lead to heaven.

Although Gale Middleton, baffled by the inscrutable and irreconcileable discrepancies of the moral world, had abandoned the unprofitable study of metaphysics and betaken himself to the investigation of matter, he had not by any means shrunk from the performance of the social duties enjoined not less by the suggestions of his own heart than by his sincere religious convictions. Many circumstances had combined to make him unhappy, but his natural temperament disposed him to be sanguine and cheerful, rather than despondent. He had not, like most young men, those absorbing excitements of business, ambition, and active life, which give them such a decided advantage over the disappointed female, and enable them

to forget so much more quickly as well as certainly the defeat of their only hopes. Gale had no stirring pursuits, none at least that would assist him to wear off his chagrin by the collision of society: for his chemical experiments were made in his lonesome study; his walks were solitary; he kept as much as possible apart from the crowd, feeding his melancholy by chewing the cud of bitter fancies, and brooding over the blight that had withered his affections upon his first going to school, and subsequently, as well as more distressingly, during his residence at Cambridge.

But while he shrank, with a morbid distaste, from intercourse with a class whose habits, modes, and thoughts, were so little in accordance with his own, his heart, yearning at the same moment for some relief from solitude as well as from the burthen of its sorrows, found both in seeking out the habitations of the poor, the lowly, and the afflicted, and administering to them the consolations of charity. Here was a species of companionship, which, leaving him in the enjoyment of the independence he loved,

might be recurred to at any hour when loneliness became irksome. Here was a solace in which he could indulge, without reproach and without contamination, whenever the habitual dejection of his spirit was weighed down to an almost insupportable heaviness. His means, though limited—and it was only upon such occasions that he wished them to be more commensurate with his benevolent desires—enabled him to carry comfort into many a distressed family; and he would often restrict himself in the purchase of books or philosophical apparatus, that he might extend the sphere of his charities. But the benefit that he derived from conferring benefits was not altogether unalloyed. Brought into almost daily collision with penury, wretchedness, and disease, not seldom entailed upon the sufferers by their own misconduct or guilt, he was confirmed in the belief that human life was destined to be a perpetual struggle with sufferings and woe; his peculiar religious notions drove him to the gloomy conviction that the majority of his fellow-creatures would inevit-

ably share a still worse fate in the world that is to come: and thus, while the exercise of charity tended to alleviate his individual sorrows, it corroborated his previous misconceptions as to the dark and hopeless destiny of mankind at large.

While the young men of his own rank and station betook themselves to their various morning occupations and amusements, to the public offices, the club-houses, the saunter through the fashionable streets, the ride or drive in the parks, the lounging visit to the houses of their acquaintance, or wasted their hours in less reputable haunts, Gale, exploring those obscure and wretched quarters of the town,

> "Where hopeless anguish pours the sigh,
> And lonely want retires to die;"

devoted his time and his money to the alleviation of penury and woe, sustaining by wholesome counsels and words of comfort those whom he could not wholly extricate from their difficulties, and never returning home until he had completely emptied his pockets. With

all his care to select none but meritorious objects, he found that he was sometimes deceived and defrauded, and occasionally, though but rarely, requited with ingratitude; but this did not discourage him, did not restrain the flow of his munificence. "There are many things," would he whisper to himself, "wherein to be sure of doing enough we must often do too much, a truth of which Nature herself is perpetually offering us an illustration. In order that the shower may reach every parched spot of earth that requires refreshment, a portion of it must sometimes fall upon the ungrateful rock, and upon the overflowing sea that needeth it not. But we must not give up use for fear of abuse. Better to bestow alms on a dozen whom they may not immediately benefit, or who may not deserve them, than to pass over one who might perish for want of our assistance."

In one of these charitable excursions, he had made acquaintance with an elderly widow residing in the purlieus of that wretched quarter of Westminster, known by the name of Petty France. She was in deep distress, seemed to

be utterly friendless, had known better days, and therefore felt her reverses more acutely than those who have hardened themselves by an early and constant exposure to the storms and buffets of adversity. After having ascertained, by reference and inquiry, that she was really the victim of unmerited misfortune, he relieved her from her immediate embarrassments, and placed her upon his list for a small half-yearly pension, a mode of rendering assistance which he found the least painful to himself, as well as the most delicate and beneficial to the parties themselves.

Late on the evening of the day when he had been visiting the Colosseum, a letter was delivered to him, purporting to come from the widow in question, stating herself to be at the point of death, and imploring him to pay her an immediate visit, as she had something to communicate important to her own peace of mind, wherein he himself was deeply interested, on which account he was again entreated to come instantly and unaccompanied. Prompted by commiseration for the sufferer whom he

really respected, as well as by a natural curiosity to learn what she had to divulge, he lost not a moment in setting off for her obscure abode, which he had some difficulty in finding, never having visited that quarter except in the day-time, and there being but few and feeble lamps to dissipate the thick foggy darkness that had now shrowded the whole vicinity. At length he found the alley that led to her residence, and, passing to its further extremity, emerged upon a small open space, one side of which was occupied by two or three detached and wretched hovels. Wading through the mud to the farthest of these tenements, not without twice running foul of the poles set up for drying linen, for there was neither lamp nor light of any sort in this miserable outskirt, he knocked at the door of the widow's residence, drawing an ominous conclusion of her death from the silence and darkness of the house. After a short delay, the door was opened, and the voice of a man whom he could not see, inquired, "Is your name Gale Middleton?"

"It is," was the reply;—"How is poor Mrs. Allen?"

"Please to walk in, sir," resumed the stranger, not noticing the question about the widow. Feeling his way over the threshold, Gale did as he was desired; the door was shut and secured behind him. Before he could advance he was dazzled by the flare of a lantern, dashed close to his face, and at the same moment he was laid prostrate upon the floor, stunned into total insensibility by a tremendous blow upon the temple from a heavy bludgeon!

When a dim and wildering consciousness revisited him, it was accompanied by an acute pain and throbbing in the head, and a sensation of intense coldness over all the rest of his frame. He opened his eyes, but could not immediately collect his faculties, so as to distinguish external objects, or to recall what had happened. After the lapse of a few minutes, however, he could see that he was lying on the floor in the corner of a small unfurnished room, while, by the rays of a lantern placed upon the mantelshelf, he perceived three men examining

the contents of a purse, which he recognised as his own. The quick and intuitive sense of self-preservation suggesting to him that he had fallen into the hands of robbers, who had intended to murder him, and that his life depended upon their thinking him dead, he remained perfectly motionless, suppressing as much as possible his very breath, though he still peered with half-closed eyes and with a harrowing interest upon the group before him. Two of the party were evidently London ruffians of the very lowest order, but the third seemed to belong to a different class; aspiring to a certain degree of fashion and even of foppery in his dress, he wore rings, seals, a gold chain, and an eyeglass; his narrow-rimmed hat was slightly tilted on one side, in order to display the curls that overshadowed his opposite temple. Though not in the best taste or plight, his clothes were put on with a certain affectation of jauntiness. His figure was small and compact; his pale, sodden face wore an expression of easy impudence, and in his demeanour there was an air of self-sufficient

pretension, which by the vulgar might easily be mistaken for gentility.

"Why, Jem, you buffer!" said this person to the brawny miscreant who held the purse, "you floored him in prime twig, and have faked him out and out with a single flip of your fib!"

"Why, lookye, Gemman Joe; I vas five years a butcher's slavy, and larnt how to floor an ox afore even I join'd the milling coves, and larnt how to floor a spoony. That crack upon the temple is a favourite mill of mine, and my fib, you see, is loaded at the end with blue pigeon,* so that it 's as heavy as a rook!"†

"Ay, you have made a proper dummy of him, Jem! No fear of his blowing the gaff!‡ Well, have you turned out his kickseys — and what 's the swag?"‖

"Not much; only two beans and a bull."§

"*Three* beans!" growled the fellow who had

* Lead.

† A small iron crow is facetiously termed a rook.

‡ Giving information to the police.

‖ What have you found in his pockets.

§ Two sovereigns and a crown.

been hitherto silent, but who had kept a watchful eye upon the contents of the purse; "what, are you coming the cross upon your pals?" *

"Come, come, my kiddies," said the first spokesman, who seemed to be the leader of this little gang; "this is to be a square concern; we all row in the same boat; so we 'll share as we go. There 's a bean for each of us, and the bull shall go for lush at the bowsing ken.† Have you knapped any more swag, Jem?"

"The seedy had never a thimble in his garret,‡ and never a sneezer in his sack; but I prigged this here fogle‖ out of his saltbox,§ and that 's all, except his togs, which are no great go — though there 's a new castor, I see, on his nob."

"Stow that, Jem, if you please," said Gemman Joe, as he had been called by his comrade.—"Toggery is too apt to tell tales. I won't have a rag of it fambled. It 's a prime

* Cheating your comrades.

† Drink at the public-house. ‡ No watch in his fob.

‖ Silk handkerchief.

§ The outside flap-pocket of a coat is thus called.

job for us already, for we are to touch five-and-twenty guineas a-piece, you know, for doing his business, and we don't get such a grab as that every day."

"When shall we finger the blunt?" asked the third ruffian. "Are you sure of your pal? Will he come to the mark,—will he post the pony?" *

"Yes, old file! I tell you he's a prime swell! The bit's as good as Drummond. I shall make him tow out the shiners to-morrow."

The unfortunate Gale Middleton, totally unversed in the slang language, had listened, as he lay extended in the dark corner of the room, to the discourse of these ruffians, without comprehending more than its general purport, and even this he gathered rather from their looks and actions than their unintelligible phraseology. Now, however, a new and startling light broke suddenly in upon his half-bewildered faculties. It appeared that he had not been decoyed into this den by common thieves in the ordinary exercise of their nefarious calling,

* Will he cash up?

but that murder rather than plunder, was their object; that they had been hired to assassinate him by some person moving in a superior station to themselves, who must have a deep interest in his death, since he had not hesitated to seek its accomplishment by such atrocious means, and had agreed to pay the bravoes liberally for despatching him. He had heard one of the fellows pronounce the name of Drummond, and another had whispered the word Oliver; but he knew not what it meant, and an intense, a harrowing, an irrepressible curiosity to gather some further information that might enable him to discover their employer, prompted him to turn his head a little on one side, in order that he might better see the parties and overhear their conversation. This was a most perilous experiment! Slight as was the movement, and cautiously as it was made, it caught the quick ear of Gentleman Joe, who suddenly exclaimed in a whispering voice, "Stow it, stow it, kiddies; the cove's not faked out. I heard him move!"

"Gammon!" said the second ruffian; "I

warrant his manchester will never let fall another whid.* Howsomdever, Gemman Joe, I may as well tip him a crack o' t'other side the nob, to make all sure, for this here's a scragging affair if we don't make a clean job on it."

So saying, the miscreant, spitting in his right hand, and grasping his bludgeon, while he took the lantern in his left, stalked to his prostrate victim, stood over his body, and brought the light close to his face! Gale was naturally brave; in another moment it seemed likely that the uplifted bludgeon would descend, perhaps to fracture his scull; and the desperate nature of his predicament, as well as his innate intrepidity, urged him to spring up, at least to make a fierce, however unavailing struggle for his life. But then it occurred to him, for the thoughts rushed through his brain with lightning-velocity, that he might possibly escape the despatching blow if the miscreant believed him to be already dead; and moreover, that he was too powerless, too much numbed by the cold, which had stiffened all

* His tongue will never drop another word.

his joints, to do more than accelerate his fate, by making an effort to avoid it. The idea of calling out for help flashed across his mind, but he doubted whether he could raise more than a feeble cry, and if he could, it was little likely to be heard or noticed in that sequestered haunt. Influenced by these considerations, he determined to stand the brunt of the ruffian's life-involving scrutiny; and accordingly, closing his eyes, and holding his breath, he remained perfectly motionless. It is difficult to conceive a more agonizing trial of fortitude and self-possession, for one heave of his bosom, one shudder of his frame, the involuntary affection of a single muscle, would have been instant and inevitable death! But he stood this fearful ordeal so well, even when the wretch who bestrode him felt his face and hand, that his threatened executioner growled forth —"Gammon! his mug and his mauley are as cold as a key; I varrant he never opens his lamps again. But if you like, Gemman Joe, I'll just chiv sir sidney into him!" *

* Stick a clasp-knife.

"No, no, you buffer; stow that, for blood's a queer blabber now and then, and tells tales. We shall have the drag* here presently. I ordered the cove to come up Dunghill-lane. He wont be long, for Oliver's not in town to-night."†

"I hope he'll bring a lock-up chovey,"‡ replied the ruffian; and so saying, he quitted his position over the prostrate body, and returned to the fire-place to deposit the dark lantern on the shelf. It was most fortunate that he did so, for the touch of his murderous hand, as he felt the face of his victim, had occasioned such a creeping horror throughout Middleton's frame, and such a sudden revulsion of the blood, that he was seized with an irrepressible twitching in the muscles of the face, which would have inevitably ensured his destruction, had the light been still held to his features. Released from this imminent peril, the circumstance was rather favourable than otherwise, for the struggle of nature was more than he could sustain, the scene swam

* The cart. † There's no moon. ‡ A covered cart.

before his eyes, his brain reeled, and he relapsed into an insensibility so deep and total, that it might well have been mistaken for the final sleep of death.

"I say, Gemman Joe," croaked the third fellow of the gang, "if ve be to vait here an hour or two for the drag, you ought to have got us some lush or some grub,* for there 's not much in this here crib to keep us varm, and ve ha'n't got no steamers to smoke."

"Ay, ay, I didn't forget that you were a friend of Alderman Lushington's,† so I popped a bottle of heavy wet in the back slum,‡ but we've no time for grubbing and steaming till we 've got rid of our cold meat yonder." He turned the tip of his thumb towards the corner where Gale lay extended; his comrade brought the gin from the little back room, or rather closet, and the three desperadoes, who were unprovided with glasses or mugs, successively applied the black bottle to their mouths.

Not less striking than revolting was the scene presented by this small and unfurnished

* Liquor and victuals. † A toper. ‡ Back room.

chamber, as the dark lantern, throwing a narrow but vivid light upon the discoloured panels opposite, and leaving the sides of the room in deep shade, fell with a ghastly and ominous glare upon the countenances of the three wretches thus unconcernedly regaling themselves with gin, while the victim, whom they supposed themselves to have murdered, was stretched at a few paces distance, his livid face, the only part of him that was distinguishable, dimly gleaming with a sort of spectral paleness from the dark corner where he lay. In spite, however, of the recklessness and swaggering looks assumed by the leader of the gang, there was no ferocity in its expression; it might betray a profligate vulgarity, but not an ingrained scoundrelism: nay, there were moments when a discriminating observer would pronounce that he had known better days, and had once been accustomed to mix with far different associates; an inference which derived some support from his manifest struggle to preserve an air of superiority, such as it was, in his dress and appearance, as well as from his complimentary nick-

name of "Gentleman Joe." The brawny ruffian who had inflicted the blow upon Middleton presented just such a result as might have been expected from a drunken thief ingrafted upon a pugilist, and both upon a butcher's slaughterman: confirmed, irredeemable atrocity was branded upon every lineament of his face, which was so inflamed and blotched, that even the wan light of the lantern could not subdue its fiery tone. An animal aspect of mingled suspicion and stupidity characterized the third fellow, who, though silent and passive, as if he scarcely understood the purpose for which he had been hired, was wary and vigilant enough to secure his proper share; not only in the division of the booty, but even in the evacuation of the gin bottle, watching the smallest movement of his confederates with an eye so sharp, sinister, and restless, that it hardly seemed to belong to his sluggish body.

Upon what trifling and unforeseen incidents may the life of a human being depend! While they were thus carousing, a mouse happened to make a rattling noise behind the

wainscot, against which Gale was lying, when the leader of the gang, evidently startled, exclaimed, in an eager whisper, "Damn the leary cove! the wind isn't out of him yet. Twig him another crack, Jem!"

"Ay, ay, I'll sarve him out, I varrant," said the fellow, with which words he deposited the gin-bottle, again grasped his bludgeon, and was crossing the room to execute his fell purpose, when the little animal that had scared the whole party, ran clattering along behind the skirting-board, squeaking with a shrill wail as it passed.

"Pshaw!" said Gemman Joe, staying the uplifted hand of his comrade, "you needn't nob him; he's cold enough; 'twas only a a mouse."

"No more it vornt," said Jem, chuckling in his throat; "only think that such a little hanimal as that should gammon us in that 'ere vay!" He again put the bottle to his mouth, and passed it to "Gemman Joe," who, however, shook his head, declined taking it, and turned away as if to conceal the emotion with which

he was agitated. A sudden change had indeed come over his features; his impudent swaggering look had entirely left him, his whole countenance was crestfallen, and the perspiration burst from his forehead. Rendered superstitious by their calling and by the jeopardy in which they are so constantly placed, almost all malefactors are profound believers in omens, and Gemman Joe was by no means an exception to this rule. Exclusively of an unaccountable fear and even horror, with which he was always affected on hearing the squeak of a mouse, he imagined it to be a sound of peculiarly evil augury, more surely prognosticating disaster and doom to the hearer than the screech of the boding owl or the ticking of the death-watch. With any visible or tangible danger he would have boldly grappled, but this supernatural warning, for such his strange delusion imagined it, occasioned a curdling of the blood that quite unmanned him; and, though he struggled to subdue his apprehensions, it was with an altered look and voice, that he exclaimed, "Joe, this is the first

scragging job that ever I have been engaged in, and I don't like to hear that confounded squeak, which always sounds in my ears like the tolling of the death-bell in the stone jug.* Jack Bates heard it the very night he was pulled up and sent to quod; and so did Tony Clark on the night of that cracking affair that brought his squeeze to the crap."†

"Gammon! vot's come to ye?" croaked his comrade. "Vhy, your mug's as long as a pitcher. You rank spoon! you von't be twisted no sooner acause a mouse knows how to throw off a rum chaunt.‡ Vhy, I've heard you do it yourself, ay, and patter a good flash too,§ when you're not flabbergasted in this here vay."

"Twisted. Ha ha!" said Joe, making an awkward attempt to laugh off his apprehensions; "this is not likely to be a twisting affair; we're all bang up: no nose‖ among us; and if we had, I know how to gammon the

* Newgate. † His neck to the gallows.
‡ Sing a good song. § Talk well. ‖ King's evidence.

twelve * as well as——hark! — douse the darky! What noise is that? I thought I heard a grunter."†

"Heard the devil! The scouts are all——"

"Stash! hist! there 'tis again!" said Joe, grasping the pummel of a horse-pistol, which he carried inside his waistcoat.

"Gammon! I tell ye vonce more; if it 's any thing it 's the drag cove; he ought to have been here afore now."

"I hope he can get the chovey up Dunghill-lane."

"Vhy, you flat, it 's broad enough for a rumble-tumble.‡ Ah! that 's he! I cotched the sound of his old snorting prad."§

A low whistle was now heard at the back of the premises, and "Gemman Joe," who seemed to recover his courage and self-possession in the prospect of quitting the house, and hearing no more squeaks, exclaimed briskly, "Yes, that 's Bob—I 'll undub the jigger,‖ and twig

* Cheat the jury. † A policeman. ‡ A stage coach.
§ Horse. ‖ Unlock the door.

him." He unlocked the door accordingly, and said in a low voice, "Bob, my snatcher, is that you?"

"All right, Gemman Joe," was the reply.

"All right!" echoed the latter, and then returning to his comrades, he said, "Now, then, my pals, bear a hand, and let us get rid of our cold meat."

"Vhen and vhere are ve to vack the blunt?"* asked the third fellow before he moved.

"To-morrow darky, at the old flash ken," was the reply; when the three men raised the still insensible body from the floor, carried it across a small back-yard, and deposited it in the covered cart, which was immediately driven off.

* Divide the money.

CHAPTER VIII.

O, monstrous beast! how like a swine he lies!
Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN these unconnubial times, a young bachelor of handsome fortune, tolerable good looks, and a title of any sort appended to his name, is so great a *catch*, to use the colloquial term, that the whole world of mammas, aunts, and married sisters, with a pretty girl in one hand, and a hymeneal noose concealed in the other, chase him from morning till night, from the opera to the play, and from the private ball to the public concert, in the hope of securing him; each as indefatigable in the pursuit as the panting groom whom one sometimes sees running from one corner to another of an exten-

sive field, with a sieve of corn and a hidden halter, striving to catch some skittish horse, who, in the wildness of his liberty, scampers backwards and forwards, desiderating the attractive grain, but having a shrewd presentiment that if he offers to taste it his personal freedom may undergo an unpleasant circumscription. Such a bachelor as we have been describing is veritably a lord of the creation; he "bestrides the narrow earth like a Colossus!" he may exclaim with literal truth, "I am monarch of all I survey!" for he is magisterial, imperial, autocratical! For ever redolent and tesselated is his table with perfumed, many-coloured billets of invitation; on the same day do twenty dejeuners, dinners, and dances, court his acceptance; whithersoever he may go he is a sort of Grand Turk, surrounded with a seraglio of beauties, all eager for the honour of his choice. Constantly enjoying the best things in the best society, his winter-life is an incessant round of pleasure; and in the summer, what nobleman or gentleman, who has unmarried daughters or sisters, does not feel a

disinterested delight in giving him the run of his hunting-box, and the privilege of his preserves, if he be a sportsman; of his marine villa, if he require sea-bathing; or the best berth in his yacht, if he have any nautical yearnings? Fortunate bachelor! he enjoys everything without the trouble of ordering or of paying for anything!

But what are these gross and physical advantages compared to the moral beatitudes that form a bright although perchance a deceptive halo around the happy wight, who is thus receiving perpetual courtship, not from one but from all; who is spared the annoyance of keeping house and of returning these civilities; who sees the soul of society, as it were, in a sabbath dress, and the whole world through a medium of rose-colour? Instead of the anger, hatred, and malice, with which others are pestered, he beholds nothing but love, charity, and cheerfulness: the women are all amiable, the men all friendly; both parties disinterested! He luxuriates in an antepast of the millennium!

" So, by a calenture misled,
The mariner with rapture sees,
On the smooth ocean's azure bed,
Enamell'd meads and verdant trees."

Every medal, it is true, has its reverse; and in every scene the darkness of the shadow is proportioned to the brilliancy of the light: pithy apophthegms, of which we leave the application to those middle-aged bachelors who, being given up by the world as incurable celibates, are placed upon the shelf; who are abandoned to the solitude of their monkish clubs; whose compulsory dullness and seclusion are embittered by the remembrance of past gaiety and favouritism; and who find that they are shut out from society, and more especially from the charms of female companionship, just when they have most need of those domestic blessings which can alone give pleasantness to the down-hill path of life, smooth the bed of sickness, and disarm death itself of a portion of its terrors.

We cannot take upon ourselves to affirm that these latter considerations had so far out-

weighed the imagined felicities of bachelor-life as to have prompted Sir Dennis Lifford's offer at the Colosseum; but certain it is that, as he sate at Mivart's Hotel, discussing his dinner with the aid of a bottle of claret, he reflected with no small complacency on the effort that he had made to conquer his habitual indolence, and on the happy result of his exertions. Had he been aware that ever since his arrival in town he had been the object of the most complicated though covert manœuvring and finesse, on the part of the mammas to whom he had been introduced, mostly through the agency of the bustling Mrs. Burroughs; and that, at the very moment when he was sipping his claret, "all alone by himself," he was occupying the thoughts of perhaps a dozen maternal match-makers, to say nothing of young ladies, whose numbers we will not presume to guess, he might probably have regretted his precipitation, and have wished that he had exercised a wider range of choice before he committed himself by propounding the irrevocable question. Happy in his ignorance of these facts,

and of the signal sensation he had made, less, however, by his personal merits than by his title, his estates, and his expected peerage, he congratulated himself on his selection of the fair Cecilia, and resolved to accelerate his marriage as much as possible, in order that he might reach Paris, where it was his intention to pass the honeymoon, in time for a grand public entertainment which was shortly to be given in that gay metropolis. This excursion would be a treat for his bride, who had never been abroad, and he wished her to commence her matrimonial career under as favourable auspices as possible.

Sir Dennis, however, seldom thought so much of others as to forget himself. Having settled his future plans, he deemed it right to settle the present position of his whiskers; wherefore he sauntered up to a glass, adjusted them with an almost mathematical precision, returned the diminutive comb to his pocket, took out a tiny pair of scissors, snipped off a single hair that he had caught in the act of playing truant, gave a more becoming twirl to the lock that fell over

his left temple, and felt altogether so well satisfied with his prospects, both in the mirror before him and in the glass of futurity, that he successively ordered a fresh bottle of claret, and got up to drill his curls and his whiskers, till he could get up no more, and was finally carried to bed by the waiters, who had found him on the floor in the heavy sleep of intoxication.

Others there were, who were scarcely less elated than the baronet by the offer made and accepted in the Swiss cottage of the Colosseum. Cecilia, although agitated by so novel an occurrence as a lover kneeling at her feet amid rocks and waterfalls, to the somewhat incongruous accompaniment of fighting ducks and cooing doves; while she was not less pleased at the success of the little manœuvrings she had put in practice under her mother's tuition than at the prospect of making so advantageous a match, and of being ultimately elevated to the peerage; was not of a temperament to be very vividly or durably excited by emotions of any sort. Good temper, or rather placidity, may

be constitutional, we had almost said, physical; it may proceed from the want rather than from the proper control of feeling. This was pretty much the case with Cecilia, whose negative character we have already noticed, and whose consequent equanimity seldom underwent more than a momentary disturbance. Still, however, the most phlegmatic young lady can hardly be expected to retain her self-possession when she is asked to put herself in possession of another, and that other a wealthy baronet, likely to raise her to a higher sphere than that in which she had previously moved. Cecilia's heart had not quite returned to its customary pulsation, nor had the flush of surprise and excitement quite deserted her cheeks, when, on returning from the Colosseum, she ascended to her own room, and immediately ran to the glass.

"Well!" she exclaimed, smiling at the unusual bloom of her face and the still rarer animation that lingered in her eyes; "mamma is certainly right; this is the most becoming bonnet I ever had! I declare I have got quite a fine colour, and yet that spiteful Mrs. O'Grady

affected only yesterday to regret that I was always so pale; as if it were not a thousand times genteeler to be fair than to have such milkmaid faces as her cherry-cheeked daughters. I wonder what they will say, and Miss French, and the Framptons, and cousin Maltby, and those conceited Hendersons, who are always giving themselves such airs, when they hear that I am to be Lady Lifford, and perhaps in three or four years, the Countess of Ballycoreen. Lady Gauntley, I remember, told mamma, with one of her polite sneers, that it was not sufficient now-a-days for a girl to have money, she must have beauty besides; well, I quite agree with her, only the beauty of others need not be like that of her scraggy daughters. One can be handsome, I suppose, without being a grenadier; and have a good figure, I presume, without being pinched in half, like a wasp." As she denounced these characteristics of the Miss Gauntleys, it was remarkable that Cecilia raised herself up to her full height, even until her heels no longer touched the carpet, while she drew her belt so tight that she

could hardly breathe, as if anxious to obtain some little portion of the superfluous height and slimness which might so well be spared by the Miss Gauntleys. Having completed this process, she took off her bonnet, but instead of ringing for Horton, her maid, to put it away, she carefully blew off a modicum of dust from its rim, deposited it with her own hands in the wardrobe, and covered it tenderly with a cambric handkerchief. The species of flattery conveyed by a peculiarly becoming article of dress is the most endearing, the most ingratiating, of all adulation, because it is at once silent and utterly free from suspicion. It is an homage that a girl may believe without any imputation upon her good sense; and it is one, therefore, which will often realise what it suggests, by calling up into the countenance that expression of perfect complacency which is in itself a beauty. We have known young ladies form a sort of personal friendship with an embellishing leghorn, and mourn over its decline and fall as pathetically as if the head and

shoulders, instead of the head and bonnet, were about to be separated for ever !

Lady Middleton was better pleased at the thought of the annoyance which the contemplated marriage would occasion to her competitor, Mrs. Howard Maltby, than of the happiness which it was likely to confer on Cecilia. As the sweetest wine, when once it is turned, makes the sourest vinegar, so are the quarrels of near relations apt to be more sharp and acrimonious than those among simple friends and acquaintance. In these cases, conscience sometimes makes us malevolent, and we the more bitterly hate those who have once enjoyed our confidence, because we are aware that they knew enough to warrant their hatred of us. This it is that throws such a peculiar charm, beyond that of mere novelty, around those friendships which are too recent to have allowed the discovery of mutual faults and failings, or to have awakened the unpleasant feeling that the parties are in each other's power, which, to a certain extent, must be the case in

all unreserved intimacies. In the higher circles, moreover, a quarrel soon degenerates into rancour, and fixes itself in the heart, because it has no allowable vent beyond sneer, insinuation, and polite scandal, which, though they may be sufficient to carry off the regular evaporation of hatred, rather sustain than diminish its quantity. With vulgar people, on the contrary, the mouth is a safety-valve, which prevents the accumulation of any dangerous vapour and the chances of an explosion. They get into a passion, they storm, they swear, they abuse, they pour forth all their rage and dislike in a single day, and, after a night's sleep, they are ready for a reconciliation. The soft gentle voice with which Lady Middleton always spoke of her sister was the zephyr that fanned the flame of her resentment, and kept it alive when a furious gust would have blown it out.

Although she waited with some impatience the arrival of Sir Matthew, in order that she might be the first to communicate to him the happy tidings, her Ladyship was too strict an

observer of proprieties to run out to meet him, when she heard the knock that announced his arrival, or to betray any undue elation as she recounted what had occurred at the Colosseum, and the purposed visit of Sir Dennis on the following morning. To her own skilful diplomacy and good management, coupled with the discreet instructions she had given Cecilia, she attributed the successful capture of Sir Dennis, whose fashionable manners and appearance she again warmly eulogised, diverging from this point to his large estates in Donegal, the prospect of the earldom of Ballycoreen, and the certainty that by such an alliance they themselves would be lifted into a higher sphere, and be enabled to move among the most select circles. "Poor dear Ciss!" exclaimed the father, in a softened voice, as he fixed his eyes upon an opposite chair, and remained silently pondering for two or three minutes. "Glad to see her happy, poor thing!" he continued; "but lord! how I shall miss the girl in the house: won't be like the same place, hey!—flat as ditch water—dull as 'Change on a Sunday."

"But why should you look so melancholy, when ——."

"'Cause 'tis my own flesh and blood: wouldn't like to have your leg cut off, would ee? Don't much fancy that Irish chap; afraid to trust any of them further than you can hook 'em back again with a crooked stick. Look what we lost by Murphy and Mayhew, of Dublin, and O'Connor and Leary, of Limerick:—nothing but bad debts with those Paddies: all lame ducks,—hey!—hick!"

"My dear Sir Matthew, you are neither going to execute an order for Sir Dennis, nor to take his acceptance. You forget that he is a baronet and a gentleman."

"Only to think of my losing dear little Ciss!" said the father, "never out of my sight hardly since I dandled her upon my knee in Lawrence-Pountney Lane. Well! all's uncertain; here to-morrow, and gone to-day; life's a bubble, full of trouble. Lord, if her poor dear mother, ah! *she* was a kind-hearted creature! if she were alive now, and saw Ciss

turned into my lady, and like to be a countess. Hick, hick, hick !"

The baronet's chuckle was but faintly given; it wanted its usual sharp hilarity; he blew his nose, and surreptitiously stole the handkerchief up to the corner of his eye, but not so adroitly as to be unobserved by Lady Middleton, who exclaimed, smilingly, but nevertheless with a frown at her heart, "These allusions are not particularly pleasant, my dear Sir Matthew."

"Like enough, like enough; two of a trade never agree—claw me, claw you—meant no harm—give every one their due, and play fair, that 's my motto. Heads I win, tails you lose, —hey, hick ! Sha'n't consent to her marrying this whiskered Jackadandy if she 's to live in Ireland; tell 'ee that, plump !"

"Sir Dennis is much too fashionable a person not to be an absentee. He may occasionally visit his estates, but his permanent residence will doubtless be in England, and most likely in London."

"Ah ! if she had married Ned Travers now,

would have lived in Broad Street Buildings; capital situation, good house. Just the thing for me; might have popped in at luncheon-time—Ned 's a famous fellow for tender mutton-chops, and a nice beef-steak pudding; and might have seen dear Ciss every day. Got some prime old Madeira too."

The wife, who was not deficient in penetration, saw his rising objections to the match fortified by this beatific vision of the daily luncheon: but she knew also his strong affection for his daughter, and she dwelt therefore so forcibly upon the honour, the distinction, and the advantages of her becoming a Countess, that his vanity and ambition were awakened, his scruples were conquered, and he finally gave up his friend Ned Travers, one of the first brokers on the Russia walk, in spite of his merited reputation for unrivalled mutton-chops and peerless beef-steak puddings. When we talk of Sir Matthew's vanity and ambition, we must enter a caveat and ask leave to explain. In his own person he cared little or nothing about titles and polite life: he had removed to

Portland Place, not to please himself but his wife, whose affectation of fashion and restless anxiety to be admitted into the upper circles he at once ridiculed and deplored. But when the foibles that he thus lamented in another courted his own adoption under the semblance of paternal duty, he yielded with a good grace, piquing himself upon discharging an imperative obligation, when he was in fact only indulging his own latent propensities in the person of his daughter.

Just as Lady Middleton had completely reconciled Sir Matthew to the projected match, Cecilia entered the room, dressed with more than usual care, and looking so well, for her cheeks had not entirely lost their flush, that her father gazed at her with a proud complacency, held out his arms, and drawing her towards him, kissed her with a loud and hearty smack, congratulating her on the conquest she had made, and wishing her joy with such rough shakings of the hand that the disconcerted girl was glad to sink into a chair by his side. Still, however, he retained, and occa-

sionally kissed one of her hands as he exclaimed, "Bless 'ee, girl, bless 'ee, dear Ciss! and so thee be going to marry, and leave the old man. Lord! it 's like tearing the heart out of one 's body, taking away my little Ciss, that 's always been playing about by my side like a kitten, only she never scratched and quarrelled. Your poor mother used to say you were too good-tempered—so did I; let every little girl take away your playthings;—make yourself all honey, and the flies will eat 'ee up—hey! Sure I ought to love 'ee—my own flesh and blood, ar'n 't 'ee? and a good child thee 'st ever been to me; never forgot my lozenges of a morning to give me an appetite; always well spoken that I must say. Showed sense there — fair words put off rotten apples:—always dutiful to me and to thy poor ——. Ah, well! she 's dead and gone! Always did as I bid 'ee — always put nutmeg into my fish-sauce — always — I mean never — and now thee 'st going to ——."

Towards the conclusion of his speech, the father's voice gradually broke into a husky whisper; striving at every pause to gulp down

his emotion, he made several efforts to pronounce the words, "leave me," but the sounds were lost in a suppressed sigh, which he tried to turn into a cough, and two or three big tears which had been gathering in his eyes, rolling down his rough, red face, fell upon his daughter's hand.

Lady Middleton was amazed at an emotion which she could not at all comprehend; Cecilia, much affected, jumped up and kissed her father's cheek, and Sir Matthew, hugging and embracing his daughter, would probably have wept outright and blubbered aloud, but that at this juncture the second dinner-bell sounded, when he started up with alacrity, crying out in his usual voice, "Ha! glad to hear that—bread-basket empty—no time for snivelling. Come along—where's Gale? always too late—bad sign that. Capital salmon—bought it of Myers, St. Michael's Alley—now then—hey—hick!"

At the commencement of dinner, the baronet was too busy to speak; but as he appeased his voracity, for his appetite was proportioned to his bulk, he gradually mixed in the conversa-

tion, emptying his glass rapidly, and chattering with a good-humour that suffered no check until he had occasion to call for pepper. Dupin being at that moment the only servant in the room, his master, who had taken, half jestingly, several dinner-lessons in French from Cecilia, and was disposed on the present occasion to show his proficiency, called out two or three times, "*donnez moi*," and pointed to the article he wanted, forgetting the French word for pepper; but as the Gaul only elevated his shoulders and his eyebrows, ejaculating with a look of bewilderment, "*Plait-il, Sare Matthieu?*" the baronet, whose maccaroni was cooling, while he himself was getting hot, at last lost his temper, and roared out with a crimsoned face, "The pepper and be damned to 'ee! —Why casn't speak English like a man, ye spindle-shanked *parlez-vous?* Where 's William? As well have a kangaroo behind one 's chair as this." He had no time to say more, for the desiderated stimulant had been supplied, and he addressed himself seriously to his dish, which proved to be so good, that it

presently restored his equanimity, especially as the superfluity of pepper, which he had administered in his wrath, afforded him an excuse for two quick succeeding bumpers of Madeira. Lady Middleton, in the mean time, had been enlarging upon her favourite topic, the fashion and elegance of Sir Dennis's appearance, when Sir Matthew broke in upon her eulogy, by exclaiming, "Badly dressed, badly dressed—all rags!"

"What! Sir Dennis Lifford?" shrieked both the females at once.

"Psha! speaking of the chickens; what should make me think of Sir Dennis at dinner-time? S'pose *you* did, 'cause you saw this maccaroni before 'ee. Had he there!—hick! hick! hick!—ha! ha! ha!"

As he seldom ventured on a joke, the baronet may stand excused for indulging in the full extent of his laugh, which was so singular as to deserve a passing notice. The three first interjections were a sharp loud chuckle, to which his stomach heaved upwards in accordance, and there he would sometimes end; but

when his irresistible risibility required the conclusion it constituted an almost superhuman cachinnation, given with such an outbursting cordiality and enjoyment that few hearers could sufficiently restrain their sympathies to avoid mingling in the mighty mirth.

"Ah!" sighed Lady Middleton, "I was just expressing my regret that Gale, who is really quite a sloven ——."

"Where is Gale?" interrupted the husband. "Poor boy! dinner all cold—shocking! shocking! Serve him right, though — man who neglects his most important duties, ought to be be punished, hey,—hick!"

"As he is neither in his own room nor in his laboratory," replied Lady Middleton, "I presume he is still at the Colosseum, where we left him apostrophising the painted houses in the most extraordinary way I ever heard off the stage. The young man's wits seem to me to be always woolgathering."

"Don't gather much;—great cry and little wool, as the devil said when he sheared his sheep, hey!—hick! Very wrong—ought to be

here: look devilish blue when he finds the fish cold. Talking of that, Meg—Lady Middleton I mean—forgot to tell'ee, seen the captain of the Arethusa—clever fellow that Bracebridge —one hundred and ninety serons prime Guatimala indigo—seen a sample of the cochineal—capital. Drugs looking up—hides come to a good market; clever fellow that Bracebridge —'spose we drink his health, hey!—hick!"

In vain did the wife and daughter try to turn the conversation into a more interesting channel, by talking of Sir Dennis, and wondering what had become of Gale. Sir Matthew was on board the Arethusa, whose cargo he recapitulated *seriatim*, stating the prospects of the market, as he enumerated the various articles, and drinking fresh bumpers to the health of Captain Bracebridge, so that the ladies, who had much more important matters to discuss, took an early opportunity of withdrawing upstairs.

While they were at tea, they heard a double knock, when Cecilia, who took it for granted that her brother, to whom she was sincerely

attached, had come home, inquired whether she might communicate to him the important occurrence of the morning. "There can be no objection but its inutility," was the reply, "for in an hour he will forget the whole circumstance, and be 'climbing trees in the Hesperides,' or apostrophising the moon, as if he were a new Endymion. He loves nothing but books, chemical apparatus, and fustian soliloquies."

"Nay, now you do him injustice, indeed you do. He loves everything and everybody. He is the most affectionate creature in the world; so kind-hearted, that he would not harm an insect. I 'm sure he will be delighted to hear of my good fortune, especially if, as papa suspects, he is himself more than half in love with Chritty Norberry of Maple Hatch."

"Nothing more likely; she is just the strange, oldfashioned girl, likely to attract his regard, and not the less so for being as plain as she is underbred."

Cecilia was about to undertake the defence of the young lady thus inculpated, when the

door was opened, and Dupin, instead of ushering in Gale, as she expected, announced her civic lover, Mr. Travers, whose cold reception was perhaps more attributable to the disappointment of which he was the unconscious author, than to any positive dissatisfaction at his presence, inopportune as it might be deemed. Indeed, there was nothing whatever to dislike about him, though he did not possess the happy art of ingratiating himself with the other sex, in spite of his personal appearance, which was rather in his favour. Keen, active, and intelligent, as a man of business — qualities which, in conjunction with his well-appointed luncheons and dinners, had completely won him the heart of Sir Matthew, Travers was, nevertheless, so diffident, not to say sheepish, in the society of females, so easily abashed by their ridicule, or frightened by their frowns, that he could not display to advantage the information and good qualities which he really possessed, and was often accused of being dull and stupid, when his reserve was solely occasioned by his timidity. Lady Middleton, who,

with a strange inconsistency, affected to despise everything civic, treated him with a cold, distant politeness, for she was never rude to any one; and Cecilia, although she really entertained some predilection for her mercantile suitor, followed the injunctions of her mother, and gave no encouragement whatever to his addresses. Hopeless, however, as his attachment might appear, he could not eradicate it from his bosom, and occasionally came up to Portland Place to tea, though he could scarcely fail to perceive that his visits were little acceptable.

"You are not engaged — you do not expect company — I am not intruding, I hope?" said Travers, as he advanced with a hesitating air.

"Pray be seated, sir," replied Lady Middleton, with a frigid smile, that looked like moonlight upon ice. Travers moved a chair towards Cecilia, still, however, keeping at a respectful distance, and drawing a small box from his pocket, continued: — "I took the liberty of calling because I had a curiosity which I thought your Ladyship might like to see. It

is a necklace which I had commissioned Captain Bracebridge to procure at Buenos Ayres, the only place where they are manufactured. Of little intrinsic value, for it consists only of minute shells, it is, nevertheless, curious from its rarity, as well as from the skill with which it is strung together." He handed it to Lady Middleton. Cecilia ran up to look at it, and both were loud in its praise, for they had previously seen nothing of the sort, and in baubles novelty is the highest possible merit. "I had a great favour to ask," resumed Travers, blushing and looking down; "as the toy is of such trifling value, I had hoped, if I did not think it would be deemed presumptuous, that is to say, I ventured — I mean I intended to request Miss Middleton to do me the honour of accepting it."

"La!" cried Cecilia; "and did you think of this so long ago as when Captain Bracebridge sailed? How very kind of you! I should have been most happy to accept it, and I feel not the less obliged by your consideration, but just at this moment there would be

an impropriety — I must beg leave to decline your offer. There are circumstances which prevent my —" she hesitated and looked at her mother.

Lady Middleton, to whose meanness in trifles we have already adverted, thought it was now time to interfere, not only to secure the trinket, which she really admired, but to give a final dismissal to the civic suitor, whom she could not abide. " Since it is of such trifling value, Mr. Travers," said her Ladyship, " I can have no objection to accept it for myself, as a little memorial of your friendship for Sir Matthew, who, I am well aware, has a sincere regard for you; but Cecilia could not take it with any propriety, for, *entre nous*, though I should not wish it to go any further at present, she is shortly about to change her condition.

" How! what!—Miss Middleton!—Is Miss Middleton about to be mar—mar—married?" stammered the lover, turning excessively red, and then as suddenly pale.

" Yes; to Sir Dennis Lifford, an Irish baronet, who has every prospect of soon becoming

Earl of Ballycoreen! a most advantageous match!"

"Indeed! you amaze me. This is very sudden, is it not? I am very glad, if it will make Miss Middleton happy; and as to any other consideration, I shall endeavour to bear — I must submit!—it will be very trying!—my heart must learn — I beg your pardon; I scarcely know what I am saying. I hope you will forgive me?"

Neither of his companions knowing what to say to relieve the evident distress and agitation of the rejected lover, an embarrassing silence succeeded, which was at length broken by Lady Middleton, who sought to turn the conversation, by asking him whether he would take tea. "No, thank you, madam; I came on purpose —" was the not very intelligible reply; and another pause ensued, during which the mother placed herself at the table, while Cecilia, who really felt for her discarded suitor, as she saw his countenance working, pretended to be searching very diligently in her empty reticule. As there is an extremity of danger

that conquers fear by converting it into desperation, so there is a vehemence of emotion that banishes all reserve and timidity. Such was the situation of Travers, who, starting suddenly from his chair, approached Cecilia, took her hand, pressed it respectfully to his lips, fixed his glistening eyes upon her face, and exclaimed in a tender, earnest voice, "God bless you, Miss Middleton! May you be as happy as you deserve—as happy as I wish you to be!" So saying, he bowed, hurried out of the room, ran down stairs, and quitted the house!

"He started like a guilty thing, and fled!" cried Lady Middleton, laughing as she proceeded to ridicule the sudden animation and confidence of the fugitive, who had never before presumed even to shake hands with his mistress. Cecilia, however, felt little disposed to second this bantering strain. Few girls, whatever they may pretend, thoroughly dislike the man who makes them an offer. They may not choose him for a husband, but they at least owe him gratitude for his preference; he has

flattered their pride in its most sensitive point, and it is impossible to hate him who has made us better love ourselves. By a strange caprice, only to be thus accounted for, Cecilia had never felt half so well disposed towards Travers as at the present moment, when she had given him his final dismissal, and was engaged to be married to another.

Sir Matthew joined them soon after tea; but it was agreed to say nothing to him of what had just occurred, lest he should be prompted by his acknowledged partiality for Travers to throw some impediment in the way of the match with Sir Dennis. Their chief subject of conversation was the non-appearance of Gale, who had not presented himself when the supper-tray was brought up. His habits, however, were so eccentric, that this circumstance excited conjecture rather than apprehension, and the family retired to bed at their usual hour, one of the servants having been ordered to sit up for the absentee.

CHAPTER IX.

Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in?
——————— Is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place—
——————— shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears?

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Gale Middleton slowly recovered consciousness, his first sensation was that of a cold numbness throughout his body, so intense and total as to have even stilled the throbbing anguish in his head. For some time his ideas were too confused and bewildered to allow him to recall the occurrences of the night, although an indistinct notion that he had been the victim of some violence and robbery floated vaguely in his mind. Even when the frightful scene

in the widow's cottage at length presented itself to his recollection, he inclined at first to think that it was all a phantasm of sleep, a hideous dream, a nightmare: but, as the circulation of his blood became restored, the returning pain and pulsation in his temple convinced him that it was indeed a frightful reality, and he kept his eyes closed, and suppressed his breath, under the harrowing apprehension that the athletic ruffian with his uplifted bludgeon might still be bestriding him, ready, if he detected the smallest sign of animation, to dash out his brains. In this agony of suspense he remained for some minutes, his ear, the only sense that he dared to exercise, listening with an intense eagerness to catch the smallest sound that might confirm or dispel his fears. There reigned a perfect and profound silence: but, as the assassins might still be around him, though not speaking, he listened, in order that he might catch their smallest breathing, should they be within hearing distance. After a while, he became thoroughly convinced that he was alone, and yet it was not

without a violent palpitation of the heart that he ventured to peep from beneath his half-closed eyelids. He could discern nothing; all was dark. He raised his lids a little more, when a faint glimmering of light became visible, while he distinctly felt a puff of cold air pass over his face. Persuaded from this circumstance that he was no longer lying on the floor of the little room, but exposed, wherever he might be, to the breezes of heaven, he opened his eyes entirely, and saw the bright stars glimmering far, far above him, in the moonless but clear and quiet sky. His sensations at this moment it would be utterly impossible to describe. Thus unexpectedly snatched from the very jaws of death, and brought into renewed communion with the glorious heavens, and the stars that seemed to be looking down upon him with a bright-eyed gratulation, his first feeling was an exquisite enjoyment of vitality, a sense of the inappreciable value of that existence from which he had been so nearly cut off.

They only who have stood suddenly and

unexpectedly in the immediate presence, as it were, of a violent death, can imagine the passionate yearning with which we cling to life, even though we may have had little cause to hold it in previous estimation. Of this Gale Middleton afforded a signal illustration. Little as he had hitherto coveted existence, he now clung to the hope of its prolongation with an unutterable avidity, that absorbed every faculty of his soul, quickening his apprehensions of danger, while it suggested expedients for avoiding it. The sweet and tender charities of life, its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, his social and domestic attachments, the pensioners who depended on his bounty, together with all the beauties, the marvels, and the mysteries of creation, rushed in upon his heart and memory with such an overpowering effect, that the tears burst involuntarily from his eyes, dimming the sight of the calm heavens upon which he had been gazing with such a devout and consoling fervour. But their hallowing influence was not lost. Afraid to break the thrilling silence that brooded around him, he

offered up a fervent mental thanksgiving as he thus lay rapt and motionless, and felt a fresh courage in the thought that he had a sure protector and defence against his present perils, whatever might be their nature, in the Deity by whom he had been so marvellously preserved from destruction.

It behoved him, however, to be instrumental to his own safety, to use every precaution for avoiding the perils with which he might be surrounded. Fearing that he might still be in the power of his intended assassins, he determined, before he would make any attempt at escape, to ascertain if possible where he was. He could perceive that his view of the sky was circumscribed and confined to a narrow space by some mass that encompassed him around; but, though he turned his eyes repeatedly on either side, the darkness would not allow him to discover its nature further than to observe that it rose perpendicularly, leaving only sufficient space for his extended body. Under the notion that he was dead, the ruffians might, perhaps, have cast him into some deep and

lonely pit, in which event he had only to remain quiet until the morning dawned, when he might extricate himself, with good assurance that he would not be again waylaid and assaulted, of which he could hardly be certain were he to venture to escape in the dark.

As these thoughts passed rapidly across his mind, the gloom of his enclosure decreased, or his vision became better accustomed to it, and, in the earthen wall surrounding him, he was enabled to distinguish objects which thrilled his whole shuddering frame with the horrible, the appalling, conviction that he was lying at the bottom of a deep and newly dug grave! Yes, it was impossible to doubt the nature of the hideous receptacle into which he had been cast. Fragments of coffins, mingled with loathsome and revolting remnants of mortality, protruded from the dark, rank soil on either side, while, opposite to him, towards the upper surface, his terrified fancy bodied forth a skull, whose eyeless sockets, catching the dim starlight, seemed to be fixed upon him with a withering glare. The nauseous smell of death

was in his nostrils; a sickening horror crept through his veins; and he was now doubly urged to attempt his instant extrication, first by his natural disgust of being thus buried alive; and, secondly, by the fear that the miscreants, who had doubtless thrown him into this excavation in the belief of his death, and as the most effectual means of concealing their victim, would speedily return to cast in the earth upon his body and complete their purpose.

Impelled by these terrors, he made an immediate effort to rise, when he found to his unutterable consternation that his limbs refused to move, that he had completely lost all muscular power, and was totally helpless. Consciousness and volition remained, but in every other respect he was dead; his body was a corpse, and the grave seemed to be its proper depository! The effort that he had made to move, combined, perhaps, with the shuddering revulsion of his frame, sent a rush of blood to his head that bewildered his mental perceptions, under which temporary hallucination he entertained the strange phantasy that he was

indeed dead, and that the soul was only lingering for a short while in the body before it took its final flight. While labouring under this delusion, it appeared to him at times that the skies, upon which his regards were fixed, gradually lowered themselves until they were brought so close to him that he could perceive flying companies of seraphs, and hear the dulcet symphonies of the angelic choir: while, at other moments, he felt as if the grave were lifted up from the earth, and received into the innermost depths of the heavens, floating with him from sphere to sphere, in search of that celestial mansion to which he was ultimately destined. "Now, then!" he mentally ejaculated, "I shall soon solve the great and hitherto inscrutable mystery of my being. As I had been convinced by the operations of dreams that the mind might be awake when the body was asleep, so was I persuaded that the soul might live when its corporeal tegument was laid asleep in death. Lo! I have now an irrefragable proof. My soul, the restless bird which has so long been beating itself

against the bars of its cage, is about to make its escape, to spread its wings, and to soar upwards. But whither? To what unknown spheres will it be wafted; what new modes of existence will it assume; what novel senses and enjoyments will be imparted to it; what higher and more exquisite intellectual faculties will it develop; and will it retain any recollection of its pains or pleasures in its mortal and sublunary state?"

These and other reveries continued for some time to flit across his wandering brain; the deep and intense silence, not less than the immobility of his limbs, convincing him that he was actually dead, and thus relieving him of the terrors with which he had been previously assailed, from an apprehension that the assassins might return. The crowing of a cock, dissipating all the bubbles of his imagination, suddenly changed the whole current of his ideas. Having attributed the previous profound silence not to the absence of sound but to the closing of his ear by death, the shrill

clarion that he had just heard seemed to restore him, as it were, to vitality, to the world, and to the whole train of thoughts that had rushed upon his brain when he first recovered consciousness. Now came again the eager, the absorbing, the overwhelming desire of life, the irrepressible impatience for escape, the shuddering horror of the grave, the heart-withering fear that his assailants might return. But the agony of his mind did not rouse his limbs from their torpor; nerveless, immoveable, powerless, he could do nothing to avert his fate; he must lie where he was, to be butchered like an unresisting victim, or to encounter a still more horrid doom by being buried alive, and smothered with the nauseous earth that surrounded him. Conscious that his life depended on the breaking of a new day, he kept his eyes fixed on the stars, watching them as if each were an executioner holding an uplifted axe over his neck, and at length perceived, with an ecstasy not the less rapturous because it was confined within his silent bosom, that

that their twinklings became less vivid, and that they gradually grew pale and wan, while the sky assumed a lighter and a greyer tint.

Reassured by this prospect of the dawn, he gazed for a moment at the opposite extremity of the grave, in order to ascertain whether the dim light had sufficiently penetrated into its depths to disclose what it was that oppressed his limbs with such a sense of weight and coldness. The bottom of the pit was as dark as ever, but towards the surface his eyes fell upon the imbedded skull by which he had been previously appalled. Its orbless sockets glared upon him more distinctly than before, and with such a power of fascination, that, in spite of the horror they inspired, he could neither close nor turn away his eyes. Riveted as if by some potent spell, they continued immoveable until a crow flew over the grave, intercepting the faint light that had gleamed into the sockets. To the disturbed faculties of him who was thus intently staring upon them, it seemed as if they winked at him, a prodigy so ghastly and appalling, that by a

violent effort he drew down his lids, and kept his eyes shut for some time, shuddering and thrilling throughout his whole frame.

A second crowing of the cock, which sounded in his ears like a reprieve from death, at length emboldened him to open them, when he perceived, with an ineffable delight, that the day had distinctly dawned; and, as he stole his looks hesitatingly towards the supposed skull, now fully and clearly visible, he discovered that it was a round indented stone, bearing some resemblance to the object into which his imagination had fashioned it. Freed from the apprehensions that had beleaguered him, and cherishing a full and sweet assurance that he should eventually preserve his life, he drew up his breath with a renovated courage, and felt as much relieved from his previous oppression of spirit as if a stone had been rolled from his breast. Still, however, the same weight pressed upon his limbs, and, as the gathering light stole dimly down to the bottom of the grave, he perceived that his legs and arms, probably benumbed with cold when he was first cast into it,

were covered with earth, which seemed to have been thrown over him in haste, and to have escaped or fallen from his head owing to its being slightly elevated by resting against the back of the grave. Here was fresh subject for amazement, conjecture, and gratitude: but his thoughts were otherwise occupied, for by this time it was bright day-break, he caught various sounds that convinced him the neighbourhood was awake and stirring; and, as the near whistling of a passenger met his ear, he determined to make an effort to procure assistance, and called out as loudly as his exhausted state would allow—"Help! Help!" His voice, as well indeed it might, sounded hollow and sepulchral, dying away without an echo; the whistling faded into inaudible distance; and he could distinguish no noise but the faint murmur and rumbling which, from such a metropolis as London, begins at a very early hour to float over the whole adjacent district.

In a short while, however, he heard the dissonant yell of an early milkman, presently succeeded by the sharp plaintive cry of a sweep-

boy and the hoarse growl of his master—noises more grateful to his ear at the moment than the most exquisite music. Again he called out for assistance, but it was with a feeble voice that seemed scarcely loud enough to attract attention, unless some wayfarer should chance to be passing close to the grave; and, as he felt himself every moment growing more weak and faint, he began to fear that he should perish from cold and exhaustion before any one could discover him. He closed his eyes, for his senses began once more to wander, while before his dizzy brain there floated a beatific vision of cherubim and seraphs, poising themselves upon silver-feathered pinions in an atmosphere of roseate light, and singing mellifluously to the accompaniment of their harps. Opening at length his eyes, as the sound of approaching footsteps dissipated this pleasant phantasm, he beheld, peering over the edge of the grave, two diminutive figures whom, by their sable hue and grim aspect, he might well have imagined to be imps from the realms of darkness rather than those angelic forms of which he had just

been dreaming. He moved his head, however, and murmured the word "Help!" when the sooty urchins, for they were little chimney-sweeps, uttered a cry of terror, and scampered from the place as fast as their heels could carry them. Their casual visit, however, to the grave eventually saved the life of its unfortunate inmate, although three-quarters of an hour still elapsed, and he was on the very point of perishing, before any succour arrived. At this early day-break but few of the neighbours were stirring, and these were prompted by their superstitious terrors rather to fly from the spot than to approach and extricate the sufferer. When interrogated as to the cause of their outcry, the young sweeps solemnly averred that they had both seen and heard a ghost, which was so irresistibly confirmed by their fear-fraught countenances, and the positive refusal of one of them to venture back for his brush, which he had dropped in his flight, that the gossips and others collected around them, listening with eager looks to their statement, felt not the smallest desire to have ocular evidence of its

truth. Few indeed ventured to cast their eyes in the direction of the church-yard, but each huddled close to his neighbour, as if anxious to borrow, from contact with flesh and blood and the security of numbers, a protection against the machinations of the ghost, should it presume to play truant and emerge from its appropriate haunt, the burial-ground.

One apparition makes many. Several of the old women of either sex thus assembled were provided with other and equally indisputable tales of spectres and spirits, which they proceeded to recount with all the minute circumstantiality of such fictions, until they were silenced and laughed to scorn by an enlightened milkman, who, having seated himself upon one of his pails, while his yoke was slung diagonally across his body, informed his auditors with some pomposity of manner, that he belonged to a Mechanics' Institute; alluded to the march of intellect; ridiculed the ignorant credulity that could believe in the existence of ghosts; and insisted that the sweeps, influenced by the superstitious terrors always felt by such illiterate

creatures, in passing through the church-yard, had been deceived by some optical illusion, at which they themselves would be the first to laugh, when they discovered its real nature. "If that be the case, Master Jenkins," said an old woman as she rested both hands upon her crutch-headed stick and looked at the orator with an expression of sneering malice—"mayhap you wouldn't mind just stepping to the grave, and seeing what it is, and telling us the rights on't.' 'Twouldn't be a minute's job."

"If I were going that way," replied the purveyor of milk, "shouldn't mind a farthing; but I mustn't keep my customers waiting. I tell you it's all humbug: ghost, indeed! not such a soft Tommy as to believe any rubbish of that sort—bah!" So saying, he hastily slipped the yoke over his shoulders, hooked up the pails, and decamped in double-quick time, taking a direction opposite to the church-yard.

"Ha! ha!" croaked the beldame, showing her toothless gums as she winked her eyes, and drew up her shrivelled lips in scorn, "I

thought he was a dunghill cock by his crowing so loud."

A pieman, who looked stout and stalwart enough to face a whole legion of ghosts, being challenged to perform the feat which the recreant milk-vender had declined, pretended to hear himself called, and bolted round a corner, crying out—"Pies! pies! hot mutton pies!"

The remainder of the group, who had caught the contagion of an additional fear from the manifest alarm of the fugitives, now huddled together more closely than before, when, to their great relief a policeman came up to enquire the cause of their assemblage, which half-a-dozen stated at the same moment, all urging him to proceed forthwith to the church-yard, as was his bounden duty, and demand of the apparition what it wanted, and why it thus disturbed the peace of the neighbourhood. But it was objected by the functionary to whom this requisition was addressed, that the burial-ground was out of his beat, that his constabulary duty did not extend to posthumous trans-

gressors, but was strictly limited to living malefactors, and that the ghost in question, if any such there were, fell within the jurisdiction of the parson, who, being paid for burying people, was answerable for their subsequent good behaviour, and their continuance in the grave to which they had been legally and comfortably committed. An argument so logical there was no rebutting; it was unamimously pronounced to be a case for the parson, but it was known that he would not be stirring for two or three hours to come; his clerk, whose presence and assistance might be necessary, resided at some distance; and in the mean time the ghost, should it hear the crowing of a cock, might evaporate and disappear without satisfying their curiosity —an escape the more to be apprehended because the grave was described as being quite open.

"That 'ere makes no odds," observed a cobbler, who had now joined the throng. "Them spiritous creaturs doesn't want no thoroughfare; they can make their way where there 's no way whatsomdever. What is a happarition like? Why, it's like the smell of roast

pork, which will mount from the kitchen to the garret, tho' all the doors and windows are fastened as tight as winky, and nobody can't tell how it travell'd. I don't say a ghost is like the smell of roast pork to look at, but only mentions this just to hillustrate the objick."

"There was no open grave in the churchyard yesterday," said the policeman; "and if there's one now, it must be the work of the body-snatchers."

This observation threw a completely new light upon the affair, and operated a marvellous change in the minds of the auditors. It was pertinently suggested, that instead of a ghost the sweeps might have disturbed one of these violators of the grave — a set of miscreants against whom popular indignation is so easily aroused that the whole party, whose terrors had now given way to wrath, moved simultaneously towards the churchyard, accompanied by the policeman, who seemed to have forgotten that it was out of his beat. It was soon discovered that the re-opened grave was that of Mrs. Allen, the poor widow who had been

buried two days before—a circumstance which tended to confirm the policeman's notion, that the resurrection-men had been at their nefarious work during the night, and quickened the advance of the party, in the hope of arresting one of those delinquents. As he heard them approach, Gale Middleton, who was too much exhausted to pronounce an articulate word, uttered a deep groan, which rather staggered the courage of the little group, and brought them to a sudden halt. One of their number, however, a poor woman, observed, that as the sound expressed suffering and exhaustion, it was much more likely to proceed from some unfortunate creature who had fallen into the grave than from any of the malefactors whom they had hoped to surprise. In almost every case of human anguish or distress, implicit reliance may be placed on the compassion of females, which is generally powerful enough to conquer their natural timidity and make them bolder than the other sex. So it proved in the present instance; for, while the men, under various pretexts, hung back and hesitated, the poor woman

here mentioned stepped forward to the edge of the grave, and, lifting up her voice and hands at the same moment, cried out — "Lord have mercy upon us! here 's a live man has tumbled into the grave sure enough!"

At this announcement the others hastened to the spot, when all stood for some minutes in a bewilderment of surprise, uttering exclamations, gazing at the prostrate body, and forming the most absurd conjectures as to the cause of the accident, instead of hastening to extricate the sufferer. The policeman betook himself to the station-house, to give information and procure assistance, and none of the others seemed disposed to venture down into the grave, until a second groan from Middleton had such an effect upon the woman who had first discovered him, that she scrambled into the pit, exclaiming — "Why, the poor wretch will perish afore ever them policemen gets here; so let 's try, neighbours, if we can't hoist him up into the fresh air, and get a summat warm down his throat." Before she set about the execution of her purpose, she removed the hat, which

still remained upon his head, and had no sooner done so, than she struck her hands together with a scream of surprise, crying out—"Christ save us all! It 's the strange gentleman that was so good to my poor husband when he was down with the rheumatiz; ay, and to Widow Allen, too, whose corpse ought to be lying in this very grave, if the villainous body-snatchers haven't embezzled it away. Dear, dear!—only to think!"

Two others of the bystanders recognised the face of the benefactor to whom they had more than once been indebted, and there was now no want of active and eager assistance; for ingratitude, though sometimes urged as a plea to excuse the uncharitableness of the rich, is not the besetting sin of the poor. In a few minutes the earth had been all cleared away from Middleton's body, which was raised out of the grave, and laid upon the grass, the head being supported on the knee of the woman who had been the most strenuous of his deliverers. This kind-hearted creature, who was called Mrs. Tapps, (we like to give the names of our meri-

torious characters, especially if they be in humble life,) did not know the address of her benefactor, for, in compliance with the wishes of Lady Middleton, who hated, as she said, to have her door besieged with paupers and petitions, her son never imparted his place of residence to the objects of his bounty. She proceeded, therefore, to search, in the hope of discovering some card or letter that might contain his address; but it was found that his pockets had been completely emptied, and the watch taken from his fob; circumstances which, in conjunction with the frightful bruise upon his forehead, convinced the bystanders that he had been assaulted and rifled by robbers who had subsequently thrown his body into the grave. As it was now obvious that nothing was to be got by waiting, and the males of the group were artisans, whose hour of morning labour had already struck, they were dispersing to their several avocations, when Mrs. Tapps requested them before they left the spot, to carry the body into the little tenement which she occupied in the immediate vicinity of the church-

yard. This was done accordingly, and the good woman, assisted by two female neighbours, who eagerly joined in discharging the offices of humanity and gratitude towards their common benefactor, laid him before the fire, covered him with blankets, and succeeded in getting some brandy down his throat, a restorative which, with the lower orders, is generally considered to be a complete panacea.

In the present instance it might almost merit that character, for it restored the faculties of their patient, who, after gazing about him with the bewilderment that generally succeeds to fainting, was at last brought to understand where he was, and the predicament in which he had been discovered. In a faint voice he gave his address, desiring to be sent home immediately; when one of his attendants ran for a hackney-coach, and Mrs. Tapps in the mean time prepared and applied a poultice to his temple, cautioning him not to speak as he had so little strength to spare, and urging him to swallow the remainder of the brandy, which, however, he declined.

On the arrival of the vehicle, a new difficulty presented itself; for the driver had no sooner caught a glimpse of his fare, than he exclaimed with a distasteful look — "When I makes a hospital of my coach, I always has double. That 'ere creetur may give my hosses the glanders, for what I know. I must have six shillings for this here job, and it must be paid aforehand."

In vain did they assure him that the sufferer was a gentleman, and that he would be paid liberally, and even gratefully, on his arrival in Portland Place: these assertions derived so little support from the appearance of the fare and the wretched aspect of the hovel whence he was to be taken, that the man prepared to drive away rather than make any diminution or compromise. It was Saturday, always the most moneyless morning of the week, and the three women could muster only two shillings among them; but in these emergencies the poor have a resource which, though often abused, is sometimes of essential service to them. Charity, it is said, blesseth the donor as well as the

receiver, and never was the dictum more strikingly verified than upon the present occasion. At the commencement of the week, Middleton had given a warm scarlet cloak to Mrs. Tapps, who now, folding it neatly up, ran with it to one of those petty pawnbrokers whose shops are opened at daybreak, that they may receive trifling deposits from the labourers and artisans who, holding it to be highly injurious to go to work with a cold stomach, must needs have wherewithal to purchase their morning dram before they commence the toil of the day. From a matin usurer of this class Mrs. Tapps obtained a few shillings upon her cloak, and, hastening home, flushed alike with triumph and with running, satisfied the demand of the driver, who now willingly assisted in carrying Middleton to the coach, observing that he liked "a vork of humanity as vell as any man, only a rule *vas* a rule, and ought to be kept as sich."

Mrs. Tapps, who accompanied her patient to Portland Place, explained to the servants what had happened to their young master, and the miserable plight in which he had been found.

The family were just getting up when the news of this catastrophe was communicated to them —" Hey!—what!—hick!" cried Sir Matthew, reddening with sudden emotion; " Gale robbed and wounded!—dear boy! dear boy! Run for Dr. Hammond! — send for Surgeon Cripps! Where is he?—where is he?" With which words he ran down stairs half-dressed, and had no sooner seen his son, whose face wore a most cadaverous hue, than he burst into a mingled passion of ruth and rage, bewailing and weeping over him and cursing his savage assailants almost in the same breath.

" I am not in the least surprised," said Lady Middleton, in a calm voice; " it's what I always told him would one day be the result of his poking into those low haunts, and seeking out objects of charity among paupers and malefactors, which are generally convertible terms. It happens at a most unfortunate moment, for I fear it will compel me to put off my party. He might have considered — but, no, Gale considers nothing."

" My brother robbed and wounded!" ejacu-

lated Cecilia; "good Heavens, how shocking! Dear Gale! I hope he is not much hurt. Where's my dressing-gown? I must see him instantly. How very unlucky! I wonder whether it will put off my marriage with Sir Dennis!"

CHAPTER X.

Search, seek, and know how this foul murder comes!
Romeo and Juliet.

ALTHOUGH Sir Dennis Lifford frequently declared that punctuality was a tradesman-like and vulgar virtue, which he had never been able to accomplish, he presented himself at Portland Place rather before than after the hour appointed for his interview with Sir Matthew, who was, however, infinitely too much preoccupied with Gale's misfortune to think of anything else, or to join in a conference even upon such an important subject as a proposal of marriage for Cecilia. Fuming, fretting, bewailing, and utterly unable, in the impatience of his spirit, to remain five minutes together in the same place, he bustled from one room to another, issuing the most contradictory orders,

and endeavouring to enforce their execution sometimes by oaths and menaces, sometimes by entreaties and promises of reward. His general deportment towards his domestics was marked by a familiar good-humour, that often degenerated into coarseness; but upon the present occasion his excitement rendered him so irritable, and even violent, that the servants were almost afraid to approach him. Dupin, whom he never liked, now became the object of his especial wrath. Unable to make him comprehend his meaning, which indeed was not very intelligible even to himself, he drove him from his presence with such a volley of opprobrious terms, that the Gaul, elevating his eyebrows almost to the top of his brown and wrinkled forehead, exclaimed — "Voilà le pauvre Sare Matthieu comme un chien enragé. A't on jamais vu un animal comme cela?"

Restoratives, and all other proper remedies having been administered to their patient, the physician and surgeon who had been in attendance upon Gale took their departure, leaving

particular injunctions that he should not on any account be disturbed, or spoken to, until they returned; a most galling order for the father, who was dying with impatience to interrogate him, and learn all the particulars of his robbery, that immediate steps might be taken for discovering and punishing the delinquents. Messengers had been hastily despatched to Bow Street, and two officers were soon in attendance; but they were obliged to be dismissed, with a request that they would return in the afternoon, very much to the annoyance of the hot and hasty Sir Matthew, who wanted, if possible, to have an instant clue to the malefactors. Could they have been brought within his grasp, he would probably have attempted to wreak upon them some prompt and fierce vengeance, for he was powerful as well as choleric; but he was fortunately spared this temptation to a breach of the peace, and his passion, which generally subsided as rapidly as it was kindled, was already passing away, when Lady Middleton came to announce the arrival of Sir Dennis."

"Lord love'ee, Meg!" cried the husband; "how canst think of asking me to see him now? Like to lose Gale, and now this Irish Jackadandy comes to take away poor dear Ciss. Well, well! man born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards! Never mind! bad luck now, worse another time; misfortunes always come single. Lose Gale, lose Ciss! Never mind: a small loss better than none! O, the villains, to hit him such a blow! Been Sir Dennis, now, wouldn't ha' minded: got a head like a buffalo; only jar your hand to pummel it with a bludgeon! Besides, Irishmen used to it — got thick sculls on purpose; boys play upon them with shillaleghs, like marrowbones and cleavers! Hey!—how!—hick! What say, Meg?"

"If you mean me, Sir Matthew, I say, in the first place, that I do not admit the thickness of head which you are pleased to impute to your future son-in-law; and secondly, that let its density be what it may, he has at all events the wit to keep it out of danger. Would any but such a half-crazy creature as Gale think of

going at night into those miserable purlieus, where he was almost sure of being robbed, even if he escaped with his life?"

"Very true, very true; head cracked before, worse cracked now — can't be helped; better no bread than half a loaf. Fool for his pains. Best armour is to keep out of gun-shot. A murrain seize the villains! Give an inch, take an ell; hey—hick! couldn't 'em take his purse without giving him such a — Tell 'ee what, if had 'm here — good heavy poker this — crack their nobs pretty considerable, as the Yankees say; warrant their sculls shouldn't ring again in a hurry." He grasped the poker till the muscles started from the back of his broad hand, clenched his teeth, drew back his lips, and breathed snortingly through his dilated nostrils, while a grim smile passed over his features, as he indulged in the contemplation of this satisfactory vengeance.

"My dear Sir Matthew!" cried the lady, "you positively frighten me; you look like the *gladiator repellens!* Surely you want not the poker to stir the fire of your wrath, for it

is hot and flaming enough already, though I see not what purpose it can answer to put yourself in such a passion ?"

" Ay, ay, easy to talk ; better keep porridge to cool your breath ! My own flesh and blood, ar'n't he ? Wouldn't like to be robbed and half-murdered, would 'ee ? Ar'n't in a passion, though — wrong there ! — cool as a cucumber ! quiet as a lamb ! — hey ! — hick !"

The baronet puffed out his reddened cheeks, as if he would blow away the last remains of his choler, and was about to replace the poker, when, unluckily for the restoration of tranquillity, Dupin shuffled into the apartment with a tray of coffee, saying — " Voilà, Sir Matthieu, quelqu'un qui demande —" He could not conclude the sentence, for his master's fury, which was but half-allayed, underwent such a sudden revival at sight of the obnoxious Gaul and the sound of his jabber that he once more brandished the iron implèment, roaring in a stentorian voice — " Out of the room, you French son of a ——"

So menacing were his looks and gestures,

that Dupin, ejaculating, " Eh ! par exemple !" bolted rapidly from the apartment, making his escape with such incautious rapidity that his foot tripped in the sheepskin mat, and he rolled head-over-heels down stairs, with no inconsiderable clatter and outcry, being accompanied in his descent by the coffee-tray and its contents !

" There he goes !" cried his delighted master, throwing down the poker and snapping his fingers in an ecstasy — " Bumpity bump ! bumpity bump ! Hope he won't stop at the landing-place — no — off again ! All stone steps ! — there he is, landed in the hall, and well soused, I hope, with scalding coffee ! Capital ! capital !—hick, hick, hick !—ha, ha, ha !" And even in the midst of his uproarious laughter the baronet continued snapping his fingers.

Lady Middleton hastened to see whether any injury had been sustained by her favourite domestic, who had, however, escaped for the fright and a few bruises ; while Sir Matthew, shocked at the loud and hearty laugh into

which he had been involuntarily betrayed, suddenly recovered his gravity, muttering in a tone of self-reproach, "What an unnatural beast I am! None but a pelican would laugh and snap its fingers in this way when its own child lying in the house half-dead. Poor dear Gale! — hope he has broke his bones — mean the rascally Frenchman — bumpity bump! hick! Ha! carriage stopped! Perhaps Dr. Hammond — hey! No; only the jackadandy Irishman's cab driving up — come to take him away, I hope — want no visiters now."

"Ah, now! I was in hopes it was Sir Matthew!" cried Sir Dennis Lifford as Lady Middleton re-entered the drawing-room. "Isn't it the first time in my life I was ever punctual, and haven't I been waiting half an hour just for nothing at all?"

"Sir Matthew may well stand excused for a little impunctuality, considering the catastrophe that has happened in our family," said Lady Middleton, whose smile betrayed her to be somewhat offended.

"'Faith! then, as I hope to be saved, I had

forgotten all about it. And how is he, the poor boy? Is it only a broken head he has got? Ah, then, he'll do mighty well!"

"Strange enough, Sir Dennis, that you should forget the accident almost as soon as you learnt it."

"It's such a mons'ous bore recollecting things, now is'nt it? And sure wasn't I talking all the while with Miss Middleton, which is enough to drive everything clean out of a man's head?"

"I fear you have found me a very stupid companion," said Cecilia, "for I have been thinking too much of poor Gale to keep up a conversation. It's very cruel that they will not allow us to see him."

"Should he be better in the afternoon I dare say the prohibition will be removed; and if Sir Dennis will do us the favour of returning about three o'clock, Sir Mathew will then be able to meet and confer with him. At present he is too much agitated to see anybody, or to discourse rationally upon any subject, though that is not very unusual."

"Is it three o'clock you said, Lady Middleton? Ah now, don't say three; sure I've an engagement for that same?"

"Is it of so urgent a nature that you cannot defer it?"

"Indeed is it, for I promised to meet Lord Arthur Fintown to see two wooden-legged sailors run a race, whom we have match'd for twenty guineas a side. It will be uncawmonly rideeculous—mons'ous amusing; each fellow has two wooden legs, so that if he falls, devil a bit will he be able to get up again. I give you my honour it will be an elegant match." The baronet humming an air, sauntered up to the mirror, and proceeded to arrange his whiskers, hair, and cravat, with as much nonchalance as if he were making his toilet at home; while Cecilia, unable to conceal her displeasure that a race of wooden legged sailors should be deemed of more consequence than an interview with her father upon so interesting a subject as her marriage, turned to a table, and began pouting over a book, which however, she was too much ruffled to read. "My dear child," whispered

Lady Middleton, who perceived that she had lost her habitual equanimity, "you must reconcile yourself to these little *etourderies*, for which young men of distinguished fashion and elegance are allowed a *carte blanche*. They are privileged persons, and their deviation from the ordinary *bienséançés de la societé* is only a proof that they belong to the *haut ton*. You would not have Sir Dennis as formal and servile as that horrid prig, Caleb Ball, or as timidly polite and deferential as your beau of Broad Street Buildings—Ned Travers?"

"O no, certainly," replied Cecilia, who wished to show a proper appreciation of everything fashionable, though she was by no means reconciled to her lover's apparent indifference. "At five o'clock then, I 'll be here as sure as fate," said Sir Dennis, lounging back from the mirror—"and I hope we 'll soon arrange everything with Sir Matthew, for indeed now, Miss Middleton—" and here he looked particularly tender, "wont I be miserable till all is settled, and the happy day arrives? Faith then, to tell you the truth, I 'm a very extror'nary fellow;

never was such an indolent creature till once my mind is made up, and then I 'm altogether just as impatient. So that I hope—ah now, that's a beautiful head-dress of yours; I give you my honour you are *coiffée comme un ange*, as Dupin would say. What was I talking of? Oh then, I remember, and that 's a wonder. I was hoping you would be prevailed upon to name a very early day, for I must be at Paris to keep my appointment if I possibly can."

"All this can be explained to Sir Matthew this afternoon," said Lady Middleton.

"Faith, and that 's very true, and so, *au revoir!*" cried the baronet, lounging out of the room.

Scarcely had he been five minutes gone when Mrs. Burroughs bustled into the apartment without being announced, exclaiming as she entered, "A thousand pardons, Lady Middleton! they told me you had desired to be denied to everybody except Sir Dennis, who I see, is just departed; but I was sure you would make an exception in favour of such a particular

friend; so I ran past the servants, and ushered myself into your presence *sans ceremonie*. How do, Ciss?

"Besides, I come upon business. What a shocking occurrence! quite dreadful! I was completely overcome when I heard it; thought I should have fainted; but I desired Dominick to run directly to Bow Street. You 'll do nothing without Dominick, he knows some of the policemen and the officers, and he is now gone to the church-yard where Gale was found, to make enquiries and procure evidence and all that, for he never minds what trouble he takes for a friend."

"You seem to know more of this strange and unlucky affair than I do myself," said Lady Middleton, coldly. "I was not even aware that Gale had been found in a church-yard."

"O dear yes, an obscure place in the neighbourhood of Petty France. On his way back from Dr. Hammond's, Dupin called and told me all about it. How could you think of sending for Hammond, or Cripps either? Blenkinsop

is the only man in London for wounds in the head, so I took the liberty of desiring him to call. It was he, you know, who trepanned—"

"I have no doubt of his skill in trepanning," interposed Lady Middleton, "but he cannot possibly be admitted now that Gale is in other hands."

"What a pity! such a clever man! but it's of no consequence; you can give him his fee, and explain that he need not return. But I must run away; I know you are all in confusion, and don't want to see company, though I could not help popping in just to tell you what Dominick is about, lest you should be employing some one else. Nobody like Dominick for such jobs as these. Good b'ye, my dear friend; I will call again in the afternoon. La! what beautiful artificial flowers you have got in this pretty basket. All French I see; but surely there are too many roses; you must positively allow me to steal these two little ones, they won't be missed." So saying, two of the finest were conveyed into her reticule, for she rarely called anywhere without collecting spoil of

some sort, however trifling, when she hurried out of the room. No sooner was the door shut than Lady Middleton exclaimed, "I will take good care that she shall not be readmitted in the afternoon; really, this woman's officiousness and intrusion becomes quite impertinent. Give Blenkinsop a fee! Indeed I shall do no such thing. I must check this offensive forwardness."

"She may err in judgment," observed Cecilia, "but I believe her intentions to be good and friendly, and we have certainly been indebted to her kindness."

"What! in introducing Sir Dennis? true; she is a useful person, but she requires to be kept at a little distance, or she would turn us out of our own houses. I know she patronises Mr. Blenkinsop, but that is no reason why I should give him a fee for nothing."

When the medical attendants revisited their patient in the afternoon they pronounced that no immediate or ultimate danger was to be apprehended from the injuries inflicted upon him, although it was probable that a considerable time might elapse before he would be entirely

re-established. From the wandering nature of his discourse in the first instance they had been inclined to fear that the blow had produced some concussion of the brain, but, as he was perfectly collected upon their second visit, they changed their opinion, and seemed to think he would sustain longer and more serious inconvenience from the consequences of the cold to which he had been exposed, than from the wound in his head. Tranquillity and avoidance of all excitement they still considered essential; although, in consideration of the urgency of the case, and the necessity of receiving such instant communications as might lead to the discovery and apprehension of his assailants, they consented to his having a short interview with the Bow Street officers, who were again in waiting. Lest this should be prolonged to the injury of the patient, the physician signified his intention of being present, but he wished if possible to exclude Sir Matthew, whose loud voice, boisterous manners, and uncontrollable feelings, were but little adapted to a sick-room. This proposition, however, it was found much

easier to make than to enforce, although it was submitted with all the plausible and persuasive arguments that the Doctor, speaking in his softest voice, could adduce. "Humbug!" cried the indignant father, "all flummery and palaver! Never consent when a fellow speaks so softly to me. Giving fair words is feeding with empty spoon. My own flesh and blood, ar'n't he? What! let those thief-takers into the room, stay there yourself, and shut out his own father! Deuce a bit. Ar'n't going to be made a fool in my own house; those don't like it may lump it. Perhaps I may be more use than all of 'ee, and give a better guess at the truth. Little ears have long pitchers; old fox understands trap!—hey!—hick!"

As it was quite evident from the baronet's manner that he had made up his mind, and was neither to be dissuaded nor commanded from his purpose, he was suffered to enter the room with the officers, a promise being previously exacted that he would not remain long, and would avoid all discourse or demeanour that might unnecessarily agitate his son — pledges

which were soon given and as quickly forgotten. Unaccustomed to restrain his feelings, he had no sooner caught sight of Gale, than running up to his bed-side, and, seizing the hand that was extended towards him, he wrung it with a nervous grasp, ejaculating — "Lord love 'ee, my poor boy! thee lookest desperate ill — white as ashes — how goes it with 'ee? — how 's head? Here's the doctor, and the chaps from Bow Street, come to ask 'ee about it. Rascals! I hope to see 'em all swinging by the neck—mean the robbers. Only wish I had 'em here—that 's all."

The physician, now interposing, requested his patient to communicate, with as little exertion as possible, any particulars which he might think likely to identify his assailants and lead to their apprehension; in compliance with which invitation Gale succinctly stated the circumstances of his robbery, describing the appearance of the thieves, and adding that one of them was called Gentleman Joe. This offender, it appeared, was not unknown to the officers, who however did not express any very confident

expectation of discovering and securing him, as he was what they termed a " shy bird " and a " Levanter," that is to say, a person who makes only occasional visits to London, absconding after any successful enterprise to various parts of England or Ireland, and even occasionally crossing over to the Continent. Gale declared that he could not recall any other name, except that he had caught the words " as safe as Drummond," and had heard one of the fellows observe that Oliver was not in town.

At this observation the two police-officers, looking at each other with a derisive smile, found it impossible to refrain from laughing, for which the senior apologized by saying, as he smoothed down the hair upon his forehead— " Ask your pardon, sir; hope no offence; only we thought every body in the world knew that ' safe as Drummond' meant as good as the Bank; and that Oliver's not being in town signified that there was no moon."

Admitting his utter ignorance of the slang language, Gale proceeded to recount, as well as he could collect its meaning, the conversation

of the robbers, whence it appeared that they had been expressly hired by some secret and mortal enemy to assassinate him; and then related all that had occurred until he had become finally insensible, and had been conveyed, he knew not how, to the churchyard, and thrown into the grave where he had been so fortunately discovered. During this statement, Sir Matthew, utterly unable to sit still, had stalked up and down the room, muttering half-suppressed execrations, grinding his teeth, clenching his fists, and looking about with a restless eye and angry visage, as if seeking some weapon wherewith to wreak his vengeance on the miscreants when they should be discovered, of which he did not allow himself to entertain a moment's doubt. Other thoughts occupied the mind of the physician, who enquired whether his patient could attach suspicion to any individual likely to have thus instigated the assassins to their murderous purpose, and to have even paid them for despatching him.

"This is a point," replied Gale, "which I have been revolving in my mind for a great

part of the morning, but without being enabled to form even a guess as to my secret foe. I knew not that I had an enemy in existence; that I should have one so deadly and atrocious as thus to practise against my life I can hardly believe, in spite of the evidence of my senses. And yet there can scarcely be a mistake, for I was distinctly asked whether my name were Gale Middleton, before I was attacked. Some mortal and remorseless enemy I must therefore have. Whoever he may be, may God forgive him as freely as I do! I am utterly unconscious of any offence; I have never done harm to any man."

"Dear boy! kind-hearted boy! no more thee hast," cried the father, who had again seated himself by his side, and taken his hand; "ready to take my Bible oath on 't; wouldn't hurt a worm; too kind, too forgiving, by half; too — Oh, Doctor Hammond! thee doesn't know what a generous — never was such a— isn't it a burning shame, now, that such an affectionate, such a good—" Overcome by an irrepressible tenderness, the baronet, who

found that the words stuck in his throat, dashed away a tear with the back of his hand, swallowed down the rising emotion, and throwing himself into a passion in order to conceal his melting mood, exclaimed — "Tell 'ee what, Gale! never forgive 'ee if 'ee bid God forgive the scoundrel that broke thy head. Forgive him after he's hung — time enough then: as good a Christian as other folks—bear no grudge when fellow's dead. Bloodthirsty rascal — hey! — hick!"

In vain did he attempt to give a firm and angry energy to the concluding exclamation; his voice broke into a hoarse whimper, he rose from his chair, hurried to the window, and pretended to be looking out and blowing his nose, while he was struggling to recover his self-possession. Much affected by the ill-concealed emotion of his father, Gale put his handkerchief to his suffused eyes, as if the light were too strong for them; and the physician, observing that the interview had now lasted quite long enough for his patient, and that he had made every requisite communication, desired the offi-

cers to withdraw from the apartment, which they did accordingly, while he himself, taking the arm of the silent and unresisting Sir Matthew, led him back to the drawing-room, repeating his injunctions that his patient, who would probably fall asleep after the exertion he had made, should be kept as quiet as possible. As he was leaving the house the baronet put a bank-note into his hand, observing that he might not be always in the way when he called, and beseeching him to be unremitting in his attentions to his son — "My dear Sir Matthew," said the Doctor, "I really ought not to accept such an inordinate fee, for I hope my attendance will not long be required."

"Never mind, stick to him the closer while you do come. Money makes the mare to go. Can't live upon fine words. Thank ye, good puss, starved my cat. Make a short job on't, and welcome to as much more. Ar'n't he my own flesh and blood?—hey!—hick!"

In his injudicious anxiety to enforce the physician's orders, the kind-hearted baronet was himself the first to violate them. Unac-

customed to idleness, and unable to think of anything but his sick son, he fidgeted about the house, forbidding the servants to speak or move, listening at the bed-room door, and even sallying forth into the street to silence the clamorous hawkers who happened to be passing, an object in which he could not always succeed without an altercation productive of much more noise than that which he sought to suppress. When Sir Dennis, who was once more punctual to the appointed hour, returned to Portland Place, Sir Matthew positively refused to see him, in spite of the remonstrances of Lady Middleton. For almost the first time in his life he listened with a deaf ear when summoned to dinner, nor would he quit his occupation of securing silence by main force, until Cecilia, who anxiously desired to share his attentions to her brother, obtained permission to relieve guard, and prevailed upon him to descend to the dinner-room, whence, however, he soon returned to resume his duty of watch and ward.

By a rare effort of self-command, he refrained from disturbing his son, who enjoyed a long

and refreshing slumber, and was sufficiently recruited to enquire with some eagerness when he awoke what refreshments he was allowed to take. "Ha!" cried the baronet, rubbing his hands — "feel empty in the bread-basket? Good sign—good sign: do famously when 'ee begin to eat and drink;" and he forthwith rendered a bustling and officious assistance to the nurse in preparing such slops as she had been directed to administer, expressing no small regret at their unsubstantial and unsatisfactory nature. "Look'ee, dear boy," he exclaimed, after having sent the nurse out of the room, "want to talk to 'ee a-bit; 'twon't hurt 'ee now, after swallowing all that gruel, though 'tis but wishy-washy stuff. Been thinking of what Dr. Hammond said: must have an enemy somewhere. No use nabbing the fellow that broke 'ee head, if can't get hold of chap that hired him. Got an idea of my own—no fool, though can't jabber Latin: an ounce mother-wit worth a pound of learning, hey!—hick! Taken it into my head this rascally attack has something to do with that love affair of your's at Cambridge.

Understand there was a quarrel and angry words."

"My dear sir," interposed Gale, evidently pained by this allusion, "it is quite impossible that there can be any connexion whatever between the two occurrences; and I must entreat you not to recal an affair, to which, as you are well aware, I can never listen without great anguish of mind."

"Why so plaguy silent always about it?—Close as wax—wince and turn pale if I drop a word upon the subject. Mayhap I may think different from you; two heads better than one. Why casn't tell us what it was?"

"Because, Sir, I am bound by a solemn vow not to divulge a single particular of that unfortunate transaction; a declaration which will, I trust withhold you from ever again pressing me upon this point."

"But if life 's in danger, my dear boy, you 're not bound——"

"I repeat my full conviction that the parties implicated in that affair cannot possibly be the authors of this atrocious attempt to assassinate

me: they owe me gratitude, not hatred, and still less revenge."

"Gratitude! then what did'ee quarrel about so fiercely?"

"It grieves me that I cannot reply to your questions, but my lips are sealed."

"Been told a parcel of lies that'ee behaved ill in that business: fudge! don't believe a word on't."

"I feel grateful for your confidence in my rectitude and honour," said the son, who would not suffer his secret to be extorted from him even in defending his character; "and I can declare with a safe conscience that my conduct on that occasion does not deserve the malevolent censures with which it has been sometimes assailed. As they spring from the ignorance of disappointed curiosity, they have my contempt and my forgiveness.—"

"And you feel perfectly satisfied that the individuals with whom you quarrelled at Cambridge cannot be concerned with these murderous rascals in London?"

"Of this I entertain an assured and absolute conviction."

"Well, if you won't see anything in it you won't: a nod as good as a wink to a blind horse Only mind what you say: speaking without thinking, like shooting without taking aim."

"I have not spoken without due consideration; my opinion is deliberate and conclusive, and you will therefore much oblige me by never again referring to an event in my college life which only serves to fill my mind with the most distressing reflections."

"Mum's the word then, my dear boy!—wouldn't hurt'ee for the world: keep my teeth within my tongue as well as another: none so deaf as those that can't hear; dumb as a flounder!—hey—hick!"

CHAPTER XI.

——Why, who cries out on pride
That can therein tax any private party?
Doth it not flow as hugely as the sea,
Till that the very means do ebb?
Who can come in and say that I mean her,
When such a one as she, such is her neighbour?
Or what is he of basest function,
Thinking that I mean him, but therein suits
His folly to the metal of my speech?

SHAKSPEARE.

LATE in the evening Sir Matthew had a visit from the indefatigable Mr. Dominick Burroughs, who came to report the result of his enquiries. This practitioner was a good lawyer in the worst acceptation of the term; in other words he was a pettifogger, who flourished and supported himself like ivy, by finding out flaws, holes, and defects, into which he might insinu-

ate his footstalks, and by that means climb upwards. Quirks, quiddits, and technicalities, might be said to supply him a house, since he was perfectly at home in them: for a knavish client, who wished to defeat the ends of justice by availing himself of the forms and subtleties of law, he was an admirable instrument: sharp and astute, he was not less quick in detecting than unceremonious in seizing every advantage that might benefit his employer; but this was the utmost extent of his abilities. The cunning fox, or the crafty weasel, however well versed in chinks, lurking-places, and earth-holes, could not be more ignorant of the solar system, than was Mr. Burroughs of the great principles that governed the law, whose rubbish and decay were made to afford him shelter and sustenance. He was so far fortunate that while he throve tolerably well in this department, which necessarily connected him with an inferior and not very reputable class, his keen and calculating wife was indefatigable in procuring him clients of a better order.

In justice to his family, (for he, too, was pro-

vided with this convenient plea,) our lawyer, who always had an eye to his bill, and thought more of himself than of his client, had examined and taken depositions from all the parties who knew anything, and from some who knew nothing of the affair, which, without any instructions to that effect, he had undertaken to investigate. Even the young chimney-sweeps had been ferreted out and interrogated; Mrs. Tapps and her neighbours had undergone strict examination; Widow Allen's hovel had been visited and inspected; the dwellers in that forlorn vicinity had been questioned and sifted; nothing in short had been neglected which could bring profit to the solicitor, and yet very little had been discovered or elicited that could give satisfaction to his employer, or dissipate the profound mystery in which the affair still remained involved. Burroughs himself, as well as the police-officers who assisted him in his researches, had at first imagined Gale to have been assaulted by some of the miscreants whose murders and atrocities, for supplying subjects of dissection for the hospitals, have on several oc-

casions excited such a profound horror in the metropolis: but, had this been the case, instead of throwing his body into a grave, where they had evidently intended to inter it, they would have concealed it in some of the receptacles provided for that purpose, until it suited them to strip and convey it away for sale. That the grave of Widow Allen, who had only been buried two days, had been opened for the sake of this nefarious traffic seemed scarcely to admit a doubt; and yet upon examination the corpse was found undisturbed, nor did any attempts appear to have been made to unscrew the coffin. Why, therefore, the burial-place had been violated at all, or why it had been selected as the depository of Gale's body, which might have been disposed of by much quicker and less troublesome methods, were enigmas not less difficult to solve than the singular fact of the grave being left unclosed, under circumstances sure to occasion the detection of the supposed murder, which it must have been the main object of the perpetrators to conceal.

The various surmises which the plausible

Mr. Burroughs was proceeding to recapitulate to Sir Matthew, with as much circumlocution as if he were to be paid by the word, were at once overthrown by the statement of the sufferer, that he had been the victim of a foul conspiracy against his life, originating with some unknown enemy, by whom his assailants had been hired. Here was a fresh clue and fresh business for the man of law, who noted down all the particulars, expressing a confident hope, especially as one of the culprits was known to the police, that some or all of them would speedily be apprehended, when there could be no doubt that they would gladly screen themselves by giving up the name of the villain who had set them on. To accomplish this object Sir Matthew eagerly declared himself willing to incur any expense, a declaration very acceptable to his auditor, who, having now got the business into his own hands, took his leave, with a full determination to make the most of so rich and liberal a client.

At the very moment when the parties were thus conferring in Portland Place, Gale's mis-

fortune formed the subject of conversation at the dinner-table of the Duke of Harrowgate in May Fair. This wealthy nobleman had unfortunately received his education under all the errors and prejudices of the old school, which held in special abhorrence every liberal idea, maintained as an article of faith the "right divine of kings to govern wrong!" inculcated passive obedience to pastors and masters in all matters relating to church and state, and asserted in its utmost latitude the comfortable doctrine of the many being made for the few. So far from shaking off, or even modifying, as he grew older, any of these exploded dogmas, and adapting himself to the more enlightened spirit of the age, the Duke, who, like most of his class, was exceedingly indolent, and thought it very hard that he should learn a new lesson after he was grown up, contented himself with clinging the more closely to his original small stock of narrow ideas, considering them the best distinction of the best portion of the aristocracy. For his wounded pride and mental deficiency, which he could not altogether con-

ceal, even from himself, he found a solace in extolling the good old times, while he stigmatised all those who had advanced with the march of intellect and left him behind as revolutionists, radicals, and incendiaries. So far as a naturally feeble mind, wrong-directed from its infancy, can be said to possess any character at all, that of the Duke may be summed up in a very few words: inert, bigoted, and illiberal, he had an overweening notion of his own importance, and that of the aristocracy, a general contempt for the rest of the community, and a special hatred of all those innovators who presumed to doubt that whatever is is right. And yet he was often pointed out as one of those who conferred honour upon his honours. Moral and domestic, he was admitted by all parties to be a kind-hearted and generous man wherever that decided political bias, which is always strong in proportion to the weakness of the intellect, did not warp him from his natural amiability.

It has been observed, that a husband and wife, by living together for a series of years,

often undergo a certain process of external assimilation, a theory which may perhaps be merely fanciful, so far as regards personal appearance, but which, when applied to the minds of the parties, will be frequently confirmed by the most careless observation. Born in the same class, possessing congenially negative faculties, and passing the greater part of her time in his society, for they were a very domestic couple, considering their high rank, it is little wonderful that the character of the Duchess should resemble that of the Duke. In both parties indolence had blunted faculties which had never been very acute ; for as the bodily or intellectual powers may be strengthneed by use, so may they as certainly be debilitated by suffering them to remain inert. Perpetually surrounded by servants, who ministered to every want, and prevented their discharging the most trifling function, the noble pair became almost as helpless as the Chinese mandarins, who suffer their nails to grow to the length of many inches as a proof that they never do anything for themselves. Even the trouble

of thinking soon became a burthen, to escape from which they received into the house, in the capacity of humble companion to the Duchess, a Miss Borradaile, a very talented person, as the phrase goes, whose duty it was to inform her patrons of what was passing in the world, to read the newspapers to them, to acquaint them with the heads of such books as attained any temporary popularity, to answer questions, and give information of all sorts, and in fact to perform the part of a walking encyclopædia.

As a relief from the ennui naturally engendered by this bodily and mental inertness, the Duchess, whose high birth and unimpeached character formed her sole qualifications for the office, undertook to become a leader among the female exclusives, all the trouble of which devolved upon Miss Borradaile, while her Grace was flattered by the patronage and importance that accrued, with little or no exertion, to herself. Why so rigid a dictatress of the *haut ton* should condescend to sanction a party at the house of a city baronet in Portland Place may require some explanation. None but those

who have unfortunately basked in the smiles of fortune, until every wish has been gratified even to satiety and surfeit, can fully appreciate the misery that sometimes springs from the want of a want. Sick of the world, because it had nothing more to give her, and of herself because she had nothing to do or to think of, the Duchess endeavoured to excite her stagnant mind by frequent changes of scene and society, travelling from one country-house to another, and from each to London, in the vain hope of being enabled to escape from herself. The desire of seeing new faces soon made her dislike old ones, which may account for her having become thoroughly tired of Miss Borradaile, of whom she was the more anxious to get rid because she had no decent pretext for doing so. Here was a little difficulty; and an obstacle of any sort was a treat to a person who had been accustomed to see everything give way and yield to her wishes without resistance.

"Dismiss her at once, or pension her off, if you think it worth the expense," said Lady Barbara Rusport, who was consulted in this emergency.

"Impossible, my dear Lady Barbara. Many years ago her father was enabled to render some service to the Duke, who is such a kind-hearted creature that he would never consent to her being *congédiée* without assigning some more satisfactory cause."

"Well, then, marry her off, which would settle the affair in a manner equally pleasant and honourable to all parties."

"Very true; but where shall we find a husband for a person of humble birth, who is neither young nor handsome, who has no fortune, wears spectacles, and, in spite of all her talents and acquirements, has few of those accomplishments which are usually looked for in a wife?"

"Crown me, Duchess, with an orange flower-garland!" exclaimed Lady Barbara, after a moment's consideration; "I have it—I have it! I know the very man who, if marriages be made in heaven, must have been destined for her in the paradise of fools. It is the only son of Sir Matthew Middleton, a wealthy baronet."

"Would a young man of such expectations select ——?"

"Yes, if like loves like, for he is a quiz, an oddity, a bookworm, a lover of chemistry and of everything that is abstruse, in short, he is half crazy; the very man who would prefer a wife that wore spectacles, and only regret that they were not green. Besides, he sets up for a philosopher, and would pique himself upon despising everything that another would admire in a wife."

"Nay, if he is a philosopher, there can be no great trouble in making a fool of him. You really give me hopes; and if you can accomplish this affair, you will confer a great obligation upon me as well as Miss Borradaile. He will find her a very delightful companion for a few weeks — at least I did; and it will afford me sincere pleasure to see her so well married."

Lady Barbara willingly undertook the negotiation, suggesting as a means of introducing the parties, that the Duchess should patronise a *soirée* at the house of Lady Middleton, whom, as we have already seen, she laid under pecuniary contribution for appearing to procure from her Grace, as a great favour, that which

she had been expressly commissioned to offer. Such conduct might have been deemed hardly honourable, even by Lady Barbara herself, but that she felt bound in honour to pay certain debts that ought to have been long since discharged: a miserable subterfuge, which she would have laughed to scorn in another, but which, so ingenious are we in self-deception, she contrived to fashion into a flattering unction for her own soul.

At the dinner-table of the Duke, when the attack upon Gale Middleton formed the prevalent subject of conversation, there were present, besides Lady Barbara and two or three other friends, a briefless barrister known by the name of Tom Rashleigh, a man of obscure birth, little fortune, and few personal recommendations, who had wormed or bullied his way into the very first circles by a reputation for small wit, as exemplified in puns, epigrams, and satirical compositions; but more especially by his known connexion with certain scandal-dealing journals which make weekly attacks, often pushed to the most unbounded licentiousnsss,

upon those of either sex and of every rank that incur their displeasure. The wielder of such a formidable, though unjustifiable, means of annoyance, was naturally hated—but he was feared still more; and such was the moral cowardice of some of the high and titled exclusives, grounded perhaps on a knowledge of their own vulnerable points, that they not only admitted Tom Rashleigh into their penetralia, but sought to propitiate his favour, or at least to blunt the shafts of his malice, by the most fulsome flattery and undisguised homage. Despising a meanness which, while it made him feel his own power, seemed to justify its rigorous exercise, the satirist sometimes gave himself airs of arrogance scarcely consistent with the rules of good-breeding, and which could only be excused by the consciousness that he was the most detested by those who offered him the grossest adulation.

The dinner-table of the Duke of Harrowgate, from which we have so long detained our readers, presented the usual features of such repasts in the houses of the noble and wealthy.

After earth, sea, and sky have been in vain ransacked for new delicacies, nothing remains but to amuse the eye and tempt the jaded appetite by compounding and disguising the old materials, until the banquet becomes a masquerade, which perpetually recalls the first line of Ovid's Metamorphoses. Fish, flesh, and fowl, were made to change appearances with each other, many an old friend losing under his new face every thing that had once recommended him to the palate; vegetables were carved into flowers, birds, and beasts; and the pastry was manipulated into a thousand forms, animate and inanimate. Nothing, in short, was what it appeared to be; and, consequently, everything was what it ought not to be. A servant had been stationed behind each chair, to whisk away the plate of those who did not vigilantly guard it; while others incessantly worried the guests by offering enigmatical dishes, which many could not comprehend, and therefore feared to touch. These officious tormentors were now diminished to three, two being occupied at the beginning of the dessert

in removing the opal ice-plates, while a third perambulated the apartment with incense in a silver chafing-dish, in order to dissipate the fumes of dinner.

"A very shocking story, Lady Barbara!" said the Duke; "to knock down and rob the young gentleman — a commoner, I think you said, of the name of Middleton — was wrong, very wrong; but to attempt to bury him, even if he had been dead, without reading the service over his body, without benefit of clergy, as I may say, was a most atrocious, diabolical, and, in fact, exceedingly improper proceeding."

"It is amazing to me that they do not hang up all these horrid resurrection-men," said Lady Barbara.

"That would be wrong again, madam—very wrong. The resurrection-men, as they are improperly, and indeed very indecorously termed, must be allowed to exercise their calling, in order that surgeons may acquire sufficient skill to perform operations upon people of condition; but when they presume to disinter persons belonging to respectable and wealthy families,

they ought to be condignly punished. Such conduct is equally wanton and wicked, for surely they might procure bodies enough among the lower orders to answer all the demands of the dissectors."

"A very profound and a very just remark," cried Rashleigh, with a mock gravity: "they might, and they ought; and whoever acts otherwise, whether body-snatcher or surgeon, is encroaching upon my manor, since I claim the exclusive right of digging up, showing up, and cutting up, all the higher classes."

"O, you horrid creature!" cried Lady Barbara; "but then you are so honourable and good-tempered, that you never think of inflicting a wound upon a friend."

"Or if he does," said the Duchess, "his wit is so keen, and so highly polished, and its edge, in consequence, so little felt, that even the patient may admire the inimitable skill and beauty of the operation."

"Would your Grace wish me to furnish you with a subject of admiration?"

"Out upon you! — no. You would not think of attacking me, I am a friend."

"And so am I," cried Lady Barbara, eagerly, "and one of the warmest admirers of your admirable *jeux d'esprit*."

"That is fortunate, for with such friends I may take the liberty which with a stranger would have been hardly justifiable. Besides, I am furnished with so many and such irresistible subjects, by knowing all your sore places and weak points."

The exclamations of the ladies were drowned by the deep and solemn voice of the Duke ejaculating, "Order! order! —we have wandered from the subject, which was that of disinterring dead bodies, and is not a matter to be treated with levity."

"Certainly not; it is a grave subject," said Rashleigh, whose poor pun elicited a general laugh, a species of applause with which he was greeted almost every time he opened his mouth; for the reputation of wit in some degree supersedes its exercise, and the gentle dullness "that ever loves a joke," will often receive as such

the flattest common-place or the gravest truism, provided it be uttered by a reputed wag.

"There is one reform," resumed the Duke, "of which we hear nothing; and yet it appears to me more necessary than any other. As there is a great indecorum, to say nothing of the levelling principle it so jacobinically involves, in burying the aristocracy among plebeians, and subjecting them to the same chance of disinterment, I would propose that the nobility and the dignified clergy should have a cemetery of their own, at which a guard of soldiers should be stationed night and day."

"I doubt whether such a reform would prevent corruption," said Rashleigh, whose remark provoked the usual cachinnation; "though I must admit that there is something grand, original, and every way worthy of your Grace, in the idea of having a cemeterial House of Lords, a sepulchral Almack's, an exclusive charnel-house for the nobility, and special vaultage for the bench of bishops. But even thus, I doubt whether the worms of your burial-ground could be entirely banqueted upon patricians, for you

might inter in it occasionally the children of peeresses who were not the offspring of peers."

"I bar all scandal," cried the Duchess.

"Then you must make your peace with the rest of your sex for condemning them to silence. Do you remember, Duke, the story told by Quevedo in his 'Visions?'— A Spanish nobleman's coachman, astonished at meeting his master in purgatory, enquired with great respect and commiseration, what could possibly have condemned so good a Catholic to so ugly a place. — 'O Pedro, Pedro!' was the reply, 'I am here for having spoiled that graceless son of mine. But what can have brought hither so faithful and honest a servant as you have ever been?'—'O, master, master!' groaned the coachman, 'I am sent here for being the father of that graceless son of your's.'"

"It is well that your characters are Spanish," said Lady Barbara.

"I did but quote from Quevedo: had I spoken from my own knowledge, I need not have travelled."

"Pray, Miss Borradaile, who *was* Que-

vedo?" asked the Duchess, in hopes of turning the conversation from a subject which was evidently unpalatable to Lady Barbara.

"Quevedo, madam, was a Spanish satirist, and a knight of St. James, born, I believe, somewhere about the year 1570," replied Miss Borradaile, who seldom spoke, except in answer to an interrogatory, and never confessed ignorance upon any subject, since she had been engaged as an *Encyclopédie parlante*, and was tolerably sure that if she committed a mistake, it would rarely be detected.

"The rogue, you see, was a satirist, like myself," said Rashleigh.

"Not altogether, for he appears to have been a person of quality," observed the Duke, not sorry to gird at his plebeian guest.

"He wrote so well, that I always took him for a commoner," resumed Rashleigh. To return, however, to your idea of an aristocratical cemetery, it is not so original as I had at first imagined, for the ancient Egyptians had exclusive burial-places of this nature, and the bodies of the old Theban nobility, converted

into an excellent fuel by the bitumen used in the process of embalming them, are at the present moment, if travellers are to be believed, cut up and sold for that purpose by the bushel and chaldron. Whatever might have been their living character, none can deny their posthumous merits, since they are thus made to enlighten the lower classes, to diffuse warmth around them, and to assist in preparing dinners for the hungry and the poor; an example which our modern aristocracy would do well to follow."

"No imputation can attach to the English Peerage; they are altogether an excellent, an admirable body of men—very!—very!!—very!!!"—exclaimed the Duke, speaking with a strength and emphasis by which he often concealed from himself, and sometimes from others, the weakness of his ideas and the poverty of his language.

"My dear Duke," said the Duchess—"it is now my turn to cry Order! order! The original subject before the house was the misfortune that has befallen Mr. Gale Middleton, a com-

moner, and you have wandered to the merits of the English aristocracy."

"A very wide digression, madam, it must be admitted—very, very! I have not the honour of knowing the gentleman in question, the son, I think you said of a city baronet, notwithstanding which he may be, and I dare say is, a very respectable person."

"He is a young man of great talent," continued the Duchess, "who was much distinguished at college, and whose various attainments and amiable disposition are the theme of general admiration. You would be delighted with him, Miss Borradaile, for his pursuits have in many respects been congenial with your own, and I hope to make you soon acquainted with each other. He declares that the blue-stocking females, whom the ignorant and the coxcombical of his own sex affect to dislike, constitute the only class from which he would choose to select a wife."

Miss Borradaile pushed her spectacles nearer to her eyes, and looked at the speaker with an air of great interest and profound attention.

"I only fear," resumed the Duchess, "that his unfortunate accident may prevent, or at least defer, the opportunity of making his acquaintance, for I had intended to patronise a musical party at Lady Middleton's house."

"What, madam!" cried the peer, "did I correctly catch your words? Is it fitting, I would ask, that the wife of the Duke of Harrowgate should visit the wife of a city baronet? a title, by the bye, which, however humble, ought not to be degraded by being bestowed on such inferior characters. Is he a person of any birth?"

"I can answer that question in the negative," said Rashleigh. "He is the thriving founder of a new, not the decayed member of an old family, and has had the misfortune to make his way in the world entirely by his own talents and industry."

"Ay, I suspected as much. Do you hear, madam? Is this, I repeat, a proper acquaintance for the Duchess of Harrowgate? If we are to confound all gradations of rank, we may as well have a revolution at once, and plunge—

that is involve—in short it is altogether shocking and improper; highly so—very highly so."

"My dear Duke, *laissez moi faire;* this is in my department, not yours, and I doubt not that when you know my motives, you yourself will approve my conduct."

"I hope so, madam. If you should ever be tempted, in the choice of your visiting acquaintance, to forget what is due to yourself, I trust you will always recollect that you are the wife of the Duke of Harrowgate. At present I cannot discuss this matter, for I must hasten down to the House to oppose these new and most dangerous measures that threaten to overturn all the most ancient and therefore the best institutions of the country. What the people can possibly want is to me utterly amazing. How can they be better off or more comfortable? Have they not already all that they could wish for? To complain under such circumstances is abominable, and indeed wrong—very, very, very!" So saying the hereditary legislator tossed off a final bumper of Burgundy, enveloped himself in a wadded silk

roquelaure, was helped by three or four servants into his padded, well-poised carriage, and drove to the House, to express his unqualified opinion that things were perfectly well as they were, and that none but radicals, revolutionists, and incendiaries, would think of complaining.

"Duchess! I take the liberty of inviting myself beforehand to the party at Lady Middleton's," said Rashleigh, "for your grace will of course name the guests, and I think it will afford sport to see the fashionables in the house of a city baronet in Portland Place. Fish more completely out of water one can hardly imagine."

"No man takes a liberty with more nonchalance than yourself. However, I consent, upon condition that we are none of us shown up on the following Sunday in any of the scandalous journals."

"Who so much scandalised as myself in being thus unceremoniously associated with those objectionable publications?"

"Nay, nay," cried the Duchess, and Lady Barbara at the same moment—"we know you

have absolute authority over them, both for insertion and omission."

Aware of the great power he derived from this general belief, which while it occasioned his exclusion from the houses of the resolute, the manly, and the upright, procured him all sorts of favours from the timid, the thin-skinned, and those whose reputation would not bear handling, Rashleigh met the charge with that species of coy and evasive denial which confirms what it affects to contradict, while he avoided any admission that might involve him in legal proceedings or personal altercation. "If I really possessed," said he, "the power which you are pleased to impute to me, I should consider myself a most useful public character, inasmuch as I should be the only moralist having the means to make himself feared or even heard. If I could really persuade my acquaintance that—

'Whoe'er offends at some unlucky time,
Slides in a verse or hitches in a rhyme,
Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
And the sad burthen of some merry song;'

should I not be the means of keeping them on their good behaviour better than all the sermons, laws, and magistrates, in existence? And if I should succeed in thus enforcing even an external homage to virtue and religion might I not justly exclaim with the bard

> 'Yes, I confess that I am proud to see
> Men not afraid of God afraid of me,
> Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
> And shamed and awed by ridicule alone.'

Such are the high and useful objects that justify the severity of the satirist."

"Yes," said Lady Barbara, significantly, "where he is himself a moral and religious person, and only attacks those who are neither."

"My dear Lady Barbara!" cried Rashleigh, "what is the use of allowing me to have a shot at you, and yet prohibiting me from carrying fire-arms?"

"I prohibit nothing of the sort; I only call upon you to show your qualification. Your great talents are admitted by everybody."

"But they have some doubts about my religion and my morality. How much I ought to

feel obliged to everybody! Ladies, we are getting personal, so we had better separate. I promised to look in at half-a-dozen places to-night."

"But we part friends," said the Duchess and her companion, each holding out her hand.

"The best on earth, I swear it, and thus do I kiss the book." With an air of mock gallantry he pressed each hand to his lip, hurried home, and composed a biting lampoon upon Lady Barbara, whose character laid her somewhat open to these attacks, not forgetting to throw in several jibing allusions to her friend the Duchess. It might have been thought that the ladies anticipated his purpose, for his back was no sooner turned, than they not only vituperated him as a treacherous and malevolent libeller, but even denied the talents on which they had so recently been pronouncing the highest and most fulsome eulogy.

CHAPTER XII.

God made the country, and man made the town;
What wonder, then, that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound,
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves?

COWPER.

GALE MIDDLETON, having enjoyed several hours refreshing sleep, found himself so much better on the following morning, that he was allowed to have an interview with his cousin, Caleb Ball, who had been in attendance from a very early hour, and who, upon his admission into the sick-room, evinced a tenderness and sympathy with the patient which could hardly have been expected from his cold, phlegmatic temperament. Even now his leaden countenance, which seemed to be altogether incapable of emotion, did not vary, but his verbal ex-

pressions testified a deep interest in the state of the patient, and his indignation against his assailants was loud and vehement, in spite of the immobility of his features. After making the most minute inquiries into all the circumstances of the case, and taking notes in his pocket-book of what he heard, particularly as to the personal description of Gentleman Joe and the other robbers, he volunteered to assist Mr. Burroughs in his investigations, or to accompany the Bow Street officers, who would be stimulated, he said, to a more active discharge of their duty if they had a monitor at their elbow, to prompt them when they were remiss, or to hold out the promise of a recompense for the zealous discharge of their duty.

"I have seen a good deal of these men," said Caleb; "first, when our book-keeper decamped with a considerable sum of money, and upon a subsequent occasion, when our warehouses were robbed of some valuable goods, and I have no great confidence in their exertions, unless where they are incited by the hope of reward. By this method also, even if the

police fail in discovering the offenders, there is every probability that one of their own body may turn king's evidence. Almost incredible as is the fact, it is manifest that you have some secret enemy, bitter and atrocious enough to practise against your life. He may repeat the horrible attempt in which he has now been foiled, and as money, in a case like this, is no object whatever, I should counsel Sir Matthew to offer a reward of five hundred, or even a thousand pounds at once, were I not deterred by one weighty apprehension —"

"What is that?" inquired Gale.

"You remember the affair of Brown and Shipton, the two unfortunate creatures who were hung last year for an imputed crime, of which, as it was subsequently proved by the confession of the real malefactors, they were unquestionably innocent. The same thing happened to a poor wretch named Combe, at Lancaster; and in these, and other cases of the like nature, the lives of innocent men were sworn away by perjured villains, for the sake of the large reward offered for the discovery of

the criminals. Even the Bow Street officers themselves have not been always free from the imputation of a similar crime, in cases where the blood-money, as it has been so truly termed, only amounted to the paltry sum of forty pounds!"

"God forbid that I should be the means of exposing a fellow-creature to the remotest chance of such a horrible doom! Were anything of this sort to occur, and to become known to me, I should be miserable for the whole remainder of my life!"

"I am sure you would, my dear Gale, and it would therefore hardly be safe to offer any such inordinate sum as might tempt to the commission of this enormity; but I will consult Sir Matthew on the subject."

"Let nothing be done without my concurrence. One crime need not generate another, and I will have no additional temptations to perjury and murder thrown in the way of the unprincipled and the needy. If my secret enemy can be discovered by the ordinary processes of the law, let him be dragged to light,

and exposed to whatever fate he may merit; if not, let him for the present escape. As for myself, I am indifferent upon the subject, and had rather be the object than the cherisher of a malice which is as unprovoked as it is deadly."

"This it is that puzzles us all, my dear Gale. Your whole life, at least since you came home from college, has been passed in conferring benefits, which ought to have secured you troops of friends without creating a single enemy. It is not in London, therefore, that you must look for your foe. Upon that mysterious quarrel at Cambridge, of which we have all heard, though we none of us know the particulars, I will not interrogate you, since I am well aware that you wish to bury the whole transaction in profound oblivion; but, as you may rest assured, that it has some connection with this infamous attack upon your life, it is for yourself to determine whether you will still preserve so unaccountable a silence?"

"You are utterly mistaken in your surmises, and I must request, as I already have of

Sir Matthew, that you will *never, never* make any allusion to a subject which is so painful, I may say so revolting, to me. You cannot more highly disoblige me than by disobeying this injunction !"

" You may command our silence, but you cannot prevent our suspicions. *That* was the only quarrel in which you were ever known to be concerned; but I see that I distress you, and I will say no more; others, however, may be less scrupulous, and that you may escape from all the annoyances and vexatious inquiries to which you are sure to be exposed, I should strenuously advise your withdrawing from London as soon as you have recovered sufficient strength to be moved. Tranquillity, seclusion, and the good air of Brookshaw Lodge, will do more for you in a week than can be accomplished by all the London physicians in a month."

" I believe it; I am sure of it; nor can you be more anxious to urge than I am to adopt the recommendation. Nothing but the earnest request of my father could have torn me from

my favourite Brookshaw, for an early return to which I have ever since been yearning with my whole heart."

"Is it the Lodge, or Maple Hatch and the philosophical Chritty Norberry, of whom I myself am something of an admirer, that ——"

"You, Caleb! you an admirer of Miss Norberry!" cried Gale, starting up in the bed.

"Nay, nay, you need not be alarmed; you may dismiss your apprehensions," said the cousin, smiling; "I have discovered the secret of your attachment, which is all that I intended to do, but that is the last quarter in which I should dream of becoming your rival."

"I have no attachment of which I am aware, and if I had, there would be no reason for my keeping it a secret."

"I am glad, very glad to hear it, for in that case you cannot be offended at my expressing my real opinion of Miss Norberry, and counselling you most earnestly against being inveigled by her arts."

"Inveigled! arts! Of whom are you speaking? What do you mean?"

"Of your being fascinated by her personal charms I have no fear, for she has none whatever to recommend her."

"I differ from you *toto cælo*. Miss Norberry may not boast the merely physical beauty which can be imparted to a picture or a statue, but her animated, intelligent, and ever-gracious countenance possesses, in an eminent degree, that moral loveliness which an artist cannot express, and which time will not alter or diminish, since it is the divine halo which, emanating from her mind, will continue to the last to shed its embellishing light around her features. This is worth a thousand evanescent charms of form and colour—this is the grace, the fairness, the symmetry, of the soul! and this it is that distinguishes the beauty of an angel from that of a flower."

"I thought you were not attached to her, and yet you are comparing a girl, with an indifferent complexion, and without a single good feature, to an angel!"

"A man may render tribute to truth and justice without being in love."

"But not in this instance, without being grievously mistaken. Are you so confident that she is really gifted with those virtues of which you see an imaginary reflection in her countenance? Far be it from me to impute to her any grave improprieties; I do not impeach her honour; but she certainly entertains very singular notions upon many points, and both professes opinions and pursues a line of conduct widely different from those of other young ladies."

"So much the worse for other young ladies. I never heard her utter a sentiment, never knew her perform an action, that was not equally creditable to her head and heart!"

"And yet you are not attached to her! Now I must freely confess that I do not like either what I have heard or seen of Miss Norberry, and I am very confident that Sir Matthew and all your friends would be grievously hurt, should she succeed in entangling your affections."

"And yet you professed yourself her admirer."

"I did but jest, and have already told you my reason."

"Caleb, I do not quite understand you: this is no subject for trifling; still less for prevarication or evasion. I demand of you an explicit declaration, upon your honour, that you have no attachment, no intentions of marriage, towards Miss Norberry."

I give it you with the utmost readiness, and disclaim any such intentions in the most solemn manner, though I can scarcely help laughing at your jealous suspicions. There are three insuperable objections to my ever thinking of matrimony with the lady in question; in the first place she has no money, which I consider an indispensable requisite in a wife; secondly, her husband will in all probability be saddled with her testy waspish father, and her weak-witted aunt; and thirdly and lastly, I do not like her person, while I positively dislike her character. As you say you have no particular regard for her, you will of course pardon my frankness."

"Willingly: pray go on enumerating her

faults; I had much rather hear you abuse than praise her. You see how mistaken you were; I am quite indifferent."

The cousin's reply was prevented by the entrance of Cecilia, who came to congratulate her brother on his good night's rest and amended health, as well as to offer to read the paper to him, which however he declined, saying he had much rather chat with her. She accordingly gave the journal to Caleb, who hurried with it to the window, and instantly became deeply absorbed in its contents, murmuring from time to time, as if unconscious that any other person was present — "Ha! Mexican Stock left off two per cent. lower—Bull of fifty.—Consols up half per cent.—Bear on joint account.—Panic in French fives—no sale at any price—Simkin and Scott declared lame ducks.—This must have been after I left the city yesterday.—So, so, soh!" with which words he took a huge pinch of snuff, thrust the paper into his pocket, having previously crumpled it together in his hand, and hurried out of the room without taking any further

notice either of Gale or Cecilia, who were, however, too much occupied to observe the deviation from the usual deference and even servility of his demeanour.

Shortly afterwards Sir Matthew entered the chamber, bursting into an obstreperous exultation as he noticed his son's amended looks, and learned that he had passed a much better night than could have been expected. His present interview was but of short duration, for the physician, who now made his appearance, declared that his patient had already been talking too much, and ought to be left alone for the remainder of the morning.

Sir Dennis Lifford, once more marvellously punctual, presented himself in Portland Place at the appointed hour, and was presently closetted with Sir Matthew, to whom he communicated without the least reserve the state of his affairs, before he solicited his consent to the marriage. From his deportment in this interview, it was evident that much of his habitual foppishness and coxcombry were assumed, for he discarded his airs and affectations, dis-

cussed the business upon which they met with quickness and intelligence, and answered all the interrogatories put to him by the blunt and straightforward Sir Matthew with great apparent frankness. The first question advanced by the latter referred to the intended place of residence, for he required as a *sine quâ non* that his daughter should not be altogether taken from him, a point upon which the suitor satisfied him at once by declaring that he would reside three months in Ireland, and the rest of the year in London. It had been one of the objects of his visit to the Metropolis to consult the highest legal opinions as to the possibility of cutting off the entail upon a portion of his Donegal estates, for which purpose he stated that he had brought the title-deeds with him, adding, that the lawyers had decided against him, and had pronounced it impracticable to set aside any portion of an entail so strictly guarded by legal forms against the smallest alienation.

"So much the better," cried Sir Matthew. "Can't spend what 'ee han't got—can't empty

the well when the pump handle's chained. What 'ee want it for? make ducks and drakes of, hey—hick? Don't wish an acre cut off—little ship sink a great leak. Why can't 'ee live upon income—very handsome. You Irish fellows so fond of extravagance—hey—what!"

"Indeed then, my dear Sir Matthew, you quite misunderstand the thing altogether. Is it upon our income that we won't live? Never fear, and have money to spare too; only you see by the provisions of this cursed entail I 'll not be able to make any settlement upon Miss Middleton, except her own money, which of course will be secured to her own self, every penny of it. Shall I put all the documents and papers into the hands of Mr. Burroughs, and he 'll tell you exactly how I am circumstanced, for deuce a bit do I understand of the law, and never will, please God."

It was agreed that this should be done; Sir Matthew mentioned the sum that he meant to give his daughter upon her marriage, securing it in the manner proposed; and Sir Dennis, after

having warmly thanked him for yielding his consent, and acting in so handsome a manner, stated the reasons that made him anxious to have the ceremony performed with as little delay as possible. It appeared that his relation, the Earl of Ballycoreen, had invited him to Paris, where he was then residing, and had named the day by which he wished him to arrive. He was described to be a rich and eccentric old man, to whose fortune as well as title Sir Dennis was not unlikely to succeed, if he conformed to his wishes, and humoured his little whims and oddities as he had scrupulously done. The Earl had often urged him to marry, and Sir Dennis expressed a confident hope that if he presented himself in Paris by the appointed day, and with a wife in his hand, he might benefit very considerably in the testamentary dispositions of the old gentleman, whose health he stated to be very precarious.

"Fegs!" cried Sir Matthew, "some sense in all that—didn't think got so much gumption in 'ee. Quite right—quite right—go by all means don't lose a day—stitch in time saves nine—

sleeping poultry catch no fox. Tell 'ee some day how I stuck to old Jemmy Gale, the soap-boiler—meant to get Brookshaw for myself though—left it to his godson—choused there—hey!—hick!"

Sir Dennis took his leave with fresh thanks, promising to put the title-deeds of his estate in the hands of Mr. Burroughs; and Sir Matthew, who was infinitely better pleased with him at this interview than he had ever been before, exclaimed, as he left the room, "That Irish chap not such an ass as I took him for—mind the main chance—up to snuff—many ruined by hunting foxes—never heard of a legacy-hunter coming to the Gazette. Pity he dresses like such a jackadandy, but can't put old shoulders upon young heads. Dare say the fellow will be Earl of Bally—what 'ee call it? What, my Ciss a Countess!—hick—hick—hick!"

All parties were anxious for the recovery of Gale, in proportion as their hopes and prospects were implicated in that event. Sir Matthew's feelings were the most single and unalloyed,

for, as he cared not about expediting his daughter's marriage further than as her arrival at Paris with her husband might give the latter a better chance of succeeding to the Earl's fortune, he watched over his son's convalescence with the eagerness of a hasty temperament and the affection of a fond father. Cold, selfish, and cherishing but little regard for her stepson, Lady Middleton was merely solicitous for the quick re-establishment of his health, in order that there might be no delay or interruption in the two great objects upon which her heart was now set,—the marriage with Sir Dennis, and the grand party that was to be patronised by the Duchess. Sir Dennis, although he knew little or nothing of Gale, had more motives than any other for wishing him to be pronounced out of danger, since his marriage and his journey to Paris would both be indefinitely protracted should his illness assume any serious or lingering character. Cecilia, who was sincerely attached to her brother, would have ardently desired his recovery even for his own sake, though it cannot be denied

that her wishes became more anxious and intense when she reflected that her nuptials depended on the state of his health, and when she recalled the sinister adage, more applicable, perhaps, to matrimonial engagements than to any other, that delays are dangerous. Even Caleb Ball, who had no participation in these various hopes and fears, absenting himself, for the first time in his life, from Lloyd's Coffee House and the Royal Exchange, passed several afternoons in the sick-chamber, ministering to the invalid, while his mornings were devoted to the Bow Street officers, whom he accompanied in their exploratory visits to such haunts of the thieves and resurrection-men as were likely to furnish information upon the late mysterious affair. After several conferences with Sir Matthew, at which he stated Gale's insuperable objection to offering any very large reward for the discovery and apprehension of the malefactors, Caleb was empowered to get handbills printed, and to insert advertisements in the papers, promising such a moderate sum as might induce one of the criminals to turn

king's evidence, while it was not likely to lead to the accusal of an innocent man. These announcements were profusely inserted in the journals; Caleb himself superintended the bill-stickers, who covered the walls of the metropolis with similar notices: but neither the universal publicity thus given to the occurrence, nor the reward offered, nor the unremitting exertions of the officers employed, succeeded in gathering any clue to the offenders, or in throwing the smallest light upon an affair which seemed destined to remain involved in impenetrable mystery.

From information procured by the police, they gave it as their opinion that Gentleman Joe, whom they always described as an uncommonly shy bird, had crossed over to France; while they expressed their conviction, grounded upon the statements of some of the resurrection-men, that none of their body had been concerned in opening the grave and uncovering the coffin of the deceased female, as in that case they would unquestionably have carried off the corpse. Meagre and unsatisfactory as

was this intelligence, which seemed, indeed, only to throw an additional darkness on that which was already sufficiently obscure, it was all that could be obtained, after many days' active research on the part of magistrates, policemen, Burroughs, Caleb Ball, and a whole troop of satellites who were employed to assist them.

Youth and an excellent constitution, aided by the best medical advice of London, enabled Gale Middleton to recover from his injuries much more rapidly than had been anticipated. At the end of a few days he was pronounced well enough to be removed into the country, a notification which he received with too much delight not to avail himself of it as speedily as possible, only delaying his departure from London until he had caused a liberal recompense to be bestowed upon Mrs. Tapps and such of her neighbours as had been in any way instrumental in extricating him from his perilous situation. Even the young chimney-sweepers, a class with whose sufferings he had always deeply sympathised, and whose fate he

had strenuously exerted himself to meliorate, were handsomely rewarded, a duty in which their benefactor felt infinitely more interested than in lending any assistance towards the discovery of the villains who had so remorselessly attempted to assassinate him. In vain did Sir Matthew urge that his presence was indispensably required in town, that he might promote this object by such information as none but himself could supply, or identify the villains, should any of them be apprehended, a contingency of which the indignant baronet could not, even for a moment, renounce the hope. Equally fruitless were the solicitations of Lady Middleton that he would remain to do the honours of her approaching grand party; and of Cecilia, that he would continue in town in order to be present at her nuptials. All that could be extorted from Gale, who had now again become silent, melancholy, and apparently inexorable to entreaty, was a conditional promise that, if his health continued to improve, he would return from Sussex for the express purpose of assisting at the respective

celebrations. Sir Matthew, seeing that his son was determined on going, took care to have him attended by careful servants and provided with every requisite, when, with tears in his eyes, he gave him his blessing, promised to run down to Brookshaw Lodge as soon as he could, and stood at the door waving his hand until the carriage in which Gale took his departure turned out of Portland Place into the New Road.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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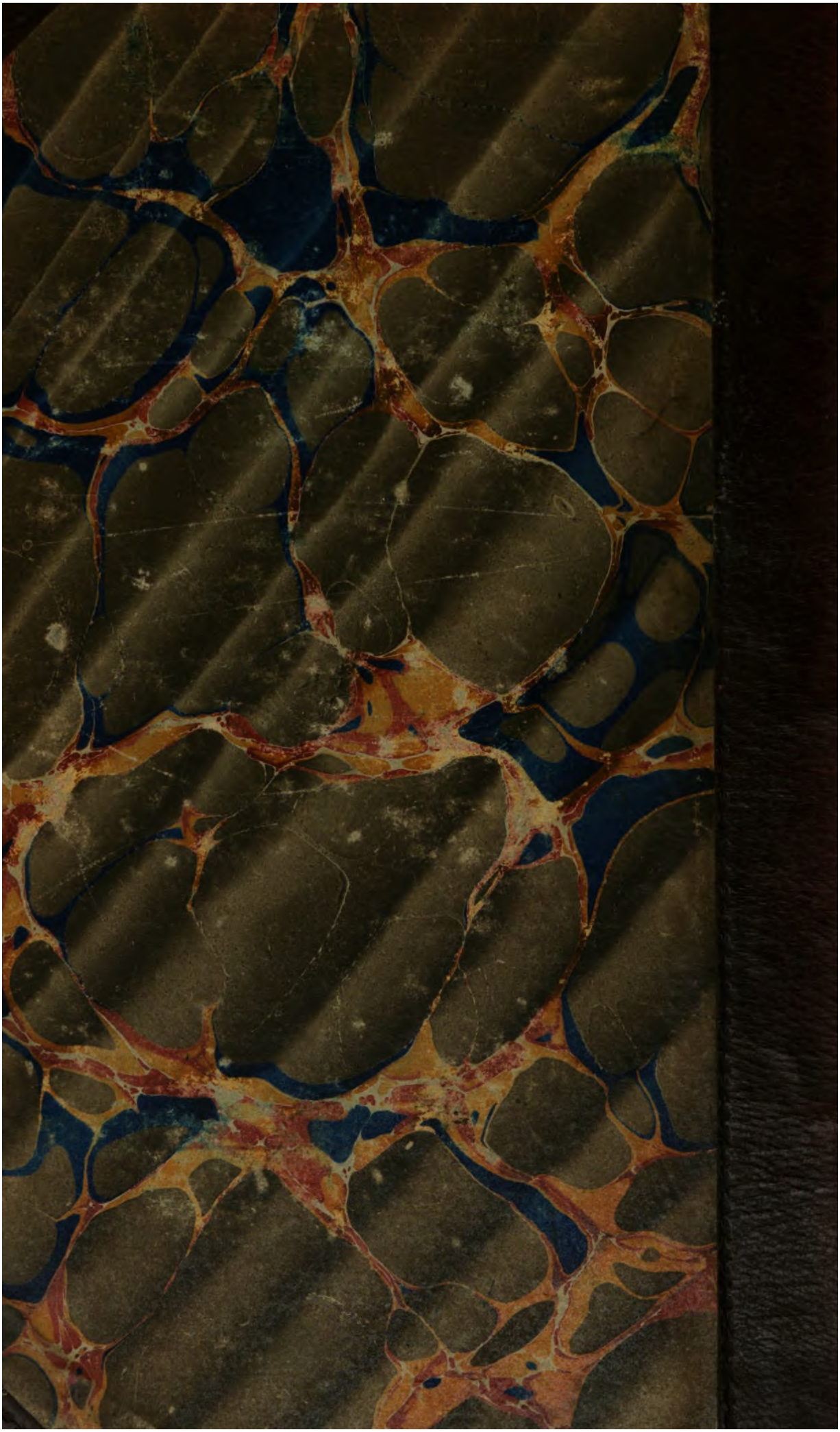
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